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'I Descended to the Depths of the Earth'

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‘I Descended to the Depths of the Earth’

A Rhetorical Poetics of the Jewish Babylonian Aramaic Incantation Bowls

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Drawing of non-Aramaic bowl: Abigail Leavitt

friends & family,
thank you

university of
 groningen

‘I Descended to the Depths of the Earth’

A Rhetorical Poetics of the Jewish Babylonian Aramaic
Incantation Bowls

PhD thesis

to obtain the degree of PhD at the
University of Groningen
on the authority of the
Rector Magnificus Prof. C. Wijmenga
and in accordance with
the decision by the College of Deans.

This thesis will be defended in public on

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ABBREVIATIONS AND REFERENCE GUIDE TO BOWL PUBLICATIONS

BOWL PUBLICATIONS

AIT followed by a number denotes the sequence of texts in Montgomery: *Aramaic Incantation Texts*. **AMB** followed by a number denotes the sequence of texts in Naveh and Shaked: *Amulets and Magic Bowls*. **CAMIB** followed by a number denotes the sequence of texts in Segal: *Catalogue of the Aramaic Bowls in the British Museum*. **CMI** followed by a number denotes the sequence of texts in Faraj: *Coppe Magiche*. **Corpus** followed by a page number denotes the location of texts in Levene: *Corpus of Magic Bowls*. **Curses** followed by a page number denotes the location of texts in Levene: *Jewish Aramaic Curse Texts*. **Gordon** followed by a letter denotes the sequence of texts in Gordon: “Aramaic Magical Bowls in the Istanbul and Baghdad Museums.” **Gordon** followed by a number denotes the sequence of texts in Gordon “Aramaic Incantation Bowls.” **Gorea** followed by a number denotes the sequence of texts in Gorea: “Trois Nouvelles Coupes.” **Isbell** followed by a number denotes the sequence of texts in Isbell: *Corpus of the Aramaic Incantation Bowls*. **JBA** followed by a number denotes the sequence of texts in Shaked, Ford and Bhayro: *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, vol. 1. **MSF** followed by a number denotes the sequence of texts in Naveh and Shaked: *Magic Spells and Formulae*. **SHM** followed by a number denotes the sequence of texts in Fain, Ford, and Lyavdansky: “Aramaic Incantation Bowls at the State Hermitage Museum.” **ZHS** followed by a number denotes the sequence of texts in Müller-Kessler: *Zauberschalentexte in der Hilprecht-Sammlung*. **VAM** followed by a number denotes the sequence of texts in Bhayro, Ford, Levene, and Saar: *Aramaic Magic Bowls in the Vorderasiatisches Museum*.

Where JBA bowl texts have been published in one of the foregoing publications, I refer to them using the abbreviations above, e.g. JBA 64, Gordon A, or Curses: 22-24.

Where JBA bowl texts have been published in individual editions, I refer to them using their catalogue number and author name and year of publication, e.g. 10895 = Bhayro 2017

Where several JBA bowl texts are published in an individual article, I refer to them using their catalogue number and author name, year of publication, and page number, e.g. T15608 = Misgav 2018: 58

BOWL COLLECTIONS

BM followed by a number denotes the catalogue number of bowls in the British Museum. **CBS** followed by a number denotes the catalogue number of bowls in The University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. **HS** followed by a number denotes the catalogue number of bowls in the Frau Hilprecht Sammlung. **IM** followed by a number denotes the catalogue number of bowls in the Iraq Museum. **JNF** followed by a number denotes bowls in private collections (to be) published by James Nathan Ford. **M** followed by a number

denotes the catalogue number of bowls in the Shlomo Moussaieff Collection. **MS** followed by a number denotes the catalogue number of bowls in the Martin Schøyen Collection. **S-** followed by a number denotes the catalogue number of bowls in the State Hermitage Museum. **SD** followed by a number denotes the catalogue number of bowls in the Samir DeHays Collection. **T** followed by a number denotes the catalogue number of bowls in the collection of the Israel Antiquities Authority. **VA** followed by a number denotes the catalogue number of bowls in the Vorderasiatisches Museum.

The locations of other published bowls are generally noted at the point in question, and always in the appendix.

DICTIONARIES

Jastrow refers to Jastrow: *Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Bavli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature*. **DJBA** refers to Sokoloff: *Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic*.

INTRODUCTION

I stand upon a mountain of stone, upon a great mountain of stone. I heed and listen to Shamish and Hur, his grandson, the son of the great king of the *dēvs* and the great ruler of the no-good-ones. On that day, at that hour, and at that time, when the *dēvs* were going out for battle and the liliths were going out for wailing, the phalanx of the demons and the band of the no-good-ones were in commotion, the troop of the *dēvs* and the band of the liliths were in commotion. The drum of rebellion groaned, the horn of destruction cried out. The cauldrons boiled over with rage, the great cauldrons of destruction boiled. Four blasts of wind came forth from the four directions of the world. Four blasts of wind came forth from you, the shore of the ocean. Four dragons came forth from you, the Lydian (?) mountain. The *dēv* shrieked, the dragon howled, Zarnai Lilita wailed, Leviathan the fish became agitated. He shook, and quaked, and caused the entire earth—the universe—to shake. There was shaking in the earth and groaning in heaven. The stars turned over and all the constellations turned over. The great anvil of heaven budged, the sea turned over by its rage and by its power, and the angels were agitated in heaven. I stand at the shore of the sea, and at the great shore of the ocean. I speak to the nighthawk and the bird, and question the wild beasts, and I adjure the great fowl of the rivers, from which the angel Rasiel issues, and from which a column of fire issues and burns the entire world ...¹

What is this and what does it represent? Written in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic (JBA) and inscribed in the Jewish square script on the inside of a simple clay bowl, this passage narrates a vast cosmic upheaval in the first person singular. Towards its end, the anonymous narrator of this dramatic scene descends from a great mountain of stone to stand upon the shore of the sea. From the sea, this unknown I goes on to adjure the angel Rasiel and a variety of wild creatures before proceeding to describe a demon called *Dēv Ziana* and his dwelling (whose beams are made from the teeth of liliths, and whose walls are piled with scorpions). This description of *Dēv Ziana* and his great house is followed by a brief nested narrative, wherein the woman who commissioned the inscription of this clay bowl—*Dukhtoy d. Aḥat*—is introduced. In this narrative-within-a-narrative, *Dukhtoy* is said to cross the sea with her voice; to ascend mountains with a mystery; to raid the arsenal of demons and liliths; to turn their weap-

¹ MS 2053/159:1-10.

ons against them, and thereby achieve great feats in battle against them. It is at this point that the crux of this long inscription becomes clear, as its text proceeds to pronounce a series of bans and anathemas against “all evil liliths that appear to Dukhtoy d. Aḥat in any form and any shape, in the form of living females and dead women, in the form of distant women and of near-by women, and in (the form of) the dead Aḥat d. Farrokhoy.”² On the basis of “the ban of the Lord of the World, and the anathema and decree of the Great Father of Heaven,” the bowl text commands that these liliths be expelled from Dukhtoy’s dreams, visions, and bedroom like an arrow from a bow. It then quotes three verses from the Hebrew Bible—Is 6:3, Ex 15:16, and Ex 15:18—each of which is written out three times, and concludes with the words *amen, amen, selah*.

Like a great many other incantation bowls inscribed in the area of Mesopotamia during the late Sasanian and early Islamic period, this particular bowl builds on the power of the written word in order to address the plight of its owner and frustrate the designs of hostile demons. Demons were everywhere in late antique Mesopotamia—this much is clear—in the words of two famous rabbis from the Babylonian Talmud:

It has been taught: Abba Benjamin says, If the eye had the power to see them, no creature could endure the demons. Abaye says: They are more numerous than we are and they surround us like the ridge around a field. R. Huna says: Every one of us has a thousand on his left side and ten thousand on his right side.³

Existing right on the edge of the visible, tangible world, these special beings were participants in—and often the principle cause of—domestic crises, disease, and various other ailments and

² MS 2053/159:16-17.

³ b. Ber 6a. The specific numbers derive from Ps. 91, which was used during the Second Temple period and in rabbinic literature to protect against demons. It is possible to adduce hundreds of incantation bowls whose long lists of demons support the numerical magnitude of the rabbis’ claims. Indeed, the texts of these bowls spell out a true rogues gallery. To be protected against were not just your garden-variety *shedim*, but *dēvs*, howlers, liliths and *lilin*—i.e. male liliths—tormentors, jackal-spirits, wicked charms, male and female idols, plagues, satans, incubi, evil chariots, necklace charms, bans, pebble spirits, *kisa*-spirits, languor, spirits dispatched through evil practices, demonised witchcraft, and so on. These long lists of afflictive beings represent an attempt to close down on the possibility of any one (kind of) demon slipping through the protective net cast by the bowl. This same scrupulosity also often applies to the meticulous enumeration of the bowl owner’s property, e.g. to be protected are: the dwelling, threshold, residence, house, sons and daughters, oxen, donkeys, slaves and maidservants, cattle of all kinds, both present and future.

misfortunes.⁴ They could also take many forms, such that one could no longer tell of particular entities whether they belonged to the mundane or the transmundane realm. Thus demons might appear in the guise of vermin or reptiles.⁵ Or they might bark like dogs, grunt like pigs, hiss like snakes, and appear in the shape of camels, oxen, donkeys, lions, wolves, leopards, cats, and monkeys.⁶ Demons could also adopt human form and might appear as men or women; this form of aggressive enclothing could be especially malicious, as these demons might attempt to seduce their human victims. Finally, as Dukhtoy's plague of liliths demonstrates, demons could adopt the form of the dead; accompanied by other frightening visions, this particular apparition of a dead woman may even have been Dukhtoy's mother.

In short, late antique Mesopotamia was a dangerous place, a world of florid crises, reified dangers, and potentially grotesque demonic masquerade, where people did not just face natural hazards, but invisible foes and the further dangers of misprision and indeterminacy. The incantation bowls and their texts represent a particular type of response to this menacing reality. Inscribed in great numbers with protective incantations in several forms of Aramaic, the bowls were placed upside down under thresholds or buried beneath the floor in the corners of homes. There they worked to trap or 'press' demons or to ward off potential threats. They reflect an attempt to extend human jurisdiction to circumstances and beings outside the realm

⁴ Throughout this study I use 'special' or 'transmundane being' and in particular 'demon' as terms of ease and convention that embrace the entirety of malevolent creatures addressed by the incantation bowls; these are obviously analytical rather than native designations. Such invisible and generally unseen beings—which are not immediately perceptible to most of us through any of the other four senses—stand afoul of many contemporary, cosmologically constitutive assumptions about how reality works—at least so far as these assumptions reflect the dominant discourses that shape modern western scholarship and a good deal of public life. In conceptualising and referring to these beings, I have purposely stayed away from the super/natural divide in favour of the trans/mundane. The latter—though less fluent—at least has the benefit of undercutting the post-Enlightenment epistemological assumptions that so heavily flavour the super/natural dichotomy. On the continuities and transformations in the semantic field of *daimôn*—whence demon—see, e.g. Anders Klostergaard Petersen, "The Notion of Demon: Open Questions to a Diffuse Concept," in *Die Dämonen: Die Dämonologie der israelitisch-jüdischen und frühchristlichen Literatur im Kontext ihrer Umwelt*, ed. Armin Lange, Hermann Lichtenberger, and K.F. Diethard Römheld (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 23–41. Cf. Dorian Gieseler Greenbaum, *The Daimon in Hellenistic Astrology: Origins and Influence* (Leiden: Brill, 2016); Jan N. Bremmer, "Demons: An Epilogue," in *Demons in Late Antiquity: Their Perception and Transformation in Different Literary Genres*, ed. Eva Elm and Nicole Hartmann (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2020), 167–74.

⁵ AIT 7:14-15.

⁶ AMB 13:12.

of ordinary human influence. Consequently, they look very much like magic according to common western conceptions of the term.⁷

The inscriptions on the incantation bowls comprise many different types and combinations of different textual units. These textual units include invocations; adjurations; oaths; bans; curses; decrees; scriptural quotations; introductory, bridging, and concluding formulae; as well as longer units or spells, such as the extended formula recounted in Dukhtoy's bowl. A typical incantation bowl might contain one or several spells, introductory and concluding formulae, and various combinations of smaller textual units. Together, these materials worked to expel or ward off some beings and/or to enlist other beings in service of the bowls' apotropaic and/or exorcistic goals. As we have seen, some bowls also sought to bring the power of narrative to bear in pursuit of their goals.

⁷ Many of the bowls composed in JBA and inscribed in square script also draw on the Hebrew Bible, Jewish liturgical materials, the rabbinic writings, and myths and stories derived from these sources. They thereby betray their origins in the Jewish communities of late antique Mesopotamia and appear to contradict the many spirited ordinances issued by Jewish authorities throughout history against magic or sorcery. Deut. 18:9-11, for example, includes the sorcerer (מכשף) and his arts amongst those "abhorrent practices" of the nations from which the Israelites are to abstain. Ex. 22:17 dictates that a sorceress (מכשפה) should not be allowed to live. The rabbis decreed likewise, specifying that practitioners of sorcery should be stoned (m. Sanh. 7:4). At the very least, the JBA bowls reflect a very different understanding of the types of practice that these ordinances embraced. In doing so, they raise important questions about the point-of-view we should adopt towards the materials we wish to study. Do we adopt an emic perspective and conclude that Jews in antiquity did not really practice magic. Or do we adopt an etic perspective and conclude that some Jews did practice magic, even if they did not appear to think of their own practices in these terms. This is obviously a 'live' question in relation to numerous adjacent fields, including the study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and magic, and magic and rabbinics. I address this question in Chapter Two. For discussion around these issues in relation to the approximate period of the bowls, see J.H. Chajes, "Rabbis and Their (In)Famous Magic: Classical Foundations, Medieval and Early Modern Reverberations," in *Jewish Studies at the Crossroads of Anthropology and History: Authority, Diaspora, Tradition*, ed. Ra'anana S. Boustan, Oren Kosansky, and Marina Rustow (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 58-79; Joshua Levinson, "Enchanting Rabbis: Contest Narratives Between Rabbis and Magicians in Late Antiquity," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 100.1 (2010): 59-94. For a broad survey of rabbinic views on magic, see Yuval Harari, "A Different Spirituality or 'Other' Agents? On the Study of Magic in Rabbinic Literature," in *With Letters of Light: Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Early Jewish Apocalypticism, Magic, and Mysticism in Honor of Rachel Eilior*, ed. Daphna V. Arbel and Andrei A. Orlov (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2011), 169-195. In relation to the Dead Sea Scrolls, see now Gideon Bohak, "Mystical Texts, Magic, and Divination," in *T&T Clark Companion to the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. George J. Brooke and Charlotte Hempel (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2019), 457-66.

INTRODUCTION TO THE PRESENT STUDY

If it is abundantly clear that the people who inscribed the bowls sought to influence their audience of angels and demons on multiple levels and to persuade them to act in a desired manner, the clear implication of the narrative materials employed in the bowls is that these too acted as a repository of persuasive power, and that this persuasive authority could be channelled and transferred by means of its writing. This implication—and the various ways it manifests itself in the narrative materials of the bowls written in JBA—is the primary concern of the present work. Emphasising the rhetoricity and power dynamics inherent to all language, this thesis examines narrative in the bowls as a mode of persuasion in and of itself. That is, it examines the construction and deployment of narrative in the JBA bowls as a tool to affect a change in the world.⁸ In short, it represents a rhetorical poetics of these texts: the making of literary works in order to persuade. At its most fundamental, the basic question that structures the present work concerns the rhetorical warrant for the incantation bowls. The sharper end of this question addresses the rhetorical justification and authority for the narrative materials in the JBA bowls. How *did* telling a story compel an angel or a demon to do anything? Why go to the effort of inscribing a lengthy narrative on the precarious inner surface of a bowl? Why not deploy a shorter spell or a still more concise selection of invocations and adjurations? And if you did commit to that larger narrative effort, how *did* you deploy the various aspects of narrative—including description and imagery—in order to accomplish your purpose? To what extent does narrative description—as opposed to names cited, beings adjured, scripture quoted, or actions recounted—underwrite the efficacy of a given bowl?⁹ What, in short, are the

⁸ As early as Aristotle, commentators have recognised that every narrative implicitly argues for a certain view of the world over and against other possible configurations. This aspect of narrative is even more pronounced when viewed through a rhetorical lens. The narratives in the bowls, for example, frequently depict—and thereby argue for—a version of the world where demons are already vanquished. And although narrative is itself not an illocutionary act, the bowl narratives that this book deals with certainly behave like performative utterances: the act of telling these stories conveyed power and transformed audience and environment alike in ways similar to declarations. But because most of these narratives accomplished this conveyance of power in themselves without actual declarations, they should properly be categorised not as illocutionary but perlocutionary acts. These are acts where transformation (like healing or protection) occurs *per-* (through, or by means of) *locutio* (utterance or recitation). See David Frankfurter, “Narratives That Do Things,” in *Narrating Religion*, ed. Sarah Iles Johnston (Farmington Hills: Macmillan Reference USA, 2016), 103–4. I expand upon this point below.

⁹ All indications in some of these bowl texts suggest that their efficacy was not predicated on a preference for oaths, adjurations, or biblical citations over and against ‘literary form’; in fact, these other textual materials

persuasive workings and functions of the narrative materials that we encounter in the bowls? And how do these forms of narrative textual production relate to their historical, ideological, and cultural context?

John Frow suggests that the patterns of genre—and thus the genre of narrative in the incantation bowls—are at once shaped by a type of situation and in turn shape the rhetorical actions that are performed in response to it.¹⁰ The narrative materials in the bowls represent a socially constructed response to particular rhetorical exigencies—the sometimes desperate *need* to be rid of a demon or to protect one's family, for example—and the formal features of the bowl narratives are thus indissolubly linked to their rhetorical power. This means that we are obliged to pay attention to both the praxis *and* the aesthetics of narrative. Persuasive appeals reveal people's orientations and attitudes towards transmundane powers, while the (poetic) features of narrative in the JBA bowls reveal the human actors behind these bowls in the *active, imaginative* process of constructing and negotiating their relationships with angels, demons, and God. These narrative texts do not just represent an attempt to communicate with these powerful beings for magical means; through their narratives, they also work to *describe* or *represent* the reality of these beings, to give shape to the invisible through language. The narrative spell inscribed on Dukhtoy's bowl, for example, affords one particular vision of the transmundane landscape and its ecology as imagined by at least three inhabitants of late antique Mesopotamia.¹¹ The person who inscribed this bowl did not just seek to resolve Dukhtoy's demon problem with a powerful first person narrative. Their use of this narrative also worked to 'inscribe' the forces addressed in the bowl. In a similar fashion, other bowls and other bowls narratives assigned various characteristics to these powerful forces, shaping them through the use of established narrative formulae, improvisations on these formulae, or individual narrative inspirations. Such descriptive passages—understood as distinct but not disconnected from the actions and events that constitute narration in the strict sense—are typically understood to play either (1) an ornamental or decorative role, or (2) an explanatory or symbolic role, where the description works to reveal and justify the psychology of the persons within a narrative. The value of the approach put forward in this book is that—by focussing attention on how these forces acquired images for various purposes—it sheds light on the dia-

often appear at best as either allied, supplementary, or parallel to the (descriptive) concerns of the narratives in some of these texts.

¹⁰ John Frow, *Genre* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 14.

¹¹ The narrative spell in Dukhtoy's bowl is reflected with greater and lesser variation in at least two other bowls known to us. See Chapter Five.

lectics of imagination and the linguistic construction or illustration of the transmundane. Whether anthropomorphic or zoomorphic, malevolent, monstrous, or simply strange, the expressive features granted to the transmundane (body) in the bowl narratives reflect wider ontological truths about angels and demons. This study thereby accommodates an interest in how meaning itself was conveyed and constructed by the Jewish communities in Sasanian Mesopotamia. Its focus on the praxis *and* the aesthetics of the bowl narratives draws attention to the performative dimension of these narratives as they constructed, described, or enacted (trans)mundane reality. It also draws attention to how these narratives worked to constitute the social world that informed them; how people conceived of the (trans)mundane world; and how human experiences such as suffering, sickness, and conflict were understood and negotiated.

Given its scope and the nature of its concerns, this work necessarily engages with several heavily debated terms—primarily magic, rhetoric, and poetics. Magic is undoubtedly the most contentious of these terms—sometimes even rejected out of hand as inevitably ethnocentric—but again and again problems of definition surface in this study beyond this term. A further difficulty is the tendency of some of these concepts to overlap and for the individual aims of a discipline like rhetoric or poetics to claim for themselves the entirety of discursive language.¹² Many of the issues and questions raised by the bowl texts—such as questions of orality and textuality—also intersect in a manner that make it difficult to produce a linear presentation of the bowls that allows them to slot into a uniform genre. But category or definitional problems of this sort need not necessarily be understood as negatives or deterrents. We make distinctions and draw master-tropes in order to make sense of the multitudinous interminglings and mutual reabsorptions of phenomena within the everyday life of language. And even as we concede the artificiality of the distinctions and master-tropes that we make, we might find that nothing illuminates the ancient world so brightly as those points at which our categories and distinctions sit awkwardly with the realities of ancient society. As Andrew Wallace-Hadrill puts it, “It is in unpacking the misfit that we begin to grasp what is distinctive

¹² Following Austin, Benveniste, Jakobson, Searle, and Ricoeur in particular, I understand discourse or discursive language to be a set of utterances reducible not to the word but to the sentence, i.e. if the phonological and lexical sign is the basic unit of language, then the sentence is the basic unit of discourse and cannot be reduced to the individual words that compose any sentence. Discourse is thus the use of sign systems by someone to say something about something to someone: as such, it involves a speaker or a writer who says something in some situation about some reality to a hearer or a reader.

about an alien world.”¹³ We may also find that there are some areas where a term like magic actually does not prove alien or harmful as a descriptor, and places where it may even serve to carry certain aspects of language or (material) behaviour to improved critical attention.

In defining and engaging some of its analytical categories and critical terminology, the present study also aims—at least in its initial stages—to outline a theoretical approach that may be applied to the entirety of the incantation bowls. Despite an accumulating wealth of publications in the field of bowl studies, sustained academic research on the bowls is only of recent provenance. The field is primarily philological, and consists largely of textual reconstructions and translations of bowl texts. And even though the discussion has broadened significantly in the past several decades, scholarship has largely ignored the poetics of the bowl texts, and completely ignored rhetoric as a relevant factor in their study. By shifting focus to view the bowls through a rhetorical lens, the present work hopes to succeed in repositioning the bowls as a place where people employed language in creative, persuasive, and often metaphorical ways to influence their reality. Thus—even as the first and second chapters of this book flirt with various definitions of rhetoric—this book is itself also a rhetorical act. It is essentially an act of persuasion, an attempt not just to better illuminate the nature of these objects, but to get people to see the bowls in a certain light. It is also my aim to provide a bridge between linguistic and text-critical scholarship on the bowls and interpretive scholarship. Historical linguistics needs history of interpretation, and any interpretive theory of the bowl needs historical linguistics. Interpretive theories need historical linguistics in order to know what is in front of them — what linguistic use and abuse is in the bowls. And historical linguistics needs interpretive theories because the significance of linguistic (ab)uses is unclear without an account of what the people who wrote the bowls were doing. Because the rhetoric of the bowls is always related to particular exigencies, and forms a response or concrete practice in relation to those exigences, to examine the rhetoric of the bowls is not just to examine how their texts were generated; it is to employ rhetoric as a hermeneutic for the bowls.¹⁴ In addition to building on—and engaging in conversation with—more traditional

¹³ Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, “Inscriptions in Private Spaces,” in *Inscriptions in the Private Sphere in the Greco-Roman World*, ed. Rebecca Benefiel and Peter Keegan (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 1.

¹⁴ That is, this book works through rhetoric to generate a more sophisticated hermeneutics of the bowls. It thus recognises interpretation as a creative effort to compose an understanding; it also marks a movement towards a performance-centred hermeneutics. On this movement, see George L. Pullman, “Rhetoric and Hermeneutics: Composition, Invention, and Literature,” *Journal of Advanced Composition* 14.2 (1994): 367–87. On the use of rhetoric to do hermeneutics, see, e.g. Michel Charles, *Rhétorique de la lecture* (Paris: Éditions du

forms of bowl scholarship, it is a goal of this study that its use of rhetoric will open up new ways to think about interpretation and literary composition in relation to the bowls. The integrative/synthetic approach offered in this book thus represents an attempt to read across disciplines and move beyond the specialisations of linguistics and history of religions and Jewish magic in order to outline a more holistic approach to the bowls.

United in part under the general rubric of rhetoric, the methodological approach that I adopt in this project nevertheless does not fully adopt any rhetorical sub-discipline or apparatus in its entirety but instead borrows from various places what I need to account for the bowls. In both their texts and choice of domestic ware as a writing surface, the magic bowls provision us with a complex interweaving of (textual) materials. Because magic in the bowls reflects a mix of sacred and mundane motives and activities, and because the bowls present us with a medley of (textual and potential ritual) phenomena, the challenges they pose dictate a certain eclecticism. A flexible conceptual system—combining cognitive, linguistic, stylistic, and materialist terms—seems justified both in light of the material and the aims of this project. For the main body of this study, I adopt a composite of linguistically-oriented literary critical methods that show themselves useful in dealing with the narrative materials in the bowls. I borrow chiefly from the sub-discipline of rhetoric known as rhetorical narratology, as well as appropriating various insights from the New Criticism and Russian Formalist schools, and occasionally augmenting these with recent work in the field of cognitive poetics. In its attempt to enjoin and read across disciplines—including those disciplinary approaches well-established in the study of the bowls—this study represents a (necessarily limited) response to Christopher Lehrich’s call for an interdisciplinary field of magic.¹⁵ In the remainder of this introduction, I offer a brief overview of the book’s trajectory and structure, even if many of the

Seuil, 1977); Steven Mailloux, *Rhetorical Power* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989). For Gadamer, too, the hermeneutic task of returning a text (separated from us in time and space) to immediate experience completes the total interpenetration of the rhetorical and hermeneutical aspects of human linguisticity. Interpretation thus becomes a performative rather than a purely analytical activity, and rhetoric and hermeneutics are rendered practical activities. See, e.g. Hans-Georg Gadamer, “On the Scope and Function of Hermeneutical Reflection,” in *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, ed. David E. Linge (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 18–43. Where classical rhetoric may be said to have been concerned with the making of texts, contemporary rhetoric—in light of an interpretive term that emphasises the correlative capacities for invention and application rhetoric inherent in both rhetoric and hermeneutics—seeks to interpret texts.

¹⁵ Christopher Lehrich, *The Occult Mind: Magic in Theory and Practice* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), xiii–xiv; Christopher Lehrich, “Finding One’s Place,” in *Introducing Religion: Essays in Honor of Jonathan Z. Smith*, ed. Willi Braun and Russell T. McCutcheon (London: Equinox, 2008), 263.

theoretical terms I introduce here (as well as those I have already introduced) will only be clarified by the discussion in Chapter Two.

RESEARCH QUESTION AND OUTLINE OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The hazardous social landscape in which the magic bowls were produced—wherein humans and demons came into constant contact—made it imperative to establish an illocutionary force that was strong enough to achieve a concrete effect with respect to the demons you wished to ward off or to expel from your home. But why tell a story when you could issue a command, make a threat, or adjure an angel for assistance? This is the basic question that structures the present work. What is gained by using a story to augment the effect of an invocation, an adjuration, and a statement of your goal? And if demons were susceptible to storytelling, how could one best marshal the resources of narrative in a limited space to work an effect upon them?

It was not so very long ago that Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked could remark that narrative materials “are practically unknown in [the] Aramaic magic bowls, although certain bowls contain brief allusions to story situations.”¹⁶ In the intervening period, it has become increasingly plain that—where their repertoire and competence were adequate to it, and their client’s purchasing power extended to it—the bowl practitioners wrote stories. The first objective of this study is to draw all of these JBA narrative materials—scattered over a century and a half of disparate publications of varying quality—into one place for further study. The key objectives of this study are to understand why narrative formed such an important mechanism within the calculus of means available to the bowl practitioners; what the rhetoric-magico warrant was for this practice; what kinds of information are indexed by the resources of narrative as they are deployed in the bowls; and what the narrative materials in the bowls can tell us about how the communities who used the bowls people conceived the world. As focused in this study, this last objective seeks to demonstrate how the resources of narrative index the demonology of late antique Judaism, and how the details of these stories (and techniques like description) reveal the imaginative construction of demons. In relation to this point, this study also moves beyond the textualisation of knowledge about demons in the bowls to ask how the material forms of writing worked to mediate and index the demonological.

¹⁶ Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity*, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1987), 192.

Existing treatments of narrative in magical contexts across the ancient world—though well-theorised in respect to the use of myth in *historiolae*—frequently lack any definition of narrative or story and are prone to the haphazard treatment of these phenomena. This is especially and unmitigatedly true of the field of bowl studies, where the narrative materials in the bowls are often addressed haphazardly in the context of other concerns, and where concepts of story, narrative, and allusion are jumbled in ways that do no favours to the materials in question, even actively hindering our understanding of the rhetorical forms and functions of narrative in the ancient world. It is therefore necessary to add a further key objective to those enumerated above. This study seeks to set the study of narrative (not just) in the bowls (but in similar magical materials across the ancient world) on a firm theoretical footing. In doing so, it seeks to bolster—and provide a model for—the thoroughgoing study of such materials in other magical traditions.

In this regard, the objective of Section I is to lay the ground work for the present study and develop the theoretical underpinnings for the body of bowl materials in Section II. The field of bowl studies is chiefly philological, and some of the work in Section I is designed not just to underpin the present work, but to better undergird the interpretive study of the bowls as well. In Chapter One, I provide a thorough introduction to the bowls that also serves in part as a survey of bowl scholarship. This introduction to the bowls focusses on several hitherto neglected issues in the study of the bowls, in particular as these issues relate to the main through-line of this work, the conclusions I draw at its end, and the construction of a more holistic vision of bowl praxis. In this respect, I emphasise the need to direct our attention to the so-called pseudo-script bowls, which provide valuable insight into bowl practice. I further stress the *writtenness* of the bowls and the need to better incorporate ‘things written’ into our analyses of ancient magic in addition to ‘things said’ and ‘things done.’¹⁷ Following the survey of previous scholarship in this chapter, I outline several lacunae in this scholarship and preview the approach this study will take to the bowls. In the midst of a great deal of philological work, bowl scholarship sometimes appears to forget the communicative nature of the bowls and the facts of their transmundane audience. It has also neglected the forms and func-

¹⁷ See Fritz Graf, “Magie et écriture: quelques réflexions,” in *Écrire la magie dans l’antiquité: actes du colloque international (Liège, 13-15 Octobre 2011)*, ed. Magali de Haro Sanchez (Liège: Presses universitaires de Liège, 2015), 227–37 who has recently sounded a valuable call to move away from the priority of oral incantation in our analyses of ancient (Greek) magic and (on the basis of so many varieties of written media in magical practice) to incorporate writing more centrally into our descriptions.

tions of narrative in the bowls, and I redirect the study of the bowls in this sub-section towards the communicative and persuasive aspects of the bowls.

In Chapter Two, I site the present study at the crossroads of ‘magic, rhetoric, and narrative in ancient Judaism.’ This chapter serves to delineate the underpinnings of my chief methodological and theoretical tools, though the specific mode of their application is borne out from chapter to chapter in accordance with the foci of those chapters. The key objectives of this chapter are to establish the heuristic connections between magic, rhetoric, and narrative; outline my general approach to the narrative materials in the bowls; and establish the terminological framework that I will use throughout the remainder of the book. In the first place, I consider the definitional paths of ‘magic’ in western scholarship, examine the utility of ‘magic’ for my study of the bowls, and propose a heuristic definition of the term in the context of the bowls. There is a marked tendency in bowl studies to abdicate all engagement with the knotty problems inherent in defining this term. This is perhaps because of the philological thrust of much of the field, though this raises the basic criteria of demarcation. Social inquiry involves the recovery of the meaning of language and human action, and though my concern is not to legislate with respect to the details of any specific field of inquiry—either the bowls, philology, or magic—I argue that a proper understanding of the bowl texts and their language may benefit from careful application of a term like magic. Numerous calls have gone out for the abandonment of the term, but I show that it nevertheless retains much polythetic and prototypical value for an approach to the bowls. With regard to the bowls, I use magic primarily to embrace and emphasise the following aspects of the bowls: that they direct language towards the population of the transmundane realm that is instrumental, manipulative, and/or coercive, and that this language is used to achieve clearly defined, locally delimited (i.e. personal) goals through the manipulation of these transmundane beings. Nevertheless, I do not downplay the importance of academic approaches to magic outside this field (or Jewish Studies more broadly). In fact, the definitional approach that I adopt opens the bowls to dialogue with theoretical discussions of magical practices beyond Judaism and the late antique period.

This is the same tack that I assume in relation to the ‘rhetoric’ of the bowls—which is the next term I consider in Chapter Two. In this respect, this chapter extends the idea of rhetoric beyond the restricted canon of formal logographic techniques of argumentation outlined in the classical (Aristotelian) *ars rhetorica*. This expanded view of rhetoric embraces the use of narrative and other types of (extended) discourse in order to persuade. Demonstrating that the construction of narratives and the deployment of rhetoric are not mutually exclusive activities,

this chapter moves to introduce the branch of contemporary narratology known as rhetorical narratology. Narratology itself is the theoretical discipline which deals with narrative as a mode of discourse and which seeks to describe narrative's fundamental structures and particular elements, while the basic thesis of rhetorical narratology is that a strict separation between rhetoric and narrative is (and always has been) artificial. Sited at the intersection between narrative and rhetorical criticism, I demonstrate that rhetorical narratology offers a useful set of resources for examining the nature, interrelations, and functions of the narrative resources deployed in the bowls. In this respect, I turn at last to offer a definition of 'narrative' before proceeding to survey its forms in the JBA incantation bowls. Most narratologists agree that narrative consists of material signs—the discourse—which convey a certain meaning or content—the story—and which fulfil a certain social function. Definitions of narrative have traditionally made a series of at least two actions or events the prime constituent of narrativity. Without an event, you simply have description, an argument, or a lyric. On this basis, plot is construed as the chrono/logical concatenation of events on the level of *fabula* (the event sequence or the raw material of a story) transformed into *sjuzhet* (the way the story is organised). Put even more simply, story is a sequence of events (the action). Narrative discourse is those events as represented. And narrative is the representation of events, consisting of story and narrative discourse. For the purposes of this book, I define narratives as the representation of a sequence of at least two events; these narratives are not reports about stories, summaries of stories, or references to stories, though I do analyse the role of references to story situations in certain bowls.

The objective of Section II is to establish the forms, function, and workings of narrative in the JBA incantation bowls. Deploying the definition of narrative outlined in Section I, the three chapters in this section collate the various narrative materials contained in the published JBA bowls—a body of some 415 texts. The first part of each of these three chapters enlarges upon the form and the mechanics of the narrative materials under examination. The second part of each of these chapters categorises and surveys the appearance of these materials in the bowls. My survey of the diverse mechanisms and deployments of narrative in the bowls begins in Chapter Three with the *historiola*, a modern term which refers to mythic stories whose narration reflects and creates a precedent or paradigm wherein a crisis or situation is represented as (already) resolved. The narrative world of myth in magic thus comprises dramas whose arcs have been completed and whose tensions have been resolved. In examining the pragmatic use of myth in the bowls, I distinguish between *references* to mythic stories

and the actual *narration* of such stories. This is an important distinction that has not been observed in the field of bowl studies (as well as other fields of magical studies). In examining how these different phenomena develop and exert the force of mythic stories, I draw upon the concept of the story world. I use this concept in order to examine how different uses of mythic figures and mythic narratives work to reinforce (and stand as guarantors of) the power of (yet other) mythic narratives. In this respect, I demonstrate how references to story situations—or ‘narrative tokens’ as I call them—are able to ‘cash in’ on a treasure house of accrued narrative associations.¹⁸ In conceptualising *historiolae* and narrative tokens, I also deploy the idea of the ‘miniature’ in order to illuminate how they achieve their effects. I show how a reduction in the dimensions of a longer narrative or the selection of a specific detail or token can lead to an increase in the dimensions of this narrative or this detail’s significance. Examining how such acts of ‘exaggeration’ represent a strategy for achieving focus, I demonstrate the ways in which the bowls use such strategies to threaten an almost unlimited amount of significance.

In Chapter Four, I briefly examine the use in the bowls of excerpts from biblical prose narratives. Demonstrating the extent to which the Hebrew Bible could be broken up into small units of text, this chapter observes the ways in which these quotations in the bowls function like *historiolae*. Drawing on recent research into metonymy and meronymy, this chapter asks how far these excerpts were conceived as independent units separable from their contiguous narrative *pericopae*. That is, did they have a larger conceptual referent beyond the actual words that were quoted in the bowl? And did this potential conceptual referent embrace all or only part of the narrative *pericopae* from which the quotation was derived? Though the answers to these questions proves inconclusive, this chapter also advances a firmer theoretical basis for dealing with the forms and functions of scriptural citation in the bowls. It furnishes a modulated method that can be expanded to account for the functions of biblical quotations in the bowls. In addition, the appendix to this chapter—which catalogues all of the biblical quotations contained in the JBA incantation bowls published thus far—provides a map of potential avenues for further research into the Bible in the bowls (and late antique Judaism more generally). A significant (but underdeveloped) dimension of the study of JBA incanta-

¹⁸ In this respect I am heavily indebted to the valuable work by Sarah Iles Johnston, “The Authority of Greek Mythic Narratives in the Magical Papyri,” *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 16 (2015): 51–66. Cf. now Kathryn Caliva, “The Past Made Present: Mythic References and Pragmatic Effects in Sappho,” *American Journal of Philology* 140.3 (2019): 415–38 for an approach to mythic references that is similar to the concept of narrative tokens that I develop in Chapter Three.

tion bowls is their use of the Jewish scriptures, and this chapter further facilitates the study of this aspect of the bowls.

In Chapter Five, I examine the use of first person narrative spells within the JBA incantation bowls. Construed by previous bowl scholarship through the lens of the *historiola*, this chapter demonstrates that these spells represent a distinct deployment of the resources of narrative—both formally and functionally. I show that these narratives do not represent an appeal to the external authority of myth but instead evince a kind of ‘technology of the self’ whereby the I of the spell—who I demonstrate should be understood as the bowl practitioner—is shown to have overcome the limits of mundane reality and established a human embodiedness within the transmundane realm. I show that these narratives work to invest the bowls with an auto-prescriptive performative authority and force. Marked by the rhetoric of seeing and an emphasis on sensory-rich details, these spells make the I dynamically real within the transmundane realm and contribute to a kind of *evidential scene setting*. The first person presentation of these narratives guarantees the direct accrual and thus the validity of the practitioner’s knowledge of angels and demons and represents a pre-emptive response to Pierre Bourdieu’s critique of the Austinian performative — to wit, that the illocutionary act is not just a matter of doing things with words but whether or not the speaker is invested with the authority to do those things with those words and thereby effect a change in the world.

Attendant on the role of the I as a direct observer of events (or an actor within events) is an emphasis on experientiality and an expansion of description. In Chapter Five, I further demonstrate how far the authority of the first person narrative formulae in the bowls is established through two closely related narrative phenomena: description and space. In this respect—as in Chapter Three—I show what the *actual structures* of narrative contribute to the magical enterprise. This marks a significant departure from previous studies of narratives in magical contexts, which tend to conceive of narrative or story in general or grossly underdefined terms—if at all—or simply in relation to myth construed as precedent or paradigm. In Chapter Three I show how the *historiola* exploits the incipient teleology of narrative—moving through the ‘natural’ junctures of instability-complication-resolution—in order to establish a higher-level semantic perspective whereby resolution (and not just precedent or paradigm) are thematised on a formal level. In Chapter Five, I show how far the first person narrative spells in the bowls exploit the techniques of description and the possibilities of narrative space to achieve their effects.

Chapter Six represents an extended synthesis that brings together many of the concerns of the previous chapters, as well as setting the bowls in dialogue with the Aramaic materials attested in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Building on the linguistic root of the word narrative—which derives from the Sanskrit *gna*, ‘know’ while also yielding Greek *ginoskō*, ‘I know’ and Latin *gnarus*, ‘knowing’ or ‘skilful’—this chapter asks what kinds of things the bowls know about demons, and how they index this knowledge. Moving from the scrolls to the bowls takes us from a period where we have little to no evidence for magical efforts by Jews to combat demons to a period where such evidence (in the form of the bowls) suddenly explodes into the archaeological record. Chapter Six examines what this means for the demonology indexed by the bowls, and explores how the bowl practitioners used written language to give a verbal shape to the *realia* of the demonic body. Unlike the earlier Qumran materials, which are largely concerned with the aetiology of demons and have little to say about demonic appearances, the bowls offer an underexploited window onto the actual conception of demons in ancient Judaism. Stepping into this space, Chapter Six examines the ways in which the bowl texts mediate this knowledge of the demonic body and its characteristics.¹⁹

Further to this, Chapter Six demonstrates the extent to which the material forms of writing upon the bowls worked to mediate their demonology. Using the ideas of visual literacy and sensational forms, this chapter reads the bowls as a particularly compelling combination of seeing and doing. I show the extent to which, capitalising upon a connection

¹⁹ Due to the large amount of bowl materials available—my starting corpus comprises some four hundred plus published bowls—this chapter presents only a number of representative case studies in which certain (narrative) devices are traced in order to shed light on the larger pattern of their use in the bowls. Furthermore, of the stock of incantation bowls known to us, many fewer bowls are published than unpublished. It is impossible moreover to estimate just how many unearthed and unpublished bowls are out there in the world already. This number can also only continue to grow as more bowls surface on the antiquities market; and once Iraq regains some semblance of its former stability, new controlled excavations are bound to add to our already swollen company of incantation bowls. It is thus in the nature of bowl studies at the present time that the discovery and/or edition of just one new bowl (fragment) has the possibility to change what was taken for granted before. Accordingly, this study can provide only tendencies and exemplary results in its examination of the (narrative) materials in the JBA bowls. As of the present moment, definite statements and comprehensive answers to the questions it poses cannot—and should not—be offered. Nevertheless, the data available for study today is bountiful, and this study represents a first effort to open up the subject of narrative in the incantation bowls. Independent of any new data that may and will arise in the future, there is great value in the integrative interpretive approach that I advance in the present study.

between writing and the transmundane, the practice of inscribing bowls—which began suddenly in the fourth to fifth century—represents an outstanding example of how interactions across the spectrum of seeing, reading, writing, and doing generate new concepts of media and mediation. Writing is a way of extending cognition into the environment, and the different forms and uses of writing and visual media in the bowls are a striking example of the interactions between text and text carrier as well as shifting perceptual orientations towards writing as an act of physical and cultural intervention. I conclude Chapter Six by reflecting upon the extent to which various forms of textualised knowledge and the perceived power of writing were instrumentalised and increasingly technologised in the bowls by both literate and non-literate practitioners in order to claim authority over demons and mediate this authority to a largely illiterate consumer base. In laying out the diversity of the bowls, this conclusion marks an attempt to complicate existing ideas of a unified body or ‘corpus’ of magic bowls. There is so much happening across this diverse expanse of inscribed objects—from bowls inscribed with wholesale inventions of signs and scripts, to pseudo-scripts, to Aramaic bowls whose hands range from barely legible to beautiful, and bowls inscribed with short, simple formulae to others inscribed with complex narratives and striking materials that parallel aspects of the Hekhaloth literature—that it is imperative to try and better model the ways in which we conceive of it.

In sum, this book surveys the ways in which narratives are used in the JBA incantation bowls. A diversity of types and functions emerges as a result of this survey, whose communicative and persuasive functions I outline. This study shows why you might choose to narrate the distant past in order to re-envision the immediate future, and why you might describe a demon to a demon. Why—in order to generate a defined change in reality, whether the cure of a disease or the elimination of some other demonic affliction—you might tell a story. In doing so, it demonstrates the great extent to which two vastly underexplored aspects of the magic bowls—their writtenness, and the ways they use narrative—index the demonology of bowls and show people in the active, imaginative process of constructing and negotiating their relationships with transmundane powers.

NOTE ON THE BOWL TEXTS

The present work is primarily a survey of the narrative materials in the published JBA incantation bowls. It is not a linguistic and philological study of their texts. Nevertheless, my analysis of the narrative spells in the bowls has necessitated making a number of changes to

the reading, interpretation, and translation of numerous texts published by earlier scholars. It is simply a fact that the readings and interpretations presented in earlier editions of bowl texts may be improved through collation or in the light of new or parallel texts that were unavailable to the editors of those texts. In fact, the value of parallel texts to the field of bowl studies cannot be overstated. These permit us to get a grasp on bowl formulae that may otherwise be too difficult to read, sometimes due to our limitations as scholars, the handwriting of the bowl practitioner, the complex and/or potentially garbled nature of the text, or because of damage to the bowl—whether this damage has resulted in missing or illegible letters or even entire portions of certain bowl formulae. As evidenced in particular by the careful philological work of James Nathan Ford and Matthew Morgenstern, every publication of new bowl texts clarifies obscure points in previously published texts. In addition—thanks again to the efforts of these and other scholars—our knowledge of the Aramaic dialects used in the bowls is always increasing.

All of that said, extensive linguistic discussion is beyond the remit of the present work. Where I have made changes to the published bowl texts surveyed in the present work, I have generally done so silently and chiefly on the basis of (un/published) parallels unavailable to the editors of those bowl, on the basis of subsequent philological work, and/or on the basis of reviews of earlier editions of bowl texts. It is a given, for example, that J.B. Segal's edition of the bowls in the British Museum should not be consulted without reference to the important reviews by Christa Müller-Kessler and James Nathan Ford; that James Montgomery's monumental edition of the bowls in the Penn Museum should be read in light of the comments by Jacob Epstein. And so on. Where I present extended portions of bowl texts in the present work, I note the major editions of these texts—as well as the most important literature dealing with these texts—but readers of the present work interested in the details of the readings advanced in the present study are referred to the extensive bibliography in the present work, as well as the bibliographies provided with each bowl text in their various editions.

NOTE ON THE ADDRESSEES OF THE BOWLS

It hardly needs to be said that the broader meaningfulness of the bowls is underwritten by numerous assumptions about the lived reality of transmundane beings and their manifestation in the mundane world. Buried or otherwise embedded within the architecture of the home, any given bowl was designed to communicate with and effect a change upon the world through the specific beings addressed by that bowl. The excavation of the bowls thus raises a number

of (hermeneutical) difficulties, not least the fact that the implied readers or authorial audience for the bowls (consisting of a large cohort of late antique Mesopotamian demons and angels) have very little in common with the actual flesh-and-blood readers of the bowls (consisting primarily of an emphatically much smaller cohort of academics). In short, the bowls present us with a complex and unusual communicative situation. Taking seriously the claim of the bowls to commerce with various transmundane interlocutors, I approach this situation in the following way.

I note first of all that the bowl texts present themselves as speaking to certain named beings or classes of beings. That is, they explicitly identify their addressees. However, many of these addressees (in particular when addressed as a class) appear in innumerable bowls prepared for innumerable different human beneficiaries. That said, the bowl texts are further appended with the name(s) of the beneficiaries for whom they were prepared, thereby further specifying the un/desired activities of the addressees in relation to a specific person and a very specific location. In short, the addressees of each bowl *knew who they were*, that they were being addressed, and why they were being addressed. Further to this, the governing first person voice of each bowl text, which is to be identified in almost every instance with the I of the bowl practitioner, defines a horizon of knowledge as shared with the addressee by taking for granted certain facts. The most basic of these assumptions of course is that angels and demons could read and understand Aramaic (or divine the intended message of those bowls where the practitioner may have chosen to adopt an invented script). As Shaul Shaked puts it,

The existence of a fairly large number of [incantation bowls] implies that we are dealing with a literate society, where it was taken for granted that their interlocutors, the angels and demons, appreciated the arts of the book no less than the writers of the texts and their customers, and would have taken written messages with all seriousness.²⁰

More specifically, the governing voice of each bowl text defines a horizon of knowledge as shared with the addressee by taking for granted numerous linguistic usages or references, such as narrative, analogy and metaphor, deictic expressions referring to the governing voice's time, frequent references to biblical and rabbinic figures or stories, technical expressions related to jurisprudence, a sensitivity not just to adjurations and commands but to aesthetic

²⁰ Shaul Shaked, "Jews, Christians and Pagans in the Aramaic Incantation Bowls of the Sasanian Period," in *Religions and Cultures: First International Conference of Mediterranean*, ed. Adriana Destro and Mauro Pesce (Binghamton: Global Publications, 2002), 63–64.

considerations, and so on. Because the bowls present themselves as speaking to various transmundane beings—thereby explicitly projecting a certain image of their addressees—and because this audience is further identified as the intended receiver of the bowl text through second person grammatical forms, my assumption throughout this study is that angels and demons were presumed to possess the kinds of knowledge that a given bowl practitioner possessed. As such, I identify the implied reader of the bowls with the ideal reader of the bowls, just as I identify the governing voice of the bowls with the bowl practitioner. Despite the fact that the spell formulae used in the incantation bowls were copied and reproduced by multiple people in multiple bowls, I take seriously—on the level of the text, with respect to the addressee—the claims (to identity) of the governing voice. As such, where a narratologist might expect to read ‘implied author,’ read instead ‘bowl practitioner.’ For the purposes of the bowl, and the purposes of this study, the I of the incantation is identical with the person who (says they) wrote the bowl.

PART ONE
THEORY, METHOD, AND THE BOWLS

CHAPTER ONE

Introducing the Mesopotamian Magic Bowls

INTRODUCTION

The Mesopotamian magic bowls reflect a protective practice developed in Sasanian Mesopotamia, of which the main activity was the inscription of simple clay bowls. The primary goal of these inscribed bowls was the exorcism or apotropaic repulsion of demons and other malevolent forces from peoples' homes. The bowls themselves are nothing more than domestic earthenware. Once inscribed, they were buried upside down inside the homes of the people for whom they had been prepared. These people included Jewish, Mandaean, Christian, and Zoroastrian householders.¹ The bowl inscriptions consist primarily of incantations written in several contemporary varieties of Aramaic—JBA, Mandaic, and Syriac. The (ritual) manipulation of written signs is also common in the bowls, and a significant number of bowls are

¹ For an initial sociological treatment of the bowls, see Michael G. Morony, "Magic and Society in Late Sasanian Iraq," in *Prayer, Magic, and the Stars in the Ancient and Late Antique World*, ed. Scott Noegel, Joel Walker, and Brannon Wheeler (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 94–95, 101–7. Morony presents a statistical treatment of 855 bowls, which he uses to reconstruct gender ratios and household structures, and to examine the possible religious affiliation of the bowl owners. For a more recent example to probe the societal data presented in the bowls in respect to the Jewish communities of Sasanian Mesopotamia, see Geoffrey Herman, "Jewish Identity in Babylonia in the Period of the Incantation Bowls," in *A Question of Identity: Social, Political, and Historical Aspects of Identity Dynamics in Jewish and Other Contexts*, ed. Dikla Rivlin Katz et al. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2019), 131–52. Note also Shaul Shaked, "Jews, Christians and Pagans"; Shaul Shaked, "Popular Religion in Sasanian Babylonia," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 21 (1997): 106; Shaul Shaked, "Rabbis in Incantation Bowls," in Geller, ed. *Archeology and Material Culture of the Babylonian Talmud*, 99–101. The people for whom the bowls were prepared are identified in almost every case by their name and matronym. Further members of the same household to be protected are also named. Aramaic and Iranian names occur among the bowl owners, as do names with Jewish and Zoroastrian religious significance (sometimes in the same household).

also inscribed with invented signs and scripts, as well as symbols that (closely) resemble the forms of contemporary alphabets. Such inscriptions defy both reading and conventional sense, and are commonly referred to in the literature using the term pseudo-script. A number of bowls also feature drawings, mostly of demons bound in chains, but sometimes also of animals or insects, and occasionally the magical practitioner. In what follows, I refer to the bowls inscribed with Aramaic as incantation bowls. I use the term magic bowls to refer to the entirety of the phenomenon, including both the bowls inscribed with Aramaic and the bowls inscribed with invented or pseudo-scripts.

This chapter surveys the state of the art with relation to the field of bowl studies. It outlines what we know at the present moment about the chronology, geography, and typology of the bowls; the languages and scripts used in the bowls; the forms of drawings that we encounter alongside their inscriptions; the people who produced the bowls; and how the bowls were actually used. I also outline a typology for the kinds of textual materials and text units that we find in the bowls. During the course of this chapter I focus on several neglected aspects of the bowls, and demonstrate in particular the need to incorporate the bowls inscribed with invented and pseudo-scripts into our analyses. I argue that these have a great deal to teach us not just about how people perceived writing in the communities in question, but the nature of bowl practice as well. In the final sections of this chapter I observe how far the field of bowl studies lacks for systematic treatments of the rhetorico-poetic aspects of the bowl texts and observe the ways in which the present study steps into this gap and furnishes a different method for approaching their texts and the uses the bowls put language towards.

SECTION I DETAILING THE BOWLS

CHRONOLOGY

Ali Faraj has recently surveyed the various proposals—based on archaeological and palaeographic data—for dating the magic bowls.² Several unpublished incantation bowls bearing specific dates are also known to us, and these allow us to state with certainty that the practice of inscribing bowls took place during the sixth and seventh centuries CE. The dates on these

² Ali H. Faraj, *Coppe magiche dall'antico Iraq con testi in aramaico giudaico di età ellenistica* (Milan: Lampi di Stampa, 2010), 17–18 and the literature cited therein.

bowls range from 545 CE to 611 CE by way of 573/4 CE and 580 CE, while a further bowl inscribed partly in Arabic can be dated to the reign of Mu‘āwiya (661–680 CE).³ We can assume that the practice of inscribing bowls began earlier than the sixth century, possibly even as early as the fourth century. The production of bowls stopped towards the end of the seventh century, or possibly shortly thereafter.

There is still no adequate explanation for why the practice of inscribing bowls started and stopped when it did. An impression is sometimes given in the literature that the advent of Islam somehow brought an end to the practice, and even where the circumstances of the bowls’ disappearance and Islam’s rise are not explicitly linked, the facts of their disappearance and the spread of Islam are commonly stated together as though they were somehow related. Markham Geller however has recently offered a more reasoned theory for the disappearance of the bowls.⁴ He argues first of all that the sudden appearance of the bowls was a response to the demise of cuneiform script towards the end of the third century CE and the subsequent loss of the comprehensive magical and medical literature contained within the large body of cuneiform tablets. This would have necessitated a new genre of magic to deal with human afflictions and physical maladies, hence the bowls. The disappearance of the bowls Geller assigns to the introduction of the Syriac Book of Medicines into Mesopotamia sometime in the fifth or sixth century CE.⁵ Therapies and prescriptions, prognoses and diag-

³ Shaul Shaked, James Nathan Ford, and Siam Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells: Jewish Babylonian Aramaic Bowls* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 1 n. 2. It is likely that the impetus for supplying dates to some bowl texts grew out of the frequent use in the bowls of legal formulae—deeds of divorce directed at demons in particular—where the provision of dates is a strict requirement. See further below.

⁴ Markham J. Geller, “Magic Bowls Belong in Babylonia,” in *Zauber und Magie im antiken Palästina und in seiner Umwelt*, ed. Jens Kamlah, Rolf Schäfer, and Markus Witte (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2017), 95–106; cf. Markham J. Geller, *Akkadian Healing Therapies in the Babylonian Talmud* (Berlin: Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, 2004), 38.

⁵ And though it is yet to have been incorporated into such discussions, the Mandaean Sfar Maluašia or Book of the Zodiac may have a role to play in this respect, particularly as incantation bowls produced by Mandaean practitioners comprise the second largest number of bowls in terms of dialectical distribution. Sfar Maluašia merges earlier cuneiform, Aramaic, and Graeco-Roman traditions and is testament to the transmission of various ancient materials through to late antiquity and into the mediaeval period. On the transmission of ancient Mesopotamian magic and celestial divination in Mandaean sources, see Francesca Rochberg, *In the Path of the Moon: Babylonian Celestial Divination and Its Legacy* (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Christa Müller-Kessler, “Aramäische Beschwörungen und astronomische Omina in nachbabylonischer Zeit: Das Fortleben mesopotamischer Kultur im Vorderen Orient,” in *Babylon: Focus mesopotamischer geschichte, wiege früher Gelehrsamkeit, Mythos in der Moderne*, ed. Johannes Renger (Saarbrücken: SDV, 1999), 427–43.

noses were suddenly available once more in ample amounts and on a scale to rival earlier cuneiform literature. The bowls were thus no longer necessary: “a stopgap between Akkadian and Greek medicine,” they “disappear as quickly as they appear, as outmoded technologies, and uniquely Mesopotamian.”⁶

GEOGRAPHY

Magic bowls have been discovered since the middle of the nineteenth century in excavations around Mesopotamia. The bowls were first reported in an archaeological context by Austen Henry Layard, who discovered a number of bowls during his excavations at Babylon and Nippur in 1850.⁷ Only a small minority of bowls are recorded in their proper archaeological context, however, and most surface through the antiquities market or the so-called ‘invisible market’ (where the large bulk of archaeological materials is traded out of the public eye). As

⁶ Geller, “Magic Bowls Belong in Babylonia,” 97. An even simpler explanation for the cessation of bowl practice—at least in some locales—may lie in the archaeological evidence. The fact that bowls discovered at such long-occupied sites as Nippur were located in the remains of houses immediately below the surface suggests that the disappearance of bowl practice was associated with a broader process of settlement abandonment. See Neil Brodie, “Aramaic Incantation Bowls in War and in Peace,” *Journal of Art Crime* 11 (2014): 11. Morony, “Magic and Society,” 106–7 has hypothesised that “the proliferation of incantation bowls in certain places” may have been related “to increased social tensions resulting from agricultural development during the sixth century, to its effect on the native rural population, and to the insecurity of forcibly imported labor. Social tensions and insecurity may also have been increased by socioreligious changes among these populations, including the effect of religious change on the position of women, and the mortality caused by the great plague pandemic of the sixth century and recurring outbreaks of plague that lasted until the mid-eighth century.” It should be noted, however, that while outbreaks of plague had a great effect on the population of Mesopotamia from 542 CE on, we do not find plague as a particular concern within the incantation bowls. Moronoy suggests that the “disappearance of the particular custom of burying incantation bowls to protect the household may signify the completion of social, economic, and religious changes, and great stability, or it may signify the disappearance or replacement of the people who used them. They may have died out.”

⁷ Austen Henry Layard, *Discoveries among the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon; with Travels in Armenia, Kurdistan, and the Desert: Being the Result of a Second Expedition Undertaken for The Trustees of the British Museum* (New York: G. P. Putnam and Co., 1853), 509, 524. Layard’s volume brought the bowls into the public eye for the first time, though a number of bowls had already been acquired by the British Museum prior to (the publication of) Layard’s excavations. These accessions took place as early as 1841, when the museum purchased BM 91739 and BM 91712 from the collection of Claude Scott Stewart. See Erica C. D. Hunter, “Incantation Bowls from Babylon and Borsippa in the British Museum,” *Isimu* 2 (1999): 165.

a result, the bowls have lately become minor icons of unprovenanced antiquities.⁸ Thus far, the few hundred bowls recovered in documented archaeological excavations all come from sites in Iraq.⁹ Bowls have been found *in situ* at such places as ‘Afak Qadha (Tell Abū Sarīfa),¹⁰ Babylon,¹¹ Bidjân,¹² Borsippa (Birs Nimrud and Ibrāhīm al-Khalil),¹³ Ctesiphon (Tell

⁸ On (ethical) issues of provenance and provenience as they relate to the incantation bowls, see Brodie, “Aramaic Incantation Bowls in War and in Peace”; Neil Brodie, “The Market Background to the April 2003 Plunder of the Iraq National Museum,” in *The Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Iraq*, ed. Peter G. Stone and Joanne Farchakh Bajjaly (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2008), 41–54; Neil Brodie and Morag M. Kersel, “WikiLeaks, Text, and Archaeology: The Case of the Schøyen Incantation Bowls,” in *Archaeologies of Text: Archaeology, Technology, and Ethics*, ed. Matthew Rutz and Morag M. Kersel (Philadelphia: Oxbow, 2014), 198–213.

⁹ See Brodie, “Market Background,” 51–52 for a table of (purported) find-spots. For a map, see Christa Müller-Kessler, “Zauberschalen und ihre Umwelt: Ein Überblick über das Schreibmedium Zauberschale,” in Kamlah, Schäfer, and Witte, eds., *Zauber und Magie*, 59–94. Some bowls are said to come from the Iranian province of Khuzestan—perhaps more specifically from Susa—though none of these bowls are known to have been recovered in a documented excavation. Furthermore, while some of these bowls are conserved in the Louvre Museum, Shaul Shaked reports that an attempt to locate them was unsuccessful (Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 1 n. 3). Three of these missing Louvre bowls may be those bowls reported by Moïse Schwab, “Coupes à inscriptions magiques,” *Proceedings of the Society for Biblical Archaeology* 13 (1891): 590 to have been discovered at Susa by Marcel-Auguste Dieulafoy and his wife. For additional references to bowls (purportedly) excavated in Iran, see Cyrus H. Gordon, “Two Magic Bowls in Teheran,” *Orientalia* 20 (1951): 306, where Gordon reports seeing a bowl excavated in Khuzestan in the Archaeological Museum in Tehran, as well as noting a Mandaic bowl said to come from Hamadan, Iran; cf. Cyrus H. Gordon, “Aramaic Incantation Bowls,” *Orientalia* 10 (1941): 354. Edwin Yamauchi has also published a bowl said to be from Nehavand, some sixty kilometres south of Hamadan. See Edwin M. Yamauchi, “Aramaic Magic Bowls,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 85.4 (1965): 514. Khuzestani find-sites would not be surprising, as this region was part of the Sasanian empire at the time, and Susa was an important Sasanian administrative centre. There is also a bowl in the British Museum which is said in the museum’s accessions register to have been excavated by Layard at Arban, Syria. But while Layard did excavate in Arban, he does not record finding a bowl there; neither does his conspectus mention an Arban bowl. See Layard, *Discoveries among the Ruins*, 272–82, 524. It thus remains the case that no bowls have been found outside Iraq in circumstances that can be verified today.

¹⁰ Robert McC. Adams, “Tell Abū Sarīfa: A Sassanian-Islamic Ceramic Sequence from South Central Iraq,” *Ars Orientalis* 8 (1970): 115.

¹¹ Erica C.D. Hunter, “The Typology of the Incantation Bowls: Physical Features and Decorative Aspects,” in J.B. Segal, *Catalogue of Aramaic and Mandaic Incantation Bowls in the British Museum* (London: British Museum Press, 2000), 163; Robert Koldewey, *Das wieder Erstehende Babylon: Die bisherigen Ergebnisse der deutschen Ausgrabungen* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1913), 241–242.

¹² Michel Gawlikowski, “Une coupe magique araméenne,” *Semitica* 38 (1990): 137–45.

Baruda),¹⁴ Hīrah (Umm Khesham),¹⁵ Tell Khafaje,¹⁶ Kish,¹⁷ Kutha (Tell Ibrāhīm),¹⁸ Nineveh,¹⁹ Nippur,²⁰ and Seleucia (Tell Omar).²¹ Christa Müller-Kessler has further argued from the fine scribal skills on display in some of the bowls in the Moussaieff and Schøyen collections that these unprovenienced bowls may have come from either Sura or Pumbeditha.²²

¹³ Hunter, “Typology of the Incantation Bowls,” 163; Hunter, “Incantation Bowls from Babylon and Borsippa,” 168; Robert Koldewey, *Die Tempel von Babylon und Borsippa: nach den Ausgrabungen durch die Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1911), 58–59, cf. Liane Jakob-Rost, “Borsippa,” *Forschungen und Berichte* 27 (1989): 73, 75, 87.

¹⁴ Fulvio Franco, “Five Aramaic Incantation Bowls from Tell Baruda (Choche),” *Mesopotamia* 13–14 (1978/9): 233–49; Ernst Kühnel, “Baudekor und Kleinfunde,” in *Die Ausgrabungen der zweiten Ktesiphon-Expedition (Winter 1931/32)*, ed. Ernst Kühnel and Friedrich Wachsmuth (Berlin: Islamische kunstabteilung der Staatlichen museen, 1933), 28, 35, abb. 44; Roberta Venco Ricciardi, “Trial Trench at Tell Baruda (Choche),” *Mesopotamia* 8/9 (1973/4): 15–20; Roberta Venco Ricciardi, “Trial Trench at Tell Baruda (Choche),” *Mesopotamia* 10/11 (1975/6): 15–20; Roberta Venco Ricciardi, “Trial Trench at Tell Baruda (Choche),” *Mesopotamia* 12 (1977): 11–14.

¹⁵ Ali H. Faraj and Marco Moriggi, “Two Incantation Bowls from the Iraq Museum (Baghdad),” *Orientalia* 74 (2005): 72; St. J. H. Simpson, “Excavations in Iraq 1985–86,” *Iraq* 49 (1987): 250–51.

¹⁶ Edward M. Cook, “An Aramaic Incantation Bowl from Khafaje,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 285 (1992): 79–81.

¹⁷ Gordon, “Aramaic Incantation Bowls,” 276–80; P.R.S. Moorey, *Kish Excavations 1923–1933: With a Microfiche Catalogue of the Objects in Oxford Excavated by the Oxford – Field Museum, Chicago, Expedition to Kish in Iraq, 1923–1933* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 122–24.

¹⁸ Hunter, “Typology of the Incantation Bowls,” 163.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 164.

²⁰ See, e.g. Hermann Volrath Hilprecht, *Die Ausgrabungen der Universität von Pennsylvania im Bêl-Tempel zu Nippur: Ein Vortrag* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1903), abb. 8; Hermann Volrath Hilprecht, *Explorations in Bible Lands during the 19th Century* (Philadelphia: A. J. Holman, 1903), 448; John Punnett Peters, *Nippur, or, Explorations and Adventures on the Euphrates: The Narrative of the University of Pennsylvania Expedition to Babylonia in the Years of 1888–1890*, Vol. 2 (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1897), 182, 184; Erica C. D. Hunter, “Combat and Conflict in Incantation Bowls: Studies on Two Aramaic Specimens from Nippur,” in *Studia Aramaica: New Sources and New Approaches*, ed. Markham J. Geller, Jonas C. Greenfield, and Michael Weitzman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 61–63.

²¹ Leroy Waterman, *Preliminary Report upon the Excavations at Tel Umar, Iraq* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1931), 61–62.

²² Christa Müller-Kessler, “Of Jesus, Darius, Marduk ... Aramaic Magic Bowls in the Moussaieff Collection,” *JAOS* 125.2 (2005): 221. For other find-sites (with greater or lesser documentation), see (the literature cited in) Hunter, “Typology of the Incantation Bowls,” 163–64; Christa Müller-Kessler, “Zauberschalen und ihre Umwelt,” 64–69; Morony, “Magic and Society,” 86–87.

Both these locations were home to rabbinic academies (though neither academy has been satisfactorily located). The location of Sura is unknown; Pumbeditha is present-day Falluja.

TYPOLOGY

The most extensive study of the physical aspects of the bowls remains Erica Hunter's contribution to J.B. Segal's catalogue of the bowls in the British Museum.²³ The bowls themselves are simple in design, and derive from the wider Sasanian repertoire of earthenware; they represent nothing more than varieties of unglazed domestic ware common to late antique Mesopotamia. As domestic ware, the bowls would have fulfilled a number of household functions, from food preparation to storage. Some inscribed bowls with knobs in their centres—like several bowls with perforated bases—may have been manufactured to serve as the lids for larger jars. Most magic bowls are 13–20 cm in diameter and 3–8 cm in depth. Others are much larger, up to 40–45 cm in diameter and 20–25 cm in depth. The bowls are wheel-made, hemispherical or flat-based, without glazing. The use of slips is rare.

The bowl inscriptions are most commonly written in black ink on the inside of the bowl. The inscriptions are typically arranged in concentric spirals. These spirals generally commence at the centre of the bowl and travel to its rim. Other texts spiral from rim to centre. Yet others are arranged in a circular or radial pattern, or are divided into registers. The inscriptions sometimes extend to the exterior wall of the bowl, sometimes because the bowl practitioner has exhausted the space on the inner surface of the bowl and can only accommodate the overflow of text on the outside of the bowl; in other instances, the outside of the bowl is inscribed with the name of the client or beneficiary of the bowl text, the opening formula(e) of the incantation, or with an instruction designating the bowl's intended location within the home, i.e. 'for the bedroom.'

²³ Hunter, "Typology of the Incantation Bowls," 165–68. See also Laura Cordera, "The Typology of Incantation Bowls from the Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale in Rome," *East West* 51.3/4 (2001): 229–46; and Morony, "Magic and Society," 84–85, 93, who notes that differences in the type of clay used to manufacture the bowls may help to discern the origin of unprovenanced bowls. For a survey of writing materials (i.e. writing surfaces) used in ancient and mediaeval Jewish magic, see Bill Rebiger, "'Write on Three Ribs of a Sheep': Writing Materials in Ancient and Mediaeval Jewish Magic," in *Jewish Manuscript Cultures: New Perspectives*, ed. Irina Wandrey (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2017), 339–59.

THE DRAWINGS

The writing on the bowls is quite frequently accompanied by drawings of human and hybrid figures—commonly identified as demons—as well as different zoomorphic and geometric motifs. The drawings in particular have been treated extensively by Naama Vilozy.²⁴ These were most often added to the centre of the bowl, and sometimes elsewhere on the inside. Most of the drawings portray male or female demons; these appear either as human or hybrid figures with disproportionately large, stark, staring eyes. They are often naked, with wild and tangled hair, and have horns, claws, or tails. Their feet and/or their hands are usually bound by chains, cuffs, or ropes. Depictions of human figures in the bowls (which presumably represent the bowl practitioner) can be distinguished from the drawings of demons by several features. These include clothing; a wholly human body; a lack of bindings; and sometimes the inclusion of a raised weapon or palm branch as an accoutrement.

LANGUAGE, SCRIPT, AND PSEUDO-SCRIPT

The magic bowls are inscribed for the most part in various forms of Aramaic that were current during the period of the bowls' production. By far the greatest number of bowls were written in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic (JBA).²⁵ A substantial number were also written in

²⁴ See most recently Naama Vilozy, *Lilith's Hair and Ashmedai's Horns: Figure and Image in Magic and Popular Art: Between Babylonia and Palestine in Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 2017) (Hebrew), as well as Naama Vilozy, "The Art of the Aramaic Incantation Bowls," in Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 29–37; Naama Vilozy, "Lilith's Hair and Ashmedai's Horns: Incantation Bowl Imagery in the Light of Talmudic Descriptions," in Geller, ed. *Archaeology and Material Culture of the Babylonian Talmud*, 133–52; Naama Vilozy, "Between Demons and Kings: The Art of Babylonian Incantation Bowls," in *Orality and Textuality in the Iranian World*, ed. Julia Rubanovich (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 400–421. See also Hunter, "Typology of the Incantation Bowls," 173–76; Erica C.D. Hunter, "Who Are the Demons? The Iconography of the Incantation Bowls," *Studi epigrafici e linguistici* 15 (1998): 95–115; Michael D. Swartz, "The Aesthetics of Blessing and Cursing: Literary and Iconographic Dimensions of Hebrew and Aramaic Blessing and Curse Texts," *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 5 (2005): 187–211; Elliot R. Wolfson, "Phantasmagoria: The Image of the Image in Jewish Magic from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages," *Review of Rabbinic Judaism* 4 (2001): 78–120; Rebecca Lesses, "Image and Word: Performative Ritual and Material Culture in the Aramaic Incantation Bowls," in *Practicing Gnosis: Ritual, Magic, Theurgy and Liturgy in Nag Hammadi, Manichaean and Other Ancient Literature: Essays in Honor of Birger A. Pearson*, ed. April DeConick, Gregory Shaw, and John D. Turner (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 377–408.

²⁵ The name JBA embraces the spoken and written language of the Jewish communities living in Mesopotamia between the third and eleventh centuries CE. This time-frame corresponds to the Amoraic, Savoraic, and Geonic periods in Jewish chronology. Such a duration naturally allows for considerable variation to exist within

Mandaic and Syriac.²⁶ A handful of bowls known to us were also written in a contemporary form of Persian known as Pahlavi, though these have so far resisted interpretation.²⁷ A smaller number still were written in Arabic.²⁸ Because the Mandaic and Syriac bowls do not form part of the present study, I focus below only on the language and script of the JBA bowls.²⁹ I

JBA (both between sources, and sometimes within a single source). Within the traditional framework of the Aramaic group of languages, JBA is usually classified together with Syriac and Mandaic under the banner of Eastern Aramaic. Shlomo Morag, however, has argued that during the Late Aramaic phase of Aramaic (200-700 CE in the standard periodisation of the history of Aramaic) Eastern Aramaic consisted of graded isoglosses—lying along a single continuum—and not distinct dialects. See Shlomo Morag, “Graded Isoglosses in East Aramaic,” in *Semitic Studies in Honor of Wolf Leslau on the Occasion of His Eighty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Alan S. Kaye, Vol. 2 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1991), 1085–99. As to the model of the Aramaic continuum, see Daniel Boyarin, “An Inquiry into the Formation of the Middle Aramaic Dialects,” in *Bono Homini Donum: Essays in Historical Linguistics in Memory of J. Alexander Kerns*, ed. Yoël Arbeitman and Allan R. Bomhard (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1981), 613–49, who argues that JBA and Mandaic were the sole two representatives of the Eastern branch of Aramaic during the Late Aramaic period.

²⁶ For a survey of the distribution of Aramaic varieties in the bowls, see Morony, “Magic and Society,” 87. These statistics, however, are based only on 855 bowls identified by Morony in the 1980s — a number that now represents only a third of the bowls currently known to us. Nevertheless, James Nathan Ford and Ohad Abudraham indicate that the distribution that Morony found, i.e. 62% JBA, 23% Mandaic, and 13% Syriac, fairly accurately reflects the overall distribution of the Aramaic dialects in the bowls. See James Nathan Ford and Ohad Abudraham, “Syriac and Mandaic Incantation Bowls,” in *Finds Gone Astray: ADCA Confiscated Items*, ed. Dalit Regev and Hananya Hizmi (Jerusalem: The Antiquities Department of the Civil Administration, 2018), 76 n. 3.

²⁷ Shaked, “Jews, Christians and Pagans,” 71. There also exist several Syriac bowls whose outer surfaces bear brief (decipherable) instructions in Pahlavi that state where within the house the bowls were to be placed. These tags or dockets were presumably added to the bowls so that the person who had bought the bowl or bowls (for different rooms in their home) would know where to put it. See Shaul Shaked, “Manichaean Incantations Bowls in Syriac,” *JSAT* 24 (2000): 64–65; cf. Shaked, “Popular Religion in Sasanian Babylonia,” 105 n. 3. Labels for use also appear on the outer surfaces of many other bowls—suggesting deliberate planning and placement on the part of the people who inscribed the bowls—and include such instructions as ‘for the inner room of the eating house,’ ‘for the centre of the threshold,’ ‘for the middle gate of the entrance,’ ‘for the lower vestibule,’ etc.

²⁸ At least two of these bowls are in the collections of the British Museum. They may date to the early Islamic period.

²⁹ For the language of the Syriac bowls, as well as the two different scripts in which they are inscribed, see Marco Moriggi, *A Corpus of Syriac Incantation Bowls* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 5–9, 11–19. For the Mandaic bowls, see Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Mandaic Incantation Texts* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1967); Matthew Morgenstern, “Mandaic Magic Bowls in the Moussaieff Collection: A Preliminary Survey,” in *New Inscriptions and Seals Relating to the Biblical World*, ed. Meir Lubetski and Edith Lubetski (Atlanta: SBL,

also address the large number of bowls inscribed with so called pseudo-scripts. These pseudo-script bowls are much-neglected in bowl scholarship, though they have the potential to shed a good deal of light on bowl praxis as a whole. As inscribed media that encode various visual strategies into ‘text,’ they demonstrate the centrality of writing and *writtenness* to bowl praxis, and provide a valuable window onto processes of writing as a means of engaging with—inscribing, ordering, and manipulating—transmundane powers.

Language

The language of the bowls written in square script is not identical with the language of the JBA literary texts.³⁰ It lacks homogeneity from the linguistic point of view and cannot be generalised simply or easily.³¹ Borrowings from (or features shared with) Syriac and espe-

2012), 157–70 and the literature cited therein. On the Mandaic script, see Edwin M. Yamauchi, “Mandaic Incantations: Lead Rolls and Magic Bowls,” *ARAM Periodical* 11.2 (1999): 253–68, and the literature therein; Joseph Naveh, *Early History of the Alphabet* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1987), 132–37.

³⁰ Our main source for JBA is the Babylonian Talmud, which developed orally over several hundred years, was edited in various Babylonian Jewish academies in the fifth to sixth centuries of the Sasanian Period, and achieved its final form only around the seventh century. Another major source for JBA is the post-Talmudic (or Geonic) literature composed roughly between 700–1100 CE. This consists mostly of *responsa*, commentaries on the Talmud, and glossaries of the same (plus later citations from such works). Our third major source for JBA is the Writings of Anan, an exegetical commentary on the Pentateuch and *Sefer ha-Mitzvot* composed by Anan b. David in the eighth century CE. For a consideration of the various (manuscript) sources (and traditions) for our knowledge of JBA, as well as a summary of the main developments in the study of JBA, see Matthew Morgenstern, *Studies in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 7–53. On the formation of the Babylonian Talmud, see *inter alia* Richard Kalmin, “The Formation and Character of the Babylonian Talmud,” in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, ed. Steven T. Katz, vol. 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 840–76. No manuscripts of the Babylonian Talmud predate the twelfth century CE, and the JBA bowl texts thus constitute our only *direct* epigraphical documents from late antique Mesopotamia written by one of that region’s most important minority groups (during the period in which rabbinic Judaism was being consolidated and out of which the Babylonian Talmud emerges). The publication of new incantation bowls is an ongoing process, and it will not be so long before the corpus of published JBA bowls rivals (or even surpasses) the Babylonian Talmud as our largest Jewish textual corpora from antiquity.

³¹ In this sense, it is much like the language of the Talmudic texts, which is alive with dialectic varieties. Unlike the language of the JBA bowls, however, perhaps the single most significant factor in the heterogeneity of the Aramaic of the Babylonian Talmud is the gradual processes of compilation and redaction undergone by the Talmudic texts. Thus, within the Talmud—and sometimes side by side within the same text—we might find almost any Aramaic linguistic trait, excluding only some peculiarities of Old Aramaic dialects. These range from the markers of standard Babylonian Talmudic Aramaic to the dialects of the tractates Nedarim, Nazir, etc.

cially Mandaic are also common in the JBA bowl texts. However, it must be stressed that, though words or phrases found in these texts may be attested or ‘at home’ in Mandaic, it does not necessarily follow that these derive from Mandaic; it should also be noted that not every phonetic or *plene* spelling or collocation shared by the JBA bowl texts with Mandaic is necessarily evidence of a Mandaic forerunner for the word or phrase in question.³² Furthermore, because the writers of the JBA bowl texts often attempt to reproduce “an archaic or ‘high’ language,” the JBA bowls “are not very helpful for classifying dialect varieties”.³³ Additional caveats regarding the language of the JBA bowl texts have been expressed by Hannu Juusola, who notes that “each text typically contains only a handful of dialectal markers that we could exploit,” and concludes that “we have practically no possibility of dividing bowl texts into dialect groups.”³⁴ More recently, Holger Gzella has compared the practice of Aramaic dialectology to “playing piano with gloves on.”³⁵

Despite these complications, caveats, and the decidedly mixed language of the large corpus of JBA bowls, Christa Müller-Kessler has argued in several publications that it is possible to distinguish three varieties of JBA in the bowls inscribed with the square script. She labels these Standard Literary Babylonian Aramaic, Koiné Babylonian Aramaic, and Talmudic Aramaic.³⁶ She estimates that about ninety percent of the bowls inscribed with square

to Western Aramaic features and signs of earlier Amoraic dialects. Consequently, while the language of the JBA bowl texts yields features that apparently stem from different geographical areas and different phases of Aramaic, this is no different from almost all other JBA dialects.

³² Matthew Morgenstern and James Nathan Ford, “On Some Readings and Interpretations in the Aramaic Incantation Bowls and Related Texts,” *BSOAS* 80.2 (2017): 227, *pace* Christa Müller-Kessler, “Phraseology in Mandaic Incantations and Its Rendering in Various Eastern Aramaic Dialects: A Collection of Magic Terminology,” *ARAM Periodical* 11.2 (1999): 296–97, who argues that a number of “Mandaic Vorlagen” were translated and incorporated into the texts of JBA and Syriac bowls; cf. Morgenstern and Ford, “Some Readings,” 194–95.

³³ Shaul Shaked, “Dramatis Personae in the Jewish Magic Texts: Some Differences Between Incantation Bowls and Geniza Magic,” *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 13.4 (2006): 363 n.2.

³⁴ Hannu Juusola, *Linguistic Peculiarities in the Aramaic Magic Bowl Texts* (Helsinki: Finnish Oriental Society, 1999), 247.

³⁵ Holger Gzella, *A Cultural History of Aramaic: From the Beginnings to the Advent of Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 286.

³⁶ Müller-Kessler, “Phraseology in Mandaic Incantations,” 294–95; Christa Müller-Kessler, “Aramäische Koine—Ein Beschwörungsformular aus Mesopotamien,” *Baghdader Mitteilungen* 29 (1998): 331–48; Christa Müller-Kessler, “The Earliest Evidence for Targum Onkelos from Babylonia and the Question of Its Dialect and Origin,” *Journal for the Aramaic Bible* 3 (2001): 186–92; Christa Müller-Kessler, “Die Stellung des Koine-

script are written in the first of these varieties of Aramaic: a supra-local Standard Literary Aramaic that coincides with the Aramaic dialect of Targum Onqelos.³⁷ But while similarities between the archaic literary dialect that predominates in the bowls and the language of Onqelos (and Targum Jonathan) cannot be denied, these certainly cannot be said to reflect “an identical artificial Rabbinic idiom.”³⁸ Also problematic is Müller-Kessler’s assertion that a second, well-defined koiné dialect can be distinguished in the bowl texts.³⁹ On the basis of

Babylonisch-Aramäischen auf Zauberschalen innerhalb des Ostaramäischen,” in *Neue Beiträge zur Semitistik: Erstes Arbeitstreffen der Arbeitsgemeinschaft Semitistik in der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft vom 11. bis 13. September 2000 an der Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena*, ed. Norbert Nebes (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002), 91–103.

³⁷ Müller-Kessler, “Earliest Evidence,” 186, cf. Müller-Kessler, “Die Stellung des Koine-Babylonisch-Aramäischen,” 97; she categorises the language of the remaining ten percent of bowls in square script as Koiné Babylonian Aramaic, and argues that the language of these bowls carries all the isoglosses of the Central and South-Eastern Babylonian dialects expected for this area (“Earliest Evidence,” 188).

³⁸ Müller-Kessler, “Earliest Evidence,” 197; cf. the comments and/or critiques in James Nathan Ford, “Three *Hapax Legomena* in the Babylonian Talmud,” *Le Muséon* 130.1–2 (2017): 3 n. 4; Holger Gzella, *Cultural History of Aramaic*, 353 n. 1189; Ingo Kottsieper, “Das Aramäische als Schriftsprache und die Entwicklung der Targume,” in *The Targums in the Light of Traditions of the Second Temple Period*, ed. Thierry Legrand and Jan Joosten (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 36; Yochanan Breuer, “The Babylonian Aramaic in Tractate Karetot According to MS Oxford,” *Aramaic Studies* 5.1 (2007): 23; Renaud J. Kutty, *Studies in the Syntax of Targum Jonathan to Samuel* (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 12.

³⁹ Cf. Gzella, *Cultural History of Aramaic*, 353 n. 1189; Matthew Morgenstern, “Jewish Babylonian Aramaic and Mandaic: Some Points of Contact,” *ARAM Periodical* 22 (2010): 14. Elsewhere, Matthew Morgenstern, “On Some Non-Standard Spellings in the Aramaic Magic Bowls and Their Linguistic Significance,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 52.2 (2007): 276 argues that ‘koiné’ does not accurately reflect the dialect distinctions found in the Jewish, Christian, and Mandaean magic bowls. Shaul Shaked, “Rabbis in Incantation Bowls,” 98 n. 5 also writes that “Calling the Jewish Aramaic language of the bowls a *koiné* language is not very helpful. If there was such a shared language, the *koiné* language of Sasanian Babylonia was more likely to be a form of Syriac, but Syriac is poorly represented by the bowls.” For further on the notion of an Eastern Aramaic ‘koiné’ in the bowls, see also Tapani Harviainen, “A Syriac Incantation Bowl in the Finnish National Museum, Helksinki: A Specimen of Eastern Aramaic ‘Koiné,’” *Studia Orientalia* 51.1 (1978/1981): 26–28; Tapani Harviainen, “An Aramaic Incantation Bowl from Borsippa: Another Specimen of Eastern Aramaic ‘Koiné,’” *Studia Orientalia* 51.14 (1981): 23–24. For a rare (but certainly not unique) instance of Talmudic Aramaic in the bowls, see Christa Müller-Kessler and Theodore Kwasman, “A Unique Talmudic Aramaic Incantation Bowl,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 120.2 (2000): 159–65; Morgenstern, *Studies in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic*, 39 n.120 notes that further unpublished bowls are written in a similar idiom; the language of one of these bowls is particularly close to the language preserved in the Early Eastern Talmudic manuscripts.

the evidence currently available, it is safe to say only that the bowls in square script resist routine classification according to established linguistic categories.

It is also likely that the forms of Aramaic spoken in Sasanian Mesopotamia were even more varied than the bowls and other written evidence indicate. The majority of incantation bowls employ a largely historical orthography, and many of the phonetic features of their language are thereby concealed from us. Glimpses of the phonetics of this language are revealed to us primarily through slips or phonetic spelling ‘errors’ made by the people who wrote the bowls.⁴⁰ Some bowls overflow with such phonetic forms. Other bowls, produced by more ‘proficient’ individuals, provide evidence that these phonetic forms were judged to be errors by these individuals: the texts of these bowls contain corrections where phonetic spellings were amended to reflect the ‘literary standard,’ as well as evidence of false starts. In the absence of a clear ‘literary standard,’ however, the degree of interplay between the written and spoken languages varied considerably in Sasanian Mesopotamia. The model of the Aramaic continuum thus seems to be the best framework in which to site the language of the JBA bowls. It outlines a context wherein all the linguistic varieties to be found in the incantation bowls are seen to contiguous in time and space, allowing for parallel developments and similar phenomena within the languages that existed in Sasanian Mesopotamia.

Script

The bowls composed in JBA were inscribed in the Aramaic or Jewish square script.⁴¹ This script was the exclusive domain of the Jewish communities.⁴² The bowls written in JBA dis-

⁴⁰ The possibility that the phonetic spellings in these bowls may provide an insight into the true nature of the language spoken by the people who wrote the bowls is variously discussed in Matthew Morgenstern, “Notes on a Recently Published Aramaic Magic Bowl,” *Aramaic Studies* 2 (2004): 207–22; Matthew Morgenstern, “Linguistic Notes on Magic Bowls in the Moussaieff Collection,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 68.3 (2005): 349–67; Morgenstern, “Non-Standard Spellings.”

⁴¹ Moritz Levy produced an early study of the scripts of the incantation bowls in 1855, but its present use is massively diminished by that fact that only a scant handful of bowls were available to him for study at that point. See Moritz A. Levy, “Über die von Layard aufgefundenen chaldäischen Inschriften auf Topfgefäßen: Ein Beitrag zur hebräischen Paläographie und zur Religionsgeschichte,” *ZDMG* 9.2 (1855): 465–91. A fairly extensive discussion of the bowl scripts is also provided by James A. Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania: The Museum, 1913), 26–39, but the most substantial study of the bowl scripts to date remains Alexander Cornelis Klugkist, “Midden-Aramese Schriften in Syrië, Mesopotamië, Perzië en aangrenzende gebieden” (Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, 1982), 184–216. On the Jewish or Aramaic square script more generally, see, e.g. Joseph Naveh, *Early History of the Alphabet* (Jerusalem:

play a wide variety of different script styles, though these differences are chirographic and not palaeographic. The hands on display in the bowls range from barely legible to beautiful, but as James Montgomery points out, this wide variety is the result of differences in writing style and ability, as the contemporaneity of the bowls can be ascertained on the basis, for example, of shared clientele and shared phraseology.⁴³ It should also be noted that—as writing surfaces—the bowls do not naturally lend themselves to great feats of calligraphy. Indeed, the unusual shape and texture of these unglazed earthenware bowls often results in elongated and otherwise misshapen letters. In particular, distinctions between א and א', ב and ב', ד and ד', ה and ה', ו and ו', ז and ז' are not always clear and have to be decided on a lexical basis. But whether due to haste, a lack of skill, the precariousness of the writing surface, or some combination of these and/or other factors, it is a fact that some letter forms in the bowls inscribed with square script are particularly difficult to distinguish. This is in spite of the fact that these bowl texts tend to be less cursive and ligatured than their Mandaic and Estrangelo Syriac counterparts.

Invented and pseudo-scripts

Within the larger body of magic bowls we also encounter a wide variety of different inscriptional practices and manipulations of graphic signs. These range from invented signs and ostentatious displays of non-writing to imitation scripts that closely resemble the forms of known alphabets. The evident consistency and clear command of an inscriptional repertoire

Magnes Press, 1987), 162–174; Ada Yardeni, *The Book of Hebrew Script: History, Palaeography, Script Styles, Calligraphy & Design* (London: British Museum Press, 2002), 3–100; Solomon A. Birnbaum, *The Hebrew Scripts* (London: Paleographica, 1956).

⁴² As Gideon Bohak, “Babylonian Jewish Magic in Late Antiquity: Beyond the Incantation Bowls,” in *Studies in Honor of Shaul Shaked*, ed. Yohanan Friedmann and Etan Kohlberg (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 2019), 72 notes, “one may definitely assume that bowls written in [Jewish Babylonian] Aramaic and in the square script were produced by Jews (though not necessarily for Jewish clients). The hundreds of bowls in this category that have been published thus far display many signs of the Jewish origins of their producers, and no [Jewish Babylonian] Aramaic bowl displays clear signs of having been produced by a non-Jewish practitioner.” On the correlation between the religious identities of the people who wrote the bowls and the forms of Aramaic and the scripts that they used, see Tapani Harviainen, “Pagan Incantations in Aramaic Magic Bowls,” in *Studia Aramaica: New Sources and New Approaches*, ed. Markham J. Geller, Jonas C. Greenfield, and Michael Weitzman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 53–60.

⁴³ Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts*, 27–28. Yardeni, *Book of Hebrew Script*, 206 observes that “A large variety of handwritings appears on incantation bowls ... The letter-signs in most of the bowls have no ornamental additions and their strokes are uniform in their thickness. Only a few bowls were written in a script resembling the book-hand.”

in some of these bowls is particularly intriguing. Other bowls contain unexpected and unusual combinations of familiar letter forms inscribed in the Jewish script (occasionally interspersed with letter combinations that are meaningful in Hebrew and/or Aramaic). Despite their differences, these bowls are commonly bracketed together by bowl scholars and referred to in the literature using the term pseudo-script. This prefixes the combining form pseudo- to the adjoining concept to indicate a falsehood, a fake, or a pretence.⁴⁴ The overwhelming consensus among bowl scholars is that these ‘texts’ were the work of ancient illiterate charlatans—unscrupulous magical practitioners who passed these ‘fakes’ off onto unlettered clients.⁴⁵

Unfortunately, the use of the term pseudo-script to designate this wide array of graphic practice breeds a kind of terminological incoherence. It works to both conflate and obscure the differences between a variety of different inscriptional practices—from invented to imitation scripts—while its pejorative overtones prejudice discussion of these diverse practices from the get-go. The large number of these bowls makes plain that this was not a marginal practice, while the diversity of their inscriptions shows that they were clearly not the exclusive domain of persons attempting to imitate an Aramaic script. Indeed, many of these bowls were plainly not intended to fool anyone into thinking they were written in Aramaic, or any other language. The purpose and value attributed to the diverse signs on these bowls un-

⁴⁴ The term pseudo-script is common in various fields of scholarship. See, e.g. the contributions in Petra Andrassy, Julia Budka, and Frank Kammerzell, eds., *Non-Textual Marking Systems, Writing and Pseudo Script from Prehistory to Modern Times* (Göttingen: Seminar für Ägyptologie und Koptologie, 2009) and Olaf E. Kaper and Ben J. Haring, eds., *Pictograms or Pseudo Script? Non-Textual Identity Marks in Practical Use in Ancient Egypt and Elsewhere: Proceedings of a Conference in Leiden, 19–20 December 2006* (Leuven: Peeters, 2009). On the religious and magical connotations of the ‘funny signs’ that characterize many ancient Egyptian quarries, Maria Nilsson, “Pseudo Script in Gebel El Silsila: Preliminary Results of the 2012 Epigraphic Survey,” in *Current Research in Egyptology 2013: Proceedings of the Fourteenth Annual Symposium*, ed. Kelly Accetta et al. (Oxford: Oxbow, 2014), 122–41. On the fashion for ‘nonsense’ inscription within Attic vase painting, originating in the impaired literacy of the painters involved in the production of these vases, see, Sara Chiarini, *The So-Called Nonsense Inscriptions on Ancient Greek Vases: Between Paideia and Paidia* (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

⁴⁵ For an attempt to challenge this consensus, as well as complicate some of our ideas about the act of writing in the magic bowls, see Daniel James Waller, “Curious Characters, Invented Scripts, and ... Charlatans? ‘Pseudo-Scripts’ in the Mesopotamian Magic Bowls,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 78.1 (2019): 119–139; cf. Charles G. Häberl, “Aramaic Incantation Texts between Orality and Textuality,” in *Orality and Textuality in the Iranian World: Patterns of Interaction across the Centuries*, ed. Julia Rubanovich (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 396.

doubtedly varied from practitioner to practitioner and client to client, and any one interpretation of the so-called pseudo-script bowls should not be immediately discounted. Opportunistic use was undoubtedly made of writing technology by many illiterate or semi-literate magical practitioners in order to capitalise upon the prestige that writing conveyed, and many bowls thus merit the designation pseudo-texts, being written by charlatans and passed off cynically onto people who were either illiterate or who could not read Aramaic.⁴⁶ But neither does communication with angels and demons necessarily entail the kind of ‘texts’ that accord with established forms of (glotto)graphic expression,⁴⁷ and some of these bowl inscriptions may represent a purposeful breach of continuity with ordinary forms of written communication. These ‘scripts’ were perhaps attempts to remedy the (potential) failures of human languages and scripts to correspond to the realities of transmundane communication; they were perhaps attempts to render angelic or demonic speech in writing. The written representation of non-human language(s) would have required different technologies of forming or shaping meaning; that is, new sign-systems and scripts. As such, the bowls inscribed with invented or pseudo-scripts should not necessarily be asked to submit to the same kinds of hermeneutic schema as normative inscriptions. In taking such an approach, we might even begin to perceive the coefficient of intelligibility that may have obtained in some of these ‘weird’ scripts,⁴⁸ what is incomprehensible to human eyes may well have been understood to be perfectly comprehensible to a transmundane addressee.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ In Chapter Six, I seek to problematise the too-easy presupposition of a kind of total illiteracy on the part of the general populace—a total inability to distinguish legitimate script from either invented script or the ostentatious displays of non-writing that characterise some bowls. In challenging this presupposition, it is necessary to pay attention not just to the very conspicuous displays of non-writing on some bowls, but also the extent to which people—even if they could not read or write—nevertheless possessed the ability to recognize the basics of writing to some degree, and the ability to distinguish thereby between script and conspicuously poor examples of pseudo-script, or at least the ability to recognize an egregious display of non-writing as non-writing.

⁴⁷ Glottography refers to writing systems that represent spoken languages (by way of phonetic representations of their sounds). The term may be contrasted with semasiographic (idea-based) or other non-glottographic systems of inscription (which do not denote spoken language but instead represent ideational content). On this term, see, e.g. Malcolm D. Hyman, “Of Glyphs and Glottography,” *Language & Communication* 26 (2006): 231–49; Pierre Robert Colas, “Writing in Space: Glottographic and Semasiographic Notation at Teotihuacan,” *Ancient Mesoamerica* 22.1 (2011): 14.

⁴⁸ I intend ‘coefficient of intelligibility’ to function in contradistinction to Malinowski’s ‘coefficient of weirdness.’ See Bronisław Malinowski, *Coral Gardens and Their Magic: A Study of the Methods of Tilling the Soil and of Agricultural Rites in the Trobriand Islands*, Vol. 2. (New York: Dover Publications, 1978), 220. Ma-

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When discovered *in situ*, the magic bowls are typically located upside down beneath the floors of homes, either at the thresholds of these homes, or in the corners of rooms.⁵⁰ Con-

linowski's point is that human language is not often strange enough to be effective in magic, and that some successful magical practitioners thus seek other languages for their magic; this same observation—as well as its intelligible obverse—is of course equally applicable to script.

⁴⁹ Naturally, this interpretation of the so-called pseudo-script bowls can hardly be proven false; ultimately it draws its power of conviction from the rhetoric of the interpreter, and may even work to sanction a type of fraudulent product that should properly be understood as an elaborate attempt to mislead an illiterate clientele. It is not my intention to favour a mystically potent 'reading' of all such inscriptions—as such an appeal to mystical processes only shuts down further inquiry—but only to emphasise the multiple possibilities, understandings, and aims that may have lain behind the production of any given bowl. We also cannot discount the far more prosaic possibility that some bowls represent nothing more extraordinary than a form of do-it-yourself magic that sought to circumvent the costs associated with professional practitioners—the work of “laymen, who affected to write their own prescriptions” (Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts*, 28, 14 n.9). That said, the possession of the materials necessary for writing in late antiquity does presuppose more than mere amateurism.

⁵⁰ To date, the best reported archaeological contexts for the bowls stem from the University of Pennsylvania's second expedition to Nippur. See Peters, *Nippur*, 182–94. For bowls from later seasons at Nippur, see, e.g. Donald E. McCown and Richard C. Haines, *Nippur I, Temple of Enlil, Scribal Quarter, and Soundings: Excavations of the Joint Expedition to Nippur of the University Museum of Philadelphia and the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967), 153, pl. 162; Erica C. D. Hunter, “Two Mandaic Incantation Bowls from Nippur,” *Baghdader Mitteilungen* 25 (1994): 605–18; McGuire Gibson, “Nippur,” in *The Oriental Institute 2001-2002 Annual Report*, ed. Gil J. Stein (Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 2002), 84. Other bowls have been found in courtyards. See, e.g. details from the tenth season of excavation at Tell Baruda by the University of Turin Centro Scavi in Ricciardi, “Trial Trench at Tell Baruda (Choche).” The outer surfaces of several Mandaic bowls bear dockets indicating that they were ‘of the cemetery’ (דבית קבוריא). See Henri Pognon, *Inscriptions Mandaites Des Coupes de Khouabir* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1898), 30, 88; cf. Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts*, 43–44 and AMB 4:2, whose text self-designates as אִסְרָא דְקִבְרָא “the spell of the tomb” (though this need not indicate that the bowl was interred in a grave or tomb). Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts*, 14 quotes Peters as recording “inscribed Hebrew bowls” in the “immediate neighbourhood of slipper-shaped coffins” at Nippur. However, Erica C. D. Hunter, “Two Incantation Bowls from Babylon,” *Iraq* 62 (2000): 139 n.5 notes that Peters may have confused the stratigraphy of Nippur: “Area WG, the source of the forty incantation bowls which Montgomery translated, is contiguous to the Parthian ‘Villa with a Court of Columns’ complex which was investigated in 1889 by the University of Pennsylvania expedition. The slipper-shaped coffins would appear to be Parthian, whilst the chronology of incantation bowls is Late Sasanian. To date, there is no excavated evidence for the usage of incantation bowls in a funerary context.” This is not true, however: Simpson, “Excavations in Iraq 1985-86,” 250 reports an incantation bowl found upside down over a grave in the cemetery site at Umm Kheshm.

temporary scholarship is in agreement that the bowls were placed in these locations as a kind of demon trap.⁵¹ This idea of their function is based on both the primary find sites of the bowls—domestic structures—and their texts. Many bowls, for example, seek to ‘seal’ (חתם), ‘bind’ (אסר), or ‘tie’ (קטר) demons. More frequently, the bowls speak of pressing or suppressing demons. In particular, this use of the verb ‘to press’ (כבש) in its various guises, alongside the verb ‘to overturn’ (הפך), works to signify what is done to both the demons *and* to the bowl itself. Just as the bowls were turned upside-down and pressed into the ground, so were the demons pressed or suppressed. Thus: כִּבְשָׁא הַדִּין כְּבִישְׁנָא לֵהוֹן בַּהֲהוּא שַׁעְתָּא וְקִבְרָנָא לֵהוֹן לְשִׂידֵי וְדִוְיִ ... וְסַחֲפָנָא לִיהּ בְּאַיִסְקוּפַת בֵּיתֵיהּ “I press this press upon them at this time, and I bury (it) against them: demons, *dēvs*, etc. I place it (the bowl) upside-down on the threshold of his (the client’s) house.”⁵²

(Elsewhere on the Umm Kheshm site, in the uppermost fill of a shallow rock-cut fire-installation, a further pair of incantation bowls were discovered; these were placed upside down one over the other on top of an inscribed bird’s egg.) There thus exists documented archaeological verification for the sporadic mentions on other incantation bowls of their use in cemeteries.

⁵¹ This idea was suggested as early as 1885 by Henri Hyvernât, who argued that the bowl was overturned on the basis of the belief “que l’on pouvait imprisonner les esprits nuisibles dans des vases.” Henri Hyvernât, “Sur un vase judéo-babylonien du musée Lycklama de Cannes (Provence),” *Zeitschrift für Keilschriftforschung* 2 (1885): 138. The idea attained greater currency with Montgomery, but was subsequently rejected by Cyrus H. Gordon, *Adventures in the Nearest East* (London: Phoenix House, 1957), 161–62, who argued the absurdity of any person wishing to permanently trap a demon in his or her home. Gordon believed it was more likely that people would wish to completely rid their homes of demons. This argument fails to convince, however. As Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*, 15 note, the idea of keeping a demon-trap in the house “need not strike us as more ridiculous than that of placing mouse-traps. In both cases, the hated victim, once caught, is incapacitated and is made powerless to cause harm. A harmless demon caught by the bowl constitutes no menace to the safety of the house.” Earlier explanations for bowl practice include the conjecture by Thomas Ellis in Layard, *Discoveries among the Ruins*, 511 that the writing on the inside of the bowls was to be dissolved in liquid and drunk as a cure; cf. John Medows Rodwell, “Remarks upon a Terra-Cotta Vase,” *Transactions of the Society for Biblical Archaeology* 2 (1873): 114–15, who connected the bowls with the divining cup of Joseph. This idea was dismissed already by Layard, *Discoveries among the Ruins*, 526, who noted that the writing on the bowls was “perfectly fresh” and betrayed no signs of exposure to liquid; it was further criticized by Joseph Halévy, “Observations sur un vase judéo-babylonien du British Museum,” *Comptes rendus des séances de l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 5 (1877): 289, who proposed that “ces vases étaient de simples amulettes, destinés à préserver la famille contre les démons et les maladies.”

⁵² Geller B:4–5, 6–7, cf. ll. 1, 7–9. For an example of the extended use of כבש in a bowl, see M 163 = Levene 1999. This bowl forms part of a rare sub-genre of bowl magic: curse or aggressive bowl magic. Levene has assembled 30 exemplars of this sub-genre of incantation bowls in Dan Levene, *Jewish Aramaic Curse Texts*

What we have here is an elegant and sympathetic confluence of text and text carrier. Thus AIT 4:1 represents itself (and possibly several other bowls in the same house) as “covers to hold in” (מיטלי דלמיכל) demonic forces.⁵³ Numerous texts also refer to the overturning of the earth, heaven, stars, planets, the talk of people, and curses, and Erica Hunter points out that, because curses and malicious spells are commonly undone in the incantation texts by being ‘overturned,’ the practice of burying bowls upside down may have been an act of sympathetic magic to overturn evil.⁵⁴ This sympathy of text and text carrier is even more pronounced in light of the fact that the inner surface of a bowl is not an easy surface to inscribe: the symbolic and social necessity of the bowl was articulated at the expense of practical considerations, presumably because the bowl gave such full expression to ideas of protective power. The bowl’s shape allowed it to function as a cover in which the words of the bowl ‘worked’ in the space created by the cover of the overturned bowl. The addition of drawings to the bowls built on this idea to construct an ‘ideal reality’ whereby the demon was already in the bowl, while the binding of the demon in the image on the artefact happened to the demon via metonymic association.

Other bowls, rather than trapping demons, sought to expel them or ward them off before they entered the home. Yet others sought to chain and press malevolent forces at the same time as they bid these forces to leave. It can thus be difficult in the bowl texts to draw a sharp distinction between the generalised apotropaic spell that sought to keep demons out the house and the directed exorcism that sought to expel those demons already inside the house. Regardless, there is no real contradiction between the two goals; either way, the demonic threat is neutralised. And as Yuval Harari notes, the bowls could equally have “performed a

from *Late-Antique Mesopotamia: “May These Curses Go Out and Flee”* (Leiden: Brill, 2013). This small number of curse bowls is especially pronounced when set against the vast background of bowls that are otherwise defensive or protective; it is plain that the use of the bowls for aggressive magic was limited. The bowl under consideration contains a curse commissioned by two brothers—Mihlad and Baran s. Mirdukh—and is directed against a certain Ishah s. Ifra-Hormiz. As Levene notes, this bowl text abounds with verbs, nouns, angel names, and magical names that all derive from כבש, ‘to press, subdue, conquer, oppress.’ The bowl also makes repeated use of the formula ‘just as X was oppressed (איתכביש), so may Y be oppressed.’

⁵³ An even more pronounced sympathy between bowl and bowl text is to be found in a specific sub-domain of bowl practice, wherein two bowls were cemented together rim-to-rim and buried as such. These bowls have been treated by Dan Levene, “‘This Is a Qybl’ for Overturning Sorceries’: Form, Formula—Threads in a Web of Transmission,” in *Continuity and Innovation in the Magical Tradition*, ed. Gideon Bohak, Yuval Harari, and Shaul Shaked (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 219–44. I address them at greater length in Chapter Six.

⁵⁴ Erica C. D. Hunter, “Incantation Bowls: A Mesopotamian Phenomenon?” *Orientalia* 65.3 (1996): 231.

dual function: delimiting and curbing from the start and entrapping and removing after the fact.”⁵⁵ Indeed, this would be best — to delimit the space of the home (from the beginning if possible, or at least from further intrusions by injurious agents) and to neutralise or expel any demons already in the home. Thus, while it tends to be assumed in a great deal of bowl scholarship that one explanation ought to apply to the purpose of all bowls, the diverse social contexts and geographical range of the bowls, as well as the heterogeneous nature of the bowl texts, should legislate against this. The value and function attributed to the bowls undoubtedly varied from place to place and person to person, and it is likely that the act of overturning and burying the bowl had multiple significances or meant different things to different people. That said, it is at least clear that the bowls site themselves at various points on a continuum between a generalised apotropaic function that keeps demons away and a kind of directed exorcism that expels demons already inside the home.

Rituals, recitation, and open questions

As to the preparation and burial of the bowls, because we possess no contemporary formularies or recipe books that detail this undertaking, we have no way of knowing whether any rituals accompanied their inscription or interment.⁵⁶ And despite a great deal of recent work on the bowls, there still remains a good deal to be theorised about the ritual gestures that may have been involved in bowl practice.⁵⁷ Whether oral invocations were spoken during the writing and interment of the bowls, or whether the bowl texts were recited at any point, also

⁵⁵ Yuval Harari, *Jewish Magic Before the Rise of Kabbalah* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2017), 250. Cf. David Frankfurter, “Scorpion/Demon: On the Origin of the Mesopotamian Apotropaic Bowl,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 74.1 (2015): 13, who notes that apotropaic objects such as the bowls “depend on their openness, their ‘visibility’ to such supernatural and human agents of harm as might try to enter (or have already succeeded in entering) the house.

⁵⁶ In this respect, it is interesting to note the use of written tags on certain incantation bowls that state where within the house the bowls were to be placed. These tags or dockets were presumably added to the bowls so that the person who had bought the bowl or bowls (for different rooms in their home) would know where to put them. The implication here is that the interment of some bowls was not performed (ritually) by the bowl practitioner. This suggests that certain spell formulae which reference the act of burying the bowl in the first person do not necessarily reflect an actual situation where the practitioner ritually buried the bowl but instead may reflect a kind of ‘fossil.’ Once again we are in the realm of sheer conjecture. For a spell that references the burial of the bowls (in formulaic terms) see HS 3008 = ZHS 7:5 and the unpublished parallels adduced by Ford and Morgenstern, *Bowls in the Hilprecht Collection*, 36. See also above.

⁵⁷ A white rooster is perhaps implied in the preparation and/or installation of M 163:6–8 = Levene 1999 but the details here are minimal. See the excursus below.

remain open to debate. Any answers to these questions need to be teased out from the texts of the bowls themselves, and they are not especially forthcoming.

With regard to the recitation of the bowls, a few suggestions have been made by different scholars on the basis of certain aspects of the bowl texts. Shaul Shaked has suggested a silent ritual,⁵⁸ while J. B. Segal has argued for a ritual recitation of the texts that was accompanied by whispering or susurrations.⁵⁹ In a recent highly suggestive article, Charles Häberl incorporates Segal's suggestion into a much broader argument and goes on to hypothesise the ritual behind the production of the magic bowls as an oral affair that incorporated writing into the ritual as an act of performance.⁶⁰ Arguing from the various hallmarks of oral composition that characterise some bowls, as well as the frequent appearance of performative utterances in the bowl texts, Häberl theorises that the bowl texts were actually transcriptions of ritual utterances that represent the direct speech of the bowl practitioners. In Häberl's view, the incantation written on the bowl was simultaneously spoken out loud and transcribed before the client. However, Häberl's focus on the oral transmission of bowl formulae and his understanding of the performative as a spoken act—and a spoken act alone—lead him to conclude

⁵⁸ Shaked, "Popular Religion in Sasanian Babylonia," 104: "One may assume that the text was not read aloud, as there are some bowls that contain fraudulent inscriptions: an illiterate practitioner in antiquity would sometimes scribble some gibberish on a bowl, and sell it off to his innocent customer as a valid text." However, Shaked does allow that—having gone to the trouble of faking a text—an illiterate practitioner would presumably have had the wherewithal to provide an adequate 'recitation' of the 'text' in order to satisfy any expectations their client may have had in this regard.

⁵⁹ Bearing in mind that the root לחש can mean both to whisper and to (recite a) charm, two parallel bowl texts may indeed indicate that the objects of their attention should be *אסורי אסירין ... ולחשי לחישין* (MSF 14:1 and AIT 5:1). A third bowl also appears to accidentally include the instructions *והחשי לחישין*, "you murmur and you whisper." (This act of whispering might reflect the fact that these texts were addressed to an invisible audience of demons. The ambiguity of the addressee, and the necessity of addressing it nonetheless as part of a performative gesture, are reflected in the ambiguous performance—whispering or murmuring—of the address.) Cf. a recently published gold lamella from Palestine, in which the practitioner accidentally included the instructions from a magical recipe book in the text of the actual amulet (ll. 56, 60–61, 65). Some of these instructions (ll. 60–61) prohibit reading the written spell out loud. See Shaul Shaked and Rivka Elitzur-Leiman, "An Aramaic Amulet for Winning a Case in a Court of Law," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 26.1 (2019): 1–16. Note also the following detail in Siam Bhayro et al., *Aramaic Magic Bowls in the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin: Descriptive List and Edition of Selected Texts* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 91, where the editors remark that a spell contained in the unpublished bowl VA 2433 is said to be *מנסי ולית*, *דיכותיה*, "tried and there is none like it."

⁶⁰ Häberl, "Aramaic Incantation Texts."

that the writing of the incantation bowls “was quite possibly of secondary importance.”⁶¹ But while bowl formulae were undoubtedly transmitted orally in many cases, to argue that they were primarily oral compositions that just “happened” to be written down is a fundamental misunderstanding of bowl praxis. Despite the role of oral and memorial processes in the transmission and composition of bowl formulae, the bowls as inscribed media reflect the centrality of writing to bowl praxis.

Writing and writtenness, permanency and stability: the transformation of Jewish magic

Stability and continuity inheres in the visual trace, and writing has the power to make visible and enduring what is otherwise fleeting and ephemeral (namely, the spoken word). Inscription grants a kind of permanence (and materiality) to ritual elements, and this aspect of permanency is key to bowl praxis.⁶² From the inscription and burial of the bowls to the apotropaic and exorcistic goals reflected in their texts, the bowls plainly reflect a concern that constant communication and communion be achieved with their transmundane interlocutors. Once inscribed, the bowl as a written object was clearly intended to function as an autonomous communication that could be maintained independent of the magical practitioner in the client’s home. Further overwhelming evidence for the centrality of writing to bowl praxis is also to be found in the bowls inscribed with invented or pseudo-scripts. Regardless of the (potentially fraudulent) reasons for their production, the authority of these bowls plainly derived from the status of writing and the prestige of true literacy elsewhere in society.⁶³

Bowl praxis emerged against a common Near Eastern background where writing and script played a generative role in shaping conceptions about the power of words,⁶⁴ and the bowls re-

⁶¹ Häberl, “Aramaic Incantation Texts,” 396.

⁶² Inscription gestures towards the future in ways that spoken incantations cannot. This gesture toward the future, characterised by the writing on a bowl in a magical context, can be connected to the notion advanced by Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004) that an orientation toward the future entails expectations, an *Erwartungshorizont*, that is not solely based on prior experience (*Erfahrungsraum*).

⁶³ See Waller, “Curious Characters,” which examines the diversity of inscriptional styles in these bowls and suggests that some of them undoubtedly reflect different ideas about the nature of writing and inscription. The practice of writing invented or pseudo-scripts was clearly not limited to a few bad eggs, while it is also clear from even a cursory glance at the variety of these bowls that many of them were not intended to fool anyone into thinking that they were written in Aramaic. See Chapter Six for further discussion.

⁶⁴ See, e.g. David Frankfurter, “The Magic of Writing and the Writing of Magic: The Power of the Word in Egyptian and Greek Traditions,” *Helios* 23.2 (1994): 192. With reference to Mesopotamia, see Scott B. Noegel,

flect the development of an extensive magical practice built on the increasing instrumentalisation of writing.⁶⁵ Where scholars of Jewish magic in earlier periods of Jewish history must contend with a distinct paucity of evidence, the bowls mark a “quantum leap” in the quality and quantity of our evidence for Jewish magical practices.⁶⁶ The sudden appearance of the bowls in the archaeological record is no doubt down in part to a material shift in magical practice, where oral incantations and other apotropaic practices suddenly become visible to us due to a shift in practice (a transition to written incantations) or where existing written practices suddenly become visible to us due to the choice of a more durable writing surface.⁶⁷

“‘Sign, Sign, Everywhere a Sign’: Script, Power, and Interpretation in the Ancient Near East,” in *Divination and Interpretation of Signs in the Ancient World*, ed. Amar Annus (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 143–62 and the literature cited therein. Note also the contributions in Thomas E. Balke and Christina Tsouparopoulou, eds., *Materiality of Writing in Early Mesopotamia* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2016), which focuses on the material and ‘power-discursive’ character of inscribed artefacts in ancient Mesopotamia.

⁶⁵ See the extensive remarks in Roy D. Kotansky, “Textual Amulets and Writing Traditions in the Ancient World,” in *Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic*, ed. David Frankfurter (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 507–54 who argues that the development of the amulet from spoken incantation to written text seems to follow a natural, built-in progression, from ‘unlettered’ amulets (made from natural substances that carry meaning only insofar as their natural properties exhibit *materia magica* or because magical efficacy was attached to them by means of ritual empowerment such as immersion, fumigation, or oral incantation) to ‘semi-lettered’ amulets to ‘lettered’ amulets, whose efficacy was recognised in the written words inscribed and preserved upon them.

⁶⁶ Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 285. The many thousands of bowls known to us from Mesopotamia are also complemented by dozens of lead, bronze, silver, and gold amulets. These stem mostly from the Jewish communities in Palestine and date from the fourth or fifth to the seventh or eighth century CE. In sharp contrast, the only direct evidence we have for written Jewish magic in the First or Second Temple period are the famous pair of silver amulets found in a First Temple period tomb at Ketef Hinnom. These date to the late seventh or early sixth century BCE. The best summary and synthesis of the scant (first-hand) evidence for Jewish magic in the First and Second Temple periods remains Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 70–142. Bohak also surveys the biblical passages pertaining to magic at pp. 19–35. The lack of evidence for Jewish magic in these early periods is in markedly sharp contrast to the many literary representations of magical practitioners in Graeco-Roman literature and to the thousands of magical documents and activated magical objects that stem from either side of the turn of the era. For a broad investigation of ancient Graeco-Roman magical practice, see now Radcliffe G. Edmonds, *Drawing Down the Moon: Magic in the Ancient Greco-Roman World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

⁶⁷ This question has recently been formalised into an extensive argument in relation to the transformation of Graeco-Roman magic by Faraone, *Transformation of Greek Amulets*. Faraone’s study deals with the apparent explosion in the production of amulets throughout the Greek-speaking world in the Roman period. This explosion has previously been argued to reflect some sort of fundamental change in the *Zeitgeist*, caused by an increase in superstition or contact with ‘oriental’ cultures, though Faraone argues instead that this sudden in-

What little evidence we do possess from the periods before the bowls appears to suggest however that oral incantations played a dominant role in Jewish magic in earlier periods. For instance, as the extensive survey by Gideon Bohak shows, what is most prominent in the surviving evidence for Second Temple Jewish magic (perhaps intensified by the growth of interest in prayer in the Second Temple period) is an emphasis on the special power of the spoken word as deployed in incantations and apotropaic prayers.⁶⁸ Though recorded in writing, the anti-demonic expertise preserved in our surviving materials is ultimately predicated on oral performance and the presumption of human speech to wield exorcistic or apotropaic power.⁶⁹

The bowls thus reflect a surge in the use of writing by Jews as a magical technology for communicating with transmundane powers.⁷⁰ In addition to this, the use of performatives

crease in the number and variety of amulets in the archaeological record is primarily down to the increased epigraphic habit of the imperial period. He writes that this “dramatic transformation” reflects “the novel use of writing on amulets, which transformed orally performed prayers, incantations, and other protective or curative speech acts into textual objects that instantly proclaim their function to the archaeologist and historian” (239). With regard to the bowls and a change in writing surface, organic materials used as writing surfaces—such as leather, parchment, papyrus, paper, cloth, and other plant materials—are liable to degrade in most climates and naturally leave little to no trace in the archaeological record. Paper was not yet available in the period of the bowls, and to what extent leather, parchment, papyrus and other perishable materials were used as magical writing surfaces is almost impossible to judge—though the expense of parchment and leather may have been prohibitive. This leaves pottery and metal as the major alternatives. Unlike surfaces derived from the skin of animals, metal sheets comprise a non-perishable and commonly available material. Nonetheless, they have left scant trace in the archaeological record of Mesopotamia. A number of Mandaic incantations inscribed on lead, silver, and gold are known, and though their formulae are very similar to those of the bowls, the archaeological data for (dating) these lamellae is most often poor to non-existent. For the most recent publication of one of these lamellae, see Ohad Abudraham and Matthew Morgenstern, “Mandaic Incantation(s) on Lead Scrolls from the Schøyen Collection,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 137 (2017): 737–65. For a recent survey of (the uses of) different writing materials in Jewish magic in late antiquity and the early middle ages, see Rebigier, “Write on Three Ribs,” 339–59.

⁶⁸ On prayer in this period, see now Judith H. Newman, *Before the Bible: The Liturgical Body and the Formation of Scriptures in Early Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

⁶⁹ In this respect, we see a marked continuity with ancient Israelite psalms, liturgy, and prophecy, where the status of speech as the prime means of communication with the divine is well established. Jewish traditions concerning the divine name as well as the ideal of Scripture as read from mouth to ear to memory also have a bearing here.

⁷⁰ This transformation in respect to Jewish magic happens several centuries later than in other ancient magical traditions. Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 289 thus emphasises the “scribalization gap” not just between

is very common in the bowls, as is clear just from the evidence that Häberl has adduced from the seventy-odd JBA bowls in the British Museum.⁷¹ But given this fact, as well as the sudden explosion of bowls in the archaeological record and what we know about bowl practice, I argue that we should read the illocutionary act in the magic bowls not so much as a verbatim record of speech or oral action, but as reflecting a growing view of writing in itself as constitutive of social action. This argument is clearer if we take ‘utterance’ as a neutral term, a verbal sequence irrespective of written or spoken medium. This allows us to better appreciate the existence of written documents that contain utterances which are not to be read or interpreted as speech. To read them as deriving their authority from speech is to misread them, and I suggest that the bowls represent an increasing popular or vernacular experiment with the performative potential of writing and that their texts represent the transfer of performativity from speech to writing—a transfer encouraged by the prospects and possibilities of embedding a permanent speech-act within the architecture of the home. On the back of their innovative choice of writing surface, the popularity of the bowls attests to the increasing actualisation of this form of long-term and autonomous efficacy.

Transferring performativity from speech to writing

Work on Anglo-Saxon legal documents, as well as literary texts from mediaeval France, shows that the transfer of performativity from speech to writing is common in periods when writing is becoming institutionalised.⁷² The Sasanian period in particular may be character-

Second Temple and late antique Jewish magical materials but between the Graeco-Egyptian magical tradition and the Jewish magical tradition. The Graeco-Egyptian magical tradition increasingly embraced the act of writing as a central component of ritual praxis from roughly the first century BCE or CE onwards. See now Faraone, *Transformation of Greek Amulets*. In approaching the emphasis on writtenness as a central component in late antique Jewish magic, we must be careful about extrapolating from the Graeco-Egyptian tradition to the Jewish tradition. As Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 139 notes about the Jewish tradition, “it is essential that we highlight this gap and learn to accept its implications, rather than pretend it does not exist and extrapolate backwards from the later [Jewish] evidence.” On the scribalisation of Jewish magic, see Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 283–85. Cf. Michael D. Swartz, “Scribal Magic and Its Rhetoric.”

⁷¹ Häberl, “Aramaic Incantation Texts,” 372–76.

⁷² As Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the 11th and 12th Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 32–34 notes, there are important parallels to be drawn between the development of literacy and the institutionalisation of writing in the ancient world and the supersession of oral culture by literate practices in the mediaeval period. On the transitional language in Anglo-Saxon legal documents, see Brenda Danet and Bryna Bogoch, “From Oral Ceremony to Written Document: The Transitional Language of Anglo-Saxon Wills,” *Language & Communication* 12.2 (1992): 95–122; Brenda

ised by a spreading awareness of the contrast between oral and written traditions—marked by a pronounced movement towards the redaction and production of religious texts—and bolstered by a widespread reliance across Babylonia and the Middle East on written documents.⁷³ People made frequent use of writing, from deeds of sale to deeds of divorce, and the bowls may safely be characterised as “product[s] of an environment steeped in literacy.”⁷⁴ As written objects, the bowls were also embedded in an environment populated by human and transmundane agents engaged in complex social interactions. Writing acts—it can make things happen—and the inscription, inversion, and interment of the bowls transformed them into agents of measurable power within this environment.⁷⁵ As objects imbued with social agency, the bowls worked to constitute new social relationships between the owners of the bowls and the demons that troubled them. In illocutionary terms, the bowl texts represent acts of writing that compelled demons to adjust their behaviours in relation to the owners of the bowls.⁷⁶ They thereby affected a change in the world.

Danet and Bryna Bogoch, “‘Whoever Alters This, May God Turn His Face from Him on the Day of Judgment:’ Curses in Anglo-Saxon Legal Documents,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 105 (1992): 132–65. On transitional literary texts from mediaeval France, see Jeffrey Kittay, “Utterance Unmoored: The Changing Interpretation of the Act of Writing in the European Middle Ages,” *Language in Society* 17 (1988): 209–30; Jeffrey Kittay and Wlad Godzich, *The Emergence of Prose: An Essay in Prosaics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

⁷³ Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 3–7. With respect to changes within religious traditions, we can observe with respect to the Jewish tradition—just for instance—various internal pressures aimed towards the transformation of the so-called oral law into a written code. This is witnessed already before the Sasanian period by the systematic arrangement of the Mishnah.

⁷⁴ Häberl, “Aramaic Incantation Texts,” 369. Shaul Shaked, “Orality and Esotericism: Reflections on Modes of Transmission in Late Antiquity,” in Julia Rubanovich, ed., *Orality and Textuality in the Iranian World*, 43 clarifies this characterisation by noting that, even if we distinguish the Sasanian period as “a period of high literacy, it does not mean, of course, that literacy was a skill that most people possessed.” Beyond individual rates of literacy, it means more generally a group of cultures that maintained records and often venerated the written word.

⁷⁵ Object agency—a reflection of the so-called New Materialism—denotes the possibility that things can act (in a way that is irreducible to direct human intervention). On object agency and the bowls, see below.

⁷⁶ See Béatrice Fraenkel, “Actes d’écriture: quand écrire c’est faire,” *Langage et société* 121–122 (2007): 101–12; Béatrice Fraenkel, “Actes écrits, actes oraux: la performativité à l’épreuve de l’écriture,” *Études de communication* 29.1 (2006): 69–93. Fraenkel examines ‘acts of writing’ in the same way as Austin analysed speech acts.

Performativity is simply a feature of language-in-use, whether it is spoken or written, and I suggest that to read the bowls as a verbatim record of speech or oral actions or as deriving their authority from speech may be to misread them. Written texts are material phenomena, and because writing renders utterances permanent, it originates a class of utterances that should be understood primarily in terms of their writtenness (even if these utterances were transmitted orally and reproduced from mental templates). The change in the world that the bowl texts were designed to bring about was guaranteed by their permanence in writing. Writtenness is what could constitute the bowls as autonomous communications that bore an ongoing message. In many literate and pre-literate societies, both spoken and written constitutive acts are treated as (legally) binding. And if I am right to suggest that the bowl texts represent an increasingly popular or vernacular investment of authority in writing and written documents during the Sasanian period—and that they reflect a growing view of writing in itself as constitutive of action—then it is the writtenness of the language in the bowls that rendered their oaths, adjurations, and curses indissoluble. In this view, such acts of ‘word magic’ as oaths, adjurations, and curses are more likely to represent a kind of transitional language or ‘oral residue’ than the verbatim representation of speech or spoken. A compelling illustration of this point—and evidence of the increasingly popular deployment of writing’s performative potential—is the adaptation of the *geṭ* to bowl praxis. As Brenda Danet remarks, “almost from the beginning of the history of writing in ancient times, legal documents contain evidence of a latent struggle to transfer performativity from speech to writing.”⁷⁷ Indeed, both the *geṭ* and the *ketubba* (Jewish marriage contract) represent legal situations where written documents were mandatory almost from biblical times in Jewish law, while the attribution of potency to writing that I am discussing would in many ways have derived from the social and/or legal potency of the genres of writing deployed by scribes. The use of such written legal formulae in the bowls was undoubtedly a means to enhance the performative potential of these written objects (while the expertise of the practitioner would lie not just in their use of writing but their adjustment of these legal formulations to the struggle with demons). Thus JBA 30:11, which reads:

⁷⁷ Brenda Danet, “Speech, Writing and Performativity: An Evolutionary View of the History of Constitutive Ritual,” in *The Construction of Professional Discourse*, ed. in Britt-Louise Gunnarsson, Per Linell, and Bengt Nordberg (London: Longman, 1997), 15.

כתבית ליכי גיטיכי ותריכית יתיכי מן פרוך בר רשיונדוד ...

I write to you (the lilit *Ḥablas*) your deed of divorce, and I divorce you from
Farrokhs. Rašewandukh ...

Here and in numerous other instances we explicitly see the writing itself doing the performing.⁷⁸ Multiple other bowls conclude with phrases like *אנה כתבית ומרי כולא יסי*, “I have written and the Lord of All will heal.”⁷⁹

Writing thus plays a decisive role in the bowls as a technology for accessing and manipulating the transmundane (over the long-term). As a pragmatic technological response to the exigencies of demon-belief, the bowls call attention to the need to take ‘things written’ in addition to ‘things said’ and ‘things done’ into consideration in our analyses of ancient magic.⁸⁰ In this respect, I suggested that to read the use of performatives in the bowl texts as a verbatim record of speech or oral action may be to misread them. At least in relation to apotropaic magic—as represented by the bowls—I suggested that the transition from spoken incantations towards written incantations reflected an ongoing dialectical process wherein we are witness to the increasing transfer of performativity from speech to writing. The bowl—the material support for the inscription—would also have added to the felicity of the constitutive act. As simple Sasanian kitchenware, the finished bowl both derived from and slotted back into the gestural world of the household. The performativity of the bowls was thus intimately related not just to the materiality of their inscription, but to the materiality of the bowl itself (as more than just a writing surface).

The importance of writing and writtenness to the bowls as magical objects

Two factors seem indisputable with regards to bowl praxis. Firstly, *written* language—and by extension, simple *writtenness*—was the main instrument employed by the practitioners behind incantation bowls in order to protect their owners from affliction. The efficacy and performative power of the bowls was centred in the written word, sign, or script, and activated during the processes of writing, overturning, and burying the bowl. Secondly, the bowl

⁷⁸ See, e.g. Gordon G:5-6, which reads *בגט פטורין יתיכי והא תריכית יתיכי והא שביקת יתיכי והא תריכית יתיכי*, “Look, I hereby divorce you! Look, I hereby divorce you! Look, I hereby divorce you with a deed of divorce!”

⁷⁹ CMI 10:6. Cf. JBA 63:10, ZHS 18:8, SHM 5:10. Numerous unpublished parallels are given by Ford and Morgenstern, *Bowls in the Hilprecht Collection*, 79–80.

⁸⁰ Cf. Fritz Graf, “Magie et écriture.”

itself—as a domestic object, and the material support for the inscription—also added to the felicity of these constitutive rituals. The inverted bowl—as simple domestic ware—focusses attention on the space inside the bowl as a symbolic miniature of the room or domestic space (from which the demon is to be expelled).⁸¹ As David Frankfurter concludes,

A ritual analogy is set up: the bowl becomes the place for demons, in the same way that the (currently afflicted) room or house should, properly, be the place for people and their safe procreation. The bowl *in place* suggests a complementary relationship (as both microcosm and macrocosm), and thus—perhaps—the efficacy of the magical transfer of demons *from* room-space *to* bowl-space. In these ways, the bowl may be not only an integral part of the overall apotropaic and exorcistic ritual, but even more, the basic material component, which the inscriptions endeavor to focus, extend, and render more powerful.⁸²

Thus, while bowl praxis may have emerged in part due to the demise of cuneiform literacy, a further set of interrelated factors undoubtedly fed into the relatively sudden explosion of the praxis. The great affordability and easy accessibility of bowls would naturally have encouraged their choice as a writing surface, permitting a kind of popular experiment with the performative potential of writing. The choice of the bowl also came with additional advantages: it offered a compelling sympathy between text and text support, which permitted people to extend the rhetorical reach of writtleness into their homes: the bowls were themselves domestic objects and provided thereby a striking complementarity of use in the fight against household demons. As a communicative medium, these inscribed objects facilitated a stable and enduring form of messaging, especially sensible for transmundane communications, and to which a specific agency could be ascribed.

⁸¹ There is no cross-cultural study of objects from different times/periods that were deliberately buried—and which have been described as ‘absconding’—but these include reliquaries which were made to be buried beneath the sanctuaries of churches as a necessary part of the building and the altar’s consecration. With respect to the bowls and any mimetic analogy between the interior of the bowl and the interior of the home, I note that many reliquaries are shaped as architectural miniatures that reflect the building they sanctify and imply a kind of magical or talismanic mimeticism. See Jaś Elsner, “Concealment and Revelation: The Pola Casket and the Visuality of Early Christian Relics,” in *Conditions of Visibility*, ed. Richard Neer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 74–110 for discussion and literature. For various examples of the class of ‘absconding’ objects, see the articles in the special edition of Francesco Pellizzi, ed. *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 55/56 (2009).

⁸² Frankfurter, “Scorpion/Demon,” 13.

As noted above, a white rooster is perhaps implied in the preparation and/or installation of the bowl M 163:6-8.⁸⁴ This bowl text forms part of the rare sub-genre of aggressive bowl texts; it is thus necessary to proceed with great caution in attempting to extrapolate from this text wider details concerning possible bowl rituals. The bowl in question contains a series of curses commissioned by Mihlad and Baran s. Mirdukh against Ishah s. Ifra-Hormiz. At one point, the text demands that:

היכדין דאתכ[ביש]ן כולהין מדינתא הכדין כבוש הדין אישה בר איפרא הורמיז בכל שמה דאית ליה
תחות ר[יגליהון] ומימרהון ושולטנהון דהדין מיהלאד ובראן בני מירדוך תחות הנא תרנולא חיורא
דמזמ[...]. יך הכדין ניתכביש הדין אישה בר איפרא הורמיז בכל שמה דאית ליה תחות ריגליהון
ותחות מימרהון ושולטנהון[ן דה]דין מיהלאד ובראן בני מירדוך

Just as all countries are suppressed, so suppress this Ishah s. Ifra-Hormiz in every name he has under the feet and command and authority of this Mihlad and Baran s. Mirdukh. Under this white cock that [is appointed on your behalf], just so may this Ishah s. Ifra-Hormiz be suppressed in every name he has under the feet and command and authority of this Mihlad and (this) Baran s. Mirdukh.

Due to a breakage in the bowl, a part of the phrase that refers to the rooster is missing. Levene’s reconstruction דמזמ[ן על] יך, ‘appointed on your behalf’ plays on the double meaning of the Hebrew and Aramaic preposition תחות, which denotes both ‘under’ and ‘in place of’ or ‘in your stead.’ With reference to the idea that this passage may reflect a ritual involving a white rooster, Levene points out that the use of a white rooster in aggressive magic is known from both *Sefer ha-Razim* and the PGM, as well as other sources. In an article accompanying

⁸³ It has come to my attention since I first wrote out the argument in this excursus that Yishai Kiel, “Negotiating ‘White Rooster’ Magic and Binitarian Christology: Mapping the Contours of Jewish Babylonian Culture in Late Antiquity,” *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 9.2 (2018): 296–274 has independently advanced a kindred reading of the unusual bowl in question. Kiel’s discussion is considerably more detailed than my own (which I preserve ‘as is’ below) and the interested reader is invited to consult his article.

⁸⁴ This bowl was first published in Dan Levene, “... and by the name of Jesus ...” An Unpublished Magic Bowl in Jewish Aramaic,” *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 6 (1999): 283–308; cf. Dan Levene, *A Corpus of Magic Bowls: Incantation Texts in Jewish Aramaic from Late Antiquity* (London: Kegan Paul, 2003), 120–138; Dan Levene, *Jewish Aramaic Curse Texts from Late-Antique Mesopotamia: “May These Curses Go Out and Flee”* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 110–13. It was also addressed at some length upon its publication by Shaul Shaked, “Jesus in the Magic Bowls: Apropos Dan Levene’s ‘... and by the name of Jesus ...,’” *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 6.4 (1999): 309–19.

the first publication of this bowl, Shaul Shaked reconstructed the passage somewhat differently, on the assumption that a group of words were accidentally omitted from the phrase by mistake, then repeated after the conclusion of the phrase.⁸⁵ Shaked thus suggests reading:

היכדין דאתכ[ביש]ן כולהין מדינתא <תחות הנא תרנולא חיורא דמזמ[נין ל]יך> הכדין כבוש הדין
אישה בר איפרא הורמיז בכל שמה דאית ליה תחות ר[יגליהו]ן ומימרהון ושולטהון דהדין מיהלאד
ובראן בני מירדוך

Just as all countries are suppressed <under this white rooster that is app[ointed for y]ou> so is this Ishah s. Ifra-Hormiz—in every name he has—suppressed under the feet and command and authority of this Mihlad and (this) Baran s. Mirdukh.

In this reading, the rooster symbolises authority over all countries or kingdoms and is used thereby to symbolise the crushing of Ishah s. Ifra-Hormiz. Shaked also suggests that any use of an actual rooster may have had some sort of sympathetic function akin to the use of the rooster in the liturgy of *kapparot* undertaken on the eve of Yom Kippur. There, a rooster that is preferably white is made the surrogate of the person performing the ritual. This rooster is subsequently slaughtered, thereby averting death from the person performing the ritual. Again on the basis of the double meaning of תחות, Shaked suggests that the rooster in the bowl is to be identified with Ishah s. Ifra-Hormiz, who is thereby sentenced to death in the role of rooster-surrogate. Shaked himself emphasises how speculative this reading is. It also suffers somewhat from the complexity of the transposition it demands and the fact that nowhere else does the bowl call for the death of Ishah s. Ifra-Hormiz, but only for the evil thoughts and words that he directs towards Mihlad and Baran s. Mirdukh to perish within him and not go out from his mouth. Given this, I suggest that a simpler—and possibly better—reading of this passage is to be found in light of b. Ber. 7a. This Talmudic passage specifically draws a set of connections between curse magic, God's wrath, and a rooster's white comb. The passage in question reads as follows:

אימת רתח אמר אביי בהנך תלת שעי קמייתא כי חורא כרבלתא דתרנגולא וקאי אחד כרעא כל
שעתא ושעתא נמי קאי הכי כל שעתא אית ביה שורייקי סומקי בההיא שעתא לית ביה שורייקי
סומקי ההוא מינא דהוה בשבבותיה דר' יהושע בן לוי הוה קא מצער ליה טובא בקראי יומא חד שקל
תרנגולא ואוקמיה בין כרעיה דערסא ועיין ביה סבר כי מטא ההיא שעתא אלטייה כי מטא ההיא
שעתא ניים אמר שמע מיניה לאו אורח ארעא

⁸⁵ Shaked, "Jesus in the Magic Bowls," 309–10

‘When is He angry?’ Abbaye said: ‘During the first three hours of the day, when the sun whitens the comb of the rooster and it stands on one leg.’ ‘Why, it stands that way every other hour of the day?’ ‘In every other hour it has red streaks, but when (God is angry) there are no red streaks.’

There was a certain heretic in R. Yehoshua b. Levi’s neighbourhood, who would upset him concerning (the interpretation of) scriptural verses. One day, R. Yehoshua b. Levi took a rooster and placed it between the legs of the bed and observed it (so as to curse the heretic at the exact moment the rooster’s comb turned white, thereby marshalling the full power of God’s wrath). He thought: ‘When the moment arrives, I will curse him.’ When the moment arrived, he was sleeping. He said: ‘We can conclude from this that it is not proper conduct.’

This passage links the manifestation of divine wrath to a very particular time of day: that moment when the comb of the rooster loses its red streaks and turns fully white.⁸⁶ It then tells the story of a certain R. Yehoshua b. Levi, who is said to have tried to take advantage of the timing of this connection in order to channel God’s wrath down upon an individual who had sorrowed the rabbi with regard to the interpretation of scripture. I suggest that the mention of the white rooster in M 163:6–8 may well reflect an allusion to (the idea contained in) this passage and the connection it draws between the white cockscomb and (the channelling of) divine wrath. The reconstruction $\text{דמזמ}[\text{ן על}] \text{ך}$ would thus refer to a white rooster appointed not somehow in place of Ishah s. Ifra-Hormiz but analogically in order to channel God’s wrath down upon Ishah s. Ifra-Hormiz and crush him.

THE BOWL TEXTS TEXTUAL UNITS, TEXTUAL REPERTOIRES, AND VARIATION

Variation abounds in the texts of the incantation bowls. We find variation both across the corpus of incantation bowls and (where individual hands can be identified) within the written output of individual practitioners. As has been noted, this variation occurs within such textual parameters as orthography, palaeography, and textual layout, but we also find variation in the lexical and grammatical features of the JBA bowl texts, and in the case of phraseology and formulary. Though they have at times been collectively criticised for being repetitive, the bowl texts are characterised by dynamic, shifting relationships among units of text—building

⁸⁶ For a brief survey of hemerology and horology in rabbinic Judaism, see Gideon Bohak, “Manuals of Mantic Wisdom: From the Dead Sea Scrolls to the Cairo Genizah,” in *Tracing Sapiential Traditions in Ancient Judaism*, ed. Hindy Najman, Jean-Sébastien Rey, and Eibert J.C. Tigchelaar (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 191–216.

blocks or modules, so to speak—that together make up the varying forms of their incantations.

The bowl texts are made up of many different types, combinations, and arrangements of textual units. These units recur across the bowl corpus in different combinations and arrangements (far more often than not with some variation between different parallels) and there are several hundred different types of textual units (including an abundance of smaller textual units and recurring formulae) to be found across the corpus as a whole. They fall into common patterns and coalesce in textual complexes, but no one incantation bowl is alike. These textual units include introductory, bridging, and concluding formulae; invocations; adjurations; oaths; bans; curses; decrees; and quotations. Longer textual units (or spells) oftentimes reflect a distinct metaphoric sensibility, while the texts inscribed in the square script bowls also draw heavily on the Hebrew Bible and on Talmudic and extra-Talmudic *aggada*; they also deploy various legal,⁸⁷ liturgical,⁸⁸ and mystical materials.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ See Manekin-Bamberger, “Intersections,” which examines the intersections between rabbinic legal discourse and the JBA bowls; cf. Avigail Manekin-Bamberger, “Jewish Legal Formulae in the Aramaic Incantation Bowls,” *Aramaic Studies* 13 (2015): 69–81; Avigail Manekin-Bamberger, “The Vow-Curse in Ancient Jewish Texts,” *Harvard Theological Review* 112.3 (2019): 340–57. The bowl practitioners frequently deploy technical legal jargon including time designations, perpetuity clauses, and legal closing formulae, while legal formulae can also be found in oaths, vows, and pronouncements of (demonic) excommunication. On time designations in the bowls, see Shaul Shaked, “Time Designations and Other Recurrent Themes in Aramaic Incantation Bowls,” in *Gazing on the Deep: Ancient Near Eastern and Other Studies in Honor of Tzvi Abusch*, ed. Jeffrey Stackert, Barbara N. Porter, and David P. Wright (Bethesda: CDL Press, 2010), 221–34. In many instances, the bowl practitioners employ specifically Jewish legal terminology, known to us from rabbinic literature and ancient Jewish legal documents. A striking instance of this is the use of the *geṭ* or Jewish divorce formula in the bowls, which uses the traditional *geṭ* to exorcise demons by divorcing them. On the use in the bowls of anti-demonic *giṭṭin* as well as motifs derived from the *geṭ*, see Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts*, 158–59; Shaul Shaked, “The Poetics of Spells: Language and Structure in Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity: The Divorce Formula and Its Ramifications,” in *Mesopotamian Magic: Textual, Historical, and Interpretative Perspectives*, ed. Tzvi Abusch and Karel van der Toorn (Groningen: tyx Publications, 1999), 173–95; Levene, *Corpus*, 18–21; Dan Levene, “‘A Happy Thought of the Magicians’: The Magical *Geṭ*,” in *Shlomo: Studies in Epigraphy, Iconography, History and Archaeology in Honor of Shlomo Moussaieff*, ed. Robert Deutsch (Tel Aviv: Archaeological Center Publications, 2003), 175–184; Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 99–100; Daniel J. Frim, “‘And It Was in the Dwelling of Rabbi Joshua Bar Peraḥiah’: Notes on the Anti-Demonic *Geṭ* in the Jewish Babylonian Aramaic Incantation Bowls,” *The Review of Rabbinic Judaism* 18 (2015): 192–226; Bhayro, “Divorcing a Demon.” On the broader theme of humans marrying and divorcing demons, see Margaretha Folmer, “On Marrying and Divorcing a Demon: Marriage and Divorce

The sole extended effort to sort through, disentangle, categorise, and develop a terminology for the different types of textual units and their arrangement within the JBA bowls

Themes in the Jewish, Christian, and Pagan World,” in *Religious Stories in Transformation: Conflict, Revision and Reception*, ed. Alberdina Houtman et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 275–99.

⁸⁸ In some cases, the JBA bowls cite Mishna passages (preceded by בָּשִׁימ and thus quoted as though they were names of power) which were (presumably) taken from the Jewish daily liturgy, as well as the Priestly Blessing (included in the regular liturgy) and non-canonical liturgical texts like the *Qeri'at shema* ‘*al ham-mitta*. For an example, see Dan Levene, Dalia Marx, and Siam Bhayro, “‘Gabriel Is on Their Right:’ Angelic Protection in Jewish Magic and Babylonian Lore,” *Studia Mesopotamica* 1 (2014): 185–98. For more general treatments of the liturgical materials in the JBA bowls, see Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 21–23; Shaul Shaked, “Incantation Bowls and Amulet Tablets: How to Get Rid of Demons and Harmful Beings,” *Qadmoniot* 38.129 (2005): 2–13 (Hebrew); Shaul Shaked, “‘Peace Be Upon You, Exalted Angels:’ On Hekhalot, Liturgy, and Incantation Bowls,” *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 2 (1995): 197–219; Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1993), 22–31; Dan Levene, “Jewish Liturgy and Magic Bowls,” in *Studies in Jewish Prayer*, ed. Robert Hayward and Brad Embry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 163–84.

⁸⁹ The JBA bowls sometimes quote extensive passages known to us from Hekhalot compositions. They also deploy some of the motifs of Hekhalot literature, as well quoting from poetic pieces which may have belonged to the same genre. The bowls thus do not just predate the European Hekhalot manuscripts known to us by many centuries, but the earliest Genizah fragments of this literature and the *responsa* of Sherira Gaon and Hai Gaon. They provision us with a firm *terminus ante quem* for some textual components of Hekhalot literature, as well as a fairly circumscribed geographic and social context for the circulation and early transmission of these materials. On the earliest manuscripts of the Hekhalot literature, see Gideon Bohak, “Dangerous Books: The Hekhalot Texts as Physical Objects,” *Henoch* 39.2 (2017): 306–24. On the transmission of Hekhalot materials in relation to the bowls, see Gideon Bohak, “Observations on the Transmission of Hekhalot Literature in the Cairo Genizah,” in *Hekhalot Literature in Context: From Byzantium to Babylonia*, ed. Ra’anan Boustán, Martha Himmelfarb, and Peter Schäfer (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 220–22. On Hekhalot materials in the bowls, see Shaked, “Peace Be Upon You”; Shaul Shaked, “Jewish and Iranian Visions in the Talmudic Period,” in *The Jews in the Hellenistic and Roman World*, ed. Isaiah M. Gafni, Aharon Oppenheimer, and Daniel R. Schwartz (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Institute, 1996), 467–86; Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 23–27; Christa Müller-Kessler, “Eine ungewöhnliche Hekhalot-Zauberschale und ihr babylonisches Umfeld: Jüdisches Gedankengut in den magischen Texten des Ostens,” *Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge* 38 (2013): 69–84. For a valuable introduction to the complex issues involved in the study of the Hekhalot literature, see Ra’anan S. Boustán, “The Study of Heikhalot Literature: Between Mystical Experience and Textual Artifact,” *Currents in Biblical Research* 6.1 (2007): 130–60. For previous work on the relations between ancient Jewish mysticism and magic, see the surveys in Harari, *Jewish Magic*, 113–32; Rebecca Lesses, *Ritual Practices to Gain Power: Angels, Incantations, and Revelation in Early Jewish Mysticism* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 1998), 24–52.

remains Shaul Shaked's pioneering article "Transmission and Transformation of Spells."⁹⁰ In what follows, I reproduce Shaked's categories and terminology with only minor adjustments. This is the terminology I use throughout this study to reference the structure of the bowl texts, though even as we define and bracket the various textual units of the bowls into categories, it should be borne in mind that what we thereby label the 'same' is never quite identical.

incantation refers to the total text of a bowl; an incantation as written in a bowl is usually made up of one or several **spells** (which may have parallels in other incantations as well);

spell refers to the major building blocks of an incantation; a spell is self-sufficient and includes all necessary elements for the accomplishment of its goal; in principle, a spell is a (loose) reproduction or adaptation of a **formula**;

formula denotes the *ideal structure of a spell* which the practitioner aims to reproduce, either from memory or on the basis of a written formulary or book of magic recipes;⁹¹ as Shaked explains, a formula is thus a construct which achieves greater intelligibility in light of an analogy with the ideas of *langue* and *parole*: formulae are akin to *langue*, while spells (the *performance* of a formula) correspond to the *parole* of the text.

As a rule, incantations are larger compositions and typically contain—in addition to one or several spells—various other kinds of (smaller) textual units. These (smaller) units often fulfil structural functions within an incantation but outside of a spell:

introductory units introduce an incantation or introduce the text of a spell within an incantation;

concluding units close an incantation or draw a line under one part of an incantation before another begins;

⁹⁰ Shaul Shaked, "Transmission and Transformation of Spells: The Case of the Jewish Babylonian Aramaic Bowls," in *Continuity and Innovation in the Magical Tradition*, ed. Gideon Bohak, Yuval Harari, and Shaul Shaked (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 187–217. See also Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 8–13 and Erica C. D. Hunter, "Manipulating Incantation Texts: Excursions in Refrain A," *Iraq* 64 (2002): 259–73.

⁹¹ Such collections of spells are attested in the Cairo Genizah. For examples, see Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*; Naveh and Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae*; and Peter Schäfer and Shaul Shaked, *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza*, 3 vols. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994–1999). See also Ortal-Paz Saar, "Geniza Magical Documents," *Jewish History* 32 (2019): 477–84. Several recipe books from the Genizah (such as *Šimmuš Tehillim*, *Sefer ha-Razim*, and *Harba de-Mošē*) plainly stem from earlier periods, but these belong to the Palestinian and not the Babylonian tradition.

bridging units form a link between spells or allow the practitioner to segue from a spell to an independent *invocation*;

invocation means a direct appeal to different (transmundane) powers, oftentimes accompanied by an *adjuration*;

adjuration refers to a solemn supplication or admonishment that these (transmundane) powers should act in the manner sought by the practitioner and/or the client.

An example of a short incantation bowl text is AMB 3. This incantation is directed against malevolent forces.⁹² These forces are described primarily as forms of injurious magic, but the bowl also extends itself to protect against more generic forces. The incantation itself consists of five lines of spiral text enclosed within a circle; this spiral in turn encircles a crude circle or square.

1	אסותא מן שמיא למאדאראפרי בת
2	אנושאי ידמכון בעפרא חבילי נידרא דכוליה דוכא
3	וכל טלא וכל מידיעם דביש ומעיק לה למאדאראפרי בת מאנושי
4	חרשות ועבדין דמיתעבדין יתכבשון ויטמרון בארעה מן קדומיה
5	בעוז גדודהו וחיחי בין נסוע הארון וימר מושה קומא יהוה ויפוצו איבאך וינסו
	מ[vacat] מיפנך אקדד ואברא אמן אמן סלה

This text may be structured in the following manner:

<i>introductory request</i>	Healing from Heaven for Mādar-Āfri d. Anushay.
<i>adjuration</i>	May there lie in the dust the injuries of vow-curses ⁹³ of every place and every shadow and every evil thing and whatever oppresses Mādar-Āfri d. Manushay.
<i>spell (a press)</i>	The sorcery and the charms which are cast will

⁹² On incantation bowls designed to address the threat of evil sorceries, see Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts*, 83–89; James Nathan Ford, “The Ancient Mesopotamian Motif of Kidinnu, ‘Divine Protection (of Temple Cities and Their Citizens),’ in Akkadian and Aramaic Magic,” in *Encounters by the Rivers of Babylon: Scholarly Conversations between Jews, Iranians, and Babylonians in Antiquity*, ed. Uri Gabbay and Shai Secunda (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 271–83.

⁹³ On the gradual shift in the use of נדר, ‘vow’ from a self-imposed religious undertaking to a harmful curse, see Manekin-Bamberger, “Intersections,” chapter 4.

	be pressed and hidden in the earth before her.
<i>invocation</i>	By the power of his army!
<i>narrative quotation</i>	‘And it came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, YHWH, and let your enemies be scattered, and let them [vacat] flee before you’ (Num. 10:35)
<i>nomina barbara</i>	’qdd w’br’
<i>conclusion</i>	Amen Amen Selah

This particular bowl cites a narrative passage from the Hebrew Bible in a peculiar spelling, with a minor but telling alteration of the biblical text.⁹⁴

quotation refers to a biblical quote, as a rule in Hebrew, though very rarely in an Aramaic version (including the Targum Onqelos).⁹⁵

In this instance, the practitioner deliberately omitted the final five letters of מְשֹנְאִיךָ from the original Hebrew passage. On inspection of the bowl and its layout, it is plain that the omission of “those who hate you” in the bowl is intentional and works as an act of sympathetic

⁹⁴ This alteration is plainly not an error, even in light of the practitioner’s negligence with regard to the spelling of Mādar-Āfri and her mother’s names (though on the alternation of Anoshay and Manoshay, see Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*, 148–49).

⁹⁵ This study engages only with narrative citations from the Hebrew Bible. On the use of biblical quotations in general in the bowls, see Natalie C. Polzer, “The Bible in the Aramaic Magic Bowls” (McGill University, 1986); Levene, “Jewish Liturgy and Magic Bowls,” 171–74; Christa Müller-Kessler, “The Use of Biblical Quotations in Jewish Aramaic Incantation Bowls,” in *Studies in Magic and Divination in the Biblical World*, ed. Helen R. Jacobus, Anne Katrine de Hemmer Gudme, and Philippe Guillaume (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2013), 225–40; Peter T. Lanfer, “Why Biblical Scholars Should Study Aramaic Bowl Spells,” *Aramaic Studies* 13 (2015): 9–23. For examples of quotations from the Targum in the bowls, see Müller-Kessler, “Biblical Quotations,” 231–34. Three of these bowls quote biblical passages in the form of an interlinear Aramaic Targum, demonstrating the influence of the synagogue and its liturgy on some bowl practitioners. The incantation on A 33965 = Kaufman 1973 consists solely of scriptural citations; it contains Hebrew quotations from Jer 2:2, 3 and Ezek 21:21–22 and either Jer 2:1 or Ezek 21:23 with interlinear translations of Jer 2:2 and Jer 2:1 or Ezek 21:23 (though presumably Jer 2:1) into the Aramaic of Targum Jonathan. Note that Ezekiel is not part of any known synagogue liturgy, which might explain why it is not also provisioned with an Aramaic translation in this bowl. HS 3030 = ZHS 2 includes Exod 15.9–12 in Hebrew and its translation in the version of Targum Onqelos. Likewise IM 56544 = ZHS 2a contains an interlinear translation of Exod 15.12 in the form of Targum Onqelos. See Lanfer, “Biblical Scholars,” 16–17 for further discussion of these interlinear translations and their implications regarding beliefs in the power of the oral scriptures and liturgy to bring about the intended effect of these bowls.

magic designed to similarly excise and negate the threat of Mādar-Āfri's enemies. This freedom on the part of the practitioner to adapt and emend scripture to Mādar-Āfri's situation also extended to the production of the bowl texts as a whole, which plainly follow a fairly loose script that was both flexible and accommodating of idiosyncrasy.⁹⁶

Though not entirely free of restrictions on their art, it is clear that the bowl practitioners could manipulate their inherited materials with firmness of authority and purpose. This freedom for ingenuity also extended to the decorative and iconographic aspects of the bowls.⁹⁷ However, it is perhaps most evident in the shifting relationships and arrangements of larger and smaller textual units across the bowl corpus. Practitioners tailored their products to the needs (and budgets) of their clients, and could in theory assemble limitless combinations of spells (designed for various afflictions) and smaller textual units, as well as lists of gods, demons, and powerful helpers. In practice, however, the shared building blocks of the incantation texts often fall into recurring patterns and coalesce into somewhat predictable textual complexes. Individual practitioners formed similarly coherent connections between textual units that nevertheless could be—but were not always—arranged otherwise, and variation in the arrangement of the bowl texts is governed by a potentially wide—but also potentially identifiable—range of factors.

In trying to get a better grasp on the processes that lay behind the composition of the bowl texts—the conceptual considerations and practical arrangements of constituent units—a

⁹⁶ Shaked, “Transmission and Transformation,” 191 also argues that the bowl practitioners were permitted “a certain freedom in moulding the text ... according to their personal preference.” He has further drawn an analogy between the composition of the bowl texts and the improvisations inherent in the structure of jazz music (private communication 2016). On the basis of two “duplicate” bowls written in the same hand for the same beneficiary, as well as several parallels to these bowls, Hunter, “Combat and Conflict,” 62, 74–75 has also suggested that the composition of the bowl texts was flexible, sometimes spontaneous, and improvised according to the situation at hand. See also Levene, *Corpus*, 24, who argues that “duplicate” bowls “can shed light on the ways in which an individual scribe could use different magical incantation formulae to construct different texts for different clients” and “the level of flexibility any scribe could exercise in his use of standard sections of formulae, and the ways in which he could combine and alter them in the process of composing any particular incantation.”

⁹⁷ Some bowls abandon the more common patternings of text and adopt unusual layouts where the text follows the shape of a star or an image. Like the invented signs and letter-forms of the pseudo-script bowls, these unusual patternings of text also constitute an overlooked ‘artistic’ signature. Recent scholarship on ancient magical texts has emphasised the creative and often improvisatory nature of magical materials, and such bowls reveal not just the hand of the practitioner in their manual ductus, but also their conceptual style.

number of difficulties have to be taken into consideration. In the first place, it is difficult to judge how the different textual units used in the bowls were transmitted and reproduced, though it is clear is that the incantation bowls are located right at the interface between orality and textuality.⁹⁸ As written media, many of their texts demonstrate the persistence of oral compositional processes, as well as the significant role played by memory in their (re)production. Some of the evidence in particular favours the oral transmission and memorial reproduction of spell formulae, primarily the many parallel and/or duplicate spell formulae that we encounter across the bowl corpus. Produced by different magical practitioners in different geographical locations, these bowls demonstrate variations in formulae that betray little evidence of reproduction from written *Vorlagen*. The corrupt citation and *plene* spelling of biblical verses in the JBA bowls also demonstrate the reproduction of certain textual units from memory and not written texts. On the other hand, some bowls bear complex spells that are so similar to parallel bowls “that one can’t help feeling that copying from a written model [was] nevertheless involved.”⁹⁹ Some duplicate bowls also bear the same magical signs, which would have been difficult to reproduce without a visual model. A further form of evidence for the reproduction of bowl spells from written models that has largely been overlooked is to be found in some bowls where it is plain that the practitioner consulted a model word by word; this delayed process of production resulted in a bowl where the initial strokes and letter forms of each word are thick and dark, thinning out as the practitioner proceeds with the word, and thickening and darkening almost immediately they have consulted their model and refreshed their ink.

The bowls thus reflect various interdependencies of oral-textual dynamics, as well as countless combinatory possibilities of text and image. These complex oral, textual, visual, and memorial interactions suggest a fluid social and semantic environment where media interfaces, transits, and tensions were the rule. Nevertheless, it may be possible to outline

⁹⁸ Scholarship in recent decades has challenged the so-called great divide between orality and textuality, speech and writing. It has shown in particular that—despite its brute explicative potential—the articulative power of this divide is inherently limited. For recent work on the interactions between orality and textuality, see, e.g. André Lardinois, Josine Blok, and M.G.M. van der Poel, eds., *Sacred Words: Orality, Literacy and Religion* (Leiden: Brill, 2011); Rubanovich, ed., *Orality and Textuality in the Iranian World*; Annette Weissenrieder and Robert B. Coote, eds., *The Interface of Orality and Writing: Speaking, Seeing, Writing in the Shaping of New Genres* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2015).

⁹⁹ Shaked, “Transmission and Transformation,” 192. For a more extensive treatment of these issues, see Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 185–87 and the literature cited therein.

several literary, pragmatic, and social factors that played a role in the choice and arrangement of textual units and spell formulae in the bowls. These factors represent a congeries of interconnections. In the first place, the chief factor governing the choice of textual units in the production of a bowl would have been the specific textual repertoire of the practitioner. A practitioner obviously could not use a spell that they did not know. This repertoire (or inventory of spells and other textual units) would have been shaped by various factors, including education, experience, and the extent of the practitioner's professional network. While parts of this repertoire would have been shared to an extent with other practitioners, no two professional repertoires would have been exactly the same. Another factor involved in the choice of textual units would have been the problem confronting the purchaser of the bowl. Each bowl would have been written at the order of a specific individual, and perhaps in extended consultation with this individual; each bowl thus represents an independent composition, regardless of parallels with other bowls. The choice of textual units would presumably also have been influenced by how far the purchaser's budget extended. The reproduction or improvisation of longer or more elaborate formulae—as an extension of the repertoire of more accomplished practitioners—presumably cost more. Shorter texts or general apotropaia presumably cost less than (longer or more specialised) spells designed to target specific demons or specific concerns. The elaborateness of the formulae (re)produced in some bowls may thus be an indicator of the economy behind the bowls. The final important factor in the production of the bowl texts and the arrangement of their textual units is wholly pragmatic. When writing in spirals on the inside of a bowl and seeking to cover the inner surface of said bowl, it simply makes good sense to save longer textual units for the beginning and middle of the planned text, and to save shorter units (with an eye to the approaching rim) for the latter stages of the composition. Shorter textual units are thus front- and back-loaded in the bowls, so as to cover the entire inner surface of the bowl without risking the spillage of longer textual units (begun too close to the rim) to the outside of the bowl.

THE (IMPLIED) PRACTITIONERS

The persons who produced the incantation bowls left no autographs, though the bowls themselves are evidence for individual practitioners (of greater or lesser skill) and the social contexts they inhabited. Together, they reveal certain characteristics, interests, and strategies that were common to these participants in a shared magical practice. With the designation 'bowl practitioner' (which is naturally an analytical and not a native designation) I intend any self-authorised inscriber of bowls (who may have been a more widely established practitioner

of magical arts) who drew upon his or her (presumed) ability to write (as well as their knowledge of efficacious spells) in order to inscribe bowls for profit. The legitimacy and or (religious) authority of certain practitioners may have accrued from institutional affiliations, or from the social standing reflected by the ability to write; it may also have been earned through demonstrations of skill and learning in the writing of bowls, or demonstrations of skill in other arenas.¹⁰⁰ Expertise in the production of the bowls may also have comprised more than just the inscription of the bowl texts, extending to expertise in (demonological) diagnosis and prognosis, as well as to the inscription of the bowls with drawings.¹⁰¹

The large number of extant bowls indicates that the marketplace for magic bowls was a somewhat crowded arena. It plainly featured a variety of actors who operated independently or semi-independently of existing (religious) institutions. As the contents of the bowl texts demonstrate, this arena was not divorced from different forms of social and religious activity. Bowl practice was a place where different types and fields of (un)related expertise merged, and where practitioners occasionally cooperated with other practitioners.¹⁰² The practitioners

¹⁰⁰ Thus we might ascribe the production of some invented- or pseudo-script bowls to respected but illiterate magical practitioners who were commissioned to produce a bowl or bowls. In this regard, it is interesting to note the clear command of a non-alphabetic inscriptional repertoire in a number of pseudo-script bowls that were produced by the same individual. See Waller, “Curious Characters,” 129–32.

¹⁰¹ Vilozy, *Lilith’s Hair and Ashmedai’s Horns*, argues that the drawings on the bowls were produced by people other than the practitioners who wrote the texts. If this were the case, we might expect to find more evidence for different inks upon the bowls—or at least different rates of deterioration and fading in the inks used for drawing and writing—but this is not the case. However, see SHM 5 which contains a spiral incantation in one hand and one ink surrounded by seven drawings with three captions in a different ink and possibly a different hand. At the very least, the drawings and captions were produced with a thicker writing instrument.

¹⁰² See above for the intersections of the bowls with both the legal world and the world of contemporaneous rabbinic Judaism. See Chapter Six for discussion of points of contact between the bowls and some of the materials that came to be included in the Hekhalot corpus. On the transmission of bowl materials from practitioner to practitioner (sometimes across linguistic, ethnic, and religious boundaries), see Levene, *Corpus*, 24–30 and the literature cited therein. Practitioners from different backgrounds were also brought together in the same Venn by clients who purchased bowls from different practitioners for the same house, e.g. Dadbeh s. Asmandukh, who commissioned bowls written in both JBA (AIT 12, AIT 16) and Syriac (AIT 31, AIT 33) for his home; cf. Peters, *Nippur*, 187; Hunter, “Combat and Conflict,” 62. The JBA bowls also include numerous invocations of non-Jewish gods and powers, including the Mesopotamian and Syrian deities Belti, Nereg, Nanai, Shamash, Dilbat, and Mot; and the Iranian powers Anahid, Danahish, and Bagdana. See Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*, 37. For one specific example, see M 163:4, 29 = Levene 1999 which invokes Shamash, YHWH Lord of Hosts, and the Christian Trinity (or at least “Jesus, who conquered the height and the depth with his

behind the JBA bowl texts were familiar with a wide array of Jewish source materials, and their products furnish us with a partial picture of the materials that formed part of Jewish discourse of that place and time.¹⁰³ And though the nature and the scope of the social ties between the bowl practitioners and the Babylonian rabbis are difficult to ascertain, it is plain that the cultural world of the bowls cannot be construed apart from the rabbinic Judaism of the time. Some bowls were even written for rabbis; others may have been written by rabbis.¹⁰⁴

Avigail Manekin-Bamberger has martialled a considerable amount of evidence to suggest that (at least some of) the people who wrote the bowls were part of a Jewish scribal

cross, and ... his exalted Father”), though even a cursory glance at other bowls reveals the juxtaposition of elements that would seem to ‘belong’ to other traditions. Tapani Harviainen, “Syncretistic and Confessional Features in Mesopotamian Incantation Bowls,” *Studia Orientalia* 70 (1993): 33 attributes the “syncretistic” aspects of the incantation bowls to *horror vacui*, i.e. where the “official religion (Judaism, Christianity, Mandaism, Islam) [is not] sufficiently effective to protect a human being against secret adversaries ... it is also profitable to pay attention to foreign cults, demons, and deities.” This syncretistic interpretation of the evidence reflects an idea of *boundaries crossed*. This scholarly rubric, which may be contrasted with *boundaries blurred*, presupposes a keen awareness of communal *differences*. Of course, the notion of ‘religious traditions’ or ‘religions’ dominate our discussions for (justifiable) historical and pragmatic reasons, though they do begin to pose a problem when we encounter practices (or aspects of one tradition) that are shared across the boundaries defined by the people who construct boundaries, whether contemporary elites (such as the rabbis) or ourselves. See Jörg Rüpke, “Living Urban Religion: Blind Spots in Boundary Work,” *Historia Religionum* 10 (2018): 53–64. It is unlikely that the structural differentiation between (and within) different traditions across the broader Sasanian religious landscape was so far progressed as the rubric of crossing boundaries would suggest; in fact, it is a scholarly commonplace that religious identities are often less than clear-cut or of temporary salience only. It is necessary to reflect on the ways in which individual bowl practitioners and the beneficiaries of the bowl texts engaged with religious differences and religious boundaries. See also Ra‘anan S. Boustán and Joseph E. Sanzo, “Christian Magicians, Jewish Magical Idioms, and the Shared Magical Culture of Late Antiquity,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 110.2 (2017): 217–40; Michael Pye, “Syncretism versus Synthesis,” *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 6.3 (1994): 217–29. On the recent rehabilitation of the term ‘syncretism,’ see David Frankfurter, *Christianizing Egypt: Syncretism and Local Worlds in Late Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 15–20.

¹⁰³ Besides the materials mentioned above, the JBA bowls also make extensive mention and use of two rabbinic figures traditionally associated with magic: Joshua bar Peraḥia and Ḥanina ben Dosa. See Chapter Three.

¹⁰⁴ Shaked, “Rabbis in Incantation Bowls.” Cf. James Nathan Ford and Alon Ten-Ami, “An Incantation Bowl for Rav Mešāršia Son of Qaqay,” *Tarbiz* 80 (2011/12): 219–30 (Hebrew).

guild.¹⁰⁵ In a smaller study, Siam Bhayro has argued that these “professional magicians should probably be identified with the scribal guild that was located at the centre, rather than on the periphery, of the Jewish communities of Talmudic Babylonia.”¹⁰⁶ Other bowls inscribed with pseudo-scripts or garbled spells in poor hands may have been inscribed by the beneficiaries of these bowl ‘texts’ themselves.¹⁰⁷ Employing gender as a category of analysis, Rebecca Lesses has examined (the gender ideologies of) the bowls and contemporaneous rabbinic discourse about women and *keshef*, and suggested that women were among those who produced the incantation bowls.¹⁰⁸ Yaakov Elman has also argued that women were not only consumers, victims, and perpetrators of incantatory attacks, but also producers of bowls.¹⁰⁹ The evidence from the bowls is scarcely explicit and permits few concrete conclu-

¹⁰⁵ Manekin-Bamberger, “Intersections,” chapter 1; cf. Bhayro, “Divorcing a Demon,” 130, who argues the likelihood that “the same scribes who would be employed to write Jewish legal documents, such as deeds of divorce, were able to supplement their income by writing incantations, often for non-Jewish clients.” Müller-Kessler, “Jesus, Darius, Marduk,” 221 has also argued from the well-trained scribal hands behind some bowls that the practitioners who produced these bowls may have been affiliated with the rabbinic academies at Sura or Pumbeditha.

¹⁰⁶ Bhayro, “Divorcing a Demon,” 131.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Ortal-Paz Saar, “Review of Shaked, Shaul / Ford, James Nathan / Bhayro, Siam: Aramaic Bowl Spells,” *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* 110.4–5 (2015): 326; Yamauchi, “Aramaic Magic Bowls,” 516.

¹⁰⁸ Rebecca Lesses, “Exe(o)rcising Power: Women as Sorceresses, Exorcists, and Demonesses in Babylonian Jewish Society of Late Antiquity,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 69.2 (2001): 361–62.

¹⁰⁹ Yaakov Elman, “Saffron, Spices, and Sorceresses: Magic Bowls and the Bavli,” in *Daughters of Hecate: Women and Magic in the Ancient World*, ed. Kimberly B. Stratton and Dayna S. Kalleres (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 365–85. The success of Lesses and Elman’s arguments depend largely on how far one is willing to accept—as reflections of social realities—the numerous rabbinic statements and narratives about women as sorceresses. These programmatic statements extend so far as to label “most women” (b. Sanh. 67a) sorceresses, though most content themselves with affirming some intrinsic connection between women and magic. The question here is to what extent these passages should be read as sociological statements or as ideologically motivated discourses that work to contrast the rabbinic estate—and the powers of its representatives—to women as illegitimate claimants of similar powers. While the rabbinic literature certainly relates to the role of women as both (legitimate) healing experts and magical practitioners, we may certainly discern a gender bias within this literature that reflects hierarchies of authority or prerogatives of legitimate male experts over and against illicit female practitioners of similar arts. More precariously, Lesses and Elman’s arguments for female bowl practitioners draw on the appearance in the first person in some bowl texts of the name of the female beneficiary of the bowl. However, first person (narrative) spells are common in the bowls, and these examples of a female ‘I’ in first person spells should be read as instances of a technique whereby the practitioner who wrote the bowl inserted the name of the beneficiary directly into the first-person narrative of the spell. See the bowl

sions about the (different types of) people who produced them, though it may be said that the bowls' heterogeneity is a symptom of diverse types of sociocultural agency and authority in Sasanian Babylonia. The bowl practitioners built on the material peculiarities of their products to construct efficacy through word, image, and deed. They framed their expertise in terms of specific genres—such as narrative—where diverse strategies of self-fashioning, claims to expertise, and superior knowledge techniques—such as—were interwoven.

NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY: CLIENTS AND BENEFICIARIES

This study uses both 'client' and 'beneficiary' to refer to the persons for whom the bowls were written, but it does not intend these terms as interchangeable. As Ortal-Paz Saar observes, 'client' presupposes the existence of a professional practitioner and a clientele.¹¹⁰ It is thus appropriate for circumstances where bowls were commissioned from literate practitioners and/or where persons purchased pseudo-script bowls in the expectation of an Aramaic inscription. However, we cannot exclude a scenario whereby lay-persons inscribed bowls for themselves and/or their family (with invented scripts, if they were not lettered). The term 'client' should thus be used with greater circumspection; 'beneficiary,' however, may be used to refer in every instance to named individuals advantaged by the production of a given bowl.

SECTION II

SURVEY OF BOWL SCHOLARSHIP

The study (and accession to museums) of the magic bowls has its origins in the upswing of interest in Mesopotamian antiquities that arose during the course of the nineteenth century.

text with which this volume opens, where *Dukhtoy d. Aḥat* is inserted directly into the incantation's Russian doll narrative, as well as the extensive discussion in Chapter Five. All of this said, we may derive some circumstantial evidence from the bowls about the relative affluence of the persons for whom they were produced, and the possible financial independence enjoyed by some women. See Shaked, "Rabbis in Incantation Bowls," 100–101, who notes that several bowl clients commissioned dozens of bowls in their battle against specific (demon-induced) ailments and/or for the protection of their households. *Mahdukh d. Newandukh*, for example, commissioned at least forty bowls that have come down to us, making her one of the great tycoons of the Babylonian bowl world. Because many of the bowl tycoons known to us were women "seeking to provide protection not only to themselves but also to a husband and other male members of the household, this could be an indication of a measure of economic independence enjoyed by these women."

¹¹⁰ Saar, "Review of Aramaic Bowl Spells," 326.

The field of bowl studies was initiated in 1853 when Thomas Ellis published one Syriac and six JBA bowl texts from Austin Layard's excavations in Babylon.¹¹¹ And though this publication was followed by several others during the second half of the nineteenth century, scholarship on the bowls remained sparse in the decades after they came to light.¹¹² Indeed, the field only achieved a firm foundation some sixty years later with the publication of James Montgomery's *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur* in 1913.¹¹³ In many ways, this remains *the* statement of the magic bowls. It established the field and outlined a great deal about the bowls that still forms the basis of much of our thought about them today. Montgomery's study consisted of only forty bowl texts, however, at a time when very few bowls were known, photographs of bowls were rare, and scholars from Cannes to Philadelphia had access only to the bowls before them. The number of bowls available for study has since

¹¹¹ Layard, *Discoveries among the Ruins*, 512–23.

¹¹² John Medows Rodwell, "Remarks upon a Terra-Cotta Vase," *Transactions of the Society for Biblical Archaeology* 2 (1873): 114–18, cf. Joseph Halévy, "Observations sur un vase judéo-babylonien du British Museum," *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 5 (1877): 288–93; Daniel Chwolson, "Die Inschriften auf den babylonischen Thongefässen," in *Corpus Inscriptionum Hebraicarum: enthaltend Grabschriften aus der Krim und andere Grab- und Inschriften in alter hebräischer Quadratschrift sowie auch Schriftproben aus Handschriften* (St Petersburg: H. Schmitzdorff, 1882), col. 103–120; Henri Hyvernat, "Sur un vase judéo-babylonien du Musée Lycklama de Cannes (Provence)," *Zeitschrift Für Keilschriftforschung* 2 (1885): 113–48; Moïse Schwab, "Une coupe d'incantation," *Revue d'Assyriologie* 1 (1886): 117–19; Moïse Schwab, "Coupes à inscriptions magiques," *Proceedings of the Society for Biblical Archaeology* 13 (1891): 583–95; Moïse Schwab, "Deux vases judéo-babyloniens," *Revue d'Assyriologie* 2 (1892): 136–42; Abraham Eliyah Harkavy, "Neskol'ko zamečaniy on aramejskoj dadpisi na vase, naxodjaščejsja v moskve," *Zapiski vostočnago otdelenija imperatorskago russkago arxeologičeskago obščestava* 4 (1889): 83–95; Jos Wohlstein, "Über einige aramäische Inschriften auf Thongefässen des Königlichen Museum zu Berlin," *Zeitschrift Für Assyriologie* 8 (1893): 313–40; Jos Wohlstein, "Über einige aramäische Inschriften auf Thongefässen des Königlichen Museum zu Berlin," *Zeitschrift Für Assyriologie* 9 (1894): 11–41; Pierre Lacau, "Une coupe d'incantation," *Revue d'Assyriologie* 3.2 (1894): 49–51. Henri Pognon also published more than thirty Mandaic bowls from Khuabir in the final decade of the nineteenth century. See Henri Pognon, "Une incantation contre les génies malfaisants en mandaïte," *Mémoires de la Société linguistique de Paris* 8 (1894): 193–234; Pognon, *Inscriptions mandaïtes*. Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts*, 16–25 provides a detailed survey of bowl publications prior to 1913—many of which are quite often faulty—thereby rendering further discussion of these early publications unnecessary.

¹¹³ The bowls thus attract only the briefest mention in Ludwig Blau, *Das altjüdische Zauberwesen* (Strassbourg: Trubner, 1898), 154 n.2, their importance having escaped even the nineteenth century's foremost scholar of Jewish magic.

grown exponentially and this growth has been accompanied by a relative explosion in the number of bowl publications.¹¹⁴

The field of bowl studies consists primarily of editions and translations of bowl texts.¹¹⁵ As of this writing, almost 600 bowls had been published in total: some 415 JBA bowls, 125 Mandaic bowls, and 50 Syriac bowls. Editions of bowl texts usually include commentaries, but these tend to focus on highly localised aspects of individual incantations. Besides these commentaries, scholarship has elsewhere engaged in explicating the linguistic

¹¹⁴ After Montgomery, the next most important name in bowl studies for most of the twentieth century was Cyrus H. Gordon, who produced editions of a number of bowls. For the most important of these publications, see Cyrus H. Gordon, "Aramaic Magical Bowls in the Istanbul and Baghdad Museums," *Archiv Orientalní* 6 (1934): 319–34; Cyrus H. Gordon, "Aramaic and Mandaic Magical Bowls," *Archiv Orientalní* 9 (1937): 84–16; Gordon, "Aramaic Incantation Bowls"; Cyrus H. Gordon, "Magic Bowls in the Moriah Collection," *Orientalia* 53 (1984): 220–41. Several of Gordon's students also produced (and published) dissertations containing bowl corpora: Yamauchi, *Mandaic Incantation Texts*; Victor Paul Hamilton, "Syriac Incantation Bowls" (Brandeis University, 1971); Charles D. Isbell, *Corpus of the Aramaic Incantation Bowls* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1975). Other (larger) publications of bowl texts from this period include Javier Teixidor, "The Syriac Incantation Bowls in the Iraq Museum," *Sumer* 18 (1962): 51–62; Isak Jeruzalmi, "Les coupes magiques araméennes de mésopotamie" (Université de Paris, 1963); William Stewart McCullough, *Jewish and Mandaean Incantation Bowls in the Royal Ontario Museum* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967). A subsequent high watermark in the field arrived with the publication of two editions of bowl texts by Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked towards the end of the twentieth century: Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*; Naveh and Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae*. These included Aramaic amulets in the discussion, sought to compare the bowls to other contemporary and later sources (including the PGM and Cairo Genizah fragments) in order to better understand the terminology and praxis of the bowls, and used parallel texts to complement and improve readings. Other important twentieth century editions of bowl texts include Markham J. Geller, "Four Aramaic Incantation Bowls," in *The Bible World: Essays in Honor of Cyrus H. Gordon*, ed. Gary Rendsburg et al. (New York: Ktav, 1980), 47–60; Markham J. Geller, "Eight Incantation Bowls," *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 17 (1986): 101–17.

¹¹⁵ The most important publications over the past two decades are Segal, *Catalogue*; Levene, *Corpus*; Christa Müller-Kessler, *Die Zauberschalentexte in der Hilprecht-Sammlung, Jena, und weitere Nippur-Texte anderer Sammlungen* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005); Faraj, *Coppe magique*; Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*; Levene, *Curses*; Tatyana Fain, James Nathan Ford, and Alexey Lyavdansky, "Aramaic Incantation Bowls at the State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg," *Babel und Bibel* 9 (2016): 289–324; James Nathan Ford and Ohad Abudraham, "Syriac and Mandaic Incantation Bowls," in *Findings Gone Astray: ADCA Confiscated Items*, ed. Dalit Regev and Hananya Hizmi (Jerusalem: The Antiquities Department of the Civil Administration, 2018), 75–111; Bhayro et al., *Bowls in the Vorderasiatisches Museum*; Ford and Morgenstern, *Aramaic Incantation Bowls in Museum Collections: The Frau Professor Hilprecht Collection of Babylonian Antiquities, Jena*.

features of the Aramaic language used in the bowls.¹¹⁶ It has also delved into the magical praxis of the bowls, and touched briefly on their value for understanding the social history of Sasanian Jewry.¹¹⁷ In a handful of important articles, Shaul Shaked has studied the bowl texts as a form of literary production.¹¹⁸ It is these that the present work builds upon.

¹¹⁶ For the most important treatments, see Ohad Abudraham, “A Grammar of Early Mandaic According to the Language of the Incantation Bowls and Amulets” (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, 2017); Ya‘akov Naḥum Epstein, “Gloses babylo-araméennes,” *Revue des Études Juives* 73 (1921): 27–58; Ya‘akov Naḥum Epstein, “Gloses babylo-araméennes,” *Revue des Études Juives* 74 (1922): 40–72; James Nathan Ford, “Phonetic Spellings of the Subordinating Particle d(y) in the Jewish Babylonian Aramaic Magic Bowls,” *Aramaic Studies* 10.2 (2012): 237–69; Juusola, *Linguistic Peculiarities*; Morgenstern, “Non-Standard Spellings”; Morgenstern and Ford, “Readings and Interpretations”; Marco Moriggi, *La lingua delle coppe magiche siriane* (Firenze: Edizioni Dipartimento di Linguistica, Università di Firenze, 2004); Marco Moriggi, “Syriac Incantation Bowls and Linguistic Interference in Sasanian Babylonia,” in *Afro-Asiatic Studies: 11th Italian Meeting of Afro-Asiatic Linguistics*, ed. Alessandro Mengozzi (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2005), 313–23; Christa Müller-Kessler, “Puzzling Words and Spellings in Babylonian Aramaic Magic Bowls,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 62 (1999): 111–14; Müller-Kessler, “Die Stellung”; Christa Müller-Kessler, “More on Puzzling Words and Spellings in Aramaic Incantation Bowls and Related Texts,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 75 (2012): 1–31; William H. Rossell, *A Handbook of Magical Aramaic Texts* (Ringwood: Department of Semitics of Shelton College, 1953). A large number of bowls also form part of the textual inventory used as the basis for Michael Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Magic of the Talmudic and Geonic Periods* (Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 2002).

¹¹⁷ For a recent synthetic treatment of bowl scholarship, see Harari, *Jewish Magic*, 133–40. On praxis, see, e.g. Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts*, 40–101; Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*, 13–19. On the origins of the practice, see Frankfurter, “Scorpion/Demon,” cf. Harari, *Jewish Magic*, 234–35 for earlier Mesopotamian evidence for the apotropaic use of non-inscribed bowls: “It thus seems that the use of bowls in the Sassanid era ... is a cultural variation of a magic practice that had been widespread in Mesopotamia for thousands of years” (235). On the origins of the sub-practice whereby pairs of incantations bowls were joined and buried together, see Ortal-Paz Saar, “Mesopotamian Double-Jar Burials and Incantation Bowls,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 138.4 (2018): 863–73. On the bowls and the social history of Sasanian Jewry, see, e.g. Siam Bhayro, “The Reception of Mesopotamian and Early Jewish Traditions in the Aramaic Incantation Bowls,” *Aramaic Studies* 11 (2013): 187–96; Yuval Harari, “Power and Money: Economic Aspects of the Use of Magic by Jews in Ancient Times and the Early Middle Ages,” *Pe‘amim* 85 (2000): 14–42 (Hebrew); Harviainen, “Syncretistic and Confessional Features”; Morony, “Magic and Society”; Shaked, “Popular Religion in Sasanian Babylonia.” For synthetic treatments of the bowls in relation to the social history of Sasanian Jewry, see Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History*, 190–94; Michael G. Morony, “Religion and the Aramaic Incantation Bowls,” *Religion Compass* 1.4 (2007): 414–29.

¹¹⁸ Shaked, “Poetics of Spells”; Shaul Shaked, “Healing as an Act of Transformation,” in *Self and Self-Transformations in the History of Religions*, ed. David Shulman and Guy G. Stroumsa (Oxford: Oxford

SECTION III

TOWARDS A NEW APPROACH

TOWARDS A NEW APPROACH

Amidst the mass of text editions and linguistic and historical research on the bowls, one important aspect of the bowls is frequently elided, ignored, or outright forgotten. This is the fact that they were inscribed for an audience of demons, angels, and other special beings that were (most often) invisible to the human eye. The bowls are acts of communication. To communicate is to act (as speech act theory shows us) and to communicate is to create new realities.¹¹⁹ As acts of communication, the bowls were intended by way of their inscription and burial to reach this invisible audience and act upon it in service of these new realities.

Examining the bowls as a form of communication shifts our attention to the discursive level and the present study proposes to account for the unusual communicative situation of the bowls—and the varieties of communicative and persuasive channels that they open up—by emphasising the rhetoricity inherent in all language. The particular semantic range that this study intends by ‘rhetoricity’ is outlined in Chapter Two, but in general this study intends rhetoric as the situational use of written language to persuade. The bowls were embedded in an environment populated by human and transmundane agents engaged in complex web of social interactions. This study emphasises written language—in the sense of communication—in order to highlight the communicative constitution of these agents. Situational refers to the fact that persuasive language in the bowls cannot be divorced from the need(s) of the moment. The rhetoric of the bowl texts is designed to constrain—that is, bring certain salient words, phrases, and motivations to bear upon—an audience of transmundane beings in order

University Press, 2002), 121–30; Shaked, “Dramatis Personae”; Shaked, “Transmission and Transformation.” See also Shaked, “Peace Be Upon You.” Cf. Henk S. Versnel, “The Poetics of the Magical Charm: An Essay on the Power of Words,” in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, ed. Paul Mirecki and Marvin Meyer (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 105–58.

¹¹⁹ This is most pronounced in light of the concept of performative speech: J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words: The William James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1955*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980); John R. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969); John R. Searle, *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

to modify a situation by removing or overcoming a controlling exigency.¹²⁰ The social situation behind the bowls is fundamentally agonistic and the actors that commissioned and produced the bowls strove for control over contingency by seeking to create safe(r) situations (in part) through verbal action. Acting means acting in order to solve problems, and it is in acting that the bowl practitioners refined, modified, or further developed various strategies of written discourse: the practitioner as an actor is always located within a social context alongside other actors and traditions of action. Within this concrete but contingent space of possibilities, the practitioner could be creative and develop new solutions or emend previous solutions to the circumstances at hand. To examine the rhetoric of the bowls is thus to examine their appropriation and use of persuasive language across diverse social interactions that reflect discrete though often habitual social situations and constellations.

It has been uncommon in bowl studies to treat the language of the bowls—whose forms may not necessarily lend themselves to traditional rhetorical analysis—on its own merits, while even to the present day the bowls are still quite often dismissed or derided.¹²¹ Thus the genre of bowl magic has been referred to as “all pretty basic and relatively unsophisticated.”¹²² The language of the bowls has been characterized as “corrupt” or “debased” and their style and contents as “repetitive and stilted. The overall theme—the suppression or expulsion

¹²⁰ Rhetoric thus establishes a relation to concrete practice and pragmatic action, thereby opening itself up to interdisciplinary collaboration with theory of action. On situational rhetoric, see Lloyd F. Bitzer, “The Rhetorical Situation,” *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 1.1 (1968): 6, who defines the rhetorical situation as “a complex of persons, events, objects, and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence which can be completely or partially removed if discourse, introduced into the situation, can so constrain human decision or action as to bring about the significant modification of the exigence.” Cf. Richard E. Vatz, “The Myth of the Rhetorical Situation,” *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 6.3 (1973): 154–61, who argues that rhetoric is not situational, but that situations are rhetorical. Vatz contends that the world is not a plot of discrete events, but a scene of inexhaustible events. On this basis, he argues that we cannot account for the relation between situations and rhetoric without first accounting for the persuader’s initial selection (and linguistic depiction) of certain facts or events from the wider scene.

¹²¹ I need not cite here the litany of criticisms levelled against the bowls in earlier scholarship. The general attitude of scholarship of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries towards magical texts is well known and well documented. However, Rudolf Macuch, *Handbook of Classical and Modern Mandaic* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1965), lix, vi exemplifies the wider nineteenth and twentieth century attitude towards the bowls: he dismissed their texts as “a mass of hardly decipherable or completely incomprehensible nonsense,” and refused to incorporate the contents of the Mandaic bowls into his *Handbook* except where he “grudgingly” felt obliged to quote “examples worth an entry or a reference.”

¹²² Geller, “Magic Bowls Belong in Babylonia,” 97.

of evil spirits—cannot but become monotonous.”¹²³ Similarly, Philip Alexander’s judgments on the Hekhalot literature have elsewhere been applied to the bowls: “their verbosity, their tiresome repetitions and bizarre ideas leave the reader dulled and stupefied rather than elevated or enlightened.”¹²⁴

One of the advantages of the approach advocated here is that it allows us to treat the bowl texts as a *sui generis* form of discourse characterised by structures, arguments, stylistic forms, and an *actio* of its own. In this way it is possible to approach the frequently maligned aspects of the bowls in a different light, rather than applying qualitative judgments (seemingly the result of fatigue from reading too many similar bowls) to texts whose goal was plainly not to reduce redundancy,¹²⁵ and which should not be judged (either on an individual basis or on the basis of duplications or parallels across the corpus) as repetitive. Instead we might ask what value these repetitions serve (in and of themselves) as persuasive devices. Repetition, after all, is the simplest form of insistence, and the overlaps and recapitulations of the bowl texts are perhaps ultimately recursive rather than merely repetitive; they may be said to achieve a ‘syndetic’ structure (or system of referential links) of remarkable coherency and resolution; and to function moreover as a form of channel-redundancy and built-in error correction whereby overlap and recapitulation ensure that the message got through one way or another.

The focus of the present work, however, is the narrative spells contained in the JBA bowl texts. In this it extends Shaul Shaked’s work on the JBA bowl texts as a form of literary production. In examining the narrative spells in the bowl, my first question is what these spells are doing in the incantation texts of the bowls. In order to better understand the form and function of these spells in the bowls, I expand upon a conception of rhetoric that may be

¹²³ Segal, *Catalogue*, 29.

¹²⁴ In Shaked, “Poetics of Spells,” 173, though Shaked importantly goes on to observe that, while there may be “an element of truth in this judgement about the literary merit of the texts in question ... one cannot help feeling that it ignores the literary structure and the aesthetic conventions that underlie these writings. No one would claim that literary considerations were the paramount preoccupation of the people who composed these texts. But they do have the constituents of literary style in them, and they can be treated with the tools that we use for literary analysis.”

¹²⁵ See, e.g. IM 71180 = Faraj and Moriggi 2005: 73-74 which consists of a single exorcistic spell (three imperatives that invoke the help of a powerful being against a curse, followed by two jussives that exorcise said curse from the home of the beneficiary) that is repeated three times in its entirety.

referred to as ‘rhetorico-poetic’ persuasion.¹²⁶ This conception of persuasion incorporates important elements from what is traditionally understood as poetics—in particular the elements of *mimêsis* or representation and *phantasia* or visualisation—and represents a branch of the rhetorical tradition that is concerned with artfully composed persuasive discourse. One of the earliest and most noticeable articulations of this branch of rhetorical tradition is to be found in the work of the pre-Socratic Greek philosopher and rhetorician Gorgias, who also discusses the relations between magic and rhetoric.

The most basic proposition advanced by this ancient branch of rhetoric is that a convincing argument—that is, the successful production of relations of meaning—may be supported by mimetic processes and other poetic means. That is, that the problematic realities and crises of human life may be dealt with by telling a story or presenting a dramatic action, thereby bringing the techniques and power of representational performance to bear upon an audience. This understanding of rhetoric is reflected in various treatments of the term discussed in Chapter Two, including one of the primary theoretical models adopted in this study: rhetorical narratology.

NOTE ON METHODOLOGY

It might be objected that contemporary theories of persuasion—focussed mainly on literary texts—alongside classical treatises on rhetoric from the ancient Greek world—also focussed on literary texts—can be used to analyse the late antique Mesopotamian texts of the JBA incantation bowls. My approach obviously does not reflect the anachronistic assumption that the bowl practitioners received any kind of rhetorical training or had access to rhetorical handbooks or treatises (let alone access to twenty-first century conceptualisations of rhetorical theory). Rather, it builds on the understanding that “rhetoric is not mere theory of forms of speech and persuasion; rather, it can develop out of a native talent for practical mastery, without any theoretical reflection about ways and means.”¹²⁷ Practice precedes theory, and theory is subsequent to the praxes it is abstracted from (even as it may in turn shape practice). Furthermore, any text read as poetic can equally be read as persuasive and socially situated, even as texts whose primary and explicit function is rhetorical can be seen to exercise their persuasive power partly through the effect of poetic words and worlds. Both poetic and rhe-

¹²⁶ For this term, see Stephen Halliwell, *Between Ecstasy and Truth: Interpretations of Greek Poetics from Homer to Longinus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 277.

¹²⁷ Gadamer, “On the Scope and Function of Hermeneutical Reflection,” 20.

torical texts prompt for aesthetic responses, while contemporary theory simply offers explanations for how people—who read no theory, and may not have reflected on what they were doing—sought to influence themselves and others. The view that I adopt in this study is that—in dialogue with the bowls—rhetoric may serve as a valuable conversation partner and conceptual tool, furnishing us with a theoretical framework and a set of basic concepts through which to examine persuasive language in the JBA bowls.

CHAPTER TWO

Framing the Bowls and Their Narratives Magic, Rhetoric, and Rhetorical Narratology

INTRODUCTION

Though this study shares several substantive predilections and methodological concerns with past and present bowl scholarship, its agenda departs in some significant ways from most of that scholarship. The approach adopted herein thus mandates that I pay special attention to the semantic ranges of—and interrelations between—its operative terms. In attempting to understand the appearance of narrative spells in the incantation bowls, this study sites itself at the crossroads of magic, rhetoric, and narrative. Each of these elements have been framed using various taxonomies and (analytical) models within the wider scholarly imagination, and this chapter circumscribes the ways in which I will use magic, rhetoric, and narrative as analytical tools, as well as clarifying what the use of these terms as conceptual tools brings to the study of the bowls.

The relations between magic, rhetoric, and poetics have been variously discussed, beginning with the pre-Socratic Greek philosopher and rhetorician Gorgias of Leontini.¹ In

¹ Along with Plato and Isocrates, Gorgias conducted a spirited debate on the relations between magical and literary ‘enchantment.’ On this debate, as well as the relationship between magic and rhetoric in ancient Greek literature more broadly, see Jacqueline de Romilly, *Magic and Rhetoric in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975); Hugh Parry, *Thelxis: Magic and Imagination in Greek Myth and Poetry* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1992); cf. Thomas D. McCreight, “Exemplum or Historiola? Literature and Magic in Apuleius’ Apology,” *Syllecta Classica* 15 (2004): 153–75. For a broader thematic treatment, see John O. Ward, “Magic and Rhetoric From Antiquity to the Renaissance: Some Ruminations,” *Rhetorics: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* 6.1 (1988): 57–118. In a Jewish historical context, see Swartz, “Scribal Magic.” What magic and rhetoric share, in the précis advanced by Niek Veldhuis, “The Poetry of Magic,” in Abusch and van

what follows, however, my initial strategy is to take up questions one by one. I am first of all concerned to differentiate various aspects of magic and rhetoric for the purposes of this study. The bowls provision us with a very complex set of textual and material interrelations, and the relations between these can only be discovered and reconstituted through such projects of differentiation.

Magic

Such a process begins with a category like magic, and the first section of this chapter outlines an analytical concept of magic. It also shows what this concept contributes to our understanding of the bowls. But to broach the subject of magic means to broach the (problematic) history of the academic study of magic. I thus begin with a very brief overview of recent scholarship that addresses the term. I also consider the implications of the various paradigm shifts in our understanding of magic. I suggest that both the concept of a definitive definition as well as its opposite movement—towards the rejection of the term—are appealed to only by weariness. Ultimately, I conclude that it is necessary to attempt a definition of magic—in order to aid in the proper understanding of the bowls—despite claims from some quarters that the term is otiose at best and chimerical and polemic at worst.

Ultimately, the definitional procedure in this work is fairly straightforward. The bowls do not self-designate using any of the terms conventionally translated into English as magic, and the (rabbinic) literature that derives from this period does not mention the bowls as part of (what was designated by this literature as) contemporary magical practice.² As such, I acknowledge the entirely heuristic nature of ‘magic’ here. In the way that I use it, the term is designed simply to bring certain qualities of the bowls to the fore. Beginning almost in the tradition of substantialist definitions, I introduce the notion of demons, angels, and God and point to their presence in the communicative context of the bowls. From there I point to the different kinds of language that the bowls address to these special beings.³ On the basis of these kinds of language, I suggest that the bowls may fruitfully be classified as magic. Ulti-

der Toorn, ed., *Mesopotamian Magic*, 39 is “the intention not to express one’s feelings, or to communicate a state of events, but to change something, be it the curing of an illness or the opinion of your adversaries.”

² A detailed discussion of rabbinic attitudes towards *keshef* or witchcraft can be found in Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 351–425 who notes the lack of clear references to the bowls in rabbinic literature.

³ Cf. the (quasi) ostensive procedure outlined by Harari, *Jewish Magic*, 159, 169–75; Yuval Harari, “What Is a Magical Text? – Methodological Reflections Aimed at Redefining Early Jewish Magic,” in *Officina Magica: Essays on the Practice of Magic in Antiquity*, ed. Shaul Shaked (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 91–124.

mately, my approach means conceptualising magic from the communicative perspectives of the transmundane beings and human persons that commissioned, inscribed, and read the bowls once they were overturned and buried. My use of this label for the bowls does not mean that the rituals and practitioners represented by the bowls were imagined to be ambiguous or illegitimate in the cultural world of Sasanian Mesopotamia. Further to this point, my use of magic uncouples the term (without totally severing it) from the magic-religion dichotomy. There seems little point to me in trying to legislate in a comprehensive way what magic is and is not in relation to religion; in so far as it may be necessary to draw such a dividing line, it seems best to wait until (the clarification of) some particular issue makes the such a line desirable.⁴ It is of course to be expected that other writers working in the field of late antique Judaism will draw their lines—if they do so at all—in different places and in relation to different issues. Other commentators may view certain features of the bowls as more salient (to the concerns of their work) or they may simply choose to emphasise aspects of the bowl texts other than those which are given prominence in this study. Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, for example, suggest that the bowls may be understood to represent an exercise in piety.⁵ Such an amalgamation of pieties as we find in the bowls might then suggest a form of ‘popular’ religion that gestures to a sphere of devotion outside (the analytic categories of) elite, learned, or ‘orthodox’ Judaism.⁶

Narrative, rhetoric, and rhetorical narratology

The focus of this study is the use of narrative spells in the incantation bowls. But how does narrative work to persuade an angel or demon to do anything, thereby affecting a change in the world? In answering this question, I first turn to consider the term ‘rhetoric’ and its uses for this study. Though the use of ‘rhetoric’ is much less controversial than ‘magic,’ the number of available definitions of the term represents an (apparent) embarrassment in more than one sense. Competition over the definition of rhetoric goes on throughout antiquity, while

⁴ Of course, such questions do need to be raised in order to determine where particular discussions belong and to determine how these discussions should be labelled, understood, critiqued, and defended. (It is too often forgotten, however, that to label is to draw a boundary where previously there was no boundary; we must remember not to fuse the label with what is labelled.) Such questions simply do not form part of the trajectory of the present chapter.

⁵ Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 8.

⁶ Such a conclusion might previously have reflected a vision of the bowls as representing a fall from properly guided orthodoxy—a monolithic conception of Judaism, for example—though it plainly carries no such evaluative connotations in Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro’s analysis.

these ancient positions have subsequently been modified and multiplied in untold numbers of post-classical formulations. The history of rhetoric, however, largely comprises a movement from the art of speaking in public in deliberative assemblies, judicial settings, or civil events, to a broadening of the term to designate persuasive speech *per se*. Broadly speaking, rhetoric can be defined as “the use of symbols to induce social action,”⁷ meaning that rhetorical discourse is discourse aimed at specific audiences for specific reasons in specific situations. As such, the incantation bowls certainly seem to be rich in rhetoric-in-practice, and *psogos* in particular (which is usually translated as invective, a good deal of which the bowls direct towards their demonic interlocutors).

In this section, I emphasise several aspects of the contemporary study of rhetoric that are important to the study of narrative in the bowls. In particular, I pay attention to the relations between rhetoric and poetics, that is, rhetoric and the construction of narratives.⁸ My discussion in this section reflects an idea of rhetoric as artfully composed persuasive discourse. This embraces the two traditional meanings of rhetoric—persuasive action and figurative language. This allows me to emphasise either or both senses in relation to the bowls and the different narrative resources employed therein; it also allows me to specify how these different narrative materials in the bowl incantations sought to affect their transmundane audiences in terms of particular power relations. Having established that narrative and rhetoric are not mutually exclusive, I ask in what ways certain bowl spells actually constitute narrative. For the purposes of this study, I define narrative at its most basic as the representation of a sequence of at least two events. I then turn to outline a theoretical approach that accounts for the use of narrative as a communicative act designed to affect an audience of demons. In Chapter One, I conducted a historical survey of bowl scholarship. The genre of the present chapter is conceptual, and I touch only on recent key studies or movements within the study of magic, rhetoric, and narrative in order to advance my approach to the bowls.

⁷ Gerald A. Hauser, *Introduction to Rhetorical Theory* (Long Grove: Waveland Press, 2002), 3.

⁸ Poetics literally concerns “making” (ποίησις) or literary construction. Most commentators recognise that “poetry” is too restrictive a translation of the original Greek ποίησις, which forms the title of Aristotle’s *Poetics*. German *Dichtung* is more useful as a translation: it embraces both prose and verse, and better captures—for instance—the fact that Aristotle analyses elements of epic and tragedy beyond their metric form whilst also disregarding other verse literature.

SECTION I

DEFINING MAGIC

INTRODUCTION

The term magic is a Proteus which has assumed all sorts of forms and significations and about which there has been much battling and ink shed. Like poetry, it resists definition, and the last century has seen a number of shifts in its study. The very terms in which understanding may be attempted have changed radically and this is in itself potent information. The ‘constructedness’ of the category magic—for example—has received a great deal of attention, for magic’s past is fraught with polemics. Within the scholarly literature, religion and science have generally comprised the furniture of the discussion and magic has sometimes been put hard to work making ideological claims for one or the other.⁹ But despite severe criticism, the category continues to be used in many academic disciplines, both to signify and to classify various materials. Some scholars acknowledge magic as a disputed category but argue that the term retains much polythetic and prototypical value nonetheless. Other scholars reject any attempt to use the term whatsoever, though this approach—at least in relation to the ancient world—appears to be losing traction in recent times.¹⁰

The diversity of approaches to magic reflects the difficulty of defining magic in a consistent and widely accepted manner. The radically different nature of these approaches—on the part of good scholars—must surely reflect very different methods and presupposi-

⁹ Jonathan Z. Smith, *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 215 writes that “in the history of [magic’s] imagination, it has been doubly dual, being counter-distinguished from ... both ‘science’ and ‘religion.’ On logical grounds alone, this reduplicated dualism should give rise to some suspicion of duplicity, for, if something is the opposite of one member of another opposition, it ought to have, at the very least, a close affinity to the second member of the pair.” The difference between magic and religion or science in our culture has functioned—to borrow from Smith again—as a means of “culturally encoding and decoding, of maintaining and relativizing internal as well as external distinctions” (245).

¹⁰ See now David Frankfurter, “Ancient Magic in a New Key: Refining an Exotic Discipline in the History of Religions,” in *Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic*, ed. David Frankfurter (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 3–20 and especially Joseph E. Sanzo, “Deconstructing the Deconstructionists: A Response to Recent Criticisms of the Rubric ‘Ancient Magic,’” in *Ancient Magic: Then and Now*, ed. Attilio Mastrocinque, Joseph Sanzo, and Marianna Scapini (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, forthcoming).

tions.¹¹ In what follows, I do not believe it is necessary to offer an overview of these diverse approaches. The central trajectory of the academic study of magic in the twentieth-century is so well-rehearsed as to require no extensive recapitulation here.¹² Instead, I focus only on the perceived pitfalls of defining magic, and what a heuristic category of magic—carefully conceived and continuously subject to critical reflection and scrutiny—adds to the study of antiquity.

MAGIC AND THE PROBLEMS OF ITS DEFINITION

Magic is a problematic category with a dubious polemical past.¹³ Laden as it is with complicated cultural and analytical baggage, it is not surprising that calls for the abandonment of the

¹¹ As Hans H. Penner and Edward A. Yonan, “Is a Science of Religion Possible?” *The Journal of Religion* 52.2 (1972): 107–33 point out, all that a multiplicity of definitions implies is a multiplicity of methods.

¹² I need not add my voice to an already large choir. For extensive treatments, see Stanley J. Tambiah, *Magic, Science, Religion, and the Scope of Rationality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Graham Cunningham, *Religion and Magic: Approaches and Theories* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999); Randall G. Styers, *Making Magic: Religion, Magic and Science in the Modern World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 69–119; Yuval Harari, “What Is a Magical Text?”; Bernd-Christian Otto, *Magie: Rezeptions- und diskursgeschichtliche Analysen von der Antike bis zur Neuzeit* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2011). For important collections of essays, many of which address (as well as forming part of) the history of the study of magic, see Christopher A. Faraone and Dirk Obbink, eds., *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); Marvin W. Meyer and Paul Mirecki, eds., *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power* (Leiden: Brill, 1995); Hans G. Kippenberg and Peter Schäfer, eds., *Envisioning Magic: A Princeton Seminar and Symposium* (Leiden: Brill, 1997); David R. Jordan, Hugo Montgomery, and Einar Thomassen, eds., *The World of Ancient Magic: Papers from the First International Samson Eitrem Seminar* (Bergen: Norwegian Institute at Athens, 1999); Leda Ciruolo and Jonathan Seidel, eds., *Magic and Divination in the Ancient World* (Leiden: Brill, 2002); Mirecki and Meyer, eds., *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*; Jan N. Bremmer and Jan R. Veenstra, eds., *The Metamorphosis of Magic: From Late Antiquity to the Early Modern Period* (Leiden: Brill, 2003); Noegel, Walker, and Wheeler, eds., *Prayer, Magic, and the Stars*; Kai Brodersen and Amina Kropp, eds., *Fluchtafeln: Neue Funde und neue Deutungen zum antiken Schadenzauber* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Antike, 2004); Shaul Shaked, ed., *Officina Magica*; Richard L. Gordon and Francisco Marco Simón, eds., *Magical Practice in the Latin West* (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Bohak, Harari, and Shaked, eds., *Continuity and Innovation*; Kimberly B. Stratton and Dayna S. Kalleres, eds., *Daughters of Hecate: Women and Magic in the Ancient World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Frankfurter, ed., *Guide to Ancient Magic*.

¹³ For detailed studies of the problems endemic to the term magic, see most recently Bernd-Christian Otto, “Towards Historicizing ‘Magic’ in Antiquity,” *Numen* 60 (2013): 308–347; Bernd-Christian Otto, “Magic and Religious Individualization: On the Construction and Deconstruction of Analytical Categories in the Study of Religion,” *Historia Religionum: An International Journal* 9 (2017): 29–52. In relation primarily to early Christian studies, but with a bearing on the study of ancient magic more generally, see the important contributions by

term have issued from some quarters.¹⁴ And while most of the criticisms levelled against magic in important studies by Jonathan Z. Smith, David Aune, and Bernd-Christian Otto—just for instance—are beyond dispute, it seems unlikely that the term magic is going away anytime soon.¹⁵ Mostly the concept seems difficult to avoid, and scholarship finds itself situated somewhere between the devil and the deep blue sea; between using the word magic and abandoning it altogether. Among those who call for the term to be replaced, it is common to point out that the category has long been deployed—by both ancients and moderns—to denigrate and to characterise as deviant, savage, or strange practices that were disapproved of or considered inferior by the person or institution doing the labelling. Another valid criticism that is frequently levelled against magic is that it fails to do justice to the realities and complexities of ancient life. Further to this point, it has long been stressed that the facile series of dichotomies religion/magic = public/private = supplicative/manipulative do not correspond to many ancient or modern ritual practices. Among those who advocate for the continuing use

David E. Aune, “‘Magic’ in Early Christianity and Its Ancient Mediterranean Context: A Survey of Some Recent Scholarship,” *Annali di storia dell’esegesi* 24 (2007): 229–294; David E. Aune, “The Use of the Term ‘Magic’ as a Socio-Religious Category in the Study of the Greco-Roman World and Early Christianity,” in *To Set at Liberty: Essays on Early Christianity and Its Social World in Honor of John H. Elliott*, ed. Stephen Black (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2014), 15–26;

¹⁴ In his important article, Otto, “Historicizing Magic,” 320–321 concludes that magic should be replaced with a “critical interpretation of the concept of ‘religion’ accompanied by modern interpretations of the concept of ‘ritual’ and subordinate functional terms (describing ritual goals such as ‘divination,’ ‘healing,’ ‘binding,’ etc.).” Cf. Smith, “Trading Places,” 16–17 who sought earlier to disassociate magic from its subordinate constituent parts. These scholars advocate the use of more specific categories of function—such as healing or binding—on the basis that such categories are free (or freer) from the pejorative connotations and taxonomic limitations of ‘magic.’ What such studies ignore is the fact that these subordinate or middle-order categories generally already function—on a deeper cultural level—as an extension of the rubric ‘magic,’ i.e. our concept of magic and its attendant baggage undergirds these specific categories, whether the term is acknowledged or not. As such, their deployment functions simply to displace the cultural baggage associated with magic and to render the concept of magic implicit (which is not to say innocuous). Further to this, the primary replacement category for magic that is most often mooted—religion—is hardly problem free, burdened as it is with implicit judgments, a long and diverse history, and a problem of fuzzy semantics to rival magic. Remarking upon this issue (in a footnote!) Otto, “Historicizing Magic,” 321 n. 55 claims that religion is a “less disputed” term than magic, conveniently downplaying a growing sentiment in the field of religious studies (similar to the movement in the field of magical studies) which construes religion as an inherently biased category which could (according to some commentators) also be given a decent burial. See the note below.

¹⁵ It is in fact some sixty years since Olof Pettersson, “Magic-Religion: Some Marginal Notes to an Old Problem,” *Ethnos* 22 (1957): 119 called for the term to be given a “decent burial.”

of the term, it is typical to point to the fact that it is simply impossible to ignore the common use of the terms magic and religion in our culture. We are deeply beholden on a cultural level to such concepts, even if their range is unclear and we are unable delimit their borders precisely. This confounds us, not least because we find strict principles—being strict—to look rational to us.

The point often made is that this lack of definite borders need not distress us, nor prevent us from discussing the phenomena we wish to refer to, not least because we cannot even begin to conceive of our sources—let alone investigate them—without first having some general concept, however broad, however vague, however conceptually value-laden, to get going with.¹⁶ As Yuval Harari notes, “The choice of texts on which scholars base their works testify to a preconceived perception of the particular phenomenon that they are interested in.”¹⁷ This is inescapable. We are talking here about the inevitability of preconceived perceptions, and the fact that the collection of data can never confirm but only presuppose an interpretation of this data. Scholarly discourse can only ever be etic and “as moderns ... we have no alternative but to use our own concepts and categories to describe and explain other societies.”¹⁸

Henk Versnel was keen to stress this point in a much-cited article in which he argues the unworkability of abandoning the term magic.¹⁹ Quoting J.A.M. Snoek’s categorical statement that “an emic scholarly approach is a *contradictio in terminis*. Scholarly discourse is always etic and should always therefore be conducted in etic terms,” Versnel begins by emphasising the seeming unavoidability of the term magic.²⁰ We cannot avoid it in his view

¹⁶ At the very least, as demonstrated by Gager’s failed but valiant attempt in *Curse Tablets* to avoid the term ‘magic’ altogether, we need some general concept of magic to structure our understanding in opposition to, thereby rendering this discussion dependent on magic (in the manner of reverse-engineering).

¹⁷ Harari, “What Is a Magical Text?” 113.

¹⁸ Keith Hopkins, “Contraception in the Roman Empire,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 8.1 (1965): 125. Cf. the remarks on analytic vocabulary by Jonathan Z. Smith, “Religion, Religions, Religious,” in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 281–82 which appear rather ironic in light of his vacillations over magic: “‘Religion’ is not a native term; it is a term created by scholars for their intellectual purposes ... It is a second-order, generic concept that plays the same role in establishing a disciplinary horizon that a concept such as ‘language’ plays in linguistics or ‘culture’ plays in anthropology. There can be no disciplined study of religion without such a horizon.”

¹⁹ Henk S. Versnel, “Some Reflections on the Relationship Magic-Religion,” *Numen* 38.2 (1991): 177–197.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 185.

because we are simply unable to ignore the conceptual capacity the term carries in our culture. Given this, Versnel argued that we do best to try and define the term, even if our endeavours in this regard suffer from or risk a lack of clear borders. He proposes that we use Wittgenstein's principle of family resemblance to characterise the range of phenomena that our culture typically calls magic. Drawing on a 'common sense' collection of features typically associated with magic in our culture—including instrumentality, mechanicalness, manipulativity, non-personality, coerciveness, and short-term, concrete and often individual goals—he argues that when enough of these features are present in a given phenomenon we can call it magic.²¹ Though Versnel was concerned only to make a distinction “between magic and non-magic” and not “between magic *and* religion or magic and other features *within* religion,”²² the principle of family resemblance elegantly glosses the relationship between magic and religion too. We see that “not only are there phenomena bound in a network of partial resemblances, whether called ‘magical’ or ‘religious’ ... but that many phenomena which fit into both the spheres which we designate by these terms, maintain between them partial relations of resemblance.”²³

In more recent times, Jesper Sørensen has also pointed to the difficulty we seem to have in avoiding the concept magic.²⁴ He also moots a number of arguments in favour of keeping the term. His approach acknowledges the likelihood that magic will continue to linger, and he further sees nothing to gain by jettisoning the term, only the risk that we lose sight of important aspects of ritual practice if we abandon it. Sørensen's work is concerned to redescribe magic in terms of cognitive science; he argues that magic exemplifies certain basic cognitive processes and that paying attention to its basic cognitive constituents allows us to see why people judge magic to be pragmatically efficacious. His approach in part represents a

²¹ For a longer list of qualities and praxes commonly associated with magic, see Bernd-Christian Otto and Michael Stausberg, eds., *Defining Magic: A Reader* (Sheffield: Equinox, 2013), 2–3. In his valuable expansion of Versnel's article, Harari, “What Is a Magical Text?” 111–12 discusses the issue of ‘common-sense’ as well as other problems raised by Versnel's approach. It is important to note that, when we see a kind of practical, common-sense consensus as to what magic is emerge in the literature—though emphases vary from scholar to scholar, there is no serious dissonance amongst those who use the term as to what it they mean by it—we must bear in mind that what we call common-sense is not unmotivated.

²² Versnel, “Reflections,” 187.

²³ Harari, “What Is a Magical Text?” 115.

²⁴ Jesper Sørensen, “Magic Reconsidered: Towards a Scientifically Valid Concept of Magic,” in Otto and Stausberg, eds., *Defining Magic*, 229–42.

welcome antidote to that tendency in scholarship which takes James George Frazer as its whipping-boy. The principles that Frazer saw to exemplify magic—those of similarity and contagion—do in fact appear to be (almost) universal in human cognition and representation.²⁵ Sørensen’s method accounts for such mental processes and their role in human ritual practices *universally*. It is concerned to combat the “deplorable development whereby ritual efficacy has been exorcised from first the Western world and subsequently the rest of the world.”²⁶ Sørensen argues that to abandon the concept of magic serves only to reify the notion that the West is not subject to conceptions of immediate ritual efficacy at the same time as it claims that neither is the ‘primitive other.’

Abandoning the term magic thus works to further stabilise our discourses of knowledge (even as we claim that abandoning the term protects the ‘other’ from our worst tendencies, that is, the use of magic to stabilise ideological claims about religion and science). Christopher Lehrich makes the same point in an article that construes the denial of the category of magic as an ethical problem, one that highlights an implicit belief on our part in the fundamental difference of our discourses from those of the people we study.²⁷ Lehrich does not so much argue the futility or unworkability of abandoning magic so much as he argues that we acknowledge our persistent need to define magic; he also emphasises the *necessity* of continuing to try and define it. His point is that debating definitions “forces to consciousness [the] layers of presupposition that underlie scholarly work” and that a useful definition is “more a question of how we go about things than of the data examined.”²⁸ This is hardly a novel argument, but it is an important argument. A definition is not just the basis for debating and engaging a particular set of data; it provides a locus for the labours of reflexive scholarship. To define the word magic is thus to be endlessly vigilant as to what we are doing when we use it.

In concluding this sub-section, I note that magic appears to be one of our perpetual storms, raging in place like the red spot on Jupiter. The concept seemingly cannot be avoided and—going forward—it seems that the best we can do is acknowledge our persistent need to

²⁵ See George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

²⁶ Sørensen, “Magic Reconsidered,” 241.

²⁷ Christopher Lehrich, “Magic in Theoretical Practice,” in Otto and Stausberg, eds., *Defining Magic*, 211–28.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 212, 213.

define the term, and note the ends that historically these definitions have served (the needs that they have met in the history of modern scholarship). The past one hundred and fifty years or so have seen systems and theories of magic follow one another in rapid fashion, though something that many of these attempts at defining (and thus regulating) magic have in common is that they reflect an attempt at understanding ‘modernity.’²⁹ Each has sunk into history as missing what seems to be the (essential) nature of the case. Such developments are but the transient agents of an extremely complex tradition and the fact of the matter is that we ought not to expect future conversational developments to satisfy when the old ones have not. To express our frustration at the unending debate about magic’s definition by abandoning the term is—as Leirich suggests—to pass off mystification for scholarly rigour. While shades of our popular, native understanding of magic no doubt influence our second-order use of the term as scholars—the proper response to this circumstance is not to jettison the term. Instead, we ought to acknowledge what we gain by using the term and what we lose; we need not rid ourselves of the very thing that allows us to define our interests, frame our conversations as scholars, and which stimulates reflexivity and the rectification of our terms of analysis.

DEFINING MAGIC IN THE INCANTATION BOWLS

In offering a definition of magic I make no attempt to define a unified concept of magic (let alone a universalising concept of magic). I simply aim to speak about magic within a very specific context—the magic bowls—where my definition functions as a discursive construct designed to distinguish several aspects of the bowls from amongst many. The bowls represent a complex phenomenon and—given their contents and structure—I do not doubt that the criteria I am at pains to centralise for my definition can be remarginalised and something else

²⁹ Jason Ā. Josephson-Storm, *The Myth of Disenchantment: Magic, Modernity, and the Birth of the Human Sciences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017); Styers, *Making Magic*; cf. Corinna Treitel, *A Science for the Soul: Occultism and the Genesis of the German Modern* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004); Alex Owen, *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004). As summed up by Kocku von Stuckrad, “Magic,” in *The Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion*, ed. Robert A. Segal, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, forthcoming), “It is not by chance that the modern discussion of magic is closely linked to the institutionalization of the scholarly disciplines of anthropology, sociology, psychology, and the academic study of religion, or *Religionswissenschaft*, in the nineteenth century. Despite the huge spectrum of classifications that emerged in these disciplines—evolutionist, intellectualist, sociological, functionalist—in most cases magic was a signifier of the strange, the savage, or the premodern, which the inhabitant of the ‘modern West’ finds difficult to understand.”

centralised in their place. Nevertheless, relations are discovered and reconstituted through projects of differentiation, and my procedure here allows me to delimit a pronounced characteristic of the bowls, helping to satisfy our scholarly curiosity about their complex role as agents of change within the social landscape of late antique Mesopotamia.

Reading through the bowls, we see that certain ‘facts’ recur; persistent observations impose themselves upon us. The language of the bowls is first of all predicated on the assumption that there is a transmundane realm: a professed unseen whose inhabitants are nevertheless categorised and often provisioned with specific names in the bowl texts. (The bowls themselves use both drawings and figurative language to directly represent this realm.) With regard to the bowls, I use the word magic to embrace and emphasise the following aspects of their texts: that they direct language towards the population of this transmundane realm that is instrumental, manipulative, and/or coercive. The bowls are lacking in the language of request, and heavy on the language of threat, restriction, compulsion, and expulsion. They also favour formulations that urge haste in relation to their transmundane interlocutors. Furthermore, this language aims to achieve clearly defined, locally delimited (i.e. personal) goals through the manipulation of these transmundane beings. It is addressed to transmundane powers according to the specifically stated goals of a named human party. The language of many bowls also implies or explicitly reflects at least one ritual act—the inversion and burial of the bowls—meaning that magic in the bowls is about more than instrumental language; it also comprises (a series of) instrumental action(s). It is thus not just the language of the bowls but the overturned bowls themselves that work to ‘press’ and subdue hostile forces. In this way, the bowl practitioners built upon the material peculiarities of their products to construct magical efficacy through word and deed.

This description of the language of the bowls construes the various types of pragmatic, goal-oriented language in the bowls together, and derives from this a generalisable rubric for what the bowls—as a whole—are doing on the basis of the kinds of language that they use, the kinds of things they say they want to achieve, and the kinds of actions that are suggested by this language. But I draw attention nevertheless to the *general* nature of this definition. By general I mean that my definition of magic reflects “a mental, comparative, taxonomic activity that directs attention to co-occurrences of selected stipulated characteristics while ignoring others.”³⁰ It is tentative, partial, selective, and corrigible, and designed to

³⁰ Smith, *Relating Religion*, 369.

give a sense of the elemental structure of the bowls. The general is a practice or mode of operation that permits us to discern some patterns. As a generic, analytic category or heuristic rubric, magic delimits and helps to construe certain aspects of the bowls, that is, the (verbal) gestures that lend expression to the stated goal of the bowl in question. Magic in the bowls thus comprises a certain way of reacting in word and deed, “terms that can be conceptually distinguished but not phenomenally separated,”³¹ to the situation at hand. This situation is whatever the bowl intends to address (illness or the presence of a demon, for example) while action, expression and intention (or thought, language, and world) coalesce in the inscribed object. Of course, it is not as though the aspects of the bowls that I emphasise using the rubric of magic are exclusive to the bowls. Many of the qualities that I have emphasised in relation to the bowls are equally observable in other corpora, and it is my goal to keep the bowls not just in dialogue with other texts and objects in the Jewish tradition, but texts and objects produced by other communities in different times and places. In noting how ancient Jewish magic resembles or diverges from the magical practices of other cultures and periods, I use magic as a convenient way of facilitating discussion with other scholars without normative or judgmental connotations.

The definition of magic that I have offered above, though it is extrapolated from the language of the incantation bowls, expands on the basis of the language in the bowls to cover a range of identifiable actions around the bowls (as well as possible actions unknown to us). In the section and chapters that follow, I examine one specific use of language (narrative) that is employed in the bowls. What are narratives and story materials doing in a context that seeks to affect a change in the world through the controlled choreography of transmundane beings? An answer to this question—as well as an approach to the narrative spells in the bowls—lies in the recent development of a sub-field of literary theory known as rhetorical narratology. Sited at the intersection between rhetoric and poetics, rhetorical narratology understands narrative to be not just a story but also an action, the telling of a story by someone to someone on some occasion for some purpose. It should thus prove useful in understanding and analysing the forms and functions of narrative in the bowls.

³¹ Wolfson, “Phantasmagoria,” 82.

SECTION II

NARRATIVE, RHETORIC, AND RHETORICAL NARRATOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

The fields of narrative and rhetoric have traditionally been siloed well apart.³² But the construction of narratives and the deployment of persuasive language are not mutually exclusive activities, and in bringing rhetorical and narrative criticisms together we arrive at the idea of *narrative communication*, a concept embodied by a branch of contemporary narratology known as rhetorical narratology. Narratology itself is the theoretical discipline which deals with narrative as a mode of discourse and which seeks to describe narrative's fundamental structures and particular elements, while the basic thesis of rhetorical narratology is that a strict separation between rhetoric and narrative is (and always has been) artificial. The key procedural question of this sub-discipline of narratology concerns the integration of rhetorical and narrative criticism. In what follows, I briefly examine the relations between narrative and rhetoric before moving to define narrative in more detail and outline a theoretical approach to its effects.

RHETORIC AND ITS DEFINITIONS

The historical course followed by (the discipline of) rhetoric has traversed a number of protracted epochs (which may be styled in drastic abbreviation here as Greek, Roman, Mediaeval, Renaissance, Enlightenment, Romantic, Modern, and Contemporary). A system of effective composition that was originally concerned with public address then adapted to written compositions, rhetoric has undergone myriad innovations and reformulations over more than two millennia. As the oldest discipline of the discursive use of language, rhetoric has accrued a number of overlapping meanings and the number of available definitions embarrasses in more than one sense. These definitions have accumulated over millennia and inhabit and shape what amounts to a highly complex discipline.³³ As Friedrich Nietzsche

³² This perceived gulf between rhetoric and poetics may be evidenced—and is abetted—by the fact that even to this day Aristotle's *Poetics* circulates and continues to be referenced separately from the *Rhetoric*. See further below.

³³ As Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg, eds., *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001), 1 note, rhetoric may refer to "the practice of oratory; the study of the strategies of effective oratory; the use of language, written or spoken, to inform or persuade; the study of the persuasive effects of language; the study of the relation between language and knowledge; the clas-

notes in agonistic fashion, “the competition over the correct definition of rhetoric goes on throughout the whole of antiquity.” In this regard, he states that

Those who avoided giving a strict definition have at least sought to determine the orator’s *telos* or *officium*. This is the *peithein, dicendo persuadere*: it was difficult to incorporate this into the *horismos* because the effect is not the essence of the thing, and furthermore, persuasion does not always take place even with the best orator.³⁴

Ultimately, Nietzsche declares that “the rhetorical” is none other than “a further development, guided by the clear light of the understanding, of the artistic means which are already found in language.” He also writes,

The power to discover and to make operative that which works and impresses, with respect to each thing, a power which Aristotle calls rhetoric, is, at the same time, the essence of language; the latter is based just as little as rhetoric is upon that which is true, upon the essence of things.³⁵

For Nietzsche, then, language is always and already rhetorical. Rhetoric in this view is a latent possibility of language, “a generalized rhetoric that penetrates to the deepest levels of human experience.”³⁶ Nietzsche’s definition provides a useful point of departure for this study. For a start, it is post-classical and embraces the dialogic or dialectical mode of contemporary rhetorical studies which emphasise the rhetoricity and power dynamics inherent to all language.³⁷ In this view, which is radically different from its classical antecedents, rhetor-

sification and use of tropes and figures; and, of course, the use of empty promises and half-truths as a form of propaganda. Nor does this list exhaust the definitions that might be given.”

³⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language*, ed. Sander L. Gilman, Carole Blair, and David J. Parent (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 5.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.

³⁶ Bender and Wellbery, “Rhetoricity,” 25, cf. Paul Ricoeur, “Rhetoric—Poetics—Hermeneutics,” in *Rhetoric and Hermeneutics in Our Time: A Reader*, ed. Walter Jost and Michael J. Hyde (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 63: “the whole human order can be annexed by the rhetorical field ... Thus rhetoric becomes the art of ‘human, all too human’ discourse.”

³⁷ Nietzsche thus sets the agenda for the modernist reconceptualisation of rhetoric. He sets the stage for Heidegger, Gadamer, Derrida, Ricoeur and Foucault—virtually all of the deconstructive critics—and opens up the general field in which various forms of contemporary rhetorical inquiry formulate their individual programs. These new theoretical programs, which began to flourish in the late 1950s—though they can be traced back to Alfred M. Hitchcock’s exposition of rhetoric as the art of communication in 1913—approach rhetoric in particu-

ric can be theorised only in the strong sense that specific rhetorical principles or emphases can be used to direct our inquiries into persuasion:

Rhetoric today is neither a unified doctrine nor a coherent set of discursive practices. Rather, it is a transdisciplinary field of practice and intellectual concern, a field that draws on conceptual resources of a radically heterogeneous nature and does not assume the stable shape of a system or method of education.³⁸

But Nietzsche's definition is also engaged with and influenced by the ancient accounts of rhetoric. His definition highlights the fundamental point on which poetics and rhetoric relate in the work of both the ancients and later humanists: the power to discover and to make operative that which works and impresses, that is, persuasiveness or audience effectiveness. In *Rhetoric and Poetics in Antiquity*, Jeffrey Walker emphasises the extent to which rhetoric—even from the earliest times—reflected an argumentative mode known as epideictic. He writes that "*Epideiktikon*, in sum, came to include everything that modernity has tended to describe as literature, and more, and comprised a range of genres much greater and more various than the handful of speech-types identified as *pragmatika*."³⁹ In Walker's conception, this original epideictic mode represents a broadly considered practice of artfully composed persuasive discourse—that is, not a fundamentally rational type of discourse shaped by judi-

lar from the perspectives of linguistics, semiotics, and speech act theory. In Bender and Wellbery's summary, "Rhetoricity," 26 these approaches insist "especially on the essential rhetoricity of language and on the human 'drive to form metaphors' as the basis of our rendering of the world. The inherited concept of figures of speech here undergoes a decisive reinterpretation: the figures are no longer devices of an *elocutio* that adorns and presents the invented thoughts of the speaker, but mobile, shifting categories that are always at work in every encounter with the world."

³⁸ Bender and Wellbery, "Rhetoricity," 25.

³⁹ Jeffrey Walker, *Rhetoric and Poetics in Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 7. Though the judicial and legislative exigencies of rhetoric's primary locations in the classical world naturally had a profound effect on rhetoric's epistemology, Walker's study demonstrates how far contemporary conceptions of rhetoric diverged from these oft-told judicial and deliberative arenas. Nonetheless, in readings of the classical tradition, poetics is frequently understood to mark a significant departure from rhetoric's rational character. For a further discussion of the relations between rhetoric and poetics in the classical tradition, see Ruth Webb, "Poetry and Rhetoric," in *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period, 300 B.C.–A.D. 400*, ed. Stanley E. Porter (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 339–69. Cf. Wilbur Samuel Howell, *Poetics, Rhetoric, and Logic: Studies in the Basic Disciplines of Criticism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975).

cial and legislative exigencies, but one that embraces the mimetic or narrative.⁴⁰ In this view, *mimêsis* is not simply the imitation or representation of action; it is action that has entered or been taken up into language through the creative imagination and the invention of a plot. This particular use of language impresses itself upon the hearer or reader with aesthetic and emotive appeal. It is *logos* without *logismos*, persuasive speech without ratiocination or rational argument. And it is this rhetorico-poetic understanding that I wish to bring to bear upon the narrative materials in the bowls as I elaborate upon them in the next section.⁴¹ This view of rhetoric embraces the power of *mimêsis* and *phantasia* as key elements of persuasion, whilst drawing attention to the figurative aspects of language.

⁴⁰ Thus—and just for instance—the *Iliad* (1.259–274) uses stories paradigmatically as moralistic models for imitation, while the construction of ‘narratives’ and the employment of ‘rhetoric’ are plainly not mutually exclusive activities for Aristotle and many later rhetorical theorists. As Douglas D. Hesse, “Aristotle’s Poetics and Rhetoric: Narrative as Rhetoric’s Fourth Mode,” in *Rebirth of Rhetoric: Essays in Language, Culture, and Education*, ed. Richard Andrews (London: Routledge, 1992), 19–20 demonstrates at length, Aristotle’s *Poetics* should be read as advancing “a fourth mode of persuasion – the mimetic or narrative – that complements and completes the logical, ethical, and pathetic forwarded in [Aristotle’s] *Rhetoric*.” So Cicero also points to a natural affinity between storytellers and rhetoricians (*De or.* 3.27); Quintilian recommends to his students that they learn the storytelling skills of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides (*Inst.* 10.1.66–68); and Livy reports how Menenius Agrippa calmed a group of secessionists by telling a fable about the body parts (2.32).

⁴¹ Earlier than Walker, other twentieth century American scholars emphasised the relationship between rhetoric and poetics and advance a rhetorical poetics. See, e.g. Donald Rice and Peter Schofer, *Rhetorical Poetics: Theory and Practice of Figural and Symbolic Reading in Modern French Literature* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983); Richard M. Ohmann, “Speech Acts and the Definition of Literature,” *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 4 (1971): 1–19; Seymour Chatman and Samuel R. Levin, eds., *Essays on the Language of Literature* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967); Donald C. Freeman, ed., *Linguistics and Literary Style* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970); Donald C. Freeman, ed., *Essays in Modern Stylistics* (London: Methuen, 1981). Above all, Roman Jakobson accomplished the almost total reorganisation of the rhetorical sub-field traditionally known as *elocutio*, transforming metaphor and metonymy from two figures amongst a host of others into the sole determiners of semantic production. See in particular Roman Jakobson, “Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances,” in *Fundamentals of Language* (The Hague: Mouton, 1956), 53–82. In France, a number of scholars also pursued a rhetorical poetics: Aron S. Kibédi Varga, *Rhétorique et littérature: étude des structures classiques* (Paris: Didier, 1970); Groupe Mu, *Rhétorique de la poésie: lecture linéaire, lecture tabulaire* (Brussels: Éditions Complexe, 1977); Michel Charles, *Rhétorique de la lecture* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1977); Alain Michel, *La parole de la beauté: rhétorique et esthétique dans la tradition occidentale* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1982). See also the numerous historical studies on Renaissance rhetoric and its relations to poetics enumerated in Heinrich F. Plett, *English Renaissance Rhetoric and Poetics: A Systematic Bibliography of Primary and Secondary Sources* (Leiden: Brill, 1995).

RHETORIC AND THE INCANTATION BOWLS

A great deal of contemporary rhetorical theorising is somewhat removed from the indeterminacies of practical life and tends to treat interpretive issues without considering the ways in which texts engage with complex audiences. And though broader concepts of language as inherently rhetorical do not admit a specifically rhetorical situation (in the sense that such a situation implies a non-rhetorical situation) my engagement with rhetoric in this study allows for considerations of what constitutes ‘proper’ persuasiveness in a particular social and cultural context, as well as the ways in which different types of persuasion work within particular contexts. It allows for examination of both the “discursive architecture and adornment”⁴² of the bowls texts as well as the ways in which the bowls utilise a particular form of verbal action (narrative) in order to stake out a place vis-à-vis and within an a(nta)gonistic ‘local’ scene populated by both human and transmundane actors.⁴³ This idea of rhetoric also breaches the focus on rational argument that characterises classical rhetoric and draws attention to the creative imagination and the ways in which the (re)productions of narrative reflect the ability of individuals to deal creatively with problems. It thus focusses on the linkages between pragmatic awareness and (narrative) compositions of some skill and metaphoric prowess. Rhetoric for the purposes of this study thus gives a strong shape to the idea of language as one particular means (among others) of altering reality, not through the direct application of energy to objects, but by the composition of a discourse which changes reality through the mediation of verbal action. The practitioner of this art alters reality by bringing into existence a kind of discourse that works to incite its audience to engage in action such that this audience becomes a mediator of change. As an operative art that seeks to conquer the assent of its audience and incite this same audience to act in the desired manner, rhetoric should be understood to simultaneously embrace both the illocutionary and the perlocutionary aspects of language.⁴⁴

It is this idea of rhetoric that forms the basis of the following chapters and the rhetorical poetics of the JBA bowl narratives that I pursue therein. As the foregoing has shown, the

⁴² Bender and Wellbery, “Rhetoricity,” 4.

⁴³ I intend ‘local’ here primarily in contrast to the (ahistorical) universal. It may be understood to refer to the late antique household, village, town, or region wherein a given bowl was deployed, and within which shared material and symbolic goods were deployed in such a way that they may be said to constitute a social or socio-religious body.

⁴⁴ Ricoeur, “Rhetoric—Poetics—Hermeneutics,” 62.

construction of narratives and the deployment of rhetoric are not mutually exclusive activities. Conceived as an action designed to incite an audience into acting in a certain fashion, narrative consists of “somebody telling somebody else on some occasion and for some purpose(s) that something happened.”⁴⁵ This rhetorical conception of narrative pays special attention to the relations that exist between tellers, audiences, and purposes — the ways in which the teller of a story might use the various resources of narrative in order to achieve different purposes in relation to one or more audiences. But if narrative is persuasive and can be used to affect a change in its audience, what else is it? How do we define the structure of narrative, and in what ways may certain bowl spells be said to constitute narrative? In the following sub-section, I offer a more comprehensive definition of narrative based on recent work in (rhetorical) narratology.

DEFINING NARRATIVE IN THE INCANTATION BOWLS

In the rhetorical poetics that I sketched in the previous sub-section, I briefly drew attention to the power of *mimêsis* and *phantasia* as elements of persuasion. In this sub-section, I ask to what extent certain bowl spells are constituted by narrative or may be characterised as narratives. In this regard, I first examine what constitutes narrative.

Defining narrative

Narrative may at first glance seem easy enough to define, but discussion of its basic features has persisted since the time of the *Poetics*.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, within the crowded Venn of early

⁴⁵ James Phelan, *Narrative as Rhetoric: Technique, Audiences, Ethics, Ideology* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1996), 218.

⁴⁶ On the level of discourse—or material signs—which corresponds roughly to the syntactic component of semiotic theory—those theorists who have attempted to divide narrative into clearly definable units or constituents have assembled an especially motley catalogue of narrative’s basic elements, from Aristotle’s exposition, crisis and denouement, to Propp’s functions and roles, Greimas’s types of actants, and Barthes’ kernels and satellites (not to forget the more traditional triad of character, action, and setting). As to the broader history of the study of narrative, in recent times there has been a considerable expansion of narratological theory beyond the decontextualised New Critical approaches of the last century. In fact, more than twenty years have passed since David Herman, “Scripts, Sequences, and Stories: Elements of a Postclassical Narratology,” *PMLA* 112.5 (1997): 1046–59 first proposed using ‘post-classical narratology’ to refer to the field of narratology’s many revisions and expansions of (classical) structuralist narratology. Elsewhere, David Herman, “Narratologies,” in *Narratologies: New Perspectives on Narrative Analysis*, ed. David Herman (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999), 2–3 has described how post-classical narratology’s expansion of older structuralist models “is marked by a profusion of new methodologies and research hypotheses; resulting in a host of new perspectives

poeticians and contemporary semioticians, linguists, and narratologists, a common area of overlap can be identified, wherein the nature of narrative is agreed to lie in the imitation or representation of (a sequence of) events or actions (*mimésis*).⁴⁷ For example:⁴⁸

1. One will define narrative without difficulty as the representation of an event or of a sequence of events.⁴⁹

on the forms and functions of narrative itself.” Because contemporary practitioners of narratology have sought to explain not just the nature and interrelation of narrative’s resources, but also their function, narratology has expanded to include different socio-cultural contextualist frameworks, while diverse schools of thought have proliferated around every aspect of the narrative communicative process (in particular the three fundamental elements of sender/message/receiver or author/text/reader). This is largely a result of a movement away from the limitations and methodological pitfalls associated with formalist-structuralist brands of narratology. The broader discipline of narratology now embraces such sub-disciplines and methodological approaches as feminist, cognitive, and post-colonial narratology, as well as enactivist and unnatural narratology. Narratology has also expanded to take ancient literary practices into account. See, e.g. the Studies in Ancient Greek Narrative (SAGN) series published by Brill, or the extensive body of scholarship that treats New Testament narratives (for a useful bibliography, see the literature cited in Michal Beth Dinkler, “New Testament Rhetorical Narratology: An Invitation toward Integration,” *Biblical Interpretation* 24 (2016): 203–28. For narratological treatments of literature closer to the cultural context of the present work, see, e.g. the contributions in Constanza Cordoni and Gerhard Langer, eds., *Narratology, Hermeneutics, and Midrash: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Narratives from the Late Antique Period through to Modern Times* (Göttingen: Vienna University Press, 2014). Such scholarship, which draws on contemporary theoretical understandings of narrative and persuasion in order to better understand ancient narratives, reflects the understanding that, while ancient literature does not include common narratological concepts like the narratee or the implied author, practice precedes theory. For a useful and easily accessible treatment of the history of narratology, from its pre-structuralist iterations through to structuralist, post-structuralist, post-classical, and the ‘new’ narratology, see Jan Christoph Meister, “Narratology,” in *The Living Handbook of Narratology*, ed. Peter Hühn et al. (Hamburg: Hamburg University), <http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/article/narratology>, and the extensive bibliography provided therein.

⁴⁷ As to whether actions constitute events, action theory—drawing primarily on the work of Wittgenstein and Anscombe—would say that, where there is an action, something happens, and that an action must therefore be an event. The more difficult question is what qualifies some events as actions (as opposed to events in general, and especially events as understood in the physical sciences, such as the Big Bang). English-language philosophy of action answers this question with the concept of intentionality: an event is an action when it is something *done*, and not something that *just happens*.

⁴⁸ This initial presentation is indebted to a number of introductory treatments of narrative, but I borrow in particular from the presentation in Marie-Laure Ryan, “Toward a Definition of Narrative,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, ed. David Herman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 22–35.

⁴⁹ Gérard Genette, *Figures of Literary Discourse* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 127.

2. Narrative is the representation of events, consisting of story and narrative discourse, story is an event or sequence of events (the action), and narrative discourse is those events as represented.⁵⁰

Despite the many changes in narratology over the past six decades, the story/discourse distinction—sketched in the second definition above—remains in many ways the foundational staple of most narrative theory. In simplest terms, story designates the *what* of narrative, while discourse designates its *how*. Story thus comprises events and existents, while discourse comprises the techniques used to present these events and existents. In offering their own definitions of narrative, other commentators have frequently expanded upon the terse nature of the above two definitions, choosing to make certain implied elements within these definitions more explicit. Thus, where events imply transformation and actions imply agents, Mieke Bal introduces change, causality, and an experiencing subject into her definition of narrative as:

3. The transition from one state to another state, caused or experienced by actors.⁵¹

Susana Onega and José Landa also include causality in their definition of narrative as:

4. The semiotic representation of a sequence of events, meaningfully connected in a temporal and causal way.⁵²

Ricoeur in particular emphasises temporality in his understanding of narrative as that which makes sequence and change possible:

5. I take temporality to be that structure of existence that reaches language in narrativity, and narrativity to be the language structure that has temporality as its ultimate reference.⁵³

Of course, a temporally ordered sequence of events could just as easily be a list or a recipe as a story. As such, some special arrangement of action—a plot—is needed to link narrative actions in time in such a way that they convey a specific type of content, that is, in such a way

⁵⁰ H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 16.

⁵¹ Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 182.

⁵² Susana Onega and José Angel García Landa, eds., *Narratology: An Introduction* (London: Longman, 1996), 3.

⁵³ Paul Ricoeur, “Narrative Time,” *Critical Inquiry* 7.1 (1980): 169.

that narrative is defined through conditions that pertain to meaning. Thus Peter Brooks describes

6. Plot [as] the principal ordering force of those meanings that we try to wrest from human temporality.⁵⁴

The assembly or juxtaposition of actions—such that they satisfy concerns of intelligibility, verisimilitude, and necessity—is achieved through plot. Plot thus schematises action for the reflective imagination. Like *mimêsis*, which plays a constitutive role in narrative discourse, emplotment does something: it is active and functional. It weaves the episodes of a story into a whole. As David Pellauer puts it, “insofar as narratives are all ways of recounting human action ... the story told can in some ways itself be considered a single, meaningful action.”⁵⁵ Together, *mimêsis* and plot are not simply reproductive, but productive: they introduce something that was not already there, something new.⁵⁶ In Paul Ricoeur’s view, they combine to shake up the order of persuasion by generating a new conviction;⁵⁷ they thus have

the power to ‘remake’ reality and ... to remake real praxis to the extent that the [narrative] text intentionally aims at a horizon of a new reality that we may call a world. It is this world of the text that intervenes in the world of action in order to give it a new configuration or, as we might say, in order to transfigure it.⁵⁸

Following Aristotle, Ricoeur emphasises plot’s constitutive role in the way that narrative weaves episodes into single stories about (human) actions. Naturally, there are many other factors within narrative that one could emphasise in this regard: a narrator (or several) with a voice and point of view; (implied) author(s) and audience(s); characters who act and are acted upon; the functions fulfilled by such characters; transformations or changes in fortune. Marie-Laure Ryan includes these factors in her fuzzy set presentation of narrative. In her scalar conception of narrative, centred on prototypical cases recognised by everybody as stories,

⁵⁴ Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), ix.

⁵⁵ David Pellauer, “Narrated Action Grounds Narrative Identity,” in *Paul Ricoeur in the Age of Hermeneutical Reason: Poetics, Praxis, and Critique*, ed. Roger W. H. Savage (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015), 77.

⁵⁶ Because *mimêsis* is action that has entered or been taken up into language, it has the power to reshape the structures and dimensions of action in accordance with the configurations of plot; it is thus not simply reproductive or imitative, but productive.

⁵⁷ Ricoeur, “Rhetoric—Poetics—Hermeneutics,” 66.

⁵⁸ Paul Ricoeur, *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics, II* (London: Athlone, 1991), 10.

the definition of narrative “becomes an open series of concentric circles which spell increasingly narrow conditions and which presuppose previously stated items, as we move from the outer to the inner circles, and from the marginal cases to the prototypes.”⁵⁹ Ryan’s proposal organises the conditions of narrativity into three semantic dimensions and one formal and pragmatic dimension. Each of the conditions that she outlines—which I present below—work simply to prevent certain types of representation from becoming the basis of a story; this does not mean that these representations cannot appear in narrative texts, only that by themselves they do not represent narrativity *per se*.⁶⁰

Spatial dimension

1. Narrative must be about a world populated by individuated existents.⁶¹

Temporal dimension

2. This world must be situated in time and undergo significant transformations.⁶²
3. The transformations must be caused by non-habitual physical events.⁶³

Mental dimension

4. Some of the participants in the events must be intelligent agents who have a mental life and react emotionally to the states of the world.⁶⁴
5. Some of the events must be purposeful actions by these agents.⁶⁵

Formal and pragmatic dimension

6. The sequence of events must form a unified causal chain and lead to closure.⁶⁶
7. The occurrence of at least some of the events must be asserted as fact for the story-world.⁶⁷

⁵⁹ Ryan, “Toward a Definition of Narrative,” 28; cf. Fotis Jannidis, “Narratology and the Narrative,” in *What Is Narratology? Questions and Answers Regarding the Status of a Theory*, ed. Tom Kindt and Hans-Harald Müller (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), 35–54.

⁶⁰ Ryan, “Toward a Definition of Narrative,” 29.

⁶¹ This eliminates representations of abstract entities and entire classes of concrete objects, such as scenarios involving ‘reason’ or ‘the human race.’

⁶² This eliminates static descriptions.

⁶³ This eliminates enumerations of repetitive events and natural changes such as aging.

⁶⁴ This eliminates one-of-a-kind scenarios involving only natural forces and non-intelligent participants.

⁶⁵ Together with the third condition, this eliminates representations that consist exclusively of mental events, such as interior monologues.

⁶⁶ This eliminates lists of causally unconnected events, such as chronicles and diaries, as well as reports of problem-solving actions that stop before an outcome is reached.

⁶⁷ This eliminates recipes, as well as texts made entirely of advice, hypotheses, or instructions.

8. The story must communicate something meaningful to the audience.⁶⁸

These eight conditions provide a kind of do-it-yourself toolkit for the definition of narrative. As to whether a given (portion of a) text comprises narrative or not, some commentators may be satisfied with conditions 1–3. Others may refuse a definition that does not embrace human or human-like intentions and experiences and the vicissitudes and consequences that mark their course,⁶⁹ and insist that conditions 4–5 are essential to a satisfactory definition. Yet others may be satisfied to discard conditions 3 and 7 and consider a recipe a narrative. There are thus many different ways of drawing the frontiers of narrative. In the simplest possible terms, however, a narrative would appear to recount a story: to represent a series of at least two events in a temporal sequence.

The implications of a definition of narrative for the study of the bowls

Despite its simplicity, even this basic definition has consequences for a proper understanding of the narrative materials in the JBA bowls. For example, one common type of narrative material found in many magical traditions is a type of spell known as the *historiola*. This is a modern term used to denote a ‘little story’ or brief mythic narrative built into magical texts whose narration is designed to provide a precedent or paradigm for the desired magical action. It is common in bowl scholarship, however, to use the term to refer not just to brief narratives—a narrative may consist of just one sentence, after all—but also to allusions to known stories. The difference here is between reference to and representation of an event. Thus, depending on whom one consults, *historiolae* populate the bowls to a greater or lesser degree. This loose usage of the term is obviously problematic for a more systematic categorisation of the bowl materials, and I draw a distinction between *historiolae* proper and allusions to stories.⁷⁰

Similarly, bowl scholars often use the term *historiola* to refer to the use of first person narratives in the bowls. But while such narrative spells are indeed little stories, I show in

⁶⁸ This condition is controversial, for it may appear to stray beyond poetics into a dimension relative to the context of the telling and the interests of the participants. It needs to be accompanied by a full theory of the different ways in which narrative can achieve significance.

⁶⁹ Cf. Jerome Bruner, *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 13.

⁷⁰ Though narratology’s overriding concern is narrative representation, it does not preclude the study of what I will call narrative tokens: brief references or allusions to (well-known) stories which work in a similar fashion to *historiolae* by conjuring precedent or paradigm. Such tokens are frequently ‘cashed-in’ in the bowl texts—frequently on the basis of an analogy—and I address their function in Chapter Three.

Chapter Five that these spells do not function to establish their authority through the narration of a paradigmatic event—thereby establishing precedent—but through the full coherence of vision afforded to the ‘I’ of these narratives. And though the visionary experiences presented in some of these narratives contain elements that may appear ‘mythical,’ they are not presented as though they occurred *in illo tempore*.⁷¹ Instead, their use seems intended to imply the proximate past: a recent experience, wherein the I of the spell (whether the bowl practitioner or the beneficiary of the incantation) traversed the transmundane realm. Through the use of such descriptive narratives, the bowl practitioners worked to emplot themselves within the transmundane realm and to establish a warrant for their authority in and over this realm. As I show in Chapter Five, the use of the first person in these narrative spells explicitly connects the bowl practitioner or the beneficiary to the events and experiences of the story and represents a kind of pre-emptive response to Pierre Bourdieu’s critique of the Austinian performative — to wit, that the illocutionary act is not just a matter of doing things with words but whether or not the speaker is invested with the authority to do those things with those words and thereby effect a change in the world. The aim of these spells was plainly not just to represent a (generally) invisible (and thus unrepresentable) transmundane reality, but to instantiate and participate in that reality. In this sense, such passages are both discursive and performative: the representation of the demonic realm comes to play a role in defending against the demonic realm.

As such—on the basis of the basic definition of narrative above, and a stricter deployment of the term *historiola*—I distinguish three types of narrative material in the JBA bowls:

1. **historiolae**, where *historiola* refers to the representation of at least two events (that occurred *in illo tempore*) in order to establish precedent or paradigm.⁷²

⁷¹ I use *in illo tempore* (in relation to myth) in order to designate events that occurred at an undetermined time in the past. I do so in order to reflect the fact that many practitioners presumably saw the abbreviated narratives that they deployed—such as abridgments of the Sodom and Gomorrah story—as records of historical events, rather than myths “in the ... sense of ... ‘an untrue story imaging truth’,” which is the definition of myth that Edina Bozóky, “Mythic Mediation in Healing Incantations,” in *Health, Disease, and Healing in Medieval Culture*, ed. Sheila Campbell (Houndsmill: Macmillan, 1992), 84 uses for her definition of the *historiola*.

⁷² The following address to a *lilith* in Gorea B3:4–5 would thus not count as a *historiola*: שני שבילכי כמא דשני, “Change your ways, just as the *primaeval* demon (who was in the days of Solomon son of David) changed his ways.” Though this line refers to an event *in illo tempore*, and derives its power like many *historiolae* through an explicit analogy, what would be necessary to change this from a

2. **first person narratives**, (extended) spells that work to establish authority not through precedent or paradigm but through purported first-hand experience of the transmundane realm.
3. **narrative quotations**, where the bowls excerpt prose passages from the Hebrew Bible.

These three categories comprise a basic inventory of the narrative materials found in the JBA bowls. I survey these narrative materials (and their mechanisms) in detail in the following chapters. Recognising the individuality of each bowl text, these chapters nevertheless aim at more general conclusions about these materials and their use. Each of these types of narrative reflect a clear concern on the part of the bowl practitioners with the features, forms, and functions of narrative: these three types of narrative material in the bowls thus do not just conform to the simplest definition of narrative given above, they meet most—if not all—of conditions 1–8 as outlined by Ryan. The narrative spells in the bowls reflect a clear understanding of the inextricable connections between the what, the how, and the why of narrative. And though the practitioners behind these spells read no narrative theory and may have had no notion of rhetoric as such, they were clearly concerned with the rhetorical use of narrative.⁷³ This understanding of narrative as a mode of persuasion in and of itself is reflected already in the long-standing term *historiola*. In what follows, I turn to the field of rhetorical narratology in order to account more fully for the use of narrative spells in the JBA bowls.

RHETORICAL NARRATOLOGY

Having outlined a rhetorical poetics that accounted in general for narrative's persuasive power, and having further specified narrative in the previous section, I now turn to outline a method for analysing the rhetorical power of the narrative spells deployed in the JBA incantation bowls. These are a set of formulae that epitomise the rhetorical deployment of narrative. Narrative in the bowls represents not just a structure, but an act, and a relatively re-

simple assertion (the *primaeval* demon changed its ways, a result of an implied action by Solomon) into a narrative is a representation of the (apparent) story-situation such that the one event (the demon's transformation) occurred after the other (Solomon's action) *because* of the other, i.e. Solomon did such-and-such and shortly thereafter the *primaeval* demon changed its ways.

⁷³ I stress that this is a general affirmation, by which I hope to avoid too-specific claims about authorial intent on the part of the bowl practitioners, i.e. it is necessary to distinguish between 'intentionality' as constructed by the contemporary reader from textual elements, and authorial intent as 'individual psychology.' See Michael S. Kearns, *Rhetorical Narratology* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 50–52.

cent development in literary theory—called rhetorical narratology—offers a useful set of resources for examining the nature, interrelations, and functions of the narrative resources deployed in the bowls. Sited at the intersection between narrative and rhetorical criticism, this subfield of narratology is focused squarely on narrative’s rhetorical power.

Foremost among contemporary rhetorical narratologists is James Phelan, who has proposed and explored a rhetorical definition of narrative discourse in various works: “somebody telling somebody else on some occasion for some purpose that something happened.”⁷⁴ This definition of narrative works as shorthand for somebody using the materials or resources of narrative (narrators, characters, events, and so on) in order to influence or accomplish certain purposes in relation to certain audience(s). As one definition of narrative among many, it does not discount the diverse kinds of knowledge produced by different narratological projects, which regardless happen to reflect a strong consensus among narratologists about the general nature of narrative (as the representation of two or more events communicated by one or more narrators to one or more narratees). Rather, Phelan’s definition simply emphasises

⁷⁴ Phelan, *Narrative as Rhetoric*, 218. Cf. Ricoeur’s general characterisation of discourse as the use of language by someone to say something to someone about something: Paul Ricoeur, *From Text to Action* (St Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1986), 75–88; Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 40–44; Paul Ricoeur, *Réflexion faite: autobiographie intellectuelle* (Paris: Éditions esprit, 1995), 39. In this view, narrative discourse would be discourse that further configures a series of events into a single story where something meaningful happens. It is no great leap from this characterisation of (narrative) discourse to Phelan’s understanding of narrative as persuasive. Phelan first proposed his (default) rhetorical definition of narrative in *Narrative as Rhetoric*, whence it made its way into many conversations in contemporary narrative theory. For further iterations and enlargements, see James Phelan, *Living to Tell about It: A Rhetoric and Ethics of Character Narration* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005); James Phelan, *Experiencing Fiction: Judgments, Progressions, and the Rhetorical Theory of Narrative* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2007); James Phelan, “Rhetoric/Ethics,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, ed. David Herman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 203–16; James Phelan, “Rhetoric, Ethics, and Narrative Communication: Or, From Story and Discourse to Authors, Resources, and Audiences,” *Soundings* 94.1–2 (2011): 55–75; James Phelan, *Somebody Telling Somebody Else: A Rhetorical Poetics of Narrative* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2017); James Phelan, “Authors, Resources, Audiences: Toward a Rhetorical Poetics of Narrative,” *Style* 52.1–2 (2018): 1–34. For other practitioners (or instantiations) of rhetorical narratology, see, e.g. Mary Louise Pratt, *Towards a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977); Susan S. Lanser, *The Narrative Act: Point of View in Prose Fiction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981); Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983); Sandy Petrey, *Speech Acts and Literary Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Kearns, *Rhetorical Narratology*.

that narrative is not just a story but also an action; that narrative is not just an event or an action taken up into language but is itself an event. Consequently, Phelan's treatment of narrative pays particular attention to the relations that exist between tellers, audiences, and purposes in the construction of narrative. Different definitions of narrative orient their users towards different concepts of narrative, and thereby reflect (or lead their users towards) different interpretive projects. In this regard, I turn to Phelan's rhetorical paradigm for several reasons. Firstly, it extends beyond text-based conceptions of narrative to the *use* of narrative; it can thus account for the possible recitation of the incantation bowls. More importantly, its emphasis on author-audience relations places great importance on the historical and social contexts of these parties, thereby integrating history and historical analysis (be it literary, cultural, or social) into the rhetorical paradigm. It can thus account for the unusual communicative situation instantiated by the bowls.

The bowls and the principles of rhetorical narratology

In *Somebody Telling Somebody Else*, Phelan sketches ten principles that are key to the rhetorical theory of narrative. The following brief overview outlines only some of these, insofar as they are relevant to the types of narrative we encounter in the bowls; it also seeks to problematise these principles in relation to the bowl texts, especially as regards the peculiar audience dynamics that the bowls instantiate. Firstly, Phelan's theory of narrative represents a rhetorical poetics. That is, it "subsumes the traditional view of narrative as a structured sign system representing a linked sequence of events under the broader view that narrative itself is an event."⁷⁵ More specifically, it construes this narrative event as a rhetorical action: a purposive communication from a teller to an audience. This emphasis on purpose informs the core of the rhetorical analysis of narrative and its concern with how tellers shape their narrative materials in service of their larger ends. Within the corpus of the bowls, these larger ends can be loosely distinguished on the basis of the words, images, structures, dialogic relations, and generic conventions that they deploy, and grouped into two main types of text: those which are generic in regard to the malicious forces they seek to exorcise or repel (and which wield a more generalised apotropaic authority) and those which address specific afflictions caused by specific demons and/or specific social situations.⁷⁶ These preliminary distinctions reflect a

⁷⁵ Phelan, *Somebody Telling Somebody Else*, 5.

⁷⁶ Strictly speaking, any broader focus on these larger ends would mean studying the bowl narratives as narratives *within* rhetorical discourse. This kind of focus on narrative (elements) *in* situated persuasive discourse differs from rhetorical narratology, which conceives of narrative itself as a multidimensional purposive

spectrum that ranges from apotropaic to exorcistic and curative. Such overall purposes would have naturally dictated the choice of spell formulae used in the bowls, and should prompt us to ask if specific narrative formulae were targeted at particular (types of) demons, and how these formulae were shaped in order to best combat them. At least in the case of one demon known as Agag d. Baroq—who was associated with blindness and migraine—a historiola featuring the colourful first-century Palestinian tanna Ḥanina ben Dosa seems to have been deemed the most efficacious method of thwarting her.⁷⁷

This first principle of the rhetorical paradigm reflects the assumption that authors design narratives to affect readers in particular ways, and that these designs are conveyed through different textual elements. Phelan’s second major point, which “identifies a feedback loop among authorial agency, textual phenomena (including intertextual relations), and reader response,” is that these authorial designs “are also deeply influenced by the nature of their audiences.”⁷⁸ The rhetorical paradigm thus theorises ‘the somebody else’ in narrative communications by distinguishing among three different audiences in nonfiction narrative (which is how I will characterise the narrative material in the bowls). The first of these audiences is

the actual audience, flesh-and-blood readers in all their differences and commonalities. The second audience is the authorial audience, the hypothetical group for whom the author writes—the group that shares the knowledge, values, prejudices, fears, and experiences that the author expected in his or her readers, and that ground his or her rhetorical choices. The authorial audience is neither wholly hypothetical nor wholly actual, but instead it is a hybrid of readers an author knows or knows about—or at least an interpretation of such readers—and an audience

communication. Whilst the present study takes care to situate any given bowl narrative within the wider rhetorical context of the bowl it is found in, my emphasis on the bowl narratives as independent spells—persuasive in themselves—leads me to site this study within the practice of rhetorical narratology rather than within a framework for the study of narratives in rhetorical discourse (as might be the case in a more comprehensive poetics of the incantation bowls, one which examined the ‘making’ of the bowl texts as wholes). I also note here the extent to which the so-called ‘narrative turn’ in academia has led to the application of narratological tools to extra-narratological research questions, such that it would do little disservice to the bowl texts as a whole if they were so treated. As Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations of the Semiotics of Texts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 13, cf. 29–31 notes, “It is usually possible to transform a non-narrative text into a narrative one.”

⁷⁷ See Chapter Three.

⁷⁸ Phelan, *Somebody Telling Somebody Else*, 6.

the author imagines. The third audience is the narratee, the audience addressed by the narrator, whether characterized or not. Typically, the more the narratee is characterized, the more important this audience is in the rhetorical exchange.⁷⁹

One obvious but often disregarded feature of the bowl texts is that—at least upon the moment of their interment—they were intended not for other humans to read, but solely for a transmundane audience. In fact, it is only upon the exhumation of the bowl and the beginning of the interpretative exercise that a human audience—the contemporary scholar, say—comes to assume the position of the actual audience. Prior to the recovery of the bowls from the ground, the transmundane audience adjured by the bowls comprised both their actual and authorial audience, as well as the narratees for the narrative spells. Like other applied magical objects whose (primary) readers were the transmundane agents invoked by their texts, the bowls thus leave us in a peculiar hermeneutical bind—for how are we to understand a text that was never intended for human eyes? As Joseph E. Sanzo points out with regard to the use of amulets—whose texts were generally obscured from their beneficiaries once they were folded and inserted into capsules in order to be worn on the body—this inevitably leaves us “with an author-oriented situation in which we must primarily investigate the reader *as envisioned by the practitioner*.”⁸⁰ Distinguishing the authorial audience in the bowls is thus virtually indistinguishable from assessing authorial intent, while the bowl texts and bowl praxis let us know that the authorial audience of transmundane beings envisioned by the bowl practitioners were susceptible not just to persuasive human language, but to written language in particular; that they could read; and that they could read underground, and in the dark. This is obviously a general observation, and the authorial audience for specific bowls and specific bowl narratives was presumably decided and elaborated upon in consultation with the client on the basis of a diagnosis of the demon(s) behind the client’s problem or illness. This point comprises a further aspect of the rhetorical paradigm outlined by Phelan: that the rhetorical situation that underlies different (kinds of) narratives varies (and typically varies within individual narratives).⁸¹ It also brings me to another important principle of the rhetorical

⁷⁹ Phelan, *Somebody Telling Somebody Else*, 7.

⁸⁰ Joseph E. Sanzo, “Wrapped up in the Bible: The Multifaceted Ritual on a Late Antique Amulet (P. Oxy. VIII 1077),” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 24.4 (2016): 594. Emphasis in original.

⁸¹ Phelan, *Somebody Telling Somebody Else*, 10. There are thus often different tracks of rhetorical communication within a single text. In fiction, for example, the teller/audience situation may be doubled, wherein a narrator or narrators may tell a story to (uncharacterised) narratees for their own purposes, while the author

paradigm: rhetorical interpretation is based not on an *a priori* method, but an *a posteriori* method. As Phelan puts it,

Rather than declaring what narratives invariably do or how they invariably do it, I seek to understand and assess the variety of things narratives have done and the variety of ways they have done it. In practical terms, this principle means that I try to reason back from the effects created by narratives to the causes of those effects in the authorial shaping of narratives.⁸²

As is plain, in relation to the bowl texts more broadly—but with an eye to the audience for their narratives—I have read back from the bowls and their texts a fairly specific idea of their authorial audience and the kind of rhetorical choices this audience was susceptible to. In short, it would seem that—in imagining ourselves into the shoes of an angel or a demon—we can take a fairly anthropocentric tack, for it appears—on the basis of things done in the bowl texts, and the way in which they are done—that these special beings were believed to be just as susceptible as human readers to the broader effects of the bowl texts, as well as the more particular effects of their narratives. As Shaul Shaked notes in relation to several bowl narratives,

It is impossible to ignore the literary quality of many of the spells. This is eminently noticeable in the formula ‘I descended to the depths of the earth’, with its high language, its peculiar poetic structure, and its double-edged vision, downwards and upwards. There is also a marked tendency to high drama, conveyed by the spatial movement of the narrator, by the visions seen, and by the dialogue. ... One can’t help feeling that the demons had a highly developed sensitivity to poetic figures of speech, which acted upon them, we might say, like magic. They had no choice but to flee or be subdued.⁸³

communicates both the events and the narrator’s account of them to their audience for their own purposes. In the bowl narratives, the narrator-narratee track is generally indistinguishable from the author-audience track.

⁸² Phelan, *Somebody Telling Somebody Else*, 6.

⁸³ Shaked, “Transmission and Transformation,” 207. Cf. the literature cited in n. 1 above on the relations between magical and literary ‘enchantment.’ Shaked’s remarks recall the magical and seductive marvels of *logos* as they are discussed and defined by Gorgias, who was the founder of rhetoric’s flashier branch: epideictic. In his *Encomium of Helen*, Gorgias evinces an understanding of *logos* that links poetry to conviction and the transportive powers of language. Poetry for Gorgias is simply “speech with metre” (*Hel.* 9). But if we move beyond the confines of poetics in the sense of versification to the production or manufacturing of discourse, what Gorgi-

In many ways, Shaked's point here—which focusses on the structure and progression of these bowl narratives, as well as their thematic elements—embraces the final aspect of Phelan's rhetorical paradigm that I wish to emphasise in relation to the bowl narratives. The last of these aspects emphasises the progression of narratives and the centrality of textual and readerly dynamics to a narrative's effects and purposes:

Textual dynamics are the internal processes by which narratives move from beginning through middle to ending,⁸⁴ and readerly dynamics are the corresponding cognitive, affective, ethical, and aesthetic responses of the audience to those textual dynamics. ... by describing progression as a synthesis, I seek to capture the ways that textual dynamics and readerly dynamics influence each other.⁸⁵

In the following chapters, I focus primarily on textual and readerly dynamics, which Phelan characterises as “a synthesis of plot dynamics, governing the sequence of events, and narratorial dynamics, governing the relations among authors, tellers (whether narrators or characters), and audiences.”⁸⁶ I now turn to the bowl narratives themselves.

as is speaking to is the ability of language to “drug and bewitch the soul” and to cause “what is incredible and invisible to appear before the eyes of the mind” (13, 14). Gorgias thus equates “persuasion by speech” with “abduction by force” and implicates persuasive speech in the creation of experience (12).

⁸⁴ Note the important contributions in Raphaël Baroni and Françoise Revaz, eds., *Narrative Sequence in Contemporary Narratology* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2016).

⁸⁵ Phelan, *Somebody Telling Somebody Else*, 10.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

PART TWO

SURVEY OF NARRATIVE SPELLS
IN THE JBA BOWLS

CHAPTER THREE

Mythic Stories and Mythic Story Worlds Historiolae and Narrative Tokens in the JBA Bowls

INTRODUCTION

This chapter surveys the use of brief mythic narratives in the published JBA incantation bowls. It also surveys references to mythic stories in the bowls. The difference here is between the representation of a sequence of events and overt allusion to those same events. There is a tendency in bowl scholarship (as well as other studies of ancient magic) to blur these different forms and functions of story and narrative. One side-effect of this tendency is an incomplete picture of the communicative contexts of activated magical objects and what practitioners sought to achieve with relation to their transmundane audiences. Paying attention to the difference can aid us in understanding how stories and narratives circulated in specific contexts. I use the term *historiolae* to refer to ‘little stories’ that are actually recounted in the bowls. I do not extend the term to embrace references to stories, even though these references work like *historiolae* to establish precedent or paradigm for the desired magical action. To refer to a story is not the same as to tell a story, and the present work is concerned with the application of stories to present circumstances through their actual telling. Nevertheless, the references to various mythic stories that we find in the bowls invoke the actions of God and other powerful figures in a way that evokes earlier/related narratives about these figures. Like many *historiolae*, they reflect a larger ‘story world’ that in turn establishes the authority of individual references and narratives through the evocation of larger (complexes of) narratives. In this way, each story (whether narrated or not) stands as a guarantor of the existential rules that underlie the others (and is in turn guaranteed by them). This process of accreditation is common in the bowls and I examine it below insofar as it relates to *historiolae* and what I label ‘narrative tokens.’ I use ‘narrative token’ to designate the frequent

references in the bowls to stories or set of stories known to the bowl practitioners (but which may not necessarily have reached us in written form, if indeed these apparent stories were ever written down or even existed). By evoking powerful figures and/or the stories that circulated around them, these tokens were plainly designed to cash-in on the mythical precedents established by these figures and/or these stories. The idea of tokenisation that I develop below is intended to better reflect the active and applied nature of these references in a way that is not necessarily captured by the terms ‘reference’ or ‘allusion.’¹

I begin this chapter with a summary and synthesis of several proposals made regarding the use and working of the *historiola* in the ancient world. Coined by scholars of folklore and subsequently adopted by scholars of ancient magic,² the neologism ‘*historiola*’ refers to a cross-cultural phenomenon whereby brief mythic narratives are used within (or as) spells in order to affect a change in the world. The expectation is that the actions described or the events recounted in the *historiola* will happen in (or effect) the present as the story is narrated. Narrating a *historiola* thus constitutes a type of performative utterance, and I focus in particular on the performativity of *historiolae*. There is an implicit tendency in a great deal of existing scholarship on *historiolae* towards the essentialisation of myth, whereby the details and structure of specific narratives are boiled away in favour of an over-arching macro conception of myth. In this chapter, I move the study of *historiolae* away from essentialising notions of macro- or ur-myth. Adopting an approach that sees myths to be extant in the telling, I show the extent to which the actual structures of narrative are vital to the ways in which the narration of specific myths achieve resolution to a given crisis.

As part of the survey of *historiolae* and narrative tokens in the JBA bowls, and as they become relevant to its progression, I further introduce several new theoretical concepts in relation to the bowls. In particular I focus on the idea of story worlds, which I use to help unpack the relations between *historiolae* and narrative tokens. In conceptualising the *historiola* and narrative tokens, I also deploy the idea of the miniature in order to illuminate how they achieve their effects. I demonstrate how a reduction in the dimensions of a longer narrative or the selection of a specific detail or token can lead to an increase in the dimensions of this narrative or this detail’s significance. I examined how such acts of ‘exaggeration’ represent a strategy for achieving focus, and demonstrated the ways in which the bowls used such strate-

¹ See Chapter Four for a discussion of the term allusion.

² See R. Heim, “Incantamenta magica graeca latina,” *Jahrbücher für classische Philologie* 19 (1892): 495 and Paul Maas, “The Philinna Papyrus,” *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 62 (1942): 37.

gies to threaten an almost unlimited amount of significance. I stress here that the logic governing the sequence of my theory development in this chapter does not mean that concepts developed in relation to specific *historiolae* are not applicable to others. In fact, many of the theoretical issues developed in this section and this chapter are looped into the next, even as many of these issues are explored in relation to particular narratives and types of narrative in the bowls.

SECTION I

THEORISING THE HISTORIOLA

HISTORIOLAE

Narrative spells known as *historiolae* appear frequently in many ritual contexts, though extended treatments of this cross-cultural phenomenon are limited in number.³ Broadly

³ The classic synthetic treatment is David Frankfurter, “Narrating Power: The Theory and Practice of the Magical *Historiola* in Ritual Spells,” in Meyer and Mirecki, eds., *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, 457–76. Other important studies include Edina Bozóky, “Mythic Mediation in Healing Incantations,” in *Health, Disease, and Healing in Medieval Culture*, ed. Sheila Campbell (Houndsmill: Macmillan, 1992), 84–92; Seth L. Sanders, “A Historiography of Demons: Preterit-Theme, Para-Myth, and *Historiola* in the Morphology of Genres,” in *Proceedings of the XLV Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale: Historiography in the Cuneiform World*, ed. Tzvi Abusch et al. (Bethesda: CDL Press, 2001), 429–40; Jørgen Podemann Sørensen, “The Argument in Ancient Egyptian Magical Formulae,” *Acta Orientalia* 45 (1984): 5–19; Monika Schulz, *Magie oder Die Wiederherstellung der Ordnung* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2000), 285–378. See also Edina Bozóky, “*Historiolae* apocrypha: les charmes narratifs au Moyen Âge,” in *Pensée grecque et sagesse d’Orient: Hommage à Michel Tardieu*, ed. M.-M. Amir Moezzi et al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 117–32; Edina Bozóky, “Medieval Narrative Charms,” in *The Power of Words: Studies on Charms and Charming in Europe*, ed. James Alexander Kapaló, Éva Pócs, and William Ryan (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2013), 101–15; A.A. Barb, “Antaura: The Mermaid and the Devil’s Grandmother,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 29.1 (1966): 1–23; Christopher A. Faraone, “Hermes but No Marrow: Another Look at a Puzzling Magical Spell,” *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 72 (1988): 279–86; Frankfurter, “Narratives That Do Things”; Fritz Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 224–29; R. Heim, “Incantamenta magica graeca latina,” 495–507; Sarah Iles Johnston, “Narrating Myths: Story and Belief in Ancient Greece,” *Arethusa* 48.2 (2015): 176–183; Johnathan Roper, “Towards a Poetics, Rhetorics and Proxemics of Verbal Charms,” *Folklore* 24 (2003): 22–27; Brian Sowers, “*Historiolae*: Narrative Charms in Magical Texts and Literature in Late Antiquity,” *History of Religions* 56.4 (2017): 426–48. For *historiolae* in the context of Jewish magic, see Gideon Bohak, “The Uses of Cosmogonic Myths in Ancient Jewish Magic,” *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 13 (2011): 93–107; Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 205, 312–14; Joseph Angel,

speaking, the purpose of *historiolae* is to draw a connection or analogy between a mythical precedent and the situation confronting the magical practitioner and his or her client. Fritz Graf defines the term as follows:

(‘Little story’). Modern term describing brief tales built into magic formulas, providing a mythic precedence for a magically effective treatment. ... *historiolae* should not be understood as abridgments of well-known myths or as *ad hoc* inventions, rather the narrator understands them as proof of an all-embracing order into which he integrates his rite.⁴

Graf’s definition is typical of analyses of *historiolae* in that it appeals to an essential feature of our understanding of myth: that myths have the “ability to channel ‘power’ from a primeval time or place into our world.”⁵ In what follows, I understand ‘myth’ to be a spoken or written narrative that describes events that occurred *in illo tempore* (at an undetermined time in the past).⁶ Salient to this understanding is that myths concern the (inter) actions (and enduring implications of these actions for humans) of powerful human figures, gods, and other transmundane beings; that myths are set in a distant past which is nevertheless understood to be continuous with or accessible to the present; and that myths are stories. As Sarah Iles Johnston notes, the study of myth under the long shadow of James Frazer has typically “started from the assumption that ‘a myth’ must be extracted from the narrative vehicles that conveyed it before a scholar can do anything with the myth, *qua* myth.”⁷ This comparative approach has borne valuable results in various disciplines over the years in our understanding

“The Use of the Hebrew Bible in Early Jewish Magic,” *Religion Compass* 3.5 (2009): 795–96. For *historiolae* in the context of the incantation bowls, see Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 13–18. For a recent synthetic treatment of the major contributions to the literature on *historiolae*, as well as an examination of the mechanism of *historiolae* and their integration of mythic and present time and space, see Daniel James Waller, “Echo and the Historiola: Theorizing the Narrative Incantation,” *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 16 (2015): 263–80.

⁴ Fritz Graf, “Historiola,” *Brill’s New Pauly Online*, 2006.

⁵ Sanders, “Historiography of Demons,” 432.

⁶ Compare the Platonic definition of myth used by Bozóky, “Mythic Mediation,” 84 in her treatment of mediaeval *historiolae*: she defines myth as “an untrue story imaging truth.” This has the unfortunate side effect of associating myth with falsehood and suggesting that the magical practitioners who deployed these stories understood them to be useful fictions rather than representations of actual past events and actions undertaken by heroes, gods, and other powerful beings. Issues of truth and referentiality—as these concepts are understood from our perspective—are bracketed in my account.

⁷ Johnston, “Narrating Myths,” 173.

of what myths can do. I nevertheless take a different tack in this chapter, and approach myths as narratives that have been given a specific verbal shape in order to communicate something (and sometimes affect a change in the world). This tailoring to suit specific tasks and communicative functions is my focus, and my concern in this chapter is not so much the delivery of a larger thesis on the nature of (over-arching macro conceptions of) myth as it is the performative articulation of myth. In this view, myth is understood as an (applied) narrative representation (of precedent) which carries independent value in itself. This is in contrast to the traditional approach to *historiolae*, which understands them to be extracts from or paraphrases of some putative macro- or ur-myth. The approach that I adopt sees myths to be extant in the telling; insofar as any macro-myth exists, it is simply the sum-total of various extant (narrative) performances.⁸

In short, *historiolae* are not derivatives of myths; as applied authoritative narratives of precedent, they *are* the myths, and the events that they represent are understood to be archetypical: they retain for all time their power or force, and this force may be tapped into at any time simply by recounting them. “The precedent having been cited, the god,” for example, “is obliged to act the same way now as then, this time to the benefit of the conjurer/suppliant. Even a simple allusion to deeds done in the past will suffice to incite a god to action.”⁹ The precedents narrated in *historiolae* are typically set in the past, but as certain Egyptian spells

⁸ Cf. the structuralist approach to myth as expressed by, e.g. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), 13: “Each myth taken separately exists as the limited application of a pattern, which is gradually revealed by the relations of reciprocal intelligibility discerned between several myths.” See also Claude Lévi-Strauss, “The Structural Study of Myth,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 68.270 (1955): 435, where Lévi-Strauss defines myth as “consisting of all its versions,” by which the “problem” of the “quest for the *true* version, or the *earlier* [version of the myth]” is eliminated, and from which it follows that we should take all the different versions into account *qua* myth. I expand upon certain aspects of Lévi-Strauss’ pattern (or gradual revelation of relations of reciprocity) in the next section in my discussion of the term ‘story world.’ I also note here the essentialising tendency (mentioned previously in relation to Frazer) of the structuralist approach to myth (which can be seen to boil down the details of any specific narration in order to uncover its structure). Cf. the methodologies developed by Jean-Pierre Vernant and Walter Burkert, both of whom draw on (Lévi-Straussian) structuralist approaches to myth but emphasise the relevance and significance of any myth’s narration in a specific place, at a specific time, and in response to specific circumstances, as well as the narrator of the myth’s careful choice of each word of the narrative: Walter Burkert, *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979); Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Myth and Thought among the Greeks* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983).

⁹ William Brashear, “The Greek Magical Papyri,” in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II/18/5, 1996, 3439.

demonstrate through their use of a narrative present, what is important in *historiolae* is not so much the link that they establish between times but the link that they establish “between a human dimension where action is open-ended and a mythic dimension where actions are completed and tensions have been resolved.”¹⁰ In some *historiolae*, present time may be projected or absorbed into mythic time. In other cases, mythic time is transposed into present time. A good example of this is a Sumerian *historiola* (UHF VII:647-89) treated by Seth Sanders in his examination of ancient Mesopotamian *historiolae*.¹¹ This incantation begins by describing a patient’s sickness in the present tense as directly attributable to an attack by the evil Udu-g-demon, the Dimme and Dima-demons, and the Ala-demon. The incantation’s closing command also occurs in the present tense. In between, however, the patient’s problem is set in the past and solved in the past through the narration of a story about the gods Asalluḫi and Ea. The narration of the demonic attack and its resolution also occurs in the preterit, which contextualises the use of narrative in the incantation in a very specific way. As Sanders notes,

the events of the myth are portrayed as having resulted from a unique *historical* event in the life of the individual patient. The way the Marduk-Ea theme contextualizes itself might even make us rethink a certain stereotype about myth,

¹⁰ Frankfurter, “Narrating Power,” 466. For a preliminary attempt to account for the spatial and material implications of different ‘dimensions’ in our understanding of *historiolae*, see Waller, “Echo and the *Historiola*,” 272–73. The term ‘dimensions’ compounds the difficulties of understanding mythical time with the difficulties of understanding mythical space. As Johnston, “Narrating Myths,” 175 observes, terms like mythic dimension and human dimension or mythic realm and human realm, though they may be heuristically useful, “have the unfortunate side effect of suggesting that the narrated actions occur in places that are completely separate from our own world.” The ontology of the *historiola* is such that the mythic is not cut off from the quotidian in either time or space. In much the same way that we understand the relation that we draw between a sound and its echo to be one of logical and spatial necessity, and understand a sound and its echo to share the same space, I suggest that we should understand the mechanism of the *historiola* to efface the (spatial) distance between the mythic and the quotidian so as to embrace a shared time and space. Cf. Jonathan Z. Smith, “The Wobbling Pivot,” in *Map Is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 88–103, where Smith argues that we move away from evolutionary dichotomies and Eliadan contradistinctions of archaic and modern time and sacred and profane space, toward a locative-utopian expression of space and time. This experiential formulation of Smith’s speaks to the different ways in which space can be conceived and constructed, and opens up a heuristic spectrum of temporal possibilities when it comes to mythic time and its invocation or actualisation.

¹¹ For the incantation text, see Markham J. Geller, *Forerunners to Udu-g-Hul: Sumerian Exorcistic Incantations* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1985), 56–62. For an examination of its narrative aspect, as well as an examination of other ancient Mesopotamian *historiolae*, see Sanders, “Historiography of Demons.”

namely that it is supposed to have occurred *in illo tempore*, in some primeval time that is also, mysteriously, our time. The Marduk–Ea theme explicitly describes events starting when the demon’s onslaught made the patient sick: if the patient became sick last Wednesday, then the myth will be describing events that began, not *in illo tempore*, but last Wednesday. In fact, one of the basic formal features of these narratives-within-incantations is that they evoke the context of their own performance not in one way but in a *variety* of ways.¹²

In Sander’s view, the successful application of mythic narratives in incantations is “the outcome of an interaction between the text, performer, audience and occasion.”¹³ Historiolae are not derivations or applications of pre-existing myths. Rather, their power derives from the narrative articulation and performance of the events of the myth. This aspect of the historiola is reflected in Sanders’ discussion of the performative:

What is interesting about the performative is that it helps create its own context by explicitly bridging the gap between speech and action, text and context. And what is unique about the performative is the way it bridges this gap: through reflexivity and deixis, by pointing to itself and to what it is doing.¹⁴

Historiolae act meta-pragmatically: they call the goals of the practitioner into being by talking about them and accomplish effective magical actions by modelling them through mythic narratives. In this sense, historiolae are perlocutionary acts.¹⁵ The action of the historiola is simultaneously its speaking, and its effect is achieved—contextualised, framed, performed—through narration. The historiola “represents itself as acting on a divine being and provides divine models for it,”¹⁶ and the performance of the narrative achieves the fusion of mythic and present circumstances. This performative palimpsest—achieved either through recitation or inscription—is bolstered by an analogical relation of relevance between the content of the myth, and the apotropaic, curative, exorcistic, or aggressive function of the incantation of which it forms a part. This analogical relation articulates not just correspondence or correla-

¹² Sanders, “Historiography of Demons,” 431.

¹³ Ibid., 434 n.19.

¹⁴ Seth L. Sanders, “Performative Utterances and Divine Language in Ugaritic,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 63.3 (2004): 163.

¹⁵ See Frankfurter, “Narratives That Do Things,” 103–4.

¹⁶ Sanders, “Performative Utterances and Divine Language,” 178.

tion between past and present, but precedence or paradigm for present circumstances.¹⁷ Confronted with a pressing situation, “the ritualist formulates, out of traditional terms and characters, a precedent in which the same situation is resolved.”¹⁸ In this light, the *historiola* is a kind of “active analogizing” or “dynamic story-telling.”¹⁹ The telling of the story functions to articulate the precedent and to form a link between an ongoing problem in the present and a dimension where this same problem has been resolved. The telling thus recognises a certain reality in the present and simultaneously creates a third reality through a narrative of resolution past. This integration of myth and present circumstance to create a third reality is emphasised in some cases through the use of an explicit analogical formula like ‘just as it was then, so may it be now.’ In other cases, a specific declaration to apply the *historiola* may be lacking, and the analogy should be understood to be implicit.²⁰ In these instances, the narration of the precedent itself functions like a kind of declarative or ‘situating’ speech act, where the mere act of telling the *historiola* declares the resolution of the situation to be a *fait accompli*.²¹ In the following survey of *historiolae* in the published incantation bowls, I further

¹⁷ But as Bozóky, “Mythic Mediation,” 89 notes, in some cases it is simply “the miraculous and extraordinary nature of the mythic event that furnishes the basis of the comparison in narrative incantations. Indeed, the myth and the actual situation need not necessarily have any points in common. It is not a question always of establishing a similarity, but of creating a correspondence—sometimes a quite surprising one—between the two situations.”

¹⁸ Frankfurter, “Narrating Power,” 466.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 472.

²⁰ Frankfurter, “Narrating Power,” 469 further specifies the distinction between explicit/implicit *historiolae* with the terms ‘clausal *historiola*’ and ‘*historiola* proper.’ In the former, the narrative plays a subordinate role to a directive utterance; in the latter, the narrative itself performs the ritual function. The idea of explicit/implicit *historiolae* overlaps somewhat with Bozóky’s categories of ‘indirect’ and ‘direct’ mythic mediation. In indirect mythical mediation, the conjuration is pronounced on an analogical formula by the practitioner. In direct mythic mediation, the mythic protagonists themselves pronounce the cure or curse or prohibition of harm. For a linguistic analysis of implicit *historiolae*, see Thomas A. Sebeok and Frances J. Ingemann, *Studies in Cheremis: The Supernatural* (New York: Wenner-Gren Foundation, 1956), 287–89.

²¹ Frankfurter, “Narrating Power,” 467; cf. Frankfurter, “Narratives That Do Things,” 103–4, and his remarks on the perlocutionary functions of narrative. On ‘situating speech,’ an amplification of John Searle’s declarative type of speech act, see Wade T. Wheelock, “The Problem of Ritual Language: From Information to Situation,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 50.1 (1982): 49–71. John R. Searle, “A Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts,” in *Language, Mind, and Knowledge*, ed. Keith Gunderson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1975), 359–60 argues that, in order to successfully complete a declarative speech act, the speaker should carry an appropriate status, while Frankfurter, “Narrating Power,” 467 argues that “at least insofar as it pertains to the *historiola*,” the authority of the declarative speech act “derives from the content itself: the

model this form of dynamic story-telling and active analogising in relation to the ideas of story worlds and narrative tokens.

SECTION II

SURVEY OF HISTORIOLOAE AND NARRATIVE TOKENS IN THE JBA BOWLS

Historiolae may be classified by their themes, their protagonists, or common motifs. In what follows, I largely subsume themes and other motifs under the umbrella of protagonists: the human, non-human, and transmundane figures whose actions provide precedent for the stated goals of the bowls.

MYTHIC STORY WORLDS AND WONDER-WORKING RABBIS HANINA BEN DOSA AND JOSHUA BAR PERAḤIA

The protagonists of historioloae in the JBA incantation bowls are typically God, other transmundane agents, or powerful human figures. Such figures were (highly) familiar in late antique Mesopotamia and the names of many of them—in and of themselves—would have been enough to evoke histories, actions, and/or personal characteristics that were apropos to the intended function of any given bowl. Two such human figures that feature prominently in the JBA bowls are the tannaim Ḥanina ben Dosa and Joshua bar Peraḥia.²² On the basis of the bowl evidence, it appears that Joshua bar Peraḥia possessed a considerable reputation for legal and magical powers.²³ He features prominently in the bowls as the originator of a geṭ or

mythic events that are recounted.” See Chapter Five for an examination of bowl narratives that function more emphatically as declaratives, where authority accrues to the narrating ‘I’ (the bowl practitioner as implied author) through a kind of authorising vision of the transmundane realm.

²² Ḥanina ben Dosa, a colourful first-century Palestinian tanna, appears at numerous points and in numerous stories in the Talmudic literature. He is said in m. Soṭah 9:15 to have been the last of the ‘men of deed’ (מעשה ואנשי). For a survey of rabbinic testimonies to the sage, see Geza Vermes, “Ḥanina Ben Dosa: A Controversial Galilean Saint from the First Century of the Christian Era,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 23.1 (1972): 28–50; Geza Vermes, “Ḥanina Ben Dosa: A Controversial Galilean Saint from the First Century of the Christian Era (II),” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 24.1 (1973): 51–64. See also Gad Ben-Ami Sarfati, “Pious Men, Men of Deeds, and the Early Prophets,” *Tarbiz* 26 (1957): 126–53 (Hebrew); Geza Vermes, *Post-Biblical Jewish Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 178–214; Sean Freyne, “The Charismatic,” in *Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism: Profiles and Paradigms*, ed. John J. Collins and George W.E. Nickelsburg (Ann Arbor: Scholars Press, 1980), 223–58.

²³ Joshua bar Peraḥia lived and served as *nāšī* of the Sanhedrin in second century BCE Palestine. He appears only a few times in the Talmud, but is said in some of these passages (despite the gross temporal incongruity) to

divorce writ that was given to demons. In five historiolae (the texts of some of which are damaged) and in multiple varied references to this get, the demons threatening the owners of the bowls are served with a divorce and enjoined to leave—just as demons were previously dismissed by Joshua bar Peraḥia. Another historiola which appears in multiple bowls recounts an incident whereby Ḥanina ben Dosa—also renowned for his magical and miracle-working powers—met a female demon and recited Ps 104:20 against her. A variant of this historiola is also to be found in b. Pes. 112b, which relates a meeting between Ḥanina ben Dosa and a powerful demon called Agrat bat Maḥlat, who is subsequently subdued by the tanna:

לא יצא יחידי בלילה לא בלילי רביעיות ולא בלילי שבתות מפני שאגרת בת מחלת היא וי"ח רבוא של מלאכי חבלה יוצאין וכל אחד ואחד יש לו רשות לחבל בפני עצמו מעיקרא הוו שכיחי כולא יומא זמנא חדא פגעה בר חנינא בן דוסא אמרה ליה אי לאו דמכרזן עלך ברקיע הזהירו בחנינא ובתורתו סכנתך אמר לה אי חשיבנא ברקיע גוזר אני עליך שלא תעבורי ביישוב לעולם אמרה ליה במטותא מינך שבק לי רווחא פורתא שבק לה לילי שבתות ולילי רביעיות

One should not go out alone at night either on the eve of Wednesday or on the eve of the Sabbath, because Agrat bat Maḥlat goes out in company with 180,000 harmful angels, each of which has the authority to cause harm on their own. Originally they would be found abroad every day. On one occasion she happened to come against Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa. She said to him: ‘If it were not for the fact that there is a proclamation in heaven (saying): Beware of Ḥanina and his (knowledge of the) Torah, I would put you in danger’. He said to her: ‘If I have a

have played a role in the Jesus story. See b. Sanh. 107b and b. Soṭah 47a. He is also associated with magic in the Talmud, in b. Menah. 109b, cf. Markham J. Geller, “Joshua b. Peraḥia and Jesus of Nazareth: Two Rabbinic Magicians” (Brandeis University, 1974), 45–47, and in those passages which detail his supposed sojourn with Jesus in Egypt. (Egypt was considered by the rabbis to be magic central.) For these and (discussion of) other legendary materials surrounding Joshua bar Peraḥia, see, e.g. Samuel Krauss, “Fragments araméens du Toldot Yéshou,” *Revue des études juives* 62 (1911): 28–37; Samuel Krauss, “Un texte cabbalistique sur Jésus,” *Revue des études juives* 62 (1911): 240–47; James A. Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania: The Museum, 1913), 226–28; Louis Ginzberg, *Genizah Studies in Memory of Doctor Solomon Schechter I: Midrash and Haggadah* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1928), 329 ff.; Zeev Falk, “A New Fragment of Toledot Yesu,” *Tarbiz* 46 (1978): 319–22; Jacob Neusner, *A History of the Jews in Babylonia V: Later Sasanian Times* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 235–41 and—for an extensive survey of the rabbinic materials that mention Joshua bar Peraḥia, and a discussion of his magical prowess in particular—Geller, “Joshua b. Peraḥia and Jesus of Nazareth.”

considerable position in heaven, I decree against you that you should never go through an inhabited place'. She said to him: 'Please give me a little respite', and he allowed her (to roam about) on the eves of the Sabbath and Wednesday.

Such stories circulated—in independent but similar instantiations—around these and other figures.²⁴ Ḥanina ben Dosa, for example—like Joshua ben Levi—could bring rain.²⁵ He was renowned as a healer, and was able to avert harm by his mere presence, rendering the quarter of Sepphoris in which he resided free from an outbreak of plague.²⁶ As Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro note, such stories

show how much the belief in the reality of demons and wonder-works was part of everyday life, and that this belief not only rested on the authority of at least some Tannaim, among them Ḥanina ben Dosa, but that much of their reputation was dependent on this belief ... We can see from these stories how a model of a person was created, who could, by his piety and inherent power, fight the threatening presence of the demons.²⁷

These individual stories worked to create a pattern and condition a reality whereby each individual myth worked to accredit and guarantee the existential rules that underlay the others, thereby bolstering the authority of the powerful transmundane beings and humans represented in the myth. In several recent articles on Greek myths which draw on ideas developed in media studies and social psychology, Sarah Iles Johnston has used the term 'story world' to refer to this pattern of reciprocal intelligibility that develops between individual myths.²⁸ By 'story world,' she intends

²⁴ The text in b. Pes. 112b, for example, continues with a similar encounter between Agrat bat Mahlat and the amora Abbaye. These stories share a thematic resemblance with the story—common in mediaeval and modern magic formulae—of the prophet Elijah's encounter with Lilith. See Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*, 118–19. The common denominator between the two stories about Ḥanina ben Dosa is an encounter with a female demon. For a further encounter in a later rabbinical source (R. Judah berabbi Kalonimos) between Ḥanina ben Dosa and a demon, see Shaked, "Form and Purpose in Aramaic Spells: Some Jewish Themes," in Shaked, ed., *Officina Magica*, 2005, 14, cf. Meir Bar-Ilan, "Exorcism of Demons by the Rabbis: Notes on the Magic Activity of Talmudic Sages," *Da'at* 34 (1995): 17–31 (Hebrew).

²⁵ b. Ta'an. 24b; b. Yoma 53b. See also b. Ta'an 23a for Ḥoni the Circle-Maker as a bringer of rain.

²⁶ For further on Ḥanina ben Dosa as a magician and miracle-worker, see Bar-Ilan, "Exorcism of Demons."

²⁷ Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 54.

²⁸ Johnston, "Narrating Myths"; Sarah Iles Johnston, "The Greek Mythic Story World," *Arethusa* 48.3 (2015): 283–311; Sarah Iles Johnston, "The Authority of Greek Mythic Narratives in the Magical Papyri,"

something that goes beyond the narratively constructed space in which a *single* story is set—something that constitutes a space where many stories, whether they be directly connected to each other or not, can be set, and something that is perceived by its audience as consistent and coherent.²⁹

In developing this concept, Johnston makes frequent reference to recent work in narratology, social psychology, and cognitive science that shows how narratives not only convey certain facts or values but modes of thinking or looking at the world. In this regard, Joshua Landy's work on 'formative' narratives is particularly relevant.³⁰ Landy examines how, beyond transmitting information, narratives can grant a (lively) reality to things or entities that might otherwise be too abstract to grasp or whose presence is not typically accessible to the five senses. These 'formative' narratives work to create and reinforce (or simply reflect) an 'enchanted' model of the world. (Recall the mutual/circular reinforcement of belief and authority that Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro refer to in their discussion of the tannaim.) Such narratives work to dismantle the barriers patrolled by the mundane logic of the five senses and expand (or reflect) the (different) kinds of perception available to the senses. In the bowls, narratives like this are sometimes reinforced by highly vivid (figurative) descriptions of the transmundane realm as part of the narratives and/or elsewhere within the bowl text. Such narratives work to reflect and condition a reality whereby mundane and transmundane realities and mythic and present occurrences were concretely experienced as one and the same; a reality where powerful (invisible) figures could affect the course of everyday life. The formative aspects of story worlds are also reinforced by the plurimedial nature of many of the characters instantiated within individual myths. This narratological neologism—plurimediality—simply

Archiv für Religionsgeschichte 16 (2015): 51–66; Sarah Iles Johnston, "How Myths and Other Stories Help to Create and Sustain Beliefs," in *Religion: Narrating Religion*, ed. Sarah Iles Johnston (Farmington Hills: Macmillan Reference USA, 2017), 141–56.

²⁹ Johnston, "The Greek Mythic Story World," 287. Such a space in late antique Judaism is instantiated, e.g. in various rabbinic stories where the protagonists' far-reaching (magical) powers include the ability to animate corpses (y. Šeb. 9:1, 38d), raise the dead (b. Meg. 7b), to kill with words or even a stare (e.g. y. Ta'an. 3:10, 66d; b. Ber. 58a; b. Šabb. 34a; b. B. Bat. 75a), to grow and harvest gourds by means of speech (b. Sanh. 68a), to flood a valley with gold dinars (Exod. R. 52:3), and to subdue demons (e.g. b. Qidd. 29b, b. Hul 105b). For discussion of the demonic stories in rabbinic literature in particular, see Eli Yassif, *The Hebrew Folktale: History, Genre, Meaning* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 144–56.

³⁰ Joshua Landy, *How to Do Things with Fictions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

refers to the *many methods* by which stories are told.³¹ It is designed to reflect the fact that a character may be instantiated not only in a single story, book, film, or other narrative form, but also in other stories, books, films, and narrative forms. The variety of stories told about Ḥanina ben Dosa is a good example of this: in the JBA bowls his person is instantiated in one particular narrative, but he was also popularised through other narratives as well, each of which offers a different instantiation of his character.³² Plurimediality is thus something which accumulates around a character. As Johnston puts it,

A plurimedial character shimmers at the nexus of several, perhaps even many, different instantiations of that character taken from different texts, none of which has absolute authority over that character and any of which may therefore dominate the others in the mind of the individual who creates it.³³

Plurimedial characters are encountered more often and the bowl practitioners could cash in on a body of accrued narrative associations that names such as Ḥanina ben Dosa carried; at the same time, they selected a particular instantiation of Ḥanina ben Dosa's character and story to apply in the bowls. Similarly, the different stories about and references to Joshua bar Peraḥia in the bowls reflect and refer to a broader nexus of stories that featured this tanna, different versions of which are instantiated in different bowls.

In sum, the bowl practitioners inherited a mythic story world whose cumulative authority built upon, sustained, and validated the authority of different figures. This story world is reflected in multiple individual stories that bind their protagonists—transmundane and/or

³¹ On plurimediality in general, as well as its cognates 'transmedial' and 'intermedial' (all three of which are occasionally used interchangeably by some scholars, as well as defined and used differently by different scholars), see, e.g. Werner Wolf, "Intermediality," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, ed. David Herman, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan (New York: Routledge, 2007), 252–56; Marie-Laure Ryan, "Narration in Various Media," *The Living Handbook of Narratology*, 2012, <https://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/node/53.html>.

³² Thus Monika Amsler, "The Making of Ḥanina Ben Dosa: Fan Fiction in the Babylonian Talmud," *Transformative Works and Cultures* 31 (2019) has fruitfully examined the various rabbinic stories about Ḥanina Ben Dosa through the lens of contemporary fan fiction. Baruch M. Bokser, "Wonder-Working and the Rabbinic Tradition: The Case of Ḥanina Ben Dosa," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 16 (1985): 42–92 analyses the different stories about Ḥanina ben Dosa from a literary perspective and argues that there are fundamental differences in his portrayal between the Mishna and the Talmud: his instantiation is much more powerful in the Talmud, and more so in the Babylonian Talmud than the Palestinian Talmud.

³³ Johnston, "Narrating Myths," 208.

human—into a larger network. In their interactions with different kinds of demons and other transmundane powers in these stories, these different protagonists are presented as inhabiting the same world.³⁴ In other words, Ḥanina ben Dosa and Joshua bar Peraḥia—whose narratives in the bowls I turn to now—are bound together in a discrete story plane over the span of multiple different narratives. This story world worked to validate not only each individual myth that comprised it but also the different characters who inhabited these myths, the kinds of actions they took, and the entire worldview upon which such actions rested.

HANINA BEN DOSA

Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa's encounter with an evil spirit (רוחא בישתא) is narrated in twelve published bowls.³⁵ The general theme of an encounter is common in narrative spells across diverse contexts.³⁶ It makes possible the meeting or confrontation between the helper and the sufferer, the healer and the patient, the exorcist and the assailant. The historiola of Ḥanina ben Dosa's demonic encounter is found (more or less) in the following (sometimes heavily effaced) bowls: JBA 1-10, M 156, and LO.831. JBA 1-7, JBA 9-10, and M 156 all appear to have been executed by the same professional hand.³⁷ These bowls were produced by this

³⁴ In some stories, e.g. Cant. Rab. 1:4, Ḥanina ben Dosa does not just encounter demons, but is presented as an intimate or associate of angels.

³⁵ One from the Moussaieff Collection (M 156), ten from the Schøyen Collection (JBA 1-10), and one held in the London collection of the Barakat Gallery (LO.831). For further comments on the figure of Ḥanina ben Dosa in the bowls, as well as partial editions of JBA 1 and JBA 9, see Shaked, "Form and Purpose in Aramaic Spells," 11–16, 18–19, 26–28. Agrat bat Mahlat, the demon Ḥanina ben Dosa is said to have vanquished in b. Pes. 112b is also further attested in several other bowls. In HS 3041 = ZHS 7:3-4, 8, for example, the beneficiary's house is sealed against Agrat and her entire chariot. Likewise in M 6:16 = Shaked 1995:211-213.

³⁶ See, e.g. Ferdinand Ohrt, "Über Alter und Ursprung der Begegnungssegen," *Hessische Blätter für Volkskunde* 35 (1936): 49–58.

³⁷ Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 54 suggest that the same practitioner also wrote two further unpublished bowls in the Schøyen Collection: MS 1927/9 and MS 1927/60. The writing of JBA 8 is mostly faded, but it is clear that its short incantation text was produced for a certain Aḥat d. A[---]i and that it contained the Ḥanina ben Dosa historiola. The incantation texts of two further bowls (JBA 11 and 12) are very similar to the incantations in JBA 1-10 though they omit (most likely due to haplography) the Ḥanina ben Dosa narrative. These two bowls were produced for two separate clients by a practitioner who differs from the practitioner that wrote JBA 1-7 and JBA 9 and 10. It should be noted that—in addition to the usual generic suspects—these two bowls specify and address several more malevolent entities than JBA 1-7 and JBA 9 and 10. They also specify in greater detail more of the human anatomy afflicted by demons than is specified in JBA 1-7 and JBA 9 and 10. Given the demonstrable compositional freedom exercised by the bowl practitioners, as well as the different spell

practitioner for two clients: Mahdukh d. Newandukh (JBA 1-4 and M 156) and Mihranahid d. Aḥat (JBA 5-7 and JBA 9-10).³⁸ These two women appear to have been related and to have sought with these bowls primarily to counteract the effects of a demon associated with blindness and migraine.

1. MS 2053/183 = JBA 9

An exorcistic-curative incantation bowl prepared for Mihranahid d. Aḥat

מומינה עלכי ומשבֿענא עלכי אנתי רוחא ⁽⁸⁾ בישתא דיפגע ביה ברבי חנינא בן דוסא ואמר לה רבי חנינא בן דוסא לרוחא בישתא דיפגע ביה בההיא שעתא קראה דיכתיב תשית חושך ⁽⁹⁾ ויהי לילה בו תירמוס כל חיתו יאער

⁽⁷⁾ I adjure you and I beswear you, you, evil ⁽⁸⁾ spirit, who met Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa, and Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa said to her, to the evil spirit who met him at that time, the verse that is written: “You make darkness ⁽⁹⁾ and it is night, in which all beasts of the forest creep” (Ps 104:20).

2. MS 1927/47 = JBA 4

An exorcistic-curative incantation bowl prepared for Mahdukh d. Newandukh

מומינה ומשבֿענא עלכי אנתי רוחא בישתא ⁽⁹⁾ דיפגע ביה ברבי חנינא בן דוסא ואמר לה רבי חנינא בן דוסא לרוחא בישתא דיפגע ביה בההיא שעתא קראה דיכתיב תשית חושך ויהי לילה בו תירמוס כל חיתו יאער ⁽¹⁰⁾

3. MS 1927/64 = JBA 5

An exorcistic-curative incantation bowl prepared for Mihranahid d. Aḥat

מומינה ומשבֿענא עלכי אנתי רוחא בישתא דיפגע ביה ברבי חנינא ⁽⁷⁾ בן דוסא ואמר לה רבי חנינא בן דוסא לרוחא בישתא דיפגע ביה בההיא שעתא קראה דיכתיב תשית חושך ויהי לילה בו תירמוס כל חיתו יער ⁽⁸⁾

elements introduced in JBA 11 and 12, I do not discount the possibility that the Ḥanina ben Dosa historiola was felt by the practitioner in question to be unnecessary to addressing the clients' ailments and engaging the specific demons in JBA 11 and 12. That said, the case for haplography in these two bowls is strong. Because the omission appears in both JBA 11 and 12, it is clear that—if the historiola was accidentally omitted—the corruption occurred before the formula was transmitted to this particular practitioner.

³⁸ In addition to Mahdukh d. Newandukh, JBA 2 includes Gundas s. Rašewandukh and Mihroy d. Mahdukh as beneficiaries.

4. M 156 = Corpus: 115-116

An exorcistic-curative incantation bowl prepared for Mahdukh d. Newandukh

(7) מומינה ומשבֿענא עלכי אנתי רוחא בישתא דיפגע ביה ברבי חנינא בן דוסא ואמר לה רבי חנינא בן דוסא לרוחא בישתא (8) דיפגע ביה בההיא שעתא קראה דכתיב תשית חושך ויהי לילה בו תירמוס כל חיתו יאער

5. MS 1927/8 = JBA 1

An exorcistic-curative incantation bowl prepared for Mahdukh d. Newandukh

(8) מומינא עלכי אנתי רוחא בישתא [די פ]גע ב[יה בר]בי חנינא בן דוסא ואמר לה רבי חנינא בן דוסא לרוחא בישתא דיפגע ביה בההיא שעתא קראה (9) דיכתיב תשית חושך ויהי [לי]לה בו תירמוס כל חיתו יער

6. MS 1927/29 = JBA 2

An exorcistic-curative incantation bowl prepared for Gundas s. Rašewandukh; Mahdukh d. Newandukh; Mihroy d. Mahdukh

(8) מומינא ומשבֿענא עלכי אנתי רוחא בישתא דיפגע ביה ברבי חנינא בן [ד]וסא ואמר לה רבי (9) [ח]נינא בן דוסא לרוחא בישתא דיפגע ביה בההיא שעתא קראה [דיכ]תיב תשית חושך ויהי לילה בו תירמוס כל חיתו יאער

7. MS 1927/45 = JBA 3

An exorcistic-curative incantation bowl prepared for Mahdukh d. Newandukh

(8) מומינא ומשבֿענא עלכי אנתי רוחא (9) בישתא [א] דיפגע ביה ברבי חנינא בן דוסא ואמר לה רבי חנינא בן דוסא לרוחא בישתא דיפגע ביה בההיא שעתא קראה דיכתיב ת[שית] חושך [ד] ויהי לילה בו תירמוס כל חיתו יער

8. MS 2053/10 = JBA 6

An exorcistic-curative incantation bowl prepared for Mihranahid d. Aḥat

(7) מומינה (8) עלכי ומשבֿענא עלכי אנתי רוחא בישתא דיפגע ביה בר[בי] חנינא בן דוסא ואמר [לה] רבי חנינא בן דוסא לרוחא בישתא דיפגע ביה בההיא (9) שעתא קראה דיכת[יב] תשית [חן]שך ויהי לילה בו תירמוס כל חיתו יאער

9. MS 2053/12 = JBA 7

An exorcistic-curative incantation bowl prepared for Mihranahid d. Aḥat

(8) מומינה ומשבכנא עלכי (9) אנתי רוחא בישתא דיפגע ביה ברבי חנינא [בן דו] סא ואמר לה רבי
[חנינא] א [בן דו] דוסאה לרוחא בישתא דיפגע ביה בההיא שעתא קראה דיכתיב תשית חושך ויהי (10)
לילה בו תירמוס כל חיתו יאער

10. MS 2053/185 = JBA 10

An exorcistic-curative incantation bowl prepared for Mihranahid d. Aḥat

(8) מומי [נה ו] משבכנא עלכי [אנתי רוחא ביש] תא דיפגע [ע ---] (9) [---] דיפגע ביה [בההיא] א שעתא
קראה [דיכתיב ת] שי [ת] חושך [ויהי לילה בו תירמוס כ] ל ח [יתו יער]

11. MS 2053/55 = JBA 8

An incantation bowl prepared for Aḥat d. A[---]i

(4) [א] שבכעית עלכי אנתי רוחא בישתא די (5) פגעא ביה ברבי חנינא בן דוסא ואמרה [ל] ליה רבי
חנינא בן דוסא [--- תשית חושך] (6) [ויהי לילה בו תירמוס כל] חיתו יער

12. LO.831 = Bhayro 2018³⁹

An incantation bowl prepared for Aban s. Maḥlafta

(6) [ו] משבכנא [עלכי אנתי רוחא בישתא] א די [פגע] בה ברב [י] חנינא בן דוסא ואמר לה רבי חנינא בן
[ד] וסא לרוחא [בי] שתא ד [פגע] בה בההיא שעתא (7) קרא [ה] ד [י] כ [תיב תשית חושך] [ד] ויהי לילה
בו [תי] רמוס כל חיתו יער

The Ḥanina ben Dosa historiola in the above bowls commences with a deictic second person adjuration in the present tense of an unnamed evil spirit. This spirit is then identified in the narrative as the same spirit which met or came up against Ḥanina ben Dosa “at that time” in the past. Upon their encounter, Ḥanina ben Dosa speaks and quotes Ps 104:20, after which the narrative ends and the bowl text continues in Aramaic: “And again I adjure you and again I beswear you, you, evil spirit, etc.” The story of Ḥanina ben Dosa’s meeting with the demon in these bowls is thus exceedingly short. In light of the curative intent of these incantation bowls, and the way in which the historiola introduces an exorcism of various entities as part of the incantation, it was perhaps intended not just to instantiate Ḥanina ben Dosa’s prowess

³⁹ In a gesture that recalls the conflation of different temporal realities in the historiola, the volume of *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* in which this bowl text appears—though it was published in 2018—gives its date of publication as 2014.

when it came to vanquishing demons but also his renown as a healer.⁴⁰ Given this, it is interesting to note that, unlike the story in b. Pes. 112b, the bowls narrate only the meeting of the sage and the demon; the bowl narratives present no resolution, and may be said in themselves only to refer to a larger network of stories wherein the sage's encounter with the demon ends with her subdual. If the story about Ḥanina ben Dosa in the bowl texts was intended to evoke precedent, it did so by recollecting through similar elements those stories where the sage did subdue a demon.⁴¹ The effectiveness of these eleven bowl narratives thus appears to presuppose the active story world built around Ḥanina ben Dosa (which presumably had a cultural life and tradition beyond the agency of the rabbis and the bowl practitioners) and the expectation of the bowl narratives seems to be that a basic knowledge of their protagonist's larger history is brought to bear upon their narration and effective application. Stepping outside the bounds of these narratives, however, which end with the quotation from Ps 104:20 (thereby appearing to confine the activities of the evil spirit, like in the story of Ḥanina ben Dosa's encounter with Agrat bat Maḥlat, to the nighttime) it is important to note that the bowl practitioners immediately resume their adjuration. JBA 9, for instance, reads:

(9) ותוב מומינא ותוב משבענא עלכי אנתי רוחא בישתא דלא תיזלין ולא תיהוין לה
למיהרנהיד בת אחת דמיתקריא (10) כוטוס לא צותא דליליה ולא צותא דיממה

(9) And again I adjure and again I beswear you, you, evil spirit, that you should not go and not become to Mihranahid d. Aḥat, who is called (10) Kuṭus, neither a companion of the night nor a companion of the day.

Here the practitioner's adjuration works to supersede the last so-called man of deed, correcting Ḥanina ben Dosa's lack of foresight and proffering a more holistic vision of protection wherein the beneficiary is safe from harm by both night *and* day. The lack of resolution in the story—as it is told—is capitalised upon by the bowl practitioners in order to establish them-

⁴⁰ For stories concerning Ḥanina ben Dosa's healing powers, see m. Ber. 5:5, b. Ber. 34b, y. Ber. 9d, b. B. Qam. 50a. There is no ready-made yardstick by which to date the stories about Ḥanina ben Dosa (and thus to decide which version of a specific story may have another instantiation of Ḥanina ben Dosa in mind). However, the earliest rabbinic reference to Ḥanina ben Dosa (m. Ber. 5:5) does concern his power to heal (though a reference in an earlier compilation like the Mishnah does not automatically guarantee an earlier tradition. As Vermes, "Ḥanina Ben Dosa," "Ḥanina Ben Dosa (II)" shows, the Mishnah sometimes presupposes stories about Ḥanina ben Dosa that have survived only in the Talmuds in baraita form).

⁴¹ Shaked, "Form and Purpose," 13 observes that the narrative of Ḥanina ben Dosa's encounter with the demon in the bowls appears "like a shortened allusion to what might have possibly been a more elaborate exchange of words between the sage and the female demon."

selves within a line of powerful anti-demonic combatants by supplementing their earlier deeds.⁴²

As a narrative, this instantiation of the Ḥanina ben Dosa story works explicitly only to identify the evil spirit addressed in the adjuration. That is, while unnamed, the spirit does not go unidentified: addressed in the introductory adjuration simply as ‘you,’ she is identified through the telling not just as an evil spirit that came up against Ḥanina ben Dosa at an undetermined time in the past, but as the specific spirit against whom he recited Ps 104:20. (Given the structure of these incantations texts, it is unclear whether this spirit should be identified as a spirit in addition to Agag and the other demons listed in the bowls, whether Agag herself is identified through the narration as the demon against whom Ḥanina ben Dosa quoted Ps 104:20, or whether this unnamed spirit should be identified with Agrat bat Maḥlat.) The biblical verse in this narrative thus functions as a kind of naming tool. But this is not its only function. Narrative communication is a multi-layered event, and one through which tellers can communicate with (different) audiences along multiple channels of communication within the same text.

One of the arguments of rhetorical narratology is that the interaction between characters can be an important channel of communication with readers.⁴³ By this I mean that scenes of dialogue between characters function both as events in the narrative *and* as narration by other means. When it comes to dialogue between characters, the implied author of a text needs to motivate each character’s dialogue within its mimetic context, that is, the logic of the occasion, the relationship between the characters, and the ongoing dynamics of the conversation. At the same time, however, they can use the dialogue for their own different authorial disclosures to the audience(s). This insight from rhetorical narratology can be used to make sense of the somewhat baffling nature of the dialogue in the Ḥanina ben Dosa historiola. The dialogue in this narrative comprises a single line of scripture, but it is not immediately apparent—given the nature of the story, the aims of the bowl, and the apparent

⁴² See further below.

⁴³ James Phelan, “Rhetoric, Ethics, and Narrative Communication: Or, from Story and Discourse to Authors, Resources, and Audiences,” *Soundings* 94.1–2 (2011): 64–66; James Phelan, *Somebody Telling Somebody Else: A Rhetorical Poetics of Narrative* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2017), 13–29; James Phelan, “Authors, Resources, Audiences: Toward a Rhetorical Poetics of Narrative,” *Style* 52.1–2 (2018): 2–6. The view that characters (and their dialogue) form part of the communication model overcomes a misleading aspect of the story/discourse binary (wherein characters fall on the side of story, and communication on the side of discourse).

aim behind telling the story—*why* Ḥanina ben Dosa speaks this verse. Unlike Zech 3:2 and its rebuke of Satan, for example, the content of Ps 104:20 does not demonstrate any immediate correspondence with the logic of the meeting between Ḥanina ben Dosa and the demon or the purpose of (telling the story in) the bowl.

Viewed through the communicative lens of rhetorical narratology, however, the verse may be seen not just as a dialogic event within the narrative, but also as a form of descriptive narration. It functions in part to suggest a time of day, a location, and an atmosphere of night and menace, wherein forest creatures creep. Forests are liminal spaces, and such intermediate spaces are both common haunts for demons as well as common crystallising motifs within narrative spells (whose encounters often occur at intermediate positions in space). The fall of dark recollects the common threat of night-time demonic apparitions, while the creeping forest creatures recollect not just the crawling or crippled demon—Agag—who is the chief target of these bowls,⁴⁴ but the fact that demons in the bowls are frequently fixed and located with reference to their appearance as animals and thereby reflected and organised in/to the material world.⁴⁵ As Johnston points out, the authority of myths rests in large part on their effectiveness as *lively, cognitively-engaging* narrations.⁴⁶ In this light, I suggest that Ps 104:20 in the Ḥanina ben Dosa historioli functions partly and with great narrative economy to create and reinforce the story world of Ḥanina ben Dosa. Within the briefest of narratives, the quotation facilitates what social psychologists Melanie Green and Timothy Brock call ‘narrative transportation,’ or absorption into the story.⁴⁷ Within the rhetorical economy of this particular narrative, then, the quotation-as-dialogue does double duty, serving both as an event within the narrative *and* as an aesthetic or descriptive communication.

⁴⁴ See Chapter Six for a discussion of how these bowl texts give shape to Agag’s body.

⁴⁵ For demons as animals, see e.g. the suggestion in b. Ber. 6a to sprinkle ashes around one’s bed in order to check for something like the footprints of a cockerel (the sign of demons in the house), as well as numerous references in the bowls to demons in the guise of animals, e.g. AIT 7:14 (vermin, reptile, beast, bird), M 164:9 = Levene 2007 (pig, ram, dog), or AMB B13:12 (camels, oxen, donkeys, lions, wolves, leopards, cats and monkeys). See Chapter Six for further discussion. References to the nightly apparition of demons are also common in the bowls, e.g. AIT 1:12-13, cf. the highly explicit reference to the semen-snatching succubus in the Mandaic bowl YBC 2364:7 = Müller-Kessler 1996. As a general rule, night is the domain of demons: see b. Ber. 5a, 6a; b. Meg. 3a; b. Šabb. 151b; b. Qidd. 29b; b. Giṭ. 69a; Exod. Rab. 12:3.

⁴⁶ Johnston, “Authority of Greek Mythic Narratives,” “Greek Mythic Story World,” “Narrating Myths.”

⁴⁷ Melanie C. Green and Timothy C. Brock, “The Role of Transportation in the Persuasiveness of Public Narratives,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 79.5 (2000): 701–21.

On another level of this multi-layered communicative exchange, the use of the psalm in the narrative reflects an effective communication with the bowls' audience of demons. Ps 104 is a panoramic evocation and celebration of divine dominion over all creation, and this divine hierarchy is what seems in part to underlie the use of Ps 104:20 by Ḥanina ben Dosa against the demon.⁴⁸ The verse serves to remind the demon—along with every other nocturnal and creeping creature—of her proper place within this unitary system governed by God.⁴⁹ In consequence, the demon (who is characterised within the narrative simply as evil) is subject to the power of Ḥanina ben Dosa (who is characterised simply by his knowledge of scripture) as God's spokesperson and representative. The textual relationship between the sage and the demon also serves to communicate an extra-textual relationship between the implied author of (the bowl) narrative and the (other) demons they are dealing with. This is reinforced by the immediate resumption of the practitioner's adjuration at the exact point where Ḥanina ben Dosa's speech leaves off. The practitioner's knowledge and manipulation of scripture as the implied authors of the spell would have served to identify them with Ḥanina ben Dosa, placing them securely within a line of figures powerful enough to wield the potency of the Hebrew scriptures in service of their aims.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ See Chapter Four for an extended discussion of the metonymic use of scriptural quotation in the bowls.

⁴⁹ Note that night in the psalm is not a mythological realm of darkness or terrors but part of the diurnal cycle controlled by God.

⁵⁰ Cf. b. Pesah. 111b, which links rabbinic study to magical knowledge and states that only the true scholar is capable of expelling demons. In this light, note also the potential pun on Hebrew תַּרְמֵשׁ, 'creep about' and Aramaic תִּרְמֹס, 'you trample,' i.e. "You make darkness and it is night, in which you trample (i.e. subdue, crush) all the beasts of the forest (i.e. demons, who frequently appear in the guise of animals)," cf. AIT 1:10, which adjures and threatens various demons, including those who "do violence and trample (וִירְמִסִּין) and scourge and mutilate." Recall also that in the Agrat vs. Ḥanina ben Dosa historiola in b. Pes. 112b that the tanna uses his authority to curb the activities of Agrat and her demonic cohort to the evening time. The possible Aramaic pun on the Hebrew of Ps 104:20 would reflect the tanna's authority—recounted elsewhere—to subdue or subjugate malevolent night-time forces. Cf. Num. Rab. 12:3, where the verse "You shall not fear the terror by night" (Ps 91:5) is interpreted as follows: "(You shall not fear) Agrat bat Maḥlat and her chariot or all the harmful demons who hold sway by night."

A story retelling how Joshua bar Peraḥia produced a geṭ against a demon is narrated in three complete bowls, as well as one damaged and one partially effaced bowl.⁵¹ (The tanna's geṭ is further supplemented in these narratives with a "geṭ from across the sea." This second geṭ is pronounced against a certain lilith whose name was not included in the tanna's original divorce decree.) His figure is also cashed-in on in numerous bowls through the use of narrative tokens that evoke the story of his geṭ and/or the proceedings by which he furnished it. Given without background or explanation, these narrative tokens rely on a shared knowledge of the tanna's divorce decree. They reflect various aspects of a larger story world that encompasses this particular tanna's distinctive power to dismiss demons through the mechanism of divorce.

1. 80.1.1 (Israel Museum, Jerusalem) = AMB B5

An exorcistic incantation bowl prepared for Marnaqa s. Qala

(5) ... בגיטא דאתה לכא בן עיבר ימא דכתבו ושדרו לרבי יהושוע בר (6) פרחיא כד הות ההיא ליליתא

ד(ח)נקא לבני אינשה ושדר עלה יהושוע בר פרחיה שמתא ולא קבילת מחמת דלא הוא דידע שמה

וכתבו שמה (7) בגיטא וכריזו עלה ברקיעא בגיטא דאתא לכא מן עיבר ימא אף אתון כיפיתון ...

(5) ... in the deed of divorce that came here across the sea, which they wrote and sent to Rabbi Joshua bar (6) Peraḥia when a certain lilith was strangling human beings. And Joshua bar Peraḥia sent a ban against her but she did not accept it because he did not know her name. And (so) they wrote her name (7) in a deed of divorce and made an announcement concerning her in heaven in a deed of divorce that came here from across the sea. So you too [the demons addressed in the bowl] are subdued, etc.

2. AS 13 = Ford 2014: 248-49

An exorcistic incantation bowl prepared for Maḥlafa s. Imm[ay]

(11) וכתבו ושדרו לה לרבי יהושוע בר (12) פרחיה כד הות ההיא ליליתא מנזקא בבני אנשה (13) שדר

רבי יהושוע בר פרחיה שמתא וקבילת (14) עלה מיח[מט] דלא הוה ידע שמה וכתבו (15) שמה בגיטא

[ואצריזו] עלה בירקיעא בגיטא (16) דאתא לנא מן [עיבר י]מה אף אתון כיפיתון ...

(11) And they wrote and sent to Rabbi Joshua bar (12) Peraḥia when a certain lilith was harm-

⁵¹ James Nathan Ford, "Notes on Some Recently Published Magic Bowls in the Schøyen Collection and Two New Parallels," *Aula Orientalis* 32.2 (2014): 247 n. 50 notes six further unpublished parallels.

ing human beings. ⁽¹³⁾ Rabbi Joshua bar Peraḥia sent a ban (against her) but she <did not> accept (it) ⁽¹⁴⁾ upon herself, bec[ause] he did not know her name. And (so) they wrote ⁽¹⁵⁾ her name in a deed of divorce [and made a proclamation] concerning her in heaven, in a deed of divorce ⁽¹⁶⁾ that came to us from [across the s]ea. So you too you are subdued, etc.

3. VA.Bab.2829 + VA.unnumberedD = VAM 5

An exorcistic incantation bowl prepared for Bābāy s. Gušnōy and Məšaršītā d. Immā

[...] בגיטא דאתה ⁽³⁾ ל[נ]ה מן עבר ימה דיכתבו ושדרו ליה לרבי יהושוע [בר פרחיא ... ולא

קבילת ⁽⁴⁾ מיחמת דלא הוה ידע שמה דכתבו שמה בגי[ט]א ואכ[ריזו] ...

4. M 2 = Shaked 1999: 192

An exorcistic incantation bowl prepared for Horm[---] s. Dašmoy

... בגטא ד[---] ⁽⁶⁾ ליליתא מן עבר ימא רמני באבני ושדר עליך רבי יהושע בר פרחיה שמ[---]

5. MS 2053/280 = JBA 25

An exorcistic incantation bowl prepared for Bahmandad s. Magita and [---]ta d. Immi

... כתבו ושדרו ליה לרבי יה[ו]שו[ע] בר פרח[---] מ[נז]קא ביבני ⁽⁷⁾ אינשא שדר עלה רבי יהושוע

בר פר[ח]יא [שמתא ול[א]] קבילת מיחמת דלא הוא ידעא שמה ויכתבו שמה בגיטא ואכריזו עלה

ברקי[ע] בגיטא דאתא לנא מן עיבר ימא ...

⁽⁶⁾ ... they wrote and sent to Rabbi J[o]shu[a] bar Peraḥ[ia ---] h[ar]ming ⁽⁷⁾ human beings.

Rabbi Joshua bar Pera[h]ia sent against her a ban, but she did no[t] accept (it) because she did not know his name. And (so) they wrote his name in the deed of divorce and they made a proclamation concerning her in heave[n], in the deed of divorce that has come to us from across the sea.

The damaged context of some of these incantations aside, the narratives therein are all very similar, with only one significant difference. They all play on the idea of Joshua bar Peraḥia as the author of an authoritative anti-demonic geṭ, as well as the need to supplement the tanna's original decree in light of the harm wrought by a certain lilith. In AS 13 and AMB B5, however, this supplementary document was required because Joshua bar Peraḥia did not know the name of the lilith. Failing to include it in his ban, he thereby invalidated its effect on her. In JBA 25, on the other hand, it is the lilith who does not know the tanna's name, meaning further action needed to be taken. Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro note an unpublished parallel to this bowl, "JNF 192:8, which reads mḥmt dl' hw' yd'h šmyh wk d yd't šmyh qbylt 'because she did not know his name, but, when she came to know his name, she accepted

(it).⁵² This idea of the increase in the lilith's knowledge is reflected in JBA 25:7 where Joshua bar Peraḥia's name is written in a second, widely-proclaimed divorce, which presumably introduced the lilith to the tanna. In another bowl in the same volume, the practitioner adopts a shortened version of the narrative spell formula used in the above bowls and uses it as an analogical token:

6. MS 2053/206 = JBA 23

An incantation bowl prepared for [Farro]kh s. [Ra]šewandukh and Dukhtbeh d.

Guṇašp-fri

... בגיטא דאתא לנא מן עיבר ימא די כתבו⁽⁴⁾ ושדרו רב יהושע בר פרחיא דכד הות ההי ליליתא⁽³⁾

דמנוקא בבני אינשא אף אתון שידי וליליתא⁽⁵⁾ ופתכרי כ[—]

⁽³⁾ ... in the deed of divorce that has come to us from across the sea, which they wrote⁽⁴⁾ and sent (to) Rabbi Joshua bar Peraḥia. For just as that certain lilith who harms human beings, also you demons and liliths⁽⁵⁾ and idol spirits, etc.

The larger part of the narrative is elided in this bowl, and the analogical adjuration that follows succeeds the identification of the harmful lilith without the to-and-fro of the supplementary overseas geṭ. Such narrative tokens are very common in the bowls with reference to Joshua bar Peraḥia. Like the narratives quoted above, many of them refer to a geṭ descended from heaven and/or from across the seas:

Divorces from across the sea and/or descended from heaven

CATALOGUE NUMBER	PUBLICATION	LL.
MS 1927/43	JBA 15	5-6
MS 2053/103	JBA 18	4-5
MS 2053/132	JBA 19	9, 11
MS 2053/206	JBA 23	3
MS 2053/251	JBA 24	6-7, 8
80.1.1 (Israel Museum, Jerusalem)	AMB B5	7
Bab 2829 + VA.UnnumberedD	VAM 5	3
CBS 9013	AIT 8	7
CBS 2922	AIT 17	10
CBS 16020	ZHS 11a	8-9
CBS 2976	ZHS 11b	6, 7
AS 13	Ford 2014: 248-49	15-16

⁵² Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 141 n.7.

In some of these same bowls, Joshua bar Peraḥia is given a line of dialogue as part of the narrative token, as in JBA 19:10-11, where the incantation text reads:

והכי אמר לנה⁽¹⁰⁾ [רבי] יהושע בר פרחיה גיטא אתה לנה מן עבר ימה ואישת[כ]ח
כתיב ביה אבוכון פלחס שמיה ואימכון פלחדד שמיע

And thus said⁽¹¹⁾ [Rabbi] Joshua bar Peraḥia to us: “A deed of divorce has come to us from across the sea, and there was fo[u]nd written in it: ‘Your father’s name is Palḥas and your mother is Palḥadad.’”

Joshua bar Peraḥia speaks

CATALOGUE NUMBER	PUBLICATION	LL.
MS 2053/132	JBA 19	10-11
MS 2053/251	JBA 24	8-9
CBS 9013	AIT 8	8-9
CBS 2922	AIT 17	10
CBS 2976	ZHS 11b	8-9

A large number of bowls refer (often in addition to the geṭ of Joshua bar Peraḥia) to a ban or excommunication (שמתא) sent by the tanna. JBA 26:2-3 explicitly refers to Joshua bar Peraḥia as the initiator of this particular legal procedure against demons:

הדא חד ראזא וחד דגז עלכי רבי יהושע בן פרחא קבלת שמתא דתשמתי ותהון⁽²⁾
בשמתא דרבי יהושע בר פרחא⁽³⁾

⁽²⁾ This is a mystery and a (decree) that Rabbi Joshua ben Peraḥ(i)a decreed against you. You have received the ban in order that you shall be banned. And may you be ⁽³⁾ under the ban of Rabbi Joshua bar Peraḥ(i)a

The ban of Joshua bar Peraḥia

CATALOGUE NUMBER	PUBLICATION	LL.
MS 1927/43	JBA 15	8
MS 2053/132	JBA 19	8
MS 2053/251	JBA 24	5, 8
MS 2053/280	JBA 25	7
MS 1928/43	JBA 26	3
MS 1927/16	JBA 27	1
MS 2053/41	JBA 31	1
MS 2053/64	JBA 32	1
MS 2053/190	JBA 42	1

AS 13	Ford 2014: 248-49	13
80.1.1 (Israel Museum, Jerusalem)	AMB B5	6
CBS 2922	AIT 17	8, 9-10
CBS 9013	AIT 8	6, 8
CBS 16020	ZHS 11a	6, 8
CBS 2976	ZHS 11b	5, 8
HS 3026	ZHS 13	1
M 2	Shaked 1999: 192	6
M 164	Levene 2007	12

Some bowls adjure the demons by the signet ring of the tanna, or simply refer to a document sent by him:

The signet-ring (עִזְקָתָא) of Joshua bar Peraḥia⁵³

CATALOGUE NUMBER	PUBLICATION	LL.
CBS 2922	AIT 17	12
MS 2053/251	JBA 24	11
CBS 2976	ZHS 11b	10-11
CBS 9013	AIT 8	11

The document (דִּיטְקָה) of Joshua bar Peraḥia

CATALOGUE NUMBER	PUBLICATION	LL.
BM 91760	CAMIB 024A	7

The introductory doxology of JBA 24 also invokes Joshua bar Peraḥia alongside God:

(1) לַשִּׁמְךָ אֲנִי עוֹשֶׂה קְדִישָׁא רַבָּה בְּשִׁמְיָה דְּרַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ (2) בְּרַחֲמֵי אֵל ...

By the name of Joshua bar Peraḥia

CATALOGUE NUMBER	PUBLICATION	LL.
MS 1927/43	JBA 15	2-3, 12

⁵³ Signet-rings and seals are associated in a huge number of incantation bowls with another powerful human figure from the remote past: King Solomon. See below. The mention of Joshua bar Peraḥia's signet-ring in several bowls is particularly interesting in light of an Arabic tradition where King Solomon commands his vizier Asaf ibn Barahia, i.e. Joshua bar Peraḥia, to write an amulet against Qarina (the Muslim equivalent of lilith). For the narrative, see Jalāl al-dīn al-Suyūfī, *al-Raḥmah fī al-ṭibb wa-al-ḥikmah* (Damascus: Maktabat al-hadarah, 1972), 183; Geller, "Joshua b. Perahia and Jesus of Nazareth," 20–21, 30. On the identification of Asaf ibn Barahia with Joshua bar Peraḥia, see Raphael Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, 3rd ed. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990), 329 n.20. For further parallels between the incantation bowls and al-Suyūfī's text, see Geller, "Joshua b. Perahia and Jesus of Nazareth," 21–22.

A large number of bowls gesture to the actual court-session in which Joshua bar Peraḥia produced his geṭ.⁵⁴ In these bowls, the practitioners draw a direct link between the writing of their geṭ and the session in which the tanna produced the original (thereby seeming to negate the need for supplementary bans or additional decrees from overseas). The incantations in these bowls all begin with the casting of a lot, as in JBA 14:1-3—for example—which also draws an analogy between the practitioner's writing of the divorce decree and the practice of demons writing divorces to their wives:⁵⁵

(1) פורא [רמינא] ושקיל[נא] ועובדא עב[י] דנא דהוה במותב רב[י יהושוע בר] (2) פ[ר]חיא
 כתבנ[א] ליכי ל[ילי] דיכרא ולילי ניקבתא גיטא גיט פטורין ושיבו[קין] (כמא) דכת[בין] שידי
 (3) גיטי ויהבין לנשיהון ו[תו]ב לא הדרין עליהן

(1) [I cast] a lot and take (it). And I perf[o]rm a (magical) act, which was in the court-session of Rabb[i Joshua bar] (2) Pe[ra]ḥia. I write to you, male l[ili] and female lili, a deed of divorce, a deed of release and dismis[sal (just as)] demons [wri]te (3) deeds of divorce and give (them) to their wives and they do not come back [aga]in unto them.

A simple switch in prepositions—as in M 50:1, for example—also permitted practitioners to insert themselves directly into the tanna's court-session:

(1) פורא רמינא ושקילנא {ועב} ועבדא עבדנא והוה הוה במותב רבי יהושוע בר פרחיא
 (2) כתבנא להון גיטא לכל ליליתא דיכרי וניקבתא ...

(1) I cast a lot and take (it). And I perform a (magical) act. And it was in the court-session of Rabbi Joshua bar Peraḥia. (2) I write them a deed of divorce: to all the male and female liliths, etc.

⁵⁴ במותב, lit. 'sitting, session,' though Shaked, "Poetics of Spells," 177 n.18 notes the frequent expression בתלת, "in the session of three (judges)" and argues that the term developed the specialised sense of 'a court session, a court procedure.'

⁵⁵ On the mechanics of divorcing a demon—as well as the possible presuppositions that lie behind this action—see, e.g. Shaked, "Jews, Christians and Pagans," 66–68; Shaked, "The Poetics of Spells," 175–76; Dan Levene, "'A Happy Thought of the Magicians': The Magical Geṭ," in *Shlomo: Studies in Epigraphy, Iconography, History and Archaeology in Honor of Shlomo Moussaieff*, ed. Robert Deutsch (Tel Aviv: Archaeological Center Publications, 2003), 176–77; Frim, "'And It Was in the Dwelling of Rabbi Joshua Bar Peraḥia': Notes on the Anti-Demonic Geṭ in the Jewish Babylonian Aramaic Incantation Bowls."

The court-session of Joshua bar Peraḥia

CATALOGUE NUMBER	PUBLICATION	LL.
MS 1927/5	JBA 13	1-2
MS 1927/39	JBA 14	1-2
MS 2053/33	JBA 17	2-3
MS 2053/150	JBA 20	3-4
MS 2053/164	JBA 21	1-3
MS 1927/165	JBA 22	1-3
CBS 9010	AIT 9	1-3
HS 3046	ZHS 8	1-2
M 50	Corpus: 32	1
M 59	Corpus: 35-37	6-7
IM 142641	CMI 6	1-2
IM 142131	CMI 8	1-2

In JBA 16:1-3, lots are cast, but there is no mention of the court-session. Instead, the practitioner simply compares their actions to those of Joshua bar Peraḥia:

פּוֹרָא רְמִינָא וּשְׁקִילנָא וְעַבְדִּי ⁽²⁾ עֲבַדנָא כְּמָה רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּר פֶּרְחִיא וִיכְתַּבִּית ⁽³⁾ גִּטָּא לְכָל
לִילִיתָא בִּישְׁתָּא דִּיכְרִי וְנִיקְבַּתָּא ...

⁽¹⁾ I cast a lot and take (it). And I perform ⁽²⁾ (magical) acts like Rabbi Joshua bar Peraḥia. And I have written ⁽³⁾ a deed of divorce to all the evil male and female liliths, etc.

Like Joshua bar Peraḥia (I have written a deed of divorce)

CATALOGUE NUMBER	PUBLICATION	LL.
MS 1929/16	JBA 16	1-3
M 11	Shaked 1999: 188	3-4

The narrative spells and tokens in this section are all constructed around a story that features Joshua bar Peraḥia as the initiator of a writ of divorce and/or a ban against demons. The use of divorce as a tool for the expulsion of demons in the bowls thus finds an authoritative legal precedent in the successful performance of this procedure by Joshua bar Peraḥia in the remote past. (Like the Ḥanina ben Dosa historiola, it also suggests a reliance upon rabbinic authority in the fight against demons.) Most of the bowls invoke the tanna through narrative tokens rather than actual narratives. In some of these instances, the practitioners—particularly those who self-characterise or self-identify their bowls as divorce decrees—situate the writing of their bowls within the mythical court-session of Joshua bar Peraḥia, thereby aligning

their get with his get and assimilating the process at hand into the archetypal template established by the tanna.⁵⁶ Most of the bowls that invoke the tanna also make reference to a get descended from heaven and/or from across the sea. The latter phrase (מן עיבר ימא) should possibly be identified with the halakhic concept of a גט ממדינת הים,⁵⁷ a “get from a province across the sea” (i.e. abroad) which refers to the procedure for divorcing a woman from a distance.⁵⁸ At the same time, these references to a get “from across the sea” frequently occur in collocation with the phrase “from the heavens.” While detailing an aspect of the halakhically conceived divorce, this geographic space—in collocation with the heavens—simultaneously connotes a type of mythic ‘locale’ and signifies the mythic context in which the get of Joshua bar Peraḥia first originated. This reading is reinforced by the references in some bowls to the bearer of the divorce from these locations as a transmundane figure named Palsa Pelisa. An essential condition of the Mishnaic laws of divorce is that the get is handed to the recipient; gittin from across the sea were further required to be witnessed by the individual who delivered the divorce:

המביא גט ממדינת הים, צריך שיהאמר, בפניי נכתב ובפניי נחתם

One who brings a get from abroad must declare, ‘In my presence it was written and in my presence it was signed.’⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Cf. Daniel J. Frim, “‘And It Was in the Dwelling of Rabbi Joshua Bar Peraḥiah:’ Notes on the Anti-Demonic Get in the Jewish Babylonian Aramaic Incantation Bowls,” *The Review of Rabbinic Judaism* 18 (2015): 210, who writes that their “self-characterization is a means of alluding to a *historiola* and of situating the present magical act within this *historiola*.”

⁵⁷ m. Giṭ. 1:1-4.

⁵⁸ This argument was first advanced in laconic fashion by Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts*, 159; cf. the amplification of his remarks by Levene, “A Happy Thought,” 177: “the reason this particular type of *get* was used in the magic bowls was because demons are supernatural beings, whereas humans are terrestrial. Thus the distance between supernatural and terrestrial was judged in the same way as with foreign countries.” Shaked, “Jews, Christians and Pagans,” 67 is more forthcoming: “We apply to the demons the rules that were created for divorcing a woman at a distance. The legal term for this is ‘a divorce that comes from across the sea’ (*get šebba me’ever layyam*). This arrangement makes it possible to send a letter of divorce by a messenger, who acts on behalf of the husband, and who can hand it over to the woman. No human messenger can cross the boundary to the world of the demons and carry out the task of releasing the demon from its attachment to this household; the bowl itself is therefore made to be both a letter and a messenger.” (See below for further discussion concerning the role of messenger in the bowls, and the Mishnaic requirement that the messenger also bear witness to the writing of the get.)

⁵⁹ m. Giṭ. 1:1.

Thus JBA 19:9-10 establishes Palsa Pelisa as the bearer of a *get* intended for a demonic recipient:

(9) גיטא נחית לנה מן שמיא ... בישמי[ה] דפלסא (10) פליסא יהיב ליכי גיטיכי ופיטוריכי גיטיכון
ופיטוריכון אנתי שלניתא בשמתא דישלח עלכי רבי יהושוע ב[ר פרח]יה

(9) A deed of divorce has descended to us from heaven ... By the name of Palsa

(10) Pelisa, (who) gives to you your deeds of divorce and your release, your deeds of divorce and your release—you, the grabber—by the ban that Rabbi Joshua ba[r Perah]ia sent against you.

The same formula is found in AIT 8:7-8 and JBA 24:7-8.⁶⁰ As the bearer of the *get* from afar, Palsa Pelisa is sole witness to its writing and attestation, and his archetypal name reinforces the mythic quality of the decree he bears: as Markham Geller points out, the first part of his name (lit. ‘splitter’ or ‘destroyer’) is active and conjures the role of the husband in the divorce procedure, while the second part is passive and reflects the recipient of the divorce and the effect that is wrought.⁶¹

The theme of divorcing a demon highlights the ambiguity of demonic presence in human households and society more broadly. Though invisible, their presence in or attachment to a household or person may be ended or severed by affecting a type of legal separation upon them. Given the nature of demons and the largely speculative quality of their presence within the home—where they are discernable as disease, misfortune, or in the manifestation of social tension—this procedure of serving a divorce upon them is in practice a fairly complicated affair. How do you serve an intangible being with a divorce? This business of applying a demonic divorce in the present is facilitated in the bowls through the application of a paradigmatic story world—reinforced in several cases by an authoritative narrative precedent—where mundane and transmundane persons interact freely in the exchange of legal documents. What sets these texts apart from typical legal arguments and other forms of argumentation is in part the fact that they are imaginative. They incarnate the idea of the divorce formula in the form of stories about a character or characters in action. The felicitous narrative shape that they give to this legal paradigm and/or a powerful precedent is both descriptive and prescriptive. That is, these narratives reflect reality by representing ‘what was.’

⁶⁰ And see also, e.g. JBA 15:8-9, JBA 18:7.

⁶¹ Geller, “Joshua b. Perahia and Jesus of Nazareth,” 75, 108 n.12.

They also shape reality by establishing ‘what ought to be.’ They affirm the ‘narrative paradigm’ as a form of *knowing* in its own right (and not just a repackaging of legal discourse).

The practitioners who wrote these bowls in the context of the wider story world that circulated around Joshua bar Peraḥia—apparent in the different spell formulae found in the bowls above—‘sanctioned’ select details and thematic resonances as relevant by incorporating them into their incantations by means of narrative or narrative tokens. These might take the form of a matter-of-fact recounting of a legal procedure performed in a court session (under the aegis of Joshua bar Peraḥia) or simple references to the ban or seal ring of Joshua bar Peraḥia (the latter presumably used to give authentication to the original divorce document). These references or tokens were understood to be effective without narrative amplification. By contrast, other practitioners chose to tell a larger story about the original administration of the geṭ—generally in confrontation with a specific type of demon, or in order to circumvent the possibility that the name of the demon in question was absent from Joshua bar Peraḥia’s original divorce deed. To avert this danger, these narratives recount how the demon’s name was announced in heaven and dispatched to earth in a special deed of divorce containing the appropriate name.

PARA-BIBLICAL HISTORIOLOAE AND NARRATIVE TOKENS

Adam, Seth, and Solomon: historiolae and narrative tokens

Two further bowls in the VAM also take the mythical actions of a human figure as the basis for establishing a protective paradigm. These duplicate historiolae feature two biblical characters—Adam and Seth—and narrate how Adam covered the rocks of a mountain with entrails and skulls in order to seal his son Seth from harm. Adam’s safe-guarding of Seth is also referred to in three parallel Syriac bowls, as well as AIT 10:3-4, which seals two of its three beneficiaries בההוא חתמא דחתמה אדם קדמאה לשת ברה ואיתנטיר מן ש[דין] ומן דיין ומן מבכלין ומן, “with that seal with which the first Adam sealed his son Seth and he was protected from de[mons] and *dēvs* and tormentors and satans.”⁶²

⁶² For the texts of the three parallel Syriac bowls (MS 2055/16, MS 2055/24, MS 2055/25) which were written in the Manichaean script and which display a strong Manichaean connection, see Shaul Shaked, “Manichaean Incantation Bowls in Syriac,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 24 (2000): 76–82. On the Manichaean tradition whereby the primordial Adam seals Šāthil (Seth) with three circles, see Shaked, “Manichaean Incantation Bowls,” 71–72; Dan Levene, “Heal O’ Israel: A Pair of Duplicate Magic Bowls from the Pergamon Museum in Berlin,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 54.1 (2003): 110–11; John C. Reeves, “Manichaica

1. VA 3854 = Levene 2003: 105-106 = VAM 2⁶³

A curative-apotropaic incantation bowl prepared for 'Ummu-l-bāb d. Rimāna

(12) כולכון אסיריתון (13) וחתימיתון מיניה בעיזקתיה (14) דאילשדי {בעיזק} (15) ובעיזקתיה דישלמה בר
(16) דויד מלכה דישראל דיחתימין (17) בה תלת מאה ושיתין ושיתה שידין דחתמי אדם {לש} (18) לשית
בריה אנה גיוין ומחין על כפי (19) דאינוש לא יעול עלוהי לביש {ביש} (20) כסי לטורא דאינוש לא יעול
{על} (21) עלוהי לביש

(12) All of you, you are bound (13) and sealed from her (the beneficiary) by the signet-ring
(14) of El Shaddai (15) and by the signet-ring of Solomon son of (16) David, king of Israel, by
which are sealed (17) three hundred and sixty six demons, (from) which Adam sealed (18) his
son Seth. He (Adam) placed entrails and skulls upon the rocks (19) so that no one might en-
ter unto him (Seth) for evil. (20) He covered the mountain (with them) so that no one might
enter (21) unto him for evil.

2. VA 3853 = Levene 2003: 107-108

A curative-apotropaic incantation bowl prepared for 'Ummu-l-ḥubāb d. Rimāna

(11) כולכון (12) אסיריתון וחתימיתון {בעיזק} (13) בעיזקתיה דאלשדי ההי (14) ובעיזקתיה דישלמה {בר}
(15) בר דויד מלכא דישראל {דיח} (16) דיחתימין (17) בה תלת מאה {ושיתין} (18) ושיתין ושיתה {ש}
(19) שידין דחתמי אדם {לשי} (20) לשית בריה אנה גיוין {ומחין} (21) ומחין עלוהי דאינוש לא יעול עלוהי
לביש (22) כסי לטורא {דאי} (23) דאינוש לא יעול עלוהי (24) לביש

The six bowls under discussion here reflect a cluster of stories whose theme is the protection afforded to Seth by Adam; in the JBA bowls, this is achieved through a (grisly ritual) act of sealing; in the Syriac bowls, this is achieved through an invocation spoken over Seth by Adam in the name of Ḥarbiel. Similarly, in the Manichaean cosmogony recorded by Ibn al-Nadīm, Adam draws three circles around Šāthil (Seth) and then pronounces the names of the King of the Gardens, the Primal Man, and the Living Spirit over these three rings.⁶⁴

Aramaic? Adam and the Magical Deliverance of Seth,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 119.3 (1999): 432–39.

⁶³ I adopt the lineation of the bowl given in VAM 2, where ll. 12-21 = 12-22 in Levene’s earlier edition. The complicated textual arrangement chosen by the practitioner behind VA.3853 and VA.3854 led to a number of false starts in these bowls.

⁶⁴ For the *Fihrist* of Ibn al-Nadīm, see John C. Reeves, *Heralds of That Good Realm: Syro-Mesopotamian Gnosis and Jewish Traditions* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 79–81; cf. the brief discussion of further Manichaean texts concerning Adam and Seth in Shaked, “Manichaean Incantation Bowls,” 72.

VA 3853 and VA 3854 also seal their beneficiary by the signet-ring of king Solomon. This particular device reflects a widely distributed set of shifting para-biblical stories wherein the Israelite king is granted the capacity to repel or to marshal demons (through his ring).⁶⁵ References to the ring served as conduits for Solomon's anti-demonic powers and they are tokenised in innumerable bowls whose practitioners sought to imbue either themselves or their products with the powers recounted in the para-biblical stories about Solomon. A number of bowls—such as Gorea B3:4-5, for example—flesh out their references to (these stories about) Solomon by cashing-in not (only) on his ring, but an apparent change in character that he was able to affect in a *primaeval* demon (who is probably to be identified as Ashmedai). These bowls command their target demons to desist from harm and threaten to cast them into a pit if they do not follow the precedent of the *primaeval* demon:

שני שבילכי כמא דשני שידא קדמאה ⁽⁵⁾ דהוה ביומי שלומה בר דויד

Change your ways, just as the *primaeval* demon ⁽⁵⁾ who was in the days of Solomon son of David changed his ways!

⁶⁵ Objects associated with venerable or legendary figures from the (biblical) past—such as Solomon and Joshua bar Peraḥia's signet-rings, as well as staffs, swords, scrolls, tablets, and books associated with figures like Moses—appear in a wide range of ritual (con)texts in late antiquity. See, e.g. Yuval Harari, "Moses, the Sword, and *The Sword of Moses*: Between Rabbinical and Magical Traditions," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 12 (2005): 307, 312–16. For an extensive discussion of one of the stories built around the ring of Solomon, see Ra'anan Boustán and Michael Beshay, "Sealing the Demons, Once and For All: The Ring of Solomon, the Cross of Christ, and the Power of Biblical Kingship," *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 16 (2015): 99–129. Relevant to the approach taken to myth in the present chapter is Boustán and Beshay's remark to the effect that "because Solomon's signet-ring was deployed in so many different media and for such varied ritual purposes, we think it crucial to resist the temptation to treat these materials as reflexes of a more or less unified 'tradition.' ... the shifting discursive contexts in which the signet-ring of Solomon became embedded in the course of late antiquity conditioned the symbolic valences it carried and the ritual uses to which it was put" (100-101). For various appearances of Solomon's ring across late antiquity, see, e.g. Josephus, *Ant.* 8.45-49, PGM IV.3009–3085, the third-century Egyptian amulet published by Roy Kotansky, Joseph Naveh, and Shaul Shaked, "A Greek-Aramaic Silver Amulet From Egypt in the Ashmolean Museum," *Le Muséon* 105 (1992): 5–25, as well as the materials discussed in José Leite de Vasconcelos, *Signum Solomonis: estudio de etnografía comparativa* (Lisbon: Livraria Clássica Editora, 1918); Esther Fernández Medina, "The Seal of Solomon: From Magic to Messianic Device," in *Seals and Sealing Practices in the Near East: Developments in Administration and Magic from Prehistory to the Islamic Period*, ed. Ilona Regulski, Kim Duistermaat, and Peter Verkinderen (Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 175–88. For an associated bibliography concerning Solomon's knot, Temple, pillars, testament, song, key, islands, table, and mines, see Allegra Iafra, *The Wandering Throne of Solomon: Objects and Tales of Kingship in the Medieval Mediterranean* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 1–2.

Solomon and the Primaeval Demon⁶⁶

CATALOGUE NUMBER	PUBLICATION	LL.
Private collection (USA)	Gorea B3	4-5
MS 1927/9	Shaked 2005: 27	4-5
MS 1927/11	Corpus: 115 ⁶⁷	4
MS 2053/4	Corpus: 115	10
MS 2053/13	Shaked 2011: 209	11-12
MS 2053/258	JBA 47	11
JNF 318	Ford 2012: 218 ⁶⁸	6-7

I address the use of (biblical) narrative tokens in the bowls in greater detail below, and note here only one final bowl that—in a similar vein to Solomon’s encounter with the primaeval demon—refers to a certain lilith sent against king Saul. JTS 950 = Gordon H adjures numerous demons and other malevolent forces, including

פרגוס ליליתא דאישתדרת על שאול בר קיש ⁽⁷⁾ ושגישת ית רעיונוהי ⁽⁶⁾

⁽⁶⁾ PRGWS the lilith that was sent against Saul son of Kish ⁽⁷⁾ and confounded his thoughts.

NON-HUMAN PROTAGONISTS THE SEMAMIT HISTORIOLA

More common than historiologiae that are built (primarily) around mythic human figures in the bowls are those which detail the past exploits of various non-human figures. One of the best attested (such) formulae in the bowls is the Semamit historiola, whose narrative functions as a support for eight published bowls that were written to protect the lives of children. Variations on this story differ quite significantly across the published (and unpublished) record, though the basic story in most of the published bowls diverges hardly at all across these texts.⁶⁹ This basic story has enjoyed great popularity since late antiquity and Joseph Naveh

⁶⁶ Cf. M 155:12 = Corpus: 111, which references the primaeval demon without mention of Solomon: שנא שבילכי כמה דשני שידא קדמאה

⁶⁷ Levene, *Corpus*, 115 quotes only the lines in question from this bowl and MS 2053/3 below, both of which are unpublished.

⁶⁸ James Nathan Ford, “Phonetic Spellings of the Subordinating Particle d(y) in the Jewish Babylonian Aramaic Magic Bowls,” *Aramaic Studies* 10.2 (2012): 218 quotes only the two lines in question from this unpublished bowl.

⁶⁹ Many of the bowls featuring the Semamit historiola were produced by the same practitioner, the basic formula of which is largely identical: Heb. 4° 6079 = AMB B12a = Ford 2016: 149; XI-t 5178 = Müller-Kessler

and Shaul Shaked have traced its extensive history across sources in Hebrew, Aramaic, Ethiopic, and Arabic, as well as Greek, Coptic, Armenian, Romanian, and Slavonic mediaeval literature.⁷⁰ The story features several characters, though the primary protagonist is a mother whose name—variously spelt—designates either a lizard or a spider.⁷¹ The story recounts the murder of Semamit's children and how several helpers—in part responsible for the death of her thirteenth child—work to avenge these murders by hunting down the evil agent responsi-

1994 B1; Privatbesitz = Müller-Kessler 1994 B2; HS 3003 = Oelsner 1989 = ZHS 4; IM 114987 = Hunter 2004: 81 = ZHS 4a. See Hunter, "Combat and Conflict in Incantation Bowls: Studies on Two Aramaic Specimens from Nippur," 62–65. According to James Nathan Ford, "New Light from Babylonia on the Semamit Story," *Eretz-Israel* 32 (2016): 157 n.3 (Hebrew), this same practitioner also reproduced their version of the Semamit historioli in the following six unpublished bowls: M 106; JNF 125; JNF 149; JNF 152; JNF 153; JNF 188. A slightly divergent version of this story produced by different practitioners is also to be found in the following published bowl and bowl fragments: MMA 86.11.259 = AMB B12b; BM 117869 + BM 117870 + BM 117871 = CAMIB 071A + 072A + 073A. The Semamit historiola in many of the unpublished bowls differs significantly from these thirteen bowls. The sole published exemplar of these variants is JNF 124 = Ford 2016: 153–154, though Ford, "New Light," 157 n.3 notes a further seven unpublished parallels: DS 34; JNF 150; JNF 164; SD 19; Wolfe 23; PC 55; PC 56. Four amulets from Palestine also preserve versions of the Semamit story, though only two of these have been published: Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*, 104–6; Rivka Elitzur-Leiman, "An Aramaic Amulet in the Collection of the BLMJ: A New Version of the Smamit Story," *Eretz-Israel* 32 (2016): 4–10 (Hebrew). Elitzur-Leiman (9 n.4) notes a further amulet from the Candiotti Collection that contains the Semamit story, cf. Steven Fine, *Art, History and the Historiography of Judaism in Roman Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 121 n.63, while James Nathan Ford and Matthew Morgenstern note the existence of a fourth amulet containing the story in *Aramaic Incantation Bowls in Museum Collections: The Frau Professor Hilprecht Collection of Babylonian Antiquities, Jena* (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

⁷⁰ Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*, 111–22. Their discussion extends to the survival of the story in Jewish sources into the modern period. For a further extensive treatment of the basic narrative elements of the historiola, and the story's Slavonic redactions in particular, see Florentina Badalanova Geller, "Between Demonology and Hagiology: The Slavonic Rendering of the Semitic Magical *Historiola* of the Child-Stealing Witch," in *In the Wake of the Compendia: Infrastructural Contexts and the Licensing of Empiricism in Ancient and Medieval Mesopotamia*, ed. J. Cale Johnson (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2015), 177–205.

⁷¹ See Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*, 107 for discussion. The weight of contemporary evidence suggests a spider, as the term seems uniformly to have meant as much in Talmudic Hebrew and Aramaic. The sense of 'spider' is also reflected in the frequent association of spiders with (divine) motherhood across history. This association extends from the African Gold Coast to India to the Western United States, and finds its most recent popular expression in the series of giant spiders created by French-American artist Louise Bourgeois as a symbol of the protective mother. See, e.g. Katarzyna Michalski and Sergiusz Michalski, *Spider* (London: Reaktion Books, 2010); Lawrence E. Newman and Robert J. Stoller, "Spider Symbolism and Bisexuality," *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 17.3 (1969): 863–64.

ble. These helpers are subsequently instrumentalised in the bowl texts in order to assure the ongoing safety of the human children of the bowl owners. As Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro eloquently note,

... the *historiola* contains implicit observations on the meaning of motherhood and on the precarious nature of raising small children. It can almost be characterised as a compendium of the uncertainties and dangers facing humanity when it struggles to raise the next generation. An interesting element here is the ambiguity of the nature of the helpers, Soni, Sasoni, Sanigru, and Artiqu, who avenge the death of the child and are instrumental in assuring the future safety of the children of the client, but who may themselves be implicated in some of the troubles threatening the existence and survival of the children. This *historiola* thus conveys in a succinct manner a sophisticated account of family tensions and gender disparities.⁷²

1. Heb. 4° 6079 (National Library of Israel) = AMB B12a = Ford 2016: 149

An apotropaic incantation bowl prepared for the protection of the children of Agabalaha s.

Qarqoy and Qaqay d. Poziqtoy (?)

(1) סמומית ילדת תרי עשר בנין וכולהון קטל יתהון (2) סדרוס רשיעה וקמת וערקת מן קדומוהי ואזלת
לחד טורא (3) דימיחד בעלמא שמיה ועבדת לה דשין דינחשה ועברין דפרזלא ואתא סאיני וססאיני
(4) וסנגרי וארתיקו ואמרו לה פתח לנא ואמרת להון לית אנא פתחא לכון ואמרו דוכתא דנעבר
(5) וניעול עלה וקמת ופתחת להון ועול עימהון סדרוס וקטליה ליברה וחנק יותיה וקמת וצוחת עלוהי
(6) אסאיני וססאיני וסנגרי וארתיקו מא עבדו ליה וקומו ורדפו בתריה ואדריכו יותיה לגו פלגוס ימא
(7) מינהון למיקטל יותיה ולמיחנק יותיה ואמר להון שבוקו מיני ואנא מישתבענא לכון במי
שמדד בשעולו מים דכל אתר דדכרין (8) שמיה דסאיני וססאיני וסנגרי וארתיקו אנא לא איקטול ולא
איחנוק ולא איחבול בביתיה דאגבלהא בר קרקוי וכל בנין דאית להון ודהון להון לקאקאי בת (9) –
(זיק(-)י ולאגבלהא בר קרקוי

(1) Semomit gave birth to twelve sons and the wicked Sideros killed all of them. (2) And she rose and fled from before him and she went to a mountain (3) whose name is unique in the world. And she made for herself doors of bronze and bolts of iron. Then Saini and Sasaini (4) and Sangeri and Artiqu came and said to her, 'Open up for us!' And she said to them, 'I shall not open for you.' And they said, 'There is a place we shall pass through (5) and enter

⁷² Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 14–15.

unto her!’ So she arose and opened up to them and Sideros entered with them and killed her son and strangled him. And she arose and cried out to them (lit. him), ‘O, Saini ⁽⁶⁾ and Sasaini and Sangeri and Artiqu, what have they done to him!’ And they rose and chased after him and they caught him in the midst of Pelagos the great sea. And they were about ⁽⁷⁾ to kill him and strangle him when he said to them, ‘Let go of me and I swear to you by the One “who measured the waters in his palm” (Isa 40:12) that wherever one mentions ⁽⁸⁾ the name of Saini and Sasaini and Sangeri and Artiqu, I shall not kill or strangle or harm the house of Agabalaha s. Qarqoy and any children that Qaqay d. ⁽⁹⁾ Poziqtoy and Agabalaha s. Qarqoy have or will have.’

2. HS 3003 = Oelsner 1989 = ZHS 4

An apotropaic incantation bowl prepared for the protection of the children of Nifrā s. Mādōy and Hormizdukh d. Mādu

⁽²⁾ סמומת ילידת תריעשר בנין וכולהון קטל יתה[ון] סדר[ו]ס ⁽³⁾ רשיעה וקמת וערקת מן קדומוהי ואזלת לחד טורא דימיחד בעלמא שמי[ה] ⁽⁴⁾ ועבדת לה דש[י]ן דינחשה ועברין דפרזלא ואתא סאיני [ו]ססאיני וסנגרו ארתיקו ואמרו ⁽⁵⁾ לה פתח לנא ואמרת לה[ון] ל[י]ת אנא פתחא לכון ואמרו דוכתא דנעבר וניעול <עול> עלה וקמת ופתחת ⁽⁶⁾ להון ועול עימהון סדרוס [וקטליה ליברה ו]חנק יותיה וקמת וצוחת עלוהי אסאיני וססאיני וסנגרו וארתיקו מא ⁽⁷⁾ עבדו ליה וקומ[ו] ורדפו בתרי[ה] ואדרי[כ]ו [ו]י[תיה] ל[גו] פלגוס ימא רבה ובעו מינהו[ן] למיקטל יותיה ולמיחנק יותיה ואמרלהון ⁽⁸⁾ שבוקו מיני ואנא מישתבענא לכון[ן] במשמדד מדד בשעולו מים דכל אתר דדכ[רין] ש[מיה] [ד]סאיני וססאיני וסנגרו וארתיקו אנא ⁽⁹⁾ לא איקטול ולא [איחנוק ו]ל[א] איחבול בנ[י]ן [דא]ית להון ודהון להון להורמיזדוך בת מאדו ול[ניפרא] בר מאד[וי]

3. IM 114987 (18N98) = Hunter 2004: 81 = ZHS 4a

An apotropaic incantation bowl prepared for the children of Nifrā s. Mādōy and Hormizdukh d. Mādoy

⁽¹⁾ סמומת ילידת תרי עשר בנין וכולהון קטל יתהון סדרוס רשיעה ⁽²⁾ וקמת וערקת מן קדומוהי ואזלת לחד טורא דימיחד בעלמא שמיה ועבדת לה דשין ⁽³⁾ דינחשה ועברין דפרזלא ואתא סאיני וססאיני וסנגרו וארתיקו ואמרו לה פתח לנא ואמרת ⁽⁴⁾ להון לית אנא פתחא לכון ואמרו דוכתא דנעבר וניעול עלה וקמת ופתחת להון ועול עימהון סדרוס ⁽⁵⁾ וקטליה ליברה וחנק יותיה וקמת וצוחת עלוהי אסאיני וססאיני וסנגרו וארתיקו מא עבדו ליה וקומו ורדפו בתריה ⁽⁶⁾ ואדריכו יותיה לגו פלגוס ימא רבה ובעו מינהון למיקטל יותיה ולמיחנק יותיה ואמר להון שבוקו מיני ואנא ⁽⁷⁾ מישתבענא לכון במשמדד מדד

בשעולו מים דכל אתר דדכרין שמיה דסאיני וססאיני וסנגרו וארתיקו אנא לא איקטול ולא⁽⁸⁾ איחנוק
ולא איחבול בנין דאית להון ודהון להורמיזודך בת מאדוי ולניפרא בר מאדוי

4. XI-t 5178 (Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte) = Müller-Kessler 1994 B1

An apotropaic incantation bowl prepared for the children of Bahranoš d. Mah-Avar and Mā-Bindad s. Gonakoi

(1) סמומית ילדת תרי עשר בנין וכולהון קטל יתהון סדרוס⁽²⁾ רשיעה וקמת וערקת מן קדומוהי ואזלת
לחד טורא דימיחד בעלמא⁽³⁾ שמיה ועבדת לה דשין דינחשה ועברין דפרזלא ואתא סאיני וססאיני
וסנגרו וארתיקו⁽⁴⁾ ואמרו לה פתח לנא ואמרת להון לית אנא פתחא לכון ואמרו דוכתא דנעבר וניעול
עלה⁽⁵⁾ וקמת ופתחת להון ועול עימהון סדרוס וקטליה ליברה וחנק יותיה וקמת וצוחת עלוהי אסאיני
(6) וססאיני וסנגרו וארתיקו מא עבדו ליה וקומו ורדפו בתריה ואדריכו יותיה לגו פלגוס ימא רבה ובעו
(7) מינהון למיקטל יותיה ולמיחנק יותיה ואמר להון שבוקו מיני ואנא מישתבענא לכון במשמד מדד
בשעולו מים דכל אתר דדכרין שמיה⁽⁸⁾ דסאיני וססאיני וסנגרו וארתיקו אנא לא איקטול ולא איחנוק
ולא איחבול בנין דאית להון ודהון להון לבהראנוש בת⁽⁹⁾ מהאור ולמאבינדד בר גונקוי

5. Privatbesitz = Müller-Kessler 1994 B2

An apotropaic incantation bowl prepared for the children of Bahr[anoš d. Mah-Avar and Ma-Bindad s. Gonakoi]

(1) סמומית ילדת תרי עשר בנין וכולהון קטל יתהון סד[רוס]⁽²⁾ רשיעה וקמת וערקת מן קדומוהי
ואזלת לחד [טורא דימי]חד בע[למא]⁽³⁾ שמיה ועבדת לה דשין דינחשה ועברין דפרזלא [ואתא סא]יני
וססאיני [וס]נגרו וארתיקו⁽⁴⁾ ואמרו לה פתח לנא ואמרת להון לית אנא פתחא [לכון ו]אמרו דוכתא
דנעבר וניעול עלה⁽⁵⁾ וקמת [ופתחת להון ו]עול עימהון סדרוס וקטליה ליב[רה וחנק] יותיה וקמת
וצוחת עלוהי אסאיני⁽⁶⁾ וסס[איני וסנגרו ו]ארתיקו מא עבדו ליה וקומו ורדפו ב[תריה ואדרי]כו יותיה
לגו פלגוס ימא רבה ובעו⁽⁷⁾ מינהון למי[קטל יותיה ולמיחנק יותיה ואמ]ר להון שבוקו מיני ו[אנא
מישת]בענא לכון במשמד מדד בשעולו מים דכל את[ר דדכרין שמיה]⁽⁸⁾ דסאיני וססאיני ו[סנגרו
וארתיקו אנא [לא איקטול ולא] איחנוק ולא איחבול בנין דאית להון ודהון להון לבהר[אנוש בת]⁽⁹⁾
מהאור ולמאבינדד בר גונקוי]

6. 86.11.259 (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) = AMB B12b

An apotropaic incantation bowl prepared for Zuna s. Dutī the son of Zabinu s. Zuni and Dutī d. Gusi

(4) ... סממיתא ילדת תרין עשר בנין כולהון קטל יתהון⁽⁵⁾ סרגיס קמת וערקת מן קודמוהי ואזלת לח

לטורא חד מאחיד שמיה ועבדת ⁽⁶⁾ ל[ה] דשין דינחש ועברין דיפרזל ואתא סיני וסאסיני וסינגרו וארתיקו ואמרו ⁽⁷⁾ לה פתח לנא ואמרת לית אנא פתחא ואמרו (ד)רכיה נעבור ונעול עליה וקמת ופתחת ⁽⁸⁾ להון ועל עימהון סרגיס וקטליה ליברה {ונ} וחנק יתיה וקמת ויצוחת עלי סיני ⁽⁹⁾ וסאסיני וסינג[רו] וא[רתיקו] מא עבדו לה קומו וירדפו בתרוהי {לגו} ואדריכו יתיה לגו פלגוס ימא ⁽¹⁰⁾ רבה למיקטל י[תיה ו] למיחנק יתיה ואמר שבוקו מיני ואנא מישתבענא לכון במי שמדד בשועולו מים ⁽¹¹⁾ ושמים בזרת תיכין וכל בשליש עפר הארץ ושקל בפלס {ויגע} ויגבעות במואוזנים דכל אתר דיכרך שמיה ⁽¹²⁾ דסיני וסאסיני וסינגרו וארתיקו איתרח(ם) ולא {אינ} איחנוק ולא איקטול ליבנין דזבינו בר זוני ואינתתיה בת ⁽¹³⁾ גוסי דאית להון וידהון להון מן יומא דנן ולעלם אמן אמן סלה הללויה

⁽⁴⁾ Semamit gave birth to twelve sons. Sergi(u)s killed them all. ⁽⁵⁾ She rose and fled from before him and she went to a mountain whose name is unique. And she made ⁽⁶⁾ for herself doors of bronze and bolts of iron. Then Sini and Sasini and Sinigru and Artiqu came and said ⁽⁷⁾ to her, 'Open up for us!' And she said, 'I shall not open.' And they said, 'There is a place for us to pass through and enter unto her!' So she arose and opened up ⁽⁸⁾ to them and Sergi(u)s entered with them and killed her son and strangled him. And she arose and cried out to them (lit. him), 'O, Sini ⁽⁹⁾ and Sasini and Sinigru and Artiqu, what have they done to him!' They rose and chased after him and they caught him in the midst of Pelagos the great ⁽¹⁰⁾ sea (in order) to kill him and strangle him. And he said, 'Let go of me and I swear to you by the One "who measured the waters in his palm ⁽¹¹⁾ and gauged the heavens with a span, and weighed <the mountains> with a scale and the hills with a balance" (Isa 40:12) that wherever one mentions the name ⁽¹²⁾ of Sini and Sasini and Sinigru and Artiqu, I shall have pity and shall not kill or strangle the children of Zabinu s. Zuni and his wife, daughter of ⁽¹³⁾ Gusi.

7. BM 117869 + BM 117870 + BM 117871 = CAMIB 071A + 072A + 073A

An incantation bowl prepared for (the children of) [...] s. [...] (?)

⁽³⁾ 072A [—] ונעול עליה ו[—] ⁽⁴⁾ [וקט]ליה ליברה וחנק יתיה [—] ⁽⁵⁾ [—] וירדפו בתרוהי ואדרכו [—] ⁽⁵⁾ 071A [בש]ליש עפר הארץ שקל בפלס הרים [—]

8. JNF 124 = Ford 2016: 153-154

An apotropaic incantation bowl prepared for (the children of) Farrokhzād s. Kumay and Azarmidukht d. Zādoy

⁽¹⁾ צמותית ילידת תריעשר ⁽²⁾ בנין וכולהון קטל יתהון סיני וסאסיני ⁽³⁾ וסינגרי וארתיקי וקמת וערקת מן

קודמיהון ואזלת ⁽⁴⁾ ועבדת לה דשין דינחש ועברין דיפרזל ואתה סיני וסאסיני ⁽⁵⁾ וסניגרי וארתקי ואמרו לה פתחי לנא ואמרת להון לית אנא פתחא ⁽⁶⁾ לכון ואמרו סולם נעביד וניעול עלה וקמת ופתחת להון וקטלוה ליברה וחנק יתה ובעו ⁽⁷⁾ למיקטל יתה ואמרת ליה אם תישבוקנני ובכל אתר דמדכרין שמה דסיני וסאסיני וסניגרי וארתקי ⁽⁸⁾ לא איקטול ולא איחנוק ולא איצער ליבנין וליבנין דאית ליה ודהואן ליה לפרוך זאד בר כומאי ומן ⁽⁹⁾ אזרמידוכת בת זאתוי זאדוי אינתתיה ומן קיניניה ומן בעיריה ומן חויתיה ומן מזוניה ...

⁽¹⁾ Šmotit gave birth to twelve ⁽²⁾ sons and they were all killed by Sini and Sasini ⁽³⁾ and Sinigri and Artiqi. And she rose and she fled from before them and she went ⁽⁴⁾ and she made for herself doors of bronze and bolts of iron. Then Sini and Sasini ⁽⁵⁾ and Sinigri and Artiqi came and said to her, ‘Open up for us!’ And she said to them, ‘I shall not open ⁽⁶⁾ for you.’ And they said, ‘We shall make a ladder and enter unto her.’ So she arose and opened up to them and they killed her son and strangled her and they were about ⁽⁷⁾ to kill her and she said to them (lit. him), ‘If you leave me, wherever the name of Sini and Sasini and Sinigri and Artiqi is mentioned ⁽⁸⁾ I shall not kill or strangle or harass the children that Farrokhzād s. Kumay has or shall have, or ⁽⁹⁾ his wife Azarmidukht d. Zādoy, etc.’

In this last of the published bowl texts, the Semamit figure and her offspring are cast not as innocent victims of the wicked Sideros but as villains to be hunted down and killed.⁷³

⁷³ Several similar instantiations of this version of the story are known in relation to female demons in different traditions, e.g. as part of the hagiography connected with St. Sisinnius, cf. the Arabic spells connected with Qarīna al-Tāb‘ia, Umm al-Šibyān and the late Syriac figure of *emmā ḥanoqtā d-ṭalyē*, ‘the child-strangling mother.’ See Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*, 118; Badalanova Geller, “Between Demonology and Hagiology,” 186; Ford, “New Light,” 157. In the most striking of these instantiations, recounted in the *Alphabet of Ben Sira* 23a, three angels named Senoy, Sansenoy, and Semangelof chase a certain lilith—an evil agent associated with Adam’s first wife and depicted here as a witch whose task is to destroy babies—down to the sea. They threaten her with drowning, whereupon she swears to restrain herself from harming children wherever she encounters the three angelic names. In doing this deal to protect her cause, she further agrees that one hundred of her own children should die each day. This version of the story retains the sea as the place where the evil agent is vanquished (as in the Semamit texts 1-7 above) as well as the oath sworn by this agent to desist from harming children wherever the names of the helper figures are invoked (as in all the Semamit texts above). It also reflects the negative shift in the character of the Semamit figure in JNF 124: in this bowl, Šmotit plays a similar role to lilith, with whom she is explicitly associated and even equated in several (un)published bowls, as well as *Havdalah de-Rabbi Aqiva*. On the nexus סממית/סמומית/צממית/צמותית as well as the demon called סמומית, see Ford, “New Light,” 155, who also quotes from the unpublished bowl Wolfe 23:7-8. This bowl reads סדרסות ליליתא ילידה תרין עשר בנין כולהון קתל יתהון סדרסות, “The lilith Semimot gave birth to twelve sons; Sidros killed them all,” which brings us full circle through the various incarnations of the Semamit character. A sub-

Šmotit’s negative character in this bowl—like Semamit’s sympathetic characterisation in the other texts—is simply assumed by the narrative and made explicit only in the oath that she swears at the end of the story in order to escape execution by the four angels (who appear in this narrative as unambiguous agents of good). This oath not to harm the children of the bowl owners recalls the oath sworn by Sideros in the other bowls, and casts Šmotit in the same mould as this malevolent figure. As in the other bowls, Šmotit loses her sons, but they are not collateral casualties here. Seemingly on the basis of the precept ‘like mother, like son,’ their neutralisation or extermination by the angels should be understood here as a preventative good. This version of the story thus does not only provide a precedent for the neutralisation of this demon’s particular powers, it also instantiates a type of narrative revenge upon her wherein she herself loses the children that she threatens to take from human parents.⁷⁴ This slightly shorter story—which eliminates the chase to the sea—nevertheless makes use of many of the same details as the other stories. The bronze doors, for example, reoccur alongside the central character, though they are cast not as a protective element but as obstacles easily overcome by the powerful angels (in a protective role). Likewise, in all eight narratives the Semamit figure gives birth to a thirteenth doomed son, though Semamit’s bereavement and subsequent outcry are elided in JNF 124; the absence of these details removes all room for identification with her figure, while their presence in the other stories evokes further sympathy for the benevolent mother figure. In all eight texts, the names of the beneficiaries are inserted directly into the villain’s spoken oath, though JNF 124 omits the partial quotation of Isa 40:12 from the dialogue of its narrative. In the other stories, the quotation seems intend-

stantial difference between the bowls and other tellings of the story occurs in the addition of a fourth helper (Artiqu) in the bowls, but this is to be explained by the fact that *וארתיקו* (the verb *רתק* with prefixed conjunction meaning ‘and they knocked [on the door]’) was understood by the bowl practitioners as part of a series of names, cf. the Palestinian amulets AMB A15:8, where three politer helpers knock on Semamit’s door, and BLMJ 7052 = Elitzur-Leiman 2016, which also features only three helpers. The interpretation the fourth element in *וארתיקו* and *וססאיני* as a name and not a verb is confirmed by an unpublished parallel = DS 34:45 where the preposition *lamed* occurs before each of four names: *וארתיקי ולסניגרי ולסאיני ולססיני* “and she opened the door for them, for Sini and for Sasini and for Sinigri and for Artiqui” (DS 34:45). See Ford, “New Light,” 151. The bowls anyway waver in taking these characters as a singular entity or as a plural company, cf. the remarks on AMB A15 and the Greek version of the story in Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*, 196.

⁷⁴ See the *Ben Sira* lilith story detailed in the note above where the evil agent agrees to the death of one hundred of her own demonic spawn each day in order to protect her cause.

ed—much like the partial quotation of Ps 104:20 in Ḥanina ben Dosa's speech to the evil spirit—to acknowledge the demon's proper place within the unitary system created by God.

NON-HUMAN PROTAGONISTS
THE TALKING EGG HISTORIOLA

This brief narrative recounts a curious dialogue between an unidentified speaker—presumably to be identified with the beneficiary, though the bowl practitioner is also possible—and an egg.⁷⁵

1. Einhorn 3 (Einhorn Collection) = MSF B 21

An incantation bowl designed to subdue the enemies of Sinyona s. Qitin⁷⁶

(³) בעתה בת תרנגול(תה) אלמא פומך פתחת (⁴) (עלי) (א)למא עינך מרמזת עלי אלמא (בדעתך)
(מחש) [בת עלי] (⁵) אלמא ב[רג]ליך [רה]טת בתרי (מן) לילא (ההוה) בעתה ואמרה לי מנא (לי)
(⁶) פומא דפתח[נא] עלך (מ)נא לי עינ[י] דרמזנא עלך [...] עלך מנא לי רגלי דרהטת בתרך [...] [
(⁷) [...] בעתה שפיפ(ת ולא) [...] פו]מא (לית) לך דפתחת עלי (ועיני לית) לך ד(רמזת) עלי [ולי]בא
לית לך דמחשבת עלי וריגלי לית לך דרהטת (⁸) (בתרי) (הכדין) מכבשין כל סנייהו ומסיקיהו דסיניונא
בר קיטין הדין דודי בת אימי וסוסיא בת אימי

(³) ‘Egg, daughter of a hen, why do you open your mouth (⁴) against me? Why does your eye wink at me? Why do you consider me with your mind? (⁵) Why do you run after me with your foot at night?’ The egg spoke (?) and said, ‘Where have I got (⁶) the mouth that I open at you? Where have I got the eye [that I wink at you ...] at you? Where have I got the foot that runs after you?’ (⁷) The egg bowed and no ... ‘You have no mouth to open against me. You have no eyes to wink at me. You have no heart to think against me. You have no feet to run (⁸) after me.’ Thus may all the enemies and oppressors of Sinyona s. Qitin be subdued: this Duda d. Immi and (this) Susya d. Immi.

The text of this incantation bowl is obscure and was perhaps imperfectly understood by the practitioner; the reading above is therefore only cautiously proffered. The story opens with a

⁷⁵ See also the egg story found in the preliminary translation of the Mandaic bowl MS 2054/124 in Shaked, “Jesus in the Magic Bowls,” 317–318. A fragmentary Syriac version of the egg story (similar to the version in MS 2054/124) is also known: VA.Bab.4167i = VAM 14 = Müller-Kessler, “Syrische Zauberschalen,” 129 = Moriggi, *Syriac Incantation Bowls*, 197.

⁷⁶ See Levene, *Corpus*, 127–28 n.223; cf. Naveh and Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae*, 128–29, whose edition understands the six individuals named in this difficult text to be the beneficiaries of a bowl designed to protect against evil spirits.

series of questions addressed to an egg, who is asked about various gestures she directs towards the speaker. The egg responds that—seeing as she has no mouth, no eyes, no mind, and no feet—she is incapable of the actions (and seemingly malicious intent) attributed to her. The egg’s speech is followed by an affirmation of all that she has said, before the story is explicitly analogised by the practitioner. Naveh and Shaked remark that the narrative’s “connection to the rest of the text is not entirely clear.”⁷⁷ I suggest, however, that the narrative’s application is relatively straightforward: it is intended to analogise away the threat facing the beneficiary of the bowl by likening it to the threat posed by an egg. Just as an egg is incapable of causing harm—and the notion of its speaking, plotting, winking, and walking is ultimately absurd—so the threats and malicious intent directed towards Sinyona s. Qitin are rendered harmless—bland as an egg—and ultimately laughable.

TRANSMUNDANE PROTAGONISTS YHWH — HISTORIOLOAE AND NARRATIVE TOKENS

Biblical historiolae: YHWH, Pharaoh’s chariot, and the Sea of Reeds

The primary protagonist in several bowls is YHWH. These bowls typically recount or refer to his actions against various human provocateurs or enemies of Israel as a kind of (narrative) commination addressed to the demons targeted in the bowls.

1. Tarshish Bowl (present whereabouts unknown) = Shaked 2015: 109-110

An exorcistic-curative incantation bowl prepared for Rav Ashi s. Maḥlafta

(15) מומינא ומשבענא עלכי אנתי רוחא בישתא בשמיה דאלהא רבה ... דהוא נזף (16) בימא ואיתרגישו כיפויי כמה דיכתיב רוגע הים ויהמו גליו יהוה צבאות שמו {וע} כען ארים ליבהון מצראי לימא ורדפו בתר עמא לימא וברוגזה רבה איתגלי על ימא ורדפו בתר עמא לימא וברוגזא רבה איתגלי על ימא ואיתמסיו מן (17) קדמוהי ואמרו קדמוהי לא לנו יהוה לא לנו ...

(15) I adjure you and beswear you, you, the evil spirit, by the name of the great God ... who rebuked (16) the sea and its banks shook, as it is written: ‘I cleft the sea and its waves roared, the Lord of Hosts is his name’ (Isa 51:15/Jer 31:34). Now he lifted the hearts of the Egyptians towards the sea and they pursued the people up to the sea, and He made an appearance with great wrath over the sea, and they pursued the people up to the sea, and He made an appearance with great wrath over the sea, and they dissolved (17) from His presence, and said in His presence: ‘Not to us, O Lord, not to us’ (Ps 115:1).

⁷⁷ Naveh and Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae*, 129.

This spell recounts the pursuit in Ex 14 of the Israelites into the Sea of Reeds by (Pharaoh and) the Egyptians. It serves as a proof text: the practitioner adjures the evil spirit by the name of God, and then details a paradigmatic display of divine power by elaborating upon the biblical account of the seas parting and the Egyptian army drowning as they followed the Israelites into the water. The version of the story told here begins with the aforementioned adjuration of the evil spirit by a divine appellative that evokes in miniature the splitting of the sea. This extended appellative is furnished with a biblical proof text wherein YHWH himself recalls in the first person how he stirred up or split the sea. Following this quotation from Isa 51:15/Jer 31:34, the practitioner proceeds to the narration proper, where God is said to lift the hearts of the Egyptians toward the sea—recalling Ex 14:17, where God hardens the hearts of the Egyptians in their pursuit—whereupon the bowl relates that God made a wrathful appearance over the sea. This detail perhaps recollects the divine appearance in the pillars of cloud and fire in Ex 13. The repetition of “and they pursued the people up to the sea, and He made an appearance with great wrath over the sea,” if not accidental, may refer to this dual appearance of the divinity. Alternatively, it may suggest an initial appearance that worked to draw the Egyptians to the sea (a materialisation of the lifted hearts), and a subsequent appearance that worked to dissolve them as they cried out in the voice of Ps 115:1. The deliquescence of the Egyptians is the detail here that opens up a paradigm for the destruction of those who threaten the beneficiary of the bowl. The narrative thus works to shape a vision concerning the relation of God to the enemies of humans on the basis of the past relation of God to human enemies.

The narrative details of this particular vision are multiplied across a number of bowl texts. The events at the Sea of Reeds also appear as part of a divine appellative in two parallel bowls produced by the same practitioner for the same person. This appellative extends to encompass a brief narration of the story in Exodus:

2. VA.3854 = Levene 2003: 105-106 = VAM 2⁷⁸

A curative-apotropaic incantation bowl prepared for 'Ummu-l-bāb d. Rimāna

(23) יהוה צבאות שמו (24) דעבד אתין ותמהין במצרים (25) ועבד בישין בגו ימיניה ודחק (26)

{ו} מרכבתיה דפרעה בגו ימא (27) דסוף

(23) YHWH Sabaoth is his name, (24) who performed signs and wonders upon Egypt, (25) and performed bad things by his right hand, and pushed (26) Pharaoh's chariot into the Sea (27) of

⁷⁸ I adopt the lineation of the bowl given in VAM 2, where ll. 23-27 = 24-28 in Levene's earlier edition.

Reeds.

3. VA.3853 = Levene 2003: 107-108

A curative-apotropaic incantation bowl prepared for 'Ummu-l-ḥubāb d. Rimāna

(27) יהוה צבאות שמו [...] דעבד אתין ותמהין {במצ} (30) במצרים ועבד בישין בגו (י) (31) ימיניה
ודחק {מר} (32) מרכבתיה דפרעה (ב) (33) מרכבתיה דפרעה (34) בגו ימא דסוף

These two parallel bowls reflect a minor amplification of God's ambush of the Egyptians in Ex 14. This amplification has YHWH himself actively push Pharaoh's chariot into the sea as part of the bowls' commination. The signs and wonders and misfortunes inflicted the right hand of God may refer simply to the events at the Sea of Reeds (and/) or (meronymically) to the previous divine actions performed against Egypt in Ex 7-12. In either case, they become a stage where the practitioner can project—by means of analogy—a deliberately framed series of actions directed against demons in the present.

Biblical historiolae: YHWH, Moses, and Mt Sinai

A further biblical story is recounted in two other bowls that engage very differently with the events at Mount Sinai.

1. VA 2269 = VAM 6

An incantation bowl for the healing and protection of Farrokh-Khusraw s. Barāzdukh

(2) זעו שמיא ושמי שמיא מן קדמך אדוני כד איתגליתא על טורא דסיני [...] איהבת (3) אוריתא לעמך
ישראל טוריא ראמאית איתעקרו וכל עישבי ארעה נדו מיבונכיהן מ [...] (4) [...] ניחזו אדוני אלהא
רב[א די]שראל כד מיתגלי על טורא דסיני וכד [...]

(2) The heavens and the highest heavens shook in your presence, Lord, when you were revealed upon Mount Sinai [...] you gave (3) the Torah to your people Israel. High mountains were uprooted and all the plants of the earth moved from their places [...] (4) [...] they shall see the Lord, the great God [of I]srael, when he is revealed upon Mount Sinai and when [...]

Only the base of this bowl is preserved, while much of the fragment is taken up with a drawing of an unbound figure who carries a spear in both hands and appears to be wearing a helmet. It is likely that this drawing represents the practitioner. The narrative establishes the might of the divinity, but the lack of context for the telling of the story makes it difficult to comment further on its use.

2. MS 1927/2 = Shaked 2005: 25-26

An incantation bowl prepared to gain favour for Mahdukh d. Ispendarmed

(5) דין הוא רזא דיגלא ליה זרפיאל (6) סר הפנים למשה ... אין כל רזיא כד סליק לטורא דסיני ובעו
עמא דבית ישראל דניכל עיניה ברחמתא אמרו (7) ליה בר עמרם יכלו בר[ח]מין ונחסן לך ונעביד
בעותך דישחקת נפשנא בת נפשך ורוחנא בת (8) זיוך ואף אנתה זרפיאל מלאכה גמול חיסדה לחיליון
בת איצפינדרמיד באפי כל חזה ומחזה

(5) This is the mystery that Zarpiel, (6) the prince of the countenance, revealed to Moses ... all the mysteries, when he ascended Mount Sinai, and the people of Israel asked that his eyes be filled (?) with love. They said (7) to him: ‘Son of Amram, may they be filled by our love, and we shall hold you and fulfil your desire, for our soul is smashed within yours, and our spirit within (8) your splendour.’ So you too, Zarpiel the angel, give grace to Ḥilion d. Ispendarmed in the eyes of all those who see her and gaze at her.

The beneficiary of this bowl sought popularity and the favour of the people around her, possibly in relation to a legal proceeding, as l. 3 asks: “May she speak and be heard, may she come to trial and win it, may she ask and take, may she say (something) and be heard.” In light of these goals, the practitioner quotes Prov 3:4—“And may he find grace and good understanding in the eyes of God and man”—and adjures a number of angels “who are appointed over the shape of the countenance of a person, and who give that person grace and love” to put “grace in Mahdukh d. Ispendarmed in the eyes of all those who see her and gaze at her” (2-3). These direct appeals and the scriptural proof-text are followed by a story where Moses is hailed by the people of Israel during his ascent of Mount Sinai. In this story, the people speak a kind of blessing over Moses, whereby the strength of their good will towards him fills him and holds him and fulfils his desire. The dialogue thus binds together the aspirations of Moses and the people around him, and represents a perlocutionary statement of the client’s desire to gain favour with the people around her. The narrative is followed by an explicit analogical adjuration addressed to the angelic prince of the countenance Zarpiel.

Biblical narrative tokens: YHWQ YHWQ, a chariot, and the Sea of Reeds

The JBA bowls contain numerous references to (biblical) stories, many of which are applied analogically, and which use this analogical selection of detail to frame the intended magical act, magnify precedent, and thereby potentise the selected paradigm. In what follows, I note the location and use of these narrative tokens in the published record, before returning to actual narratives in bowls. Further to the above historiologiae concerning the events at the Sea of

Reeds, a number of bowls—JBA 6:15, for example—also adjure demons בשמיה דיהוק יהוק רבה ביה, “By the name of the great YHWQ YHWQ, who pushed his chariot over the Sea of Reeds.”

[YHWQ YHWQ] who pushed his chariot over the Sea of Reeds

CATALOGUE NUMBER	PUBLICATION	LL.
CBS 16017 ⁷⁹	AIT 14	2 ⁸⁰
MS 1927/29	JBA 2	13
MS 1927/47	JBA 4	14
MS 2053/10	JBA 6	15
MS 2053/183	JBA 9	14-15
MS 2053/247	Ford 2012: 243	7 ⁸¹
1899.2.659 (2037) (Harvard Semitic Museum)	Gordon 2 = Isbell 39	7 ⁸²
1932.620 (Ashmolean Museum)	Gordon 1941: 279-280	13 ⁸³

This extended appellative undoubtedly reflects a minor amplification of the story in Ex 14. The name YHWQ YHWQ is a probable play on the tetragrammaton, while the possessive pronoun in ‘his chariot’ may reflect two different visions of the events at the Sea of Reeds. It may refer either to Pharaoh (as in VA 3853 and VA 3854) or to the manner of the divine appearance (upon a chariot, cf. the Tarshish bowl) during the events at the Sea of Reeds.⁸⁴ Regardless, these practitioners wrote their bowls in the context of the biblical narrative and— from multiple resonances with this much longer story—sanctioned the specific detail of the chariot as particularly potent by incorporating it into their incantations.

Biblical narrative tokens: the burning bush

Such references are the most common way—besides quotation—of invoking various biblical pericopae in the bowls. JTS 950 = Gordon H, for example, does not simply adjure numerous demons by the name of YHWH, but explicitly invokes Exod 3:2-14 and the scene of the burning bush and the revelation of the divine name:

⁷⁹ The catalogue number is given incorrectly as CBS 16917 in Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts*.

⁸⁰ בשום סף סף יהוק יהוק דדחיק ית מרכבתיה על ימא דסוף

⁸¹ The bowl is unpublished but Ford, “Phonetic Spellings,” 243 quotes the formula as part of his discussion of the subordinating particle in the incantation bowls.

⁸² The bowl is damaged, but the legible text reads: תיה על ימא דסוף [—]

⁸³ The writing on the bowl appears to have faded considerably since Gordon prepared his preliminary edition of the text. At present, it is possible to read: על ימא דסוף [...]

⁸⁴ Cf. the remarks in Shaked, “Form and Purpose,” 19.

(16) באדוניה (17) וכסא דרבא למריה יאהואה שמ מפורש דאיתגלי למשה באסנה

(16) By the Lord (17) and the great throne of the master Y'HW'H, the ineffable name that was revealed to Moses in the bush.

Biblical narrative tokens: Goliath/David, Pharaoh/Moses, Egypt/Joseph, Jericho/Joshua

The bowls refer to a number of stories where God acts against malefactors or on behalf of those who put their trust in him. MSF B21, for example, seeks to subjugate several named antagonists of its beneficiary; designating itself ... לכיבשא ד, it uses an extended appellative to invoke God as:

(10) כבשה לגולית ביד דויד ולפרעה ביד משה (11) ומצרים ביד יוסיף ושורא דיריחו ביד יהושע בר נון

(10) (He) who has subdued Goliath by the hand of David and Pharaoh by the hand of Moses (11) and Egypt by the hand of Joseph and the wall of Jericho by the hand of Joshua bar Nun.

Biblical narrative tokens: Sodom and Gomorrah

One prominent precedent frequently tokenised in the bowls is the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the two ancient cities who met their downfall as a result of the iniquity of their citizens in Gen 19:24-25. Unless otherwise noted, the cities appear as part of the commination in these bowls.

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
IM 9736	Gordon 1941: 349-50 = Saar 2013	8-9 ⁸⁵
VA 2509	Curses: 31-32	7-9
BM 91767	Segal 026A = Curses: 119-120	15-16 ⁸⁶
BM 91763	Segal 041A = Curses: 121-122	6-7
BM 117826	Segal 044A	6
CBS 2945	AIT 2	6
CBS 16041	AIT 27	9-10
MS 2053/270	JBA 49	8

⁸⁵ A bowl for sowing discord. In service of this aim, the bowl adjures two angels—Michael and Gabriel—that it describes as having been sent against Sodom and Gomorrah. Michael also appears in the bowls noted in the footnote above.

⁸⁶ The two cities are named in this bowl in a quotation from Deut 29:22.

A number of other bowls also refer to “mighty fortified cities” that were “broken” by three angels named Nurael, Raphael, and Michael.⁸⁸ These analogical tokens appear as part of the commination against the target demon. Thus JBA 9:

דאם אזלת ורדפת ... מיהרנהיד בת ⁽¹¹⁾ אחת ... ישמתון יתיכי ויתברון יתיכי ויחרמון
ייתיכי כמה דאיתברו כרכין תקיפין שדרו עליהון נוראל רפאל ומיכאל

⁽¹⁰⁾ For if you go and persecute ... Mihranahid d. ⁽¹¹⁾ Aḥat ... they will ban you and break you and excommunicate you just as mighty fortified cities were broken. They sent against them Nurael, Raphael and Michael.

The names of these mighty cities are not given in these ten bowls, though rabbinic tradition allows us to identify them as Sodom and Gomorrah. In the build-up to the destruction of the two cities in the biblical story it is simply stated that three unnamed men visited with Abraham. (One of these visitors is actually God. The other two are said in Gen 18:22 to have continued on to Sodom. Upon their arrival there in Gen 19:1 they are revealed to be angels. They state in Gen 19:12-13 that Lot must flee for they are there to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah.) Subsequent Jewish tradition names these three men as Michael, Raphael, and Gabriel—angels whose respective missions were to deliver the news of God’s intentions to Abraham, rescue Lot, and destroy the two cities. The version preserved in Gen. Rab. 50:2 informs us that their missions were faithfully delivered:

מיכאל אמר בשורתו ונסתלק גבריאל נשתלח להפוך את סדום ורפאל להציל את לוט

Michael spoke his tidings and was dismissed. Gabriel was sent to overturn Sodom and Raphael to deliver Lot.

The version preserved in the bowls simply replaces Gabriel with Nurael for the added pleasure of punning on the destruction of the cities by נורא, ‘fire.’ In a version preserved in two further bowls, Nuriel and Michael are accompanied by Pag‘iel. So JBA 12 reads:

⁸⁷ This bowl is unpublished, but Siam Bhayro, “On Early Jewish Literature and the Aramaic Magic Bowls,” *Aramaic Studies* 13 (2015): 64 quotes a single line from its text that refers to the destruction of the two cities: הכפיאל מלאכה דאישתדר על סדום ועל עמורא למיהפכהון, “I beswear against you ... the angel Hakfiel who was sent against Sodom and against Gomorrah in order to overturn them.”

⁸⁸ Michael is also mentioned in IM 9736 as one of the angels sent against Sodom and Gomorrah.

משמתנא יתכי ומחתימנא יתכי וכריכנא יתכי כמא דיכרד⁽¹⁴⁾ ברכין תקיפין ומשדרנא⁽¹³⁾

עליכי נוריאל ופגעיאל ומיכאל בנורא

⁽¹³⁾ I will ban you and I will seal you and I will encircle you just as one encircled

⁽¹⁴⁾ mighty fortified cities. And I will send against you Nuriel and Pag'iel and Michael with fire.⁸⁹

The encirclement of mighty fortified cities in these two bowls also suggests the manner in which the Israelites overcame Jericho in Josh 6:1-20, perhaps suggesting a conflation of this story with the story preserved in Gen 19:24-25.

The destruction of mighty fortified cities: Sodom and Gomorrah

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
M 156	Corpus: 115-116	10-11
MS 1927/8	JBA 1	10-11
MS 1927/29	JBA 2	11
MS 1927/45	JBA 3	11-12
MS 1927/47	JBA 4	11-12
MS 1927/64	JBA 5	9-10
MS 2053/10	JBA 6	11
MS 2053/12	JBA 7	11-12
MS 2053/55	JBA 8	8
MS 2053/183	JBA 9	11
MS 2053/79	JBA 11	14-15
MS 2053/178	JBA 12	13-14

Biblical narrative tokens: Qorah, Dathan, and Abiram

The divine action taken against the rebellious Qorah in Num 16:31-35 is also tokenised as part of the commination or adjuration in three bowls:

The Punishment of Qorah, Dathan, and Abiram

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
VA 2509	Curses: 31-32	5-6
BM 91763	Segal 041A = Curses: 121-122	4 ⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Cf. JBA 11:14-15.

⁹⁰ VA 2509 and BM 91763 appear to represent a midrashic conflation and amplification of the events presented in the biblical narrative. In the adjuration in these two bowls, the earth does not split apart; rather, the fires of Gehenna bring the three rebellious individuals down to the abyss: אשבעית עליכון נורי גיהנם דאחיתו דבית

Biblical narrative tokens: Dan 3 and the fiery furnace

Other bowls tokenise protective gestures made by God, or divine actions taken on behalf of the faithful. SD 27:2-4, for example, analogises the story in Dan 3:23-28 where Daniel's three companions are saved from the flames of Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace. This particular narrative token is deployed in the bowl in order to annul a series of curses that the two beneficiaries of the bowls believed to have been sent against them by over thirty named residents of the same town:

(2) בישמיך מיכאל שרא רבה ומישאל סרא דנורא כד אעילתונון ליהנניא (3) מישאל ועזריא לגו
אתונא יקידתא ולא נגעה בהון נורא כלל הכדין לא תינגע לוטתא (4) ונטתא ושיקופתא בביתיה
דאמי(ט)אל בר מחלפתא ולא נינגע בדירתא דאלישבח בר שומוני

(2) By your name Michael the great angel and Mishael the angel of fire. Just as you delivered Hannaniah, (3) Mishael, and Azariah into the midst of the burning furnace and the fire did not touch them at all, so too may curses (4) and affliction and knocks not afflict the house of Amitiel s. Mahlapta and no afflict the dwelling of Elishebakh s. Shumuni.

The angel Michael also appears in Dan 12:1 with the title the great prince, while Mishael strangely appears twice in the bowl spell: as Nebuchadnezzar's victim and as the name of the angel of fire. The title prince of fire is also applied to the angel Gabriel in the rabbinic version of the biblical story in b. Pes 118ab, where Gabriel argues that—as the prince of fire—God would better manifest his might by sending him rather than the prince of hail to save the three faithful:

אמר לו גבריאל אין גבורתו של הקדוש ברוך הוא בכך שאתה שר ברד והכל יודעין שהמים מכבין את
האש אלא אני שר של אש ארד ואקרר מבפנים ואקדיח מבחוץ ואעשה נס בתוך נס אמר לו הקדוש
ברוך הוא רד

מאמ, קריה דתין ואבירם (י)תהומא, “I adjure upon you the fires of Gehenna that brought down the house of Qorah, Dathan, and Abiram to the abyss.”

⁹¹ Addressed against a human opponent, the bowl tokenises and explicitly analogises the Qorah story as follows: “And just as the house of Qorah and Dathan and Abiram was pressed, just so may this Iša s. Ifra-Hormiz (by every name he has) be crushed and trod under.”

Gabriel said to him, ‘The might of the Holy one, blessed be He, is not thereby [manifested], for you are the prince of hail, and all know that water extinguishes fire. But I—the prince of fire—will go down and cool it within and heat it without and will thus perform a double miracle.’ The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him, ‘Go down.’⁹²

The Nebuchadnezzan point of view in the Danielic story, where the reader only realises with the king that the three prisoners in the furnace are unharmed and accompanied by a fourth figure, is replaced in SD 27 with a focus on the angelic intercessors and the mechanism by which the three were saved from the flames. The imagery associated with this biblical episode is also attested in a spell formula—based on Dan 3:6—which adopts the Nebuchadnezzan punishment. Found in SHM 5:5, 8 and AIT 14:7, this formula asks that the evil spirit oppressing the beneficiaries of the bowls be thrown into the (furnace of) blazing fire:

ושדי יתיה לגו אתון נורוא יקידתא ולשלהבית אשתא SHM 5:5

and may he cast it into the furnace of blazing fire and to flames of fire

ותרמון יתבין לגו נורא יקידתא ולשלהיבת אשתא AIT 14:7

and you will be cast down into the blazing fire and to flames of fire

A number of other bowls appear to make reference to Daniel’s three companions in a recurring formula that mentions three old men sitting within or at the mouth of a furnace.⁹³ VA 2423, for example, seeks from the mouths and from the names of these three men in the furnace to void the sorceries and curses sent upon the bowl’s beneficiary:

ומיפום (3) תלתא סבין דאהוו יתבין באתונא

(3) And from the mouths of (4) three old men who were sitting in a furnace ...

⁹² Cf. the versions of the story in the so-called narrative section of the (Syriac) Prayer of Azariah (Dan 3:50) and in Theodotion’s addition, where the ‘angel of dew’ causes a dewy wind in the midst of the furnace and the ‘angel of the Lord’ causes a wind to blow like dew through the furnace. Levene, *Curse Texts*, 99–101 contains several synoptic tables of these and other passages related to SD 27.

⁹³ See Levene, *Curse Texts*, 39–41 for a synoptic table of the parallel sections of these bowls.

Three Companions in/at the Mouth of the Fiery Furnace (Dan 3)⁹⁴

CATALOGUE NUMBER	PUBLICATION	LL.
SD 27	Curses: 98-99	2-3
VA 2423	Curses: 37-39	4, 11
VA 2487	Curses: 39-41 (partial publication)	2, 5
BM 91760	CAMIB 024A = Curses:	2-3, 5-6
BM 91739	CAMIB 025A	4

Biblical narrative tokens: Noah seals the ark

Finally, AIT 10, which sealed its beneficiaries with the seal that the First Adam used to seal Seth, redoubles its protective efforts:

תוב חתימין ומחתמין הלין ...⁽⁵⁾ בהווא חתמא דחתמה נח לתיבותה מן מיה דטופנא⁽⁴⁾

⁽⁴⁾ Again, sealed and countersealed are these (the beneficiaries) ... ⁽⁵⁾ with that seal with which Noah sealed the ark from the waters of the deluge.

In contrast to Gen 7:16 (where God shuts the ark behind Noah, his family, and the animals) the protective seal invoked in this bowl is assigned to Noah.

TRANSMUNDANE PROTAGONISTS THE FALLEN ANGELS — HISTORIOLOAE AND NARRATIVE TOKENS

Amongst the litany of *similia similibus formulae* that structure the text of the unusual bowl M 163 are several that extend to encompass brief narratives.⁹⁵ One of these narratives weaponises a story first attested in the Book of the Watchers. As witnessed at Qumran, this Aramaic pseudepigraph furnishes us with the earliest attested Jewish aetiology of demons and demonic activity. Part of this influential aetiology—which expands upon Gen 6:4—recounts the fate of two hundred angels who rebelled against God. Many of the narrative de-

⁹⁴ The two VAM bowls refer to the three old men sitting within the furnace; the two BM bowls site them at its mouth. A further unpublished bowl (VA 2490) also contains the three old men formula, as noted in Bhayro et al., *Aramaic Magic Bowls in the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin: Descriptive List and Edition of Selected Texts*.

⁹⁵ For simile formulae across the ancient world, see (the literature cited in) Juraj Franek and Daniela Urbanová, “‘May Their Limbs Melt, Just as This Lead Shall Melt...’: Sympathetic Magic and *Similia Similibus* Formulae in Greek and Latin Curse Tablets (Part 1),” *Philologia Classica* 14.1 (2019): 27–55.

tails of M 163:17-18 recollect aspects of the large body of literature that grew up around this brief biblical reference to the sons of God.⁹⁶

1. M 163 = Corpus: 122-124 = Curses: 110-113

An incantation bowl designed to subdue an enemy of Mihlad and Baran s. Mirdukh

(17) היכדין דאיתכבישו הנון (18) דעל פוקדן דמריהון עברו עזאל ועזאל ועזיאל ואישתלחו מלאכי עליהון מן קדם אלהא וכבשינון על טור[א דחשוכא] ואהדרו אפיהון לאפי דחשוכא והיכדין דאיתכביש רימון תורא קדמאה הכדין ניתכביש (19) הדין אישה בר איפרא הורמיז

(17) Just as they were pressed—those (18) ‘Z’L and ‘Z’L and ‘ZZY’L who transgressed the command of their Lord—and angels were sent against them from the presence of God and pressed them upon the mountain [of darkness] and their faces (those of ‘Z’L and ‘Z’L and ‘ZZY’L) were turned towards the face of darkness. And just as the first RYMWN ox was pressed, just so may (19) this Iša s. Ifra-Hormiz be pressed.

The violent precedent directed at Iša s. Ifra-Hormiz asks that he be pressed in the same way that the three disobedient angels ‘Z’L and ‘Z’L and ‘ZZY’L were pressed by God’s emissaries. 1 Enoch 10:4-5 details a similar divine punishment to M 163. There, the archangel Raphael is commissioned to cast Asael into the darkness, to cover him with darkness, and to cover his face with darkness. Likewise, Iša s. Ifra-Hormiz is set up by the bowl to have his face turned to the face of darkness and to be pressed upon a mountain (of darkness).⁹⁷ The names of the three angels who transgressed the command of the Lord in M 163 are somewhat similar to the names of the three angels mentioned in some variants of 3 Enoch (‘WZ’ and ‘Z’H and ‘Z’L).⁹⁸ The fallen angels ‘Z’ and ‘Z’L are further referred to (together with Metatron) in Gordon D:11. A further witness to the story of the Fallen Angels appears in two published bowls as part of a demonic aetiology. Thus AIT 1:8-9 adjures all types of liliths בש[ום], “by the n[ame]

⁹⁶ E.g. 1 Enoch 10; 3 Enoch 4-5; b. Yoma 67b; Deut Rab. 11; Pesiq. Rab Kah. 34. For discussion of the Fallen Angels in these and other sources, see the extensive literature cited in Chapter Six. Enoch himself is briefly referenced in AIT 4:3.

⁹⁷ For the reconstruction ‘mountain of darkness’ and the several textual parallels that form its basis, see Levene, *Corpus*, 135.

⁹⁸ On these names, as well as the angelology of 3 Enoch 5, see Annette Yoshiko Reed, “From Asael and Šemiḥazah to Uzzah, Azzah, and Azazel: 3 Enoch 5 (§§7–8) and the Jewish Reception-History of 1 Enoch,” *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 8.2 (2001): 105–36.

of your family which is begotten by demons and liliths, the sons of fire (who) go astray and rebel and transgress against the decree of their lord.”⁹⁹

The Myth of the Fallen Angels

CATALOGUE NUMBER	PUBLICATION	LL.
M 163	Corpus: 122-124 = Curses: 110-113	17-19
CBS 8693	AIT 1	8-9
MS 2053/256	JBA 64	1-2
IM 6519	Gordon D = Isbell 49	11

That the demonic aetiology familiar from Enoch was known by the bowl practitioners is further confirmed by a number of other bowls which include as part of their commination against demons the ban that was put upon Mount Hermon. This particular ban recollects “the myth of the confederation of the fallen angels upon Hermon.”¹⁰⁰ Hermon derives from **הרם**, ‘ban’ and the mountain is given in 1 En 6:5 as the location where the fallen angels set foot on earth and swore their rebellion.¹⁰¹

The Ban against Mount Hermon

CATALOGUE NUMBER	PUBLICATION	LL.
CBS 2945	AIT 2	6
CBS 16041	AIT 27	9
F 447 (Jewish Theological Seminary)	Gordon 11	9
MS 2053/188	Shaked 2011: 208	13
M 4	Shaked 2006: 373-374	3.2

The last of these bowls gestures towards a story about Mount Hermon which may go some way to explaining the idea that may have lain behind the ban that is analogised in the bowls above. Used as part of the commination in M 4, the text of the bowl reads:

אי הניה מומתא תיאברו והא שבועתא לא תקבלו תיהוי אליכזה אחרמתא וגזירתא דהוי אחרמון
טורא שב שני הוא ביה מיטרא לא ירוק ירק הוא ביה ופירי ...

⁹⁹ See also JBA 64:1-2. Montgomery translates “children of light.”

¹⁰⁰ Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts*, 126.

¹⁰¹ The leader of the rebels in the Enochic account is the angel Šemḥeza, whose signet-ring is also referenced as part of the demonic sealing in a Syriac bowl written in the Manichaean script: James A. Montgomery, “A Magical Bowl-Text and the Original Script of the Manichaeans,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 32.4 (1912): 434–38.

If you trespass against this adjuration and do not accept this oath, may there be against you the ban and the decree that are on Mount Hermon. Seven years it (the ban) was on it (the mountain). (There was) rain, (but) no green was on it (?) and fruit ...

This extended threat sketches Mount Hermon as an accursed place: because the mountain was the place where the fallen angels swore their oaths, a ban was placed upon it whereby nothing green grew on it (even though rain fell on it). The bowl threatens its demonic targets with the same aridity of fate as that which befell Mount Hermon.

TRANSMUNDANE PROTAGONISTS THE PUNISHMENT OF ḤRWM 'ḤRWM AND OTHER 'PRESSES'

M 163 further expands another of its similes to encompass a further brief narrative:

1. M 163 = Corpus: 122-124 = Curses: 110-113

An incantation bowl designed to subdue an enemy of Mihlad and Baran s. Mirdukh
(23) היכדין דאיתכביש הוא חרום אחרום ואתו עליו על שיתין ושב(ע)ה אלפין ענינן ואתו עליו מלאכי
דר(בה) דחטו דהוא מריא קדמאה ונקטוי בצ(ו)צי(ן) דסעריה ופכרו(י) פכרוי פכרי לא איתפסיק ושדוי
שבע (24) לישמא ותמני לליבביהון דענני עד אמא דנינדי מוקריה על גללי

(23) Just as ḤRWM 'ḤRWM was pressed, and there came against him upon sixty seven thousand clouds, there came against him angels of the great one who committed the sin, (alleging) that he is the *primaeval* lord. And they grabbed him by the locks of his hair and they bound him, they bound him (with) bonds (that) do not break. And they hurled him seven (times) (24) to the heavens and eight (times) to the midst of the clouds until his brain was bespattered upon the rocks.

The unknown figure of ḤRWM 'ḤRWM is reminiscent of the person of Yima known from various Zoroastrian and Iranian Manichaean traditions preserved in Sanskrit, Avestan, Pahlavi, New Persian, Sogdian, and Arabic sources.¹⁰² M 163 further deploys a number of

¹⁰² Shaked, "Jesus in the Magic Bowls," 312; Yishai Kiel, "Negotiating 'White Rooster' Magic and Binitarian Christology: Mapping the Contours of Jewish Babylonian Culture in Late Antiquity," *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 9.2 (2018): 274–75.

narrative tokens that also cash-in on a series of violent fates suffered by mythological figures.¹⁰³

(18) והיכדין דאיתכביש רימון תורא קדמאה הכדין ניתכביש (19) הדין אישה בר איפרא
הורמיז

(18) And just as the first RYMWN ox was pressed, just so may (19) this Iša s. Ifra-Hormiz be pressed.

(20) [והיכ]דין דאיתכביש אמור גברא רבה דלסוף ...

(20) [And ju]st as 'MWR the great man of the end was pressed, etc.

Its closing formula also includes an extended appellative that encompasses part of the Christian crucifixion story:

(29) בשמיה דאהיה אשר אהיה יהוה צבאות ובשמיה דאישו דכבש רומא ועומקא בזקיפיה
ובשום אבוי רמא ובשום רוחי קדישתא לעלם (30) עלמין

(29) By the name of I-Am-that-I-Am YHWH Sabaoth and by the name of Jesus who conquered the height and the depth by his cross and by the name of his exalted father and by the name of the holy spirits forever (30) and to eternity.¹⁰⁴

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter has surveyed the use of *historiolae* and narrative tokens in the published JBA incantation bowls. Incorporated into the bowl texts in efficient and abbreviated fashion, these narratives and narrative tokens were recounted and deployed on the basis of their paradigmatic potency. Whether YHWH, Moses, Joshua bar Peraḥia, Semamit, or Qorah, the figures whose exploits are referred to and recounted in the bowls surveyed above were plainly well known. By referring to these figures or narrating certain events associated with them, the

¹⁰³ For discussion of the (sometimes) cryptic mythological references in this bowl, see Levene, *Corpus*, 127–38; Shaked, “Jesus in the Magic Bowls”; cf. Müller-Kessler, “Jesus, Darius, Marduk.” Shaked suggests the bowl may in part reflect a Zoroastrian cosmological backdrop. Yishai Kiel, “First Man, First Bovine: Talmudic Mythology in Context,” in *The Aggada of the Bavli and Its Cultural World*, ed. Geoffrey Herman and Jeffrey L. Rubenstein (Providence: Brown University Press, 2018), 313–34 also discusses (this bowl and) the oppression of the First Man and Primordial Ox in light of Iranian, Indic, and Mithraic sources.

¹⁰⁴ On the (unexpected) appearance of Jesus in this bowl, see Shaked, “Jesus in the Magic Bowls,” 314–16 and Kiel, “Negotiating ‘White Rooster’ Magic,” 263–66.

bowl practitioners were able to confront the crises and threats that faced their clients with a paradigm wherein such tensions and crises were already resolved. Thus for example the malevolent Sideros/Sergius/Šmotit could be shown to have *already* sworn not to harm the children of the beneficiaries for whom these *historiolae* were written.

Previous approaches to such narratives and narrative tokens have typically been very lax in distinguishing narrative from story from reference. As such, there has been no possibility of appreciating what telling vs. referring accomplished in the bowl spells, or what accumulations of narratives and narrative tokens across the corpus of bowls can tell us about how these narratives and references functioned as part of—and drew part of their power from—a broader story world. By drawing their actors from a pool of characters whose names were already associated with well-known histories, the bowl practitioners could both gesture toward and build upon ideas or stories that they did not necessarily need to make explicit. They could capitalise upon a broader story world predicated on the ubiquity of most of these figures and the pervasiveness of the narratives and narrative elements associated with them in the cultural context of the bowls. The concept of the mythic story world captures the linkages between—and the power of association inherent in—these long-standing and far-reaching narratives. Thus the anti-demonic powers of Ḥanina ben Dosa underwrite the anti-demonic powers of Joshua bar Peraḥia while the story of Joshua bar Peraḥia affirms the possibility of written traffic between mundane and transmundane realities. Each myth—supported by the multiple and diverse narrative associations evoked by individual names and events—contributed to a widely furnished and credible story world where such events were more generally possible. It is not just that the event or figure narrated or invoked is relevant to the resolution of the present crisis, but that they reflect a broader set of possibilities, and this chapter has used the concept of the narrative ‘token’ to refer to the capacity of certain mythic figures and events to activate these wider possibilities or evoke a wider set of events. The deployment in the bowl texts of these tokens or selected details from longer (biblical) narratives is reflected in the idea of miniaturisation. The literary critic Susan Stewart has defined miniaturisation as “a selection of detail that magnifies detail in the same movement by which it reduces detail.”¹⁰⁵ Stewart’s most basic contention is that a reduction in the dimensions of an

¹⁰⁵ Susan Stewart, *Nonsense: Aspects of Intertextuality in Folklore and Literature* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 101.

object does not necessarily produce a corresponding reduction in significance.¹⁰⁶ In fact—as Stewart shows—the miniature’s manipulation of normal dimensions can extend the limits of its significance beyond the ‘median’ provided by the everyday. This increase in the dimension of significance means that the miniature “always tends toward exaggeration.”¹⁰⁷

On this analogy, a selection of detail from a longer narrative or a larger nexus of stories works to magnify this detail at the same time as it reduces detail. The ring, the seal, the ban, the document, or the chariot: this reduction in the dimensions of the longer narrative through the selection of a specific detail or token can lead to an increase in the dimensions of this detail’s significance. This act of ‘exaggeration’ represents a strategy for achieving focus. Those details that are set off to be depicted—by the very act of being singled out—begin to threaten an almost unlimited amount of significance. Significance is multiplied in select details, and the variety of ‘diluted’ detail that comprises the longer narrative or the broader story world is concentrated to boiling point. The image of the chariot in VA 3853 and VA 3854 and at least five other bowls—for example—highlights the extent to which magical discourse determines what needs to be said and what can be left unsaid. The selection of this particular detail grants the practitioner the capacity to capture and ‘blow up’ the dimensions of this discourse,¹⁰⁸ whilst this briefest of phrases works to concentrate the divine power diffused in various narrative events in the Exodus story.¹⁰⁹ The detail thus becomes a stage or a screen onto or through which a deliberately framed series of actions can be projected, while the representative quality of the selected detail—and the act of selection itself—make that contextualisation an allusive act. This act of reference or allusion functions as a kind of narrative token that—cashed-in—can compensate for the renunciation of a longer narrative by the acquisition of extreme exaggeration or focus. The idea of the miniature is a useful corrective to the strong focus in scholarship on the analogical mechanism of the *historiola*. Miniaturisation opens our minds to the fact that *historiolae* are not just a way of drawing an analogy

¹⁰⁶ This argument is not just advanced in *Nonsense*, but also in more sustained fashion in Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993).

¹⁰⁷ Stewart, *Nonsense*, 101; cf. Stewart, *On Longing*, 43.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1981), 45 where Barthes describes the “power of expansion” inherent in a photograph’s *punctum* (a small but arresting detail that ‘pricks’ the observer) — this *punctum* (or textual detail) is paradoxical in that, “while remaining a ‘detail,’ it fills the whole picture.”

¹⁰⁹ On the use of quotations from Exodus to achieve a similar effect through metonymy, see Chapter Four.

between the present and the past, but a way of ordering and transforming the past, through exaggeration, in order to impact the present. Exaggeration as a strategy for achieving focus is foregrounded as a technique in the historiola. It sets detail apart and opens it up to unlimited significance. This can then be marshalled to cure or curse, to achieve the magical goal at hand. But it also reflects the way in which each historiola sets about establishing a context for itself independent of the story it is adapting.

In addition to elaborating upon the interrelated concepts of story worlds and narrative tokens in relation to the use of myth in the bowls, this chapter has also explored certain underexamined aspects of the brief narratives employed in the bowls, for instance, how certain historiolae use the resources of dialogue for different ends. While the scene of dialogue in the Ḥanina ben Dosa historiola, for example, is itself an event in the story world, that dialogue also functions as a form of mediated telling. Character speech can enhance or interfere with narrative transportation. It also represents an implicit (and sometimes explicit) form of argumentation (as in the Semamit historiolae) and performs an important role in narrative's rhetorical project.¹¹⁰ For the most part, however, the stories surveyed in this chapter are told in a simple way. They progress by an iconic ordering of events and in accordance with the principles of natural narrative.¹¹¹ The majority of historiolae surveyed in this chapter develop through patterns of instability-complication-resolution. One or more characters are introduced in an unstable situation; a series of events linked by cause and effect (may) then follow as a focussed chain, thereby advancing the plot by complicating the initial instability; the instability is then resolved as a result of the logical and chronological concatenation of these events and the total delineation of their cause and effect chains. The situation of these narrative dynamics in the tension between the initial instability and its resolution highlights the incipient teleology of narrative.

The movement towards resolution expressed in the historiola—and which forms the basis for the historiola's thematisation of resolution—bespeaks the obviousness of the deci-

¹¹⁰ Cf. how Socrates describes the function of speech: to "lead souls by persuasion." Plato, *Phaedr.* 271c-d.

¹¹¹ The structure of 'natural narratives' was first described by William Labov and Joshua Waletzky, "Narrative Analysis," in *Essays on the Verbal and Visual Arts*, ed. J. Helm (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1967), 20–21, who state that they "are defined by the fact that they recapitulate experience in the same order as the original events." In linguistic analyses of discourse, 'natural narrative' has come to define 'naturally occurring' forms of storytelling; for a full discussion of the basic types of natural narrative and their formal and experiential variations, see the second chapter of Monika Fludernik, *Towards a "Natural" Narratology* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005).

sion to incorporate narrative into magical practice. The deployment of *historiolae* in the bowls approaches narrative teleology from a higher-level semantic perspective which comprehends (the inevitability of) the narrative's overall structure and its movement to resolution. Where an end point or resolution is already encoded into a sequence of events, and this teleology or inevitable movement towards resolution is both entailed in—and can be traced back to—a beginning point (through the chain logic of cause and effect), the application of narrative in the magic of the bowls itself begins to appear inevitable.

CHAPTER FOUR

Making God's Word Work

Narrative Quotations from the Hebrew Bible in the JBA Bowls

INTRODUCTION

This chapter analyses the use within the JBA incantation bowls of one particular kind of scriptural citation: the quotation of short passages from narrative portions of the Hebrew Bible.¹ The strategic deployment of quotations from biblical narratives is attested in a number of bowls, and this chapter seeks to assess in what way, with what intent, and to what effect these biblical quotations were integrated into the bowl texts. It is also the aim of this chapter to explore several questions that have hardly been touched upon in previous scholarship on the dynamics of scriptural use in the bowls, namely, do quotations from different (kinds of) texts function in different ways? Do these quotations make reference to (narrative) material beyond the actual 'words in the bowl?' And if so, how large is the implied conceptual referent of a given quotation?

The use of scriptural quotations and allusions in the bowls remind us that texts cannot be studied in isolation, but that they form part of a web of texts: "an intersection of textual

¹ This conception of the 'Bible' is—of course—anachronistic, insofar as it presupposes the idea that it is possible to delimit the boundaries of a given bowl practitioner's 'Bible' (if indeed such a concept is implied by the use of a given quotation or allusion). Further to this, our familiarity with a fixed authoritative canon in the form of a single book leaves us liable to conceive of earlier engagements with scripture in too simplistic terms and in categories that are too rigid. And while the evidence of the Qumran manuscripts and the Talmudic literature show that a canon of scripture was long established by the fifth century CE, the deployment of scripture in the bowls shows the freedom of bowls practitioners to break scripture into units, and even suggests that they encountered and/or conceived of scripture not as a whole but as individual units.

surfaces.”² In what follows, I eschew broad, post-structuralist conceptions of intertextuality.³ I concentrate instead on a descriptive category of textual analysis that embraces the semantically productive or ‘dialogic’ connections between a ‘pre-text’ (the cited text) and a ‘manifest text’ (the citing text). This reflects a notion of intertextuality that speaks to the *simultaneous activation* of two texts, where the relationship between the pre- and the manifest text runs both ways and the simultaneous presence of both the pre- and the manifest text indicates a third reality. Gian Biagio Conte indicates the nature of this third reality on an analogy with the rhetorical trope of metaphor: “the poetry lies in the simultaneous presence of two different realities that try to indicate a single reality.”⁴ Similarly, Ellen van Wolde has argued that intertextuality is “a part of the reader’s general semiotic actualization process” whereby “the reader achieves intertextual semiosis through logical and analogical reasoning in interaction with the text.” In her view, intertextuality does not “concern the similarity between text and referent but the ability of the reader to conceive of the worlds of the text as possible or to reconstruct them, or, in other words, to give them contents by relating them to his own living- and reading-experiences.”⁵ Placing both pre- and manifest texts within the synchronous interpretation of the reader enables us to explore the production of emergent meanings.

² Julia Kristeva, “Word, Dialogue, and Novel,” in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 65.

³ It is possible, for example, to speak not just of intertextuality, but of hypertextuality, metatextuality, paratextuality, or transtextuality. See Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (London: Routledge, 2000), 210–221 for a useful glossary (as well as an overview of the theoretical concept of intertextuality).

⁴ Gian Biagio Conte, *The Rhetoric of Imitation: Genre and Poetic Memory in Virgil and Other Latin Poets* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 38, cf. Ziva Ben-Porat, “The Poetics of Literary Allusion,” *PTL: A Journal for Descriptive Poetics and Theory of Literature* 1 (1976): 108.

⁵ Ellen van Wolde, “Trendy Intertextuality?” in *Intertextuality in Biblical Writings: Essays in Honour of Bas van Iersel*, ed. Sipke Draisma (Kampen: Kok, 1989), 48. Van Wolde and Conte’s suggestive views of intertextuality as a process that produces the simultaneous coexistence of both a denotative and a connotative semiotic (the nature of whose intertextual patterning cannot be predetermined) are remarkably close to contemporary views of intertextuality within the field of cognitive poetics. Hugo Lundhaug, *Images of Rebirth: Cognitive Poetics and Transformational Soteriology in the Gospel of Philip and the Exegesis on the Soul* (Leiden: Brill, 2010) has shown how easily their views lend themselves to restatement within the framework of cognitive poetics. The use of Blending Theory in cognitive poetics places both pre- and manifest texts within the synchronous interpretation of the reader.

In the context of the bowls, such new meanings or third realities reflect the circumstances of the bowls and the change that the bowls aim to effect in the world.⁶ In van Wolde's phrase, these new meanings effect to "turn the possible worlds of the text into realities."⁷ In this chapter, I explore the mechanism by which these new meanings are achieved in the bowls through quotation. I will show that quotations were selected not merely because they were semantically/contextually relevant, but that they were constitutive components of the magic in question. The use of brief narrative quotations could evoke and invoke the power of (selected events from longer) biblical narratives. In this sense, they functioned like *historiola*e, working to invoke a (specific) precedent or paradigm that was performed or established *in illo tempore* and narrated in scripture. I begin with a brief survey of the uses of the Bible in the bowls; I then demonstrate the need for a more nuanced theoretical approach to these uses with a brief case study and a survey of prior scholarship on the Bible in the bowls. Following this, I outline a definition of quotation as well as a theory for dealing with quotation in the bowls.

The theoretical framework advanced in this chapter has been anticipated by the meronymic approach advanced by Joseph Sanzo in his study of brief scriptural quotations on apotropaic objects, namely, the gospel incipits in Egyptian amulets.⁸ Extending his theoretical approach to meronymy (or part-whole relations) to the incantation bowls, I focus on a particular criterion that has been used for classifying meronymic relations: separability. The brief narrative quotations deployed in the bowls are excerpted from larger pericopae and—in order to properly understand their use—it is necessary to examine the relations between the quotations and the (possible) whole from which they were extracted. Were these quotations understood as completely independent units wholly separable from the larger narrative pericopae of which they formed a part? That is, were they quoted solely on the basis of the thematic correspondence between the quoted words—and the quoted words alone—and the aims of the bowl? Or were the quotations intended to refer to and to weaponise other parts of the larger pericopae from which they were extracted? The question here is to what extent a

⁶ In some cases, it might even be possible to suggest a dynamic interaction between scriptural citation and the magical text by which the practice of magic becomes a component of the biblical tradition itself. For example, certain scriptural passages or details—such as the chariot discussed in the previous chapter—were used as a base for articulating an extended or altered vision of (the earlier vision of) reality (narrated in scripture).

⁷ van Wolde, "Trendy Intertextuality," 48.

⁸ Joseph E. Sanzo, *Scriptural Incipits on Amulets from Late Antique Egypt: Text, Typology, and Theory* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014).

unit of narrative prose can be rendered separate from or discontinuous with its contiguous scriptural whole. Separability is thus of the utmost importance in deciding what the bowl practitioners had in mind—and did not have in mind—when they used certain quotations.

SECTION I

THEORY AND METHOD IN THE STUDY OF NARRATIVE QUOTATIONS FROM THE HEBREW BIBLE IN THE JBA BOWLS

THE BIBLE IN THE BOWLS

Like a number of objects from late antiquity which quote portions of scripture in various aggressive, apotropaic, and exorcistic contexts, the JBA bowls contain a diversity of scriptural citations.⁹ The bowl texts quote from and allude to many books of the Hebrew Bible.¹⁰ They contain biblical phraseology and biblical epithets (the names of God and angels used in the bowls are frequently borrowed directly or otherwise derived from the Bible) as well as litur-

⁹ The citation of (partially shared) scriptures is common to ritual corpora across the divides of geography, language, and religious communities. These include amulets from Egypt and other parts of the ancient Mediterranean, as well as amulets and formularies from the wider Levant. As in the bowls, these artefacts cite (short) excerpts from scripture and apply them to the context at hand. In addition to the use of the Bible (both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament) throughout the Mediterranean and the Middle East, scholars have also highlighted similarities between the ritual use of biblical passages and the ritual use of other sacred texts (Homeric poetry in particular) in antiquity. See, for example, the use of Homeric verses in PGM IV.467-74, 820-34 and VII.1-148. On the use of sacred texts in magical rituals throughout antiquity, see E.A. Judge, "The Magical Use of Scripture in the Papyri," in *Perspectives on Language and Text: Essays and Poems in Honor of Francis I. Andersen's Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Edgar Conrad and Edward Newing (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1987), 339–49. For a comparative study, see Johannes Leipoldt and Siegfried Morenz, *Heilige Schriften: Betrachtungen zur Religionsgeschichte der antiken Mittelmeerwelt* (Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1953), 178–89.

¹⁰ Within the published bowls, we find quotations from and (possible) allusions to passages from Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, 1-2 Samuel, 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Amos, Jonah, Micah, Zechariah, Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Songs, Esther, Daniel, and Chronicles, as well as numerous references to the monster Leviathan (which is mentioned in Job as well as several of the aforementioned biblical books). For several brief attempts to identify the biblical reference points of these mentions of Leviathan, see Lester L. Grabbe, *Comparative Philology and the Text of Job: A Study in Methodology* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977), 36; G.R. Driver, "Problems in the Hebrew Text of Job," in *Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East: Presented to Harold Henry Rowley by the Editorial Board of Vetus Testamentum in Celebration of His 65th Birthday, 24 March 1955*, ed. Martin Noth and David Winton Thomas (Leiden: Brill, 1960), 72.

gical phrases that derive from the Bible. They also contain various allusions to biblical characters and events, as well as places named in the Bible. The forms of quotation in the published bowls range from incomplete phrases to the entirety of individual biblical verses to the occasional quotation of extended biblical passages. Quotations are occasionally used as incipits, more often as epithets and/or in adjurations, and most often on analogy with the concerns of the bowl. In some cases, these analogies are made explicit with a citation formula, such as (the variations on) the formula used several times in AMB B9: ויתקים עליה קראה דכתיב, “May the following verse apply to him.” In other cases, the analogy is implicit in the thematic associations between the quotation and the goals of the bowl text. In other bowls, it appears that the quotations were selected without concern for their original (narrative) context; some of these quotations were de/re-contextualised on an analogy with the concern at hand. Quotations are occasionally accompanied by interlinear Aramaic Targums or they appear in an Aramaic version without reference to the original Hebrew. Some bowls also exhibit forms of ‘pseudo-quotation’ (such as paraphrases and creative confluences of biblical passages). The spelling of the quotations is mostly pre-Masoretic; it is frequently *plene*, ס often appears in place of ש, and the conjunction ו is often omitted.

The deployment of biblical citations within the bowls has hardly gone unnoticed in scholarly analyses of the bowls, but bowl scholarship at present lacks a robust terminology and well defined descriptive typology for the forms and functions of scriptural citation in the bowls.¹¹ Discussions of this phenomenon have largely been confined to passing observations within or alongside analyses of other aspects of bowl texts.¹² The use of scriptural citations in

¹¹ This lack of a tightly defined descriptive typology is noticeable, for example, in Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 20–22, which uses the designation ‘echo’ rather than ‘allusion’ to refer to direct references to Sodom and Gomorrah and Mount Horeb in two bowls, before conflating the terms ‘echo’ and ‘implicit reference’ under the heading of ‘Quotations and Allusions.’

¹² There are several exceptions to this rule. Polzer, “Bible in the Aramaic Magic Bowls” represents the first extensive survey of biblical citations in the bowls, but her starting corpus consisted of only 105 bowl texts. She found biblical quotations in 22 of these bowls as well as references to biblical characters, places, or events in 23. Her study has been rendered out-of-date by the relative explosion in bowl publications since the 1980s, and also suffers from several definitional and typological problems. More recently, Müller-Kessler, “Biblical Quotations,” has provided a detailed survey of biblical quotations in 59 published bowls, though her study is also marked by definitional deficiencies. In a special volume of *Aramaic Studies*, Lanfer, “Why Biblical Scholars” has briefly assessed the value of the bowl texts to the study of the Hebrew Bible; he also provides an even briefer categorisation of biblical citations in the bowls. For further remarks, see Levene, *Corpus*, 10–14; Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 18–20. On the use of the Hebrew Bible in Jewish magic more general-

the bowls has thus not been the subject of any sustained or extensive (recent) study, while the lack of a substantial and exclusive collection of scriptural citations in the bowls has obscured their diversity of forms. The narrative focus of the present work means that this chapter is not the place for such an exhaustive study; the constraints of this chapter drastically delimit the number and type of biblical citations under consideration. Nevertheless, the study of quotations from narrative passages within the Hebrew Bible still provides an excellent opportunity to study the dynamics of scriptural use within the production of the bowl texts.

QUOTATION (AND ALLUSION)

The practice of incorporating earlier spoken or written materials into the body of a later composition is frequent in literature of all times and genres, but there is considerable disagreement in comparative literary theory regarding the nature of quotation and allusion, as well as little scholarly consensus on the terminology and methodology to be used in treating them. Where the actual language of an earlier text is used by a later author, the technique is conventionally termed quotation, and many scholars differentiate between quotation and allusion on this basis: that quotation is the direct use of a prior text and allusion an indirect use of a prior text. But these distinctions are far from objective and it is necessary to note from the outset the impossibility of completely removing a certain subjective element from the study of these terms.¹³ In his discussion of the use of the Hebrew Bible in the New Testament,

ly, see Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 308–14. For surveys of the biblical verses used in ancient and medieval Jewish magic, see Lawrence H. Schiffman and Michael D. Swartz, *Hebrew and Aramaic Incantation Texts from the Cairo Genizah: Selected Texts from Taylor-Schechter Box K1* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 37–42; Naveh and Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae*, 22–31. Dorothea M. Salzer, *Die Magie der Anspielung: Form und Funktion der biblischen Anspielungen in den magischen Texten der Kairoer Geniza* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010) provides an extensive survey and treatment of the biblical quotations and allusions used in the Hebrew and Aramaic magical texts from the Cairo Genizah.

¹³ Müller-Kessler, “Biblical Quotations,” 232, for example, categorises מרה ארעה חיתא in ZHS 2a:3 as a quotation from an Aramaic version of Gen 1:24, cf. נֶאֱמַר יְיָ מִפֶּק אֶרְעָא נִפְשָׁא חִיתָא לְזִנְה בְּעִיר וְרִחַשׁ וְחֹת אֶרְעָא לְזִנְה וְתִנְה כֵּן (Tg. Onq. Gen 1:24). Cf. Müller-Kessler, *Zauberschalentexte*, 14–15 where she is more circumspect. The bowl certainly contains a brief two-word verbal parallel to Tg. Onq. Gen 1:24, but the lexical linkages here are hardly multiple or sustained and the use of מרה ארעה חיתא in this bowl seems better suited to the category of allusion than quotation. Of course, the concept of allusion is difficult to define and—more so than quotation—complicated by questions of authorial intent and the fact that no two readers are likely to perceive such brief parallels in the same way. Similarities between texts do not necessarily point to a direct relationship between them, and they may equally be put down to the use of a common vocabulary or a shared fund of tradition. On the other hand, the large register of biblical quotations and explicit allusions in the bowls mean there is a strong

Stanley Porter notes the methodological and terminological difficulties that arise in the study of quotation and allusion and proposes that studies of these phenomena simply formulate as clearly as possible their goals and then define the categories under discussion.¹⁴ My aim in what follows is to briefly set out the parameters of the categories with which this chapter will operate.

The primary category under discussion here is quotation. By all accounts, this category includes at least some ways of reporting or repeating the speech or discourse of someone else. But what constitutes the repetition of discourse in a world of non-standardised texts, where the accurate reproduction of the actual words of an earlier text—let alone the acknowledgment of this reproduction in a note—does not appear to have been a priority?¹⁵ The realities of quotation in both the bowls and the wider ancient world are complex,¹⁶ and where some seek to introduce simplicity by limiting their discussion to explicit quotations—quotations that are clearly marked in some way, usually by an introductory formula—the use

presumptive likelihood that מרה ארעה חיתה was not just a phrase picked up from the practitioner's (spoken) environment. But neither does the use of biblical vocabulary necessarily represent anything more specific than a general allusiveness to scripture, i.e. it does not necessarily represent an allusion to a specific scriptural passage (e.g. Tg. Onq. Gen 1:24). Numerous scholars using different (theoretical) frameworks have sought to establish formal principles for the description and classification of allusions, as well as establish how allusion comes into being and where it exists (in the text, in the author's mind, or in the mind of the reader). By most accounts, allusion is a way of signifying where some kind of overt or covert marker is used to both denote a pre-text and recover one or more properties of this pre-text in order to modify the manifest text. The perception of generic affinity is thus the driving force of allusion; it is what directs the reader to a particular interpretation of the manifest text. These affinities may be simple or complex, and triggered by more or less overt markers. Thus the phrase מרה ארעה חיתה may refer through the use of scriptural language to the general (biblical) idea of an all-powerful creator god. Its verbal similarity to Targ. Onq. Gen 1:24, however, directs attention to the more individuated instantiation of the creator god in the opening chapter of Genesis.

¹⁴ Stanley E. Porter, "The Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament: A Brief Comment on Method and Terminology," in *Early Christian Interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel: Investigations and Proposals*, ed. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997), 79–96 (94).

¹⁵ Most modern literature clearly marks quotations with punctuation (while the source is often acknowledged in a note). Some uses of 'quotation' even correlate the term with quotation marks, thus defining quotations by their form: where there are quotation marks, there is quotation; where there are no quotation marks, there is no quotation.

¹⁶ Some of these more complex realities do not confront this study, e.g. it can be assumed that the scriptural texts predate the bowl texts, and we need not be concerned with uncertainties over the relative dating of texts or criteria for establishing the dependency of one text on another. Likewise, the availability of the quoted texts and the familiarity of the late antique Jewish community with these texts can be assumed.

of such introductory formulae in the bowls is rare.¹⁷ Nevertheless, a marked formal correspondence (even in spite of orthographic variations) can be easily observed in 117 published bowls between portions of the bowl texts and the actual words of a variety of biblical texts.¹⁸ These are obviously (intended to be) quotations. Of course, in almost all the bowls, the presence or absence of an explicit quotation formula is largely an academic question, as the use of scripture is marked not just by a switch from Aramaic into Biblical Hebrew, but also very often by changes of voice and viewpoint.¹⁹ They clearly refer to the words of a speaker who is not the implied author of the composition, though it is not always possible to discern whether the practitioner drew the quotation directly from scripture or a liturgical context.²⁰

For the purposes of this study, I use the term quotation to refer not to explicit verbatim reproductions of scripture in the bowls but—allowing for orthographic variance—to refer to a marked formal correspondence with the actual words found in an antecedent scriptural text. These may be marked as the words of someone other than the implied author of the in-

¹⁷ Examples include Gordon C:9 (וכתוב); AIT 3:12 (שנאמר); Tarshish bowl = Shaked 2015:109-110, l. 16 (דיכתיב); the unusual formula in AMB 9:5, 6-7, 10 (ויתקים עליה קראה דכתיב); and the lengthy threat/citation formula in JBA 46:10-11 (אם לא מקבלת למומתא אילין יתון עלך לוטתא דכתיב באוריתא ויבאלה הדברים יתקימן בכון) “If you do not accept these oaths, may the curses that are written in the Torah and in Deuteronomy came upon you (and) may they be fulfilled in you”).

¹⁸ The orthographic variations amongst the bowl texts as well as between MT and the bowls do not reflect different recensions or textual variants, but the reproduction of biblical texts from memory rather than written copies. Only rarely is the Hebrew spelling exceedingly free, and the divergences in spelling between MT and the bowls are generally small and characterised by the use of mater vowels and the confusion of rhyming consonants (dentals in particular). See Müller-Kessler, “Biblical Quotations”; Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 18–19.

¹⁹ Only in a few cases are Aramaic verses embedded in bowl texts without their Hebrew counterpart, e.g. the half verses of Tg. Onq. Exod 3:5 in M 123:5-6, M 138:8, and MS 2053/216:6 (Corpus: 89-90): שרי סנך מעל: ריגלך, cf. the bowls which quote various biblical verses in the form of an interlinear Aramaic Targum: A 33965 = Kaufman 1973, ZHS 2, and ZHS 2a. In one very rare instance, a quotation of Ps 115:1 begins in Hebrew but continues in an Aramaic Targum which is not identical with any Targum known to us. In this case, we have an instance of quotation that problematises the notion of quotation as a formal correspondence between the words of a manifest text with the words of an antecedent text; the difficulty here is our inability to identify the specific text quoted, though this difficulty is smoothed over by the initial Hebrew of the quotation.

²⁰ See Naveh and Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae*, 22; Levene, *Corpus*, 11–14; Polzer, “Bible in the Aramaic Magic Bowls,” 102–3; Lanfer, “Why Biblical Scholars,” 15–17. See also the discussion of the liturgy of the bedtime prayers and the petition for protection from ‘angels all around’ in Levene, Marx, and Bhayro, “Gabriel Is on Their Right.” A clear-cut instance of biblical quotations derived from the liturgy is to be found in M 108 = Corpus: 71.

cantation by an explicit introduction or citation formula, a shift into Biblical Hebrew, a change of voice, and/or a change of viewpoint. The focus on prose narrative in this study and my minimum definition of narrative as the representation of at least two events further delimit the number and type of biblical materials under consideration in this chapter.²¹

PRECEDENTS AND PART-WHOLE RELATIONS EXOD 14:31 AND PS 91:1

Though the narrative focus and attendant strictures of this book result in this chapter in a non-representative sample of quotation practices in the bowls, the relative arbitrariness of this focus and its constraints nevertheless have the potential to highlight—and to cut through—common perceptions about the use of scripture in magical practice. First of all, the narrative focus of this study raises a very broad question: do quotations from different texts and different genres of text function in different ways? More specifically, the selection and delimitation of quotations in this chapter reflect a significant fact about the use of narrative quotations in the bowls; these narrative quotations themselves reflect *select* scenes from longer biblical narratives.

Broadly speaking, these selections appear to work on the assumption that the significance of the events depicted in the quotation was not confined solely to the past, but could be brought to bear upon the present. Take, for example, the quotation of Exod 14:31 in JNF 124, a bowl prepared for (the protection from demons of the children of) Farrokhzād s. Kumay and Azarmidukht d. Zādoiy. The quotation itself is preceded by a variant of the Semamit historiola; an analogical statement of purpose; an invocation of angels and God; and quotations from Deut 6:4 and Ps 91:1.²²

וירא ישראל את היד הגדולה אשר עשה יהוה במצרים ויראו העם את יהוה ויאמינו ביהוה ובמשה עבדו

And Israel saw the great power (lit. the great hand) that YHWH used against Egypt, and the people feared YHWH, and they trusted in YHWH and in Moses his servant.

²¹ This chapter does not consider how prose, verse, and apothegmatic genres deal differently with narrative; it also excludes (brief) quotations from prose narratives where the quotation itself does not include the representation of a sequence of (at least two) events; neither does it include quotations of dialogue from prose narratives, e.g. the quotation in M 142:8 = Corpus: 93-94 of part of Moses' reply to the Gadites and Reubenites in Num 32:22 or the quotation in the same bowl of part of Joshua and Caleb's exhortation to the Israelites in Num 14:9.

²² Ps 91:1 is repeated backwards. Exodus 14:31 is followed by a brief concluding formula, and the text of the bowl is further supplemented by three drawings of demons bound at the hands, legs, and neck.

Exod 14:31 describes the aftermath of the crossing of the Sea of Reeds. It is thus contiguous with the larger narrative of Exod 14:1-31, which describes Israel's deliverance through the sea as well as the destruction of the Egyptian army. The deployment of Exod 14:31 in this bowl may reflect an understanding of the verse as an independent scriptural unit that makes reference to a kind of generalised great power wielded by God. Alternatively, Exod 14:31 may have been intended to invoke a more specific conceptual referent. The narrative from which the verse was extracted (and not just the words of the verse itself) may have been understood to bear upon the context of the bowl. In short, does this quotation make reference to material beyond the 'words in the bowl'? If so, how so? And how large is this implied conceptual referent? Should the quotation be understood to make reference only to the events of the contiguous narrative of Exod 14:1-31, or might it have been intended to invoke a larger textual unit or narrative 'whole' such as Exod 1:8-15:21, wherein the great powers yielded by YHWH (on behalf of Israel against Egypt) include not just the splitting and crossing of the sea but the ten plagues and other miraculous acts. And is the emphasis in the bowl what God did *to* the Egyptians, or what he did *for* the Israelites? That is, was the quotation intended primarily as a threat towards those who would harm the bowl owners, or was its use intended to establish a protective paradigm built upon trust in YHWH?

An answer to these questions may be found in part in the quotations chosen to accompany Exod 14:31, and in Ps 91:1 in particular.²³ Psalm 91:1 appears in six published incantation bowls.²⁴ The verse is a promise of divine safe-keeping: "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High shall lodge in the shadow of the Almighty." In four of its appearances in the bowls, Ps 91:1 is woven together with Deut 6:4, thereby combining a declaration of faith, "Hear O Israel: YHWH our God, YHWH is one," with a verse promising divine protec-

²³ Exod 14:31, Deut 6:4, and Ps 91:1 are far removed from each other in the context of the Bible, but it is no great stretch to leverage their proximity in the context of the bowl as a relevant factor in their interpretation. In several forms of early Jewish exegesis—including rabbinic midrashim and the targumim—scriptural texts are used to explain one another, even where these texts do not appear to be related in their original context. See, e.g. Alexander Samely, *The Interpretation of Speech in the Pentateuch Targums: A Study of Method and Presentation in Targumic Exegesis* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 32–42; Alexander Samely, *Rabbinic Interpretation of Scripture in the Mishnah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 41–48. As I will show, bowl practice appears to indicate that the bowl practitioners shared a similar hermeneutical assumption: that verses of scripture placed adjacent to one another could be connected and read together on the basis of their proximity.

²⁴ JNF 124 = Ford 2016; VA 2423 = Curses: 37-39; Aaron B = Geller 1986: 107; ZRL 48 = Gordon 1978: 233; AMB 11; and Schwab O.

tion.²⁵ Like Exod 14:31 and Ps 91:1, the use of Deut 6:4 in these bowls reflects the freedom of the bowl practitioners to break (larger) sections of scripture into smaller units.²⁶ It is also possible that the use of Ps 91:1 was intended as an incipit, i.e. that the first line of the psalm was understood to function *pars pro toto* for the entirety of Ps 91, a psalm whose explicit theme is the extension of God's protection to all those who trust in him.²⁷ Of course, Ps 91:1 may have been understood to possess apotropaic relevancy as an independent scriptural unit, and it is necessary to distinguish between the use of a quotation which happens to correspond with the beginning of a larger textual unit and the intentional use of the same quotation *as the beginning* of that unit. In the case of Ps 91:1, however, it seems likely that the verse was intended to function as an incipit for several reasons. Psalm 91 as a whole is steeped in metaphors for God's protective care.²⁸ The psalm—and vv. 5-6 in particular—also reflects a

²⁵ Aaron B; ZRL 48; AMB 11; Schwab O. In these cases, the first word of Deut 6:4 is followed by the first word of Ps 91:1, and so on. In ZRL 48, only the first two words of both verses are quoted.

²⁶ Deut 6:4 appears in nine published bowls, including the four bowls where it is combined with Ps 91:1. The other five bowls in which it is found are T 27987 = Mishgav 2018: 60; AIT 6; JNF 124; the De Menil Collection bowl = Isbell 1976: 16-20; and a bowl in an anonymous private collection = Müller-Kessler 2013: 82.

²⁷ Similarly, while Deut 6:4 may have been quoted as an independent scriptural unit, it is equally possible that its quotation in some bowls was intended to refer on a *pars pro toto* basis to the centrepiece of the Jewish liturgy: the Shema (comprising Deut 6:4-9, 11:13-21, and Num 15:37-41). A further possible referent for Deut 6:4 in the bowls is the Bedtime Shema, where only Deut 6:4-9 is recited (cf. b. Ber. 60b). Evidence from two further bowls shows that these portions of scripture were not necessarily understood solely as a collection of distinguishable parts but as a unified literary unit: in VA 3853 and VA 3854, Deut 6:4-9 and Deut 11:13-21 appear together with the customary liturgical response (ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד) after the first verse. The absence of Num 15:37-41 in these two bowls reflects the way that the Shema was recited in the daily evening prayer (cf. m. Ber. 2:2 and b. Ber. 13a), while the presence of the liturgical response in these bowls distinguishes the use of the Shema from its use in the mezuzah and the tefillin. Long portions of the Shema also appear on two unpublished bowls: JNF 129 (Deut 6:4, 5-9) and JNF 251 (Deut 6:4-9). In short, while we cannot discount the possibility that only certain portions of independent scriptural units like Ps 91 and the Shema were seen as relevant by some bowl practitioners, it is possible that the quotations from the first lines of these passages were intended to function as incipits; that they were intended to evoke the whole psalm or the whole of the Shema. This seems almost certainly to be true in case of ZRL 48, where the first two words of Ps 91:1 and Deut 6:4 were presumably intended at the very least to conjure the whole of these two verses on a *pars pro partibus* basis, if not the whole psalm and the entirety of the Shema. (Across the published record, possible candidates for the designation of incipit include quotations that range from two words to complete verses.)

²⁸ Commenting on the value of this psalm for ritual petitioners, Erich Zenger, "Psalm 91," in *Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51-100*, ed. Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger (Minneapolis: Fortress Press,

long and vibrant apotropaic tradition with a specific focus on perceived demonic attacks.²⁹ Because Ps 91:1 is the beginning of a textual unit that goes on to detail various forms of divine protection—and protection from demons in particular—what seems implicit in its use is an intentional connection between the ‘words in the bowl’ and the contiguous psalm as a whole.³⁰

The use of Ps 91:1 in collocation with Exod 14:31 in JNF 124 lends impetus to the idea that the use of Exod 14:31 in this bowl was intended not to bring a largely undifferentiated divine power to bear upon the context of the bowl, but that its use was intended to evoke

2005), 429 writes, “In reciting the psalm, the petitioner constitutes the saving counter-world, as projected in the psalm, against the threatening world in which he lives.”

²⁹ For an extensive survey of the interpretive history of Ps 91 and its use as an anti-demonic text in Jewish and Christian apotropaia, with a particular focus on the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Gospels, see Michael J. Morris, *Warding Off Evil: Apotropaic Tradition in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Synoptic Gospels* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017). Cf. Andrew J. Schmutzer, “Psalm 91: Refuge, Protection and Their Use in the New Testament,” in *The Psalms: Language for All Seasons of the Soul*, ed. Andrew J. Schmutzer and David M. Howard (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2013), 93–105 and the large bibliography cited therein. The Psalter more broadly also appears to share close relations with apotropaic magical traditions. On vestiges or allusions to magical practices and incantations in the Psalms, see the section on “Material in the Psalms Inspired by the Incantory Genre” in Daniel R. Miller, “Incantations in Ancient West Semitic Corpora and in the Hebrew Bible: Continuity and Discontinuity” (University of Michigan, 2006), 205–7. On the overlap in the logic and applications between prayers and incantations in the ancient world, see (the literature cited in) Jeremy D. Smoak, “May YHWH Bless You and Keep You from Evil: The Rhetorical Argument of Ketef Hinnom Amulet I and the Form of the Prayers for Deliverance in the Psalms,” *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 12 (2012): 202–36, who demonstrates that there may have been more functional fluidity between incantations and prayers in ancient Israelite religion than previously understood.

³⁰ Scholars working on different apotropaic objects have noted the frequent *pars pro toto* deployment of specific verses from Ps 91 on these objects, e.g. Judge, “The Magical Use of Scripture,” 341; Thomas J. Kraus, “ΒΟΥΣ, ΒΑΥΛΩΩΧ und Septuaginta-Psalm 90? Überlegungen zu den sogenannten ‘Bous’-Amuletten und dem beliebtesten Bibeltext für apotropäische Zwecke,” *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 11.3 (2007): 487; Sanzo, *Scriptural Incipits*, 106–20; Erich Zenger, “Psalm 91,” in *Psalmen 51-100*, ed. Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger (Freiburg: Herder, 2000), 626 who writes: “entweder Teile aus Ps 91 (meist Ps 91,5-6 oder 91,10-13) oder der Anfang (Incipit) des Psalms (als Substitution für den ganzen Psalm) geschrieben standen.” For the *pars pro toto* deployment of psalmic incipits more generally, see Bill Rebig, “Die magische Verwendung von Psalmen im Judentum,” in *Ritual und Poesie: Formen und Orte religiöser Dichtung im alten Orient, im Judentum und im Christentum*, ed. Erich Zenger (Freiburg: Herder, 2003), 265–81; Theodore de Bruyn, “Papyri, Parchments, Ostraca, and Tablets Written with Biblical Texts in Greek and Used as Amulets: A Preliminary List,” in *Early Christian Manuscripts: Examples of Applied Method and Approach*, ed. Thomas J. Kraus and Tobias Nicklas (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 149.

a precedent or paradigm where a particular type of (unflagging) providential protective power was brought to bear in the face of danger. In a similar fashion to the way that Ps 91:1 was probably understood to function *pars pro toto* for Ps 91, the use of Exod 14:31 in JNF 124 may also have been intended to evoke and invoke the power of a longer textual composition by way of metonymic analogy. In this view, the details of Exod 14:31 act as kind of *précis* for a broader set of actions and ideas: the quotation may have been understood to be contiguous not just with Exod 14:1-31 or Exod 1:8-15:21 but also with the subsequent parts of the narrative in Exod 15:22-17:16 that detail a further series of non-Egyptian dangers and acts of deliverance and protection. And though a glance at the broader practice of scriptural quotation in the bowls suggests that bowl practitioners deployed scripture as isolated, atomistic, or independent units, the use of Ps 91:1 and Exod 14:31 in JNF 124 and many other bowls suggest that they were equally ready and well-equipped to pay close attention to the original (narrative) frameworks of their quotations in order to bring contextual information to bear in their deployment of scripture.

As the foregoing discussion shows, there is a need for more detailed analysis of the ways in which bowl practitioners understood the biblical corpus in relation to their objectives, how scriptural quotations functioned in the bowls, and by what actual mechanism they were brought to bear in the bowls. Most of the quotations used in the bowl texts are not provided with an analogical transfer point, e.g. ‘just as (it was then), so (may it be now),’ where the analogy serves as an explicit trigger for discerning the use and function of the allusion. Though the link between the quotation and the context at hand may appear obvious, such links are largely implicit in the use of quotations in the bowls. Insofar as quotations may have been used to establish a precedent or paradigm for the magic at hand or to tap into the perceived power of scripture or scriptural events, scholarly conceptions of the way these precedents were conjured or this power was tapped are either very limited and/or simultaneously very broad. In her dissertation on the use of the Bible in the bowls, for example, Natalie Polzer conceives of scriptural quotations in the bowls in very general terms as “typological precedents” that functioned as “a sort of sympathetic magic.”³¹ In this view, it is not necessary to look beyond the contents of the quotation itself to its context in the Bible. Polzer’s position thus ignores the potential referential quality inherent in a quotation; neither does it take into account the possibility that biblical texts can be quoted in abbreviated form as stand-ins for a larger text. As part of a larger textual unit or narrative, the intentional connection be-

³¹ Polzer, “Bible in the Aramaic Magic Bowls,” 104–5.

tween the ‘words in the bowl’ and their contiguous pericope are at the very least always implicit in the notion of a quotation. In his discussion of biblical historiolae, Peter Lanfer does briefly suggest that a quotation from Deut 29:22 derives part of its function in CAMIB 040A from “the surrounding context of the verse.”³² Like Polzer, however, Lanfer conceives of the use of quotations in the bowls very generally, noting that (partial) biblical verses are often quoted as “words of power.”³³ Such verses, “like the divine names in the incantations, ensure ‘that the power of Scripture will be brought to bear on the magic’.”³⁴ Such largely undifferentiated models—where scripture possesses a mostly undefined power—have dominated the little discussion that has taken place of the bible in the bowls. Such broad claims have little explanatory power, while the brevity of many of these treatments of the intent and mechanism of quotation in the bowls mean that the insufficiency of their generic claims are not limited to semantic and classificatory matters. In light of the frequent use of scriptural quotations in the published bowl record, a detailed analysis of this phenomenon akin to Dorothea Salzer’s systematic treatment of the dynamics of scriptural use in the texts of the Cairo Genizah is a considerable desideratum.³⁵ As I have noted, this chapter is not the place for such a large-scale analysis. However, the metonymic theory that it advances should further nuance the approach of previous scholarship to scriptural quotation in the bowls. It provides a modulated method that can be expanded to account for (1) the functions of biblical quotations in different capacities and for different purposes; (2) the different relations that may exist between the individual part (the quotation) and the contiguous scriptural whole that it is

³² Lanfer, “Why Biblical Scholars,” 21.

³³ Ibid., 17, cf. Polzer, “Bible in the Aramaic Magic Bowls,” 102.

³⁴ Ibid., 18, quoting Schiffman and Swartz, *Incantation Texts from the Cairo Genizah*, 58. Such an approach neglects, for example, how partial quotations from scripture are used (as epithets) in the bowls to invoke specific qualities of the deity. For example, we find the collocation of Exod 15:3 and Ps 24:8 as part of an invocation in twelve published bowls (one of which is partially effaced). These verses read יהוה איש מלחמה יהוה שמו, “YHWH is a man of war, YHWH is his name,” and יהוה עוז וגבור יהוה גבור מלחמה, “YHWH strong and mighty, YHWH mighty in battle.” These quotations are plainly not deployed as “words of power ... regardless of context or intent” (Lanfer, “Why Biblical Scholars,” 17) but are clearly designed—in the face of demonic threats—to invoke the might and bellicosity of God on behalf of those threatened. In their use as invocations or extended appellatives, their description of aspects of the deity’s character shades into a comminative statement of intent which further clarifies the intended purpose of the bowl. Exod 15:3 is also contiguous with the broader celebration of God’s bellicose defence of the Israelites in the Song of the Sea (Exod 15:2-18) while Ps 24 emphasises the blessings afforded to those who demonstrate faithfulness in God. Their combination functions somewhat like the constellation of Ps 91:1 and Deut 6:4 in other bowls.

³⁵ Salzer, *Die Magie der Anspielung*.

extracted from; and (3) how these relations and their conceptual referents were established and leveraged through quotation. This chapter will show that scripture—whether it was conceived by bowl practitioners as the Bible or not—was approached by practitioners as a repertory of individual units which could be appropriated (in both larger and smaller sections) on the basis of their themes and narrative contents and the perceived consonance of these themes and contents with the client’s specific needs. I also suggest that the precedent or thematic paradigm of the larger pericopae contiguous with a given quotation may have been harnessed along with the ‘words in the bowl’ on the basis of metonymic transfer and that the complexity of this larger pericope would thus have played an important role in shaping the conceptual material(s) invoked by the quotation.

MERONYMY

The primarily ‘bite-size’ approach to the bible in the bowls suggests that the bowl practitioners conceived of scripture largely as a repository or repertory of separable units.³⁶ These individual units could be used to invoke the powers associated with the precedent or thematic paradigm of the events and/or actions and/or divine characteristics narrated or described in a given citation. Like *historiolae*, the use of quotations seems to have proceeded on the assumption that specific actions—or the enduring nature—of God established an actionable precedent or paradigm for the present moment. In this section, I theorise the logic and application of quotation in the bowls and the potential semantic relations that they establish between the ‘words in the bowl’ and the contiguous scriptural wholes from which they were excerpted, i.e. between the parts of things and the wholes which they comprise. I will outline what I believe to be the most helpful way to designate and discuss the (nature of the) relations between scriptural quotations and the contiguous wholes from which they were excerpted.

The general phenomena of contiguity and the relationships between parts and wholes encompass different types of conceptual transfers from one item to the other. The nature of these transfers as well as our knowledge of parts and wholes have been variously theorised by

³⁶ This selective approach to large bodies of scriptural material in the manufacturing of apotropaic devices was naturally dictated by other factors, including the limitations of the artifact: the writing surface of a small bowl can only include so much text, and it was thus necessary to separate parts from wholes for this reason too. When assessing the imagined targets of excerpts from larger pericopae, it is also necessary to keep in mind the ways in which a diverse body of bowl practitioners may have encountered scripture, whether through common engagement in the context of the liturgy—which would have focused attention on portions of scripture as sources of apotropaic or exorcistic power—or through diverse types of encounter with written scripture.

literary scholars, linguists, and anthropologists using different conceptions of synecdoche and metonymy.³⁷ More specifically, the relationship between potential wholes and their respective parts has been labelled meronymy by some linguistic theorists. Meronymy refers simply to part-whole relations.³⁸ I will use this concept to express the nature of the relationships between narrative quotations and the potential wholes from which they are excerpted. As a partial ordering relation, meronymic relationships structure semantic space in a hierarchical fashion. They thus draw attention to the criterion of relevancy in the selection of quotations. Verses from Ps 91, for example, are excerpted from the larger mass of scriptural materials for their apotropaic relevancy. Gen 30:22 is excerpted in a bowl for fertility for its specific bearing upon the concern of barrenness. Implicit in these selections from a larger whole of diverse materials is a hierarchy of appropriateness, where power is not generally conceived but concentrated in the specific events quoted. Meronymic relationships also draw attention to the possibility of parts to be separated from their wholes. A taxonomy of meronymic relations has been established by Morton Winston, Roger Chaffin, and Douglas Herrmann, who distinguish between six different kinds of meronymy:

1. component-integral object (pedal-bike), 2. member-collection (ship-fleet), 3. portion-mass (slice-pie), 4. stuff-object (steel-car), 5. feature-activity (paying-shopping), and 6. place-area (Everglades-Florida).³⁹

³⁷ On part-for-whole relations variously categorised as or aligned with metonymy, see especially Roman Jakobson, "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances," in *Fundamentals of Language* (The Hague: Mouton, 1956), 53–82; Ken-ichi Seto, "Distinguishing Metonymy from Synecdoche," in *Metonymy in Language and Thought*, ed. Klaus-Uwe Panther and Günter Radden (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1999), 91–120; Stanley J. Tambiah, "The Magical Power of Words," *Man* 3 (1968): 189; Richard L. Gordon, "What's in a List? Listing in Greek and Graeco-Roman Malign Magical Texts," in *The World of Ancient Magic: Papers from the First International Samson Eitrem Seminar at the Norwegian Institute at Athens, 4-8 May 1997*, ed. David R. Jordan, Hugo Montgomery, and Einar Thomassen (Bergen: The Norwegian Institute at Athens, 1999), 239–77. On part-for-whole relations categorised as or aligned with synecdoche (as a species of metonymy), see especially Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*; Donald Rice, "Catastroph(h)es: The Morphogenesis of Metaphor, Metonymy, Synecdoche and Irony," *SubStance* 26 (1980): 3–18.

³⁸ The term originates with D.A. Cruse, *Lexical Semantics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 159 who defined it as the "semantic relation between a lexical item denoting a part and that denoting the corresponding whole."

³⁹ Morton E. Winston, Roger Chaffin, and Douglas Herrmann, "A Taxonomy of Part-Whole Relations," *Cognitive Science* 11 (1987): 420.

Winston, Chaffin, and Herrmann further establish three criteria for distinguishing among these various part-whole relations: “whether the relation of part to the whole is functional or not, whether or not the parts are homeomerous or not,⁴⁰ and whether the part and whole are separable or not.”⁴¹ Of particular interest here is the criterion of separability, and the extent to which parts can be separated from wholes, whether or not the part also serves a particular function with respect to its whole (e.g. chapter-book vs. tree-forest), and the role the whole plays in determining the nature of the part. To what extent does the complexity of the potential whole impact upon the nature of the part, and to what extent does the part refer to the possible whole, i.e. what are the possible imagined referents or conceptual materials invoked by a given quotation?

With regard to parts that serve a function with respect to the whole, Joseph Sanzo asks how respective part-whole relations change if one continues to divide these possible wholes along a ‘partonomy.’⁴² For example, a book may be divided into parts called chapters, which may be divided into sections, which may be divided into paragraphs, which may be divided into sentences, clauses, words, and so on. With regard to scripture, the Bible may be broken down into sentences or even briefer excerpts from prose narratives, poems, or apothegmatic sayings which may in turn—moving back up the hierarchy from the specific to the general—be put together to form books and larger groupings of books such as the Pentateuch, the Prophets, or the Psalter. What Sanzo’s question emphasises is that the further one moves down the levels, the closer the relationship between the potential whole and its parts and the less likely the parts are to be conceptualised as separate from their potential whole. For example, working down from the Bible to the Writings to the Psalter to a particular psalm to a

⁴⁰ Homeomerous parts are the same kind of thing as their wholes, e.g. slice-pie, while non-homeomerous parts are different from their wholes, e.g. tree-forest.

⁴¹ Winston, Chaffin, and Herrmann, “Part-Whole Relations,” 420.

⁴² Sanzo borrows the term ‘partonomy’ from Seto, “Distinguishing Metonymy from Synecdoche,” who approaches metonymy and synecdoche as two species of the genus *pars-pro-toto*. Within Seto’s productive scheme, metonymy and synecdoche involve different kinds of transfer from one item to another, while the term ‘partonomy’ refers to a classificatory system associated with metonymy. Seto uses this classificatory system to distinguish between metonymy and synecdoche. Synecdoche is aligned with taxonomy in his scheme and refers to ‘conceptual’ transfers or ‘kind-of’ relations, while metonymy is aligned with partonomy and refers to ‘referential’ transfers or ‘part-of’ relations. “In other words, taxonomy is the relation between a more comprehensive category and a less comprehensive one, while partonomy is the relation between an entity and its parts, such as the relation between a table and its legs” (93).

single verse such as Ps 91:1, the likelihood that the contents of this verse were divorced from their immediately contiguous surroundings (i.e. Ps 91) diminishes exponentially.

Thus individual psalms or certain narrative pericopae could be conceptualised as ‘wholes’ vis-à-vis the quotations excerpted from them. This is particularly apropos scriptural units like individual psalms, whose parts are more closely integrated into their wholes, meaning that they could be more easily conceived of as entire thematic units than larger or more thematically complex pericopae. In the case of larger or more complex types of ‘whole,’ the quotations excerpted from these ‘wholes’ undoubtedly represent different types of meronymic relations, while the implied referents that practitioners sought to tap may have ranged ‘partonomically’ from entire narrative pericopae to single verses or phrases. Exod 14:31, for example, may have been intended to tap a larger ‘target’ or ‘whole’ than the crossing of the Sea of Reeds. In the following section of this chapter, I examine these potential wholes and their possible bearing on the aims of the bowls and the choice of certain quotations in these bowls.

SECTION II

SURVEY OF PROSE NARRATIVE QUOTATIONS FROM THE HEBREW BIBLE IN THE JBA BOWLS

PROSE NARRATIVE QUOTATIONS IN THE JBA BOWLS

Gen 30:22

The verse appears in one bowl. The biblical text may be translated as follows: And God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her, and He opened her womb.

1. 10895 (Museu da Farmácia, Lisbon) = Bhayro 2017

An incantation bowl for fertility and success in child birth prepared for Mihranahid d. Aḥat

a.	MT:	וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת רָחֵל וַיִּשְׁמַע אֵלֶיהָ אֱלֹהִים וַיִּפְתַּח אֶת רַחְמָהּ
b.	Quotation:	וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת רָחֵל וַיִּשְׁמַע אֵלֶיהָ אֱלֹהִים וַיִּפְתַּח אֶת רַחְמָהּ וַיִּזְכֹּר

Gen 30:22 appears in this bowl midway through an incantation for fertility and success in child birth.⁴³ It marks the end of one spell formula and the beginning of another. Biblical

⁴³ On kindred applications of this verse in the Genizah materials, see Salzer, *Die Magie der Anspielung*, 33, 68 and the texts T-S K 1.157, fol. 1:8 and 1:27-28 as well as the damaged Genizah recipe book T-S K 1.143 =

quotations in the bowl texts are generally located either at the beginning or (more often) at the end of the incantation (where they are sometimes reproduced in small clusters of two or three). Zech 3:2, for example, is used with the confirmatory formula *אמן סלה* to conclude the text of the present bowl. The somewhat unusual deployment of Gen 30:22 in the middle of this text speaks to the specificity of its use. The bowl requests healing, fertility, and “living and abiding children” for Mihranahid d. Aḥat, while the quoted verse recounts how God remembered Rachel, listened to her, and opened her womb. Rachel had been unable to conceive and Gen 30:22 signals the divine resolution to remedy her barrenness. The quotation thus invokes God to fulfil a specific blessing from the Torah for the benefit of the bowl owner, while the repetition in this bowl of “And He remembered” after the end of the verse serves both as a reaffirmation and to make explicit a mechanical aspect of many biblical quotations in the bowls.

Granted a basic model of asymmetrical social relations and the subsequent need to confirm distance and establish the fact of respect, the bowls do not directly adjure or command God.⁴⁴ Instead, the bowl practitioners sometimes appear to use quotations as a form of divine inducement or indirect coercion. These have the advantage of being more distinctive than mere requests, for insofar as these brief excerpts from longer narratives were able to create their own context (to shed the determinations of narratorial voice and point-of-view, for example) they serve to render God the narratee to his own actions. Without directly commanding the divinity, quotations such as Gen 30:22 afforded the practitioners with an opportunity to ‘remind’ God to act in a certain way. In this sense, the use of ‘remembered’ is felicitous, as the English verb does not just mean to bring to mind something or someone, but also to bear someone in mind by making them a gift or making provision for them. The repe-

MSF G18: 12:4-5 (the most likely context of which would be fertility). Cf. the citations of Gen 21:1 (“And YHWH visited Sarah as He had said, and YHWH did for Sarah as He had spoken”) in the Genizah amulets T-S K 1.157, fol. 1:12 and 1:29 and recipe book T-S K 1.157, fol. 1:9.

⁴⁴ Cf. the mode of address adopted in the Greek and Roman texts detailed in Frances V. Hickson, *Roman Prayer Language: Livy and the Aeneid of Vergil* (Stuttgart: B.G. Teubner, 1993), 33–43; William D. Furley and Jan Maarten Bremer, *Greek Hymns*, vol. 1. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 2–5, 50–63 as well as the preference for declaratives in Latin curse-tablets—such as *commendo*, *mando*, *demando*, *defigo*, *deligo*, *obligo*, *devoveo*, *trado*—which stake out a fine ground of divine address that is neither entreaty nor command. Richard L. Gordon, “Imaginative Force and Verbal Energy in Latin Curse-Tablets,” in *Litterae Magicae: Studies in Honour of Roger S. O. Tomlin*, ed. Celia Sánchez Natalias (Zaragoza: Libros Pórtico, 2019), 113 notes that, by “playing upon the force of such declaratives, the [magical practitioner] created a situation in which the ball was as it were suddenly in the court of the divine addressee(s): they had to deal with the move as best they could.”

tition of “And He remembered” serves to remind God how he remembered in the sense that he actioned Rachel’s infertility, on the basis that he could do so once more with the appropriate prompt.

Gen 30:22 forms a part of Gen 30:1-24, wherein Rachel’s inability to conceive is laid bare by a narration that details the many children born to her sister Leah, as well as Rachel and Leah’s servants. The majority of this pericope has little pronounced bearing on the specificity and application of Gen 30:22 in the bowl, though the verse does reflect a broader paradigm wherein barrenness is framed as actionable by God and pregnancy is conceived of as an act of God. In her inability to conceive, Rachel is allied with the other matriarchs—Sarah and Rebecca—whose collective infertility marks the eventual births of their sons Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph as special, as well as emphasising that pregnancy is an act of God.⁴⁵ In circular fashion, this emphasis on the nature of pregnancy makes infertility actionable and reinforces the choice of Gen 30:22 as a constitutive part of the bowl’s magic.

Exod 14:20

The quotation appears in one bowl. The biblical text may be translated as follows: ⁽¹⁹⁾ And the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them. ⁽²⁰⁾ And it came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel, and there was the cloud and the dark, and it lit up the night, and they did not draw near each other all night.

1. IM 9736 = Gordon 1941: 349-50 = Saar 2013

An incantation bowl for sowing discord between Gušnin s. [—] and Namoy d. [—]

a.	MT:	ויבא בין מחנה מצרים ובין מחנה ישראל ויהי הענן והחשך ויאר את הלילה ולא קרב זה אל זה כל הלילה
b.	Quotation:	ויבא בין מחני ישראל ובין מחני מצרים ויהי הענן והחשך

An altered version of the first part of Exod 14:20 occurs in this bowl as part of an incantation for sowing discord between a man and a woman. In his initial publication of the bowl text, Cyrus H. Gordon assumed that its incantation was designed “to ward off from the client the

⁴⁵ See the Genizah recipe for infertility T-S K 1.157, fol. 1:21-31 = MTKG I 8:111 f. which explicitly invokes the entirety of the (implied) referent or paradigm that I suggest may lie behind the metonymic use of Gen 30:22 verse in the bowl. The text links Gen 30:22, 21:1, and 25:21—thereby evoking Rachel, Sarah, and Rebecca—in support of its request for fertility.

curses of an enemy.”⁴⁶ However, Ortal-Paz Saar has argued convincingly in the light of substantial comparanda from other sources—including *katadesmoi/defixiones* from the Graeco-Roman world and later mediaeval practices of Jewish, Christian, and Islamic love magic—that the text is actually designed to separate a man from a woman.⁴⁷ This design presumably originated with a third party who Saar suggests may have been the man’s wife or former lover, who sought to avert or turn the face of Gušnin away from Namoy.⁴⁸ The text of the incantation bowl concludes with (or is cut off midway through) a partial quotation from Exod 14:20 (Gordon is unclear on this point). This particular passage describes how the divine pillar of cloud separated the camp of the Egyptians from the camp of the Israelites. The MT continues by noting that the cloud lit up (יָאָר) the night and that the two camps “did not draw near each other all night,” wherein the rationale behind the use of Exod 14:20 in the bowl becomes clear: the practitioner and their client also sought to prevent Gušnin and Namoy from approaching one another (sexually) in the night.⁴⁹ As Saar points out, this particular use of Exod 14:20 is evidenced in a magical recipe from the Cairo Genizah which explicitly leverages an adapted version of the biblical verse to separate a man from his wife:

⁴⁶ Gordon, “Aramaic Incantation Bowls,” 349.

⁴⁷ Ortal-Paz Saar, “An Incantation Bowl for Sowing Discord,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 58.2 (2013): 241–56. See CBS 2972 = AIT 28 and CBS 8694 = AIT 13 for two further published bowls whose genre may be designated ‘love magic.’

⁴⁸ The phrase הִפֵּךְ אִפּוּיָא, ‘to turn/avert someone’s face’ appears twice in ll. 4 and 9 of the bowl, and while the verb הִפֵּךְ appears in numerous incantation bowls, it occurs most often in bowls that seek to overturn curses or return them to their senders. The appearance of this verb with the noun אִפּוּיָא/אִפּוּיָא is thus far unique in the bowls, though the same phrase appears in mediaeval Jewish spells designed to separate lovers (e.g. Bodleian MS Heb. g. 3, fol. 2b:8–fol. 3b:4) as well as in a Mandaic magical recipe whose text has been observed to bear a close similarity to IM 9736. See Christa Müller-Kessler and Karlheinz Kessler, “Spätbabylonische Gottheiten in spätantiken mandäischen Texten,” *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 89 (1999): 68, who refer to the bowl as ‘eine fast wörtliche Parallele’ to the Mandaic text. See also Saar, “Bowl for Sowing Discord,” 249, who has produced a table illustrating the parallels between the two texts.

⁴⁹ E.A. Speiser, “An Angelic ‘Curse’: Exodus 14:20,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 80.3 (1960): 198–200 considers the possibility that the root of the verb יָאָר, ‘it gave light (to the night)’ is actually אָרַר and not אָוַר. He suggests that the correct meaning of this verse may be “Thus there was the cloud with the darkness, and it cast a spell (יָאָר) upon the night, so that one side could not make contact with the other all through that night.”

אדא ארדת תעקד רגל ען אהלה פקול /עליה הדא אלאפסוק ז' מראר ד ויבא /משה בין
מחנה מצרים ובין מחנה ישראל /הך דלא קרב זה אל זה כל הלילה כן לא יק' /פ' אל פ' עד
זמן דנצבי

If you wish to bind a man from his family (i.e. separate him from his wife), say/
over him this verse 7 times d? and Moses *came/ between the camp of Egypt and
the camp of Israel./* Just as (they) did not come near the other all night so shall
not/ N come near N as long as I desire.⁵⁰

In the bowl, the names of the two camps—Egypt and Israel—are interchanged. Saar suggests
that this reversal may reflect an intentional modification whereby the relations or traffic be-
tween Gušnin and Namoy are also to be reversed or overturned. This interpretation finds
further support in the bowl's use in ll. 8-9 of a familiar magical analogy—the overturning of
Sodom and Gomorrah—in order to further reinforce its goals. It adjures Gabriel and Michael,
the two angels it names as having overturned Sodom and Gomorrah, to turn the face of
Gušnin from Namoy. As Saar points out, this narrative token is a frequent fixture in Jewish
magic that seeks to change or overturn a person's feelings, either by inducing love or separat-
ing lovers.⁵¹

Exod 14:31

The quotation appears in one bowl. Clustered towards the end of the incantation alongside
two other biblical quotations, it is preceded by Deut 6:4 and Ps 91:1 (which is repeated in re-
verse order). The biblical text may be translated as follows: And Israel saw the great hand
that YHWH used against Egypt, and the people feared YHWH, and they trusted in YHWH
and in Moses His servant.

1. JNF 124 = Ford 2016: 153-154

An apotropaic incantation bowl prepared for (the children of) Farrokhzād s. Kumay and
Azarmidukht d. Zādoy

a.	MT:	וירא ישראל את היד הגדולה אשר עשה יהוה במצרים ויראו העם את יהוה ויאמינו ביהוה ובמשה עבדו
b.	Quotation:	וירא ישראל את היד הגדולה אשר עשה יהוה במצרים ויראו העם את יהוה

⁵⁰ JTSL ENA 2871.7–8, fol. 8b:1–5 = MTKG II 28.

⁵¹ See Saar, “Bowl for Sowing Discord,” 251–52 as well as Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 204–5, 312–13
for the diverse appearances of Sodom and Gomorrah in aggressive and love magic.

Exod 14:31 appears in this bowl as part of an incantation designed to protect the children of the bowl owners. The large part of the text is dedicated to a version of the Semamit story, while the declarations of faith in Deut 6:4 and Ps 91:1 are followed by a quote-as-commination, whereby the divine retribution visited upon Egypt is wielded against those who would threaten the children of the bowl owners (who are simultaneously figured through the quotation as the faithful who trust in the Lord). The first part of this verse and its mention of Egypt suggests a target ‘whole’ that encompasses Exod 14 at the very least but which may extend to embrace the earlier actions of God against Egypt before the events at the Sea of Reeds. The second part of the verse emphasises trust in YHWH (seemingly as a prerequisite for divine action on one’s behalf) and thereby imputes such trust to the beneficiary of the bowl. (Indeed, many of the biblical quotations used in the incantation bowls have this particular perlocutionary effect, which works to instantiate the beneficiaries of the bowl as the trusting or faithful who merit inclusion within the protective paradigm instantiated by the verse.) As detailed in the previous section, the generic nature of the second half of the quotation thus invokes an even larger potential referent than the first half of the verse, as well as extending the threatening paradigm of the first part of verse to encompass a protective paradigm. Its potential reference points and the respective meanings that derive from these possible wholes via transitory reference are slippery and hard to pin down. But this also means that the choice of verse is particularly productive, embracing both protective and comminative reference points to particular parts of the Exodus story. At the same time, the bowl practitioner was clearly not invoking the book of Exodus as an undifferentiated whole, but only select passages from (and aspects of) the Exodus tradition that they felt would be efficacious in light of their need to threaten demons and protect their client. I will expand upon this point in relation to Num 9:23 below. Nevertheless, we cannot know which particular aspects of the Exodus narrative were intended by this practitioner, while the intended referent may not even be known to us, as detailed in the previous chapter, where we saw the divine or pharaonic chariot elaborated upon in relation to the story of Exod 14.

Num 9:23

The quotation appears in ten bowls and is often quoted with Zech 3:2. In one of these bowls, it appears in combination with Num 10:36. In another, it appears in combination with Num 11:2 and 12:13. I deal with these linked quotations separately in the next sections. The bibli-

cal text may be translated as follows: On a sign from YHWH they would camp and on a sign from YHWH they would set out. They kept the charge of YHWH, at the sign of YHWH in the hand of Moses.

1. M 6 = Shaked 1995: 211-213

An apotropaic incantation bowl prepared for Šabānag s. Mahandukh and Bamaī d. Šišin; Široi, Marka, Čahārbukht, Bahāroi, and Yazdānkhwāst ss. Bamaī; Karkoi and Šahristān ds. Bamaī

a.	MT:	על פי יהוה יחנו ועל פי יהוה יסעו את משמרת יהוה שמרו על פי יהוה ביד משה
b.	Quotation:	על פי יהוה יחנו ועל פי יהוה יסעו את משמרת יהוה שומרו על פי יהוה ביד משה

The verse appears as part of a cluster of biblical quotations roughly two-thirds of the way through the incantation. It precedes Zech 3:2, Ezek 32:27, and Ps 91:11.

2. Einhorn 4 (Einhorn Collection) = MSF B22

An apotropaic incantation bowl prepared for Marutha d. Duda

[...] ת משמרת יהוה שמרו על פי [...] [...]

The faded quotation appears towards the end of the incantation. This bowl also quotes Ezek 32:27.

3. CBS 2952 = AIT 5

An exorcistic incantation bowl prepared for Farrokh s. Pušbi, Newandukh d. Pušbi, and Abandukh d. Pušbi

על פי יהוה יחנו על פי יהוה יסעו את משמרת יהוה שמרו על פי יהוה ביד משה

The verse appears at the end of the bowl. It is followed by Zech 3:2 and a confirmatory formula.

4. CBS 3997 = AIT 26

An exorcistic incantation bowl prepared for Berik-Yahbeh s. Mamai and Ispandarmed d. Mahdukh

על פי יהוה יחנו על פי יהוה יסעו את משמרת יהוה שמרו על פי יהוה ביד משה

The verse appears as part of a cluster of biblical quotations that open the incantation. It is preceded by Deut 6:4 and followed by Zech 3:2.

5. Aaron B = Geller 1986: 108⁵²

An apotropaic incantation bowl prepared for Ized s. Anai

על פי יהוה יחנה ועל פי יהוה יסעו את משמרת יהוה ישמרו על פי יהוה ביד משה

The verse appears as part of a cluster of biblical quotations that end the incantation. It is preceded by Zech 3:2 and followed by Deut 6:4 and Ps 91:1. The latter two verses are woven together in a fashion whereby the first word of Deut 6:4 is followed by the first word of Ps 91:1 and so on.

6. Aaron F = Geller 1986: 115

An apotropaic incantation bowl prepared for Guzi s. Ašoy and Imai d. Šaglai

על פי יהוה יחנו על פי יהוה יסעו את משמרת יהוה שמרו על פי יהוה ביד משה

The verse appears at the end of the incantation.

7. HS 3005 = ZHS 5 = Gordon J

An exorcistic incantation bowl prepared for Ebbay s. Māmay

על פי יהוה יחנו ועל פי יהוה יסעו את משמרת יהוה שמרו ועל פי יהוה ביד משה

The verse is preceded by a confirmatory formula and is used to close the incantation. It does not appear in the two parallel texts (HS 3010 and HS 3033) produced by the same practitioner for the brothers Āḏīn and Bahmandād ss. Aḥāt.

8. MS 2053/41 = JBA 31

An exorcistic incantation bowl prepared for Bar-Sahde s. Aḥata and Aywi (?) d. Aqrita

[...] ה יסעו את משמרת [יהוה שמ]רו על [...]

The faded quotation appears at the end of the incantation.

Num 9:23 concludes a pericope characterised by stasis, wherein narrative impetus is abandoned for legislation and tabulation (a census and military roster) in Sinai; it prefigures the journeying (and disgruntlement) that characterises the book of Numbers from chapter 10 onwards. The application of this verse in the bowls is not immediately apparent.⁵³ The use of the verse may be interpreted—on the basis of a face-value reading—as a perlocutionary

⁵² Geller does not include the verse in his translation of the bowl text.

⁵³ It appears only once in the Genizah in T-S K 1.3, fol. 3a:16 = MTSK III 62 in a spell “gegen einen hartnäckigen Ankläger sowie Schutzzauber für die Begegnung mit einer höhergestellten Person” (Salzer, *Die Magie der Anspielung*, 393).

statement of the faithfulness of the bowl owners.⁵⁴ In relation to this goal, as Polzer suggests, the verse may also have been intended to invoke the power of God to directly protect Israel throughout her forty years in the desert: “just as God’s power protected Israel all of those years in the desert, so shall He now protect the client of the bowl.”⁵⁵ These two readings of the verse in the context of these bowls are not mutually exclusive, though if the implied antecedent of the verse was the entire base narrative of the book of Numbers and the protective paradigm established therein, this narrative was presumably invoked on a *pars pro partibus* or ‘part for parts’ basis and not a *pars pro toto* basis. That is, while the meaning of the verse in the bowl derived in part via transitory references to the whole of Numbers, its ultimate references were presumably to particular parts of this narrative, eliding those parts where the murmuring of the Israelites led God to kill some fifteen thousand of them by various means. The verse thus serves to invoke a cluster of conceptually related parts of the book of Numbers wherein the faithful/protective paradigm is evident. This would cast Numbers—like Exodus in JNF 124 above—as a kind of repository of individual narrative units of which only certain units were appropriate to the apotropaic and exorcistic situation of these bowls. In this case, the interpretation of the verse in these bowls and the identification of their scriptural target relates to the type of metonymic transfer intended by each bowl practitioner. Unfortunately, the incantation bowls offer few clues towards this identification process, and only hint at the possible extent of these bowl practitioners’ ‘biblical book’ of Numbers.

Num 9:23, 10:36

The two verses are strung together in one bowl. The biblical text may be translated as follows: ^(9:23) On a sign from YHWH they would camp and on a sign from YHWH they would set out. They kept the charge of YHWH, at the sign of YHWH in the hand of Moses. ^(10:36) And when it came to rest, he would say, ‘Return YHWH to the many thousands of Israel.’

1. MS 2053/190 = JBA 42

An exorcistic incantation bowl prepared for Bar-Sahde s. Aḥata and Aywi (?) d. Aqrita

על פי יהוה יחנו ועל פי יהוה יסעו את משמרת יהוה שמרו על פי יהוה ביד משה ^(9:23)
ובנוחא יאמר שובא יהוה רבבות אלפי ישראל ^(10:36)

⁵⁴ In this regard, note the appearance of Deut 6:4 and Ps 91:1, 11 in several of these bowls.

⁵⁵ Polzer, “Bible in the Aramaic Magic Bowls,” 144.

The quoted verses conclude the incantation. Linked together, the verses have the effect of emphasising the presence of God with the obedient/faithful and the divine protection afforded to Israel as they travelled through the wilderness and kept the charge of YHWH. That is, just as the Israelites would sojourn and set out at the word of the Lord, and Moses would say “Rise YHWH and let Your enemies scatter and let those who hate You flee before You” (Num 10:35), so when the ark was set down Moses would say, “Return YHWH to the many thousands of Israel.” The poetic fragment from Num 10:36 appears together with Num 10:35 in another bowl, and the two verses were thus known by at least one practitioner to form two complementary halves. It is possible that 10:36 was used in this bowl with 10:35 in mind, while the exorcistic goals of this particular incantation would reinforce this interpretation.

Num 11:2, 9:23, 12:13

The three verses are strung together in one bowl and are followed by Zech 3:2. The biblical texts, in the order that they appear in the bowl, may be translated as follows: ^(11:2) And the people cried out to Moses, and Moses prayed to YHWH, and the fire sunk down. ^(9:23) On a sign from YHWH they would camp and on a sign from YHWH they would set out. They kept the charge of YHWH, at the sign of YHWH in the hand of Moses. ^(12:13) And Moses cried out to YHWH, ‘Please, God, heal her!’

1. HS 3022 = ZHS 14

An (exorcistic) curative incantation bowl prepared for Māmā d. PR[...] and Addā s. Māmā

a.	MT:	^(11:2) ויצעק העם אל משה ויתפלל משה אל יהוה ותשקע האש ^(9:23) על פי יהוה יחנו ועל פי יהוה יסעו את משמרת יהוה שמרו על פי יהוה ביד משה ^(12:13) ויצעק משה אל יהוה לאמר אל נא רפא נא לה
b.	Quotation:	^(11:2) ויצעק העם אל מ[שה וי]תפל[ל] [מ]שה אל יהוה ותישקע האש ^(9:23) על פי יהוה יחנו ועל פי יהוה י[סעו את] משמרת [יהוה ש]מרו [על פ]י יהוה ביד משה ^(12:13) ויצעק משה אל יהוה לאומר אל נא רפא נא לה

The cluster of three verses (plus Zech 3:2) concludes this curative incantation. The order of their reproduction sandwiches a verse describing the obedient peregrinations of the Israelites (Num 9:23) between two verses whose wider context details God’s wrathful response to—and Moses’ intervention on behalf of—the Israelites (Num 11:2) and Miriam (Num 12:13). Numbers 11 recounts how God’s fire burnt against the Israelites as they grumbled while Num 12 recounts how God struck Miriam—whose familial ‘murmuring’ should probably be read

against the backdrop of Num 11—with skin blanch. The sandwich-style tension between the second and the first and third of these verses suggests that the quotations from Num 11:2 and 12:13 were not intended to recollect their broader biblical context but instead were deployed as independent units—Num 11:2 to reflect an act of divine intervention in the face of threat, and Num 12:13 as a direct echo of the appeal for divine healing that appears in ll. 1-3 and 5-6 of the incantation.⁵⁶ The choice of Num 11:2 and its receding fire may suggest that the bowl was intended to cure its beneficiaries of fever. Regardless, both Num 11:2 and 12:13 emphasise an act of human intercession on behalf of the fearful and the stricken: in both verses, Moses mediates between the human and the divine, in much the same way that the bowl practitioner—wielding these verses—mediates healing from heaven for the beneficiaries of the bowl. The choice of verses reflects a paradigm—also apparent in the *historiolae* that feature Ḥanina ben Dosa and Joshua bar Peraḥia—wherein powerful human figures intercede with the transmundane world.

Num 10:35

The quotation appears in two bowls. The biblical text may be translated as follows: And it happened, whenever the Ark set out, that Moses would say, ‘Rise YHWH and let Your enemies scatter and let those who hate You flee before You!’

1. 1399 (Hebrew University Institute of Archaeology) = AMB B3

An apotropaic incantation bowl prepared for Mādar-Āfri d. Manuṣay

a.	MT:	ויהי בנסע הארץ ויאמר משה קומה יהוה ויפצו איביו וינסו משנאיו מפניך
b.	Quotation:	וחיחי בין נסוע הארון וימר מושה קומא יהוה ויפוצו איבאך וינסו מ[vacat] מיפנך

Num 10:35 appears at the end of this bowl as part of an incantation designed to protect Mādar-Āfri d. Manuṣay against various forms of injurious magic. The quotation is reproduced in an unusual spelling with a telling alteration to the biblical text: the final five letters of משנאיו, “those who hate you” are deliberately omitted by the bowl practitioner, undoubtedly as an act of sympathetic magic designed to excise and negate the threat of Mādar-Āfri’s perceived enemies.

⁵⁶ Num 11:2 occurs in AMB G5:4-6, where it appears alongside Gen 32:3 and Ps 55:9 in a recipe for healing as well as protection לגויים, “against (?) goyim.” The second half of Num 12:13 appears in MSF G23 2:11-12 in a recipe against headache.

2. BM 91735 = CAMIB 035A

An apotropaic incantation bowl prepared for Nibrita d. Doday

ויהי בנסע הארון ויאמר משה יהוה ויפצו איביך וינסו משנאיך מפניך

Num 10:35 appears midway through this bowl as part of an incantation designed to protect Nibrita d. Doday against various forms of injurious magic.

Num 10:35 includes an address to God, wherein Moses commands God to scatter his enemies and make them flee before him.⁵⁷ Moses' use of the imperative in relation to the divinity in this quotation is particularly interesting in light of the observation I passed above — that the bowl practitioners avoid direct commands addressed to God but instead use quotation as a form of indirect divine inducement or coercion.⁵⁸ Given the subject of this particular imperative, it understandably provoked a wide range of ancient responses. Targum Neofiti, for example, inserts בבעו, 'please' after קום, while Targum Pseudo-Jonathan loses the imperative altogether. Sifre Num. 84 and Sifre Zutta Num. 10.35 relate Num 10:35 (where Moses commands God) to Num 9:23 (where God commands Israel) in order to solve the problematic imperative by stating that just as a king does not wish to travel without his beloved, and thus requests that she participate in his commands, so God and Moses worked together as a team. Midrash Tehillim 90.5 and Pesiq. Rab Kah. 51.9 suggest that Moses actually had some power to command God by relating Moses' title איש האלהים to the power of a husband (איש) to establish or nullify his wife's vows. It is thus possible that the verse was used in these two bowls as a form of direct command. Perhaps implicit in the use of the full verse in both of these bowls—including the superfluous mentions of the ark and Moses as the speaker—is a hint towards Num 10:36, where the ark is mentioned once more and Moses speaks again in order to request that the marauding YHWH return to accompany the beneficiaries of his actions in 10:35. (See the bowl below.) That is, if the intended referent of this verse included the contiguous verse Num 10:36, its use was intended to invoke God not just to ensure the destruction of the bowl owners' enemies, but also to ensure that God afforded the bowl owners with continuing protection by asking that he return and remain with those on whose behalf he has acted. In this light, the omission of "those who hate you" in AMB B3 works in-

⁵⁷ Cf. TS AS 142.214, fol. 1b:4 = MTSK II 35. Several midrashim identify God's enemies with Israel's enemies, e.g. Sifre Num. 84, Sifre Zuta Num. 10.35; Midr. Tehillim 68.1.

⁵⁸ The words יהוה קומה appear in Samaritan bronze amulets and other inscriptions. See Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*, 151 n. 17 for references.

versely to align Mādar-Āfri and Nibrita with those who love the lord and are deserving of the protection requested in 10:36.

Num 10:35-36

These successive verses appear in one bowl, along with Zech 3:2 (which is used twice in this incantation). Quotations of successive verses or larger units of continuous scripture are unusual in the bowls.⁵⁹ The biblical text may be translated as follows: ⁽³⁵⁾ And it happened, whenever the Ark set out, that Moses would say, ‘Rise YHWH and let Your enemies scatter and let those who hate You flee before You!’ ⁽³⁶⁾ And when it came to rest, he would say, ‘Return YHWH to the many thousands of Israel.’

1. MS 2053/7 = Bohak 2012: 47

A curative-exorcistic incantation bowl prepared for Mahdukh d. Newandukh

a.	MT:	<p>⁽³⁵⁾ ויהי בנסע הארץ ויאמר משה קומה יהוה ויפצו איביך וינסו משנאיך מפניך</p> <p>⁽³⁶⁾ ובנוחא יאמר שובא יהוה רבבות אלפי ישראל</p>
b.	Quotation:	<p>⁽³⁵⁾ ויהי בנסע הארץ ויאמר משה ק[ומה יהוה] וי[פצו] אויביך וי[נסו] משנאיך</p> <p>⁽³⁶⁾ מפניך ובבנחה יאמר שבא יהוה רבבות אלפי ישראל</p>

Num 10:35-36 are explicitly marked as a quotation in this bowl: the two verses are preceded by כִּאֲמֹר, “As it is said.” This bowl is also the sole published instance where both halves of the brief poetic fragment in Num 10:35-36—often referred to as the Song of the Ark—are quoted together. Taken together, the quotations have the effect, noted above, of commanding or invoking divine action on behalf of the bowl owner’s woes, as well as ensuring continued divine protection. Together, the two verses also form an independent unit—almost hermetic—which is unlikely to have been intended to refer to any conceptual referent outside the ‘words in the bowl.’

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The tumultuous social terrain in which the magic bowls operated was populated by demons and characterised by uneven power relationships. On the most basic level, authoritative quo-

⁵⁹ But see, e.g. VA 3853 and VA 3854 which quote Deut 6:4-9 and Deut 11:13-21, as well as the partial publication in Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 19 of MS 2053/44 which quotes from Ps 4:5-9.

tations functioned as a shortcut to assumed agreement,⁶⁰ while the bowl practitioners' choice of certain scriptures demonstrate the classification of scriptural texts and units of text as useful/not useful for confronting the problems of their clients. These scriptural quotations form part of the bowl practitioner's repertoire for interpreting experience—for evaluating what will and will not count in forming the horizon of the situation before them—and thereby forming the boundaries of the 'texts' of experience. Drawing from their stock of scriptural knowledge (a set of expectations stratified or hierarchised in terms of typification and relevance) they set about to craft a third reality where God—for example—acts on behalf of the beneficiaries of the bowls. In this view, the act of quotation in the bowls does not just reflect the similarity between the (aims of the) bowl text and the pre-text but the ability of the practitioner to conceive of the worlds of both texts together and give them contents by relating them to lived experience.

Whereas a significant proportion of the *historiolae* surveyed in the last chapter depicted the past actions of human protagonists, the vast majority of biblical quotations in the bowls recall divine actions. Insofar as they depict divine actions, these quotations appear to be directed at God and render the divinity himself the addressee or narratee of his own actions in order to prompt further action in the present. This makes them fertile ground for understanding key theological emphases within the Judaism of practitioners who produced the JBA bowls. And while the complementarity of some quotations to the aims of certain bowls is occasionally oblique or glancing, one of the more interesting points to emerge from the above discussion is the extent to which quotations such as Num 9:23, Exod 14:31, and Deut 6:4 may have been used to express the idea of protection for or action on behalf of those who trust in God. While these quotations functioned as 'statements of confidence' that sought to remind the deity of past provision and protection, they also stood as testimony to the bowl owner's trust in God. They thus establish a protective paradigm built upon trust in God. Insofar as these units of scripture emphasise piety, a relevant factor in their selection appears not just to have been their perceived relevance to apotropaic or curative goals, but their ability to

⁶⁰ The concept of authority has an elusive quality and is created, contested, and transformed in different historical eras and cultures. I use the term conventionally but advisedly to suggest an ascribed prestige, recognition, or status and the subsequent power to motivate and gain obedience. The use of scripture in the bowls is a function of scripture's authority as God's word and its ability to cut through power differentials between humans and malevolent transmundane beings.

establish—in perlocutionary terms—the loyalty of the bowls’ beneficiaries to God’s commandments and their merit.

The appendix to this chapter attests to the breadth and diversity of scriptural citations in the JBA bowls and demonstrates the extensive scriptural knowledge of many bowl practitioners. This sustained interaction with scripture affords us a vivid picture of the complex ways authoritative traditions were conceptualised and appropriated for aggressive, apotropaic, curative, and exorcistic purposes. The bowl practitioners did not just select quotations on the basis of their biblical context and their suitability for the purposes of the bowls but also de- or re-contextualised quotations on an analogy to the concerns at hand. We saw, for example, how Exod 14:20 was used as part of an incantation for sowing discord between a man and a woman. In light of these sophisticated deployments of scripture, this chapter has sought to examine the extent to which certain quotations may have been used to point beyond the ‘words in the bowl’ to invoke all or portions of relatively extensive biblical pericopae. Taking narrative as its starting point—and the selection of small units from longer narratives as its focus—this chapter has surveyed the deployment within the JBA incantation bowls of quotations from prose narratives found in the Hebrew Bible. It has asked to what extent these selected quotations could evoke and invoke the analogical power of select narratives or narrative paradigms from lengthier textual compositions via metonymic transfer. That is, it has examined not just the analogical capacity of these quotations to establish a connection between past and present, but their metonymic capacity to refer beyond the ‘words in the bowl’ to a larger whole than is quoted.

This chapter showed that while some quotations excerpted from longer narratives were used metonymically as well as analogically, others were used at ‘face value’ and were intended to function as independent units empowered by the highly specific precedents reflected in the ‘words in the bowl.’ Once again, a good example of this is Exod 14:20, whose particular thematic contents were tailored to—and made operative within—a very specific magical context. Likewise, Num 11:2 and 12:13 appear to have been deployed as independent units without reference to the narrative pericopae from which they were extracted. Even though the seriatim listing of these two verses alongside Num 9:23 summons up an index of a larger whole—such as the book of Numbers—these verses do not represent a synoptic type of metonymic use. Instead, the practitioners decontextualise these quotations in favour of the ‘face-value’ precedent invoked solely by the ‘words in the bowl.’ Thus Num 11:2 mediates and effectuates an act of divine intervention in the face of threat, while Num 12:13 reiterates

a plea for divine healing. Num 10:35 in AMB B3 and CAMIB 025A, as well as Num 10:36 in JBA 42, also appear to have been used as independent units, though the actual ‘words in the bowl’ recollect their other half in such a way that it seems possible—in light of the incantation texts in which these verses appear individually—that they were intended to embrace the complementary other half of the quoted verse.

This evidence suggests that the bowl practitioners viewed scripture more like a repository of individual thematic units. At the same time, however, Num 11:2 and 12:13 emphasise an act of human intercession, wherein a powerful human figure mediates between the human and the divine on behalf of the beneficiaries of the bowl. The choice of verses thus happens to reflect a paradigm very similar to that of Ḥanina ben Dosa and Joshua bar Peraḥia. Similarly, the use of Gen 30:22 in Museu da Farmácia 10895 reflects a broader matriarchal paradigm—embodied by Rachel in the Lisbon bowl but embedded at various points in Genesis and reflected more broadly in the Genizah materials—wherein infertility is specifically remediable by God.⁶¹ More concretely, Exod 14:31 in JNF 124 explicitly invokes a larger target (that encompasses the events at the Sea of Reeds at the very least, but which may extend to other pericopae within Exodus). Num 9:23 also appears to invoke a cluster of conceptually related parts of the book of Numbers wherein the faithful/protective paradigm is evident. This would cast Numbers—like Exodus in JNF 124—as a kind of repository of individual narrative units of which only certain units were appropriate to the apotropaic and exorcistic situation of these bowls. In this case, the interpretation of the verse in these bowls and the identification of their scriptural target relates to the type of metonymic transfer intended by each bowl practitioner. Unfortunately, the incantation bowls offer few clues towards this identification process, and only hint at the possible extent of these bowl practitioners’ ‘biblical’ book of Numbers.

These shifting metonymic targets complicate an otherwise inconclusive set of results, though this is not surprising in relation to the diverse deployment of scriptural quotations in the JBA incantation bowls. The study of the Bible in the bowls is only taking its first steps.⁶² This chapter has identified several areas that merit further investigation—the use of incipits within the bowl corpus, for example—and has furnished a more theoretically solid basis upon

⁶¹ See Salzer, *Die Magie der Anspielung*, 266–71.

⁶² See now Siam Bhayro, “A Jewish Aramaic Magic Bowl Containing the Formula of Ḥanina Ben Dosa, and the Problem of Psalm 24:8b in the Magic Bowls,” *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 28 (2018): 121–26 for the kind of detailed insights that investigations into the use of biblical quotations in the bowls can afford us.

which to build future research. It is now possible to understand—and to better investigate—the extent to which certain practitioners may have used certain verses to refer to a larger conceptual referent than the ‘mere’ words quoted in the bowl.

CHAPTER FIVE

The ‘I’ of the Beholder

First Person Narrative Spells in the JBA Bowls

INTRODUCTION

This chapter surveys various types of (primarily) first person narrative engagements with the transmundane world in the published JBA incantation bowls. Ranging from brief reports to extended depictions of transmundane experiences, these first person narratives establish an I who has overcome the limits of mundane reality and established a direct human witness to and embodiedness within the transmundane realm.¹ The implied authors of these first person narrative spells are the bowl practitioners, who are present elsewhere in the bowl texts in the threats and adjurations that they pronounce in the first person. In many cases, the I of these narrative spells is named as the beneficiary of the bowl. The incantations in which these

¹ Narrations of or by people who have undergone transmundane journeys are numerous across the ancient world. For a recent survey of otherworldly journeys, from Bilgamesh/Gilgamesh to the Orphic and Pythagorean Underworld complex through to Virgil and the Vision of Paul, see Fritz Graf, “Travels to the Beyond: A Guide,” in *Round Trip to Hades in the Eastern Mediterranean Tradition: Visits to the Underworld from Antiquity to Byzantium*, ed. Gunnel Ekroth and Ingela Nilsson (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 11–36. For an important and wide-ranging study of the *topos*, see Ioan Petru Culianu, *Out of This World: Otherworldly Journeys from Gilgamesh to Albert Einstein* (London: Shambhala, 1991). For two classic treatments of ascent and descent in the Jewish and Christian traditions, see Martha Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Martha Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell: An Apocalyptic Form in Jewish and Christian Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983). (But note the growing scholarly movement away from the terminology of apocalyptic *literature* towards apocalyptic *discourse*; the latter concept particularises specific perspectives and concerns within compositions that are often radically multi-generic.) See further below and in Chapter Six the literature cited in relation to the ascent in the Hekhalot literature.

spells appear, however, were almost certainly written by practitioners. This is especially evident in those cases where several bowls written by the same hand append the names of different beneficiaries to the first person singular pronoun of the narrative. Other bowls use more than one grammatical person (even across single sentences, and not just different spell formulae within incantations) to refer to the beneficiary. Very rarely, multiple named beneficiaries narrate the story in the first person plural or take turns as the first person singular narrator of the same experience.

The use of the first person in these narratives explicitly connects the bowl practitioner or the beneficiary to the events and experiences of the story and represents a pre-emptive response to Pierre Bourdieu's critique of the Austinian performative — to wit, that the illocutionary act is not just a matter of doing things with words but whether or not the speaker is invested with the authority to do those things with those words and thereby effect a change in the world.² The first person narrative spells that represent or form part of certain bowl incantations work to invest the incantation with an auto-prescriptive performative authority and force. Unlike the *historiola*, their narratives do not represent an appeal to external authority. Neither does the I of these spells represent a technique used in certain *historiolae* where the practitioner uses the first person to recast himself or herself as the mythical protagonist of the *historiola*. In an Egyptian spell, for example, the practitioner declares “I am that Thoth, that physician of the Eye of Horus,” while another Egyptian *historiola* ends with the words “It is I who speak, the Lord Jesus.”³ The effect of the personal pronoun in these *historiolae* is not to aggrandise the practitioner but to shift the agency and authority behind the spell away from the practitioner and towards the mythic protagonists Thoth or Jesus.⁴ By contrast, I argue that the narrative spells surveyed below implicate and emplot the I of the practitioner within the transmundane realm. They represent the practitioner's direct experience of the transmundane realm and its inhabitants and they convey the right and the capacity of the practitioner to act within that realm; to command, threaten, or otherwise engage the powerful beings that they depict themselves as having encountered there. These narratives represent a perlocutionary performance of authority that emphasises the basis for the explicit verbal actions that follow,

² Pierre Bourdieu, *Langage et pouvoir symbolique* (Paris: Seuil, 2001), 108–10, 161–69, 185–86.

³ PHearst [214] 14, 4-7 = Text 80, J.F. Borghouts, *Ancient Egyptian Magical Texts* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 48–49; Berlin 8313 = Text 49, Marvin Meyer and Richard Smith, eds., *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994), 95–97.

⁴ Frankfurter, “Narratives That Do Things,” 104.

precede, or are implicit in the narrative. The first person presentation of these narratives guarantees the direct accrual—and thus the validity—of the practitioner’s knowledge of angels and demons.

Though they are also short stories, these narratives thus reflect a very different use of narrative to the *historiola*. Besides these functional differences, these narratives also differ in many formal respects from the *historiolae* in the bowls. Despite these formal and functional differences, these two types of narrative spell are frequently conflated in bowl scholarship.⁵ Our understanding of the calculus of means available to the late antique magical practitioner is thereby diminished. As such, the first section of this chapter examines the distinctive differences between these first person narratives and the *historiola*, showing how far the distinction works to enrich our understanding of the forms and functions of narrative in late antique magic. This section also addresses the concept of the I and its relationship to the concept of the self, as well as the extent to which the ego of these spells—the denoted I—refers to the self of a particular bowl practitioner. I then turn to survey the variety of first person narrative spells in the published incantation bowls.

SECTION I

MORE THINGS (IN HEAVEN AND EARTH)

DISTINGUISHING THE HISTORIOLA FROM THE FIRST PERSON NARRATIVE BOWL SPELL

In this section I examine the relationship between the bowl practitioner and the anonymous first person narrator of these spell formulae. I then turn to distinguish the form and function of the *historiola* from the form and function of the first person narrative spells in the JBA incantation bowls. In Chapter Three I examined the nature of *historiolae*, and defined these as brief stories that were narrated with the goal of directing the paradigmatic power of mythic events and actions towards the resolution of everyday crises. Using the *historiola* form, the practitioner could marshal and conduct a form of external authority towards present circumstances, thereby affecting a cure or a curse or a pre-emptive strike against harmful beings. By

⁵ E.g. Levene, *Corpus*, 17; Shaked, “Transmission and Transformation,” 199; Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 15–16. Cf. Faraone, *Transformation of Greek Amulets*, 222 who very briefly—and without reference to other grammatical persons—nevertheless defines the *historiola* as “a Latin term used by modern scholars to explain the use of *third-person* narratives in curative or protective spells” (emphasis mine).

contrast, the effect of the narrative spells collated in this chapter is not to apply precedent or paradigm. Instead, these spells appear to be effective at least in part by their immediacy and the extent to which they reflect a dynamic personal engagement with the transmundane realm. Where the telling of the historiola functions as the fulcrum between the real-life situation and the resolution of (that same) crisis *in illo tempore*, the first person narrative spells in the bowls shape the I of these spells as the fulcrum between the mundane and transmundane realms. The I of these spells, for example, might ascend or descend to the transmundane realm in a fashion that resembles the narratives of ascent recounted in the Hekhalot literature.⁶ These spells thus establish the I as an actant in and between the mundane and transmundane realms.

⁶ Broadly speaking, the body of texts known as Hekhalot literature forms the earliest extended collection of Jewish ascent and adjuration texts. Known chiefly from mediaeval manuscripts and Genizah fragments, the Hekhalot literature is radically unstable and no absolute criteria exist for delimiting the boundaries of the corpus (which continues to resist basic social, geographic, and chronological classification). Encompassing an eclectic range of motifs, themes, and literary genres, a significant part of this literature depicts dramatic narratives of human ascent through the transmundane realm. Achieved through active human agency, these narratives recount the movement between earthly and heavenly realms. This particular strand of Hekhalot literature is often designated merkavah mysticism (with reference to the divine chariot-throne of Ezek 1, 10; cf. Dan 7). Equally central to the (thematic) structure of many Hekhalot compositions, however, are magical techniques for marshalling the assistance of angelic intermediaries for various practical purposes. The Hekhalot texts and the texts of the incantation bowls thus share several aims in addition to thematising the human potential to overcome the barriers between the mundane and transmundane realms. All the Hekhalot texts, however, ascribe their contents—both narrative and instructional—to a select group of early rabbinic figures, who also serve as the human actors in these texts. The anonymous first person narratives that comprise certain bowl spells thus do not exhibit the architecture of pseudonymous attribution that characterises the Hekhalot corpus. On the connections between the bowl texts and the Hekhalot literature—the evidence for which establishes the existence of Hekhalot texts as early as the late Sasanian period—see Naveh and Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae*, 17–22; Shaked, “Peace Be Upon You”; Lesses, *Ritual Practices*, 351–62; James R. Davila, *Descenders to the Chariot: The People Behind the Hekhalot Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 217–228; Levene, *Corpus*, 14–17; Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 23–27; Müller-Kessler, “Eine ungewöhnliche Hekhalot-Zauberschale”; Gideon Bohak, “Hekhalot Literature in the Cairo Genizah,” 220–21. Cf. Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 332–39 for a broader overview of the dis/continuities between late antique Jewish magic and mysticism, as well as Ra‘anan S. Boustán, “The Emergence of Pseudonymous Attribution in Heikhalot Literature: Empirical Evidence from the Jewish ‘Magical’ Corpora,” *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 14.1 (2007): 28–35. For a useful introduction to Hekhalot literature, see Boustán, “The Study of Heikhalot Literature: Between Mystical Experience and Textual Artifact.” For a programmatic statement of the fluid nature and open-ended redactional processes behind the Hekhalot literature, as well as an attempt to delineate the boundaries of the corpus, see Peter Schäfer, *Hekhalot-*

It is not uncommon for ritual practitioners across cultures to assume the first person when writing or reciting spells.⁷ Across the corpus of published bowls, we find the same first person narrative spells in different bowls produced by different practitioners and we cannot necessarily take the relationship between the I of these spells and the self of the practitioner for granted. Neither is self an unambiguous or clearly defined entity or concept, and what is at stake in our understanding of the first person stance in these spells are notions of personhood, constructions of the self, the similarity of ancient constructions of the self to modern (western) ideas of the self, and the relationship of the concept of self to the concept of I.⁸ It is

Studien (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1988), 8–16. The variegated late antique and mediaeval contexts within which Hekhalot literature developed are comprehensively examined in the contributions in Boustán, Himmelfarb, and Schäfer, eds., *Hekhalot Literature in Context*.

⁷ See, e.g. the ancient Egyptian materials discussed by Podemann Sørensen, “Ancient Egyptian Magical Formulae,” 9 and the contemporary Finnish materials discussed in Henni Ilomäki, “The Self of a Charm,” in *Charms and Charming in Europe*, ed. Jonathan Roper (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 47–58. Using the concept of the ‘ritual I’ to designate this verbal expression of self, Ilomäki has argued that the assumption of the ‘ritual I’ is more than empty semantics but an embodied state or experience manifested through recitation.

⁸ Alongside related and/or overlapping terms like ‘I,’ ‘subject,’ and ‘person,’ the concept of self is hard to pinpoint, while the validity of the modern category of self in respect to antiquity has been questioned by several scholars. For a classic treatment of the diverse meanings and referents of self (*moi*) or person (*personne*) in various cultures, see Marcel Mauss, “A Category of the Human Mind: The Notion of Person; The Notion of Self,” in *The Category of the Person: Anthropology, Philosophy, History*, ed. Michael Carrithers, Steven Collins, and Steven Lukes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 1–25. For other studies on selfhood in various contexts, see, e.g. Christopher Gill, *The Structured Self in Hellenistic and Roman Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Richard Sorabji, *Self: Ancient and Modern Insights about Individuality, Life, and Death* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006); Gretchen Reydam-Schils, *The Roman Stoics: Self, Responsibility, and Affection* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Henry Wheeler Robinson, *Corporate Personality in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981). Scholars of Jewish literature have also taken an increased interest in notions of the self in recent decades. The discovery and dissemination of the Dead Sea Scrolls in particular has galvanised much of the discussion around early Jewish understandings of personhood; the larger part of this discussion has thus taken place around late Second Temple texts that revolve around concerns of human interiority and communal identity. See, e.g. Shannon Burkes, *God, Self, and Death: The Shape of Religious Transformation in the Second Temple Period* (Leiden: Brill, 2003); Carol A. Newsom, *The Self as Symbolic Space: Constructing Identity and Community at Qumran* (Leiden: Brill, 2004); Carol A. Newsom, “Models of the Moral Self: Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Judaism,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 131.1 (2012): 5–25; Carol A. Newsom, “Toward a Genealogy of the Introspective Self in Second Temple Judaism,” in *Functions of Psalms and Prayers in the Late Second Temple Period*, ed. Mika S. Pajunen and Jeremy Penne (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2017), 63–79. On the negotiation and development of the concept

of course easy enough to elide such questions by pointing to the ease with which we identify the adjuring I of the incantation bowls with the individuals that wrote each bowl. Nevertheless, a proper understanding of the mechanism of the first person narrative spells in the bowls demands some interrogation of the relationship between the social I—as presented by the practitioner in daily life—and the verbally expressed I of the spell.

In what follows, I adopt a social constructionist approach to self and define a person as a member of a group that adopts the behavioural models of that group, in light of which the emergence of the subject is cast as a social process. This process presumes the pre-existence of the group and the interaction of individuals in the group and it is shaped by the discourse of the group and its symbolic practices. It also presupposes a fundamental cognitive assumption—the individual’s mental and physical awareness of their bodily and individual existence—that permits a distinction between the individual’s sense of self and the socio-cultural category of self (wherein a conscious concept of self only gradually arises along a socialised learning curve). In Clifford Geertz’s formulation, tracking down the discourse of the self in a given group or culture is thus a matter of “searching out and analyzing the symbolic forms—words, images, institutions, behaviors—in terms of which, in each place, people actually represented themselves to themselves and to one another.”⁹

Moving from the concept of the social self to the I of the bowl texts, and presupposing that at least some kind of relationship was intended between the words of the bowls and the person who wrote them, some kind of awareness of an individual self on the part of the practitioner must have existed. The reproduction of spell formulae—and by extension the possible existence of formularies—are also a sign of both the bowl practitioner’s autonomy and their membership of a group or a culture and a profession. On the level of their profession, the practitioner can be construed primarily as a creature of their inheritance — that is, their learnt repertoire. The repertoire of the bowl practitioners embraces in part the idea of a ‘social dialect,’ a term that articulates the existence of different sub-communities within a group or culture. This is not a matter of traditional dialect geography but instead concerns the ways in which language is socially stratified and stratifying. These stratifications map communities, and the contours of these strata may be traced—for example—along the lines of gender, age,

of a bodily self in early rabbinic Judaism, primarily through the lens of im/purity, see Mira Balberg, *Purity, Body, and Self in Early Rabbinic Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).

⁹ Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 58.

religion, occupation, class, relative urbanisation, and so on. Different sub-communities use different but overlapping stocks of words to talk about different topics, while the stylistic features, grammatical forms, tone, genre, and degree of formality of their spoken and written output will vary. Social dialects “give differential substance to membership in a social group,”¹⁰ and the learning process concerning magical formulae undergone by the bowl practitioners, wherein certain features of the self-as-practitioner developed, propose a partial answer to the question ‘Who am I?’ Of course, the bowl practitioners’ distinct professional language system was only one part of the dense linguistic texture of their discursive world (which would have encompassed numerous overlapping social dialects).¹¹ Nevertheless, available in a compartmentalised way as a structure of social meaning, the existence within their repertoire of narrative formulae that contained verbal expressions of an I sets up the possibility that the individual bowl practitioner could be called into a more active identification with the textual I of the spell.

On the level of the utterance, one never speaks except to someone and the I of these narrative spells is a symbol that is designed to cause a response in the implied transmundane reader of the incantation. In speaking or writing, “one actively takes up a subject position within a discourse. Ownership of the discourse, and the identity that comes from it is strongly enhanced through the act of speaking in its terms and its accents.”¹² Taking each bowl as a *sui generis* communication in its own right—regardless of the parallels between bowls—the I of the first person narrative bowl spells cannot be explained as a semantically hollow expression.¹³ Within the discourse of the bowls, a very specific role is realised and the I of the

¹⁰ Richard Terdiman, *Discourse/Counter Discourse: The Theory and Practice of Symbolic Resistance in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 54.

¹¹ On social dialects, see Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 295–96.

¹² Newsom, *The Self as Symbolic Space*, 14.

¹³ Pace Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 15 who state that “Bowls using the first-person singular style of narrative make no pretence to impart the illusion of a personal vision. The spells may be repeated in several bowls, each written by a different scribe. As a magical spell these narratives are part of the repertory of magicians, and anyone can copy and reproduce them.” The fact that spell formulae were reproduced by different practitioners across multiple products is appreciable and significant only from our perspective as textual scholars. But we should not allow this perspective to unduly influence our understanding of the likely intent of these spells or allow us to disregard their context. Inscribed on individual bowls as autonomous communications, the purpose of these spells almost certainly appears to have been to establish the veracity of a personal experience undergone by the practitioner *in their role as an anti-demonic professional* (regardless of

incantation—and thus the I of the practitioner—shifts on a textual level to encompass the I of the narrative spell without requiring us to attribute shamanistic or visionary characteristics or practices to the bowl practitioners. On the level of the magic text—where the text does what it says it does—the horizon of the practitioner expands through their narration to encompass a direct experience of the transmundane realm. In much the same way that each historiola is a myth—and does not reflect some putative ur- or macro-myth—so each first person narration within the bowls—on the level of the text—is the event in itself. From the perspective of the implied transmundane readers of these narratives, the implied author of the bowl undertook these ascents and descents because they just said that they did so. They possess the knowledge of the workings of the cosmos that they possess because they went on these journeys. The narrating self of the spell reports the actions and experiences of the spell from a vantage point that—apparent not least in the choice of grammatical person—is proximate enough to the events and experiencing self of the spell that the intended implication of the I is inescapable.¹⁴ All is straightforward: the I of the narrator is the I of the adjurer is the I of the implied author is the I of the practitioner. What the narrator sees and hears really was seen and heard.

What all these spells have in common is that they communicate or imply knowledge in a way that recalls the etymological root of the word ‘narrative.’ ‘Narrate’ comes from the Sanskrit root *-gna* (know), which also yields the Greek *ginoskō* (I know) and the Latin *gnarus* (knowing or skilful)). These spells demonstrate an accrual of information—whether implicit or explicit in the narration—that inflates the practitioner’s horizon as well as providing an explanans for their facility with—and their authority over—the transmundane realm.

whether the bowl practitioner as an individual ever sought or experienced an unmediated vision of the transmundane realm akin to that sought by the Hekhalot mystics).

¹⁴ On the distinction and relations between the ‘experiencing I’ and the ‘narrating I,’ see Dorrit Cohn, *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978). Cohn places the relationships between the narrating self and the experiencing self in first person narratives on a sliding scale between dissonance and consonance. In dissonant first person narratives, the narrating self or narrating I possesses the quality of perspective and the ability to move back and forth in time; to evaluate and analyse; to refer back to the past self (or selves) and to explain or contradict the thoughts, speech, and actions of that past self (that is, the experiencing I or the I as character, the I that underwent or undertook the events or actions that comprise the story). In consonant first person narratives, the narrating self or narrating I recounts what happened from a vantage point that is proximate to the experiencing self or experiencing I. In this form of narration, distinguishing between the experiencing self and the narrating self can be exceedingly difficult, and events may be narrated exclusively through the experiencing I.

In this light, the first person narrative spell in the bowls functions as a kind of technology of the self.¹⁵ By recounting various first person engagements with—and experiences within—the transmundane realm, these narratives establish the reality of the practitioner outside the bounds of mundane existence and reinforce their ability to communicate directly and effectively with beings and powers that are not ordinarily perceptible. They provide an arena wherein the dissolution of the boundaries between the mundane and the transmundane can be affected and a penetrative knowledge of the transmundane realm attested. It seems reasonable to argue that these narrative spells imply a hierarchy of authority arranged in terms of the directness of the encounter that they describe and the detail they expound.¹⁶ The veridicality of their experience of the otherworld is reinforced by the intensity of the vision and its vividness of detail. As a result, the narrative spells in this section (especially in contrast to the *historiolae* surveyed in Chapter Three) may be said to be characterised by more things: more marvelous sights, more ambiguous beings, and more details of the transmundane landscape.

More importantly for the typology of the narrative spells in bowls, however, is the association of the I of the narrative spell with the I of the practitioner or beneficiary. Because they are associated with the practitioner, these first person narrative spells—unlike *historiolae*—possess a strong proximate temporal reference. Though they might bear certain mythical qualities, the events narrated in these spells do not reflect events that occurred *in illo tempore*. Instead, they reflect a proximate past bounded by the experience of the practitioner-as-implicit-author. The expertise that they reflect is not a knowledge of the past patterned into paradigm (as in the *historiola*). Neither is the overarching movement of these narratives necessarily towards the resolution of a situation (as in *historiolae*).

Besides recounting a proximate experience, many of these first narrative person spells also reflect a greater variety and scale of formal and thematic structures than the *historiolae* surveyed in Chapter Three, as well as displaying a wider range of converging structural and dynamic configurations. The majority of *historiolae* in the bowls reflect a straightforward pat-

¹⁵ For a useful recent discussion of Jewish writings that feature stories or discussions about the ontological transformation of the human self as it enters transmundane space (in particular, the presence of God), see Tyson L. Putthoff, *Ontological Aspects of Early Jewish Anthropology: The Malleable Self and the Presence of God* (Leiden: Brill, 2017).

¹⁶ Descriptions—and the accumulation thereof—are generally assumed to contribute considerably to the creation of what Roland Barthes, “L’effet de réel,” *Communications* 11 (1968): 84–89 felicitously termed *l’effet de réel* or the ‘reality effect.’

tern of instability-complication-resolution. They represent a predominantly episodic structure that consists of a series of episodes—defined by an episode onset, episode centre, and episode conclusion—strung straightforwardly together. By contrast, many of the first person narrative spells in the bowls reflect a movement towards the expansion or dissolution of this pattern of episodic narrative. In many respects—loosely speaking—they reflect a greater ‘narrativity.’ By this I mean that they make more extensive use of some of the fundamental characteristics that constitute a narrative: plot, point of view, setting, and characterisation. This is most apparent in the looser patterning of their plots, whose structure reflects lesser emphasis on overall onset and conclusion in terms of instability and resolution. The conspicuous through-line of the *historiolae* in the bowls—manifested in their swift concatenation of events—is obscured to a degree in many of the first person narrative spells in the bowls. The concatenation of events in these first person spells is most frequently eclipsed by an expansion of dialogue and/or descriptive passages, particularly towards the centre of these narratives. Descriptive passages in particular gain in centrality in these narratives, and the setting of these narratives is thereby foregrounded. Events that impinge on the protagonist—central to the progression of many *historiolae*—are also increasingly replaced by the actions of the I in the first person narrative spells. At the same time, this leads to an increase in encountered incidences (the core of the experiential episode) in many of these spells. The type of experiential quality that is typical of these incidences and episodes is linked to the first person point of view, such that the ‘tellability’ of these story consists in or derives from the extraordinary sights witnessed by the ‘I’ or the things that the I heard. The nature of these experiential episodes also sometimes causes episodes to run into one another in a way that makes the distinction between the beginnings and endings of episodes within the narrative difficult to determine: often the ‘I’ just perceives something anew, thereby initiating a new episode, which may be much the same as the apparently ended episode.

The narrative schemata of experientiality operative in these spells places a premium on description, which is of particular interest for the insight it allows into the imagination of the transmundane realm. Many of the spells surveyed in this chapter are marked by an insistence on seeing and an attempt to give a verbal shape to the things seen. The bowl texts as a whole are also marked by the sheer physicality—unto gruesomeness—of many demons. The typically non-observable essence of these beings is expressed in various formulae in concrete, non-speculative terms. The strategies of visualisation employed in the first person narrative spells in particular include the use of vivid multi-sensory language and imagery—particularly

in relation to narrative features such as persons and scenes. From the outset of many of these spells, things are seen or heard (while the processes of eating, drinking, anointing and their effects on both human and demonic bodies are also prominent in some spells). These visual and auditory expressions are then continuously reemphasised throughout these spells. What unfolds is a transmundane panorama, populated by various beings whose corporeality is expressed in material terms; a concrete place with definable concrete features that reflects a ‘story world’ in a sense of the term that is slightly different to the way I used it in Chapter Three. This sense of ‘story world’ reflects the creation of a complete *mise en scène* within which the practitioner’s desires can be played out and the security of the beneficiaries safeguarded.

Description is an integral component of many forms of narration, and while the importance of the concept of description has been widely recognised by commentators, narrative theory has accorded comparatively little attention to the forms and functions of description within narratives.¹⁷ Every narrative of course comprises two kinds of closely interwoven representation—the representation of actions and/or events and the representation of objects or persons—but narrative theory for a long time viewed description as ornamental while many narratologists preoccupied themselves with the attempt to establish a clear-cut distinction between narration and description.¹⁸ Other scholars have argued that a “clear distinction between narration and description is, of course, untenable.”¹⁹ Verbs of action, for example, are not necessarily exempt from descriptive resonance, and there is a marked difference between representing a person as picking up a knife vs. a person grabbing a knife, just

¹⁷ For an extended attempt to deal with the problems involved in the concept and definition of description, see Werner Wolf, “Description as a Transmedial Mode of Representation: General Features and Possibilities of Realization in Painting, Fiction and Music,” in *Description in Literature and Other Media*, ed. Walter Bernhart and Werner Wolf (Amsterdam: Brill/Rodopi, 2007), 1–87.

¹⁸ The common distinction between narration and description is exemplified by the definition of description offered in two narratological encyclopaedias. See Gerald Prince, *A Dictionary of Narratology*, 2nd ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 19: “The representation of objects, beings, situations, or (non-purposeful, non-volitional) happenings in their spatial rather than temporal existence, their topological rather than chronological functioning, their simultaneity rather than succession. It is traditionally distinguished from NARRATION and from COMMENTARY.” Compare Torsten Pflugmacher, “Description,” in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, ed. David Herman, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan (Routledge, 2005), 101: “Classical narratology defines description as a narrative pause interrupting the presentation of the chain of events.”

¹⁹ Evelyn Cobley, “Description in Realist Discourse: The War Novel,” *Style* 20.3 (1986): 397.

as the choice of the verb ‘to strangle’ in the Semamit story lends precision and resonance to the act of killing in that episode of the historiola. To ascend or descend—or simply to establish oneself as stood within the transmundane realm—also carry markedly different resonances. And though it is possible to conceive of a purely descriptive text, in practice there are no purely descriptive genres, and description as a mode of verbal representation cannot be clearly distinguished from narration. In sum, the study of the relations between narration and description amounts to the study of the functions that descriptive aspects or passages play within the general economy of a given narrative.²⁰ Nevertheless, as Ansgar Nünning points out, there are surprisingly few studies that devote much systematic attention to the forms and functions of different kinds of description in narrative.²¹ This is naturally not the venue for the development of any such systematic framework, though I do briefly consider the functions of description in the spells below, as well as taking up this topic in more depth in Chapter Six.

Before turning to survey these spells, however, I note in sum the distinctions I have drawn between the historiola and the first person narrative spell in the JBA bowl texts.²² I have argued that the I of the narrative spell should be identified with the implied self or author of the incantation text (which should be understood as an autonomous communicative whole directed to the named addressees).²³ As a consequence, the temporal distance between the narration and the events narrated is much lesser in the first person narrative spell than in the historiola; the narrator or governing voice of some of the first person narrative spells also sometimes use deictic expressions to refer to the time of the events, while most of these spells

²⁰ Gérard Genette, *Figures of Literary Discourse*, 134.

²¹ For important exceptions, see the chapter entitled “Description Is No Textual Handmaiden” in Seymour Chatman, *Coming to Terms: The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 38–55; Mieke Bal, “On Meanings and Descriptions,” *Studies in Twentieth-Century Literature* 6.1–2 (1981/1982): 100–147; José Manuel Lopes, *Foregrounded Description in Prose Fiction: Five Cross-Literary Studies* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995). For a further bibliography and an attempt to develop an analytical framework, typology, and poetics of different kinds of description, see Ansgar Nünning, “Towards a Typology, Poetics and History of Description in Fiction,” in Bernhart and Wolf, ed., *Description in Literature*, 91–128.

²² In summarising these distinctions, I draw heavily on the typological text profiles developed by Alexander Samely et al., *Profiling Jewish Literature in Antiquity: An Inventory, from Second Temple Texts to the Talmuds* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

²³ The proximate knowledge horizon of the first person voice in these spells is sometimes further compounded by an identification (in the governing voice) of the narrator with the proper name of the beneficiary.

commence with an explicit introduction of the spatial setting of their action. As a result, there is a much lesser emphasis on long-established precedent or paradigm in the first person narrative spell, as well as a greater investment in the point of view of the first person narrator. The action of ascent or descent as well as the direct gaze of the ‘I’ are used to thematise how the narrator has come to know the contents of their narration (as well as their implicit right to command obedience from the addressee). In some cases, the transmundane knowledge presented in the text is presented as having been achieved through transmundane mediators or informants. Attendant on the role of the narrator as a direct observer of events or as an actor within the events of some first person narrative spells is an emphasis on experientiality and an expansion of description. The pace of some of the first person narrative spells is considerably slowed down by the occurrence of extended descriptions. This extends from description of the physical setting or landscape to the outward appearance of transmundane persons. The narrative pace is also frequently slowed down or changed by an increase (in the prominence) of reported or direct speech. The longer first person narrative spells also narrate events which are strongly emplotted; they depict interlocking happenings, characters, motivations, causes, times, and/or locations. Unlike many *historiolae*, which recount the fate of one primary character and/or a small group of supporting characters, and wherein (subordinate) events are presented as preparing one crisis and its solution, the longer first person narrative spells present complex series of events which do not necessarily lead towards only one crisis and solution, nor contribute solely to only one person’s story.

SECTION II

SURVEY OF FIRST PERSON NARRATIVE SPELLS IN THE PUBLISHED JBA BOWLS

The narrative spells surveyed in this section generally begin with a statement of orientation or a movement of the I towards reorientation within the transmundane realm. Examples include “I stand upon a mountain of stone,” “I descended to the depths of the earth,” “I ascended against you,” and “I went up to the roof.” In what follows, I group these spells according to the direction of their movement and the orientation, actions, and experiences of their narrators. This survey also includes several spells recounted by an anonymous narrator who—unlike the I of most of the spells surveyed in this section—does not play a role within the events that are narrated. Though the apparent function of these spells is close to that of the

historiola, I include them in this section because of the larger number of features they share with the first person narrative spell as defined above.

SEEING AND HEARING WITH THE I ASCENTS AND DESCENTS

'I descended to the depths of the earth'

The first person narrative spell commencing “I descended to the depths of the earth” is one of the more popular extended spells in the JBA incantation bowls. It appears in the published editions of five bowls (two of which are damaged). In a recent article, James Nathan Ford further quotes (brief) sections of the spell from three unpublished bowls in private collections.²⁴ The same spell also appears in a number of unpublished bowls in the Schøyen Collection.²⁵ Its ubiquity means it has formed part of an extensive discussion on the transmission of bowl formulae.²⁶ Shaked has also discussed the dramatic structure of the spell as part of a series of articles on the poetics of the bowls.²⁷

The narrative begins with the descent of the I to the depths of the earth. Shortly thereafter, the scene shifts on the vertical axis and the underground action is repositioned in the upper world. This shift in setting is accomplished through a series of narrations embedded within the primary narrative. These narrations are recounted in nested Russian-doll style by different speakers. (They also reflect various transmundane locations: we move from the roots of the world to the divine atmosphere via an audial encounter, and from there to the tombs of the dead and onwards to lightning-lit clouds.) The focalisation of the first person narrative spell in the bowls is thus not necessarily restricted to the first person narrator but can shift to other characters. ‘Focalisation’ is a term coined by Gérard Genette that has prov-

²⁴ JNF 148, 245, 21 = Ford, “Three Hapax Legomena,” 11–12. Ford quotes from these bowls in the context of his discussion of the root פשח.

²⁵ MS 1927/17, MS 2053/61, MS 2053/71, MS 2053/257. Complete editions of these bowls will appear in the forthcoming fifth volume of *Jewish Babylonian Aramaic Bowls* in Brill’s MRLA series. In the meantime, I am exceedingly grateful to Shaul Shaked for permission to quote the narrative spells included in these bowls.

²⁶ See Levene, *Corpus*, 95–99, though the discussion therein has largely been superseded by Shaked, “Transmission and Transformation,” 191–92, 199, 204–7. See also Ford, “Three Hapax Legomena,” 11–12.

²⁷ Shaked, “Transmission and Transformation,” 199–203.

en useful in the refinement of point of view and narrative perspective.²⁸ It asks ‘who sees?’ in a given narrative and may be defined as the selection or restriction of narrative information in relation to the experience and knowledge of the narrator or the characters (or other entities) within the world of the story. The overall narration of the ‘I descended’ spell may be described as a case of variable, internal focalisation, whereby the events of the narrative are further focalised through a secondary narrator—Segan the swift angel—who stands before God on behalf of the children that have been devoured by four large child-strangling beings. From Segan, the focalisation shifts to the bereaved mothers of these lost children. The narrative culminates with the identification and subsequent neutralisation of these four beings. These harmful beings are provided with names in some of the incantation bowls.

1. MS 1927/61 = Shaked 2011: 207-208

An apotropaic incantation bowl prepared for the children of Mahdukh d. Newandukh

(2) לחיקרי ארעה

(3) נחתית עיקרי ת[יביל] חזיתי בעיני רעשי תיביל א[י]סתכל[ית] בהון

(4) והא שמעית קל מילולאה דיממליל מיגו חשמלא מליליל וכן אמר אנה הוא סגן

(5) מלאכה קלילאה דקאים קודם מריה דעלמה על ולדי נשייא דמיתחטפין ומפשח וכן אמר

(6) על קברי מיתי יתיבית והא שמעית קל נשיא דתוחן ומתוחן בכיין ומב[כיין] צוחן [ומצוח]ן מפשחן

בחד קלא וכין אמרן

(7) בידמות ברקא הוינא בדמות עננין איתילידנא והא ארבע חיון רברבן דמישתדרן על ולדנא דחאנקן

וחטפן מממרקן ואכלן

(8) כאריה דחטיף וחניק מממריק ואכיל אילין אינן דחנקן וחטפן מממרקן וא[כ]לן כען אסיריתן

וחתימיתון בשמיה רבה ובעזקתיה

(9) דקדוש ובשמיה דעיליון ובמילוליה דשדי דלא תסכלון ולא תחבלון ולא תנוקון ביבנ[ין] דאית לה

ודהון לה למהד[ו]ך בת ניונדוך

(2) I descended to the depths

(3) of the earth. I saw the roots of [the world] with my eyes. I looked at the tremors of the world,

(4) and lo, I heard a voice of speech which speaks from the midst of the Ḥašmal, speaking

²⁸ Gérard Genette, “Discours du récit,” in *Figures III* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), 67–282. Genette intended ‘focalisation’ to function more or less as a synonym for ‘perspective’ and ‘point of view,’ though the concept as elaborated diverges from these traditional terms.

and saying thus: I am Segan

- (5) the swift angel who stands in the presence of the Lord of the World on behalf of the children of women who are snatched away, and who cries out and says thus:
- (6) I sat upon the tombs of the dead, and lo, I heard the voice of women who wail and cry, weep and sob, shriek [and scream], cry out in one voice and say thus:
- (7) We have come into being in the shape of lightning, we were born in the shape of clouds, and lo! four great beasts that are sent against our children, who strangle and snatch, crush and devour,
- (8) like a lion that snatches and strangles, crushes and devours. These are the ones who strangle and snatch, crush and devour. Now you are bound and sealed by His great name and by the signet-ring
- (9) of the Holy One and by the name of Elyon, and by the speech of Shaddai, that you should not harm or injure or damage the children that Mahdukh d. Newandukh has and those that she will have.

Descending to the depths of the earth, the I is witness to the tremoring foundation of the world. The I then hears a voice. This voice speaks from out of the Ḥašmal—Shaked translates ‘electrum’ and the term appears to refer to the rarefied atmosphere that surrounds the Lord of the World—and names the speaker as Segan the swift angel who stands in the presence of the Lord of the World.²⁹ Stationed between the divine presence and the world below, Segan identifies himself as a kind of spokesperson for lost children. It appears that, in this representative role, Segan stands before the divinity and recollects a story of his own: sitting upon the tombs of the dead, he himself experiences an audial encounter. He hears the voices of women raised in anguish. Crying out in unison, these women themselves speak and recount a vision of four

²⁹ *Hašmal* is of course that hapax legomenon which appears at Ezek 1:4 as part of Ezekiel’s theophanic vision by the river Kebar. The Septuagint renders the Hebrew as *elektron*. Rabbinic tradition explained the term as an abbreviation of חיות אש ממלכות, “living creatures speaking fire.” See b. Ḥag. 13a-b. In light of the co-occurrence of the four living creatures in l. 7, these narrative spell formulae naturally bring to mind the biblical theophany. The Hebrew word *hašmal* derives from the Akkadian *elmešu*. Whether (the author of) Ezekiel had access to Babylonian scientific learning (as preserved in the Babylonian text KAR 307, for instance) is an open question, but see Mladen Popović, “Ancient Jewish Cultural Encounters and a Case Study on Ezekiel,” in *Cultural Encounters in the Ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern World*, ed. Mladen Popović, Myles Schoonover, and Marijn Vandenberghe (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 1–12 for a judicious approach to the evidence (as well as a bibliography). For further on the appearance of first-millennium BCE cuneiform and alphabetic materials in the bowls, see Chapter Six.

great beings sent against their children. These beings mangle and crush their children (with their teeth) and devour them like a lion devours its prey. The nested Russian-doll dialogue of the narration makes the boundaries of the characters' speeches—as well as the precise end of the spell—difficult to identify. However, it seems likely that the speech of the bereaved women ends “like a lion that snatches and strangles, crushes and devours,” and that Segan then addresses his speech again to the I—this time ostensibly—in order to directly identify for the I the four beings who strangle, snatch, crush, and devour. At this point, one of three things occurs. Either the narrative ends and the adjuring-I of the incantation speaks. Or the I of the narration speaks within the narrative—in ear-shot of Segan—and binds these four beings against harming the children of Mahdukh. Or Segan himself continues to speak—in ear-shot of the practitioner—and binds the four beings in the presence of God. By contrast, MS 2053/13 elides the demonstrative and moves straight from the women's speech to the binding:

2. MS 2053/13 = Shaked 2011: 209

An apotropaic incantation bowl prepared for the children of Mahdukh d. Newandukh

- (3) לחיקרי ארעא נחתית עיקרי תיב[י]ל ח[זי]תי בעיני
- (4) רעשי תיביל איסתכל[ית] בהון והא שמעית קל מילולא [דיממ]ליל מיגו חשמ[לא]
- (5) [מ]מליל וכין אמר א[נה] הו[א] סגן מלאכה קלילא דקאים קודם מ[ארי]ה דעלמה [על ולדי נשי]א דמיתח[ט]פין ומפ[שח]
- (6) [וכין אמ]ר על קברי מיתי יתיב[י]ת והא שמעית קל נשיא דתוחן
- (7) ומת[ו]חן צ[ו]חן ומצ[ו]חן בכין ומבכין [ו]מפשחן [ו]כין אמרן בידמות ברק[א] הוינא בידמות ענגנ[ין] אית[י]לדנא
- (8) וה[א] ארבע חיון רברבן דמישדרן על ולדנא דחנקן וחטפן ממרקן ואכלן כאריה [ד]חטיף וחניק ממריק ואכיל כען אסיריתון וחתימיתון ...

(3) I descended to the depths of the earth. I saw the roots of the world with my eyes.

(4) I looked at the tremors of the world, and lo, I heard a voice of speech [which sp]eaks from the midst of the Ḥašmal,

(5) speaking and saying thus: I am [Segan] the swift angel who stands in the presence of the Lord of the World [on behalf of the children of women] who are snatched away, and who cri[es out]

(6) [and says thus]: I sat upon the tombs of the dead, and lo, I heard the voice of women who wail

- (7) and cry, shriek and scream, weep and sob [and] cry out [and] say thus: We have come into being in the shape of lightning, we were born in the shape of clouds,
- (8) and lo! four great beasts that are sent against our children, who strangle and snatch, crush and devour, like a lion [that] snatches and strangles, crushes and devours. Now you are bound and sealed, etc.

In this spell, the I is once more brought to an awareness of the four harmful beasts through the nested narration of Segan and the bereaved mothers, though the narrative appears to end with the women's speech. At this point, the adjuring I of the incantation moves to bind these four beings. Nevertheless, the movement of the narrative in both incantation bowls—despite the to-and-fro of the shifting setting—is ultimately a movement towards direct knowledge. In each case, a kind of transmundane ombudsman—through a nested narration of their own—directly identifies for the practitioner a quartet of harmful beings. This identification itself occurs within the transmundane realm, the atmosphere of which is concisely sketched through various sudden transportations: from the tremoring roots of the world to the divine ether through a further katabasis to the tombs of the dead and a further anabasis to a vision of lightning-lit clouds. These spatial and temporal distortions are unified through the person of Segan, whose report to the I clarifies the nature of the threat to the beneficiaries' children.

The minor differences between MS 1927/61 and MS 2053/13 aside, the variant texts of this story are very consistent. Like MS 1927/61, for example, MS 2053/188 also concludes with an ostensive identification of the four beasts, meaning that the second person objective pronoun of the subsequent adjuration—whether this adjuration is spoken by Segan, the adjuring-I, or the narrating-I—is wholly identified with the four beasts of the narrative.

3. MS 2053/188 = Shaked 2011: 208

An apotropaic incantation bowl prepared for the children of Mahdukh d. Newandukh

(1) [לחי]קרי ארעה נחתית לחיקרי ארעא

(2) נחתית עיקרי [תיביל] חזיתי בעיני רעשי תיביל איסתכלית [ב]הון והא

(3) שמעית קל מילולאה [די] ממליל מיגו חשמלא ממליל ממליל [ו] כן אמר א[נה הוא] סגן מלאכה

(4) קלילא דקאים [ק]ודם מריה [דעלמ]ה על ול[די נ]ש[יי]א דמיתחטפין ומפש[ח ו] כין אמר על קברי

[מיתי יתיבי]ת

(5) והא [שמ]עית קל [נשייא ד]תוחן ומתוחן בכיין ומבכין ומפשחן וצוחן וכין [אמרן כיד]מות ברקאה

הוינאה כידמות

(6) עננ[ין] איתלדנאה והא ארבע חיון רברבן דמישתדרן על ולדנאה דחאנקן ו[חטפ]ן מממרקן ואכלן

כאריה דחטיף וחאניק

(7) מממריק ואכ[י]ל [א]י[לי]ן אינ[ין] ד[חנקן] וחטפן מממרקן ואכלן כען אסיריתון וחתימיתון בשמיה

[ר]בה ובעיזקתיה דקדוש ...

(1) I descended [to the dep]ths of the earth. To the depths of the earth

(2) I descended. I saw the roots of [the world] with my eyes. I looked at the tremors of the world and lo,

(3) I heard a voice of speech, [which] speaks from the midst of the Ḥašmal. It was speaking, speaking, [and] saying thus: I [am] Segan the swift

(4) angel who stands in the presence of the Lord [of the World] on behalf of the [children of women] who are snatched away and who cries out and says thus: I [sat] on the tombs of [the dead]

(5) and lo, I heard the voice of [women who] wail and cry, weep and sob and cry and shriek and [say] thus: “We were [in the lik]eness of lightening, we were born in the likeness

(6) of clouds, and lo! four great beasts that are sent against our children, who strangle and [snatch], crush and devour, like a lion that snatches and strangles,

(7) crushes and devours. [It is] they [who] strangle and snatch, crush and devour. Now you are bound and sealed by the great name and by the signet-ring of the Holy One, etc.

In some versions of the story, the child-snatching assailants are named, though the published bowls in which these ‘I descended’ spells appear are damaged:

4. M 142 = Corpus: 93-94

An apotropaic incantation bowl prepared for Adad Gušnas s. Mahdukh and Iṣpandarmid d. Tahmandukh

(2) [...] מרי עלמא על [...] דמיתחטיפ[ין] [...] א ארבע ח[יון] [...] חדא מ[ינהי]ן [...] [...]

(3) חדא מינהין אמו(מי)תא חדא מנהין בליליתא [...]

(2) [...] Lord of the World on behalf of [...] who are snatched away [...] and lo!] four

b[east]s [...] one of them [...]

(3) one of them (is) ’mw(my)t’, one of them is blylyt’ [...]

5. Aaron E = Geller 1986: 114³⁰

An apotropaic incantation bowl prepared for Ahay s. Mešaršita and Immoy d. [?]

[...] ם מרי עלמא על ולדי נשיי [...] ⁽⁴⁾

[...] איתא אמומיתא בליליתא וצחלית בת ימא ואילין אינין דחנקו ⁽⁷⁾

⁽⁴⁾ [...] before] the Lord of the World on behalf of the children of women [...]

⁽⁷⁾ [...] 'ta, 'mwmyt', blylyt', and šhlyt bt ym'. And these are the ones who strangle [...]

The text of the 'I descended' spell also appears in several unpublished bowls that are better preserved than Aaron E and M 142. Larger and smaller portions of these bowls have been quoted by James Ford in a recent publication:

6. JNF 148 = Ford 2017: 11

An incantation bowl prepared for [———]

בחקרי ארעה נחתית עיקרי תיביל חזיתי בעיני ורעשי תיביל איסתכלית בהון והא שמעית קל ⁽¹⁻⁴⁾
מילולה דיממליל מן גו חשמלה ממליל ממליל וכין אמר אנא הוא סגי קלילא דמפשח קדם מרי
עלמא על ולדי נשיה דמיתחטפין מפשח וכין אמר על קברי מיתין יתיבית והא נשיה דתוחן
ומתוחן וכין אמרן ...

⁽¹⁻⁴⁾ I descended to the depths of the earth. I saw the roots of the world with my eyes and I looked at the tremors of the world. And lo, I heard a voice of speech that speaks from the midst of the Ḥašmal. It was speaking, speaking, and saying thus: I am Sagi the swift who cries out before the Lord of the World on behalf of the children of women who are snatched away. He cries out, cries out and says thus: I sat upon the tombs of the dead and lo! women who moan and sigh and say thus ...

Ford further quotes very briefly from two other unpublished bowls that contain the 'I descended' spell:

7. JNF 245 = Ford 2017: 12

An incantation bowl prepared for [———]

ממליל ממליל וכין אמר אנא הוא סגי גלילא דימצוח קדם מרי עלמא ⁽⁴⁻⁵⁾

³⁰ This bowl is in considerably worse shape than M 142 (the damage to the text of which has obscured only its initial lines, which happen to coincide with the 'I descended' spell). Most of the text of Aaron E is missing. Note that Geller's transcription fails to include some of the legible text (which he nevertheless reproduces in his facsimile of the bowl).

(4-5) It speaks, speaks and says thus: I am Sagi the swift who cries out before the Lord of the World ...

8. JNF 21 = Ford 2017: 12

An incantation bowl prepared for [—————]

אנא סגי קלילה דמפשח קדם מרי עלמא צוח מכריז וכן אמר⁽³⁻⁴⁾

(3-4) I am Sagi the swift who cries out in the presence of the Lord of the World. He cries out and proclaims and says thus ...

A number of unpublished bowls in the Schøyen Collection also contain the 'I descended' spell. In one of these, the surface of the bowl is badly faded and only the names of two of the child-snatching assailants are preserved. The names are followed by the same binding formula as appears in M 142 and Aaron E.

9. MS 1927/17

An incantation bowl prepared for [—————]

[...] ב[לילית] א⁽⁸⁾ וצחלות בת טמא ...⁽⁷⁾

The 'I descended' spells in the remaining unpublished bowls from the Schøyen Collection are better preserved. But for some variation in their verbs of speech, their texts are largely identical to the published bowls from the collection, though MS 2053/61:10 notably expands upon the names of the four beasts: "And these are the names of the beasts: 'brwmwt', 'mwmwt', [...]t', [...] lylyn."

10. MS 2053/61

An apotropaic incantation bowl prepared for the children of Bayazaddād s. Gušnay, Dukhtoy d. Hormizdukh, and Gušnay d. Kufitay

בחקרי⁽⁴⁾ ארעה נחתית עיקרי תיביל חזיתי בעיני ר[ע] שי תיביל אישתכלנא בהון והא

שמית קל מילולא דיממליל מנגו חשמלא ממליל ממליל וכן אמר⁽⁶⁾

אנה הוא שגי קלילא ואפשח קדם מרי עלמא [על] ולדי נשיה דמיתחטפן מפשח⁽⁷⁾

מפשח וכן אמר על קברי מיתי יתיבית והא נשיה דתוחן ומתוחן וכן אמרן כזיהור⁽⁸⁾

ברקא חזינא בדמות ענניא איסתכלנא והא ארבע חיון דמישתדר[ן] על ולדנ[א] דחנקן וחטפן⁽⁹⁾

ממרקן ואכלן וא[ל]ין שמהתהין דחיותא אברומותא אמומותא [...]תא [...] לילין⁽¹⁰⁾

דחנקן וחטפן ממרקן ואכלן⁽¹¹⁾

11. MS 2053/71

An apotropaic incantation bowl prepared for the children of Mahdukh d. Newandukh

- (2) לחיקרי ארעה (3) נחתית עיקרי תיביל חזיתי בעיני רעשי תיביל איסתכלית בהון והא
 (4) שמעית קל מילולא דיממליל מיגו חשמלא ממליל ממליל ובין אמר {ע} אנה הוא סגן מלאכה
 (5) קלילא דקאים קודם מריה דעלמה על ולדי נשיא דמיתחטפין ומפשח ובין אמר על קברי מיתי
 יתיב[ית והא] שמעית
 (6) קל נשיא דתוחן ומתוחן בכין ומבכין צוחן ומצו[חן] ומפשחן ובין אמרן כידמות ברקא הוינא כידמות
 ע[נ]נין [איתי]לידנא [וה]א
 (7) ארבע חיון רב[רב] דמישת[ד]רן על ולד[נ]א דחנקן וחטפן ממ[מ]רקן ואכלן באריא דחטיפ וחנוק
 מ[...ק] [ואכי]ל אילין א[ינ]ון דחנ[קן] וחטפן (8) מממרקן ואכלן

12. MS 2053/257

An apotropaic incantation bowl prepared for the children of Safray s. Anahidag and Aḥata d. Dēnkhwaš; Ataš s. Qaqay and Biftay; Daštōy s. Qaqay and Miryam; Mahoy s. Dēnkhwaš and Kaykhwaš

- (2) [...] תיביל חזיתי [...]
 (3) [...] שמעית קל מילולה ד[...] מגו חשמ<ל> ממליל [...] קלילא
 (4) דמפשח [קד]ם מרי [ע]למ[א] על [...] נשיא דמיתחטפין מפשח ובין אמר על קברי [...] תוחא [...] ומותחין ומותחין ובין אמרן כדמות ברקא חזינא כדמות עננין איסתכלנא [...] דמישתדרן על ולדנא דחנקן וחטפן מממרקן ואכלן ...

Glancing with an 'I' to the heavens: 'I ascended against you'

Another popular spell in the JBA incantation bowls briefly details a first person ascent to the heights. The spell appears in fourteen published bowls. It begins בכין, 'then,' 'at that past time,' and is frequently coupled with the common invocation "By the name of a character out of a character, and characters out of characters, and names out of an empty space, names through which heaven and earth are split/subdued and mountains are uprooted and heights melt away." Like some of the formulae surveyed further below, the account of ascent in these spells and the subsequent actions of the I more closely resemble a report than a story. The lack of a 'conventional' story aside, these brief narrations nevertheless function to emplot the I as an effective player within the transmundane realm: having ascended to the heavens, the I details various forms of harm that they have brought against 'you,' i.e. the harmful transmundane beings addressed by the bowls. This conflation of the narratee with the addressee of the bowls further confirms the identification (outlined above) of the narrative-I with the bowl

practitioner. Dan Levene has discussed the transmission and transformation of this spell at some length.³¹

1. IM 142131 = CMI 8

An exorcistic incantation bowl prepared for Ardoy s. Ilo and Yowita d. Mama

(8) בכין סליקית עליכון למרומא

(9) ואיתיתי עליכון מחבלא לחבל יתכון ולאפק יתכון {ולאפק יתכון} מן כולה ביתיה ומדריה דהדין

אירדוי בר אילו ...

(8) Then I ascended against you to the height

(9) and I brought against you an injurer to injure you and to cause you {and to cause you} to go forth from all the house and dwelling of this Ardoy s. Ilo ...

2. IM 142641 = CMI 6

An exorcistic incantation bowl prepared for Hafay s. Marganita and Ina d. Aha

(7) בכ[ין] סליקית

(8) עליכון למרומא ואיתיתי עליכון חיבלא לאפקא יתכון ואפקא לאפיק יתכון מן חפאי בר מרגניתא ומן

אינא אינתתיה ...

(7) Then[n] I ascended

(8) against you to the height and I brought against you injury to cause you to go forth and an expulsion to cause you to go forth from Hafay s. Marganita and Ina his wife ...

3. M 11 = Shaked 1999: 188

An exorcistic incantation bowl prepared for Abuna s. Ḥatoy and Dahbanita d. Šiloy

(7) בכין סליקית עליכון למרומא

(8) והיתית עליכון חבלא יחב<ל>ון יתכון ינפיק יתכון מן ביתיה דהדין אבונא בר חתוי ומן הדא

דהבניתא בת שיילוי ...

4. M 50 = Corpus: 32

An exorcistic incantation bowl prepared for Uri d. Maruṣita and Qaqai s. Šipparta

(4) בכין סליקית עליכון למרומא איתיתי עליכון מחבלא לחבלא יתכון

(5) ולאפקא יתכון מן ביתה ומן כל אתר בית מישכבהון דהדא אורי בת מרושיתא ולהדא קאקי בר

ציפורתא ...

³¹ See Levene, *Corpus*, 38–39 and the synoptic table that precedes this discussion.

5. M 59 = Corpus: 35-37

An exorcistic incantation bowl prepared for Ardoi s. Khwarkhšedukh

⁽¹⁰⁾ בכין סליקית עליכון למירומא מחבלא

⁽¹¹⁾ לאפוקי ולאנדויאהון שידין ושיבטין ודיוין וסטנין וחילמי סניתי שגישי ותיזחון ותיפקון מן ביתיה ...

⁽¹⁰⁾ Then I ascended against you to the height (and brought against you) an injurer

⁽¹¹⁾ to cause (you) to go forth and to excommunicate you—demons and afflictions and *dēvs* and satans and confused (and) hateful dreams—and may you turn away and go out from his house ...

6. CBS 9010 = AIT 9

An exorcistic incantation bowl prepared for Babanoš s. Qayyomta and Pidardost d. Širen

⁽⁷⁾ בכין סליקית עליהון לימרומא ואיתיתי עליכון

⁽⁸⁾ מחבלא לחבלא יתהון ולאפקא יתכ[ון מ]ן ביתיה דאבוסמכא בר שילתא

7. HS 3046 + HS 3069 = ZHS 8 + ZHS 30

An exorcistic incantation bowl prepared for Gušnazdād s. Ispendarmed and Ādardukh d. Aḥātā

⁽⁴⁾ בכין ⁽⁵⁾ סליקית עלי[כון למרומ]א ואחתית עלי[כון ... מן] ביתיה דהדין גושנזדד בר איספנדרמיד ומן

הדא אדרדוך בת אחתא ...

8. MS 1927/5 = JBA 13

An exorcistic incantation bowl prepared for Abusamka s. Šilta

⁽⁶⁾ בכין [סל]יקי[ת עליכון למר]ומא

⁽⁷⁾ וא[י]תיתית עליכון חיבלא וחבלא לחבולי יתיכון [ו]לאפוקי יתכון מן ביתיה דאבוסמכא בר שילתא

⁽⁶⁾ Then [I ascen]ded [against you to the] height

⁽⁷⁾ and I brought against you injury and ruin to injure you [and] to cause you to go forth from the house of Abusamka s. Šilta ...

9. MS 1927/39 = JBA 14

An exorcistic incantation bowl prepared for Šilay s. Gušnazuḫ and Nanay

⁽⁶⁾ בכין סליקית עליכון

⁽⁷⁾ למרו[מא ואיתיתי ע]לי[כ]ון חיבלא לאפקא יתכון ואפקא לאפק ית[כון] מן שילי בר גושנזדוך ומן

נאנאי אינתתיה ...

10. MS 1929/16 = JBA 16

An exorcistic incantation bowl prepared for Abba s. Titi

(7) ב[כין ס] לִיקִית עליכון למירומא מיחבלאבלא

(8) לאעוקי אתין ליליתא בישתא (9) {א} מן ביתא דאבה דאבא בר תיתי ...

(7) Then I ascended against you to the height to injure (!)

(8) (and) to cause to go forth (!) you evil liliths

(9) from the house of Abbah—of Abba—s. Titi ...

11. MS 2053/33 = JBA 17

An exorcistic incantation bowl prepared for Be-Nebo s Bat-Šappetay and Maḥlafta d. Lalay

(6) בכין סליקית עליכון למרומיה והיתי[י]ת עליכון חבלא יח[ביל] יי[תכון ינפי]ק

(7) ייתכון מן ביתיה [ד]הדין בינב[וו] ב[ר ב]תשפתי [ומן] הדא מחלפתא בת [ל]אליי ...

12. MS 2053/150 = JBA 20

An exorcistic incantation bowl prepared for Mesanneqa s. Tiqla and Mama d. Hormizdukh

(8) [ב]כין סליקית עליכון למרומיה והיתי[י]ת עלי[כו]ן חבלא יחביל [י]תכון [ינ]פ[י]ק יתכון מן ביתיה

(9) דהדין מס[נקא בר] תיקלא ומן הד[א] ממא [ב]ת הורמזדוך ...

13. MS 2053/164 = JBA 21

An exorcistic incantation bowl prepared for Naward s. Nabiya (?) and Yawita and Aḥay s. Yawita

(9) בכין סליקית עליכון למרומא

(10) ואיתייתי עליכון [—] לחבל יתכון ולאפק יתכון מן כוליה הדין ביתיה ומדריה דהדין נורד בר נביא

14. MS 2053/165 = JBA 22

An exorcistic incantation bowl prepared for Giza s. Duday

(8) בכין סליקית עליכון לשמ[י] מ[רומא וא] ייתי עליכון חבלא לחבל יתכון

(9) ולאפק יתכון מן ביתי[ה] ומן מדריה דג[יז]א בר דוד[י] ...

(8) Then I ascended against you to the heaven[s] on [high and] I brought against you ruin to injure you

(9) and to cause you to go forth from the house and from the dwelling of G[iz]a s. Duda[y]

Glancing with an 'I' to the heavens: 'I ascended to the upper abode'

In the previous formulae, the I briefly recounts an ascent in the proximate past whereby they brought injury, ruin, or an injurer from on high in order to combat the harmful agents afflict-

ing the beneficiaries of the bowls. In a different formula, the I also ascends—this time to the upper abode—but to different ends. Here the I speaks (in the second instance before Ashmedai, the king of the demons). Their plaint then ascends to a greater height where it is audible before God. This formula appears in several unpublished bowls.³² Two of these have been quoted in part by James Ford.

1. JNF 158 = Ford 2017: 13

An incantation bowl prepared for [———]

לימדור עילין סליקית ולי ולי אפשחית ... כי היכדין דולי ולי אפשחית צוחתי סליק קודמוהי דיברין
שמיה וקים ...

⁽¹⁻⁷⁾ I ascended to the upper abode, I cried out, ‘Woe to me! Woe to me!’ ... As I cried out, ‘Woe to me! Woe to me!’ my cry ascended to before the One whose Name is Blessed and Exists ...

2. JNF 140 = Ford 2017 13 n. 36

An incantation bowl prepared for [———]

לימדור עילין סליקית ק[ו]דם אשמדי מלכה דשידי קבילית ולי ולי אפ[ש]חת ... כי היכדין דולי ולי
אפשחית צוחתי סליק ליקודמוהי דיברין שמיה וקים

⁽¹⁻⁷⁾ I ascended to the upper abode. Before Ashmedai, king of the demons, I uttered a complaint. I cried out, ‘Woe to me! Woe to me!’ ... As I cried out, ‘Woe to me! Woe to me!’ my cry ascended to before the One whose Name is Blessed and Exists ...

SEEING AND HEARING WITH THE ‘I’ COSMIC COMMOTION AND TRANS/MUNDANE WARRIORS

‘I stand upon a mountain of stone’

The first person narrative spell commencing “I stand upon a mountain of stone” appears in at least four bowls. Only one of these bowls—M 145—has been published in a complete edition. As part of this edition, Dan Levene presented the text of M 145 in synopsis with MS

³² M 7, M 50, MS 2053/277, JNF 116, JNF 140, and JNF 158. Cf. MS 2053/252, another unpublished bowl quoted in part by James Nathan Ford, “Phonetic Spellings of the Subordinating Particle d(y) in the Jewish Babylonian Aramaic Magic Bowls,” *Aramaic Studies* 10.2 (2012): 233, which reads: אנה הוא בוסא בר אימא “I am Busa s. Imma who ascended and went (up) to the great band of *dēvs*” (ll. 5-6).

2053/159, though he did not furnish the text of MS 2053/159 with a translation.³³ The spell is also found in an unpublished bowl in the Schøyen Collection that was inscribed by the same hand as M 145. This bowl is not just faded in sections but also badly broken. Damage to the writing surface aside, the texts of these spells are difficult and liable to obscurity.³⁴ According to the editors of the forthcoming fifth volume of *Jewish Babylonian Aramaic Bowls* in Brill's MRLA series, a further parallel is to be found in a fourth bowl in private hands.

A number of first person narrative spells in the incantation bowls open with the I sing. participle of קר"ם.³⁵ The settings in which the I stands vary greatly, as do their subsequent audial and visual encounters. From their vantage point upon a mountain of stone, the I of the spells in this section first experience an audial encounter. They hear the voice of Shamish and Hwr, the great king of the *dēvs*.³⁶ A time designation follows, and it is unclear whether what follows reflects the direct visual experience of the I or whether the focalisation shifts and the subsequent narration recounts what the I heard Shamish and Hwr to say. That is, it is unclear whether the witness to the subsequent events is the same person as the narrator of this part of the story. This possible shift in focalisation aside, the spell continues to document a great cosmic upheaval in which vast troops of demons march out to battle. Drums groan, horns sound, cauldrons seethe, and dragons, *dēvs*, and liliths shriek. Agitated

³³ A partial translation of MS 2053/159 sans Aramaic text appears in Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 15–16 and Shaked, “Time Designations,” 229–30. Shaked further discusses the spell in some depth across pp. 231–33.

³⁴ For discussion of some of the finer points of these texts, see Levene, *Corpus*, 104–8; Matthew Morgenstern, “Linguistic Notes on Magic Bowls in the Moussaieff Collection,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 68.3 (2005): 357–62; James Nathan Ford, “Review of Dan Levene, *A Corpus of Magic Bowls: Incantation Texts in Jewish Aramaic from Late Antiquity*,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 51 (2006): 211–12; Morgenstern and Ford, “Some Readings.” The discussion in Müller-Kessler, “More on Puzzling Words,” has largely been superseded by the aforementioned articles.

³⁵ See Matthew Morgenstern and James Nathan Ford, “On Some Readings and Interpretations in the Aramaic Incantation Bowls and Related Texts,” *BSOAS* 80.2 (2017): 219–20 for a multitude of (unpublished) examples from both JBA and Mandaic incantation bowls. The forms קר"ם and קר"ם attested in the ‘I stand upon a mountain of stone’ spells are explained by Matthew Morgenstern, “On Some Non-Standard Spellings in the Aramaic Magic Bowls and Their Linguistic Significance,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 52.2 (2007): 265 as showing assimilation of the third radical to the *n* of the appended personal pronoun, cf. Morgenstern and Ford, “Some Readings,” 219.

³⁶ The transmundane being Hwr also appears in see BM 1957–9–25.1 = Dan Levene and Gideon Bohak, “A Babylonian Jewish Aramaic Incantation Bowl with a List of Deities and Toponyms,” *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 19 (2012): 56–72. He is identified there as the son of Danahjš.

by all this activity, the great fish Leviathan begins to quake. His shaking causes the entire universe to tremble, whereupon the anvil of heaven shifts, the skies groan, and the stars and the sea are overturned.³⁷

At this point, the I reorients their person and the scene shifts: “I stand at the shore of the sea, and at the great shore of the ocean.” This ‘reset’ and conclusive restoration of focalisation to the I further embodies the I within the world of the story: the verbs of hearing from line 1 are replaced by verbs of speech and the I transforms from a mere auditor in order to directly adjure a number of living creatures.³⁸ Following their adjuration, the I commences a graphic description of the person and dwelling of a demon called *Dēv Ziana*. This demon straddles the heavens and the earth, tramples and smites *dēvs* and *liliths*, and inhabits a dwelling constructed from scorpions and the skulls and teeth of dragons and *liliths*. These descriptive passages are followed by a further time designation and another shift in scene. The use of the time designation recalls the beginning of the earlier episode wherein the demons went out to war. The I bows down before an awesome being and sings its praises. This being speaks and introduces the owner of the bowl, who is said to have crossed the sea by the power of their voice and to have achieved great feats in the battle against the demons — possibly the same battle whose preparations were narrated earlier in the spell. The bowl owner is said to have raided a transmudane arsenal and to have armed themselves with various magical weapons, including the lance of Ashmedai and the sword of Solomon. At this point, MS 2053/159 transitions into an adjuration. In M 145, however, the bowl owner himself speaks within the narrative and recapitulates in the first person the details of his raid upon the weapons store-house.

1. M 145 = Corpus: 100-102

An exorcistic incantation bowl prepared for Aḥay s. Gušnazdukh

(1)
אטור גלל קינא ואשינא רבתא (דטור) מציתנא ושמנא

³⁷ These descriptions of Leviathan reflect a long-standing Jewish mythological tradition wherein Leviathan is depicted as the foundation upon which the world is built. See K. William Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts: Leviathan and Behemoth in Second Temple and Early Rabbinic Judaism* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006) who traces the transmission of this tradition through a multitude of sources. On its appearance in the rabbinic literature see pp. 114–15.

³⁸ Cf. BM 91767 = CAMIB 040A = Müller-Kessler 2001/2002:128-129 = Morgenstern 2007, which reads: לכיף ימא סליקנא ולבני ימא משילנא מומנא בני ימא, “I go up to the sea shore and I question the inhabitants of the sea. I adjure the inhabitants of the sea” (l. 13).

- (2) לשמיש חור דביריכון בריה דמלכה רבה דדיוי ושלטא רבא
- (3) דליליתא מנההיא שעתא בההוא יומא בההוא עידנא כד דיוי נפק ליקרבא וליליתא
- (4) נפק לימ[נובי]א דל פלגא דשידי ומרכבתא רבתא דלטיב ודל גודא דדיוי וכלא רבתא
דליליתא גנח טבלא
- (5) דמירדא וקרי קרנא רבתא דחבולא טפו דודי ברוגזא תפו דודי ררבי דחבולא נפק ארבעה זיקין
מן ארבע
- (6) רוחי עלמה נפק ארבע דיוין מינך טורא דלדון נפק ארבע תנינין מינך כיפא דרבייתא קדח דיווא
צנף תנינא ויליל
- (7) זרני ליליתא ואישתרגז לזיתן כורה נד איתונד ואנידה לארעה כולה ותיביל נודא הוה בארעה
וגונחא רבא הווה ברקיעה
- (8) נד ארעה ואיתפיך רקיע ואישתוש כוכבי ואיתופך מזלי שף סדנא רבא דרקיע ודוק טורי סמיק
פקתא רגש נוני בימא
- (9) מלכי רגש ביקרבא איתפיך ביתא רבא בתוקפיה אכיף ימא קינא ואכיפא רבא דרבייתא לציצא
ולציפרא אמנליה {ומשילניה} משיילנליה
- (10) מומינאליה לעופא רבא דזיבי דתישמא מילי לתיבל ורוטנא דקביל תיגנח שוטיך בארעה ותישווי
זיוא בכליה עלמא אפרטה דלבייתא
- (11) רבא [...] ארעה בארקבי אישפוך אישתא בקרקף תניני טקי טקי בבני יוזן כשורי אילן בשיני
דליליתא דשרי ביה דיוא זינא דזיניה
- (12) וקרקפנא רבה דניסכאיא חד גפיה בארעה וחד גפיה בירקיעה ניגריה שירשה דארע ורישיה
סדנא דרקיעא בניגריה דיש רוחי בגפיה שקיף ליליתא
- (13) בההיא שעתא בההוא יומא בההוא עידנא אזיל כרעית וזגדית קדם בית איליה שבחית וזמרת
מזמוריה דדוד ואמר אית בכון גברא חיילן ביקרבא וקילן
- (14) בימא רבא דקירסא ואמר אית בכון גברא דעבר ימא בקליה וסליק טורי בירוגזיה ושקיל אקלודי
דבית גנזי זיניה אזי מיתי זינא דשידי וזינא דליליתא וניסכא דאשמדי
- (15) מלכא דשידי וסיפא דריוש מלכא דדיוי אנא אחאי (בר ג) [ו]ש(נ)ז(ו)ד(ו) עברנא ימא בקלאי
סליקנא טורי ברוגזאי ושקילנא אקלידי דבית גנזי זינא [אז] [י]נ[א] (ו)מיתנא זינא דשידי וסיפא
דליליתא
- (16) וניסכא דאשמדי מלכא דשידי וסיפא דרוש מלכ[א] ד[ש]ידי [...] להדין דיוא וליליתא מ[ג]
- ביתטה דאחי בר גושנזדוד

(1) I stand upon a mountain of stone and upon the great peak of a mountain. I heed and I listen

- (2) to Shamish Hwr (...) the son of the great king of the *dēvs* and the great ruler
- (3) of the liliths. From that hour, on that day, at that time, when the *dēvs* went out for battle and the liliths
- (4) went out for w[ailin]g, the phalanx of the demons and the great chariot of the no-good-ones moved about, and the troop of the *dēvs* and the great assembly of the liliths moved about. The drum
- (5) of rebellion groaned and the great horn of destruction cried out. The cauldrons boiled over with rage, the great cauldrons of destruction boiled. Four blasts of wind came forth from the four
- (6) winds of the world. Four *dēvs* came forth from you, the Lydian (?) mountain. Four dragons came forth from you, the shores of the ocean. The *dēv* shrieked, the dragon howled and Zarnai
- (7) Lilita wailed, and Leviathan the fish became agitated. He shook, he quaked, and he caused the entire earth and the universe to shake. There was shaking in the earth and great groaning in the firmament.
- (8) The earth shook and the firmament turned over and the stars shook and the constellations were overturned. The great anvil of heaven budged and mountains were crushed. The valleys became red, and the fish were agitated in the sea.
- (9) The angels were agitated in battle and the great house turned over by its power. I stand at the shore of the sea, and at the great shore of the ocean. I speak to the night-hawk and to the bird. I question
- (10) (and) I adjure the great fowl of the rivers, that you may hear my words (spoken) to the universe and accept my complaint (?) May you cause your whip to resound (?) upon the earth and may you put radiance in all the world (and) upon the contents (?) of the great
- (11) house [...] the floor with scorpions. He piled up its foundation (?) with the skulls of sea serpents (and) each window (?) with (...) These (its) beams are the teeth of liliths, (the house) in which Dēv Ziana dwells, whose armour
- (12) and great skull (?) are of cast metal. One of his wings is on the earth, and one of his wings is in heaven. His feet are (at) the base of the earth and his head is the anvil of heaven. With his feet he tramples spirits and with his wings he smites liliths.

- (13) At that hour, on that day, at that time, He went out (and) I bowed and worshipped before the house of God.³⁹ I praised and I sang the psalms of David. And He said, ‘There is a man amongst you, mighty in battle, and he stands
- (14) upon the great sea of misfortune.’ And He said, ‘There is among you a man who crosses the sea with his voice and ascends mountains with his wrath. And he takes the key to the weapons store-house (and) goes (and) brings (out) the weapon of the demons and the weapons of the liliths and the lance of Ashmedai
- (15) the king of the demons and the sword of Darius the king of the *dēvs*.’ ‘I, Aḥay s. Gušnazdukh, cross the sea with my voice. I ascend mountains in anger and take the key to the weapons store-house and go and bring (out) the weapon of the demons and the sword of the liliths
- (16) and the lance of Ashmedai the king of the demons and the sword (of) Darius, the king [of the demons]’ [...] this *dēv* and lilith from the house of Aḥay s. Gušnazdukh.

2. MS 2053/159 = Corpus: 100-102

An exorcistic incantation bowl prepared for Dukhtoy d. Aḥat

- (1) אטור גלל קאינה ואטורא רבה דגללא
- (2) מציתנא ושמענא ליה לשמיש וחור בריה דבריה בר
- (3) מלכה רבה דדיוי ושליטא רבה דלטבי בההוא יומא בההיא שעתא
- (4) ובההוא עידנא כד דיוי נפקין לקרבה וכד ליליאתה נפקן למנוביא דלי פלגא
- (5) דשידי וכלה רבתי דלטבי דלי גונדא דדיוי וכלה רבתי דליליאתה גנח טבלא דמירדא קרי קרנא דחבלא
- (6) טפו דודי ברוגזא ורתח דודי ררבי דחבלא נפק ארבע זיקי מארבע רוחי עלמה נפק ארבעה זיקי מינד
- (7) כיפא דרביתא נפק ארבעה תניני מינד טורא דלודן קדח דיוא צנף תנינא יליל זרני ליליתא אישתרגז ליויתן כוארה נד
- (8) ואיתונד ואנידה לכולה ארעה תיביל נודא הוה בארעה וגונחא הוה ברקיעה איתפיד כוכביא ואיפנדך כל מזאליה שף סדנא רבה
- (9) דרקיעה איתפיד ימא ברוגזיה ובתוקפיה ומלאכי רגש ברקיעה אכיף ימא {קאינה} קאינה ואכיפא

³⁹ It is unclear—following the time designation—whether the third person personal pronoun refers to Dēv Ziana (of the foregoing episode) or the being (perhaps the divinity himself) who is bowed down to before the house of God.

רבה דרביתא לציצא וציפרא אמנה ליה

(10) ומשילנא ליה לחיוא בלא אמנא ומומינאליה לעופא רבה דזיבי דמיניה נפיק רסיאל מלאכה ונפק

מיניה עמודא דנורא וקליה לכוליה עלמה בחייכון ציצי וציפרי

(11) בחייכון נוני וכוארי בחיך חיוא בלא בחיך רסיאל מלאכ[ה] בחיך דוכתוי בת אחת וכל שום

דאית לה דתישמעי מילי ותיקבלי רוטנאי תיגנחי שוטיך בארעה תשוי

(12) זיויך בכוליה על[מא] איפריש ביתא רבה די(...)ון רבה דגונדיה בארקבי שפיכי וטקיה ט[קיה]

[...] וכשוריה אילין בשיני דליליאתה דשרי ביה דיוא זיאנא דזיניה

(13) קרקף פדנא רבה דניסכיה ניגריה שירשה דארע[ה ח]ד גפיה בארעה וחד גפיה ברקיעה בניגר[יה]

[...] ובגפיה שקיף ליליאתה בההוא יומא ובההיא שעתא ובההוא

(14) עידנא זל כר[עי]ת וסגידית קדם פנות רבה גיברא ודחילא דהודתילך אידיורא הוי לן בקרבה רבה

וקול[ן בימא] רבא דקירסא אמר אית בכון אתתא דשמה דוכתוי בת אחת דעברא ימא

(15) בקלה וסלקא [טורי] בראזא ושקלא איקלידא ועילא לבית גנזי זינא ומתיא זאינא דשידי ו[ס]יפא

דליליאתה וני[סכא] (...) מיתקטלין (...) (וקלא) דדויד וסיפא דשלמה וניסכא דדריוש מלכא

(16) וזינא דא[שמ] די מלכה דלטבי ושממא דמרי עלמה ואחרמתא וגזרתא דאבא רבה דישמאי

לאחרמה ולשממא[א] ולת[רכא] ול[ב]טלא כל ליל[יא]תא בישתא דמידמין לה לדוכתוי דא בת

אחת בכל דמותא ...

- (1) I stand upon a mountain of stone, upon a great mountain of stone.
- (2) I heed and I listen to Shamish and **Hwr**, his grandson, the son of
- (3) the great king of the *dēvs* and the great ruler of the no-good-ones. On that day, at that hour,
- (4) and at that time, when the *dēvs* were going out for battle and the liliths were going out for wailing, the phalanx
- (5) of the demons and the band of the no-good-ones were in commotion, the troop of the *dēvs* and the band of the liliths were in commotion. The drum of rebellion groaned, the horn of destruction cried out.
- (6) The cauldrons boiled over with rage, the great cauldrons of destruction boiled. Four blasts of wind came forth from the four directions of the world. Four blasts of wind came forth from you,
- (7) the shore of the ocean. Four dragons came forth from you, the Lydian (?) mountain. The *dēv* shrieked, the dragon howled, Zarnai Lilita wailed, Leviathan the fish became agitated. He shook,
- (8) and quaked, and caused the entire earth—the universe—to shake. There was shaking

- in the earth and groaning in heaven. The stars turned over and all the constellations turned over. The great anvil of heaven budged,
- (9) the sea turned over by its rage and by its power, and the angels were agitated in heaven. I stand at the shore of the sea, and at the great shore of the ocean. I speak to the nighthawk and the bird,
- (10) and question the wild beasts. I speak and I adjure the great fowl of the rivers, from which the angel Rasiel issues and from which a pillar of fire issues and burns the entire world: ‘By your lives, night-hawks and birds;
- (11) by your lives, fish and sea-fish; by your life, wild beasts; by your life, the angel Rasiel; by your life, Dukhtoy d. Aḥat, and any (other) name that she may have. May you listen to my words and accept my plaint. May you cause your whip to resound (?) upon the earth. May you put
- (12) your radiance in all the wor[ld].’ I shall describe the great house of the great y(...)n, the walls of which are piled up with scorpions and each of whose windows [...]. These its beams are the teeth of liliths, (the house) in which Dēv Ziana dwells, whose armour
- (13) is the skull of the great plough of cast metal. His feet are (at) the base of the earth. One of his wings is on the earth, and one of his wings is in heaven. With [his] feet [he] tramples spirits [...]. and with his wings he smites liliths. On that day, at that hour, and at that
- (14) time, I went out. I b[ow]ed and worshipped before the great, mighty, and awesome **pnzt**: ‘I praise you. Be a helper to us in the great battle, and stand by [us on the] great [sea] of misfortune.’ He said, ‘There is among you a woman whose name is Dukhtoy d. Aḥat, who crosses the sea
- (15) with her voice and ascends [mountains] with a mystery. And she takes the key and enters the weapons store-house and brings (out) the weapon of the demons and the sword of the liliths and the lan[ce] (...) they are killed (...) and the voice (?) of David and the sword of Solomon and the lance of Darius the king
- (16) and the weapon of Ashmedai the king of the no-good-ones and the ban of the Lord of the World and the anathema and decree of the Great Father of Heaven, in order to anathemise and ban and di[vorce] and annul all evil liliths that appear to Dukhtoy d. Aḥat in any form, etc.

Unlike M 145, where the narrative ends with a speech by the beneficiary that inventories his anti-demonic arsenal, the narrative spell in MS 2053/159 closes by including various divine bans and anathemas and decrees amongst the magical weapons that Dukhtoy d. Aḥat brings out in order to do battle. The incantation in MS 2053/159 then transitions into an adjuration of the liliths who appear to Dukhtoy in various forms — most unnervingly in the shape of her dead mother. There follow three biblical quotations (Isa 6:3, Exod 15:16, 15:18) each of which is repeated three times. These verses are not included in MS 2053/17, the badly damaged bowl written by the same hand as M 145.

3. MS 2053/17

An exorcistic incantation bowl prepared for Abušira son of Maḥlafta

- (1) אטור גליל קינא אשינא [דגללא] קאימנא ומציתנא [...]
- (2) [ל]שמי חור דביריה [...] מלכא רבה ד[דיוי] [...]
- (3) [...] ([בההו]א יומא בההיא שעתא בההוא ע[ידנא]) [...] ליקרבא
- (4) וליליתא נפק לימנוביא (ד) [...] דייו וכלא
- (5) רבתא דליליתא גנח [...]
- (6) (דחבילא נפק ארב[ע] [...] נפק ארבע) [...] נפק ארבעא
- (7) [...] (מינד) [...] (זינא בידיה) [...]
- (8) [...] איתפך
- (9) מזלי שף סדנ[א] רב[א] דירק[י] עא (נד ארעה אית)פיד [ר]קיעא (אופיד) [...] (פקעתא) [...] ימא מלכי [...]
- (10) [...] (איתפי) [...] (אבא) [...] (אדוני) [...] (אלוה) [...]
- (11) [...] (בארע[ה] זיוא בכליה [על]מא אפרשיה לב[ית]א [...] דכאורי
- (12) ארע[א] באר[קבי] [...] בקרקף (תיניני) [...] (בבני יזין) כשורי אילן בשיני דלי[ל]יתא שרי ביה דיזא [...] וקרקפנא [...] ואמר [אי]ת בכון ג[ברא] [...]
- (13) ביקרב[א] ו[קולן] בימא [ר]בא [דק]ירסא ואמר [אי]ת בכון גב[ר]א א חילן ביקרבא וקולן [...] ואמר [אית] ביכון [...] דעבר ימ[א] בקליה וסליק ט[ו]רי ברוגזיה [ו]שקיל
- (14) אקלדי [דב]ית גנזי {זנ} [זי]נא אזי ומיתי זינא דשידי וסיפא דליליתא וניס[כא] דאשמדי מלכא דשידי [ו]סיפא ד[...] אנ[ה]א בוצירא בר מחלפתא [...]
- (15) [...] סליקנא טורי ברוגזי ושקלנא אקלידי דבית גנזי זינא אזינא [ומיתינא] {שיד} זינא דשידי וסיפא דליליתא [ו]ניסכא דא[ש]מדי מלכא דשי[ד]י וסיפא דמשמל [...] ... מן בית[יה] ו[מן] דירתיה דאבוצירא בר מחלפתא אמן [א]מן סלה
- (16)

- (1) I stand upon a mountain of stone, upon a peak [of stone] and I heed [...]
- (2) [to] Shami Ḥwr the son [...] the great king of [the *dēvs*] [...]
- (3) [...] (on that day, at that time, in that period) [...] to battle
- (4) and the liliths went out for wailing [...] *dēvs* and the great
- (5) assembly of the liliths. (The drum of rebellion) groaned [...]
- (6) (of destruction. There went forth four [...] There went forth four) [...] There went forth four [...]
- (7) [...] (from you) [...] (with a weapon in his hand) [...]
- (8) [...] overturned were
- (9) the constellations. [The great] anvil of heaven budged. (The earth shook.) The firmament turned over. (It overturned) [...] (the valleys) [...] (The fish were agitated in) the sea. The angels [...]
- (10) [...] (Abba) [...] (Adoni) [...] (God) [...]
- (11) [...] upon the earth [...] radiance in all the world (and) upon the contents (of) the house [...]
- (12) [The] floor [with scor]pions [...] with the skulls (of sea serpents) [...]. These (its) beams are the teeth of liliths, (the house) in which Dēv (Ziana) dwells [...] and (whose) skull [...] and he said, ‘There is among you [a man] [...]
- (13) in battle, [and] he stands upon the great sea [of mis]fortune.’ And he said, ‘There is among you a man, mighty in battle, and he stands [...].’ And he said, ‘[There is] among you (a man) who crosses [the] sea with his voice and ascends mountains with his wrath. And he takes
- (14) the key to the weapons store-house(and) goes (and) brings (out) the weapon of the demons and the sword of the liliths and [the] lance of Ashmedai the king of the demons [and] the sword of [...]’ [...] ‘I, Abušira s. Maḥlafta, [...]
- (15) [...] I ascend mountains in anger and take the key to the weapons store-house. I go [and bring] the weapon of the demons and the sword of the liliths and the lance of Ashmedai the king of the demons and the sword of (?) [...]
- (16) ... from the house and the dwelling of Abušira son of Maḥlafta. Amen Amen Selah.

A brief adjuration (elided here) follows the end of the bowl owner’s damaged speech in MS 2053/17. The text of the bowl then concludes with a confirmatory formula.

In all of these spells, the I functions as an auditor/observer and either hears about or is afforded a bird’s-eye view of various maleficent forces grouping for battle. The movement of

these troops and the sounds of their drums and horns induces a vast cosmic commotion. Amidst this upheaval, Leviathan stirs and upsets the various building-blocks of the universe with his shaking. Following a ‘spatial reset,’ the spell then introduces a new character—Dēv Ziana—and establishes the nature of this character through a description of their dwelling. This is not decorative description, but serves several functions.⁴⁰ In the first place, it further embeds the I within the transmundane realm. As Marisa Bortolussi and Peter Dixon demonstrate, there “can be no description of anything that does not have implications for spatial vantage point.”⁴¹ This description does not emanate from a secondary character or a heterodiegetic, covert narrator situated outside of the level of the characters, but instead is focalised through the I whose direct visual perception it represents. From this, it is easy to infer the ‘descriptive position’ or location from which the descriptive agent or I originates their description: from before the dwelling of Dēv Ziana. These descriptions—unlike the earlier descriptions of transmundane activities that potentially stemmed from Shamish and Ḥwr—underscore the reality effect, and function as an authenticating device. These descriptions also convey plot-relevant information and contribute to the characterisation of Dēv Ziana. Constructed from bones and teeth of dragons and demons, this unnerving dwelling establishes Dēv Ziana as a fearsome player in the battle against harmful forces. So prolific is he as a warrior that he is able to construct a dwelling from the bodies of his defeated foes that is large enough to house his enormous person. This pedigree is important to what follows, for Dēv Ziana next speaks to the I and introduces and endorses a powerful trans/mundane warrior of great repute. This powerful warrior is named as the bowl owner, who is similarly established as a powerful player in the battle against harmful forces. Dēv Ziana recounts how the bowl owner has armed themselves with a transmundane arsenal, at which point in M 145 and MS 2053/17, the voice of the I is assumed by the beneficiary within the narrative. They proceed to confirm how they have indeed crossed the ocean using only their voice and to have equipped themselves with various types of arms intended for the defence of their person against demonic assailants.

⁴⁰ Cf. Gérard Genette, “Frontières du récit,” *Communications* 8 (1966): 156–57, who distinguishes between ‘ornamental’ description and ‘significative’ description. Following Nünning, “Towards a Typology,” I distinguish between ‘decorative’ and ‘explanatory’ description.

⁴¹ Marisa Bortolussi and Peter Dixon, *Psychonarratology: Foundations for the Empirical Study of Literary Response* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 186.

BODIES OF PURE FIRE
TRANS/MUNDANE WARRIORS

In the ‘I stand upon a mountain of stone’ formula, the I of the spell recounts how they were personally informed by a powerful transmundane being that the owner of the bowl is an established and accomplished figure in the fight against harmful agents. The actions of a similar warlike personage are recounted in the first person in several other bowls. In these spells, the first person narrator—whose I is affixed with the name of the beneficiary in some instances—clads their fiery body in armour fashioned from pure steel. Announcing their power, they set out to confront various demons in battle. The I then pronounces a series of threats and adjurations, such that the usual incantation form is incorporated into a narrative framework. A similar series of trans/mundane figures also appear in a group of spells whose narration does not explicitly proceed in the voice of the first person.

‘I am clad in clothing of pure steel’

The spell ‘I am clad in clothing of pure steel’ appears in three published bowls, as well as an unpublished bowl in the Schøyen Collection.⁴² The bowls in which the spell appears have been subject to various editions.⁴³

⁴² MS 2053/197. A further set of unpublished spells also fashion the I of the spell—sometimes named as the bowl owner—as the possessor of an armoured and unconquerable body, e.g. JNF 189:10 = Ford 2012: 232 n.46, where we read: זיו פרזיל לבישנא וזיו פרזיל מכסינא, “I am clad with the radiance of iron and I am covered with the radiance of iron.” Several other unpublished spells (MS 2053/252; PC 43) clad the I with an unknown item of iron (צר פרזולא) that is perhaps a band. These same spells have the I bind their loins with a girdle of iron, cf. James Nathan Ford, “Phonetic Spellings of the Subordinating Particle d(y) in the Jewish Babylonian Aramaic Magic Bowls,” *Aramaic Studies* 10.2 (2012): 232. Another unpublished spell (MS 2053/38) recounts how the I built and furnished a house of iron: ביתא דפרזולא בני לי ושמי טלליה דברא אריא גני לי אראשא ודבה גני לי אניגראי, “I have built a house of iron and the vault of its ceiling (?) is of lead. A lion reclines at my head and a wolf reclines at my feet.”

⁴³ In addition to the editions given with the texts below, see also (the discussion in) Ya‘akov Naḥum Epstein, “Gloses babylo-araméennes,” *Revue des études juives* 73 (1921): 30–32, 55; Baruch A. Levine, “The Language of the Magical Bowls,” in *A History of the Jews in Babylonia V: Later Sasanian Times*, ed. Jacob Neusner (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 361–62; Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity*, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1987), 131–32; Christa Müller-Kessler, “Die aramäische Beschwörung und ihre Rezeption in den mandäisch magischen Texten am Beispiel ausgewählter aramäischer Beschwörungsformulare,” in *Charmes et sortilèges, magie et magiciens*, ed. Rika Gyselen (Bures-sur-Yvette: Group pour l’étude de la civilisation du Moyen-Orient, 2002), 202; Müller-Kessler, “More Puzzling Words,” 11.

1. F 447 (Jewish Theological Seminary) = Gordon 11 = Isbell 7

An apotropaic incantation bowl prepared for Marai s. Itai and Qurdas s. Nanukh (?)

- (1) אֶזְלֵנָא בְּחִילָא נִפְשָׁא וּבְקוּמְתִי
(2) קְצוּצָתָא דְּפְרִזְלָא כּוּלָּהּ קוּמְתִי {ה} דִּינְהוּרָא
(3) דְּכִיָּה וּבְלִישְׁנָא לְבוּשָׁא דְּאִדְמוּסָא דְּכִיָּה וּמְמַלְלָא
(4) וְהִלִּינָא בַּהֲהוּא דִּיבְרָא שְׁמִיָּא וְאַרְעָא אֶזְלִית פְּגַעִית בְּהוּן בְּסוּטוֹנִי
(5) בִּישִׁי וּבְעִלִּידְבִּי מְרִירִי אִמְרָנָא לְהוּן וְאִי לְכוּן אִם מִידְעָם תַּעֲבֹדוּן לְהוּן
(6) לְמֵאֲרָאִי בְּרֵי אִתִּי וְקוּרְדָּאס בְּרֵי נֹאֲנֹךְ אֶשְׁפָּנָא עֲלִיכּוֹן בְּאֶשְׁפָּא רַבָּא דִּימָא וּבְאֶשְׁפָּא
(7) דְּלִוִּיתוֹן תְּנִינָא תוֹב אִם מִידְעָם תֹּאמְרוּן לְהוּן לְמֵאֲרָאִי בְּ[רֵי אִי] תִּי אֲרָאסְךָ בְּרֵי נִינְאוּךָ? כִּי קִשְׁתָּא
(8) גִּיבְנָא לְכוּן וְכִיתִירָא פְּשִׁיטְנָא לְכוּן תּוֹף אִם מִידְעָם תַּעֲבֹדוּן לְהוּן [לְמֵ] אֲרָאִי בְּרֵי אִתִּי וְלִגּוּרְדָּאס בְּרֵי
נֹאֲנֹךְ
(9) מַחִיתְנָא עֲלִיכּוֹן גְּזִירְתָּא דִּישְׁמִיָּה וְאַחַרְוּמָתָא דְּאִיתְנַחְיָי {עֲלִיכּוֹן} [חִירְמוֹן] טוֹרָא וְלִוִּיתוֹן תְּנִינָא
וּמִיכְבֵּשׁ ...

- (1) I go out by my own power and on my body
(2) is a bar of iron. My whole body (is) of pure
(3) light and I am clad in clothing of pure forged steel.
(4) And I am mighty in Him who created heaven and earth. I went out. I attacked the evil
(5) enemies and bitter adversaries. I say to them, 'Woe unto you if you do anything
(6) unto Marai s. Itai and Qurdas s. Nanadukh. I shall cast upon you the great spell of the
sea and the spell
(7) of Leviathan the sea serpent. Again, if you say anything to Marai s. Itai (or) (...) s.
Ninukh, I shall bend
(8) you like a bow and stretch you like a bow string. Again, if you do anything unto Ma-
rai s. Itai and Gurdas s. Nanukh,
(9) I shall bring down upon you the decree of heaven and the anathema that was placed
upon Mount [Hermon] and upon Leviathan the sea serpent.' ...

The spell continues in a similar fashion at some length. This additional material (elided here) is paralleled in two further bowl texts where the I of the narrative spell is variously adopted by different beneficiaries of the bowls.

2. CBS 2945 = AIT 2 = Isbell 2 = Shaked 2006: 371-372

An apotropaic incantation bowl prepared for Pabaq s. Kopitai, Abuna s. Geribta, and Iba s. Zutai

- (1) תוב אזלנא אנה פאבק בר כופיתאי בחילי דנפשי בקומתי גציצא דפרזלא קרקפתי דפרזלא קומת
דנורא
- (2) דכיא ולבישנא לבושא דאדמסא דכיא וממללא וחילינא במן דברא שמיא וארעה אזלית ופגעית
בהון
- (3) בסני בישי ובעילדבבי מרירי אמרת להון דאים מידעם חטיתון ביה אבונא בר גריבתא ובאיבא בר
זותאי אשיפנא לכון באישפא
- (4) דיומא ואישפא דליון[יתן] תנינא דאם מידעם {חתחטתו} חטיתון ביה באבונה בר גריבתא
ובאיתתיה ובבניה כי קשתא גיבנא לכון
- (5) וכי יתרא פשיטנא לכון תוב מידעם חטיתון בביתיה דפאבק ובקיניניה ובכל אינשי ביתיה בידידי
אנה אבונה בר גריבתא או באיבא בר זותאי
- (6) מחיתנא עליכון שמתא וגזירתא ואחרמתא דאיתנח על חירמון טורא ועל ליויתן תנינא ועל סדום
ועל עמורא מיטול למיכבש דיו
- (7) אזלנא אנא אבונא בר גריבתא וכל רזי בישי לישן חומרי זידניתא אזלית ופגעית בהון בשידי
ובדיוי במבכלתא בישתא ביפתכרי דיכרי ובאיסתריתא ניקבתא קימין סידרי סידרין ורפדי מרפדין
- (1) Again I go out—I, Pabaq s. Kopitai—by my own powers. On my body are bands (lit. arms) of iron (and) my skull (is) of iron. My body (is) of pure
- (2) fire and I am clad in clothing of pure forged steel. And I am mighty by Him who created heaven and earth. I went out and I attacked
- (3) the evil enemies and bitter adversaries. I said to them that if you cause any harm to Abuna s. Geribta and Iba s. Zutai, I shall cast upon you the spell
- (4) of the sea and the spell of Leviathan the sea serpent. If you cause any harm to Abuna s. Geribta and to his wife and sons, I shall bend you like a bow
- (5) and stretch you like a bow string.
- Again, if you cause any harm to the house of Pabaq or his possessions or any of the people in his household or to my own self—Abuna s. Geribta—or to Iba s. Zutai,
- (6) I shall bring down upon you the ban, the decree, and the anathema that was placed upon Mount Hermon and upon Leviathan the sea serpent and upon Sodom and Gomorrah. (It is) in order to suppress *dēvs* (that)
- (7) I go out—I, Abuna s. Geribta—and all evil mysteries and the tongue of malicious

amulet spirits. I went out and I attacked the demons and *dēvs*, evil tormentor, male idols and female goddesses. They stand in row upon row and camp upon camp.

Line 5 marks the point where the armoured Pabaq s. Kopitai ceases to narrate his threats on behalf of Abuna s. Geribta and Iba s. Zutai. At this juncture, Abuna assumes the I and pronounces a further series of threats on behalf of Pabaq and Iba. Like Pabaq, Abuna recounts how he stepped out and confronted various (now specified) agents of harm with diverse bans. It is possible that the practitioner became confused as they juggled the names of the various beneficiaries of the bowl, but it seems likely that—in this case—they sought to instantiate two of the three beneficiaries of the bowl as powerful agents in their battle against demons. A similar technique is used in CBS 16041, where Yazedad s. Izdandukkh describes his powerful form before detailing his encounter with the harmful agents; in l. 8, his wife takes up the I of the exorcism before Yazedad resumes it in l. 9. But for the shift in beneficiaries, the text of this bowl essentially duplicates that of AIT 2.

3. CBS 16041 = AIT 27 = Isbell 6

An apotropaic incantation bowl prepared for Yazedad s. Izdandukkh and Mirdukh d. Bana

- (2) אִזְלָנָא אָנָא יִזְדָּאד
- (3) בֵּר אִיזְדַּנְדוּךְ בַּחֲלִי דְנַפְשִׁי בְּקוּמְתִי גְצִיצְתָּא
- (4) דְּפִרְזָלָא קִרְקַפְתִּי דְּפִרְזָלָא כּוּלָּהּ קוּמְתִי דְנוּרָא דְכִיָּא וּלְבִישָׁנָא
- (5) לְבוּשָׁא דְאַדְמָסָא דְכִיָּא וּמַלְלָא וּחְלִינָא בְּמָאן דִּיבְרָא שְׁמִיָּא וְאַרְעָא אִזְלִית פְּגַעִית
- (6) בַּהוֹן בְּסַנְאִי בִישִׁי וּבְבַעֲלִדְבִי מְרִירִי אִמְרִית לְהוֹן דָּאִם מִידַעִם חֲטִיתוֹן
- (7) [...] אָנָא יִזְדָּאד בֵּר אִיזְדַּנְדוּךְ כִּי קִשְׁתָּא גְאִיבְנָא לְכוֹן וְכִי יִתְרָא פְּשִׁיטְנָא לְכוֹן תּוֹב מִידַעִם חֲטִיתוֹן
- (8) בְּבִי [...] אָנָא מִירְדוּךְ בַּת בְּאַנָּא אִשְׁיפְנָא לְכוֹן בְּאִישְׁפָּא דִּיּוּמָא וּבְאִישְׁפָּא דְלִיּוּתֵן תְּנִינָא תּוֹב
- מִידַעִם חֲטִיתוֹן
- (9) בִּידִידִי אָנָא יִזְדָּאד בֵּר אִיזְדַּנְדוּךְ מַחִיתְנָא עֲלִיכּוֹן שְׁמַתָּא גְזִירְתָּא וְאַחַרְמַתָּא דְאַחִיתְנָא עַל חִירְמוֹן
- טוּרָא וְעַל לִיּוּתֵן תְּנִינָא וְעַל סְדוּם
- (10) וְעַל עֲמוּרָה מִיטוּל דְּלִמְיַכְבֶּשׁ דִּיּוּ אִזְלָנָא וְרוּחִי בִישְׁאֲתָא וְלִישָׁן חוּמְרִי זִידְנִיָּאֲתָהּ אָנָא יִזְדָּאד בֵּר
- אִיזְדַּנְדוּךְ אִזְלִית פְּגַעִית בַּהוֹן
- (11) בְּשִׁידִי בְּדִיּוּ בְּלִילִיָּאֲתָא בִישְׁאֲתָא בְּפִרְיָךְ [י] דִּיכְרִי וּבְאִיסְתֵּרָאֲתָהּ נִיקְבָּאֲתָהּ כַּד קִימִין סִידְרֵי סִידְרֵי
- מִרְפְּדִי מִרְפְּדִי ו[ע] בְּרַת עֲלִיהוֹן

An apotropaic incantation bowl prepared for Burzaq s. Māhdukh

4-6 מיטול דחתימא ליה נפשיה לאב[א] רבה קדמא ותרצא ליה קמיה מגינא דאדמסא דכייא ותרצא ליה קמיה לאבא רבא קדמא דמו חרביה סיפיה איצטמומיה אתון מיניה גנדיה ואידיוריה

4-6 For he—the Great Primordial Father—has sealed his soul (i.e. the beneficiary's) and he has erected a shield of pure steel before him, and he—the Great Primordial Father—has erected before him the likeness of his sword, his sabre, (and) his spear. His troops and his auxiliary troops have come with him.

An apotropaic incantation bowl prepared for (the children of) Mahdukh d. Newandukh

(10) מיטול דחתימה ליה נפשיה לאבה רבה קדמאה ותריצא ליה קמיה מגינא דאדמסא דכייא ותריצא ליה <קמיה> לאב(ה) רב(ה) [...] (11) [...] [אי]דיוריה ...

⁴⁵ The text of the bowl is not lineated in Shaked's edition.

Similar to many of the foregoing formulae in the details of its drama and its drive towards description is an unusually large ‘elephant’ bowl (AMB B13) that features a series of brief narrative episodes. These are also recounted by an anonymous narrator who—like the narrator of the Great Primordial Father formula—is not an actor within the story. Again, however, the point of view that orients the narrative perspective in the spells in AMB B13 is plainly that of the practitioner. This is most evident at various points in the bowl text where the narrator of these stories shifts into a mode of direct address. In this mode of address, various harmful beings are threatened, adjured, or insulted—both within and without the narrative episodes—using the second person (plural). The act of perception on the part of the practitioner in this bowl is thus variously narrated, reported, quoted, and scenically represented. The use of quotation in particular is expressive of this practitioner’s knowledge of the transmundane realm: adopting the perspective of the addressees of the bowl, the practitioner crafts speeches for them in which they lay out their harmful plans against humanity. For example:

דאמריתו ניזי להו לידמות אדם ולא נישבוק להו חיה בדיריהו ניקטול סבי באסניהו⁽¹⁹⁾
ואלימני באישכריהו ני[סחו]פינהו לדר[ד]קי בשוקי נירדופינהו בפגריהו נירדופינהו
בארחתהו ...

⁽¹⁹⁾ That which you say, ‘Let us go to them in the shape of a human being, and we shall not spare a living being in their dwelling. Let us kill the old ones in their granaries and the young ones in their fields; let us sweep away the children in the streets. Let us chase them in their bodies. Let us chase them in their streets.’

The malice expressed in these speeches (and reflected elsewhere in reports on the activities and intentions of the addressees) is then thwarted. This is achieved either by commanding various powerful beings against the addressees of the bowl, or through the narration of various anti-demonic exploits on the part of these powerful beings. In some cases, the body or person of these beings are described without any narrative framework. In fact, the main body of AMB B13 begins in this fashion, with an invocation and extended description of a powerful being that the practitioner first arms and then commands to attack a certain lilith. This same being also features as the protagonist in a later narrative episode:

... ובישמיה דמריא בגדנא אזיזא רבא דאילהי ומלכה ראישא דשיתי מלכותא חיליה⁽³⁾
חילא (דזיקא) חומתיה⁽⁴⁾ חומתא דנורא סוגייה סוגיא דקטלא מרדוטי מרדווא דיקרבה
דחי אכיל דלא מזיג שתי ראישיה ראישא דאריא ככיה ככי {ב}דיברזה שיניה⁽⁵⁾ שיני דנמרא

סירפי פומיה אדוגי דנורא עיניה ברקין דיקדין קוליה גילגלי בעננא צידיה סדנא דפרזלא
 איבריה תרתי ארזפתא חדייה חדיא דגברא לטבא ⁽⁶⁾ כרסיה ימא דלא בירי גביה גבא
 דיגילא שקיה שקי נחשה ופרזלא סנדליה סנדלי פריחי מרכבתיה מרכבא לטבי תיתי בידיה
 חרבא דקטלא את מריא אתא גוס ⁽⁷⁾ קריב עליהון ...

⁽³⁾ ... and by the name of the lord Bagdana Aziza, the great one of the gods and the king, head of sixty kingdoms. His power is the power of (a blast). His heat ⁽⁴⁾ is the heat of fire. His practice is the practice of killing. His chastisement is the chastisement of battle. That which is alive, he eats. That which is unmixed, he drinks. His head is the head of a lion, his tusks are the tusks of a wild boar, his teeth are ⁽⁵⁾ the teeth of tiger, the draughts of his mouth are furnaces of fire, his eyes are burning lightnings, his voice is the thunder in a cloud, his temples are an anvil of iron, his arms are two hammers, his chest is the chest of an evil man, ⁽⁶⁾ his belly is a lake without wells, his back is a back of stone, his legs are legs of brass and iron, his sandals are sandals of sparks, his chariot is the chariot of the no-good ones. Let a sword of killing come into his hand; you, lord, come, meet, (and) ⁽⁷⁾ do battle against them ...

Many aspects of this bowl are obscure, while the shifting verbal forms, point of view, and mode of address across the text of the incantation mean that the boundaries of its narrative episodes are not always clear. A number of bowls whose texts are parallel to AMB B13 have been identified by Christa Müller-Kessler and James Nathan Ford and Matthew Morgenstern, and these have been used by these scholars in order to better illuminate parts of AMB B13. None of these parallel bowl texts have been published, however.⁴⁶ In what follows, I include only those sections of the bowl text that plainly reflect a story or the narration of a series of actions or events. I do not include reports on the thoughts or speech of demons as they prepare for harm. I also exclude a portion of the bowl text (ll. 6-9) that Naveh and Shaked interpreted as a narrative, but whose verbs instead consist of a succession of imperatives.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ See the references to—and quotations from—the text of a bowl auctioned at Christie's New York in Müller-Kessler, "More Puzzling Words" as well as the references to three other bowls in private hands (JNF 29, JNF 30, JNF 43) in Morgenstern and Ford, "Some Readings," 193, 199. According to Müller-Kessler and Ford and Morgenstern, the Christie's bowl was produced by the same hand as AMB B13. Ford and Morgenstern further state that JNF 29—amongst other parallel bowls—was also written by this practitioner.

⁴⁷ Müller-Kessler, "More Puzzling Words," 3; Morgenstern and Ford, "Some Readings," 192.

VK 5 (National Library of Israel) = AMB B13

An exorcistic incantation bowl prepared for Yoitay d. Ḥatay and Zorigay s. Imma

... אתא עליכון מריא בגדנא כנשינכו ובשינכו ואחיתנכו תחות טורא רב(ה) דפרזלא (13)

אפרגוד רמנכו דיוי נקש לכו בליביכו אצמומי דפרזלא אחית עליכון טינרא רבא דיגלל אטף (14)

עליכון ימא וכיפיה ...

(13) Marya Bagdana came against you. He gathered you, pressed you, and placed you under a great mountain of iron.

(14) He cast you against the curtain (?), *dēvs*, he struck spears of iron in your hearts, he placed a great flint stone upon you, he caused the sea and its shore to swamp you.

Armed by the practitioner in l. 6 with a sword of killing, then ordered into battle in l. 7 against various demons, Marya Bagdana appears again in the lines above. His actions in this narrative appear to be directed against the legion of demons that are addressed in the second person in ll. 10-13. Previous to this, an encounter between another powerful figure and a further series of malevolent forces is recollected:

VK 5 (National Library of Israel) = AMB B13

An exorcistic incantation bowl prepared for Yoitay d. Ḥatay and Zorigay s. Imma

אתא בישלם גברא טישתגר אתא עליהון דשידי ודיוי בני חילי חשוכה בני אתרא דנורא בני (9)

אתרא דמיא איסיוי ...

(9) He came in peace, the man who was sent. He came against the demons and *dēvs*, the children of the forces of darkness, the children of the place of fire, the children of the place of black water, etc.

Subsequent to Marya Bagdana's second appearance in AMB B13, a third further powerful figure is introduced and his actions against the *dēvs* recounted:

VK 5 (National Library of Israel) = AMB B13

An exorcistic incantation bowl prepared for Yoitay d. Ḥatay and Zorigay s. Imma

... לא ידעיתון דיוי (15)

דגברא מילבר אתא עליכון קנטיעל שמיה סכין גודדא בידיה נקיט לי>ה> וחרבא סטנא בבית (16)

אצבעתיה ואתא למיסחף בתי דאילהי וסחוף כל איסתרתא סחפינהי לפתורהי שדינהי לאגנהי

זלח להי חלבא בארבעא זזיתא בסיא לקרניהי תברו לשיפורהי

שויא לחדותהט נסיסא (17)

- (15) Do you not know, *dēvs*,
- (16) that a man from the outside came against you. Qan̄tiel is his name. In his hand he holds a sharp (lit. cutting) knife and in his fingers the sword of Satan. He came to throw down the houses of the gods, and he threw down all the goddesses. He threw down their tables, he cast away their chalices. He sprinkled fat for them in the four corners. He trampled their horns, he broke their trumpets.
- (17) He made their joy (into) sadness.

The class of *dēvs* as a whole are reminded here of a powerful warrior who came against them from the outside. Like the man who came in peace, the person of this warrior is not described.⁴⁸ Unlike the man of peace, this Qan̄tiel—like Marya Bagdana, the Great Primordial Father, and the final I of the ‘I stand upon a mountain of stone’ formula—comes bearing weapons.

VK 5 (National Library of Israel) = AMB B13

An exorcistic incantation bowl prepared for Yoitay d. Ḥatay and Zorigay s. Imma

- לא ידעיתון דיויד גברא מילבר אתא עליכון ודהבה שמה (19)
- דארעא כולה נהרא בזיוה וטורי כולהין צמחי בידמותיה אישתפל גברי חשוכא איבטל אורי שמה (20)
- חילוותא איתוח קצירי אישתפי צורה[נא ביש]א דיוי (ננא) אגביה לטורא טורא קרח ויליל רוחי
בי[שתא ...]אה ...
- (19) Do you not know, *dēvs*, that a man from the outside came against you, and **dhbh** is his name.
- (20) The whole earth glows with his splendour and all the mountains shine with his likeness. The men of darkness were vanquished, the lights of heaven (and) the heavenly powers were annulled, the sick recovered, the evil sickness was relieved, the *dēv* (**nn'**) lifted up the mountain. The mountain shouted and wailed. The ev[il] spirits [...]

Like the historiola, these three narratives recollect a type of precedent whereby the class of *dēvs* were confronted by a series of men who are said to have come against them ‘from the

⁴⁸ Cf. the great Nuriel in ll. 17-18: נורא לביש ונורא: לא ידעיתון דיוי דגברא מילבר אתא עליכון נוראל רבה נוראל שמה נורא לביש ונורא, “Do you not know, *dēvs*, that a man from the outside came against you, the great Nuriel, Nuriel is his name. He is clad with fire and is covered with fire. A flame of fire comes out of his mouth.” The actions of this figure against the *dēvs* are not recounted.

outside.’ These particular narrative spells, however, are marked by an expansion of description and a loosening of plot.

‘I WENT UP TO THE ROOF’
WORKING FROM ONE’S DOORSTEP

The first person narrative spells surveyed in this section reflect an entirely different order of setting to the foregoing formulae. The events narrated take place within the domestic realm and instantiate the impregnability of the person of the I—identified with the beneficiary—and their home in the face of incursions by harmful agents and demonised witchcraft.

‘I sit at my door (and) I resemble a Babylonian’

This first person narrative spell accounts for the length of one published bowl: BM 135563. First published in 2000 in two independent editions, the text of this spell has since been the subject of extensive discussion as well as further editions.⁴⁹ Replete with motifs known from ancient Mesopotamian magical and diagnostic texts,⁵⁰ the spell recounts an attack upon the bowl owner by various forms of demonised witchcraft. Sitting upon her doorstep, the I of the spell remarks upon the impregnability of her house and person. She first likens herself to the

⁴⁹ The first edition of this bowl was produced by Müller-Kessler and Kwasman, “A Unique Talmudic Aramaic Incantation Bowl.” It was followed in the same year by J.B. Segal’s edition = CAMIB 049A. A third edition by Matthew Morgenstern followed in 2004 with additions in 2005: Morgenstern, “Notes on a Recently Published Aramaic Magic Bowl”; Matthew Morgenstern, “Additional Notes to the Aramaic Magic Bowl BM 135563,” *Aramaic Studies* 3.2 (2005): 203–4. The editions by Morgenstern and Müller-Kessler and Kwasman were followed several years later by two further studies in which these scholars defended their divergent readings and interpretation of the bowl: Theodore Kwasman and Christa Müller-Kessler, “Once Again on the Unique Incantation Bowl BM 135563,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 132.2 (2012): 189–98; Matthew Morgenstern, “Yet Again on the Unique Incantation Bowl BM 135563,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 133.1 (2013): 111–17. A further reading and interpretation of the text has been offered by James Nathan Ford, “The Ancient Mesopotamian Motif of Kidinnu, ‘Divine Protection (of Temple Cities and Their Citizens),’ in Akkadian and Aramaic Magic,” in *Encounters by the Rivers of Babylon: Scholarly Conversations between Jews, Iranians, and Babylonians in Antiquity*, ed. Uri Gabbay and Shai Secunda (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 271–72. Ford’s reading of the text largely follows Morgenstern’s but improves upon Morgenstern’s reading at several points. See also Christa Müller-Kessler, “Die Zauberschälensammlung des British Museum,” *Archiv für Orientforschung* 48/49 (2001/2002): 129.

⁵⁰ See the discussion in Markham J. Geller, “Tablets and Magic Bowls,” in Shaked, ed., *Officina Magica*, 57–61; Müller-Kessler and Kwasman, “A Unique Incantation Bowl,” 161, 163; Ford, “Ancient Mesopotamian Motif of Kidinnu.”

citizens of Babylon and Borsippa and thereby apports to herself a form of divine protection or *kidinnu* that was accorded to residents of these ancient temple cities.⁵¹ She next fashions the inviolability of her person through a series of metaphors.⁵² As impregnable as the high heavens and unbending as the earth—so she cannot be harmed. The main action of the narrative then commences with the advent of various forms of evil witchcraft. The I goes out to confront these species of demonised witchcraft and defies them to eat and drink with her.⁵³ A dialogue ensues whereupon these harmful agents are forced to admit their powerlessness before her. They are then commanded to return to the person who dispatched them; to infest their food and drink; and to sicken them thereby.

1. BM 135563 = MK&K 2000 = CAMIB 049A = Morgenstern 2004 = Ford 2014

An exorcistic incantation bowl prepared for Gušnazuḫt d. Aḫat

- (1) אבבי יתבנא אנה גושנזדוכת בת אחת
- (2) לבבליתא דמינא באסופי יתבנא אנה גושנזדוכת בת
- (3) אחת לבורספיתא דמינא {ב} ארעה פתיתא אנה דאניש לא כיפלי
- (4) {הר} שמי דרמא אנה דאניש לא מטילי הרזיפא מרירתא אנה דאניש לא אכילי
- (5) מיני נהר מררי אנה דאניש לא שתי מיני ביתי רחיץ איסקופתי מרימא אתו אלי
- (6) חרשי בישי פגעי פקי ומללתא אנה גושנזדוכת בת אחת לאפיהו נפקנא מללנא ואמרנא להו
- (7) לחרשי בישי פגי פקי ומללתא דתו אכול מידאילנא ותו אישתו מידשיתנא ותו שוף מידשיפנא
- (8) מליל חרשי בישי פגע פגעי פקי ומללתא האכנ היכי ניכו מידאכלת ונישתי מדשתי ונישוף מדשיפת דארעה
- (9) פתיתא את דאניש לא כיף לך שמי דרמא את דאניש לא מטילך הרזיפא מרירתא את דאניש לא אכי מינד נהר {מ}
- (10) מרארי את דאניש לא שתי מינד ביתך רחיץ איסקופתיך מרימא אילא תור זידו אאבדניכו אמשרניכו על טחי קמחיכו

⁵¹ Ford, “Ancient Mesopotamian Motif of Kidinnu,” 277–81.

⁵² Cf. the Mandaic incantation series against the evil eye *Šapta d-Pišra d-Ainia*, 666-678; the Akkadian incantation series *Maqlū* III, 151-154; and the Sumerian-Akkadian incantation *Utukkū lemnūtu* IV, 174-175.

⁵³ Cf. the third subseries of *šumma ūm ištēn marišma*, tablet 17:12-13 = Nils P. Heeßel, *Babylonisch-assyrische Diagnostik* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2000), 196.

(11) זילו ופילו לה בסליה דנהמא דניכו מיניה וניחבן בחצביה דמיא דנישתי מינהו וניחבן באצותיה

דמישחא דנישוף מיניה וניחבן

(12) בשום תיקוס יהוה צבאות אמן אמן סלה

- (1) I sit at my door, I, Gušnazdukht d. Aḥat,
- (2) (and) I resemble a Babylonian. I sit in my vestibule, I, Gušnazdukht d.
- (3) Aḥat, (and) I resemble a Borsippean. I am the wide earth, which no one can bend.
- (4) I am the high heavens, which no one can reach. I am the bitter *harzifa* herb, from which no one can eat.
- (5) I am a brackish river, from which no one can drink. My house is secure, my threshold is raised.
- (6) Evil witchcraft, afflictions, *paqqa* spirits, and spells came to me. I, Gušnazdukht d. Aḥat, went out to meet them. I spoke and said to them,
- (7) to the evil witchcraft, *paqqa* spirits, afflictions, *paqqa* spirits, and spells: ‘Come eat from what I eat, and come drink from what I drink, and come anoint (yourselves) from what I anoint (myself).’
- (8) The evil witchcraft, affliction, afflictions, *paqqa* spirits, and spells spoke thus: ‘How can we eat from what you eat, and drink from what you drink, and anoint (ourselves) from what you anoint (yourself)? For
- (9) you are the wide earth, which no one can bend. You are the high heavens, which no one can reach. You are a bitter *harzifa* herb, from which no one can eat. You are
- (10) a brackish river, from which no one can drink. Your house is secure, your threshold is raised!’ ‘If not, go back to your practitioner, to your dispatcher, to the one who grinds your flour (?)
- (11) Go and infest his breadbasket, that he may eat from it and be sickened; his water barrel, that he may drink from it and be sickened; his container of oil, that he may anoint (himself) with it and be sickened!’
- (12) In the name of Tiqos YHWH Sebaoth. Amen, Amen, Selah.

The same spell also appears in at least one other unpublished bowl.⁵⁴ Ford has quoted the opening lines of this bowl in his discussion of the *kidinnu* motif in the incantation bowls:

⁵⁴ JNF 90 = Davidovitz 1. Cf. the variant formulae in Davidovitz 2 and the VAM bowl KtO 1445. James Ford is preparing both of these bowls for publication. The text of Davidovitz 2 parallels BM 135563 and JNF 90 before diverging considerably: “אנא דוכתיש בת בהרוי בבאבי קימנא לבאביל דמינא בסופי קינא {ד} לבורסיף דמינא”, “I, Du-

2. JNF 90 = Davidovitz 1 = Ford 2014: 275

An incantation bowl prepared for Talifa s. Immay

תשאלין אסותא ורחמי מן קדם שמיא לבטלא חרשי מן ביתה דתליפא בר אימי בביל קמינא (1-

לבבלהא דמינא בברסיף קימנא לברספיא דמינא 4)

(1-4) You shall request healing and mercy from heaven in order to remove witchcraft from the house of Talifa s. Immay. I stand in Babylon and resemble a Babylonian. I stand in Borsippa and resemble a Borsippean.

The male beneficiary of this spell goes one better than the beneficiary of BM 135563 and declares not just his resemblance to the citizens of Babylon and Borsippa but his simultaneous physical presence in both of these cities. This declaration aside, the immediate scene of the action in these spells is the mundane world of the doorstep. The I has journeyed no further than the doorway of their own home. And yet they are as inviolable as the I of those first person formulae who are availed of diverse magical armaments or the shield of the Great Primordial Father. Here the I is wholly at home and a force wholly to be reckoned with. This is not just a matter—depending on which version of the spell is being read—of claiming the status of Babylon and Borsippa or possessing the status of a native of Babylon and Borsippa or even being physically present in these temple cities. It is the subsequent construal of the bowl owner's body as wholly inviolable. This embodied inviolability is achieved through four physically-founded metaphors. The metaphoric mapping of their person and the security of their bodily experience is achieved first through physical spatial referents: as broad as the earth, the bowl owner cannot be bent, as high as the heavens, she cannot be reached. The everyday 'grammar' of these two metaphors is then further specified in two more metaphors of the natural world. Because she is the bitter *harzifa* herb, to eat of her is to come to harm.⁵⁵

khtīš d. Bahāroy, stand in my doorway (and) I resemble Babylon. I stand in my vestibule (and) I resemble Borsippa" (Ford, "Ancient Mesopotamian Motif of Kidinnu," 276).

⁵⁵ Cf. the use of the myrtle tree and its leaves in ZHS 25 and AIT 15 to give figurative shape to the impossibility of harming the bowl owner. ZHS 25:2-3 reads as follows: מן סאליק אטרפי דאסה מן סנקט כיהכדי לא ניקרבולה יותי: "Who ascends and who gather the leaves of a myrtle? In the same manner may they not approach her, Yōṭay d. Lālay, neither demons, nor witchcraft, etc." This reference to the myrtle tree and its leaves is clearer in AIT 15:4-7, which reads: לאס מן סליק ואטרפי דאס מן מנא אינש לאס לא סלי[ק] ואטרפי דאס אינש מנה: "Who has ascended a myrtle and who has counted the leaves of a myrtle? No one has ascen[ded] a myrtle and (no) one has counted the leaves of a myrtle. Just as no one has ascended a myrtle and (no) one has counted the leaves of a myrtle, thus I have go[ne] (and) recited against you, spirits and demons and plagues, etc." The import of the spell is clear. As

Because she is a brackish river, to drink of her is also to come to harm. Her person is thus safe from molestation.

The impregnability of the beneficiaries' person and home having been firmly established, the main action of the spell commences. Various form of demonised witchcraft approach the home of the bowl owner, who goes out to meet them and offer them various forms of hospitality. The ironic quality of this first speech is met in earnest fashion. The witchcraft speaks to the impossibility of having anything to do with her or her household (which is partially constructed in synecdochal fashion through the actions of eating, drinking, and anointing). This impossibility is construed on the basis of the metaphors employed earlier in the spell: the witchcraft states that it cannot eat of her food, drink of her drink, or anoint themselves with her oils, because she is the bitter herb, the brackish river, and the unyielding earth. Upon this admission, the I of the spell commands the witchcraft to return to infest the home of their dispatcher and to sicken this individual.

'I went up to the roof (at night)'

Akin to the foregoing spell are a series of formulae in which the I of the spell also invites various harmful agents into their home to eat and drink. In one instance, meat and wine are specified. The invitation is extended from the rooftop of the beneficiaries' homes and it is premised on the fact that the harmful agents will not be able to eat or drink with the beneficiaries, even if they are famished and their bodies are wasted. Variations on this formula appear in three published bowls: ZRL 48, IM 9731, and BM 91776.⁵⁶

The first of these bowls was prepared for multiple beneficiaries, though only one of them adopts the I of the spell. The beneficiaries are further said in ZRL 48:3 to dwell in a house of iron: *בביתא דפרזלא יתבין*.⁵⁷

impossible as it is to number the leaves of a myrtle, so it is equally impossible to harm the beneficiary of the spell.

⁵⁶ The descriptive catalogue in Siam Bhayro et al., *Aramaic Magic Bowls in the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin: Descriptive List and Edition of Selected Texts* (Leiden: Brill, 2018) also notes that the unpublished text of VA.Bab.2834 is parallel to ZRL 48 and IM 9731; VA 2452 is said to be parallel to BM 91776.

⁵⁷ Cf. MS 2053/38 (unpublished), which recounts how the I built a house of iron: *ביתא דפרזלא בני לי ושמי טלליה* דברא, "I have built a house of iron and the vault of its ceiling (?) is of lead." The text of IM 9731 is less well preserved than ZRL 48, but it also appears to contain an introductory formula that reflects some of the elements of ZRL 48 and possibly MS 2053/38.

1. ZRL 48 = Gordon 1978: 233

An incantation bowl prepared for Manmalka d. Imai; Zarmazd and Mahendad s. Manmalka;
Imai d. Maḥlafta; Maḥlafta d. Imai; Anoš d. Imai

- (6) ... סליקית לאיגרא מנ מלכא בת אימא <י> ואמרית להון על
- (7) מא אתיתון חרשין בישין וראזין אפוכין אם כפיניתון עול איכל איכול אם צחתון עול עול אשתו
אם חרביתון עול אידהן אם לא כפינין אתון ואם
- (8) לא צחיאתון ואם לא חרביתון אתון איזדעזעו ופוקו מינהון מן מנמלכא בת אימאי ומן זרמזד מן
מהינדד בני מנמלכא מן אימאי בת מחלפתא מן מחלפתא
- (9) בת אימאי מן אנוש בת אימאי מן כל ירתיהון ומן זרעיהון מן קיניניהון ומן כולה איסכופתיהון דהון
מן מוגיאי ומן בריא אית בכול ימינהון הדרו באורחא דאתיתון
- (10) בה ועולו לביתא דנפ{כ}קתון מיניה ופילו לה בסלא דלחמא {ממבניכון} דיאכל <ו> ולא ישבעו
מנא {ומנא} דמיא דישתי ויפקו במנא דמשחא דישוף {ויכעבו} וכעיב ...
- (6) ... I, Manmalka d. Imai, went up to the roof and I said to them,
- (7) 'Why have you come, evil sorceries and perverted mysteries? If you are hungry, enter
(and) eat, eat. If you are thirsty, enter. Enter (and) drink. If you are wasted, enter
(and) become fat. If you are not hungry and if
- (8) you are not thirsty and if you are not wasted, (then) remove yourselves and go out
from them — from Manmalka d. Imai and from Zarmazd (and) from Mahendad ss.
Manmalka, (and) from Imai d. Maḥlafta (and) from Maḥlafta
- (9) d. Imai (and) from Anoš d. Imai (and) from all their heirs and from their seed, from
their possessions and from the whole of their threshold (...) Return by the road on
which you came
- (10) and enter the house you came out from, and infest the breadbasket, that he may eat
and not have his fill; the water vessel, that he may drink and go out; the oil vessel,
that he may anoint (himself) and be in pain!'

2. IM 9731 = Gordon 1978: 236

An incantation bowl prepared for [...]mrt d. (...) and [...] d. Ima

- (8) ... סליקית לאיגרא בליליא
- (9) ואמרית להון איכלו ואם צחתון איתו אשתו ואם חרביתון איתו אידהנו ואם לא כפיניתון ולא
צחתון ולא חרביתון
- (10) הדרו ואזילו באורחא דאתתון בה ועולו לביתא דנפקתון מיניה ועולו בפומא (...) דנפקתון מיניה

- (8) I went up to the roof at night
 (9) and I said to them, ‘<If you are hungry, come> Eat. And if you are thirsty, come, drink. And if you are wasted, come, become fat. But if you are not hungry or thirsty or wasted,
 (10) return and go (back) by the road on which you came, and enter the house you came out from and enter the mouth (...) which you came out from.’

In the following variant—like ZRL 48, written for multiple beneficiaries—the events of the spell are recounted in the first person plural. The action of the spell is prefaced by a long list of demons who pass by the door of the beneficiaries.

3. BM 91776 = CAMIB 036A = Müller-Kessler 2001/2002: 123-124

An incantation bowl prepared for Khwarkhšed-Gušnas s. Dostai and Zebinta d. Ziwoi

- (4) ... דיחליפו על בבאין דילנה כורכשיד
 (5) גושנס בר דוסתא ולא עלו או[.].חו בגורה ולא סליקו ואנחן כורכשיד גושנס בר
 (6) דוסתא וזבינתא בת זיישי סליקנן לאיגרא ואמרנן להון [מ]אן חרשי בישי אתו ומאן [ני]דרי בישי
 אתו ומאן
 (7) מעבד[ד]י סניי אתו דחליפתו על באבין דילן כורכשיד גושנס בר דוסתא וזבינתא בת זייזי ולא
 עלתון עולו איתו הא
 (8) בישרא למיכל והא חמרא למישתי פתחו פומיהון ואמרזו לנה מאן לביתכון אעיל ארעי[כון כוכין]
 ואטטין ואינש בגוה לא זרעה [...] (9)
 [...] והלף על באבא דבתיכון דאינש לא קריב ליה ערסא מיד לכון בביתכון וגבו גניא (לה)
 (10) [...] ובחניה דנבו מולית גניא ובידה דמולית [...] (11)
 [...] חרשי בישי ונידרי בישי ומאבדי סניי מנכון דילכון כורכשיד גושנס בר דוסתא[י וז]בינתא
 בת זייזי אילא איזלו הדרו על עבד[נא]
 (11) [דעבדינכו ועל משדרנא] דשדרינכו זילו ופילו ליה בסליה דלחמא בחצביה דמיא ב(...)ה
 דמ(יש)[חא] [...] ולישתי מיא ולזוק ולישוף מישחה וליכוב
 (4) ... who passed by our door—that of Khwarkhšed-Gušnas s. Dostai—
 (5) but did not enter, who (...) by the roof but did not ascend. Then we—Khwarkhšed-
 Gušnas s.
 (6) Dostai and Zebinta d. Ziwoi—went up to the roof and we said to them, ‘Who are you,
 evil sorceries, and who are you, evil [vo]ws, and who
 (7) are you, odious acts, who passed by our door—that of Khwarkhšed-Gušnas s. Dostai

- and Zebinta d. Ziwoi—but did not enter? Enter! Come! Here is
- (8) meat for eating and here is wine for drinking.’ They opened their mouths and they said to us, ‘Who can enter your house? Your land is [thorns] and briars and no one can sow it.
- (9) [...] pass by the door of your house which no one can approach. You have prepared the bed in your house and Nabu lies in it, and Mulit lies in the lap of Nabu, and in the hand of Mulit (?) [...]’
- (10) [...] ‘evil sorceries and evil vows and odious acts. Go back to the pract[itioner]
- (11) [who made you and to the dispatcher] who dispatched you! Go and infest his bread-basket, his water barrel, his (...) of o(il) [...] let him drink water and be harmed and let him anoint (himself) with oil and be in pain!’

These three narrative spells—like the spell in BM 135563—are marked by their use of dialogue to progress the plot, as well as their emphasis on the domestic setting. By the conclusion of these episodes, the nature of the dialogue has transitioned to command and the I of the spell speaks in order to return the demonised witchcraft to the person who dispatched it.

WORKING WITH THE I BRANDING DEMONS AND BINDING THE EDGES OF THE EARTH

‘I have taken some of their hair for binding them’

This spoken facility with and authority over transmundane beings also extends directly to the material person of these beings in a formula that begins “I have taken some of their hair for binding them; some of their blood for sealing them; some of their skin for marking them.”⁵⁸ Following their account of these actions, the I further recounts how they have seized the demons by their hair and by their genitals and cast them into a sort of (chaotic, cosmic) breach

⁵⁸ Cf. the direct threat in MS 1928/1 = JBA 55:6-8, which reads: ואם לא תיפקון מינה מן מישכוי בת אנושפרי נסיבנא “And if you do not go out from Miškoy d. Anušfri, I shall take some of your hair for binding you and some of your fat for sealing you and I shall cast you into the depths of the netherworld, from which it is not possible to ascend.”

known as Haraq Maraq.⁵⁹ The spell appears in three published bowls, as well as numerous unpublished bowls.⁶⁰

1. Allard Pierson Museum Bowl = Smelik 1978

An exorcistic incantation bowl prepared for Rašoni s. Imi and Ispandarmed s. Imi

מן שעריהון שקלית ליפכריהון ומן גילדיהון לירקמיהון ומן דמיהון ליחתמיהון בישבע שבע (2)

נקטית בציצותהון ובתמני תמני בגדולתהון ושדרית יתהין לחד מרק לניקרא דישימא (3)

(2) I have taken some of their hair for binding them and some of their skin for branding (?) them and some of their blood for sealing them. Seven at a time

(3) I seized them by the tufts of their hair and eight at a time by their braids, and I have cast them into Ḥad Maraq, the breach of heaven.

2. BM 102584 = CAMIB 056A

An incantation bowl prepared for Ḥaṭīb and Mizdok d. Mamay

[...] לחתימיהון [...] (וב)תמני תמני בגויותהון ושדיתינון לחרק מרק (3)

ניקרא דשמיה להיכאה (דאזלין שידי) [...] (4)

(3) [...] for sealing them [...] (and) eight at time by their membra, and I have cast them into Ḥaraq Maraq,

(4) the breach of heaven, to (the place) where (demons go) ...

A further (likely corrupted) version of the spell appears in a published bowl from the Schøyen Collection:

3. MS 1928/43 = JBA 26

An exorcistic incantation bowl prepared for Abudimme s. Daday

מן שערהון <שקלית> לאבודימי בר דדי מן דמיהון שקלית לחתמהון ומן גלדהון שקלית לרקאה (6)

בה(ון שב[ע]) שבע לקיט בסוסיתיה

(6) <I have taken> Some of their hair for Abudimme s. Daday. I have taken some of their blood for sealing them and I have taken some of their skin for patching (?) them. Sev-

⁵⁹ Cf. M 163:23-24 = Corpus: 123 (discussed in Chapter Three of the present work).

⁶⁰ MS 1927/10, MS 2053/11, MS 2053/182, M 148, Wolfe 9, JNF 32, JNF 5, JNF 53, JNF 63, JNF 72, JNF 101, JNF 274, cf. MS 2053/158. The incantations on these published and unpublished bowls go on to describe the person of their beneficiaries as inviolable רבא דיגללא ופירמה דכייא אינון "because they are a pure burning coal and a great censer (?) of stone." A translation of MS 1927/10:6-10 sans Aramaic text appears in Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 17.

en times seven it is seized by the tufts of its hair.

These spells recount the extension of the practitioner's jurisdiction directly to the bodies of the demons that they address in their texts. Their facility with their persons means that they are able to bind them with their own hair, to mark or brand their skin, and to extract their blood in order to seal them.⁶¹

'I have bound the constellations of the sky'

These direct manipulations of transmundane beings extend also to direct manipulations of the cosmos. The I of the formula commencing 'I have tied' recounts how they have variously tied down or subdued the edges of the earth, bound the constellations or the mysteries of the sky, and suppressed the lower abysses. The spell appears in five published bowls.⁶²

1. M 2 = Shaked 1999: 192

An apotropaic incantation bowl prepared for Hormiz s. Dašmoi

... כפתניהו לכיפי ארעה (1)

ואסרתניהו לר(ז)י רקעא ... (2)

(1) I have tied up the edges of the earth

(2) and I have bound the mysteries of the sky ...

2. 80.1.1 (Israel Museum, Jerusalem) = AMB B5 = Shaked 1999: 191

An exorcistic incantation bowl prepared for Marnaqa s. Qala

כפתנינן לכיפי ארעה ואסרתנינן לרזי (רק(יעא (2)

3. AS 13 (Private Collection) = Ford 2014: 248

An exorcistic incantation bowl prepared for Maḥlafta s. Imm[ay]

כפתנינן לכיפי שמיה ואסרתנינן למזלי רק(יע)ה (1)

כבשתנינן ליתהומי תחתאי ... (2)

(1) I have tied up the edges of the sky. I have bound the constellations of the firmament.

(2) I have suppressed the lower abysses ...

⁶¹ Cf. BM 91767 = CAMIB 040A = Müller-Kessler 2001/2002:128-129 = Morgenstern 2007, which reads: "I dipped my hands in blood and my fingers in menstrual blood" (ll. 12-13).

⁶² The formula also appears in at least one unpublished bowl = JNF 192, cf. MS 2053/129 (and parallels). For discussion of the details of the spell, see Ford, "Notes on Some Recently Published Magic Bowls in the Schøyen Collection and Two New Parallels," 249-50.

4. MS 2053/280 = JBA 25

An exorcistic incantation bowl prepared for Bahmandad s. Magita and [—]ta d. Immi

... כפתינן לכיפ[י ארעה ואסרתינ]ון לרזי רקיעא כבשתינן ליתהומי ת[חתאי] ... (3)

5. MS 2053/206 = JBA 23

An incantation bowl prepared for [Farro]kh s. [Ra]šewandukh and Dukhtbeh d. Gušnašp-fri

... כפתינן לכיפי ארעה ואסרתינן למזלי רקיעא ... (1)

These spells do not just implicitly recount a journey to the far reaches of the cosmos, but the practitioner's immediate facility with the underpinnings of the visible universe. They recount how the practitioner has personally bound the edges of the earth or the sky, as well as suppressing the depths of the underworld and binding the constellations. By establishing their facility with the far reaches of the cosmos, the practitioner construes as paltry the business of binding and subduing demons and other harmful agents.

EXPERIENCING WITH THE I

'I have been astounded'

The text of a brief spell that appears in two published bowls briefly extends to embrace the consciousness of the I. Here the I self-characterises their response to “the mysteries of the earth” by expressing amazement or astonishment, before reporting that they have directly observed the jackal-spirit that has been sent against the beneficiary by a named human adversary. Again, a cosmic journey is implied by the events reported in the narrative.

1. VA 2484 = Curses: 22-24

A *qybl'* bowl prepared for Šilta d. Imi

אידמרית ברזי (10)

ארעה ואיסתכלית בדירכי מרכבתא טוב חזיתי ירור בישתא ותקיפתא וזידניתא ומחבלתא (11)

דימחבל(תא) ומבכלתא ירור ומרתא

דעלמא דאישתדר עלוהי דשלתא בת אימי (12)

(10) I was astonished by the mysteries

(11) of the earth and I looked at the paths of the *merkavah*. Again I saw the evil and powerful and wicked jackal-spirit and the injurer of injurers and the *mevakkalta* — jackal-spirit and mistress

(12) of the world that has been sent upon Šilta d. Imi.

2. VA 2434 = Curses 2013: 53-54

A *qybl'* bowl prepared for Batia s. Maḥlafta and Ima d. Maḥlafta

... אידמריִת ברזי ארעה ואיסתכלית (5)

בדירכי מרכבתא טוב חזיתי ירור בישתא תקיפתא וזידניתא ומחבלתא (6)

דימחבלתא ומבכלתא ירור דאישתדר עלוהי ירור תוקיפתא וזידניתא (7)

(5) ... I was astonished by the mysteries of the earth and I looked

(6) at the paths of the *merkavah*. Again I saw the evil, powerful, and wicked jackal-spirit and the injurer

(7) of injurers and the *mevakkalta* demon — a jackal-spirit that was sent upon him, a powerful and wicked jackal-spirit.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter has surveyed the use of first person narrative spells within the published JBA incantation bowls. It has argued for the formal and functional distinctiveness of these spells and has sought to obviate any conflation of these spells with the *historiola*. In contrast to previous scholarship, I have argued that—in order to properly appreciate the function of these spells—it is necessary to set aside their formulaic nature and approach them on their own terms as independent utterances. In this light, the implied author of the bowl (the practitioner or the beneficiary as the case may be) actively takes up the subject position of the narrative spell. That is, they take up ownership of—appropriate and validate—the identity and experience of the I of the spell. The events and actions recounted in these spells (at least as far as the implied reader or authorial audience of demons is concerned) should be understood as having happened in the proximate past and within the direct experience of the I behind the adjurations and narrations of the bowls. Any disjunct that we (the current actual reader and post-exhumation flesh-and-blood audience) may perceive between the social self of the practitioner (however we may hypothesise this self) and the I of the adjurations and narrations within the bowl is not pertinent. On the communicative level of the bowl—the level of (implied) author and intended audience—the events narrated in the bowl establish an auto-prescriptive performative authority that demonstrates the capacity of the enunciating I to act with effect within or against the transmundane realm. (I will return to this point shortly.)

As the foregoing survey makes clear, the first person narrative spells in the extant JBA incantation bowls are extremely diverse. They range from extended transmundane journeys dominated by diverse audial and visual encounters to brief accounts of events or actions taken at the edges of the earth or sky or around the beneficiary's home. They may be distinguished by the direction of the locative verbs they deploy; the number of selves who adopt the first person singular of the spell; or the nature, location, and the physical immediacy of their engagements with the transmundane realm and transmundane beings. The expansions and contractions of these spells pivot largely around the degree to which they incorporate dialogue and description, while the narrative tense of these spells shifts across (and even within) spells, from the active participle to the past tense, for instance. In fact, the perfect tense of some of these narrative spells may even function in a modal manner—denoting not the past but an unmarked future. As Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro remark, the effect of such narrative formulae as the 'I have taken some of their hair for binding them' spell is almost injunctive, lying (fruitfully) somewhere between story and direct magical invocation.⁶³

The more interesting aspect of these spells, however, lies in their commonality and the horizon afforded by an I that is free from associations with external mythic figures. The I of these spells is not connected with mythic personalities like Ḥanina ben Dosa, or the I of Jesus or Thoth. Where the historiola may allow such an external authority to speak (in the first person) in the present and to project precedent or paradigm into present circumstances, the I of the first person narrative spells surveyed above models an adaptable figure who is able to straddle the trans/mundane realms and whose competences and experiences include a direct knowledge of the transmundane realm and/or a direct facility with and/or authority over transmundane beings in the trans(mundane) world (of the home). The use of the first person instantiates a form of personal authority which inheres not in precedent but in the I as the fulcrum between, and an active agent *in between*, the mundane and transmundane realm. As Jurij Lotman remarks, "A plot can always be reduced to a basic episode—the crossing of the basic topological border in the plot's spatial structure."⁶⁴ The narratives in the spells surveyed above are born as the I crosses the symbolically-charged boundary between the mundane and the transmundane.

Many of these spells are not just distinguished by a first person narrator who is active within the story world, but by the accumulation of first-hand detail that this active narratorial

⁶³ Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 17.

⁶⁴ Jurij M. Lotman, *The Structure of the Artistic Text* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1977), 238.

role within the diegesis permits. In the ‘I descended to the depths of the earth’ and in the ‘I stand upon a mountain of stone’ formulae in particular, a fully-imagined transmundane vista is realised. A transportive situation or form of narrative transportation is achieved, whereby the I is embedded within a story world that directly reflects the transmundane realm. The direct experience of this realm is conveyed using evocative and sometimes elaborate visual and auditory imagery. From the outset, things are seen and heard, and sequences of images succeed the heavily foregrounded verbs *חזי*, ‘to see,’ *סכל*, ‘to look at (attentively or with understanding),’ and *שמע*, ‘to hear.’ This visual and aural language is not confined to the beginning of these spells, but permeates the length of their narratives. Various voices—raised at various pitches in the ‘I descended to the depths of the earth’ formula—are heard throughout, while direct dialogues frequently dominate the narrative progression. The racket of rebellion predominates in the ‘I stand upon a mountain of stone’ spells, as troops of demons march out to battle and drums groan and horns blast. This immediate connection between rebellion and the themes of seeing and hearing is particularly germane to (the progression of) the spell, which construes the I as more immediately aware of (the threat of) evil in the world (and the beneficiary as a fearsome warrior in the fight against those forces which are in rebellion against the proper order of things).

The individual who sees both yields and possesses a deep and authentic knowledge and an intimate understanding of the trans/mundane cosmos and its workings. Walter Fisher famously affirmed the ‘narrative paradigm’ as a form of knowing in its own right—and not just the aesthetic packaging of rational discourse—while Kenneth Burke likewise argued that texts and utterances are not repositories of ideas but acts. In Burke’s view, utterances are “strategies for the encompassing of situations,”⁶⁵ while Fredric Jameson has developed Burke’s argument in order to examine the relationship between text and world.⁶⁶ According to Jameson, the world is not simply a linguistic construct, but it is nevertheless available to us not in itself but only insofar as we are able to textualise it—to bring the world into the realm of the symbolic. (The use of ‘symbolic’ here, at least as far as my understanding of the texts of the incantation bowls, reflects only the fact that the ways in which texts act on and in the world are distinct from acts of direct physical force.) As Carol A. Newsom summarises this perspective, “Insofar as a text takes the world into itself, as its subtext, then the world can be

⁶⁵ Kenneth Burke, *Philosophy of Literary Form*, 3rd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 1.

⁶⁶ Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981).

acted upon in the symbolic work of the text.”⁶⁷ Herein lies the perlocutionary force of narrative, as well as one of the possible motivating factors behind the description and instantiation of the transmundane world in some of these spells.

In this light, one of the key functions of the first person narrative spells in the JBA bowls is to embed the I within the transmundane world through a form of narrative transportation, and by the same gesture to demonstrate the facility of the I within this realm and with its inhabitants. These spells establish a form of social power by controlling—via narrative—the terms in which the transmundane realm is understood there and then (in the performative context of the bowl). The shorter first person narrative spells surveyed above act with celerity to encompass the situation of the bowl and its owner, and to recount the actions taken against the demonic forces whose presence comprises that situation. Thus, the ‘I ascended against you,’ ‘I ascended to the upper abode,’ ‘I have taken some of their hair,’ and the ‘I have bound the edges of the earth’ formulae rapidly translate the I into the transmundane realm and then expeditiously establish their (forceful) actions in that realm. These actions reflect a facility with the material bodies of transmundane beings as well as the material underpinnings of the universe. By contrast, the longer spells surveyed above expend more effort cementing the I into the transmundane realm. The full coherence of vision and auditory experience afforded to the practitioner in these spells (as opposed to their clients’ more ‘abstract’ or somatic experience of demons as physical woes or apparitions) privileges the practitioner, and establishes their knowledge of the transmundane realm. As Gadamer remarks, the task of rhetoric involves a Platonic assumption: “that the rhetorician must be ... knowledgeable and at home with the souls on which he hopes to work.”⁶⁸ It also provides a psychosocial buffer against what is generally invisible or unseen and thus largely unknowable. The felicitous functioning of the first person narrative spells is not just descriptive, but prescriptive. Narratives reflect reality. That is, they represent *what is or what was*. Concomitantly, narratives also shape reality. That is, they shape *what ought to be*. Thus the ‘Great Primordial Father’ formula simultaneously seals the person of the bowl beneficiary and establishes a shield of pure steel before them. The practitioner is able to confidently report the safeguarding of the bowl owner. The ‘I am clad in clothing of pure steel’ formula frames the I of the beneficiaries as

⁶⁷ Newsom, *The Self as Symbolic Space*, 16.

⁶⁸ Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and the Critique of Ideology: Metacritical Comments on *Truth and Method*,” in *The Hermeneutics Reader*, ed. Kurt Mueller-Vollmer (New York: Continuum, 1985), 277.

powerful trans/mundane warriors. Their strength—which derives from the divinity—reflects a radical transformation of the self. Their bodies are fire or light and clad in pure forged steel. The safeguarding of their person going forward is guaranteed.

Also key to the felicitous functioning of these narratives is space.⁶⁹ The concept of narrative space denotes the *where* of narrative—the demarcated environment of the story world—and includes objects (such as houses, rooftops, breadbaskets, and water barrels) or other entities that are part of the setting and which are not properties of the characters. The perception of space has to do with concepts such as volume, extension, and three-dimensionality, and many of the spells surveyed above display a markedly ingressive aspect: the spatial frames (the locations and shifting scenes of action and events) into which the I enters embrace both horizontal and vertical axes and extend to the far reaches of the cosmos. Narratives model “an emergent constellation of spatially related entities”⁷⁰ and the first person narrative spells in the JBA bowls place the practitioner at the centre of this sprawling constellation. They establish a claim to practical achievement and a form of free-range authority, expressed by the ease through which vastly disparate points on the practitioner’s itinerary are encompassed by the briefest, matter-of-fact reports of (implied) travel, as well as the ease with which borders, bodies, and the underpinnings of the cosmos are manipulated.

⁶⁹ Narrative space has traditionally been considered less important than narrative time. The baldest statement in this regard remains Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Werke. Sechster Band. Kunsttheoretische und Kunsthistorische Schriften* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1974), 102–15. Genette was also much less interested in issues of spatial organisation in narrative than he was in temporal progression. Note also the total absence of space in the famous example of a minimal plot in E.M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1954), 130: “the king died and then the queen died of grief.” But even when spatial information is withheld—as in Forster’s minimal narrative—a world with spatial extension is still implied, and narrative space has come to comprise a conspicuous topic of narratological investigation in recent times. This ‘spatial turn’ in narratology is exemplified by the title of a recent key study: Jörg Döring and Tristan Thielmann, eds., *Spatial Turn: Das Raumparadigma in den Kultur- und Sozialwissenschaften* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2008). For other important contributions to the study of space in narrative, both early and recent, see Mikhail M. Bakhtin, “Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel,” in *The Dialogic Imagination*, 84–258; Gabriel Zoran, “Towards a Theory of Space in Fiction,” *Poetics Today* 5 (1984): 309–35; Ruth Ronen, “Space in Fiction,” *Poetics Today* 7 (1986): 421–38; Henry Jenkins, “Game Design as Narrative Architecture,” in *First Person: New Media as Story, Performance, and Game* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004), 118–30; Katrin Dennerlein, *Narratologie des Raumes* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009); Bertrand Westphal, *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

⁷⁰ David Herman, “Spatial Reference in Narrative Domains,” *Text* 21.4 (2001): 534.

Description is one of the most prominent techniques of spatial disclosure; as a strategy for disclosing the spatial frame, it temporarily suspends the narrative action. As Genette puts it,

narration is concerned with actions or events considered as pure processes, and by that very fact it stresses the temporal, dramatic aspect of the narrative; description, on the other hand, because it lingers on objects and beings considered in their simultaneity, and because it considers the processes themselves as spectacles, seems to suspend the course of time and to contribute to spreading the narrative in space.⁷¹

In referring to processes as spectacles, Genette hints here at the ways in which the temporary suspension of the narrative action may be minimised through more dynamic forms of description. One such minimising technique is to be found in the ‘I stand upon a mountain of stone’ formula, which uses character movements and character perception to construct narrative space. This dynamic construction of narrative space is achieved through the elevated orientation of the I and the various transmundane troop movements that take place within their view. A dynamic panorama of the transmundane realm results, while the immediate spatial frame of these events is augmented by various audial effects and cosmic happenings that further extend the story space. This dominantly diegetic form of description—established in M 145:3-9 in a cohesive, coherent block—does not just contribute to an effect of visualisation, but further expands and diversifies the geography of this realm into regions where different (audial) events and experiences take place, such as the sounding of horns, the beating of drums, and the quaking of the wider universe. In this regard, the ‘I stand upon a mountain of stone’ formula exemplifies—on the macro-level—one of the two basic strategies by which spatial information can be organised. This basic strategy is the map; the other is the tour.⁷² The tour strategy is exemplified by the other extended spell surveyed above: the ‘I descended to the depths of the earth’ formula. In the map strategy, space is represented panoramically, and—in the case of the ‘I stand upon a mountain of stone’ formula—this representation is achieved through the point of view of an observer situated at elevation. As Marie-Laure Ryan summarises, space in this mode of representation is divided into segments and is covered by the text

⁷¹ Genette, *Figures of Literary Discourse*, 136.

⁷² Charlotte Linde and William Labov, “Spatial Networks as a Site for the Study of Language and Thought,” *Language* 51 (1975): 924–39. See also Marie-Laure Ryan, “Cognitive Maps and the Construction of Narrative Space,” in *Narrative Theory and the Cognitive Sciences*, ed. David Herman (Stanford: Center for the Study of Language and Information, 2003), 214–42.

in systematic fashion.⁷³ From the battlefield below to the four corners of the world (whence the winds) to the shore of the ocean; from the earth to the heavens to the constellations and back to the heavens and then to the mountains. By contrast, the tour strategy—as exemplified by the ‘I descended to the depths of the earth’ formula and the other (implicit) journey narratives in the bowls—adopts a mobile point of view and represents space dynamically from this perspective. Most important in these spells, however, is the contribution of description to spreading the narrative in space, thereby cementing the I within the reality of that space.

Elsewhere in the spells surveyed above, the lived experience of domestic (rather than transmundane) space is foregrounded. Spell formulae such as ‘I sit at my door’ and ‘I went up to the roof’ semanticise the architecture of the homes of the beneficiaries for whom these spells were inscribed. The concept of ‘inhabited’ or ‘lived space’ (*espace vécu*) was developed by Gaston Bachelard in his pioneering study of spatial imagery—*Poetics of Space*—though Bachelard’s work is far from a systematic study of how texts represent space.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, Bachelard’s work emphasises the fact that inhabited space transcends geometrical space, as well as the importance of what (humanly experienced) space means to its inhabitants. In Manfred Jahn and Sabine Buchholz’s summary, the idea of ‘lived space’ captures the extent to which our human conception of space “always include[s] a subject who is affected by (and in turn affects) space, a subject who experiences and reacts to space in a bodily way, a subject who ‘feels’ space through existential living conditions, mood, and atmosphere.”⁷⁵ This human experience of inhabited space is of course of the utmost pertinence to the broader study of bowl practice; of interest at the present moment, however, is the thematicisation of lived space in the spells under discussion, and the extent to which they semanticise the architecture of the home. The I of the ‘I sit at my door’ spell in BM 135563 notes that her threshold is raised; the I of the same formula in the unpublished parallel Davidovitz 1 notes that his house is *הרץ*, ‘entrenched’ and that his threshold is *מדליא*, ‘elevated.’ The verbal barricading of the home in these spells reveal how narratives semanticise domains of space. Contrast the Semamit historiola and the violent invasion of her home; this spell gives eloquent voice to the existential terror that is conjured by the experience of demons in the home.

⁷³ Marie-Laure Ryan, “Space,” in *the living handbook of narratology*, ed. Peter Hühn, et al. Hamburg: Hamburg University.

⁷⁴ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (New York: Orion, 1964).

⁷⁵ Manfred Jahn and Sabine Buchholz, “Space in Narrative,” in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, 553.

The ‘I sit at my door’ and ‘I went up to the roof’ formulae, on the other hand, construe the human home as inviolable, while also modelling various (hierarchical) spatial relations. This is most evident in the semiotic opposition inside-outside in all of these spells, as well as the high-low opposition implicit in the ‘I sit at my door’ spell and made explicit in the ascent to the roof in the ‘I went up to the roof’ formulae. These oppositions construe the space of human habitation as separate from the proper space of demons (who are obliged to pass by, even as they suffer and waste away) and demonised witchcraft (whose proper home is established as the breadbasket of its dispatcher).

In sum, what is key to the authority of the first person spells surveyed above are two closely related narrative phenomena: description and space. The experiences of the enunciating first person subject—as they unfold in space and are reified through the accumulation of detail—bind the I of the practitioner or the beneficiary into the transmundane landscape, establishing the I of both the narrative spell and the entire incantation as a channel of authority. As it journeys to and through and acts within the transmundane realm, the narrative self emerges as a particularly productive symbolic space in the bowl texts: agency within and authority over the transmundane realm accrue to the I and establish an auto-prescriptive performative authority and force within the communicative context of the bowls.

PART THREE
IMAGINING AND INSCRIBING DEMONS

CHAPTER SIX

How to Shape a Demon

Imagination, Inscription, and the Dramatis Personae of the Bowls

INTRODUCTION

Thus far this work has surveyed the use of narrative and narrative tokens in the JBA incantation bowls. Chapters Three and Four examined the deployment in the bowls of *historiolae* and quotations from biblical narratives in order to draw a connection between the present and the mythic past. Building on an awareness of past events, these spells pattern this knowledge into precedent and paradigm in order to affect a change in the world. Chapter Five surveyed a more proximate type of experience, narrated in the first person, that patterns the I of the spell—and thus the I of the bowl as a whole—into the transmundane realm. Marked by an emphasis on seeing and effective human embodiedness within and across the transmundane, these spells also yield a form of knowing and reflect the attempt not just to manipulate but to represent (knowledge about) the transmundane through the act of narration. In this chapter, I want to ask what else the bowls know, and to examine how this knowledge is bound up in a closely woven nexus that ties together text, writing, and the transmundane. As we saw in Chapter One, the bowls represent the increasing instrumentalisation of writing as a Jewish magical technology, while their appearance in the archaeological record takes us from a situation where we have very little material evidence for Jewish magic to a situation where the scholar is suddenly surfeited with easily identifiable evidence for Jewish magical practices. Appearing suddenly in late antique Mesopotamia, the new genre of bowl magic reflects the growing technologisation of writing as a means of accessing, materialising, and manipulating the transmundane. Accompanying this transformation are various shifts in the kinds of knowledge our Jewish sources express about demons.

plastic descriptions of demons; their texts provide an excellent view and a number of points of entry onto the appearance and/or habitual activities of demons. This fact has been noted previously, but not explored in much depth with respect to the bowls.³ In attempting to deepen our analyses in this respect, this chapter examines the extent to which—even as activated magical objects—the bowls reflect the increasing textualisation of different orders of knowledge about demons. It examines the representation of the transmundane (body) in the JBA incantation bowls and the ways in which certain diegetic and non-diegetic bowl spells index the demonology of late antique Judaism. Existing right on the edge of the visible, tangible world, demons exhibit a highly ambiguous corporeality. It is important to remember, however, that these invisible beings had bodies.⁴ This chapter will analyse the representation

Tales: The Talmud's Narratives and Their Historical Context (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 53–79, 95–129; Yishai Kiel, “Gazing through Transparent Objects in Pahlavi and Rabbinic Literature,” *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 24 (2014): 27–38; Avigail Manekin-Bamberger, “An Akkadian Demon in the Talmud: Between Šulak and Bar-Širīqa,” *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 44.2 (2013): 282–87; Sara Ronis, “Space, Place, and the Race for Power: Rabbis, Demons, and the Construction of Babylonia,” *Harvard Theological Review* 110.4 (2017): 588–603; Sara Ronis, “A Demonic Servant in Rav Papa’s Household: Demons as Subjects in the Mesopotamian Talmud,” in *The Aggada of the Bavli and Its Cultural World*, ed. Geoffrey Herman and Jeffrey Rubenstein (Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2018), 3–22; Sara Ronis, “A Seven-Headed Demon in the House of Study: Understanding a Rabbinic Demon in Light of Zoroastrian, Christian, and Babylonian Textual Traditions,” *AJS Review* 43.1 (2019): 125–42. The bowls themselves exhibit very little interaction with Zoroastrian ideas, though they are heavier on cross- and trans-cultural interactions with other traditions, as is discussed in the foregoing literature. See Ronis, “Do Not Go out Alone,” 371–77.

³ Gideon Bohak, “Demons, Demonology. V. Judaism,” *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception* (Walter de Gruyter, 2013), 547–48. For several brief analyses of plastic depictions of the transmundane in the bowls, see Shaked, “Healing as an Act of Transformation,” 122 and Shaked, “Transmission and Transformation of Spells,” 199–203.

⁴ This has been stressed in an important article by Gregory A. Smith, “How Thin Is a Demon?” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 16.4 (2008): 479–512. See also Annette Yoshiko Reed, *Demons, Angels, and Writing in Ancient Judaism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020). As Bruce Lincoln, *Gods and Demons, Priests and Scholars: Critical Explorations in the History of Religions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 33 notes, “Although demonology was—and remains—a major part of many religions and cultures ... with few exceptions, most studies are condescending in tone and superficial in their engagement, as if reflecting residual anxiety that such foolishness might be contagious or—a less magical construction of the same dynamic—that evincing too much interest can damage one’s reputation. As the result of such skittishness, our understanding of many cultures and historic eras remains impoverished, for some of the best minds of numerous peoples were devoted to demonology.” Throughout the present work, it has been my goal to take seriously the fundamental (underlying) assertions about angels and demons in the bowls; to treat them not as ciphers to decode, but a con-

of the demonic body in the bowls, its consequences for our understanding of how the demonic realm was conceived by the late antique Jewish communities of Mesopotamia, and the relations between demonology and writing in Judaism.⁵

Writing and indexing the demonological: words and their shapes

In attending to the demonology of the bowls, part of this chapter is devoted to several operative images of demons in the bowls texts and the ways in which the practitioners behind the bowls used language to generate a verbal shape for these invisible beings. I thus briefly sketch a ‘rhetographic’ frame for the bowls in Section I. Coined by Vernon K. Robbins in the tradition of rhetorical interpretation, the neologism ‘rhetography’ refers (at its most basic) to the graphic images that arise in the mind as a result of the sensory-aesthetic and perlocutionary textures of a text.⁶ The sensory-aesthetic texture of a text—and the images it invokes—may exhibit or embody a range of visual, oral, aural, haptic, gustatory, and olfactory senses, as well as actively involving the imagination. Deployed in relation to the magic bowls, I intend rhetography to embrace the imaginative visualisation, representation, and mediation of

stitutive part of the implicit cosmology of the bowls and an acutely felt part of everyday lived experience in Sasanian Mesopotamia. We should not (always) disembodify the idea of demons by taking them as symbols, and one way of revivifying their impact on everyday life (pursued in this chapter) is to examine their material presence: their bodies and the impact of their bodies upon human bodies. See further below.

⁵ For entry-points into the demonologies expressed in other cultural settings, see, e.g. Bernd U. Schipper, “Angels or Demons? Divine Messengers in Ancient Egypt,” in *Angels: The Concept of Celestial Beings – Origins, Development and Reception*, ed. Friedrich V. Reiterer, Tobias Nicklas, and Karin Schöpflin (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 1–19; Rita Lucarelli, “Demonology during the Late Pharaonic and Greco-Roman Periods in Egypt,” *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 11.2 (2011): 109–25; Rita Lucarelli, “Towards a Comparative Approach to Demonology in Antiquity: The Case of Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia,” *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 14.1 (2013): 11–26; Lincoln, *Gods and Demons*, 31–52. For specifically Jewish contexts, see the recent survey in Sara Ronis, “Intermediary Beings in Late Antique Judaism: A History of Scholarship,” *Currents in Biblical Research* 14.1 (2015): 94–120, as well as Bennie H. Reynolds, “A Dwelling Place of Demons: Demonology and Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Apocalyptic Thinking in Early Judaism: Engaging with John Collins’ The Apocalyptic Imagination*, ed. Cecilia Wassen and Sidnie White Crawford (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 23–54 and the large body of literature cited below.

⁶ The term is thus closely related to *ekphrasis*, which refers to descriptive language that seeks to bring what is shown clearly before the eyes and to enliven the imagination. It also bears a close relation to *enargeia*, which refers to language that aimed to produce a sensation of presence by evoking the imaginative faculties. For further on rhetography, as well as a bibliography, see below.

an invisible transmundane reality, and the demonic in particular.⁷ In examining the mediation of the transmundane realm by the bowl practitioners, I also tie the rhetographic aspects of the bowl texts (as focused in this chapter) to an aspect of bowl practice that I emphasised in Chapter One, that is, the *writtenness* of the bowls. In particular, I want to examine the nexus between text, writing, and the transmundane in late antique Judaism.

In this respect, I turn from the use of written language to index the demonic in order to show how the material aspects of the written word in the bowls worked to materialise and give shape to these invisible beings. The magic bowls represent a phenomenon where graphic space is exploited and activated as an inseparable part of the theme and structure of the text and the aims of the ‘activated’ text-object. Consider, for example, the extent to which the maze-like spirals and concentric circles of the bowl texts (wherein demons may have become confused and trapped) convey an easily legible visual message that both evokes and supports the verbal message of the bowl texts.⁸ Texts are themselves items of visual material culture—whereby humans inscribe visual signs that signify meanings—and I examine how the material arrangements of the bowl texts—the text as image—create networks of meanings and meaning effects.⁹ As L. Gregory Bloomquist points out in his discussion of rhetography and conceptual blending:

Using elaborate integration networks, the brain composes and reconfigures images into memorable narratives that gain power through regular and consistent use in local contexts, or in some cases much broader, trans-cultural contexts. With

⁷ Cf. the definition of rhetography advanced by Vernon K. Robbins, *The Invention of Christian Discourse*, Vol. 1. (Dorset: Deo, 2009), xxvii: “the progressive, sensory-aesthetic, and/or argumentative texture of a text that invites a hearer/reader to create a graphic image or picture in the mind that implies a certain kind of truth and/or reality.”

⁸ Cf. the argument in Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2011), which notes the way in which humans default in their thinking to a form of picture-based cognition that Kahneman variously labels “intuition,” “intuitive heuristics,” and “fast thinking.”

⁹ For several recent treatments of ‘text as art,’ see the contributions in Brigitte Miriam Bedos-Rezak and Jeffrey F. Hamburger, eds., *Sign and Design: Script as Image in Cross-Cultural Perspective (300–1600 CE)* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2016), as well as Sean V. Leatherbury, *Inscribing Faith in Late Antiquity: Between Reading and Seeing* (New York: Routledge, 2019).

regular use these networks of meaning further conjure up in the minds of hearers and readers other networks that have some relationship to them.¹⁰

Read as images, the material arrangement of the bowl texts—let alone the ‘coefficient of weirdness’ that attaches to many of the bowls inscribed with invented or pseudo-scripts—feed into and reinforce the ‘narrative’ of the bowls as (effective) demon traps. Much more so than has been appreciated by existing scholarship, the bowls instantiate a highly complex series of relations between the material and the immaterial worlds, the visible and the invisible, and the concrete realities of daily experience and the ideational world inhabited by invisible beings. An emphasis on the material aspects of the bowls thus forms an important part of this chapter and its discussion of the role of embodied agency (as pictured not just in the bowls

¹⁰ L. Gregory Bloomquist, “Eyes Wide Open, Seeing Nothing: The Challenge of the Gospel of John’s Nonvisualizable Texture for Readings Using Visual Texture,” in *The Art of Visual Exegesis: Rhetoric, Texts, Images*, ed. Vernon K. Robbins, Walter S. Melion, and Roy R. Jeal (Atlanta: SBL, 2017), 133. Conceptual blending refers to the theory of cognition first developed by Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, which accounts for the ways in which our minds use (the actually very limited data from) visual stimuli and images from our stored personal and corporate memory in order to construct meaning. According to Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind’s Hidden Complexities* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), 102, the essential workings of the mind proceed according to “small conceptual packets constructed as we think and talk, for purposes of local understanding and action.” Thus a conceptual packet such as ‘son’ occupies an “input” or “mental space” that is “framed” by (and always already blended with) a package of other easily pictured elements and relations such as ‘human’ and ‘male.’ This frame is what permits the construction of meaning, as individual input spaces are almost inevitably brought into relation with other (more or less visualisable) conceptual packages in other mental spaces, such as ‘mother’ and ‘father’ or ‘prodigal.’ These framing “links” are integral to thought and communication, while the process of linking two or more conceptual packets and their input spaces together by means of these vital links (thereby producing pictures in the mind) is called “conceptual blending.” According to Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, “Compression and Global Insight,” *Cognitive Linguistics* 11.3/4 (2000): 294, we humans “live in the blend.” (Compression refers to elaborate blends that are nonetheless more easily visualisable than abstract blends such as concepts like ‘prodigal’ or ‘righteous.’) The idea of the magic bowls as ‘presses’ or ‘demon traps’ reflects an elaborate integration network that brings together numerous conceptual packets and blends and mappings by means of the overarching general principles outlined by Fauconnier and Turner. For a discussion of the extraordinary complexity of such elaborate integration networks, see Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, “Rethinking Metaphor,” in *Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*, ed. Raymond W. Gibbs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 53–66. For an application of the conceptual integration network model to narrative, see Pilar Alonso, “The Conceptual Integration Network Model as a Paradigm for Analysis of Complex Narrative Discourse,” *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature* 37.2 (2004): 161–81.

texts, but upon and through the bowls) in mediating between the material and the immaterial.¹¹

In sum, this chapter does not just consider the use of compelling images within the argumentation of the bowl texts, but the physical arrangement of the bowl texts into compelling images. Its goal is a more holistic vision of the bowls and their use of texts and the material aspects of text formation to shape and extend control over demons. I thus do not privilege the incantation bowls over the magic bowls, but consider the phenomenon of the bowls as a whole. I am interested in the power of seeing and not just reading, with the impact of the bowls' total (not just verbal) rhetoric on the imagination. Demons populated the late antique imaginary, but this does not mean that they were imaginary, only that—by virtue of being invisible—they needed to be imagined, to be given a verbal or visual shape. Wouter Hanegraaff has recently argued that “Religion is not just about discourse: on a more fundamental level it relies on the workings of the human imagination.”¹² He emphasises the need to correct the legacies of dogmatic rationalism and recover the profound role of imagination in human cognition and the study of religion. In this regard, he quotes Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, who almost two decades ago stressed the nature and mechanisms of the imagination in operations of meaning construction, stating that “the next step in the study of mind is the scientific study of ... the imagination.”¹³ My concern in this chapter is in part the imagination of demons in late antique Sasanian Mesopotamia as it emerges in the magic bowls. The bowls represent a material, even embodied, (textual) response to demonic threats and set us in the midst of the magico-religious discourse of the Jewish communities of Mesopotamia ‘on the ground.’ I am concerned to examine how they provided meanings that persuaded people to think in particular ways about the world.

¹¹ In this regard, see the highly suggestive comments advanced by Alfred Gell, “Magic, Perfume, Dream ...” in *Symbols and Sentiments: Cross-Cultural Studies in Symbolism*, ed. Ioan Lewis (London: Academic Press, 1977), 25–38 who argues that the significance of materiality (in a magical context) might really lie in its relation to the immaterial. Cf. Richard L. Gordon, “From Substances to Texts: Three Materialities of ‘Magic’ in the Roman Imperial Period,” in *The Materiality of Magic*, ed. Dietrich Boschung and Jan N. Bremmer (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2015), 136, 138.

¹² Wouter J. Hanegraaff, “Imagining the Future Study of Religion and Spirituality,” *Religion* 50.1 (2020): 77. See also Wouter J. Hanegraaff, “Religion and the Historical Imagination: Esoteric Tradition as Poetic Invention,” in *Dynamics of Religion: Past and Present*, ed. Christoph Bochinger and Jörg Rüpke (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2017), 131–53.

¹³ Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, 8.

I begin Section I of this chapter with a discussion of the kinds of demonological materials indexed by our Second Temple Sources, as well as the dis/continuities between these sources and the bowls. Tracing the similarities between these two disparate bodies of texts, I also highlight their dissimilarities, and explore the different ways in which they use text and writing as instruments to engage with the transmundane. I show in Section I how far the bowls represent a transformation in the kinds of knowledge about demons that are textualised in our sources. Where our surviving sources from earlier periods—primarily the Second Temple period—show little interest in demonic appearances—but a marked interest in demonic origins—I examine the marked emphasis in many bowl spells on the appearances and characteristics of demons, as well as the rhetographic aspects of several operative images of demons in the bowls. I turn in Section II from how the bowl practitioners used language to give a verbal shape to the demonic body in order to examine how they used the material aspects of writing to mediate knowledge about demons and to index demonic reality. In this regard, I consider more explicitly the role of the bowl practitioners and ask how the bowls were ‘read’ by a largely illiterate clientele. I show how much of bowl practice we miss when we dismiss the bowls inscribed with invented and pseudo-scripts as the product of charlatans. I argue that the magic bowls—organised in conformity with the phenomenology of sight—represent a configuration of media, act, and imagination that mediates an experience of the spatial and bodily realities of demons, as well as graphically narrating their efficacy as demon traps. These two sections represent an extensive survey of continuity alongside notable changes in the production of powerful images and written technologies of ordering and controlling demons. Having sited these various processes of writing and technological and demonological thinking in more holistic and integrated ways in relation to the bowls, I turn in my closing remarks to argue for a more nuanced approach to the bowls. I also demonstrate the extent to which—*pace* recent denigrations of their form and content—the bowls represent a highly sophisticated magical technology.

In sum, this chapter demonstrates the ways in which the resources of narrative in the bowls index the demonology of late antique Judaism. It further extends this question to non-diegetic materials in the bowls and finally examines the striking material forms of inscription developed by the bowl practitioners. It uses all these materials to further refine our conception of the bowls, and to illustrate the elaborate nexus that the bowls instantiate between text, writing, and the transmundane.

SECTION I
FROM SCROLLS TO BOWLS
TRANSMUNDANE LANDSCAPES AND DEMONIC BODIES

TYPES OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT DEMONS
FROM DEMONIC ORIGINS TO DEMONIC APPEARANCES

In this section, I examine the ways in which certain diegetic and non-diegetic spell formulae within the JBA bowls index the demonology of Judaism in late antique Mesopotamia. As practical *written* devices directed against demons—magical objects that instrumentalise text and writing in order to combat demons—the magic bowls reflect the sudden entry into the archaeological record of a huge body of primary evidence for Jewish magic. Accompanying this massive increase in our evidence for Jewish magic is (naturally) a shift in the kinds of knowledge that our available ancient Jewish sources express about demons and other special beings. As we glimpsed briefly in Chapter Five, some JBA bowl spells give expression to the geography of the transmundane landscape as well as the physical characteristics of demons. In this section, I examine the ways in which the bowl texts index these geographic and somatic orders of knowledge.

ANGELS, DEMONS, AND JUDAISM

Transmundane powers (about which the Hebrew Bible has relatively little to say) first become a topic of concerted Jewish interest in a body of Jewish Aramaic pseudepigrapha from the third and second centuries BCE—preserved at Qumran—which closely link writing, textuality, and the transmundane.¹⁴ Foremost among these Second Temple sources in this regard

¹⁴ Angels and demons are scarce in biblical literature, which makes their expansive entry onto the literary scene in the Second Temple period one of the more dramatic developments in Jewish literature between the Exile and (the compilation of) the Mishnah. Summing up the scanty detail about angels in the Hebrew Bible, Saul M. Olyan, *A Thousand Thousands Served Him: Exegesis and the Naming of Angels in Ancient Judaism* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1993), 18 notes that “no text from pre-exilic Israel presents a detailed or even basic ordering of angels into a hierarchy of divisions with specific functions and responsibilities.” (Only unnamed ‘hosts’ and ‘holy ones’ surround God, while enigmatic *mal’akim* or ‘messengers’ act on his behalf.) Regarding demons, Dan Ben-Amos, “On Demons,” in *Creation and Re-Creation in Jewish Thought: Festschrift in Honor of Joseph Dan on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Rachel Elijor and Peter Schäfer (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 30 cuts straight to the quick: “the biblical references to demons and demonic forces are scant.” (Goat-demons and *cherubim* are scarcely distributed across the Hebrew Bible, for instance, while references to the Mesopotamian demonological lexicon are represented by the names Lilith, Resheph, Qeteb, and Deber. See

are the Book of the Watchers (1 En 1–36) and the Astronomical Book (1 Enoch 72–82).¹⁵ These project the antediluvian Enoch as a paradigmatic scribal exemplar while their sharpened concern with scribal activities is accompanied by an intensified interest in powerful beings like angels and demons. Thus the Book of the Watchers furnishes us with the earliest attested Jewish aetiology of demons and demonic activity. Like a number of related Dead Sea Scrolls which attest to the richness and scope of Jewish Aramaic literary production before the rabbinic period, these works are characterised by a focus on the antediluvian past as well as numerous explicit references to and self-referential reflections upon scribes and books and the activities of reading and writing.¹⁶ Also important in this respect is the Book of Jubilees.¹⁷

Karel van der Toorn, “The Theology of Demons in Mesopotamia and Israel: Popular Belief and Scholarly Speculation,” in Lange, Lichtenberger, and Römheld, eds., *Die Dämonen*, 63–67.) See Reed, *Demons, Angels, and Writing*, 41–86 who argues that the lack of an explicit, written systemisation of traditions about angels and demons in the literary remains of pre-exilic Israel is an important datum in itself that reveals the scribal habits that shaped the surviving literature of ancient Israel and choices concerning the types of knowledge to be textualised.

¹⁵ Throughout this chapter, I avoid retrojecting the late antique compendium now known as 1 Enoch into the Second Temple period. 1 Enoch comprises a compendium of five previously independent writings: the Book of Watchers, the Book of Parables, the Astronomical Book, the Book of Dreams, and the Epistle of Enoch. Aramaic fragments of all of these, except for the Book of Parables, were found at Qumran. I refer to the earlier independent works in Aramaic using the titles currently ascribed to them by scholarship.

¹⁶ In addition to the Book of the Watchers (4Q201–206 = 4QEn^{a-c}) and the witnesses to early forms/sources of the Astronomical Book (4Q208–4Q211 = 4QEnastr^{a-d}), the following Qumran materials point to an early Hellenistic tradition of Jewish Aramaic literary production whose textual creativity focused around the pre-Sinaitic past. These may be divided very crudely into two groups. The first group consists of proto-testamentary texts: the Aramaic Levi Document (1Q21, 4Q213, 4Q213a, 4Q213b, 4Q214, 4Q214a, 4Q214b), Admonitions of Qahat (4Q542), and Visions of Amram (4Q543–549; cf. 4Q540–541). The second group consists of narrative sources concerned with the pre-Sinaitic patriarchal past: the Genesis Apocryphon (1Q20), Book of the Giants (1Q23–24, 2Q26, 4Q203, 4Q530–532, 6Q8), and various patriarchal traditions about Jacob and others preserved in Aramaic fragments (4Q537–539). For a recent and very detailed analysis of these sources, see Reed, *Demons, Angels, and Writing*. These materials represent only a portion of the Aramaic materials preserved at Qumran. According to the count in Devora Dimant, “The Qumran Aramaic Texts and the Qumran Community,” in *Flores Florentino: Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Early Jewish Studies in Honour of Florentino García Martínez*, ed. Anthony Hilhorst, Émile Puech, and Eibert Tigchelaar (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 199 portions of 121 Aramaic manuscripts were discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls, making up approximately thirteen percent of the total manuscripts found near Qumran. On the language and the different types and clusters of content in the Aramaic texts from Qumran, as well as the implications of these factors for their social setting, see the survey and discussion in Eibert Tigchelaar, “Aramaic Texts from Qumran and the Authoritativeness of Hebrew Scriptures: Preliminary Observations,” in *Authoritative Scriptures in Ancient Judaism*, ed. Mladen Popović (Leiden: Brill,

This is a magisterial mid-second century BCE synthesis in Hebrew of many of the themes present in earlier Jewish Aramaic writings concerning angels, demons, writing, scribes, and the pre-Sinaitic past. As in some of the Aramaic literature preserved at Qumran, angels and demons are key to Jubilees' epistemology, authority-claims, and literary structure, as well as its cosmology. Like the Book of the Watchers, Jubilees explains the origins of different spirits, delineates the scope and mechanics of their power, and recounts their changing roles in human history.

2010), 155–71 and more recently in Daniel Machiela, “Situating the Aramaic Texts from Qumran: Reconsidering Their Language and Socio-Historical Settings,” in *Apocalyptic Thinking in Early Judaism: Engaging with John Collins' The Apocalyptic Imagination*, ed. Cecilia Wassén and Sidnie White Crawford (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 88–109.

¹⁷ The Book of Jubilees is preserved in whole only in Ge'ez in a number of mediaeval and early modern manuscripts, though a number of Hebrew fragments of Jubilees have also been recovered from the caves near Qumran (1Q17-18; 2Q19-20; 3Q5; 4Q176 frgs. 21-23; 4Q216, 218-224; 11Q12). For a summary of the manuscript witnesses and textual situation of Jubilees with relevant references, see James C. VanderKam, “The Manuscript Tradition of Jubilees,” in *Enoch and the Mosaic Torah: The Evidence of Jubilees*, ed. Gabriele Boccaccini and Giovanni Ibba (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2009), 3–21. A great deal of research into Jubilees has combed the book for evidence into early Jewish biblical exegesis. Major studies in this vein include John C. Endres, *Biblical Interpretation in the Book of Jubilees* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1987); J.T.A.G.M. van Ruiten, *Primeval History Interpreted: The Rewriting of Genesis 1:1–11:26 in the Book of Jubilees* (Leiden: Brill, 2000); James Kugel, *A Walk through Jubilees: Studies in the Book of Jubilees and the World of Its Creation* (Leiden: Brill, 2012). My concerns in this chapter dictate a limited focus on the book. For a broader perspective on Jubilees, particularly with regard to the shift that Jubilees represents in Jewish literature after the advent of Seleucid rule in the Land of Israel and after the Revolt, see John J. Collins, “The Transformation of the Torah in Second Temple Judaism,” *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 43.4–5 (2012): 455–474 and the wider context surveyed in Paul J. Kosmin, *Time and Its Adversaries in the Seleucid Empire* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018). Reed, *Demons, Angels, and Writing*, 247–308 has recently explored the extent to which Jubilees is critical for understanding the fate of the Aramaic Jewish scribal pedagogy that appears in works such as the Astronomical Book, Book of the Watchers, and a number of related Dead Sea Scrolls. Reed uses Jubilees to cut across generic concerns and sectarian trajectories in order to explore shifts in the textualisation of transmundane powers and the theorisation of textuality. Her study of Jubilees shows a concern for the afterlives of the Astronomical Book, Book of the Watchers, and Aramaic Levi in the Hebrew text of Jubilees. She argues that Jubilees' sophisticated literary structure embraces much more than concerns for the history of interpretation of Genesis and Exodus, including but not limited to theology, theodicy, and ritual theory, as well as the consolidation of earlier Aramaic traditions and their ‘translation’ into Hebrew. She further demonstrates the extent to which discussion of transmundane beings in Jubilees is intertwined with explicit and extensive efforts to theorise and historicise Jewish books and writing.

Attested amongst the manuscript discoveries at Qumran, these sources reflect an intensified interest in powerful beings like angels and demons. The turn of the millennium has seen a large increase in research into the origins of Jewish demonology in this literature, though the demonological question within these sources has often been bracketed into much wider inquiries about the origins and development of ancient (Jewish) conceptions of evil and the influence of this concept on later (rabbinic) Judaism (and early Christianity).¹⁸ The texts that form the subject of these studies are predicated on special-access claims to information from and about (arch)angels, fallen watchers, evil spirits, and demons. These beings are assigned classes, as well as names and motives, and they are integrated into detailed cosmologies. Cutting across genres and holding out against neat categorisation, the capacious purview of these Second Temple sources ranges from angel- and demonology to astronomy, geography, eschatology, the structure of the cosmos, and didactic lunar and calendrical lists. The increased interest in demons in the Second Temple period is thus plainly bound up in a much wider scribal project.

This aspect of these sources has recently been explored in great detail by Annette Reed.¹⁹ In Reed's account, the expansion, classification, and systemisation of knowledge about transmundane powers in these texts does not just represent the explicit textualisation of these topics—which are previously mentioned only briefly or in allusive terms in the Hebrew Bible—but is part and parcel of a wider set of activities that strove to order Jewish knowledge, model scribal expertise, and theorise textuality and cosmology alike.²⁰ What

¹⁸ The literature on the topic is vast and varies in scope. See recently (the contributions to) Chris Keith and Loren T. Stuckenbruck, eds., *Evil in Second Temple Judaism and Early Christianity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016); Loren T. Stuckenbruck, *The Myth of Rebellious Angels: Studies in Second Temple Judaism and New Testament Texts* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014); Miryam T. Brand, *Evil Within and Without: The Source of Sin and Its Nature as Portrayed in Second Temple Literature* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013); Archie T. Wright, *The Origin of Evil Spirits: The Reception of Genesis 6:1–4 in Early Jewish Literature* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015); Annette Yoshiko Reed, *Fallen Angels and the History of Judaism and Christianity: The Reception of Enochic Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Ishay Rosen-Zvi, *Demonic Desires: Yetzer Hara and the Problem of Evil in Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011) and the bibliographies cited therein.

¹⁹ Reed, *Demons, Angels, and Writing*.

²⁰ See also, e.g. Matthew Goff, "A Blessed Rage for Order: Apocalypticism, Esoteric Revelation, and the Cultural Politics of Knowledge in the Hellenistic Age," *Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel* 5.3 (2016): 193–211; Annette Yoshiko Reed, "Was There Science in Ancient Judaism? Historical and Cross-Cultural Reflections on 'Religion' and 'Science,'" *Studies in Religion* 36 (2007): 461–95; Philip S. Alexander, "Enoch and Beginnings

Reed argues is that the emergence of systematic reflection on angels and demons in some of these sources stems from the broader impulse across these texts to order (to collect, list, and organise) knowledge about the cosmos, its cycles, contents, and structures. “Just as ancient Jewish scribes ordered their knowledge about the cosmos by writing lists of information pertaining to the cycles of the moon and sun, so they did so also by naming the demons who roamed among them and by listing the angels whom they might petition for protection.”²¹ In this view, new claims by learned Jews in Ptolemaic and Seleucid Palestine in the Hellenistic period to possess knowledge about transmundane powers are emblematic of totalising new claims about Jewish textuality. Speaking generally—in these texts and in this exegesis—demons appear largely as a paradigm for that which can be textualised—ordered and controlled—by the power of transmundane knowledge contained in writings on earth. As we will see shortly—though our Second Temple period evidence is exceedingly scanty, especially in light of our evidence for applied magical technologies elsewhere in the ancient world—demons were naturally not only a site for intellectual reflection in Second Temple Judaism, but a frightening reality requiring technologies of protection.

FROM SCROLLS TO BOWLS

As we have seen, the first flourishing of demonology in the Jewish tradition is attested as part of a larger body of Aramaic texts from the early Hellenistic age that establish a complex series of relations between writing, scribalisation, and angel- and demonology.²² Of course, the

of Jewish Interest in Natural Science,” in *The Wisdom Texts from Qumran and the Development of Sapiential Thought*, ed. Charlotte Hempel, Armin Lange, and Hermann Lichtenberger (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 223–243 and the important contributions in Jonathan Ben-Dov and Seth L. Sanders, eds., *Ancient Jewish Sciences and the History of Knowledge in Second Temple Literature* (New York: New York University Press, 2014).

²¹ Reed, *Demons, Angels, and Writing*, 20.

²² These Jewish writings also attest to a burst of experimentation with new literary forms, including first person narratives and revelatory dream-visions. See, e.g. Andrew Perrin, *The Dynamics of Dream-Vision Revelation in the Aramaic Dead Sea Scrolls* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015); Loren T. Stuckenbruck, “Pseudepigraphy and First Person Discourse in the Dead Sea Documents: From the Aramaic Texts to Writings of the ‘Yahad’,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Contemporary Culture: Proceedings of the International Conference Held at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem (July 6-8, 2008)*, ed. Adolfo D. Roitman, Lawrence H. Schiffman, and Shani Tzoref (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 295–326. On major trends and research developments in pseudepigrapha studies, see now (the literature cited in) the contributions to the section ‘The History of the Study of the Pseudepigrapha’ in Matthias Henze and Liv Ingeborg Lied, eds., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Fifty Years of the Pseudepigrapha Section at the SBL* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2019), 103–99.

corollary to all of these systematic reflections on angels and demons—concurrent with an elevation of scribalism—is the surviving evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls for practical attempts to confront the reality of demonic forces. Demonology is not just the abstract ordering of various bodies of knowledge about demons. It reflects very practical concerns about the threat of demons in daily life and domestic and local spaces. The frightening reality of this threat is reflected in the evidence for magic preserved in the scrolls.²³ It is especially evident, however, in the texts of the bowls, whose late antique incantations resonate in many ways with the magical materials from Qumran.²⁴

²³ Among the scrolls, potential evidence for magic in Hebrew embraces 1QH^a (frag. 4), 4Q444 = 4QIncantation, 4Q510-4Q511 = 4QSongs of the Sage, 5Q14 = 5QCurses, 6Q18 = 6QpapHymn, 8Q5 = 8QHymn, and 11Q11 = 11QApocryphal Psalms. Potential evidence for magic in Aramaic encompasses 4Q560 = 4QExorcism ar. According to the typology developed by Esther Eshel, “Genres of Magical Texts in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in Lange, Lichtenberger, and Römhild, eds., *Die Dämonen*, 396 these materials fall into two main categories: “incantations or spells, aimed to exorcize or drive out evil spirits or other evil forces” and “apotropaic psalms which were intended for protection.” Thus 1QH^a (frag. 4), 4Q444, 4Q510-4Q511, and 6Q18 are grouped as apotropaic prayers, while 4Q560, 8Q5, and 11Q11 are grouped as incantations. Cf. Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 108 who argues that 4Q510-511 is more liturgical than magical. Émile Puech, “Les psaumes davidiques du rituel d’exorcisme (11Q11),” in *Sapiential, Liturgical and Poetical Texts from Qumran: Proceedings of the Third Meeting of the International Organization for Qumran Studies, Oslo 1998*, ed. Daniel K. Falk, Florentino García Martínez, and Eileen Schuller (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 160–81 demonstrates convincingly that the four exorcistic hymns in 11Q11 correspond to the four compositions that are to be played over the demon-stricken that are mentioned as Davidic compositions at the end of 11Q5 xxvii 2-11 = 11QPsalms. For a recent treatment of some of these materials, see David Hamidović, “Illness and Healing through Spell and Incantation in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Demons and Illness from Antiquity to the Early-Modern Period*, ed. Siam Bhayro and Catherine Rider (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 97–110. Note also that the two earliest Jewish narratives about exorcism known to us appear in other Aramaic texts from the early Hellenistic period: the Book of Tobit and Genesis Apocryphon (from the third century BCE and the second century BCE respectively).

²⁴ A number of publications have examined the incantation bowls and early Jewish traditions in light of one another, either in commentaries on bowl texts, discussion of ‘Enochic’ themes, or treatments of early Jewish sources. See, e.g. Jonas C. Greenfield, “Notes on Some Aramaic and Mandaic Magic Bowls,” *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University* 5.1 (1973): 149–56; Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*, 170–71, 207; Douglas L. Penney and Michael O. Wise, “By the Power of Beelzebub: An Aramaic Incantation Formula from Qumran (4Q560),” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 113.4 (1994): 628–30; Siam Bhayro, *The Shemihazah and Asael Narrative of 1 Enoch 6–11: Introduction, Text, Translation and Commentary with Reference to Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical Antecedents* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2005), 242; Gideon Bohak, “From Qumran to Cairo: The Lives and Times of a Jewish Exorcistic Formula (with an Appendix by Shaul Shaked),” in *Ritual Healing: Magic, Ritual and Medical Therapy from Antiquity until the*

In certain scrolls, we find that both the rhetoric of adjuration and appeals to the divine name are addressed to demonic powers; we also see the use of psalms (especially Ps 91) to appeal to God and/or angels for protection against demons. The broad strokes of these texts thus mirror the anti-demonic strategies that we find in the bowls. More specifically, the highly fragmentary 4Q560 (which preserves what appears to have been an Aramaic exorcistic spell) includes the first person adjuration of a spirit as well as mentioning other types of demons, including male and female shudder- and crumble-demons who are associated with physical ailments including “fever, chills, and heart fever.”²⁵ Likewise, 11Q11, which preserves a series of Hebrew exorcistic hymns, presumes a similar logic with respect to the mechanics of demon control. In fact, 11Q11 v 6-8 provides us with a direct link between Qumran and the bowls in a taunt addressed to a demon. This particular formula—the ‘your face is the face’ formula—is known to us in a slightly different form from part of a Genizah magical fragment as well as several JBA incantation bowls whose role Gideon Bohak has examined in the process of textual transmission that allowed a Second Temple period exorcistic formula to reach mediaeval Cairo.²⁶

Another motif attested in 11Q11 was plainly so well known that it could be deployed in the bowls—despite its apparent obscurity—without explanation. This is an enigmatic phrase that occurs as part of a number of adjurations in the bowls and refers to תלתיכין תלתיכין, “the three of you, the four of you, the five of you.”²⁷ Considered in light of 11Q11 vi 3-12, however, the sense of this phrase becomes clear. This passage from 11Q11

Early Modern Period, ed. Ildikó Csepregi and Charles Burnett (Florence: SISMEL Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2012), 31–52; Siam Bhayro, “The Reception of Mesopotamian and Early Jewish Traditions in the Aramaic Incantation Bowls,” *Aramaic Studies* 11 (2013): 187–96; Siam Bhayro, “On Early Jewish Literature and the Aramaic Magic Bowls,” *Aramaic Studies* 13 (2015): 54–68.

²⁵ Compare especially the phrase אומיתך רוחא, “I adjure you, spirit (5Q560 1 ii 6) with the common bowl formula אומית עלך, “I adjure you, etc.” The parallels between 4Q560 and the bowls (as well as other Aramaic amulets) are discussed in Penney and Wise, “By the Power of Beelzebub,” 628–30. For further on this text, as well as the demons it addresses—the חלחולא demon and פריצ(י)א demon—see Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 111–12 who notes the reappearance of these fiends in the bowls and describes their apparent effect: “The whole sequence, it would seem, describes the onslaught of the evil perforators and crushers which enter one’s flesh, climb to one’s teeth, and begin the kind of digging and crushing that give modern dentists a respectable income.”

²⁶ Bohak, “From Qumran to Cairo.”

²⁷ See, e.g. JBA 15:3-4, JBA 19:5, JBA 24:3, and JBA 62:2.

contains Ps 91, while its deployment in the scroll reflects an apotropaic scheme that is further exhibited by the psalm's structure. As Ida Fröhlich points out:

The psalm has a tripartite structure consisting of a title, a series of plagues, and a promise of rescue for the righteous by an angelic helper. The series of plagues from which the recipients of the blessing are protected is again tripartite. The list of plagues represents a numeric symbolism ($3 + 4 + 5 = 12$).²⁸

Read as a list, the adversaries and dangers enumerated in the psalm are divided as follows: the snare of the fowler, pestilence, and destruction = 'the three of you;' the terror of the night, the daytime arrow, the noontime plague, the pestilence that proceeds by night = 'the four of you;' stone, asp, viper, lion, and dragon = 'the five of you.' The reference in the bowls should be understood with reference to this tradition.

Taken together, these fragmentary texts from Qumran and the bowls demonstrate how certain first-millennium BCE Jewish materials were received in late antique Jewish magic.²⁹ They also serve to remind us of the circulation of (local) ideas about demons beyond elite exegetical contexts and literary attempts to systematise ideas about demons. In addition to these intersections and resonances between the scrolls and the bowls, we also observe the appearance in the bowls of the demonic aetiology first attested in the Book of the Watchers. Dubbed the myth of the Fallen Angels, this tradition focusses on angelic transgression and its consequences for the origin and spread of demons.³⁰ A narrative expansion of the brief but curious

²⁸ Ida Fröhlich, "Magical Healing at Qumran (11Q11) and the Question of the Calendar," in Jacobus, de Hemmer Gudme, and Guillaume, eds., *Studies on Magic and Divination*, 46.

²⁹ In this regard, see the valuable discussion in Bhayro, "Reception." Cf. Bohak, "From Qumran to Cairo." Bhayro concludes by arguing that the bowls "serve as an important testimony for how no-longer extant first-millennium BCE Aramaic sources were themselves received and used by later scribes" (196). The bowls also witness to the reception of first millennium BCE cuneiform texts in late antiquity. See further below. On these processes of knowledge transfer in relation to other materials and the role of Aramaic in mediating these traditions across the turn of the era, see, e.g. Aage Westenholz, "The Graeco-Babyloniaca Once Again," *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie* 97.2 (2007): 262–313; Mladen Popović, "Networks of Scholars: The Transmission of Astronomical and Astrological Learning between Babylonians, Greeks and Jews," Ben-Dov and Sanders, eds., *Ancient Jewish Sciences*, 153–93 as well as the literature cited below.

³⁰ The literature on the topic of the Fallen Angels is immense. For a recent bibliography, see Stuckenbruck, *The Myth of Rebellious Angels*. Important studies produced since the 1970s include Devorah Dimant, "'The Fallen Angels' in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the Apocryphal and Pseudepigraphic Books Related to Them" (Hebrew University, 1974); Philip S. Alexander, "The Demonology of the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls after Fifty Years: A Comprehensive Assessment*, ed. Peter W. Flint and James C. Vanderkam, vol. 2.

episode of the ‘sons of God’ in Genesis 6, the aetiological appeal to the past in this narrative pivots on the descent to earth of two hundred angels of the ‘Watcher’ class. The lust of these angels for human women—which prompted their descent—leads them to beget monstrous offspring by humankind. These angels further compound this evil by sharing various corrupting and civilising arts with humankind. Interestingly, besides such arts as warfare and ornamentation, this pedagogical corruption embraces two prime components of Mesopotamian medicine: herbal medicine and various divinatory and exorcistic practices.³¹ Subsequently, their offspring (who take the form of hybrid Giants) turn to torment humankind and pollute the earth. Ultimately, the spread of corruption across the world is so malign that it triggers both the Flood and divine judgment upon the Giants and their angelic fathers. The Giants are obliged by God to fight to the death before the Watchers; the Watchers are imprisoned beneath the earth; and a flood is sent to purify the world. Existing in hybrid flesh before the Flood, the monstrous Giants are condemned to a wandering postdiluvian existence as demonic forces. Killing two birds with one stone, God further deploys them as a means to punish humankind for their initial role in the angelic rebellion and for their continued sin. Thus far in the present work we have only glanced at this particular aetiology in several of the narrative spells surveyed in the previous chapters. For instance, we saw in M 163:17-18 an explicitly analogised historiola which—like the Book of the Watchers—recounts the fate of the fallen angels who transgressed the command of the Lord:

Just as they were pressed—those ‘Z’L and ‘Z’L and ‘ZZY’L who transgressed the command of their Lord—and angels were sent against them from the presence of God and pressed them upon the mountain [of darkness] and their faces (those of ‘Z’L and ‘Z’L and ‘ZZY’L) were turned towards the face of darkness.³²

(Leiden: Brill, 1999), 331–53. For an overview of the survival of this tradition, see Wright, *The Origin of Evil Spirits*, 169–93.

³¹ Thus 1 En 7:1b: “And they began to go in to them, and to defile themselves through them, and to teach them sorcery and charms, and to reveal to them the cutting of roots and plants.” It is unclear, however, whether this knowledge is meant to be associated only with women. See Annette Yoshiko Reed, “Gendering Heavenly Secrets? Women, Angels, and the Problem of Misogyny and Magic,” in Stratton and Kalleres, eds., *Daughters of Hecate*, 108–51. All translations of 1 Enoch are from George W.E. Nickelsburg and James C. VanderKam, *1 Enoch: The Hermeneia Translation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012).

³² Note also the threat in JBA 55:6-8, which reads: ואם לא תיפקון מינה מן מישכוי בת אנושפרי נסיבנא מן סעריכין “And if you do not go out from Miškoy d. Anušfri, I shall take some of your hair for binding you and some of your fat for sealing you and I

We also saw this demonic aetiology attested in the adjuration in AIT 1:8-9. This bowl addresses all types of liliths [בש[ום] זרעיתכין דילדין שידי וליליתא לבני נורא סטין וימרדין ועברין [על], “by the name of your family which is begotten by demons and liliths, the sons of fire (who) go astray and rebel and transgress against the decree of their lord.”³³ It further appears in a historiola and various narrative tokens that weaponise the ban that was put upon Mount Hermon. This mountain is given in 1 En 6:5 as the location where the fallen angels first set foot on earth and swore their rebellion.³⁴ As Gideon Bohak notes about the survival of this tradition, “the Jewish magicians of later periods had more access to ancient textual materials—such as the story of the Fallen Angels which is known to us from the ‘apocryphal’ literature of the Second Temple period—than we would otherwise have imagined.”³⁵

From scrolls to bowls: transmundane journeys and cosmic geography

As we have seen, it is possible to locate several points of intersection between the bowls and a range of Qumran Aramaic materials—both magical and non-magical—including corresponding mechanics of demon control and some conceptual parallels. In addition, we might also point to the act of binding which looms so large across both the bowls and the accounts of God’s commission to the archangels to cleanse the earth of antediluvian evils.³⁶ Further to this, the long-form first person narrative spells that we saw in Chapter Five are suggestive of

shall cast you into the depths of the netherworld, from which it is not possible to ascend.” Cf. 11Q11 v 8-13 which threatens a demon that a powerful angel sent by God will take it down to the great abyss to dwell in darkness.

³³ A parallel is to be found in JBA 64:1-2.

³⁴ In addition to these JBA materials, the Syriac bowl YBC 2357:8 refers to a sealing *b’ yzqth dšmhyz*, “by the signet-ring of Šemheza,” thus tokenising the seal of the leader of the rebellious angels in the Book of the Watchers. This bowl was first published by Montgomery, “A Magical Bowl-Text.” The most recent edition of its text is to be found in Moriggi, *Syriac Incantation Bowls*, 23. A mangled form of the angelic name Šemhaza may also appear in JBA 35:8, whose text the editors read as [גדורל]השם הזה, “this great name.” Cf. the (potential) identification of the same name in the Genizah materials: T-S Misc. 10.122 5-6 = Naveh and Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae*, 230–32, and the unpublished text T-S NS 322.87 referred to in Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 166 n. 59. For further, see Bhayro, “Early Jewish Literature,” 55–57.

³⁵ Gideon Bohak, “Prolegomena to the Study of the Jewish Magical Tradition,” *Currents in Biblical Research* 8.1 (2009): 119.

³⁶ Thus God sends Raphael to “bind Asael hand and foot, and cast him into the darkness” (1 En 10:4-8) and Michael to “bind Shemihazah and the others with him who have united themselves with the daughters of men” (10:11-14). Compare the innumerable references to (and pictorial representations of) bound demons in the bowls.

certain epistemes that are closely associated with demonology in some of the early Jewish Aramaic pseudepigrapha that we glimpsed above.³⁷ Specifically as they relate to cosmic geography, descriptions of space, and spatial concepts of celestial and terrestrial realms, these

³⁷ I focus on Jewish scribal traditions in what follows, but these long-form narrative spells also show thematic points of contact with earlier Iranian and Sasanian materials. See Shaul Shaked, “Quests and Visionary Journeys in Sasanian Iran,” in *Transformations of the Inner Self in Ancient Religions*, ed. Jan Assmann and Guy Stroumsa (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 65–86 who also examines these Iranian materials in light of the Hekhalot literature. On potential points of contact between Iranian materials, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and apocalyptic discourse, see, e.g. Albert de Jong, “Iranian Connections in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Timothy H. Lim and John J. Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 479–500; Jason M. Silverman, “Iranian Details in the Book of Heavenly Luminaries (1 Enoch 72–82),” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 72.2 (2013): 195–208; Jason M. Silverman, *Persepolis and Jerusalem: Iranian Influence on the Apocalyptic Hermeneutic* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2012). Older studies on points of contact between the scrolls and Iranian materials focused mainly on the Two Spirits Treatise, e.g. Marc Philonenko, “La doctrine qoumrânienne des deux esprits: Ses origines iraniennes et ses prolongements dans le judaïsme essénien et le christianisme antique,” in *Apocalyptique iranienne et dualisme qoumrânien*, ed. Geo Widengren, Anders Hultgård, and Marc Philonenko (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1995), 163–211. Further to Shaked’s discussion about the thematic points of contact between the Hekhalot literature and Iranian literature, the long-form narrative spells in the bowls also recall the mystical ascents in the Hekhalot texts. See Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 332–39 for a broader overview of the dis/continuities between late antique Jewish magic and mysticism. On the relations between mysticism and apocalyptic discourse, see now the contributions in John J. Collins, Pieter G. R. Villiers, and Adela Yarbro Collins, eds., *Apocalypticism and Mysticism in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2018). Some bowl practitioners were plainly familiar with or even well-versed in some of the materials that came to be included in the Hekhalot corpus. In some cases, we find direct parallels. In other cases, we do better to speak of a marked affinity between the language of these sources. A lot of the time, the parallel attestation of angelic names appears to reflect a shared magico-mystical preoccupation with the production of holy and/or esoteric names. Some of the sporadic affinities between the bowls and the Hekhalot literature may in fact reflect an affinity between the bowls and the Jewish liturgical tradition which was taking shape at the time. Mostly, however, visions of the divine throne and the ministering angels (which occasionally appear outside of first person narrative spells in the bowls) do not appear to have been the focus of the first person narrative spells in the bowls. For the most extensive treatments of Hekhalot materials in the bowls, see Shaked, “Peace Be Upon You”; Lesses, *Ritual Practices to Gain Power*, 351–62; Davila, *Descenders to the Chariot*, 217–228. More recently, see Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 23–27; Christa Müller-Kessler, “Eine ungewöhnliche Hekhalot-Zauberschale und ihr babylonisches Umfeld: Jüdisches Gedankengut in den magischen Texten des Ostens,” *Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge* 38 (2013): 69–84. In his recent discussion of the Hekhalot materials in the Cairo Genizah, Bohak, “Transmission of Hekhalot Literature,” 220–21 notes two unpublished bowls (MS 1927/30 and MS 1927/26) which contain a very close parallel to a passage contained in *Tefillat Rav Hammuna Sava*. Including these two bowls, there are some fourteen bowls in the Schøyen collection whose spells contain material that parallels the Hekhalot literature.

spells recall certain aspects of ancient *Wissensgeschichte* as these were developed in apocalyptic discourse.³⁸ In highlighting certain limited commonalities between these different sources, however, I do not wish to collapse the bowls into the much earlier literary materials from Qumran. Neither do I wish to reduce any relationship between the bowls and these earlier materials to an all-too-simple arithmetic of influence. As Annette Reed notes about the parallels between the literary and magical materials preserved at Qumran, these cannot be reduced to simple debates about dependence:

To chart their relationship, rather, is to recover something of the vitality of the local and practical demon-belief that preceded, paralleled, and informed the beginnings of Jewish demonology, constituting the lived and local experiences that gave meaning and power to the claims of some scribes to know – and write – the origins, nature, names, types, and purpose of these and other transmundane powers.³⁹

What I want to emphasise below is what is achieved *by* and *with* practices of textualising and organising knowledge about demons and the cosmos. With respect to the Qumran materials, I briefly remarked upon the scope and diversity of topics encompassed by such works as the Book of the Watchers, the Book of the Giants, the Astronomical Book, the Genesis Apocryphon, the Aramaic Levi Document, Admonitions of Qahat, Visions of Amram, and various patriarchal traditions about Jacob and others. Despite this breadth, many of these texts are united by a focus on the antediluvian past and an unusually high concentration of references

³⁸ On space and spatiality in apocalyptic discourse, as well as the (cosmic) geography of 1 Enoch, see, e.g. Matthew Goff, “Where’s Enoch? The Mythic Geography of the Qumran Book of Giants,” in *Sibyls, Scriptures, and Scrolls: John Collins at Seventy*, ed. Joel Baden, Hindy Najman, and Eibert Tigchelaar, vol. 1. (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 472–88; Kelley Coblentz Bautch, “Spatiality and Apocalyptic Literature,” *Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel* 5.3 (2016): 273–88; Kelley Coblentz Bautch, *A Study of the Geography of 1 Enoch 17–19: “No One Has Seen What I Have Seen”* (Leiden: Brill, 2003). For the ancient world more generally, see Jon L. Berquist, “Theories of Space and Construction of the Ancient World,” in *Foundations for Sociorhetorical Exploration: A Rhetoric of Religious Antiquity Reader*, ed. Vernon K. Robbins, Robert H. Jr. von Thaden, and Bart B. Bruehler (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), 151–76; Jon L. Berquist and Claudia V. Camp, eds., *Constructions of Space I: Theory, Geography, and Narrative* (London: Bloomsbury, 2008).

³⁹ Reed, *Demons, Angels, and Writing*, 210. In what follows, I lean heavily on Reed’s recent exegesis of the Aramaic literature from Qumran because of the extent to which Reed focuses, as Frankfurter, *Evil Incarnate*, 20 puts it, on the “efflorescence” of demonology across the Hellenistic and Roman world and the extent to which this efflorescence seems to have been enabled especially by “writing, as a technology allowing both abstraction from local experience and the magical force of the inscribed name.”

to writing, reading, and books. They are also marked by an elevation of scribes, books, and writing, which express—as Reed argues—a confidence in the capacity of human knowledge to resist loss to historical ruptures like the Flood. As Reed emphasises, writing also features in these works as something that enables information to travel intact not just across historical ruptures, but from the heavens and the far reaches of the cosmos to the mundane realm and into lived experience. As deposits of information about these far-off places, these works preserve, for example, what the angels themselves spoke and read to Enoch and his heirs—sometimes directly from transmundane books. In these putative first person materials, form and content converge: as material objects, these texts bearing first person accounts of an antediluvian scribe do not just assert but embody the contention that writing and scribal expertise can assure the movement of knowledge across the trans/mundane divide as well as across radical moments of rupture like the Flood. A similar notion also underlies the Aramaic Levi Document, the Admonitions of Qahat, and Visions of Amram, all of which evoke an image of Israel’s earliest past in which the activity of writing is central and guarantees the preservation of wisdom from times long past: from the time of Enoch, to Abraham, Jacob, and Levi, on to Qahat and Amram, and culminating in the reception of the Torah on Sinai by Moses.⁴⁰

Turning to the bowls, I note also that—as in the Book of the Watchers, for instance—expressions of epistemological mastery over the transmundane appear in many of the first person narrative spells surveyed in Chapter Five. As I demonstrated, complete and concrete knowledge of the cosmos, its structure, and its inhabitants are ascribed to the I of these spells. This is most apparent in the ‘I descended to the depths of the earth’ and the ‘I stand upon a mountain of stone’ formulae, which lay out the structure and contents of the earth to its very depths, or describe the four winds and the leviathan that cross, connect, and underlay the universe. Knowledge of ‘the height,’ ‘the heavens’ or ‘the upper abode’ is also implicit in the briefer ‘I ascended’ formulae surveyed in Chapter Five, while there is some overlap between the later Enochic claim to have visited the deep pits of bound stars (1 En 21:1–6) and the claim by the I in some of the bowl spells to themselves have bound the constellations. The spatial ideology of these spells—as well as the scope of their spatial and cosmological concerns—pivots on the claim of the I to first-hand knowledge of the structure of the cosmos and God’s heavenly abode. As deposits of information about these far-off places, these bowls

⁴⁰ See also Annette Yoshiko Reed, “Textuality between Death and Memory: The Prehistory and Formation of the Parabiblical Testament,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 104.3 (2014): 381–412.

twice embody the contention that writing and written expertise can assure the movement—across the trans/mundane divide—not just of direct knowledge of the transmundane but also direct messages to demons.

In these narrative spells, demons are presented as components of the cosmos and elements of the practitioner's lived human experience. In the 'I descended to the depths of the earth' formula, for example, the concrete witness to the four child-snatching beasts is what gives credence to the claim by the I in these spells to know (and to write) the names of these beasts and to ascribe to them their role in the death of infants; it is also what gives credence to the bowl's claim to have jurisdiction over these beasts. Knowledge about demons in this spell is presented as an integral part of knowledge about the workings of the cosmos. At the same time, this knowledge—and the rhetoric of seeing and hearing through which it is expressed—also works to embody the (authority of the) practitioner within the transmundane realm.⁴¹

This rhetoric of seeing and showing is also paired with the first person perspective in the Enochic materials: it is of course from the first person perspective that the Book of the Watchers mounts its totalising knowledge claims.⁴² Insofar as the Book of the Watchers does so through increased attention to the first person perspective of Enoch himself, it draws attention to the importance of exemplarity in many of the Qumran materials. As Annette Reed notes,

What is modeled by Enoch, and depicted as divinely ratified, is the power of the scribe as a creature of flesh who can nevertheless act like an angel, privy to knowledge about the order of the cosmos and the function of both spirits and flesh therein.⁴³

Likewise, in the spells surveyed in Chapters Three and Four, exemplarity—precedent and paradigm—is exhibited over and over through a narrative focus on the (biblical) past that is expressed in both historiolae and narrative quotations from the Bible. These spells use the act of narration to connect various past events and actions by transmundane powers to the pre-

⁴¹ Cf. 11Q11, which also frames its anti-demonic concerns within a (more) cosmic perspective, as well as articulating them in terms that recollect both biblical and Enochic traditions—thereby recalling many of the narrative spells and tokens surveyed in Chapters Three to Five of the present work.

⁴² See, e.g. 1 En 1:2.

⁴³ Reed, *Demons, Angels, and Writing*, 228.

sent. Chapters Three and Four also surveyed a series of narratives that explicitly link (exemplary) human figures with the transmundane; in particular, the narratives and tokens built around the person of Joshua bar Peraḥia instantiate and explicitly textualise a link between the mundane and the transmundane through written divorce documents.⁴⁴ In Chapter Five, we saw how far the I of certain spells was privy to direct knowledge about the order of the cosmos and the actions and interactions of transmundane powers therein.

Activated magical technologies and the textualisation of the transmundane

By drawing together the beginnings of Jewish angel- and demonology and the more day-to-day expressions of demon belief in the bowls, we can uncover some overlap between the (perforce) imagined worlds of the anonymous scribes and practitioners behind these materials, wherein angels sinned and sired demonic spawn and humans could travel to the ends of the earth and beyond—alone or with transmundane interlocutors. Further to this, we might also see what their different choices of language and form disclose about practices and perceptions of writing, and the ways in which these different conceptions of writing inform their articulations of common ideas about the workings of a world where humans and demons inhabit the same spaces.

As is often remarked, local demon-beliefs and their practical adjuncts tend to precede more systemic literary efforts to make sense of them, but such systematisation is neither inevitable nor conclusive, and both demonology and practical attempts to combat demons tend to parallel and (continue to) inform one another.⁴⁵ In this respect, it is interesting to observe that—within an applied magical technology attested amongst the Jewish communities of Sasanian Mesopotamia—we encounter transmundane (or visionary travel) experiences that echo earlier modes of intellectual reflection and textual production. But whether or not the narrative spells in the bowls actually encompass testimony to—or familiarity with—these epistemological paradigms, they certainly reflect the integration of cosmic geography, descriptions of space, and spatial concepts of celestial and terrestrial realms into activated magical technologies.

⁴⁴ Cf. the comments on the deployment in a bowl of the stipulation from m. Šeb. 4:13 regarding oaths, in which Dan Levene, “If You Appear as a Pig,” 59, 67 notes the “appropriation of oaths from the terrestrial legal sphere [and their application] to that of the supernatural” whereby “terrestrial jurisprudence [is extended] to the world of the supernatural.”

⁴⁵ Frankfurter, *Evil Incarnate*, 13–30.

Insofar as both bowls and scrolls weave a series of connections between text, writing, and the transmundane, where the bowls and the Qumran materials that we have observed diverge is in the uses that they put writing to—that is, to the production of applied magical objects and to the textualisation and ordering of various bodies of (transmundane knowledge). They also differ in the ultimate ends that motivate their use of the (scribal) strategy of (transmundane) narration. The bowl practitioners use narrative not to theorise (at a level of abstraction) about the cosmos and the distant past, nor to leave the realm of lived experience through cosmological theorisation alone, but to actually make the mythic past present and/or to extend the lived experience of the practitioner to the far reaches of the cosmos. While the scribes responsible for the Book of the Watchers ultimately contribute to the authority of the Jewish scribal collective by collecting and consolidating knowledge about transmundane powers, the narrative act of knowing in the bowl spells—in particular the claims to first-hand knowledge about transmundane powers expressed through the narrative evocation of an I who consolidates this knowing in their person—contributes to the authority of the individual practitioner in their engagement with specific demons. Where earlier sources present a world-view wherein demons are a paradigm for that which can be ordered and controlled by the power of transmundane knowledge contained in writings on earth, the magic bowls—as activated magical technologies that draw on the power of writing—concretise this act of control in lived experience.

In the context of the bowls, knowledge about (the aetiology of) demons (and their place in the cosmos) does not just form the basis or starting point for (written) adjurations and threats against demons. It is explicitly textualised and weaponised *within* these written responses to demons. Epistemic expressions regarding demons and the transmundane realm are instrumentalised in the bowl texts. Through the textual technologies of first person framing and the direct witness of the I, they are used to embody (the authority of) the practitioner within (and with respect to) the transmundane realm. These bowl spells therefore do not just represent a written reaction to the existence of demons. They do not just adjure or command specific angels and demons as the source of particular ailments. They index a demonology that embraces cosmic geography—for instance—and the description of demons and transmundane spaces. Knowledge of transmundane geographies is instrumentalised in the bowls as a means to embody the practitioner within the transmundane realm. At least in their written communications to demons, it is testified to as part of their lived experience (their proximate past). This knowledge of demons—and the demonic body, in particular—is ex-

pressed rhetographically in the bowls in both diegetic and non-diegetic descriptions of demons. But particularly within the narrative spells surveyed in Chapter Five, the sensory-rich details that these formulae exhibit amounts to a kind of *evidential scene setting* in which the enunciating subject assumes an embodied experience manifested through the written spell. The full coherence of vision that is afforded to the practitioner in these spells (in contrast to the beneficiaries' experiences of demons as physical maladies or apparitions) privileges the practitioner and demonstrates (not merely their knowledge about, but) their successful negotiation of diverse spatial and temporal continuities. The instrumentalisation of cosmological details within the bowls exponentially increases the geographic and cosmographic space within and over which the practitioner is able to demonstrate their authority and their power. The practitioners' organisation and textualisation in these spells of knowledge about demons and angels from local contexts and landscapes also works to re-order various bodies of knowledge about demons and to grant a totalising aspect to their knowledge of the cosmos. In pragmatic terms, these spells create a *mise en scène* within which the practitioner's knowledge about and goals concerning demons can be played out.

THE EMBODIEDNESS OF DEMONS IN THE BOWLS

As we have seen, the scope and forms of Jewish writing were radically expanded in Second Temple times—an expansion encompassing the emergence of systematic reflection on angels and demons. In the foregoing, I examined some of the overlap between these earlier sources and the bowls and the ways in which they index the demonology of Second Temple and late antique Judaism. I also examined the different uses of writing and strategies of textualisation represented by these sources. The bowls do not just provision us with a massive increase in our evidence for ancient Jewish magic. They reflect very different ideas about the kinds of uses writing could be put to. The bowls reflect a situation where writing was plainly no longer just a means to textualise knowledge about demons—even as actual technologies to combat demons remained largely oral—but used as a tool to directly access, materialise, and combat demons.

In earlier sources, as we saw, there is also a marked focus on the origin of demons, but this explicit aetiological focus is not paralleled in these sources by the types of demonological accounts that we find in the bowls (and to a lesser extent in rabbinic literature). It would seem that, where there are Watchers, demons remain largely unsighted. The bowls on the other hand provision us with a far richer vision of the appearance and/or habitual activi-

ties of demons. Their texts are considerably more expansive when it comes to the characteristics of demons, their abodes and habits, and their physical appearance. The bowls thus reflect in part a different kind of demonological knowledge, though the material constitution of demons—their physical science, so to speak—nevertheless has a bearing on conceptions of the cosmos and the human person, as well as more fundamental ideas about matter, physics, and biology.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, in shifting from the demonological expressions in the scrolls to those in the bowls, we see that the material bodies of demons—previously unsighted in our sources—increasingly begin to gain in expression. The language of the bowls grants them an increasingly concrete shape. As such, the bowls may be said to represent not just the expansion and instrumentalisation of writing to directly engage with demons, but also to reflect a shift in the forms of knowledge about demons that were textualised through writing. In what follows, I explore the extent to which—even as activated magical objects—the bowls reflect the increasing textualisation of a different order of knowledge about demons. I examine the ways in which the bowl texts express somatic knowledge about demons, exploring the rhetorical texture of some of these texts and the ways in which their use of language gives shape to the demonic body.

The most forthright and striking evidence of this knowledge about the immediate characteristics of demons is—of course—to be found in the drawings of demons on many of the bowls. Looking at these figures, we can see what the (Jewish) communities of Sasanian Mesopotamia imagined demons to look like, whether naked and dishevelled, horned or winged or hybrid.⁴⁷ These drawings are a valuable reminder of something that is easy to forget—at least by the mind shaped in the wake of Descartes—that ancient demons had bodies. Naturally, this is well known in theory by specialists in the ancient world, but it is nevertheless a fact that is difficult to grasp given both the absence of demons from the dominant

⁴⁶ In this regard, see Gideon Bohak, “Conceptualizing Demons in Late Antique Judaism,” in Bhayro and Rider, eds. *Demons and Illness*, 111–33 who develops an analogy between contemporary bacteriology and late antique Jewish conceptualisations of demons. Cf. the discussion of fine-material kapnophagic demons in relation to material physics, meteorology, and biology in Smith, “How Thin Is a Demon?” 483–90.

⁴⁷ For numerous reproductions of the drawings in the bowls, see Viložny, *Lilith’s Hair and Ashmedai’s Horns*. A Google Image search for Viložny’s name also returns multiple, easily-accessible reproductions. Viložny’s work sites the drawings in the bowls against the background of the artistic conventions of Sasanian Iran. Cf. Laura Feldt, “Monstrous Figurines From Mesopotamia: Textuality, Spatiality and Materiality in Rituals and Incantations for the Protection of Houses in First-Millennium Aššur,” in Boschung and Bremmer, eds., *The Materiality of Magic*, 59–95.

discourses that shape contemporary public life as well as the wealth of insightful psychological and figurative interpretations of demons that stand agley of their material reality.⁴⁸ As Gregory Smith points out, these psychological and figurative interpretations of demons have a long and ancient pedigree (though it is easy enough to lapse into a pattern of thinking that construes sensitive attention to the mind and self as a particularly modern phenomenon).⁴⁹ It is perhaps in part because they bear such a long, influential (and particularly Christian) history, that these psychological and figurative interpretations of demons—wielded to great effect and valuable insight by modern scholars and ancient monks—make it so difficult for us to conceive in a literal sense what it meant or felt like to have a demon inside your body. Being invisible, as Smith stresses, is not the same as being a figure of speech—though figurative language is of course one way of giving shape to the demonic body—nor is it the same as being immaterial.⁵⁰ The drawn images upon the magic bowls open a window onto the material reality of demonic bodies. It is the bowl texts, though, that provide the most extensive view onto how the demonic body and demonic realm were conceived by these late antique Jewish communities. In examining this aspect of the bowls texts, I will draw upon the frame of rhetoric.

⁴⁸ See David Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monk: Spiritual Combat in Early Christianity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 8–9 for an assessment of explicitly psychoanalytic interpretations of demons as well as the utility and limitations of these interpretive perspectives for our understanding of the ancient world. More recently (and more in-depth) see the extensive survey in David L. Bradnick, *Evil, Spirits, and Possession: An Emergentist Theology of the Demonic* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 54–148. Of course, the literal reality of demons shapes many contemporary forms of discourse—though these may appear removed from the ‘mainline’ of western religious practice and predominant scientific, political, and educational discourses—and demons represent an immediate part of many people’s lived realities. Just within the west, for example, see the communities discussed in, e.g. Sean McCloud, *American Possessions: Fighting Demons in the Contemporary United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) as well as Joseph Laycock, “The Folk Piety of William Peter Blatty: ‘The Exorcist’ in the Context of Secularization,” *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion* 5 (2009): Article 6, which argues that William Peter Blatty’s novel “*The Exorcist* represents a cultural moment in which the perceived decline of supernaturalism inspired a resurgence in folk piety.”

⁴⁹ Smith, “How Thin Is a Demon?” 480 points to John Cassian’s vision of Egyptian asceticism—and the momentous results of its transmission to the west—in order to illustrate both the ancient roots and ongoing influence of the psychological interpretation of demons. In the concise summary provided by Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monk*, 244, Cassian “subordinates the monk’s conflict with demons to a persistent and divinely planned conflict within himself.”

⁵⁰ Smith, “How Thin Is a Demon?” 481–82.

Rhetography

As I noted previously, the neologism rhetography refers in its simplest sense to the graphic images that arise in the mind as a result of the sensory-aesthetic and perlocutionary textures of a text.⁵¹ It can be contrasted with ‘rhetology’ and may be understood—following the two-fold Aristotelian understanding of the nature of rhetorical argumentation—to refer to arguments that are unfolded in inductive or paradigmatic ways (through thematic or narrative elaboration, for instance) as opposed to arguments that progress according to enthymematic (deductive or logical) means.⁵² The concept is thus related to the idea of narrative as it is advanced by rhetorical narratologists. The sensory-aesthetic texture of a text—and the images it invokes—may exhibit or embody a range of visual, oral, aural, haptic, gustatory, and olfactory senses, as well as actively involving the imagination. Deployed in relation to the magic bowls, I intend rhetography to embrace the imaginative visualisation and representation of an invisible transmundane reality—and the demonic in particular. Looking back to the foregoing chapters, we can observe how the bowls yield an unexpected form of knowing: they do not just attempt to communicate with the transmundane for magical means, they also describe and represent that transmundane reality. These expressions of transmundane reality are not

⁵¹ On the early development of rhetography, see Vernon K. Robbins, “Rhetography: A New Way of Seeing the Familiar Text,” in *Words Well Spoken: George Kennedy’s Rhetoric of the New Testament*, ed. C. Clifton Black and Duane F. Watson (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2008), 81–106, which reviews the relations between the concept and (scholarship on) *ekphrasis*, iconography, signs, and picturing. Of particular importance to the development of the concept are Erwin Panofsky’s work on iconography and iconology and Roland Barthes’ work on sign and signification. See Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (New York: Routledge, 2018); Roland Barthes, “The Imagination of the Sign,” in *Critical Essays* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972), 205–11; “Literature and Signification,” 261–79. Also important is the section titled “Textual Pictures” (especially the two chapters titled “Visible Language: Blake’s Art of Writing” and “Ekphrasis and the Other”) in the landmark study by W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). Rhetography is also closely related to rhetorical narratology insofar as it formulates a productive role for narrative within rhetorical argumentation. For recent applications of rhetography, see (the literature cited in) Christopher J. Nygren, “Graphic Exegesis: Reflections on the Difficulty of Talking about Biblical Images, Pictures, and Texts,” and Bloomquist, “Eyes Wide Open, Seeing Nothing,” in Robbins, Melion, and Jeal, eds. *Art of Visual Exegesis*, 271–302, 121–67. For a further important contribution to the development of rhetography, see Roy R. Jeal, “Blending Two Arts: Rhetorical Words, Rhetorical Pictures and Social Formation in the Letter to Philemon,” *Sino-Christian Studies* 5 (2008): 9–38.

⁵² Though Robbins’ work develops Aristotle’s original enthymematic and paradigmatic categories, the terms rhetology and rhetography do not map directly onto the two Aristotelian bases of argumentation.

just found in narrative spells but—as we will see below—in non-diegetic bowl passages as well. These images do not reflect ‘mere’ aesthetics, however; the graphic images of demons and demonic bodies that result from the sensory-aesthetic blueprint of the bowls reflect an embodied cognition. This cognition in turn reflects a specifically located context and way of seeing (that is, a specific social and cultural context). As Robbins phrases the rhetographic project: “a speaker or writer composes, intentionally or unintentionally, a context of communication through statements or signs that conjure visual images in the mind which, in turn, evoke ‘familiar’ contexts that provide meaning for a hearer or reader.”⁵³

Attending to the rhetoric of the images in a text can thus provide the interpreter with “the primary cultural clue to the logic of the discourse.”⁵⁴ The rhetography of a text permits us to picture the contextual environment of the discourse under examination. This environment provides meanings that persuade readers, viewers, and hearers to think in particular ways about the world. In the case of the bowls, and in the context of the present chapter, attending to the rhetography of the bowl texts provides an interpretative space in which to analyse images evoked by the bowls that frequently function as markers of somatic presence. The rhetographic project pushes us to take seriously the rhetorical power of graphic picturing. Attending to the reality of the demonic body as it is pictured in and by the bowls can reveal people’s orientations (and subsequent) attitudes towards transmundane powers. The bowls provide an unexploited window through which to examine human actors in the active, imaginative process of constructing and negotiating their relationships with demons (as well as angels, God, and other powerful forces). This chapter thus examines how the bowl practitioners mediated the invisible reality of the transmundane realm; how the visual textures and images in their products configured and reconfigured how demons were seen and experienced in late antique Mesopotamia. The bowl practitioners sold their expertise for the benefit of people beset by demons and/or demonised forms of witchcraft and illness. But their role was not limited to the simple repulsion or expulsion of these forces. Credited with authority and exorcistic powers by their clients, they were also agents in the definition of these forces. The formulae they employed—as well as their variations and *ad hoc* innovations upon these

⁵³ Vernon K. Robbins, “Conceptual Blending and Early Christian Imagination,” in *Explaining Christian Origins and Early Judaism: Contributions from Cognitive and Social Science*, ed. Petri Luomanen, Ilkka Pyysiäinen, and Risto Uro (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 162.

⁵⁴ Robbins, “Rhetography,” 100.

formulae—worked to construct and define the demonic realm as an extension of this authority. As I will show, they reflect a kind of ‘lived demonology.’

Describing and embodying demons

Many bowl texts do not just seek to adjure demons, to exorcise them or frustrate their hostile designs. They also employ various textualising strategies to depict these demons and their invisible reality. Taking the witness of the living and seeing ‘I’ as a narrative principle, we saw previously how some bowl texts use the techniques of description to expand their spell formulae to include direct experiences of the transmundane. Reflected in these descriptions are aspects of transmundane bodies and spaces. Similar acts of expansion also occur in non-diegetic spell formulae. In this regard, a parade example is the description of Marya Bagdana that we glanced at briefly in Chapter Five:

AMB B13 (3) ... His power is the power of (a blast). His heat ⁽⁴⁾ is the heat of fire. His practice is the practice of killing. His chastisement is the chastisement of battle. That which is alive, he eats. That which is unmixed, he drinks. His head is the head of a lion, his tusks are the tusks of a wild boar, his teeth are ⁽⁵⁾ the teeth of tiger, the draughts of his mouth are furnaces of fire, his eyes are burning lightnings, his voice is the thunder in a cloud, his temples are an anvil of iron, his arms are two hammers, his chest is the chest of an evil man, ⁽⁶⁾ his belly is a lake without wells, his back is a back of stone, his legs are legs of brass and iron, his sandals are sandals of sparks, his chariot is the chariot of the no-good ones.

Known elsewhere as the king of the demons, AMB B13 refers to the demonic figure in question simply as Marya Bagdana. As Shaul Shaked remarks,

The attributes of [this] person include intense heat, violence and annihilation, and uncivilized, beastlike behavior. This is brought to life by his way of eating and drinking: eating uncooked flesh, drinking unmixed wine, two features that mark one who does not belong to human society. It is also underlined by his physical similarity to ferocious animals.⁵⁵

More concretely, the text of this bowl describes the constitution of this particular transmundane body in great detail, drawing on both diffuse and abstract ideas (as Shaked observes) as well as heavily concrete materials: from chastisement to clouds and sparks, and from light-

⁵⁵ Shaked, “Healing as an Act of Transformation,” 122.

ning to brass and iron. An immensely hybrid being, Marya Bagdana is envisioned in terms of both animal and human imagery, as well as in terms of human technologies: anvils and hammers. At the same time, his physical presence is further characterised through atmospheric qualities that manifest in the feeling body's environment: his heat (which is the heat of fire) and the draughts of his mouth (which are furnaces of fire) characterise not just his person but the dimensions of the space surrounding him in a manner that is apprehensible by way of bodily feeling rather than vision or audition (or even straightforward tactile experience). All of this detail works not just to accentuate his physical body and his presence, but to accentuate his power and his liminality, suspending the boundaries between the categories 'human,' 'animal,' and 'meteorological phenomena,' as well as combining aspects of these categories to simultaneously suspend and reinforce the independence of the members of his body. In violating established thought categories, this image of the demonic body may render erudition somewhat helpless. At the same time it makes an exceptionally strong appeal to direct perception and mitigates confusion by mixing elements and thought categories that in themselves are conventional. Herein I suggest lies the most pronounced rhetographic aspect of this image of his body. Using both stable visual shapes and intense (but elusive or somewhat intangible) atmospheric qualities to describe his person, it remains unclear which side of the trans/mundane limit Marya Bagdana inhabits. Whence the threatening and disorienting nature of his image.

In what follows, I further pursue the demonic body in the bowls by examining in more depth the ways in which the magical practitioners behind the bowls used language to generate a verbal shape for these invisible beings. In line with the rhetographic goals outlined above, I do not consider how the bowls use language to convey the quality of ambiguity or liminality that inheres to the demonic in many of the bowl texts.⁵⁶ Instead, I examine several operative images that work to materialise demons in the bowls and which express concrete knowledge about their bodies and their appearances. As we will see, these images are often constructed on the basis of ordinary descriptive paradigms—sets of rules for mapping observed entities into linguistically mediated descriptions—whence the ekphrastic valence of

⁵⁶ For an exploration of how language is used in various ancient and modern sources to give an experience of such qualities, see the extensive body of work by Reuven Tsur, most recently Reuven Tsur, "The Numinous as Aesthetic Quality," *Style* 52.4 (2018): 361–84 and most extensively in Reuven Tsur, *On the Shore of Nothingness: Space, Rhythm, and Semantic Structure in Religious Poetry and Its Mystic-Secular Counterpart* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2003).

physiognomy, for instance.⁵⁷ Here though these rules or paradigms reflect the realities of bodies that are not visually discernible. The bowl texts shape demons in various ways and I will examine how they do so first in relation to the animal world, then through graphic images of the demonic appetite, and finally through images of human illness and disability.⁵⁸ Unlike the surveys offered in the previous chapters, I make no claims to exhaustiveness here. The material is too extensive to offer more than exemplarity and common tendencies.

⁵⁷ Of course, as was emphasised in the discussion of rhetography above, no types or bodies of descriptive work are ‘ordinary,’ ‘obvious,’ ‘natural,’ or ‘culturally-neutral,’ hence the insight such textual resources can offer into the specific ‘logic’ of a given discourse—on which point, see the contributions in J. Cale Johnson and Alessandro Stavru, eds., *Visualizing the Invisible with the Human Body: Physiognomy and Ekphrasis in the Ancient World* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2019). On the physiognomic materials in early Jewish sources contemporaneous with the Dead Sea Scroll materials discussed above, see Mladen Popović, *Reading the Human Body: Physiognomics and Astrology in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Hellenistic-Early Roman Period Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), who triangulates these materials with Babylonian and Graeco-Roman materials. On the ‘physiognomic consciousness’ that marks various texts that do not explicitly deal with physiognomics on a theoretical or technical level, see pp. 4–6, 277–90. Of course, Popović’s study is concerned with the increase in interest in the physical description of people’s bodies in Second Temple Judaism, and not demonic bodies.

⁵⁸ For discussion of the appearance of demons in earlier Mesopotamian sources, see, e.g. Gina V. Konstantopoulos, “They Are Seven: Demons and Monsters in the Mesopotamian Textual and Artistic Tradition” (University of Michigan, 2015), 253–62; Julia Assante, “Inside and Out: The Extra-Dimensional Aspects of the Mesopotamian Body, With Egyptian Parallels,” in *Religion und Menschenbild*, ed. Manfred Dietrich et al. (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2010), 3–18; Lorenzo Verderame, “Demons at Work in Ancient Mesopotamia,” in Bhayro and Rider, eds. *Demons and Illness*, 64–66, 73–76; Karen Sonik, “Mesopotamian Conceptions of the Supernatural: A Taxonomy of *Zwischenwesen*,” *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 14 (2013): 112, who observes that “demons were not a popular subject of representation in the visual arts of Mesopotamia, and that even written references to or descriptions of their physical forms were often vague or amorphous in nature.” Verderame, “Demons at Work,” 74 also observes that, “in later compositions, narrative descriptions of demons are scantier.” As in the bowls, descriptions of demons also appear in incantations against demons. For instance, in an Old Babylonian incantation against the *lamaštu* demon—who shares many features with *Pazuzu*—we find the following description: “H[er] breasts are [stripped off ...]. A goat is ... / Like a fish [her body is do]tted, / Like a *šeršerru*-paste her chin [...] is pale, / Her head is a lion’s head, / Her teeth are donkey’s teeth, / ... of a dog ...” (Lorenzo Verderame, “‘Their Divinity Is Different, Their Nature Is Distinct!’ Nature, Origin, and Features of Demons in Akkadian Literature,” *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 14 (2013): 123). *Lamaštu*’s long nails are also constantly emphasised in descriptions of her person; these are useful for the activities of baby-snatching. Demons in these sources are often immensely hybrid, polymorphic, or composite beings. Other demons may be appearance-less: Markham J. Geller, “The Faceless Udug-Demon,” *Studi e materiali di storia delle religioni* 77.2 (2011): 333–41. Some demons lose what individual qualities they possess when they are depicted as part of a group, e.g. in the case of the Seven, the Galla, and the Utukku.

Demons and (the shapes of) animals

I begin with AIT 7—a bowl excavated at Nippur—which addresses a variety of malevolent forces that appear in the form of vermin, reptiles, birds, other animals, and in the shape of men and woman.

(14) ... שידי ושידאניאתה ולילי וליליאתא ופגעי וסטני בישי וכל מזיקי בישי דמידמן כל חילונין
בישין בידמות שיקצא ורימסא ובדמות חיתא ועופא (15) ובדמות גברא ואיתתא ובכל דמו ובכל גיונין

...

(14) ... male and female demons, male and female liliths, plagues and evil satans
and all evil harmers, all of which evil powers appear in the guise of vermin and
reptile and in the guise of beast and bird (15) and in the guise of man and woman,
and in every form and every shape ...

This bowl introduces the fluid and flexible nature of demonic bodies as they appear in the bowl texts.⁵⁹ It also demonstrates the ability of demons to manifest themselves in diverse forms. Taking this adjuration as a starting point, I want to briefly survey how demons are characterised and concretised in the JBA bowls in relation to the animal world.⁶⁰ One of the longest spells attesting to the appearance of demons as specific animals is found in M 164 = Levene 2007.⁶¹ This bowl adjures numerous demons—in part using an oath from the Mishnah—that take the form of animals:

(8) ... אם כחזירא אתון מידמין מומינא ומשבענא לכון ביהוה יהוה צבאות אם כחזירא אתון
מידמין מומינא ומשבענא (9) לכון ביהו יהו אם כדיכרא אתון מידמין מומינא ומשבענא לכון

⁵⁹ Cf. MS 1927/38, which binds a certain Lilith, the evil Mavhalta, as well as a transmundane voice that resides in the house of Papa s. Hormizdukh and his wife — these call at night like a man and appear to the beneficiaries as human beings. Of interest here is the audial presence of malevolent forces.

⁶⁰ See also the brief survey by Marco Moriggi, “Devilish Apparitions in Mesopotamian Incantation Bowls: Preliminary Remarks about Demons in the Guise of Animals,” in *Animals, Gods and Men from East to West: Papers on Archaeology and History in Honour of Roberta Venco Ricciardi*, ed. Alessandra Peruzzetto, Francesca Dorna Metzger, and Lucinda Dirven (Oxford: BAR Publishing, 2013), 119–22. On the well-attested class of demons known as ירורי, ‘jackal-spirits’ see Dan Levene, “‘This Is a Qybl,’” 229–31. Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts*, 81 notes about ירר that “the root is onomatopoeic, connoting a howling creature.” Though I do not pursue the aural imagination in the bowls, I note in this regard the extent to which auditory experiences of demons contribute to conceptions of their physical existence.

⁶¹ In light of much of the foregoing discussion, note that this bowl invokes the name of Metatron, attaching different epithets or epithetic elements to the name from 3 En. 1:4 and 12:5, as well as epithetic materials associated with Metatron from b. Sanh. 38b and Merkabah Rabba. See Levene, “If You Appear as a Pig,” 64.

באלף דלא ביוד הי בשדי ביצבאות בחנון וברחום בארץ אפים ורוב חסד וכל הכנוים אם
 ככלבא אתון מידמין מומינא ⁽¹⁰⁾ ומשבענא לכון באהיה אשר אהיה ...

⁽⁸⁾ ... If you appear as a pig, I adjure and put you under oath by means of YHWH
 YHWH Sabaoth. If you appear as a pig, I adjure and put you under oath ⁽⁹⁾ by
 means of YHW YHW. If you appear as a ram, I adjure and put you under oath
 “by *alef-daleth*, by *yod-he*, by Shaddai, by Sabaoth, by the Merciful and Gra-
 cious, by Him that is long-suffering and of great kindness, and by any substituted
 name” (m. Šeb. 4:13). If you appear as a dog, I adjure ⁽¹⁰⁾ and put you under oath
 by means of I Am that I Am. ...

The animals listed here are all domestic, highlighting the insidious threat posed by demons
 and the need to be constantly on one’s guard: in the guise of domestic animals, demons could
 insinuate themselves into the very heart of the home. Another formula attesting to the appear-
 ance of demons as (a menagerie of) animals is to be found in AMB B13:

... מיתחזתון לה ליויתאי בת חתאי בגמלי בתורי וביחמרי באריוי בדיבי ובנמרי בשורני ⁽¹²⁾
 ובקופ[י] ...

You make yourselves visible to Yawitai d. Ḥatai in camels, oxen, donkeys, lions,
 wolves, leopards, cats, and monkeys ... ⁶²

Such spells, though they do not evoke graphic images of demons, nevertheless fix and locate
 the material presence of demons in the world by reference to particular animals. They thereby
 provisionally reflect demons and organise them into the material world.⁶³

Constitution and nutrition

The animal world appears in much less general terms in certain bowl formulae that attest to
 the demonic appetite. This appetite is shaped in the bowls using highly visceral—and dis-
 tinctly gory—language with respect to animal flesh. This presentation of the demonic

⁶² This bowl also conjures the threatening audial experience of demons in ll. 10-11: נביתון כיכלבי נצריטון
 כיחזירי ומישתריקטון כיתניני, “you bark like dogs, you grunt like pigs, you hiss like snakes.” Note further the ap-
 pearance in ll. 11-12 of demons as different species of trees, as well as metals, including gold, silver, brass, and
 lead. Cf. the constitution of Marya Bagdana.

⁶³ Frankfurter, *Evil Incarnate*, 14. The appearance of demons as animals—in particular in canine or wolf-
 like form, cf. n. 60 above—is a widespread cross-cultural phenomenon. See Charles Stewart, *Demons and the
 Devil: Moral Imagination in Modern Greek Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 183–87.

appetite through the use of graphic images also works to concretise the demons themselves. It reinforces their materiality—a corporeal body needs sustenance, after all—as well as reinforcing the very material threat that they represent: their nutritional needs are seemingly one of the principal motivators of their malevolence. The ugly side of this appetite is often visited upon (the flesh of) children and women. In some formulae seeking to avoid this outcome, however, the demons are commanded to devour the sweet and savoury flesh of various wild animals. This carrot-and-stick approach is applied in VA 2414 = Ford and Levene 2012 which enjoins various forms of demonised witchcraft to:

(5) ... אזלו ופילו על טבי בטורי (6) ועל ארדי בנשבי ועל ססתא בישר דבישר אכלן (7) ובישר שתין וחלי דמיהו ובסי בסרהו ושקוה לאחתאדאבוה (8) בת אמא אמן אמן ואלתר

(5) ... go and attack gazelles in the mountains (6) and wild asses in net(ting place)s and maggots (in) flesh that devour flesh (7) and drink flesh—their blood is sweet and their flesh is savoury. And leave Ahata-de-'abuh (8) d. Imma alone! Amen, amen, and immediately!

A similar formula appears in a bowl held by the Tarshish antiquities shop in Jerusalem = Ford and Ten-Ami 2012. In this instance, the demons are instructed in l. 10 to leave the beneficiaries and טבי דבני טבי, “eat the flesh of wild asses and drink the blood of young gazelles.” In two unpublished bowls, the demons are again referred to the savoury flesh and sweet blood of mountain gazelles and wild asses, and cautioned in addition that the flesh and blood of the bowl owners are neither savoury to eat nor sweet to drink.⁶⁴ Another (aggressive) bowl commands a jackal-spirit to go with great fury and drink and sup upon the intended victim of the bowl. Thus VA 2484 = Levene Curses 22-24:

(5) ... אומיתי ואשבועית עליכי דתיזלן עלוהי דשישין בת אסמנדוך (6) ותיבעין מינה כל דאמרת קדמך ותישדרן עלה כלבי (7) {וג}וגריתא ודרדקיך ופריסתין וזג ד יקנך ושליחך יזילון עלוהי ברוגזא רבא (8) אם קימא ירמיו לה לארעה ובשיפלא וימחון על ראשה ותיכלין מן בישרה ותישתין מן (9) דמה עד תיקום קדמך ...

(5) ... I have adjured and put you under oath that you may go against Šišin d. As-māndukh (6) and demand of her all that she has said before you. And send against her dogs (7) and bitches and your children and your maid servants and your jailors

⁶⁴ These two unpublished bowls (Wolfe 39 and Wolfe 45) are quoted in part by James Nathan Ford and Dan Levene, “‘For Ahata-de-'abuh Daughter of Imma:’ Two Aramaic Incantation Bowls in the Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin (VA 2414 and VA 2426),” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 57.1 (2012): 57.

and your messengers. They shall go against her in great anger. ⁽⁸⁾ If she gets up they will cast her to the earth in exhaustion, and may they strike upon her head. And may you eat from her flesh and drink from ⁽⁹⁾ her blood until she will serve you.

This particular bowl crafts a picture akin to a frenzied dog hunt. Here the hounds are supplemented by a rabble comprising the children and servants and jailers of the jackal-spirit who eats the flesh and drinks the blood of her battered and exhausted quarry. Another curse bowl in the Israel Museum = AMB B7:7-8 asks that malevolent forces do not just fall upon the intended victim like rocks fall from high mountains, but that they “eat from his flesh and drink from his blood.”

In some cases, the demons do not dine raw or drink undiluted blood (VA 2484:12) but are pictured using verbs of cooking. In three published bowls, a female demon called Šakobit the Sleeper—daughter of Lilith Ṭasat—is said to gather infants from women and roast their flesh. She is also said to consume the breastmilk of these women.⁶⁵ This image is particularly expressive of the malevolence of Šakobit, delineating not just the cruelty of roasting and devouring a baby but the lurid evil of returning to the bereaved and still lactating mother to sup further upon her milk. Thus M 155:

... שכובית שכובניתא דנסבה בנין מן נשיא וקליא יתהון ושתיא מן חלביהון בת טסת
(ליליתא) [סכוריכי] מן מהדוך בת ניונדוך ולא תישתין מן חלבא ...

⁽¹¹⁾ ... Šakobit the Sleeper, who takes away children from women and roasts them and drinks from their (the mothers’) milk, daughter of Lilith Ṭasat. [Shut yourself away] from Mahdukh d. Newandukh ...

JBA 47 was prepared for the same beneficiary and contains the same formula. Though the text of this bowl is not as well preserved as M 155, it is possible to discern a further unsettling addition to the formula that is not present in M 155. Thus JBA 47:10 adds סכוריכי מן “Shut yourself away from Mahdukh d. Newandukh, and do not drink from her milk and do not knead it with your blood.”⁶⁶ An-

⁶⁵ Šakobit the Sleeper is further witnessed to in numerous unpublished parallels to this formula in the Schøyen Collection: MS 1927/9, MS 1927/11, MS 1927/44, MS 2053/4, MS 2053/9, MS 2053/20, MS 2053/21, MS 2053/26, MS 2053/60, MS 2053/73, MS 2053/155, MS 2053/175, MS 2053/263.

⁶⁶ The third published example of this formula largely follows JBA 47. Thus Gorea B3:2-4 reads: [...] בנין מן נשיא וקטלא ית[הון] ושתיא מן חלביהון בת טסת ליליתא (סכור) יכי מן אביי בר דודי ומן אימאי בת אחת לא תישתין מן חלביהון ולא תלושין

other far more physical verb of food preparation (לִישׁ, ‘to knead dough’) is incorporated here and the demon is pictured combining the breastmilk of bereaved mothers with its own blood in the preparation of another meal. JBA 40:1 asks for the protection of the bowl owner’s children and appears to suggest that demonic methods of food preparation extend to the boiling of children, though the context of the passage is not entirely clear: [---], “[---] ולאחתין ביסר בנין [---], “[---] and they boil the flesh of children.”⁶⁷

That demons eat and drink is of course attested by the rabbis in b. Ḥag 16a, but this generic statement—that in three things demons are like human beings, that they eat and drink, propagate, and die—is confirmed in visceral fashion by such stark images in the bowls. Here, strong verbs of roasting and boiling and kneading construe the demonic body through both (grisly) activity and a visceral approach to the flesh and substances of the human body. Elsewhere in the bowls—likewise activating or embodying the haptic, gustatory, and olfactory senses—demons are envisioned through associations with the undiluted blood of fawns and humans, as well as graphic images of viscous worm- or maggot-strewn flesh, in one case so putrefied that it can be drunk (seemingly a felicitous innovation of the practitioner).

Visualising the invisible through (and upon) the human body

As glimpsed in the foregoing discussion of the demonic appetite, the human body is the site upon which the curious constitution of demonic bodies most directly impinges. This of course is reflected (in general) in the many physical ailments (conceived as demons) that the bowls are directed against. But the demonic transgression of the body’s boundaries—by breaching the skin, skull, or the eyeball, for example—does not just articulate the range of affects the demonic body could have upon the human body.⁶⁸ The body and its parts and its

יתה בידמכי “[...] children from women and kills them and drinks from their milk, daughter of Lilith Ṭasat. Shut yourself away from Abay s. Dodi and Immay d. Aḥat. Do not drink from their (*sic*) milk and do not knead it with your blood.”

⁶⁷ On the reading of the verb as רהת (cf. Mandaic ‘to seethe, boil’) and the interchange between *lamed* and *reš*, see Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 193.

⁶⁸ References to the breaching of the body by malevolent forces through the gateways of its orifices are innumerable across earlier Mesopotamian materials. The Sumerian and Akkadian words for orifice—*KÁ* and *bābu* respectively—also mean ‘door’ or ‘gate.’ This susceptibility to ingress is also attested in certain Qumran materials, which appear to localise the presence and/or activity of spirits in the innermost parts of the body, e.g. 4Q560, which we saw above, describes the entrance of demons into flesh and tooth; 4Q444 1–4+5, 2, which refers to spirits במבנית, within the speaker’s bodily structure and תכמי בשר, innards of flesh (perhaps blood vessels). Cf. 4Q511 48–49+51 3; 1Q36 14 2; 4Q434–438. For discussion, see Eibert Tigchelaar, “Catalogue of

fluids are potent cultural idioms and demons in the bowls are also given material form in relation to aspects of human illness or in terms of the visible or physical effects that illness has upon human bodies. The bowl formulae that I want to look at now do not just let us know what it actually *felt* like to experience a demon within one's body. They also shape demons through the prism of bodily disability in a complex transubstantiation of the visual where the body of the demon—as the cause of the depicted physical ailment—is shaped in terms of ailment and its manifestation upon the human body.

Ten of the fourteen parallel bowl texts I consider here were written by the same practitioner for two different though possibly related clients: Mahdukh d. Newandukh and Mihranahid d. Aḥat.⁶⁹ All fourteen of these bowls deploy (or omit by haplography, in the case of JBA 11 and JBA 12) the Ḥanina ben Dosa historiola. They deploy the historiola as part of an incantation designed to counteract the effects of a demon associated with blindness and migraine. Targeted primarily against this demon, but also embracing afflictions caused by several other demons, the formulae in these bowls offer up a series of biologically and physically detailed descriptions of demonic activity inside the human body. Where we previously saw the prism of bodily perception exploited in part to describe Marya Bagdana in AMB B13, these bowls further deploy the prism of *internal* bodily perception in order to shape the demonic.

The chief demon that these incantations engage with is named by the bowl practitioners and the editors of the majority of these bowl texts as אגג בת ברוק בת ברוקתא בת נקור בת נמון, Agag d. Baroq d. Baroqta d. Naqor d. Namon d. Migraine d. the Evil Eye.⁷⁰ As Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro acknowledge, however, these words could equally be translated to

Spirits, Liturgical Manuscript with Angelological Content, Incantation? Reflections on the Character of a Fragment from Qumran (4Q230 1), with Appendix: Edition of the Fragments of IAA #114,” in *A Kind of Magic: Understanding Magic in the New Testament and Its Religious Environment*, ed. Michael Labahn and Bert Jan Lietaert Peerbolte (London: T. & T. Clark, 2007), 133–46, esp. 139 ff.

⁶⁹ JBA 1, JBA 2, JBA 3, JBA 4, and M 156 = Corpus: 115-116 were produced for Mahdukh d. Newandukh, while JBA 5, JBA 6, JBA 7, JBA 9, and JBA 10 were produced for Mihranahid d. Aḥat. JBA 8 was produced by a second bowl practitioner for Aḥat d. A[---]I, while JBA 11 and JBA 12 were produced by a third bowl practitioner for Farrokh d. Aden-xwarrih and Miškoy d. Anuṣfri respectively. LO.831 = Bhayro 2018 was produced by a fourth bowl practitioner for Aban s. Maḥlafta.

⁷⁰ JBA 1:6-7, JBA 2:7, JBA 3:7, JBA 4:7, JBA 5:5, JBA 6:6-7, JBA 7:7-8 (with ריפסי בת רמאי, “daughter of Weakness [?], daughter of Aches” further specified between Migraine and Evil Eye), JBA 9:6, JBA 10:7, JBA 11:9-10, JBA 12:9, LO.831:4, M 156:6.

reflect a series of eye diseases or problems: Agag d. Cataract d. Glaucoma d. the Gouger d. the Plucker d. Migraine d. the Evil Eye.⁷¹ This diagnostic identification is followed by a set of further appellatives: מַסְמִיתָא עוֹרִיתָא קֶרֶן לְכִי מַחְגֵּרְתָא קֶרֶן לְכִי גַרְבָּנִיתָא קֶרֶן לְכִי שְׁפוּפְתִי קֶרֶן לְכִי, which Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro translate as “They call you blinder, smiter, sightless; they call you lame, they call you itchy, they call you crawler.” These terms could equally be read as a series of nominalised passives, though, and translated as “blinded one, smitten one, sightless one, lame one, itchy one, cripple.”⁷² Commenting on these bowls, Markham Geller observes that “these terms all describe human attributes of disease or disability, reflecting a serious deformity or defect, rather than being insults.”⁷³ Geller further demonstrates that some of the elements in Agag’s appellation (as well as other elements of the formulae in these bowls) reflect earlier Akkadian incantations. In this regard, his identification of גַּרְבָּנִיתָא with Akkadian *garbānu*, ‘leper’ is compelling though his suggestion that בַּת נְקוּרָא should be understood in relation to נִיקְרָא, ‘worm’ suffers from the fact that while worms are attested as a source of tooth disease they are not—so far as I am aware—attested as the source of eye disease. Furthermore, the translation of Aramaic נִיקְרָא as ‘worm’ is far from certain. The term is attested in DJBA only as a type of compress, but cf. Jastrow, who gives ‘pickings, worms which hens pick’ for the usage in b. ‘Abod. Zar. 28a. The derivation from נִקֵּר, ‘to pluck out’ or ‘gouge’ thus seems more likely than ‘worm,’ though it is possible that the term should be understood with reference to נִקְרָה, which Jastrow gives as ‘offal at chiselling, stone-dust.’ In the case of b. ‘Abod. Zar. 28a, the reference then would not be to small pieces of stone (as in b. Ḥul. 88b) but to small pieces of discarded offal or other organic matter that are eaten by hens. This sense of violently damaged flesh would certainly fit with the texts of the bowls.

In light of the Akkadian themes that Geller identifies in the bowls, he argues that these elements in the incantation bowls should properly be understood as designations of diseases or ghosts that attack various parts of the client’s body: “all of [these] characteristics ...

⁷¹ Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 54. נְקוּרָא is used in the sense of gouging out the eyes, and the editors understand נִמְקָן in a similar sense. The two terms probably refer to the violent loss of eye/sight and reflect the beneficiaries’ struggles with migraine and its resulting blindness.

⁷² Pace Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 54 who suggest that only the first of these epithets may be a passive. Cf. the comments in the same volume by Matthew Morgenstern, “Linguistic Features of the Texts in This Volume,” 47–49, who suggests that the first five of these terms have a passive/static meaning and should be interpreted and translated as nominalised passive participles, and that the final term should be interpreted as an adjectival form of a *nomen agentis* with the feminine תִּי- suffix.

⁷³ Geller, “Magic Bowls Belong in Babylonia,” 103

refer to ghosts rather than demons, since such terms as ‘blinded’ or ‘smitten’ or ‘leprous’ can only describe humans, or in the present case, ghosts who find no rest in the netherworld, possibly because of their disabilities.”⁷⁴ He concludes that the editors “have failed to understand this bowl fully,” though he does acknowledge that the given translation “is sensible and technically correct, and it is even possible that the scribe who copied this bowl understood his text in the way that it is translated.”⁷⁵ In a response to Geller’s contention that the meaning of these lines in these bowls can only be fully comprehended through reference to Akkadian incantations, Siam Bhayro writes that

This is an approach with which I have much sympathy, as it fits in with the general question of the transmission of ancient cuneiform traditions into late antique and medieval alphabetic sources—something that we are only now beginning to appreciate. It is already clear that the reception of such ancient sources was not straightforward, and a change would have occurred in how technical terms were understood over time. This raises a methodological question for those who translate texts like the magic bowls. My preferred solution would be to translate the text as we think the scribe [i.e. the bowl practitioner] would have understood it, but to then address as best as possible the history of the technical terminology.⁷⁶

As Bhayro notes, though the transmission of cuneiform traditions and their reception in late antique sources is a complex matter, words and technical terms change over time, and it seems very likely that the late antique practitioners who produced these bowls understood their subjects to be demons and not ghosts. Geller’s account of the history of the technical terms in these lines should naturally be borne in mind, but it does not necessarily follow that ‘blinded’ or ‘smitten’ are terms that can only be used to describe (deceased) humans. Instead I argue that these passages refer not to ghosts but—in line with an interpretive project that attempts to render the incantation texts and the realities of the world as the practitioners and their clients understood them—to a demon whose body is conceptualised and given shape in these incantations in terms of the human body and human disability.

Besides gaining specificity in these bowls in relation to their effects on the human body, demons are therefore also articulated and characterised in these bowls in terms of human disease and bodily disability. What we appear to have in JBA 1-7, JBA 9-12, M 156 and

⁷⁴ Geller, “Magic Bowls Belong in Babylonia,” 103–4.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 100.

⁷⁶ Bhayro, “Bowl Containing the Formula of Ḥanina Ben Dosa,” 124.

LO.831 is a set of eye diseases and ailments directly personified as a demon named Agag.⁷⁷ Agag should probably be understood in these bowls as the spawn of various demons-as-eye diseases.⁷⁸ In this genealogical vein, she should also be understood as the spawn of a Gouger and a Plucker, two epithets which would appear to refer to malevolent entities responsible for the loss of eye/sight. Agag's body in these texts is thus characterised in relation to different aspects of human illness and in terms of the visible, physical effects that these illnesses have upon the human body. These appellatives work to characterise her through human attributes of disease and disability. And whilst serving to diagnose the source of the clients woes, these formulae work to represent the sightless and stricken body of the demon herself. The body and its parts as I noted previously are potent cultural idioms, and these passages articulate the appearance of Agag through the lens of disability/deformity as an abnormal/deviant condition.⁷⁹ The visible manifestation of physical imperfection functions not (just) symbolically as a metaphor or paradigm for transgressive, undesirable, or malevolent behaviour, but materially—to give shape to her body. But as philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari note,

We know nothing about a body until we know what it can do, in other words, what its affects are, how they can or cannot enter into composition with other af-

⁷⁷ Cf. MSF B25:2, 5, 7, 9 which targets ברקתא דיכרא וניקבתא, “the male and female cataract” amongst other demons. On the personification, hypostatisation, or identification of physical maladies with demons in the bowls, see Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts*, 89–94. For further examples of direct personification in the bowls, see Naveh and Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae*, 36–38, cf. Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts*, 69.

⁷⁸ That is, the daughter references in this bowl are used in a doubly conventional way: to refer to diseases-as-demons or demons-as-diseases *and* to the genealogy of these demons. Cf. AMB B5:3-4 and JBA 25:5 (and their parallels) which further illustrate this point through the multiplication of demonic progeny: מירבר ביהון ועד, דדקיהון מיעולימיהון ועד סבתהון, “from their adults and to their children, from their young ones and to their old ones.” Note also VA 2418 = Curses: 88 which invokes a member of Agag's family tree (the *baruqta*-demon) against a human adversary, as well as JBA 64:1-2 and AIT 1:8-9, which adjure a variety of liliths by their ancestral tree, going all the way back to the fallen angels who first transgressed against God. On demonic genealogies and the genealogies of female demons in particular, see Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts*, 68, 77 where Montgomery also remarks upon the accumulation of epithets around certain demons in addition to the specification of their parents, granddams, etc.

⁷⁹ On ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’ bodies in late antique Judaism, see Simcha Fishbane, “‘Hear No Evil, Speak No Evil, See No Evil’: The Physically Handicapped in the Mishnah,” in *Deviancy in Early Rabbinic Literature: A Collection of Socio-Anthropological Essays* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 103–20; Judith Z. Abrams, *Judaism and Disability: Portrayals in Ancient Texts from the Tanach through the Bavli* (Washington, D.C.: Galludet University Press, 1998).

fects, with the affects of another body, either to destroy that body or to be destroyed by it ...⁸⁰

I thus wish to close this sub-section by examining how the bowls give shape to demons through their locations within and their effects upon the human body. We saw above how the *הלחולא* and *פריצ(י)א* demon worked to perforate and crush in their onslaught upon the human body, but I wish to examine here a further set of spell formulae attested in the same group of bowls as Agag. These testify to the effect of the demonic body upon the human body by playing upon the mass of the demonic body and the raucous noise it induces when sited within the human head. Thus JBA 9:13 adjures an evil spirit

... דמיתקריא בת בלעין ורגזיאל שדר⁽¹³⁾ ליכי למיתב על רישא למיפע מוחא למיצלי
בצידעין למיזם באודנין למיתב על עינין לשגשא פרצופין וילחבלא גופא כוליה ואנתי רוחא
בישתא יהון רזכי טמירין דחזי ליכי בגוהא מרמי ליכי בינקישיא מרמי⁽¹⁴⁾ ליכי בריפסי מרמי
ליכי ובסיהרא ובציבעוני משני יתיכי

(12) ... who is called daughter of Bal'in. And Ragziel sent⁽¹³⁾ you to sit upon the head, to crush the skull, to ring in the temples, to buzz in the ears, to sit upon the eyes, to confuse the countenance, and to harm the whole body. And you, evil spirit, may your mysteries be hidden. The one who sees you, with rumbling he hurls you, with clapping he hurls⁽¹⁴⁾ you, with shaking he hurls you, and by the moon and by its colours he drives you mad.

The skull-crushing (or penetrating: DJBA, 923) physical mass of this demon further induces a ringing in the temples and a buzzing in the ears.⁸¹ In other parallel formulae, the cacophonous effect is replaced with the more insidious effect of a demon who 'lies in ambush in the temples' and induces a buzzing in the ears.⁸² The response to this evil spirit is characterised by an even greater—thunderous and juddering—ejection of its body from the head of the beneficiary. In addition to Agag, JBA 11 and 12 further address themselves to a *satan* that is sited

⁸⁰ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 257.

⁸¹ In relation to 'sitting upon the eyes,' cf. another bowl prepared for Mahdukh d. Newandukh, M 1:4 = Shaked 1995: 207 which seeks to protect against a spirit *אינה בפת* *די נקישא לה* "that knocks on the pupil (or socket) of her eye."

⁸² Cf. JBA 2:12, JBA 4:13, JBA 6:12–13, JBA 9:13.

within the architecture of the human body in much the same place as the evil spirit sent by Ragziel. So JBA 11:17-18 seeks to expel:

... סטנא הדין אחטל⁽¹⁸⁾ בתרעי מוחא ומעוית נהורא דבני אינשה⁽¹⁷⁾ ...

⁽¹⁷⁾ this satan ... ⁽¹⁸⁾ at the gates of the skull and distorts the eyesight of human beings ...

Here the skull looms like a gate, and within it lurks a satan that distorts the eyesight of the beneficiary.⁸³ Elsewhere in these incantation bowls, demons are potentially located in the beneficiaries' head, temple, eyelid, eye, ear, stomach, lungs, liver, kidney, all the sinews of the body, and the point of the loins; this exhaustive list of the seats of demonic activity in the human body is summed up by "the two hundred and forty-eight members of the body."⁸⁴ The exhaustive head-to-toe purview availed in these spells recalls a scribal method of arranging materials—listing—that is common in both medical and magical cuneiform sources.⁸⁵ (I discuss Near Eastern *Listenwissenschaft* and the scribal activity of listing, as well as the poetics of the list in the bowls, further below.)

It is through the prism of bodily perception that a society gives sense to and interprets its surroundings. In the foregoing, I have briefly demonstrated how the human body and its sensory dynamics give material shape and spatial dimensions to the demonic body in the bowl texts. From point-by-point enumerations of the parts of the body, as well as architectural metaphors of the body (the skull), to the apprehension of demons by way of bodily feeling and images of ailment and disability, to graphic images of roasting children and rotted animal flesh—the somatic expression of demons, and knowledge of the demonic body and its nutritional needs, takes a wide variety of graphic forms in the bowls, building not just upon vivid images but intense forms of proprioception.

⁸³ Cf. JBA 12:17-18.

⁸⁴ Cf. with significant variation JBA 1:5-6, 10, JBA 2:6-7, 10, JBA 3:6, 11, JBA 4:6, 11, JBA 5:4, 9, JBA 6:5-6, 10, JBA 7: 6-7, 11, JBA 8:7, JBA 9:5, 10, JBA 10:11, JBA 11:7-9, 12-14, and JBA 12:7-8, 12-13, LO.831:8, and M 156:5-6, 9-10.

⁸⁵ For a discussion and bibliography, see Markham J. Geller, *Ancient Babylonian Medicine: Theory and Practice* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 89.

SECTION II

VIEWING TEXTS AND SEEING DEMONS

In the foregoing section, I looked briefly at some of the ways in which demons and their bodies are pictured (and thereby constituted) in the bowls. Such pictures of demons do not just function rhetorically to convey the threat of demons; they also reflect the textualisation of various forms of somatic knowledge about demons. Earlier in this work, I also examined the broader transmundane landscape and its ecology as depicted in certain narrative spells. I would like now to consider more explicitly the role of the bowl practitioners in all of this, in particular their mediation of the demonic body and their use of the material forms of writing to do so. I also turn to consider the bowl owners and their perception of the bowls as part of this analysis.

MEDIATING DEMONS THROUGH THE MATERIALITY OF TEXT

The bowl practitioners sold their expertise for the benefit of people beset by demons. Thus far I have only partially examined how these practitioners—credited with authority as well as apotropaic and exorcistic powers by their clients—constructed and defined the demonic realm in relation to and as an extension of their authority. It is a given that, by nature of their profession, the bowl practitioners were intimate participants in a world of domestic crises, social stresses, and deeply personal problems. Note, just for instance, JBA 64. This bowl deals with the lilith-induced erotic dreams of a woman named Gista d. Ifra-Hormiş using several redolent verbs to convey the strong effect of these importunate night-time visitations upon Gista.⁸⁶ But the diversity of bowl formulae, as well as variations and *ad hoc* innovations upon these formulae, suggest that the bowl practitioners were not just passive recorders of their client's anxieties, illnesses, or erotic sufferings. Nor was their role limited to the simple expulsion of demonic forces. They were clearly also agents in the definition of these forces.

Who, after all, names Mihranahid's headaches, and specifies her ailments as Agag d. Baroq? Of course, Mihranahid and her contemporaries were not ignorant of transmundane threats, but in turning to a magical practitioner, they invited this practitioner to play a role in defining these threats according to the practitioner's received notions—notions naturally

⁸⁶ Cf. the even more suggestive language used to refer to these lust-inducing demons in the unpublished bowl MS 2053/178: זימתא וזנותא, “and they heat and inflame and seduce, they love lust and fornication.”

shaped by their learning and their professional inheritance but perhaps also by their personal predilections. Appealed to for discernment in the identification and specification of specific maladies within a demonic context, the practitioner was thus not just invited to resolve the client's problem by producing a demon trap; they became the ultimate 'inscriber' of the demon, giving to it its characteristics, and shaping it through the use and combination of established formulae or their own choice of language.

Writing to demons and estranging inscription

This observation also extends to the style of writing adopted by the practitioners and the possibilities afforded by their choice of bowls as a writing surface. Writing and inscription are typically viewed from the perspective of speech, but the forms and arrangements of inscription—their size, style, and format, for instance—are equally capable of expressing meaning, that is, communicating, persuading, and performing in their own right.⁸⁷ As David Frankfurter concisely summarises a large body of ethnographic research,

Ethnographers of non- or minimally literate cultures have long noted that, in these cultures' encounters with writing, they conceptualize letters and textuality not primarily as a communicative or recording technology for representing speech or ideas but as a set of symbols indexing divinity, spirits, heritage, colonial power, or charismatic authority.⁸⁸

In what follows, I want to focus on ways in which the material aspects of the bowl inscriptions behave and how these behaviours work alongside the bowl itself to both mediate demons and to constrain their power. The most obvious example of what I mean is the frequent deployment of concentric circles and hectic spirals of text on the inner surface of the bowls; as I have observed, writing is a way of extending cognition into the environment, and the unusual inscriptional practices on these bowls open up a cognitive space in the perception of the structure of writing where transmundane or counter-intuitive beings are themselves

⁸⁷ On the agency of writing, and the value of treating inscriptions as more than finished texts whose meaning lies almost exclusively in their wording, see the contributions in Irene Berti et al., eds., *Writing Matters: Presenting and Perceiving Monumental Inscriptions in Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2017); Andrej Petrovic, Ivana Petrovic, and Edmund Thomas, eds., *The Materiality of Text - Placement, Perception, and Presence of Inscribed Texts in Classical Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2018). In addition, see further below.

⁸⁸ David Frankfurter, "The Magic of Writing in Mediterranean Antiquity," in Frankfurter, ed., *Guide to Ancient Magic*, 626.

made more ‘legible,’ even as demons may have been bamboozled by and trapped within the spiralling maze of their texts.

As I will argue in what follows, the broader reconfiguration and subsequent estrangement of inscription in the bowls effects a shift in attention to the form of these bowls as a medium of communication with angels and demons. This is most pronounced in the magic bowls inscribed with invented and pseudo-scripts, though these have consistently been attributed to illiterate or quasi-literate magical practitioners who passed them off onto non-literate clients. However, the diversity of the inscriptions on these bowls as well as their very large numbers suggests that something else (indeed, many things else) might be going on here. Previous bowl scholarship has nevertheless dismissed these bowls, bracketing them all off together with the prefix pseudo- and ascribing them to frauds who sold them to illiterate customers. But this idea ignores the common magical practice of inventing and estranging signs and symbols. As Richard Gordon points out, invented signs and scripts are one of the commonest devices of literate, quasi-literate, and illiterate magical practitioners everywhere, though the possibilities of these signs and scripts are ultimately a function of the types of knowledge-practices that are current among literate specialists.⁸⁹ It also far too easily presup-

⁸⁹ Gordon, “Charaktères,” 253–54. To illustrate this point, Gordon points to several modern parallels. For example, fragments of printed prayer-books are used by traditional magical practitioners in the Philippines in the manufacture of amulets. Likewise, in Indian Kērala, amongst barely-literate low-caste practitioners specialising in exorcism, the idea of literacy survives only in the secret signs that they use to control low-ranking non-Sanskrit spirits. Further to these examples, I note that there are numerous instances of the leaders of radical messianic movements among Southeast Asian minorities who—recognising literacy as an important vehicle of state power—turned to invented writing systems as a symbolic instrument or technology of resistance. In Zomian Southeast Asia, for instance, there have been no less than nine documented reinventions of writing since the 1840s. In almost all these cases, these inventions were undertaken by charismatic leaders whose political agendas were founded on the revelation and diffusion of new scripts. See Piers Kelly, “The Art of Not Being Legible: Invented Writing Systems as Technologies of Resistance in Mainland Southeast Asia,” *Terrain* 70 (2018). There are also numerous other recent examples of script invention on the part of literate or semi-literate communities in certain focal regions of the colonised world as European powers began to contract over the course of the twentieth century. See Piers Kelly, “Introducing the Eskaya Writing System: A Complex Messianic Script from the Southern Philippines,” *The Australian Journal of Linguistics* 36.1 (2016): 131–63. In relation to the ancient world, Richard L. Gordon, “Showing the Gods the Way: Curse-Tablets as Deictic Persuasion,” *Religion in the Roman Empire* 1.2 (2015): 165–73 has also recently described as ‘pseudo-paragraphia’ various deliberate alterations to the direction and style of writing by magical practitioners. As he demonstrates, these anti-semantic strategies of inscription render the writing *more* efficacious. See also, e.g. Gideon Bohak, “The Charaktères in Ancient and Medieval Jewish Magic,” *Acta Classica Universitatis*

poses a kind of total illiteracy on the part of the general populace—a total inability to distinguish legitimate script from invented script or ostentatious displays of non-writing.⁹⁰ And while it is true that many of the bowl customers may not have been able to read or write in any strict sense, it does not necessarily follow that they were “in no position to distinguish between genuine and arbitrarily invented script.”⁹¹

In any case, it is not my intent to litigate the question of literacy levels in Sasanian Mesopotamia, nor would this be possible: historical literacy studies are a relatively recent development in scholarship and I am not aware of any study that addresses possible literacy rates ‘on the ground’ in Sasanian Mesopotamia in any depth.⁹² Nonetheless, there are various studies available on (the differential distribution of) active and passive literacy across minimally literate cultures, as well as studies that address questions of socialised literacy and interdependent literacy.⁹³ In discussing the clientele for the bowls and what it is they thought

Scientiarum Debreceniensis 47 (2011): 25–44; Michaël Martin, “‘Parler la langue des oiseaux’: les écritures ‘barbares’ et mystérieuses des tablettes de défixion,” in de Haro Sanchez, ed., *Écrire la magie*, 251–65; Tonio Sebastian Richter, “Markedness and Unmarkedness in Coptic Magical Writing,” in de Haro Sanchez, ed., *Écrire la magie*, 85–96.

⁹⁰ For a recent discussion of the problems inherent in starkly dichotomising illiteracy and literacy in the ancient world, see Greg Woolf, “Ancient Illiteracy?,” *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 58.2 (2015): 31–42, who considers the problems of accurately defining a person’s actual ability to read, write and perform casual arithmetic or handle numbers. For a broader geographical and chronological exploration of literacy in the ancient world, see the contributions in Anne Kolb, ed., *Literacy in Ancient Everyday Life* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2018).

⁹¹ Shaked, “Orality and Esotericism,” 53.

⁹² Though scholars have adduced various common-sense conclusions. For instance, Yaakov Elman, “Orality and the Redaction of the Babylonian Talmud,” *Oral Tradition* 14.1 (1999): 53 writes that in fourth and fifth century rabbinic circles “reading literacy was certainly common, but writing considerably less so.” Cf. the traditions preserved in b. B. Bat. 161a regarding the semi-pictographic nature of many famous rabbinic signatures; note also b. B. Bat. 167a wherein someone is reported to have forged Rava’s signature! bearing in mind, however, that this signature may have been of the semi-pictographic type.

⁹³ In this respect, I note for comparative purposes the recent study by Michael Owen Wise, *Language and Literacy in Roman Judaea: A Study of the Bar Kokhba Documents* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015) which asks numerous valuable questions about why people choose to write the way they do in contexts where other options are available (and perhaps expected) and what such behaviours may signify within a multilingual social milieu. Wise also addresses evidence for issues of ancient Judaeian language patterns and illiteracy. Stepping bravely into the briar patch that comprises the overlap of ancient demographics, economics, and literacy, and working with two models for understanding the economics of Judaea in the Roman period (as well as an estimated total population of one million) Wise proceeds to generate an approximate reply to the question: how

they were buying, it is necessary to pay attention not just to highly ostentatious displays of non-writing on some bowls, but also the extent to which people—even if they could not read or write—nevertheless possessed the ability to recognise the basics of writing to some degree; the ability to distinguish thereby between script and conspicuously poor examples of pseudo-script; or at least the ability to recognise an egregious display of non-writing *as* non-writing. We also need to consider the plurilingual and pluriscriptual background from which the bowls emerge, and the ways in which scripts and signs function as expressions of identity (even to the extent that readability and transmission of information might even have been secondary factors).⁹⁴ All that said, opportunistic use was undoubtedly made of writing technology by many illiterate or semi-literate magical practitioners in order to capitalise upon the

many Judaeans were literate, in the several senses of that term. He answers that between five and ten percent of Judaeans in that period were literary literates, i.e. able to read books. Of course, the ability to read is only one possible definition of literacy, and by another metric—the ability to sign one’s name—Wise answers that about sixteen percent of Judaeans were signature literate. The real value of Wise’s study, however, is in the emphasis he places on interdependent literacy, and the extent to which—especially within familial circles—the relations between illiterates of various levels would have worked to safeguard against fraud and deception and to allow a broader concept (and diffusion) of literacy across families and communities. Such points need to be born closely in mind when we approach the bowls. For further on different levels of literacy—such as diversified or sectoral literacy—see the contributions in William A. Johnson and Holt N. Parker, *Ancient Literacies: The Culture of Reading in Greece and Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). On the concept of functional literacy, see Peter Keegan, *Graffiti in Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 2014). For different examples of socialised literacy, as well as the diffusion of literacy from scribal circles into the laity, see Meir Bar-Ilan, “Socialized Literacy in Antiquity,” *Maarav* 21.1–2 (2014): 237–50.

⁹⁴ Again, I am not aware of any sustained study of the pluriscriptual environment in which the bowls arose. But note James N. Adams and Simon Swain, “Introduction,” in *Bilingualism in Ancient Society: Language Contact and the Written Text*, ed. James N. Adams, Mark Janse, and Simon Swain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 5 who remark that “when a second language is imposed on or taken up by a people, they may also acquire a second script.” Cf. b. Giṭ 19b, which documents R. Papa’s ability to speak Middle Persian but his inability to read the Pahlavi script. For a recent application of socio-linguistic theory to the diverse ‘textual community’ attested at Qumran that takes multilingualism, multiscripturalism (or multigraphism), and knowledge transfer as central issues, see Mladen Popović, “Multilingualism, Multiscripturalism, and Knowledge Transfer in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Graeco-Roman Judaea,” in *Sharing and Hiding Religious Knowledge in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, ed. Mladen Popović, Lautaro Roig Lanzillotta, and Clare Wilde (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2018), 46–71. For ways of modelling multilingualism and language ideology, see, e.g. Herbert Schendl, “Multilingualism, Code-Switching, and Language Contact in Historical Sociolinguistics,” in *The Handbook of Historical Sociolinguistics*, ed. Juan Manuel Hernández-Campoy and Juan Camilo Conde-Silvestre (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 520–33 and the other contributions to the same volume.

prestige that writing conveyed. Simply as a social fact, the (perceived) ability to write in many ancient societies represented not just a particular skill but a status symbol, whether or not the product of this writing was legible and/or intended to be semantically meaningful. The magic bowls were cross-cultural, and it is simply good sense to assume that many non-Jews—for example—fell prey to Jewish Aramaic pseudo-scribbles, and that their expectations of an effective JBA incantation were fulfilled by these fake products. Jewish customers may equally have fallen prey to pseudo-Syriac or pseudo-Mandaic products, and so on.

Script, sight, and ‘sensational forms’ — written practices of demonic (re)presentation

Nevertheless, we have to be open to the possibility that at least some magic bowls—inscribed with quasi-alphabetical signs or wholly invented sign-systems—were recognised as non-scripts by both the person who produced the bowl and the person who purchased it. In fact, many bowls are inscribed with a single repeated sign—a lack of variation which leads to an almost geometrical effect. It certainly does not seem like these inscriptions were intended to resemble writing let alone to model Aramaic or any other known system of writing. If such bowls were sold to people, it was obviously on the basis that they were not written in Aramaic (or any other language) and in recognition of the fact that the magical practitioner either could not write—but was presumably felt to be an accomplished practitioner nonetheless—or that the practitioner had chosen to cover the surface of the bowl with this particular form of inscription (whether they were literate or not). Such bowls might be evidence that the people for whom they were made upheld their validity even when it was clear that the ‘script’ or written ‘word’ inscribed upon the bowls was not linked to a verbal or written utterance or spell.

But if writing an efficacious text, producing efficacious writings, or spending money on such products were not side issues for late antique practitioners of magic and their clients, might this have meant abandoning Aramaic language and script altogether in order to take advantage of inscription’s non-glottographic aspects? And if many magic bowls are clearly more (or something other) than a series of jottings that represent misleading acts addressed to illiterate customers or failed attempts at intelligible written communication, what then do they communicate? How were these intended to be ‘read’ or understood? In relation to the great diversity of bowl inscriptions, I want to consider what the individuals and communities behind the bowls may have required of their communicative practices, what their criteria for legibility were, and how these criteria related to their social understanding. In this regard, I

want to ask what was considered legible in light of the transmundane audiences the bowls were addressed to and to ask what the inscriptional practices in the bowls conveyed to human viewers about demons. In this regard, I emphasise the artistic possibilities and iconicity of script, wherein texts may take on the condition of images—images that at times may stand independent of the systematic constraints of graphemes and turn scripts into images capable of telling stories. Here my focus is on the iconicity of signs, script, and script patterns, which includes the instrumental and expressive aspects of script as a visual medium.⁹⁵

The variety of inscriptional practices and manipulations of graphic signs and geometric patterns in the bowls is vast, while the manifestly invented sign-forms that we encounter in many magic bowls reflect a variety of stylistic predilections and the innovation of signs along multiple, contemporaneous trajectories.⁹⁶ These inscriptions may have been understood to exercise a *sui generis* effect on reality through their unexpected styles of inscription and their ‘coefficient of weirdness.’ Representing different strategies for influencing the cosmos through (highly) specialised acts of writing, the invented scripts in some bowls may have been understood to tap into an infra- or extra-linguistic communicative sphere, or to point to a language beyond language. Some bowls might thus represent the ‘alchemical’ reduction of writing to a form stripped of all glottographic convention, ready to represent whatever the practitioner and their client desired. Through the supersession of conventional processes of semiosis, these inscriptions could mean anything or everything.

More likely, however, is that the inscriptions on these bowls—despite the apparent impossibility of their communicating anything—may in fact have been designed to be legible to the eyes of angels and/or demons. Because it does not necessarily follow that one would employ human language or human script when engaging in written communications with such beings, I suggest that we remain open to understanding the inventors of some of these scripts, on an analogy with glossolalia, as practitioners of a kind of glossographia.⁹⁷ The writ-

⁹⁵ For script as a medium to work in, see Christian Kiening and Martina Stercken, eds., *SchriftRäume: Dimensionen von Schrift zwischen Mittelalter und Modern* (Zurich: Chronos, 2008); cf. Jeffrey F. Hamburger, “The Iconicity of Script,” *Word & Image* 27.3 (2011): 249–61.

⁹⁶ See Waller, “Curious Characters,” for further.

⁹⁷ Similarly, Richard L. Gordon, “Signa nova et inaudita: The Theory and Practice of Invented Signs (Charaktères) in Graeco-Egyptian Magical Texts,” *MHNH: Revista Internacional de Investigación sobre Magia y Astrología Antiguas* 11 (2011): 15–44 has argued that the invented signs or charaktères of Graeco-Egyptian magical practice should be understood in close relationship to—in fact, as the graphic complement of—*voces*

ten representation of non-human language(s) might require different technologies of forming or shaping meaning; that is, new sign-systems and scripts. As such, we should not necessarily ask the bowls inscribed with invented scripts to submit to the same kinds of hermeneutic schema as normative inscriptions. After all, magical rituals often operate by violating domain-specific expectations and by de-symbolising conventional (written and linguistic) symbols in order to foreground their essential and/or intrinsic nature and structure.⁹⁸ As more than the graphic counterparts of natural language, these invented signs and letter-forms also constitute an overlooked ‘artistic’ signature. Recent scholarship on ancient magical texts has emphasised the creative and often improvisatory nature of magical materials, and many of the invented scripts in the bowls reveal not just the ‘hand’ of the practitioner in their manual ductus, but also their conceptual style. As Alexander Nagel points out about the use of pseudo-Arabic scripts in Italian art, “Carefully conceived pseudo-scripts are an excellent index of purely autograph work.”⁹⁹

Writing is not just a speech written down. As I have noted, its material aspects can be deployed as tools for communication, while the reconfiguration and subsequent estrangement of inscription in the bowls (both Aramaic and non-Aramaic) undoubtedly affected a shift in attention to the form of the bowls as a medium of communication with demons. In this regard, I argue that the bowls—whether inscribed with spirals or invested with an even greater coefficient of weirdness—worked to materialise and give shape to these invisible beings. Scholars have increasingly come to understand the ways in which inscriptions function as both texts and images, and there exists a growing body of literature on the intersection between reading and seeing and the ways in which people read images as script and script as images.¹⁰⁰ The bowls represent a phenomenon where graphic space is exploited and activated

magicae, the incomprehensible and strange-sounding words of power that feature prominently in many magical traditions.

⁹⁸ See Jesper Sørensen, “The Problem of Magic – Or How Gibberish Becomes Efficacious Action,” *Recherches Sémiotiques/Semiotic Inquiry* 25.1–2 (2005): 93–117, which considers how many types of actions (such as writing) are disconnected from their default aspects inside ritual event-frames.

⁹⁹ Alexander Nagel, “Twenty-Five Notes on Pseudoscript in Italian Art,” *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 59–60 (2011): 242.

¹⁰⁰ See, e.g. (the contributions in) Michelle P. Brown, “Images to Be Read and Words to Be Seen: The Iconic Role of the Early Medieval Book,” in *Iconic Books and Texts*, ed. James W. Watts (Sheffield: Equinox, 2013), 93–118; Antony Eastmond, ed., *Viewing Inscriptions in the Late Antique and Medieval World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Bedos-Rezak and Hamburger, *Sign and Design*; Sean V. Leatherbury, “Reading and Seeing Faith in Byzantium: The Sinai Inscription as Verbal and Visual ‘Text,’”

as an inseparable part of the theme and structure of the text and the aims of the ‘activated’ text-object. Whether they were read or not, the bowls shift attention to the material realities of their demonic targets. The striking arrangements of their inscriptions seem plainly to have been designed to be both read (when they were written in Aramaic) *and* viewed.

This easily legible visual message both evoked and supported the (verbal) message of the bowl texts as effective demon traps. In this regard, bowl practice represents an elegant and sympathetic confluence of text, text carrier, and conceptual narrative. Just as the bowls were turned upside-down and pressed into the ground, so were curses overturned and demons pressed or suppressed. But the bowls did not just offer a compelling sympathy between text and text support. They permitted people to extend the rhetorical reach of writtenness into their homes. As domestic objects themselves, the bowls provide a striking complementarity of use in the fight against household demons. Things are never just things, but are instead bound up in countless discursive and material networks, and it is useful to expand the scope of traditional rhetoric to include (the persuasive nature of) objects and the ways in which objects (such as the bowls) produce opportunities for new rhetorical audiences and new rhetorical actions (such as the overturning and pressing of the bowl into the ground).¹⁰¹

Gesta 55.2 (2016): 133–56; Sean V. Leatherbury, “Writing, Reading and Seeing Between the Lines: Framing Late Antique Inscriptions as Texts and Images,” in *The Frame in Classical Art: A Cultural History*, ed. Verity Platt and Michael Squire (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 544–82; Leatherbury, *Between Reading and Seeing*; Raquel Martín Hernández, “Reading Magical Drawings in the Greek Magical Papyri,” in *Actes du 26e Congrès international de papyrologie: Genève 16-21 août 2010*, ed. Paul Schubert (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2012), 491–98; Hamburger, “The Iconicity of Script”; Erik Thunø, “Inscription and Divine Presence: Golden Letters in the Early Medieval Apse Mosaic,” *Word & Image* 27.3 (2011): 279–91. See also See Zachary Brooks, “Is Media Literacy Active or Passive?” *Journal of Educational Multimedia and Hypermedia* 19.3 (2010): 267–86.

¹⁰¹ The ‘rhetoric of things’ reflects the broad strokes of the so-called New Materialism, a movement that has increasingly focussed on the rift between epistemology and ontology—between words and things—and which has bred a number of recent studies that focus on the significance of the material and visual aspects of artefacts. One of the key claims of the New Materialism is that all objects have the capacity to exert agency in some way, such that we might say that the bowl itself ‘spoke’ as part of the magical act and exercised various kinds of ‘social’ and ‘rhetorical’ agency. For recent examples of the ‘material turn,’ see, e.g. Carl Knappett, *Thinking through Material Culture: An Interdisciplinary Perspective* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005); Carl Knappett and Lambros Malafouris, eds., *Material Agency: Towards a Non-Anthropocentric Approach* (New York: Springer, 2008); Nicole Boivin, *Material Cultures, Material Minds: The Impact of Things on Human Thought, Society, and Evolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); John Robb, “Beyond Agency,” *World Archaeology* 42.2 (2010): 493–520; Ian Hodder, *Entangled: An Archaeology of the*

As Richard Gordon notes, treating objects as agents is a reflexive movement: humans make things, which is an activity that in turn “helps to transform the world into how it ought to be; but those very choices in turn circumscribe or channel human agency in certain directions or modes, while at the same time opening up new creative possibilities.”¹⁰² An example of the vicissitudes of the bowls as text-carriers and their potential for new rhetorical actions is the קיבלא or “counter-charm” bowls that have been addressed by Dan Levene.¹⁰³ These represent a specific sub-domain of bowl practice, whereby two bowls were cemented together rim-to-rim and buried as such. These are pairs of bowls that were custom-made to be set rim-to-rim, that were fixed together with bitumen, sometimes bound with cord, and buried as one unit. These bowls instantiate a connection between the use of the קיבלא spell and the practice of joining two bowls together, and it seems likely that this practice may have developed in association with or out of the use of that type of counter-charm.¹⁰⁴ As Levene points out, other meanings derived from the same root as קיבלא are “darkness,” to “become dark,” and the preposition לקבל, “junction, meeting, opposite.” Given the physical configuration of the קיבלא bowls, these other meanings of darkness, junction, meeting and opposite are especially apt. The word קיבלא puns on both the purpose of the amulet—as a counter-charm—and its physical form as two bowls that are *opposite* each other, whose rims *meet* at a *junction* which encloses the space (and the demons) in between them in *darkness*. The קיבלא bowls exemplify that movement whereby new creative possibilities are opened up on the basis of an original circumscription of human agency: the choice of the bowl as an amuletic object and text surface. This initial choice or strategy opened up a new mode of individual intervention, whereby the initial type of agency exemplified by the bowl was expanded in scope.

Relationships between Humans and Things (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012); Dietrich Boschung and Jan N. Bremmer, eds., *The Materiality of Magic* (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2015). On the ‘rhetoric of things,’ see the contributions in Scot Barnett and Casey Andrew Boyle, eds., *Rhetoric, Through Everyday Things* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2016).

¹⁰² Gordon, “From Substances to Texts,” 137.

¹⁰³ Dan Levene, “‘This Is a Qybl’.”

¹⁰⁴ As noted by Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier, *A History of Reading in the West* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 2, “a text is invested with a new meaning and a different status with every change in the support that makes it available to reading.” Cf. Saar, “Double-Jar Burials,” who suggests that the practice of joining two incantation bowls together may have originated in an analogy with the much older Mesopotamian practice of double-jar burials. She suggests that the formal similarity between the double-jar configuration and the paired incantation bowls may reflect an intent on the part of some bowl practitioners to symbolically bury human or transmundane adversaries.

The interaction between the bowls and the diverse visual aspects of their inscriptions is dialogic, reciprocal, and polyvalent, while—as chirographic products within the domestic realm—the bowls offered an affordable palette through which to communicate with the transmundane. My larger point, however, is that *all* of these material factors worked to *shape* the demonic and to emphasise the correspondence of the bowls to an invisible reality, thereby working to ratify and reinforce the efficacy of the praxis.¹⁰⁵ By looking at the bowls (and not just reading the bowl texts) we can begin to appreciate the extent to which they exemplify what the anthropologist Birgit Meyer has labelled “sensational forms” — configurations of media, acts, imaginations, and bodily sensations that provide a “procedure to experience ... a movement towards a limit that evokes a sense of there being something more.”¹⁰⁶ Working through material media—and writing in particular—I have argued that the sensational forms of the bowls shape and frame the bowls as an index of the demonological. Their domestic modesty aside, the bowls are in fact carefully wrought pieces of metaphysical technology.¹⁰⁷ They represent a distinctive strategy for negotiating through writing and the written word with demons, one that allowed for experience of their media in intimate, tactile ways: as objects with their own agency and force.

¹⁰⁵ In this regard, I do want to pass a brief remark about the drawings of demons upon the bowls, which I would like to suggest do not *just* represent a pictorial representation of the idea of the bowls. It is a relative common-place in cognitive linguistics that faces are inextricably linked with personhood. Thus Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 37 and Günter Radden and Zoltán Kövecses, “Towards a Theory of Metonymy,” in *Metonymy in Language and Thought*, ed. Klaus-Uwe Panther and Günter Radden (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1999), 18–19 have demonstrated that THE-FACE-FOR-THE-PERSON metonymy, as well as phenomena that derive from it (such as portraits) are not simply conventions of language but are inextricably linked with and fundamentally structure how we understand personhood. In addition to this, Sanzo, “Wrapped up in the Bible,” 579 has noted how far the distinction between representation and reality is blurred on amulets and formularies. Bearing these insights from magical studies and cognitive linguistics in mind, I would emphasise the extent to which the drawn demons upon the inscribed bowls—working now across textual, visual, and material registers—established the bowls as a direct index of the demonological, working to shape a direct perception of the demonic, and not just reinforce a relationship between target and object. See also Richard L. Gordon, “Getting It Right: Performative Images in Greco-Egyptian Magical Practice,” in *Seeing the God: Image, Space, Performance, and Vision in the Religion of the Roman Empire*, ed. Marlis Arnhold, Harry O. Maier, and Jörg Rüpke (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 101–23.

¹⁰⁶ Birgit Meyer, “How to Capture the ‘Wow’: R.R. Marett’s Notion of Awe and the Study of Religion,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 22 (2016): 20.

¹⁰⁷ I borrow the phrase “carefully wrought pieces of metaphysical technology” from Shai Secunda, “Common Clay,” *Jewish Review of Books* 5.4 (2015): 12.

Inscribed on the open face and occasionally the exterior of the bowl, the bowl ‘texts’ and texts—unlike amulets—represent a self-conscious exhibition of knowledge about transmundane powers and the expertise needed to combat and control them. The striking material arrangements of these texts and ‘texts’ simultaneously make this knowledge ‘legible’ even to illiterate viewers. The distinctive praxes on display in the bowls are thus not just epistemological and textual but also written: the practitioners responsible for the bowls write order upon demons, and in the process, they make claims for the power of their written expertise and its products *vis-à-vis* the invisible forces that intervened daily in the lives and bodies of their clients. Capitalising upon a demand for an enduring—thus, written—form of protection from demons, the bowl practitioners thereby furthered the claims of writing over demons as well as *their* claims to authority as persons able to wield writing in the battle against them.

As we have seen, the ritualised manipulation of writing and the invention of signs and scripts are ultimately a function of the prestige inherent in true literacy and the kinds of praxis current amongst literate practitioners. Attributions of potency and performativity to writing do not just reflect broader ideas rooted in the sacred scribality and alphabets of Jewish, Egyptian, and other Near Eastern cultures; they also derive from the day to day genres that scribes used and the impact of these (legal) genres upon people’s lives. In this respect, we have observed throughout this work the appearance of various legal materials within the bowls. The idea that some bowl practitioners were also responsible for producing legal documents was first argued at some length by Siam Bhayro in regard to b. Giṭ. 85b and the very specific instructions advanced in this Talmudic passage about the writing of the Jewish deed of divorce.¹⁰⁸ One of these instructions stipulates that scribes must lengthen the form of the letter *wāw* in the words תירוכין, “divorce” and שבוקין, “release” in order to prevent the confusion of these nouns with passive participles. Now, we have already seen the extent to which the bowls draw on divorce materials.¹⁰⁹ Further to this, however, a number of bowls which in-

¹⁰⁸ Bhayro, “Divorcing a Demon.”

¹⁰⁹ Further to this, though, compare b. Giṭ. 85b, ודן די יהוי ליכי מני ספר תרוכין וגט פטורין ואגרת שבוקין כדת משה, “And this shall be to you from me a document of divorce and a deed of dismissal and a letter of release according to the law of Moses and Israel,” with JBA 21:12, תכון מינהון בספר תרוכין וגט פטורין ואגרת, “[For] I release you from them (the beneficiaries) by a document of divorce and a deed of dismissal and a letter of release, according to the law of Moses and Israel, from this day and forever,” and JBA 14:7-8, דפטרא יתכון בסיפר תירוכין ואגרת שיבוקין וגט [פטורין כד] ת שידין ודיוין וכדת בנת ישראל,

corporate such materials also adhere to the Talmudic stipulation concerning the writing of the letter *wāw*. Bhayro thus notes the likelihood “that the same scribes who would be employed to write Jewish legal documents, such as deeds of divorce, were able to supplement their income by writing incantations.”¹¹⁰ Avigail Manekin-Bamberger has subsequently added a substantial number of further arguments from the bowl texts to support this hypothesis, thereby highlighting the anachronistic nature of the dichotomy between the domains of law and magic.¹¹¹ To all this knowledge of jurisprudence—the appropriation of much of which it would have required a scribe to enact—we must also add the use of biblical and targumic passages and various liturgical formulae in the bowls, much of which suggests that the bowl practitioners may have engaged in other forms of Jewish writing.¹¹²

The potency of the bowls undoubtedly derived in part from their associations with the scribal arts and the power of writing as manifested in the kinds of binding legal documents that people used in their day to day lives. In this respect, it is interesting to note the circulation in late antique Mesopotamia of a version of the familiar demonic aetiology which

“For I release you by a document of divorce and a letter of release and a deed of dismissal according to the law of demons and *dēvs* and according to the law of the daughters of Israel.” (The latter bowl text lengthens the key *wāws* according to the instructions in b. Giṭ. 85b.) Cf. above the use in M 164 of the Mishnaic stipulations regarding oaths.

¹¹⁰ Bhayro, “Divorcing a Demon,” 130. Cf. the tantalising remarks by Müller-Kessler, “Jesus, Darius, Marduk,” 221 who argues from the well-trained scribal hands behind some bowls that the practitioners who produced these bowls may have been affiliated with the rabbinic academies at Sura or Pumbeditha

¹¹¹ See Manekin-Bamberger, “Jewish Legal Formulae”; Manekin-Bamberger, “Intersections”; Manekin-Bamberger, “Vow-Curse.” In addition to demonstrating the vast amount of technical legal jargon in the bowls (including time designations, divorce formulae, perpetuity clauses, closing formula), Manekin-Bamberger, “Intersections,” has also analysed an interesting bowl whose apotropaic incantation protects against individuals who both write curses and are writers of books (כתבי ספרי).

¹¹² Given the frequent intersections between the Bible and the domain of law, it should not surprise us that so much of what some of these practitioners do with their knowledge of the biblical past resembles the compilation of (legal) precedents. As we saw in Chapters Three and Four, the (biblical) past is continuously cited in the bowls, and frequently framed in narrative terms. In many cases, these narratives and narrative tokens make specific recourse to legal precedent, as in the case of the materials related to Joshua bar Peraḥia. (These precedents also implicitly highlight the connections between such past masters of the legal arts and the practitioner in the present, whose business is likewise the traffic between humans and demons. They thus do not just cite authoritative documents, but authoritative personalities who mediated commerce across the boundaries of the trans/mundane.) We may thus wish to reframe the materials surveyed in Chapters Three and Four by emphasizing their specifically ‘casuistic’ aspects (in the legal sense of case law).

construes the practice of medicine and magic as restricted scribal arts. Travelling from Aramaic into Hebrew by way of the Book of Jubilees, the story of the Fallen Angels also appears in *Sefer Asaf ha-Rofe*, a Hebrew medical manual that stems from pre-Islamic Mesopotamia.¹¹³ In the form in which the story of the Fallen Angels appears in *Sefer Asaf*—which is contemporaneous with the bowls—it closely links the arts of magic and medicine with scribal culture and the written safeguarding and transmission of knowledge from one generation to the next. Thus *Sefer Asaf* begins:

This is the book of remedies that the ancient sages copied from the book of Shem, the son of Noah. It was handed down to Noah on Mount Lubar, one of the mountains of Ararat, after the Flood. For in those days the spirits of the bastards began to attack Noah's children, to lead them astray and to cause them to err, to injure them and to strike them with illness and pains and with all kinds of diseases that kill and destroy human beings ... He (God) sent one of the angels of the presence from among the holy ones, whose name was Raphael, to imprison the spirits of the bastards from under the heavens so they would do no more harm to mankind. The angel did so, imprisoning them in the place of judgment. But he left one in ten to go about on earth before the prince of enmity (Mastema) to oppress evil-doers, to afflict and torture them with all kinds of disease and illness and to afflict them with pain. The angel told him (Noah) the remedies for the afflictions of mankind and all kinds of remedies for healing with trees of the earth and plants of the soil and their roots ... Noah wrote all these things in a book and gave it to

¹¹³ *Sefer Asaf ha-Rofe*—also known as *Midrash* or *Sefer Refu'ot*, the Book of Asaph the Physician or the Book of Medicine—is the earliest known medical manual written in Hebrew. It bears the name of a sixth-century physician, also known as Asaf ha-Yehudi, Rabbenu Asaf, Asaf ben Berechiah, and Asaf ha-Yarhoni. The treatise exists in sixteen as yet unpublished manuscripts in the libraries of Florence, Paris, Munich, Vienna, London, and Oxford. Sections of the book are very old, though these were redacted together with other materials as late as the seventh to the tenth centuries. The antiquity of the work is clear, however, from its use of Persian (rather than Arabic) synonyms, its use of weights current in Palestine during the Talmudic period, and the similarities of its style to older *midrashim*. On the dates of the composition and redaction of *Sefer Asaf*, see Suessman Muntner, *Introduction to the Book of Asaph the Physician* (Jerusalem: Geniza, 1957), 47–50 (Hebrew); Suessman Muntner, “Asaph Ha-Rofe,” *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1972 (the latter may be found in a recently updated version at <https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/asaph-ha-rofe>).

Shem, his oldest son, and the ancient wise men copied from this book and wrote many books, each one in his own language.¹¹⁴

This midrashic introduction to Sefer Asaf exhibits a clear dependence on the tradition of the Fallen Angels that appears in the Book of Jubilees.¹¹⁵ In its account of how the power and purpose of demons were conceived on earth at the time of the Flood, Jubilees states that God was of a mind to purge all the evil spirits from the earth. The prince of these spirits, however, was able to talk the divinity down from the total destruction of these spirits. In acquiescing to this request, God permitted a tithe of these spirits to remain free upon the earth in order to punish mankind.¹¹⁶ Crucially, however, God takes certain measures in this account in order to ensure that righteous humans are able to combat the harmful activities of these spirits: “He (God) told one of us (the angels) that we should teach Noah all their medicines because he knew that they (the demons) would neither conduct themselves properly nor contend fairly” (Jub. 10:10).¹¹⁷ As such,

We (the angels) told Noah all the medicines for their diseases with their deceptions so that he could cure (them) by means of the earth’s plants. Noah wrote down in a book everything (just) as we had taught him regarding all the kinds of medicine, and the evil spirits were stopped from pursuing Noah’s children. He gave all the books that he had written to his oldest son Shem ... (Jub. 10:12-13)

Here it is important to note that those arts which were previously introduced by the Fallen Angels as an act of rebellion (and characterised as evil in the Book of the Watchers) are now to be shared pre-emptively by the angels in accordance with divine prescription. These apotropaic and medicinal arts (now characterised as legitimate) are also directly associated with the

¹¹⁴ Martha Himmelfarb, “Some Echoes of *Jubilees* in Medieval Hebrew Literature,” in *Tracing the Threads: Studies in the Vitality of Jewish Pseudepigrapha*, ed. J.C. Reeves (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 129–30 with minor adjustments to Himmelfarb’s translation.

¹¹⁵ On the connections between Sefer Asaf and Jubilees 10, see the section titled ‘The Relationship Between Jubilees 10 and the Introduction to the Book of Asaph’ in Michael Segal, *The Book of Jubilees: Rewritten Bible, Redaction, Ideology and Theology* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 170–74.

¹¹⁶ Thus Jub. 10:8 “When Mastema, the leader of the spirits, came, he said, ‘Lord Creator, leave some of them before me; let them listen to me and do everything that I tell them, because if none of them is left for me I shall not be able to exercise the authority of my will among humanity. For they are meant for (the purposes of) destroying and misleading before my punishment because the evil of mankind is great.’”

¹¹⁷ All translations of Jubilees from James C. VanderKam, *Jubilees: A Commentary in Two Volumes*, ed. Sidnie White Crawford (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2018).

scribal arts. They are transmitted in written form as books from generation to generation. Taken together, these two points—which reflect the deliberate sharing of a potentially harmful technology—construe this technology as a necessary evil to be restricted to scribal circles. As attested in Jubilees and Asaf, this particular story depicts medicine and magic as restricted scribal arts, necessary evils that in other hands would prove dangerous. Whether Sefer Asaf may have a role to play in our search for clues about the scribal identity or self-conception of some of the people who wrote the bowls is not a question for the present work. Nonetheless, it certainly instantiates a special relationship between the arts of writing and magic, reflects an influential scribal tradition—thereby provisioning us with yet another link between Second Temple sources and the pre-Islamic Mesopotamian context of the bowls—and lets us know how far associations between magic and medicine and the potency of the scribal arts were current in Sasanian Mesopotamia.

Nevertheless, while expert practices were undoubtedly paradigmatic with respect to the bowls, I have demonstrated in this section how far the practice of inscribing bowls made room for illiterate and quasi-literate practitioners to assert their (creative) arts. In this respect, it is useful to draw attention to the ways in which interactions between things and people have the potential to create new kinds of subjects whose skills and (social) positioning were also thereby newly defined. Capitalising upon expert knowledge-practices and the prestige associated with writing, many of the magic bowls index some strikingly creative forms of autograph work. Neither should we discount the possibility that some of the bowls inscribed with invented signs and scripts were produced by literate specialists for whatever reason. With regard to this phenomenon, I have merely offered glossographia as one possibility, perhaps representing an attempt by certain practitioners (literate or not) to stand out in a crowded market-place or provide a more specialised service. In this light, we might even imagine that *more* recompense was demanded for some of these elaborate products than less (just as more would have been charged for an elaborate narrative formula). The practice of inscribing the insides of simple clay bowls with protective incantations may provide “startling testimony to the local nature of much of late-antique religiosity,”¹¹⁸ but as the foregoing discussion has shown, a more sympathetic and holistic approach to the bowls can better illuminate the increasing instrumentalisation of writing as a magical technology across the ancient world. At the same time, the idea of unified bowl ‘corpus’ seems increasingly ill fitted to our evidence. Across this shared writing surface we find such a variety of writing practices, knowledge

¹¹⁸ Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 189.

practices, (non) scribal hands and scribal competencies that the notion of a unified bowl praxis or bowl corpus—typically conceived—may begin to appear untenable. I will return to this point below.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

TEXT, WRITING, AND THE TRANSMUNDANE

In their great numbers and great textual and formulaic diversity, the magic bowls represent what is undoubtedly (one of) our most important source for everyday demon-beliefs in the ancient (Jewish) world. In the foregoing, we saw that the bowls reflect the textualisation of various forms of somatic knowledge about demons, a kind of knowledge for which we lack in earlier Jewish sources. Section I of this chapter showed how far the bowls index the somatic aspect of late antique Jewish demonology. In this section, we also glimpsed the use in the bowls of the common scribal strategy of list-making. Inscribed upon surfaces that were limited in size, the bowl texts sometimes reflect the extensive (re)deployment of (Near Eastern) scribal *Listenwissenschaft*. Thus several bowls examined above deploy diagnostic lists that proceeded from head-to-toe across the beneficiaries' bodies, thereby organising the potential seats of demonic activity in the human body. Elsewhere in the bowls, we encounter incantations populated by extensive lists of demons—in an applied context, short on space, where we would expect broader bodies (and demonstrations) of knowledge to be drawn upon as the (hidden) basis or starting-point for the composition of more specifically targeted and activated spells, but not to appear in and of themselves. Where more popular or applied forms of demonological thinking are situation-specific, embedded in individual, familial, and local contexts, we once again find the practitioners behind the bowls not just diagnosing and targeting specific afflictions, but engaging in more extensive scribal strategies of textualisation—arranging demons with other threats of the same class, contracting in the business of listing, aetiology, and lineage—presenting the impression of comprehensiveness and completeness, and thereby imposing textualised/written order on the demonic within and *as* activated magical technologies. In addition to this, of course, there are the narrative spells which have formed the central focus of this work. Alongside an extensive use of legal materials in the bowls, we also encounter an almost casuistic deployment of precedent in the form of narrative, where knowledge of the (biblical) past (in particular) is compiled into paradigms for effective magical action. Further to this, Chapter Five demonstrated the use of extended

narratives that reflect various bodies of cosmic knowledge and which work to embed the practitioner within the transmundane realm.

Carefully wrought metaphysical technologies

As attested by (some of) the bowls, the widespread triangulation of scribal expertise, mastery of knowledge about demons, and writing as a magical technology appears to be a new thing in the history of Jewish magic.¹¹⁹ On the basis of cross-cultural data, David Frankfurter has previously contrasted the “local landscapes where people really tangle with demons” with the more abstract, second-tier practices of “collection, classification, and integration.”¹²⁰ In this view, the former world of local demon-belief is conceived of as largely *ad hoc*, while the latter world of demonology is shaped by totalising aims and globalising claims, as well as being associated with lists and writing. What I have examined in relation to the bowls, however, is the extent to which their tangle with demons also occasionally reflects the instrumentalisation of processes of collection, classification, and integration within the tangle with demons. Not only does the practice of listing play a prominent role in the poetics of the incantation bowls, but some bowls reflect the increased technicalisation of these activated magical technologies with several epistemes that diagram together with demonology in earlier Jewish materials. The narrative spells that we saw in the previous chapters are marked by totalising knowledge claims, an emphasis on the continuity between past and present, and the use of human exemplars whose commerce with demons frequently breached the trans/mundane boundary.¹²¹ In the case of the Joshua bar Peraḥia materials, this breach is itself modelled and achieved through the use of concrete written documents, providing a pedigreed scribal precedent for the act of writing (not just divorce decrees but incantations upon bowls) to demons. In the case of the Ḥanina ben Dosa materials, the bowl practitioner actually steps in to extend the rabbi’s night-time ban of demons to the day-time. Coinciding with a tradition (and literature,

¹¹⁹ As is commonly observed, the production of engraved metal amulets requires an entirely different skill set.

¹²⁰ Frankfurter, *Evil Incarnate*, 13–15. In his consideration of Mesopotamian materials, van der Toorn, “The Theology of Demons,” 62 observes a similar distinction between what he refers to as “popular” and “scholarly” perspectives upon demons.

¹²¹ On ‘scribal senses of the past,’ see Mladen Popović, “Pseudepigraphy and a Scribal Sense of the Past in the Ancient Mediterranean: A Copy of the Book of the Words of the Vision of Amram,” in *Is There a Text in This Cave? Studies in the Textuality of the Dead Sea Scrolls in Honour of George J. Brooke*, ed. Ariel Feldman, Maria Cioată, and Charlotte Hempel (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 308–18. Cf. also the extensive discussion across Reed, *Demons, Angels, and Writing*.

from the Book of the Watchers to Jubilees through to Sefer Asaf) that construed the scribal arts as restricted and associated them with restricted technologies of magical healing—we can begin to better appreciate how the perceived potency of the bowls may have lain not just in their writtenness, but their association with the scribal arts.

Of course, it should be noted that the contention that mastery of knowledge about demons belongs properly only to those educated in writing and other forms of scribal expertise (first attested in Jewish literature in the Dead Sea Scrolls) has precedents in Mesopotamia.¹²² Siam Bhayro in particular has examined the reception and redeployment in the bowls of materials associated with Mesopotamian scholasticism, illustrating the extent to which late antique scribal traditions drew on common ancient Mesopotamian materials, as well as the role of Aramaic in mediating traditions from first millennium BCE cuneiform texts to the incantation bowls.¹²³ Markham Geller has also observed several relations between cuneiform sources and bowls which are of interest in light of the foregoing discussion of *materia iuridica* in the bowls. Geller writes that “the appearance of the *geṭ* in Aramaic magic bowls may

¹²² The linkage of heavenly journey and scribal exemplar, for example, has ancient precedents in Mesopotamian traditions surrounding Adapa (an extensive treatment is to be found in Seth L. Sanders, *From Adapa to Enoch: Scribal Culture and Religious Vision in Judea and Babylon* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017). (Elsewhere, Bhayro, “Reception” amasses a good deal of evidence for the reception of ancient Mesopotamian materials in the bowls. Note also the *kidinnu* motif in the bowls surveyed in Chapter Five). As Frankfurter, *Evil Incarnate*, 15 notes, the development of demonologies frequently goes hand-in-hand with efforts to centralise ritual power, as well as attempts by classes of ritual experts to monopolise cosmological or theological knowledge.

¹²³ Bhayro, “Reception.” An excellent example of this process is the appearance in the bowls of the ‘angels on all sides’ formula, which stems from the canonical incantation series *Utukkū Lemnūtu*. For further on this formula, see Levene, Marx, and Bhayro, “Gabriel Is on Their Right.” On the routes by which first millennium BCE cuneiform texts may have found their way into the incantation bowls, see, e.g. the discussion of the movements of astronomical and astrological lore from Akkadian to Qumran Aramaic sources in Jonathan Ben-Dov, *Head of All Years: Astronomy and Calendars at Qumran in Their Ancient Context* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 259–66; Popović, “Networks of Scholars: The Transmission of Astronomical and Astrological Learning between Babylonians, Greeks and Jews.” See also Gideon Bohak and Markham J. Geller, “Babylonian Astrology in the Cairo Genizah,” in *Envisioning Judaism: Studies in Honor of Peter Schäfer on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Ra‘anan S. Boustán et al. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 607–22. More generally, see Sanders, *From Adapa to Enoch*, 152–96 or Popović, “Multilingualism, Multiscripturalism, and Knowledge Transfer,” 62–66. It is increasingly common in the literature to speak of an ‘Aramaic cultural mediation’ which facilitated the reception of ancient Babylonian science and literature within Jewish circles.

have a precedent in early cuneiform incantations, but in the form of marriage rather than divorce,” further specifying that

a divorce is simply the reverse of a wedding ceremony, and marrying off a ghost [a common strategy in Sumero-Akkadian incantations prescribed against both *ar-dat lilī* and *lamaštu*] is not so very different from divorcing a demon. The ceremonial words of marriage and divorce as well as the legal terminology of the documents are complementary, indicating how closely marriage and divorce were considered to be related. The authority of law and custom is harnessed in magic to get the desired result, namely the exclusion of the succubus from the victim’s house and bed.¹²⁴

However, Geller is wont to denigrate the incantation bowls in comparison with earlier Mesopotamian materials. He has thus referred to the genre of bowl magic as “all pretty basic and relatively unsophisticated.”¹²⁵ In a similar set of disparaging remarks made in the context of his thesis that the appearance of the bowls marks a response to the demise of the cuneiform sciences, he has referred to the bowls as “jejeune” (*sic*, read: jejune) and “makeshift magic” that “relied upon relatively uncomplicated incantations.”¹²⁶

In contrast to this picture of the bowls, I have sought to show in the foregoing discussion that the bowls do not necessarily lack for the type of sophisticated scribal culture that underlay earlier Sumero-Akkadian magic. Neither do their texts, as demonstrated in particular by many of the formulae surveyed in Chapter Five of the present work, necessarily rely upon uncomplicated or unsophisticated incantations. As a response to the demise of cuneiform script—most probably around the late third century CE according to Geller—I propose that as *locum tenentes* the bowl practitioners ably stepped in to fill the gap left by the loss of the comprehensive technical literature preserved in cuneiform. The record they leave behind

¹²⁴ Geller, “Tablets and Magic Bowls,” 63, 70. Geller does not refer to the following bowl, but see specifically ZHS 15:4-6, in which the beneficiary first puts a lilith under various bans, including the ban of Rabbi Aḥā bar Rabbi Ḥanieli and “the ban of all the rabbis of the world,” before divorcing the lilith and marrying it off to something/someone unknown: ליליתא דלויית מגי ודרית בבתי מקדש מחרמת עלי כהקדישה: אנה הוא אבאי שבקית ופטרי תאנתה, “I am Abbay. I have dismissed and divorced, you, the lilith who accompanies me and dwells in my house. You are consecrated (i.e. betrothed) and forbidden to me like the consecrated object of Joha bar Nun and Saul son of Kish.”

¹²⁵ Geller, “Magic Bowls Belong in Babylonia,” 97.

¹²⁶ Markham J. Geller, “Graeco-Babylonian Utukkū Lemnūtu,” *Nouvelles Assyriologiques Brèves et Utilitaires* (2008: 2): 44.

frequently reflects an elevated scribal culture that brought the worlds of liturgy, law, scripture, mysticism, and textualised demonology to bear in written *responsa* to everyday demon-induced crises. Setting magical activity alongside activities such as medicine and law—witnessed by the diagnostic materials surrounding Agag, for example, as well as numerous legal materials—they shaped the nature of these crises through their knowledge of various (technical) traditions, written expertise, and ultimately through the material mediation of the bowl.

As freelance ritual authorities, the scribes who in addition sold their services as magical practitioners exercised an agency that embraced the authority to identify the problems of their clients as particular demons—frequently featured in extensive lists in the incantations themselves, and reflecting a fairly comprehensive systematisation—or varieties of demonised witchcraft.¹²⁷ If something is to be expelled or protected against, it must first be defined, and the ‘lived demonology’ reflected in many JBA bowls appears to have derived from Jewish literary traditions of demons, Mesopotamian lore, scribal techniques of listing, the predilections and innovations of individual bowl practitioners, and—though more difficult to discern given the current less-than-complete state of our evidence—local traditions of demons. Of course, the beneficiaries of the bowls (as paying clients) would have had an important role in conceptualising their particular problem. Taking into account their knowledge and particular experiences, we should imagine a dialogic or dialectical process whereby the demon was materialised. Nevertheless, the practitioner remains the ultimate identifier and inscriber of demons. By way of their authority, their creative acts of systematisation, and their combinations of and innovations upon their repertoire, the bowl practitioner naturally had an effect upon local experiences of the demons.¹²⁸ It is upon this note that I will close out the present chapter, by reflecting upon this local experience in relation to the focus on writing that has

¹²⁷ I intend—and thus do not elaborate upon—the idea of freelance ritual authority not in any distinct definitional sense but only to draw attention to commonalities and overlaps between normally differentiated categories of social practice such as magic and law. In this regard, I also note the overlaps between Hekhalot mysticism and some of the long-form narrative spells I have based my argument around in this chapter.

¹²⁸ For local experiences of the demonic in antiquity, see especially David Frankfurter, “Dynamics of Ritual Expertise in Antiquity and Beyond: Towards a New Taxonomy of ‘Magicians,’” in Mirecki and Meyer, eds., *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, 159–78; Frankfurter, “Headless Beings”; Gordon, “From Substances to Texts.” For a study that examines modern experiences of the demonic in rural France, and which emphasises the agency and social role of experts in the discernment of evil, see, Jeanne Favret-Saada, *Deadly Words: Witchcraft in the Bocage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

shaped much of the foregoing. For what may ultimately be said to matter most to a consumer base of potentially limited literacy is the ‘sensational form’ of the activated magical technology, wherein we can see just how much room there was for elaboration upon the forms of text and writing in bowl praxis, as well as just how much space there was for less- and non-literate practitioners to assert their arts, and not just members of an occasionally *belletristic* and sophisticated scribal elite.

Beyond scribes: ‘writing weird’ and mediating demons through materiality

Where human acts of writing may have cosmic consequences in many of the Jewish Aramaic texts from Qumran, the (oftentimes still cosmic) consequences of writing are of more precipitate significance in the bowls—where they have an immediate, concrete, and far-reaching effect within the personal universe of the beneficiary. The large number of surviving bowls appears to reflect the extent to which this fact was appreciated by the populace of Sasanian Mesopotamia, initiating a kind of popular experiment with writing as constitutive of social action. Further to this, the variety of hands and formulae behind and within the bowls—as well as the diversity of invented and pseudo-scripts inscribed upon them—demonstrate that the bowls were plainly produced by individuals who did not possess even a modicum of scribal training. These signs and (poorly written) scripts and crude(r) formulae are undoubtedly a function of the types of knowledge-practices current among literate practitioners. As such, they plainly reflect the importance of writtenness to bowl practice. They also show how an innovation like writing an incantation upon a bowl can become customary. Not only does writing render permanent what is otherwise fleeting, but the bowls represent a compelling combination of seeing and doing.

In order to fully appreciate just how compelling this particular innovation was, I have argued that we need to read the bowls in the context of archaeology’s increasing emphasis on material presence, object agency, and embodiment. Produced in a semi-literate culture, the bowls used writing in diverse ways that clearly mediated a material potency through the written word. Not just the formulae in many bowls but the material arrangements of the bowl texts are marked by the rhetoric of seeing in ways that oblige us to re-examine the mechanics of visual power. In this regard, I have examined how the writing upon the bowls was perceived by the bowl owners, with the idea of replacing the concept of reading or viewing with something more visceral: the power of (texts-as) images to make other entities present and to contribute to the ‘narrative’ of the bowls as agentive demon ‘presses’ — objects that could

redefine ideas of space (as in the קיבלא bowls) as well as the domestic space around them. Returning by way of redefinition to the discussion of material agency above, agency here is a social construction—a dialectic between interventions and experiences—in which practitioner and purchasers all have an interest: “In this process the circulation of narratives, subtending or implying a variety of different models of action, style and possibility, plays a fundamental rôle. It is such narratives that in turn legitimate attempts by non-specialists to appropriate specialist techniques [and] turn them to their own advantage.”¹²⁹

Of course, the knowledge of specialists remains primary and paradigmatic, but what I have sought primarily to examine is how the bowl practitioners as a collective used the material forms of writing to shape and embody narratives (of knowledge) about demons and efficacy. Nothing that we learn about demons from the bowl texts precludes the possibility of physical interaction with them or indeed their infliction of physical pain, but the bowls as physical containers explicitly exhibit the fact that demons are not devoid of spatial extension. For a beneficiary unable to read a bowl text, the bowl and the act of overturning it would have lent a concrete substance to the praxis akin to the pressure against the body of a worn amulet.¹³⁰ More importantly, though, the spirals and radii and sizeable ‘coefficient of weirdness’ that characterise the inscriptions upon the magic bowls also lend a contingent visibility to demons. In the foregoing, I examined how the rhetographic texture of the bowl texts worked to picture and lend a verbal shape to demons—like a blanket thrown over the invisible man—but I emphasise now the extent to which the immaterial also depends (paradoxically) on ma-

¹²⁹ Gordon, “From Substances to Texts,” 139.

¹³⁰ Naturally, the bowls were not people’s sole recourse in the face of demons. They would have represented just one type of (mostly protective) magical practice used in the Babylonian environment at the time. See Bohak, “Beyond the Incantation Bowls,” 76 who points out that, at least “in the Jewish magic of later periods and even of late-antique Palestine, magical practices for aggressive, erotic, medicinal and divinatory purposes tend to be at least as popular, and often more so, than magic aimed for protection against demons and witchcraft.” Cf. Shaked, “Dramatis Personae,” 366 who observes that “the bowls do not reflect the whole range of magical practices used in the Babylonian environment at the time.” Nonetheless, they are the type that produced the most enduring remains, perhaps because they were the one type of magic committed to writing, or the one type of written magic to use a durable surface, or because they reflect a magical technology whose writing was not subsequently subject to immersion or burning as part of a given ritual. At the very least, it may be said that the bowls—as inscribed objects subsequently overturned—were plainly perceived to be such felicitous and symbolically forceful sites of power as to have dominated an enormous segment of the magical market.

teriality for its expression.¹³¹ To repurpose a phrase used by Daniel Miller in his discussion of materiality, the bowls are so many ‘technologies for the imagination of the transmundane.’¹³² (Again I stress that by ‘imagination’ I do not mean imaginary; only that the quality of invisibility necessitates the action of imagination.) As Richard Gordon elaborates, “material culture helps both to signal unequal access to [transmundane] power and to communicate its immanent transmissibility.”¹³³ The materiality of text in the bowls was thus used to transcend the limitations of (mere) text in a semi-literate society.

Lending flesh to the idea of text-as-art, and building upon the pictorial possibilities of text to build a kind of ‘iconotext,’ the material forms of writing in the bowls work to conceptualise and picture the demonic. Whether or not the bowl spells were read or recited out loud, whether or not the client could read them, the bowls themselves communicate ‘demons.’¹³⁴ Their inscriptions also call attention to the exceptional nature of the claims made for the expertise that lay behind their production. They emphasise the meaningfulness of that knowledge within the totality of knowledge-claims on offer. They may also on occasion reflect different specialisms for enhancing the efficacy of their producer’s knowledge-practice, signalling their distinctiveness through a kind of autograph work. The expressive features that they grant to the demonic (body) through (the materiality of) text steer us toward the agency and creativity of the bowl practitioners and open a window onto a kind of ‘lived’ demonology that is only hinted at in the exorcistic materials from Qumran. This demonology reflects the fluent and fluid interconnection of writing, textuality, and the transmundane, binding writing and ritual practice to control of demons in strikingly creative ways, and reflecting the multiple possibilities of writing.

¹³¹ Daniel Miller, “Materiality: An Introduction,” in *Materiality*, ed. Daniel Miller (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 29–35.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 23. Miller’s discussion revolves around Qur’anic inscriptions as “technologies for the imagination of the divine.”

¹³³ Gordon, “From Substances to Texts,” 138.

¹³⁴ But as Shaked, “Transmission and Transformation,” 202 observes about the ‘I descended to the depths of the earth’ formula, “if the text was read out aloud” it would undoubtedly have “instill[ed] ... in the human audience ... a feeling of awe and humility.” Less speculatively, such spells would undoubtedly have cost a lot more money (thus lending weight to the suggestion that some bowl spells may have been read or recited out loud, as proof of money well spent; such spells would also have been purchased by wealthier clients, who may have been more likely to have been able to read.)

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has mapped the functions and effects of narrative and story materials within the spells of the Jewish Babylonian Aramaic incantation bowls from late antique Mesopotamia. Its main research question dealt with the communicative and persuasive functions that narratives serve in the bowls and how their stories are constructed. Studies of narrative in magical contexts across the ancient world are often bereft of theoretical underpinnings, frequently lack even basic definitions of narrative or story, and jumble story, narrative, and allusion in ways that do no favours either to the materials in question or our understanding of the rhetorical forms and function of narrative in the ancient world. This is especially true of the field of bowl studies. In collating the narrative materials in the corpus of published JBA incantation bowls, this dissertation has set their study on a firm theoretical footing, surveyed their diversity of form and function, and demonstrated the ways in which the resources of narrative in the bowls index the demonology of late antique Judaism. Something else that has not been incidental to the thrust of this project is an attempt to recover the bowls—which have been variously denigrated in scholarship both past and present—not just as a subject for sustained attention but as sophisticated and carefully wrought pieces of metaphysical technology in their own right. Neglected by academics, the bowls reflect an unfamiliar dimension of Judaism. We are only just beginning to understand their significance for the study of Judaism and—as I have shown—for the study of late antiquity in general. In this regard, this dissertation has demonstrated the extent to which the bowls can be used to illuminate wider trends in late antiquity, in particular the increasing instrumentalisation of writing as a magical technology in the early centuries of the first millennium CE. In this respect, though it is primarily an account of narrative phenomena in one textual corpus, the considerations and applications of this study range far and wide and the picture it paints is drawn with a broad brush on a large canvas.

This concluding chapter offers an overview of the book's chapters and the discussions included therein. The conclusions of each chapter are summed up and presented as I build towards the overarching argument of the book. Chapter One—Introducing the Mesopotamian

Magic Bowls—positioned this project at the intersection of contemporary scholarly discussions about magic, rhetoric, and narrative. It began more prosaically however with an introduction to the bowls and what we know about them. In building upon the past century and a half of infrequently sustained and largely piece-meal research into the bowls, I sought to complement our understanding of bowl praxis here and there but—in doing so—not to wipe away moonlight with mud. Reflecting recent work on the materiality and the agency of things, I emphasised the extent to which bowl praxis reflects an elegant and sympathetic confluence of text and text carrier. I also demonstrated the need for a more holistic approach to the bowls in another sense—by seeking to recover the so-called pseudo-script bowls from the netherworlds of neglect and charlatanism. Distinguishing between ‘incantation bowls’ inscribed with known languages written in known scripts and ‘magic bowls’ inscribed with ‘invented’ and ‘pseudo-scripts’ I argued that the pejorative prefix ‘pseudo-’ conflates and obscures the differences between a wide variety of different inscriptional practices and manipulations of graphic signs—from invented to imitation scripts and ostentatious displays of non-writing. Laying the ground for the more detailed argument in Chapter Six, I showed that—as inscribed media that encode various visual strategies into ‘text’—these much-neglected bowls demonstrate the centrality of writing and *writtenness* to bowl praxis and open a valuable window onto conceptions and processes of writing as a means of engaging with transmundane powers.

Despite the fact that writing and writtenness are the central facts upon which any understanding of ancient magic is predicated, the realities of writing and writtenness have entered into discussions about Jewish magic mostly in the form of observations that relate to the sudden abundance in the archaeological record of evidence that instantly proclaims its (magical) function to the archaeologist and historian. Writing and writtenness have also entered the discussion about the bowls in sometimes superficially conceived analyses of orality and textuality, but largely in relation to questions about the transmission of the bowl spells. By contrast, I have integrated writing more centrally into our description of bowl practice. As Fritz Graf has pointed out (in relation to the much more established field of Graeco-Roman magical studies) it is increasingly obvious that we need to integrate ‘things written’ in addition to ‘things said’ and ‘things done’ into our analyses of ancient magic.¹ In elaborating upon this call in relation to the bowls, I demonstrated in Chapters One and Six that the efficacy and performative power of the bowls was centred in the written word, sign, or script, and

¹ Graf, “Magie et écriture.”

that the writtenness of the bowls as well as their evident popularity were predicated in part on the fact that they allowed people to extend the rhetoric of writing into domestic spaces and to embed an enduring illocutionary act within the architecture of their homes. Taking the large number and diversity of surviving bowls as my starting point (and noting the complex oral, textual, visual, and memorial interactions reflected by the bowls) I demonstrated that the weight of evidence proves the centrality of writing and writtenness to bowl praxis. On this basis, I argued that the apparent popularity of the bowls reflects a growing understanding of writing as a performative act in itself and that the bowl texts reflect the (gradual and ongoing) transfer of performativity from speech to writing in Sasanian Mesopotamia. This argument has important consequences for our understanding of bowl praxis. In this view, acts of ‘word magic’ in the bowls like oaths and curses are more likely to represent transitional language or a kind of ‘oral residue’ than the verbatim representation of speech or spoken acts, while the permanency inherent in writing becomes the key factor in understanding not just the huge popularity of the bowls, but an important factor in attempting to understand the fundamental shift in the nature of ancient Jewish magic.

Further to the point of Chapter One—and moving towards the goals of this study—I observed that the field of bowl studies is chiefly philological and consists primarily of editions and translations of bowl texts. Only Shaul Shaked in a handful of articles has studied the bowl texts as a form of literary production. We saw how a sustained study of the ‘literary’ qualities of the bowls—broadly conceived—is a considerable desiderata in the field of bowl studies, not least because the bowl texts do not just adjure, command, and threaten their audience of demons but frequently seek to compel them through the deployment of poetic or artfully composed discourse. In seeking to answer why this might be so, this study identified narrative as a valid and valuable entry point into the mechanics and poetics of late antique Jewish magic. I argued that the narrative formulae in the bowls show human actors in the active, imaginative process of constructing and negotiating their relationships with angels, demons, and God. In taking narrative as my playing field however I emphasised the importance of treating the bowl texts as a *sui generis* form of discourse characterised by structures, arguments, stylistic forms, and an *actio* of its own. Reflecting work in the field of rhetorical aesthetics, I moved this study away from a universal standard of literary quality towards an understanding of how individual narratives work on their own terms.

In seeking to outline how we might conduct an investigation into the aesthetics and pragmatics of the bowl narratives, Chapter Two of this dissertation—Framing the Bowls:

Magic, Rhetoric, and Rhetorical Narratology—formalised a rhetorical approach to the magical use of narrative within the bowls. It furnished a theoretical basis for engaging with the impetus that appears to lie behind the use of narrative in the bowls: the idea that narrative can do things and thereby affect a change in the world. Existing treatments of narrative in magical contexts across the ancient world—though well-theorised in respect to the use of myth in *historiolae*—lack any definition of narrative or story and are prone to the haphazard treatment of concepts like story, narrative, and allusion. In attending to this pronounced issue in relation to the bowls, I offered definitions of these key terms and outlined an approach to the bowls derived from the sub-discipline of narratology known as rhetorical narratology. Rhetorical narratology conceives of narrative ultimately not as a structure, but as an action, paying special attention to the relations that exist between tellers, audiences, and purposes—the ways in which the teller of a story might use the various resources of narrative in order to achieve different purposes in relation to one or more audiences. In elaborating a model that allowed for the examination of both the discursive architecture and adornment of the bowls texts, as well as the ways in which people utilise narrative in order to stake out a place *vis-à-vis* and within an a(nta)gonistic ‘local’ scene populated by both human and transmundane actors, I have provided a prototype for further investigations into magical narratives in other traditions.

In Chapters Three to Five, I collated the narrative materials contained in the four hundred plus JBA incantation bowls published as of 2019. These chapters collected and categorised a mass of scattered and disparate materials in one place, illuminating narrative and story as rich categories of *materia magica* within the repertoire of the bowl practitioners. Rather than conceiving of narrative or story in general or grossly underdefined terms, or simply in relation to myth construed as precedent or paradigm, Chapters Three and Five demonstrated what the actual structures of narrative contribute to the magical enterprise. I showed how many of the *historiolae* surveyed in Chapter Three exploited the incipient teleology of narrative—moving through the ‘natural’ junctures of instability-complication-resolution—in order to establish a higher-level semantic perspective whereby resolution (and not just precedent and paradigm) were thematised. In Chapter Five, I demonstrated how far the first person narrative spells in the bowls exploited the techniques of description and the possibilities of narrative space in order to achieve their effects. Dating back some five decades, the so-called ‘spatial turn’ in narrative studies has drawn attention to the linguistic representation of space (in narrative) as one of the primary elements connecting text to extra-textual reality and story to the extra-narrative life of the audience. In the first person narrative

spells, both the I of the spell and various transmundane beings are part of (the same) space, while their actions take place in space, and affect and are affected by space. These interactions are defined as such by the space in which they are located, and it is this spatial nature—unfolded through acts of description—that lends these trans/mundane interactions their extra-textual dimension. In discussing intertextuality in Chapter Four, I noted how the use of biblical quotations in the bowls index a ‘third reality’ through the simultaneous activation of God’s saving power—for instance—in relation to the particular problem of a given bowl beneficiary. What Chapters Three and Five have shown is that the uses of *mimêsis* and plot in narrative—because they reflect actions taken up into language—also establish something productive, something new. They are not simply reproductive of the world but—as deployed in the bowls—shake up the order of persuasion in order to remake reality as it ought to be. As Paul Ricoeur puts it, *mimêsis* and plot possess

the power to ‘remake’ reality and ... to remake real praxis to the extent that the [narrative] text intentionally aims at a horizon of a new reality that we may call a world. It is this world of the text that intervenes in the world of action in order to give it a new configuration or, as we might say, in order to transfigure it.²

It is not enough to talk only of precedent or paradigm in relation to magical narrative, and this study has demonstrated for the first time what the actual techniques and structures of narrative contribute to the magical enterprise.

Chapter Three—Mythic Stories and Mythic Story Worlds: Historiolae and Narrative Tokens in the JBA Bowls—mapped the forms and functions of ‘historiolae’ and ‘narrative tokens’ in the published JBA incantation bowls. I established these two categories in order to distinguish two distinct uses of story in the bowls: their actual telling and their tokenisation through refence or allusion. Scholarship on the bowls (as elsewhere in magical studies) has been exceedingly lax in approaching these distinct uses of mythic story and narrative, but there is a big difference between citing and analogising a past precedent and actively narrating that precedent. Distinguishing these two acts allows us to better appreciate the action of the bowl spells, as well the forms in which (popular) stories and narratives circulated in late antique Mesopotamia. In order to explore the ways in which both narrative and token are weaponised in the bowls, I deployed the concept of the story world. This concept reflects how different authoritative figures and concepts could be—and were—bound together in a

² Ricoeur, *From Text to Action*, 10.

discrete story plane over the span of multiple different narratives in multiple different contexts. By drawing their actors from a pool of characters whose names were already associated with well-known histories, the bowl practitioners could both gesture toward and build upon ideas or stories that they did not necessarily need to make explicit. They could capitalise upon a broader story world predicated on the ubiquity of most of these figures and the pervasiveness of the narratives and narrative elements associated with them in the cultural context of the bowls. In conceptualising the historiola and narrative tokens, I also deployed the idea of the miniature in order to illuminate how they achieved their effects. I showed how a reduction in the dimensions of a longer narrative or the selection of a specific detail or token can lead to an increase in the dimensions of this narrative or this detail's significance. I examined how such acts of 'exaggeration' represent a strategy for achieving focus, and demonstrated the ways in which the bowls used such strategies to threaten an almost unlimited amount of significance.

It was not so very long ago that Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked could remark that "Such stories [as the Semamit historiola] are practically unknown in [the] Aramaic magic bowls, although certain bowls contain brief allusions to story situations."³ The materials that I have collated in Chapter Three—which derive, it should be stressed, from just the small corpus of published bowls—show the great extent to which stories (told or tokenised) functioned as a powerful magical technology within the bowls. The materials collated in Chapter Five further demonstrate the dominant role that narrative played in the calculus of means available to the bowl practitioners.

Where most previous (and passing) scholarship on the phenomenon of first person narratives in the JBA incantation bowls construed these formulae through the lens of the historiola, in Chapter Five—The 'I' of the Beholder—I demonstrated that these spells represent a distinct deployment of the resources of narrative—both formally and functionally. I showed that, unlike historiolae, these formulae do not represent an appeal to external authority but instead work to invest the incantation with an auto-prescriptive performative authority and force. Within the communicative context of the bowl—where practitioners or named beneficiaries address various demons who threaten their person or home—the I of the spell reflects a technology of the self whereby the I behind the spell is shown to have overcome the limits of mundane reality and established a direct human witness to—and embodiedness within—

³ Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*, 192.

the transmundane realm. As such, I argued that these narratives do not reflect the past of myth but the proximate past of direct experience. That is, where the telling of the *historiola* functions as a fulcrum between real-life situations and the already-accomplished resolution of (those same) crises *in illo tempore*, the first person narrative spell formulae in the bowls cast the I of these spells as the fulcrum between the mundane and transmundane realms. These spells provide an arena wherein the dissolution of the boundaries between the mundane and the transmundane can be affected and the authority of the I attested across these boundaries. Attendant on the role of the I as a direct observer of events (or an actor within events) is an emphasis on experientiality and an expansion of description. In Chapter Five, I further demonstrated how far the authority of the first person narrative formulae in the bowls was established through two closely related narrative phenomena: description and space. I showed how the experiences of the enunciating first person subject—as they unfold in space and are reified through the accumulation of detail—bind the I of the practitioner or the beneficiary into the transmundane landscape, establishing the I of both the narrative spell and the entire incantation as a channel of authority.

In the much shorter Chapter Four—Making God’s Word Work—I examined the use of narrative quotations from the Hebrew Bible in the JBA incantation bowls. Again, I first offered a definition of quotation, noting that bowl scholarship lacks a robust terminology and well defined descriptive typology for dealing with the forms and functions of scriptural citation in the bowls. Observing that biblical quotations in the bowls functioned a lot like *historiolae*, I nevertheless noted that quotations excerpted from longer narratives in the Hebrew Bible provide a starting point for a different kind of question. Pointing to the potential referential quality inherent in these quotations, I asked whether these quotations functioned as independent/hermetic units or whether they were designed metonymically to refer to and weaponise other parts of the larger narrative pericopae from which they were extracted. Though the answer to this question proved inconclusive, I suggest that merely asking nevertheless drew valuable attention to the way in which quotations in the bowls function. For example, the line of questioning that I pursued in Chapter Four raised the possibility that some quotations in the bowls function as incipits. More importantly, the metonymic theory that this chapter advanced further nuanced the approach of previous scholarship to scriptural quotation in the bowls. It furnished a modulated method that can be expanded to account for the functions of biblical quotations in different capacities and for different purposes, and complicated ideas about how we should approach the question of a given bowl practitioner’s

‘Bible.’ In addition, the appendix to this chapter provides a map for further research into the Bible in the bowls (and late antique Judaism more generally). As I observed, a detailed analysis of the phenomenon of biblical quotation in the bowls—akin to Dorothea Salzer’s systematic treatment of the dynamics of scriptural use in the texts of the Cairo Genizah—is a considerable desideratum. The collation in a single location of the biblical quotations from the published incantation bowls—as furnished by this work—furnishes the basis for such large-scale work.

Building upon the etymological root of the word narrative, Chapter Six—How to Shape a Demon: Imagination, Inscription, and the *Dramatis Personae* of the Bowls—asked what kind of things the bowls know about demons and how they index this knowledge about demons. Highlighting an increased epigraphic habit across the antique world—the very condition of our knowing anything at all about Jewish magical practices—this chapter picked up on the issues of writing and writtenness raised in Chapter One and examined the complex relations between text, writing, and the transmundane in ancient Judaism. As instrumentalised and technologised by the bowl practitioners, writing was imbued with a significant ‘coefficient of weirdness.’ Playing upon the material aspects of inscription in diverse ways, the bowls represent a complex and compelling sympathy between text and text support—a powerful combination of seeing and doing—that worked not just to mediate a material potency through the written word but to directly index the demonological and reinforce the relationship between target and object. Marked by the rhetoric of seeing and showing, the magic bowls represent a compelling configuration of media, act, and imagination that mediates a ‘sensational’ experience of the spatial and bodily realities of demons, as well as crafting an easily legible claim for their efficacy as demon traps. Further to this, I argued that the inscribed face of the bowl would have drawn attention to the exceptional nature of the expertise that lay behind its production, emphasising the meaningfulness of written knowledge within the totality of knowledge-claims and efficacious practices on offer.

Further to the ways in which the material forms of writing worked to mediate knowledge about demons and index demonic reality, Chapter Six examined the ways in which the practitioners behind the bowls used language to generate a verbal shape for these invisible beings. It also located the bowls as potentially productive site for questions of scribal subjectivity. Setting the materials surveyed in Chapters Three and Five in diachronic perspective, and examining the types of knowledge-practices found in the bowls in light of the demonology of Second Temple Jewish literature, this chapter analysed how the bowl

texts index the demonology of late antique Judaism. Focusing on the demonic body, it examined how the JBA bowl texts constructed the bodies that populated their world as part of a broader cosmic network. Pictured through the lens of the animal world, the demonic appetite, and the human body, this chapter demonstrated the extent to which the demonology of the bowls emphasises demonic appearances over aetiological questions. Nevertheless, I suggested that a contemporaneous aetiology of demons—which links writing and magic as restricted arts, and which is attested in different aspects in the bowls and *Sefer Asaf*—could provide important insights into the perceived potency of the bowls, as well as the self-conception of (some of) the bowl practitioners. In connection with their striking forms, I argued that the bowls reflect a sophisticated and fluid concatenation of writing, textuality, and the transmundane that betrays the undead idea that they reflect a jejune and largely inept practice. Taken together, the bowls and their inscriptions represent variable channels of media and (textual) genre that could be deployed in diverse ways in order to work an effect upon the transmundane. This thesis has shown that a more holistic vision of bowl practice permits a greater appreciation of their mode of operation, and that careful attention to their textual and written pragmatics can permit us an insight into the attitudes and beliefs of late antique (Jewish) magical practitioners, as well as the ways in which people read, experienced, and perceived writing.

APPENDIX: THE BIBLE IN THE BOWLS

Quotations, References to Biblical Figures and Locations, and Divine Epithets derived from the Bible in JBA Incantation Bowls

Published as of 2019¹

QUOTATIONS

Genesis

Gen 1:24

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
IM 56544	ZHS 2a	3 ²

Gen 30:22

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
10895 (Museu da Farmácia, Lisbon)	Bhayro 2017	5-6

Gen 49:22

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
M 5	Shaked 1999: 194	9-12 ³
BM 117869	CAMIB 71A	7

¹ The occurrence of a number of biblical quotations in sundry unpublished bowls in the VAM are noted in the recent descriptive catalogue of these bowls: Siam Bhayro et al., *Bowls in the Vorderasiatisches Museum*. Several biblical quotations from unpublished bowls in the Schøyen collection are also noted in Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 19–20.

² Half verse quoted in Aramaic: מרה ארעה חיתא

³ The quotation is written on the outside of the bowl.

Exodus

Exod 3:5 (Targum Onqelos)

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
M 123	Corpus: 83-84	5-6
M 138	Corpus: 89-90	8
MS 2053/216	Corpus: 89-90	6

Exod 3:15

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
MS 1927/9	Shaked 2005: 27	11
MS 1911/1	Shaked 2006: 376-377	6
MS 1927/43	JBA 15	11-12 ⁴
MS 2053:212	JBA 60	8-9 ⁵
CBS 9013	AIT 8	12 ⁶

Exod 14:20

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
IM 9736	Gordon 1941: 349-50 = Saar 2013	10

Exod 14:31

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
JNF 124	Ford 2016: 153-154	13-14

Exod 15:3⁷

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
M 156	Corpus: 115-116	11
MS1927/8	JBA 1	12
MS 1927/29	JBA 2	11
MS 1927/45	JBA 3	12
MS 1927/47	JBA 4	12
MS 1927/64	JBA 5	10
MS 2053/10	JBA 6	11
MS 2053/12	JBA 7	12
MS 2053/183	JBA 9	12
MS 2053/185	JBA 10	12
MS 2053/79	JBA 11	15
MS 2053/178	JBA 12	15
LO.831	Bhayro 2018	9

⁴ Partial quotation as part of an invocation.

⁵ Partial quotation as part of an invocation.

⁶ Partial quotation as part of an invocation.

⁷ Used as an invocation: [בשמיה] דיה יה יהוה איש מלחמה יהוה שמו

Exod 15:7

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
VK 5 (National Library of Israel)	AMB 13	2

Exod 15:9-12

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
HS 3030	ZHS 2	1-7 ⁸

Exod 15:12

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
IM 56544	ZHS 2a	3 ⁹

Exod 15:14-17

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
IM 141803	Faraj 2010: 206-207	— ¹⁰

Exod 15:18¹¹

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
MS1927/8	JBA 1	12
MS 1927/45	JBA 3	12-13
MS 1927/47	JBA 4	12
MS 1927/64	JBA 5	10
MS 2053/10	JBA 6	12
MS 2053/12	JBA 7	12-13
MS 2053/183	JBA 9	12
MS 2053/185	JBA 10	12
MS 2053/79	JBA 11	15-16
MS 2053/178	JBA 12	15
LO.831	Bhayro 2018	10
BM 91778	CAMIB 65A	12

Exod 22:23

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
Present whereabouts unknown	AMB 9	7

⁸ The bowl text consists solely of the quotation from Exod 15:9-12. Each Hebrew verse is followed by an interlinear translation in the Aramaic version of Targum Onqelos.

⁹ The Hebrew quotation is followed by an interlinear translation in the Aramaic version of Targum Onqelos.

¹⁰ The bowl, which is divided into four sections, contains the biblical verses Exod 15:14-17, Zech 3:2, and Prov 30:17. The only non-biblical parts of the bowl are confirmatory formularies. The bowl includes a drawing of a figure in the centre, the torso of which contains Exod 15:14 written in reverse order. Exod 15:15-17 are also written in reverse order.

¹¹ Used as an invocation in JBA 1, JBA 3-7, JBA 9-12, LO.831, and preceded by Exod 15:3 and Ps 24:8 in these bowls.

Exod 23:21

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
M164	Levene 2007	7 ¹²

*Leviticus***Lev 26:29**

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
Present whereabouts unknown	AMB 9	9

Lev 26:37b

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
Present whereabouts unknown	AMB 9	5 ¹³

*Numbers***Num 6:24-26**

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
BM 91765	CAMIB 26A	4-5 ¹⁴
MS 1927/9	Shaked 2005: 27	11 ¹⁵

Num 9:23

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
M 6	Shaked 1995: 211-213	13-14
Einhorn 4 (Einhorn Collection)	MSF 22	10
CBS 2952	AIT 5	5
CBS 3997	AIT 26	1-2
Aaron B (Aaron Gallery)	Geller 1986: 108	8-10
Aaron F (Aaron Gallery)	Geller 1986: 115	4
HS 3005	ZHS 5	9-10
HS 3022	ZHS 14	7-8 ¹⁶
MS 2053/41	JBA 31	10-11
MS 2053/190	JBA 42	9-10

¹² Partial quotation preceded by שנאמר.

¹³ The verse is paraphrased together with Jer 8:4/Amos 8:14 and is deployed like a direct quotation: קראה דכתיב יפלו ולא י(ק)ומו (אל) תהה תקומא

¹⁴ BM 91763 = CAMIB 041A also contains a possible allusion to Num 6:25 in l. 20: וחנני יחני

¹⁵ The quotation is damaged/effaced.

¹⁶ The verse is preceded by Num 11:2 and followed by Num 12:13.

Num 10:35

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
1399 (Hebrew University Institute of Archaeology)	AMB 3	5 ¹⁷
BM 91735	CAMIB 35A	4-5

Num 10:35-36

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
MS 2053/7	Bohak 2012: 47	6-7
MS 2053/190	JBA 42	10

Num 11:2

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
HS 3022	ZHS 14	6-7 ¹⁸

Num 12:13

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
HS 3022	ZHS 14	8 ¹⁹

Num 14:9

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
M 142	Corpus: 93-94	8-9 ²⁰

Num 32:22

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
M 142	Corpus: 93-94	8 ²¹

*Deuteronomy***Deut 6:4²²**

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
242/1 (Jewish Historical Museum, Belgrade)	AMB 11	6 ²³
De Menil Collection	Isbell 1976: 16-20	IV.3
T 27987	Mishgav 2018: 60	1

¹⁷ The final five letters of מִשְׁנֵאִיד are deliberately omitted from the quotation..

¹⁸ The verse is followed by Num 9:23 and Num 12:13.

¹⁹ The verse is preceded by Num 11:2 and Num 9:23.

²⁰ The verse is preceded by Num 32:22.

²¹ The verse is followed by Num 14:9.

²² Several other bowls (BM 117885, 117878, 117879 = CAMIB 051A, 052A, 053A) also contain the first part of Deut 6:4 amidst an otherwise apparently meaningless arrangement of letters.

²³ The verse is interwoven with Ps 91:1. The first word of Deut 6:4 is followed by the first word of Ps 91:1, and the second word of Deut 6:4 by the second of Ps 91:1, and so on.

CBS 3997	AIT 26	1
Aaron B (Aaron Gallery)	Geller 1986: 107	10-11 ²⁴
Anonyme Privatsammlung	Müller-Kessler 2013: 82	12
ZRL 48 (Zion Research Library)	Gordon 1978: 233	1 ²⁵
JNF 124	Ford 2016: 153-154	11
Collection Dieulafoy = Musée du Louvre (?)	Schwab 1891: 592	___ ²⁶

Deut 6:4-9

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
VA 3854	Levene 2003	29-46 ²⁷
VA 3853	Levene 2003	36-48 ²⁸
HS 3027	ZHS 1	1-3 ²⁹

Deut 6:19

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
VA 2484	Curses: 22-24	19

Deut 11:13-14

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
HS 3027	ZHS 1	4-5 ³⁰

Deut 11:13-21

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
VA 3854	Levene 2003	46-82
VA 3853	Levene 2003	48-85

Deut 28:22

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
Present whereabouts unknown	AMB 9	7-8

Deut 28:28

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
Present whereabouts unknown	AMB 9	9

²⁴ Interwoven with Ps. 91:1.

²⁵ The first line of this bowl weaves only the first two words of Ps 91:1 together with the first two words of Deut 6:4 and thus does not represent a full quotation of the verses in question.

²⁶ The verse is interwoven with Deut 6:4.

²⁷ VA 3854 is part of a pair with VA 3853. Like VA 3853, the bowl includes the traditional liturgical response (ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד) after the first verse of the *Shema* before continuing with Deut 6:5-9.

²⁸ The bowl omits Deut 6:7, 8, but it seems reasonable to assume on the basis of the inclusion of these verses in VA 3854 that the omission was accidental.

²⁹ The bowl consists solely of biblical verses. Deut 6:4 is repeated in l. 6.

³⁰ The bowl consists solely of biblical verses.

Deut 28:35

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
Present whereabouts unknown	AMB 9	8-9

Deut 28:57

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
MS 2053/249	JBA 46	11-12 ³¹

Deut 29:19

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
Present whereabouts unknown	AMB 9	11-12

Deut 29:22

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
BM 91767	CAMIB 40A = Morgenstern 2007	15-16 ³²

Deut 29:28

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
BM 91770	CAMIB 43A	19-21 ³³

Deut 32:3

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
M 1	Shaked 1995: 207	2

*1 Samuel***1 Sam 2:2**

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
Moriah 2 (Moriah Collection)	Gordon 1984: 238	1-2

1 Sam 17:45

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
M 117	Corpus: 77	6 ³⁴

³¹ The practitioner plainly struggled with the quotation, and was obliged to correct himself three times. The verse is accorded an introduction: “And again, if you do not accept these oaths, may the curses that are written in the Torah and in Deuteronomy come upon you; may they be fulfilled in you.”

³² The quotation is written on the exterior of the bowl, and is repeated in reverse order.

³³ Partial quotation in the context of a curse bowl: אף וחימה וקצף גדול

³⁴ Combined with Isa 6:3 and used as an invocation: בשמיה דיה יה יה קדוש קדוש יהוה צבאות אלהי מערכות
ישראל

Isaiah

Isa 6:3

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
M 1	Shaked 1995: 207	14 ³⁵
S-446	SHM 5	3-4
1899.2.658	Gordon 1 = Isbell 33	5 ³⁶
M 117	Corpus: 77	6 ³⁷
Tarshish Collection	Ford/Ten-Ami 2012	14 ³⁸

Isa 12:3

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
MS 2053/125	Shaked 2005: 28	5

Isa 33:15

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
IM 56544	ZHS 2a	2 ³⁹

Isa 40:12⁴⁰

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
HS 3003	ZHS 4	8
IM 114987 = 18 N 98	ZHS 4a	7
XI-t 5178	Müller-Kessler 1994 B 1	7
Privatsammlung	Müller-Kessler 1994 B 2	7
Heb. 4° 6079 (National Library of Israel)	AMB 12a	7
86.11.259 (Metropolitan Museum, New York)	AMB 12b	10-11 ⁴¹
BM 117869	CAMIB 71A	5

Isa 40:31

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
M 142	Corpus: 93-94	3-4
MS 1911/1	Shaked 2006: 376-377	6
Aaron E (Aaron Gallery)	Geller 1986: 114	10 ⁴²

³⁵ The quotation is underlined in the bowl.

³⁶ Used as an invocation: בשום קדוש קדוש יהוה צבאות מלא כול האורץ כבודו

³⁷ Partial quotation used as an invocation in combination with 1 Sam 17:45.

³⁸ Partial quotation used as an invocation.

³⁹ Partial quotation: דבר מִי־שָׁרִים

⁴⁰ In almost every instance in the published JBA incantation bowls, only מי מדד בשעלו מים from Isa 40:12 is quoted in a speech by the demonic figure of Sideros in the Semamit historiola.

⁴¹ This bowl quotes Isa 40:12 in full.

⁴² The citation is misattributed to Isa 40:13 in Geller 1986.

Isa 44:25

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
BM 91765	CAMIB 26A	5
BM 91735	CAMIB 35A	8

Isa 50:11

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
M 164	Levene 2007	13
IM 56544	ZHS 2a	3 ⁴³

Isa 51:14

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
MS 132 (Matenadaran, Yerevan)	Abousamra 2019	13

Isa 51:15/Jer 31:34

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
SD 12	Levene/Marx/Bhayro 2014	3
Present whereabouts unknown	Shaked 2015: 109-110	16

Isa 60:6

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
SD 34	Levene/Bhayro 2005	14 ⁴⁴

Isa 60:8

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
SD 34	Levene/Bhayro 2005	14 ⁴⁵

Isa 60:11

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
SD 34	Levene/Bhayro 2005	13-14 ⁴⁶
MS 1911/1	Shaked 2006: 376-377	8 ⁴⁷

*Jeremiah***Jer 2:1/Ezek 21:23**

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
A 33965 (Oriental Institute Museum)	Kaufman 1973	7-8 ⁴⁸

⁴³ Partial quotation: במעצבא תישכין

⁴⁴ The verse is sandwiched between Isa 60:11 and Isa 60:8 in a bowl for success in business.

⁴⁵ The verse is preceded by Isa 60:11 and Isa 60:6 in a bowl for success in business.

⁴⁶ The verse is followed by Isa 60:6 and Isa 60:8 in a bowl for success in business.

⁴⁷ MT חיל גוים ומלכיהם נהוגים at the end of the quotation is replaced with מיטרא דרקיעא ומיטבה דארעה so that the text of the bowl reads “‘And they shall open your gates continually, day or night they shall not close, that they may bring unto you’ the rain of the sky and the best (products) of the earth.”

Jer 2:2

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
A 33965 (Oriental Institute Museum)	Kaufman 1973	2-3 ⁴⁹

Jer 2:3

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
A 33965 (Oriental Institute Museum)	Kaufman 1973	6-7 ⁵⁰

Jer 5:22

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
Tarshish Collection	Ford/Ten-Ami 2012	15-16

Jer 8:4/Amos 8:14

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
Present whereabouts unknown	AMB 9	5 ⁵¹

Jer 31:34/Isa 51:15

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
SD 12	Levene/Marx/Bhayro 2014	3
Present whereabouts unknown	Shaked 2015: 109-110	17

*Ezekiel***Ezek 1:5**

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
M 1	Shaked 1995: 207	10

Ezek 1:27

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
M 1	Shaked 1995: 207	10 ⁵²

⁴⁸ The quotation appears in a bowl which consists solely of biblical verses. Two of the Hebrew verses in the bowl are followed by interlinear translations in the Aramaic version of Targum Jonathan, including Jer 2:1/Ezek 21:23.

⁴⁹ The quotation appears in a bowl which consists solely of biblical verses. Jer 2:2 is followed by an interlinear translation in the Aramaic version of Targum Jonathan.

⁵⁰ The quotation appears in a bowl which consists solely of biblical verses. Unlike Jer 2:1, 2, the quotation of Jer 2:3 is not followed by an Aramaic version.

⁵¹ The partial quotation is paraphrased together with Lev 26:37b and deployed like a direct quotation: קראה דכתיב יפלו ולא י(ק)ומו ו(אל) תהה תקומא

⁵² A partial quotation (ונוגה לו סביב) which precedes the full quotation of Ezek 1:5.

Ezek 21:21-22

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
A 33965 (Oriental Institute Museum)	Kaufman 1973	1-2 ⁵³

Ezek 21:23/Jer 2:1

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
A 33965 (Oriental Institute Museum)	Kaufman 1973	7-8 ⁵⁴

Ezek 32:27

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
M 6	Shaked 1995: 211-213	14-15
Einhorn 4 (Einhorn Collection)	MSF 22	10 ⁵⁵

*Hosea***Hos 2:2-4**

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
CBS 3997	AIT 26 = Shaked 1999: 194	7-8 ⁵⁶

*Amos***Amos 8:14/Jer 8:4**

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
Present whereabouts unknown	AMB 9	5 ⁵⁷

*Micah***Mic 7:16-17**

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
Present whereabouts unknown	AMB 9	10-11

⁵³ The quotation appears in a bowl which consists solely of biblical verses. Two of the Hebrew verses in the bowl are followed by interlinear translations in the Aramaic version of Targum Jonathan. However, neither Ezek 21:21-22 nor Jer 2:3 are repeated in Aramaic.

⁵⁴ The quotation appears in a bowl which consists solely of biblical verses.

⁵⁵ Partial quotation: ותהי עוונותם על עצמותם כי חת[ית גבורים בארץ חיים]

⁵⁶ The quotation is partially effaced. Montgomery (210) “merely reproduced ... the evident characters,” but did not recognise Hos. 2:2-4 here. Isbell (117) notes Rossell’s (3, 87) contention that the letters form the text of Hos 2:2-4, but ultimately decides that their meaning is unclear. Shaked sides with Rossell and reads Hos 2:2-4 here. Consultation of photographs of the bowl confirms the reading of the quotation in lines 7-8.

⁵⁷ The partial quotation is paraphrased together with Lev 26:37b and deployed like a direct quotation: קראה דכתיב יפלו ולא י(ק)ומו ו(אל) תהה תקומא

Zechariah

Zech 3:2

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
IM 141803	Faraj 2010: 206-207	— ⁵⁸
MS 132 (Matenadaran, Yerevan)	Abousamra 2019	13
242/1 (Jewish Historical Museum, Belgrade)	AMB 11	5-6
M 6	Shaked 1995: 211-213	14
M 59	Corpus: 35-37	14-15
M 108	Corpus: 71	3-4 ⁵⁹
T15608	Mishgav 2018: 58	4
T 27987	Mishgav 2018: 60	6-7
T 28001	Mishgav 2018: 67	42-43
10895 (Museu da Farmácia, Lisbon)	Bhayro 2017	8-9
BM 139524	CAMIB 23A = Geller C	12-13
AO 2099	Gordon 7 = Isbell 42	10-11
CBS 2920	AIT 16	14
CBS 2952	AIT 5	5-6
CBS 2963	AIT 3	12
CBS 3997	AIT 26	2-3
S-448	Fain/Ford/Lyavdansky 2016: 301	5
Aaron B (Aaron Gallery)	Geller 1986: 107	7-8 ⁶⁰
HS 3022	ZHS 14	8-9
ZRL 48 (Zion Research Library)	Gordon 1978: 233	11-12
Collection Dieulafoy = Musée du Louvre (?)	Schwab 1891: 592	—
MS 1927/64	JBA 5	10-11
MS 2053/7	Bohak 2012: 47	8-9 ⁶¹
MS 2053/13	Shaked 2011:192-198	15-16

Zech 14:9

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
BM 91763	CAMIB 41A	17 ⁶²

⁵⁸ The bowl, which is divided into four sections, contains the biblical verses Exod 15:14-17, Zech 3:2, and Prov 30:17. The only non-biblical parts of the bowl are confirmatory formularies.

⁵⁹ Apart from a basic statement of purpose in l. 2, this bowl consists of seven full biblical quotations, all of which can be found in Seder Amran and appear to have been borrowed from the weekly evening prayers: the Arvit and the Keri'at Shema al he-Mitta.

⁶⁰ Interwoven with Deut 6:4.

⁶¹ The verse is quoted a second time in ll. 10-11.

⁶² Partial Aramaic translation: דהוא חד ושמיה חד

Psalms

Ps 10:16⁶³

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
MS1927/8	JBA 1	12
MS 1927/45	JBA 3	13
MS 1927/47	JBA 4	12
MS 1927/64	JBA 5	10
MS 2053/10	JBA 6	12
MS 2053/12	JBA 7	12-13
MS 2053/183	JBA 9	12
MS 2053/185	JBA 10	12
MS 2053/79	JBA 11	15-16
MS 2053/178	JBA 12	15
LO.831	Bhayro 2018	10

Ps 24:8⁶⁴

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
M 156	Corpus: 115-116	11
MS1927/8	JBA 1	11-12
MS 1927/45	JBA 3	12-13
MS 1927/47	JBA 4	12
MS 1927/64	JBA 5	10
MS 2053/10	JBA 6	11-12
MS 2053/12	JBA 7	12
MS 2053/183	JBA 9	11
MS 2053/185	JBA 10	12
MS 2053/79	JBA 11	15
MS 2053/178	JBA 12	14
LO.831	Bhayro 2018	10

Ps 32:7

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
MS 1928/1	JBA 55	13-14

Ps 46:8

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
BM 91763	CAMIB 41A	20-21

Ps 55:9

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
MS 1928/1	JBA 55	14 ⁶⁵

⁶³ Used as an invocation in JBA 1, JBA 3-7, JBA 9-12, LO.831, and preceded by Exod 15:3 and Ps 24:8 in these bowls.

⁶⁴ Used as an invocation and preceded by Exod 15:3.

⁶⁵ The client's name is inserted directly into the quotation in place of the 1 p. sg. pron. suffix.

Ps 68:5

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
MS 2053/236	Bohak 2012: 48-49	1

Ps 69:24

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
Present whereabouts unknown	AMB 9	6

Ps 69:26

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
Present whereabouts unknown	AMB 9	6

Ps 72:18-19

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
M 108	Corpus: 71	6-8

Ps 86:5

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
BM 91763	CAMIB 41A	21

Ps 86:17

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
Moriah 2 (Moriah Collection)	Gordon 1984: 238	2-3

Ps 89:53

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
M 108	Corpus: 71	4

Ps 91:1

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
242/1 (Jewish Historical Museum, Belgrade)	AMB 11	6-7 ⁶⁶
VA 2423	Curses: 37-39	23
Aaron B (Aaron Gallery)	Geller 1986: 107	10-11 ⁶⁷
ZRL 48 (Zion Research Library)	Gordon 1978: 233	1 ⁶⁸
JNF 124	Ford 2016	11-12 ⁶⁹
Collection Dieulafoy = Louvre (?)	Schwab 1891: 592 (Bowl O)	— ⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Interwoven with Deut 6:4.

⁶⁷ Interwoven with Deut 6:4.

⁶⁸ The first line of this bowl weaves only the first two words of Ps 91:1 together with the first two words of Deut 6:4 and thus does not represent a full quotation of the verses in question.

⁶⁹ The quotation in this bowl is also repeated in reverse order.

⁷⁰ Interwoven with Deut 6:4.

Ps 91:7

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
5365 (Istanbul Museum of Antiquities)	Gordon C = Isbell 52	9 ⁷¹

Ps 91:10

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
5365 (Istanbul Museum of Antiquities)	Gordon C = Isbell 52	9

Ps 91:11

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
M 6	Shaked 1995: 211-213	15
M 164	Levene 2007	13
S-442	Fain/Ford/Lyavdansky 2016: 285	4

Ps 104:20⁷²

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
M 156	Corpus: 115-116	8
MS 1927/8	JBA 1	9
MS 1927/29	JBA 2	9
MS 1927/45	JBA 3	10
MS 1927/47	JBA 4	9-10
MS 1927/64	JBA 5	7-8
MS 2053/10	JBA 6	9
MS 2053/12	JBA 7	9-10
MS 2053/55	JBA 8	5-6
MS 2053/183	JBA 9	8-9
MS 2053/185	JBA 10	9-10
LO.831	Bhayro 2018	7

Ps 104:31

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
M 108	Corpus: 71	9 ⁷³

Ps 106:47

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
M 108	Corpus: 71	1 ⁷⁴

⁷¹ Followed by Ps 91:10.

⁷² In all eleven instances in the published JBA incantation bowls, Ps 104:20 is quoted by the figure of Hanina ben Dosa in a historiola which details how the famous Tanna vanquished an evil spirit.

⁷³ Apart from a basic statement of purpose in l. 2, this bowl consists of seven full biblical quotations, all of which can be found in Seder Amran. See above.

⁷⁴ See above.

Ps 106:48

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
M 108	Corpus: 71	4-5 ⁷⁵

Ps 115:1

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
Present whereabouts unknown	Shaked 2015: 109-110	17 ⁷⁶

Ps 116:6

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
BM 91763	CAMIB 41A	21
MS 1928/1	JBA 56	10
M 164	Levene 2007	13 ⁷⁷

Ps 121:7

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
CBS 9009	AIT 12	12

Ps 125:2

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
IM 5497	Gordon G = Isbell 19	10

*Proverbs***Prov 3:4**

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
MS 1927/2	Shaked 2005: 25-26	5

Prov 30:17

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
IM 141803	Faraj 2010: 206-207	— ⁷⁸
M 4	Shaked 2006: 373-374	4.1 ⁷⁹

*Song of Songs***Song 3:7**

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
BM 91765	CAMIB 26A	3-4

⁷⁵ See above.

⁷⁶ The quotation begins in Hebrew but continues in an Aramaic version. There follows an Aramaic paraphrase of Ps 115:2-3.

⁷⁷ The quotation in this bowl is also repeated in reverse order.

⁷⁸ The bowl, which is divided into four sections, contains the biblical verses Exod 15:14-17, Zech 3:2, and Prov 30:17. The only non-biblical parts of the bowl are confirmatory formularies.

⁷⁹ Partial quotation: עין תלעג לב ותבזז לקהת אם

Song 3:7-8

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
Heb. 4° 6079 (National Library of Israel)	AMB 12a	10

*Chronicles***1 Chr 29:10**

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
IM 9745	Gordon E = Isbell 50	5 ⁸⁰
IM 9745	Gordon F = Isbell 51	5 ⁸¹

REFERENCES TO BIBLICAL NARRATIVES**Gen 1:1-2:3 — The Creation Story⁸²**

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
VA 2423	Levene 2011	15 ⁸³
M 155	Corpus: 111	5 ⁸⁴

Gen 6:13-7:16 — Noah's Ark

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
CBS 16014	AIT 10	5 ⁸⁵

Gen 19:24-29 — Sodom and Gomorrah⁸⁶

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
IM 9736	Gordon 1941: 349-50 = Saar 2013	8-9

⁸⁰ Partial quotation: ברוך אתה יהוה אלהי ישראל

⁸¹ Partial quotation: ברוך אתה יהוה אלהי ישראל

⁸² There are numerous other references to God as creator in the bowls, though these are generalised and do not necessarily speak specifically to Gen. 1 ff.

⁸³ Invocation: בישמיה דמאן דאמר ויהוה עלמא, cf. the Targum Neofiti of Exodus 3:14, and the Fragment Targums of Gen 11:2 (MS Paris 110 and MS Vatican Ebr. 440).

⁸⁴ במימריה ובזיו יקריה ברא שמיא ושכליל תיביל, cf. Zech 12:1

⁸⁵ The bowl refers to the seal with which Noah sealed the ark against the floodwaters.

⁸⁶ JBA 1-9 refer to “mighty cities” that were “broken” by three angels named Nurael, Raphael, and Michael. The names of these mighty cities are not given, but the allusion is to Sodom and Gomorrah. JBA 11 refers to the encirclement of (unnamed) mighty fortified cities, while JBA 12 expands: “I will ban you and I will seal you and I will encircle you just a[s] one encircled mighty fortified cities. And I will send against [you] Nuriel [and] Pag’iel and Michael with fire.” Again the reference is to Sodom and Gomorrah, though the act of encirclement suggests a possible conflation with the story of Jericho’s destruction in Josh 6:1-20.

VA 2509	Curses: 31-32	7-9
BM 91763	CAMIB 41A	6-7
BM 91767	CAMIB 26A	15-16 ⁸⁷
BM 117826	CAMIB 44A	6
CBS 2945	AIT 2	6
CBS 16041	AIT 27	9-10
MS 2053/270	JBA 49	8

Gen 41:38-57 — Joseph's Success in Egypt

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
Einhorn 3 (Einhorn Collection)	MSF 21	10-11 ⁸⁸

Exod 3:1-14 — The Burning Bush

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
JTS 950 (Jewish Theological Seminary)	Gordon H = Isbell 53	16-17 ⁸⁹

Exod 7-14 — Pharaoh Subdued by Moses

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
Einhorn 3 (Einhorn Collection)	MSF 21	10-11 ⁹⁰

Exod 14:15-31 — The Parting of the Red Sea⁹¹

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
VA 3854	Levene 2003	25-28 ⁹²
VA 3853	Levene 2003	31-34 ⁹³
Present whereabouts unknown	Shaked 2015: 109-110	15-17

⁸⁷ The two cities are named in this bowl in a quotation from Deut 29:22.

⁸⁸ Part of a lengthy adjuration built upon divine interventions on behalf of Israel: ברז ... וכבשה לגולית ביד דויד, "By the mystery of He ... who subdued Goliath by the hand of David and Pharaoh by the hand of Moses, and Egypt by the hand of Joseph and the wall of Jericho by the hand of Joshua bar Nun."

⁸⁹ Invocation: ב ... יהוה שם מפורש דאיתגלי למשה באסנה

⁹⁰ Part of a lengthy adjuration built upon divine interventions on behalf of Israel. See above.

⁹¹ AIT 14:2, JBA 2:13, JBA 4:14, JBA 6:15, JBA 9:14-15 all adjure ימה דסוף מרכבתיה על ימה דסוף, "the great YHWQ YHWQ, who pushed his chariot over the Red Sea," which presumably alludes to a midrashic amplification of the narrative in Exodus 14. The possessive pronoun in 'his chariot' may refer not to YHWQ YHWQ (a probable play on the tetragrammaton) but to pharaoh (although the latter is not mentioned in these bowl texts). Two other bowls also refer to the Red Sea: Gordon 2 = Isbell 39:7 and Gordon 1941: 280, l. 13.

⁹² Invocation: דעבד אתין ותמהין במצרים ועבד בישין בגו ימיניה ודחק ומרצבתיה דפרעה בגו ימא דסוף

⁹³ See n. 92 above.

Exod 19 ff. — The Revelation on Mount Sinai

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
VA 2269	VAM 6	2-3, 4 ⁹⁴
MS 1927/2	Shaked 2005: 25-26	5-6 ⁹⁵

Num 16:31-35 — The Punishment of Qorah, Dathan, and Abiram

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
VA 2509	Curses: 31-32	5-6 ⁹⁶
BM 91763	CAMIB 41A	4 ⁹⁷
M 163	Corpus: 122-124	24 ⁹⁸

Josh 6:1-20 — Joshua Conquers Jericho

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
Einhorn 3 (Einhorn Collection)	MSF 21	10-11 ⁹⁹

1 Sam 17: 37-54 — Goliath Subdued by David

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
Einhorn 3 (Einhorn Collection)	MSF 21	10-11 ¹⁰⁰

Dan 3:19-27 — Daniel's Three Companions in the Fiery Furnace¹⁰¹

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
SD 27	Curses: 98-99	2-3 ¹⁰²

זעו שמיא ושמי שמיא מן קדמך אדוני כד איתגליתא על טורא דסיני איהבת אוריתא לעמך ישראל ... ניהזי אדוני אלהא רב[א] ⁹⁴
די[שראל] כד מיתגלי על טורא דסיני

דין הוא רזא דיגלא ליה זרפיאל סר הפנים למשה ... אין כל רזיא צד סליק לטורא דסיני ובעו עמא דבית ישראל דניכל עיניה ⁹⁵
ברחמתא

⁹⁶ VA 2509 and BM 91763 appear to represent a midrashic conflation and amplification of the events presented in the biblical narrative. In the adjuration in these two bowls, the earth does not split apart; rather, the fires of Gehenna bring the three rebellious individuals down to the abyss: אשבעית עליכון נורי גיהנם דאחיתו דבית: “I adjure upon you the fires of Gehenna that brought down the house of Qorah, Dathan, and Abiram to the abyss.”

⁹⁷ See n. 96 above.

⁹⁸ והיכדין דאיתכבשו דבית קרח ודתן ואבירם

⁹⁹ Part of a lengthy adjuration built upon divine interventions on behalf of Israel. See n. 88 above.

¹⁰⁰ Part of a lengthy adjuration built upon divine interventions on behalf of Israel. See n. 88 above.

¹⁰¹ Two other bowls use a formula based on Dan 3:6 (ושדי יתיה לגו אתון נורוא יקידתא ולשלהבית אישתא). See CBS 16917 = AIT 14:7 and S-447 = Fain/Ford/Lyavdanskyy 2016: 297, l. 5. A number of other bowls also make reference to three individuals in a manner reminiscent of Daniel's companions. In these instances, the bowls allude to three old men sitting ‘within’ (ב-) a furnace (VA 2423 and VA 2487 = Curses: 39-41, ll. 4, 11 [2423] and 2-3, 56 [2487]) or at the mouth (על פומה ד-) of a furnace (CAMIB 024A: 2-3, 5-6 and CAMIB 025A:4). Cf. VA 2490 (unpublished).

¹⁰² בישמך מיכאל שרא רבה ומישאל סרא דנורא כד אעילתונון ליחנניא מישאל ועזריא לגו אתונא יקידתא ולא נגעה בהון נורא כלל

REFERENCES TO BIBLICAL FIGURES/LOCATIONS

Multiple references to King Solomon's signet-ring are sustained across the body of the incantation bowls, but as these refer to a non-biblical tradition associated with the king that first appeared in the first-century, I do not include them here.

Adam and Eve

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
CBS 8694	AIT 13	5

Adam and Seth¹⁰³

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
VA 3854	Levene 2003	18-22
VA 3853	Levene 2003	19-21
CBS 16014	AIT 10	3-4

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
Collection Dieulafoy = Musée du Louvre (?)	Schwab 1891: 592	5
Present whereabouts unknown	Shaked 2015: 109-110	15

Moses

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
De Menil Collection	Isbell 1976: 16-20	IV:3
T 28001	Mishgav 2018: 67	36, 38

Yohāna and Mamre (TPs-J to Ex 1:15; 7:11; b. Men 85a)

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
MS 2053/89	JBA 35	4 ¹⁰⁴

Mount Sinai

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
Aaron B (Aaron Gallery)	Geller 1986: 107	2

Joshua

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
HS 3019	ZHS 15	5-6

¹⁰³ Cf. MS 2055/16, MS 2055/24, MS 2055/25 = Shaul Shaked, "Manichaean Incantation Bowls in Syriac," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 24 (2000), pp. 76-82, 71-72.

¹⁰⁴ The bowl refers to Jannes and Jambres, the Egyptian magicians (unnamed in the biblical text) who faced off against Moses.

Saul

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
M 117	Corpus: 77	1
JTS 950 (Jewish Theological Seminary)	Gordon H = Isbell 53	6-7
HS 3019	ZHS 15	6

David

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
M 145	Corpus: 100-102	13
CBS 16917	AIT 14	3
Present whereabouts unknown	Shaked 2015: 109-110	4-5

Job

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
Musée de l'écriture de Figeac	Gorea B2	18

Nineveh

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
80.1.2 (Israel Museum)	AMB 6	3 ¹⁰⁵

The Idols of the Nations (Ps 115:4-6)

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
80.1.2 (Israel Museum)	AMB 6	4

The One Hundred and Twenty-Seven Provinces (Esth 1:1)

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
Jewish Museum, London	Geller 1986:116-117	2

DIVINE EPITHETS DERIVED FROM THE BIBLE

Exod 3:14 — 'I Am that I Am'

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
BM 131669	CAMIB 20A	1
5361 (Istanbul Museum of Antiquities)	Jeruzalmi 1963: 115 = Isbell 67	2
5363 (Istanbul Museum of Antiquities)	Jeruzalmi 1963: 128 = Isbell 69	3-4
IM 5497	Gordon G = Isbell 19	2, 9
IM 49972	Hunter 1997: 109-110	10
IM 148114	CMI 5	7
CBS 2976	ZHS 11b	13
CBS 9013	AIT 8	14
CBS 16022	AIT 11	4

¹⁰⁵ The bowl contains a possible allusion to Jonah 4:9-11: שלם ליכי מדינתא דעמיה סגי סגי דלא ברינא לכון

CBS 8695	AIT 18	3
CBS 16055	AIT 27	11
VA 2416	Curses: 46-47	13, 20
VA 2434	Curses: 53-54	13
VA 2484	Curses: 22-24	17, 23
N-IV (Oriental Institute Museum)	Isbell 1976: 23	2
M 123	Corpus: 83-84	3
M 138	Corpus: 77	5
M 164	Levene 2007	10
Present whereabouts unknown	Lacau 1894: 50	5
Moriah 1 (Moriah Collection)	Gordon 1984: 221-222	14
HS 3023	ZHS 18	2
HS 3047	ZHS 17	2
SD 12	Levene/Marx/Bhayro 2014	3
MS 1911/1	Shaked 2006: 376-377	5
JTS 950 (Jewish Theological Seminary)	Gordon H = Isbell 53	16-17
MS 1928/1	JBA 55	9 ¹⁰⁶
MS 2053/86	JBA 34	3
MS 2053/167	JBA 40	6
MS 2053/216	Corpus: 89-90	6
MS 2053/236	Bohak 2012: 48-49	10

Exod 3:15 — ‘The Might of Abraham, the Rock of Isaac, the Shaddai of Jacob’

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
CBS 2976	ZHS 11b	11
CBS 9013	AIT 8	12
IM 114980 (?) = 18 N 18	Hunter 1995: 72	9-10
MS 1927/43	JBA 15	11-12 ¹⁰⁷
MS 2053/212	JBA 60	8-9

Deut 10:17/Neh 9:32 — ‘The Great, the Mighty, the Awesome God’

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
M 102	Corpus: 44-45	10 ¹⁰⁸

2 Sam 7:26 — ‘YHWH Sabaoth Elohim’

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
M 155	Corpus: 111	8

¹⁰⁶ With ב instead of אשר, thus paralleling the common magic name יה ביה

¹⁰⁷ The first invocation, “by the Light of Abraham” (cf. JBA 24:12), is probably a corruption of “by the Mighty One of Abraham” (cf. JBA 60:8).

¹⁰⁸ The bowl extends the biblical epithets to read: יהוה אלוהינו מלך העולם האל הגדול הגיבור והנורא והמופלא ומ(ע)ולא

2 Kgs 19:15 — ‘YHWH God of Israel Who Is Enthroned among the Cherubim’

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
VA 2416	Curses: 46-47	14 ¹⁰⁹

Isa 26:4b — ‘The Rock of Ages’

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
HS 3023	ZHS 18	1-2
HS 3047	ZHS 17	2
HS 3052	ZHS 27	4 ¹¹⁰
MS 2053/236	Bohak 2012: 48-49	6
5361 (Istanbul Museum of Antiquities)	Jeruzalmi 1963: 115 = Isbell 67	2

Isa 37:16 — ‘YHWH Sabaoth God of Israel Who Is Enthroned among the Cherubim’

CATALOGUE NUMBER	(PRIMARY) PUBLICATION	LL.
HS 3023	ZHS 18	1-2
MS 2053/236	Bohak 2012: 48-49	6

¹⁰⁹ Levene includes ‘Sabaoth’ (cf. Isa 37:16; see below) in his translation of the passage from the bowl, though this is not how the bowl text reads.

¹¹⁰ See also the unpublished bowl CBS 85–48–912 by the same bowl practitioner.

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NEDERLANDSE SAMENVATTING

Dit proefschrift beschrijft een studie van de retorische poëtica van de Joods-Babylonisch-Arameese toverschalen uit het Mesopotamië van de late oudheid. Deze schalen zijn bedoeld om hun eigenaren te beschermen tegen de schadelijke invloed van demonen. Om dit te bereiken maken de schalen echter niet alleen gebruik van eenvoudige en directe bezweringsformules: in veel gevallen bevatten de schalen uitgebreide narratieve elementen om hun bedoelde uitwerkingen (namelijk het afweren of uitdrijven van demonen) kracht bij te zetten. Dit proefschrift onderzoekt het narratieve materiaal binnen het corpus van de ongeveer 415 gepubliceerde toverschalen die geschreven zijn in het Joods-Babylonisch-Aramees. Het onderzoek richt zich met name op de rol die deze narratieve elementen vervullen ten behoeve van de beoogde uitwerking van de toverschalen. Door het narratieve materiaal van alle gepubliceerde toverschalen te verzamelen, werpt dit onderzoek een nieuw licht op ‘verhaal’ en ‘narratief’ als vruchtbare categorieën binnen de magische praktijk van de late oudheid en toont het de manier waarop de narratieve teksten ons inzicht kunnen verschaffen in de rijke demonologie van het jodendom van deze periode. Ook beschrijft dit werk in hoeverre het onderzoek naar de toverschalen kan leiden tot een beter begrip van magie in de bredere context van de late oudheid, met name de groeiende rol die het schrift als magisch medium vervult in de eerste eeuwen van het eerste millennium van onze jaartelling. Kortom, dit proefschrift introduceert de toverschalen – die tot op heden onderbelicht zijn gebleven in het wetenschappelijk discours – als belangrijk onderwerp voor toekomstig onderzoek.

Hoofdstuk 1 van dit proefschrift vat het onderzoek naar de toverschalen van de afgelopen anderhalve eeuw samen, om te concluderen dat er behoefte is aan een meer holistische wetenschappelijke benadering van de schalen. Gebaseerd op recent onderzoek naar het verband tussen de fysieke kwaliteiten van een object en de manier waarop dit object gebruikt wordt, wordt benadrukt dat de toverschalen blijken geven van een elegant en wederzijds versterkend samenspel tussen tekst en tekstdrager. Op basis van de grote verscheidenheid aan manieren waarop de schalen omgaan met schrift en schrifttekens, wordt

betoogd dat bij het gebruik van de schalen het schrift, de daad van het schrijven en de ‘geschrevenheid’ van de tekst centraal staan. Op deze manier werpen de schalen een waardevol licht op de idee van het schrift en de daad van het schrijven als hulpmiddelen in onze omgang met bovennatuurlijke krachten. Betoogd wordt dat de zichtbare populariteit van de toverschalen wijst op een groeiend besef van schrijven als performatieve daad op zich, en dat de op de schalen geschreven teksten wijzen op een verschuiving van spraak naar schrift als belangrijkste medium van performativiteit. Het hoofdstuk eindigt met de conclusie dat een analyse van de narratieve component van de schalen een waardevol beginpunt is van een onderzoek naar de mechanica en poëtica van de joodse magie in de late oudheid.

Hoofdstuk 2 van dit proefschrift formaliseert de retorische benadering van het magische gebruik van narratief in de toverschalen, en schetst tevens de contouren van een benadering van de schalen die gebaseerd is op de discipline van retorische narratologie. Hierbij ligt de nadruk op de bijzondere wisselwerking tussen verteller, publiek en intentie, en op de manieren waarop de verteller van een verhaal verschillende narratieve strategieën kan aanwenden om zijn doelen te bereiken.

Hoofdstukken 3 tot en met 5 verzamelen en analyseren het narratieve materiaal in de 415 gepubliceerde (per 2019) Joods-Babylonisch-Aramese toverschalen. Ook wordt in deze hoofdstukken uiteengezet op welke manier narratieve structuren bijdragen aan de bedoelde magische uitwerking van de schalen. Hoofdstuk 3 brengt de vorm en functie van historiola’s in de toverschalen in kaart en legt uit hoe deze teksten door een inherente, onvermijdelijke doelmatigheid – die typisch beweegt langs de structuur ‘instabiliteit-complicatie-oplossing’ – een verfijnd semantisch perspectief schetsen aan de hand waarvan de oplossing van een situatie wordt gethematiseerd. Hoofdstuk 4 vormt een beknopte bespreking van narratieve citaten uit de Hebreeuwse Bijbel in de schalen. Met behulp van een intertekstuele aanpak wordt geconcludeerd dat men door middel van Bijbelcitaten in de schalen gebruik maakt van een zogenaamde ‘derde realiteit’, namelijk door het woord van God direct te verbinden aan de specifieke problemen van de eigenaren van de schalen. Hoofdstuk 5 bestudeert het gebruik van de narratieve toverspreuken die in de eerste persoon geformuleerd zijn. Aangetoond wordt dat deze teksten (in tegenstelling tot de historiola’s) geen beroep doen op een externe autoriteit, maar de bezwering in plaats daarvan juist voorzien van een interne performatieve kracht. Op deze manier wordt het ‘ik’ in de spreuk het punt waarop zowel het natuurlijke als het bovennatuurlijke domein steunen. Doordat op deze manier de grenzen tussen het natuurlijke en bovennatuurlijke verdwijnen, wordt het ‘ik’ macht gegeven over deze domeinen.

Dit hoofdstuk beschrijft ook hoe de narratieve spreuken die in de eerste persoon geformuleerd zijn, gebruik maken van beschrijvingstechnieken en de mogelijkheden van narratieve ruimte om hun beoogde uitwerking te bereiken.

Hoofdstuk 6 borduurt voort op het eerste hoofdstuk van dit proefschrift, en verkent de ingewikkelde verbanden tussen tekst, schrift en het bovennatuurlijke in het antieke jodendom. Het onderzoekt de manieren waarop de mensen achter de schalen gebruik maakten van taal om vorm te geven aan onzichtbare, bovennatuurlijke wezens. Het identificeert de schalen tevens als potentieel vruchtbare grond voor onderzoek naar schrijvers en subjectiviteit. Door het in het voorgaande besproken materiaal in diachronisch perspectief te plaatsen en in verband te brengen met de demonologie van de joodse literatuur uit de tijd van de Tweede Tempel, analyseert dit hoofdstuk hoe de Joods-Babylonisch-Aramese toverschaalteksten omgaan met de demonologie van het jodendom van de late oudheid. Met bijzondere aandacht voor demonische lichamen wordt onderzocht hoe de toverschaalteksten gestalte gaven aan de krachten die hun wereld, als deel van een groter kosmisch netwerk, bevolkten.

Dit proefschrift toont aan dat een meer holistische kijk op het gebruik van de schalen ruimte schept voor een grotere waardering van hun werking, en dat zorgvuldige aandacht voor de doelmatigheid van hun tekstuele en ‘geschreven’ karakter ons inzicht kan verschaffen in de handelwijze en de overtuigingen van beoefenaars van (joodse) magie in de late oudheid, maar ook in de manier waarop mensen omgingen met tekst, schrift en ‘geschrevenheid.’