The Personal Use of Magic as a Form of Control in the Imperial Roman Era, Prior to the Laws of Constantine

By

Bonita Lorraine Calmeyer

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Classical Studies

In the subject

Biblical and Ancient Studies

At the

University of South Africa

Supervisor: Dr JC Lamprecht

30 November 2020

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the following people for without their assistance and support this dissertation would not have been possible:

To my supervisor Dr Liana Lamprecht, thank you for all your patience, wise words, insight and support. Your invaluable input is greatly appreciated, as it helped me to achieve my goal.

To my partner, Danial, for putting up with me constantly bombarding him with all things Roman and for giving me an extra push whenever it was necessary.

To my partner in mischief, Lennette, for keeping me sane with our little get-togethers.

DECLARATION

Name: Bonita Lorraine Calmeyer

Student Number: 3674 4859

Degree: Master of Arts in Classical Studies

Dissertation title: The Personal Use of Magic as a Form of Control in the Imperial Roman Era, Prior to the Laws of Constantine

I declare that the above dissertation is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I submitted the dissertation to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

Bonita Lorraine Calmeyer   Date: 30 November 2020

ABSTRACT

The term 'magic' conjured up many different feelings for the people of Imperial Rome. For many magic was something to be feared, for others it was a frivolous waste of time; a further group were open-minded to magic's potential. Regardless of their feelings, it was clear that the majority of the Imperial Roman populace, as well their leaders, believed in magic and its powers. The result of this was that Imperial Romans, from all walks of society, made use of magic as a means to control certain aspects of their personal and political lives in an attempt to achieve their desires and ambitions.

KEYWORDS

Table of Contents

ABBREVIATIONS

GMP – The Greek Magical Papyri

NIV – Holy Bible New International Version

PDM – spells in Demotic, often with Greek, part of the collection in GMP

PGM – *Papyri Graecae Magicae*

GLOSSARY

Apotropaic:	having the power to avert evil influences or bad luck.
Catarchic astrology:	a form of astrology that seeks the astrologically opportune moment to begin a new enterprise.
Catoptromancy:	a form of divination performed with the aid of a mirror.
Furies:	avenging spirits of murder, especially among blood relatives.
Genethlialogers:	individuals who had learned the skills of constructing a natal chart or horoscope for the exact time and location of a person's birth, in an attempt to determine the new-born's personality or life path.
Hieroscopy:	divination by inspection of entrails of victims offered in sacrifice.
Libation:	a ritual pouring of a liquid, as an offering to a god or spirit or in memory of the dead.
Luteal phase:	the second half of a woman's menstrual cycle, beginning after ovulation and ending at the start of her next menstrual period. This stage is vital for conception to occur.
Medium/s:	person/people who act as channels for the dead in order for them to communicate with the living.
Moon-juice:	a foam deposited on plants by the moon when it is brought closer to the earth in the ritual known as drawing down the moon.
Necromancy:	the practice of communicating with the dead, especially in an attempt to predict the future.
Nocebo effect:	the negative or harmful reaction from a harmless treatment or diagnoses based on a person's belief in the treatment or diagnoses.

Pagan: a term Christians used for people in the Roman Empire who practiced polytheism.

Placebo effect: a beneficial effect that cannot be attributed to the properties of the drug or treatment itself and may be due to the person's belief in the drug or treatment.

Polytheism: the belief in and/or worship of more than one god.

Syncretism: the mixing of different religious beliefs and traditions.

Uterine: relating to the uterus or womb.

IMPORTANT DATES

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Despite its reputation as illegal, dangerous and fraudulent, the use of magic formed an essential part of Roman culture and religion during the imperial era. If one examines its use in Imperial Rome, one would find that magic is a common factor discernible in all forms of the miraculous, medicine and divination. If any form of magic was required, it is highly likely that the Imperial Romans merely had to pay a visit to their local marketplace to find what they were looking for (Dickie 2001: 217-218). There they could purchase amulets and herbs and have their fortune read (Dickie 2001: 217-219). Magic, however, was not only visible in the marketplace. If one studied the surrounding buildings and houses, one would have noticed that many of them were decorated with stone figurines and mosaics designed to protect the occupants from any sort of evil or harm. Most of the Roman populace also wore jewellery such as rings, a necklace or protective amulet, all of which would have been clearly recognisable.

The use of magic in Imperial Rome was commonplace enough that it was not unusual for some people to believe that the cause of any tragedy or personal failure was the result of some sort of magical curse. Those who desired to make use of magic, either as a preventative measure against an 'enemy's' curse or to affect a rival or loved one's actions through the use of a binding spell, would have known who to visit to commission a magical amulet or tablet, since the abundance of archaeological evidence proves the identities of professional magicians was public knowledge.

Roman authorities, however, viewed the use of magic with some concern as it could be dangerous; even its supporters acknowledged that many practitioners were frauds. Authorities, therefore, tried to stop the use of and even the knowledge of magic. This is seen as early as the Republic (510 – 27 BC) and during the Empire (27 BC – AD 476) as many laws forbidding the use and practice of magic were put in place.[1]

---

[1] The earliest Roman legislation relating to magic can be found in the *Twelve Tables*, written between 451 and 450 BC, in which an edict can be found relating to the use of magic: Table VIII.9 made it a crime to move crops from someone else's field to one's own through the use of magic (Ogden 2002b: 277). The *Lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficis* (The Cornelian Law concerning assassins and poisoners of 81 BC) was a law proposed by the dictator Sulla and became the main statute under which all subsequent cases of magic were prosecuted. This was due to the fact that the word for 'poisoner' *(veneficus)* was the same as that for 'magician' (Graf 1997: 46-48).

The large number of spell books and amulets found by archaeologists in Italy dated to the periods between the first century AD and fourth century AD may be an indication that these legal attempts to eradicate the use of magic did not have the desired effect.

1.2 Background of the study

The scholarly interest in ancient magic, especially Greco-Roman magic, has slowly increased over the years. [2] The initial lack of interest could have been due to the overall distrust of things magic, along with the extreme difficulty in interpreting the magic texts themselves (Graf 1997: 9).

The English translation of texts, such the *Greek Magical Papyri*, [3] Greek and Latin curse tablets or binding spells known as *defixiones* and collections of spells have all helped make the sources on magic more accessible. [4] Consequently, this led to the increase in the interest in and study of the topic of magic.

Various studies regarding magic focus on the history and origin of magic, the use of magic, law and magic and magic in various religions, both ancient and modern. Levi's *The History of Magic* (1860) is one of the earliest books written on the topic of magic and it covers the development of Western magic from its origin in the ancient world to the nineteenth century occult revival. The book does include a chapter on the origin of magic in ancient Greece, but it only lightly touches on how magic was perceived and used in ancient Rome.

Another observation is that some of the studies done on the use of magic in antiquity tend to concentrate on various groups of people or cultures who made use of magic, all at once. An example of this can be seen in Janowitz (2001), which looks at the uses of the term 'magic' in groups such as Pagans, Jews and Christians in the first three centuries AD. It also gives examples of how magic was practiced in the form of exorcisms, love rites, alchemy and the transformation of humans into divine beings by examining how such rituals were believed to work.

---

[2] The increase in the study of the use of magic in the scholarly world is evident through works by academics such as Hans Dieter Betz *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, Including the Demotic Spells* (1986), Christopher A. Faraone and Dirk Obbink *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion* (1991), John Gager *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (1992), Fritz Graf *Magic in the Ancient World* (1997) and Daniel Ogden's *Magic, Witchcraft and Ghosts* (2002).

[3] These were translated and published by a team under the leadership of Hans Dieter Betz and published in 1986.

[4] A collection of curse tablets was translated by John Goodrich Gager Jr and published in 1992. A collection of spells was translated by Marvin Meyer and Richard Smith and published in 1994.

There are studies which consider the issue of the use of magic as a form of control, examples of these studies can be found in Faraone and Obbnik's *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion* (1991). One such article is Strubbe's (33-59) and it concentrates on the use of curses to prevent or punish those who dared to desecrate graves and the various reasons why certain gods were called upon to enact the curses. Another example can be found in Versnel's article (60-106) which explores the use of *defixiones* or curse tablets by various cultures in their attempts to manipulate the outcomes of judicial issues. While these articles are insightful, they tend to concentrate mainly on the various curses or curse tablets, rather than their actual use and how the practitioners could have benefited from their use.

The uses of magic seem to have been unlimited in Imperial Rome. This is evident from Pliny's *Natural History*, which provides an interesting look into the various areas where magic was used.[5] One such area is that of medicine and health. Pliny mentions in particular the use of magic in women's reproductive health, particularly in fertility, contraception and abortion (*Nat. Hist.* 30: 43 and 45).

The type of magic mentioned above would have been used mainly by women. These women may have used magic in a possible attempt to remain married, since a woman could be divorced if she could not bear children[6] or conversely, to control the size of her family or even to conceal infidelity with another man, a practice illegal for women in Imperial Rome. Such use of magic could be interpreted as a woman trying to control her life through the use of magic.

The use of magical spells, such as curse tablets and love-spells, was also popular in the Imperial era. Roman poets and playwrights provide us with an insight into Romans making use of this type of magic. An example of this can be found in Ovid's *Amores* 3.7: Ovid believes that a curse was placed upon him as he is suddenly unable to 'perform' in the arms of his mistress.[7] The fact that Ovid was convinced that his inability to 'perform' was due to a curse, shows that the Imperial Romans believed that it was possible to control someone's sexuality through the use of curses. Apuleius provides another example in his *Metamorphoses* 9.29: A baker becomes aware of the fact that his wife is having an affair, therefore he divorces her and asks her to leave their

---

[5] Pliny's examination of magic is in the context of a deliberation on fate – his *Natural History* explains what it is to be Roman and is not so much a list of natural 'facts' but a rhetorical disquisition of how 'real' Romans see the natural world, foreigners and their thoughts on 'fate'.

[6] Cassius Dio (*Roman Hist*. 59.23.7) reports that Caligula divorced his wife, Lollia Paulina, because she was infertile.

[7] Works of fiction are important, as they can provide an interesting insight into the everyday lives of ordinary Romans.

home. The wife then turns to magic, firstly in the form of a love-spell and secondly in the form of a curse. The wife's use of magic in this instance alludes to the need to control the outcome of her infidelity.

Evidence shows that Emperor Domitian was one Imperial Roman leader who made use of divination in his personal life. Cassius Dio notes that Domitian would often consult astrologers, where he made them pay particular attention to the day and hour when the most important and powerful men had been born. Once Domitian had this invaluable information and deemed the subject as a threat to him, he had the person in question executed (*Roman Hist.* 67:15.6). By making use of divination in this manner, Domitian would have the power to stop his enemies from causing him harm, thus prolonging his reign as emperor.

When one critically engages with all the available information on the topic of magic, each study looks at magic and its use in ancient Rome in its own way, from its own perspective and with a specific purpose in mind. While some studies do investigate the use of magic as a form of control by the Roman populace and the leaders of Imperial Rome, they do so from a very impersonal perspective and are not always clear as to how the various forms of magic were actually used as a form of control. I therefore believe that, since there seems to be a gap in the understanding of the use of magic on a more personal or individual level as opposed to concentrating on a specific group such as Jews or Pagans, an in-depth investigation, combined with my interest in ancient magic, into the use of magic as a form of control in Imperial Rome would be allowed.

1.3 Research questions

a) Research question

The research question I will attempt to answer is as follows:

How and why did the leaders and the general populace of Imperial Rome make use of magic in attempts to control the world around them?

b) The following sub-problems or questions will also be dealt with in the study:

Did the Imperial Romans believe in the powers of magic, because it provided them with plausible answers to situations and elements which they did not fully understand due to their lack of scientific knowledge?

Why did some members of the Imperial Roman society make use of magic, while others did not?

Did the Imperial Romans' beliefs and/or opinions about the various forms of magic play a role in how it was practiced?

Are there any similarities between the types of issues and desires faced by today's society, which the Imperial Romans attempted to control with magic?

Did the Imperial Romans use magic as a substitute for or in conjunction with religion to help them solve their problems, because they felt they could better control the outcomes or solutions to their problems, than if they solely relied on religious practices and/or rituals or on human cooperation and actions?

Did Christians in Imperial Roman society make use of magic and if so how and why?

1.4 Objectives

The objectives of the research study are to:

1. Study the concept of ancient magic in order to try and understand its role in the ancient world, especially among Romans of the Imperial era.

2. Gain a better understanding of why Romans in the Imperial era believed in magic and why and how they attempted to use it as a form of control.

3. Analyse the different ways in which magic was used by Romans in the Imperial era and what the impact and legal consequences of its use were.

4. Determine the role of magic in the lives of early Christians in Imperial Rome.

1.5 Limitations of research

The research will focus on the beginning of the Roman Empire in 27 BC and continue until the official recognition of Christianity in Rome in AD 313.

This study will focus on the use of magic by political leaders, especially emperors as well as private persons.

The main focus area of this study will be the ways in which magic was used as a form of control and not necessarily on the history of magic or the use of magic by other cultures, such as the Greeks and Egyptians, in the same time period.

The use of literary evidence such as works by Pliny, Tacitus and Apuleius, will form the basis of my research. Due to my limited understanding of Latin, the above-mentioned works will be read

in English translation. This presents a problem since the context and meaning of the original text could possibly be changed as a result of the interpretation of the text by the translator.

1.6 Definitions

Defining the term or concept of 'magic' has been and is still a fundamental aspect of current research.

How was the term 'magic' used in Imperial Rome? According to (Meggitt 2013: 182-183) the people of the Roman Empire derived a definition from elements which were considered magical, firstly through Latin terms related to magical practitioners, namely *magus, lamia, saga, maleficus, praecantrix, veneficus* and then the practice of magic itself *magica, veneficia.*

Thus, based on this Meggitt (2013: 183-185) believes that magic in the Imperial Roman Empire was a concept associated with the following characteristics:

a) Practices. Magic was often thought to involve nocturnal and secret rites, the use of incantations, spells and the sacrifice of humans.

b) Practitioners. Although it was possible for non-specialists to perform magical acts, a range of identifiable experts were associated with the practice of magic, from sorcerers and magicians to witches.

c) Places. It was believed the particular locations, especially those places connected with the dead and death, such as cemeteries and battlefields, along with secret and isolated places such as caves were regularly associated with magic.

d) Times. Magic was especially associated with the night, a full moon or an eclipse.

e) Materials and artefacts. Specific plants and gemstones, as well as animal and human body parts, were thought to be necessary for the practice of magic. Certain objects, for example amulets, magical books and curse tablets, were believed to be tools employed by those utilising it.

f) Knowledge. Magic was usually thought to involve the possession and application of distinctive, specialist and secret knowledge. This could include technical knowledge, such as the knowledge of specific rites and practices and propositional knowledge, which included the knowledge of supernatural realms and their inhabitants and the true natures of, and potential causal relationships between, animate and inanimate objects.

g) Gods and spirits. Magic was particularly associated with infernal, chthonic gods of the underworld, and the spirits of the dead, especially the restless dead, those who had died too early, or too violently or who had not received the appropriate burial rites, or had been killed by magical practitioners themselves.

h) Effects. Magic was usually thought to be something that was harmful to at least one of the parties involved.

Now that we have a basic understanding of how the Imperial Romans saw the concept of magic, how does it compare to a modern take on the concept?

When attempting to define the concept of 'magic' Versnel (1991: 178-179) indicates that the following distinctions can be applied:

a) That the intention of magic is that it is employed to achieve concrete, mostly individual goals.

b) The attitude of magic itself is essentially manipulative. This is due to the fact that (wo)man is essentially both the initiator and the executor of processes he/she controls with the help of knowledge which he/she has, or which has been put at his/her disposal.

c) The action of magic is often characterised by the attention paid to the technical side of the manipulation, precision of formula and *modus operandi*. This means that often professional help was required since the knowledge was secret. If, however, all the instructions are correctly observed, there is an expectation of direct results.

d) The social and moral evaluation of magic is also important, as often its goals are contrary to the interests of other members of society. Consequently, magic was often deemed as anti-social or at least a-social activity, leading one to believe that magic was immoral, anti-social and deviant.

The historian Graf also provides a number of details regarding the concept of 'magic'. These various details are discussed by various scholars and historians in the journal article entitled *Panel Discussion: "Magic in the Ancient World" by Fritz Graf* (1999).

'Magic' can be seen as man's attempt to deal with the universe, an attempt characterised by mechanical manipulation (Gager 1999: 293). The use of magic was also linked to that of anti-social behaviour (Gager 1999: 295). The forces called upon to enact the various types of spells or curses were generally linked to supernatural forces such as spirits of the underworld and/or demons (Himmelfarb 1999: 300). Graf also claims that the enactment of magic was often done in

secret and it was often necessary for a specialist to provide the correct knowledge to ensure the successful outcome of a magical request (Meyer 1999: 305-307).

When comparing magic to religion are there any differences? According to Versnel (1991: 178-179) there are, and they are as follows:

a) The intention of religion focuses more on the intangible long-term goals or issues which are of importance to society and not only an individual.

b) In the attitude of religion man is dependent upon powers outside his sphere of influence.

c) The action behind religion can include prayer and votives, but results are not dependent upon a specialist, although their skills may be required as mediators, but solely on the free favour of sovereign gods.

d) The social or moral evaluation of religion is that it has positive social functions and it can bring communities and various members of society together.

According to (Bradley 2010: 164) "magic became distinguished from religion in the ancient world because it had the potential to harm the community, therefore becoming a distinct entity in social and legal terms."

With all of the above mentioned information in mind it is possible that a definition of magic by Luck makes some sense (Luck 1985: 33). Magic is "a technique grounded in a belief in powers located in the human soul and in the universe outside ourselves, a technique that aims at imposing the human will on nature or on human beings by using supernatural powers."

The above-mentioned definition is very broad and includes most aspects of magic. I have therefore created my own working definition of magic which I will aim to unpack with and apply in my research: Magic is the attempt to bring about supernatural occurrences and behaviour with the aid of items perceived to hold special qualities or powers in order to gain control over aspects of an individual's life which he/she would ordinarily not be able to control.

This definition can be seen as plausible due to the following reasons: in one instance as discussed in Lucan's *Pharsalia* 6.667: wherein moon juice, which is the foam left on plants exposed to the light of the full moon, was perceived to have special powers and an important ingredient used by magicians and witches in the ritual of necromancy.[8] Another example of

---

[8] Despite Lucan's *Pharsalia* being a work of fiction and relating to events occurring during the Roman Republic, it is useful as it provides the most elaborate description of necromancy in classical literature (Ogden 2002b: 197). The

where this definition can be seen as plausible is in the use of various types of amulets, such as rings or pendants, which could either be made from certain materials or display certain symbols, which were believed to hold supernatural powers to ward off evil or to prevent unwanted pregnancies.

The concept of 'control' is a vital aspect of this dissertation and can be defined as follows: "the ability or power to make someone or something do what you want or make something happen in the way you want" (Longman Exams Dictionary 2006: 322). There are various ways in which people could attempt to achieve this, for example through the use of violence, intimidation or bribes. Magic can be seen as a form of control, as it gave its practitioners the belief that they held the ability and power to achieve their desires and create the outcomes which they so craved. The use of divination is an example of how magic gave its practitioners the power and ability to help ensure that their desires where achieved. This was due to the fact that it allowed them the opportunity to gain information about the future, which then could be used to either ensure that the predictions become a reality or not, depending on the wishes of the practitioner. In most cases the practice or use of magic was done in secret and/or in private, as often the information gained by the practitioners could have led to unwanted problems, such as political unrest, or the type of magic being practiced was illegal, such as curses, and the practitioners and their clients did not want to risk falling victim to the law.

Another term or concept which requires clarification is that of 'evil'. According to the Longman Exams Dictionary (2006: 508) evil can be defined as "something that is very bad or harmful" or "cruel or morally bad behaviour in general, in other words the opposite of good". In order to fully understand the concept of evil, one needs to understand what is meant by the term 'good'. The Longman Exams Dictionary (2006: 659) describes good as "being morally right, behaving correctly or being right according to accepted moral standards." One such example of morally incorrect behaviour is that of jealousy, as it goes against the morals of society it can consequently be deemed as a form of evil (Miceli and Castelfranchi 2007: 440).

The concept of evil is also associated with supernatural powers or creatures, such as evil spirits, demons and witches (Calder 2020: 2). It is often believed that these beings possess powers and abilities that can be used to cause harm (Calder 2020: 2). An example of this can be seen in the

---

use of necromancy continued well into the Imperial Roman years as is evident from Nero's use of it. It is mentioned in various sources, for example Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* (2.29-30) and Suetonius (Otho 7.2) however these fail to provide an in-depth look into the practice. Thus, through the use of *Pharsalia,* we can get a better understanding of how necromancy was practiced as it is unlikely the practice would have changed much over time.

fact that it was believed that evil spirits or demons could cause harm through the spiritual possession of a person. Thus, the concept of evil can be associated with both man and his potential to commit deeds that went against the morals of society and that of the supernatural world.

During the course of this study reference is continuously made to the Imperial Romans, but who exactly where they? The population of the city of Rome was made up of not only legal Roman citizens but also foreigners and slaves from many other cultures. This was mainly due to the fact that Imperial Rome was part of a large empire, which incorporated not only the city of Rome but also the surrounding areas, such as North Africa, Gaul and Brittany. The foreigners who called the city of Rome their home, although often viewed with suspicion contributed to Roman society and their beliefs. Evidence of this can be seen in Pliny's *Natural History* (30. 1-8) where he questions the validity of the contribution of foreigners and their beliefs to Roman society, but at the same time he also acknowledges the value and accepts some of their contributions.

1.7 Literature review

The literature review has been broken up into different sections, because although some of the information found in the various sources overlap, it is easier to understand the main and important aspects of each source if they are placed under headings.

a) Origin of magic

Levi (1860) contains information on the history of magic as well as the practice of magic and occultism. Although the book is quite dated, it is useful for my study because it explores areas such as the magic of the Magi, mysticism, oracles and magic in Ancient Greece and early Christianity.

Bremmer (1999) uses the information collected by the scholar Arthur Darby Nock on the origin of the term 'magic' as the basis of his article. Bremmer claims that Nock did not collect all the available evidence on the topic and that his information has since become outdated. Bremmer's article reviews the evidence and answers the question as to why the terms *magos* and *mageia* arose in Greece.

Graf (2001) questions the statement by Robert Markus (1994) that "the practice of magic was ubiquitous in antiquity; theorising about it was rare" and sets out to prove that the Greeks and Romans had their own theories on the concept of magic.

All three of these authors have focused on the topic of the origin of magic. Levi explores the use of magic by different groups of people in history. Bremmer looks at the origin of the term 'magic' and its use in Greece. Graf discusses available evidence that shows that Greeks and Romans not only practiced magic but had their own theories about it too. What each of these sources has in common is that they all provide an insightful look at where the use of magic and the term itself originated. What Levi and Bremmer are lacking though, is a proper analysis of the origin and understanding of magic in ancient Rome. Levi's work is also outdated, as new knowledge, debates and discoveries regarding the origins of magic and its practice have occurred since the work was first written. It does however allow one to see how the understanding of magic has evolved and grown since the nineteenth century. Graf, however, provides a more critical perspective on the origin and understanding of magic in ancient Rome. These works are useful to the current study as they provide an understanding as to what magic is as well as any Roman attitude towards it. This information is necessary as it provides the basis of my understanding of what magic is, which is pertinent to the study.

b) The use of magic in Rome

Luck (1985) is a comprehensive sourcebook, introducing magic as it was practiced by witches, sorcerers, magi and astrologers in the Greek and Roman worlds. The book contains 130 translated ancient texts dating from the eighth century BC through to the fourth century AD. The author thoroughly investigates these texts to gain a perspective on the darker beliefs of ancient Romans.

Graf (1997) looks at the various forms of evidence that are available to us today in order to assess the belief and efficacy of magic. He explores the different types of magic found in Greco-Roman antiquity and describes various rites and the theories behind them. Graf also explores what the concept of magic meant in Greco-Roman antiquity and how it differed from religious practices or beliefs. He also attempts to provide some insight into the various debates surrounding the definition of the term 'magic'.

Veltri (1998) first identifies the customs and beliefs found in Rabbinic literature, which are known to be the ways of the Amorite. From there, he moves on to identify the various principles that led the Rabbis to forbid or permit certain customs or beliefs. He then compares this information with Greek and Roman magical practices, by analysing Pliny's *Natural History*. This then allows him to look at the attitudes of the Rabbis and Pliny towards magic, which he deems to be similar as both sides are intent on examining and judging instructions that could be helpful or harmful for the eventualities of everyday life.

Collins (2008a) explores what magic is, how it works and what makes it so effective in the lives of the ancients. He also examines references to magic in both Greek and Roman law and provides examples of how these laws were implemented at various stages in Greek and Roman history.

Gordon and Simon's (2010) book contains an interesting collection of essays that discuss numerous elements regarding magic. The book begins with James Rives' review on the term 'magus.' He explores the development of the term from its use to describe a distinct type of religious practitioner to its widely associated use as used by Pliny. Another interesting essay by Matthew Dickie, explores the various Roman historians' attitude towards magic. These historians include Tacitus, Lucian and Cassius Dio. Dickie explores their various attitudes on an individual basis and attempts to provide reasons as to why each historian held these opinions towards magic.

The studies conducted by these authors provide us with information concerning the belief and effectiveness of magic in ancient Rome and other regions. The information found in Luck's book is useful as it provides primary sources of information on magic and witchcraft in ancient Rome. Graf's work looks at specific consequences for different types of magic used. Collins investigates the consequences of the use of magic throughout Greek and Roman history.

These studies are useful as they provide easy to follow examples of the types of punishments used by authorities in an attempt to control the use of magic and whether they were successful in doing so. This is important as it addresses one of the sub-problems of the study. The works of these authors are also useful as they provide practical examples of how Romans personally used magic in their everyday lives. This information will be helpful in my study of magic as it provides examples of where magic could have been used as a form of control.

James Rives' review on the term '*magus*' is interesting as it provides an in-depth look into the evolution of the term. It also explores the difficulties in defining the term 'magic', since the modern and ancient terms can often mean something different. This is done through examples such as its use in legal terms and even in poetry. Matthew Dickie's work attempts to explore how the various Roman historians felt about magic – if they thought it was effective, their opinions of those who supported the art and their perceptions of those who practiced it. Dickie also attempts to answer the question of how these historians believed the state should deal with practitioners of magic. This is done by analysing the various Roman historians and their works in cases where magic is mentioned or explored. Based on this Dickie attempts to paint a picture of each historian's attitude towards magic.

Rives' essay is useful as it provides another perspective on the use of the various terms relating to magic in the Greco-Roman era, as well as the difficulties surrounding the attempts to provide a definition of the term 'magic.' Dickie's work is useful to this study, as it provides not only an insight into the perceptions of various Roman historians and their attitudes towards magic, but it is also possible that their attitudes mirrored Roman society's beliefs and attitudes towards the art. Despite its usefulness, however, Dickie is not always clear in his arguments about each historian's attitude, which makes the work a bit confusing and difficult to follow.

Despite Veltri's angle of exploring magic from a Jewish point of view, his comparisons between the Greek, Roman and Jewish viewpoints on magic are enlightening. It allows us to gain an understanding into the types of magic deemed helpful, or harmful, by the Roman populace. This is useful to the current study as it provides insight into the types of magic Romans would have possibly feared or deemed anti-social as well as the types of magic that were deemed acceptable, further providing a basis to the area of the study that deals with Roman attitudes towards magic.

c) Medicine and health

Tavenner's (1916) doctoral dissertation provides a general introduction to Roman magic as reflected in Latin literature, along with a detailed study on how Romans attempted to use magic in their on-going need to prevent diseases.

Jones (1957) concentrates on the various ways in which magic and medicine went hand in hand to cure or prevent illness in ancient Rome. The article also looks at the different reasons as to why Romans believed magic assisted in the healing process.

The studies of Tavenner and Jones into the uses of magic in the prevention and cure of disease, are exceptionally useful since they provide clear and concise examples of where and how magic was used. One example is the way in which Romans used a combination of magical incantations and herbs to try heal a broken bone or relieve a headache. Jones takes his studies a bit further, by looking into the possible psychological reasons as to why Romans believed in the use of magic, along with 'accepted medical procedures,' to heal them or their loved ones. What these sources fail to explore though, is the type of magic that would logically be used by women as a form of control over their bodies and families. This type of magic includes potions for contraception and abortion and even remedies to help ease the pain of childbirth. Despite the lack of information on women's use of magic and medicine, the information found in these two works provides a useful insight into the use of magic and medicine as a form of control in Imperial Rome, which is one of the areas explored in my study of magic.

d) Spells, rituals, divination and protection

The *Greek Magical Papyri* translated from Greek by Betz (1986) is useful to this study as it contains a number of magical spells dating from *circa* 100s BC to 400s AD, which the Imperial Romans could have used in their attempts to control their lives. These spells include instructions for the removal or exorcism of evil spirits, spells for protection against evil and even love spells to gain the affections of a certain man and/or woman.

Dickie (2000) takes a look at the practitioners of love spells in the late Roman world. The article is based on the supposition that the truth about love magic and the people who performed it can be found in spell books and *defixiones.* Using these types of sources, he claims that men, not women, were the main participants in the use of these types of spells.

Dickie (2001) brings together evidence of the existence of sorcerers in the ancient world, along with their identities and social origins. The book also includes reference to the careers of witches and sorcerers, which allows us insight into the fascinating underworld of Roman society.

The book by Mirecki and Meyer (2002) contains an interesting collection of essays detailing various aspects of magic predominately in the Greco-Roman world. They do, however, also concentrate on rituals and magic in the ancient Near East (Mesopotamia and ancient Israel), in Judaism and Coptic and Islamic Egypt. A number of essays concentrate on the conceptualisation and definitions of magic. These are useful as they provide an in-depth look into the various ways in which the Greco-Romans and other civilisations understood the concept of magic. An interesting perspective given by Sarah Iles Johnston, regarding the use of sacrifice in the *Greek Magical Papyri* is also included. Lynn R LiDonnici explores the various substances prescribed in the recipes found in the *Papyri Graecae Magicae.* These essays are useful to this study, as they explain the role that these collections of magical recipes played in antiquity and how sacrifices and the various ingredients used in these recipes highlight the various beliefs surrounding magic and religion. The collection also includes an essay by Oliver Phillips which concentrates on women known as the "Witches of Thessaly" and their alleged abilities to perform magic, and provides an interesting look at how practitioners of magic, particularly women, were perceived by both the Greeks and Romans.

Ogden's (2002b) work presents us with a collection of primary sources on magic-related issues. These sources provide descriptions of sorcerers, witches and ghosts found in the works of ancient writers. It also reproduces curse tablets, spells from ancient magical recipe books and inscriptions found on magical amulets. All of this is brought together by a commentary that puts it in context within ancient culture.

Dickie's (2001) and Ogden's (2002b) studies are extremely useful as they provide English translations of primary sources pertaining to magic in Greek and Roman cultures. This will be useful in the current study as primary evidence forms the basis of it and these two works provide the necessary examples of where and how magic was used. The commentaries given by the authors on these examples allows for a better understanding of the sources. Their works however are not confined to the Roman Empire and as a result, they can be confusing at times.

Lee-Stecum (2006) looks especially at Roman charioteers and how they built their reputations, either through their actual use of, or their supposed use of magic. She looks at the various reasons why the charioteers would aspire to a certain reputation and how this formed the perception of the Roman populace as well as that of other charioteers concerning the use of magic as a form of control over building their reputations.

Dickie (2000) and Lee-Stecum (2006) both introduce us to the type of people who made use of magic in ancient Rome along with possible reasons why they did so. Dickie argued that it was mainly men who made use of love spells. Lee-Stecum, on the other hand, looks at the possible use of magic by men to gain a certain type of reputation to help them achieve more suitable outcomes in their lives. Both these sources can help us in our effort to understand how Roman society viewed magic and made use of it. It also shows us how Roman society viewed people who made use of certain types of magic. These two studies are useful for this study as they provide examples of everyday or personal use of magic as a form of control. The information also provides insight into how successful the users were, which answers certain aspects investigated in the sub-problems of this study.

Graf (2001) says the ancients knew what they meant when they spoke about magic, sorcery and charms. He then investigates the phenomena that Greeks and Romans placed under these terms in contrast with today's understanding of them. Graf's work is useful as it provides an in-depth look at the use of magic from a Greek and Roman perspective, providing examples of the types of magic used by Greeks and Romans. This information will be useful as it provides insight into why Romans turned to magic as form of control, which forms part of this study.

Andrikopoulos (2009) wrote his doctoral thesis on the topic of magic and Roman emperors. This thesis analyses the association of Roman emperors with magic and magicians. It explores whether certain emperors where represented as magicians themselves, employers of magicians or whether they were victims of magic. Andrikopoulos' dissertation is useful as it gives us a better understanding of how the leaders of the Roman Empire perceived magic and made use of it in their personal and political lives. This information is useful as this study explores the leaders of

Imperial Rome and their personal use of magic as a form of control. It also allows us to have a look at how the general Roman populace was influenced by their leaders' attitude towards magic.

Elliott's (2011) article explores a presentation of the method, emergence and contribution of social-scientific criticism as a part of the critical explanation or interpretation of the New Testament. The article also provides a description of ancient evil eye belief and practice. This article is of vital importance to this study as it provides an in-depth look at the mechanics of the evil eye and examples of circumstances which could lead to its use. It also explores the various ways in which people protected themselves from falling victim to the evil eye. Although the text is useful, it mainly concentrates on the role of social-scientific criticism and how its use can improve one's understanding of the texts found in the New Testament. Thus, it fails to provide an insight into the use of the evil eye in Imperial Rome.

When reading these various works it becomes obvious that although they do provide an insight into the type of people who used magic and their reasons for it, it is mainly done from either a political point of view, in other words an emperor's point of view and/or a civilian perspective. Although the study regarding the "Witches of Thessaly" involves women, it highlights their use of magic in rather a negative light and it concentrates mainly on their alleged magical abilities. Throughout the various works there is little to no mention as to how or why women could have made use of magic in their everyday lives.

e) Laws and consequences of the use of magic

Pharr (1932) explores different laws in ancient Rome that prohibited the anti-social practices of magic. It looks at how successful these laws were and how they were changed at different stages in Roman history in an effort to combat different problems that arose as the result of new types of magic. The article also explores the ambiguity of these laws and the types of punishment handed out if an individual was found guilty of breaking the law.

Rives (2003) discusses Roman laws on magic through the examination of the *Lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficis*, the trial of Apuleius as known from his *Apology* and a passage from the *Opinions of Paulus*.[9] Rives argues that Roman law on magic found in the *Lex Cornelia* slowly

---

[9] The *Opinions of Paulus* (circa AD 300) is a collection of cases regarding various legal issues, for example agreements and contracts, in Imperial Rome. The collection was written by Julius Paulus, a renowned jurist and later, a praetorian prefect under Emperor Alexander Severus. The passage to which Rives refers to regarding this work is 5.23.13-17.

moves from focusing on anti-social and harmful actions to that of a concern with religious deviance. He argues that this change was already underway at the time of Apuleius' trial, but was firmly placed in Roman law by *circa* AD 300, the date of the *Opinions of Paulus*.

Ogden's chapter entitled *Magic and the Law* (2002b: 275-299) provides numerous examples, as well as explanations of how magic and its use were oppressed through various laws and trials in both Greece and Rome. The examples and explanations pertaining to Rome, include an insightful look into the earliest laws against the use of magic, as described in the *Twelve Tables*, it also explores the expulsion of astrologers by various emperors and how legal trials were used in an attempt to punish those who were deemed to be using magic, such as in the case of Apuleius' trial.

Collins' chapter entitled *Magic in Greek and Roman Law* (2008a: 132-167) begins with an exploration of the various terms, such as *venenum*, and how they related to magic in both Greece and Rome. He further explores how these terms became interlinked with Roman laws against the use of magic. Collins' work also provides examples of where these terms were used in a legal context for example, Apuleius' trial.

The works of Pharr, Rives, Ogden and Collins are useful as they demonstrate that Romans took the practice and use of magic very seriously – so seriously in fact, that they created laws in an attempt to control it. Pharr takes a general look at the laws governing magic and its use and at the types of punishment the Roman populace could expect to receive if found contravening these laws. Rives, on the other hand, concentrates on very specific laws and observes how the laws governing magic and its use began to change, especially with the dawn of the official recognition of Christianity. Ogden's work concentrates on specific examples of the different laws against magic, how these laws could be infringed upon and how the perpetrators could be punished as a result. The sources which the chapter explores are English translations of primary sources, such as the *Twelve Tables* and consequently, are vital, as they provides the necessary evidence that is required to substantiate this study. Collins' work concentrates on the various terms relating to magic and their use in the Roman laws against its use and practice. This is useful as it not only provides a detailed explanation of the meaning of these various terms, but it also provides examples of where and how they were used and understood by Roman society and their legislative authorities. The information in these sources provides a look into how Roman authorities attempted to control the use of magic in Imperial Rome, which is one of the areas explored in this study.

Although all of these works provide an insightful look into the various laws against magic and its use in Imperial Rome, they fail to provide any details as to what could be potentially gained from attempting to control magic, whether it be from a personal or political point of view. They also fail to provide a detailed insight into how the law could be manipulated to suit the needs of the Imperial Roman citizens and their leaders.

f) Primary sources

Apart from the above-mentioned secondary sources, the following primary sources will also be used for the basis of this study. These sources are made up of a combination of works of fiction and non-fiction.

Apuleius' *Metamorphosis* although a work of fiction is useful as it provides various examples of where magic was used in everyday Roman society as a form of control. Apuleius' *Apology* is a factual text, as it describes his defence trial against the use of magic. This is useful as it provides first-hand evidence of how the Romans perceived magic and the way in which the law could also be manipulated in one's attempts to control their lives.

Pliny's *Natural History* explores various the properties of various plants and animals and how they can be used to help heal or prevent numerous health issues. Pliny's work also explores the contribution of foreigners and their various contributions to Roman society. Most importantly however, is that the work also contains Pliny's opinions and thoughts regarding magic and its use. Pliny's work is important to this study, as it provides an insight into how magic was perceived by educated Romans and it also provides a number of magical spells which could have been used by the Imperial Romans in their attempts to control their world.

Suetonius' *Twelve Caesars*, Cassius Dio *Roman History* and Tacitus' *Annals* all provide an insight into the lives of the various Imperial Roman emperors, although not always written from first hand experiences these sources are useful as they provide actual evidence of how magic was used by various Roman emperors, the reasons for their use and even the consequences of their use.

In order to gain a better understanding of these texts and their authors, they were analysed by comparing them to what modern scholars had to say regarding their works and their various attitudes toward certain topics such as magic as well as their attitudes regarding certain emperors and their reasons for it. These works were also individually analysed by myself in order to gain my own opinion and understanding of the authors and their attitudes.

1.8 Methodology

The research methodology to be applied in this study can be described as

- Qualitative in nature since it attempts to provide an analytical and descriptive framework and does not make use of quantitative research methods. This study will follow a descriptive historical narrative approach, as it relies on selective and eclectic historical data.

Research is done by:

- Reading and analysing all the relevant sources that contain information on the topic of magic and its use. These sources will include the English translations of Pliny's *Natural History*, Apuleius's *The Golden Ass Being the Metamorphoses of Lucius Apuleius,* Suetonius's *The Twelve Caesars* and Tacitus's *Annals.*

- The reading and analysis of fictional works, such as Apuleius's *The Golden Ass Being the Metamorphoses of Lucius Apuleius* form part of my research. When referring to these types of sources in my dissertation, I will acknowledge that the information being used is fictitious and justify its use with reasons as to why the information forms a valid part of my research.

- The use of primary sources such as curse tablets and an English translation of the *Greek Magical Papyri* – a collection of various types of magical spells.

- When analysing the various primary sources, such as Tacitus or Suetonius, their various attitudes and/or biases will be taken note of, as they can affect the validity or the image presented regarding various emperors or incidents, which they are reporting on.

- In order to differentiate between magic and medicine, the following should be noted: magic normally accompanied medicine in the form of incantations, rituals or appeals to divine beings to encourage the healing or preventative process, whereas medicine was the actual use of specific types of plants, animals, substances and medical procedures believed to cure or prevent diseases. In some cases, however, an overlap of magic and medical practices did occur, when specific types of plants, animals or substances were used to help cure or prevent illness due to the magical healing properties associated with them. These differences or similarities will be noted in my dissertation.

The research methodology also entails:

- To critically investigate existing research pertaining to the use of magic in Imperial Rome and to draw conclusions about the similarities and differences on different issues.

- To draw my own conclusions regarding the usage of magic in Imperial Rome.

  And finally:

- To bring all the relevant information together in a logical manner, in order to create a better understanding of the use of magic as a form of control in Imperial Rome, being the main focus of this study.

1.9 Structure of dissertation

In an attempt to study and respond to the main and sub-topics of this study, this dissertation will be divided into structured and specific chapters. A brief outline of each chapter is provided below.

Chapter 2 Roman attitudes towards magic

Pliny's opinion about magic and its use in Imperial Rome is just one example of how Romans perceived magic. He believed that it was fraudulent, but at the same time, he also saw that it did have its uses. This chapter will study how magic was perceived by the Roman populace during the Imperial era.

Chapter 3

This chapter will explore the various ways in which magic was used in the Imperial Roman era. It will be divided into four sections:

Chapter 3.1 Medicine and health

In a period before comprehensive understanding of illnesses and other health issues was available, magic was often used as part of the cure. This chapter will concentrate on the collection of magical potions and cures meant specifically for women; for example, to aid with abortions. This section will also analyse how the women of Imperial Rome made use of this type of magic as a form of control over their personal and family lives.

Chapter 3.2 Erotic magic, curses and necromancy

The Romans made use of spells and rituals for a variety of reasons. If, for example, they wanted to get rid of a rival, there were a few options available: one could either kill the person themselves, hire someone to do it for them or approach a magician to help commit the murder. The magician would then perform a ritual to ensure the death of the rival in question. Love-spells were also very popular and often used in an attempt to gain the affections of a potential suitor. This section will explore the types of spells and rituals used by Romans in an attempt to

control various aspects of their lives as well as the lives of others who they would not ordinarily have control over.

Chapter 3.3 Divination

The people of Imperial Rome, including its leaders, made use of different types of divination; the most popular being astrology. Those who made use of divination had their own personal reasons for doing so; some wanted to know their futures, others wanted to have their dreams interpreted and others were looking for signs from the gods. This chapter will concentrate on how Romans used divination as an attempt to control their futures by attempting to gain knowledge from the gods to aid them in making important life decisions.

Chapter 3.4 Protection

Most Romans seemed to live in constant fear of supernatural powers and other forces they believed in but did not always fully understand. They therefore paid many a visit to magicians in order to purchase amulets for protection against spells, the power of spirits and demons and evil in general. This chapter will explore the different magical methods used by Romans in order to protect themselves and their families from harm.

Chapter 3.5 Conclusion

This section will sum up the key points of the chapter and include any of my own conclusions which were drawn from the study.

Chapter 4 The legal consequences of the use and abuse of magic

There were many legal consequences for using magic in the Imperial Roman era as Roman authorities often viewed magic with some concern. This resulted in them trying to control its use by implementing laws. This chapter will look at the various laws put in place and the reasons for them as well as examine how the authorities used these laws as a form of control over the citizens of Imperial Rome.

Chapter 5 Magic and Christianity

Although it is often difficult to believe that the Christians of Imperial Rome included various magical practices in their everyday lives, there is evidence that suggests this was the case. This chapter will examine the available evidence to determine whether early Christians did in fact use magic as a form of control.

Chapter 6 Final conclusion

The conclusion will rephrase the topic and explain why this study is important. It will also briefly summarise the main points of the dissertation and provide a short description of the findings and results of the study.

The following chapters will explore the various areas and ways in which the Imperial Romans and their leaders attempted to make use of magic as a form of control.

CHAPTER 2 ROMAN ATTITUDES TOWARDS MAGIC

The term 'magic' meant different things to the people of Imperial Rome. For many, it encouraged feelings of fear, others might have believed it to be frivolous and fraudulent and for some, it was approached with a more liberal attitude. It however would seem that these different attitudes and beliefs did not deter Imperial Romans from attempting to use magic as a form of control. In fact, it is possible that some of these attitudes and beliefs encouraged the people of Imperial Rome to use magic for such a purpose.

2.1 Fear

When studying various sources pertaining to magic in Imperial Rome, it is easy to believe that Romans feared all forms of magic.[10] This, however, was not always the case. On closer inspection, it becomes obvious that the only form of magic they truly feared was black magic as it contained the power to cause them physical or mental harm. Although the magical art of divination itself was not necessarily feared, it was often viewed with suspicion as it had the ability to make the Romans' lives unnecessarily difficult.

The considerable number of apotropaic amulets that have been unearthed by archaeologists and other experts provides the first clue that Romans feared black magic.[11] These magical amulets served as a form of protection against curses and other forms of evil present in black magic. The fact that Pliny's *Natural History* also contains reference to various forms of apotropaic magic serves as confirmation of this:

> "What they [magicians] tell us, too, about the bat… if one of these animals is carried alive, three times round a house, they say and then nailed outside the window with the head downwards, it will have all the effects of a countercharm" (*Nat. Hist.* 29.26).

> "According to what the magicians say, the gall of a male black dog is a counter-charm for the whole of a house; and it will be quite sufficient to make fumigations with it, or to use it as a purification, to ensure its preservation against all noxious drugs and preparations" (*Nat. Hist.* 30.24).

---

[10] There were three types of magic found in Imperial Rome, black magic which contained curses and other supernatural forces that could cause harm, white magic which contained helpful magic, such as apotropaic magic and healing spells and lastly divinatory magic, under which astrology and necromancy fell (Cramer 1954: 276 and Murphy and Susalla 2016: 8)

[11] For more information regarding amulets and black magic, refer to Chapter 3.4.

The sudden illness and death of the popular Roman general Germanicus (AD 19), serves as an example of why Imperial Romans feared black magic. It was believed that his death could be attributed to the use of curses and other forms of black magic due to the discovery of the following:

> "There were found hidden in the floor and in the walls disinterred remains of human bodies, incantations and spells and the name of Germanicus inscribed on the leaden tablets, half-burnt cinders smeared with blood and other horrors by which, according to popular belief souls are dedicated to the divinities of death" (Tac. *Ann.* 2.69).

Shortly after this rather gruesome discovery, Germanicus died. The alleged use of black magic and the mysterious circumstances surrounding the sudden illness and death of Germanicus would have certainly justified and reinforced Imperial Romans fears regarding black magic – because not even those with great integrity and importance were immune to its evils.

The second clue that Romans feared black magic and were suspicious of magical divination, is the fact that there is evidence of several laws pertaining to the use of its various forms. The *Lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficis* (*The Cornelian Law concerning assassins and poisoners* of 81 BC) is an example of one such law which was implemented in an effort to control the use of black magic. [12] Although the law itself does not actually state that it was against black magic, it was the blanket law under which most cases concerning black magic were tried during the Imperial era.

When it came to the magical art of divination, particularly astrology, there were some concerns regarding its use. The Augustan Edict of AD 11 is an example of a law imposed against astrology, not because the art itself was feared, but rather the information that could be gained through its use and the consequences thereof were the actual threat.[13] Similarly, the edicts that expelled astrologers from Rome were not issued because the emperors feared astrology, but rather the astrologers themselves as they could potentially acquire more power due to the knowledge gained through practicing their art.[14]

---

[12] "The statute itself has not been preserved but can be recovered from the later legal discussion on it: Whosoever has made, sold, bought, owned or administered a noxious drug to kill a man, shall be tried on a criminal charge" (Kippenberg 1997: 147-148).

More information regarding this statute and its links to black magic can be found in Kippenberg's study entitled *Magic in Roman Civil Discourse: Why Rituals could be Illegal* (1997).

[13] For more information regarding this edict, refer to Chapter 4.1.1.

[14] For more information regarding these various expulsion edicts, refer to Chapters 4.1.2 – 4.1.5.

The fact that the use of apotropaic amulets was widespread across all levels of Imperial Roman society and that laws were imposed to restrict both black magic and certain forms of divination is enough to convince one that Imperial Romans feared black magic and the consequences of the information gained through astrology. Consequently, it would appear that people realised this pre-existing fear could be used as a form of control as it would not have been a difficult task to convince someone that their fears were well-founded or that their misfortunes were due to some form of black magic.

2.2 Disapproval and lies

Although magic was widely practiced throughout the Roman Empire, it does not mean that it was blindly accepted by all. There were those who questioned its validity and disapproved of it.

Pliny's *Natural History* is one source where this is glaringly obvious. In the opening paragraph of book 30 Pliny immediately makes his opinion on the subject clear:

"Magic, that most fraudulent of the arts…" (*Nat. Hist,* 30.1).

He then goes on to support his accusation with the following argument:

"The magicians, too, have certain modes of evasion as, for instance that the gods will not obey, or even appear to persons who have freckles upon the skin. Was this perchance the obstacle in Nero's way? As for his limbs, there was nothing deficient in them. And then, besides, he was at liberty to make choice of the days prescribed by the magic ritual: it was an easy thing for him to make choice of sheep whose colour was no other than perfectly black: and as to sacrificing human beings, there was nothing in the world that gave him greater pleasure" (*Nat. Hist,* 30.6).

Pliny presents a compelling argument as to why magic was fraudulent. If an emperor who had access to all the necessary resources and the best magicians was unsuccessful in his endeavours with magic, then the likelihood of the general populace succeeding in their own magical endeavours would have been even less. Based on this, one gets the impression that Pliny was also of the opinion that magic was a waste of one's time and resources.

Due to Pliny's blatant statement regarding the fraudulence of magic, it is easy to believe that this was his true feeling regarding the subject. On closer inspection of his *Natural History*, one begins to see that this was not necessarily the case as a complex picture begins to emerge. Despite his obvious feelings, we find among his description of everyday remedies, numerous

references to magical paraphernalia meant to aid those in need.[15] This is rather strange, for if Pliny thought magic did not wield any power, why would he deem it necessary to include such information in his works? Consequently, this could lead one to the conclusion that Pliny had deeply conflicting perceptions of magic. He was sceptical of its validity, yet at the same time, he believed it was real since it aided healing. He also considered it something to be feared, albeit cautiously.

Tacitus also concerned himself with magic in Imperial Rome.[16] As a prominent member and record keeper of the Imperial Roman society, Tacitus' views on magic are important as they possibly mirrored Roman society's views.[17] Tacitus, however, did not openly state what his feelings were towards magic, thus it is difficult to determine what they might have been. A number of scholars have attempted to provide some insight into Tacitus' attitude towards the art: Mellor (1993: 49) believes that Tacitus was sceptical of the validity of magic due to his unsympathetic attitude towards Eastern religions, Druids and astrology. Davies (2004: 166) claims that due to the fear of magic pervading the upper classes of Rome, it is possible that Tacitus could have shared this feeling. Dickie (2005: 95) is of the opinion that Tacitus disapproved of magic as it deviated from the norms of Roman religion. Regardless of what Tacitus' true feelings were, it is apparent he did not accept the phenomena of magic outright and he could also have held conflicting opinions of his own regarding the topic.

On one element of divinatory magic, Tacitus is abundantly clear as to what his feelings were:

> "The astrologers also — a tribe of men most untrustworthy for the powerful, deceitful towards the ambitious, a tribe which in our state will always be both forbidden and retained… Many of these astrologers, the worst possible tools for an imperial consort" (*Hist.* 1.22).

Upon reading the above statement, it is obvious that Tacitus strongly disapproved of astrologers as he clearly believed that regardless of what situation they found themselves in astrologers always had the potential to cause some sort of unnecessary trouble.

This is confirmed by the following:

---

[15] For examples of the various types of magical paraphernalia refer to Chapter 2.1 as well as Chapters 3.1.1 and 3.2.1.

[16] Tacitus (AD 56-120) was a member of the Roman senate and a highly regarded historian of the Roman Empire.

[17] As Roman society is not monolithic, Tacitus' views on magic could have mirrored the upper classes', for example the emperors' views on the topic.

> "… A charge of revolutionary activities was laid against Libo Drusus, a member of the Scribonian family… Firmius Catus, a senator and one of Libo's closest friends, had urged that short-sighted youth, who had a foible for absurdities, to resort to the forecasts of astrologers, the ritual of magicians and the society of interpreters of dreams" (Tac. *Ann.* 2. 27).

> "[Astrologers] also urged him [Otho] on, declaring from their observation of the stars that there were new movements on foot and that the year would be a glorious one for Otho… Many of these astrologers … one of them, Ptolemy, persuaded Otho that he would be called to the imperial office… But Otho accepted his prophecies as if they were genuine warnings of fate disclosed by Ptolemy's skill, for human nature is especially eager to believe the mysterious. And Ptolemy did not fail to do his part; he was already urging Otho even to crime, to which from such aspirations the transition is most easily made" (Tac. *Hist.* 1.22)

In both cases, these ambitious men were assured by astrologers that they were destined for greatness. It does however appear that in each case, the astrologer was unaware of the consequences of his client's rise to power. Drusus certainly did not even come close to achieving the coveted position of emperor as he committed suicide shortly after being accused of treason. Although Otho did achieve greatness, it was short-lived as he too, committed suicide after a few short months on the throne. One may suspect that if the astrologers in question were aware of their clients' unfortunate fates, they seemingly neglected to inform them accordingly.

It is possible that the astrologers kept this fact from their clients as it played a role in them achieving their dreams of greatness. Due to the actions of pursuing their dreams, both Drusus and Otho have not been forgotten in the sands of time. Thus, in a sense, they did achieve greatness, albeit in death and certainly not in the manner they may have hoped.

For the sake of this argument, it is highly possible that had Drusus and Otho been made aware of their untimely demise, they probably would not have been so eager in their efforts to achieve greatness. Thus, Tactitus' hostile attitude towards astrologers is understandable, since in his opinion, it was due to their predictions that these two unfortunate events occurred.

Tacitus also clearly disapproved of the presence of astrologers at the imperial court, possibly due to the fact that he believed they could not be trusted. This point was proven when Thrasyllus lied to Tiberius regarding the time of his death (Suet. *Tib.* 62.3). It is believed that Thrasyllus

intentionally lied to Tiberius in order to achieve his own agenda.[18] Despite his opinion, Tacitus resigns himself to the fact that astrologers would always have a role to play in Imperial Rome and that the state would always have a "love-hate" relationship with astrologers, based on the current mood of the emperors and the people of Rome (Dickie 2005: 90).

Necromancy was another magical ritual linked to divinatory magic. During the Imperial Roman era it would appear that Romans adopted a rather dim attitude towards the ritual of necromancy. It is not exactly clear as to why though. One theory is that Romans were fearful of the practice due to the belief that the individual might return from a consultation with one's life shortened or, worse still, not return at all (Ogden 2001: 263). Another possible reason could be due to the practitioners of the ritual and the bizarre ingredients required to perform it. Generally the practitioners of this ritual were outcasts of society, such as foreigners and old women, believed to be witches.[19] Depending on the type of necromantic ritual being performed, the strange list of magical ingredients required could include human skulls, the bone marrow of a deer fed on snakes and a "ship-stopping" sea monster (Ogden 2002a: 49 and 56).[20] In addition, the fact that the dead were linked with the enactment of curses may have led Romans to associate necromancy with black magic. All these examples could have led Imperial Romans to disapprove of the practice. Thus, in their minds, one had to be somewhat odd, desperate and brave to make use of necromancy (Ogden 2001: 263).

Pliny's conflicting feelings and disapproving attitudes towards astrologers and necromancy is understandable. Generally, people tend to feel this way if they fail to fully understand or trust a phenomenon. For Pliny, it would seem the logical side of him wanted a clear and concise explanation into the mechanics of magic. The fact that it seemingly worked in some instances and not in others clearly confused and troubled him. It did not help that practitioners of magic were also evasive and defensive regarding the practice's inner workings. Consequently, his logical side seemingly convinced itself that it must surely be a fraudulent art. The emotional side of him, however, was apparently not so sure, thus, it is highly likely that despite his doubts regarding its authenticity, a small part of Pliny did believe in magic.

---

[18] For more information regarding this issue, refer to Chapter 3.3.1.

[19] Though a work of fiction, Lucan's *Pharsalia* provides insight into the mechanics of necromancy and its practitioners; in this case the Thessalian witches. Emperor Nero called upon the Persian Magi to invoke the spirit of his dead mother, Agrippina (Suet. *Nero*.34.4).

[20] Ogden's work entitled *Greek and Roman Necromancy* (2001) provides details of the various forms of necromancy and the necessary ingredients required for the rituals.

Tacitus' disapproving attitude towards astrologers was most certainly the result of distrust. He was intelligent enough to realise astrologers were normal people who also had desires of their own. What was to stop them from using their apparent celestial knowledge as a front, to lie and cheat their way to achieve their own personal desires and to retain, or obtain, high-profile clients? He also realised however, that this was a price the Imperial Roman populace and its emperors were willing to pay as the benefits of using the art clearly outweighed the troubles it could cause. Imperial Romans' dim views of necromancy were also due to their distrust and lack of proper knowledge regarding the rituals. Thus, it was not a popular form of divination among the general populace and therefore could have been regarded as the last resort for those in desperate situations.

Although we cannot be entirely sure of the general populace's feelings regarding astrologers, it is however, highly probable that there were those who did share similar views to Tacitus. It is also possible that Imperial Roman authorities were aware of the populace's disapproval and distrust of astrologers. Consequently, this knowledge would have played into the hands of those in authority as they could use it as a form of control. By appealing to preconceived notions regarding astrologers, authorities could easily manipulate the public's view regarding them whenever it was necessary.

2.3 A permissive attitude

The popularity of magic in Imperial Rome appears to have been at its highest during the early to middle years (*circa* AD 11-217) of the Imperial era. It is highly likely that this was because the majority of the Imperial Roman emperors during this period were ardent supporters of magic. In fact, certain emperors even became proficient in aspects of the art themselves.[21]

It would appear the emperors' permissive attitude towards magic allowed not only them, but also the general populace the opportunity to explore its various qualities, which, in turn, was used to control various aspects of their lives. It is, of course, possible that this permissive attitude stemmed from the fact that the emperors recognised the type of image they would present to the public if they made use of such a powerful phenomenon and attempted to keep it exclusively for themselves or worse yet, ban it completely. Thus, in an attempt to protect their fragile image and to keep the peace, emperors allowed its practice and use by the general populace.

---

[21] According to Cassius Dio (*Roman Hist.* 57.15.7) Emperor Tiberius was a proficient astrologer. The *Historia Augusta* (3.9) claims that Emperor Septimius Severus was also allegedly proficient in astrology.

Despite this permissive attitude, there were times when emperors were concerned about the use of magic.[22] In most cases, this was when they felt their authority was being undermined or there was a crisis that threatened the peace within the city of Rome. It is interesting to note that in most of the cases where emperors felt threatened astrology and/or astrologers were the main culprits. This proves that Tacitus' concerns regarding astrologers were valid. Consequently, laws were implemented in an effort to restrict this art. Generally, these laws were only enforced when necessary and were typically a temporary measure as the aim was not to prevent its practice entirely.

Although astrologers were apparently viewed in a poor light in Imperial Rome, it would appear that the attitude towards astrology itself was rather different.[23] Due to the complicated mathematical knowledge and skills required to draw up and interpret one's horoscope, Imperial Romans regarded astrology as a more refined and scientific method of divining one's future (Papathanassiou 2006: 165). This could explain why the general populace and the leaders of Imperial Rome held the predictions that astrology provided in such high regard. It is therefore not surprising that all levels of Roman society made use of astrology to gain a glimpse into their futures. Thus, despite the risks of using astrology, it would appear the emperors and the general populace alike were open to its use as the knowledge they gained from it would have allowed them the opportunity to control certain areas of their lives.

2.4 Conclusion

The picture presented to us when attempting to decipher the Imperial Romans attitudes towards magic is rather messy as the practice conjured up a variety of emotions and sentiments. This is obvious in Pliny's perception of the art. Despite his unmistakable sentiments regarding its validity, he also clearly harboured feelings of fear and belief.

Tacitus' feelings regarding magic are vague, unlike his attitude towards astrologers. Despite his open animosity towards astrologers, he does fail to make his feelings towards astrology itself clear. Thus, it is possible that he held a similar disposition towards the art of magic as he did towards its practitioners, since, in essence, they both contained the power to cause unnecessary trouble. This is a sentiment some emperors also held from time to time as there is evidence of them banishing astrologers from Rome during times of crisis. Despite this however astrology

---

[22] Examples of such situations can be found earlier in this Chapter and in Chapter 4.1

[23] For more information regarding the use and faith in astrology, refer to Chapter 3.3.1.

was one of the most popular forms of divination in Imperial Rome, possibly due its scientific undertones.

Barring a few incidents, the leaders of Imperial Rome clearly held a permissive attitude towards magic. It is highly likely their liberal attitudes provided the correct conditions for magic to flourish as they allowed the people of Rome the opportunity to experiment with its various qualities. Authorities only stepped in when magic was used to cause some sort of physical or mental harm. Other than that, they seemingly paid no attention to the everyday practices of magic.

Overall, this rather messy picture provides some sort of insight into the Imperial Romans' attitudes towards magic. Although we cannot say for sure, it is highly probable the overlapping and conflicting emotions were not just confined to one group of people, but to the entire populace. Consequently, it was this hodgepodge of attitudes that led Imperial Romans to believe magic could be used as a form of control as there is one thing they all had in common – a sense of belief in some form or another.

With the aforementioned knowledge in mind, the following chapter will explore the various ways in which Imperial Romans and their leaders made use of magic and how their attitudes played a role in their belief that it could be used as a form of control.

CHAPTER 3 USES OF MAGIC IN IMPERIAL ROME

This chapter will be divided into four sub-chapters, each of which will explore various types of magic and the variety of ways in which Imperial Romans and their leaders made use of magic in efforts to control various elements of their lives.

3.1 MEDICINE AND HEALTH

During the Imperial Roman era, magic and medicine were often regarded as being one and the same. Pliny, in *Natural History* (30.1) states that medicine was one of the three elements that gave rise to magic. Pliny's *Natural History* along with other historical writings, such as the works of Galen,[24] also provide descriptions of various magical and medicinal treatments, which are often closely linked. As the Imperial Roman Empire was significant in size, it is highly possible that spells and other magical treatments from various cultures were included in the Roman collection of treatments. This is *inter alia* apparent in the *Natural History as* many of the treatments described in it were brought to Rome by the Magi, who were foreigners in the city.[25] It should, therefore, have been no different for magical reproductive treatments as there is enough evidence of the existence of such treatments; many of which were integrated from other areas of the Empire.

3.1.1 Uterine magic

Magic relating specifically with the uterus is known as uterine magic. Its main concern was the timely opening and closing of the womb, which could be used for both good and evil purposes. If practitioners of uterine magic were using it for good purposes, they would ensure that the natural course of conception, pregnancy and delivery occurred. They would also provide the necessary contraceptives and abortifacients as required. The same methods could be applied to more malicious intentions, such as hindering conception, causing miscarriages and complicating

---

[24] The *Claudii Galeni Opera Omina* is an example of Galen's medical works which contain references to medicine and magic.

[25] Magi originated in Persia and were often thought to be priests or magicians (Gaillard-Seux 2014: 209). This was due to the type of knowledge they brought to their various destinations. This knowledge included both magical and non-magical treatments for certain ailments. For example, they recommended that the leaves of pseudoanchusa plants be worn as an amulet to cure certain fevers (Pliny *Nat. Hist.* 22.24).

It is also possible that the Imperial Romans believed the Magi were magicians, due to the fact that they were foreigners and their rituals and way of life were different and therefore viewed with suspicion, and subsequently labelled as magic (Janowitz 2001 9-13). Despite this, however, we cannot ignore the fact that these foreign forms of magic infiltrated Imperial Roman society and consequently formed part of their everyday lives (Janowitz 2001 13).

delivery (Aubert 1989: 426). This section will explore how the women of Imperial Rome used uterine magic as a form of control in their everyday lives.

As our sources suggest, women who required the aid of uterine magic would have had a variety of treatments to choose from. These treatments ranged from simple amulets to more complicated spells and rituals, all of which promised to fulfil the user's needs. It is highly possible that a woman seeking the aid of uterine magic would have turned to a midwife for advice as they were responsible for issues of feminine health pertaining to reproduction, contraception and abortion (Bettini 1998: 187).

In many cases, women of Imperial Rome were closely identified with their perceived role in society; the responsibility of ensuring the smooth running of their households and most importantly, the bearing of legitimate children; in particular, sons. The need for a legitimate son to carry on the family name or legacy was an important part of Roman culture. Thus, if a woman's husband believed her to be infertile, she risked the chance of him requesting a divorce.[26] Fertility was therefore a particularly important factor in the lives of Roman families.

The pressure of being able to bear children could have led women to make use of the following spell to test their fertility:

> "The way to know if a woman will fall pregnant: You should make the woman urinate on this plant, above, again, at night. When the morning comes, if you find the plant scorched, she will not conceive. If you find it green, she will conceive" (*Spells in Demotic* (*PDM*) xiv. 956-60).

The logic here is that infertile women and barren plants are somehow synonymous and that the bodies of women actually affect the agricultural world (Behjati-Ardakani, Akhondi, Mahmoodzadeh and Hosseini 2016: 5).

The outcome of the above-mentioned fertility 'test' could have potentially allowed women the opportunity to make decisions about their reproductive health. If the outcome of the test was positive, a woman could make decisions about the size of her family and she could even attempt to plan when she would like to fall pregnant.[27] However, if a negative outcome was received,

---

[26] Cassius Dio (*Roman Hist.* 59.23.7) writes that Caligula divorced his wife Lollia Paulina, because she was infertile.

For further information regarding women's fertility and the grounds for divorce in Imperial Rome, refer to Hug's study entitled *Fecunditas, Sterilitas and the Politics of Reproduction at Rome*.

[27] It has long been recognised that many upper-class Romans desired small families (Hopkins 1965: 124).

women seeking a family would have most likely sought out methods to treat their perceived infertility.

a) Infertility

One such cure can be found in Pliny's *Natural History* (28.27):

> "…sterility in females may be removed by giving them the eye of this animal [a hyena] [28] to eat, in combination with liquorice and dill, conception within three days being warranted as the result."

This treatment could be used by a woman who believed her infertility was possibly due to health issues.

A second treatment could be used if a woman thought her infertility was due to a curse or some form of harmful magic.

> "The sinews of the [hyena's] kidneys drunk in wine with frankincense restore the fertility taken away by witchcraft or poisoning (*veneficum*)" (*Nat Hist*. 28.27).

A woman could believe her infertility was due to a curse, if she had tried all other forms of treatment without success.

What is most interesting about both cures is that Pliny does not give any dosage amounts nor how to prepare the necessary ingredients. It is highly possible that he was not aware of them as this type of information was generally passed on orally from the prescriber to the user (Sullivan 2009: 51). Pliny also fails to clarify whether the substances that were to be combined with the hyena part were meant to function as carriers for the part, or as a catalyst for its efficacy. Or even if they were effective agents in their own right (Ogden 2014: 299).[29]

When exploring the magical properties of the plants mentioned in the first cure, the reasoning for their use in the cure becomes clear. According to Cunningham (1985: 103) dill is often used in sex and love magic as it increases sexual potency when eaten. Liquorice is also useful as it makes one passionate when chewed upon (Cunningham 1985: 156 - 157). To Romans, the sexual element of conceiving a child was vital. Thus, it is understandable that they could have

---

[28] Pliny reports that magicians held the highest admiration for hyenas and that they attributed certain magical virtues to them (*Nat. Hist.* 28.27). Pliny also devotes a large section of his *Natural History* to these magical virtues.

[29] Ogden (2014: 297-298) provides an insight into how the various body parts of the hyena were used in correlation with the human body. In it he questions the use of the eye to cure barrenness in a woman as its role is not as clear to us as it might have been to the Romans.

believed that infertility was due to a lack of sexual intercourse or improper sexual performance. The use of frankincense in the second treatment is due to its magical quality of protection (Cunningham 1985: 120). Generally, this plant was burned as incense to remove evils. It is not clear why a woman should ingest it though, perhaps it was believed that by ingesting the plant it would help remove the evils from inside the body that were thought to be causing the infertility.

Modern studies on the biological properties of the plants found in the above treatments prove that, medicinally they could have aided in 'curing' infertility. The herb, liquorice is known to contain phytoestrogens. This plant-based chemical copies the effects of oestrogen when it is introduced to the human body. Oestrogen plays a vital role in a woman's reproductive cycle and an increase in this hormone, if timed correctly, may possibly increase a woman's chances of successfully conceiving a child (Zava, Dollbaum and Blen 1998: 375).

The second plant, dill proved to be effective in lengthening the luteal phase of the menstrual cycle and increasing the amount of progesterone levels in the blood (Monsefi, Ghasemi and Bahaoddini 2006: 866-867). Progesterone levels also increase during the luteal phase, allowing the fertilized egg to mature. As the luteal phase needs to be at least ten days long for a successful pregnancy to occur, the lengthening of the phase may have aided women struggling to conceive (Mesen and Young 2015: 138).

The presence of frankincense in the second treatment also had value. The stress of discovering one might be infertile can also play a role in decreasing one's chances of conceiving. When the body is stressed, it releases cortisol and endogenous opioids. These chemicals can interfere with the production of gonadotropins hormones, which are necessary for ovulation (Sullivan 2009: 50). Modern studies on the frankincense plant acknowledge its use as a stress reliever (Schiller 2008: 221-222). Accordingly, its use could potentially lower a woman's cortisol levels, which would increase her chances of conceiving.[30]

b) Contraception

If the test was positive, women would then possibly be interested in using some form of contraception. There are several reasons why women might have decided to do so. It was common for women to be married a few years after puberty. One of the consequences of this was that they risked spending most of their lives being pregnant, whether they wanted to be or

---

[30] It is not always easy to discriminate between 'magical' and 'scientific' cures in Imperial Rome, as the Romans often mixed the effective with ineffective or magical cures together, and any attempt to differentiate between the two would only serve to distort the issue (Hopkins 1965: 135).

not. The upper-class desire for small families in Rome would also warrant the use of contraception. Apart from the obvious dangers involved in being pregnant during the Imperial era, there were other factors to consider: Would the family be able to support having more children and would the legitimacy of a new child be questioned as extra-marital affairs did occur?

Prostitution was legal in Imperial Rome and the brothels were frequented by many men, which could result in a number of unwanted pregnancies. Bearing this in mind, it is understandable, then, that women would want to have some sort of control over their own uteruses. On the other hand, many of the available forms of contraception could also be used to gain control over another woman's uterus, due to jealousy or revenge.

When applying modern definitions to the Roman world, contraception and abortion are sometimes difficult to differentiate. As Veyne (1987: 12) relates, "Abortion and contraception were common practices, although historians have distorted the picture somewhat by overlooking the Roman use of the term 'abortion' to describe not only surgical practices that we today would call abortion but also techniques that we would call contraceptive. Precisely when, after conception, a mother got rid of offspring she did not wish to bear mattered little to Romans". For this study, contraception will be defined as acts performed to prevent pregnancy and abortion as acts performed to terminate pregnancy as they are generally used today.

The use of amulets as a form of contraception was one choice available to women in Imperial Rome. Their use could be interpreted as a less risky form of contraception, as the magical qualities of the plant or animal part could be transmitted through sympathetic magic. The Greek physician, Galen who practiced medicine in Rome, suggested that a woman should tie Roman cyclamen around her arm or neck to prevent conception. He also suggested that stepping over cyclamen would have a similar effect (Musallam 1983: 80). It seems that the plant itself was considered effective both medicinally and magically, or at least it had qualities that could be transmitted through sympathetic magic (Genshock 2016: 17-18).

Pliny suggests taking a hairy spider with a large head and cutting it open to remove two worms found inside it. A woman must then tie these worms onto her body with a strip of deer hide, this will result in her not conceiving for a year (*Nat. Hist*. 29.27). According to Jütte (2003: 34), Pliny was obviously convinced of the effectiveness of this method as he justifies his sharing of such 'expert knowledge' with the following statement: "Of all such preventives this only would be right for me to mention, to help those women who are so prolific that they stand in need of such a respite" (*Nat. Hist.* 29.27).

A rather peculiar component of uterine magic was the use of menstrual blood. Romans as well as other cultures, believed that it contained magical contraceptive properties. According to Pliny (*Nat. Hist.* 28.23) Laïs and Elephantis reported that female donkeys remained barren as long as they were fed with grains of barley stained with menstrual blood.[31] With the belief that menstrual blood held contraceptive properties it is reasonable to think that the following ritual formed part of Roman women's arsenal of contraceptives:

> "Take as many bitter vetch seeds as you want for the number of years you wish to remain sterile. Steep them inside the menses of a menstruating woman. Let them steep in her genitals. And take a frog that is alive and throw the bitter vetch seeds into its mouth so that the frog swallows them and release the frog alive at the place where you captured him. And take a seed of henbane, steep it in mare's milk; and take the nasal mucus of a cow, with grains of barley, put these into a [piece of] leather skin made from a fawn and on the outside bind it up with mule hide skin and attach it as an amulet…" (*Greek Magical Papyri* (*PGM*) XXXVI. 320-32).

The use of the frog in the ritual is due to it symbolising the uterus and its connection with the Egyptian goddess Heqet,[32] who was associated with fertility (Aubert 1989: 432). It is possible that these connections would make the ritual even more powerful, thus increasing the user's faith in it. The menstrual blood probably formed part of the ritual due to its perceived contraceptive properties. Finally, the amulet being bound with mule hide, was due to the belief that mules were notoriously sterile animals, which is ultimately what women were aiming for by making use of this ritual (Collins 2008b: 217).[33]

A recipe for a contraceptive amulet can be found in the *Greek Magical Papyri:*

> "A contraceptive spell: Take a bean with an insect in it and fasten it around yourself as an amulet" (*PGM* LXIII 24-5).

The recipe does not provide much in detail, in that it does not mention if it must be a specific type of bean and if a specific type of fastener for the amulet should be used. One can therefore assume that any type of bean could be used as long as there was an insect present inside it and that it could be fastened to the body using any sort of available material. It is highly probable

---

[31] Due to the nature of their work, it is understandable that they would have opinions about the usefulness of menstrual blood when it came to family planning (Plant 2004: 118-119).

[32] Although the spell calls for the attention of an Egyptian god, it is still possible that Roman women made use of this spell as the Romans would often call on foreign gods if they felt it necessary (Turcan 2000: 13).

[33] For an alternative view on this recipe and its contents refer to Mirecki and Meyer (2002: 366).

that mule hair would have been used, due to its connection to the notoriously sterile animal. Ogden (2002b: 265) provides the idea that the bean can be construed as 'pregnant' with the bug a life-form inside a life-form and so it will hinder any further pregnancy for the woman wearing it.

c) Abortions

Despite a Roman woman's best efforts to avoid a pregnancy, there was always a chance that she would fall pregnant. In the case of an unwanted pregnancy, a woman could decide if she wanted to get rid of the foetus by having an abortion. Abortions were very dangerous and could lead to the death of the mother along with the foetus.[34] One could therefore assume that women would make use of abortions as a last resort, or even as a form of revenge.

The use of menstruation blood in abortion treatments was due to its abortifacient properties. Pliny (*Nat. Hist.* 28.23*)* stated that not even women themselves are immune to the evil effects of menstrual blood. A pregnant woman who comes into contact or steps over it will miscarry. Pliny also reports that menstrual blood was perceived to be fire-proof and indestructible (*Nat. Hist*. 28.23).

These rather useful and seemingly sinister qualities could have led magical practitioners to believe that by writing an abortion or menorrhagia spell in substances known for their abortifacient properties such as menstrual blood, would enhance the effectiveness of the spell and that even with the destruction of the spell tablet it would still be effective (Aubert 1989: 431 and 433).

The following abortion spell could have been used as a treatment. However, it was more than likely used as a curse:

Written above the spell is a complex arrangement of *voces magicae* or spoken magic (incantation) and vowel series. Some of the *voces magicae* are written inside a drawing described as 'heart-shaped', which represents a womb (Ogden 2002b: 244).

> "Let the genitals and the womb of her [insert name here] be open and let her become bloody by night and day". Write these things in sheep's blood and recite before nightfall, the offerings (?)… first she harmed… and bury it near flowing water or near… scratch it on a strip of papyrus (*PGM* LXII 76-106).

---

[34] Both Suetonius *(Dom.* 22) and Juvenal (*Satire* 2.32) claim that the death of Julia, Emperor Domitian's mistress was due to her having an abortion.

It is the way in which the spell reads that seemingly makes it sound more like a curse than a treatment. The fact that it must be recited at nightfall alludes to it being done in secret, which is how most harmful magic was practiced. The flowing water sympathetically encourages the blood to flow as well as the writing of the text in blood (Ogden 2002b: 244). The text found above the spell alludes that it should be written in menstrual blood, thus there is some confusion as to what type of blood should be used in the spell (Aubert 1989: 428). I believe that it would be more sensible for the spell to be written in menstrual blood, based on its abortifacient properties and its durability.

d) Length of pregnancy

The length of pregnancy was another main concern of a mother and her family as a premature or delayed birth could lead to unwanted and unnecessary complications for the child and the mother alike. A mother or family member could have turned to uterine magic for a solution to this issue.

Pliny presents an example of a type of amulet women could wear if they wanted to avoid miscarriages:

The white flesh from a hyena's breast, together with seven hairs and a stag's penis, bound up in the skin of a gazelle and hung from a woman's neck, preserve her from miscarriage (*Nat. Hist.* 28.27). According to Ogden (2014: 298) the use of the hyena's breast meat in this precautionary amulet is because it pays tribute to the breast from which a successfully delivered baby will feed. The stag's penis forms part of the recipe due to its link with conception – it promotes fertility and the prevention of a miscarriage. The fact that the penis must come from a stag is due to the belief that it was lustful and vigorous in its sexual activity. The deer was also linked with Diana, the goddess most strongly associated with fertility and often invoked by women to aid both conception and childbirth (Dixon-Kennedy 1998: 110).[35]

Another amulet reported by Pliny is that the use of small worms found in hay-grass attached to the neck will help prevent premature delivery; they must, however, be removed once childbirth has begun, otherwise they will impede the delivery and they must also not be placed on the ground (*Nat. Hist*. 30.43). In folklore, worms are associated with the element of earth and so they can be linked to growth, fertility and even the underworld (Sax 2001: 274-276). The use of worms in an amulet to avoid a miscarriage therefore makes sense. They will encourage fertility and the healthy growth of the foetus inside the mother. During the birth of the child, however,

---

[35] The Roman goddess Diana was also identified with the Greek goddess Artemis, who was often associated with a deer or stag (Morford and Lenardon 2003: 60 and 201).

they should not be placed on the ground due to their link with the underworld as many of them burrow into the ground.   The worms being placed on the ground during childbirth could be deemed as encouraging ill luck or death for either the mother or child.

In his book, *The Golden Ass* (1.9) Apuleius provides an example of the malicious use of a spell to prolong a pregnancy:

> "The Thessalian witch Meroe, by uttering one word caused her lover's angry and outspoken wife to remain pregnant for eight consecutive years by closing her womb while allowing the foetus to continue to develop."

Even though this story is certainly fictional, and Apuleius fails to provide any wording or details of the spell, it does give us a sense of the amount of power the Romans believed uterine magic held. The story also serves as evidence of the Romans believing in the 'nocebo' effect,[36] as it shows that the outspoken wife strongly believed that she had been cursed by Meroe, which led to her exhibiting the signs of the curse.

e) Birth

The birthing process could be long, painful and dangerous not only for the mother but for the child as well. There is evidence of Romans making use of various methods to help aid the birth process along. A method which was used and is recommended by Pliny was fumigation.[37]

The following is one such method which can be found in the *Natural History:*

> "Woman struggling in labour, fumigated with the fat from the loins [hyena], give birth immediately" (Pliny, *Nat. Hist*. 28.27).

To employ Ogden's (2014: 297-298) reasoning about correlating hyena parts with healing, the use of hyena loin fat is sensible. This is due to its link with the loins of the woman who was giving birth and the fat could be symbolic of an easy childbirth.

---

[36] The 'nocebo' effect can be defined as when one strongly believes they will be harmed either through the use of medication or just being told that something bad will happen to them. It is the opposite of the 'placebo' effect (Schott 2018: 1-3).

[37] The process of fumigation was a specialised medical practice which involved the heating of certain substances, such as the one mentioned above, in a metal or ceramic pot with a close-fitting lid. The lid was pierced with a hole and a reed or lead tube was placed through it. The other end was inserted into a woman's vagina and it was through this tube which the supposedly healing smoke passed (Jackson 1988:91).

3.1.2 How does uterine magic work?

Even though modern studies have shown some of the magical treatments used by Romans did have legitimate healing properties, the majority of them did not and Romans would not have the means available to make them aware of this. Consequently, they would have attributed the healing powers of the treatments to a combination of sympathetic magic and an unknown and mysterious healing power, now known as the 'placebo' effect (Schott, 2018: 1).

There are two categories of sympathetic magic and both are relevant to our case. The first category is imitative or homeopathic magic. According to González-Wippler (1991: 6) with this type of magic, "like produces like or an effect resembles its cause". This means parts that once comprised a living creature would retain the essential characteristics of that creature (González-Wippler 1991: 6).[38] An example of this can be seen in the use of a stag's penis as part of an amulet as it was believed that the person who wore it would imitate or acquire the sexual vivacity of the animal.

The second category is contagious magic. This type of magic states that objects that came into contact with each other will continue to act upon each other even after the contact has been broken (González-Wippler 1991: 6). Amulets would have worked through this form of magic as it was believed that they derived their power from their connection with natural and supernatural forces (Ricky 2009: 119). The efficacy of amulets was also determined by the type of material used to construct them, the various texts or images inscribed upon them and their consecration (Martínez 2017: 177-192). This means it is possible to affect someone in either a positive or a negative manner if one were to acquire some object that had previously come into contact with that individual. The use of a living frog, bitter vetch seeds and menstruation blood as parts of a contraceptive spell provide us with an example of this type of magic. The vetch seeds that had originally come into contact with the woman using them and despite having fed them to the frog, which was let lose afterwards, would still be able to protect the woman from conceiving. Thus, it was believed that the magic acting upon the seeds would achieve the desired outcome because of the initial contact that had taken place, even though the seeds were no longer at hand.

The 'placebo' effect describes the case when a treatment deemed to be ineffective still improves the user's condition, simply due to that user's expectation that it will be helpful. Expectation plays a vital role in the placebo effect. The more a person believes they are going to benefit from a treatment, the higher the possibility of it being a success (Kaptchuk and Miller 2015: 8).

---

[38] For more information regarding sympathetic and contagious magic refer to Frazer's work entitled *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion.*

The 'placebo' effect has also been known to give people the illusion that they have some control over areas they normally could not. This is due to the belief that, by making an effort to obtain the desired outcomes in one's life, they are having some sort of say in the direction of their lives (Geers, Rose, Fowler, Rasinski, Brown and Helfer 2013: 550-551).

Thus, the combination of the elements of sympathetic magic and what we now know as the placebo effect found within uterine magic, would have given the women of Rome a sense of control over their own lives. This is due to them essentially believing this type of magic allowed them to create their own reality thus allowing them to control it (Thomson 1973: 13).

Of course, if Romans did not get the expected results, it is possible that they thought it was due to them not receiving the magic correctly; the failure was with the magician, not the magic (Frankle and Stein 2005: 147). According to Frankle and Stein (2005: 147) "…if the belief is that the ritual must be performed without error for it to succeed, failure of the ritual is direct evidence that the magician made an error." It was also possible that someone else was cursing them using harmful magic and this was the cause of their failure (Frankle and Stein 2005: 147). Thus, it would seem that if the desired outcome was not achieved, it was not because of the magic itself, but rather because of mistakes made by the practitioner's use of it.

3.1.3 Conclusion

Often, the lives of the women in Imperial Rome were defined by men. This meant that, for most of them, their main role in society was simply to be "a good wife and mother" as the need for legitimate children, particularly boys, was an essential part of Roman life. For some women, however, their role in Imperial Roman society was that of a prostitute. It did not matter which category a woman fell into as the issue of fertility and pregnancy would most likely have been the defining factor in their lives. Regardless of what a woman required or desired when it came to fertility and pregnancy, it is highly probable that she would have wanted some form of control over the issue.

The use of uterine magic would have given them this sense of control over a particularly personal part of their lives, due to the elements of sympathetic magic and the placebo effect found within. Each woman would have had her own reasons for making use of various treatments, either as a method to ensure her own personal reproductive needs were met or as a method to ensure harm came to other women. Sufficient evidence does not exist on whether women in Rome were successful in their attempts to control their reproductive needs. We do know, however, that the Roman authorities were concerned about the decreasing size of the Roman population and that the upper classes did, in fact, have small families. Whether uterine

magic had a part to play in this, we obviously cannot determine, but we also cannot rule it out entirely.

3.2 EROTIC MAGIC, CURSES AND NECROMANCY

Although very different forms of magic, erotic magic, curses and necromancy, allegedly all have the ability to manipulate supernatural forces in order to achieve a certain or desired outcome (Betz 1986: xlvii - xlviii). It is due to this common factor that these various forms of magic have been grouped together, as each of them required the help of a supernatural force, such as gods, for example Aphrodite, and/or a spirit of a dead person. Another factor in grouping these forms of magic together is that their use could be seen as something bad or evil, depending on the perspective one takes. Based on the information found in various historical sources, the populace of Imperial Rome, [39] as well as their leaders, recognised this and thus began taking advantage of it. This section explores how the aforementioned forms of magic were used by Imperial Romans and their leaders in their attempts to gain control over various aspects of their lives.

3.2.1 Erotic magic

According to Dickie (2000: 565) erotic magic can be defined as "any form of magic intended to manipulate the sexual behaviour of others." It was one of the most popular forms of magic in the ancient world. The main aim of this type of magic was to encourage the object of one's desires to reciprocate sexually, although there are some spells that sought to promote love and marriage (Gager 1992: 83). Apart from attraction spells, there were also separation spells that could be used with the aim of causing the advances of a romantic rival to fail, or to have a philandering spouse end an affair (Edmonds 2014: 283).

The casting of erotic spells was not only due to love or contempt as they could also be cast by prostitutes, for example, whose motives for the spells were not necessarily sexual, but rather made in an attempt to compel their clients to turn away from rivals (Dickie 2000: 565). During the Imperial Roman era infidelity and sexual promiscuity were considered normal, it is therefore understandable that erotic magic would have been used in an attempt to gain some sort of control over a rather competitive and complex area of life.

a) Separation spells

A spouse, lover or family member could have turned to separation spells to control a loved one's sexual desires. This was possibly due to the fact that the main aim of separation or restraining spells was to prevent a beloved from engaging in an erotic relationship with a specific rival, or any potential rivals and to prevent any rivals from engaging in an erotic relationship with a

---

[39] Examples of these historical sources include Pliny's *Natural History* and *The Greek Magical Papyri.*

beloved (Edmonds 2014: 284). Depending on whose point of view one is looking from these spells could have been either a curse or a blessing.

The following are examples of the personal use of separation spells:

Pliny provides an example of a separation spell that could be used on a woman to prevent her from having sex:

> "… if a woman's loins are rubbed with blood taken from the ticks upon a black wild bull, she will be inspired with an aversion to sexual intercourse: she will forget, too, her former love, by taking a he-goat's urine in drink, some nard being mixed with it to disguise the loathsome taste" (*Nat. Hist.* 28.77).

It is possible that this spell was used to protect not only a woman's virtue, which was highly valued during the Imperial Roman era, but also her sexuality. According to Clark (1981: 200) it was of vital importance to the Romans that a woman had an undefiled body and mind. Thus, Imperial Romans sought to control a woman's sexuality to protect her chastity, so as to prevent her and her family from being shamed by society (Dickie 2000: 568). Women were also meant to uphold *pudicitia*, a complex virtue that was a combination of chastity, sexual fidelity and fertility (Joseph 2018: 30). This virtue was inextricably tied to a woman's role as wife and mother, her true place in Roman society and was therefore of utmost significance in determining how she was viewed (Joseph 2018: 30).

On the other hand, a husband or lover might have chosen to use such a spell, to keep his wife or mistress exclusively for himself. This could have been because of jealousy, or simply selfishness; not wanting to share her with others. By keeping a woman for himself, it was likely that a man's self-esteem increased as he could have believed he had trumped all his rivals by disallowing them the opportunity to pursue his woman.

Another separation spell also involving blood can be found in the narrative of Empress Faustina (AD 145-175) and her infatuation with a gladiator.[40] According to the *Historia Augusta* (19.1-9) Faustina became infatuated with a particular gladiator after she had seen him pass her by. After a long illness, she confessed her love for the gladiator to her husband, Emperor Marcus Aurelius. Upon hearing this, Marcus referred the matter to the Chaldeans. They, in turn, advised that the gladiator be killed and that Faustina should bathe herself in his blood, then sleep with her

---

[40] Though it is highly possible that this narrative is not entirely true, it does provide us with an idea of the type of circumstances in which erotic magic could be used.

husband, Marcus in this condition. This advice was duly carried out and Faustina was delivered of her love.

Marcus Aurelius' reaction to Faustina's confession about loving another man, is clearly one of jealousy. It is highly likely that Marcus' ego had been bruised by this confession as he could have felt that his affections towards Faustina were not good enough. It is plausible that he was angered by the existence of a suitor who was in competition with him. The killing of the gladiator can be interpreted as Marcus sending an obvious message to other potential rivals and to Faustina, that there were serious consequences for anyone competing against him. Whereas Faustina, having to bathe in the gladiator's blood, would have had a more private experience and thus, would have been given a more personal warning. Going to bed with Marcus straight after bathing in blood could have possibly led her to re-evaluate her feelings for the gladiator as she was forced to realise that the gladiator was dead and thus, she was required to turn her full attentions to her husband. Through the use of a separation spell, Marcus would have manipulated the situation to suit his desires as he ensured Faustina's affections were exclusively his.

When reading these separation spells, two points of interest stand out. The first is, that the use of blood, whether animal or human, seemingly contained the power to suppress one's sexual desires (Ogden 2002b: 230). The second being, the administration of these spells would not have been pleasant. Thus, it is feasible to believe that the 'victims' of these spells would not have been willing participants and thus they would have been forcibly administered.

Ovid's *Amores* is a collection of poems portraying the evolution of the poet's affair with a married woman named Corinna.[41] Throughout the collection Ovid portrays himself as a capable lover, until poem (3.7), were he is suddenly unable to 'perform' in the arms of his mistress. To console himself, the poet attempts to provide various reasons as to why he has found himself in such an awful predicament. He finally concludes that he has been the target of a separation spell. According to Gager (1992: 250) the ease with which Ovid considers this explanation suggests that the practice was well-known in Imperial Rome.

As with other spells, it is highly probable that this spell was commissioned by a jealous husband, or possibly even another lover, who were seeking to fend off any rivals. There are, however, some noticeable differences: The first was the target of the spell. In the previous example, the

---

[41] Though a work of fiction it provides us with evidence of the fact that Romans believed in the existence and efficacy of erotic magic.

targets were women. In this case, the target was the other man in Corinna's life and not her. The spell also differs from the others in that it was aimed to affect his physical anatomy and not his emotions. Perhaps, the reasoning behind this was that Corinna would grow tired of Ovid's inability to perform in bed and thus, end the relationship. Finally, the most obvious difference is the administration of the spell. In the above examples, the targets came into direct contact with the spells, whereas Ovid did not, suggesting the spell was meant to be a curse.[42] As curses were meant to cause harm, it is possible the spell was also meant to punish Ovid for daring to commit adultery as well as end the relationship.

The following is an example of a separation spell found in the *PDM* xii. 108-18 [*PGM* XII. 466-68].

> * A spell [to] cause a woman to hate a man…: You bring dung, hair and hair…which is dead,/and you mix them with fresh blooms, and you put it in a new papyrus after writing on the papyrus first with my ink, saying, "May NN, born of NN, hate NN, born of NN!" And you recite these true names over it 7 times, and you bind the papyrus, and you put in the water of…
> Here are / the true names: LAKYMBIAI IAŌ IŌERBĒTH IŌBOLGHOSĒTH BASELE OM GITATHNAGS APSOPS ŌELT, separate NN, born [of] NN, from NN, born of NN; hurry, hurry; be quick, be quick!"

One of the first elements one would notice regarding this spell is its aggressive language – it starts of by informing the practitioner that its use will cause the victim to hate a man; either her husband or a rival suiter. Although the spell lists the required ingredients it is not clear as to what type of dung should be used, if the required hair should come from the victim and what type of flowers or plants were necessary. Despite this lack of information it would be sensible to think that the dung would come from some sort of animal such as a hyena and the hair would have belonged to the victim. It is well-known that the Imperial Romans believed that the hyena held various magical properties and that in order for sympathetic magic to work, it was often necessary to use some personal item which had come into contact with the victim.[43] It is not exactly clear why dung would be used, perhaps, due to its disgusting nature it was meant to

---

[42] Generally, curses were performed in secret and the target was unaware of the ill wished upon him or her until it became apparent. More information regarding curses can be found under the heading *Curse tablets and the Evil Eye*, further on in this Chapter.

[43] Refer to Chapter 3.1 and Chapter 3.2 for more information regarding the various magical properties of a hyena and for the mechanics of sympathetic magic.

cause a woman whose hair was mixed in with it, to find a certain man disgusting. The new blooms could signify the blossoming of a new relationship with the practitioner of the spell. The fact that the papyrus was bound and placed in water is synonymous with curses, as they were generally bound and placed in underground water sources such as springs or wells, due to their close proximity to the spirits of the underworld who would enact the spell (Ogden 2002b 210). This suggests that this spell could have been used as a curse.

This type of separation spell could therefore either be used as a method for a suiter to separate the woman he desired from any rivals or by another woman as a curse to punish a rival for 'stealing' their partner or suiter.

For any Imperial Roman who sought ways to gain control over a loved one's sexual desires, separation spells were an option. These spells allegedly contained the power to fend off and punish any unwanted suitors and rivals, to tempt women away from their husbands and even avert them from sex. Whether the petitioners of these types of spells were always successful in their attempts, we obviously cannot say. Judging, however, by the large volume of spells that exist they obviously believed in their efficacy.[44]

b) Attraction spells

The need to feel loved is an essential part of any person's make-up. What happens, however if the love that we so crave is unrequited or worse yet, lost? How do we go about fixing these issues, especially after all conventional methods have failed? For Imperial Romans, the answer was attraction or retaining spells. These spells promised to fulfil one's sexual desires through the manipulation and control over other's sexual behaviour.

The following are examples of how attraction spells could be used for personal gain:

It is likely that Pliny recognised the need to feel loved as he included a few attraction spells in his *Natural History.*

> "…that the bristles of the [hyena] snout, applied to a woman's lips, have all the effect of a *philtre* …" (*Nat. Hist.* 28.27).[45]

The second spell also makes use of hyena body parts:

---

[44] For more examples of various types of love spells refer to the *PGM*.

[45] The word *philtre* can be translated to mean love drink (Edmonds 2014: 286).

> "The anus… has so powerful an effect as a *philtre*, that if it is worn on the left arm, a woman will sure to follow the wearer the moment he looks at her (*Nat. Hist.* 28.27)

Imperial Romans believed the hyena was a highly magical creature and therefore included various parts of its body in their magical spells.[46] Ogden (2014: 297-298) believes the use of certain body parts was often meant to be symbolic. Thus, the body parts chosen for these spells are not surprising. In the first spell, the use of a hyena's snout bristles on a woman's lips could be symbolic of a soft kiss, since it is highly probable they would have tickled the woman's lips when rubbed across them, similar to a gentle kiss arousing her senses.[47]

The employment of the hyena's anus in the second spell could be seen as an attempt to draw a woman's attention to the wearer, as anal sex formed part of Imperial Romans' sexual lifestyle. [48] Thus, its use could have been perceived as a method to advertise the wearer's sexual intent.

The following is an example of a rather simple attraction spell:

> "Aphrodite's name which becomes known to one quickly is NEPHRIËRI – this is the name. If you wish to win a woman who is beautiful be pure for 3 days, makes an offering of frankincense, / and call upon this name over it. You approach the woman and say it seven times in your soul as you gaze at her and in this way it will succeed. But do this for 7 days" (*PGM* IV. 1265-74).

Though the spell calls on the Greek goddess of love, Aphrodite, it is possible Imperial Romans chose to keep the name or substitute it for their own goddess of love, Venus. Either way, it is possible they believed, that by calling upon a goddess of love, their chances of success would increase.[49] According to Cunningham (1985:120) the burning of frankincense drives out any evil and negativity. It is therefore used for purification purposes, which could have aided in keeping the individual, who makes use of the spell not only sexually pure, but spiritually pure, too. Finally, psychologists believe that eye contact can lead to attraction or cause a state of

---

[46] Pliny devotes a large section of his *Natural History* to the magical properties of the hyena.

[47] According to Younis, Fattah and Maamoun (2016: 20) the lips are an erogenous part of the body as touching or stimulating them can excite sexual feelings.

[48] According to Tyner (2015: 22) "the Romans did not shy away from anal sex."

[49] It is also possible that the names of the various deities used in numerous spells did not carry any particular meaning or power as the names changed depending on the language of the practitioner of the spell. (Graf 2007: 74-75).

arousal in people (Helminen 2017: 30).[50] Thus, it makes sense that this act forms part of an attraction spell.

A male seeking the love of a specific woman could also make use of the following attraction spell, found in the *Greek Magical Papyri*: [51]

> "Attraction of a woman with a seashell and a bathhouse furnace:
> Take a shell from the sea and paint the figure of Typhon shown below on it, with myrrh ink, together with his names, in a circle and caste it into the furnace of a bathhouse. When you caste the shell, recite these names written in a circle and add, "Bring me (insert her name), whom (insert her mother's name) bore, today, from this hour, burning in her soul and her heart, quickly, quickly, now, now…" (*PGM* VII. 467-77)

Although the spell does not specify what type of seashell to use, it is highly probable that an oyster shell was the shell of choice as they were often associated with love and romance. Imperial Romans also associated oysters with their goddess of love Venus (Webster 2007: 165).[52] The significance of the names being written in a circle could be to signify the strength and unending desire for this person's love.[53] According to Ogden (2002b: 233) this spell exploits the heat of the bathhouse to instil the heat of desire.

The following is another example of an attraction spell found in the *Greek Magical Papyri:*

> "… in frenzy may she (NN) come fast to my doors,
> Forgetting children and her life with parents,

---

[50] Helminen's study entitled *The Effect of Eye Contact on Arousal and Attention: A psychophysiological perspective.* (2017) provides an in depth look into the mechanics of this phenomenon.

[51] Whether or not these spells originated in Egypt is not known. It is certain though that they were used throughout the Mediterranean (Dickie 2000: 565). Thus, it is highly probable that they formed part of the Imperial Roman collection of erotic magic.

[52] Romans associated oysters with the goddess Venus (Aphrodite) due to her conception: In Hesiod *Theogonia* (176-206) Aphrodite was born from the foam of the blood dripping from the Sky God Uranus' castrated sexual organ. Hesiod said the god's testicles fell into the sea and from the foam of the sea Aphrodite was born. "The etymological root of 'Aphrodite' comes from the Greek word '*aphros*' which means foam. The erotic origin signified by the word 'Aphrodite' also lies beneath the word "aphrodisiac. In Greek mythology, the goddess of beauty, love and fertility drifted away to the shores of Cyprus in an oyster shell" (Akdeniz 2017: 343). Consequently, the oyster shell became a symbol of Aphrodite and her qualities. The presence of the oyster shell in paintings such as '*The Birth of Venus'* by Botticelli is an example of the erotic links between oysters and Venus (Aphrodite) (Akdeniz 2017: 339).

[53] Circles are meant to denote eternity and strength (Nozedar 2008: 9). Rings also carry a similar symbolic meaning, of unity and eternity (Nozedar 2008: 123).

And loathing all race of men / and women

Except me (NN), but may she hold me alone

And come subdued in heart by love's great force…" (*PGM* IV. 2755-61).

This spell is noticeably different from the previous examples as it does not aim to avert a woman from sex or punish any rivals. It aims, instead to lead a dutiful wife from her husband's bed into that of another (Stratton 2014:167). It is not clear whether the petitioner of the spell was really in love with the woman or whether he just sought to bed her. It does, however, call for her to forget her previous life and concentrate on her new life and/or love. [54]

Though the following narrative is fictitious, it is useful as it provides possible evidence of the fact that it was not only men who made use of erotic magic.[55]
Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* (9. 28-29)

> "The baker divorced his wife and made her leave the house… But she sought out an old
> woman who was believed to be able to do whatever she pleased by means of curses and
> spells. … The baker's wife promised her a large sum and urged her to do one of two
> things: either to soften her husband's heart so that they might be reconciled or, failing that,
> to invoke some spirit or infernal deity to put a violent end to his days. This powerful
> woman, able to control the gods, first tried the milder forms of her evil art and sought to
> influence the offended feelings of the husband. … But when the results turned out
> differently from her expectations, indignant at the gods… she began to attack the very life
> of the poor man and to stimulate the spirit of a woman who had met a violent death to
> carry out his destruction."

Apuleius' narrative brings some interesting points to light. While it fails to provide the exact details about the spells used in the tale, it provides some insight into the circumstances in which erotic or curse magic could be used. It also highlights the point that erotic magic was not always successful in fulfilling its promises of rekindling lost love. The most interesting aspect, however, is that Apuleius, a male author, found it necessary to record a tale about a woman's use of erotic and curse magic.

---

[54] The call for a beloved to forget her past or other rivals of the petitioner was common in separation spells (Ogden 2002b: 118).

[55] There is a continuous debate amongst historians as to who exactly practiced erotic magic and why. Dickie's study entitled *Who Practiced Love-Magic in Classical Antiquity and the Late Roman World?* (2000) provides some interesting arguments.

There are a number of possible reasons for this: Firstly, it is possible that Apuleius was following the literary trend of using females as a method to depict men deviating from their normal and accepted characters (Edmonds 2014: 292).[56] Secondly, he could voice his own as well as other men's fear of the consequences of women taking control of their own sexuality (Edmonds 2014: 292). Finally, Apuleius simply could be inspired to record such a tale as it was based on true events, which were of interest to him.

Apuleius' tale is one of manipulation and revenge; the baker's wife was clearly not ready to accept her fate. Thus, she attempts to manipulate the situation to suit her wishes, her weapon of choice being magic – firstly, erotic magic, in the form of an attraction spell. It is possible that despite her adulterous ways, the woman really did love her husband and consequently, wanted him back. Another possibility is that although divorce *per se* was not frowned upon in Imperial Rome, the reason for it was.[57] Thus, the baker's wife could lose her social standing and risk being shunned by society. It is therefore understandable that failing to regain her husband's affections, the woman turned to curse magic in order to punish him for his 'ill' treatment of her.

For those seeking love, wishing to rekindle love, or even just to promote new sexual conquest, attraction spells promised to help fulfil these desires. Through the manipulation and control of the desired one's sexual behaviour, the petitioners of these spells believed they stood a chance to attract their potential beloved.

c) Erotic magic and additional desires

Erotic magic was a useful agent in either protecting or gaining a beloved. What if however, there was more behind Imperial Romans' use of erotic magic? Did they stand to fulfil additional desires by controlling other's sexual behaviour?

The use of erotic magic could have been due to political or personal ambitions. The following scenarios are examples of its use for political reasons:

For some, the use of erotic magic could have allowed them the opportunity to improve their social standing and prospects in life. Imperial Roman society was made up of a class system that

---

[56] According to Edmonds (2014: 292) "the predominance of women in the imaginative depictions of erotic magic seems, however, to stem primarily from their place in the Greco-Roman imaginary as Other, it is a way of depicting difference from the male norm."

[57] A woman guilty of committing adultery was socially unacceptable in Imperial Rome (Richlin 2006: 350).

would often dictate one's lot in life.[58] Graf (1997: 186) claims that men of lower classes could use various erotic spells to seduce women of a higher social ranking, to improve their own social ranking through marriage.

Families with daughters also stood to gain from the use of erotic magic. According to Graf (1997: 186) "through marriage, a daughter could bring her family benefits resulting from relations with another house." Thus, it was important to protect her integrity and innocence from unsolicited admirers, such as the type of men mentioned in the previous paragraph. Failing that erotic magic would also give families an acceptable excuse to explain any scandalous misbehaviour attributed to their daughters should they be found to have dallied with men below their social station (Stratton 2014: 167).

The following scenario is an example of personal reason for a practitioner's use of erotic magic:

Male masculinity was of great importance in Imperial Roman society. According to Williams (1999: 155) Roman men could ensure their masculinity by mastering self-control, particularly when it came to controlling their sexual appetite. While it is possible some men did their best to live up to that expectation, reality presents a rather different picture. This is due to the fact that prostitution was legal and that it was acceptable for men to have mistresses or other sexual partners, so long as it fell within the law.[59] Despite this, however, a fair number of erotic spells were seemingly aimed at gaining the affections of women who were deemed unattainable.

This could have been due to the fact that they were either already married, carefully guarded by their families and neighbours, or even that they were prostitutes who would not accept these men as clients (Edmonds 2014: 565). In this scenario, erotic magic could help a man who had become infatuated with one of these unobtainable women and therefore, would stop at nothing to have her for himself. A man could also use a variety of erotic spells to tempt one of these women into his bed to prove to himself as well as to his friends that he was indeed a real man.[60]

---

[58] The *Oxford Handbook of Social Relations in the Roman World,* Peachin (2011), provides an insightful look at the various social classes and their roles in Imperial Roman society.

[59] Adkins and Adkins (2004: 377-378) state that it was socially acceptable for freeborn men to have sex with both male and female partners, provided that they were their social inferiors – slaves, prostitutes and mistresses and they adopted the active or dominating role. Sexual relations with married or marriageable women and young male citizens was, however, forbidden.

[60] According to Greene (2001: 192) "the power of apparently unattainable people is devilishly seductive; we want to be the one to break them down." Thus, by obtaining the unattainable woman, a man could be considered some sort of a hero by his friends and consequently believe that he is a 'ladies' man.

3.2.2 Love Potions

Love potions or *philtre* are magical drinks, that when consumed, reputedly cause a person to fall in love. In Imperial Rome, it was generally believed that women frequently made use of love potions in an attempt to gain the affections of the ones they desired (Edmonds 2014: 286). Although love potions are a form of attraction spell, they will be treated independently as unlike other attraction spells, they had the potential to cause people real harm and were often associated with poison. This was possible due to the fact that many to whom a potion was administered either became infirm or died not long afterwards. Höbenreich and Rizzelli (2015: 42) state that for Romans, poisoning (*veneficium)* was a crime committed by administering *venena*, which referred to substances that could alter someone's bodily or mental state. As love potions appeared to alter the 'victim's' mental state, it is understandable that Imperial Romans associated love potions with poison.

The following examples are about two women, who made use of love potions to achieve their personal and possibly political desires:

a) Plautius and Numantina

The account of Plautius Silvanus and his former wife, Fabia Numantina provides some insight into women's use of love potions and its reputed side effects.

Tacitus reports that Numantina allegedly 'poisoned' Plautius with a love potion in an effort to regain his affections. In a moment of insanity, supposedly due to the potion, Plautius threw his current wife, Apronia out of their bedroom window (*Ann.* 4.22).

At first glance it appears the spell failed to reunite Numantina and Plautius as it seemingly drove him mad instead. Whether or not Plautius' actions were really the result of a love potion, we cannot say. His actions, however, led to the permanent removal of Apronia. This would certainly work to Numantina's advantage as she was now free to attempt to regain Plautius' affections. Ultimately, however, Numantina's use of love potions was in vain as Plautius committed suicide after being formally charged with the murder of Apronia (Tac. *Ann.* 4.22).

What is noticeably absent from Tacitus' report is the reasoning behind Numantina's alleged use of a love potion. We are led to believe that Plautius had divorced Numantina and had since remarried. It is therefore possible that Numantina still had affections for her former husband or, simply, that she was jealous of Apronia. A more plausible option is that Plautius was from a good a family, which meant that Numantina would have had a relatively comfortable life (James 2011: 1). Thus, by losing her husband, it is highly probable she lost not only her status but all

hope of a comfortable life, too. Through her use of love potions Numantina was taking control of the situation in the hope of changing the outcome to favour her desires.

b) Caligula and Caesonia (AD 37-41)

The case of Caligula and Caesonia is another example of the use of a love potion. Emperor Caligula's reign is often characterised as one full of madness and cruelty. Many historians and scholars believe his supposed madness could have been caused either by epilepsy or by his traumatic life experiences. [61]

Suetonius, on the other hand, believes that a poison administered to him by his wife, Caesonia, supposedly as a love potion, is what caused his madness, as it was from this point that he went mad (*Calig*. 50.2).

Though there is evidence of Caligula's mental illness before his apparent poisoning, it would seem that traits of it became more obvious following his exposure to Caesonia's love potion. [62] In this situation there are several key issues with the alleged love potion poisoning. The first is Caesonia's use of a love potion. It is not exactly clear as to when she began administering her love potion to Caligula. It is possible it began before she became his wife. According to Cassius Dio (*Roman Hist.* 59.23.7) Caligula and Caesonia had entered into a sexual relationship well before he divorced Paulina. In addition, Suetonius claims that at the time of their marriage, Caesonia was neither young nor beautiful (*Calig*. 25.3). It therefore stands to reason that Caesonia felt it necessary to turn to magic if she were to secure the affections of the emperor.

As she married Caligula, it would seem that Caesonia's love potion was successful in helping to attain his affections. It is possible, however, that despite her success in becoming empress, Caesonia still found it necessary to continue her use of love potions. Another key issue is that of the poison itself. Did Caesonia really intend to murder Caligula and, if so, why? There is no

---

[61] These historians and scholars include Katz, R. S. *The Illness of Caligula.* (1972), Benediktson, T. *Caligula's Phobia and Philias: Fears of Seizure?* (Dec., 1991- Jan., 1992), Sidwell, B. *Gaius Caligula's Mental Illness* (2010) and Mackowiak, P. A. *Diagnosing Giants: Solving the Medical Mysteries of Thirteen Patients who changed the World* (2013).

[62] Suetonius (*Calig*. 50.2) describes Caligula's infirmity. Katz's study *The Illness of Caligula.* (1972) also provides in interesting look at Caligula's various ailments.

evidence of her being part of any plot to overthrow him and our sources claim that Caligula was devoted to her.[63] Thus she had no real reason to want him dead. [64]

Although both cases fail to provide details about the ingredients used in the love potions it is highly possible that they contained lead, which is a highly toxic substance (Deadrick 2011: 91).[65] When reading these reports it is easy to assume the unfortunate victims drank the potion in one sitting. What if, however, this was not the case? It is possible that the potions were administered over a period. If this were the case, it would explain why, in both cases, the receiver of the potions allegedly went mad. It is a well-known fact that prolonged exposure to lead can cause behavioral changes and mood disorders (Brodkin et al 2007: 60 and 61). Thus, it is highly probable that the women in both cases were unintentionally poisoning their loved ones.

Numantina and Caesonia chose to make use of love potions to regain lost affections or to retain affections. In both scenarios it is reported that the recipients of their love potions went mad due to being poisoned. It is highly probable there was some truth in believing their poisonings were due to the love potions as often the ingredients used in them were toxic. It is highly unlikely, however, that Numantina and Caesonia intentionally poisoned their loved ones as they both stood to gain nothing from their deaths. It would therefore seem that in attempting to take control of their futures through the use of love potions they unintentionally became mistresses of their own fate.

3.2.3 Curse tablets and the Evil Eye

One of the most well-known forms of magic is curse magic. According to Chauran (2013: 6) a curse is any form of magic used with the intent to harm someone or something physically, emotionally or mentally. Some of the most popular types of curses in Imperial Rome were binding curses. Binding curses are mainly known from their use in curse tablets or *defixiones* in Latin.

---

[63] Suetonius (*Calig.* 25.3) provides evidence of Caligula's devotion and affection towards Caesonia. It is of course highly possible that Caligula's level of devotion towards Caesonia, was due to her continued and effective use of love potions.

[64] Although this scenario takes place in the political arena, it is my belief that Caesonia's use of love potions was purely motivated by her personal desire to become empress, in order to live a life of luxury and not to manipulate Caligula as a means to fulfil any political ambitions she may have had.

[65] It is highly possible that the lead came from wine, which was often an ingredient in love potions (Faraone 1999: 125-126). Lead was often used to enhance the colour and taste of wine (Aneni 2018: 2).

Curse tablets could be made from a variety of materials such as broken shards of pottery, limestone, gemstone, papyrus or wax. Lead and lead alloys were also frequently used as they were cheap and readily available (Gager 1992: 4). Thus, "they were a popular media for expressing one's desire to enlist supernatural aid in bringing other persons and animals… under the control of the person who commissioned or personally inscribed the tablet" (Gager 1992: 3).

The completed *defixiones* were often placed inside the graves of those who had died an untimely or violent death as it was believed that the curse would be enacted by ghosts and/or underworld powers (Ogden 2002b: 210). The powers of the curse tablet could also take effect if placed in certain areas; for example, a curse on a charioteer would be enhanced if it were concealed in the stadium itself, while one targeting a rival would be best buried near his home (Gager 1992: 18).

The account of Tiberius and Germanicus is an example of how curse tablets were used for political gains:

a) Tiberius and Germanicus (AD 14-37)

One of the most well-known cases involving the use of curse tablets and poison was the alleged murder of Germanicus (AD 19), Emperor Tiberius' adopted son and nephew. Germanicus was a popular and well-loved figure in Imperial Roman society, a fact that did not go unnoticed by Tiberius. It is therefore possible that this caused Tiberius to believe Germanicus was a threat to his position on the throne. As emperor, Tiberius could not risk any threats to his position. Thus, he probably felt it necessary to eliminate a potential rival.

Tiberius' desire to assassinate Germanicus was most likely due to his feelings of jealousy and fear that he would be overthrown (Dando-Collins 2008: 37). According to Tacitus (*Ann.* 1.7), Tiberius had been wary of Germanicus even before the emperor ascended the throne in AD 14. Although Germanicus never openly showed any interest in becoming emperor, it is highly probable Tiberius continued to harbour feelings of fear and jealousy towards him. In AD 18 and 19, however, it is possible that Tiberius' feelings finally reached boiling point as Germanicus died following a series of incidents.

The first incident occurred during Germanicus' journey to Asia Minor. During this journey he passed through Athens, where through no fault of his own he was greeted with great enthusiasm (Tac. *Ann.* 2.53). The reaction of the people towards Germanicus probably helped reinforce Tiberius' beliefs about his adopted son's popularity and support. The second incident could be deemed as an act of defiance as it would seem Germanicus knowingly broke the law by entering

Alexandria without Tiberius' permission (Tac. *Ann.* 2.59).[66] This must have tested Tiberius' patience, increased his concerns about Germanicus' ambition and left him feeling insecure and threatened. Consequently, one solution would have been to take control through the permanent removal of his rival. According to Tacitus (*Ann.* 2.69) the method used to assassinate Germanicus was a combination of curse tablets and poison.[67] Why was this method favoured above all the others? It is possible that it was the chosen method as it promised to provide Tiberius with a sense of control and it would not leave any physical evidence linking back to the emperor.

Tiberius' use of curse tablets and poison to remove Germanicus from the political scene would have taken careful planning, creativity and subterfuge (Trestrail 2007: 51-52). Thus, it is possible that Tiberius believed he was in control of Germanicus' life as he was deciding how and when his adopted son should die. As emperor, Tiberius would have realised he could not risk having any evidence tying him to Germanicus' death. The use of curse tablets and poison would therefore have been ideal instruments of murder as they were non-confrontational and difficult for authorities to trace back to their source. Knowing it would be difficult to prove he was behind the death of Germanicus also could have given Tiberius a sense of power and control as he would have felt he had committed the perfect crime (Trestrail 2007: 52).

Tiberius' decision to use curse tablets more than likely increased his feelings of control over the situation. Thus, it could have been used as an aid to the poison, or as a second option in case the poison did not work as intended. Having a contingency strategy would also provide Tiberius with peace of mind, that all his bases were covered and thus, providing him with a sense of full control.

Tiberius' jealousy and fear of Germanicus led to him feeling threatened, which prompted the emperor to have him eliminated. The combined use of curse tablets and poison was successful in achieving Tiberius' desires. Although there was speculation about Tiberius' involvement in Germanicus' death, there was never any concrete evidence linking him to it (Tac. *Ann.* 3.11).

---

[66] Caesar Augustus had passed a law making it illegal for any Roman of Senatorial rank to enter Alexandria without imperial permission. This was due to Rome's heavy reliance on Egypt for food. "If a rival to the emperor were to take charge of Egypt he could literally starve Rome into submission…" (Dando-Collins 2008: 46).

[67] Tacitus (*Ann.* 2.69) "… poison; and it is a fact that explorations in the floor and walls brought to light the remains of human bodies, spells, curses, leaden tablets engraved with the name Germanicus, charred and blood-smeared ashes, and others of the implements of witchcraft by which it is believed the living soul can be devoted to the powers of the grave."

Therefore, it would seem that as well as providing Tiberius with a sense of control, it also allowed the emperor to get away with murder.

b. The Evil Eye

The Evil Eye was a magical curse Imperial Romans believed was cast by a malevolent glare, usually directed towards its target when they least expected it. It was believed that a malicious glare could cause misfortune, injury and damage to the person or object targeted. For those seeking to punish a rival or enemy the Evil Eye would have been the perfect weapon as its curse could be intentionally and unobtrusively inflicted upon its target at any given time.

The belief in a magical curse known as the Evil Eye was widespread during the Imperial Roman era. It was thought the curse could cause illness and death and destroy any person, animal or inanimate object, all through a mere glance (Elliott 2020: 321). The curse was believed to work through the eye as it was an active organ capable of emitting destructive emanations, charged by negative emotions, such as envy and hatred (Elliott 2020: 321).[68] According to Alvar Nuño (2012: 296-297) the curse of the Evil Eye could be inflicted intentionally, or by accident.[69]

During the Imperial Roman era, there were a number of personal or private situations which could have warranted the use of the Evil Eye:

One such case can be found in Catullus' *The Poems,* 5: [70]

> "Let us live, my Lesbia, let us love and all the words of the old and so more may they be worth less than nothing to us. Suns may set and suns may rise again: but when our brief light has set, night is one long everlasting sleep. Give me a thousand kisses, a hundred more, another thousand and another hundred and, when we have counted up the many thousands, confuse them so as not to know them all, so that no enemy may cast an evil eye, by knowing that there were so many kisses."

There are two cases present in the above-mentioned poem that could warrant the use of the Evil Eye: Firstly, the context under which the relationship occurred was that of an extra-marital affair.

---

[68] Evidence of this belief and its mechanics can be found in Plutarch's *Moralia* 680c-683b (*Table Talk.* 8.5.7).

[69] It was believed that people who possessed a visible ocular peculiarity, namely the 'double pupil', had the ability to cast the Evil Eye at will (Alvar Nuño 2012: 296-297).

[70] Although fictitious and pre-dating the Imperial Roman era, this poem is important as it reflects the culture during the time it was composed and it provides an example of a situation where the Evil Eye could be used. It is also highly probable that many romantic relationships such as this occurred during the Imperial Roman era and consequently, also warranted use of the Evil Eye.

Although this was considered normal during the Imperial Roman era, it does not mean everyone simply accepted it. [71] Consequently, it is possible they believed these people should be punished.[72] The Evil Eye would be perfect for this as it would allow the 'victim' to personally employ the punishment at the chosen time and without the risk of the attacker being caught. It is highly probable there would be some speculation as to who was responsible, but without evidence it would not be easy to prove.

Secondly, affairs could cause jealousy not only from scorned partners but, also from those who desired such a passionate relationship. Thus, the Evil Eye could be used as a method to sabotage such relationships in an effort to end them for good, in order to retain or obtain the desired partner or as a form of revenge for having such a desirous relationship.

Another scenario that probably would have aroused the malevolent gaze of the Evil Eye can be found in Virgil's *Eclogue* 3.103: [73]

> "These truly – nor is even love the cause –
> Scarce have the flesh to keep their bones together
> Some evil eye my lambkins hath bewitched."

Even with modern technology, ensuring the overall health and safety of one's livestock, it is not an easy task. Thus, during the Imperial Roman era, it was undoubtedly an arduous one. It is therefore understandable that healthy livestock would have run the risk of falling victim to the Evil Eye. It is also sensible that the Evil Eye would have been used to target animals as they were the direct cause of envy; not necessarily their owner. These animals would have been a source of income, therefore, by harming them, it would have possibly eliminated a competitor. The use of the Evil Eye would have allowed rivals the opportunity to harm the animals without leaving any evidence behind, thus, as with the previous case, jealous rivals could have avoided any risk of being caught as there would have been no proof of their involvement in any misfortune.

Livestock were not the only targets for the malicious gaze of the Evil Eye as Pliny points out in his *Natural History* (28.7) – children were especially prone to falling victim. To begin with, it is

---

[71] It is possible that scorned and jealous wives, husbands, lovers and other disapproving members of society, would not have accepted such behaviour.

[72] Catullus himself is clearly afraid of being punished for their conduct by the Evil Eye.

[73] Although written prior to the Imperial Roman era, this extract is vital as it shows that livestock could also be victims of the Evil Eye. It is also highly probable that similar situations occurred during the Imperial era as there will always be some farmer or breeder who is jealous of a rival's superior livestock.

not surprising that children were targeted as during the Imperial Roman era, children, especially boys, were highly valued in Roman society. Consequently, families who were fortunate enough to have healthy children would have been targets of the envious glares of those less fortunate. In this case the use of the Evil Eye could have been used to harm the children and perhaps even the parents of this seemingly 'perfect' family, in order to bring suffering and pain into their lives. Thus, by doing so, those less fortunate would have seen these families suffering in a similar manner to themselves, which could have allowed them to feel better about their unfortunate situation.

The Evil Eye was not only useful for personal or private situations as it could also have been used to help elevate one's political standing as the following situation demonstrates:

According to Pliny, the position of general was highly sought after (*Nat. Hist.* 28.7), thus, it comes as no surprise that having such a prestigious position would most certainly result in a few jealous rivals.

A rival's use of the Evil Eye could lead to a general's downfall, which would have resulted in him being replaced, possibly with one of these rivals. The ruining of a general's career could also bring shame to his family, which rivals could believe to be punishment for 'stealing' what they believed was meant to be theirs.

In Imperial Rome there were a number of situations that could prompt a person to use the Evil Eye in an attempt to cause injury or damage to a rival or enemy. The Evil Eye would be the perfect weapon as it would be almost impossible to trace back to those who were responsible for it, thus allowing the perpetrators to get away with causing their rival harm. The use of the Evil Eye could also give those seeking to punish a rival or enemy a sense of control as they made the decision as to when its curse should be inflicted (Elliott 2020: 322 and 328).

3.2.4 Necromancy and guilt

Necromancy is the magical practice of evoking the dead in order to communicate with them in an attempt to gain knowledge of one's future and also as a method to appease angry and vengeful spirits, but how did this practice work?

Firstly, it was necessary for practitioners to purify themselves in advance. This was done through fasting and bathing which could be done a few days or weeks before the actual ritual took place. Secondly, timing was everything. Generally, the ritual would take place at night, ideally with a full moon as it was believed that this was when spirits were most active. Thirdly, necromantic rites were normally organised around two focal areas: a pit for blood and libations (milk, water,

olive oil and grain), and a fire for the sacrifice (generally a black sheep). The offerings that went into or around the pit were for the ghosts, whereas those that went into the fire were for the underworld gods. During the ritual, the practitioner would move between the two in a circle-like manner. The practitioner would also use a combination of prayers and/or incantations. These were aimed at the spirits to encourage them to come forward and to the underworld gods to let them go. Non-verbal utterances were also used to communicate with the spirits and took the form of wailing, squeaking, muttering and droning. Once the spirits were invoked, they were controlled through metals, such as bronze and iron, further spells and a 'holding stone' were used by magicians to hold onto spirits once they had been summoned (Ogden 2001: 161-190).

Although necromancy was also used as a form of divination,[74] this section explores how the practice was used as a method to appease restless spirits.

The following scenarios are examples of how various emperors used necromancy for political reasons:

3.2.4.1 Political reasons

During the Imperial Roman era, this magical practice was mainly used by the emperors, as many of them were guilty of committing murder, either as a means of securing the imperial throne or due to their cruel natures. A number of these deaths resulted in the offending emperors suffering from terrifying nightmares, in which they were convinced they were being tormented by the restless spirits of those they had murdered.[75] This could be construed as signs of a guilty conscience. Showing any sign of guilt would have been a sign of weakness, something emperors could not risk displaying, particularly in public.[76] To rid themselves of this feeling and to regain control over their lives, the emperors turned to necromancy.[77] Necromancy would also be the

---

[74] Refer to Chapter 3.3.2 for the use of necromancy as a form of divination.

[75] According to Hill (2011: 95) "Ghosts and apparitions also function as indicators of past physical or emotional trauma and they subtly suggest that a person experiences subconscious emotional struggle, which manifests itself in the figure he sees." Massullo (2017: 56-57) claims that emotions such as guilt can lead to one experiencing paranormal phenomena. According to Ogden (2001:76) it was not unusual for ghosts to visit people in their dreams. It is possible that these visits became nightmares as these ghosts were deemed to be angry (West 2006: 7).

[76] Strong feelings of guilt can take control of one's life by interfering with decision making, stopping one from enjoying life or making one over-sensitive, thus, taking away the person's control over their life (Worthington and Griffin 2015: 8-10).

[77] According to Worthington and Griffin (2015: 17-18) one of the steps in overcoming guilt is to apologise and make amends for one's wrongdoings.

perfect front for hiding the truth from the general public as the practice was generally linked with emperors.[78]

a) Nero (AD 54-68)

Nero was one of the many Roman emperors who made use of necromancy. His unwarranted cruelty during his reign was well known. According to Pliny, Nero's cruelty had filled Rome with many ghosts (*Nat. Hist.* 30.5). Despite this however, it was the murder of his mother, Agrippina the Younger that caused him to feel the most guilt (Suet. *Nero*. 34.4). To rid himself of this emotion and regain control of his life Nero turned to necromancy as it would allow him the chance to converse with his mother's spirit.

Before Nero became emperor of Rome, his mother allegedly received an astrological prediction that he would one day become emperor and ultimately, murder her (Tac. *Ann*. 14.9). Subsequently, this prediction became a reality for the pair. Once Nero became emperor, he set about plotting his mother's death. The murder of Agrippina, however, proved to be rather difficult to execute. Our sources report Nero attempted various methods to have her removed.[79] After several failed attempts, Nero grew desperate and sent a troop of soldiers to his mother's home, where they proceeded to beat and stab her to death (Tac. *Ann.* 14.8).

Tacitus reports that on the same night of Agrippina's murder her body was cremated on her dining couch and she received a rather unworthy funeral. He also states that Nero made no effort to properly acknowledge her grave (*Ann.* 14.9). Agrippina had done everything within her power to ensure Nero became emperor (Cass. Dio, *Roman Hist.* 62.14.1). Nero then showed his appreciation by having her murdered and by dishonouring her in death.

According to Suetonius shortly after Nero's mother's death, the emperor complained of having terrible nightmares and of being repeatedly haunted by his mother's ghost as well as Furies, who chased him with whips and torches (*Nero.* 34.4).[80] Consequently, Nero sought the help of Persian Magi to evoke her spirit in order to entreat her for forgiveness (Suet. *Nero.* 34.4). Suetonius fails to provide any details about the ritual. Thus, it is not entirely clear if Nero was successful. There is, however, a possible clue towards the outcome. Suetonius reports that after the evocation of Agrippina's spirit, Nero journeyed to Greece. During this journey, he did not take part in the Eleusinian mysteries as most emperors did (*Nero.* 34.4). Ogden (2001: 152)

---

[78] Ogden (2001: 149-159) explores the various attitudes of the Imperial Roman populace and their leaders towards necromancy.

[79] Suetonius' *Nero.* 34.1-2, provides a detailed account of Nero's numerous attempts to have Agrippina killed.

[80] Furies are "…avenging spirits of murder, especially among blood relatives…" (Freeman 2012: 312)

states that this could be attributed to him being afraid of meeting his mother's ghost as he had made a connection with the underworld during the evocation of her spirit. It is possible Nero was afraid of meeting Agrippina's ghost as he still felt ashamed and guilty about his actions towards her.

To clear his guilty conscience and regain control over his emotions, Nero believed he was required to seek forgiveness from Agrippina's spirit. Therefore, he turned to necromancy to achieve this. It would however, seem that he was not entirely successful in his attempts to gain control over his emotions as he seemingly still harboured feelings of guilt.

b) Otho (AD 68-69)

Otho's rise to the Imperial throne was a violent one as it was achieved through the rather grisly murder of his predecessor, Galba. As a result of this frightful act, it is possible that Otho began to experience a feeling of guilt, which similarly to Nero, began to manifest itself in the form of nightmares, where he was tormented by Galba's spirit. To regain control of his emotions, Otho also turned to necromancy to beseech Galba's spirit for its forgiveness.

In June AD 68 Nero, fearing his own execution, committed suicide and Galba was named the new emperor. Galba's reign, however, was not as successful as everybody had hoped it would be. He became very unpopular when he withheld money he owed the Praetorian Guard. Galba also lost Otho's respect when he failed to name him as his heir. Thus, spurred on by feelings of disappointment, resentment and a large amount of debt, Otho began to plot Galba's downfall (Suet. *Otho.* 5.1).

Otho easily won the support of the Praetorian Guard and together, they set out to destroy Galba. On the morning of 15 January AD 69 when Galba went to worship at the Temple of Apollo on the Palatine Hill, Otho and the Praetorian Guard put their plan into action. Otho was declared emperor by the Praetorian Guard and in response Galba personally confronted the rebels, where he was killed by one of the soldiers. Piso, Galba's successor was also killed. It was a bloody spectacle that caused the members of the senate to view Otho with some concern. They however upheld his proclamation as emperor and confirmed his status as such (Tac. *Hist.* 1.41-47).[81]

According to Tacitus, Galba's body was neglected and very poorly treated after his death. His head which had been cut off and placed on display, went missing and was only returned to its body the following day, after it had been burned. Galba was finally given a humble burial by his

---

[81] Suetonius (*Otho*. 6.1-7.1) also provides confirmation of these events.

steward, Argius (Tac. *Hist.* 1.49). Piso, on the other hand, was given a proper burial as he was laid to rest by his wife Verania and brother, Scribonianus (Tac. *Hist.* 1.47). [82]

Suetonius writes, on the same night of Galba's death, Otho had fearful dreams in which he was tormented by the ghost of the former emperor. This occurrence led to Otho using all available means, more than likely included necromancy as it was the most suitable for the task, of communicating with Galba's spirit (Suet. *Otho*. 7.2).

Otho's story has many similarities to that of Nero, the only difference being the victim. As with Nero and his mother, Otho and Galba were close, in this case, friends and presumably, the traumatic murder and ill treatment of the victim's body thereafter, led to feelings of guilt. As with Nero, Otho also attempted to contact the ghost that was terrorising him. By doing so, Otho could have come to terms with what he had done to his once close friend. Unfortunately, Otho did not hold the prestigious title of emperor for long, so we cannot be sure if his attempts to seek the forgiveness of Galba's spirit and gain control of his emotions were successful.

c) Caracalla (AD 211-217)

Caracalla's reign was one also marred with bloodshed due to his reportedly aggressive and violent nature. Not even his own family were spared from his violence as he murdered both his brother, Geta and his wife, Plautilla. As with Nero, despite being responsible for so many murders, it was Geta's murder that caused him to feel the most guilt. Following in the steps of Nero and Otho, Caracalla also made use of necromancy to regain control of his life by seeking forgiveness from Geta's spirit.

Prior to Caracalla becoming sole ruler of Rome, he was co-emperor with his brother and father, Septimius Severus. This arrangement caused much rivalry between the two brothers. Caracalla was the oldest sibling and therefore, the undisputed leader once his father died. It is thought, however, that despite this fact, Geta was the more favourable candidate. Herodian (*Hist. of the Rom. Emp.* 78.4.3.4) reports Caracalla was aggressive and this led to his followers being bound to him through fear rather than respect. Geta on the other hand, was gentler in his ways and earned the respect and friendship of his fellow Romans. It is therefore highly probable that Caracalla was incredibly jealous of Geta and his popularity and this increased his hostile attitude towards him.

---

[82] This is interesting to note as Piso who had a proper burial does not haunt Otho, whereas Galba who did not receive a correct burial does.

Upon the death of their father Septimius Severus, the rivalry between Caracalla and Geta reached boiling point (Cass. Dio *Roman Hist.* 78.1.1-6). Caracalla allegedly wanted to murder Geta before their father's death and soon began searching for the perfect opportunity to do so (Cass. Dio, *Roman Hist.* 78.1.3-6). When no opportunities presented themselves, Caracalla created one: He tricked his mother into summoning the brothers to her apartment, where upon Caracalla's instructions soldiers attacked Geta, who later died in his mother's arms (Cass. Dio, *Roman Hist.* 78.2.2-4).[83]

Thus, Caracalla's reign began and was one filled with violence and bloodshed. It was highly probable that jealousy caused Caracalla to murder his brother to ensure he alone would be the undisputed leader of Rome. It is possible, too, that this murder came back to haunt him in the way of a guilty conscience. Caracalla attempted to regain control of his life by ridding himself of his guilt with necromancy. Judging by the proceedings of the ritual and his actions following it, he was not successful in his attempt.

Unlike with Nero and Otho, though, Caracalla's guilt only began to manifest itself when he thought he was dying. Cassius Dio claims that during a military campaign, Caracalla became visibly ill and it was during this time, that he began to experience visions of both his father and brother attacking him with swords (*Roman Hist.* 78.15.1-3). To control his guilt, Caracalla evoked various spirits, among them that of his father and of former emperor Commodus.[84] Interestingly enough he did not summon Geta's spirit. Despite this however Geta's spirit did appear alongside that of his father's (Cass. Dio *Roman Hist.* 78.15.4).

Cassius Dio (*Roman Hist.* 78.15.4) states that none of the spirits except Commodus spoke to Caracalla. Instead of offering Caracalla the help that he sought, they instead terrified him even more. This experience caused Caracalla to believe himself to be in serious danger as he continuously made offerings to various gods in an attempt to improve his health, unfortunately to no avail (Cass. Dio *Roman. Hist.* 78.15.6).

It is unclear as to why Caracalla felt it necessary to call up Commodus' spirit as he simply could have called upon the spirits of those harassing him. Perhaps he did call upon them first, but as

---

[83] According to Davenport (2012: 797) although Cassius Dio claims to be a trustworthy source, it is possible that he was biased against Caracalla as he was not a favourite of the emperor. Thus, it is possible that although there is some truth in this scenario, Cassius Dio embellished it to portray Caracalla in a poor light.

[84] According to Jehle (2019: 27) and Ogden (2001: 154) it is unclear why Caracalla felt it necessary to summon Commodus's spirit.

they seemingly did not want to communicate with him, it is possible that he then called upon Commodus' spirit to clear his guilty conscience. Both Commodus' refusal to help Caracalla and his actions following the ritual prove it was not successful in controlling his feelings of guilt.

Despite the Roman populace's reluctance of make use of necromancy, it is possible that there were times when they deemed it a necessary evil.

3.2.4.2 Personal reasons

Although the majority of the Roman populace associated necromancy with the emperors and their political issues, it seems that the public deemed it acceptable to make use of the art when it was used for personal reasons (Ogden 2001: 152).[85]

Necromancy was a useful tool as it allowed the living to converse with the dead. As we have already seen it was mainly Roman emperors who took advantage of this. There were, however, times when individuals felt it was necessary to turn to the art as the knowledge they sought was often very personal and could only be provided by the dead.

Although Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* is fictitious, the following narrative is important as it provides evidence of a possible case where necromancy was used for personal reasons and not by a Roman emperor, but by an individual:

> "… The corpse's chest swelled and filled, then the major arteries and veins pulsated, the lungs began to breath, the body rose and now the dead man spoke: 'Why do you bring me back to life an instant, when I was close to drinking Lethe's draught and about to swim the Stygian Lake? Desist, I beg you, desist and let me return to rest.' Such were the corpse's words, but the seer replied excitedly: 'No, tell these people everything and illuminate the mystery of your death. Or know that I'll invoke the avenging Furies with my curse and your weary flesh will end in torment!' The dead man answered from his bier, after a deep groan, speaking to the crowd: 'Through the evil arts of my new bride, murdered by a cup of poison, I yielded my still warm marriage bed to an adulterer…" (*Met.* 2.29-30). [86]

In this scenario it was deemed necessary to use necromancy to communicate with the corpse to discover the truth behind a man's death. During the ritual the corpse reveals he was poisoned by his wife, due to her extra-marital affair. By discovering the truth behind his death, it would have been possible for his family to avenge his murder (Odgen 2001: 234). Consequently, his family

---

[85] Refer to Chapter 2.2 for more information regarding Imperial Roman attitudes towards necromancy.

[86] The translation of this paragraph from Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* 2.29-30 comes from A. S. Kline (2013: 32-33).

would have felt a sense of control as they now had the power to inflict pain and suffering upon the deceased's wife (Odgen 2001: 234 and Jehle 2019: 18-20).

3.2.5 Conclusion

To obtain some form of control over certain aspects of their lives Imperial Romans turned to various forms of magic. Erotic magic was a useful agent in helping them gain control over an important, rather complex and often confusing area of their lives: love and sex. Through this control, they attempted to realise various desires, such as attaining the one they loved or fending off rivals and keeping their beloved for themselves. It also allowed them to fulfil other wishes, such as a rise in their social status or prove to themselves and others that they were, indeed men. It would seem, however, that there was an unfortunate downside to this form of control as it often led to the unintentional poisoning of loved ones. Despite this rather gloomy downside, however, erotic magic remained a popular form of magic in Imperial Rome.

One of the darker sides of Imperial Roman use of magic was curse magic as it held the ability to harm others, its use was punishable by Imperial Roman law.[87] This, however, did not dissuade the Imperial Romans as there is evidence of its continued use. One of the most famous cases involving curse magic, poisoning and death was that of Emperor Tiberius and Germanicus. Tiberius' use of curse tablets and poison proved to be the perfect weapons for eliminating his rival as they provided him with a sense of power and control over what could have been a rather messy situation.

For those seeking to punish a rival or enemy, use of the Evil Eye would have been the perfect weapon of choice. This was because it was possible for the perpetrator to intentionally inflict its malicious qualities on their target with a mere glance, fuelled by envy or hate. It was also the perfect weapon as it could be inflicted at a time that suited the perpetrator, which potentially lowered their risk of getting caught and as it left no evidence behind, would be difficult to prove who was responsible for the damages incurred. Thus, similarly in the case of Tiberius – it is possible that the perpetrators would have felt a sense of control as they were the cause of certain events occurring in their victims' lives.

---

[87] The *Lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficis* (The Cornelian Law concerning assassins and poisoners of 81 BC) is an example of one such law. Although the laws regarding magic are not explicit about the types of punishment an offender could face there are a few clues: According to Cassius Dio (*Roman Hist*. 57.15.8-9) those who committed magical offences faced being put to death and risked being banished from Rome. Suetonius (*Vit*. 14.4) also claims similar punishments for magical offences.

Although most of the general Imperial Roman populace frowned upon the use of necromancy, it was well known that many of the emperors continued to make use of it in their own personal matters. One of the reasons for their continued use, was its ability to aid in the control of their guilty consciences, due to the murders of people who they were once close to. Through communication with the spirits of the dead those emperors who suffered from a guilty conscience could attempt to make amends for their wrongdoings and could do so without the general public's knowledge of it, thus avoiding showing any signs of weakness. For each of the emperors who partook in this ritual, success in achieving control over their guilt was either partial, unknown, or evidently not at all.

3.3 DIVINATION

Divination is the practice of predicting future events or obtaining secret knowledge through communication with divine sources as well as through omens, oracles, signs and portents. This practice is based on the belief that the gods can provide knowledge to humans through revelations with the aim of this practice being to gain access to this knowledge. The nature of various forms of divination can be interpreted as magical. These magical rituals are used to manipulate the supernatural world to gain information. According to Guinan (2002:18) "Magic and divination operate from the same semantic foundation…" This viewpoint is reflected in McCloskey's (1992:24) perspective on the topic: "…forecasting the future and manipulating it are identically magical. The desire to forecast the future and the desire to change it are two sides of the same desire." It is for this reason that divination forms part of this study.

There are various forms of divination, including astrology, necromancy, haruspices and augury. Generally, Romans linked the practice of haruspicy, which is the reading of the entrails of a sacrificed animal and augury, the practice of interpreting omens through the observation of the behaviour of birds, with state religious practices and not with magic (Dickie 2001: 150 and Luck 1985: 308-310). Subsequently, although these practices were utilised to access the knowledge of the gods, haruspices and augury were not linked to magic and are therefore not important to this study.

3.3.1 Astrology

At the close of the Roman Republican system in 27 BC astrology began to emerge as one of the most popular forms of divination in Rome. According to Barton (1994:38) this was not a coincidence as "astrology belonged with the sole ruler as much as the state diviners belonged with the Republic." It was taken seriously by all classes of Roman society, especially the emperors. They believed there was an all-encompassing fate that governed the stars, Earth and man and through astrology they could discover how fate would affect their lives and then, in turn, use this information for their own benefit. The most popular part of astrology was the calculating, or casting of horoscopes, as it was through this that people believed that their fortunes could be read. Astrologers were often called upon to cast horoscopes for new-born royals or noble infants. It was also common for emperors to employ astrologers as part of their royal household, some emperors, such as Tiberius and Septimius Severus even became proficient in the art themselves. Through knowledge of astrology, some astrologers rose to the important

position of court astrologer, which offered them many benefits and allowed them to play a role in influencing the decisions and actions of their employers.[88]

Romans did not view astrology in and of itself as magic. This is evident through the fact that it was often regarded as more scientific than magic.[89] This was due to the intricate calculations and knowledge required to gain the desired information from the heavenly bodies. It is undeniable though that it was conceptually linked in some manner to magic. In his discussion on the history of magic, Pliny saw astrology as one of the elements that helped give rise to magic (*Nat. Hist.* 30.1). In his dealing with the subject of magic and astrology in his writings, Tacitus at one stage lumps the practices together as if they were one and the same (Dickie 2005: 88-89).[90] Many Romans also believed that "…like astrology magic was an accurate science, because it started from the fundamental conception that order and law exist in nature and that the same cause always produces the same effect" (Cumont 1909/2003: 184). In matters of the law, Roman authorities would often link the practice of astrological divination and magic when it came to issues that were deemed to be illegal, such as attempting to determine the date of an emperor's death (Andrikopoulos 2009: 11). It is for these reasons that astrology as a form of divination can be seen as a valid form of magic.

a) The Roman populace

Available sources on the use of astrology in Imperial Rome would have us believe it was an exclusive art, only used by those of the elite classes. Possible reasons for this are that the elite and their followers were often the authors of these sources and were far more fascinated by it than the rest Roman society. Despite not being as well documented, there is still evidence of lower classes making use of astrology.

Cumont (1909/2003: 165)[91] provides us with a hint of how and where the lower classes could have gained access to astrology, "This Asiatic divination … promptly became popular, especially

---

[88] Thrasyllus is an example of such an astrologer. How he potentially used his knowledge of astrology to his benefit and to influence others is explored further on in this Chapter.

[89] For a more detailed explanation as to why astrology was considered scientific see Luck, G. 1985. *Arcana Mundi Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds a Collection of Ancient Texts*. pp. 371-386.

[90] This is evident in Tacitus' *Annals* 2.27 and 12.22.

[91] The original text can be found in the *Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Graecorum*, which is a 12-volume catalogue of ancient astrological writings. The chief editors in the earlier period of publication were Franz Cumont and Franz Boll. The works are currently only available in Latin and Greek.

in the urban centres where Oriental slaves gathered in large numbers.[92] Learned Genethlialogers of the observatories often had unlicensed colleagues, who told fortunes at street-crossings or in barnyards."[93]   This description paints the practitioners of astrology as well as the areas where they practiced it in a poor light. This can lead one to believe that they were generally the type of people, or areas elite classes would not associate themselves with. It was more likely that the lower classes associated themselves with these types of people and also made use of their services.

Cumont (1909/2003: 165) provides us with a possible glimpse into the lower classes' use of astrology "… neither important nor small matters were undertaken without consulting the astrologer. His prevision was sought not only … in the case of marriage, a journey, or a change of domicile; but the most trifling acts of every-day life were gravely submitted to his sagacity. People would no longer take a bath, go to the barber, change their clothes or manicure their fingernails, without first awaiting the propitious moment." This fixation even modified Roman language and caused many debates surrounding the validity of astrology and inferior interpretation of the stars to become a source of mockery (Cumont 1909/2003: 166 and Schoener 2002: 42). Despite all of this, however, the belief in astrology and its ability to predict the future continued to grow among the Roman populace and its leaders (Schoener 2002: 41-43).

Schoener (2002: 41) also provides some insight into the possible use of astrology by those who did not form part of the elite class. It was common practice for the citizens of Rome to visit an astrologer to gain knowledge from the gods about certain everyday activities. It was considered normal for the citizens of Rome to carry inscribed sheets of papyrus around with them, from which they could read the hours of the day that were deemed favourable or unfavourable for various activities. The type of affairs enquired about ranged from health issues to when one should visit the hairdresser or doctor. Everything revolved around whether a day or hour was favourable or not. This obsession with taking advantage of a favourable time stemmed from the belief that each day and hour was controlled by its own particular gods or celestial bodies (Schoener 2002: 41). This meant that the correctly chosen day or hour for a certain activity

---

[92] Franz Cumont's work entitled *Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism* (1909/2003), explores the reasons behind the Imperial Roman's fascination with all things oriental and the influence it had on their culture. His work also includes an in-depth look into the reasons why Romans associated astrology with the Orient – one reason is that the majority of the practitioners of the art were Chaldeans who originated in the east (1909/2003: 105).

[93] Refer to the Glossary for a definition of Genethlialogers.

would be supported by the gods currently in power, thus increasing the chances of a favourable outcome.

Romans clearly believed the life-experiences of individuals, including the simplest of incidents were thought to depend on the stars and the various gods that controlled them. They, therefore, sought the "blessings" of the stars and their gods in order to ensure the desired outcome would be achieved, no matter the situation.

b) Tiberius (AD 14 -37)

Emperor Tiberius became the ruler of Rome after the death of his adopted father Caesar Augustus in AD 14. Initially, Augustus had not considered Tiberius as his heir as he already had two sons Lucius and Gaius. However, after their untimely deaths, Augustus turned his eyes to Tiberius and named him his heir. Prior to this, Tiberius was convinced he stood no chance of advancing politically and subsequently retired to the Island of Rhodes. It was during this period of exile that Tiberius's fascination with astrology seemingly began.

Emperor Tiberius made use of astrology to help divine his future long before he became emperor of Rome.[94] He is reportedly the first emperor to become proficient in astrology and the first to employ a court astrologer. This gave Tiberius an advantage as it allowed him to seek advice whenever he required it and it was possible for him to identify any possible rivals, all of which gave him a greater sense of control over his future and his surroundings.

Tiberius' association with astrology began long before he became the leader of Rome. Suetonius reports that, when Tiberius was still a child, the astrologer Scribonius predicted he would have an illustrious career and that he would one day become emperor (Suet. *Tib*. 14.2). History would prove Scribonius' prediction to be correct as Tiberius did become emperor of Rome. This could account for Tiberius' strong following and belief in the predictions of astrologers.

A large amount of evidence suggests Tiberius made use of a full-time court astrologer, who was none other than the famous Thrasyllus. An account of the meeting between the astrologer and the emperor is provided by Tacitus (*Ann.* 6.21): Tiberius tested the astrological talent of several astrologers while in exile on Rhodes. If they failed to impress him or he felt they could not be trusted, he would have them thrown off a cliff. It was no different for Thrasyllus; Tiberius put him to the test by asking him to draw up his own personal horoscope and to share its contents.

---

[94] There is no mention in our historical sources of Tiberius making use of astrology before his self-imposed exile to the island of Rhode in 6 BC. One can therefore assume that it was during this time that he began to show an interest in the subject.

Thrasyllus set about contemplating the celestial bodies and after a short period began to show fear as he had foreseen an impending crisis that could lead to his death. Tiberius was pleased with this information and he congratulated Thrasyllus on successfully foreseeing the dangers of being wrong, assuring the astrologer he was quite safe. After this event, the emperor and astrologer became close friends.

The validity of this story is questionable,[95] however, it does underline an important point. If an astrologer can foresee disasters, it follows that such predictions can help an individual or group (in this case, the emperor) try to prevent them, in an effort to attempt to gain more control of a future situation.

This point could have rung true for Tiberius if he suffered an obvious physical ailment. Numerous sources documenting the life of the emperor describe him in the following manner: Suetonius (*Tib*. 68.1) presents him as a strong, well-built man, who had powerful hands – especially his left. Tacitus describes him as a tall, handsome man (*Ann*. 4.57). So, one could ask why a powerful and physically strong man such as Tiberius would seek the advice and knowledge offered by astrology.

In his works covering Tiberius' life, Cassius Dio notes the emperor was rather dim sighted, he could see well in the dark, but poorly when it was light (*Roman Hist.* 57.2.4). Thus, according to Hayes (1959: 3-4) it could have been due to his poor eyesight that a powerful man such as Tiberius sought to protect his position through astrology. Through the use of astrology, Tiberius would have the ability to take precautions against possible future calamities. This would then allow him to make decisions regarding his safety and his position as emperor well in advance of the perceived danger as it would be difficult for a man with poor eyesight to flee danger at a moment's notice. Due to his allegedly poor eyesight, Tiberius consulted astrology to enable him to have control over his environment.

The need for control over his life could also have been the factor that led Tiberius to become a rather competent astrologer himself (Cass. Dio *Roman Hist.* 57.15.7), which would eliminate his sole reliance on Thrasyllus for divination, thus, giving him more freedom and control over his life. Dio reports Tiberius predicted that his grandson, Tiberius Gemellus, would be killed by

---

[95] Champlin's study entitled *Tiberiana 4: Tiberius the Wise* (2007) explores the various narratives detailing the meeting between Tiberius and Thrasyllus.

Although a bit dated Krappe's study entitled *Tiberius and Thrasyllus* (1927) also provides an interesting viewpoint on the validity of the various stories surrounding the meeting of the emperor and astrologer.

Caligula. He also predicted Caligula's death and that Galba would become emperor at an advanced age (Suet. *Galba*. 4.1). Despite Tiberius being an accomplished astrologer and a man who religiously consulted the heavens to obtain information, it would appear that astrology did not reveal all secrets to him. Astrology failed to reveal the wasteful and reckless ways of his daughter in law, Livia, and also to warn him of his son Drusus' peril. It is possible, however, that Tiberius was not made aware of these issues as he was not actively seeking information in these areas. Of course it was also possible that as a source of information regarding the future astrology does not actually work.

Cassius Dio claims Tiberius spent time examining the horoscopes of important citizens and if the stars promised greatness, he would have the person in question executed (*Roman Hist.* 57.193.3-4). Based on this, it would be reasonable to believe that Tiberius examined the horoscope of his adopted son and nephew, Germanicus as he deemed him to be a threat to his coveted position (Tac. *Ann.* 1.7).[96] Although there is no evidence of Tiberius ever examining Germanicus' horoscope, he could, however, have done so in private, in an effort to prevent his fears about Germanicus becoming public knowledge.[97] It is impossible to know if the celestial bodies did provide Tiberius with information regarding Germanicus' future. Our sources do, however, tell us that during the prime of his life, Germanicus suddenly became ill and died not long afterwards (Tac. *Ann.* 2. 69-72). According to Suetonius (*Tib.* 52.3) Tiberius was behind his death.[98] Whether this was the result of what Tiberius saw written in Germanicus' horoscope, we cannot be certain, but we cannot rule it out entirely.

It is also possible Tiberius took the time to draw up the horoscope of his friend and confidant, the ambitious Sejanus, because after all friends can be rivals too. As with Germanicus, there is no evidence of Tiberius seeking such information, but, even if Tiberius did not examine Sejanus' horoscope, surely astrology would have warned him in some or other manner? When Tiberius finally realised his mistake in trusting Sejanus, it was not astrology that made him aware of it, but rather a letter from Antonia warning him about the dangers of trusting his friend (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* XVIII.6.6). Tiberius responded by plotting Sejanus' downfall. Suetonius

---

[96] Chapters 3.2.3 and 4.2.2 explore Tiberius' fears regarding Germanicus and the consequences of these fears.

[97] According to Cassius Dio (*Roman Hist.* 57.15.7) Tiberius was an adept astrologer, thus he would have had the skills and knowledge that were required to draw up Germanicus' horoscope.

Germanicus was a well-liked and popular figure in Imperial Roman society; therefore Tiberius could not afford to be linked to any ill-feelings towards him as it could have tarnished his reputation.

[98] Although Suetonius records this opinion, it was not necessarily his own, as he was documenting the gossip and the Romans' beliefs surrounding the trial and Emperor Tiberius' involvement in Germanicus' death.

reports that while Tiberius was plotting Sejanus' downfall, he was so terrified of failing that he thought of fleeing to the legions for protection. Even after his successful destruction of Sejanus, Tiberius was so scared of the future that for nine months he did not leave the confines of his home on Capri (Suet. *Tib*. 65). In both cases, Tiberius displayed odd behaviour for someone who supposedly had access to divine information about the future that, one assumes would have helped to guarantee his safety.

Despite astrology's shortcomings, Tiberius remained dedicated to the art. It was possibly due to his alleged addiction to the practice as noted by Suetonius (*Tib*. 69.1) and his continued need to feel in control. It was at the end of his life that Tiberius was cruelly deceived by astrology as he did not seem to be aware of the time of his death, nor that it was his fate to be murdered. The 78-year old emperor was killed by Caligula. Before Tiberius' murder, he had planned to execute Caligula, so that he could not become emperor. Thrasyllus, however, reassured Tiberius that this would not occur. Tiberius was most certainly caught off guard at the time of his death as he was told by Thrasyllus that he had another ten years to live. Whether the astrology was inaccurate or Thrasyllus purposefully lied, is not known, but it does prove that "despite having access to divine knowledge" it did not always help Tiberius in his most desperate times.

c) Thrasyllus

Thrasyllus was a leading scholar and astrologer who is mainly known for his role as the personal astrologer and close friend of Emperor Tiberius. It was due to this friendship that he began to thrive and exert his influence over the imperial court. Was his rise in power and influence over the imperial court the result of luck or was it a well-orchestrated plan set out to make his astrological predictions of greatness a reality?

Thrasyllus' entry into the world of imperial politics may have been due to pure luck as he appears to have been at Rhodes at the same time of Tiberius' self-imposed retirement to the island from 6 BC to AD 2 (Green 2014: 105). Due to Thrasyllus' acute knowledge of numerology, philosophy, philology and astrology, "it would be sensible to think" he used this knowledge to ensure he would be on the island at the correct time to meet Tiberius. The more probable reason, however, is that he was drawn to it because of its long-held reputation as an acclaimed centre of learning. After Tiberius' arrival on the island, he frequented the classrooms of the local professors (Suet. *Tib*. 11-13) and it was in this atmosphere that Tiberius and

Thrasyllus became acquainted and later, close friends.[99] The fact that this scenario is plausible actually plays to Thrasyllus' advantage. If he did indeed use his astrological knowledge to ensure the correct timing of his meeting with Tiberius, he would not want it to be obvious as it is possible it would have caused some suspicion about his real motives.

In AD 2, Caesar Augustus recalled Tiberius to Rome as the emperor was forced to realise the necessity of adopting him and naming him his heir. Thrasyllus accompanied Tiberius to Rome and was rewarded with Roman citizenship and becoming a member of Augustus' innermost circle. Thrasyllus' relationship with Augustus is somewhat difficult to piece together. Suetonius (*Aug.* 98.4) provides possible evidence of a good-humoured relationship between the two in the later years of Augustus' life. This type of friendship could only be the result of many years of friendship, dating back to Tiberius and Thrasyllus' arrival in Rome (Cramer 1954: 98-99).[100]

Before the arrival of Thrasyllus in Rome in AD 2, Augustus aligned himself with the then fashionable view of astrology among the aristocracy; an acceptance of it, mixed with a healthy dose of scepticism. In the later years of his reign, Augustus' view on the matter changed to one of unquestioning faith in the art. This change of attitude is most likely due to the influence of Thrasyllus and his own views on the topic, which permeated into the Augustan circle.   Possible evidence of this change in attitude can be seen in the fact that in an attempt to put an end to the rumours of his impending death, Augustus had his horoscope published in AD 11 (Suet. *Aug.* 94.12). Notably, this was the same year Augustus also published an edict placing a restriction on diviners, especially those practising the art of astrology.[101] The edict made it illegal to seek the date at which the emperor would die (Cass. Dio *Roman Hist.* 56.25.5).

Augustus' reign is the turning point in the legal treatment of astrology by the Roman authorities. It also marked the beginning of a change in the imperial court's attitude towards the art. All of this being the result of the influence of Thrasyllus. Whether this was the result of Thrasyllus' use of the knowledge he gained from reading the stars or just a lucky coincidence, cannot be said. The more plausible explanation is that it was a combination of the sharpness of Thrasyllus' quick mind and luck that allowed him to influence the thoughts and beliefs of those near to

---

[99] Cramer (1954: 94) believes the friendship between these two men grew as a result of their mutual interest in academics and not through the fanciful events in the stories spun by Tacitus, Suetonius and Cassius Dio.

[100] Green (2014: 105) agrees with Cramer's statement regarding the friendship between Emperor Augustus and Thrasyllus.

[101] It is rather ironic that Augustus made use of astrology to predict his death date to dissuade the general populace of his supposed imminent death. He would later ban the general populace from following suit, possibly to prevent any form of contradiction from occurring (Barton 1994: 42).

him.[102] The change in the imperial court's attitude towards astrology could have been part of Thrasyllus' plan, but he did stand to gain from it. Up until that point, it was mainly Tiberius who had been on the receiving end of the advantages of the use of astrology. Although this might have helped sway the court's mind, it is possible they were not entirely convinced of its usefulness. Thus, by convincing Augustus to declare an edict controlling astrologers and to publish his horoscope, he would have shown the court first-hand just how useful and plausible astrology could be. Consequently, Thrasyllus persuaded the court he was a useful ally and that it was in their best interest to keep him in their inner circle. This allowed Thrasyllus the opportunity to continue exerting his influence over the imperial court.

Tiberius' accession as the leader of Rome in AD 14, further increased the influence and power of his friend, Thrasyllus. One of the first to benefit from this arrangement was Thrasyllus' daughter, who married a Roman knight named L. Ennius. This marriage would probably not have occurred, despite Thrasyllus being a naturalised Roman and his wife being an oriental princess whose family had also received Roman citizenship, as the aristocracy of senatorial or equestrian rank would not normally have allowed the marriage of one of Rome's sons into a family of 'lower' ranking (Cramer 1954: 99). Another possible reason for such a marriage to occur was that the family were aware of Thrasyllus' influence over Tiberius. Consequently, they were hoping to benefit from this influence through an alliance in marriage.

Thrasyllus was also aware of the powerful position he held and the advantages that came with it. It is therefore understandable that he would stop at nothing to remain in this position.

Thrasyllus could have attempted to secure his position as Tiberius' close confidant and adviser by preying on the emperor's insecurities. [103] As close friends, Tiberius and Thrasyllus would have spent a large amount of time together. During this time, it is highly probable Thrasyllus became aware of just how insecure and vulnerable Tiberius really was. Consequently, being the shrewd man he was, Thrasyllus could have used his knowledge of astrology to prove to Tiberius that it was a useful method to overcome his fears and protect his position on the throne. There is also evidence of Thrasyllus teaching Tiberius the techniques of magic: "Tiberius, moreover, was

---

[102] An example of Thrasyllus' quick mind is provided by Suetonius (*Aug.* 98.4): In this scenario Thrasyllus was required to think on his feet as he was put on the spot by Augustus' questions regarding a certain poem. Thrasyllus was unsure of the poem's author and quickly had to find a response or risk looking a fool (something he could not afford to do if he was attempting to impress Augustus). His quick thinking allowed him to formulate an adequate response and save face. As an astrologer, a quick mind would have been a necessary skill, particularly if one were a fake.

[103] See earlier on in this Chapter, where Tiberius' weaknesses are explored.

forever in the company of Thrasyllus and made some use of the art of divination every day …" (Cass. Dio *Roman Hist.* 57.15.7). This can be seen as another attempt by Thrasyllus to maintain his position in court, by encouraging him to practice astrology and mentoring him in the process.

In AD 34, Tiberius was feeling uneasy due to the alleged sighting of a phoenix in Egypt, which was considered an omen of the impending death of the emperor.[104] It is highly likely Tiberius sought confirmation of his death or reassurance that he still had a long life ahead of him, through the drawing up of his horoscope. It is at this convenient time that Thrasyllus may have decided to lie to Tiberius about having ten more years to live. Whether or not the prediction was based on honest astrological facts is not certain.

The belief that Thrasyllus intentionally gave Tiberius a false prediction was eventually accepted by the historians recording the event as can be seen in Suetonius' account, "and had not … Thrasyllus, purposely it is said, induced him to put off some things through hope of a longer life …" (*Tib*. 62.3). Cassius Dio seconds this in his version, "though he stated very accurately both the day and the hour in which he should die, he falsely declared that the emperor should live ten years longer …" (*Roman Hist.* 58.27.3).

One cannot help but question Thrasyllus' actions. Why did he feel it necessary to lie to Tiberius, his long-time friend about his future? Thrasyllus did have valid political reasons: Firstly, the increasing senatorial antagonism towards his family and Tiberius, must have caused him great anxiety and secondly, he opposed the torrent of *maiestas* trials that were regular occurrences in the year AD 34 (Cramer 1954: 107). The most pressing reason, however, was Thrasyllus' fear that the reign of terror in Rome of his grandson-in-law, Macro would evoke senatorial wrath,[105] to the point where Tiberius' successor would wish to remove him in order to win favour with the still influential Roman aristocracy (Cramer 1954: 107). Therefore, an effort to reduce the harshness of Tiberius' prosecutions for *maiestas* could be a valid reason for deceit (Cramer 1954: 107). "It is said that due to Thrasyllus' deceit many lives were saved and had not … Thrasyllus … induced him to put off some things through hope of a longer life, it is believed that more would have perished …" (Suet. *Tib.* 62.3).

---

[104] Tacitus, *Annals* 6.28 assigns the date of the phoenix incident to AD 34, whereas Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 58. 27. 1 assigns it probably inaccurately to AD 36 (Cramer, 1954:106)

[105] Quintus Naevius Cordus Sutorius Macro, became prefect of the Praetorian Guard after the arrest of Sejanus (he was allegedly plotting to overthrow Tiberius). During Macro's term as prefect, he set about eliminating anyone connected to Sejanus and his alleged plot. This led to a lot of bloodshed in Rome (Tac. *Ann.* 6.48).

Through Thrasyllus' shrewd mind and his understanding and use of astrology he managed to rise in social ranks, from a relatively well-known scholar, to the most trusted and influential friend of the emperor of Rome. This prestigious relationship came with benefits not only for Thrasyllus, but for those close to him too. Whether Thrasyllus predicted this fate for himself and set out to make it reality or whether it was just pure luck, we will never truly know.

d) Balbillus

Balbillus was Thrasyllus' son and an astrologer who flourished during the middle of the first century AD (Brennan 2017: 82). Not only was he court astrologer to emperors such as Claudius and Nero, but he also held the important position of prefect or governor of Egypt for a number of years (Brennan 2017: 82).

Like his father, Tiberius Claudius Balbillus, was also a skilled astrologer. We see him emerging into Roman society after Caligula's death, in support of the new emperor Claudius (AD 41-54), who had been a childhood friend. It was through this friendship that Balbillus became a familiar figure at the imperial court and had the potential to influence future events.

Balbillus' alleged use of astrology to manipulate situations to suit his desires is evident in the issue of Claudius' succession. It was not clear who would become the next emperor due to the ages of the possible heirs. Claudius' own son, Britannicus, was barely eleven years old and his adopted stepson, Nero was fifteen. This problem affected Balbillus because, if he wanted to remain in his position of influence, he would have to support the correct candidate. In this case Nero was the obvious choice as Britannicus was sickly and ailing. It is therefore highly probable that Balbillus' astrological advice was partly responsible for the dynastic marriage between Claudius' daughter, Octavia and Nero (Cramer 1954: 115). It is also highly likely Balbillus encouraged Agrippina's aspirations for her son, Nero, through the form of an astrological prediction stating Nero would become emperor, but that he would also murder his mother.[106]

After Claudius died, it was Nero who succeed him to the position of emperor. Balbillus was soon rewarded for his part in aiding the new emperor achieve this exulted position, by being appointed to the highest post in the provincial administration of the early principate – the praefecture of Egypt (Tac. *Ann.* 13.21). Balbillus held this position for a number of years, until he was succeeded by Julius Vestinus in AD 59, after which, he returned to Rome. It is

---

[106] Tacitus suggests the likelihood of this in *Annals* 6.22.

This prediction can be seen as "bitter-sweet" for Agrippina, as her desire for Nero to become emperor would be tarnished by the knowledge that this would end her life.

interesting that Balbillus was not rewarded with a position closer to the imperial court. It would be sensible to think Nero would have kept him close, especially as he had already proved he could be trusted to provide sound astrological advice. Perhaps Balbillus had assured Nero his reign would not be fraught with danger up until a certain point?[107] Thus, it is possible he returned to Rome in AD 54 in order to renew and strengthen his relationship with Nero and prepare for future dangers.

Consequently, it is only in AD 64 where we once more see Balbillus using astrology to his own advantage. It had been a terrible year for Rome and Nero – an enormous fire had ravaged through the city, which led to the spreading of ugly rumours about the emperor. Many attributed the fire and its devastation to Nero's desire to rebuild the city in a more elegant style, while others, including Nero, blamed it on a rising sect known as Christians (Tac. *Ann.* 15.40 and 44). The real cause of the fire was never established (Champlin 1998: 103-104), but the Roman populace was highly excitable for months after the incident and the appearance of a comet did not help matters: "… a comet, whose appearance according to general opinion foretells the death of great rulers, already had shown itself in the skies for several nights in succession …" (Suet. *Nero*. 36.1).

Nero obviously felt anxious about the appearance of the comet and called upon Balbillus for his astrological interpretation and advice: "… worried by this he consulted the astrologer Balbillus and received from him the information that kings, usually through the execution of a few distinguished men would avert such evil omens from their heads towards those of their nobility. Nero then decided to execute all the noblest of Romans, with some semblance of justice as two conspiracies had been discovered. Of these the earlier and more dangerous one was that of Piso in Rome and the other that of Vinicius at Beneventum" (Suet. *Nero*. 36).

It is not clear to what extent Balbillus used this event to influence Nero in deciding which victims should be targeted, to prevent potential harm to the emperor. It is possible that, like his father who had warned Tiberius of the dangers of Sejanus, Balbillus was attempting to make Nero aware of the possible dangers Piso presented to the imperial court. Balbillus' intentions behind this were to keep Nero in power as he stood to lose a lot if the opposition replaced him (Cramer 1954: 128). Whether or not Balbillus' actions in AD 64 were an attempt to dissociate himself from any personal dangers he foresaw from the Pisonic conspiracy and to save his own

---

[107] It is possible that Balbillus had only foreseen danger occurring in AD 64.

life and his family's fortune is difficult to judge. According to Cramer (1954: 128) Balbillus' actions were an attempt to survive in an ever-changing world.

Balbillus was a skilled astrologer who made use of his knowledge to help guide certain situations in a direction that would benefit him greatly. In the end however, it is highly likely that he was required to use his skills to ensure that he remained relevant in the ever-changing world around him.

e) Otho (AD 68-69)

Otho was a Roman military commander who became the second emperor during a period known as the Year of Four Emperors (AD 69). Disappointed at not being chosen as Galba's heir and encouraged by the positive predictions of astrologers, Otho led a coup against Galba (Wellesley 2000:19).[108] Shortly after ascending the throne, however, Otho was defeated in battle by his successor Vitellius and committed suicide as a result.

The suicide of the emperor Nero in AD 68 was followed by a brief period of turmoil due to a civil war that erupted after his death. Otho saw this as his chance to ensure the astrological predictions of his own great future became a reality.

According to Tacitus (*Hist.* 1.22), Otho was urged on by astrologers, "… declaring from their observation of the stars that there were new movements on foot and that the year would be a glorious one for him". One astrologer in particular, Ptolemy, played an important role in encouraging Otho to fulfil the predictions. Tacitus claims that, after this promise, "Ptolemy then employed his own conjectures and the gossip of those who compared Galba's old age and Otho's youth as a means to persuade Otho that he would be called to the position of emperor" (*Hist.* 1.22). Tacitus also states, however, that Otho truly believed in Ptolemy's predictions as it is human nature to believe in the mysterious (*Hist.* 1.22). It could possibly be said therefore that it was not necessary for Ptolemy to employ other methods to encourage Otho to fulfil his so-called destiny as it would seem he was already a believer solely from the predictions. Tacitus also believes that, apart from predicting Otho's greatness, Ptolemy also played a role in encouraging Otho that crime was the only sensible method available to him to achieve his goal. The crimes that would eventually be committed would be those of treason as Otho plotted against the emperor Galba and of murder as Otho had Galba murdered (Wellesley 2000: 19).

---

[108] Galba chose the young nobleman, Piso as his heir (Wellesley 2000: 19). As Otho's rival Piso was killed alongside Galba during the coup (Wellesley 2000: 25).

Though Otho was successful in achieving his ambition of becoming emperor of Rome, he would only hold the position for three months, a fact the astrologers, including Ptolemy, seemingly never knew; if they did, there is no record of them sharing this knowledge with Otho. One could wonder if Otho would have still pursued his ambition of becoming emperor if he was aware of this fact (Cramer 1954: 133).

Despite the astrological predictions of Otho's success it did not necessarily mean they would come true. Otho had to plan in order for the predictions to become a reality.

Otho really owed his success to the resentment felt by the Praetorian guards and the rest of the army at Galba's refusal to pay them as he had promised he would when he became emperor. The citizens of Rome were also unimpressed by Galba, which made it easy for Otho to win their support. It is due to this, then that Otho's orchestrating the murders of kill Galba and Piso, were a success and not the astrological predictions alone.

f) Domitian (AD 81-96)

Domitian was an emperor who genuinely believed the prophecies made by astrologers would become reality (Suet. *Dom.* 14.2). He believed he could use the information gained through astrology to change his fate as well as the fates of others, thus attempting to gain control over his future as well as the futures of others. This is evident in the way he lived his life.

By the time Domitian was born astrology had a long history of practice in Rome and it is highly likely that he grew up surrounded by astrology and its mysteries. Suetonius (*Dom.* 14.1) provides possible evidence of this as he claims astrological predictions had long since warned Domitian when he would die – during the fifth hour on 18th September AD 96. The fact that Domitian was aware of the exact time and manner of his death reflects ancient astrological practices. The final part of the drawing up of a natal horoscope included a calculation of life expectancy and the way in which the client in question would meet his end. Domitian's horoscope predicted he was destined to die in a violent manner, by stabbing (Molnar 1995: 6). This can be seen in Suetonius' account of how Domitian's father, Emperor Vespasian, would tease him about his unfortunate fate "… when Domitian was a young man his father offered him a dish of mushrooms, which he refused, his father then joked that it was more in keeping with his destiny for him to be afraid of swords" (*Dom.* 14.1).

Domitian's enemies would be pleased with the knowledge that their foe was vulnerable due to his unfortunate horoscope. It is certain, then, that a few of his enemies would gladly help to fulfil the astrological prediction. With Domitian's unwavering faith in astrology and its

predictions, it is understandable he would attempt everything in his power to avoid the prediction of his death becoming reality.

Domitian was not only concerned with trying to change the prediction of his death, he also attempted to control the possibilities of conspiracies and plots to overthrow him as emperor. Cassius Dio (*Roman Hist.* 15.6) tells us that this led to Domitian consulting astrologers, where he never failed to pay close attention to the day and hours when the most important and powerful men had been born. Once Domitian had this information and the subject was deemed to be enough of a threat to him, he had the offending person exiled and executed. Suetonius (*Vesp.* 14) provides an example of Domitian exercising this prerogative. Domitian had Mettius Pompusianus, whose 'imperial' horoscope was well known, exiled to Attica and then executed as he deemed him a threat to his power.

Domitian believed he could control his fate if he took preventative measures. An example of one such measure was the execution of the astrologer Ascletario. "Domitian enquired about the astrologer's own death, to which Ascletario responded he would soon die and his body would be torn apart by dogs. Once Domitian heard the astrologer's prediction he planned to alter it, which would prove that he could control fate. Domitian ordered Ascletario to be executed and his body to be cremated. A sudden storm however halted the funerary process by extinguishing the funeral pyre, which resulted in Ascletario's body being torn to pieces by wild dogs as he had predicted" (Suet. *Dom.* 15.3).

Suetonius (*Dom.* 15.3) explains Domitian's execution of Ascletario as an attempt to disprove astrology. Molnar (1995: 10) provides another way of interpreting Domitian's actions: He was attempting to defy *fatalistic* astrology to try to convince himself he was still in control of his own fate. Fatalistic astrology claims the future is unchangeable, once the stars have set a person's fate, it is unchangeable. This may be compared to the contrasting philosophy of *catarchic* astrology, "… where the stars only predisposed or preferentially inclined certain outcomes; thus a person could take steps to try to diminish or even avoid the celestial effects" (Molnar 1995: 10). It is doubtful Domitian was trying to renounce his beliefs in astrology. Rather than defying Ascletario's prediction he was trying to prove to himself and potential assassins that he could alter fate and avoid his own violent death (Molnar 1995: 10).

The similarities between Ascletario's death and his prediction of it terrified Domitian. On the evening of the failed preventative measure, Domitian was offered a gift of apples, his favourite fruit. He declined them as he had no appetite due to the fear and told his servants to save them until the following day if he was spared to eat them (Suet. *Dom.* 16.1). "He then turned to his

guests and said, 'the moon will be blooded as she enters Aquarius, where the evil planet Saturn had been during his birth and a deed will be done that will be the talk of the entire world" (Suet. *Dom*. 16.1).

Suetonius (*Dom*. 16.1) wrote that Domitian slept poorly that night, jumping out of bed in terror at midnight. At dawn he ordered the astrologer Larginus Proculus to be brought to him to predict his future. Proculus reaffirmed the prediction that Domitian would die that morning during the fifth hour. Domitian condemned him to death but delayed the execution until the predicted hour had come and gone in order to prove the astrologer was a fraud.

Domitian then scratched a festering wart on his forehead and made it bleed. When he saw he this he said "I hope this is all the blood required." He then inquired about the time, to which his slaves answered untruthfully, "The sixth hour" because they knew it was the fifth hour he feared. Domitian believing the danger had passed and with such a little amount of his blood spilled, headed for his bath. On the way there he was stopped by his head valet, Parthenius, who told Domitian that there was momentous news that he needed to reveal in private. The news was that this was not the sixth hour but the fifth, Domitian's time had come. When they were alone, Parthenius stabbed the emperor (Suet. *Dom*. 16.1). Despite Domitian's attempts to get the better of his fate, his stars proved to be correct about how he would meet his end, even if his foes did everything within their power to make the prediction a reality.

As with Tiberius astrology also failed Domitian in that it failed to bring Nerva to his attention as a possible threat. Domitian was under the impression that Nerva would soon be dead as an astrologer had informed him of this (Cass. Dio *Roman Hist*. 67.15.4-6). This prediction however proved to be false as Nerva went on to become the emperor of Rome and was possibly involved in Domitian's assassination.

Domitian was clearly a man who believed in the predictions of astrology. He believed, however that once one obtained the necessary information about the future, it did not necessarily mean it will occur, because, ultimately, the power laid with him to allow the prediction to be realised. The evidence presented to us on Domitian's interactions with astrology, however, seems to prove Domitian's belief to be incorrect.

g) Septimius Severus (AD 193-211)

Septimius Severus became emperor of Rome after the murder of Didius Julianus in AD 193, when the belief and use of astrology held a firm position in Roman imperial circles. It is understandable therefore, that Severus was an ardent believer in the predictions of astrology.

Most of his interactions with astrology can be found in the *Historia Augusta* as well as in texts written by Cassius Dio.[109]

Though most of the stories found in the *Historia Augusta* are "… written with the benefit of hindsight, often make use of stereotypes and satire and are not overly concerned with various facts, they are still more than likely based on common knowledge and in the case of Severus partially on his own biography" (Rantala 2017: 127).[110]   When dealing with these types of sources, one has to remember that they were written by historians with their own personal agendas about the topic. Therefore, one should not take what was written at face value, at least not until it is confirmed by more credible sources.

The first story in the *Historia Augusta* deals with Severus and his interaction with astrology leads us to believe that whilst in Africa, he was concerned about the future and thus sought enlightenment from an astrologer, who cast Severus' horoscope and foresaw a glorious future for him. The astrologer, however, only revealed this information, which would indeed come to pass, after Severus swore an oath that he had told the astrologer the truth about his origins (*Historia Augusta*. 2.8-9).

Like Tiberius, Severus was also allegedly a capable astrologer. The *Historia Augusta* (3.9) relates how Severus put his knowledge of the celestial bodies into effect by drawing up the horoscopes of his prospective wives, seeking the one who was destined to become his wife. It is through this method that he found his second wife, Julia Domna, whose horoscope claimed she would marry an emperor. This event is marked to have occurred before he became emperor and thus, it could be said that by marrying her Severus was ensuring his destiny would be fulfilled. According to the *Historia Augusta* (*The Life of Septimius Severus* 3.3 and 3.8) all of the above-mentioned interaction with astrology occurred while Severus was only a subject of the emperor. It seems therefore, that Severus placed a lot of emphasis on astrology in the career plans for his future (Rantala 2017: 127).

Severus also took the time to draw up the horoscope of his second son Geta. This act left Severus surprised as Geta's horoscope had failed to contain any imperial accomplishments, despite being joint-heir with his brother Caracalla (*Historia Augusta, Geta*. 2.6-7). Although the prediction of Geta not becoming emperor would indeed become a reality, thus proving his

---

[109] Cassius Dio's *Roman Histories* is an example of these texts.

[110] The *Historia Augustua (The Life of Septimius Severus,* 18.6) states "… he wrote a trustworthy accout of his own life, both before and after he became emperor". Thus it is possible that some of the available notes about his life are 'straight from the horse's mouth.'

horoscope correct, it failed to provide knowledge of how Geta would meet his end. Severus also allegedly predicted his death would take place in Britain, which also turned out to be correct (Cass. Dio *Roman Hist.* 77.11.1).

As further evidence of Severus' devotion to astrology, he supposedly had the ceiling of his throne room decorated in such a manner that it depicted his horoscope, but with significant omissions so that no one could calculate his time of death (Cass. Dio *Roman Hist.* 77.11.1). According to the *Historia Augusta* (*The Life of Septimius Severus* 2.8.2) "…being worried about the future, he had recourse to an astrologer in a certain city of Africa. The astrologer, when he had cast the horoscope, saw high destinies in store for him… that did later come to pass."

Thus, Severus could have used his horoscope as a form of propaganda, to show it was his destiny to become emperor. He could also have used it as bait, to lure out potential rivals, who might have been tempted to look into the emperor's future and have them prosecuted for doing so (Andrikopoulos 2009: 108). One could interpret this as a sly method of removing potential rivals to the imperial throne.

Severus seemed determined to ensure the destiny laid out by the celestial bodies would become reality. This could be the reason that, even though Geta's horoscope warned he would not become emperor and even with no evidence saying otherwise, it would seem Severus accepted this as his son's fate, doing nothing to change this prediction from occurring. The same could be said about Severus' death. It would seem that he just accepted it and did nothing to avoid it. It could therefore be said that Severus lived his life according to the celestial bodies and the fate they had laid out for him.

3.3.2 Necromancy

Necromancy is the name given to the theoretical magical practice of communicating with the dead. Normally communication would occur through raising the dead and summoning a person's spirit. One of the aims of this practice is to use the dead to acquire knowledge about the unknown or the future through supernatural means.

As a skill, necromancy falls within the domain of magic as it was practiced by witches, magicians and sorcerers and because its main aim is often the revelation of the future, it is definitely a form of divination (Luck 1985: 210). The use of spells and rituals to resurrect a body and communicate with its spirit also confirms its link with magic.

Romans associated necromancy with philosophical groups such as Pythagoreanism and Orphism and even with astrologers. A reason for the association with Pythagoreanism is because much

like the Romans, Pythagoreans believed that souls were separate entities from the body and were eternal. The association with Orphism was due to their belief that through sacrifices and evocations, possibly of souls, priests could remove any injustices and wrongs done by members of their group so they could be free of vices in life and afterlife (Jehle 2019: 10).

In Imperial Rome Babylonians, particularly Chaldeans were associated with astrology, magic and divination. The emperors of Rome would often consult Chaldeans for information, which they gained through astrology. It is for this reason that Romans linked the practice of necromancy with astrologers. It is also highly feasible that the Romans linked necromancy with magic due to the fact that the Chaldeans were also the ones who allegedly had the knowledge and skills to perform the necessary rituals (Jehle 2019: 11).

There are various explanations as to how exactly the dead gained their knowledge. The first explanation was simple – if the issue brought to the spirit dealt directly with its own personal experiences in the living world, they could just simply use that to provide the necessary information (Ogden 2001: 240).[111] The trouble came, however, when the issue did not directly relate to the dead person's life experiences. Where did their information come from then? Various answers were given in antiquity, but none of them agree with each other. The Pythagorean-Platonic belief was that when a soul became separated from the body, it acquired a new perspective and gained access to knowledge (Ogden 2001: 231).

It is also possible the ancients believed that the future was prepared in the underworld. Evidence of this can be seen in Virgil's *Aeneid* (6.752 - 885).[112] When Aeneas descends into the underworld, he witnesses the assembling of the souls of Rome's future heroes, despite the fact that they had not yet been born. Ogden (2001: 231) comes to the simple conclusion that the dead simply had the knowledge. This issue, however, did not seem to bother practitioners of the art as is evident from the following accounts.

The most elaborate account of the use of necromancy to foretell the future can be found in Lucan's *Pharsalia*. Though the story is fictional and takes place during the Roman Republic, it is important to this study as it shows the link between necromancy and magic as well as provides

---

[111] Darius' ghost in Aeschylus' *Persians* (739-741, 790-803 and 816-817) provides information regarding the future based on his own personal experiences and knowledge. Although a work of fiction and a Greek tragedy, it does provide us with an example of the belief that the dead could foretell the future due to their own personal experiences.

[112] Although it is a work of fiction it does provide us with an insight into how Imperial Romans believed the dead gained their knowledge of the future.

an insight into how the Romans thought necromancy worked. The event takes place during the civil war between Caesar and Pompey.

In an effort to gain knowledge of the outcome of the war, Pompey's son, Sextus consults the Thessalian witch, Erictho.[113] Through the use of magic spells and rituals Erictho revives the body of a dead soldier, who correctly predicts the outcome of the war.[114] The prediction given by the dead soldier could have been a coincidence as predictions achieved through the use of necromancy were generally accompanied by the forecast of the consulter's death. Relevant here, too, is the prophecy found in Seneca's *Octavia* (620 - 630), where the ghost of Agrippina predicts the death of Nero.[115] This could be due to the fact that contact with the dead was regarded as inherently 'deadening' (Ogden 2002b: 198).

At various stages of the Imperial Roman era, there is evidence of individuals, but mainly Roman emperors, making use of necromancy as a means to divine their futures. Often, this was done in conjunction with other forms of divination. It is possible these emperors made use of all available forms of divination as they wanted to ensure they had a firm control over their futures.

a) Hadrian (AD 117-138)

As with most of the emperors before him, Hadrian had a weakness for all things magical, especially divination. The *Historia Augusta* reports he was an extremely proficient astrologer, recording all that might happen to him in a given year, including the year of his death (*Life of Hadrian* 2.16.7). It also reports that his court was home to many intellectuals, among them astrologers (*Life of Hadrian*, 2.16.11).

The event most relevant to this study however, is the death of Antinous,[116] a favourite of Hadrian, who died while accompanying the emperor on a visit to Egypt. There are conflicting

---

[113] See Ogden's *Magic, Witchcraft and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (2002b:124) for more information on the link between Thessalian witches, magic and divination.

[114] Lucan's *Pharsalia* provides a rather vivid description of the spells and rituals required for a specialised form of necromancy, known as reanimation, which is achieved by first summoning the soul of the dead person and then reinserting it into its body. The ritual also includes filling the corpse with fresh blood (possibly a sheep's) as well as an extended list of magical ingredients; such as moon-juice, the hump of a hyena, the foam of a rabid dog and a 'ship-stopping' sea monster, among others and the issuing of threats against the gods (Ogden 2002a: 49).

[115] Though a work of fiction, it provides us with an insight into what the Imperial Romans believed the consequences for the use of necromancy were.

[116] Antinous was Hadrian's young male companion, however the exact nature of their relationship is not clear. Cassius Dio simply states that Antinous was a favourite of Hadrian and he accompanied him on his travels (*Roman Hist.* 69.11.2).

views as to how Antinous really died. Hadrian himself claims he fell into the Nile and drowned.
Cassius Dio, however, is of the opinion he was murdered by Hadrian as a sacrifice for
necromantic purposes, which is more pertinent to this study (Cass. Dio *Roman Hist.* 69.11.2-
3).[117]

Hadrian honoured Antinous after his death, either due to his love for him or because he had
freely given his life as this was a necessary requirement for Hadrian to accomplish his desires.
(Cass. Dio *Roman Hist.* 69.11.3).

Ogden (2001: 153) suggests Hadrian went so far as to build an artificial underworld at his
Tibertine villa, in which he could converse with the spirit of Antinous. If Hadrian did, in fact,
have his own personal underworld already filled with a willing spirit, he could have practiced
necromancy in private and at his own leisure. This would have allowed the emperor to converse
with the spirit of Antinous over various topics without any risk of them being leaked to the
populace.

Hadrian's use of necromancy along with other forms of divination could be interpreted as him
attempting to cover all his bases, in his pursuit of knowledge of the future. Based on his
predecessors' experiences, he also would have realised his enemies could come from anywhere
and strike at any time, especially since he was not popular amongst members of the senate.

b) Didius Julianus (AD 193)

Didius Julianus was a senator of great wealth, who became emperor after his predecessor
Pertinax was killed by mutinying soldiers. Julianus only reigned for two months before he was
killed by his successor, Septimius Severus. Cassius Dio provides evidence of Julianus' use of
necromancy in one sentence: "… he killed many boys for magical rites, believing that he could
prevent any future misfortunes if he learned of them beforehand" (*Roman Hist.* 74.16.5). Ogden
(2001: 154) suggests this was possibly a malicious reading of boy mediums.

Julianus' use of boy mediums was due to the notion that it was easier for boys to perceive
messages from the underworld as their souls were less corrupt (Ogden 2001: 196).[118] His

---

[117] Another possible reason for Antinous' murder was that, according to prophecy his death would prolong Emperor
Hadrian's life (Cass. Dio *Ep.* 69.11.3).

[118] The boys chosen to act as mediums had to be pure (must not have been with a woman. It is not clear if men were
also included in this instruction), their bodies had to be beautiful and perfect, and they had to be healthy and
articulate. The boys would be hypnotised through incantations read over them by magicians. It was also believed
necromancy could be performed through the hieroscopic sacrifice of boys (as opposed to the holocaustic sacrifice of

supposed sacrifice of boys would have been to create a spirit for necromantic exploitation (Ogden 2001: 196). Boys were generally used as mediums for necromantic rituals, which implies that Julianus did not necessarily just make use of the traditional form of necromancy. The *Historia Augusta* (*Life of Didius Julianus.* 7.10) claims Julianus had the eyes of boys bandaged and charms said over their heads. Then they would gaze into a mirror in order to obtain information about the future.[119]   It was during one of these rituals that one of the boys foresaw that Septimius Severus would take Julianus' place as emperor (*Life of Didius Julianus.* 7.11). This would not have been too difficult to discern, however as Severus had already been declared emperor by his troops and was steadily gaining the support of other legions.

Julianus came to be emperor of Rome through a peculiar manner: He bought the coveted position at an auction (Cass. Dio *Roman Hist.* 74.1.3-5). After his accession, a civil war ensued, with three generals laying claim to the throne, Septimius Severus being one of them. With a civil war raging and his position as emperor being threatened, it is understandable that Julianus turned to necromancy as it would provide him with a clearer picture of his future compared to other forms of divination (Ogden 2001: 231). Having access to knowledge about his future would have given Julianus an advantage over his enemies as it would have allowed him to take control of any issues they might have caused.   He must have been desperate to make use of necromancy as by doing so he risked his credibility as emperor, because the people of Rome were not very accepting of the practice (Ogden 2001: 264 and 267).[120]

Through his use of necromancy, Julianus allegedly received information regarding a potential threat to his position as emperor. His attempts to take control of the forewarned situation failed and, as predicted, he was replaced by Septimius Severus as emperor of Rome.

c) Caracalla (AD 211-217)

Caracalla was an emperor who was very curious and according to Herodian (*Hist. of the Rom. Emp.* 4.12.3) he desired to know everything about the affairs of men and to interfere in divine matters. He was also paranoid in that he believed everyone was plotting against him. This paranoia led him to consult oracles and astrologers he even had entrail examiners (*haruspices*)

---

animals in traditional evocations) (Ogden 2001: 196-197). According to Johnston (2001: 114) it is possible the boys used in these rituals could have been the practitioners' own children, or could have come from other sources, such as slavery.

[119] This type of divination is known as catoptromancy.

[120] According to Ogden (2001: 149) "…the deviance of necromancy was built up by association with human sacrifice", hence Imperial Romans' dim view of the practice.

and prophets summoned to give him advice. In fact, few who practiced the magic art of fortune telling at that time escaped him (Herodian *Hist. of the Rom. Emp.* 4.12.3).

It is therefore not surprising that Caracalla also made use of necromancy, which ironically helped hasten his demise. Caracalla believed he was receiving false information from his prophets and called upon Maternianus, who he left in charge in Rome and requested that he consult the best diviners to call up the dead. By doing so, Caracalla hoped to gain information about his own death and whether there were any plots to overthrow him (Herodian *Hist. of the Rom. Emp.* 4.12.4).

According to Herodian (*Hist. of the Rom. Emp.* 4.12.5) Maternianus obeyed Caracalla's orders, which resulted in him naming Macrinus as an alleged threat to the emperor. Whether Macrinus' name was put forward by the spirits or if Maternianus had his own reasons for naming him is unknown. Accordingly, Maternianus dispatched a letter to Caracalla informing him Macrinus was conspiring to gain control of the empire and must be eliminated (Herodian *Hist. of the Rom. Emp.* 4.12.5).

By some twist of fate however, Macrinus intercepted Materianus' letter to Caracalla. Upon reading the letter, Macrinus discovered he was being implicated in a plot against Caracalla that could result in his death. Consequently, in an attempt to avoid his own death, Macrinus decided to assassinate Caracalla first (Herodian *Hist. of the Rom. Emp.* 4.12.6 – 4.12.7).

Caracalla's paranoia about false prophecies and people plotting his downfall forced him to turn to various forms of divination as a method to cope with these issues. It is therefore ironic that his eventual death was due to his use of a form of divination, necromancy. It would seem Caracalla paid the ultimate price for his devotion to the magical arts.

3.3.3 Conclusion

It was at the close of the Roman Republic in 27 BC that astrology begun to emerge as one of the most popular forms of divination. Astrology seemed to be the most sophisticated form of divination as it was based on the latest scientific, philosophical and religious developments. It could be tailormade to suit the individual and it allowed private consultations all of which were different from any of the other forms of divination.

For the people of Rome, especially its emperors, the reason astrology was so attractive was not simply a desire to see their destiny inscribed in the stars, but the potential of its power and the possibilities it opened up for them. These were immediately recognised by the Roman populace

and its leaders, who did not waste any time attempting to use the knowledge gained from its use to gain some form of control over their own lives and circumstances.

Emperors who made use of necromancy did so in an effort to gain knowledge of their futures in order to protect themselves and their powerful positions. It does seem, however, that they were not very successful in their use of necromancy as a form of control as ultimately, they could not avoid their own fates. This could be due to the fact, that in order to gain knowledge about the future from the dead, one had to sacrifice a part of one's self or even one's soul – thus paying the ultimate price, death (Ogden 2002b: 198).

The use of divination by the Roman populace and their leaders was due to their attempts to gain some sort of control in an uncertain world. The use of astrology as a form of divination proved to be popular not only among the populace, but among their leaders too. Necromancy, on the other hand, tended to be used mainly by emperors as the general populace generally frowned upon its use. In both cases, the predictions brought forward were taken seriously, which led to many doing their utmost to either prevent the predictions from becoming reality or ensuring that they did. Judging the various cases where divination was used as a form of control, we can see that each one had their own successes and failures depending on how the situation was read and dealt with as a result.

3.4 PROTECTION

Much like many societies today, Imperial Romans believed there were two types of magic; helpful, defensive magic and harmful, offensive magic. In terms of modern thought, we would classify defensive magic as 'white' or 'good' magic and offensive magic as 'black' or 'evil' magic (Murphy and Susalla 2016: 8). Imperial Romans feared the use of black magic as it contained powers such as curses and other supernatural elements that could harm them.[121] They turned to white magic, therefore, in an attempt to avoid falling victim to the evils of black magic. They did this because white magic includes apotropaic or protective magic, which is based on the belief that certain depictions, texts or practices shield the user from harm (Murphy and Susalla 2016: 8).[122] Thus, one could say Imperial Romans attempted to control one form of magic with another form of magic.

3.4.1 The apotropaic phallus

For Imperial Romans one of the more potent and interesting defences against the Evil Eye and other forms of evil was distraction.[123] This was done through the use of the phallus or *fascinus* symbol as it formed part of a larger set of practices called apotropaic magic (Roof 2007: 638). As an apotropaic device the phallus was always depicted as being erect, disproportionately large or both. The foreskin was always pulled back or was possibly circumcised and it was generally shown with testicles (Slane and Dickie 1993: 487). A wide variety of objects were used to create the phallus symbol or were decorated with it. No matter how the phallus symbol was displayed, its main aim was to protect the wearer and inhabitants from evil.

Imperial Romans were terrified of falling victim to the curse known as the Evil Eye. Consequently, they did everything within their power to prevent this from occurring. One of the most popular precautionary methods was to wear jewellery bearing the phallus symbol. The most prevalent types of jewellery depicting a phallus were pendants and rings. Phallus shaped pendants made from bronze, brass, bone or gold were worn around the neck on a chain or piece of string. Rings could have varied from simple ones bearing the symbol in relief on the bezel to more fancy ones with precious stones carved with the symbol (Johns 1982: 63 and Adkins and Adkins 2004: 335). According to Pliny "… infants are under the especial guardianship of the

---

[121] This can be supported by Pliny (*Nat. Hist.* 28.4), "… there is indeed nobody who does not fear to be spellbound by imprecations."

[122] Depictions included images of Medusa's head and the phallus symbol, and they were often displayed as artwork in the form of mosaics in private homes and public areas such as bath-houses. These symbols were also used to decorate jewellery, such as pendants and rings.

[123] For more information regarding the Evil Eye refer to Chapter 3.2.2.

god *Fascinus,* protector, not of infants only, but of generals as well…" (*Nat. Hist.* 28.7). Thus, this type of jewellery could have been worn by children and adults in order to protect them from the Evil Eye.

It makes sense that children would require this type of protection as they could easily be the targets of envy. [124] Adults could also become victims of the Evil Eye, especially if they held prominent positions in society or if they had seemingly received a bout of good fortune. Jewellery depicting the phallus symbol would have been perfect for personal protection as it would always have been present on the wearer, thereby eliminating the fear of unknowingly falling victim to the Evil Eye.

Another precautionary method used to ward off the Evil Eye was artwork, such as mosaics, reliefs and wind chimes, which were created in an attempt to protect the inhabitants of buildings as well as passers-by in private and public areas (Johns 1982: 64). Mosaics depicting the phallus symbol were often displayed on the walls and floors of private homes and public buildings, such as bath-houses. [125] Most often, they were displayed on the floor (Belis 2017: vi) and one possible reason for this, is that people were hoping that, by placing the phallus symbol on the floor, it would stop evil in its tracks as it would have been fascinated by the image. Thus, evil would have been prevented from entering further into the building, where it could cause harm.

The presence of such precautionary mosaics in the above-mentioned buildings would have been deemed necessary by Imperial Romans for the following reasons: Mosaics would have been expensive to create. Thus, they would only have been present in the homes of wealthy Romans and it would be understandable that these people would want to protect their homes and their families from the evil, as they constantly suffered the envious looks of those less fortunate than them. Bathhouses played a vital role in Imperial Roman lives as they offered their patrons hygiene and leisure benefits, contained gymnasiums and were regularly used as a place to conduct business (Mowdy 2016: 5-6). Regardless of the activities taking place in at the baths, each had the potential to cause envy amongst the other patrons. Thus, to prevent this from occurring and to create a relaxing and safe environment, bathhouses were decorated with artwork featuring the phallus. This left the patrons free to enjoy the baths and the various pleasures they had to offer them.

---

[124] Children, in particular boys were highly valued in Imperial Rome, thus parents would have done everything within their power to ensure the good health of a child.

[125] A private house in Ostia, Rome and a public bath-house in Herculaneum, Italy, are examples of buildings featuring phallus mosaics on the floor.

Reliefs depicting the phallus were a simple form of precautionary art against the Evil Eye. They would be displayed on the walls of commercial buildings and in areas that were deemed to be dangerous (Moser 2006: 52). Reliefs have been found on the walls close to the entrances of buildings such as bakeries and inns.[126] It is not surprising that the proprietors of these types of businesses sought protection from the Evil Eye as there was sure to be a number of competitors wishing ill luck upon their rivals. Inns would have been full of strangers, thus increasing the potential for danger. Consequently, the use of the phallus symbol would have provided the patrons as well as the proprietors with the comforting knowledge that their lodgings were secure from evil.

Another creative way in which Imperial Romans protected themselves was through the use of phallus-themed wind chimes known as *tintinnabula.* These ornamental decorations were often hung in the courtyards of houses or outside entranceways as a method to ward off evil (Moser 2006: 64). Many examples of these phallic wind chimes were decorated with wings, legs and bells and sometimes even small figures were perched on top. The use of bells was rather ingenious as the sound they would have created was also meant to frighten off evil, thus increasing the apotropaic qualities of the phallus (Johns 1982: 67). Wings and legs were common features, although their significance is not entirely clear. One theory suggests these elements seemingly gave the phallus a life of its own, thus making them more potent against evil than unadorned phalluses (Slane and Dickie 1993: 488). The figures present on top of the phallus could either have been humorous or frightening (Johns 1982: 67). This could have been an attempt to amuse or startle evil, to force it to forget its original purpose.

3.4.2 Medusa the Gorgon

A rather surprising yet interesting addition to the Imperial Roman arsenal of apotropaic magic was the image of Medusa the Gorgon. It was believed that Medusa's head (the gaze of which had the capacity to turn people to stone) [127] had the ability to attract and hold evil powers, thus diverting it from other targets (Adkins and Adkins 2004: 335). It is not surprising then, that many of the available images of her are solely of her head. As with the phallus symbol, motifs

---

[126] Examples of phallus reliefs on the outside walls of such buildings can be found in the Roman city of Pompeii.

[127] Ovid attests to this: When Perseus set out to find Medusa he came across "the shapes of men and animals changed from their natures to hard stone by Medusa's gaze" (*Met.* IV:753-803).

For an interesting discussion on the origins of the *gorgoneion,* refer to Marinatos' *The Goddess and the Warrior*: *the naked goddess Mistress of Animals in early Greek religion* (2000), ch. 6.

of Medusa's head were used in mosaics, jewellery, breast plates of soldiers and more commonly in funerary art, all with the aim of protecting one from evil.

During the Imperial Roman era, the most common use of the image of Medusa was in funerary art, namely, on *sarcophagi* and *stelae* (Milovanvić and Anđelković-Grašar 2017: 168). Generally, she could be depicted alone with her signature head of snakes or accompanied by dolphins, *genii*, *hippocampi* or birds. These accompanying images were meant to help guide the dead to the afterlife. The role of Medusa's image was to observe, protect and frighten possible destroyers of graves (Milovanović and Anđelković-Grašar 2017: 168). It is understandable that Imperial Romans sought some sort of protection for the dead as they could have fallen victim to the evils of man and the supernatural. In both cases the evil was the result of man's actions towards the dead – the first being the evil of grave robbery. The fact that it was common practice, especially among the wealthy, to place items deemed necessary for the afterlife with the dead could have encouraged this (Adkins and Adkins 2004: 396). The second evil was the belief that the dead could aid in the enactment of curses against the living, which could prevent the dead from resting peacefully. [128] This blatant desecration of graves could have resulted in the dead seeking revenge by making life unpleasant for the living. [129]

It was not only the dead who made use of the image of Medusa for protection from evil. Jewellery and artwork, such as mosaics bearing Medusa's image were also fashionable among Imperial Romans. Cameos with her image were often created for rings, earrings and medallions, which were worn mainly by women, because it was believed that Medusa's petrifying gaze did not affect them (Milovanvić and Graśar 2017: 173). Mosaics bearing her head of snakes would often be placed at the thresholds of buildings, also to prevent the inhabitants from falling prey to evil (Carmela and Salvatore 2016: 2). Unlike the phallus symbol, however, the aim of a Medusa mosaic was not to fascinate evil, but rather to invoke terror and scare it away. [130]

---

[128] For more information regarding the dead and curses refer to Chapter 3.2.3

[129] The Imperial Romans believed that the spirits of the dead could influence their lives on Earth, thus they would attempt to appease them. One such method was to have celebrations around the deceased's grave (Adkins and Adkins 2004: 393).

[130] The sight of Medusa's head was meant to strike terror into any onlooker, possibly due to her 'stony gaze' (Lazarou 2019: 2). It is for this reason that an image of Medusa's head can be found on soldiers' uniforms. Evidence of this can be found on a funerary stele in Viminacium as it depicts a Roman soldier wearing short armour – a *lorica* with *pteryges*. A depiction of Medusa's head can be found on the armour and the belt (Milovanović and Grašar 2017: 170).

3.4.3 Animals and blood

The use of animals and blood was a rather unusual form of protection used by Imperial Romans. In all instances they were generally used to safe-guard the inhabitants of a building from evil. The blood that was used, often came from a specific type of animal and even from menstruating women. The protection provided by various animals consisted of the use of specific body parts, which were used in a variety of ways. Despite its gruesomeness it would appear that this did not deter Imperial Romans from making use of it. In fact, it is possible this only encouraged them.

When studying Pliny's *Natural History* several precautionary measures involving animals and blood can be found:

> "The Magi say that the gall of a black male dog, if a house is fumigated or purified with it, acts as an amulet protecting all of it from sorcerers' potions; it is the same if the inner walls are sprinkled with the dog's blood or if a genital organ is buried under the threshold of the front door" (*Nat. Hist.* 30.24).

> "It is asserted also, that if the fish called the sea-star is smeared with a fox's blood and then nailed to the upper lintel of the door, or to the door itself, with a copper nail, no noxious spells will be able to obtain admittance, or, at all events, to be productive of any ill effects" (*Nat. Hist.* 32.16).

> "This is also agreed and there is nothing I would more willingly believe, that if door-posts are merely touched by the menstrual discharge, the tricks are rendered vain of the Magi, a lying crowd as it is easily ascertained" (*Nat. Hist.* 28.23).

Apart from the fact that each of these measures made use of animals and blood in some form or another, there is one glaringly obvious similarity found between them: the fact that it was seemingly imperative for Imperial Romans to openly display the blood and body parts of animals. Also, that the display locations were generally either close to the entrance of buildings or in obvious places within. As with depictions of Medusa the Gorgon, the aim of this could have been to shock or repulse evil in an attempt to make it forget its original intention, thus preventing it from causing harm. It is interesting to note the penis of the black dog was buried at the threshold of the house and not displayed as one might have expected. Despite this however,

it is possible its aim was the same as other displayed phalluses, to protect the inhabitants and the building from evil.[131]

2.4.4 Counter-spells

Although Imperial Romans did their best to ward off evil, it would seem they were not always successful in their attempts. There is evidence of counter-spells that promised to break curses, which had been placed upon unfortunate victims.

Two examples of such counter-spells can be found in the *PGM*:

> "A charm to break spells: Take lead and draw on it a unique figure holding a torch in its right / hand, in its left – and at the left – a knife and on its head three falcons and under its legs a scarab and under the scarab an ouroboros serpent" (*PGM* XXXVI.178-87).

The use of the word 'charm' at the beginning of the spell and the fact it must be written or drawn on lead, suggests this was meant to be used as an amulet.[132] It is possible the aim behind this was to make it clear to evil that it could not work its dark magic as this person was carrying a counter spell. The use of a scarab beetle and an ouroboros serpent could have been due to the fact that each of these symbols represent renewal of life (Ratcliffe 2006: 86 and Cirlot 2001: 48 and 246). This could be symbolic of persons cleansing themselves of unwanted evil, thus renewing their lives.

> "Taking a three-cornered shard from the fork of a road – pick it up with your left hand – inscribe it with myrrhed ink and hide it. [Write:] ASSTRAELOS CHRAELOS, dissolve every enchantment against me, NN, for I conjure you / by the great and terrible names which the winds fear and the rocks split when they hear it" (*PGM* XXXVI.256-64).

According to Cunningham (1985: 81) myrrh has the magical properties of protection, exorcism and healing. Thus it makes sense that it would be mixed with the ink used to write the spell as these elements would be essential for someone trying to rid themselves of evil. It is interesting to note as well, that it is not exactly clear as to where the practitioner should hide the piece of pottery once the spell has been inscribed upon it.

It would be sensible to think it could be hidden either somewhere upon the person or close to where they reside as in order for the magic to work, generally, it would need to be close to the

---

[131] According to Nakamura (2004: 14) the burial of objects such as figurines depicting gods, where meant to act as protection against evil, thus it is highly possible this was the case with the dog's penis.

[132] Pieces of lead with inscriptions upon them, were also known to be used as amulets (Budge 1930/2003: 34).

person in question (González-Wippler 1991: 5-6). In either case, the piece of pottery would have served as some form of amulet to rid the user of evil.

Judging from the wording of these spells it would seem that they contained the power to lift any form of curse or evil that had been placed upon an ill-fated victim. Thus they could have been used by anyone who believed the misfortunes in their lives was due to some unwanted evil.

3.4.5 Where was the magic?

Due to that many of the above-mentioned apotropaic devices took the form of everyday objects, such as artwork, jewellery and broken pottery, it is easy to believe they lacked any form of magical properties. This is not the case, however as each of these apotropaic devices could be considered to be amulets in their own right. According to Ogden (2002b: 261) "amulets were the most pervasive of magical tools in antiquity. At the simplest level, they were a protective or empowering bond." Amulets were meant to hold special magical powers and that is exactly what they did (Budge 1930/2003: 13).[133]

The term amulet is derived from the Latin word *amuletum*, which was used by Pliny in *Natural History* to describe various methods that would protect man from falling victim to evil:

> "So too, the root of cyclaminos … it ought to be grown in every house, if there is any truth in the assertion that wherever it grows, noxious spells have no effect. This plant is also what is called an amulet" (*Nat. Hist.* 25.67).

> "As to the basilisk … its blood has been marvellously extolled by the magicians. This blood is thick and adhesive … and as an amulet preservative against all noxious spells" (*Nat. Hist.* 29.19).

Pliny's examples would seem to indicate that almost anything could be considered an amulet and that it did not necessarily need to be worn as it appears its mere presence was also enough to provide protection from harm. Budge (1930/2003: 13) supports this idea "An amulet is an object which is endowed with magical powers and which of its own accord uses these powers

---

[133] The *bulla* was a type of amulet, where this was literally the case. This type of amulet was mainly worn by Roman children, particularly boys, for protection against evil. It could have been made from wood or metal, and its shape resembled a flat, rounded capsule, with a little loop at the top. When made of metal it was often engraved with magical figures and inscriptions, and it was filled with substances to which magical powers and properties were attributed, this substance being the real amulet. Thus, the complete bulla was an amulet in its case (Budge 1930/2003: 14).

ceaselessly on behalf of the person who carries it, or causes it to be laid up in his house, or attaches it to some one of his possessions, to protect him and his belongings from the attacks of evil spirits or from the Evil Eye."

Thus, considering these viewpoints, it is possible Imperial Romans viewed apotropaic devices as amulets, but what exactly made these amulets magical? It is highly probable it was the symbols depicted or the ingredients used in the amulet's creation.

What each of these amulets has in common is that most of them were openly displayed and their alleged magical powers seemed to draw upon very human-like qualities. These factors give one the impression that Imperial Romans believed evil had human-like qualities, such as sight and emotions.[134]

The way in which many of these amulets were displayed ties in with the fact that humans are visual creatures (Lu and Dosher 2014: 3). The beauty of the artwork and jewellery created by Romans in order to display various apotropaic symbols could have aided in their magical qualities as they would have been rather compelling images. As humans, Romans would have instinctively been drawn to look at these images (Lu and Dosher 2014: 5-6). It is this unconscious behaviour that could have promoted Imperial Roman beliefs that amulets held magical qualities as in a seemingly effortless and invisible manner evil had been prevented from causing harm.

Amulets that contained motifs of Medusa and called for the use of blood and various animal parts also played on the fact that humans are visual creatures. The amulets' visual appeal, though, was not to throw evil off with beauty, but rather through repulsion and terror. It is possible that it was Medusa's gaze that could allegedly turn both people and animals into stone, which caused evil to turn away in terror, because who would want to risk such a horrible punishment? The sight of blood and animal parts could have been enough for some people to turn away in disgust and second guess their intentions towards their victim (Podila 2019: 153). This could be due to them having a soft spot for animals or because the sight of blood made them feel sick, particularly if they believed the blood had come from a menstruating woman. Thus, once again, it is possible human nature was the invisible force that prevented evil from causing harm.

---

[134] This is possible as many of the curses that were placed upon unfortunate victims could have possibly been enacted by ghosts, which were technically the spirits of dead people. Thus, it is possible that evil retained its living abilities, such as sight.

The magic of counter-spells can also be linked to human nature. The ingredients and symbols used in the drawing up of the spells were believed to hold magical properties. It is possible practitioners of these amulets were so desperate for a cure that they put all their faith into them. It is possible that through their faith they believed that these ingredients and symbols would cleanse them from evil (González-Wippler 1991: xv).

3.4.6 Conclusion

It is clear that Imperial Romans were terrified of falling victim to the evils of black magic. Thus, in order to protect themselves, they attempted to control the evils of black magic using white or apotropaic magic. In the process of doing so, they believed evil had human-like characteristics. Consequently, it appears that the magical abilities of the amulets were actually the result of human nature. One can ask therefore: Were the evils that the Romans trying to control, actually evil, or rather the manifestations of themselves?

3.5 CONCLUSION

The primary aim of this chapter has been to explore the various types of magic available to Imperial Romans and how and why they applied it to various areas of their personal and political lives in an attempt to control the world around them. The secondary aim was to investigate the possible reasoning behind Imperial Roman beliefs in magic and their use thereof.

One type of magic that was available to Imperial Romans was uterine magic. As the name suggests this form of magic dealt with a woman's reproductive health. During the Imperial Roman era, a woman's life was often defined by her ability to bear legitimate children, boys in particular. Consequently, a woman would have done almost anything within her power to ensure she was fertile and, once she had fulfilled her duty of bearing children, she most likely did everything in her power to prevent further pregnancies. Uterine magic promised to fulfil a woman's desire of being able to have some form of control over her body. As today's technology has proven, there is a scientific possibility some of the magical remedies used in uterine magic could in fact have aided with certain reproductive issues.

Other forms of magic explored included erotic magic, curses and necromancy. Erotic magic was one of the most popular forms of magic in Imperial Rome due to its alleged ability to control the sexual behaviour of others. This vital aspect of erotic magic would have given the men and women of Imperial Rome the chance to have control over a rather complex area of their lives. This had in turn many benefits as it could have elevated or secured their positions in society, proven their manhood and even helped prevent possible scandals.

Curse tablets and the Evil Eye were infamous methods used by Imperial Romans to punish their rivals as well as to cause harm due to jealousy or hatred. To Imperial Romans, the use of such curses was the perfect approach to dealing with rivals as they gave the user the ability to cause physical harm without leaving any evidence. Consequently, this would have allowed the perpetrator to get away unscathed. They also would have believed they had some form of control over their victims as they were causing certain events to occur in their victims' lives.

The art of communicating with the dead to gain important information is known as necromancy. This ritual was not exceedingly popular among the general Roman populace, however, many of their emperors were great advocates of the art. This was possibly due to their political ambitions and blood-thirsty natures, which caused the deaths of many, including members of their own families. As a result of these murders, the emperors involved began experiencing terrible nightmares, in which they were tormented by the ghosts of those they had murdered. These nightmares were often indications of a guilty conscience. This was an emotion an emperor could not openly display as it could be seen as a sign of weakness. Thus, to rid themselves of these nightmares and regain control over their emotions, emperors turned to necromancy.

The art of foretelling the future is known as divination. There were two forms of divination Imperial Romans linked magic with astrology and necromancy. Astrology was an extremely popular form of divination in Imperial Rome as it was used by both the general Roman populace and their emperors. Although there is evidence of general use of astrology, it is rather limited. Most of the evidence considered here revolves around the use of the art by the various emperors and government officials. For the most part, some emperors made use of their knowledge of the future as a method to protect their coveted positions, while others were merely satisfied with ensuring predictions of their future greatness became reality. Regardless of the reasons emperors made use of astrology, it is clear they were attempting to control not only their own fate but the fate of others as well.

The use of necromancy to divine one's future was favoured by many of the emperors. Use of knowledge of their futures gained from the dead could be regarded as an extra precautionary measure as often it was used in conjunction with astrology. This was possibly due to many of the emperors believing they were in danger of being removed from their highly sought-after position and, therefore, that they had to use any means available to prevent this from occurring. The emperors were attempting to control future events to protect themselves and their families.

Imperial Romans were terrified of falling victim to the evils of black magic, which included curses such as the Evil Eye and other supernatural forces that could cause them harm. Thus, to

protect themselves from these evil forces, they attempted to control them through the use of white or apotropaic magic. This was done using amulets, which depicted various apotropaic symbols such as the phallus, Medusa's head and even blood and animal parts. Amulets made from lead and broken pottery, inscribed with various inscriptions and symbols also formed part of the Imperial Roman collection of white magic. When studying the variety of ways in which these amulets were used, it would seem Imperial Romans believed the evil forces they were attempting to control had human-like qualities such as sight. Consequently, it is possible the magical powers attributed to amulets, were merely reflections of certain aspects of human nature.

While exploring these forms of magic and how Imperial Romans made use of them in their lives, a few points become obvious: Firstly, it seems Imperial Romans turned to magic when they were at the lowest or most vulnerable points in their lives. Secondly, it appears magic gave its users a sense of empowerment as it allowed them to have some form of control and say over areas they generally would not. This, in turn, gave them the courage or confidence to face their fears and troubles. Finally, for the Imperial Romans magic appeared to be real as many of the remedies and curses appeared to work, potentially encouraging their trust and belief in magic as a legitimate answer to their problems.

This Chapter has mainly concentrated on the use of the various forms of magic available to Imperial Romans and how and why they applied them to numerous aspects of their lives. During this study, it has been hinted that the use of some of these forms of magic was not without legal consequences. The next chapter explores how the use of magic and the legal consequences thereof were linked and subsequently, manipulated to gain some form of control over certain personal and political situations.

CHAPTER 4 THE LEGAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE USE AND ABUSE OF MAGIC

When studying sources relating to magic in Imperial Rome, it is easy to believe magic was freely practiced without legal implications and consequences, however, this was not always the case. This becomes clear when one studies Roman legislation as there are several laws regarding the use of magic and its practitioners. There are also numerous reports of various trials that occurred because these laws were infringed upon. This chapter explores these laws using various examples of trials, in order to understand how they, too, were ultimately used as a form of control.

4.1 Laws

The earliest Roman legislation relating to magic can be found in the *Twelve Tables*, written between 451 and 450 BC. Contained within the *Twelve Tables* is an edict relating to the use of magic: Table VIII.9 made it a crime to move crops from someone else's field to one's own through the use of magic (Ogden 2002b: 277). The *Lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficis* (*The Cornelian Law concerning assassins and poisoners* of 81 BC) was a law that dealt with injuries and deaths obtained through the use of magic.[135] This law became the main statute under which all subsequent cases of magic were prosecuted. This was because the word for 'poisoner' (*veneficus*) was the same as that for 'magician' (Graf 1997: 46-48).

a) The Augustan Edict of AD 11

One area of magic that emperors and Roman authorities attempted to assert their control over was divination, particularly astrology. Initially, when astrologers were deemed to be a nuisance or a threat to the Roman populace and its leaders, simple expulsion decrees were issued as a means of dealing with the troublemaker. These decrees seem to have been insufficient, however as there is evidence of additional laws pertaining to astrology and divination being instituted.

---

[135] Although this law was introduced during the Republican era, it is highly probable it continued to be valid during the Imperial period.

According to Rives (2003: 320) Roman law was not static. Thus, it is possible the scope of the *Lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficis* was expanded over time to include the use of malicious magic. Apuleius' trial for the alleged use of magic to gain his wife's affections is an example of a magical crime that could have been tried under the *Lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficis.*

"The statute itself has not been preserved, but can be recovered from the later legal discussion on it: Whosoever has made, sold, bought, owned or administered a noxious drug to kill a man shall be tried on a criminal charge" (Kippenberg 1997: 148).

One such decree relating to the use of astrology and divination was drawn up in AD 11 and was issued by Caesar Augustus (Sogno 2005: 171). This law differed from the other decrees in that instead of expelling astrologers, it singled out the topics that could not be discussed by astrologers and their clients.

This law is known as the Augustan edict of AD 11 and it formed the permanent basis of Roman law on the subject.

Interpretation of this law in Roman courts reflected the general faith in astrology. Predictions by astrologers relating to politics were likely to be taken at face value by authorities as well as by politically ambitious clients (Cramer 1954: 232). Thus, it was illegal to inquire about one's own political future or the well-being of the emperor and his house. If one were caught or accused of partaking in this type of behaviour, that individual could be charged for committing treason. The inquiry into anyone's death was also punishable under the Augustan edict of AD 11.

To fully understand the reasoning behind this law, one needs to examine the circumstances in which it was drawn up. It was drawn up during the time when Caesar Augustus was well into his senior years. This led to the spread of rumours that great changes were to come about as the aging emperor was going to die soon. This rumour was fanned by diviners trying to please their clients with promises of greatness in their futures (Cass. Dio *Roman Hist.* 56.25.6).[136] It is highly possible Augustus saw the potential dangers behind this rumour, not only for himself and his family, but also for the relative peace within Rome. Thus, he responded by controlling the supposed source of the trouble, the diviners or astrologers by legally limiting their topics of discussion.[137]

b) The *Senatus Consultum* of AD 16

Upon thwarting a potential coup led by Libo Drusus, who had allegedly consulted with astrologers and other diviners for information to help his cause, Tiberius was forced to realise the Augustan edict of AD 11 was not enough to stop ambitious men from consulting astrologers on

---

[136] It is highly probable that many of these clients were seeking affirmation regarding their political aspirations. "He also issued a proclamation to the subject nations forbidding them to bestow any honours upon a person assigned to govern them either during his term of office or within sixty days after his departure; this was because some governors by arranging beforehand for testimonials and eulogies from their subjects were causing much mischief" (Cass. Dio *Roman Hist.* 56.25.6).

[137] Astrologers were permitted to provide information concerning all areas of a person's life, for example, what day would be best suited to host a wedding. According to Cassius Dio (*Roman Hist.* 56.25.5) "… the seers were forbidden to prophesy to any person alone or to prophesy regarding death even if others should be present."

forbidden topics. He had to find another more suitable method to deal with this problem. Tiberius decided to resort back to the former expulsion principles, albeit under a different legal guise,[138] the *senatus consultum* (Cramer 1954: 237).

Tiberius did not waste time in making the required changes to the legislation as Tacitus states that shortly after the death of Drusus, the senate voted on an expulsion decree (*Ann.* 2.32). [139] The punishment imposed by this decree was probably the usual deportation of astrologers, sorcerers and other diviners (Cramer 1954: 238). This decree appeared to be too mild however as a second much harsher one was passed shortly after the first (Cramer 1954: 237).

The second decree imposed a penalty of death upon non-Roman citizens and the exile and confiscation of property for Roman transgressors (Cass. Dio *Roman Hist.* 57.15.8-9).[140] Shortly after the passing of the second decree, Tiberius had according to Tacitus (*Ann.* 2.32), two astrologers or magicians executed – Lucius Pituanius was thrown from a rock and the other, Publius Marcius was beaten to death to the sounds of trumpets. It is possible that such a drastic move was meant to be a warning to those who dared to defy Tiberius.

The fact that Tiberius felt it was necessary to bring about additional legislation controlling astrology and other forms of divination could be construed as signs of paranoia and possibly even fear. Paranoia, because he could have believed everyone was plotting his downfall and fear of losing his powerful position as emperor. At the same time, the Roman populace would have waited for his response to the potential coup and they would have wanted some certainty that the peace in Rome was not under threat. The implementation of these decrees, especially the final one, could have helped Tiberius prove he had the situation under control, thus, calming the populace's fears of any more turmoil occurring within the city. Tiberius himself might have felt a lot more secure in his position as he knew the issue was being dealt with.

---

[138] Previous expulsion edicts had been implemented under the legal guise firstly of a Praetorian edict in 139 BC and secondly, by that of an aedile's decree (Cramer 1954: 234 and 237).

[139] The expulsion edict according to Tacitus (*Ann.* 2.32) "… ordered the expulsion of the astrologers and magic-mongers from Italy."
The expulsion edict according to Suetonius (*Tib.* 36) "He banished the astrologers as well, but pardoned such as begged for indulgence and promised to give up their art."

[140] Cassius Dio (*Roman Hist.* 57.15.8-9) states, "But as for all the other astrologers and magicians and such as practiced divination in any other way whatsoever, he put to death those who were foreigners and banished all the citizens that were accused of still employing the art at this time after the previous decree by which it had been forbidden to engage in any such business in the city; but to those that obeyed immunity was granted."

c) The *Senatus Consultum* of AD 52

Although it remained illegal to discuss certain topics with astrologers, Emperor Claudius found himself facing a similar situation as Tiberius. In AD 52, a potential plot against Claudius was uncovered. A man named Furius Scibonianus was charged with the illegal consultation of astrologers as he had supposedly inquired about the well-being of the emperor.[141] This resulted in him being exiled (Tac. *Ann.* 12.52). Claudius responded to this potentially dangerous situation in a similar fashion as Tiberius, by implementing an expulsion decree against all astrologers (Tac. *Ann.* 12.52).[142] Cassius Dio (*Ep.* 61.60.33.3b) states that along with the expulsion of astrologers, their clients were to be punished too.[143]

The exact punishment imposed upon perspective violators is not mentioned in the sources. Tacitus does claim, however that the decree was harsh (Tac. *Ann.* 12.52). One could surmise therefore, that the punishments closely resembled those of Tiberius' final decree or were even the same.

It is obvious Claudius felt threatened by this event as it was highly possible the case of Lollia Paulina,[144] was still fresh in his mind. With this latest threat to his position as emperor, Claudius also realised the edict of AD 11 was not a strong enough deterrent and, thus, he felt it necessary to create an additional one. With the implementation of this new edict, Claudius would have felt he had more control over those who had the potential to cause problems; not only for the imperial family, but also for the Roman populace.

---

[141] According to Tacitus (*Ann.* 12.52) Furius Scibonianus' mother, Vibida was also included in the charge as she had refused to accept her punishment for a former misdeed.

[142] Tacitus (*Ann.* 12.52) states, "The expulsion of the astrologers from Italy was ordered by a drastic and impotent decree of the senate."

Tacitus' use of the adjectives 'drastic' and 'impotent' to describe this decree was possibly due to his belief Tiberius was overreacting to the situation or that he was trying to find a quick solution in order to prove a point, which ultimately proved ineffective.

[143] Cassius Dio (*Ep.* 61.60.33.3b) states, "The astrologers were banished from all Italy and their associates were punished."

[144] Lollia Paulina was earlier accused of employing astrologers to divine the future of the imperial family in order to gain the necessary knowledge that would make life difficult for them. For example, she was meant to marry Emperor Claudius and not Agrippina. Information such as this could have increased the animosity between the two women and could have caused Claudius to rethink his marriage to Agrippina.

4.1.1 Imperial Expulsion Edicts

During the reigns of Vitellius and Vespasian expulsion decrees were still imposed on astrologers, however they were no longer issued under the guise of a *senatus consultum,* but as a direct imperial edict. The reason for this change is not clear. Cramer (1954: 241) believes that it was simply the forerunner to the Senate losing their prestige and power.

a) Vitellius (AD 69)

Vitellius became emperor of Rome after the death of his rival, Otho. As he was in Gaul when he received the title, Vitellius had to journey back to Rome. Upon his arrival he was greeted by a city filled with turmoil. It was no wonder as Romans would be pledging their allegiance to their fourth emperor within thirteen months. Political speculations would have been rife and many curious and ambitious men undoubtedly consulted astrologers about their chances of attaining the coveted position. Vitellius was not ignorant to the fact that these types of predictions were occurring and that they were adding to the unrest within Rome.[145] Thus, in an attempt to put an end to the speculations and unrest within the city, Vitellius issued an expulsion decree against astrologers (Tac. *Hist.* 2.62).[146]

Apart from attempting to restore peace to the city of Rome, Vitellius' expulsion decree could also have been as the result of him being aware that astrologers had the power to undermine him as emperor (Ripat 2011: 139).[147] This becomes evident by the fact that not long after his expulsion edict was issued astrologers responded with their own counter edict, which was posted around the city of Rome (Suet. *Vit.* 14.4).[148] This was a daring move and it would have most certainly angered Vitellius. Suetonius reports many astrologers were executed shortly after this incident occurred (*Vit.* 14.4). These executions, however, could also have been the result of the astrologers infringing upon the expulsion edict. Although it is not clear what the penalties were,

---

[145] Vitellius was devoted to all forms of divination, especially astrology (Cramer 1954:243).

[146] Tacitus (*Hist.* 2.62) "Vitellius sent a proclamation to Rome in advance of his arrival, deferring the title Augustus and declining the name Caesar, although he rejected none of an emperor's powers. The astrologers were banished from Italy…"

[147] According to Suetonius (*Vit.* 14.4) Vitellius held a hostile attitude towards astrologers. Ripat's study *Expelling Misconceptions: Astrologers at Rome* (2011) explores the various reasons why Vitellius believed astrologers had the power to undermine him as emperor.

[148] Suetonius (*Vit.* 14.4) *"*But he was especially hostile … to astrologers, and whenever any one of them was accused, he put him to death without trial, particularly incensed because after a proclamation of his in which he ordered the astrologers to leave the city and Italy before the Kalends of October, a placard was at once posted, reading: "By proclamation of the Chaldeans, God bless the State! Before the same day and date let Vitellius Germanicus have ceased to live."

Cramer (1954: 244) believes the death penalty from the *senatus consultum* of AD 16 against non-Roman citizens had been extended to include Romans as well. This may explain the execution of the astrologers. Regardless of whether the executions were due to Vitellius' anger or a clause in his expulsion edict, it would have definitely sent a message of warning to all the astrologers who remained in Rome: Do not trifle with the emperor as there will be serious consequences for doing so.

Vitellius would have been aware of the dangerous role astrologers played in society as it was their predictions in the past that often led to attempted coups and further unrest among Romans. He was also aware of the danger astrologers posed to his image as emperor as they had the power to undermine him. By expelling and executing the astrologers of Rome, it would seem Vitellius was attempting to control one of the sources of unrest, which in turn would prevent further degradation of the city and protect his image and his seat on the throne.

b) Vespasian (AD 69-79)

Within a space of less than two years the Roman populace found themselves welcoming in their fifth emperor, Vespasian. Gauging from past experience, Romans were most likely not confident in the longevity of their new leader's reign (Cramer 1954: 244). As with Vitellius, political speculation would have been rife. Unsurprisingly, this would have caused many ambitious men to anxiously pay a visit to their favourite astrologer to enquire if they were destined to rise to the coveted position. Undoubtedly astrologers used this situation to their advantage and did their best to assure their clients that they were destined for greatness.

Due to similar situations in the past, Vespasian would have been aware of the turmoil that astrologers and their predictions could stir up. This would have led him to seek out ways to curb their actions. Accordingly, he had all astrologers banned from Rome (Cass. Dio *Ep.* 65.66.9.2).[149] Cassius Dio does not report on the penalties imposed on any transgressors of the edict.[150]

Although we cannot say for sure how the people of Rome felt about having five new emperors in a space of two years, there must have been a sense of weariness and uneasiness over all the uncertainty and upheaval caused by not having a steady leader. Vespasian could have sensed this and used it to his advantage. He was clever in expelling the astrologers from Rome as it

---

[149] Cassius Dio (*Ep.* 65.66.9.2) states, "He banished the astrologers from Rome, even though he was in the habit of consulting all the best of them himself…"

[150] Cassius Dio is the only historian to provide evidence of the issuing of this edict by Vespasian.

would have been a relatively effortless way to attempt to restore peace in the city and consequently, win the support of his people.

If he was successful in restoring peace to the city, Vespasian would be sending a message to the Roman populace that he was not an emperor to be taken lightly and that he was more than capable of controlling the various situations he might encounter as a leader.

4.1.2 Diocletian bans astrologers

By the time Diocletian became emperor in AD 284, the Roman Empire had seen many years of chaos and instability, a period known as the Third Century Crisis. Thus, upon receiving the title of emperor, Diocletian set about restoring peace. One of the ways in which he attempted to do this was to change people's perceptions of their leaders. There was however, one obstacle which could prevent him from achieving this and that was magic, particularly astrology.[151]

Like many of the emperors of the third century, Diocletian's rise to the coveted position of emperor involved murder and the military. Diocletian was proclaimed emperor by his troops after the suspicious death of Numerian, the brother and co-emperor of Emperor Carinus. Initially Diocletian shared imperial responsibilities with Carinus. This changed, however, after Carinus' assassination, whereupon Diocletian became sole ruler of the empire. Not one to waste time, Diocletian immediately set about attempting to restore the empire to its former glory.

This was done in a several ways: Firstly, Diocletian set about reorganising the administration of the Empire. He declared Maximian, an army general as his co-emperor, charged with governing the western half of the Empire from Milan, while he supervised the eastern half from his capital at Nicomedia in western Anatolia, effectively splitting the Empire into two. Secondly, Diocletian attempted to change the general populace's perception of their leaders. According to Neill (2009: 225) Diocletian believed his rise to power was divinely ordained. Consequently, he declared his kinship with the god Jupiter and Maximian's with the god Hercules. Diocletian reinforced his godlike image by requiring those who approached him to prostrate themselves on the ground and he surrounded himself with pomp and ceremony, which would have most certainly been frowned upon in the earlier years of the Empire (Neill 2009: 225).

There are several theories as to why Diocletian deemed it necessary to associate himself and Maximian with the gods. Neill (2009: 225) claims that, by creating an aura of divinity, Diocletian attempted to avoid a similar fate to his predecessors – being assassinated. Petitt (2009: 41) is of the opinion that it was to improve the image of the imperial court after all the

---

[151] Astrology fell under divinatory magic.

years of civil unrest. Finally, Ward, Heichelheim and Yeo (2016: 392) believe Diocletian adopted these titles in an attempt to persuade the general populace that he and Maximian were the earthly representatives of the gods, sent to restore the Roman Empire. All these theories are certainly plausible. There was one obstacle, however, that could have prevented Diocletian from achieving these aims and that was magic, in particular astrology.

Consequently, Diocletian implemented an empire-wide ban on astrology in AD 296.[152] This was the first time a pagan emperor deemed it necessary to implement this type of ban against the practice of astrology (Cramer 1954: 233). Which does beg the question: Why? There are several plausible reasons: Firstly, history proved astrology had the potential to cause, or at least add to the existing chaos. Thus, by eliminating its practice, Diocletian attempted to restore and maintain peace and stability throughout the empire. Secondly astrology was a practice that almost all the citizens of the Roman Empire had access to, and its knowledge was linked to the celestial gods (Schoener 2002: 30). These facts could lead to the diminishment of Diocletian's and Maximian's god-like image, which they were attempting to create as no mortal should have access to such powerful knowledge. A similar sentiment is shared by Sogno (2005: 174) "Diocletian's law forbidding astrology seems to indicate that the absolute and god-given nature of imperial power could not tolerate any competition. By allegedly knowing his destiny astrologers had a claim to a power superior to that of the emperor…" It is also possible that through astrology members of the Empire could discover there was no real link between the emperors and the gods, which subsequently, could lead to a coup. Ultimately, the reasons behind Diocletian's edict against astrology were similar to the expulsion edicts of the earlier Empire – to protect and reinforce the image of the emperor and the stability of the Empire.

4.1.3 Astrologers and the emperor's image

Regardless of what form the expulsion edicts against astrologers took during the Imperial Roman era, they all have one thing in common: They were aimed at a minority group. Why were the emperors so concerned about this group? We have already established that astrologers had the potential to cause unrest within the city of Rome and even had the power to undermine the emperor's authority. Apart from these obvious concerns, it is possible the emperors saw an opportunity in using a known prejudice against astrologers in an effort to control their image.

---

[152] "To learn and apply the science of geometry is to the public interest. But the damnable magician's art [astrology] is forbidden" (Justinian *Codex.* 9.18.2).

Barton (1994: 52) and Beard, North and Price (1998: 233) confirm the ban was against astrology in particular.

In Imperial Rome "… astrological knowledge was associated with eastern traditions as indicated by the common designation of astrologers as "Chaldeans"" (Van Der Lans 2015: 57). Thus, it is possible this association led Imperial Romans to believe that astrology was practiced by foreigners or minorities in Rome. [153] This opinion would have played right into various emperors' hands as in most societies, minority groups are not always fully accepted and are often regarded with some form of disdain and suspicion.[154] Consequently astrologers would have been an obvious target for the emperors as not a large amount of time or effort would have been required to persuade the Roman populace that their persecution was necessary. The fact that later expulsion edicts included Roman citizens could have been to help prove the point that foreigners were dangerous as they were contaminating and corrupting the Roman way of life with their peculiar ways.

By taking steps against astrologers, the emperors would have been manipulating the Roman populace's beliefs regarding astrologers. The issuing of the various expulsion edicts would validate the populace's suspicions regarding astrologers while, at the same time painting the emperors as heroes who saved Rome from the dangers these unruly foreigners presented. This led the Roman populace to believe their new leaders were competent, powerful and capable of dealing with any situation that might arise during their reign.

The singling out of a group who were already the target of negative opinions was a shrewd method used by various emperors to control their public image. As a result, expulsion edicts were a cleverly disguised ruse to convince the Roman populace of their emperor's abilities and what they could expect of them as leaders. Although we cannot be entirely sure how Romans reacted to the edicts, we can be sure some sort of message was conveyed, whether it was what the emperors were aiming for or not.

4.2 Trials

Historians such as Tacitus often report on the various trials that occurred during the Imperial Roman era, due to the laws dictating the use of magic allegedly being broken. Generally, these trials were the result of an individual feeling threatened for various reasons, which led to these

---

[153] The type of practitioners referred to in this scenario are the 'street astrologers' who generally served the middle to lower classes of Imperial Rome and not the elite astrologers who serving the upper classes, such as the emperors (Ripat 2011: 123).

[154] Spiers, Love, Pelley, Gibb and Murphy's study entitled *Anterior Temporal Lobe Tracks the Formation of Prejudice* (2016), claims that our brains are programmed to have preconceived ideas or prejudiced feelings towards minority groups.

individuals attempting to rid themselves of this perceived threat through the accusation of the use of magic.

4.2.1 Marcus Scibonius Libo Drusus (AD 16)

It was not until AD 16, during the reign of Tiberius that we hear of a trial taking place due the violation of the AD 11 edict. This was most likely because Tiberius' authority and position as emperor was threatened by a man named Marcus Scibonius Libo Drusus, who had links to the imperial family. Drusus was suspected of plotting against Tiberius and allegedly consulted astrologers, magicians and dream-interpreters and even necromancers to obtain the knowledge he required to orchestrate his plot (Tac. *Ann.* 2.27-28).

A book filled with supposedly magical symbols sealed his fate. The pleas of mercy to Tiberius from his powerful relatives were in vain as the defendant's guilt was obvious. With no hope of acquittal, Drusus committed suicide. Despite this his trial still took place, where he was formally found guilty (Tac. *Ann.* 2.30-31).

Tiberius' firm standing on this matter could be seen in a variety of ways: firstly, as a warning to other ambitious men not to follow in Drusus' footsteps. Secondly, he was protecting his position as emperor through legal channels – a clever way to eliminate one's rivals without rousing the suspicions of the Roman Senate and populace. Finally, he was attempting to prevent any more unrest among the populace that the issue with Drusus might have caused. Tiberius' actions also demonstrated the amount of control the imperial throne wielded over the practice of magic. The reports of both Cassius Dio and Tacitus reflect the type of message or image Tiberius wanted to portray, namely that he was ultimately in control and not going to allow predictions of astrology and other forms of divination to threaten his position as emperor (Hayes 1959: 6).

4.2.2 Piso and Plancina (AD 20 and AD 33)

In Imperial Rome accusations of the illegal use of magic were so effective against one's enemies, that they were even used to hide the truth. This was because Romans genuinely believed magic could be used to harm or even kill someone. This was the case with Germanicus, a popular general and the adopted son of Emperor Tiberius. In AD 19, the Roman populace was astonished, grief-stricken, confused and angry at the news of the death of Germanicus, their hero. They demanded answers as they could not believe that the man they looked up to was dead.

Some believed foul play was behind Germanicus' death and that Tiberius was the culprit.[155] Before Germanicus' death, however, both he and his wife Agrippina the Older believed he was being poisoned by a rival, named Piso, and his wife Plancina (Tac. *Ann.* 2.69). This could have been because Germanicus fell ill not long after he ordered Piso out of Syria. In fact, Germanicus was so convinced Piso was poisoning him, that he became even more ill and the discovery of implements of witchcraft within his house and reports that Piso's associates were keeping a keen eye on Germanicus' condition, only confirmed Piso's guilt (Tac. *Ann.* 2.69).[156] After Piso's failed attempt to consolidate his power in Syria, he was summoned to Rome, where he was charged with numerous infringements as the governor, but most importantly, for the murder of Germanicus with the aid of poison and magic (Tac. *Ann.* 3.13). Tacitus reports never was the whole of Rome so interested in the proceedings of a trial. He also claims the amount of private criticism and unspoken suspicion of the emperor by the Roman populace was unprecedented (Tac. *Ann.* 3.11).

The trial began with a speech by Tiberius wherein he spoke about Piso's misconduct while he was the administrator of the East as well as the possible reasons for his actions. Tiberius also spoke about Germanicus and proclaimed he would always mourn his death,[157] declaring however, that he would not allow his emotions to cloud his judgement of Piso during the trial (Tac. *Ann.* 3.12). Tiberius' reference to his emotions suggest it was perhaps part of his ploy to fool the senate into thinking he was a grieving father as part of an attempt to shift the focus of his supposed role in Germanicus' death entirely to Piso – it worked (Damon 1999: 157).

Although Piso was accused of using both poison and magic to help murder Germanicus, no sources speak of him being questioned about his alleged use of magic. In fact, they only seem to

---

[155] The reasons for this belief can be found in an earlier chapter of this dissertation, entitled *Erotic Magic, Love Potions, Curses and Necromancy*.

[156] Tacitus (*Ann.* 2.69) relates the rather horrifying discoveries: Explorations in the floor and walls (of his house) brought to light the remains of human bodies, spells, curses, leaden tablets engraved with the name Germanicus, charred and blood-smeared ashes, and other horrors, by which it is believed the living soul can be devoted to the powers of the grave.

Germanicus was so convinced that he was being poisoned it is possible that he was actually harming himself through this belief. This effect is known as the 'nocebo effect'. See Chapter 3.1.1 for information regarding this effect.

[157] Cassius Dio (*Roman Hist.* 57.18.6) reports that both Tiberius and Livia were extremely pleased when they heard of Germanicus' death. It is therefore my opinion that Tiberius was being untruthful when he spoke of his so-called sorrow over the death of his adopted son.

concentrate on his use of poison and even then, they fail to reach an agreement upon its use. [158] The accusation of the use of magic would have been linked to the evidence of witchcraft found at Germanicus' house. It is possible the prosecution did not get the chance to question Piso about this evidence of the use of magic as he died before the end of the trial.

Pollard (2014: 89) suggests the charges of magic were more than likely linked to Plancina, due to her link with Martina and, therefore, would not have applied to Piso's trial.[159] Another possible explanation would be that authorities used the accusation of the use of magic as a method to increase the seriousness of Piso's charges and to encourage suspiciousness of him among Romans. Another topic of interest in the case is that there is no mention of which law or laws Piso had actually violated. His supposed use of poison to kill Germanicus should have technically fallen under the *Lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficis*, which, in itself, would have meant he had possibly used a form of magic.

Piso's fate seemed to be sealed through the actions of his wife, Plancina. Through her close connections with Livia, Tiberius' mother, she had procured a pardon for a role in Germanicus' murder and began to slowly distance herself from her husband and his case. As defeated as he must have felt, due to Plancina's actions, Piso still found it within himself to fight his case (Tac. *Ann.* 3.15). It was to no avail though as once he witnessed Tiberius's emotionless face; he knew all was lost. After he was carried home, he locked himself in his room and committed suicide by cutting his own throat (Tac. *Ann.* 3.15). Piso's suicide confirmed the senate's belief that he was behind the death of Germanicus and thus, the murder was finally avenged.

This trial could be seen as a form of control for the following reasons: When Germanicus fell ill it is possible he could not believe he was going to die in such a manner and, therefore was convinced he was being poisoned. Germanicus must have realised an accusation of poisoning would attract the attention of the Roman authorities. Consequently, he used this to his advantage and immediately accused his long-time rivals, Piso and Plancina of poisoning him. After his death Roman authorities did charge Piso and Plancina for his murder. This could have been

---

[158] Tacitus (*Ann* .3.14) claims the defence and prosecution were both not entirely convinced as to how Piso had actually administered the poison.

[159] Martina was supposedly a woman who had magical knowledge and Plancina was known to have consulted with her on numerous occasions (Tac. *Ann.* 2.74).

exactly what Germanicus wanted as the trial would finally allow him to punish Piso and his wife for their poor treatment of him and his wife.[160]

The early and unexpected death of Germanicus caused a major upset among the Roman populace as well as the spreading of many rumours that Tiberius was involved. Tiberius saw their reactions and realised it had the potential to evolve into something far worse and that his name would be tarnished if he did not take control of the situation.

Suetonius (*Calig.* 2.1) believes Germanicus "… met his death through the wiles of Tiberius, aided and abetted by Piso." It is highly possible, therefore, that Tiberius conveniently used Piso as his scapegoat to try and hide his part in Germanicus' death. Accordingly, Tiberius would readily oblige the public outcry for an investigation into the death of their hero as he knew it would be the perfect opportunity to clear his name (Cass. Dio *Roman Hist.* 57.18.10).

Piso was a convenient scapegoat for several reasons: Germanicus had already openly accused him of poisoning him and he had formally renounced him as a friend (Tac. *Ann.* 2.70). He had also allegedly made use of magic to aid in Germanicus' murder. It would be easy, therefore, to convince the populace Piso was guilty of the crime. By giving the Roman populace a reason as to why their beloved hero had died so young, Tiberius was successful in shifting the blame away from himself. Consequently, he would clear any lingering suspicions of his involvement in Germanicus' death and prevent any further unrest within the city.

After the death of Livia, Plancina found herself on trial for Germanicus' murder. Even though Agrippina did not instigate the court proceedings herself, she undoubtedly would want to see Plancina suffer for the murder of her husband. The reason for this is that Agrippina lost a lot of status and power when Germanicus died. She was potentially next in line to become empress of Rome and Plancina and her husband took that away from her. This along with the death of her husband, would make her extremely angry, with matters of revenge not far from her mind. Perhaps Germanicus sensed this as he warned her just before he died not too seek revenge on

---

[160] Examples of this poor treatment include: Piso's attempts to turn Germanicus's supporters against him and the undermining of his military orders and Plancina publicly insulting Germanicus and Agrippina at cavalry exercises and infantry manoeuvres (Tac. *Ann.* 2.55 and 2.57). Despite this, Suetonius writes that Germanicus was a mild and lenient man, and that even when Piso was undermining him, he did not see it necessary to punish him (*Calig.* 3.3). It is possible Germanicus did not want to publicly punish Piso as it could have tarnished his name and caused Piso to retaliate in a harsh manner.

those who had wronged them (Tac. *Ann.* 2.72). Before a verdict could be given however, Plancina also committed suicide.

The accusation of the use of magic against both Piso and Plancina seemingly had its advantages. It allowed Germanicus, though posthumously, to avenge his rival's mistreatment of him and his wife. Tiberius could use the trial in an effort to quell rumours that he had a role to play in Germanicus' death and Agrippina saw it as a chance to seek justice for the death of her husband and the loss of her status and power (Pollard 2014: 190).

4.2.3 Agrippina the Younger (AD 15- AD 59) [161]

Agrippina the Younger has been described by ancient and modern historians as an ambitious, ruthless, violent and domineering woman, who would not allow anything nor anyone to come between her and her ambitions.[162] As a woman in Imperial Rome, she had to have be shrewd in her methods to gain what she so desired. Consequently, Agrippina tactfully manipulated the law through accusations of the use of harmful magic in order to remove obstacles in her way.

The following are accounts of how Agrippina cleverly manipulated the law to achieve her desires:

a) Lollia Paulina (AD 49)

The first victim of Agrippina's animosity was Lollia Paulina. After the death of Messalina, Emperor Claudius' wife, both Lollia Paulina and Agrippina were presented as potential replacements. Consequently, Agrippina found herself in competition with Lollia. In the end, however, Agrippina was favoured by Claudius and won his hand in marriage. Despite her success over Lollia, Agrippina still saw her as a threat, thus according to Tacitus, Agrippina set out to destroy her and had it arranged that Lollia be put on trial (Tac. *Ann.* 12.22). The charges brought against Lollia were that she had consulted Chaldean astrologers, magicians and the image of Clarian Apollo about Claudius' impending wedding (Tac. *Ann.* 12.22). The outcome of

---

[161] Agrippina the Younger was the daughter of the much-loved and popular Germanicus, the younger sister of Emperor Caligula, the wife of Emperor Claudius and the mother of Emperor Nero. According to Barrett (1996: XIV) "… in the setting of ancient Rome these subordinate roles are what, in fact, defined her sphere of operations as she was fully aware. The brilliant exploitation of that position, so as to exercise enormous *de facto* power and influence, was her own great achievement."

[162] Evidence of these descriptions can be found in Tacitus' *Annals* 12.64, and Barrett, *Agrippina, Sex, Power, and Politics in the Early Empire* (1996).

the trial could be regarded a victory for Agrippina as Lollia was exiled from Italy and a large part of her property was confiscated.

Were Agrippina's actions towards Lollia that of a vindictive and jealous woman or did she still have a valid reason to feel threatened by her, even though she had won? According to Baumann (1992: 182) she did still have reason to feel threatened. If Lollia had consulted with astrologers, it would have been after Agrippina's victory. She would do so with the hope of finding a way to reverse Claudius' decision, possibly to win him for herself. Pollard (2014: 195) believes Agrippina felt threatened by Lollia as she had enough money to cause real trouble for the Julio-Claudian dynasty.[163] Claudius could also believe this, as is evidenced by his speech at Lollia's trial, where he commented that her resources for evil must be removed (Tac. *Ann.* 12.22). This potential threat could have been problematic for Agrippina as it would have interfered with her plans of ensuring Nero's place on the imperial throne.

Despite Lollia's exile, Agrippina still felt threatened by her as not long after her exile a tribune of the guard was sent to ensure Lollia's suicide. Agrippina's involvement in Lollia's death could be reinforced because soon after her death, Lollia's ashes were returned to Rome for a proper burial (Tac. *Ann.* 14.12.6).[164] According to Tacitus (*Ann.* 14.12.6) Nero did this to further tarnish his mother's reputation in order to calm his feelings of guilt for having her killed. A move like this would only have the desired effect if people believed Agrippina was the one behind Lollia's downfall (Deline 2009: 193). Agrippina and Lollia clearly had a competitive relationship, which Agrippina sought to end through her accusations of the practice of magic against Lollia.

b) Titus Statilius Taurus (AD 53)

The second victim of Agrippina's accusations relating to the use of magic, was Titus Statilius Taurus, who came from a line of elite and respected senators. Taurus also shared the consulship with Gaius Sallustius Crispus Passienus, Agrippina's second husband in AD 44, before becoming proconsul of Africa (Deline 2009: 194). At Agrippina's request Taurus was charged with corruption and addiction to magical superstitions, but Taurus did not live to hear the verdict

---

[163] Lollia's wealth was so well known that Pliny even speaks about it in his *Natural History* 9.58.

[164] The return of Lollia's ashes and the giving of a proper burial to her remains, would have gone against Agrippina's wishes and greatly angered her if she were alive. It is possible the populace was aware of this as there was clearly animosity between the two of them. Thus, by returning them to Rome, Nero was trying to prove a point about his mother's nature.

of the senate as he committed suicide. In his description of the trial, Tacitus implies Taurus would have been acquitted as the court was sceptical of the charges he faced (Liebs 2012: 21).

Taurus's suicide made him look guilty, however and Agrippina was once more successful in removing someone she deemed a threat. But why did she risk going against such a high-ranking individual? Tacitus (*Ann.* 12.59) reports Agrippina caused Taurus's downfall as she desired to own his gardens. According to Barrett (1996: 135-136) the true reason was that Taurus was almost certainly the brother of Taurus Statilius Corvinus, who was involved in a plot to overthrow Claudius. This meant there was a good reason to be suspicious of him. Tacitus' explanation of Agrippina desiring Taurus's gardens was most likely a fabricated story to conceal the true reason.

c) Domitia Lepida (AD 54)

Agrippina's final victim was Domitia Lepida. What makes this attack different from the others is that it was the first time Agrippina challenged a member of the imperial family. Domitia Lepida was the mother of Messalina (the late wife of Claudius) and she was also Agrippina's former sister-in-law (through Agrippina's marriage to Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus), the grandmother of Britannicus and Octavia and Nero's aunt.

Nero was the only son of Agrippina and Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus. He was sent to live with his paternal aunt Domitia, after the death of his father and the exile of his mother.[165] After the death of Caligula, Claudius succeeded him and he recalled Agrippina from exile. Upon her return she was soon reunited with her son, Nero. Agrippina accused Domitia of neglecting her son's education, a charge that cannot be taken too seriously since Nero was only four when he was reunited with his mother. It is therefore unlikely any irreparable damage had been done (Cramer 1954: 263). It was from this point however that the rivalry between the two women for Nero's affections and influence over him began (Tac. *Ann.* 12.64).

Tacitus (*Ann.* 12.64) claims Agrippina destroyed Domitia Lepida for feminine reasons; jealousy and dislike. Agrippina had two charges lodged against rival: Firstly, that she had used magic to attack Agrippina's life and secondly, that she had failed to keep her slaves in Calabria in check, threatening the peace and stability of Italy (Tac. *Ann.* 12.65). According to Deline (2009: 196) Agrippina had popular support, so attempts on her life would not be regarded favourably. While the poorly controlled slaves could have raised fears a revolt similar to the ones that had troubled the state in the previous century. The charge of the use of magic would cause the most concern

---

[165] Agrippina's exile was her punishment for allegedly plotting against Emperor Caligula.

as it had the potential to harm a member of the imperial family and this aligned with an accusation of treason.

When one delves deeper below the surface, however, Tacitus' reasoning is not satisfactory. Agrippina had real political reasons for wanting to destroy Lepida. Tacitus reports the women's desires to have influence over Nero, were just one part of the reason (*Ann.* 12.64). The other part was that Lepida was the grandmother of Britannicus and this could have caused many problems in Agrippina's designs for Nero's future. Agrippina was clearly worried Lepida would somehow use her influence over Nero to convince him to form an alliance with him and Britannicus, or that she would remove Nero completely. There was also the possibility that Lepida would use her influence over Britannicus to persuade him to seek revenge on those who had killed his mother (Deline 2009: 196). All these fears would be ample reason for Agrippina to view Lepida as an enemy and to want her eliminated as a result. Agrippina got her wish as Lepida's verdict was that she was to be executed, which was duly carried out.

As a woman in Imperial Rome, Agrippina would have few rights and she would also have a certain type of image to uphold. These facts would limit the avenues she could explore to help achieve her goals. The accusation of the use of magic was a perfect solution as it was a less obvious method of manipulation and it would not carry the risk of tarnishing her name or her family's reputation. If a case involving her or her family did attract any attention, it would probably evoke feelings of sympathy for the victim and intense suspicion and dislike for the perpetrator. An accusation of the use of magic alone was enough to deem the accused as a troublemaker who needed to be dealt with quickly. Agrippina realised this and used it to her own advantage. She made use of the legal system and manipulated it to suit her will to remove obstacles in her path to achieving her desires (Pollard 2014: 201).

4.2.4 Apuleius

In AD 158 a trial took place at Tripolitanian Sabratha in Africa. Apuleius of Madauros was accused by Sicinius Aemilianus, his wife's brother-in-law from her first marriage, of using magic to win her hand in marriage. Although there were laws such as the *Twelve Tables* prohibiting magical practices, these are certainly not the laws with which Apuleius was being charged. Although no reference is made in the *Apology* as to which law Apuleius violated, many

historians and scholars believe the law in question must have been the *Lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficis* (Hunink 1997a: 13).[166]

During the trial Apuleius' accusers did their best to prove he was, in fact, a *magus* or magician who was more than capable of creating some sort of magical love potion or charm to seduce Pudentilla. Their arsenal against him included accusations concerning his habits, so-called mysterious objects that he held in his possession and the unusual situations in which he was often involved.[167]

The "evidence" Apuleius' accusers produced to try to convince proconsul Claudius Maximus that Apuleius was in fact a *magus,* was rather compelling. There was a problem with the evidence, however, in that it was mainly based on theories and observations and not on hard proof. Apuleius found a way to defend himself, though it becomes obvious he was knowledgeable about magic, which could lead one to believe he might have actually dabbled in magic from time to time.

Apuleius was successful in undermining the credibility of his accusers. Consequently, he did not go out of his way to prove or disprove anything, he only needed to seem more credible than they were. Apuleius' argument must have been quiet convincing, as it resulted in his acquittal (Bradley 1997: 203).

At first glance the trial of Apuleius seems to be the result of his wife's previous brother-in-law's belief he was a *magus* and that he used this skill to coax Pudentilla into marrying him. At second glance however, a different story is revealed. It becomes clear that the heart of the matter is not a magical problem but a simple domestic dispute. Sicinius Aemilianus was not happy about his previous sister-in-law's marriage to Apuleius as he stood to lose control over her vast fortune. So why then did Aemilianus accuse Apuleius of using magic to solve a domestic problem?

According to Hunink (1997a: 13) he did this because there was no law preventing Pudentilla from "marrying a stranger".[168] Thus, the prosecution inevitably had to create some formal point

---

[166] These historians and scholars include Graf (1997: 66), Beard, North and Price (1998: 235) and Gordon (1999: 263).

[167] Hunink's book *Apuleius of Madauros Pro se de Magia (Apologia)* (1997b), provides an in-depth discussion of all the accusations against Apuleius.

[168] Apuleius was not from Tripolitanian Sabratha in Africa and was thus a relative stranger to the area and its populace. According to Bradley (1997: 220) the fact that he was a stranger and he married one of the wealthiest local women, also played a role in the accusations brought against him.

on which a legal case against Apuleius could be built. Undoubtedly Aemilianus chose magical practices as it was a difficult charge to defend oneself against and sorcery was a capital offense. This meant that if Apuleius was found guilty of the charge, Aemilianus and his family would be rid of him (Hunink 1997a: 13).

Aemilianus' use of the accusation of practicing magic was a convenient and lawful method of attempting to manipulate and change a situation to suit his own design. Despite Aemilianus' desperate attempts to prove Apuleius was a *magus and* thus capable of concocting a love potion, he was seemingly not successful in convincing Claudius Maximus of Apuleius' guilt. This case can be used as evidence that accusations of magic were not just employed for political ends, but clearly used as a means to settle family disputes too (Bradley 1997: 203-220).

4.3 Conclusion

Although laws such as the Augustan edict of AD 11 and the *Lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficis* remained valid during the Imperial Roman era, there were a number of occasions when authorities saw it necessary to intensify their control over the use of magic and its practitioners. This was done by implementing additional legislation during potential times of chaos and unpredictability within Rome, but mainly when emperors felt their power and authority were being threatened through the use of magic by their rivals. The authorities would attempt to control the use of magic within the city of Rome for a limited period and once the issue had been resolved the law would seemingly fall out of use. These laws were probably not heavily reinforced by authorities to begin with. Tacitus (*Ann.* 12.52) even describes the *senatus consultum* of AD 52 as being harsh and useless.

On a larger scale, it seems more than likely that the role of these decrees was to make any potential rivals to the emperor rethink their actions and to present the Roman populace with an image of a strong and capable leader who wielded full control over his empire. On a more personal level, these decrees would have given emperors peace of mind that their position on the throne was safe for the time being as they had a potentially dangerous situation under control.

Trials relating to the accusation of the use of harmful magic were a convenient method of getting what one wanted. They were also a less obvious method of manipulation as they fell within the law. Any accusation of the use of harmful magic would have been taken seriously by Roman authorities as they deemed such practices a danger to society and the peace of the city.

It is interesting to note, however, that most of the parties who were accused of making use of harmful magic, committed suicide, whether they did so out of choice or were forced to carry out

the act. Forcing the accused to commit suicide would enforce a general perception of guilt, which would help shift the attention from the accuser to the accused. If their death could be attributed to their own choice or actions, then it could have been that they were really guilty of the crime or that the stigma attached to being accused of dabbling in harmful magic was too terrible to bear. Whatever the reason, an accusation of the use of harmful magic definitely increased the accusers' chances of obtaining the results they desired.

Historians of the past provide numerous examples of cases where Roman authorities felt it necessary to increase their control over the use of magic or punish those who were guilty of infringing upon the laws pertaining to magic and its use. The necessity behind the increase in the control over magic and its use was due to authorities attempting to avoid major issues for themselves and the populace. At other times, it was required to set an example or to prove just how powerful the imperial throne was. The trials that occurred were not necessarily always due to an actual infringement of the law, but rather a result of someone cleverly manipulating the law to suit their needs. Overall, the legislation and trials against magic were often successfully used as a method of control, as it provided its practitioners some sense of control over the uncertainties of life.

CHAPTER 5 MAGIC AND CHRISTIANITY

When dealing with magic and Christianity in Imperial Rome one is inclined to approach it with the preconceived understanding that the Christians of Imperial Rome believed all forms of magic were evil and subsequently did their best to avoid them.[169] On closer inspection however, it becomes clear that this was not necessarily the case as there is evidence that Imperial Roman Christians made use of magic. This chapter explores how Christians used magic in an effort to control evil.[170]

5.1 Protection

The most prominent form of magic used by Christians was apotropaic amulets. These amulets varied from simple engravings and inscriptions to elaborate works of art and decorative jewellery.

a) Amulets and emperors

During the reigns of emperors Diocletian (AD 284-305) and Constantine (AD 306-337), there are two documented cases where Christian symbols were used as amulets in an attempt to protect their users against various forms of evil. In turn each of these cases could have been exploited by the Christian church to prove how powerful the Christian god was.

The following narrative is an example of how Christians during Emperor Diocletian's reign used the sacred cross as a form of protection against evils they believed were present during a haruspicy ritual: [171]

> "Diocletian as being of a timorous disposition, was a searcher into futurity and during his abode in the East he began to slay victims, that from their livers he might obtain a prognostic of events; and while he sacrificed, some attendants of his, who were Christians, stood by and they put the immortal sign on their foreheads. At this the demons were chased away and the holy rites interrupted. The soothsayers trembled, unable to investigate the

---

[169] A possible reason for this preconception is the following: "In Christian writings from the second and third centuries, the use of incantations and amulets is subsumed under the larger discursive fields of magic and sorcery. These terms are associated with danger, evil, illusion and fraud" (De Bruyn 2017: 18).
For an in-depth look at various Christian writings refer to *Julius Africanus and the Early Christian View of Magic* (Thee 1984: 316-448).

[170] An interesting collection of Christian spells can be found as an appendix in Preisendanz's version of the *PGM* (vol. 2, p. 209-235). Unfortunately they are not included in Betz' English edition and consequently, do not form part of this study.

[171] Laughlin (2007) and Longenecker (2015) both confirm that the immortal symbol was the Christian cross.

wonted marks on the entrails of the victims. They frequently repeated the sacrifices as if the former had been unpropitious; but the victims, slain from time to time, afforded no tokens for divination. At length Tages, the chief of the soothsayers, either from guess or from his own observation, said, "There are profane persons here, who obstruct the rites" Then Diocletian, in furious passion, ordered not only all who were assisting at the holy ceremonies, but also all who resided within the palace, to sacrifice and, in case of their refusal, to be scourged. And further, by letters to the commanding officers, he enjoined that all soldiers should be forced to the like impiety, under pain of being dismissed from the service. Thus far his rage proceeded; but at that season he did nothing more against the law and religion of God" (Lactant. *De mort. pers.* 10).

Although the image of the cross was a simple drawing on the wearers' foreheads, it can still be deemed an amulet. This is because the wearers believed the symbol of the cross held the power to protect them from the evils perceived to be present during the ritual. As the soothsayer was unable to obtain an accurate reading, it would appear the Christians' faith in the protective powers of their amulet was accurate.[172]

Diocletian's response to his thwarted attempts to gain knowledge of the future is also of interest. It is obvious that he was angered by the outcome of the ritual. This caused him to punish those who were allegedly responsible for its failure. Why did he respond in such a harsh manner? It is highly possible he felt threatened by this seemingly powerful religion and/or god. This could be attributed to the fact that Diocletian portrayed himself as a powerful god sent to save the Imperial Roman Empire (Ward, Heichelheim and Yeo 2016: 392).[173] A more powerful god would have clearly undermined his power and possibly changed the way in which the Roman populace perceived him as their leader. Thus, by punishing those who were responsible and refused to obey his orders, Diocletian could attempt to discourage any negative beliefs regarding his powerful, godly status.

These two events could not have been more perfect for the Christian church's image. The fact that the symbol of the cross seemingly protected its wearers from evil by preventing the ritual of haruspicy from taking place, could prove the Christian god was more powerful than man and evil alike. Diocletian's response would only cement this belief in the eyes of Christians.

---

[172] Interestingly according to Persius (*Sat*. 2.31-4) Romans also used to make a sign of the cross on the foreheads and lips of babies in order to protect them from the Evil Eye.

[173] For more information regarding Diocletian's godlike persona, refer to Chapter 4.1.2

The following scenario details Emperor Constantine's use of Christian symbols in his battle against Maxentius, which is known as the Battle of the Milvian Bridge:

> "Constantine was directed in a dream to cause the heavenly sign to be delineated on the shields of his soldiers and so to proceed to battle. He did as he had been commanded and he marked on their shields the letter X, with a perpendicular line drawn through it and turned round thus at the top, being the cipher of CHRIST. Having this sign, his troops stood to arms. The enemies advanced, but without their emperor and they crossed the bridge. The armies met and fought with the utmost exertions of valour and firmly maintained their ground. In the mean-time a sedition arose at Rome and Maxentius was reviled as one who had abandoned all concern for the safety of the commonwealth; and suddenly, while he exhibited the Circensian games on the anniversary of his reign, the people cried with one voice, "Constantine cannot be overcome!" Dismayed at this, Maxentius burst from the assembly and having called some senators together, ordered the Sibylline books to be searched. In them it was found that –
>
> On the same day the enemy of the Romans should perish.
>
> Led by this response to the hopes of victory, he went to the field. The bridge in his rear was broken down. At sight of that the battle grew hotter. The hand of the Lord prevailed and the forces of Maxentius were routed. He fled towards the broken bridge; but the multitude pressing on him, he was driven headlong into the Tiber" (Lactant. *De mort. pers.* 44).

Constantine's depiction of the Christian symbol known as *Chi Rho*,[174] was certainly more elaborate than the simple cross in the previous scenario, yet the purpose of its use remains the same – protection. It would, however, also seem apart from providing Constantine's soldiers with protection, it also gave them the confidence to face their enemy. Consequently, it can be deemed an amulet, too.

Aside from following the advice he received in his dream and the obvious dangers of battle, why would Constantine's men require protection and encouragement to partake in this battle? According to Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* XIV) Maxentius was an evil man and not above resorting to magic to achieve his desires. Thus, it is possible Constantine and his men believed the *Chi Rho* symbol would protect them from the evils of Maxentius and any other evils he had called to aid

---

[174] "The Chi Rho is a monogram formed by the first two letters of the Greek word for Christ (Χριστός). Thus, X + P = ☧ "(Crosson 2016: 5).

him and his men to victory. Constantine's use of the *Chi Rho* amulets was successful, because not only were he and his men victorious but, the alleged evil of Maxentius was also destroyed that day.

Regardless of Constantine's true religious convictions,[175] the events that occurred during this battle could still have been used as a source of propaganda by the Christian church. The fact that such a highly regarded person such as Constantine had made use of a Christian symbol and was allegedly led to victory through its use, could have been used by the church in an effort to convince the Imperial Roman populace of the Christian god's power and His ability to triumph over evil. Constantine's alleged conversion to Christianity because of his victory would have only helped to prove the Christian belief in the power of their god.

b) Apotropaic artwork

To protect the living and the dead, Christian Romans created artwork such as bas-relief stuccos, funerary art and simple frescos. Not only did these forms of art have decorative purposes, they may have also been used as a statement of identity or as a confession the practitioner's faith and they were also believed to hold the power to ward off evil. Consequently, these apotropaic forms of artwork can also be considered amulets.[176]

Bas-relief stuccos of the Christian cross were one form of apotropaic artwork used in Imperial Rome.[177] Evidence of this type of artwork can be found in a bakery in Pompeii. Longenecker (2015: 96) describes one such stucco cross in the following manner:

> "It flares out at lower portions of the vertical stave before rounding off at the bottom. The horizontal transverse gently expands in width before quickly flaring toward its two endpoints. Except the tips of the horizontal transverse, a delicate bevelling adds an exquisite outline to the whole cross."[178]

---

[175] Constantine's true religious convictions have been the topic of many academic works – Elliott (1987), Laughlin (2007) and Grembowski (2013) are examples of such works.

[176] According to Pliny (*Nat. Hist.* 25.67 and 29.19) amulets did not necessarily need to be items which could be worn by their users. For example: plants such as, cyclamen, were believed to hold magical powers that could ward off noxious spells and were consequently planted in and around Roman houses. (Pliny *Nat. Hist.* 25.67).
For more information regarding artwork as amulets, refer to Chapters 3.4.1, 3.4.2 and 3.4.5.

[177] The Christian cross is associated with Christ due to His crucifixion on a cross (Longenecker 2015: 8).

[178] Refer to Longenecker (2015: 91) for a drawing of the Pompeian stucco bas-relief cross.

Based on the above description much effort went into the creation of this piece. Thus, it is easy to conclude the baker was a Christian. However, this was not the only piece of apotropaic artwork found in the bakery. Pagan artwork featuring the phallus symbol and two paintings of snakes were also found alongside this piece (Longenecker 2015: 91).[179] What does the presence of Christian and pagan apotropaic symbols mean? One theory is the baker was not a Christian, but as Romans were known to adopt favourable aspects from different religions, it is possible the baker decided there was no harm in including a Christian symbol in his arsenal against evil (Longenecker 2015: 93). Another theory is that the baker was, in fact, a Christian. However, as Christianity was not always free from syncretism, it is possible the baker still followed pagan religious traditions (Longenecker 2015: 93). For the purpose of this argument, both theories are acceptable as they lead one to a plausible conclusion that – it is possible Christians and pagans alike used artwork featuring the Christian cross in an effort to ward off evil. This was due to both parties believing the symbol had the power to do so.

Funerary art comprising simple engravings featuring Christian symbols was another form of apotropaic artwork used in Imperial Rome. These engravings can be found on tomb slabs and *tituli,* in the catacombs beneath the streets of Rome.[180] A closer inspection of these engravings reveals a fair amount of them are depictions of anchors and fish.[181] The presence of these nautically themed symbols in funerary art seems rather strange and begs the questions: How are these symbols linked to Christianity and why were they used in funerary art?

These symbols are linked to Christianity for the following reasons: Firstly, the anchor is referred to in the bible: "We have this hope as an anchor for our lives" (Heb. 6:19). Thus, according to Unger (2006: 88) the anchor is a sign of safety, security and most importantly hope. Mondello (2019: 2) also reports that early Christians combined the symbol of the anchor with that of the cross, thus proclaiming that Christ and His saving passion were the sure way to heaven. Secondly, the Greek word for fish is *ichthys*, which the early Christians used as an acronym for *Iesous Christos Theou Yios Soter:* Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour. The miracle of the loaves

---

[179] A phallic symbol was found embedded above the bakery's oven and its presence was meant to increase good luck and to protect the product of the household. The two snake paintings represent the spirits protecting the household (Longenecker 2015: 91).

[180] Some examples include an anchor and fish engraving on a *titulus* in the Catacomb of Priscilla and an anchor and fish engraving on a tomb slab in the Catacomb of Domitilla (Synder 1985: 15 and Nees 2002: 35).

[181] Examples of this type of artwork can be found in Synder (1985: 15).

and fishes was also associated with the Holy Eucharist. Consequently, early Christians used fish symbols to represent Christ (Mondello 2019: 5).

By considering the meaning behind the anchor and fish symbols and their links with Christianity, their appearance in funerary art begins to make sense. It is possible that early Christians believed these symbols held the power to protect the dead from evil, due to their meaning and close connection with Christ. It is also possible these symbols represented the hope held by the living that the deceased would move safely into the next life.

Apart from engravings of anchors and fish, Roman catacombs are also famously adorned with many biblically themed frescos.[182] According to Jensen (2000: 24) the quality of some of these frescos, particularly the pre-Constantinian ones, is rather poor as they are neither stylistically sophisticated nor even well-painted. Details are two-dimensional, often rendered awkwardly, without extraneous details and pay little attention to setting or landscape. Occasionally, better quality frescos do appear on the walls, but, generally, they are poorly executed and crammed into a small area, with little obvious relationship to one another.

Jensen (2000: 24) believes, "however, this apparently careless execution, haphazard composition, and lack of detail in the paintings actually lends an expressive quality that challenges any conclusion that this imagery was primarily decorative." Thus, it is possible that aside from their decorative role, these frescos also played an apotropaic role.[183] This was not necessarily due to the themes depicted in these works having the power to ward off evil, but rather the artwork itself. Despite the poor quality of the images, they would still have been an impressive sight to behold. Consequently, they could have caught evil's attention, thereby distracting it from its original purpose and preventing it from causing harm. Another possibility is that, through these images, early Christians attempted to encourage the presence of Christ in the catacombs as this could have caused evil to feel intimidated or guilty about the harmful deeds it was about to commit, thus encouraging the abandoning of any malevolent plans.

---

[182] Themes include images from the old and New Testament as well as Apocryphal narrative. Included in this category are portrayals of Jonah, Abraham offering Isaac, Noah and the ark, Moses striking the rock, Daniel with the lions, Jesus's baptism, Jesus healing the paralytic and the multiplication of the loaves (Jensen 2000: 19).

[183] It is also possible that these frescoes were used to identify the religious affiliation of the occupants.

c) Apotropaic jewellery

The use of apotropaic jewellery in Imperial Rome was not uncommon as it was a simple and effective method of protecting oneself from evil.[184] Thus, it is not surprising there is also evidence of apotropaic jewellery bearing Christian symbols.

Rings bearing various Christian symbols were a popular form of apotropaic jewellery. The most prominent Christian symbols to be depicted on these rings were images of the cross and fish. Images of the cross could be depicted in a number of ways: Firstly, by placing the Greek word *ichthys* (IXΘYC) in the shape of an equilateral cross (Spier 2007: 184). [185] Secondly, through the use of a simple T, which represented the cross. This depiction could also be accompanied by the Greek *Chi*, which signified Christ (Longenecker 2015: 87). On the other hand, images of the fish symbol rarely changed and often appeared individually, coupled with a cross or alongside other Christian symbols, such as doves (Spier 1992: 143 and Longenecker 2015: 90).

Gemstones featuring Christian symbols were often used to decorate rings or pendants and consequently can also be deemed amulets.

The following is a description of a red jasper gemstone bearing Christian symbols:

> "Ship with mast and cross emblem on sail, sailing to the left; on the right side a person is lying on the deck. Below the ship, the word: IXΘYC. (Note that the shape of the ship is that of a fish)" (Gitler 1990: 373).

Gitler (1990: 373) also provides examples of other gemstones featuring Christian symbols:

> "An onyx gem depicting a ship with fish swimming under it and gem types depicting an anchor with one or two fish together with the word IXΘYC…"

When examining these gemstones and their symbols, there are several apotropaic elements that come to light: Firstly, the qualities of the gemstones themselves. According to Hall (2003: 157 and 207) jasper holds the ability to protect the body and absorb negative energy and onyx is capable of alleviating any worries and fears. References to these gemstones can also be found

---

[184] For more information regarding other forms of apotropaic jewellery, refer to Chapter 3.4.1 and 3.4.2.

[185] *Ichthys* is the Greek word for 'fish', a symbol associated with Christ (Mondello 2019: 5).

throughout the Christian bible (Harrell, Hoffmeier and Williams 2017: 3).[186] Thus, it is possible Christians believed these two gemstones were endorsed by their god, enhancing the amulet's apotropaic qualities. Secondly, although the ship is in the shape of a fish,[187] symbols of ships were generally associated with Christ.[188] Thus, it is possible the fish shape was an effort to increase its association with Christ. Finally, ΙΧΘΥϹ are the initials for the phrase *Iesous Christos Theou Yios Soter:* Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour (Gitler 1990: 374).[189]

Even at its simplest form, jewellery can be distracting as one cannot help but admire its beauty or originality. Thus, by openly displaying these forms of jewellery it is possible the wearer was attempting to distract evil.[190] The use of Christian symbols would have aided in this effort as they could have encouraged fear and awe, both of which would have aided in deflecting evil and its malicious intentions.   The gemstones themselves also played a role as they could have been useful in calming or alleviating the wearer's fears regarding evil. Consequently, it is possible that a combination of these elements led the wearer to believe they were impervious to evil's threats, thus calming their fears and allowing them to enjoy their lives.

d) Scriptures, prayers and incantations

An interesting addition to the Roman Christian's arsenal against evil was the use of amulets featuring scriptural verses, prayers and incantations.

One of the most popular scriptural verses was Psalm 91: 1-16:

---

[186] The most notable mention of these gemstones can be found in Exodus 28: 15-20, where God requests that the gemstones, jasper and onyx form part of a breastplate to be worn by the high priest (*NIV* 1984). Other notable mentions of these gemstones can be found in Ezekiel 28:13 and Rev. 21:19.

Another notable mention of the gemstones jasper and onyx forming part of the high priest's breastplate can be found in Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews* (3. 166-168).

Due to the difficulty in translating the original texts describing the high priest's breastplate, the exact type of gemstones used remain a contentious subject (Harrell, Hoffmeier and Williams 2017: 3-4). Scholars such as Draper (1988), Pickering (2005) and Harrell, Hoffmeier and Williams (2017) all agree that the gemstones jasper and onyx were used.

[187] Reference to the fish, anchor and cross as apotropaic symbols can be found earlier on in this Chapter.

[188] One such association was due to the miracle on the Sea of Galilee, when Christ calmed the waves and saved the vessel of the apostles from disaster (Gitler 1990: 373).

[189] Ἰησοῦς Χριστός Θεοῦ Υἱός Ϲωτήρ – Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour (Gitler 1990: 374).

[190] It is also possible that these forms of jewellery were simply worn for decorative purposes or as a way to identify the wearer's religious affiliations.

[1]"Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. [2]I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." [3]Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. [4]He will cover you with his feathers and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. [5]You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, [6]nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. [7]A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. [8]You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. [9]If you say, "The Lord is my refuge," and make the Most High your dwelling,[10]no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. [11]For he will command angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; [12]they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. [13]You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. [14] "Because he loves me," says the Lord, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. [15] He will call on me and I will answer him; I will be with in trouble, I will deliver him and honour him. [16]With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation" (*Holy Bible New International Version* (*NIV*) 1984).

Upon reading the psalm it becomes clear that it "focuses on the individual believer and his relationship with the Almighty. It speaks of trust and protection and has evidently been read and recited to strengthen the bond of the believer and God" (Peerbolte 2017: 28). Thus, based on God's promises of protection and the believer's trust in Him, it is understandable that Christians of Imperial Rome believed the psalm held apotropaic properties. Consequently, in their efforts to arm themselves against evil, the psalm was inscribed on various objects such as armbands, medallions, rings, tablets, door frames, houses and graves (Kraus 2011: 61). The size of the item generally dictated the length of the text inscribed upon it – on smaller items, such as rings or medallions, only the opening verse(s) or parts thereof were used. On larger items, such as papyrus or parchment, either the opening verses or the entire psalm was transcribed (De Bruyn 2017: 166).

Psalm 12: 1-8 was also used as a 'weapon against evil:

"[1]LORD, for the godly are no more: the faithful have vanished from among men. [2]Everyone lies to his neighbour; their flattering lips speak with deception. [3]May the LORD cut off all flattering lips and every boastful tongue [4]that says, 'We will triumph with our tongues; we own our lips – [Or our lips are our ploughshares] who is our master?'

[5]'Because the oppression of the weak and the groaning of the needy, I will arise,' says the LORD, 'I will protect them from those who malign them.' [6]And the words of the LORD are flawless, like silver refined in a furnace of clay, purified seven times. [7]LORD, you will keep us safe and protect us from such people for ever. [8]The wicked freely strut about when what is vile is honoured" (*NIV* 1984).

Psalm 120: 1-7 was another scriptural verse chosen for its apotropaic qualities:

"[1]I call on the LORD in my distress and he answers me. [2]Save me, O LORD, from lying lips and from deceitful tongues. [3]What will he do to you and what more besides, O deceitful tongue? [4]He will punish you with a warrior's sharp arrows, with burning coals of the broom tree. [5]Woe to me that I dwell in Meschech, that I live among the tents of Kedar! [6]Too long have I lived among those who hate peace. [7]I am a man of peace: but when I speak, they are for war" (*NIV* 1984).

The two aforementioned scriptures identify man and his deceitful and boastful behaviour as the forms of evil from which one needs protection. Both also call upon the Christian God for His divine aid and thank Him for His help by praising His greatness. The most notable elements of both scriptures, however, are the descriptions of the various ways in which the Christian God would punish those guilty of committing evil. Psalm 12 also contains the Christian God's promise to protect the innocent from the harm caused by such evils. Thus, based on these elements, it is easy to understand why these scriptures were inscribed upon pieces of wood and hung on the walls of a house or tomb (Warga 1988: 149).

The Lord's Prayer similar to the version found in Matthew 6: 9-13 was also a popular prayer inscribed upon amulets:

"[9]…Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, [10]your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. [11]Give us today our daily bread. [12]Forgive us our debts as we also forgiven our debtors. [13]And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. [Or from evil] for yours is the kingdom and the power and glory for ever. Amen]" (*NIV* 1984).

When examining this text, it is clear the main apotropaic feature of this prayer lies in the last line "… and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil …" (Pereira 2015: 533 and Gupta

2017: 133).[191] The apotropaic elements of this text can be broken up into two parts: Firstly, let us concentrate on temptation. The fact that the prayer petitions for its users to be protected from temptation is interesting as certain temptations can be deemed evil (Pereira 2015: 533).[192] Thus, it could be interpreted that the users of amulets inscribed with this prayer were asking the Christian God to make them aware of the evils that surrounded them. Armed with this knowledge they would be able to avoid falling victim to the temptations of evil. Secondly, the prayer also clearly requests that the petitioner be protected from all forms of evil. Thus, similarly to the above-mentioned scriptures, this prayer became a 'weapon' against evil and was also inscribed upon objects such as jewellery and papyri and carried around as a kind of amulet (De Bruyn 2017: 167 and Gupta 2017: 133).

The following is an incantation meant to protect the user from the mischief of evil spirits:

"[I adjure you by the four'] gospels of the son […, whether a tertian fever] or a quartan fever or […] fevers […]. Depart from [N., who wears] this [divine] protector, because the one who [commands you is the] god of Israel, whom the [the angels] bless and people [fear and every] spirit dreads. Again […] demon, whose name […], who has feet of a [wolf but] the [head of] a frog […]. I adjure you by the [seven circles] of heaven: the first […], the second of [aquamarine, the third] of steel, the [fourth] of malachite, the fifth […], the sixth like gold, the [seventh] of ivory. I adjure [you], unclean spirits, who do wrong to the lord: Do not injure the one who wears these adjurations. Depart from him. Do not hide down here in the ground; do not lurk under a bed, nor under a window, nor under a door, nor under beams, nor under utensils, nor below a pit. I adjure all of you who have sworn before Solomon: Do not injure a person, do not cause harm with fire or [with water], but through the oath be fearful of the Amen and Alleluia and the gospel of the lord, who suffered for the sake of us people. And now I adjure all of you spirits who weep, or laugh frightfully, [or] make a person have bad dreams or terror, or make eyesight dim, or teach confusion or guile of mind in sleep and out of sleep. I adjure them by the father and [the son] and the holy [spirit] and the holy angels who stand before [our lady], to depart from

---

[191] Although the main apotropaic feature of this prayer is the last line, there are amulets where the whole prayer was inscribed upon them (Nongbri 2011: 59-61 and De Bruyn 2017: 161).

[192] According to McKinley (2012: 56-62) temptation differs from person to person. Generally, the type of temptation spoken about in the Bible is the kind that would lead to sin or be deemed evil. For example, those of theft or adultery.

the one who [wears] the fearful [and holy] statements of [oath], because the lord Jesus [commands…]" (Meyer and Smith 1994: 45 *op.cit* Vienna G 337, Rainer 1).

This rather lengthy and detailed incantation is noticeably different from the previous texts in that its appeals are aimed directly at evil or 'unclean spirits' and not at the Christian God. Instead, it adjures evil through the power of God, the angels, the seven spheres of heaven and the Christian liturgy (Meyer and Smith 1994: 44).[193] There are two possible reasons for this different approach: Firstly, addressing evil or 'unclean spirits' directly would have most certainly caught its attention, thus providing the user with an opportunity to present it with their requests. Secondly, entreating evil through various Christian elements is quite threatening, aiding in the prevention of mischievous behaviour. Thus, with this in mind, it is easy to see why this incantation was worn as an amulet in an effort to ward off evil.

The following amulet was meant to protect a house and its occupants from evil:

> "CH M G. Hor Hor Phor Phor, Yao Sabaoth Adonai, Eloe, Salaman, Tarchei, I bind you, artemisian scorpion, 315 times. Preserve this house with its occupants from all evil, from all bewitchment of spirits of the air and human (evil) eye and terrible pain [and] sting of scorpion and snake, through the name of the highest god, Naias Meli, 7 (times) (?), XUROURO AAAAAA BAINCHOOOCH MARIIIIIIL ENAG KORE. Be on guard, O lord, son of David according to the flesh, the one born of the holy Virgin Mary, O holy one, highest god, from the Holy Spirit. Glory to you, O heavenly king, Amen.

$$A \dagger O \; ☧ \; A \dagger O$$

> IXΘΥC" (Meyer and Smith 1994: 50 *op.cit* Hermitage)

One of the most notable elements of this amulet is the inclusion of various symbols linked to Christ: the *alpha*-cross-*omega* sequence was linked to Christ due to the following quote found in Revelations 1:8 "I am the *Alpha* and the *Omega*,' says the Lord God, 'Who is and Who was and Who is to come, the Almighty." Generally, the *Chi Rho* symbol formed part of this sequence, which in itself was also an apotropaic symbol linked to Christ.[194] Another easily recognisable symbol, also linked to Christ is the acrostic IXΘΥC which stands for *Jesus Christ*, *Son of God*,

---

[193] The Christian liturgy referred to in the text are the exclamations 'Amen' and 'Alleluia', which formed part of Christian worship (Meyer and Smith 1994: 44).

In the *PGM* 'unclean spirits' were often controlled or exorcised by threatening them with higher powers.

[194] More information regarding this symbol can be found earlier in this Chapter.

Saviour.[195] The text itself invokes the powers of various Egyptian and Judeo-Christian deities and entreats them for protection from numerous forms of evil (Meyer and Smith 1994: 49). As this text contains several apotropaic elements it also became a 'weapon' against evil.

As the above-mentioned texts were believed to hold apotropaic powers and consequently inscribed on various objects they can be deemed amulets. But how exactly did these inscribed amulets aid in warding off evil? Mainly, through distraction: Regardless of the form these amulets took, most would have been openly displayed, to attract evil's attention. Once this was achieved evil would be forced to examine the amulet's inscriptions, which upon doing so could have aroused feelings of fear.

The inscriptions could have caused feelings of fear in the following ways: Firstly, the descriptions of the various punishments that evil could face, are themselves rather dark and threatening. Secondly, the users' appeals to various deities for their attention and their protection could have encouraged evil to believe the various gods were constantly monitoring the user – resulting in a swift and unpleasant response to its unwanted and harmful attention. Finally, the incorporation of Christian symbols would have increased the amulets' apotropaic powers.[196]

This brings us to the final point, comfort – the inclusion of the Christian God's promises of protection could have reinforced the user's bond with their God. It is possible this reinforcement gave them a sense of security and comfort as they believed their God was always with them, thereby rendering them impervious to evil's harmful threats. When combined, all these elements had the potential to make evil second-guess its malicious intentions and subsequently, abandon it.

e. Exorcisms

Despite valiant attempts to protect themselves from evil, it appears Roman Christians were not always successful as there was a need for counter-spells known as exorcisms.

To understand the need for exorcisms, one must examine who or what the practice was aimed at. During the Imperial Roman era the term 'demon' or *daimon,* was used to describe a "diverse array of spiritual beings – lesser deities, astral spirits, guardians of places in the heavens or the

---

[195] More information regarding this symbol can found earlier in this Chapter. See note 189 above.

[196] For examples of the apotropaic powers of Christian symbols refer to Chapter 5.1 of this Chapter.

underworld and spirits of the dead" (De Bruyn 2017: 204). Apart from being helpful, there was also a dark side to these beings as it was believed they were also capable of causing illness and attacking or invading their human victims. Generally, this sort of harmful behaviour was conducted by the spirits of the dead, through binding spells meant to exact vengeance, hinder opponents and constrain romantic interests (De Bruyn 2017: 205).[197] Consequently, it was these malicious beings and their harmful actions that concerned the practice of exorcisms.

One spell used for exorcisms can be found in *PGM* IV. 1227-64:

> "Excellent spell for driving out demons:
>
> Formula to be spoken over his head: Place the olive branches before him and stand behind him and say, "Greetings, god of Abraham; greetings, god of Jacob; Jesus the upright, the holy spirit, the son of the father, who is below the seven, who is within the seven. Bring Yao Sabaoth; may your power issue forth from N., until you drive away this unclean demon Satan, who is in him. I adjure you, demon, whoever you are, by this god Sabarbarbathioth Sabarbarathiouth Sababarbathioneht Sabarbarbaphai. Come out, demon, whoever you are and stay away from N., hurry, hurry, now, now! Come out, demon, since I bind you with unbreakable adamantine fetters and I deliver you into the black chaos in perdition.
> Procedure: Take seven olive branches. For six of them tie together the two ends of each one, but for the remaining one use it as a whip as you utter the adjuration. Keep it secret; it is proven.
> After driving out the demon, hang around N. an amulet, which the patient puts on after the expulsion of the demon, with these things written on a tin metal leaf: BOR PHOR PHORBA PHOR PHORBA BES CHARIN BAUBA TE PHOR BORPHORBA PHORBABOR BAPHORBA PHABRAIE PHORBA PHARBA PHORPHOR PHORBA BOBORBORBA PAMPHORBA PHORPHOR PHORBA, protect N." (Meyer and Smith 1994: 43-44 *op.cit The Great Magical Papyrus of Paris*)[198]

[197] For information regarding binding spells, refer to Chapter 3.2.3.

[198] It is interesting to note that the words to be uttered, and the words addressed to the divine (1231-39) are given in Coptic, the rest is written in Greek (Meyer and Smith 1994: 43).

According to Singh and Davidson (2014: 5-6) olive trees were considered a sacred plant, due to its links to the Greek goddess Athena and later the Christian God.[199] The olive tree was also a symbol of peace, prosperity and purity (Singh and Davidson 2014: 5-6). Thus, whipping a patient with an olive branch could be an attempt to purify them from evil. The use of olive branches during the ritual could also have encouraged the patient to feel at peace and to encourage good fortune to return to them. Originally, the invocations and adjurations to Christ were not part of the Greek exorcism (De Bruyn 2017: 73), which points to two possibilities:

Firstly, pagans included these adjurations as they saw no harm in including other gods in their arsenal against evil and finally as syncretism was common in early Christianity, it is possible the users were Christian, but still followed old beliefs. The use of Jesus's name during the invocation was possibly due to His exploits as an exorcist.[200] Consequently, this could have aided in intimidating evil, forcing it to follow the exorcist's commands. Finally, the incantation includes instructions for the patient to wear an amulet once the ritual is complete – most likely as a precaution against falling victim to the same or similar type of evil.

PGM IV. 3007-86 is another example of an incantation, which promises to drive out any harmful demons.

The incantation opens with the following instructions:[201]

> "A test charm of Pibechis for those possessed by daimons. Take oil of unripe olives with the herb mastigia and the fruit pulp of the lotus and boil them with colourless marjoram while saying, 'IOEL…come out from NN."

It then proceeds with the instructions for making an amulet:

> "The phylactery: On a tin lamella write 'IAEO…' And hang it on the patient. It is terrifying to every daimon, a thing he fears. Place [the patient] opposite you, adjure…"

The following verbal formula was meant to be recited, presumably out loud:

---

[199] Greeks believed the goddess Athena was responsible for the creation of the olive tree. Christians associated olive trees with Christ due to the numerous references to it in the Bible (Singh and Davidson 2014: 5-6)

[200] There are a number of gospels that associate Jesus with exorcisms. For example, Matt. 4:24, Mark: 9:29 and Luke 9:37-42.

[201] This spell was translated by W. C. Grese, from Betz's English copy of the *PGM*.

> "This is the adjuration: I adjure you by the God of the Hebrews, Jesus IABA…who appears in fire…I adjure you by the one who appeared to Osrael in a shining pillar and a cloud by night who saved his people from Pharaoh [list of additional wonders]. I adjure you by the seal which Solomon placed on the tongue of Jeremiah [long list of more wonders by the deity]."

Finally, it closes with the following instructions:

> "And I adjure you, the one who receives this adjuration, not to eat pork and every spirit and daimon, whatever sort it maybe, will be subject to you. And while adjuring, blow once, blowing air from the tips of the feet up to the face and it will be assigned. Keep yourself pure, for this charm is Hebraic and is preserved among pure men."

The ingredients used in the concoction are of interest as they had their own magical properties. According to Cunningham (1985: 181) lotus oil was sacred to the Egyptians and as it has a high spiritual vibration it is suitable for blessing, anointing and as a dedicatory oil to the gods.[202] The wearer of the oil is also sure to have much happiness and good fortune (Cunningham 1985: 181). Thus, although the recipe calls for the fruit of the lotus, it is possible it held similar properties. As olives were also sacred, the use of olive oil could be regarded as a dedication to the gods.[203] The herb marjoram also holds protective properties and was used to cleanse physical objects (Cunningham 1985: 269). It is highly probable this concoction was meant to be applied to the patient as the anointing of 'sick' people with olive oil or herbal mixtures was common practice (Janowitz 2001: 42). If this was the case the use of the concoction makes sense as it served to protect the patient from evil and bring about a positive change of fortune, by gratifying the gods through various dedications.

It is not clear whether the patient should continue wearing the amulet once the exorcism was complete. It is sensible to believe, however, that the patient did continue to wear it. As an extension of the protective elements of the ritual, it claimed to be "terrifying to every *daimon*, a thing he fears" (*PGM* IV. 3017-18).

The adjuration itself incorporates the power of divine names. Janowitz (2001: 43) describes their appearance in the following manner: "… the divine names appear in both the easily recognisable form, such as Jesus and as strings of letters. The letter strings alternate with short descriptions of

---

[202] "The exorcism is attributed to an Egyptian wonder-worker named Pibechis" (Janowitz 2001: 42).

[203] According to Singh and Davidson (2014: 5) "Greek gods were offered olives during prayers and rituals."

the deity's actions, one of which describes the creation of the *daimon* in 'holy paradise.'[204] The reasoning behind the inclusion of this description is that, since the deity created the *daimon*, he should be able to control it (Janowitz 2001: 43). The inclusion of the deity's actions was possibly an attempt to intimidate the demon through a 'display' of the deity's power.

The final instructions are also interesting as part of the ritual involves the practitioner blowing air at the patient. This could be symbolic of 'pushing' or 'forcing' the demon or evil to rise out of the patient as air must be blown from the patient's feet to his/or her face, where it is assumed the demon will exit the body. The inclusion of Jewish elements does not necessarily mean the incantation was written by a follower of the Jewish faith – the prohibition of eating pork was a well-known fact. The prohibition on pork was Egyptian too, but this is one of very many Jewish elements in this exorcism. The charm is Hebraic, as it says. The explanation regarding the incantation's Hebraic connections is expected from someone who was an outsider to the Jewish faith (De Bruyn 2017: 72).

Judging on the wording and rituals in these incantations, they had the power to cleanse a person believed to be under the control of an evil demon. Although, generally, it was believed demons physically possessed their victims, it is possible this was not necessarily the case. The fact that many curses were bound to their victims and enacted through the spirits of the dead,[205] makes it possible the dead themselves were actually bound to the living until their part in the curse was complete. Therefore, the main aim of an exorcism would be the breaking of this bond and, consequently, the removal of the curse placed upon the unsuspecting victim.

For those who believed their ill luck was due to the influence of an evil demon, exorcisms were the perfect tool to help rid them of this unwanted and malicious attention. The removal of the bond between the curse and the victim could lead the victim to believe they were free from the influences of evil, which once again allowed them to be in control of their own lives.

5.2 Was it still magic?

Due to the fact that the above-mentioned symbols, scriptures, prayers and incantations were often associated with the all-powerful Christian God, it is highly probable Christians of Imperial Rome were under the impression they were not using magic in their efforts to ward off evil.

---

[204] Janowitz's description of the divine names "as strings of letters" does not do the *voces magicae* justice, as they are not just a string of letters, but vocalisations and the secret names of divinities which have power over demons.

[205] For more information regarding binding curses, refer to Chapter 3.2.3.

Regardless of this belief however, there is evidence this form of protection and control was actually a form of apotropaic magic.

To understand what made the Christians' use of the aforementioned items a form of apotropaic magic, one needs to understand what apotropaic magic actually is. According to Murphy and Susalla (2016: 8) there were two types of magic used by ancient practitioners, helpful, defensive magic and harmful, offensive magic.[206] Offensive magic included curses and other harmful elements, whereas defensive magic included apotropaic or protective magic. Apotropaic magic was based upon the belief that certain symbols or practices shielded the user from harm (Murphy and Susalla 2016: 8).

Bearing this statement in mind when examining the above-mentioned amulets and practices, with their various Christian elements, it becomes clear the users of these items believed they held special powers to ward off evil. In other words, they can be considered apotropaic magic.

Why did Roman Christians believe they were not using magic? Possibly due to the following: As many of the aforementioned apotropaic examples were linked with the all-powerful and good Christian God and not with the demons used by pagans, they were not considered evil and, therefore, they were not magical. This belief is evident in the following accounts: Tertullian (AD 155-240) a Christian apologist, believed magic was the work of demons and only Christ had the true power to control these evil spirits (*Apol.* XXIII). This belief could have been reinforced by two separate events involving the Emperors Diocletian and Constantine, where the use of Christian symbols successfully helped protect the users from the forces of evil. Both Origen (AD 185-254) and Augustine (AD 354-430) believed magic was real, however, they condemned its use as it made use of spirits hostile to the Christian God (Thorndike 1908: 64).[207]

There are counter-arguments, however, towards this line of thought. When dealing with pagan apotropaic devices such as the phallus symbol, it is clear pagans believed through the symbol's association with the Roman deity, *Fascinus,* it had the power to ward off evil – a similar belief

---

[206] For information regarding the various types of magic, refer to Chapter 3.4.

[207] Origen was an early Christian theologian ascetic and philosopher, who laid the foundations of philosophical theology for the Christian church. The topic of magic did not fail to attract Origen's attention as references to it can be found in *Contra Celsum.* Augustine was also an early Christian theologian and philosopher; whose writings influenced the Western Christianity. Like Origen, Augustine also referred to magic in his works as numerous references to the subject can be found in both the *City of God* and the *Christine Doctrine.*

when compared to the Christian symbols and the source of their apotropaic powers.[208] The use of the *Chi Rho* symbol by Constantine's army is reminiscent of pagan armies' use of Medusa the Gorgon's head. In both cases, the symbols were meant to protect its users and/or frighten their opposition. The fact that it is possible that some of these apotropaic devices such as the bas-relief stucco cross and jewellery,[209] also could have been used by pagans, proves the apotropaic power behind these symbols was not necessarily due to the belief in the power of the Christian God, but rather in the invisible or magical powers of the symbols themselves.[210]

Another point counting in the favour of the early Christian's use of magic can be found in their belief regarding the apotropaic powers of certain scriptural verses. The early Christian belief that their scriptures were literally the Word of God could have caused them to believe this link gave their scriptures apotropaic powers (Zuiddam 2015: 69). A remarkably similar belief when comparing the apotropaic source of power behind early Christian and pagan symbols. The scriptures were meant to protect users by frightening off evil. This aspect of the scriptural verses which can be likened to the pagan and Christian use of various symbols, which were also meant to ward off evil.

According to Munroe (2002: 19 and 30) prayers are man's way of communicating with God and allowing Him to intervene with life on Earth. Consequently, the use of prayers requesting God's assistance with protection is understandable as it is possible early Christians believed that as a result of their prayers, their god would intervene and protect them from evil. However, when comparing prayers to incantations, which contain both pagan and Christian elements one sees there is no real difference other than appeals made to additional deities.

Despite Origen's assertions that Christians did not use magic or incantations to perform exorcisms, there is evidence contrary to this (*C. Cels*. IV). As exorcisms were aimed at expelling or breaking the bonds of evil from an unfortunate victim, it could be deemed that it was actually breaking a curse inflicted upon them – an aim similar to the counter-spells used by the pagans of Imperial Rome. The fact that there are incantations containing references to Christian and pagan elements, points to the possibility that, despite their claims of not using magic, Christians actually adopted pagan incantations and adapted them to suit their own requirements, rendering Origen's assertions invalid. On the other hand, it is also possible pagans

---

[208] For more information regarding *Fascinus* and the phallus symbol, refer to Chapter 3.4.1.

[209] It is almost impossible to say whether the jewellery bearing Christian symbols was worn exclusively by Christians as there is no evidence documenting their ownership or use.

[210] For more information regarding the alleged magical powers of apotropaic symbols, refer to Chapter 3.4.5.

adopted these Christian elements as they saw no harm in including as many apotropaic elements as possible in their fight against evil. This final point is important as it demonstrates it was not necessary for users of the incantations to believe in the power of Christ, though they probably hoped the elements associated with Him might work.

Another counter-argument in favour of the Christian use of magic can be found in Augustine's text describing how demons were invoked in order to perform pagan magical rites "that by means of herbs and stones and animals and certain incantations and noises and drawings, sometimes fanciful and sometimes copied from the motions of the heavenly bodies, men create upon earth powers capable of bringing about various results…" (*City of God* X.11). This explanation is important as it demonstrates through their use of artwork, gemstones and prayers that Roman Christians were, in reality, using similar objects in their attempts to control evil.

Most notable however, is the fact that all the above-mentioned items were used as some sort of amulet. The use of amulets by Christians was often condemned, however as they were generally associated with pagan practices, demons and superstition, in other words, magic.[211] Despite this, it is possible many Christians did not perceive these items as amulets, due to their close association with Christ, but rather as tangible signs of their faith in a higher power (González-Wippler 1991: 12).

Finally, despite the early church's efforts to separate magic from the works of Christ, they were not entirely successful as theologians such as Origen and Augustine concede the power behind Christ's works was also due to supernatural or divine powers, such as angels (*C. Cels*. XLIX and *City of God*. X.8). However, they believed these powers were good as they were connected with Christ, unlike the supernatural forces used to enact other forms of magic. Thus, in essence, it would appear that Christ did use 'magic' – just a 'good' or 'holy' version of it, or alternatively it is possible that as Christ acted in God's power, His use of 'magic' was just a perception of certain early Christians.[212]

5.3 Conclusion

One of the most popular forms of magic used by the Christians of Imperial Rome was apotropaic magic in the form of amulets. This was possibly because despite having the power of Christ to

---

[211] This is evident in Augustine's *de doc Christ*. 2.20.

[212] For more information regarding Christ's use of magic refer to *Jesus the Magician* (Smith 1978).

protect them, Christians still felt comforted by having tangible items that held the power to ward off evil.

When analysing the various forms of amulets Christian Romans used, it becomes clear they were based on pagan beliefs that certain elements used in the form of amulets held the power to ward off evil. The difference between pagan and Christian amulets, however, were the items portrayed in them and where their powers came from. The components and success of pagan amulets were often linked to their deities and other supernatural forces, which Roman Christians believed were malicious demons. Christians on the other hand believed that their amulets were successful as they were linked to the almighty Christian God.

Thus, in the eyes of Roman Christians, their amulets were powered by a pure and holy source when compared to those of the pagans. This is important as Christians associated pagan magical rites with evil and their own apotropaic magic with good. One could say, therefore, that the Christians of Imperial Rome were, in essence using their own version of white or good magic to control the evils of pagan magic.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

Whether they faced a personal or political issue, magic and its various elements promised to provide Imperial Romans with a feasible solution to their predicaments. Consequently, the Roman populace and its leaders believed that, through the use of magic, they could control not only their lives but also the lives of others in order to achieve their desires and ambitions.

As the topic of magic has only recently become an area of interest, there is still a large gap in the knowledge of its use and the role it played in the lives of Imperial Romans. Most of the sources pertaining to the topic concentrate mainly on the origin and history of magic itself or they tend to look at it from a religious perspective, such as Christian or Jewish. If they do explore it from a psychological point of view, it generally takes the viewpoint of jealousy or revenge.

Consequently, a study such as this one is necessary as it examines magic and its use from a different perspective, namely the personal use of magic as a form of control. Instead of only concentrating on well-known areas such as the political lives of the emperors, this study also explores the more personal side of Imperial Roman lives, including women's health, issues of the heart, attempts to overcome fear and aspirations of power. These are areas that even in modern society today, we can relate to, thus making the people of Rome, along with their leaders, more real and accessible in the present day.

The primary sources for this study were selected from both ancient fiction and non-fiction texts in translation, being specifically chosen as they dealt with magic and its various elements as well as the use of magic in some form or another. Many of the chosen works were written by celebrated historians, philosophers, poets and playwrights of the time. Certain non-fiction texts can be deemed biographies as they document the lives of various Roman emperors and by doing so, provide some insight into their use of magic and the circumstances surrounding it. Other texts provide descriptions of actual magical spells and ingredients that Imperial Romans could use. While the non-fiction works provide vital information regarding the actual use of magic, they do not present a holistic perspective. The works of fiction were necessary to fill the gaps left by the works of non-fiction. They help paint a picture of how magic and its use was perceived by Imperial Roman society as well as present plausible scenarios of magical use.

The secondary sources were similarly chosen due to their scholarly research in matters pertaining to magic and its use. These texts were useful as they helped 'balance' out the information found in the primary sources – they brought possible prejudices towards the emperors to light, provided different insights or perspectives regarding the use of magic in Imperial Rome as well as offer

background knowledge to the information found in the primary sources. Thus, the use of secondary sources brought some clarity to magic and its use in Imperial Rome.

The primary objective of this study has been to explore the numerous ways in which Imperial Romans made use of the various forms of magic available to them as a means to control various aspects of their personal and political lives. The secondary objective was to analyse the possible reasoning behind Imperial Roman beliefs in magic and their subsequent use of it.

Chapter One contains a general introduction and background on the topic. It also contains the literature review, an explanation of the methodology followed and the layout and content of the various chapters in the study.

Chapter Two explored the various attitudes Imperial Romans held towards magic. The term 'magic' conjured up many different feelings for the people of Rome. For many it was a thing to be feared, for some it was a frivolous waste of time and others were a little more open-minded to its potential. Regardless of the hodgepodge of feelings, the majority of the Imperial Roman populace and its leaders believed in magic and its abilities to control various aspect of their lives.

Chapter Three was broken up into sub-chapters, each of which dealt with the actual use of various forms of magic.

Chapter 3.1 explored the use of magic in medicine and health, specifically women's reproductive health. Uterine magic promised to fulfil the women of Imperial Rome in their reproductive needs, such as fertility testing, safe and easy deliveries, contraception and abortions. Due to the nature of a few of the magical remedies, uterine magic also held the potential to interfere with or cause harm to a woman's reproductive health. Thus, it could also have been used as a 'weapon' by women seeking to punish a rival or enemy. According to today's scientific knowledge, several prescribed magical remedies could have potentially aided a woman with her reproductive desires, thus increasing her belief in its abilities and subsequently cementing uterine magic as a legitimate form of control.

Chapter 3.2 concentrated on a variety of magical components such as erotic magic, curses and necromancy. Erotic magic was one of the most popular forms of magic in Imperial Rome as it had the alleged ability to control someone else's sexual behaviour. This ability in turn allowed Imperial Romans to have some form of control over a rather complex and personal aspect of their lives. An individual's sexual behaviour could be controlled through several spells, each of which promised to either retain or attract the affections of a loved one or separate a loved one from a rival and/or his or her family. As well as achieving one's sexual desires, the patrons of

erotic magic also benefited from its use since it allowed them to elevate and secure their social standing, prove their virility or prevent unwanted scandals.

Curse tablets and the Evil Eye were notorious methods used by Imperial Romans to punish one's rivals out of jealousy or hatred. For Imperial Romans, the use of such curses was the perfect method to obtain revenge or punish a rival as they left no traceable evidence as to who the actual perpetrator was, thus allowing them to commit the perfect crime. The use of such curses could have given their practitioners a sense of control over their victims as they held the power to cause them harm.

The art of communicating with the dead to gain information is known as necromancy. Although necromancy was not immensely popular among the general Roman populace, there were times when its use was deemed necessary. Generally, when vital or specific information could only be obtained from the dead, for example, if murder was suspected, the deceased's family could call upon the spirit of the dead to ascertain the truth behind their death. This would allow the family of the deceased the opportunity to seek revenge against those who had wronged them, thereby giving them a sense of control as they would have the power to make the life of the perpetrator miserable or unbearable. Many emperors however, had their own reasons for contacting the dead, such as in settling a guilty conscience for murdering those once close to them. Necromancy would have allowed these emperors the opportunity to seek forgiveness from those they had murdered and ease their guilty consciences, thus regaining control over their emotions.

Chapter 3.3 investigated the various forms of divination available to Imperial Romans, namely astrology and necromancy. Due to its scientific basis astrology was the most popular form of divination in Imperial Rome. The Roman populace and its leaders made use of the art to gain insight into their futures. Many of Rome's emperors used foretold knowledge of the future to protect their positions of power, whereas others did their utmost to ensure their predicted futures did indeed become reality. Regardless of the reasons for their use of the art, emperors used it to control not only their own fates but the fates of others as well.

The use of necromancy to divine one's future was favoured by several Roman emperors. Their use of this art could be deemed an extra-precautionary measure since it was often used in conjunction with astrology. This was most likely due to the fact that many of the emperors were well aware of the dangers associated with their coveted positions and therefore attempted to protect themselves and their families by controlling future events.

Chapter 3.4 dealt with the issue of protective or apotropaic magic. Imperial Romans were terrified of falling victim to the evils of black magic which contained curses such as the Evil Eye

and other supernatural forces that could cause them harm. Thus, to protect themselves from these forces, they attempted to control them through the use apotropaic magic, predominately done using of various types of amulets depicting apotropaic symbols such as the phallus symbol, Medusa the Gorgon's head and even blood and animal parts. When examining the use of these amulets, it appears Imperial Romans believed that evil had human-like qualities such as the ability of sight. Consequently, it is possible that the magical attributes of the amulets were due to human nature and that the evil they were attempting to control was actually man himself.

Chapter Four concentrated on the legal use and abuse of magic. Imperial Roman authorities were always concerned about the harmful use of magic and, consequently, a number of laws were implemented in an attempt to control this. Apart from controlling its use, these laws could also be manipulated to suit various political and personal desires and ambitions. Various Roman emperors used these laws to manipulate and control the general populace's opinions regarding their suitability or abilities as emperor. These laws were also cleverly used to legally remove rivals, obtain revenge and solve domestic disputes.

Chapter Five focused on magic and Christianity. When dealing with Christianity and magic it is easy to approach the subject with the idea that Christians did not make use of magic since they associated it with evil. Through their use of various items in the form of amulets, including Christian symbols, artwork, scriptural verses, prayers and incantations, it becomes clear that Christians did use a form of magic to control evil.

In completing this study, some areas of potential future research were identified:

To explore the various areas where the women of Imperial Rome could have made use of magic and the consequences thereof.

A study of where and how the Christian church's negative perception of magic originated and how they benefited from marketing it as such.

Finally, the author of the *Harry Potter* series, J. K. Rowling (2008) once said "… we do not need magic to transform our world, we carry all the power we need inside ourselves already…" When exploring the reasons behind the successful use of magic, it seems there is some truth behind this statement: In Imperial Rome, one of the most vital aspects behind the successful use of magic was the user's belief in its ability to control a situation. The use of tangible items, such as curse tablets and amulets, served to confirm or strengthen this belief as they allowed their users the opportunity to 'witness' magic in action. Magic also served as a form of control for the Romans of the Imperial era, mainly due to the fact that it 'played' on the emotions and superstitions of

people and their naivety, and that it was a powerful 'weapon' in the hands of ambitious politicians. The fact that the use of magic could not be proven in several 'murder cases' made it all the more convenient.

Although belief and superstition played a vital part in the successful use of magic, other mundane phenomena, such as the 'placebo' effect, human nature and simple science also contributed to its success. So, armed with this modern knowledge, it is easy for us to dismiss the existence of magic and claim that Imperial Romans did not use magic to transform their world. This knowledge, however, did not exist during the Imperial Roman era, therefore, to Imperial Romans, magic was a real force that played a crucial role in their attempts to control and transform certain aspects of their lives.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Aeschylus. *Persians.* [e-book] Translated from Greek by G. Theodoridis. 2009. Available at: Poetry in Translation https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Greek/Persians.php [Accessed 6 October 2019].

Apuleius. *The Apologia and Florida of Apuleius of Madaura.* Translated from Latin by H. E. Butler. 1909. London: Oxford University Press.

Apuleius. *The Golden Ass/Metamorphoses.* [e-book] Translated from Latin by A. S. Kline. 2013. Available at Poetry in Translation https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/TheGoldenAssII.php#anchor_Toc347 224002 [Accessed 30 May 2020].

Augustine. *City of God and Christine Doctrine.* Translated from Latin by M. Dodds and J. F. Shaw. 1890. New York: The Christine Literature Publishing Co.

Cassius Dio. *Epitome.* Translated from Greek by E. Cary and H. B. Foster. 1914. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Cassius Dio. *Roman History.* Translated from Greek by E. Cary and H. B. Foster. 1914. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Graecorum. Translated from Greek by F. Cumont and F. Boll. 1921. Brussels: Aedibus Mauritii Lamertin.

Catullus. *The Poems.* [e-book] Translated from Latin by A. S. Kline. 2007. Available at: Poetry in Translation https://www.poetryintranslation.com/klineascatullus.php [Accessed 16 July 2019].

Eusebius. *The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius Pamphilius.* Translated from Latin by C. F. Crusè. 1856. New York: Thomas N. Stanford.

Galen. *Claudii Galeni Opera Omina.* Vol 20. K. G. Kühn. ed. 22 vols. 1821. Reprinted 2011. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Herodian. *History of the Roman Empire.* Translated from Greek by E. C. Echols. 1961. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Hesiodos. *Theogonia.* [e-book] Translated from Greek by H. G. Evelyn-White. 1914. Available at: Internet Sacred Text Archive https://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/hesiod/theogony.htm [Accessed 23 September 2019].

Holy Bible New International Version. 1984. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

Julius Paulus. *The Opinions of Julius Paulus.* Translated from Latin by S. P. Scott. 1932. Available at: https://droitromain.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/Anglica/paulus_Scott.html [Accessed 11 March 2020].

Josephus. *Antiquities of the Jews.* Translated from Greek by W. Whiston. 2015. London: Aeterna Press.

Justinian. *The Code of Justinian.* Translated from Latin by S. P. Scott. 1932. Available at: https://droitromain.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/Anglica/codjust_Scott.htm [Accessed 18 January 2020].

Juvenal. *Juvenal and Persius.* Translated from Latin by G. G. Ramsay. 1918. London: William Heinemann.

Juvenal. *Satire.* [e-book] Translated from Latin by A. S. Kline. 2011. Available at: Poetry in Translation https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/JuvenalSatires6.php [Accessed 12 January 2019].

Lactantius. *De mortibus persecutorm.* [e-book] Translated from Latin by J. Vanderspoel. 1998. Available at: https://people.ucalgary.ca/~vandersp/Courses/texts/lactant/lactperf.html [Accessed 29 September 2019].

Lucan. *Pharsalia.* [e-book] Translated from Latin by A. S. Kline. 2014. Available at: Poetry in Translation https://www.poetryintranslation.com/klineaslucan.php [Accessed 19 August 2019].

Origen. *Contra Celsum.* Translated from Latin by H. Chadwick. 1980. London: Cambridge University Press.

Ovid. *Amores.* [e-book] Translated from Latin by A. S. Kline. 2001. Available at: Poetry in Translation https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/AmoresBkIII.php [Accessed 18 December 2018].

Persius. *Satires.* [e-book] Translated from Latin by A. S. Kline. 2011. Available at: Poetry in
    Translation https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/PersiusSatires.php
    [Accessed 23 May 2021].

Pliny the Elder. *The Natural History.* Translated from Latin by J. Bostock and H. T. Riley.
    Perseus Digital Library. http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=plin.+nat.+toc
    [Accessed 30 August 2019].

Plutarch. *Moralia.* Vol 8. Translated from Latin by P. A. Clement and H. B. Hoffleit. 1969. Loeb
    Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Seneca. *Octavia.* Translated from Latin by W. Bradshaw. 1902. London: Swan Sonnenschein
    and Co.

Suetonius. *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars.* Translated from Latin by J. C. Rolfe. 1913-1914.
    Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Tacitus. *Annals.* Translated from Latin by J. Jackson. 1937. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge:
    Harvard University Press.

Tacitus. *The Histories*. Translated from Latin by C. H. Moore. 1925. Loeb Classical Library.
    Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Tertullian. *The Apology of Tertullian and the Meditations of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius
    Antonius.* Translated from Latin by WM Reeve and J Colliar. 1889 London: Newbury
    House.

The Scriptores Historiae Augustae. Translated from Latin by D. Magie. 1921. London: St.
    Edmundsbury Press Ltd.

Virgil. *Eclogues.* Translated from Latin by D. C. Stevenson. The Internet Classical Archives.
    http://classics.mit.edu/index.html [Accessed 16 July 2019].

Virgil. *The Aeneid.* [e-book] Translated from Latin by A. S. Kline. 2002. Available at: Poetry in
    Translation https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/Virgilhome.php [Accessed
    28 June 2019].

Secondary Sources

Adkins, L. and Adkins, R. A. 2004. *Handbook to Life in Ancient Rome.* New York: Facts on File
    Inc.

Akdeniz, D. 2017. "Oyster Symbolism in the Art of Painting." *International Journal of Social and Humanities Sciences Research.* 4 (3) pp. 339-354.

Alvar Nuño, A. 2012. "Ocular Pathologies and the Evil Eye in the Early Roman Principate." *Numen.* 59. (4) pp. 295-321.

Andrikopoulos, G. 2009. *Magic and the Roman Emperors.* PHD. University of Exeter.

Aneni, M. 2018. *Lead Poisoning in Ancient Rome.* [pdf] Research Gate. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/325023100_Lead_Poisoning_in_Ancient_Rome

Aubert, J. J. 1989. "Threatened Wombs: Aspects of Ancient Uterine Magic". *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies.* 30 (3) pp. 421-449.

Barrett, A. A. 1996. *Agrippina Sex, Power and Politics in the Early Empire.* London: Routledge.

Barton, T. 1994. *Ancient Astrology.* London: Routledge.

Bauman, R. A. 1992. *Woman and Politics in Ancient Rome.* London: Routledge.

Beard, M., North, J. and Price, S. 1998. *Religions of Rome. Volume 1*: *A History.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Behjati-Ardakani, Z., Akhondi, M.M., Mahmoodzadeh, H. and Hosseini, S.H. 2016. "An Evaluation of the Historical Importance of Fertility and Its Reflection in Ancient Mythology". *Journal of Reproduction Infertility.* 17 (1) pp. 2-9.

Belis, A. 2017. *Roman Mosaics in the J. Paul Getty Museum.* Los Angeles: Getty Publications.

Benediktson, D. T. 1991-1992. "Caligula's Phobias and Philias: Fear of Seizure?" *The Classical Journal* 87 (2) pp. 159-163.

Bettini, M. 1998. *Women and Weasels: Mythologies of Birth in Ancient Greece and Rome.* Translated by E. Eisenach. London: University of Chicago Press.

Betz, H. D. ed., 1986. *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, Including the Demotic Spells.* Translated from Greek by H. D. Betz. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bradley, K. 1997. "Law, Magic and Culture in the "Apologia" of Apuleius". *Phoenix.* 51 (2) pp. 203-223.

Bradley, C. M. 2010. "Defining Ancient Magic: A Brief Historiography and Explanation." *Ex Post Facto.* 19 pp. 149-164.

Bremmer, J. N. 1999. "The Birth of the Term 'Magic". *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik,* 126 pp. 1-12.

Brennan, C. 2017. *Hellenistic Astrology The Study of Fate and Fortune.* Denver: Amor Fati Publications

Brodkin, E., Copes, R., Mattman, A., Kennedy, J., Kling, R. and Yassi, A. 2007. "Lead and Mercury Exposures: Interpretation and Action." *Canadian Medical Association Journal.* 176 (1) pp. 59-63.

Budge, E. A. W. 1930/2003. *Amulets and Superstitions: The original texts with translations and descriptions of a long series of Egyptian, Sumerian, Assyrian, Hebrew, Christian, Gnostic and Muslim amulets and talismans and magical figures, with chapters on the evil eye, the origin of the amulet, the pentagon, the swastika, the cross (pagan and Christian), the properties of stones, rings, divination, numbers, the Kabbâlâh, ancient astrology, etc.* Montana: Kessinger Publishing.

Calder, T. 2020. "The Concept of Evil." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.* Stanford University: Metaphysics Research Lab.

Carmela, M. and Salvatore, S. 2016. "The Medusa Complex: the head separated from the body in the psychology of negative affects." *Mediterranean Journal of Clinical Psychology.* 4 (1) pp. 1-11.

Champlin, E. 1998. "Nero Reconsidered." *New England Review.* 19 (2) pp. 97-108.

Champlin, E. 2007. "Tiberiana 4: Tiberius the Wise." *Princeton/Stanford Working Papers in Classics.* Princeton University.

Chauran, A. 2013. *Have you been Hexed? Recognizing and Breaking Curses.* Woodbury: Llewellyn Publishers.

Cirlot, J. E. 2001. *A Dictionary of Symbols Second Addition.* Translated from Spanish by J. Sage. London: Routledge.

Collins, D. 2008a. *Magic in the Ancient Greek World.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Collins, D. 2008b. "The Magic of Homeric Verses". *Classical Philology.* 103. pp. 211-236.

Cramer, F. H. 1954. *Astrology in Roman Law and Politics.* Imprint 1971. Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society.

Crosson, S. N. 2016. *The Political Implications of the Chi-Rho in Roman British Mosaics.* Master's Degree: San Francisco State University.

Cumont, F. 1909/2003. *Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism.* Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers.

Cunningham, S. 1985. *Cunningham's Encyclopedia of Magical Herbs.* Woodbury: Llewellyn Publications.

Damon, C. 1999. "The Trial of Cn. Piso in Tacitus' Annals and the "Senatus Consultum de Cn. Pisone Patre": New Light on Narrative Technique." *The American Journal of Philology.* 120 (1) pp. 143-162.

Dando-Collins, S. 2008. *Blood of the Caesars: How the murder of Germanicus Led to the Fall of Rome.* Hoboken: John Wiley and Sons Inc.

Davenport, C. 2012. "Cassius Dio and Caracalla". *The Classical Quarterly.* 62 (2) pp. 796-815

Davies, J. P. 2004. *Rome's Religious History: Livy, Tacitus and Ammianus and their Gods.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Deadrick, A. 2011. *For All Time: An Examination of Romantic Love through Curse Tablets.* Master's Degree: San Jose State University.

De Bruyn, T. 2017. *Making Amulets Christian Artefacts, Scribes and Contexts.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Deline, T. L. 2009. *Women in Criminal Trials in the Julio-Claudian Era.* PHD. The University of British Columbia.

Dickie, M. W. 2000. "Who Practiced Love-Magic in Classical-Antiquity and in the Late Roman World?" *The Classical Quarterly.* New Series 50 (2) pp. 563-583.

Dickie, M. W. 2001. *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World.* London: Routledge.

Dickie, M. W. 2005. "Magic in the Roman historians." In R. L. Gordon and F. M Simon. eds. 2010. *Magical practice in the Latin West: Papers from the international conference held at the University of Zaragoza, 30 Sept.-1 Oct.2005.* Leiden: Brill. pp. 79-104.

Dixon-Kennedy, M. 1998. *Encyclopedia of Greco-Roman Mythology.* Oxford: ABC-CLIO

Draper, J. A. 1988. "The Twelve Apostles as Foundation Stones of the Heavenly Jerusalem and the Foundation of Qumran Community." *Neotestamentica.* 22. pp. 41-63.

Du Plessis, P. J. 2014. "Perceptions of Roman Justice." *Fundamina.* 20 (1) pp. 216-226.

Edmonds, R. G. 2014. "Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered." In: T. K. Hubbard, ed. *A Companion to Greek and Roman Sexualities.* London: Blackwell Publishing Ltd. pp. 282-296.

Elliott, T. G. 1987. "Constantine's Conversion: Do We Really Need It?" *Phoenix.* 41 (4) pp. 420-438.

Elliott, J. H. 2011. "Social-scientific criticism: Perspective, process and payoff. Evil eye accusation at Galatia as illustration of the method." *HTS Teologiese Studies.* 67 (1 #858) pp. 1-10.

Elliott, J. H. 2020. "The Evil Eye." In: Z. Crook ed. *The Ancient Mediterranean Social World: A Sourcebook.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. pp. 321-332

Faraone, C. A. and Obbink, D. 1991. *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Faraone, C. A. 1999. *Ancient Greek Love Magic.* London: Harvard University Press.

Frankle, R. L. S. and Stein, P. L. 2005. *Anthropology of Religion, Magic and Witchcraft.* Boston: Pearson.

Frazer, J. G. 1925. *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion.* New York: The Macmillan Company.

Freeman, P. 2012. *Oh My Gods: A Modern Retelling of Greek and Roman Myths.* New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks.

Gager, J. ed. 1992. *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Gaillard-Seux, P. 2014. "Magical Formulas in Pliny's *Natural History*: Origins, Sources, Parallels." In Brigitte, M. ed. *'Greek' and 'Roman' in Latin Medical Texts: Studies in Cultural Change and Exchange in Ancient Medicine.* Leiden: Brill. pp. 201-223

Genshock, S. C. 2016. *The Transmission of Contraceptive Knowledge from Greece and Rome to the Islamic World and Back Again.* Master's Degree. San Diego State University.

Geers, A. L., Rose, J. P., Fowler, S. L., Rasinski, H. M., Brown, J. A. and Helfer, S. G. 2013. "Why Does Choice Enhance Treatment Effectiveness? Using Placebo Treatments to Demonstrate the Role of Personal Control." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology.* 105 (4) pp. 549-566.

Gitler, H. 1990. "Four Magical and Christian Amulets." *Liber Annuus.* 40 pp. 365-374.

Good News Bible. 1984. Glasgow: William Collins Sons and Co.

González-Wippler, M. 1991. *The Complete Book of Amulets and Talismans.* St. Paul: Llewellyn Publicans.

Gordon, R. "Imagining Greek and Roman Magic." In Ankarloo, B. and Clark, S. eds. 1999. *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe Volume 2 Ancient Greece and Rome.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. pp. 159-266.

Gordon, R. L. and Simón, F. M. ed. 2010. *Magical Practice in the Latin West: Papers from the International Conference held at the University of Zaragoza 30 Sept. – 1 Oct. 2005.* Leiden: Brill.

Graf, F. 1997. *Magic in the Ancient World.* Translated by F. Philip. London: Harvard University Press.

Graf, F. 2001. "Theories of Magic in Antiquity." In: Mirecki, P. and Meyer, M. eds. 2002. *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World.* Leiden: Brill. pp. 93-104.

Greene, R. 2001. *The Art of Seduction.* New York: Penguin Books.

Green, S. J. 2014. *Discloser and Discretion in Roman Astrology: Manilius and his Augustan Contemporaries.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Grembowski, J. A. 2013. *The Christianity of Constantine: Conversion or Convenience? An Analysis through the Eyes of Historians.* Research Essay: American Public University System.

Guinan, A. K. "A Severed Head Laughed: Stories of Divinatory Interpretations." In L. Ciraolo and J. Seidel eds. 2002. *Ancient Magic and Divination II: Ancient Magic and Divination in the Ancient World.* Leiden: Brill. pp. 7-40.

Gupta, N. K. 2017. *Lead Us Not Into Temptation, Deliver Us From Evil (Chapter in the Lord's Prayer, Smyth and Helwys Bible Commentary).* [pdf] Faculty Publications Portland Seminary. Available at: https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/gfes/106/

Harrell, J. E. Hoffmeier, J. K. and Williams, K. F. 2017. "Hebrew Gemstones in the Old Testament: A Lexical, Geological and Archaeological Analysis." *Bulletin for Biblical Research.* 27.1 pp. 1-52.

Hayes, W. M. 1959. "Tiberius and the Future". *The Classical Journal.* 55 (1) pp. 2-8.

Hall, J. 2003. *The Crystal Bible: The Definitive Guide to over 200 Crystals Volume 1.* London: Godsfield Press.

Helminen, T. M. 2017. *The Effect of Eye Contact on Arousal and Attention: A psychophysiological perspective.* PHD. The University of Tampere.

Hill, A. 2011. *Paranormal Media: Audiences, Spirits and Magic in Popular Culture.* London: Routledge.

Höbenreich, E. and Rizzelli, G. "Poisoning in Ancient Rome: The Legal Framework, The Nature of Poisons and Gender Stereotypes." In: P. Wexler. 2015. *History of Toxicology and Environmental Health: Toxicology in Antiquity Volume II.* London: Elsevier. pp. 42-51.

Hopkins, K. 1965. "Contraception in the Roman Empire". *Comparative Studies in Society and History.* 8 (1) pp. 124 – 151.

Hug, A. G. 2014. *Fecunditas, Sterilitas, and the Politics of Reproduction at Rome.* PHD. York University.

Hunink, V. ed. 1997a. *Apuleius of Madauros Pro se de Magia (Apologia),* vol 1: *Introduction Text Bibliography Indexes.* Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben.

Hunink, V. ed. 1997b. *Apuleius of Madauros Pro se de Magia (Apologia),* vol 2: *Commentary.* Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben.

Jackson, R. 1988. *Doctors and Diseases in the Roman Empire.* London: University of Oklahoma Press.

James, B. 2011. *Perfect Victims: Slaughter, Sensation and Serial Killers An American Criminal Odyssey.* London: Simon and Schuster.

Janowitz, N. 2001. *Magic in the Roman World: Pagans, Jews and Christians.* London: Routledge.

Jehle, J. 2019. *Emperors Accused: A Study of Accusations of Necromancy in the Late Republic and the Early Empire.* [pdf] Academia. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/2199146/Emperors_Accused._A_Study_of_Accusations_of_Necromancy [Accessed 10 October 2019].

Jensen, R. M. 2000. *Understanding Early Christian Art.* London: Routledge.

Johnston, S. I., Gager, J. G., Himmelfarb, M.,Meyer, M., Schmidt, B., Frankfurter, D. and Graf, F. 1999. "Magic in the Ancient World by Fritz Graf." *Numen.* 46 (3) pp. 291-325.

Johnston, S. I. 2001. "Charming Children: The use of the Child in Ancient Divination." *Arethus.* 34 (1) pp. 97-117.

Jones, B. C. 2015. *New Testament Texts on Greek Amulets from Late Antiquity and Their Relevance for Textual Criticism.* PHD. Concordia University.

Jones, W. H. S. 1957. "Ancient Roman Folk Medicine." *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences.* 12 (4) pp. 459-472.

Joseph, K. 2018. *Pudicitia: The Construction and Application of Female Morality in the Roman Republic and Early Empire.* Masters. Brandeis University.

Jütte, R. 2003. *Contraception: A History.* Translated from German by V. Russel. 2008. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Kaptchuk, T. J and Miller, F. G. 2015. "Placebo Effects in Medicine". *The New England Journal of Medicine.* 373 (1) pp. 8 – 9.

Katansky, R. 1994. *Greek Magical Amulets.* Germany: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften

Katz, R. S. 1972. "The Illness of Caligula." *The Classical World.* 65 (7) pp. 223-225.

Kippenberg, H. G. Magic in Roman Civil Discourse: Why Rituals could be Illegal. In P. Schäfer and H. G. Kippenberg, eds. 1997. *Envisioning Magic: A Princeton Seminar and Symposium.* Leiden: Brill. pp. 137-163.

Krappe, A. H. 1927. "Tiberius and Thrasyllus". *The American Journal of Philology.* 48 (4) pp. 359-366.

Kraus, T. J. Translating the Septuagint Psalms – some 'Lesefrüchte' and their value for an analysis of the rhetoric (and style) of the Septuagint (Psalms). In: E. Bons and T. J. Kraus

eds. 2011. *Et Sapienter et eloquenter: Studies on Rhetorical and Stylistic Features of the Septuagint.* Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht. pp. 49-68.

Laughlin, Tyler Yung. 2007. "The Controversy of Constantine's Conversion to Christianity". *Student Theses, Papers and Projects (History).* 172. Western Oregon University. http://digitalcommons.wou.edu/his/172

Lazarou, A. 2019. "Golden Gorgon-Medousa Artwork in Ancient Hellenic World." *Scientific Culture.* 5 (1) pp. 1-14.

Lee-Stecum, P. 2006. "Dangerous Reputations: Charioteers and Magic in Fourth-Century Rome". *Greece and Rome,* 53 (2) pp. 224-234.

Levi, E. 1860. *The History of Magic.* Translated from French by A. Waite. 1915. London: William Rider and Son Limited.

Liebs, D. 2012. *Summoned to the Roman Courts: Famous Trials from Antiquity.* Translated by R. L. R. Garber and C. G. Cürten. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Lietaert Peerbolte, B. J. "Protection Against Evil Jesus Christ as Shield and Buckler (Psalm 91)." In: R. Zimmerman and S. Joubert eds. 2017. *Biblical Ethics and Application Purview, Validity and Relevance of Biblical Texts in Ethical Discourse.* Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck. pp. 27-44.

Longenecker, B. W. 2015. *The Cross Before Constantine: The Early Life of a Christian Symbol.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

Longman Exams Dictionary. 2006. Edinburgh Gate: Pearson Education Limited.

Luck, G. 1985. *Arcana Mundi: Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds: A Collection of Ancient Texts.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Lu, Z. L. and Dosher, B. 2014. *Visual Psychophysics from Laboratory to Theory*. London: The MIT Press.

Mackowiak, P. A. 2013. *Diagnosing Giants: Solving the Medical Mysteries of Thirteen Patients who changed the World.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Markus, R. 1994. "Augustine on Magic: A Neglected Semiotic Theory." *Revue des Études Augustiniennes.* 40. pp. 375-388.

Massullo, B. 2017. *The Ghost Studies.* New Jersey: Career Press.

Marinatos, N. 2000. *The Goddess and the Warrior: the naked goddess and Mistress of Animals in early Greek religion.* London: Routledge.

Martínez, I. C. 2017. "Magical Amulets User's Guide: Preparation, Utilization and Knowledge Transmission in the PGM." In Suáre, E., Blanco, M., Chronopoulou, E. and Canzobre, I. ed. *Magikè Téchne Formación y consideración social del mago en el Mundo Antiguo.* Madrid: Dykinson. pp. 177-192.

McCloskey, D. N. 1992. "The Art of Forecasting: From Ancient to Modern Times". *The Cato Journal.* 12 (1) pp. 23

McKinley, J. E. 2012. "Jesus Christ's Temptation." *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology.* 16.2 pp. 56-71.

Meggitt, J. J. 2013. "Did Magic Matter? The Saliency of Magic in the Early Roman Empire." *Journal of Ancient History.* 1 (2) pp. 170-229.

Mellor, R. 1993. *Tacitus.* London: Routledge

Mesen, T. B. and Young, S.L. 2015. "Progesterone and the Luteal Phase: A Requisite to Reproduction". *Obstetrics and Gynaecology Clinics of North America.* 42 (1) pp. 135-151

Meyer, M. "Greek Texts of Ritual Power from Christian Egypt". In Meyer, M. and Smith, R. ed. 1994. *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power.* San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco. pp. 27-57.

Meyer, M. and Mirecki, P. ed. 2002. *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World.* Leiden: Brill.

Miceli, M. and Castelfranchi, C. 2007. "The Envious Mind." *Cognition and Emotion.* 21 (3) pp. 449-479.

Milovanović, B. and Anđelković-Grašar, J. 2017. "Female Power that Protects: Examples of the Apotropaic and Decorative Functions of the Medusa in Roman Visual Culture from the Territory of the Central Balkans." *Starinar.* 67 pp. 167-182.

Molnar, R. M. 1995. "Blood on the Moon in Aquarius: The Assassination of Domitian". *The Celator.* May 9 (5) pp. 6-12.

Mondello, G. K. ed. 2019. *A Primer to Catholic Symbolism.* [pdf]. Boston Catholic Journal. Available at: http://www.boston-catholic-journal.com/a-primer-to-catholic-symbolism.htm

Monsefi, M., Ghasemi, M. and Bahaoddini, A. 2006. "The Effects of *Anethum Graveolens, L.* on the Female Reproductive System." *Phytotherapy Research.* 20 (10) pp. 866-868.

Morford, M. P. O. and Lenardon, R. J. 2003. *Classical Mythology.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Moser, C. 2006. "Naked Power: The Phallus as an Apotropaic Symbol in the Images and Texts of Roman Italy." *Undergraduate Humanities Forum.* 4 (1) pp. 1-132.

Mousourakis, G. 2007. *A Legal History of Rome.* London: Routledge.

Mowdy, H. 2016. "The History and Importance of the Roman Bath." *Ibid. A Student History Journal.* 9 pp. 1-7.

Munroe, M. 2002. *Understanding the Purpose and Power of Prayer Earthly License for Heavenly Interference.* New Kensington: Whitaker House.

Murphy, K. and Susalla, C. 2016. "Secrets of Ancient Magic: The Power of Spells, Curses and Omens." *Expedition.* 58 (1) pp. 7-15.

Musallam, B. F. 1983. *Sex and Society in Islam: Birth Control before the Nineteenth Century.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nakamura, C. 2004. "Neo-Assyrian Apotropaic Figurines and the Protection of Assur." *World Archaeology.* 36. (1) pp. 11-25.

Nees, L. 2002. *Oxford History of Art Early Medieval Art.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Neill, J. 2009. *The Origins and Role of Same-Sex Relations in Human Societies.* London: McFarland and Company Inc.

Noegel S. Walker, J. and Wheeler, B. ed. 2003. *Prayer, Magic and the Stars in the Ancient and Late Antique World.* University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press.

Nongbri. B. 2011. "The Lord's Prayer and ΧΜΓ." *The Harvard Theological Review.* 104. (1) pp. 59-68.

Nozedar, A. 2008. *The Element Encyclopaedia of Secret Signs and Symbols: The Ultimate A-Z Guide from Alchemy to the Zodiac.* London: Harper Collins Publishers.

Ogden. D. 2001. *Greek and Roman Necromancy.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Ogden, D. 2002a. "Lay that Ghost: Necromancy in Greece and Rome." *Archaeology Odyssey.* 5 (4) pp. 42-56

Ogden, D. 2002b. *Magic, Witchcraft and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Ogden, D. Animal Magic. In: G. L. Campbell ed. 2014. *Oxford Handbook of Animals in Classical Thought and Life.* London: Oxford University Press. pp. 294-309.

Papathanassiou, M. "Stephanos of Alexandria: A Famous Byzantine Scholar, Alchemist and Astrologer." In: P. Magdalino and M. Mavroudi, eds. 2006. *The Occult Sciences in Byzantium.* Geneva: La Pomme d'. pp. 163-203.

Peachin, M. ed. 2011. *The Oxford Handbook of Social Relations in the Roman World.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Pereira, C. 2015. "Understanding the Lord's Prayer." *Scientific GOD Journal.* 6 (9) pp. 531-534.

Petitt, J. E. 2009. *The Extension of Imperial Authority Under Diocletian and the Tetrarchy, 285-305 CE.* Master of Arts. University of Central Florida.

Pharr, C. 1932. "The Interdiction of Magic into Roman Law". *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association,* 63 pp. 269-295.

Pickering, B. J. 2005. *Twelve Stones and the High Priest's Breastplate.* Melbourne: Zenan Media and Publishing.

Plant, I. M. 2004. *Women Writers of Ancient Greece and Rome: An Anthology.* London: Equinox Publishing Ltd.

Podila, S. P. 2019. "Hemophobia in High School Students, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, India". *International Journal of Scientific Research in Science and Technology.* 6 (1) pp. 153-158.

Pollard, E. A. "Magic Accusations against Women in Tacitus's Annals." In Stratton, K. B. and Kalleres, D. S. ed. 2014. *Daughters of Hecate: Women and Magic in the Ancient World.* New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 183-218.

Preisendanz, K. 1928. *Papyri Graecae Magicae: Die Griechischen Zauberpapyri.* Berlin: B. G. Teubner.

Rantala. J. 2017. *The Ludi Saeculares of Septimius Severus: The Ideologies of a New Roman Empire.* New York: Routledge.

Ratcliffe, B. C. 2006. "Scarab Beetles in Human Culture." *Papers in Entomology.* 94. pp. 85-101.

Richlin, A. "Sexuality in the Roman Empire." In D. S. Potter, ed. 2006. *A Companion to the Roman Empire.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. pp. 327-353.

Ricky, D. 2009. *Native Peoples A to Z: A Reference Guide to Native Peoples of the Western Hemisphere.* Hamburg: Native American Books.

Ripat, P. 2011. "Expelling Misconceptions: Astrologers at Rome." *Classical Philology.* 106 pp. 115-154.

Rives, J.B. 2003. "Magic in Roman Law: The Reconstruction of a Crime". *Classical Antiquity.* 22 (2) pp. 313-339.

Roof, J. 2007. Genitalia as Apotropaic. In F. Malti-Douglas, ed. *Encyclopedia of Sex and Gender.* New York: Thomson Gale. pp. 638-639.

Rowling, J. K. 2008. *The Fringe Benefits of Failure and the Importance of Imagination.* [Online]. 15 March, Harvard University, Massachusetts. [Accessed 6 February 2020]. Available from: https://www.ted.com/talks/jk_rowling_the_fringe_benefits_of_failure

Sax, B. 2001. *The Mythical Zoo: An Encyclopedia of Animals in World Myth, Legend and Literature.* Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO

Schiller, C. and Schiller, D. 2008. *The Aromatherapy Encyclopedia: A Concise Guide to over 395 Plant Oils.* Laguna Beach: Basic Health Publications Inc.

Schoener, G. A. 2002. *Astrology Between Religion and the Empirical.* Translated from German by S. Denson. Marburg: REMID.

Schott, H. 2018. "On the History of the Placebo Effect: A Brief Outline". *Journal of Clinical and Medical Sciences.* 2 (1) pp. 1-3.

Sidwell, B. 2010. "Gaius Caligula's Mental Illness." *The Classical World.* 103 (2) pp. 183-206.

Singh, D. J. and Davidson. J. 2014. *The Magic of Olives.* Utah: JD-BIZ Publishing

Slane, K. W. and Dickie, M. W. 1993. "A Knidian Phallic Vase from Corinth." *Hesperia: The Journal of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens.* 62 (4) pp. 483-505.

Smith, M. 1978. *Jesus the Magician.* New York: Barnes and Nobles.

Snyder, G. F. 1985. *Ante Pacem Archaeological Evidence of Church Life Before Constantine.* Macon: Mercer University Press.

Sogno, C. 2005. "Astrology, Morality, the Emperor and the Law in Firmicus Maternus' Mathesis." *Illinois Classical Studies.* 30 pp. 167-176.

Spier, J. 1992. *Ancient Gems and Finger Rings: Catalogue of the Collections of the J. Paul Getty Museum.* Malibu: The J. Paul Getty Museum.

Spier, J. 2007. *Picturing the Bible: The Earliest Christian Art.* London: Yale University Press.

Spiers, H. J., Love, B. C., Le Pelley, M. E., Gibb, C. E. and Murphy, R. A. 2016. "Anterior Temporal Lobe Tracks the Formation of Prejudice. *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience.* 29 (3) pp. 530-544

Stratton, K. B. "Magic, Abjection and Gender in Roman Literature." In Stratton, K. B. and Kalleres, D. S. eds. 2014. *Daughters of Hecate: Women and Magic in the Ancient World.* New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 152-180.

Sullivan, V. A. 2009. *Increasing Fertility in the Roman Late Republic and Early Empire.* Master's Degree. North Carolina State University.

Tavenner, E. 1916. *Studies in Magic from Latin Literature.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Thee, F. C. R. 1984. *Julius Africanus and the Early Christian View of Magic.* Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr.

Thomson, G. 1973. *Aeschylus and Athens: A Study in the Social Origins of Drama.* London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Thorndike, L. 1908. "The Attitude of Origen and Augustine toward Magic." *The Monist.* 18 (1) pp. 46-66.

Trestrail, J. H. 2007. *Criminal Poisoning: Investigational Guide for Law Enforcement, Toxicologists, Forensic Scientists and Attorneys.* Totowa: Humana Press.

Tyner, K. 2015. *Roman Sexual Interactions: A Critical Examination of the Limitations of Roman Sexuality.* Undergraduate Honors Theses. University of Colorado, Boulder.

Turcan, R. 2000. *The Gods of Ancient Rome: Religion in Everyday Life from Archaic to Imperial Times.* Translated by A, Nevill. London: Routledge.

Unger, M. F. 2006. *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary.* Chicago: Moody Publishers.

Van Der Lans, B. "The Politics of Exclusion: Expulsions of Jews and Others from Rome." In Labahn, M. and Lehtipuu, O. eds. 2015. *People Under Power. Early Jewish and Christian Responses to the Roman Empire.* Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press. pp. 33-77.

Veltri, G. 1998. "The Rabbis and Pliny the Elder: Jewish and Greco-Roman Attitudes toward Magic and Empirical Knowledge". *Poetics Today.* 19 (1) pp. 63-89.

Versnel, H. S. 1991. "Some Reflections on the Relationship Magic-Religion." *Numen.* 38 (2) pp. 177-197.

Veyne, P. ed. 1987. *A History of a Private Life, Volume* 1: *From Pagan Rome to Byzantium.* Translated by A. Goldhammer. Cambridge: Belknap Press.

Ward, A. M, Heichelheim, F. M and Yeo, C. A. 2016. *A History of the Roman People.* London: Routledge.

Warga, R. G. 1988. "A Christian Amulet on Wood." *The Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists.* 25. pp. 149-152.

Webster, R. 2007. *Magical Symbols of Love and Romance.* Woodbury: Llewellyn Publications.

Wellesley, K. 2000. *The Year of Four Emperors.* London: Routledge.

West, D. 2006. *Graphic Mysteries Ghosts and Poltergeists: Stories of the Supernatural.* New York: The Rosen Publishing Group Inc.

Williams, C. A. 1999. *Roman Homosexuality: Ideologies of Masculinity in Classical Antiquity.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Worthington, E. L. and Griffin, B. J. 2015. *Moving Forward: Six Steps to Forgiving Yourself: Self Directed Workbook.* [PDF]. Available at: http://forgiveself.com/workbooks/20150903%20Self-Forgiveness%20Intervention%20Workbook.pdf [Accessed 15 January 2019].

Younis, I., Fattah, M. and Maamoun, M. 2016. "Female hot spots: extragenital erogenous zones." *Human Andrology.* 6 pp. 20-26.

Zava, D. Dollbaum, C. and Blen, M. 1998. "Estrogen and Progestin Bioactivity of Foods, Herbs, Spices." *Proceedings of the Society for Experimental Biology and Medicine.* 217 (3) pp. 369-378.

Zuiddam, B. A. 2015. "Battle for the Bible in the Early Church." *Journal of Creation.* 29 (1) pp. 64-71.