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To Honor and Avert

Rituals Addressed to the Dead

SINGAPORE (AP)—There is probably nothing to worry about, but people in Singapore believe that the gates of hell opened yesterday.

Chinese tradition holds that the gateway opens during the seventh lunar month—Aug. 3 to Sept. 1 in the Western calendar this year—freeing the spirits of the dead to roam among the living.

Restless spooks are said to visit their living relatives to share in the comfort of their homes. But the ghosts of those who died without descendants, or who were ignored by their kin while alive, may wander the streets, hungry and envious.

Unless appeased with food and entertainment before they return to hell, these wayward spirits might cause mischief, according to tradition. So open-air puppet shows, Chinese operas and pop concerts are staged for the dead and their descendants, and hungry ghosts are invited to public feasts, which usually consist of chicken, pork, rice and fruit.

To ease the ghosts' passage among the living, ancestor worshippers can obtain make-believe passports called "permits for the souls." Pocket money issued by the Bank of Hell also is available. The fake currency—so called "hell money"—is set aflame by worshippers.

"It is a month for being jittery. Believers avoid going out at night. Some may forbid their children to do otherwise perfectly normal things like going swimming," said one Singaporean.

Excerpted from a story that ran in U.S. newspapers in August 1997

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In chapter 1, I used evidence from narrative sources to examine ancient Greek beliefs concerning the dead and how they changed over the course of three centuries or so. Now I turn to other types of evidence, both to test the accuracy of the conclusions reached earlier and to try to extend them. We cannot proceed chronologically here, as we did in chapter 1. Although the dates of individual pieces of evidence remain important, the pieces cannot be sorted neatly into packets according to date, or even genre. My approach, instead, will be a topical one.

In deciding which topics to discuss (there are too many for all of them to be included), I have looked for those that might provide good tests of the hypotheses offered in chapter 1. In particular, I have tried to collect evidence that gives us insights into what the Greeks really believed about the dead, in order to verify what might otherwise, perhaps, be dismissed as literary topoi. This means that I have paid particular attention to our evidence for what the Greeks *did* about the dead—that is, for actions performed by the living in expectation of affecting the dead, for *rituals* involving the dead. A number of them, as we shall see, were similar to the Singaporean rituals described in the newspaper story quoted above, in that they attempted to please, appease, and thus keep away the potentially angry ghosts.

Of course, the questions of what rituals "mean," of how their interpretation must be approached, and of how they can be used to enhance our understanding of religious beliefs are thorny and much debated. This is not the place to rehearse all the arguments made during the past century; I shall simply acknowledge that I approach the study of Greek ritual with the assumption that careful analysis and sensitivity to the nature of the sources will enable us to recover, at least in part, the religious beliefs that underlay them. Certainly, caution is necessary: for some individuals in ancient Greece, as in other cultures, participation in a ritual signified nothing more than a realization that it was to his or her social advantage to participate; participants need not have believed in a ritual to go through its motions. Moreover, not every participant in a ritual understood its aim to the same extent as others, much less knew why it was supposed to work. And yet, at least some of the participants in a ritual must have believed that it would really accomplish what it claimed. Otherwise, the ritual would either have died out or have metamorphosed into another ritual that more directly addressed and expressed the hopes of the participants.

RITUALS FOR—AND AGAINST—THE DEAD

Theoretically, we can distinguish between two reasons that the living might choose to make offerings to the dead.¹ On the one hand, they might do so out of affection. Expressions of this might include both “funerary rites,” directed to an individual at the time of his or her death and on certain days thereafter, and civic “festivals of the dead,” during which all of the city’s dead received offerings and were honored at the same time. On the other hand, the living might bring offerings to the dead not out of affection but rather in fear that they would cause harm if not appeased. Some such defensive rituals might be undertaken spontaneously, by individuals who thought that ghosts were haunting them. Others might be undertaken by all members of a city during appointed “days of the dead,” when such ghosts were imagined to wander freely in the upper world—again, the Singaporean holiday is an example.

It would be wrong, however, to assume that any single offering, or complex of offerings, was necessarily motivated by only one emotion. Although I shall organize my discussion under the rubrics mentioned in the preceding paragraph, we shall see that the occasions on which the Greeks interacted with the dead sometimes incorporated both rites that expressed affection and rites provoked by a desire to avert trouble. This makes sense: the line between giving gifts out of a desire to please and giving gifts in hopes that the recipient will behave as one wishes is rather thin.

This point rests on another one: in the Greek view, death did little to change the essential features of human personality. Ghosts retained the emotions of living persons and were assumed to feel the same way about both good and bad treatment as they would have felt when alive; the real difference lay in what the dead were able to *do* about their feelings. There were some types of dead who were predisposed to be unhappy and vindictive, most often because of something that had happened while they were still alive, but even the kindest soul, if left unhonored, would become angry and make that anger known. This lack of any real *qualitative* difference between the angry dead and the peaceful dead—and thus the potential for the latter to become the former—is reflected

1. My theoretical division follows that of Jacoby 1944b. Cf. also the analysis of Schmidt 1994, ch. 1, for a more nuanced discussion of the reasons that the living might pay cult to the dead.

by the fact that actions performed to soothe the angry are often the same as those used to honor the peaceful.

FUNERARY RITES

That the Greeks considered the performance of funeral rites important to the disembodied soul is underscored by the practice of adopting heirs who would be able to carry them out if natural heirs were lacking. The right to inherit property was tied to the performance of these rites; more than once, settlement of a disputed estate hinged on the heir being able to prove that he was carrying out his obligations to the deceased.²

Because these rites often have been discussed, I shall offer only a sketch here, emphasizing a few aspects important for later arguments.³ Following death, the body was washed and laid out by the women of the family (*prothesis*). A passage from Aristophanes indicates that vine branches and the herb *origanos* were strewn under the body as part of this process. In antiquity, this bitterly pungent herb was believed to repel harmful animals; in later European folklore, we hear of it being used to avert ghosts and demons. Together these observations suggest that its use in funerary rites reflects a fear that even in death, evil forces of some kind were waiting to attack the departing soul or the body.⁴ An attack on either would be disastrous: the soul might be diverted by a manipulative magician for his own purposes, and thus be prevented from reaching the haven of the Underworld,⁵ and damage to the body could affect the postmortem functioning and thus the happiness of the soul, as the practice of *maschalismos* perhaps attests.⁶ It was the duty of the sur-

2. Discussion in Humphreys, esp. 98–99; Garland 1985, 104. Ancient sources include Is. 2.10, 37; 6.65; 8.38–39; cf. Arist. *Ath.* 55; X. *Mem.* 2.2.13.

3. Some basic starting points are Garland 1985, ch. 3; Burkert 1985, 190–94; Humphreys; Kurtz and Boardman, *passim*, but esp. chs. 7 and 11; Nilsson 1967, 174–82; Rohde 1925, 162–71, 524–27. More theoretical and selective but still valuable is Seaford 1994, esp. chs. 3 and 4.

4. Ar. *Ec.* 1030. Cf. discussion at Rohde 1925, 163 and n. 36. I discuss other evidence for the idea of ghosts or demonic creatures attacking the soul of the newly dead in the two next chapters. The story: Ap. *Met.* 2.25. On the power of *origanos* to turn away animals and insects, see Arist. *HA* 534b; Plin. *HN* 10§90; Thphr. *CP* 6.5.4; Dsc. 3.29; further at Rohde loc. cit. For later European beliefs in its power to avert demons, see Rohde loc. cit., n. 36. The belief that evil supernatural agents might attack the corpse is fairly common throughout the world; see, e.g., Metcalf and Huntington, 91–92.

5. See further chapter 3 below.

6. On *maschalismos*, or ritual mutilation of corpses by severing their extremities, see further chapter 4 below.

vivors to provide protection against such attacks until the body was safely in the ground and the soul had begun its journey to the Underworld. Although later in date than the period we are discussing, Apuleius's story of Thessalian witches snatching a corpse's nose and the ghost returning to complain about it provides a humorous example of the sort of risk against which *origanos* and similar apotropaic measures might have been employed in Greek funerals. Perhaps amulets against such attacks were buried with the dead as well; we have some late examples of what seem to be amulets for postmortem protection made out of metal, and it is possible that earlier types made of perishable materials once existed, too.⁷

The traditional length of *prothesis* was one day; this would fit with the fact it was on the third day after death (counting inclusively) that the body was carried out to the place of burial (*ekphora*).⁸ The swiftness of burial reflects not only the obvious need to remove a decomposing corpse quickly but the perception that the individual no longer belonged amongst the living. As many anthropological studies have discussed, in ancient Greece and elsewhere death initiates a rite of passage for both the deceased and those left behind; the passage begins to approach completion only when the corpse has been removed from the company of the living.⁹

The deceased was accompanied to the grave by family members and perhaps by other mourners, too, although funerary legislation of the late archaic and classical periods sometimes restricted the number of people who might participate, as well as the places at which they might sing their laments. In Athens, for example, Solon passed laws to the effect that only women over the age of sixty or women closely related to the deceased might take part in the *ekphora* and lament.¹⁰ Solon's laws curbed the most extreme forms of behavior during lamentation, such as self-laceration, mourning for anyone other than the person immediately dead, and excessive funeral gifts as well. He also ordered that the *prothesis* take place inside a house, and that the *ekphora* take place before

7. Kotansky 1994; see examples 2, 15, 20, 23, 27, 28, 29, and 39 with commentary.

8. On *prothesis*, see, e.g., D. 43.62 (quoting Solon's law) and more fully the discussions at Kurtz and Boardman, 143–44, and Garland 1985, 23–30, which cite the ancient evidence.

9. Metcalf and Huntington, *passim*, but esp. pt. 2 (citing many earlier studies in various parts of the world); Bremmer 1983, 89–107.

10. On *ekphora* and deposition, see Kurtz and Boardman 144–45; Garland 1985, 31–37. On funerary legislation, see the following note.

sunrise on the day after the *prothesis*. Plato's laws for funerary conduct in his ideal city take all of these ideas a bit further; real laws in some other places similarly aimed to restrict the ostentation of the funeral, the number of people lamenting or otherwise participating, and the degree to which it was public.¹¹

Offerings were made at the grave at the time of the funeral. These always included *choai*, libations made of honey, milk, water, wine, or oil mixed in varying amounts.¹² There was also a "supper" (*deipnon* or *dais*) of various foods; the dead who partook of these sometimes were described as *eudeipnoi*, which we best can translate, perhaps, as "those who are content with their meal." The word, a euphemism, seems to reflect the hope that, once nourished, the dead would realize that they had nothing to complain about.¹³ There is some evidence that water was also given to the dead person so that he could wash, just as a host would give a living guest water in which to wash before a meal.¹⁴ Offerings to the dead might also include jewelry, flowers, and small objects used in everyday life such as swords, strigils, toys, and mirrors (although gifts, like lamentation, were sometimes restricted by funerary laws). It is hard to avoid the conclusion that these gifts were expected to be useful in the afterlife, particularly when ghost stories tell of the dead demanding objects that were forgotten or omitted at the time of burial.¹⁵

A grave marker (*sēma* or *stēlē*) often was set up at some time after burial; according to Cicero, post-Solonian Athenian funerary laws at-

11. The most important ancient texts are conveniently provided by Seaford 1994, 74–78. Interpretive discussion at Seaford 1994, chs. 3–5; Foley; Holst-Warhaft, 102–3, 114–26; Garland 1989; Sourvinou-Inwood 1983; Gernet and Boulanger, 137–38; Alexiou, 15–20.

12. Among the many ancient sources on *choai* are A. Ch. 84–164; S. El. 894–5; E. El. 511; IT 159–66; Hec. 535; Or. 115; Ar. fr. 488.13; Eust. ad Od. 10.519. Discussion at Garland 1985, 113–15; Burkert 1985, 192–93. Stengel 1880 is still useful, too.

13. On suppers and their ingredients, which sometimes included blood sacrifices, see A. Ch. 483; Ar. Lys. 599–601; Plu. Arist. 21. The remark at Ath. Deip. 8.344c may be a joking reference to such meals for the dead, and the sacrifice to the dead by Odysseus at Od. 11.23–33 seems to echo regular funerary offerings. Discussion and more citations at Garland 1985, 110–13; Kurtz and Boardman, 66, 76–79, 215–16; Nilsson 1967, 177–80; Rohde 1925, 169 and notes. On *eudeipnos*, see A. Ch. 484; Phot. and Hsch., s.v. Cf. also below on the "suppers" (*deipna*) taken once a month to the crossroads to keep the dead away.

14. Ath. Deip. 9.409f–410a and cf. the *lex sacra* from Selinus, discussed below. Discussion at Nilsson 1967, 180.

15. Kurtz and Boardman, ch. 11, *passim*; Burkert 1985, 192–93; Nilsson 1967, 178–79. The most famous case of the dead demanding additional possessions is that of Melissa, wife of Periander (Hdt. 5.92η, quoted above p. vii).

tempted to restrict the size or grandeur of these markers.¹⁶ The *stēlē* or *sēma* subsequently might be decorated with ribbons, myrtle branches, or fillets of colored wool; it was also common for survivors to cut off and offer some of their hair.¹⁷ Several theories have been proposed to explain the latter practice. One argues that offerings of hair were symbolic human sacrifices—*pars pro toto*—and another that cropped hair marked the survivors as being “different,” as being in a marginal period of mourning. Either idea could be supported by interpreting funerary offerings of hair within the context of other occasions when the Greeks made offerings of hair, which tended to be associated with marginal periods as well; a good example is the practice of adolescents dedicating their hair to a divinity during the ritual marking passage into adulthood. This thesis is complicated, however, by the fact that heroes were amongst the recipients of adolescents’ hair; because heroes were members of the class of dead themselves, we are thrown back on the supposition that there was a special link between hair offerings and the dead per se—whether it be predicated on the theory of a *pars pro toto* sacrifice or something else.¹⁸

Having provided the dead with all of these gifts, the living had, for the moment, met their obligations. They returned home, where another meal (*perideipnon*) was provided.¹⁹ This, their first real meal following the death, unified the survivors and implicitly signified their ability and willingness to continue life in the absence of the deceased. The separation process continued to move the living and the dead further apart, but the link was not completely broken. On certain days after the funeral (the third, ninth, thirtieth, and possibly also after a year), additional offerings were made at the grave. Some evidence suggests that, as nowadays, offerings were also made on the anniversary of the deceased’s birth, death, or both, and that survivors made additional offerings whenever

16. Cic. *Leg.* 2.59–66. These laws probably date to the last third of the sixth century; see Seaford 1994, 75 and notes, with references to earlier scholars. On *stēlai* and other grave markers, see Humphreys; Kurtz and Boardman, esp. 84–90, 121–41, 218–46; and Garland 1985, 107–8, 115–16.

17. Hair: the *loci classici* are *Il.* 23.135; *A. Ch.* 7–9; *S. El.* 52, 449; *E. IT* 172.

18. On hero cult, see pp. 153–55 below, and specifically on hair dedicated to heroes and heroines, p. 67 below and examples throughout Larson (see index under “hair offerings”). On contextualization of hair offerings within other types, see Burkert 1985, 70; Nilsson 1967, 180–81. More generally on the variety of ways in which cutting hair—or allowing it to grow unkempt—is associated with funerals, see Leach.

19. Heg. *PCG* V fr. 1.11–16; *Men. Asp.* 232. Further on the evidence for *perideipna* and the question of where they were served, see Garland 1985, 111–12 and notes; Burkert 1985, 193; Kurtz and Boardman, 146–47.

they wanted the help of the dead person, or whenever they wanted him or her to participate, albeit distantly, in a family occasion such as a wedding.²⁰ Because much of our evidence for these practices is literary, and because one of the things that funerary legislation sought to moderate was the frequency with which survivors might visit the tomb, we must wonder how often Greeks of the classical period really visited their deceased relatives after the initial month or so, but if nothing else, the literary references suggest that periodic visits to the tomb were a *desideratum* and that offerings were a means of winning the dead’s help. The very fact that laws had to be enacted, moreover, suggests that left to their own devices, survivors visited tombs fairly frequently.

There were probably several reasons that lamentation, visits to the tomb, and other funerary rites were considered important—including the fact that they provided opportunities for survivors to display their wealth and family loyalty—but the Greeks themselves so often describe these rites as fulfilling the needs and desires of the deceased that we must accept this as a serious motivation. Funerary rites were believed to benefit the dead, and deprivation of them meant an unhappy afterlife for the disembodied soul.²¹ In other words, Greek funerary rites attest to the expectation that the deceased had some sentience in the afterlife and some of the same desires that he or she had had while alive, and to the idea that the living could—and should—gratify those desires. This idea, as we saw in chapter 1, is amply attested in our literary sources as well.

FESTIVALS OF THE DEAD

The only festival of the dead about which we have good information is the Attic *Genesia*. Something like it probably existed in other city-states as well, however, for Herodotus refers to the *Genesia* as being practiced *kata per Hellenas*, “throughout the Greek peoples,” and there was a

20. Periodic offerings after burial: *Is.* 2.10, 2.37, 8.39; *Aeschin.* 3.225; *Hyp. fr.* 110; *Poll.* 8.146 (s.v. *protheseis*); *Phot.*, s.v. *kathedra*; *Anec. Graec.* Bekker 268.19; *Harp.*, s.v. *triakas*. See also comments at Kurtz and Boardman, 145–47; Burkert 1985, 425 n. 38; Humphreys, 100–101. Offerings when help was needed: most famously *Orestes*’ and *Electra*’s requests for *Agamemnon*’s help in various versions of their story, e.g., *A. Ch.* 124–48. Offerings on special occasions: *A. Ch.* 486; *D.L.* 2.14, 10.18; *Clytemnestra*’s behavior at *S. El.* 277–81 seems intended to mock this practice. See also the discussion of the Hellenistic “Will of Epictete” (*IG* XII.3 330) at Garland 1985, 109–10.

21. E.g., *A. Ch.* 483; *S. El.* 284; *E. Hec.* 535–6; *AP* 9.8; and cf. *Lucian Luct.* 9 and *Charon* 22. At *E. IT* 166, *Iphigenia* describes her offering as something that “charms” or “enchants” the dead (*nekrois thelktēria*). Discussion at Garland 1985, 118–20; Rohde 1925, 170–71.

month named Genesion in the city of Magnesia on the Meander.²² That it was a ritual performed by children for their dead parents (and perhaps for grandparents and more distant progenitors as well) is implied not only by the name of the festival itself, which suggests "begetters," but by the context in which Herodotus refers to it: he uses the Genesia as an analogy for Issedonian funeral practices performed by sons for their fathers. Because of its connection to the familial dead, scholars have assumed that the Genesia was a festival of the first type that I mentioned at the beginning of this discussion—that is, a festival motivated by an affectionate desire to please and honor the dead rather than by a fear of their anger lest they be left unpropitiated.²³ In this case, it would be similar to American Memorial Day, when flowers are left on graves and parades honor those who died in battle.

In Attica, the Genesia was held annually on the fifth day of the month Boedromion. Libations were made to Ge and to the dead.²⁴ It is likely that other things happened at the Genesia as well, but we have only one other piece of information to help us fill out the picture. A sacrificial calendar from the Attic deme of Erchia tells us that on the day of the Genesia, a holocaust offering of a piglet and a wineless libation were made to the hero Epops or Epopeus; simultaneously, offerings were also made to Zeus Epoptes.²⁵ Other information about Epops hints that these sacrifices may have been intended to appease or avert any dead who might be angry. Pausanias tells us that a hero named Epopeus was worshipped at his grave in Sicyon, near which was an altar to "the gods who avert" (*apotropaioi theoi*). To these, Pausanias continues, the Greeks were accustomed to perform rites that would avert evil things.²⁶ The antecedent of the pronoun "these" (*toutois*) is unclear: does it refer only to the *apotropaioi theoi* or both to these *theoi* and to Epopeus himself? The an-

22. Hdt. 4.26; *Inscr. Magn.* 116.

23. E.g., Humphreys, 100–101; Jacoby 1944b; Burkert 1985, 194; Deubner, 229–30; Parke 1977, 53–54.

24. Philoch. *ap. Anec. Graec.* (Bekker) 1.86.20 (FGrH 328 F 168); Hsch., s.v. *Genesia*; fully quoted and discussed in Jacoby 1944b. All other ancient evidence for the Genesia is also quoted in full in Jacoby's appendix. The evidence for libations to Ge is taken from Hesychius; there is no direct evidence for libations to the dead as far as I can discover, but as numerous sources indicate that the Genesia was specially consecrated to them, it probably is fair to assume this (in agreement with all other scholars).

25. SEG 21 (1965) #541 = LSCG #18; the pertinent columns are D, lines 18–23 and E, lines 9–15, quoted and discussed in Mikalson, 49–50. On the calendar itself, see also Dow; Daux. On the possible mythology connected with Epops, see Hollis.

26. Paus. 2.11.1. Cf. the discussion of Burkert 1983, 185–90, which takes a different approach but also emphasizes the importance of this hero as a "watcher."

swer scarcely matters; the propinquity of the hero's grave to the altar of the *apotropaioi theoi* itself suggests his involvement in the aversion of evils. Both the name of the hero and the epithet of his cult partner at Erchia, Zeus Epoptes, mean "Watcher," a term that well describes divinities suited to such a task. Indeed, in the first line of the *Choephoroi*, Orestes invokes Hermes Chthonios, in his capacity as the god who controls the dead, precisely as *patrōi' epopteuōn kratē*, "watching [my] ancestral powers." Perhaps the role that this "watching" hero played in Erchia, like that he played in Sicyon, involved controlling the dead, and it was for this reason that he received special offerings at the Attic Genesia. If so, then this "festival of the dead"—during which the dead in general were honored—also had qualities associated with "days of the dead"—during which the dangerous dead were controlled or averted.²⁷

There has been some debate about whether the Genesia was from its beginning a communally celebrated festival, held on a single day of the year, or rather a festival that developed from the custom of individuals visiting the graves of their progenitors on days decreed by their *genos*. Felix Jacoby, who argued the latter, further interpreted Philochorus's remark that Solon had the regulations for the Genesia inscribed on the *axones* to mean that it was Solon who turned the Genesia from an aristocratic festival celebrated exclusively by members of the elite *genē* on days of their own choosing into a citywide festival, open to all and restricted to a single day of the year. By this argument, we might see the establishment of a citywide Genesia, like other funerary legislation, as another late archaic way of controlling and limiting interaction with the dead so as to weaken familial allegiances in favor of allegiance to the polis. Even if the Genesia was citywide before Solon's time, Solon's decision to have the regulations for the Genesia publicly displayed suggests that he wanted to accentuate its civic aspects.²⁸ Whatever we conclude about the origins of the Genesia, its form in the late archaic and classical periods demonstrates that by now, attention to the dead was a concern of the city or other groups larger than the family of the deceased.

Only once in classical sources do we hear about anything else that sounds like a festival of the dead. Demosthenes tells us that a woman

27. Some scholars (e.g., Garland 1985, 104; Rohde 1925, 167) presume that a visit to the grave was made on the thirtieth day of each month, as well as annually at the Genesia, but the evidence they adduce does not support this. Cf., however, the monthly offerings to the dead at the crossroads, discussed shortly below.

28. Jacoby 1944b (he partly follows Mommsen, 3, 172); contra, see Parker 1996, 48–49.

paid a large sum to honor her dead father at the annual Nemesis; the scholiasts and lexicographers tell us that the Nemesis honored the dead and that it lasted all night.²⁹ The name "Nemesis" implies a concern with averting wrath, and thus with soothing the dead who would otherwise cause problems. The fact that offerings might be made to dead *parents* during the Nemesis suggests once again that we can make no absolute distinction between rites performed out of affection and those performed out of fear. It was important to keep the dead happy, lest they return to cause trouble in their unhappy state.

APOTROPAIC RITES

There were also rites that were intended, first and foremost, to appease or avert the dead who were already angry or deflect their anger. I shall start with those that were performed by individuals on an ad hoc basis, whenever a need was perceived, and then move on to citywide rituals.

In the *Choephoroi*, Electra explains that she is taking libations to the grave of her father at the request of her mother, who has been having nightmares. Agamemnon does not, so far as Aeschylus tells us, appear in these nightmares himself, but Clytemnestra's decision to make offerings to his ghost indicates that she believes that Agamemnon is responsible for them. This is openly expressed in Sophocles' *Electra* by Chrysothemis, who carries libations and offerings to be burnt (*empura*) to Agamemnon's grave and explains that the ghost of Agamemnon himself has appeared to Clytemnestra in the night.³⁰ Notably, in both plays, the offerings that are intended to stop the angry ghost from sending troublesome dreams are identical to those used at funerals and some civic festivals that honor the dead—the line between peaceful dead and the angry dead is very slender, indeed. Electra's remark that the formulaic request made to the dead while pouring out *choai* was that they "return good for good" implies her awareness that they could bring the opposite as well.³¹ In fact, Electra manages to transform the one sort of of-

29. D. 41.11; schol. ad loc.; Harp., Phot., and Suda, s.v. *nemesis*. Parker (1996, 246–47 n. 101) has suggested that "Nemesis" is an error for "Genesia" introduced into the text at an early date, but this seems to me only a distant possibility. We do not know whether this Nemesis was the same as an athletic festival of that name held in the Attic deme of Rhamnus, where there was a temple to the goddess Nemesis; this is not impossible, because athletic games often were linked to commemoration of the dead, mythic or real.

30. A. Ch. 523–50; S. El. 410, 417–25, 459–60; *empura*, line 405; *choai*, line 406.

31. A. Ch. 94–5; cf. S. El. 453–58.

fering into the other: sent by her mother to propitiate Agamemnon's angry ghost, the girl instead uses the *choai* to win his help.

Outside of literary sources like these, we occasionally find references to the use of libations and food to appease the dead in off-hand remarks such as that of Plutarch, who describes the libations that Apollo made after killing Python as being the same as those that people offer to soften the anger of "daimones whom they call *alastores* and *palamnaioi*"—that is, the dead who seek vengeance for their violent deaths or the supernatural agents who act on behalf of those dead.³² This suggests that, in Plutarch's day at least, the appeasement of the dead by means of libations was familiar enough to be used by analogy to describe something unfamiliar, such as the mythic rite in question. But, most important, we are lucky enough to have two detailed descriptions of real aversion rituals, one contained in a *lex sacra* written on a lead tablet from Selinus, dated to about 450 B.C.E., and another from a Cyrenean inscription, dated to about 330 B.C.E.

Side A of the Selinuntine text³³ describes rituals that are to be undertaken by a group at a specific time of year, to which we shall return. Side B describes rituals to be undertaken at any time by any individual who believed that he or she was being pursued by an *elasteros*—again, this may mean either the soul of a dead person or another supernatural agent sent by that soul; the word is a variation of the more familiar *alastōr* mentioned by Plutarch in the passage cited just above.³⁴ The afflicted individual, who apparently had committed murder (the most common reason to be pursued by an *alastōr*), is instructed to make a proclamation that he is about to begin the rite and then to purify himself. Having received (*hypodekomenos*) the *elasteros* as a guest, the individual offers it water with which to wash, a meal to eat, and salt.³⁵ He then sacrifices a piglet to Zeus (a typical offering in rites of purification from murder) and leaves the place where the procedure was performed, having "turned around," which probably means that he does not look back as he leaves;

32. Plu. *De def. or.* 418b–c. The same problem obtains for *alastōr* and *palamnaios* as for *apotropaioi*: these words can represent the angry dead, a supernatural agent working on behalf of the angry dead, or a god who averts the angry dead—indeed, Alastor was even a title given to Zeus in his role as avenger of the dead. The meaning in any given instance can be determined only through context. Further discussion at Parker 1983, 107–9; Hatch.

33. The editio princeps of this inscription is Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky. See also the review article by Clinton 1996.

34. Cf. Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky, 54–55, on *elasteros*.

35. Contra the reading of Clinton here. Salt was a traditional part of a meal offered to a guest.

this is common in rites in which the dead or dangerous divinities such as the Erinyes or Hecate are expected to appear (even Orpheus had to avoid looking at the soul of his dead wife until she had been reincorporated into the world of the living). After this, apparently, he can be reincorporated into normal life, for the text goes on to decree that he may be addressed by others, eat with others, and sleep wherever he wishes.

The text then continues with further instructions that stipulate how one may get rid of other kinds of *elasteroi*, apparently meaning either those who were brought about by something other than murder or perhaps those who were brought about by particularly heinous forms of murder. The afflicted individual must begin by purifying himself in the same way as the murderer mentioned earlier does. He then sacrifices a full-grown sheep on the public altar and marks a boundary with salt and water poured from a golden vessel. It is not clear what this boundary separates—is the sacrificer to be separated from the altar on which the sheep was slaughtered? From the precinct as a whole? Whatever the answer, the salt seems to take on a different role here from that which it played in the first part of the text, but one that it also played commonly in antiquity: it purifies and averts evil and thus can be used to erect a boundary between dangerous things and things that must be protected.³⁶

In their fuller form, and particularly as translated and analyzed in the excellent *editio princeps* by Michael Jameson, David Jordan, and Roy Kotansky, the instructions are interesting for many reasons, but here I would emphasize just a few that are important for us. First, the *elasteros* is controlled by means of a meal—indeed, it is welcomed to the meal with all manner of politeness, as one would welcome a living guest (although notably, of course, the “host” here averts his eyes from his “guest”). Thus, as we have seen before, the same method is used to control an angry soul as is used to honor and please peaceful souls—one group blends seamlessly into the other. Second, precautions are taken to ensure separation of the *elasteros* from the living, in the first case by instructing the one performing the rite to avert his eyes and in the second by establishing a physical boundary between the *elasteros* and the afflicted person. This implies that, even as it is being placated, the *elasteros* continues to pose some threat; the dangerous dead are never completely soothed.

36. Discussion of salt's purificatory role at Parker 1983, 226–27.

Finally, in the seventh line of the instructions, it is said that these procedures will work either for an *elasteros* who is *patroios* (ancestral) or for one who is *xenikos* (from outside the family). What is an “ancestral” *elasteros*? An *elasteros* that has persecuted the family for generations? An *elasteros* from within the family? Either is possible but the latter seems more likely. As mentioned already, in the first line of the *Choephoroi*, Hermes Chthonios is called on as *patrōi' epopteuōn kratē* (“watching ancestral powers”), which gives us a *comparandum*, from about the same date as our inscription, for using the adjective *patroios/patrōios* to refer to the ancestral dead or their agents. Moreover, as Orestes enters the play with the knowledge that the dead Agamemnon will impose all sorts of dreadful supernatural punishments upon him if he remains unhappy,³⁷ the similarity between Orestes' predicament and that assumed by the Selinuntine text is very close. Thus, the passage from the *Choephoroi* supports the assumption that *patroios* in the Selinuntine text refers to a familial ghost. The Selinuntine text, in return, provides evidence from real life for the belief that we found attested in literary sources such as the *Choephoroi*—the familial dead, who normally protect the living, can become the dead who persecute them if they are unhappy for some reason. The other adjective in the Selinuntine text, *xenikos*, may be directly oppositional to *patroios* in its simplest sense—that is, it may indicate a ghost not related by blood to the afflicted individual—or it may refer to a ghost brought about by murder within the confines of a guest-host relationship (*xenia*), which would be another type of particularly dreadful murder, and thus likely to produce a problematic ghost.³⁸

The other complex of rituals described in the *lex sacra* from Selinus (on the so-called “Side A”) are not rites of aversion, but as we shall see, they share with Side B's rites the assumption that the dead must be kept happy if the living are to survive and thrive. The first part of the text is imperfect, due in part to intentional erasures, but in line 3 we can discern references to a consecration that must be performed by members of a household (*homosepuoi*). When the text picks up again (line 7), it seems to be concerned with a new sacrificial complex, the date of which

37. A. Ch. 269–305.

38. Here I follow along the same general lines of Clinton 1996, 178, who argues that *xenikos* means “foreign” in the sense of “guest,” and that *patroios* points to a victim of familial murder.

is carefully specified. It had to occur before a festival called the Kotytia, and also, in years in which the Olympic games were held, before the month-long truce that ushered in the games. Later in the inscription, we learn that part of the rituals may be repeated again annually, although the subsequent performances are to take place "at home," in contrast to the first performance, which takes place in various sanctuaries. The idea would seem to be that if the first, more formal performance of the rites turns out not to have been completely effective, the participants could supplement and reinforce it by subsequent rites.

The rituals were apparently optional, insofar as they were not automatically performed every year; if they had been, there would have been no need to provide for the possibility of their being repeated a year later. Moreover, the dual criteria laid out for the first performance—that it be either before the Kotytia or before the Kotytia and the Olympic truce—indicates uncertainty as to when the first performance would be held. Both the first and the subsequent performances must have been actuated by perceived need, by something that had happened in the community that indicated that a readjustment of relationships with the other world was necessary.³⁹ That this readjustment was scheduled to take place before the Kotytia implies that whatever was to be accomplished at the Kotytia might be at risk without the readjustment. The reference to members of a group in the early part of the inscription, the reference to performing rites at home in the last part, and some of the deities for whom the rites are performed (whom we shall discuss shortly below), all suggest that the rituals were to be performed by a relatively small group, such as a *genos* or family, or by an individual representing that group, rather than by the city as a whole, or its representatives. The rites must have addressed some concern common to such a group, then. The city published the inscription, we must assume, because completion of the rituals by these smaller groups was important to the welfare of the whole population as well, however.

The rituals begin with the sacrifice of a full-grown sheep to Zeus Eumenes and the Eumenides and another to Zeus Meilichios in the precinct of a hero called Myskos.⁴⁰ Then follows the most interesting part of the text. "Those to whom it is permitted" are to make sacrifice to the

39. For a different view of the timing and periodicity of the rites, see Clinton 1996.

40. In understanding the phrase "ἐν Μύσῳ" to mean "in the grove of the hero Myskos," I follow Clinton 1996, 163–64. Similarly for "in the grove of Euthydamos" below.

"polluted" (*miaroi*) Tritopatores "in the manner that one sacrifices to the heroes." Specifically, wine is to be poured through the roof of their shrine (which may have been a small, almost completely buried structure like one found in Paestum)⁴¹ and a ninth part of the sacrifice previously made to Zeus Meilichios is to be burnt in their honor. Following this, the participants are to perform an aspersion and anoint something—perhaps an altar to the Tritopatores or perhaps representations of them. They sacrifice a sheep to the "pure" (*katharoi*) Tritopatores, pour a libation of honey mixture and prepare a *theoxenia*: a table and couch are set out, with crowns of olive branches, more honey mixture in new cups, cakes, and meat.⁴² Some or all of this is burnt, and further anointing is done. The rite finishes with the sacrifice of a ram to Zeus Meilichios in the precinct of the hero Euthydamos. Statues are mentioned in a later line of the text that is too fragmentary to read; perhaps these were of some or all of the deities mentioned.

The Tritopatores were ancestral spirits⁴³ worshipped in Athens and parts of the Greek world that were influenced by Athens: Delos, Troizen, Selinus, Cyrene. Inscriptions indicate that their worship was primarily carried out on the level of the small group (*genos*, phratry, or family) rather than that of the city.⁴⁴ We should probably see them as somewhat more distant from their worshippers than members of the dead with whom the worshipper had been personally acquainted, such as parents and grandparents, and yet less distant than the city's ancestral, founding heroes, who are often worshipped in conjunction with, yet as distinct from, the Tritopatores.⁴⁵ Their name, which seems to mean "thrice-fathers" or "great-grandfathers," would support this;⁴⁶ few Greeks would have lived long enough to meet their great-grandchildren, and to those great-grandchildren, they would thus be almost semi-mythical figures. The "*trito*-" part of their name, moreover, need not be under-

41. On the sunken shrine, see Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky, 30–31 and pl. 18a.

42. On *theoxenia*, see *ibid.*, 67–70.

43. Philochorus calls them the *goneis* (engenderers) of humans (FGrH 328 F 182), and Hesychius calls them "forefathers" (*propateres*), s.v., *Tritopateres*. See, generally, Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky, 107–14, who give texts for much of the ancient evidence and full citations of earlier scholarly discussions.

44. Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky, 111.

45. See the evidence from Marathon, which associates them with the local hero Hyttenius and another called Galius, the evidence from Cyrene, which associates them with Battus and Onymastus, and the evidence from Erchia, which connects them an otherwise unknown hero named Leucaspis. All of this is given and discussed in Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky, 107–111.

46. Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky, 112, with citations for earlier discussions.

stood precisely to mean “thrice” in the sense of three generations removed, but may rather be understood to function in this word as it does in others, as an emphatic—thus, for example in “Trismegistos,” an epithet of Hermes’. In that case, the Tritopatores might also include ancestors somewhat more distant than great-grandfathers. The individual identities of the Tritopatores (if they were ever thought of in those terms) probably were ever-changing, as the generations passed and formerly familiar ancestors who had once been given cult at their individual graves slid into this vaguer, yet still important, collective.⁴⁷ The members of a *genos* or similar group naturally would have worshipped Tritopatores together, as they would have believed themselves to have many ancestors in common.

We might guess that as “great-grandfathers,” the Tritopatores would be concerned with the welfare of the group worshipping them and particularly with the group’s reproductive viability—for if it died out, from whom would they receive worship? This is borne out by ancient statements. In Athens, the Tritopatores were asked to bless marriages and promote the conception of children. In Marathon, they were worshipped in conjunction with Kourotraphos, the goddess concerned with the nurture of children, as well as with some more obscure figures who were probably local heroes and thus ancestors of a sort, as well. Hesychius calls the Tritopatores the “first causes” (*archēgoi*) of generation.⁴⁸

How can these ancestral spirits be either “polluted” (*miaroi*) or “pure” (*katharoi*)? The editors of the text suggest that the closest parallels for this puzzling concept are to be found in such cults as that of the Maniai in Arcadia, who according to myth first appeared black to Orestes in his polluted state and then, after he had bitten off one of his fingers to propitiate them, appeared white. Based on this, the editors suggest that the Tritopatores first became polluted because of a polluting crime committed by one of their worshippers and then were purified

47. Cf. the remarks of Humphreys, 114–23, who shows an increasing emphasis on the nuclear family of only two or three generations, so far as burial placement and commemoration are concerned, from the late archaic to the Hellenistic period.

48. Athens: Phanodemus *FGrH* 325 F 6; Marathon: *LSS* 20 B 30–33 (*IG* II² 1358). The late classical Athenian historian Demosthenes describes them as winds, an idea repeated by Hesychius and also picked up by the author of the Orphic *Physikos* (fr. 318 Kern); it may be right to interpret this, as the editors of the inscription do, with reference to the folkloric belief that the winds can impregnate. See Demosthenes *FGrH* 327 F 2; Harpocration, s.v. *Tritopatores*; Hsch., s.v. *Tritopatores*; and cf. discussion at Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky, 112, who follow Cook, 1: 759–60, in this, citing the earlier edition of the work as 1940, 121–22.

by rites performed by their worshippers. But although the analogy works insofar as it offers an example of divinities’ essential nature being changed by the actions of mortals, it fails in an important aspect. In the case of Orestes and others like it that the editors cite, polluting behavior on the part of humans makes deities angry and vindictive but there is no instance, to my knowledge, in which a deity is *polluted* by bad human behavior.⁴⁹

A better parallel for the *miaroi* and *katharoi* ancestral ghosts of the Selinuntine text can be found in a famous passage from Plato’s *Republic*. Plato says that itinerant ritual experts promise that they can, for the right price, use sacrifices and chants to help a client expiate transgressions (*adikēmata*) committed either by himself or by his progenitors (*progonoi*). We might assume this refers to the idea of “inherited guilt”—that the living pay experts to expiate the transgressions of their progenitors so as to escape being punished for those transgressions themselves—were it not for the way in which the statement is reiterated a few lines later: Plato says that the ritual experts use sacrifices and other rituals to provide absolutions (*luseis*) and purifications (*katharmoi*) from transgressions both to those who are still living *and to those who have already died*. The experts claim that their rituals were handed down by Orpheus and Musaeus.⁵⁰

Plato’s ritual experts affect the souls of the dead progenitors as well as the living, then, ameliorating their postmortem situation through rituals. The fact that the rituals are described as purifications suggests that the trouble in which the progenitors find themselves is considered a state of pollution. That they are polluted because of what they themselves did while alive, rather than because of anything that their living descendants subsequently did, is made clear by Plato’s second statement: they require release and purification from their own transgressions. In other words,

49. Orestes: Paus. 8.34.2. Generally: Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky, 53–54, and cf. 29–30.

50. Pl. *R.* 364b5–365a3. It is possible that Plato also alludes in this passage to the doctrines of Epimenides, who boasted in his own poetry of being the son of the Moon (fr. 2 = Ael. *NA* 12.7). The phrase in Plato is βίβλων δὲ ὁμαδὸν παρέχονται Μουσαίου καὶ Ὀρφέως, Σελήνης τε καὶ Μουσῶν ἐγγόνων, ὡς φασι... Usually, Musaeus and Orpheus are taken in apposition to “children of the Moon and the Muses,” but the genitive plural ἐγγόνων might instead be understood to depend directly on βίβλων δὲ ὁμαδὸν, and refer to other poets as well as, or instead of, Musaeus and Orpheus. Although both Orpheus and Musaeus are sometimes said elsewhere to be children of Muses, neither is known as a child of the Moon, and so understanding a reference to Epimenides here would solve a genealogical problem.

Orpheus and Musaeus have taught their itinerant priests how to turn a *miaros* ghost into a *katharos* ghost, just as the ritual described in the Selinuntine law does. Peter Kingsley has shown the likelihood of a Sicilian or southern Italian origin for the mysteries to which Plato alludes in the passage from the *Republic* and for Orphic mysteries of Plato's time more generally,⁵¹ which suggests that the ritual experts to whom Plato refers may be drawing upon the same core of beliefs that the Selinuntine law addressed. The Selinuntine rituals are controlled and prescribed by a city and used by a group, whereas those in the *Republic* can be initiated by either an individual or a city (*idiōtas . . . kai poleis*, 364e5) but this is a minor distinction: the specific application of rites, particularly when they are disseminated by itinerant specialists, is liable to such changes.⁵²

The Selinuntine law and the passage from Plato have brought two important ideas to our attention. The first is that the dead suffer the consequences of transgressions that they committed while alive. Or to put it another way, if they go to their graves in a *miaros* state, not having atoned for polluting transgressions, they might expect to remain *miaroi* and to suffer whatever consequences for *miasma* the powers of the Underworld hand out. This aligns well with the more general idea, popular in Greece from the late archaic period on, that the dead would be punished for what they did while alive unless they had prepared beforehand by being initiated into mystery rites that released them from paying for their transgressions after death (another service, in fact, that Plato's itinerant experts are willing to provide for a price). The second idea seems more surprising at first glance: the living are able to ameliorate the situation in which their dead ancestors find themselves by performing rituals on their behalf. Perhaps the living can even hire ritual experts to perform postmortem variations of initiation ceremonies that were otherwise performed for the living, for the final line in the passage from the *Republic* refers to *teletai* performed for the dead, and Orpheus

51. See Kingsley, pt. 2, *passim*, which discusses this passage and other passages about mysteries from Plato that show Sicilian or south Italian influences. On Orphism more specifically, see esp. 115–16.

52. Another excellent parallel for what happens to the Tritopatores has been brought to my attention by Philippe Borgeaud, who reminds me that the god Pan, responsible for the success of hunters and herders insofar as he is responsible for the fertility of the animals with which they are concerned, might undergo a “purification” ceremony when the animal population began to drop. The god was understood to be inactive due to impurity; until his purity was restored, he could not perform his usual functions and benefit humanity. See Borgeaud 1988, 71–73.

and Musaeus were particularly associated with such initiations. But we really should not be surprised by this idea—after all, if the dead suffer hunger, thirst, and other physical needs that the living can address, why would they not suffer religious needs that the living can address as well, including a need for purificatory rituals? Similarly, in early modern Europe, clergymen could baptize stillborn babies and in contemporary Romania and Greece, a girl who dies unmarried will be given a “marriage” ceremony before burial; vital rites left unperformed before death are better performed postmortem than not at all.⁵³ Roughly analogous, too, is the sacrifice made to Hermes Chthonios “on behalf of the dead” on the last day of the Anthesteria, for as I suggest below, this was intended to ensure that Hermes, the guide of the dead, would see the dead safely back into the Underworld after their three-day visit to the land of the living. Threatening though they sometimes were, the Greek dead were envisioned as weak enough to need all sorts of help from the living upon occasion.

As we have seen already, when the dead were discontented—hungry, thirsty, unburied, or in any other kind of need—the living might be made to suffer as well, until those needs were met. What Plato says in the *Phaedrus* about experts in purifications and initiations being able to release those driven crazy by “ancient wraths” speaks precisely to this point, for the word used for wraths—*mēnimata*—usually refers to the anger of the dead; as we shall see in chapter 4, the infliction of madness was one of the dead's favorite ways of troubling mortals.⁵⁴ When an individual suspected that the dead were angry with him, he first had to have his case diagnosed by a ritual expert, and then had to undertake to “cure” himself by performing whatever actions for the dead the ritual expert had prescribed. Based on this model, we can hypothesize that

53. On baptism, see Muir 20–27. On Romanian “marriages” after death, see Kligman, *passim*, and see, too, the photograph at Cohen, 200–201. I have been told of similar “marriages” in contemporary Greece by Richard Seaford and my colleague Gregory Jusdanis, who witnessed them. Somewhat the same conclusion regarding the passage from Plato's *Republic* is approached by Burkert 1987, 24. Something similar to what we glimpsed in Plato and our text may also be alluded to by one of the newest Bacchic gold tablets, from Pelinna, which finishes by promising that the dead woman will receive the same rites (*telea*) after death as the “other blessed ones”; this may refer to rites actually imagined to take place in the Underworld, or it may refer to some kind of rites that the living performed for the dead. On the tablet, see Graf 1993 and, for context, Johnston and McNiven. In an as yet unpublished paper, Fritz Graf has raised the possibility that some of these Bacchic gold tablets may have been placed in the mouths of the deceased, as if to make them “speak” the words of an initiation ceremony after death that they failed to speak while alive; cf. Dickie 1995.

54. Pl. *Phdr.* 244d5–245a1; cf. Burkert 1992, 66.

dead who were suffering under the burden of pollution—like our Selinuntine Tritopatores—might also be imagined to manifest their need for ritual attention by inflicting illness on the living. Alternatively, or additionally, the polluted state of the Tritopatores might manifest itself among the living, insofar as while they were *miaroi*, the Tritopatores would not be able to perform the tasks that the living required them to. When we recall that one of the most common ramifications of pollution, according to Greek belief, was sterility, the possibility of some of the Tritopatores being *miaroi* becomes especially problematic; the very spirits who were expected to bless marriages and facilitate procreation might be unable to do their job if they were polluted. A group suffering from impaired fertility might come to suspect, therefore, that one or more of their Tritopatores was *miaros*. This would be the signal to perform the rituals described in the *lex sacra*. If improvement in the form of pregnancies and births did not follow, then another ritual would be performed a year later.

With this possibility in mind, let us return to the *lex sacra* and consider whether its rites can be interpreted accordingly. They begin with a libation and holocaust offered to the Tritopatores in their polluted state; this can be understood as an attempt to assuage any anger they might be feeling toward the living who had not previously addressed their need for purification, or to call them forth formally to the rite. Then follows aspersion, an action well known in Greek and other Mediterranean religions as a method of purification, and the anointing of something—probably either the altar of the Tritopatores or statues of them. Anointing also was part of some purificatory processes in antiquity.⁵⁵ After these actions had been finished—that is, when the Tritopatores had been purified—the participants were told to sacrifice a sheep to the *katharoi* Tritopatores and prepare a welcoming meal. The sheep was to be sacrificed as one would sacrifice to the gods, in contrast to the earlier sacrifice to the polluted Tritopatores, which was conducted as a heroic sacrifice. This aligns with the idea that the Tritopatores have passed into a new, pure state of existence.

The involvement of the other deities in this process may be interpreted in several ways. The Eumenides, like the Tritopatores, were prayed to in hopes of facilitating human fecundity.⁵⁶ In this role, they might be

55. On aspersion, see Parker 1983, 226–27. See, too, the discussion of anointing at Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky, 34, with citations regarding its purificatory role.

56. See discussion in chapter 7 below and Johnston 1994.

supplanted in hopes that they would help the Tritopatores ensure the group's reproduction. Alternatively, if we consider the Eumenides' association with the Erinyes and Semnai Theai, which had been established in at least some places by the middle of the fifth century, then we might guess that they are invoked here because of their involvement with issues of pollution and purification, particularly pollution that arises from transgressions committed within a family.⁵⁷ Thus, they might be supplanted in hopes that they would help to purify the polluted Tritopatores. Zeus Eumenes is a novelty, but his name, particularly in a context where he accompanies the Eumenides, suggests that he is playing the same function as they are.⁵⁸ Zeus Meilichios is well known as a god concerned with purification, with the world of the dead and with the welfare of households or family groups. Typically, he was worshipped by small groups or families rather than by cities and took an interest in their immediate concerns. Thus he, too, would be at home in the context I have suggested for the rite described by the *lex sacra*, either as a god who could help to purify the polluted Tritopatores or, alongside of them, as a god who could promote the fecundity of those performing the ritual.⁵⁹

The *lex sacra* stipulates that these rituals must be carried out before the Kotytia. We have very little knowledge of the goddess to whom this festival was consecrated, variously known as Kot(t)ya, Kottytia, Kotyto, or Kotys, and worshipped in Thrace as well as Sicily, and probably in Corinth and Athens, too; what information we do have has been collected and discussed by the inscription's editors, on whose comments I base my own.⁶⁰ An important feature of Kotyto's cult in Sicily (and so, we presume, in Selinus) was a rite in which cakes and nuts were tied to a branch and snatched at by the revelers.⁶¹ This rite, very similar to those of the *eiresiōnē* and *korythalē* that are known from Attica and elsewhere, implies a festival concerned with fertility.⁶² Evidence for the Kotytia in mainland Greece suggests vulgar and scurrilous behavior, per-

57. Erinyes and familial transgressions: e.g., *Od.* 2.134–36; *Hes. Th.* 185; *A. Ch.* 1048–62; *Eu.* 94–177, 316–20 (and cf. the remarks of Parker 1983, 106–8); *Apolod.* 3.7.5; *E. Med.* 1389.

58. On Zeus Eumenes and the Eumenides, see Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky, 77–81, and Clinton 1996, 165–70.

59. On Zeus Meilichios, see Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky, 81–107.

60. *Ibid.*, 23–26.

61. [Plut.] *Prov. Alex.* 1.78 = Leutsch and Schneidewin, 1: 333. The passage is given in full at Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky, 24, and translated as: "Snatching at [?] the Kotyttia. Kotyttia is a Sicilian festival in which they fastened cakes and nuts on branches and allowed people to grab them."

62. Deubner, 198–201; Blech, 278–81.

haps including ithyphallic processions and cross-dressing.⁶³ These elements, too, would be appropriate to a fecundity festival. Behind this picture of the Kotytia as a fecundity festival we may glimpse why it was important to make sure that all the spirits responsible for facilitating reproduction during the succeeding year (including the Tritopatores) were in good working order before the Kotytia began. A similar surmise could be made regarding the sacrificial rhythm at Marathon. The Marathonian calendar tells us that the Tritopatores and Kouroutrophos were to receive offerings before the Skira, a festival that probably included rites performed by women in honor of Demeter in order to renew their sexual powers for the succeeding year.⁶⁴

In sum, although the evidence is too scant for us to be certain, the ritual described on Side A of our *lex sacra* from Selinus may be interpreted as a sort of "mass for the dead," in which the living endeavored to improve the postmortem lot of certain dead progenitors, not only out of sympathy but because the condition of these ancestors affected things of vital interest to the living themselves, such as fecundity. One further point may be considered briefly. In one of the last, fragmentary lines of the text, we find the word "statues" (*agalmata*) shortly after the verb "slaughter." Perhaps we have here a reference to rites performed in front of statues of the Tritopatores, which would fit in well with other uses of statues to control the dead that we shall consider next.

Our second text that describes ghost-averting rituals, from fourth-century Cyrene, declares that they had been ordered by Apollo—that is, by the Oracle at Delphi, the same institution that advised Orestes on how to deal with Agamemnon's and Clytemnestra's ghosts in myth and advised many another ghost-haunted individual or city as well.⁶⁵ The text concerns a ghostly "visitant" who has been sent against someone's

63. See the discussion and citation of ancient sources, including fragments of Eupolis's *Baptai*, at PCG V 331–42; cf. *Anec. Graec.* (Bekker), I: 246.19; Hsch., s.v. *Kotutō*; *Suda*, s.v. *Kotus*.

64. Timing of the Marathonian sacrifice: LSS 20 B 30–33 (IG II² 1358), discussed at Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky, 109. On the nature of the women's activities at the Skira: Parke 1977, 159–61; Deubner, 40–44, with particular emphasis on the schol. Lucian, 275–76, Rabe (although some, including Clinton 1988, 76–79, and Brumfield, 156–82, have doubted certain aspects of the interpretation), Harrison 1922, 134–35.

65. SEG ix 72 = LSS 115. See Parker 1983, 333, for discussion of the alleged connection of the Cyrenean law to Delphi. Further examples of Delphi's advice to the ghost-ridden are discussed in chapter 3 below. On Apollo's advice to Orestes, see A. Ch. 269–97, 1029–39; Eu. 78–84, 235–43, 276–86; and further in chapter 7 below. Of course, the *Eumenides* as a whole also serves as an extended example of Apollo's ability to "exorcise" the murderer of the ghosts that haunt him. On the Cyrenean law more generally, see Parker 1983, app. 2 (esp. 347–49), Faraone 1991b; Burkert 1992, 68–73.

house by means of magic (a *hikesios epaktos*).⁶⁶ The suffering householder deals with the visitant by, first, proclaiming its name for three days, if he knows it. Interestingly, the text goes on to specify at this point the possibility of the visitant being the spirit of a dead person, which implies that a visitant might also be some other form of supernatural creature as well. This probably alludes to the possibility of a ghost deputizing some sort of agent, for example, an *alastōr* or *erinyes*, to work on his behalf. The text goes on to say that if the householder does not know the name of the visitant, he should instead address it by saying, "O person [*anthrōpos*], whether you are a man or a woman. . . ." The householder then makes figures (*kolossoi*)⁶⁷ of wood or earth, both male and female, and entertains them by offering them portions of food. (We can probably assume that if the householder knew who the visitant was, he made only one figure, either male or female.) Finally, the householder carries both the figures and the food to an unworked forest and deposits them there. This has both a practical function, insofar as the figures have been removed from any area where people are likely to encounter them accidentally, and a symbolic function, insofar as the figures now are located at an *eschaton*, the marginal boundary of an inhabited area.

As in the Selinuntine rite against *elasteroi*, then, the afflicted person deals with the ghost first by feeding it. And yet, as in the Selinuntine rite, these actions are not assumed to be sufficient. Rather than avoiding the ghost by not turning around, however, the householder removes the ghost—now apparently transferred into a statue—to a wilderness where it cannot harm the living. Such uses of statues to represent and thereby control restless ghosts was probably fairly common; the Spartans' use of statues to control the ghost of the traitor Pausanias (following the advice of professional *psychagōgoi*) is a famous example, as is the Orchomenians' use of a statue to control the ghost of Actaeon.⁶⁸ This

66. As Parker 1983, 348, indicates, the word *ἐπακτός* is cognate with *ἐπαγωγή*, a technical term in magic for sending ghosts against people.

67. The most recent discussion of the word *kolossos* and the probable size of the *kolossoi* referred to in this and various other sources is Dickie 1996, which cites earlier treatments. Dickie concludes (persuasively to my mind) that the Cyrenean *kolossoi* were at least life-size, perhaps a bit larger.

68. Pausanias's ghost controlled by statues: Th. 1.134.4–135.1; Paus. 3.17.7–9; D.S. 11.45; Themist. Ep. 5.15; Aristodem. FGrH 104 F 8; *Suda*, s.v. *Pausanias* (cf. Plut. Mor. fr. 126 [Sandbach] = Plu. *Homerikai meletai* fr. 1 [Bernadakis] = schol. E. Alc. 1128; Plu. De ser. 560e–f; Nepos 4.5). Actaeon's ghost: Paus. 9.38.5. Further on statues used to control ghosts, Faraone 1991b and 1992, esp. chs. 3, 4, and 5; and on a Corinthian example, Johnston 1997a. For a different use of statues to control the ghosts of dead maidens, see some of the examples in chapter 6 below.

use of statues to represent and control the dead is scarcely surprising, considering the ways that the Greeks used statues representing their gods. A sacrifice for a god was often made in front of the god's statue, with the expectation that the latter could receive the offering for the former. Statues of gods were washed, dressed, and ornamented with jewelry, and statues of gods, like those of the dead, might temporarily be taken out into the wilderness, during which time the god was considered to be in retreat.⁶⁹ Analogously, the Greeks used very small statues as magical dolls: by affecting the doll, one affected the individual whom the doll represented.⁷⁰ In short, the idea of manipulating statues that represented a dead person in order to manipulate the dead person him- or herself fits comfortably within the Greek mentality—and indeed, within ancient Mediterranean mentalities generally; the Mesopotamians, for example, also manipulated statues or figurines of ghosts in order to ban them.⁷¹ The Cyrenean rite, far from being aberrant, reflects what was probably a common practice.

Broadly, the aversion rites in both the Selinuntine and the Cyrenean text align with the funerary practice of feeding the dead and making them comfortable in other ways, but more specifically, they are also similar to another ad hoc method of appeasing and averting the dead: the suppers (*deipna*) that could be sent to crossroads at the time of the new moon. Several ancient sources tell us that these were left by the statues or shrines of Hecate (*hekataia*) that stood at crossroads, and were dedicated both to the goddess and to “those who must be averted” (*hoi apotropaioi*).⁷² As Hecate was a goddess credited with the power either

69. On offering sacrifices to statues, see the many illustrations in van Straten of worshippers presenting offerings to figures who may be either the god himself or a statue of the god—it is impossible to be certain which is intended. On washing, dressing, and ornamenting statues, see, e.g., Burkert 1985, 133 (Hera in Olympia); Calame, 128–30 (Athena at Athens); Burkert 1985, 92. On the periodic “exile” or “disappearance” as represented by their statues, see, e.g., Calame, 94–95 (Artemis at Ephesus); Burkert 1985, 134–35 (Hera in Argos). On all of these phenomena, see the examples in Graf 1985, index, s.v. *Statuen*. On animating statues and statues that come to life, see S. Morris, esp. ch. 8. See also generally the discussion at Burkert 1985, 88–92, although some of his assumptions (such as that Greeks never animated statues) are misplaced.

70. Dolls: Faraone 1991b.

71. See discussion in chapter 3, with notes citing scholarship on Mesopotamian practices; cf. Faraone 1992 and Faraone et al. 1994.

72. D. 54.39; Ar. Pl. 594–97 and schol. ad 594; Plu. QR 290d and QC 708f–709a; Apollod. FGrH 244 F 109. Further discussion at Johnston 1991. The adjective *apotropaios*, as used at Plu. QC 708f, for example, can have either an active or a passive meaning: it can indicate either those who are to do the averting (e.g., Apollo Apotropaios) or those who must be averted. That the latter meaning is relevant in the passage from Plutarch describing the suppers sent to the crossroads is guaranteed by context. Plutarch

to hold back the unhappy dead or to drive them on against an unlucky individual, *hoi apotropaioi* surely refers here to the dangerous ghosts of the dead. Offering these suppers to both the dead and their mistress guaranteed not only that the dead would be fed and appeased but also that Hecate would help to keep them under control.⁷³ The timing reflects a belief that souls were especially likely to be abroad on the night of the new moon; if one wanted to do something to appease them, this was the easiest—and also the most necessary—time to make contact.

It has sometimes been assumed that these suppers were taken to the crossroads every month, as a prophylaxis against such ever-present and abundant sources of potential danger as the souls of those who had died young (*aōroi*). But like the Selinuntine rite for the Tritopatores, it is also possible that the suppers were offered only as the need arose—when some terrible occurrence signaled that the dead were angry. The monthly suppers are not mentioned in any festal calendars, which would tend to support the latter idea, although the omission may also mean only that they were taken to the crossroads by individuals on their own behalf, not by representatives of the state or any other body. In either case, their regular offering does not seem to have been understood as so crucial to the health of the polis as a whole that state sanction and control were necessary.

The dead could indeed cause citywide problems, however. The very fact that the Selinuntine *lex sacra* and the Cyrenean inscription were public documents indicates that cities wanted to ensure that ghostly problems suffered by individuals could be cleared up quickly and correctly. The implication, familiar from Greek myth and also from the *Tetralogies* of Antiphon, is that a ghost pursuing an individual might attack those around that individual as well, particularly if they had failed to punish the offender.⁷⁴ Some scholars have suggested that the codification of Athenian murder laws in the seventh century (supposedly

is describing a situation in which a host offers fine provisions that he himself will never enjoy, because, like the meals set out for Hecate and the *apotropaioi*, the food will be snatched away by guests who descend like a bunch of “shadows” (*skiai*) or harpies. For further discussion of this and related words, see Parker 1983, 107–9; Hatch.

73. The very practice of erecting *hekataia* at the crossroads, which began in the late archaic or classical period, was also understood to help control the dangerous dead, as discussed in chapter 6 below. In these monthly suppers, incidentally, we also find again a parallel with Mesopotamian practices, which included suppers for the dead at the time of the new moon: Bottéro, 39–40; Cooper, 28–29; Scurlock 1988 (examples passim); 1995a, 1888–89; 1995b; and forthcoming (including discussion of similar practices in a variety of cultures).

74. Cf. Parker 1983, ch. 4.

by Draco) reflects an increased concern about pollution at this time, but it might also be argued that it reflects an increased concern with the ghosts who follow in pollution's wake—it is difficult, in any case, to divide these two concerns very strictly, as we shall see later.⁷⁵ Moreover, we know that in times of crisis, cities might conclude that they were being persecuted by the dead and call in experts who knew how to deal with them. The most famous instance involved the ghost of Pausanias, which caused problems for the Spartans in the mid fifth century. According to Plutarch, the Spartans hired *psychagōgoi* (“conductors of souls”) to expel it from the temple where it was lurking. The *psychagōgoi* first appeased the ghost with sacrifices and then drew it out. Thucydides, who also tells the story, makes no explicit mention of *psychagōgoi* or sacrifices, but says that the Delphic Oracle commanded that Pausanias's body be buried at the entrance to the temple and that two statues of the dead man be erected “in place of” (*anti*) him, which surely indicates that some ritual was to be performed in connection with these statues, similar perhaps to the Cyrenean ghost-expelling ritual. Similarly, the Orchomenians were told by Delphi that they might control the ghost of Actaeon by burying the dead man's body and binding a statue of him to a rock. State-sponsored exorcisms probably also lie behind the story of Epimenides' “purification” of Athens after the Athenians' gross mistreatment of dead bodies following the Cylonian affair in the late seventh or early sixth century.⁷⁶

One more piece of evidence probably should be treated in this section of the chapter, although its brevity makes it impossible for us to be sure that it concerns *aversion* of ghosts rather than an *invocation*. An early fourth-century oracular tablet from Dodona carries the question “Shall we hire Dorius the *psychagōgos* or not?”⁷⁷ *Psychagōgoi*, as we have just seen, could be hired to deal with troublesome ghosts; we might imagine that the inquirers, whether members of a family group or a city, were asking the oracle whether Dorius was the right person to exorcise a ghost that was attacking them, just as the Spartans had inquired about how to get rid of Pausanias's ghost at Delphi, as the Athenians had asked Delphi what to do after the Cylonian Affair, as the Cyreneans had in-

75. Ibid., 115, with n. 45 for earlier discussions.

76. For more on all these episodes, and the ancient citations, see chapters 3 and 7 below.

77. Evangelidis, 257 (#23 of the *epigraphai*). I am grateful to A. Ph. Christidis for bringing this tablet to my attention.

quired at Delphi about the best sort of aversion rituals to deal with *hikesioi epaktoi*, and along much the same lines as Pelias supposedly inquired at Delphi concerning the relocation of Phrixus's ghost in *Pythian* 4. The great oracles seem to have been in the business of giving such advice. It is possible, however, that the inquirers were considering hiring Dorius to *invoke* a ghost for some reason—this is the role that *psychagōgoi* play in Aeschylus's lost play of the same name, for example, and the role that Admetus first thinks Heracles has played when he brings back what Admetus presumes is the ghost of Alcestis.⁷⁸ The resolution of this issue would make little difference to what is really important about the oracular tablet, however: it proves that by the early fourth century, *psychagōgoi* were a familiar part of daily life, who could be openly discussed and who even garnered the approval of gods, including Zeus, when they were right for a job.

DAYS OF THE DEAD

The only civic festival designed to avert, appease, or control the dead on an annual basis about which we have good information was the Anthesteria, which was celebrated by all the Ionians and the Athenians. Most of our information about the festival comes from Athens, although Anthesteriai elsewhere were probably similar.⁷⁹

As we know it from classical sources, the Athenian Anthesteria seems at first glance to have been a conglomeration of what were once separate rites with different purposes. We can discern Dionysiac elements, such as the opening of the new casks of wine and the “marriage” of Dionysus to the *basilinna* (queen), and celebrations of young life, such as the ceremonial introduction of young children into the festival life of the city for the first time. The name of the festival itself incorporates both of these elements, as it alludes to the new, flowering blooms of the vine.⁸⁰ Other evidence indicates that the dead were very much a concern at the

78. E. Alc. 1127–28: “I see nothing other than a *phasma* from the dead,” says Admetus as he stares at Alcestis. “Do not make your friend into some kind of *psychagōgos*,” replies Heracles.

79. General discussions of the Anthesteria include Burkert 1983, 213–30; 1985, 237–42; Bremmer 1983, 108–24; Parke 107–20; Nilsson 1906, 267–71; 1967, 181; Deubner, 111–16; and Harrison 1922, 32–76.

80. Opening of casks: Phanod. FGrH 325 F 12; Plu. QC 655e. Marriage of Dionysus and *basilinna*: [pseudo-] D. 59.73–79, 76; Arist. Ath. 3; Hsch., s.v. *Dionysou gamos*. Young children: Philostr. Her. 12.2 and IG II/III² 1368.130. More discussion of these points in the sources cited in the previous note.

Anthesteria as well. On the second morning of this three-day festival, the doors of houses were coated with pitch and people chewed buckthorn, acts that were supposed to avert ghosts.⁸¹ These precautions, which focused on the individual person and the private house, suggest that the dead were imagined to wander freely in the upper world during the Anthesteria, released from the bonds that normally held them close to their graves. Anyone, anywhere, was at risk of being attacked. The idea is much like the one behind the old, traditional celebration of European Halloween, a night when the ghosts could wander freely, as well as like that described for Singapore in the excerpt that opened this chapter.

On the final day of the Anthesteria, an offering described as *eudeipnos* was given to the ghost of a dead maiden named Erigone and perhaps to other dead maidens as well. This supper, and other rites performed in her honor, were meant to deter Erigone from attacking living Athenian maidens who had reached the age for marriage.⁸² Also on the final day, a mixture of grains (*panspermia*) was offered to Hermes Chthonios. This rite was said to have been established following the great Flood, when the few survivors gathered together and ate whatever food was available. Theopompos tells us it was intended to propitiate Hermes "on behalf of the dead."⁸³ Perhaps the idea behind both the mythic *panspermia* and the real ones offered annually at the Anthesteria was that by winning Hermes' favor, the living could guarantee his solicitude for the dead, for whom he acted as guide back and forth between the lower and upper worlds. This might be especially important at the end of the Anthesteria, when the dead who had been wandering amongst the living for three days would have to return to Hades. The Anthesteria may, in fact, have concluded with a ceremonial cry in which the souls were ordered to depart, lest there be any confusion about their visit being over.⁸⁴

81. Phot., s.v. *rhamnus*; cf. Phot., s.v. *miara hemera*, and Nic. *Ther.* 861–62; further at Burkert 1979, 218–19, and nn. 12, 13; Harrison 1922, 39–40. It is interesting that Photius goes on to tell his readers that house doors were also hung with the *rhamnos* plant when women were giving birth, in order to avert daimones. The importance of protecting house doors against ghosts who specialize in killing babies and pregnant women is discussed in chapter 6 below.

82. For citations and further discussion, see chapter 6 below.

83. *Panspermia*: Theopomp. *Hist.* *FGrH* 115 F 347a, 347b; schol. *Ar. Ach.* 1076. Further interpretation and discussion at Burkert 1979, 238–43; 1985, 240; Harrison 1922, 33–40 (somewhat extreme).

84. Zenob. *Par.* 4.33, *Paroem. Gr.*, 1: 93; Hsch. and *Suda*, s.v. *thuraze kares*; *Suda*, s.v. *thuraze*; and cf. Hsch., s.v. *kēr*. Discussion in Burkert 1983, 226–30; 1985, 238; Rose 1948; Deubner 113–14; Harrison 1922, 34–36, 42–49.

Again, the Singaporean ritual provides a close parallel in its "passports" for the dead: transgression of the boundary must be carefully managed.

Another element that expressed the Anthesteria's deep concern with the dead and the problems they could cause for the living was its aitiological use of the story of Orestes' pursuit by the Erinyes—that is, his pursuit by the avenging representatives of his mother's ghost. Following the murder of his mother, Orestes arrived in Athens at the time of the Anthesteria. The Athenians, afraid that they might incur the wrath of the Erinyes by offering Orestes formal hospitality and thus incorporating him into their community, bade him drink and eat alone. But, lest he feel singled out, they did the same. It was supposedly in commemoration of this that on the second day of the festival, all Athenians drank their new wine alone and in silence, rather than communally and with the laughter and song that such an occasion would normally merit. The story may be a comparatively late addition to the festival, imported to forge a link with the epic cycle and to showcase Athens' hospitality to even the most polluted of visitors, but both the story and the rite nonetheless express a fear that ghostly problems might be contagious, and that appeasing the problematic dead could be a concern of the city just as much as of any single citizen.⁸⁵

Scholars have puzzled over the question of how all of these elements—the honoring of Dionysus, the celebration of new life and the appeasement of the dead—came together to create the festival complex known as the Anthesteria, and what ideas, cumulatively, it articulated.⁸⁶ The fact that from at least the late archaic period Dionysus was a god associated with mysteries and thereby with the world of the dead is surely of relevance,⁸⁷ but there is a broader reason at work as well. In Greece and elsewhere, the dead, and especially the unhappy dead, were assumed to be envious of those who were still enjoying life: thus, success and joy were often accompanied by a heightened awareness of possible

85. E. *IT* 947–60; Phanod. *FGrH* 325 F 11 = *Ath. Deip.* 10.437c–d; cf. *Plu. QC* 613b, 643a; Apollod. *FGrH* 244 F 133 = schol. *Ar. Ach.* 961, schol. *Lyc.* 1374. Further citations and discussion in Burkert 1983, 221–23.

86. Nilsson 1906, 267–72. Nilsson suggests that the logic behind the combination lay in the fact that fertility and the dead are both connected with the earth, and that Dionysus, as lord of the flowering vine, also became lord of the dead. He adds (without citing any proof) that spring is the time when days of the dead are observed throughout the world, and yet in Assyria, for example, days of the dead fell in July and August (Scurlock 1995), and in northern Europe and America, Halloween falls in late October. As we have seen, in Singapore, too, the festival of the dead falls in August and September.

87. Segal 1992.

misfortune and the jealous spirits who brought it. As Plato put it, "*kēres* cling to most of the good things of life."⁸⁸ Given this attitude, the Greeks would have assumed that the dead were particularly likely to burst forth from the Underworld and attack them at that time of year when the living were celebrating renewal and abundance. A ritual complex that simultaneously rejoiced in the new vintage, the growth of flowers, and the health of the young even as it appeased and then exorcised the envious, restless dead, makes sense, then.⁸⁹ Similarly again, European Halloween follows the agricultural harvest and thus coincides with the time of plenty. The Singaporean festival of the dead articulates the same connection, inasmuch as the food, operas, and rock concerts provided "for the dead" are certainly enjoyed at least as much by the living.

There is some reason to think that the Agriania or Agrionia, a festival directed toward Dionysus that was celebrated in many city-states, was also concerned with appeasing or exorcising the dead, for Hesychius defines it as "a *nekusia* [festival of the dead] among the Argives and *agones* [contests] among the Thebans." The latter part of this statement may reflect the fact that the Orchomenean version, and perhaps also the version in nearby Thebes, included a ritual in which the priest of Dionysus pursued women who attempted to escape from him. But we are stalled regarding the first half of Hesychius's statement, for it is our only direct indication that the Agriania had anything to do with the dead; all our other sources emphasize its connection with Dionysus and with this ritual pursuit.⁹⁰

Hesychius makes one more statement that will help, however. In a separate entry, he mentions an Argive festival called the Agrania that honored one of Proetus's daughters; surely this is simply the Agriania under an alternative spelling.⁹¹ According to myth, the Proetides, daughters of King Proetus, were stricken with madness, in most versions because they had mocked Hera or her statue. They left their home in Argive Tiryns (or in Argos itself, according to some later versions of the

88. Pl. *Lg.* 937d.6–7.

89. I offer a detailed exposition of this principle in chapter 6, when I analyze more closely, not only the myth of Erigone and the rituals performed in her honor at the Anthesteria, but also a series of other myth and ritual complexes that express the risk that the envious dead might pose to young women about to embark on their adult lives.

90. Hsch., s.v. *Agriania*. On the Orchomenean pursuit, see Plu. *QG* 299e–300a; cf. *QC* 716f–717a. Main discussions of the Agriania are Dowden, 71–96; Burkert 1983, 168–79; Nilsson 1906, 271–74.

91. Hsch., s.v. *Agriania*.

myth) and wandered in the wilderness. According to one version, they believed that they were cows; in another, they contracted a hideous skin disease that marred their beauty. The two need not be mutually exclusive; the important thing is that either affliction would have prevented the Proetides from pursuing the normal goals of young girls: marriage and maternity, which stood under the protection of the goddess whom they had offended, Hera.

In Bacchylides' version of the myth, King Proetus cured his daughters himself, with the blessing of Hera, but in other versions he called in the famous Dionysiac seer Melampus, who undertook to cure the girls after some haggling over fees. With the help of his brother Bias, Melampus pursued, captured, and healed all of them but one, Iphinoë, who—as early as Hesiod's version of the story⁹²—was said to have died in the process. Some people said Iphinoë's tomb was in the marketplace of Sicyon, others located it in the marketplace of Megara (although there she was called the daughter not of Proetus but of another primeval king, Alcathoos). Still other myths may have located her tomb in other places, for Melampus's cure of the Proetides, which is closely tied to Iphinoë's death, was claimed by a variety of cities. In Megara, and probably also in Sicyon and perhaps elsewhere, libations and offerings of hair were made to Iphinoë by girls about to embark on marriage. Pausanias says that this rite was similar to that in which the daughters of the Delians once cut their hair for the dead virgins Hecaege and Opis before they married.⁹³ In other words, it was one of the hair offerings connected with a transitional rite mentioned earlier in this chapter.

All of this brings us back to Hesychius's second statement, that the Argive Agrania honored one of Proetus's daughters. As Walter Burkert aptly notes, "honoring" a heroine presupposes her death"; there can be little doubt that what this hair offering and accompanying rites refer to, therefore, is the ritual in honor of Iphinoë that Pausanias describes as occurring in Megara, and that perhaps occurred in Sicyon and other Argive city-states, too.⁹⁴ Thus, we can add to our store of information about the Argive Agriania the likelihood that at some point marriage-

92. See the analysis of relative dates at Dowden, 80–81.

93. The main sources for this myth are B. 11; Hes. frs. 37, 129–31; Pherecyd. *FGH* 3 F 14. For other sources and for discussions of how the story changed and was contaminated by others, see Dowden, 71–95; Gantz, 187–88; Seaford 1988. Burkert 1983, 168–78, is also useful.

94. Burkert 1983, 173.

able girls made offerings to a dead virgin at her tomb. Why? The answer here (and in similar cases that we shall study in chapter 6) may be found in the story of Erigone, another virgin who died before her time. If not propitiated by offerings and other rites during the Anthesteria, Erigone's envious ghost would attack living Athenian virgins—and so, too, it seems safe to assume, the ghost of Iphinoë would attack living Argive virgins.⁹⁵

Interpreting Iphinoë's rites in this way makes for a nice correspondence between the Athenian Anthesteria and the Argive Agriania and begins to explain why Hesychius calls the Agriania a *nekusia*. The dedication of both festivals to Dionysus and the fact that both were held in the springtime brings them closer together still, and encourages a further hypothesis: perhaps the Argives, like the Athenians, believed that all souls were abroad at this time of year when the abundance of good things would make them envious. The Agriania may have included rituals directed toward all the dead that were similar to those we examined when discussing the Anthesteria: avertive rituals such as the smearing of pitch and chewing of buckthorn and propitiatory rituals such as the offering of a *panspermia*.

Although the interpretation I have just offered applies only to the Argive Agriania in the strictest sense, with a few changes it may work for the Orchomenean, Theban, and other Boeotian versions as well (which appear in our sources under the variant spelling of "Agrionia"). These include elements absent from the Argive version and its *aitia*, at least as we know them. Plutarch says that the Orchomenean ritual included a chase in which the local priest of Dionysus pursued some of the women of the town; he goes on to tell us that a priest named Zoilus once forgot himself and killed the woman he caught. The real women who ran the annual race were supposed to be descendants of the Minyads, daughters of King Minyas. Maddened by Dionysus, the Minyads had

95. The functional and thematic similarities between the stories of Erigone and Iphinoë, and the rites performed in their honor, is further underlined by a common emphasis on *wandering* in the two stories. Erigone was wandering abroad in search of her father when she died; one of the things that the Athenian girls did to appease her ghost was to perform a dance called "The Wanderer," in which they imitated Erigone's search. One manifestation of the madness that Hera sent upon the Proetides (including Iphinoë, we presume) was a desire to wander in the wilderness. The Minyads, who replace the Proetides as mythic exemplars in some local *aitia* for the Agriania, similarly are driven by their madness to wander abroad. As chapters 5 and 6 will show, this wandering exemplifies the transitional or marginal stage of the girl's life, poised as she is between virginity and maternity.

killed one of their infants and run wild into the mountains. The Theban story of the daughters of Cadmus, who tore Pentheus apart after having been maddened by Dionysus, is an analogue.⁹⁶

In the Argive tradition, we have virginal daughters who wander madly. In the Boeotian tradition, we have married women (for they have borne children) who wander madly. The single distinction should not distract us unduly: it is likely that there was once a version of the myth in which the Minyads were virgins, too, for use of the patronymic collective marks them not as wives but as daughters, and in Greek myth, daughters are always virgins.⁹⁷ The Boeotian daughters of Cadmus may once have been virgins as well, for although we know them best by their individual names, thanks to Attic tragedy, the fact that they acted together as sisters implies that their primary loyalty was to their natal family.

For some reason, these (hypothesized) Boeotian versions of "maidens' tragedies" became the "mothers' tragedies" now familiar to us. We can see traces of this beginning to happen in the Argive area as well, for another story, which became confused with that of the Proetides, told of Argive mothers running wild under Dionysus's influence and the Proetides themselves, in one version of their tale, incited other women of the area to tear apart their children.⁹⁸ These variations indicate that the story of the maddened, wandering virgin and the story of the maddened, infanticidal mother were mutually attractive—a far from surprising point given that, as I shall discuss in chapters 5, 6, and 7, maidens who fail to become brides and women who fail at motherhood are really only subtypes of a figure whom we might call the failed female. The passage of a girl out of her natal household into marriage and the motherhood that sets the seal upon marriage can be truncated and ruined at either end of the process with the same result: she becomes an unhappy soul, frustrated in her attempt to complete her life as a woman, who must be propitiated lest she return to ruin the lives of other females. Although the deities blamed for such failures in myth are most often Artemis

96. Plu. *QG* 299c–300a; cf. *QC* 717a. Interpreted by Dowden, 82–89, as a festival of initiatory inversion or dislocation, and by Burkert 1983, 168–79, as a festival of dissolution.

97. Suggested as well by Dowden, 82, and Bremmer 1984, 283, who notes that their individual names as given at Ant. Lib. 10.3 are Arsippe and Lysippus—horse names that are typical for maidens—and that Ant. Lib. calls them *korai*.

98. Following Dowden, 78–90, who cites all the ancient sources. On Dionysus's part in this story, cf. pp. 226–27 below.

and Hera, Dionysus takes on the role as well in some versions of the Proetides' myth, in the Minyads' myth, in the myth of Caryä, and more faintly in the extant version of the myth of Erigone. Thus, rituals to propitiate these dead women's souls could be attracted into the sphere of a Dionysiac festival such as the Anthesteria or the Agriania/Agrionia.⁹⁹ The name, built on the root *agrios*, "wild," applies equally well to the Boeotian mothers' maddened rambles and to the crazed wanderings of the Proetides in their deluded, marginal state.

We have no direct evidence that the Boeotian versions of the festival included propitiation of a dead individual, as did the Argive versions, but the ritualized chasing of women by Dionysus's priest and the legendary death of one of them at the hands of Zoilus suggest a version of the myth in which one or more of the Minyads died during her period of wandering, which would serve as an *aition* for such a rite. Thus, the various Boeotian versions of the Agrionia, like the Argive versions of the Agriania, may well have included appeasement of a dead woman's soul. If so, they might have been performed by married women (for whom the Minyads as we know them in the extant version of the myth would have served as negative exemplars), rather than by maidens. Perhaps the Boeotian Agrionia also included rites directed toward all of the dead, as in the Athenian Anthesteria, and as I have conjectured for the Argive Agriania—but this takes us too far into the realm of conjecture to be pursued any further.

Civic "days of the dead" aimed at protecting not only the individual citizen but the vitality of the whole citizenry from damage that might be done by the dead. This is the implication behind the story of Orestes as it was told at the Anthesteria, behind the story of Erigone, probably behind the story of Iphinoë, and perhaps behind some now-lost version of the Minyads' myth. Indeed, as we shall discuss in chapter 6, the collective, annual appeasement of certain classes of problematic dead, such as dead maidens, probably took place in many areas of Greece. These manifestations of civic concern for individuals' relationships with the dead,

99. The reasons for Dionysus's involvement have been discussed by Seaford in his 1994, 1993, and 1988 publications; Cf. also Bremmer 1984. Dionysus's involvement with Caryä and Erigone is discussed in chapter 6 below. It should be noted that many of these myths show an original, and probably continuing, attachment to Artemis and/or Hera despite their attraction into the Dionysiac sphere and Dionysus's presence in their myths: thus, as we shall see in chapter 6, Erigone and Caryä each become priestesses of Artemis in some versions of their myth, and the Caryatis was a festival in honor of Artemis.

then, agree with the conclusion that we reached after our examination of the Selinuntine and Cyrenean texts: keeping the dead happy was more than just a private affair.¹⁰⁰

CURSE TABLETS

In most of the situations discussed in this chapter, there is a presumption that the dead are causing problems of their own volition—that they are angry or unhappy and choose to attack the living for their own reasons. An exception is found in the Cyrenean text, which explicitly allows for the possibility that the ghost might have been sent against the victim by another person, presumably by ritual means. The curse tablets (*katadesmoi*) that will serve as the topic of this final section provide another good example of the dead returning not of their own accord but because they have been compelled to do so by ritual techniques.

Curse tablets begin to show up in the archaeological record in the late sixth century in Sicily and in the mid fifth century in Athens; they show up elsewhere in the Greek world beginning in the fourth century.¹⁰¹ It is my assumption that, from the very beginning, most of the curses written on these sheets of lead depended on the dead for their enactment, for the following reasons. First of all, the great majority of tablets during the classical and Hellenistic periods were deposited in or near graves, suggesting that propinquity to the dead was in some way important to the enactment of their curses.¹⁰² The graves of *aōroi*, those who had died prematurely, were particularly popular so far as we can tell from cases in which the age of the deceased can be determined from skeletal remains or grave goods.¹⁰³ It follows, as Fritz Graf recently has empha-

100. I note that there is a small amount of evidence for other *nekusia*, as well. Most important, Ath. *Deip.* 8.334f. says: "[I]n earlier times the people of Apollonia (in Chalcidice) brought the customary offerings [*ta nomima*] to the dead in the month of Elaphebolion but nowadays they bring them in the month of Anthesterion." Cf. Rohde 1925, 197 n. 91; Pl. *Lg.* 717d7–18a3.

101. A good overview of our information concerning curse tablets can be found in Gager, ch. 1. His notes will lead the reader to more detailed discussions of particular tablets. Also important are Graf 1997b, ch. 5, and Faraone 1991a. I discuss the cultural origins of the tablets in the next chapter; here I concentrate instead on how the tablets were imagined to work.

102. Gager 18–19; Graf 1997b, 127 (note: the translator of this English version of Graf's book has incorrectly written "Although most of our curse tablets come from tombstones . . ."; the earlier French and German versions clearly indicate that Graf meant "from graves," which is correct).

103. Jordan 1988, esp. 273.

sized, that the dead within whose graves so many tablets were deposited had some active role to play.¹⁰⁴

But what? Without further information, it would seem safest to assume that the dead are imagined only as messengers between this world and the next, carrying the words of the tablets to deities in the underworld. This has parallels in Mesopotamian practice, as we shall see in chapter 3, and I think it is likely that the Greek dead were imagined to play this role. But I would argue that on most occasions, the dead of the classical period were envisioned as doing even more, besides—not on the basis of the few tablets that actually state this, although we shall return to them momentarily, nor on the basis of many tablets from the imperial period, which explicitly describe the dead as actively carrying out the curses. There is another, and more convincing reason. By far, the deities most frequently mentioned on tablets of the classical period are Hecate, Hermes, and Persephone.¹⁰⁵ It is “in their presence” that the practitioner either binds or registers (*katagraphō*) the dead. The latter term, which was used in business and legal contexts in antiquity as well, implies that these deities are expected to take note of the registration and then set in motion the proper chain of events to effect the curse.¹⁰⁶

But what, exactly, are they expected to do, and why are they the deities chosen to do it? Let us begin with Hecate. Her only connection to the Underworld during this period is her role as the mistress of the restless dead. In Euripides’ *Helen*, Helen and Menelaus refer to her as the one who leads forth ghosts and an unassigned fragment of fifth-century tragedy portrays her as leading packs of them through the night.¹⁰⁷ She has no other role that connects her to the dead or to the Underworld. Nor does she have any role as a goddess who punishes individuals—either before or after death—at this time. The only way to understand the tablets’ constant requests that Hecate witness or register their curses is to presume that she is to ensure their enactment by commanding those whom she rules—the dead—to carry out the work that the tablets describe. Centuries later, the more loquacious magical papyri make this point specifically: several times, Hecate is asked to rouse the

104. Graf 1997b, 148–49 (who also discusses further the importance of the tablets being underground in general).

105. On the frequency with which different gods are mentioned, see Gager, 12. In some areas, a few other, usually chthonic, gods join the list, such as Demeter in Sicily (see Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky, 125–31).

106. Cf. Faraone 1991a, 9–10.

107. E. *Hel.* 569–70; *Trag. Adesp.* 375. See further chapter 6.

dead, particularly the *aōroi*, to do what the practitioner asks.¹⁰⁸ A similar interpretation should be adduced for Hermes, who as early as Aeschylus’s *Persians* is portrayed as having the ability to help stir the souls of the dead into action¹⁰⁹—a natural development of his role as the one who leads them into Hades after death—and who, like Hecate, has no other connection with the dead or the Underworld during the classical period. Persephone, the queen of the dead, could release souls when she wished to and thus fits the scenario too; she is implored by Electra in the *Choephoroi* to help guarantee the support of Agamemnon’s ghost.¹¹⁰ Notably, entities whom we could more easily imagine as inflicting the damage described in the curses themselves—such as the Erinyes—almost never appear in the tablets, which tends to support the idea that deities are chosen *not* on the assumption that they will work the curse but rather in the expectation that they will mobilize others to do so.

It is important to remember, in evaluating the thesis that I am offering, that most of it aligns perfectly well with other beliefs of the classical period. As early as Sappho, as we saw in chapter 1, restless dead such as Gello are imagined to be capable of causing trouble for the living on their own, and by the fifth century at the latest, certain gods—most notably Hecate and Hermes—are known to have had special control over them. The only novelty presented by these tablets of the classical period is the idea that they were a new way in which a practitioner could *ask* a god to *make* the dead do something.

As noted, on a few tablets from the classical period, we do find the dead themselves mentioned. In the earliest example that I know of, from early fourth-century Attica,¹¹¹ the victim is simultaneously bound in the presence of (*pros*)¹¹² “she who is next to Persephone” (i.e., Hecate),

108. E.g., PGM IV.2726–35. Cf. IV.1390–1495, where Hecate is asked to force an *erinyes* to rouse the *aōroi*.

109. A. *Per.* 628–30: “You sacred divinities, Earth and King Hermes, conduct [his] soul up the to light from below. . . .” Cf. A. *Ch.* 124 ff.: Electra asks chthonic Hermes to summon the daimones below to listen to her prayers.

110. A. *Ch.* 490: after Orestes asks Agamemnon to rise, Electra says “Persephone, grant us beautiful strength [*eumorphon kratos*].”

111. DT #68 = Gager #22 and cf. DT #69, on which cf. Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky, 129–30.

112. When *pros* is used in curse tablets, it usually is understood by scholars to mean “in the presence of,” in the same sense that this word has in business and legal transitions from the fifth century B.C.E. on. That is, one enacts a transition “in the presence of” a magistrate, a witness, or a jury, for example, in order that they might take note of the transaction and help to ensure that it is carried out as the enacting party wishes. Curbera and

Hermes, Tethys, and the “incomplete” (*atelestoi*)¹¹³ dead, which implies that the gods and the dead are understood to be functionally equivalent. In another fourth-century Attic tablet, the victim is bound in the presence of (*pros*) those below—*hoi katō*.¹¹⁴ As the gods mentioned in tablets are almost always carefully specified, and as *hoi katō* is a term commonly used of the dead, particularly in Attic tragedy,¹¹⁵ we have to assume that the writer was using this phrase to refer to the dead. These references show that it was possible to imagine the dead playing the same role as Hecate and Hermes, and, more important, indicate that the dead were on the minds of those who wrote the tablets; thus these tablets help to confirm my earlier hypothesis that the dead were important to the enactment of the tablets’ curses. But so far as the exact function accorded to the dead in these examples is concerned, I would suggest that there has been a kind of transference: their writers registered their victims in the presence of the dead as well as of the deity who would command them, thus moving the dead into a magisterial role that they did not normally play.¹¹⁶

If my analysis concerning the role that the dead played in the enactment of curses is correct, then the tablets provide evidence from the early classical period of three important ideas. First, certain gods were taking on a new or at least increased importance in their roles as controllers of the dead, most prominently Hermes and Hecate. In neither case does this role contradict any aspect of our earlier picture of the god—it can be understood as a development of Hermes’ role as *psychopompos* and of certain aspects of Hecate’s *persona* that we shall examine in chapter 6—but their specific roles as gods who might help the practitioner by facilitating his access to the souls of the dead are definitely new. This

Jordan suggest that *pros* might often have a geographical significance instead, indicating that the curse tablet is deposited “in the presence of” a divinity or the dead, in the sense that it is buried within the divinity’s precinct or within a cemetery. Certainly, this may be true, but if so we still must infer that the place of deposition was chosen in order that the indwelling spirit might pay attention to the curse tablet and its request. Thus, the force that we must attach to *pros* changes little, in my opinion.

113. On the meaning of this word, see n. 127 below.

114. Jordan 1985a, #20; further discussed in Curbera and Jordan. Cf. also SEG 37.673 (Olbia, 4th/3d century B.C.E.; cf. Bravo; Jordan 1997), which directly addresses a dead person and promises a reward in return for his help. See also DT #52 (= Gager #73), a third-century tablet from Attica, quoted on p. 77 below.

115. E.g., S. Aj. 865; Ant. 75.

116. I should also note that some tablets seem to work on the principle of “performative utterance,” that is, that the speaking and/or writing of a curse such as “I bind” in itself bound the victim and thus put the curse into action. On these tablets, see Faraone 1991a.

makes sense: before the advent of the curse tablets and other means of invoking the dead against other people, there was no real need for such a divine role. Second, the living could call for aid upon even the dead to whom they did not have a familial relationship. Indeed, in some tablets, the practitioner indicates that he has no idea in whose grave he is burying the tablet by using such phrases as “you buried here, whoever you are,” and in only a very few tablets is the ghost addressed by his own name.¹¹⁷ The apparent distaste of the dead for serving the living in this capacity, evinced in several tablets, suggests moreover that one would not wish this role upon a departed loved one.¹¹⁸ Third, the dead were beginning to be understood as all-purpose factotums of the living. They could be asked not only to help take vengeance upon their former persecutors or to defend the surviving members of their family, as Electra and Orestes hope that Agamemnon will in the *Oresteia*, but also to assist in a wide variety of tasks in which they were unlikely to have any personal interest—the hobbling of orators’ tongues, for example. The dead, then, were no longer only threats in their own right, but also tools to be used against one’s opponents; to the long-standing, generalized fear of random attacks by the envious or vengeful dead was now added the fear that the dead might be used against one by a competitor (correlatively, the dead, particularly those who had died under unfortunate circumstances, had more to fear than just the usual dreariness or punishments of the Underworld; they might be shanghaied into servitude). The curse tablets, then, confirm that in the fifth century, we have entered into an era of belief different from that shown in the Homeric poems. We have passed from a situation in which the dead scarcely interacted with the living, and then only at their own discretion and under very specific circumstances—when their bodies were unburied, for example—to one in which the living could activate the dead at their pleasure, for many reasons.

There are several other issues that we need to consider in connection with the curse tablets. The first is their very nature as “tablets,” as written documents. The possible origins of this practice of communicating

117. See the introduction to *Supp. Mag.* #37 for a list and discussion. In a forthcoming collection of essays on magic to be published by the Norwegian Institute in Athens, edited by Einar Thompson, Hugo Montgomery, and David Jordan, there will be an essay by M. Voutiras discussing the tablets on which ghosts are called by their own names.

118. E.g., the tablet from Olbia mentioned in n. 114 above, where the dead person must be bribed by a gift before he will cooperate; PGM IV.385 and cf. Pl. *Lg.* 933b2–3, where it is implied that people are distressed to find evidence of these practices on the graves of their parents.

with the realm of the dead through writing is taken up in chapter 3, but here we might consider the evolution of the practice within Greece itself. Early tablets are terse, typically including only the name of the victim(s) and a verb such as "bind" or "register." Later tablets include more information, including instructions as to how the curses are to be carried out and by what agents. It is very likely that the deposition of the simpler, earlier tablets was accompanied by oral instructions similar to those written on these later tablets. Indeed, judging from spells for making curse tablets that are found in the magical papyri, one of which we shall examine below, even the lengthier tablets had to be accompanied by oral commands. The "binding song" (*hymnos desmios*) sung by the Aeschylean Erinyes, which bears similarities to phrases on later tablets, is probably a dramatized version of what such an oral incantation would have sounded like in the fifth century.¹¹⁹ The fact that the normal means both of addressing the gods and of contacting the dead in early Greece was through sung or spoken words lends additional support to this idea. Notably, even after the more elaborate tablets began to appear, tablets including only the name of the victim or the name and a verb continued to be produced, which suggests that, even after the idea of writing more elaborate tablets had been introduced, it was still acceptable to intone most of the instructions orally.¹²⁰ There are a couple of ways to explain this. If one were hiring a professional to create the tablet, the rationale for keeping it simple might have been financial: scribes usually charged by the word.¹²¹ If one were making the tablet oneself, it may have been a matter of skill: a person who was scarcely literate would opt for scratching on the simplest effective inscription and pronouncing the rest.

By assuming that the fuller tablets include information approximately like that which was spoken aloud at the time when simpler ones were deposited, we should be able to use the fuller tablets to get a better idea of how all the tablets, both early and late, were understood to work, and what role the dead played in the process. A number of tablets

119. Note, also, that there are a few curse tablets written partially or wholly in dactylic hexameters, which may imply again that the spells were to be spoken aloud at some point in the process: e.g., DTA #108 (third- or second-century B.C.E. Attica); discussion in Faraone 1985 and 1995.

120. The idea that early curse tablets were supplemented by oral incantation is widely accepted in various forms. See, e.g., Gager, 7 and n. 39; Faraone 1991a, 5–6; Kotansky 1991, 109–10. Cf. also my discussion in chapter 3. On the Erinyes' song, see Faraone 1985.

121. E. G. Turner, 1; for an example of the result that this policy might have on the inscription of curse tablets, see Martinez, *passim*, but esp. 113.

from later periods address the dead with phrases such as "you who lie here having died untimely" or "you unmarried ones."¹²² For example, a third-century tablet from Attica runs as follows:¹²³

Kerkis
Blastos
Nikandros
Glukera

I bind Kerkis, the words and deeds of Kerkis and also the tongue, in the presence of those who died before marriage [*ēitheoi*];¹²⁴ and whenever they read this, then [words missing] . . . to/for Kerkis . . . to talk. I bind him and his young women and his profession and his capital and his business and his words and deeds. Hermes of the Underworld, restrain them in every way until they become senseless.

This tablet aligns with the apparent preference, evinced not only by other tablets but by many spells of the magical papyri, of asking certain types of dead to carry out the curse, referring to them individually or collectively by terms such as "those who died incomplete," or "those who died violently." For example, instructions from one papyrus spell tell the practitioner to pronounce the following as he places the tablet on the grave of someone who died *aōros* or *biaiothanatos*:

I entrust this curse tablet to you, chthonic gods,¹²⁵ and to men and women who have died untimely deaths, to youths and maidens, from year to year, month to month, day to day, hour to hour. I adjure all daimones of this place to stand as assistants beside this daimon [that is, all the dead souls of the cemetery must help the soul in whose grave the tablet is placed]. And arouse yourself for me, whoever you are, whether male or female, and go to every place and every quarter and to every house, and attract and bind her. . . . Let her be unable to either drink or eat, not be contented, not be strong, not have peace of mind, not find sleep without me. . . . drag her by the hair, by her heart, by her soul, to me . . .¹²⁶

122. Examples include *Supp. Mag* #45 (= Gager #30); DT #271 (= Gager #36; cf. Deissman 169–300); DT #22 and #25 (= Gager #45 and #46 with further bibliography); DT #52 (= Gager #73) and one from Athens published by Young (= Gager #71).

123. DT #52; translation by Gager #73.

124. *ēitheoi* more exactly means "without having born children" at Pl. *Lg.* 840d5, a category of restless dead discussed in detail in chapter 5. It is possible that the word has this more exact definition here and in other uses as well. Its earliest occurrence is at *Od.* 11.38, where it refers to one of the types of dead who swarm up from Erebus as soon as Odysseus pours the blood into the pit.

125. I omit here a list of chthonic gods and *voces magicae* that appears in the spell.

126. Excerpted from PGM IV.296–466. My translation is a modification of E. N. O'Neil's translation in Betz. More fully on this spell and the working examples of tablets from it that have been found, see Martinez.

The marginal status of *aōroi* and *biaiothanatoi* would both facilitate interaction with the living and make them easier prey for the practitioner—they were neither impeded nor protected by the walls of the Underworld. In this respect, the *aōroi* and *biaiothanatoi* are the exact opposites of a certain type of soul briefly discussed earlier, who had obtained special protection from the gods of the Underworld during the afterlife by being initiated into mystery cults while alive—indeed, it is likely that the two curse tablets from early fourth century mentioned above, which invoke the *atelestoi* (“incomplete”) dead are explicitly directed to the souls of those who died uninitiated.¹²⁷ A variation on this theme is found in some late texts in which the practitioner who wants to persuade a soul to cooperate promises that, once it has finished his task, he will set it free or even protect it from having to serve other practitioners.¹²⁸ Another reason that the restless dead would be more valuable to the practitioner lies in their disposition: because they were envious and embittered, they could more easily be roused into action against the living.¹²⁹

It was probably not only the *aōroi*, the *biaiothanatoi*, and similarly unhappy souls who were invoked, however, even if they were preferred. First of all, sometimes there would have been a problem with identifying which graves contained such corpses. An epitaph on a tombstone or the presence of a *loutrophoros* (a jar used to carry the water for a girl’s wedding bath) might make it clear that a grave belonged to an *aōros*, but

127. DT #68 = Gager #22. The Greek words in question are *atelēs* and *atelestoi*, which literally mean “uncompleted” but which often also mean, more specifically, “uninitiated” (e.g., *h. Cer.* 481; *Pl. Phd.* 69c5; *E. Ba.* 40). Cf. Graf 1997b, 150–51, who understands the word to mean “unmarried”; although this meaning is otherwise unattested for either word, there may be some support for the interpretation in the fact that the tablet is intended to prevent a woman from seducing a man. Gager translates the word as “unmarried”; Audollent (ad loc.) assumed the meaning “uninitiated.” Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky, 131, suggest it refers to dead who have not received the proper funeral rites (*telē*), which, given the earlier conclusions in this chapter about the possibility of “initiating” or “purifying” the souls of the dead if they had omitted to do so themselves while alive, brings us close to the meaning accepted by Audollent and myself. Cf. also Graf 1994, 153, for a slightly different discussion, where he argues against the meaning “uninitiated” because the graves of the uninitiated would not have been marked as such. This does not carry much weight, as we cannot assume that the graves of the untimely dead would have always been marked as such, either.

128. E.g., the final line of a late curse tablet published by Kambitsis (= Gager #28; Jordan 1985a, 152) and cf. the promise made by Erichtho at *Luc.* 6.762–70 to the corpse that she reanimates that she will make him immune from further attacks by magicians and witches after he completes her request. Cf. also the tablet from Olbia cited in n. 114 above, where the dead person is promised “the best of offerings” if he cooperates.

129. See chapters 4 and 5 below.

the graves of *biaiothanatoi* and those who had failed to be initiated into mystery religions surely were rarely, if ever, marked as such.¹³⁰ Unless one happened to know the circumstances under which an individual had died, and where he or she was buried, one probably had to choose a grave at random and hope for the best. Moreover, if one wanted to bury the tablet with the corpse,¹³¹ rather than simply placing it on the grave or just below the surface, it was probably easiest either to do this surreptitiously at the time of burial or, if later insertion was necessary, to choose a new grave, as the freshly dug soil would be easier to excavate. In short, the practitioner could not always count on having access to the “best” sorts of souls, and had to take what he could find; even a “normal” soul might be compelled to cooperate. Plato’s allusion to the placement of cursing materials on the graves of parents suggests that the souls of older people at least were not excluded as possibilities.¹³²

Another important issue is what the dead were expected to do to the victims of the curse. Different circumstances probably demanded different techniques, and each practitioner undoubtedly had his own preferences as well. Most commonly, the practitioner or his client expressed a wish to restrain the victim from an action, or sometimes to hamper his movement more severely by “binding” him. Figurines that sometimes accompany the curse tablets, which show the victim with hands tied behind the back, suggest this idea, but tablets that “bind” not only the victim but such intangibles as his business support a less literal reading of the verb. Formulaic though the language of the tablets may be, then, we cannot use those formulas to develop an iron-clad axiom about what was supposed to happen to the victims.¹³³ The only thing that is clear is that until very late times, the purpose of a tablet was not so much to kill or seriously harm the victim as to restrict his or her movements and behavior.¹³⁴ Within these limits, the range of specific actions was probably broad. One tablet instructs the dead to “throw difficult fires” into all the

130. It should be noted, however, that in some cases the tablet itself makes it clear that the practitioner took the trouble to seek out the grave of a special type of dead. Thus, DT #237 (= Gager #9) begins with “I invoke you, spirit of one untimely dead, whoever you are. . . .”

131. Or even place the tablet in the hand of the corpse, as in two instances detailed by Jordan 1988, 273–74.

132. *Pl. Lg.* 933a2–b3. Interestingly, however, in cases where we can estimate the age at death of those corpses found with curse tablets, they were almost always young, according to Jordan 1988, 273. But cf. Graf 1997b, 174–75.

133. Cf. Graf 1997b, 122–23, 134–44.

134. Faraone 1991a.

limbs of the victim and make him burn, perhaps referring to the infliction of a fever. A very late tablet from Syria instructs the ghosts of the *aōroi* and *biaiothanatoi* to leap up in front of a team of horses in a race in order to frighten them, which is exactly what the ghost of Myrtilus, a murdered charioteer, was believed to do to horses competing in the Olympic races centuries earlier.¹³⁵ The oral commands of the magical papyri provide further examples illustrating the range of injuries that the dead could inflict, including insomnia and lack of appetite (e.g., PGM IV.2730–39). Generally, these are the same sorts of afflictions that the dead might impose upon the living of their own accord.¹³⁶

SUMMARY

We have covered a lot of ground in this chapter, and thus it would be a good idea to recap the most important points:

The living had to meet not only certain basic needs of the dead, such as burial and periodic nourishment, but more complex needs as well: they had to help protect them from immediate threats after death, such as demonic interference, to help guarantee their safe passage to the Underworld, and occasionally also to perform rites after the death of an individual in order to “purify” his soul or otherwise help it achieve a peaceful afterlife.

Care of the dead was a *civic* concern as well as a concern of the individuals most directly involved with any given dead person. This was because the displeasure of the dead might make itself felt not only against those immediately responsible but against the entire group. We shall see further instances of this in chapters to come.

By the classical period, the souls of dead might be manipulated by ritual practitioners who had expertise in such arts. As servants of the living, the dead might be pressed into all kinds of service, but they were

135. DT #51, from Attica; the horse-scaring tablet was published by van Rengen, 213–14, and is translated as Gager #6; see also Jordan 1985a, 192, and other bibliography in Gager.

136. There are also instances in which the dead are used as part of a *similia similibus* action wherein the practitioner commands the victim to become like the corpse in some way (e.g., DT #85 = Gager #20). Graf 1997b, ch. 5, esp. 132–34, however, is surely right in understanding this and various other *similia similibus* techniques as secondary developments (cf. Graf 1994, 151–56, a fuller and in my opinion somewhat better discussion of the question found in the revised English version of 1997b).

particularly used to injure others among the living. Troublesome ghosts could also be exorcised or controlled by these practitioners.

Finally, it is striking that all of the information to which we can assign a date for the latter two topics is from no earlier than the late archaic or early classical period: Epimenides purified Athens at the turn of the seventh and sixth centuries; the Spartans hired *psychagōgoi* in the mid fifth century; the Selinuntine law dates from the mid fifth and the Cyrenean from the mid fourth century; the Dodonian tablet mentioning a *psychagōgos* named Dorius is from the early fourth century. Curse tablets begin to appear in the late sixth and early fifth centuries. This supports the conclusion reached in chapter 1 based on examination of narrative sources: the dead began to be perceived as a bigger source of problems, and new methods of dealing with them began to develop, in the late archaic and early classical periods. In the next chapter, we shall explore some of the reasons for, and some further ramifications of, this development.