

## A City of Religious Pluralism and Spiritual Ambiguity

A fever could be a frightening, life-threatening ordeal in late antiquity. Luckily, Antioch offered the sick an overwhelming array of cures.<sup>1</sup> A person, particularly of means, would first visit any number of physicians (Gk. *iatroi*; L. *medici*) available in a city as large as Antioch.<sup>2</sup> He or she might then seek the services of a divinatory expert (Gk. *mantis*) to inquire after his or her future recovery,<sup>3</sup> or travel beyond the city gates to one of the holy men in the caves of Mount Silpius for a wondrous cure.<sup>4</sup> A person might also pray at one of the many martyr shrines outside the city, or healing might be obtained from incubation near one of the caves called 'Matrona' found in association with many of the very ancient synagogues in Daphne.<sup>5</sup> Rumors circulated that incantations were offered by rabbis within the synagogues also, or itinerant healers might sell a healing incantation for a price.<sup>6</sup> There were also old drunken women selling their healing amulets. Nurses in homes all over the city were well versed in folk remedies; an old woman healer (Gk. *graus*; L. *anus*) might come into the home offering incantations with a powerful mixture of Christian and non-Christian divine names.<sup>7</sup>

Antioch's citizens engaged in tightly entwined healing and ritual practices, drawing upon a wide variety of powers that gave them comfort. Whether they were Greek, Jewish, or Christian, religious identity was superfluous in most aspects of day-to-day existence. John Chrysostom, however, did not rest easily with the spiritual ambiguity and dangers such ritual pursuits invited into the larger Christian community. Should someone fall victim to a fever, he was quite clear: Christian prayer and ecclesiastical ritual were the only options. All other ritual cures were demonic deceptions. In this he was absolute. Even if the fever attacked a small child and certain amulets were known to offer a cure, it would be better that

a mother allow her child's body to die than accept amulets touched by the devil. To do so would doom the child's soul to eternal damnation.<sup>8</sup>

This and the next two chapters approach John Chrysostom's efforts to peel Christians away from their ritual lives outside the church—in order to have a hope of saving these souls. Chapter 1 offers a tour of Antioch and Daphne that attends closely to the enchanted worldview and the animistic environments as well as John Chrysostom's related ritual practice. Inhabitants practice a wide range of rituals, and he insists that participation in non-Christian practices produces dangerous spiritual entanglements; in some cases demonic possession may result. While John utilizes the demonization of non-Christian activity, he is far more dependent upon diabolization. In his sermons, and perhaps even more so through his regulation of sacramental practice, Chrysostom transforms the spiritual ambiguity or abundance of Antioch into an active and predatory anti-Nicene evil.<sup>9</sup>

Chapter 2 then pieces together several different demonological narratives that exist in his corpus of sermons. John also puts together powerful Nicene images in balance against his depictions of demonic predation. In his baptismal sermons as well as elsewhere he also projects persuasive images of sacramental and ecclesiastical ritual. He promotes these practices as effective weapons of spiritual warfare against a growing diabolic power.

Chapter 3 finally introduces our demonic case study or demonic crisis in John Chrysostom's Antioch and Daphne. As discussed in the introduction, John's harsh views against Jews and Judaizers during the High Holidays and Pesach provide material for our consideration of his strategies and tactics of diabolization.

Before traveling straight on to Antioch, however, we must first pause to consider a few details regarding interpretive language and concepts. This kind of study calls for the development of individualized tools to facilitate our examination of the strategies of diabolization in the late antique city. This pertains to Antioch, of course, but also to Jerusalem and Milan.

### **A Cultural of Suprahuman Presence and Ritual in the Late Antique City**

Antioch's religiously and culturally complex urban environment creates a form of ritualized identity all but inscrutable to our modern, post-Reformation eyes. Isabella Sandwell has recently recaptured a vital sense of how integral ritual practice was to religious identity in Antioch at the time. Significantly, she denies the actuality—and, in fact, desirability—of discrete religious identity in Roman imperial society; instead, “practices were shared by people whatever their religious allegiances.”<sup>10</sup> Drawing from Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* and his concept of embodied ritual dispositions, Sandwell builds an argument for Greco-Roman society's fluid play between religious difference and religious allegiance; she claims that a finely tuned sense of ritual action allows Antiochenes to feel “right” in the conflicting microenvironments of their social world: “[Antiochenes] would have ingrained

in them unspoken dispositions and habits relating to tactful and appropriate ways of dealing with this sensitive situation.”<sup>11</sup> She invokes the concept of instinctive ritual play to build her discussion of Antioch’s religious pluralism. In this way, Antioch’s religiously pluralistic society diffused tensions. Once we reach the fourth century, Christian leaders, Chrysostom included, begin developing and imposing ideological rules and clear-cut categories in his construction of religious identity. He attempts to enforce strict, rule-bound structures upon those accustomed to a fluid approach to religious allegiance/difference. The priest meets with conflict and inevitable failures, as Sandwell has observed.

Sandwell’s use of Bourdieu is smart and insightful, and her argument is extremely persuasive. However, her predominant methodology, i.e., sociology, foreshortens our view into the late antique urban environment to a modern (disenchanted) understanding of Antioch in the 380s. Likewise, I propose that her primary evidence—i.e., Chrysostom’s preaching, as she defines it “an explicit, linguistic, ideological, rule-based medium”—eclipses our view into the full and possible range of the elements that inform religious identity in this period—and, moreover, into the construction of that identity in the midst of religious conflict, change, and violence.<sup>12</sup> Sandwell focuses upon the discursive aspects of John’s preaching relationship with his various audiences. This is perfectly in keeping with the standards of scholarly trends in late antique scholarship; when interpreting issues of religious violence, many have adopted a perspective that attends closely—perhaps exclusively—to the visible realm and the horizontal plane of social interaction.

This study relies wholeheartedly upon the sturdy foundations of Sandwell’s Bourdieusian reading. Still, one cannot help but wonder when reading an interpretation that cleaves closely to the visible ground of social interaction, Is it possible that something *imagined* could be missed? Perhaps we should consider the vague, ostensibly empty, but hardly depopulated, late antique spaces between the abandoned temples and the itinerant ritual agents who invoke those temples’ once-venerated deities. What kinds of suprahuman populations loiter in these charged locations after the cult has been minimized or dies out? If we do not consider the imagined suprahuman, supernatural forces that people’s rituals invoke, bind, expel, and exorcise as they move in their environment, we are missing subtle expressions of anger that could easily escalate into violence. We also miss the cosmological shifts that the rituals produce—changes in the heavens that link to and participate in religious transformations on the ground.

It is important, then, to note the directions *City of Demons* will take. This chapter, and indeed the book as a whole, will ascend from the horizontal and move beyond the visible to pierce through to the enchanted and animistic world of late antiquity. Consequently, in this and the next chapters, ritual practice draws our focus more deliberately and directly than perhaps we see in the work of Sandwell and others who have studied these cities. We examine people’s ritual encounters

with locally perceived cosmological and spiritual powers. In this way, we consider the development of the people's animistic "dispositions and habits," their *habitus*, their embodied knowledge of how to act ritually in a wide variety of situations in Antioch and Daphne. We also attend to the generative quality of ritual. Beyond the ability to inculcate or engender a worldview, ritual practice creates and manufactures a vivid sense of the supernatural. Ritual sustains demonic and other animistic powers; such ritual action also conjures invisible orders which stretch up from the earthly and sublunar realms into the heavenly.

Sandwell's model lucidly accounts for the religious identity of the Greek, Jew, and Christian—a process of construction not beginning until the fourth century. *City of Demons* supplements her consideration by asking how Antioch's ritual practices complement or complicate the processes of religious identity construction. Demons engendered and sustained by ritual practice fill and overlap "the betwixt and between" of these religious identities. In other words, while the demons of ritual practice may clarify religious differences, they may just as easily cultivate an ambiguity blurring the lines delineating Greek, Jewish, and Christian difference.<sup>13</sup>

Antioch has been portrayed as a city of enduring religious pluralism, ambiguity, and, finally, tolerance. Undoubtedly there is truth in all such characterizations. That said, in using a term such as "religious pluralism," scholars favor the sociological at the expense of the cosmological and the spiritual—not to mention the enchanted and animistic. Such an interpretive perspective only scratches the surface of the interplay of religious identities in Antioch, the deeper, elemental nature driving the diverse collection of ritual practices. Of course this view ignores the animated forces fueling and fueled by these novel and incipient movements toward religious difference and identity. To understand how the enchanted environment and animistic forces inform religions and parse their differences in an urban environment, to grasp a sense of the rituals that draw the supernatural into one's experience of religious identity, changes are necessary.

It is time that we venture past the Cartesian divide. Temporarily, at least, it is time we leave to the side the safer, disenchanted categories of interpretation.

The city's late antique inhabitants arrange themselves according to socioeconomic status, gender, ethnicity—as well as religious affiliation(s): despite these and other expressions of difference, however, the people as a whole participate in a loosely shared understanding of Antioch's supernatural powers.<sup>14</sup> In seeking protection, wealth, power, healing, erotic love, and a host of other issues, inhabitants develop a sophisticated ritual agility. Instinctively they know how to leverage generations of ritual knowledge and demons connected to those rituals. For so many it is almost impossible to surrender the embodied ritual and animistic knowledge—even for a golden-mouthed priest.

Their ritual sense and spiritual sensibility—drawing again here on Bourdieu's idea of disposition or *habitus*—is a materially embedded and thus embodied form

of knowledge. In their very manner of ritually moving through the city day to day, inhabitants continue to feed Antioch's enduring religious pluralism. Building upon this chapter, chapter 2 will examine the dimensional depth of the clash and conflict between the inhabitants and John Chrysostom regarding the singular issue of religious identity.

In contrast to the inhabitants of Antioch's day-to-day life that this chapter reviews, we will uncover in chapter 2 a John Chrysostom who sets himself apart from others through asceticism. Through his earlier ascetic practice he constructs a very different animistic environment and enchanted worldview around himself. Before his ordination, his antidemonic struggles in mind and body carve out a clear, dualistic understanding of the divine opposing the demonic. Later, as a practicing monk within the city, he produces a sense of the demonic that is much more extreme than that of the congregants whom he will eventually lead.<sup>15</sup> Upon becoming a priest, he attempts to inculcate his congregations in this spiritual warfare: diabolizing images in his sermons regulate a severely agonistic worldview. So too he involves his baptized in the heat of this battle. Through the preparation and initiation of ecclesiastical ritual practice and the sacraments, they transform into soldiers of Christ. For John the title is certainly not metaphorical.

David Brakke has shown quite clearly that Stoic theories of cognition and perception play a central role in the ascetic, antidemonic battles and spiritual warfare worldview of Evagrian and Egyptian monasticism.<sup>16</sup> The embodied character of the soul/mind in both Stoic models of knowing offers a philosophical and psychological (and especially physiological) foundation to delineate clearly how the demon's body and the monk's body touch and battle in spiritual warfare. Gregory A. Smith correctly argues that when our Christian sources describe the material nature of the demon's body, they do not intend a metaphorical or psychological meaning. Though demons may be invisible, and though they may possess subtle bodies, they do indeed possess bodies in the late antique worldview. Thus there exists a material continuity between the demonic body and the soul.<sup>17</sup> I have discussed elsewhere the complexity of the spiritual warfare ideology within the ascetic and ritual writings of Gregory of Nazianzus, for instance, once again involving Stoic theories of cognition and perception.<sup>18</sup> There as here I argue that the material (pneumatic) quality of the connectivity between human and demon informs late antique theorizations of demonic possession and the efficacy of exorcism.

One of the goals of *City of Demons* is to demonstrate the degree to which John Chrysostom's demonology is very much of his time, corresponding, for example, to that of Antony, Origen, Evagrius, and Gregory of Nazianzus not only in complexity and philosophical sophistication, but also in conceptualization of materiality and embodiment. What has separated John's demonology from that of other church fathers so far has been the difference in context and genre. While Antony's letters and Evagrius's treatises are addressed to other monks, and therefore they

present their demonology in a fairly straightforward manner, John's demonology comes to us through the thick and contorted lens of a preacher's rhetoric molded to an elite audience trained (and expecting) to hear an orator's speech.

Consequently, scholars have understandably focused on the pastoral relations between priest and audience, and many have argued that John spoke to audiences who were generally unlikely to follow his ethical and antidemonic admonishments pertaining to their non-Christian behavior in Antioch. More to the point, though, it is impossible to recover audience reaction. In my approach to Chrysostom, I take the somewhat contrasting view that one thing is clear in John's demonology: after several years spent in rigorous asceticism within an urban environment, John engages actively with the crowded, culturally rich cities not only as its Nicene priest but crucially as one of its exorcists. When John therefore assumes ecclesiastical duties, he does not abandon the harsh, dualistic worldview he cultivated during those years alone wrapped in ascetic practice. Instead he brings it with him and to his congregants in his sermons, but most especially in ritual. In his sermons he projects his demonology through carefully constructed images. These images also convey a precise understanding of ritual efficacy—both demonic and divine ritual and power in Antioch.

As we move forward through *City of Demons*, we will see how well the model proposed here for John Chrysostom, including its ancillary elements, also works to explain Cyril's charismatic hold over Jerusalem and its Christians and finally Ambrose's control of Milan and his own embattled congregation. Now, however, a tour of Antioch follows.

### **Initial Impressions of an Animated and Animate City**

In many respects our tour resembles those provided in other studies: a survey of the city's buildings, statuary, shrines, monuments, and spaces.<sup>19</sup> Here, however, close attention is paid to the wide variety of rituals animating Antioch's urban environment. In fact, the rituals are allowed to paint the picture of the city and its supernatural populations (divinities, deities, and demons). In using the word "animating" here, I intend two meanings. The first meaning is familiar from our discussion in the introduction: in the late antique world people believe that they engage with supernatural/cosmological entities, forces, and powers in a material manner through ritual practice and speech. For them, in their time, these supernatural powers are not bodiless, immaterial absolutes or metaphorical symbols; instead they are material, enlivening, and part of local topographies, communities, and histories. The second intended meaning is somewhat more complex: it refers to the manner in which rituals literally move individuals and groups in and around the spaces and places of the city. Through that movement they give life or animating power(s) to a space and the objects or monuments in that space. It is a multi-dimensional definition of the phrase *animating power* that directs the mode of cultural and historical interpretation in this and the following chapters.

Despite its neglect in scholarship—that is until recently—Antioch stands as the gravitational center of the eastern Mediterranean world in antiquity from the time of its founding by Seleucus I in the early third century BCE.<sup>20</sup> This is certainly evident in the fourth century CE as Antioch draws a number of emperors, and their courts and armies, to its territory and becomes caught up in the border tension between the Roman and Persian empires. More importantly perhaps, during the Roman imperial period all eastern roads run through Antioch. It is linked with Alexandretta to the northwest, Laodicea to the southwest, and Beroea to the northeast. Some thirty kilometers southwest of Antioch is Seleucia, a port city offering Antioch vital access to the rest of the empire. As Libanius proudly claims, multiple races and ethnicities have chosen this city as their own.<sup>21</sup> These populations feed Antioch's trade and marketplaces. Merchants traveling through from as far away as China bring riches to the main Roman street, which stretches along the spine of Mount Silpius.

The roads bring another kind of traveler to Antioch as well. Itinerant *goētes*, *magoi*, divinatory experts (Gk. *manteis*), theurgic practitioners, and *Chaldaei* from the farthest reaches of both the Roman and the Persian empires continually move through the city, introducing new forms of ritual practices and bringing promises of cosmological power.<sup>22</sup> Diverse charismatic figures circulate around the many religious monuments that crowd Antioch's topography: ancient Greek, Roman, Syrian, and Persian temples, synagogues, churches of opposing theological factions, martyr tombs, and Jewish incubatory caves in Daphne, as well as the caves of Christian holy men in the foothills of Mount Silpius.

We should imagine a city pulsating with spiritual powers. People who live in Antioch intuitively understand the city's diverse array of invisible forces capable of inflicting harm or offering healing—as well as much else in between. In other words, through the straightforward activity of urban living—and thus the ordeal of day-to-day survival—inhabitants naturally gain improvisational ritual knowledge of their loosely shared, localized understanding of invisible forces.

#### ENDURING TEMPLES AND LINGERING DIVINITIES

Over the centuries, temples, shrines, and religious statuary cluster thickly along the streets of Antioch, projecting a complicated mixture of Greco-Roman, Egyptian, Persian, and Syrian divinity. As Sarolta A. Takács has astutely observed, “As one of the most important economic centers and one of the largest cities in the Roman Empire, Antioch was home to many gods.”<sup>23</sup> This is certainly the case in the Hellenistic period through the early imperial period. It will be several centuries after Constantine before most of the city's multilayered polytheism is finally removed. By the end of the fourth century, very little has been done to erase paganism from the architectural face of Antioch or Daphne, and this raises an important question. As long as temples and other religious structures continue to stand and

are a part of people's sensory environment in and beyond the city, are the divine powers that these monuments once actively represented ever really absent from the collective experience or memory of the city's inhabitants? Can we definitively say that the deities associated with the remaining structures fail to leave a trace in the ritual practices of Antioch's inhabitants and, therefore, do not affect their cosmological understanding or religious experiences?

While Antioch may have offered a warm and inviting home to many gods over the centuries, we need to ask what kind of residency the city, its buildings, and spaces provide to what forms of deity by the late fourth and fifth centuries. How can the religious topography shape a people's sense of their animistic environment? To settle this question we must answer a few others first. What religious structures still stand in Antioch by the late fourth and fifth centuries? What is the condition of those structures? What rituals and festivals still occur in and beyond the city at that time? What kinds of opportunities are there for ritual innovation? Or, more to the point, what new forms of ritual engagement with invisible, suprahuman powers begin to emerge, even as older, more traditional forms of cult start to decline?<sup>24</sup>

Very little polytheistic architecture is destroyed in the fourth century.<sup>25</sup> In late 362 the statue of Apollo in Daphne burns down in a fire.<sup>26</sup> The temple of Nemesis in Daphne's Olympic stadium is destroyed in 387.<sup>27</sup> Libanius derides the monks who have been terrifying the surrounding countryside and tearing down several temples and shrines, but he also notes that they have left untouched the temples of Zeus, Tyche/Calliope, Dionysus, and Athena in the city itself.<sup>28</sup> Sandwell observes that antipagan vandalism undoubtedly occurs during Gallus's residence as well as just after the emperor Julian's departure; however, Sandwell adds, our sources' silence suggests that the damage is negligible.<sup>29</sup> These few instances of destruction hardly make a difference in Antioch's impressive collection of Greco-Roman religious architecture. Actually, a variety of factors assures the preservation of many temples. Economic crises of the third century and the growing centralization and bureaucratization of imperial power produce a curial class in the fourth century less engaged in civic euergetism.

Throughout the fourth century the number of abandoned temples increases. However, rather than destroying derelict structures, civic authorities repurpose them. In 355 the temple of the Muses becomes the residence and headquarters of the first Comes Orientalis Felicianus.<sup>30</sup> In 359, the temple of Tyche is stripped and transformed into a classroom.<sup>31</sup> In 386, the temple of Dionysus, on the side of Mount Silpius, is used by the governor Tisamenus as a tribunal.<sup>32</sup> In *Pro templis*, Libanius himself makes a plea in which he suggests that abandoned temples be repurposed as houses for tax collectors.<sup>33</sup>

Finally, we will be remiss if we overlook Julian's contribution to temple preservation. While his efforts to restore the temple of Apollo in Daphne meet with unmitigated disaster, it is not altogether destroyed. A fire that strikes the temple precinct



consumes the statue but leaves the temple walls standing. This outcome raises the interesting question of what kind of smaller divinatory practices associated with the god Apollo may have emerged after the wreckage. However, Julian has better luck with the temple of Artemis in Antioch. He orders the temple's refurbishment; his predecessor Constantius II had ordered the complete removal of its decoration.

The ancient temples of Zeus, Artemis, Dionysus, and Calliope continue to stand as formidable monuments and immovable objects in Antioch's religious landscape for quite some time. They direct the flow of the population as it moves through the streets. The buildings continue to have an impact on the ritual imagination of Antioch's inhabitants. Libanius captures the enticing power such buildings possess in his description of Antioch's temple of the Nymphs, which "attracts every eye with its gleaming marble, its coloured pillars, its glistening paintings and its wealth of springs amidst the colonnades."<sup>34</sup> Divine statuary also has a decisive effect. As people pass by the statue of Tyche or the Mouseion, they are reminded of the city's long history of divine patronage. Antioch is full of monuments to divinities, which capture the attention of inhabitants of the city and fill their imaginations. Laura Nasrallah has noted insightfully how religious discourse emerges in the "lived experience and practices in the spaces of the world."<sup>35</sup> In "our interactions with the images and architecture which surround us, by our movements through cities and other spaces," as Nasrallah well observes, our ideas of religious piety, justice, true divinity, and correct ritual practice take shape.<sup>36</sup>

This is the case in Antioch, as we will see. As the people move around and through the city's imposing religious remains, these structures—regardless of their state of decay—still continue to imprint their ritual and religious lives. Depending on the "particularities of [their] bodies . . . [some] can walk with confidence while others walk in fear, in danger" surrounded by such monumentality.<sup>37</sup> In the late fourth century, Christians who have long walked in fear and Greeks who have walked even longer with confidence and entitlement in the public environs of Antioch are in the process of experiencing a radical shift and exchange of positions that only a few generations earlier would have been inconceivable. Still, this is not a period signaling the death of polytheism. Far from it, in fact. Polytheistic practice and thought tied to actual monuments continue in forms that evolve with the changing political, social, and religious conditions of Antioch.

While the priesthoods, festivals, and sacrifices that once enlivened Antioch's temples of Zeus, Dionysus, and Athena, and Daphne's temples of Apollo and Nemesis, have disappeared, not all of the temples have as yet fallen silent. Libanius and John Chrysostom describe a city in which a number of festivals have continued to "[function] as temporal markers and also [have] shaped the daily and yearly routines . . . [and thus] forged comprehension of the self within the community and helped link the community as a whole to its shared past, present, and future."<sup>38</sup> Kalends, the popular New Year's festival, is celebrated across the empire.<sup>39</sup> It takes

place in Antioch for three days, leaving John to face a congregation that is, as Jaclyn Maxwell has vividly remarked, “at risk of being completely overwhelmed by the tyranny of ancient custom.”<sup>40</sup> In the early morning hours, people drink unmixed wine from libation bowls; at night they participate in bawdy choruses, invade the craftsmen’s quarters, knock at people’s doors, and engage in jesting. People decorate their workshops and compete for the best display of lighted lamps; marketplaces crop up everywhere since gift exchange is an important part of the festival. According to Libanius, people come from great distances to exchange gifts. During this brief respite from normal life an atmosphere of generosity and liberality spreads throughout the social hierarchy. On New Year’s Day master and servant play dice together; speech rights are given equally to all. Schoolboys do not need to fear their teachers; slaves are given freedom; servants can enjoy their leisure as well. The courts are closed; and even prisoners find a measure of respite. People view the festival as an auspicious time to read omens so that they may discern future prospects for the upcoming year. On the third and final day of the festival, chariot races are held and enthusiastically attended by the city’s inhabitants.<sup>41</sup>

Given Antioch’s love of the hippodrome, Kalends is not the only festival to include horse races. In fact, several cultic festivals, which persist well into the fourth century and even longer, feature these events. The hippodrome is a site of creative cosmological and animistic production. Ammianus Marcellinus (*Res Gestae*) describes charioteers who mix together various poisons (*L. veneficii*) in the hopes of improving their chances in the races; some charioteers’ ambitious intentions were likely to have had more gruesome ends, however, including the mandating of their beheading.<sup>42</sup> More intriguing, for our purposes, is a handful of curse tablets invoking deities and demonic beings that are among those discovered in the Princeton excavations in 1934–35. While dating to a later period in Antioch’s history (the period of the circus factions in the fifth–sixth century), the tablets warrant consideration in light of the long history of both magic and the hippodrome in Antioch. One spell draws our particular attention; it includes an invocation to Hecate and other underworld forces and asks that the infernal deities demolish and overturn the blue faction. This text holds a fascination for us because Diocletian builds an underground shrine to Hecate among other improvements at Daphne at the beginning of the fourth century. Devotees to the goddess of magic and witchcraft as well as the moon can reach the subterranean space by descending 365 steps; in fact, the remarkable descent seems to function to create an intentional, ritualized gesture toward the underworld and thus the practices of mystical if not magical practice.<sup>43</sup> Should we assume a link between the hippodrome curse text(s) naming Hecate with the Hecate shrine at Daphne? While an answer to this question will most likely forever elude us, it is worth asking nevertheless.

Descriptions of the Antiochene Kalends provide a wealth of detail. By contrast, we have very little information about most of the other festivals that take place in

the city and Daphne. Therefore it is difficult, if not impossible, to know what kind of grip these events have on citizens. In fact, only a few passages regarding the Olympic games and the Maiumas festival stand out in the meager collection of testimony for the rest of Antioch's festivals. The Olympic games take place every four years in Antioch, and we know that they occur in 386. The games, which begin in the time of Claudius, draw crowds and competitors from around the Roman Empire. Festivities last for forty-five days during July and August. Commodus builds a complex of buildings in Antioch to prepare for the Olympic games; he also has a grand temple built to Olympian Zeus, patron of the games. Commodus also orders extensive changes to Daphne, where he orders that competitors receive their laurel crowns; his improvements include a covered running track (*xystos*) near the refurbished Daphne temple of Athena. He builds a stadium at Daphne as well.<sup>44</sup> Much later, Diocletian uses the occasion of the Olympic games to strengthen his dynasty and religious revival. He turns to Daphne and rebuilds the stadium, in which he constructs temples to Olympian Zeus as well as Nemesis; the latter is destroyed in 387. Malalas also informs us that during this refurbishment, Diocletian rebuilds the temple of Apollo in Daphne.<sup>45</sup>

These construction projects renew interest in Daphne as a religious site. In addition to serving as a locus for the Olympics, Daphne is the location of a popular, old Syrian cult festival known as the Maiumas, which occurs every three years in May.<sup>46</sup> It lasts thirty days and is dedicated to Aphrodite, Dionysus, and Artemis. The Maiumas features a salacious nocturnal stage show, and the festival's popularity brings Christian and non-Christian moralists together in protest against its lewd content; as a result the festival is banned several times in the late fourth century as well as in the fifth.<sup>47</sup> As already noted in the introduction, John Chrysostom expresses extreme displeasure at how easily a lewd performance in Daphne entices Christians away from the celebration at the martyr Julian's cult site. It is debatable whether or not John is referring to the Maiumas, but at the very least he describes young male mimes who dance salaciously, and the spectacle seems to have ecstatic elements quite close to those of the Maiumas.

Soon after Kalends is the festival of Poseidon, which, like the Olympic games and other festivals, also features horse races.<sup>48</sup> The festival of Artemis takes place in May near her temple on the eastern side of town and involves a very popular boxing competition.<sup>49</sup> The festival of Calliope follows in early summer. Both theatrical shows and horse races take place during this popular festival: in fact, horse races may have continued in the festival until the late fourth century.<sup>50</sup>

The festival of Adonis occurs on July 17–18.<sup>51</sup> In late summer and early autumn, at the beginning of the wine harvest, a festival celebrates the god Dionysus.<sup>52</sup> In addition, in the early fall the Jewish High Holidays are celebrated in Antioch. John Chrysostom's *Adversus Judaeos* homilies depict how the festivals and fasts draw participants from beyond the Jewish and Greek populations. Synagogue culture attracts

Christians who are interested not only in Jewish ritual observance but also in exegetical practice. This is all quite vexing for John Chrysostom, as we will see in chapter 3.

There is no question that the civic cults and organized festivals are in an irreversible decline in John's time. That said, vivid and abrupt flashes of a marginalized polytheism can still burst through to the center of city life, bringing an experience of an enchanted atmosphere that can unexpectedly tear bodies away from their everyday routines. More surprisingly still, perhaps, is who authorized these polytheistic reprieves. In the immediate aftermath of Julian's polytheism, the post-Julianic years do not see much in the way of reversal; for example, Valens does little to change the resurgence of Greek cult. Instead, in his effort to bedevil and anger Nicene Christians, if we are to believe Theodoret of Cyrrihus, Valens allows Dionysus to enjoy his ecstatic rites in the public sphere. The god holds court in the open, visible spaces of the city as "bacchantes were running through the middle of the forum."<sup>53</sup> Does the decline of a temple cult and so then the potential destruction or abandonment of that cult's religious monuments mean that the associated divinity no longer offers any ritual power to people?

As long as something of their temples, shrines, and religious statuary remain, we follow the view that the respective divinities continue to project their presence and potency into the inhabitants' daily religious consciousness and ritual experiences. Antioch's religious structures firmly anchor a shared memory of a robust, animated polytheism into the late fourth and early fifth centuries. In their day-to-day encounters with declining temples, aging divine statuary, and other religious monuments, Antioch's various populations maintain some kind of charismatic relationship with these monuments. New and evolving conceptualizations of the animistic powers tied to these structures begin to emerge. Concurrently, divergent forms of ritual expression also emerge. Our problem is methodological: How and where might we find traces of such ritual expression?

It is not difficult to imagine the emergence of Christian ritual practice at these sites. Christians most certainly are instructed to make the sign of the cross and participate in other apotropaic gestures as they pass these demonic haunts.<sup>54</sup> We may also imagine monks performing exorcisms outside of these structures—perhaps the same "black-robed tribe who ate more than anyone" and terrorized the surrounding countryside according to Libanius.<sup>55</sup> However, Peter Brown questions the quick leap to identifying Libanius's monks as actual monks. He argues persuasively that the so-called monks may rather have been among the lower economic registers of the Christian community who were determined to secure their Christian piety through collective acts of anti-pagan violence. Moreover, Brown claims episcopal hands are never far from complicity in these actions:

Throughout the empire, bishops and laymen alike remained determined that if Christianity were to triumph through their authority, they alone should have the monopoly of the use of force.<sup>56</sup>

In his discussion of the topography of religion in late antiquity, Jonathan Z. Smith invites us to imagine other rituals emerging in the shadows of Antioch's ancient temples or at the feet of a divinity's statue. Smith describes a fundamental shift from religion practiced in a specific place—temple cult and domestic religion—to “religions of anywhere.”<sup>57</sup> Especially as the public, political, unifying aspect of civic cult begin to decline in the third and fourth centuries, religious rituals are no longer tethered exclusively to cultic tradition, temple precincts, and priestly hierarchies. Rituals of sacrifice, divination, incubation, oneiromancy, divinization, initiation, and healing (*remedia*), for example, fall into vague, shifting spaces between decaying temples and cluttered domiciles. Itinerant wonderworkers, priests, magicians, soothsayers, and, I would add, Antioch's lay citizenry become important manufacturers of late antique religion as Smith has defined it elsewhere: that is, “manifold techniques, both communal and individual, by which men and women . . . sought to gain access to, or avoidance of, culturally imagined divine power by culturally patterned means.”<sup>58</sup> These men and women have the potential to become ritual power brokers in an unsettling era of cosmological disorder and uncertainty but also advantageous supernatural abundance. It seems that the possibilities are endless. This is especially so in Antioch, where the architectural surroundings preserve the cultural memory of the city's spiritual entities. This state continues for quite some time, overwhelming—or subversively undermining—any possibility for a comfortably settled ecclesiastical and Christian topography.

Approaching the endurance of polytheism in this manner, let us turn to a collection of temples where public cultic activity has visibly, appreciably, diminished; we will consider briefly how the monuments—in this case, all dedicated to a single god—continue to shape the ritual imaginations and practices and the enchanted worldviews of different communities in Antioch. Can these religious monuments be anchoring in historical time and place what Smith has defined as the shift from locative religion to “religions of anywhere”? In their day-to-day habits and routines, people come to possess an embodied awareness of their religious architectural surroundings. The accumulated sensations (sights, smells, sounds, touches, tastes, and, we should add, emotions as well) weave easily into shared discursive memories of the robust ritual existence in Antioch, a past life of festivals, celebrations, and sacrifice in honor of the gods and goddesses.

Even though a few temples have been repurposed for secular use and a few more completely abandoned, the majority remain standing; temple cult activity will continue in many of these structures into the late 380s. In the simple activity of existing and walking around the city, people (regardless of their religious designation as Greek, Christian, or Jew) naturally develop a raw, sensory connection to their city's polytheism well into the later fourth and early fifth centuries. Throughout their existence, temples and their divine powers are part of the urban topography: the buildings bear a religious presence that spreads through and beyond the

city. Gods, goddesses, and lesser powers live in statuary and temple decoration; they live within mythologies that the theater performs and countless mosaics feature in domestic and public spaces.

Zeus, Apollo, Calliope, and the like may have received eviction notices that force them ostensibly from their ancient homes, but they never abandon Antioch. They ignite the ritual imaginations of those who pass by their abandoned or destroyed temples, or hear their stories in the theater, or walk over their mosaics; a sense of residual *dynameis* continues. In new forms of divination, healing, and protective spells, ritual agents continue to perform mythological content that sustains a kind of polytheism in Antioch. In the process of the cultivation of such rituals, the supernatural and animistic orders are transformed, reordered, and remade.<sup>59</sup> In fact, all inhabitants in Antioch participate in innovative and imaginative approaches to ritual practice. In a broader sense, as long as the religious structure exists in some form people can imprint its religious meaning and content upon smaller, moveable ritual practices.

So then the closure, abandonment, destruction, conversion, or abandonment of a temple is not tantamount to the end of its deity (and its various *dynameis*); rather, the invisible powers endure in the innovative and expanding practice of smaller rituals.<sup>60</sup> In other words, deities continue to endure as well as transform in Smith's "religions of anywhere."

In what follows, we will consider a single dream. The dream primarily revolves around acts of religious sacrilege and abhorrent sacrifice: in the dream the body of a sacrificed boy had been placed in a temple of Zeus somewhere in Antioch. Describing his dream repeatedly to different friends, Libanius proclaims, "Such news seemed to indicate spells, incantations, and attacks from sorcerers (*pharmaka de kai magganeumata kai polemon apo goētōn andrōn*)."<sup>61</sup> Dreams in late antiquity are a primary means of divine/human communication; Libanius and his closest companions know to turn immediately to the task of determining what the gods may have been trying to communicate through the obscure imagery of his dream. Consequently, some time later when someone eventually stumbles across a strange little chameleon in his lecture room, Libanius and his interlocutors set it within the framework of an oneiric discourse. They identify it as clear evidence of an evil sorcery that Libanius's dream has foretold. At last, Libanius has some insight into the horrible and inexplicable illnesses he has been experiencing for quite some time.

#### DIVINATION AND THE SITUATIONAL EVOLUTION OF RITUAL PRACTICE

In late antiquity, dream divination is one of several practices that offer a measure of religious agency and an opportunity for spiritual innovation to individuals and groups, including Libanius in Antioch. In what follows we will explore how local

religious monuments and statuary—whatever their state of repair—shape an individual's or a group's supernatural worldview and thus their religious/ritual agency within that worldview. A well-known text, Libanius's famous discussion of his discovery of a dead chameleon in his lecture hall in the late 380s provides interesting insights into the practices (individual and community) of dream divination. While scholars have focused on the chameleon for what it reveals regarding contemporary beliefs about magical practice, Libanius's dream retains our focus as we ask the following questions. How do the religious monuments and statuary in Antioch at that time inform his and his community's understanding of divinatory communication? Likewise, how do these monuments together with his dream shape the shared view of his illness?

Soon after the New Year's festival of Kalends in 386 Libanius begins to suffer from a debilitating migraine. The doctors are at a loss to explain the cause or find a cure. A mantic is the only one able to offer any beneficial advice: he advises that Libanius not open his veins. Ultimately, a dead chameleon is discovered in the hall where Libanius lectures, and the orator knows immediately that this is the cause of his suffering: a competitor has used the chameleon to place a curse on him. A disturbing dream precedes the reptile's discovery and frames its identification as a magical object. Libanius himself describes the dream:

I saw two boys who had been sacrificed, and the dead body of one was placed behind a door in the temple of Zeus. After I protested against such a sacrilege, I was told that this would be the position until evening, but that when evening came he would be buried. Such news seemed to indicate *spells, incantations, and attacks from sorcerers*. And so it turned out in actual fact, when those fears had overtaken me and except for death I desired nothing (*phoboi te ekeinoi kai plēn teleutēs oudenos epithumia*). This has been the only topic of conversation with each fresh visitor and of my prayers to heaven.<sup>62</sup>

Directly after the dream, Libanius experiences more pain, which an inexplicable onset of gout increases. Weeks later, at the point when Libanius is about to give up hope, he discovers a dead chameleon in his classroom. The dream that generated Libanius's suspicion that he is the victim of "spells, incantations, and attacks from sorcerers" is validated. The convenient discovery of a mutilated and bound chameleon justifies those suspicions; in his description Libanius attends closely to every aspect of the tiny, desiccated body as he reconstructs a profile of his enemy and the intent of the curse. Libanius notes that the chameleon's head is tucked between its hind legs, one of which is missing and the other laid across its mouth as if caught frozen in the act of silencing itself or others. He appreciates his "incredible stroke of good fortune that what had been deeply buried deep should lie above the ground."<sup>63</sup> Clearly a competing rhetor is attempting to sabotage him.

Sarah Iles Johnston has observed that in antiquity the "dream world was . . . a private world, a world shut off to anyone other than the sleeper and the gods."<sup>64</sup>

People believe dreams to be a fertile space for human/divine communication. Many dreams are invited and desired, while others are unwanted, even invasive, yet in no way less compelling. In the case of physical or mental illness, people often turn to dreams as a means of seeking divine help. Incubation, which is a very familiar form of cultic healing, lies at the center of the cult of god Asclepius, which had quickly spread throughout the ancient Mediterranean after its beginning in Epidaurus in the fourth century BCE; the god still has significant presence into late antiquity—though Antioch does not have an Asclepius cult of its own.

Aelius Aristides is one of Asclepius's most famous clients, if only because he leaves behind a sacred diary detailing his two-year stay at Pergamum.<sup>65</sup> While we have no evidence of an Asclepian cult in Antioch, Daphne, as we have seen, has the Matrona caves, a Jewish holy site, which purportedly provides incubatory cures.<sup>66</sup> These kinds of sites often have religious/medical specialists on hand to help in translating the received divine messages into therapeutic prescriptions.

The incubation cults continue to be popular well into the fifth and sixth centuries. There are other options for those incapable or unwilling to travel to cult sites; one can find relief through a more intimate, personalized kind of ritual practice. *Papyri Graecae Magicae* (henceforth *PGM*) offers numerous texts depicting divination through dreams: some are requested, some sent in a more hostile manner. Several examples of ritual texts invite the gods into dreams. The range of gods and cosmological personalities is wide and varied. Spells invoke Apollo, Osiris, and the archangel Michael, together with Besas (who has to be cautioned against using treachery), “the Bear,” Sabaoth, Raphael, and Gabriel.<sup>67</sup> The spells also range in form from long and complex to brief, even abrupt. Many make the intriguing request for the true form of a god or one of many forms. A significant number of the spells contain space for tailored, individualized requests for information. In other words, these spells are not casual, open-ended expeditions. The shape of the request for information suggests instead that individuals are driven to these ritual measures out of a precise need. The ritual practitioner can complete the act within the privacy of his or her own home at a time of his or her own convenience. But many of these spells do require preparations involving sacrificial practice, again on a small scale.

The following examples help place Libanius's own experience in its proper context. Both texts (*PGM* 5.370–446) feature Hermes. The texts describe an elaborate ritual involving the creation of a small figure of the god. He is molded out of a mixture composed of leaves picked from a laurel tree, virgin earth, wormwood seeds, and wheat meal, among other elements. An unpolluted boy must carry the separate ingredients before they are pounded together and shaped into an image of Hermes. Someone else then recites a lengthy spell. After several lines of aretology, that person finally reaches his main request:

In your own form both graciously appear and graciously render the task for me, a pious man, and render your form gracious to me, NN, that I may comprehend



you by your skills of prophecy, by your own wondrous deeds. I ask you, lord, be gracious to me and without deceit appear and prophesy to me.<sup>68</sup>

After this, the spell is inscribed on a piece of papyrus and affixed on an image or a statue of the god Hermes; then the person who is performing the ritual goes to sleep with the god resting near his head.

A second spell, *PGM* XII.144–52, presents a very similar text, though the ritual preparations are less elaborate. In this case the spell is written on a linen strip in myrrh ink and then wrapped in an olive branch and placed beneath the left side of the head before sleeping on a rush mat on the ground. The instructions call for quail blood to be used as ink also. Finally, we may note a more aggressive tone with Hermes:

Come to me here quickly, you who have the power. I call upon you, the one appointed god of gods over the spirits, to show this to me in dreams. I conjure [you] by your father, Osiris, and Isis, your mother, to show me one of your forms, and reveal concerning the things I want.<sup>69</sup>

While the idea of controlling one's dreams or having the ritual ability to open up one's dream life to divine communication is compelling, it has its darker side. People can bind demons to the task of sending dreams to their enemies; such dreams, of a less than salubrious nature, are known as *oneiropompeia*. As Johnston has noted, these dreams inspire fear in many regarding the unprotected nature of the dreamscape. *PGM* provides some rather disturbing examples of this type.<sup>70</sup> Neither of these types fit in Libanius's case, however. He does not mention ritual preparation. Nor does he express fear that someone intending harm has sent the dream. In light of his unhesitating acceptance of—even insistence upon—the dream's prognosticating power, a third possibility seems the most probable: the god(s) sent the dream freely.

Greco-Roman literature from the *Iliad* to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and the *Aeneid* contains examples of this type of communication with divinity.<sup>71</sup> In an incubatory state, a dreaming person can come into contact with one divinity or more than one. When a person wakes from the dream world, he may be left with confusing, if not inscrutable, fragments of some kind of divine message. A careful examination of the divination text is necessary.

People believe that demonic invasion can endanger this mode of human/divine communication: demons can corrupt the message or send their own as counterfeit. While incubation cult sites have religious experts ready to interpret messages, Libanius wakes up in his home. Thus it is important to note that he shares his dream quickly and widely with his trusted community. We can imagine friends and family well rehearsed in the art of transforming a dream into an object for interpretation, scrutinizing it for clues to Libanius's condition. They place his dream precisely into the aetiology of his illness and the context of a discussion regarding dream divination: the dream is a puzzle to decode, and the first question

to answer is, What kind of dream is it? The dream is not *enhupnia* or *phantasmata*—in other words, garbled nonsense. And someone else has not sent it—that is, it is not an aggressive act of *oneiropompeia*. While Libanius has not invited the dream, the divine message is not unwelcome: the god in question is Zeus. Libanius's good fortune is due—no doubt—to his good standing as a tireless defender of *Hellēnismos* in Antioch.

The dream indicates—if nothing else—Zeus's relevance in the lives of Libanius and his trusted circle; this god is still an active, communicating divinity in the orator's life as late as 386. This is not surprising given Zeus's firm and protective grip on Antioch from the city's beginning; his temples and statues still have an impressive architectural hold on the landscape in Libanius's time. Along with Apollo, Zeus still has great honor in the city as one of the patron deities of the Seleucids. According to Malalas, a temple of Zeus Bottiaios is the first temple built by Seleucus in Antioch when he founds the city. In the early imperial period Commodus builds a temple to Zeus Olympius in Antioch in honor of the Olympic games; Diocletian builds a temple to Zeus Olympius in Daphne. Zeus Kasios is worshipped at a temple at Seleucia and on Mount Kasios from the Hellenistic period; the temple there is described as "dark with clouds."<sup>72</sup> Zeus on Mount Kasios is visited by three Roman emperors: Trajan, Hadrian, and Julian. According to Libanius, Julian partakes in a more personalized, even intimate, contact with the god, befitting an age touched by theurgy. In his description of Julian's visit to worship Zeus on Mount Kasios, Libanius explains that Julian "saw the god and after seeing him . . . received advice."<sup>73</sup> He continues that Zeus, "[as] one of the immortals descended from heaven, took [Julian] by the hair, spoke to him, and after listening to [Zeus's] answer [Julian] departed."<sup>74</sup> In his descriptions of Julian's intimate counsel with Zeus, Libanius describes a shift in the religious imagination surrounding the god, which had begun long before in the reign of Maximinus Daia. In his *Historia ecclesiastica*, Eusebius of Caesarea describes a statue in honor of Zeus Philius erected in Antioch by an apparent city official named Theotecnus. One can, with a little patience, read through the Eusebian anti-pagan language to catch a glimpse and confirm that Neoplatonic theurgy was involved in the statue worship:

[Theotecnus] ended by erecting a statue of Zeus the befriender (*filiou*, i.e., Jupiter Philius) with certain juggleries and sorceries (*magganeiais tisin kai goēteiais*), and having devised (*epinoēsas*) unhallowed rites (*teletas te anagnous*) for it and ill-omened initiations (*muēseis akallierētous*) and abominable purifications (*exagistous katharmous*), he exhibited his wonderworking by what oracles he pleased, even in the Emperor's presence. And moreover this fellow, in order to flatter and please him who was ruling, stirred up the demon against the Christians (*epegeirei kata Christianōn ton daimona*), and said that the god, forsooth, had given orders that the Christians should be driven away beyond the borders of the city and country round about, since they were his enemies.<sup>75</sup>

According to Libanius, this statue is also a favored visitation site of Julian—a particularly interesting point given the emperor’s theurgic interests as well as his disappointments at other temple sites in Antioch. We may indeed have a situation in which Julian himself does a great deal to advance the personalized, intimate human/divine communication with the divinity of Zeus during his time in the city—a ritualization process not lost on Libanius, it would seem.

Perhaps when Libanius describes his dream of the defiled Zeus temple he provides a glimpse of an unexpected instance in which his conscious grasp of Antioch’s religious topography overlaps with his own personal and deeply religious subconscious. When he and his friends begin to discuss the dream, Libanius participates in transforming its meaning. He also reconfigures or reconfirms the identity of Zeus, who stands once more as a powerful, divine, communicating power in Antioch. This discursive process does not serve to weaken the force and authority of Zeus tied to certain temples and statuary in and around the city. It does the opposite. In their collective conversations (about dreams, omens, curses, and so forth), Libanius and his companions, all absolute devotees of *Hellēnismos*, look to the abandoned temples, the aging statuary and shrines, and they see something else. These religious structures provide an anchor for modified, deeply personalized, and intensified modes of ritual communication between the divine and human beings. Libanius’s dream is perhaps for Libanius and his companions, as it is for us, a rare opportunity. For Libanius and his friends, the dream offers proof of continuing communication with the gods of old, and in a manner of translative ease, relatively speaking. For us it offers a rare opportunity to catch a glimpse of a transformative process, one in which a random, nonsensical dream gestates into a precious moment of admonitory divine/human contact.

On the face of it, a dream of a sacrificed boy in a temple of Zeus is quite a stretch from Libanius’s final self-diagnosis as a victim of *goēteia*. This alone could justify dismissing the dream altogether as the fanciful musings of a feverish orator. And yet, viewed from a different angle, it is the only way to read Libanius’s dream. The young corpse (an untimely death, associated with magic) is an especially vile sacrilege in a god’s temple; such a blasphemous transgression in a divine, ritual space would alert Libanius to the possibility of an object of *goēteia* in locations in his own surroundings that were in a sense “sacred” to him. More important to note, perhaps, is the fact that Libanius does not come to these conclusions alone. From almost the moment he awakes, his dream transforms into a discursive object, which he shares with his intimate circle. Libanius and his community know well the temples and statues in Antioch dedicated to Zeus; more to the point, they also experience the architecture and its geography as the Antiochenes spend their lives (secular and/or religious) walking around or through and, of course, pausing with ritual intent within or near these structures. Libanius and his companions are able to read the meanings of the Zeus cult easily. There are numerous possibilities. In

this case the presence of the Zeus temple in Libanius's dream indicates the god's protective patronage.

These religious monuments help to maintain Libanius's and his friends' sense of *Hellēnismos* in Antioch. Libanius's dream and the question of its divinatory function spark discussion among friends and family; it also affects their actions. In their many conversations, Libanius rehearses the details of the dream; he and his community's perception of their environment mold to those details. His companions begin to search for signs that someone is practicing ritual sacrilege against Libanius. Libanius claims fearfully that some of his friends have divined his death. Other companions insist that he arrest those whom they suspect of performing secret curses. Inevitably, their shifting perceptions enable not just Libanius but his friends and family to catch the hidden truth of *goēteia* in the twisted body of a dead chameleon in the corner of a classroom. Libanius's dream of temple defilement sparks a discourse that produces a tightly knit community that searches out a supernatural and nefarious cause behind his illness. This community finally finds a cure: they collectively discover something foul and dead lying in his classroom, polluting the great orator in his own "temple." With the curse exposed, Libanius's community is now motivated to oversee his return to health.

While the thriving cults to Zeus, which existed a century before, or for that matter a generation earlier, are gone, the divinity and animistic forces associated with his temples and statuary still loom large in the daily lives of many within Antioch. These animate forces and powers inform people's decisions, actions, and movements on a daily basis, as we see in the case of Libanius's dream. The mode and manner of communication between human/divine is now more intimate and individuated, but, intriguingly, it still traffics in images of temples, statues, shrines, and traditional rituals of the king of the gods. Language and imagery rescued from a declining civic cult can still create a strong sense of community in Antioch.

In what follows we continue this line of exploration. What kinds of supernatural and demonic forces are maintained or evolve into something new as people in Antioch engage in a wide array of ritual practice?

#### SPIRITS OF THE MARKETPLACE

All of the major highways and roads linking the western reaches of the Roman Empire with realms beyond Persia run through Antioch. As a result, Antioch is home to one of the richest collections of marketplaces in late antiquity. On the main Roman street, shops that nestle in between the columns of the street's colonnade eventually multiply to encroach on the wide avenue.<sup>76</sup> This is only one of many locations of commerce throughout the city. Scholars have shown that Antioch's marketplaces contribute significantly to the city's sociocultural, economic, and political vitality. As highly charged, volatile environments, the markets func-

tion as a natural catalyst for attempts to secure powerful spiritual aid through various ritual means on a daily basis. Consequently, these spaces enrich the complexity and abundance of the city's animistic atmosphere.

Libanius and John Chrysostom describe a highly diverse collection of merchants and craftsmen in Antioch: bakers, greengrocers, silversmiths, goldsmiths, tavern keepers, barbers, stonemasons, perfumers, metalworkers, cobblers, weavers, and sellers of cheese, vinegar, figs, and wood. The markets are large, varied, and economically fickle throughout the fourth century. Guilds, which were formed to protect the interests of merchants and craftsmen, only fuel the already fierce competition. Archaeological evidence has uncovered the ruthless nature of this competition. Excavations by Princeton University in 1934–35 uncovered a number of curse tablets in Antioch and Daphne dated to the third–fourth century.<sup>77</sup> A large number relate to the marketplace. Most importantly for our purposes, the presence of curse tablets in Antioch's marketplaces attests to local belief in anyone's ability to compel demons and other supernatural entities to inflict harm upon other human beings.

As John G. Gager has shown, curse tablets are ubiquitous throughout the ancient Mediterranean world; they provide an accessible ritual means of seeking justice and revenge.<sup>78</sup> The curse tablet generally consists of a sheet of lead on which are inscribed magic formulae and symbols. Certain rituals are performed over the tablet—including incantation utterances as well as sacrificial practices. After this, the tablet is often buried in a body of water or placed in the grave of someone who died young. Two of the discovered tablets were found in a well or cistern off the courtyard of the House of the Calendar situated at the base of Mount Staurin on the northeast side of the city. Both tablets are directed against a greengrocer named Babylas. The inscriptions on the tablets invoke Iao and Seth as well as other demons to bind Babylas, “to lay him low, to sink him like lead, to destroy his animals and his house in general.” Florent Heintz, who discusses these and other curse texts, has explained that to find his prey expeditiously, the demon was provided with precise detail.<sup>79</sup> In addition to providing the demon with the exact location in the vegetable stall, the curse tablet lists three different names for Babylas's mother, presumably to aid the demon in his hunt. The inscribed invocation features the names of multiple deities to ensure demonic compliance. In light of the marketplace's competitive atmosphere, Heintz suggests that rival greengrocers commissioned the tablets. Silke Trzcionka reaches a similar conclusion, contending that “financial sabotage was the intention of both tablets.”<sup>80</sup>

While it seems clear that Babylas has multiple and motivated enemies, he is hardly helpless. Antioch's marketplaces offer far more to the consumer than the products of bakers, blacksmiths, and cobblers. As Heintz has surmised, such artifacts and descriptions attest to the presence of magic workshops in Antioch throughout late antiquity. Magic workers would surely be advertising an ability

both to stymie their clients' competition and to protect their businesses' interests. All forms of magic—protective, performance-enhancing, and aggressive—are predicated on a widespread belief in a magician's ability to engage or ward off supernatural entities by calling on other, more powerful forces. Heintz speaks specifically to the marketing and selling of such ritual manipulations as common strategies in "enhancing the economic position and social status of the magician's client."<sup>81</sup> We can imagine magic workers feeding well off the competition produced in Antioch's many markets and possibly being drawn to Antioch for this reason. A Syrian silver phylactery discovered in Antioch and dated to the fourth or fifth century may also testify to the activities of magicians in the city. The object consists of a sheet of metal originally rolled up and placed inside a cylindrical case. It was probably worn as a pendant.<sup>82</sup> The Greek inscription starts with an invocation to thirty-six magical entities who are hailed as "holy, mighty and powerful names of great Necessity" and asked them all to "preserve and protect from all witchcraft and sorcery, from curse tablets, from those who died an untimely death, from those who died violently and from every evil thing, the body, the soul and every limb of the body of Thomas, whom Maxima bore, from this day forth through his entire time to come."<sup>83</sup> We might imagine Babylas seeking to purchase such an object from a magician, especially if he has heard rumors that his own business has been targeted.

Because of the city's proximity to Persia, someone like Babylas, and indeed others whose livelihood depend on the marketplace, faces another, very different kind of problem. As Roman-Persian tensions intensify in the fourth century, imperial eyes turn their attention to Antioch. In 337, Constantius II arrives and remains until 354. He oversees a substantial buildup of the military, a trend that continues long after his death. The military expansion, together with a growing imperial bureaucracy, affects—and often radically destabilizes—the city's socioeconomic dynamics. The sudden population growth puts a strain on the city's resources, as several food shortages in the 380s eventually demonstrate.<sup>84</sup> While the growth of the military and the ruling bureaucracy can offer financial advantages, more often than not it produces the opposite, as J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz has observed:

Ordinary shopkeepers and craftsmen had to submit to numerous abuses. The tavern-keepers suffered from the officials of the three high dignitaries who had their headquarters in Antioch, and from other persons of power such as *agentes in rebus*. All exploited their rank to obtain goods, particularly drinks, without paying for them. Even local or semi-local officials, the *curator* and *defensor*, abused their very limited power to the [financial] loss of the shopkeepers. The garrison . . . joined in the exploitation. These soldiers carried off everything there was in the shops, and if there was no meat, nor anything else that appealed to them, they took money. This suggests that the soldiers were exploiting an obligation on the part of the shops to supply the soldier's rations.<sup>85</sup>

Abuses perpetrated by soldiers and the imperial entourage destabilize a fragile economic market. Vulnerable tradesmen, who may already be suffering from competitors' magical attacks, now have to protect themselves from high officials' and soldiers' intimidation and exploitation. Magicians, who sell protective spells and curses, will have been among the few to benefit in such difficult times. The archaeological evidence, though not overwhelming, certainly indicates that this business endures through and beyond the fourth century. In light of the tradesmen's acute vulnerability to the abuses Liebeschuetz describes, we may easily envisage a steady stream of magicians' clients who request both spells of protection and curses for revenge.

Let us step a bit beyond Liebeschuetz's comments and discuss certain dangers during this tumultuous time that take us beyond the realm of the strictly economic. As soldiers multiply in and around the city, magicians gain new clients, or maintain magical production, for an entirely different reason: for bodily protection. The danger of sexual assault against women is quite real at this time—as it is at any time in the (late) ancient world. Soldiers are used to exploiting their privileges over shopkeepers, innkeepers, and craftsmen. How, then, might we imagine the young women in their households? Are their daughters forced to live in close proximity to undisciplined soldiers accustomed to laying claim to “free” goods? A young woman (and her family) from a low, unprotected position in society are relatively helpless to secure sufficient protection or seek justice in the aftermath of an assault.

More than one of Antioch's martyr cults highlight the cruel social fact of rape; more intriguingly still, such cults tie the threat of sexual abuse to Roman soldiers. In the martyria outside the city are the celebrated tombs of Domnina and her virgin daughters Bernike and Prosdoke, who during the Diocletian persecution chose to drown themselves rather than suffer probable rape by passing Roman soldiers.<sup>86</sup> Antioch is also home to the popular cult of Pelagia, a young virgin who jumped from a roof to escape a similar fate: an annual festival had evolved to honor her bravery as well.<sup>87</sup> Cult sites such as these can provide a place of solicitous prayer as well as tearful solace for young women exposed to sexual dangers. The locations may also be places of mental and emotional refuge after the fact of an assault; it is not difficult to imagine these sites developing forms of supernatural power of both protection and revenge tailored for the vulnerable and possibly abused female.

While we may never know how the martyr cults may have offered help to women, we do know that magicians offer amuletic protection of some kind. A silver amulet found in a grave near Beirut provides valuable insight into the kind of protection a young woman in Antioch may have sought.<sup>88</sup> A thin band engraved with 121 short lines of text was rolled up and placed in a bronze cylinder and worn around the neck as a protective amulet. The third- or fourth-century amulet adjures

an unnamed power, quite possible a corpse demon (*nekydaimon*), to protect its owner Alexandra from a variety of evils, which included “every demon and from every compulsion of demons, and from demons and sorceries and binding-spells.” The spell assures the help of a demonic power by invoking a large collection of angelic powers; it identifies their names and their areas of influence. Angels are named who “sit” (*ho kathēmenos*) over the first through the seventh heavens, the sea, rivers, and, mountains as well as roads, cities, and streets. Finally, after completing the long list of angelic powers, the spell issues the direct request for help:

[P]rotect Alexandra whom Zoê bore from daimones and sorceries and dizziness and from all passion and from all frenzy. I adjure you by the Living God in Zoar of the nomadic Zabadeans, the one who thunders and lightnings . . . that (?) all male and frightening daimones and all bindings-spells (flee) from Alexandra whom Zoê bore, to beneath the founts and the Abyss of Mareôth, lest you harm or defile her, or use magic drugs on her, either by a kiss, or from an embrace, or a greeting; either with food or drink; either in bed or intercourse; either by the evil eye or a piece of clothing; as she prays (?), either on the street or abroad; or while river-bathing or a bath. Holy and might and powerful names, protect Alexandra from every daimon, male and female, and from every disturbance of daimones of the night and of the day. Deliver Alexandra whom Zoê bore, now; now; quickly, quickly. One God and his Christ, help Alexandra.<sup>89</sup>

While this was found in Beirut, it is likely that amulets of a similar nature would have been used in Antioch.<sup>90</sup> The spell projects a palpable sense of a constant fear of victimization and an anxious, yet pragmatic, belief that there are innumerable dangers that can harm those who are ritually unprotected in a city. This invites the question, How many people would have risked walking in Antioch without some form of apotropaic protection? The ritual text from Beirut (and hundreds of others like it) offers the impression that demons have overrun the environment and are ready for any compulsory call to bind (to) anyone in an erotic spell or a curse. But demons also have to respond promptly to a person’s ritual of expulsion or exorcism, if properly performed. Demons have to play by the rules; they have no voluntary power of movement—in general.<sup>91</sup> While the human body is always in danger of suffering victimization in some kind of demonic attack, a person has the ability to defend him/herself and fight back through his/her own ritual manipulations.

Another area of demonic production to consider is the “demimonde” of prostitution—especially in Antioch in light of the theater’s popularity.<sup>92</sup> The magician in his workshop, the aging prostitute turned procuress, the old woman healer/magic worker—each may be in the business of crafting *agōgē* spells for the socially elite *hetaira*, the common *pornē* in the backstreet brothel, or the occasional wife who wishes to reclaim her husband from an aggressive prostitute or slave. As Christopher Faraone has convincingly argued, the *hetaira* cultivates an aggressive mascu-



linity in order to sustain socioeconomic autonomy.<sup>93</sup> Her use of erotic magic is completely natural—a tool of the trade in a cutthroat world. Her ability to manufacture spells on her own would be a sign of how much she excels at all aspects of her craft. Though Faraone deals with a much earlier period, he proposes that we can find magic-wielding prostitutes in late antiquity, resting his claim primarily on the evidence of John Chrysostom. This presents an intriguing possibility: that *het-airai* and the socially lower *pornai* contribute to the production of an animated environment. To a certain extent, whether or not this is actually the case is irrelevant; people believe that a prostitute has to possess a certain degree of magical knowledge. Incantations, love potions, necromantic practices, and the like are all a part of her trade, tools that help her to maintain the affection of her client, even to do away with his wife in extreme cases. Moreover, literature as well as texts included in *PGM* portray erotic magic and the *agōgē* spell itself as an especially feared and frightening form of magic that blurs the divide between a demon and a human being. Greco-Roman and late antique Christian literature contain examples that graphically display the dehumanizing effects of the *agōgē* spells: those targeted become screaming, frantic, crazed, and raving victims.<sup>94</sup>

What all these practices communicate to us is that people in late antiquity cannot afford to close their eyes to an invisible reality of demons and other suprahuman entities. In fact, their practices—their fears, concerns, jealousies, and hatreds—help to create and regenerate the material realities (ritual practices, objects, and buildings) of demons and other forces or powers. The archaeological and literary record offers a picture of Antioch's citizens engaged in rituals of binding and loosening, expelling, and casting away demons and other kinds of cosmological beings in an effort to live day to day in what can be an unforgiving urban environment.

To that end, the concept of the “magic workshops” provides a handy, hypothetical location(s)—an anchor within Antioch's topography—to consider the production and dissemination of demonic and general animistic knowledge. Spells for horse races, erotic spells, protection against erotic spells, incantations for healing, divination spells, and curse texts are among the many kinds of ritual products recovered in excavations and recorded in the literary record. In much of the recovered material, as well as in comparable evidence from places nearby, we find wide-ranging references to demonic powers as the central mechanism of ritual agency. Those who make and sell these ritual texts (whether they are magicians or other kinds of ritual experts), as well as those who purchase them, are engaged in the production and regulation of demonic and supernatural knowledge. They also contribute to the commodification of that knowledge. A supply-and-demand principle guides the local cultivation of Antioch's spiritual worldview. People with a particular need for protection, love, revenge, and truth, for example, seek out the available magician or other ritual expert (e.g., Greek priest, Christian monk, or rabbi) to whom deities, demons, demigods, and powerful names offer the most

power. Which spells are efficacious? What are the costs? Who are the most reliable practitioners of magic? Such questions drive the production of animistic and demonic knowledge in the city of Antioch.

In chapter 2 we turn to consider how well attuned John Chrysostom is to this situation. We will explore the manner in which he uses demons to combat people's inveterate and inherent ritual sense of various supernatural powers in the city. John does not deny the efficacy of non-Christian ritual practices or reject the reality of the supernatural powers populating populations. Instead, he does the opposite. He begs his congregants to seek refuge within the protective walls of the church. He understands the pressing weight of the supernatural populations' threat; in fact, he amplifies it. He speaks repeatedly and graphically of the dangers in non-Christian rituals and enhances those dangers until the only effective apotropaic and protective rituals left are sacramental and ecclesiastical. He claims that the charismatic power that a non-Christian ritual practitioner displays—and whispers into the ears of John's own congregants—comes from the devil himself. And then John turns around and offers to perform an exorcism to expel the pollution the congregant has contracted. In other words, Chrysostom attempts to diabolize the rituals and related spiritual orders in Antioch; being the golden-mouthed priest of Antioch, John transforms the practice of diabolization into a rhetorical art as well as an impressive ritual practice.

However, a particular kind of Antioch is easily able to withstand and survive John's demonology and diabolization. And in fact, the depth of ritual life in the city is such that even this far into the Christian period Antiochene bodies are invested with profoundly complex, multilayered ritual knowledge and a living, evolving knowledge of the surrounding invisible forces empowering those rituals. People have tremendous power to create through ritual practice a wide range of animistic powers subversive or indifferent to the processes of Christianization. To that end, Antioch harbors the potential for tremendous religious and ritual transformation and rejuvenation outside the realm of Christianity for quite some time.