

## INTRODUCTION



### *What is Goetia?*

**F**IRSTLY, A WORD ABOUT WHAT GOETIA IS NOT. Many people with some acquaintance with occult literature will associate goetia with the first book of the *Lemegeton*, the *Goetia of Solomon the King*; which deservedly or not is nowadays perhaps the most famous of the grimoires. Indeed, in Aleister Crowley's *Book IV*, all the references to goetia involve this grimoire and nothing else. However, this first book of the *Lemegeton* originates in mid-seventeenth century England, whereas the term goetia is ancient Greek, so clearly there is some distance between the date of the grimoire and the origins of goetia.

This significant distance is unconsidered in popular usage, and even among many modern authors. It is not uncommon to hear such expressions as goetic demons or even goetias when referring to the spirits of this grimoire; which could be acceptable were it applied equally to demons of other grimoires, which it is not. This restricted usage is inaccurate in other ways and one in particular is of interest here. In English, the word magician derives from magic, the person taking their name from their art. Two other words used for magician in Greek follow similar lines, *pharmakos* refers to the use of drugs, and *epodos* to the use of chants; only *magos* does not follow this rule, and that is a loan word from Persian, its relationship to magic being possibly perceived rather than actual. By contrast, the term goetia derives from a word indicating a person, a rare case of the art taking its name from the artist. Such a person was termed a *goes*. Goetia is related primarily to the identity of the operator, and only secondarily to their art or perceptions of it. Additionally the evocation of 'evil spirits', while relevant to the original context of goetia, and central to

its later significance, does not define the operator's principal role or the original purpose of their activities.

The word *goes* relates to terms describing the act of lamenting at funeral rites; the mournful howling considered as a magical voice. These magical tones can guide the deceased to the underworld, and raise the dead. This is the root of the long connection of goetia with necromancy, which has come to be termed black magic.

Authors from Cornelius Agrippa to Mathers and Waite use the term goetic of most of the grimoires, particularly the darker ones. The recent fame of the *Goetia of Solomon* has obscured the long association of the term with supposed black magic generally.

From Agrippa the negative associations of the word goetia go back beyond the medieval period into Classical antiquity. Therefore, it might appear feasible that goetia is a very old word for black magic. However, in Greek use magic was a term derived from a Persian root, whereas goetia originates within the Greek language. In the history of Western magic, not only did goetia come first, it possessed a character that distinguished it from many later forms. In its original form, goetia did not involve the same worldview or assumptions as later magic of the approved Judæo-Christian type. The circumstances in which it competed unsuccessfully for a time are no longer applicable, and the old assumptions increasingly questioned. Unfortunately, since magic is a specialized, largely amateur pursuit in the West, the old cultural assumptions linger in many forms, with an occasional nod in the direction of the new.

Before postmodernism, the differences between goetia and mainstream Western magic involved certain cultural assumptions about what constitutes Western civilization and what constitutes 'primitive' religion; including those ideas inherited by nineteenth century occultists. These notions have impeded clarity in the Western tradition of magic. In order to express this more clearly some of the old assumptions regarding Westernism require deconstruction, or at least to be identified. There were two main strands to the late modern view of Western civilization: the Judæo-Christian on the one hand and the Classical or Neo-Classical on the other; each with their subdivisions, alliances and differences. This

bipolar superstructure while overly simplistic is nevertheless useful in understanding Western magic. Of course, in reality Northern European cultures played a large role in the evolution of Western civilization, magic included, but so long as we recognize it as a generalization, this idea has some use even now. It is in this sense then that my direction in writing is more towards a deconstructed Classicism than a deconstruction of Judæo-Christian tradition.

The over emphasis on the Judæo-Christian elements in the grimoires has long obscured the immense contribution of the Græco-Roman or Hellenistic world to Western magic. Ancient Jewish and Christian traditions were but parts of this world. In this deconstruction of the old view of the Classical world, its importance to Western magic as a whole is re-evaluated, not only in the past but also in the immediate present and into the future. To avoid misunderstanding, this is not a strictly academic approach, though availing itself of modern studies. The study of interpretations of history is termed historiography, and I avail myself of this term to indicate that interpretation to a definite end rather than strictly scientific use of literary and other evidence is the purpose here. Besides literary and archeological evidence, I also employ real geographical, ethnological and migratory foci. This is in order to deconstruct the old assumptions regarding the superiority of Greek over Pelasgian and other cultures which are equally a part of the Greek legacy. By means of this apparatus, I hope to elucidate and reinterpret Western magic and its relation to the wider world, both ancient and postmodern.

This approach serves a dual purpose, underlining the aspects of this lore most relevant to goetic magic, not only historically but also in contemporary practice. This, rather than a straightforward study of Greek religion, is the intent throughout. To accomplish this requires an interpretative method which necessarily differs in purpose and practice from impartial academic and archaeological evaluation of evidence. Traditional methods of philosophical speculation employed Greek myth as emblems of moral or cosmological truths; the approach here both follows and departs from this precedent. As will be further elucidated in our discussion of myth, the aspects of myth and history emphasized differ, as does the

practical purpose served. This purpose is neither impartial historical understanding nor a re-enactment style historical reconstruction nor even Hellenic neo-paganism. It serves an emergent synthesis of global magic produced by cultural forces active in our own time, in which Western magic is fused with influences from the New World and elsewhere. These Afro-Hispanic influences, essentially spiritist in nature, have strong affinities with earlier phases of Western magic. In order to facilitate the fusion to maximum effect, these earlier phases and their contributions to modern magic require elucidation.

The last great synthesis of magic occurred in the Hellenistic world; formulated in the great schools of Neoplatonism and Hermeticism, and incorporating astrology and the Græco-Egyptian roots of alchemy. Major factors in these fusions were the older traditions of Chaldean star-lore and Greek goetia. Although modern occultists often imagine the roots of their tradition lie in the Kabbalah, this is in fact a medieval system that did not enter Western magic until the Renaissance: with Mirandola and Agrippa in the 1490s. Even then, Kabbalah, and in particular those parts of Kabbalah incorporated in modern magic, involve a good deal of earlier Hellenistic origin.

The Spheres of the Primum Mobile, fixed stars, the seven planets and the Earth were integral parts of the Neoplatonist astronomical model. Thus, the order of the planets corresponding to the sefirot of the Tree of Life essentially originates in Neoplatonism and Ptolemaic astrology. The connection of these categories with letters, names and numbers by modern ritual magicians, whether they follow Agrippa or the Golden Dawn, also derives directly from Neoplatonist pagan magicians. Nor is this a superficial resemblance; Neoplatonism is – after all – the origin of the Logos doctrine fundamental to Christian theology, and the deity without attributes central to that of the Kabbalists.

For the first time since the Hellenistic era, a new global magical synthesis has the potential to emerge. Given cultural conditions in the West and elsewhere, this potential *will* be realised. What needs to be asked is, what part will Western traditions play in it, and what aspects of Western magic are most compatible with New World and other magical traditions? In

order to answer these questions it is important to bear in mind that the Greeks were in prolonged contact with both African and Indian traditions, making Western a very ambivalent expression. Given the globalisation of modern culture and the importance of Afro-Hispanic traditions from the New World in modern magic, looking beyond the recent emphasis on Kabbalah in Western ceremonial magic is necessary to achieve a workable synthesis.

It is my contention that goetic magic, properly understood, is the most important fundamental element Western magic has to contribute to the melting pot, being most compatible with magical practices from the other cultures concerned. In order for this to take place, a major reappraisal of goetic magic is necessary. In the academic world, this has already occurred in large part, but it remains necessary among Western magicians and their contacts in the other traditions. Naturally, despite the usefulness of academic studies, the requirements for this are rather different. It is to these different requirements that my study is geared, and while this requires saying, it does not require an apology.

### *Chthonia Lost*

Many authors have expended considerable energy distinguishing magic from religion, without much effect. In reality, magical rites often include remnants of religious traditions older than those currently in favour. As recollection of the original context recedes such survivals are either devalued and demonised or heavily disguised and redefined. Negative perceptions then replace the former prestige and power of the older tradition. Even after deconstructing unsympathetic interpretations, our perceptions can never be those of the original participants in these traditions in their various historical phases over many years. Therefore, while deconstructing an outworn historical view of myth is the method, the intent is a mythic view of history.

Franz Cumont's book *Chaldean Magic* speaks of Persian magic entering Greek use around the time of the Persian Wars. He says that a *Book of*

*Ostanes*: was the origin of the magic substituted from that time forth for the coarse and ancient rites of Goetia. As can be seen from accounts of them in Herodotus, the rites of the Magi known to the Greeks seem in the main to have been pre-Zoroastrian, and no less coarse and ancient in many respects. More recent studies suggest that far from being replaced what we know as goetia took its historical form around this time, principally through the new movement known as Orphism. This was, as will be shown, a reform of more ancient chthonic elements in Greek religion, incorporating eastern ideas. Despite occasional use of the term *magos* these eastern influences were not Zoroastrian; they originated chiefly in Crete, Asia Minor and Chaldea, while at the same time Orphism retained much that was innately Greek.

In other words, this was actually more of a transfusion than a replacement; and in many ways revitalized and transformed ancient chthonic traditions; as Orphism actively concerned itself with Thracian and Pelasgian traditions, while introducing Eastern elements at the same time. The *Book of Ostanes* does not represent an entirely new current. In history, but not its preceding myth, goetia *began* rather than died out with the advent and evolution of these Magian rites. Many features of old Greek rituals underwent a major transformation around this time, as religion transformed from family and tribal cults to city cults; and it is precisely then that goetia appears.

In the past, understanding this transformation was complicated by a curious phenomenon in the history of magic, its foreign-ness whether actual or supposed. Goetia was foreign to the Greeks in several ways, in mythic terms it was associated with Dionysus in whom foreign-ness or outsider status was an intrinsic principle. This quality of the god was further reinforced by association with survivals of Pelasgian traditions and the cults of foreign deities such as Cybele. These were all essentially chthonic in nature. Outsider status is extremely frequently associated with demonic figures in religion, and it is remarkable that despite these associations Dionysus retained and even enhanced his divine status.

The chthonic realm was essentially coexistent with the celestial world in Greek religion; it only became demonised after the rise of more exclu-

sive ouranian or celestial emphases in later religions. However, the difference in perspective and emphasis, and the association with foreign and lower class practices, contributed to making the goetic rites and traditions increasingly repugnant to the urban literati. This prejudice significantly assisted further subsequent demonisation, but at that time goetia was neither legislated against nor persecuted. It was an accepted part of the culture, that happened to be unpopular with intellectuals. The old idea that the chthonic and celestial emphases in Greek religion were the products of different cultures is flawed. In fact many of the chthonic deities and rites of Greek religion are every bit as Indo-European as the sky-god Zeus; additionally such a dualism already existed in Mesopotamian and Hittite cultures. The two worlds co-existed in perfect balance within Greek religion for thousands of years. The demonisation of the chthonic has comparatively little to do with matters of ethnicity; on the contrary foreign-ness is simply a common attribute of the demonic. Nevertheless, fertile ground for this demonisation was present in the Classical and Hellenistic eras, and indeed long before.

The dangerous nature of many chthonic figures is essential to recognise, although at the same time other roles are also proper to them. Hades, Persephone, Demeter and Hecate, along with Hermes Chthonios are significant figures in such traditions. Hecate is often associated with the negative stereotype of witchcraft, but also had very benign roles that preceded these associations. Demeter, along with Persephone and Hades (and his alter ego Plutos) were the pre-eminent deities of the Eleusian Mysteries; her cult began in prehistoric times. While associated with earthly fertility and with the Underworld, the constellation Virgo has long been associated with her; her nature is both celestial and chthonic. While Hades as King of the Underworld was at best an ambivalent character, his alter ego Plutos was the god of wealth through the fruits of the earth. Attempts to distinguish the two are erroneous. Earthly fertility was also the special province of Demeter and Persephone, with which they were as much concerned as with death. Alongside the enactment of Demeter's search for Persephone after her abduction by Hades there appears to have existed another yet more mysterious rite, the fruitful marriage of Plutos

and Persephone. On the other hand, the dead were termed children of Demeter, or Demetrians. More sinister deities and entities, dangerous, requiring placating, were also strongly associated with the chthonic realm. These too had some positive roles, even if dependent on their dangerous nature; the Erinyes for example presided over oaths, with the clear implication of punishment for perjury. They avenged wrongdoing and, while terrible, their actions upheld what Greek culture considered right conduct. There are in fact few figures in Greek myth, if any, that are wholly evil in nature.

There were nevertheless major differences in the cults of deities of the Olympian or celestial realm and those of the chthonic region. Celestial deities are invoked in daylight, in a state of purity and cleanliness, often wearing white; the occasion is joyful, the altar is raised up, and the sacrificial victim looks towards the heavens at the moment of sacrifice. The dead on the other hand were honoured with lamentations, from the Greek word for which the term *goetia* has its origin. These ceremonies were generally nocturnal, as were the Hittite equivalents. The garments of the mourners were torn and defiled with dirt, their hair hung loose and in disarray. No altar was erected for the dead, rather a pit was dug, into which the sacrificial beast looked down. Many features of the cult of the dead were shared with chthonic deities and heroes. Some distinctions drawn between the rites of the two worlds in the past are not as binding as had been supposed; some sanctuaries and rites included elements and features associated with both chthonic and celestial entities.

The history of Greek religion is long and complex; its beginnings pre-date Homer by a far greater period than that from Homer to our own times. It is not the purpose of this work to give an account of this history, but its antiquity is important to bear in mind, as most of us are only familiar with the Classical period in some basic form. The origins of the Greek cults are to be found in the Neolithic period, from which originate substantial connections with the pre-literate cult iconography of Catal Huyuk. The Minoan and Mycenaean periods followed in the Bronze Age. After the destruction of these aristocratic cultures and their palace cults was a four hundred year Dark Age. This permitted a revival of

older Neolithic forms that had survived among the lower classes. Towards the end of this Dark Age, as well as during it, these were cross-fertilised with Middle Eastern influences from 1200 BCE to 600. This influence originated in what is now modern Turkey and Northern Syria and was particularly strong in Cyprus, from which it was diffused to the larger Greek world. From the 26<sup>th</sup> dynasty around 660 BCE Greek mercenaries served the Pharaoh, and influence from Egypt increased accordingly. The origins of much of Greek ritual and myth in the religions of the Hittites are important, but beyond the scope of a study tracing Greek influence on Western magic. The emphases for this study are the influences from Phrygia and the European near equivalent in Thrace; also considered are Chaldean ideas – often confused with Zoroastrian ideas in antiquity – such as Zurvanism and its forebears.

*Chthonia Regained*

Notwithstanding the complexity of the relations between celestial and chthonic religion, the goetic strand within western magic essentially represents survivals of more primal elements within host traditions of another character. For example, magical approaches adapted and systemised by the Neoplatonists. Invariably such brief attempts as have been made to define goetia are from the viewpoint of such host traditions or from viewpoints hostile to magic in general, rather than the viewpoint of goetia itself. It is difficult to speak of goetia in its own terms when competing with the accumulated assumptions of so many intervening centuries. For the last two thousand years, our civilisation has lived with the assumptions inherent in Revealed Religion. The civilisations of Classical Greece, and all other civilisations of the ancient world, were either built or superimposed upon a tradition of thousands of years of what is known as Natural Religion. Whereas Revealed Religion is delivered from on high by a revelation – frequently represented by a Book – Natural Religion is built up from below; the result of observation of and interaction with the visible world, including perceived supernatural or numinous forces. At the heart of these two approaches to religion are two entirely different worlds.

These two worlds, the centres of two opposed worldviews, can be termed the celestial and chthonic worlds. These are not the limits of the worldviews concerned, but their centres. That is to say, while Revealed Religion has as its base the celestial or even super-celestial realm, it does not exclude considerations of other regions, such as Earth, Hell and the physical universe in general. Similarly, while natural religion has the Earth and the Underworld at its heart, this does not prevent it dealing with gods of thunder or the Sun and Moon.

In the same way, the source of the revelation of revealed religion is celestial, and this is the centre of its worldview. By contrast, the chthonic realm was the source of oracular power at all stages of Greek religion. The celestial or transcendental realms became all important in later magic, not least as the source of the magician's authority. Previously the earth as source of life and the underworld as the abode of the dead were central to religion and magic. More to the point, much of the magic of later times – particularly that characterised as goetic – was an adaptation – one might even say a distortion – of the older type. Nevertheless, the initial transition from chthonic to celestial bases for magical authority did not involve a major change of character or content.

The roots of the word *goetia* exemplify its chthonic connections. Whereas *goetia* is commonly translated howling, following the precedent of nineteenth century authorities which are too often unquestioned, a closer translation would be wailing or lamenting. There is a large group of related words in Greek, the majority of which refer specifically to ancient funeral rites. The tone of voice used in these rituals distinguished the practitioner of *goetia*, and the concern with the Underworld was equally explicit.

The precursors and the earliest manifestation of *goetia* are principally concerned with the dead. At the same time, despite some parallels and later syncretism, it has little intrinsic connection with the aristocratic Olympian religion of Homer. Its primary role was benign in that it served a role in the community; that of ensuring the deceased received the proper rites to ensure they left the living alone. Alongside this were additional roles. These included laying ghosts, including those where proper burial

had not been possible. Such restless spirits were troublesome, even hostile and dangerous. Their existence was a major reason for the practice of funeral rites in the first place.

Another aspect of goetia's involvement with the dead was necromancy. This, the art of divination by the dead, correlates naturally with the ability to guide the dead to the Underworld. Those who could guide souls to the Underworld could bring them back, at least temporarily. In its original religious context, necromancy was not perceived as anti-social, and some major necromantic oracular centres existed throughout the Greek world.

The most sinister aspect of this involvement with the dead was the ability to summon such spirits for purposes other than divination. Like necromantic divination, this is a natural consequence of the role of guide of souls. However, it also relates very closely to the ability to deal with hostile ghosts of various kinds. The arts of exorcism and evocation are intimately related. It is from this aspect of its past that goetia is associated with demonic evocation. Distinctions between underworld demons and the angry dead have always been vague. Additionally, expertise in rites concerning the dead necessarily involves the gods and guardians of the Underworld. Consequently, in various guises, raising spirits has been associated with goetia for much of its history,

The impression caused by the confusion between the *Goetia of Solomon* and goetia itself is that goetia concerns evocation alone. There is a stereotyped image of the conjurer calling up spirits into a triangle from within a circle, and bidding them to perform this, that and the other thing. This seemingly reduces all goetic operations to the same format, which is not the case at all. Even disregarding the religious and funerary aspects, goetia involves magical methods of every variety. It is true that goetic magic involves the participation of spirits in virtually all its operations, but these operations are varied.

The *Grimorium Verum* makes clear that all operations are performed with the assistance of spirits, but its methods include what we would call spells, and also methods of divination. Most often in these operations the sigils of appropriate spirits are involved in the procedure. There is for instance a traditional method of causing harm to an enemy through their

footprint. In its *Verum* form this involves tracing the sigils of spirits and stabbing a coffin nail into the print. Some of this methodology is reminiscent of modern applications of Austin Spare's sigils, although rather more results oriented than the uses the artist himself employed. Incidentally, my speculation in *The True Grimoire* that Spare was acquainted with, and inspired by its contents has been verified by Gavin Semple, (see his introduction to Spare's *Two Tracts on Cartomancy*).

In general, *Verum* employs full-scale evocation for one main purpose, which is to form a pact with the spirit or spirits concerned, precisely so they will be willing to assist the magician in other types of operation. I say spirits in the plural for a reason. In contrast to the methodology of the *Goetia of Solomon* as popularly understood, *Verum's* process envisages the possibility of summoning more than one spirit at a time for the purpose of forming pacts. While any evocatory process is demanding, in terms of time and effort expended, this multiple evocation process is considerably more economical, and far more productive. Modern understanding envisages the conjuring of a single spirit in order to achieve one specific result, and the spirit concerned may never be met with again. *Verum* on the other hand envisages calling upon one or more spirits in order to commence a working relationship, so that on future occasions the same spirits may assist the magician. In these subsequent relations the full procedure of evocation is rarely necessary; and will usually only be employed to initiate relationships with additional spirits.

Such exhausting operations therefore are not the be all and end all of goetic sorcery. The magician and the spirits with whom they are involved will be active in a variety of other procedures. These will involve a range of different skills and activities, alongside a more minimalist conjuration.

The purposes of this book therefore should be becoming clear, although the work is not without considerable difficulties. One purpose is to reach behind the Classical Greek inheritance to reveal the older strata of chthonic religion. Another is to show, with demonstrations of continuity, the influence of both archaic practice and the archaic practitioner on what followed. This influence is traced in both the Classical and Hellenistic periods and the medieval and Renaissance magic of the grimoires, as well

as the interim period. In the course of this some familiar mythical and historical figures will be re-examined, and some much less familiar ones brought into the light.

*Mythic Language*

The purpose of a re-examination of Greek mythology may be questioned; what has it to do with goetia, aside from goetia being a Greek word? For one thing, its inclusion in this study is intended to bring the term howling, by which goetia is often translated, into its proper context. The spirit summoning aspect of the familiar grimoires is more or less compatible with Jewish and Christian culture, if not the religious authorities. Nothing in it remotely resembles howling, the attitude is one of sober and fearful piety. There is, like it or not, quite obviously another aspect of the grimoires and its folkloric background where quite other traditions are at work, which directly concern the term goetic and are more closely connected to its origins. This is the background for the mythological material included here.

It may still be asked, aside from the cultural distinctions, which are obviously significant, why the mythology? Part of a comprehensive reply concerns the nature of spirits, and of magical working that revolves around them. It is relatively unimportant whether such and such a spirit is the equivalent of such and such a mythic figure, or even an aspect of them. What is important is the fact that such figures had a myth, and were seen in mythical terms, and that this was a critical aspect of the magic in which they played a part. Even late demonologists, who spent time pedantically tabulating names of whose spelling they were never quite sure, were aware of the need for a story. Myth endows a spirit with a history, a family, a residence in the universe, and precedents for tasks undertaken on behalf of magicians and their clients.

Their likes and dislikes, and aspects of their story, also generally produce the basis for tables of correspondences. While these remain data in a table there is comparatively little magic in them. Endowed with a personality, the spirit becomes an active participant in the ritual, and in the creation of rituals. Reference tables are no replacement for the mythical

context of a spell, although with a little creativity they can partially substitute for the lack of one. That they can do this in fact demonstrates their reliance on such a context in the past, even if merely as a prototype. The loss of such a context is displayed in reliance on traditional rituals that are no longer understood, but cannot be adequately replaced. The ghost in the machine lingers even where the magician has no reference points for the background of the ritual employed. A mythology supplies such reference points, giving vitality to the composition and performance of ritual.

In recent decades a quiet revolution in mythological studies has taken place in the academic world with crucial relevance to goetic magic. Unsuspected by many modern occultists this revolution has gone beyond the antiquated and trivialised forms of myth; the glossy productions of the literary elite of the Classical period still perpetuated in modern coffee table books. Dieter Betz underlines this in his *Introduction to the Greek Magical Papyri*. These papyri are full of references to an older stratum of Greek mythology, in which the gods are not portrayed in genteel Hellenistic forms but as: *capricious, demonic, and even dangerous*. These are the gods of the local cults and of the popular forms of myth, more primitive and primal, above all more genuine. Although finding this material in the papyri appears to surprise the editor of the collection there is really no reason why it should. Although – as he remarks – the papyri are thus a primary source for the study of Greek folklore, the reverse is equally true: the more primal forms of myth are the bedrock of goetic magic.

Whereas literary sources for mythology begin a few hundred years BCE their origins precede these by thousands of years. Of the two earliest sources, Homer – the great ancestor of Western literature – is more problematic than Hesiod. Lack of Homeric precedent cannot be automatically taken as proof that such-and-such a theme is of a later date. As observed by Dorothea Wender, Homer erases from the history of the gods all traces of incestuous relationships, he also suppresses the castration of Ouranos and the child-eating of Kronos. In short, he removes all evidence of their more ‘primitive’ beginnings; just as he has excised much evidence of magical practices, human-sacrifice and homosexuality among his human cast. There can be no doubt whatever that what he has taken such pains to

erase was nonetheless present from the earliest times. That later sources often include these themes is not indicative of innovation or fabrication simply because absent from Homer, even allowing for subsequent changes in form and expression.

For, much as the idealised human forms of the Olympian gods suit the prejudices of later rationalism, it is not true that in the beginning people made the gods in their own image. In the beginning, people made the gods in the images in which they saw the gods; like lightning, like volcanoes, like water, like powerful beasts, like life giving or mind altering plants. Until the landlord asked people if they didn't think the gods were more like him, and his friend the judge, and the judge's friend the king, and like the priest, and their friends, and their husbands, wives and mistresses. Gods such as these are neither themselves nor the people they idealise.

Hesiod by contrast, while roughly contemporary with the Homeric texts, retains much that is primitive, with the major exception of his portrayal of Zeus. It is readily apparent that in the original form of the myth Zeus was taken in by the trickster Prometheus, while Hesiod portrays him as infallible, allowing Prometheus to think him fooled for his own reasons. Similarly, Hesiod down-plays Zeus' dethronement of Kronos; as an exemplar of rebellion against parental authority such an act was unworthy of the paradigm of fatherhood himself. These examples are enough to warn us against taking the forms of myths as presented by the literary elite for true representations of more primitive phases of religion. They are retellings, often distorted by tendencies to rationalise or to promote later views. In using literary sources then, rather than take the retelling at face value, the purpose is to unearth traces of older belief in what remains.

The contrast between Homer and Hesiod is particularly illustrative. Homer wrote for an aristocratic audience and lived in Asia Minor, the birthplace of Greek philosophy and much of its higher culture. Hesiod on the other hand lived in rustic Boeotia on the Greek mainland, the literary tradition of which he was part produced among other things divinatory manuals, almanacs and – interestingly enough – handbooks of metal working. It is precisely in this 'unlearned' context that the real roots of Greek religion are to be traced and its true character discerned. In his

*Introduction to the Magical Papyri*, Betz directs us – in note 46 – to another note in a scholarly article by A.A. Barb. The quotation is given below with due emphasis. While appearing in a footnote (both in Betz and in Barb) it is enormously important. In an interesting study of the Gnostic gems, comparing their Greek and oriental elements, Barb speaks of the comparatively recent recognition of ancient Oriental influences on Greek religion, and by extension magic. While the Papyri are full of oriental elements – cheek by jowl as it were with classical materials – until recently this juxtaposition was viewed as late syncretism, having no relevance for ancient Greek religion. In a delightfully incisive summation, Barb completely reverses this: so far from being late syncretism, in many important respects it is: *the ancient and original form of popular religion coming to the surface when the whitewash of ‘classical’ writers and artists begins to peel off*. That this material should form in very large part the background of the magical papyri underlines the necessity for a reappraisal of myth by modern magicians.

So what is myth? Many answers are possible; one of the most interesting and influential definitions in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was that myths were stories explaining pre-existent ritual usage. The academic reappraisals of this idea are relevant in their own sphere. However, the speculative use of mythic emblems for philosophical purposes is a not dissimilar concept of great relevance to our purpose. In other words, this might not explain the origins of all myths, but it does relate to how myth might be understood by Greek magicians, among others.

So there is another aspect to the question, which is, if mythology is a language, how does it work? Before really addressing this, some examples are useful to illustrate the innate flexibility of mythological language. Some are implicit among the themes explored herein: in the myths of the birth of Athene from the head of Zeus some uncertainty about roles is seen; was it Prometheus or Hephæstus, both Lords of Fire, who struck the blow? How could Hephæstus – the limping god – have done it if Hera created him in revenge for the birth of Athene? The mythic birth of Dionysus from the thigh of Zeus involves further apparent confusion of roles. If Zeus is lame when Dionysus is in his thigh, is Zeus

then Hephæstus? When Dionysus fetches Hephæstus back to Olympus, drunk and seated on an ass, is Hephæstus then Silenus? When Dionysus conquers the world including India he is portrayed as bearded, no longer the eternal youth; which of the elder gods is he then, is he Hades, is he Silenus? Or is he Zeus himself, of whom he was the infant form, then the son, to be finally the Father? In these scenes gods are seen at once as older and younger, dying and being born, tragic and comic. It is not that myth provides no clear cosmological system, but that it provides a language by which cosmological ideas are expressed, and by means of which they evolve. What is important is not that static forms neither define nor confine myth, but that myth gives life to otherwise static forms.

The mythological material presented here is active in precisely this way, it is demonstrative and suggestive in ways that tabulated data or analytical approaches are not and cannot be. As will be shown the roots of goetia involve gods of fire, and legendary magicians who discovered haematite iron. It will be shown too that goetia was strongly associated with the more emotionally charged, orgiastic aspects of religion. Orphic and Pythagorean associations represent a sublimating and rationalising reform of just such traditions. The Orphic and Pythagorean reforms of the older traditions of Dionysus or Demeter are personified by Apollo; now a solar god of reason, pursued in more restrained and directed religious ecstasies – the witch-doctor has become the philosopher.

In the Classical and Hellenistic periods it is to this more ethereal status that systems termed magic or theurgy aspired. Both theurgy and goetia borrowed from each other, and were never completely distinguished. The names of Orpheus and Zoroaster were intended to lend respectability to the rites and books composed in their names. In reality, Orphic rites reverted to chthonic forms even though seeking the Apollonian dignity of celestial religion, and the rites of the Magi – generally pre-Zoroastrian in origin – were as barbarous as the goetia Cumont supposed their rites were intended to replace. Myths were employed to describe this magic, to explain it, provide authors for its texts and founders for its schools. To reach back through the Orphic reforms to the more primitive levels necessarily involves examination of this mythic background.

My intention is not a complete historical reconstruction of magic and religion of a particular circumscribed historic period; this study involves several phases of the past for the purposes of the present. In any case such a result could not be achieved in this fashion; neither indeed is it likely to emerge from academic or archaeological disciplines. Orphism is still deeply controversial, and the interwoven themes of oriental and Greek magic and religion involve deeply complex questions pursued and understood by highly recondite specialists who nevertheless disagree on many fundamental issues.

Nevertheless, looking at and behind them for contemporary magical purposes is not so difficult, in the manner and for the purpose involved here. The purpose of academic historical disciplines is to understand peoples of older cultures, how they thought, how they behaved. Even so, empathically seeking to apply this understanding in contemporary life is never the stated intention. Reaching behind Orphism in the way undertaken here reveals not a historical but a mythic past. I am not drawing a family tree of dates, times and places in which oriental and Greek ideas influenced one another. The relationship of the Orphic reforms and of goetia with the Dionysian currents provides a creation myth for transforming modern magic. This creation is conceptually prior to the emergence of Goetia and its involvement with older religious traditions; it is not intended to be strictly historical. Considered in strict socio-historical terms of linear time and geographical space, traditions concerning ancient gods and magical books often appear compartmentalised and distinct, but this was never the way that they were understood. Consequently this mythic past is essential to a revitalised and practical pagan goetia in the here and now.

It requires emphasizing here that my use of mythic language to elucidate goetia, while separate from archeology and formal academia of that sort, is also distinct from theological and philosophical approaches. These might have allowed me to pursue a high-brow extension of mainstream Hermetic and Qabalistic magic. However, while simpler, such an approach would be anaemic and fall far short of my underlying intent. Nevertheless, while distinct from all these approaches, do not imagine

that *Geosophia* has neither precedent nor direction. There is a clear direction underpinning the entire work, which shares its precedent with the ancient specialists in necromancy and initiation into the Mystery cults.

The essential concerns of Orphic initiates and of goetic magicians or necromancers were and are primarily in one field. Ancient and modern syntheses alike are necessarily rooted in eschatology. Or to express it in still simpler terms: death, judgement, heaven and hell. These concerns fundamentally shaped the worldview and procedure of the papyri and the grimoires; by their very nature, they are as central to the postmodern synthesis of magic. Eschatology dictated the purposes of ritual, its structure, mechanisms and individual components. More fundamentally still, these concerns shaped perceptions of and responses to the world of spirits.

Many of the mythic figures and stories recounted in the course of this work may be unfamiliar, but they are vitally important to the study. The fact is that not only was Greek myth reshaped by the ancient literary elite, but also that until recently classical learning was the exclusive preserve of their latter day counterparts. The preferences of both were served by particular emphases, leading to the comparative neglect of others for many hundreds of years. Magicians have frequently concerned themselves with neglected or marginalised traditions; in very large degree this now includes Classical learning, stripped of the emphases involved in its former establishment form. The chthonic traditions, which were intimately concerned with the origins of later magic, were already marginalised by the end of the Græco-Roman era, and classicists until very recent times shared similar prejudices. In my opinion this is ample justification for the emphasis in this study upon mythological material; concerned not with the Olympian state religion, but the chthonic cults and other traditions which underpinned goetia.

Before proceeding with the examination in the manner outlined here, a few simple points require re-emphasis. The identity of the operator makes goetia what it is, not the good or bad nature of the spirits involved. Sun and Moon are both as important to goetia as to astrology, but then astrology itself has a fundamentally geocentric foundation. In the same way, goetia focuses on earth and the underworld. It relies not on authority

from the celestial regions – the so-called adversarial angels of aristocratic magic in the Jewish and Christian tradition – but the innate power of the magician. It has its own worldview – of which theology and philosophy are later sublimated forms – and far from being a specialised sub-discipline, it is the primal origin of the entire Western tradition of magic.