

EXCURSUS

THUS SPAKE NOT ZARATHUŠTRA: ZOROASTRIAN PSEUDEPIGRAPHIA OF THE GRECO-ROMAN WORLD

Introduction: The pseudepigrapha in their cultural and literary context

In the Mediterranean world, from the third century B.C. to the end of antiquity (and beyond), there circulated a mass of literature attributed to Zoroaster or to other “magi”. The language of this literature was predominantly Greek, though at one stage or another various parts of it passed through Aramaic, Syriac, Coptic or Latin. Its ethos and its cultural matrix were likewise Greek—that far-flung Greek culture which we call “Hellenistic” and which furnished the common intellectual and spiritual currency of Alexander’s empire and its successor kingdoms and eventually of the Roman empire in its entire eastern half. The ascription of this literature to sources beyond that political, cultural and temporal framework represents a bid for authority and a fount of legitimizing “alien wisdom”.¹ Zoroaster and the magi did not compose it, but their names sanctioned it. That was the function of the attributions.

Almost all of this pseudepigrapha is now lost. It is known only in fragments quoted, paraphrased or alluded to in other authors, often at second or third remove. The only work which we possess unmediated and in anything like its entirety is a relatively recent discovery, the tractate of Zostrianos from the Coptic Gnostic library from Nag Hammadi (VIII, 1). For the rest, it is a matter of reassembling the *disiecta membra* and allocating them to their proper originals. This is no easy or straightforward task; indeed, in any final sense, it is an impossible one. Relatively few of the fragments which are attributed to a specific author are also attributed to a specific work. Frequently, moreover, it is questionable whether a specific text underlies the citation at all, rather than a stray story or piece of teaching which the reporting author, or his sources, believed should stem from Zoroaster or the magi. Finally, these pseudonymous works, once composed, were not fixed: they ac-

¹ The phrase echoes the title of A. Momigliano’s fine monograph, *Alien Wisdom*.

creted new material and modifications over the centuries. W. and H. G. Gundel, in discussing the astrological writings of "Zoroaster", put the researcher's dilemma well, if despairingly: "In treating these late texts, just as in dealing with their origins, we find ourselves back in a swampland where one cannot win a firm footing because of the many additional anonymous sources which flow into the tradition".² The problem, paradoxical though it may sound, is to disentangle a real pseudo-Zoroaster or a real pseudo-Ostanes from their second- and third-order shadows!

Fortunately, the ground for any study of the Zoroastrian pseudepigrapha has been well laid in the magisterial volumes of J. Bidez and F. Cumont, *Les Mages hellénisés*, the second of which is a collection of all fragments attributed to the three "magi", Zoroaster, Ostanes and Hystaspes, and of all information concerning their supposed lives and teachings carried in western, i.e. non-Iranian, sources from antiquity. The collection was assembled and analyzed with enormous erudition and thoroughness, and it includes, but is not limited to, all substantial candidates for the pseudepigrapha with the exception of the *Zostrianos*, whose discovery postdated the publication of *Les Mages hellénisés* by several years.

Reliance on *Les Mages hellénisés* must be qualified in one important respect. Bidez and Cumont were of the view that magian wisdom was mediated to the West through a very particular channel: Iranian communities of the diaspora, settled in Anatolia since the Persian conquests of the sixth century, which persisted and flourished well into Roman imperial times. The people of these communities were known to the Greeks as *Magusaioi*, from an Aramaic form for "magi". The cult life and practices of the "Magusaeans" are quite well attested both from literature and archaeology.³ Less so their beliefs, although we possess a possible record in the form of two hymns whose content was reported by Dio Chrysostom (late 1st—early 2nd cent. A.C.), himself a native of this area. On this and other bases, Bidez and Cumont postulated a Magusaeans learning from which the Zoroastrian pseudepigrapha known to us by citation and in fragments ultimately stemmed. This

² *Astrologumena*, 62.

³ The communities and their practices are described in Chs VIII–X, above. Following Cumont, it has been customary to reserve the term "Magusaeans" for the communities' priests and wise men, their magi. This is erroneous, for Basil of Cappadocia (above, p. 277) makes it clear that this term could be used for the entire folk (*ethnos*). For convenience' sake, however, and because the "Magusaeans" to be discussed in this excursus are very much a Cumontian construct, the term will here be used in the limited sense of the religious leaders among the Magusaeans and their interpreters to the outside world.

learning owed much to Babylon, being characterized by an astral fatalism and an obsession with great temporal cycles characteristic of that culture. It was, moreover, of the Zurvanite persuasion. Western philosophical influences too, especially Stoicism, played their part, at least in the moulding of native beliefs to the philosophical idioms of the then dominant Greek culture. Thus, in the system of Bidez and Cumont, there are really two sets of "Hellenized magi": one, the very real but nameless Magusaeen intellectuals, the other the lay figures of the famous magi of old in whose names the former composed oriental wisdom in Greek form for Greeks.

While the existence of a Magusaeen wisdom cannot be denied, one may be sceptical of its extent and pervasiveness, particularly of the extent to which it underlies the main works of the Zoroastrian pseudepigrapha known to us. There is, as we shall see, relatively little in these works that evokes an indubitable Iranian or Babylonian provenance and with which the Magusaeans might be credited. If they did compose this literature, they have so wrapped themselves in the guise of Hellenistic learning as to be indistinguishable from other Greeks writing in that tradition. This excursus will accordingly proceed on the alternative hypothesis that the major works of the Zoroastrian pseudepigrapha are essentially the products of Hellenistic learning and that their authors used the names of Zoroaster and the magi not because they were themselves magi or drew primarily on magian sources, but because those exotic names conferred the desired authority of a remote and revelational wisdom.

The major works of the Zoroastrian pseudepigrapha appear to have circulated under the names of Zoroaster himself and of Ostanēs, a magus said to have accompanied Xerxes during the great Persian invasion of Greece.⁴ If one had to characterize their subject matter, judged on the contents of the fragments, in a single word for each, one would say of "Zoroaster" that he wrote about astrology and of "Ostanēs" that he wrote about magic. Though oversimplifications, the descriptions do at least indicate what the

⁴ The third "Mage hellénisé", Hystaspēs, behind whom lies the historical figure of Zoroaster's royal patron and convert Vištāspa, was the putative author of a set of prophecies, the *Oracles of Hystaspēs*. These are very much a special case, not least because they draw on real Zoroastrian sources and the argument for ultimate magian composition is a strong one. They have already been fully discussed in this volume (p. 376 ff.) and therefore will not be further considered in the present excursus. As prophecies they have a political context, a function, and a focus which radically distinguish them from the philosophical and encyclopedic wisdom of the other pseudepigrapha.

works are *not*. They are not vehicles for the doctrines of Zoroastrianism; they are not even vehicles for what the Greeks *imagined* the doctrines of Zoroastrianism to have been. That this is so may be simply confirmed by reference to the passages collected by Bidez and Cumont which attest what the West knew, or thought it knew, about the teachings of Zoroaster.⁵ Not only are the “doctrines” of Zoroaster carried by a different collection of Greek texts from his supposed “works”, but there is also remarkably little overlap of content. The major tenets of Zoroastrianism, such as its fundamental dualism and the opposition of the good Ahura Mazda and the evil Anra Mainyu, were known with greater or less clarity and were reported by the Greek authors. But they are absent, except as trace elements, from the pseudepigrapha, the very works of which Zoroaster and the magus Ostanès were the “authors”. One must suppose, then, that it was not the intention of their actual authors to convey those doctrines.

Do the pseudepigrapha, then, convey a set of doctrines which, while not Zoroastrian (or even “Zoroastrian”), are at least coherent and systematic, so that one might perceive across the various works the outlines of a distinct and distinctive school of thought? Here judgement is necessarily tentative because of the miserably small fraction of the material which the preserved fragments represent and because of the arbitrary and unrepresentative nature of the selection. Excerptors choose what fits their own special purposes, not what typifies or is significant in the work plundered. In “Zoroaster” it was the astrology that interested them and in “Ostanès” the magic and especially the alchemy. There are indications that some at least of the works attributed to the two magi were philosophical and compendious, not merely narrow technical treatises. The title, the dramatic setting, and some of the excerpts suggest as much for Zoroaster’s *On Nature*, and the same is probably true of Ostanès’ *Oktateuch*, though that work is much more difficult to fix in scope, content and intention. Nevertheless, other pseudonymous works, perhaps the majority, were indeed just technical treatises, such as Zoroaster’s *Asteroskopika* or *Apotelesmatika*, which, as its title indicates and its fragments confirm, was an astrological handbook, albeit a very varied one, for the making of predictions. Even the mass of astrology flowing to us from the *On Nature* may not actually distort the scope of its original content very much. Proclus, who seems to have known it adequately well, speaks

⁵ BCM II 63–92, frs. D 1–14.

of it somewhat slightly as “stuffed with astrological speculations”.⁶

The assembled fragments show, moreover, no noticeable commonality of outlook or teaching between “Zoroaster” and “Ostanes”—or rather, as must be emphasized, between *and among* the several authors who wrote under the former name and the several who wrote under the latter. Partly, of course, this is the result of that convention of specialization under which astrology became peculiarly the sphere of Zoroaster and magic and alchemy of Ostanes. But even so, there is little in these two sets of works that makes them both similar to each other and dissimilar to non-“Zoroastrian” works of the same genres. Neither philosophically nor technically does there appear through them to have been an identifiable “Zoroastrian” school of thought.

The discovery of the Coptic Gnostic tractate *Zostrianos* seems to confirm this conclusion dramatically. Here for the first time we have a complete work by a “Zoroastrian” author. Yet not only is there nothing noticeably Zoroastrian about it, but also, as we shall see, in content, style, ethos and intention, its affinities are entirely with its congeners among the Gnostic tractates and not at all with other parts of the Zoroastrian pseudepigrapha. With the latter it shares name alone. Our pseudepigrapha thus prove to be a discrete corpus, whose only unity is formal, coming from the persons who were supposed to have written it. If there is any commonality to the Zoroastrian pseudepigrapha, it is one which they share as members of an altogether larger block of ancient writings. There developed in the Hellenistic age a “science” which claimed, in a catholic and rather indiscriminating way, the authority of every learned culture known to—or guessed at by—the Greeks of that period.⁷ Here, side by side with a wisdom imputed to the Persian magi, we find a wisdom of the priests of Egypt, of the Brahmins of India, of the Jews, of the Chaldean astrologers, and so on.⁸ One of the favoured and most effective vehicles of this “science” was the pseudonymous treatise. Clearly, it adds weight and immediacy if one’s work does not merely report the lore and learning of these national cultures

⁶ In Remp. II, p. 109, 7 Kroll = BCM II 159, fr. 0 13 line 14 f.

⁷ A. J. Festugière’s *La Révélation d’Hermès Trismégiste* (RHT) still offers the best insight into this Hellenistic wisdom, especially the first volume (*L’Astrologie et Les Sciences Occultes*). Although the work is devoted to one branch of this wisdom, that contained in the Greco-Egyptian texts of the Hermetic corpus, the coverage of the entire field and its literature is extensive and its relationships are brilliantly captured.

⁸ See Festugière, RHT I 19–44; also Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom*, *passim*.

but conveys the actual words of their founding sages. Hence the “writings” of Zoroaster. Hence, too, the “writings” of Nechepso the Egyptian king and of Petosiris his priest.⁹ Both sets are the products of Hellenistic astrology. Alchemy likewise. Ostanes the magus is but one of its authorities. Among his collaborators we find Democritus the Greek, Cleopatra the Egyptian, and Maria the Jew—a veritable alchemical UNESCO of the ancient world.¹⁰ The Zoroastrian pseudepigrapha have to be set within the context of these “sciences” and their literatures, since it is this wider Hellenistic wisdom that gives them their characteristic forms and features.

A fundamental characteristic of this Hellenistic wisdom is that it was intensely *practical*: it aimed at control of the world, not at disinterested understanding. That indeed distinguishes it from the great rival tradition of Aristotle, in which *theoria*, the knowledge and contemplation of things for their mere beauty and order, is the goal of science.¹¹ Practical arts lie at the origins of Hellenistic wisdom, and it was the interaction of the Greeks with the cultures and skills of the lands which Alexander had won that brought them into being. Alchemy was born from the metallurgical trade secrets of Egypt, transmitted in the temples and royal workshops, which the Greeks transmuted first into a philosophy and secondly into something close to a religion.¹² It remained, though, in essence, a manipulation of nature, albeit for spiritual rather than material ends. Astrology, likewise, developed as a practical art, to foretell the future from the stars. Foreknowledge is power: thus, though less directly and not through material manipulation, it too aims at a measure of influence in the practical world. Like alchemy, it was formed in the crucible of Egypt, though its principal non-Greek elements were Babylonian (“Chaldean”) rather than native Egyptian. Babylon furnished the long tradition of astral divination and the records and techniques of calculating and predicting the positions of the celestial bodies, Greece the much younger geometric conception of the heavens and a new and brilliant astronomical framework.¹³

⁹ On Nechepso-Petosiris see Gundel, *Astrologumena*, 27–36.

¹⁰ See below, n. 241.

¹¹ The contrast is well drawn by Festugière, *RHT* I 189–94.

¹² Festugière, *RHT* I 217–82, from our perspective the best introduction to the art. In general, see also: E. O. von Lippmann, *Entstehung und Ausbreitung der Alchemie*, Berlin 1919; E. Riess, “Alchemie”, *PW* I (1893), cols. 1338–55; F. S. Taylor, “A Survey of Greek Alchemy”, *JHS* 50, 1930, 109–39.

¹³ The fundamental study of ancient astrology is still A. Bouché-Leclercq, *L’astrologie grecque*. See his long note 1 to p. 51 on the thoroughly confused strands of the speculations of the ancients themselves on the origins of astrology,

The theoretical underpinning of all this wisdom and the premise which validated its multifarious practical endeavours was the doctrine of universal sympathy.¹⁴ The world, by this view, is a vast, almost organic unity whose parts interact, in patterns discoverable to the learned, either positively (sympathetically) or negatively (antipathetically). A particular mineral, for example, will be peculiarly related, sympathetically or antipathetically, to a particular animal or a particular plant. Mankind, of course, since this wisdom aims to be a practical and humane discipline, stands at the centre, and the crucial sympathies are those which govern men and women, the parts of their bodies, their activities, their dispositions, and above all, their minds and souls.

The most precise calculus of sympathies and antipathies was furnished by astrology. The stars are a part of the cosmos and accordingly exert their influence—the word itself is of astrological derivation!—on every quarter of the world below. The conventions of astronomy provided the celestial entities and constructs, of which the seven planets and twelve signs of the zodiac are the most familiar, whose positions and geometrical relationships (“aspects”) could be precisely known and predicted. In the practice of astrology, these celestial sets were related to the categories of the terrestrial world and of human affairs: signs and planets to plants, stones, body parts, careers, temperaments, countries and races, times (our planetary week is but the most obvious and persistent example), and so on; and the wheel of the twelve “places” (the fixed circle against which both signs and planets appear to revolve each day) to the fortunes, activities and relationships of human life. In the same process, the positions of the planets on the zodiac, their shifting aspects, and the positions of both signs and planets on the circle of places were interpreted normatively for good or ill, as favourable or unfavourable, sympathetic or antipathetic. Genethliology, or the casting of horoscopes at birth (or conception) to determine an individual’s future, is only one particular mode of understanding and manipulating predictively the elaborate correspondences to which astrology held the key. As we shall see in the context of “Zoroaster’s” writings, there were numerous others.

whether Egyptian or Chaldean—or even magian. As introduction, see again Festugière, *RHT* I 89–101; F. Cumont, *Astrology and Religion among the Greeks and Romans*, New York 1912 (repr. 1960).

¹⁴ See Festugière, *RHT* I 89 ff. (esp. p. 90 n. 1), 196 ff. The key philosophical figure in the summation of this doctrine appears to have been Posidonius of Apamea (c. 135–50 B.C.), in its practical application Bolos of Mendes (c. 200 B.C.), Greeks of Syria and Egypt respectively. On the latter see below, p. 560.

The world whose structure of sympathies was the subject of Hellenistic wisdom was not a world only of men, stars, and animate and inanimate nature. It was a world also of spiritual powers of many different ranks and competencies, a bewildering, dangerous, but intensely alluring world of gods and demons.¹⁵ Access to this world, at the manipulative level, was the province of magic and divination.¹⁶ Through spells and other means, demons—or the

¹⁵ "Demon" is not intended in a pejorative sense, but rather in the most common ancient one of *daimōn*, i.e., any spiritual being in the intermediate range between men and the high gods. Knowledge of demons, their natures and functions, may itself be seen as a sub-branch of Hellenistic wisdom. Handy introduction in G. Luck's source book *Arcana Mundi*, Baltimore and London 1985, 161–225 (the book may be usefully consulted for other branches too).

¹⁶ Ancient magic is a vast topic, to which one can hope only to offer a few pointers here. Most of the extant data come from papyrus texts from Egypt of the late Hellenistic and Roman periods. They were edited by K. Preisendanz (*Papyri Graecae Magicae*, 2nd ed., revised A. Henrichs, 2 vols., Stuttgart 1973–74) and are accessible in a recent translation by H. D. Betz: *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*, Chicago and London 1986. Much folk magic is preserved in Pliny's (d. 79 A.C.) *Natural History*, that great encyclopedia of contemporary "science". Pliny has a disquisition on the nature and history of magic (Book XXX), to which he is intensely hostile, though by no means dismissive of its efficacy. The section is important for our purposes since he treats of the supposed magian origins of magic: see esp. R. L. Gordon, "Aelian's Peony: The Location of Magic in the Graeco-Roman Tradition", *Comparative Criticism* 9, 1987, 59–95, at p. 74 ff. There is as yet no general and definitive work on ancient Greek and Roman magic (though see T. Hopfner, "Mageia", *PW* XIV, 1 (1928) cols 201–393). As introduction, see the section in Luck's *Arcana Mundi* (preceding note), 1–131 (but with caution at p. 25 where he is altogether too credulous about Zoroaster and Ostanēs as actual magical authors!); J. M. Hill, *Hellenistic Magic and the Synoptic Tradition*, London 1974; A. F. Segal, "Hellenistic Magic," *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions Presented to Gilles Quispel* . . . , ed. R. van den Broek and M. J. Vermaseren, Leiden 1981, 349–75; A. D. Nock, "Paul and the Magus", *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World*, ed. Z. Stewart, Oxford 1972, I 308–30. For a vivid autobiographical account (whether genuine or not) of a practising magician, see the prefatory letter to Thessalus' treatise on medical astro-botany: Thessalos von Tralles, ed. H.-V. Friedrich, Meisenheim am Glan 1968 (see also A. J. Festugière, "L'expérience religieuse du médecin Thessalos", *Rev. Bibl.* 48, 1939, 45–72; J. Z. Smith, "The Temple and the Magician", *Map is Not Territory*, Leiden 1978, 172–89. Thessalos is of particular interest in that he receives his wisdom by divine revelation); and for an equally vivid defence against the charge of practising magic, see the *Apology* of Apuleius (cf. A. Abt, *Die Apologie des Apuleius von Madaura und die antike Zauberei*, Giessen 1908); on the image of the magician, M. Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, San Francisco 1978.

Divination is as huge a topic as magic. In general, A. Bouché-Leclercq, *Histoire de la divination dans l'Antiquité*, 4 vols., Paris 1879–82. An excellent introduction is R. Lane Fox's *Pagans and Christians* (Harmondsworth 1986), whose chapters 4 and 5 on "Seeing the Gods" and "Language of the Gods" (pp. 102–261) present, in the context of the living paganism of the Greco-Roman world, the modes, both learned and popular, institutional (e.g., the great oracular shrines) and private, by which the divine world reveals itself or is made to reveal itself to the human, for the profit and edification of the latter. The learning that explicates the various modes of divination is very much a part of the larger Hellenistic wisdom.

dead—could be compelled to reveal secrets of past, present or future. This was the art of exploiting channels of cosmic sympathy in the bluntest fashion. But man, as an ensouled being, was also by right a part of that other world of spirits, and at death his destiny inevitably lay there. Thus, a more philosophical, more religious approach taught the adept how to rise into this spiritual world and to encounter its powers.¹⁷ Though not as crudely acquisitive as magic, this level too is essentially self-centred and on its own terms quite practical.

This thumb-nail sketch of Hellenistic wisdom has emphasized its variety and scope in order to explain the wide range of the fragments of the Zoroastrian pseudepigrapha, what it is that links, for example, “Zoroaster” on prognoses from the position of the moon at the rising of Sirius (fr. O 40) or “Ostanes” on the proper stones and plants for headaches (frs. 22 f.) with the enlightenment of Zostrianos by spiritual powers of the highest order. These are not peaks of a submerged “Zoroastrian” wisdom, but rather manifestations of that general pattern of learning whose characteristics we have briefly reviewed. To appreciate their interconnection and underlying logic, they should be viewed alongside their non-

¹⁷ In the borderland where magic marches with philosophy, one finds theurgy, the art of operating directly on supernatural powers or on their images. The major extant authority is Iamblichus *On the Mysteries* (ed. and tr. E. des Places, Paris 1966). For a description of the art see esp. E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, Berkeley 1951, Appendix II “Theurgy”, 283–311; S. Eitrem, “La Théurgie chez les Néoplatoniciens et dans les papyrus magiques”, *Symbolae Osloenses* 22, 1942, 49–79.

Travel to the posthumous or spiritual world, whether in the form of a descent to the underworld or an ascent to the heavens, is the subject, or at least the narrative frame, of much ancient literature from the “Myth of Er” in Plato’s *Republic* onwards. Cf. above, p. 430 n. 333. The goal of the voyage is usually enlightenment, but the route taken and powers encountered are crucial too. The function of literature in this branch is thus to provide a map and a who’s who. It is to this branch that the *Zostrianos*, as so much other Gnostic and Hermetic literature, belongs. Likewise, in its frame, as we shall see, Ps.-Zoroaster *On Nature*. A classic example of the celestial ascent is the papyrus text known (misleadingly) as the “Mithras Liturgy”: A. Dieterich, ed., *Eine Mithrasliturgie*, 3rd ed. 1923, repr. Darmstadt 1966; M. W. Meyer, ed. and tr., *The “Mithras Liturgy”*, Missoula 1976. Also instructive are the myths in Cicero’s *On the Republic* (the “Dream of Scipio”) and in Plutarch’s essays “On the Face in the Moon” (*De facie*), “On the Genius of Socrates” (*De genio Socratis*) and “On God’s Belated Vengeance” (*De sera numinis vindicta*). On the celestial ascent see D. W. Bousset, “Die Himmelsreise der Seele”, *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* 4, 1901, 136–69, 229–73; C. Colpe, “Die Himmelsreise der Seele innerhalb und ausserhalb der Gnosis”, *The Origins of Gnosticism*, ed. U. Bianchi, Leiden 1967, 429–45; I. P. Culianu, *Psychanodia I: A Survey of the Evidence Concerning the Ascension of the Soul and its Relevance*, Leiden 1983. In religion, the learned mapping of the celestial world and of the soul’s routes therein was most advanced in Mithraism: see Beck, *Planetary Gods*.

“Zoroastrian” congeners within the same grand tradition. Especially instructive, because a larger proportion has survived, is the body of Greco-Egyptian wisdom centred on the figure of Hermes Trismegistus, the *Corpus Hermeticum*.¹⁸ There, a broad tract of the same continent is still visible above the waters.

Hellenistic learning of the type exemplified in the Zoroastrian pseudepigrapha is generally viewed unfavourably by modern scholars as a falling off from the high level of the philosophical culture of the classical age (5th-4th cents. B.C.). It is portrayed as a flight from reason, a surrender of independent enquiry to the claims of authority and revelation.¹⁹ The charge is the more grievous in that the authorities it invoked were often alien to Greece. Moreover, they were fictitious: Greece was listening not to new and potentially revivifying voices from outside her own culture, but to her own etiolated echoes, tricked out in foreign guise. It was, in sum, an exercise in self-deception by a culture which no longer dared to rely on its own thought and only pretended to import the thought of others. Pseudepigraphy thus lies close to the heart of the literature of Hellenistic wisdom.

In quality, one must admit that this literature is far from good. Much of it, indeed, is sorry stuff, poorly written and intellectually meagre, as far distanced from the true scientific endeavours of the Hellenistic age (Hipparchus or Ptolemy in astronomy, for example, or Galen in medicine) as from the giants, or even the journeymen, of classical Greece. It is not, however, lack of reason that vitiates it. It is in fact quite rational, indeed logical, once its fundamental operating principles are allowed. Universal sympathy, on the one hand, warrants a network of cause and effect which transcends both scientific enquiry and commonsense observation. Anything in the world—and out of it—can be linked with anything else, subject only to the organizing capacity of the human mind and to its ingenuity in discovering analogies. On the other hand, a world in which so many supernatural agencies communicate so readily with mankind sanctions a flow of information on which everyday reality can impose no curbs. From these indulgent premises Hellenistic wisdom argued its way, rationally enough, to absurd conclusions.

In fact, the traits for which Hellenistic wisdom was castigated were present, although less dominant and harmful, in classical

¹⁸ Ed. and tr. A. D. Nock and A. J. Festugière, 4 vols., Paris 1946–54. Festugière’s RHT, as already mentioned, is fundamental. See also G. Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, Cambridge 1986.

¹⁹ See esp. Festugière, RHT I 1–44; Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom*, esp. pp. 147 f.

Greece. It is not the case that Greek civilization achieved both reason and science, in some full and modern sense, and then betrayed them. Scholarship now recognizes the persistence in classical Greece of strong currents of the magical and the irrational side by side with the emergence of forms of scientific method and rational argumentation.²⁰ The exotic figures of Hellenistic wisdom, the "Zoroasters" and company, follow home-grown precedents of an earlier age, sages who claimed—or whose disciples claimed on their behalf—the authority of revelation, whose lives, because of a deliberate cultivation of the shaman's style, verge on the legendary, and whose sayings are cloaked in enigma, metaphor and song. Pythagoras is the arch example, but there is much of the same in a Heraclitus or an Empedocles. Of particular relevance is Heraclides Ponticus.²¹ Heraclides, whose life spanned most of the fourth century, belongs to the classical age; yet he stands intellectually no less than chronologically on the threshold of the Hellenistic. He was a distinguished pupil of Plato and himself a philosopher of some originality, both in astronomy and the theory of the constitution of the material soul. Yet he promoted in his own person and writings the older image of the philosopher as revelational sage and shaman. He purveyed "information" on the afterlife and the soul's celestial journeyings on the warrant of myths of his own construction, myths which no longer served, as in Plato, as exploratory accounts in areas beyond dialectic, but as vehicles for arcane but nevertheless literal "facts". He exploited as personae in his dialogues the earlier sages Empedocles and Pythagoras, the superhuman status with which he endows them adding authoritative weight to his own propositions. A third sage, a certain Empedotimos, he seems to have invented. Significantly, he reached beyond Greece to invoke alien wisdom, in the person of one Abaris, a Scythian, and of Zoroaster, for whom one of his works (the contents of which are unfortunately quite unknown) was named.²² All in all,

²⁰ See Dodds, o.c. in n. 17; G. E. R. Lloyd, *Magic, Reason and Experience*, Cambridge 1979, esp. p. 4 f.

²¹ See the excellent study of H. B. Gottschalk, *Heraclides of Pontus*. Heraclides' works are known only in tantalizing fragments, and Gottschalk's monograph supersedes earlier and rather tendentious literature on their reconstruction.

²² Gottschalk, o.c., pp. 111–3. A tentative and, in Gottschalk's opinion (p. 111 n. 81), unconvincing attempt at reconstructing Heraclides' *Zoroaster* as a Pythagoreanizing dialogue on the corporeal and luminous nature of the soul and on its celestial descent was made by Bidez and Cumont, *BCM* I 14 f., 80–3. Another—or perhaps the same—work of Heraclides featured a magus who had circumnavigated Africa. On Heraclides as the possible original source for the fictive encounter of Pythagoras with Zoroaster see P. Kingsley, cited above, p. 368 n. 25.

Heraclides is a fascinating linking figure between the known philosophers of the classical age and the anonymous creators of the pseudepigraphic literature of Hellenistic wisdom.

Putting words into people's mouths was an old and respected literary convention among the Greeks, not confined to philosophical dialogue, though it was Plato who raised it to its highest level of art and effectiveness. We find it in history too, where it is more insidious, given history's pretensions to be a record and an account of facts. The most egregious instance is the debate which Herodotus stages between the Persian grandees in a sort of seminar on the optimum form of government.²³ Here at least the fiction is transparent. In the more sober Thucydides the invented speeches attributed to the participants in great events become a historiographic tool for analysing motives and causes: what is said is what it was *appropriate* for the agent to have said in the circumstances.²⁴ It is significant that the third (and least) of the extant historians of the classical age, Xenophon, progressed with one of his works, the *Cyropaedia* ("Education of Cyrus"), from fictitious speech to entirely fictitious biography: Xenophon's Cyrus is an idealized creation, a vehicle for moralizing and propaganda (the promotion of monarchy). Any connection with the historical Cyrus, founder of the Achaemenian empire, is tangential and quite beside the author's purpose.²⁵ "Cyrus" was Xenophon's invention as surely as "Pythagoras" was Heraclides'. The following age was to see the invention, works and all, of "Zoroaster" and "Ostanes".

Hellenistic pseudepigraphy was not then something radically new. What distinguishes it seems to be, first, an increase in scope and volume. Secondly, one observes a certain loss of subtlety, irony, and sense of function in its use. Thirdly, the authorities on whom the material imparted is foisted become progressively more elevated and superhuman. As the quality of the data falls, so the stature of the sanctioning authority rises: only a god or divinely

²³ III.80–3.

²⁴ Thucydides is explicit about this: I.22.

²⁵ This is not to deny that Xenophon incorporates some accurate information on Persian matters, of which he had first-hand experience as a mercenary in the rebellion of the younger Cyrus. Indeed, his characterization of the older Cyrus is probably a backward projection from the younger namesake. See HZ II 211–6. On the other side, the *Cyropaedia* is the acknowledged precursor of the whole tradition of the ancient novel, where frankly fictitious and romantic events are given a gloss of historical reality by linking them to historical events and personages or by anchoring them to supposedly real authorities, documents, pictures and the like. See, most recently, J. Tatum, *Xenophon's Imperial Fiction: on the Education of Cyrus*, Princeton 1989.

inspired sage could confer credibility on such matter. But the fourth and most distinctive feature is the expansion, on which we have already touched, to alien sources as both arbiters and authors of the new wisdom. It is time to explore this phenomenon further.

Alien sages and their pseudepigrapha

Without doubt, it was the vast opening of horizons consequent on Alexander's conquests that was primarily responsible for the adoption into Greek culture of the Eastern sages. The Greeks had always had a certain respect and admiration for the ancient civilizations of the Near East (coupled, paradoxically, with an intense and chauvinistic contempt for "barbarians" from all quarters, incapable equally of political freedom and intelligible speech). They were intrigued by the very antiquity of those cultures, especially the Egyptian, sensing (correctly) that here were traditions immeasurably older, and therefore perhaps richer and more authoritative, than their own. Plato reflects this feeling well in his dialogue *Timaeus* when he has the Egyptian clergy lecture the archetypal Athenian sage, Solon: "You Greeks are all children . . . you have no belief rooted in old tradition and no knowledge hoary with age".²⁶

Respect for alien wise men and appeal to their authority was not then unprecedented. What changes in the Hellenistic age, as a result of contiguity and intermingling with these ancient cultures, is the volume of that appeal and the attitude that now informs it. First the primacy, and then the superiority, of alien over Greek wisdom is accepted; and the acceptance is all too often uncritical and reverential.²⁷ A. J. Festugière, who chronicled the rise of the "prophètes de l'Orient" so incisively, well contrasted the attitude of the fourth-century Platonic *Epinomis*, which insists that whatever learning Greece imported she improved, with that of Numenius of Apamea in the second century A.C., decrying Plato as a mere "Atticizing (i.e. Athenianized) Moses".²⁸ To treat philosophically

²⁶ 22b (tr. D. Lee); whether Plato himself shared this sentiment to any extent is altogether another matter.

²⁷ Festugière wryly—and justly—observes that the typical reaction of the recipient of the sage's revelation, "I was stunned", epitomizes the mentality of the age (RHT I 20).

²⁸ RHT I 19–44, with 6 f. on the *Epinomis*. It is interesting to note, however, that the superiority claimed for the Greeks in the *Epinomis* passage (987d–8a) rests not on reason but on the possession of a better fount of supernatural authority—Apollo's oracle of Delphi! The point escaped Festugière. Numenius on Plato: fr. 8 des Places.

of the nature of God, Numenius insisted, one had to look back behind the wisdom of a Plato, or even of a Pythagoras, to "everything that the Brahmans, the Jews, the Magi and the Egyptians have established".²⁹ The acme (or nadir?) of this trend is reached perhaps in the preface to the philosophical compendium of Diogenes Laertius (3rd cent. A.C.), where the opinion is reported that philosophy itself "began with the barbarians", that it "originated with the Magi among the Persians, or with the Chaldeans among the Babylonians or Assyrians, or with the Gymnosophists among the Indians, or with the so-called Druids and Semnotheoi among the Celts and Galatians"—anywhere, in sum, except in Greece.³⁰

Regard for alien wisdom and willingness to learn from it were not in themselves harmful. Indeed, they might have been healthy and creative forces had they drawn on genuine exoteric traditions, accurately reported. But on the whole, and especially in the later phases, they did not. Initially, a good deal of information flowed into the new Hellenistic synthesis from the now readily accessible Eastern cultures. Astronomy profited hugely from the data and formulae of the Babylonian tradition.³¹ Astrology and alchemy, as we have seen, were precisely the children of this fusion of East and West into a new wisdom. From a modern viewpoint it is perhaps unfortunate that so much of this synergy took place at the less reputable end of the spectrum of learning. Nevertheless, and for whatever ends, some true synergy there was.

Living alongside these ancient peoples did impose on the Greeks certain constraints of accuracy, albeit rather elastic ones, in reporting their traditions. A further check on free invention was the collaboration of natives of these cultures willing to work within the

²⁹ Fr. la des Places.

³⁰ Diog. Laert. prooem. 1 (= BCM II 7, fr. B la Zor.); in fairness, one must allow that Diogenes Laertius did not himself endorse these views on the origins of philosophy. Two fairly late and imaginative works are revealing for Greek attitudes on the superiority of alien sages and their (mostly fictitious) philosophical traditions. One is the biography—much fantasy spun on a tiny core of historical reality—of the first-century Pythagorean sage, Apollonius of Tyana, by Philostratus (early 3rd cent.). Philostratus has Apollonius visit the Brahmans of India in a never-never land of marvels and supernatural abilities. The Brahmans become thereafter Apollonius' touchstone of wisdom and enlightenment, superior alike to the Greeks and the Gymnosophists of Upper Egypt. The other work is the novel of Heliodorus (date disputed: 2nd–4th cents. A.C.), the *Aethiopica*. Here Egyptian wisdom, embodied in the sage Calasiris, easily surpasses Greek, whose naive representatives are the priests of Delphi, Hellenism's focal shrine.

³¹ See O. Neugebauer, *The Exact Sciences in Antiquity*, 2nd ed., Providence 1957 (repr. New York 1969), ch. VI "Origin and Transmission of Hellenistic Science".

intellectual conventions and common language of Hellenism, Greeks in effect by adoption, but possessed of authentic knowledge of their own peoples' traditions and prepared to write about them. Such were Berossus and Manetho, authors respectively of a *Babyloniaca* and an *Aegyptiaca*: both were priests in their native religions, and both, significantly, wrote within the first generation of the Hellenistic age when the flush of novelty was still upon Greek settlement within their countries. The practice continued. In their very different ways, Philo at the turn of the millennium and Josephus in the first century A.C. were interpreters of, and thus purveyors of information about, Judaism and the Jews for the wide Greco-Roman audience.³²

In this process of assimilating old cultures into new wisdoms, the various foreign traditions fared quite differently. Mere geography was the single most important determinant. The closer and more durable the coexistence with the Greek newcomers, the greater the likelihood that the native culture would contribute in some authentic way to the new synthesis. Egypt, where the Greeks settled soon and in large numbers and where, moreover, the great new city of Alexandria grew to be the power house of Hellenistic learning, lies at one extreme. Here we find true blended traditions, as in the Hermetic Corpus or magical papyri. At the other extreme are those countries where the Greeks never penetrated, or only as occasional travellers and traders or in short-lived military adventures. Here invention could be given free rein. Of the wisdom of the Indian Brahmans one could say what one wished, for there were none within the confines of Hellenism to give it the lie.³³ Likewise the wisdom that lurked somewhere above the Nile's cataracts among the Ethiopians or, at the other end of the world, among the Hyperboreans "at the back North Wind".

³² One might also mention another Philo, Philo of Byblos (1st–2nd cents. A.C.), who transmitted the religion and myths of Phoenicia. Philo is an interesting test case. We know now, from the Ras Shamra tablets, that much of his material is authentic and very ancient. But it is all mediated through a pervasive Hellenism and in particular the rationalizing school of thought known as Euhemerism (great human benefactors as the originals of the gods). Furthermore, his putative source Sanchuniathon, too eagerly and gullibly accepted as a genuine author of the second millennium B.C., remains entirely elusive. See the admirable study of A. I. Baumgarten, *The Phoenician History of Philo of Byblos*, Leiden 1981, esp. pp. 1–6, 261–8.

³³ Of course, not everything that the Greeks wrote about India and the Indians was pure fancy. Megasthenes (c. 300 B.C.), for example, composed his *Indica* on the basis of his service as Seleucus I's ambassador to Chandragupta in Patna. Though an unreliable reporter, blinkered by his Greek preconceptions, he was at least a first-hand observer.

Persian wisdom falls between these two extremes. It is true—and remarkable—that “not an inch of the territory conquered by Alexander had not been held before him by the Achaemenians”.³⁴ Everywhere the Greeks settled there was, or had been, an Iranian presence. One might then expect that ample information would have been available to the makers of the new wisdom and that the data forthcoming would have acted as a check of sorts on the fantasies of invention and false attribution. That, however, was not the case—and for good reason. First, with the notable exception of Anatolia, the enduring Iranian presence in most areas of the Achaemenian empire that fell permanently to the Greeks was relatively small and uninfluential, once the thin governing and military overlay was stripped away at the empire’s demise. Secondly, the Iranian heartlands, though conquered by Alexander, were held by his successors for no more than two centuries (and insecurely at that), and hellenization there was superficial and sporadic. In the former areas, then, there were few Iranians to instruct the Greeks, in the latter few Greeks for the Iranians to instruct. Neither could support the true intermingling of cultures to generate a Greco-Persian wisdom authentic in both its parts.

Two areas remain. In Mesopotamia, the eventual triumph of the Parthians once again established an Iranian ruling power in that land at a time when its principal city, Seleucia-on-the-Tigris, was a flourishing centre of Hellenism, both in population and culture. Yet here too no “Persian” wisdom emerges, partly perhaps because the philhellenism of the Parthian rulers did not promote it, but mainly because the dominant native culture was not Iranian, but Babylonian. It was “Chaldean” wisdom that was deemed to have originated here, a wisdom with which, as we shall see, that of the magi is thoroughly confused and masked. Also, for the areas which were creating the mainstream of Hellenistic wisdom in the West, Mesopotamia was now distanced by political boundaries. Together with the Iranian highlands, it was again alien territory, ripe for imaginative exploitation rather than the exchange of real information.³⁵

Only in the Anatolian hinterlands did the right conditions obtain for the transfer of an Iranian tradition to the new Greek wisdom.

³⁴ Above, p. 361.

³⁵ Some information about contemporary Iranians, and especially the ruling Parthians, did however flow from the Greeks of Mesopotamia. As Momigliano demonstrated (*Alien Wisdom*, 138–41), it emerged *after* the reconquest and was particularly in demand by the Romans, seeking to comprehend the political and military realities of their uncomfortably powerful new neighbour. It was not of interest to the makers of Hellenistic wisdom. Its major figure was Apollodorus of Artemita (early 1st cent. B.C.), who was used as a source by Strabo.

Here, as we have noted, the Iranian communities of the Magusaeans, stable and retentive of their religion, survived within the orbit of Greek (and later, Greco-Roman) political and cultural hegemony. Some transfer did indeed take place, but it was slight and uninfluential. Its only clearly demonstrable issue were perhaps the magian hymns, to be discussed later, which Dio of Prusa claimed to have learnt from these people and incorporated into his thirty-sixth *Oration*.³⁶ That the Magusaeans contributed further to Hellenistic wisdom as the ultimate source of the Zoroastrian pseudepigrapha was precisely the assumption, unprovable and improbable, which we declined to make at the outset.

One genuine fusion of Greek and Iranian religions did take place in Anatolia. This was a cult promoted—created indeed—in the small border country of Commagene by its king, Antiochus I, in the first century B.C. It is known to us from its splendid remains on the summit of Mt. Nimrud and elsewhere in the kingdom and from its inscribed charter document. It was an artificial religion, centred on the person of Antiochus and the royal line which he traces back to both Darius and Alexander. Though self-serving and pompous, Antiochus was also patently sincere, and a certain flair was shown by him—or probably rather by his priests—in the conflation of his cult from the two worlds of Persia and Greece. This cult has already been described in this volume.³⁷ The point in mentioning it here is to show that, religious fusion though it attempted to be, it was without issue in the world beyond. As a dynastic and national cult, it could not spread without radical transformation, and even at home it could not outlive its dynasty and its country's independence. Above all, it contributed nothing to the realm of thought, nothing to the circumambient "wisdom" beyond its borders. This was not because it was in itself sterile or too meagre intellectually—it strikes one as in some ways a powerful, numinous and imaginative construct—but solely, I believe, because of its remoteness. Commagene was, simply, off the beaten track. Hellenistic wisdom was created in the great centres of population and of learning, Alexandria above all. Few echoes, whether of Magusaeans lore or of Commagenian cult, would be heard from the hinterlands of Anatolia.³⁸

³⁶ Arguably, too, such elements within Greek prophetic literature as are attributable to the Persian Sibyl originally emanated from the shrines of the Anatolian Iranians: above, p. 373.

³⁷ p. 321 ff.

³⁸ I leave aside for later consideration (since its few written remains were classed as Zoroastrian pseudepigrapha by Bidez and Cumont) another postulated

Although the spatial contiguity of Greeks and Iranians in the Hellenistic age thus proves to be a complicated factor, it is clear that its patterns imposed no special constraints on the makers of the new wisdom by confronting them with an authentic and vigorous Iranian tradition that could not be ignored. Another factor is the lack of native spokesmen, such as Berossus or Manetho, who could mediate Iran to Greece, transmitting facts about the former in the voice and guise of the latter. The principal authority of the Hellenistic age on Iranian culture, certainly in the religious sphere, was a learned Alexandrian, Hermippus. It was he who wrote, around 200 B.C., a multi-volume treatise *On the Magi* and who first collected the works of "Zoroaster".³⁹ To the latter accomplishment we shall return, since it is one of the founts of our pseudepigrapha. The point here is that this expert on the magi, relatively early in the Hellenistic age, was already transmitting spurious and recent Greek compositions wholesale as products of the magian tradition. He wrote, in any case, far from practising Zoroastrians, in the scholarly seclusion of the Alexandrian Library. Conceivably, since Smyrna was his home town, he could at one time have met and observed Anatolian magi, but there is no evidence that he did in fact do so. Hermippus' work is entirely lost, but his magi were in all likelihood products of the study, excerpted from previous writers, not of encounters in the field.

But perhaps the most powerful factor that militated against the transmission of authentic data and at the same time fostered the growth of pseudepigrapha was the reluctance of the Greeks themselves to listen to the original voices of those alien cultures. They admired their "wisdom", but they preferred it transmuted into forms that were readily comprehensible to the Greek mind and that answered to Greek preconceptions of what a "philosophy", however foreign, should be. This can be seen most clearly in the case of the Jews. From the third century the Hebrew scriptures were progressively translated into Greek in the version that came to be known as the Septuagint, from the story that it was the product of seventy scholars commissioned for that purpose by Ptolemy II of Egypt. The purpose of the Septuagint was to render the scriptures once more comprehensible to the large and important Alexandrian Jewish community, whose working language was now Greek; but its effect could also have been to make an entire ethnography of the

Anatolian offspring of Iranian religion—Mithraism. The worship of Mithra in Anatolia prior to the formation of the Western mystery cult has in any case been discussed above, p. 475 ff.

³⁹ On Hermippus see BCM I 21 f., 86.

Jews, their history, religion and customs, accessible to the Greeks—if the Greeks had deigned to read it. They did not. Hellenistic learning shows no knowledge of it at all, or of any other version of the Hebrew scriptures. Instead, throughout the third and second centuries the Greeks were regaled with the predigested accounts and fantasies of a parade of hellenized Jews, deservedly obscure, telling them only what they would accept and only in the form in which they would accept it. The fictitious correspondence of the juvenile Solomon with kings Vaphres of Egypt and Suron of Tyre, composed by Eumolpus, a Jewish ambassador to Rome in the second century, will suffice as an example. Soon enough, those who cannot stomach an authentic literature are fed an artificial one.⁴⁰

If the Greeks were unwilling to come to terms with other cultures' literature when translated, still less were they prepared to master their languages and to tackle their texts in the original. In part, this lazy attitude was bred of a sense of superiority, a bland assumption that these alien wisdoms attained their true potential and usefulness when recast in the forms and tongue of a more perfect civilization. But the opposite is also true. Left in its original tongue, sacred discourse preserved its power and numinous quality. Its very exoticism, the fact that it was not comprehended and thus not fixed, enhanced its value for the Greeks. This we see above all in Egypt. Priestly interpreters would intimate certain things—in Greek—but wholesale translations of texts and hieroglyphics were neither offered nor solicited. The symbols and divine names were too useful to the magicians and theurgists as they stood. Greek might be the language of rational explanation, but Egyptian, as the Hermetic Corpus at one point boasts, is the language of power, whose words in and of themselves are directly efficacious.⁴¹

It should come as no surprise, then, that genuine texts of Zoroastrianism remained unknown to the Hellenistic Greeks. Zoroastrianism at the time being a deliberately aliterate religion, the

⁴⁰ This sorry story of the blinkered reception which the early Hellenistic age gave to the traditions of the Jews and the distortions and misunderstandings which it caused is brilliantly told by Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom*, 82–96. It was of course the adoption of the Hebrew scriptures by the Christians as their Old Testament that finally brought the Septuagint to the attention of Greeks.

⁴¹ *Corpus Hermeticum* XVI.2. The author, in the person of Asclepius, denigrates Greek as “insolent, insipid and meretricious . . . empty speech, good for showing off . . . noisy talk” (tr. Fowden). He pleads that his work be *not* translated lest “the dignity and strength [of the original Egyptian] and the cogent force of the words” be impaired. It is interesting and ironic that the plea was composed in Greek and never had an Egyptian original! See Festugière, *RHT* I 26; Fowden, o.c. in n. 18, p. 37.

Avesta was not even potentially accessible to them in written form.⁴² A translation, difficult enough in the circumstances, would have demanded a willingness to collaborate on the Zoroastrian side which was obviously not forthcoming. As for the Greeks themselves learning Avestan or even Persian, and encountering authentic Zoroastrianism on its own ground, nothing could have been further from their aims and interests, which were to recreate and exploit alien wisdoms, not to learn from them as equals or to explore them objectively as they really were.

Such, then, were the factors that permitted the riotous growth of pseudepigrapha in the Hellenistic age. Seldom was their authenticity challenged. When it was, it tended to be in a sectarian context where doctrinal acceptability was at issue. Apocryphal gospels and the like were excluded from the Christian canons as unauthentic primarily because they were judged to have made wrong statements, not because they were proved to have claimed wrong authorship. With the bulk of the Zoroastrian pseudepigrapha, consisting as it does of practical astrological and magical lore, orthodoxy was never a question. No one, then, had a compelling interest in mounting a challenge.

There is one honourable exception, which in some ways proves the rule. The greatest of the Neoplatonist philosophers, Plotinus, set two of his disciples, Amelius and Porphyry, the task of refuting certain Gnostic texts, including "apocalypses" of Zoroaster and Zostrianos, which he felt that others in his circle (Christians, as it happens) were misusing. Amelius tackled "the book of Zostrianos", which, as we shall see, is probably identical with the Nag Hammadi tractate under that name. Of his method we know nothing; but of Porphyry's in refuting "Zoroaster" we do, since he himself reports the matter in his *Life of Plotinus*. He demonstrated, he says, that "Zoroaster's" book was illegitimate and recent, fabricated by the founders of the sect (i.e., that to which Plotinus' Christian followers subscribed) to further the belief that the doctrines which they had chosen to maintain were actually those of the

⁴² Later legend records that written copies of the Avesta existed *ab origine*, some of which were burnt by Alexander (above, p. 16 with n. 70). A variant (DkM 405.11 ff.) has one copy carried off and translated into Greek. The complex of stories cannot of course be accepted literally; the reality which it reflects is the *loss* of Avestan learning, not its transmission. Bidez and Cumont (II 137 f.) perceptively conjectured that the variant concerning translation may well have originated from a misconception of the genuineness of part of the *Greek* writings of "Zoroaster", i.e. of our pseudepigrapha.

Zoroaster of old".⁴³ The method, then, was exemplary in modern terms, a demonstration not that the book of Zoroaster was "wrong", but that it was spurious and anachronistic, that it was not Zoroaster's at all. The purpose, however, was the familiar one: to discredit the texts of wrong-thinking rivals. It is significant that this demonstration of pseudepigraphy concerns one particular corner of "Zoroaster", an apocalypse that is otherwise quite unknown.⁴⁴ No one bothered to free him from the copious and far better attested works on astrology and magic, for these carried no "doctrines" from which right-thinking persons had to be weaned.

Given the impetus to wholesale pseudepigraphy in the names of great sages of alien cultures, we must next ask why it was that magic in particular was fathered on the Iranian magi, astrology on Zoroaster, and alchemy on Ostanēs. To answer that question, one must look at the image of the magi among the Hellenistic Greeks. For it is not what the magi *were* but what the Greeks *supposed* them to be that determined their exploitation as figureheads for those occult arts and their literatures.

Magi and magic—through Greek eyes

The words "magus" and "magic" are of course etymologically linked. The latter was derived from the former in the Greek language as early as the fifth century B.C., long before the first Zoroastrian pseudepigrapha were compiled. Literally, magic (*mageia*, *magike*) is what a magus (*magos*) does; it is his art or practice. But almost from the outset the noun for the action and the noun for the actor parted company. *Mageia* was used not for what actual magi actually did, but for something akin to magic in the modern sense: that is, the achieving of effects in the natural world by

⁴³ *Vita Plotini* 16 = BCM fr. O 105 (II 249 f.). Bidez and Cumont (I 156) inferred that it was Adelphius and Aquilinus, the leaders of the subgroup of Christians attached to Plotinus, who had themselves fabricated these pseudepigrapha. Though possible, this inference is not necessary. "Those around Adelphius and Aquilinus" were the contemporary sectarians; "those who founded the sect" and fabricated the pseudepigrapha may well have been of an earlier generation. Porphyry's proof that the "book of Zoroaster" was "new" implies only that he established that it was anachronistic, i.e., that it must be more recent than the real Zoroaster, not that it was the product of the immediate present. The point is perhaps academic, though it makes a difference whether Porphyry was accusing his fellow disciples of forgery or merely of being the dupes of previous forgers. (For these refinements I am greatly indebted to Dr. Howard Jackson.)

⁴⁴ In Clement *Strom.* I.15 the phrase "the apocryphal books of this man" might refer to Zoroaster rather than Pythagoras, but the passage (BCM II 250, fr. O 106) tells us nothing further about the works in question.

supernatural means, or the appearance of achieving them through trickery and illusion. The early uses of the word in Greek usually carry that second, deceitful sense, with the further disreputable implication that what is done is done for the practitioner's profit at the expense of the deceived. At the same time, the *nomen agentis* was also uncoupled from its original denotation. A *magos* who performs these tricks is not, and need not even falsely claim to be, a magus in the original sense of an Iranian priest; he is merely a "magician"—with overtones of the conjurer or quack. A classic passage for this use of the term occurs in the Hippocratic treatise on epilepsy, *On the Sacred Disease* (late 5th cent.): "My own view is that those who first attributed a sacred character to this malady were like the magicians (*magoi*), purifiers, charlatans and quacks of our own day, men who claim great piety and superior knowledge" (sect. 2, trans. Jones). The author goes on to describe the false treatments offered by such people, treatments designed to safeguard the practitioner who can claim credit if successful or blame the gods if not. They are the sort of persons who "profess to know how to bring down the moon, to eclipse the sun, to make storm and sunshine, rain and drought, the sea impassable and the earth barren" (4). If genuine, they are sinister and impious, since through them "the power of godhead is overcome and enslaved by the cunning of man". Moreover, "he who by purifications and magic (*mageuōn*) can take away such an affection (i.e., the "sacred disease") can also by similar means bring it on" (3). But probably their claims are false, and their contrivances are just another means by which men scramble to make a living (4).⁴⁵

The original meanings of the words, however, were by no means lost. Educated Greeks were aware that the magi were the priests of what, from their perspective, was the Persian national religion, and that their proper business was not magic in the derived sense, but "the service of the gods", as the Platonic *Alcibiades I* defines it.⁴⁶ Both Dinon (late 4th cent.) and Aristotle affirmed that real magi "knew nothing of so-called magic".⁴⁷ Others, however, as we shall

⁴⁵ *Magos* in the derived, pejorative sense, is also found in 5th-century Greek tragedy; cf. Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus* 387, where Oedipus calls the seer Teiresias a *magos* and derides him as a scheming and venal imposter. Two excellent short studies of the history and terminology of magic and its relationship to the real magi are the articles of A. D. Nock and R. L. Gordon cited above, n. 16. See also BCM I 143–50.

⁴⁶ 122a (= BCM II 21 f., fr. B 10a); further citations in BCM I 94 n. 1.

⁴⁷ Ap. Diogenes Laertius prooem. 8 (= BCM II 67, lines 22 f., fr. D 2; cf. lines 7 f. "they spend their time in the service of the gods and sacrifice and prayers . . ."). The adjective used to describe the sort of "magic" that the magi do not practise

see, believed to the contrary that magic, and in particular divination and the yet darker art of necromancy, belonged to the repertoire of the magi. The two senses of *mageia* and *magos* thus descend in uneasy juxtaposition. Generally, they are distinct, but when, whether for positive or negative reasons, it becomes desirable for the two to coalesce, etymology provides an easy warrant. Their name alone "proves" that magi practice magic and were its obvious founders. It is this above all that licensed in the pseudepigrapha the ascription of invented magical and divinatory lore to the magi.

Why, though, were the magi chosen by the Greeks for this role as the standard-bearers of magic? Undoubtedly, at the origin was a misunderstanding—perhaps a wilful misunderstanding—of the function of actual magi in religious ritual as the Ionian Greeks first observed it in their early contacts with the Persians. As A. D. Nock well described it, "we may explain the selection of *magos* as a typical name, and the formation of the noun *mageia* from it, as due to the impression made on unfriendly Ionian spectators by Persian priests, with their queer garments and tiaras and mouth masks—as we see them on the relief from Dascylium—performing uncomprehended rites, uttering unintelligible prayers, and indispensable at sacrifice".⁴⁸ For the ancients, the borderline between religion and magic was quite indistinct, and it was easy enough, conceptually and in popular perception, for priests to be metamorphosed into magicians. It was a question not so much of different activities as of a differing status and legitimacy of activity.⁴⁹ Magi were believed in any case to have achieved or aimed at the sort of miraculous modifications of the natural order which have always been peculiarly the sphere of magic: for example, the stilling, by sacrifice and incantation, of the storm that wrecked the Persian fleet off Magnesia as reported by Herodotus (VII.191), or the kindling of the altar flame without fire which the traveller Pausa-

comes from the original Greek word for magician, *goēs*. Unlike *magos*, *goēs* invariably carries pejorative, sinister or fraudulent connotations.

⁴⁸ Art. cit., p. 318; cf. p. 311: the misapprehension was understandable, for, as Nock shrewdly remarked, "it must always be remembered that the Greek was seldom a good observer of strange religions, prone as he was to hasty conclusions and identifications and to a contempt or to a veneration which were equally uncritical". The earliest use of the word *magos* in something approaching its derived sense occurs in an Ionian writer, Heraclitus (c. 500 B.C.); he includes *magoi* in a list of execrable types from the fringes of religion: "night-roamers, *magoi*, bacchants, maenads, initiates" (fr. B 14 DK).

⁴⁹ Nock, art. cit., pp. 313–18.

nias (V.27.5–6) witnessed, apparently as a routine event, in Lydia in the second century A.C.⁵⁰

Undoubtedly, too, the experiences of the Persian Wars affected the transformation of magi into magicians in the Greek language and consciousness. War in antiquity, especially between different cultures, was viewed as a clash of gods, not merely of human combatants. The magi were the priests of an empire and culture which had threatened, so the Greeks then and later believed, to overwhelm Hellenism and its gods. Xerxes' army, its magi conspicuous, had penetrated to the heart of Greece, overturning her shrines and thus subverting her religion. But the invasion had been beaten back, and a century and a half later that alien and menacing culture was in its turn overwhelmed. Its gods and its magi proved powerless to save it. From the Greek perspective, then, the magi were the authorities of a religious system which was first alien, secondly dangerous, thirdly inimical to the established cultus of their cities, and fourthly inferior to that cultus because vanquished in the ultimate test of battle. But these characteristics, as R. L. Gordon has well demonstrated,⁵¹ could be applied with equal cogency to that other system located on the margins of established religion—magic. Magic was of course a home-grown product in Greek as in other cultures, but its activities and practitioners, from the point of view of the respectable and educated who set that culture's tone, lay outside, and competed with, the sanctioned religious core. What, then, more natural and convenient than to transfer to it the name of the truly and literally alien system? By calling their native witchcraft the magian art and its adepts magi, the Greeks at a stroke marginalized and delegitimized it. Magic becomes by definition irredeemably foreign, and the psychological and social distance between it and the religion of the establishment is underscored by the ethnic and geographical distance of its implied origins. Its power, too, is precisely fixed: sinister and menacing, like the art of the actual magi, yet subordinate to the religion of the traditional cults, just as the cult and gods of the magi lost to the cults and gods of Greece.⁵²

⁵⁰ Herodotus appends the typically dry comment that perhaps after 3 days the storm had blown itself out. Pausanias characterizes the miraculous kindling of the altar as "not innocent of the magician's art". Context makes it clear that although the practitioners are magi he means magic in the derived sense. From his chauvinistic perspective, the magi's chants are "barbarous and incomprehensible"—but nonetheless effective. On the Pausanias passage see above, p. 236.

⁵¹ Art. cit., esp. pp. 78–80.

⁵² It is thus entirely comprehensible that the word *magos* could denote, beside

This is to view magic looking out at it, as it were, negatively from the established centre. The view from the outside is of course different, and it exploits the image of the magus in a different way. Like the negative view, it conflates magus and magician, but to enhance the latter figure rather than to diminish it. "Magus" becomes the magician's word for himself. Used without contempt or implications of venality and quackery, it was a godsend; for did it not already connote both religious authority (albeit that of another culture) and an exotic and powerful art? On another front, when men came to write the pseudepigrapha of alien wisdom, the magi and their leaders were obvious candidates for the authorship of texts which explored, in a systematic way and on a somewhat more philosophical plane, those same cosmic sympathies which the magician exploits at the practical level. These writings in turn legitimated magic by bringing it within the orbit of the new Hellenistic learning and so raising its intellectual respectability. More precisely, fixing magic as the "magian" art affected its status in two very positive ways (as a Greek would see them). First, magic—serious magic, that is—becomes a male preserve. Magi were men, and therefore "real" magicians, *qua* magi, must be men too. The magic of magicians is thus separated from, and elevated above, the folk witchcraft of women. Secondly, magic becomes literate, indeed literary. Not only did the magi "invent" magic (so it was believed), but they also wrote about it: were there not texts of "Zoroaster" and "Ostanes" extant, or at least thought to have existed somewhere in the background, to prove the point and to establish magic's pretensions as a liberal art?⁵³

Both friends and foes of magic, the credulous and sceptic alike, thus had an interest in referring the origins of magic and its literature to the magi. One may see the result of this fictive process in the brief history of magic with which the elder Pliny (d. 79 A.C.) prefaces the thirtieth book of his *Natural History*. He himself is violently hostile to magic, calling it "the most fraudulent of arts"

an Iranian priest on one side and a Greek magician on the other, a practitioner of any foreign and suspect religious cult. Nock (art. cit., p. 315) cites a revealing example from the *Acta disputationis S. Achatii* (5), applied to Christianity: the examining magistrate charges, "so you're magi, because you're bringing in some new-fangled cult or other" (*ideo magi estis quia novum nescio quod genus religionis inducitis*); the charge is virtually a definition: *magus* = importer of new religion.

⁵³ The contrast between literate male magic, as symbolized by "Zoroaster", and its illiterate female competitor, whose archetypal practitioner is the mythic sorceress Medea, is finely drawn by Gordon, art. cit., esp. p. 73 f. It is interesting (if inexplicable) that in learned magic alchemy alone throws up powerful female authorities in the persons of Maria and Cleopatra.

while admitting its formidable and pernicious hold (XXX.1.1). Somewhat idiosyncratically, he traces the power of magic to its conflation of three other arts which allure and dominate mankind: medicine, religion and astrology (1.2). There is, he says, "universal consensus that magic began in Persia with Zoroaster" (2.3), who, on the calculations of Eudoxus (4th cent. B.C.) and Aristotle, lived six thousand years before Plato (or five thousand before the Trojan War, according to Hermippus) (2.3-4).⁵⁴ Since no explicitly magical treatises attributed to him were extant and the "facts" from the intervening millennia are thin, Pliny is at something of a loss to explain the early transmission and dissemination of magic from that single source (2.4-7).⁵⁵ What is certain, he says, is that magic came to Greece with another magus, Ostanes, in the train of Xerxes (2.8): "he sowed what I may call the seeds of this monstrous craft, infecting the whole world by the way at every stage of their travels" (trans. Jones). As far as Pliny says he could discover, Ostanes was also the earliest extant writer on magic (*primus, quod exstet, ut equidem invenio, commentatus est de ea*, *ibid.*). From Ostanes the Greeks acquired not merely a lust (*aviditatem*) for the new art, but a downright "madness" (*rabiem*), and many of their greatest philosophers, such as Pythagoras, Empedocles, Democritus and Plato, travelled abroad to study it and promoted it on their return (2.8-10). Even for his own times Pliny still regards the eastern magi as the fount and authority on magic. In speaking of Nero's vain attempts to learn and practice the art—Pliny's point is that if there had been really anything to master Nero was uniquely placed to master it—he includes among the emperor's advantages the visit to his court of genuine magi in the train of king Tiridates of Armenia (6.16 f.), when Tiridates "initiated him into their magian feasts" (*magicis etiam cenis eum initiaverat* 6.17).⁵⁶

When one enquires what sort of magic it was that the magi were supposed to have taught and practised, the range turns out to be quite restricted. For the most part it was divination of one type or another. Pliny is typical when he transmits Ostanes' definition: "As Ostanes said, there are several forms of it (i.e. of magic); he

⁵⁴ On Hermippus see above, p. 508.

⁵⁵ The curiously tentative and ambivalent quality of Pliny's sketch is well captured by Gordon, *art. cit.*, pp. 74-7. Pliny feels it necessary to supplement his history with doppelgangers of both Zoroaster and Ostanes, the second Zoroaster being placed just before the first Ostanes, and the second Ostanes contemporary with—and a companion of—Alexander.

⁵⁶ In context, *magicis* means both magian and magical, for to Pliny here the two are one and the same.

professes to divine (*divina promittit*) from water, globes, air, stars, lamps, basins and axes, and by many other methods, and besides to converse with ghosts and those in the underworld" (XXX.5.14, trans. Jones).⁵⁷ An even more exotic list of the forms of magic, at least the last two of which are certainly modes of divination, is given by the novelist Iamblichus in the second century A.C. The title of his novel, *Babyloniaca*, advertises its setting in Mesopotamia, and he himself was either a Syrian or Babylonian, and claims to have learnt the magian art—at or close to its source, it is implied—and thereby to have forecast accurately the outcome of L. Verus' Parthian campaigns (163–5).⁵⁸ As reported in Photius' summary (the novel is otherwise preserved only in fragments), "Iamblichus goes through the forms of magic (*magikēs*): magic of grasshoppers, magic of lions, and magic of mice (it's from mice [*myōn*] that mysteries [*mysteria*] get their name—for mouse-magic is the prime form); and he mentions magic of hail and magic of snakes and necromancy and ventriloquism . . ."⁵⁹ This list clearly contains a good measure of free invention—the spurious and illogically deployed etymology of mysteries (= "mouseteries"!) from mouse-magic proves as much—yet, just as clearly, it reflects what Iamblichus' somewhat low-brow Greek readership *expected* to be told of the activities of Eastern magi. It fits the image, and perhaps also a misunderstood reality.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ = BCM fr. 12 (II 286 f.); see n. 1 ad frag.

⁵⁸ Epit. 10, p. 32 Habrich (the variant that makes Iamblichus a Syrian is reported in a marginal gloss: p. 2 Habr.).

⁵⁹ Ibid.; for "magic of grasshoppers", etc., Iamblichus uses the *nomen agentis*, *magon* (i.e., literally, "magus/magician of grasshoppers", etc.).

⁶⁰ The modes from grasshopper- to snake-magic may represent Zoroastrian *apotropaic* magic misunderstood and clumsily reported by Iamblichus. BCM (I 148 n. 8) appositely cites Dk. VII.5.9 to the effect that Zoroaster had taught spells against such scourges of crops. However, both Iamblichus' Greek and his context seem more naturally to imply that he himself understood these creatures to be the media through which magic of a divinatory sort was practised. Immediately preceding the disquisition on the forms of magic in the Photian summary, we are told how the mother of a certain Tigris, recently deceased, "is convinced, by practising a magic rite (*ekmageusasa*), that her son has become a hero (i.e. demigod)". In other words, she *divines* (no pun intended) by magic the posthumous status of her son, and Iamblichus then proceeds to list what he misunderstands—or wilfully misrepresents—as the local forms of divinatory magic. In doing so, he slanders the magi by implying that they would use as mediums *khrafstras*, evil and destructive creatures of Anra Mainyu (cf. HZ I 90 f., 298 f.). That the magi loathed, and encouraged the extermination of, mice, which Iamblichus actually makes their prime magical objects in order to float his ridiculous etymology for "mysteries", was well known even in the West. Plutarch mentions it no less than 3 times (*De Iside* 46, *Quaest. conv.* IV.5.2., *De invidia* 3). Iamblichus' arbitrary conversion of what was probably real magian apotropaic magic into a garbled parody of modes of divination seems to me a good illustration

Both Pliny and Iamblichus conclude their lists with necromancy, divination by means of the spirits of the dead. This was indeed the speciality of the magi in both popular and learned perception. The stereotype was set early—in Aeschylus' play, the *Persians* (produced 472 B.C.), in which the dead king Darius is raised at his tomb to declare the divine dimensions of the ruin of the Persian fleet at Salamis, newly reported by a messenger.⁶¹ Six centuries later, when the satirical essayist Lucian wishes to dispatch one of his characters to the underworld, he has him resort to the magi as the acknowledged experts and guides to the realm of the dead: "As I was puzzling over these matters, it occurred to me to go to Babylon and ask one of the magi, Zoroaster's disciples and successors. I had heard that they could open the gates of the underworld with certain spells and rites and conduct down and bring back up safely whomever they wished".⁶² The supposed expertise of the magi, as one sees here, extends beyond mere divination to include all traffic between the living and the dead, between this world and the Other World. It is a motif that runs through the pseudepigrapha too. In the book *On Nature* "Zoroaster" reports what he himself had learnt in the underworld. Its opening words, as reported by Clement, were, "These things I wrote, I, Zoroaster son of Armenios, a Pamphylian by race, who died in war, whatever I learnt from the gods while I was in Hades".⁶³ The descent to the underworld gives the work both a gripping narrative frame and a compelling warrant

of that shameless Greek tendency to distort or invent Eastern data according to the dictates of authorial purpose—or mere fancy. (The ingenious attempt by R. Merkelbach, *Mithras*, 253–4, to trace Armenian versions of Avestan legends in the *Babyloniaca* is to be discussed in HZ IV.).

⁶¹ See S. Eitrem, "The Necromancy in the *Persians* of Aeschylus", *Symbolae Osloenses* 6, 1928, 1–16.

⁶² *Menippus* 6 = BCM fr. B 30. The magus is given a good Persian-sounding name—Mithrobarzanes. Again, one notes in the account the fanciful adoption of details which would have been unthinkable for a real Zoroastrian magus. Thus in the ritual prior to the descent, Mithrobarzanes spits 3 times in Menippus' face, unremarkable as a magical practice but outrageous conduct for a Zoroastrian endowed with his religion's scruples on pollution from bodily discharges.

⁶³ Clement *Strom.* V.14 = BCM fr. O 12 (II 158); Proclus *In Remp.* II p. 109 Kroll (= BCM fr. O 13, II 159) gives a slightly different wording. Zoroaster's novel parentage and nationality are revealing: the author has simply plagiarized the opening of the famous "myth of Er" from Plato's *Republic* (614b), substituting Zoroaster's name for Er's. As often happens, the genuine and the fake changed places, with some believing that it was Plato who had substituted Er for Zoroaster. Colotes, a disciple of Epicurus, so asserted (ap. Proclus, above)—which, incidentally, furnishes a probable *terminus ante quem* of the mid 3rd cent. B.C. for the original of the pseudepigraphic text whose fragments we possess, if, as Bidez and Cumont reasonably argue (I 111), it was on the basis of this work that Colotes made his claim.

for its revealed wisdom. The tractate *Zostrianos* follows essentially the same pattern, except that the journey to acquire the revelation is an ascent to the heavens.⁶⁴ Finally, the magus Ostanēs is himself the object of conjuration, his shade invoked to reveal his alchemical truths, in the writings that pretend to transmit them.⁶⁵ He is also the supposed source of much of the lore concerning the use in divination of various orders of spirits and the souls of the untimely dead.⁶⁶

Necromancy is at best a sinister pursuit, and not infrequently worse is suspected of those thought to practise it. From invoking human souls it is a short step to tampering with human bodies. Precisely that charge is levelled against Ostanēs by Pliny: "Not a few among the Greeks have spoken of the taste characteristics and effects of individual organs and limbs, cataloguing them all, even down to nail parings. As if health could come about by turning a human into a beast, deserving his disease for its very cure . . . ! It is held illegal and ill-omened to divine with human entrails—what then of actually eating them? Who was it who first made these discoveries, Ostanēs? It is against you that the charge shall be laid, you subverter of human law and creator of inhuman horrors, you who founded this science, I believe, only to have your own memory preserved".⁶⁷ The function of this shrill invective is the familiar one of marginalizing the unacceptable and monstrous: "So be it! The rites of barbarians and outsiders found out these skills". Yet Pliny must admit that "Greece made them her own", and for the actual

⁶⁴ Cf. Arnobius *Adv. nat.* II.62 that the prayers of the magi were thought to ease the way "for those striving to fly up to heaven". The celestial voyage was not of course a monopoly of the magi, any more than was the descent to the underworld. Both became widely used *topoi* in the literature of Greco-Roman times, see above, n. 17; also p. 501, on Heraclides as a key figure in the development of this tradition (though, contra BCM, he probably did not send "Zoroaster" on the quest to the underworld—above, n. 22). The celestial voyage is also found in Jewish intertestamental literature, i.e. in 2 *Enoch*, which is possibly partly dependent on the Zoroastrian story of Arda Viraz, see above, p. 429 ff. But given the established position which the journey to the Other World attained in Hellenistic literature generally, it is unnecessary to suppose that the theme entered the Zoroastrian pseudepigrapha themselves from the oral *Arda Viraz* (whose written form dates from Islamic times).

⁶⁵ BCM I 202–4, II 317 f. (fr. A 6); see below, p. 562.

⁶⁶ BCM I 180–6, II 287 ff. (frs. 13–16); see below, p. 558. Further evidence on Persia as the supposed home of necromancy: Strabo XVI.39 (in a list of diviners by nationality, "among the Persians: the magi, the necromancers and those who practice lekanomancy and hydromancy"); Varro ap. Augustine *City of God* VII.35 (that the Roman king Numa, and after him Pythagoras, acquired from the Persians the art, called hydromancy or necromancy, of summoning the dead for prophecy by means of a vessel of blood).

⁶⁷ *NH* XXVIII.5 f. = BCM fr. 17 (II 296 f.).

works he cites only Democritus, the Greek philosopher who was supposedly Ostanēs' pupil.⁶⁸ In fact, there is nothing substantial in the pseudepigrapha to link "magian" authors with this most gruesome corner of magic, and only this one outburst of Pliny suggests that their image was thus tarnished. While the magi were widely supposed to conjure with demons and ghosts, preying on corpses was rather the imagined preserve of native female witches such as we find, archetypally and in full melodramatic horror, in the phantasies of Lucan or Apuleius.⁶⁹ Indeed, only in a single passage from Plutarch's *De Iside* concerning apotropaic sacrifices to Areimanios are sinister rites of any sort imputed to the magi with any degree of plausibility.⁷⁰

Generally, the Greek image of the magi, when not distorted by the equation of magus and magician which we have been examining, is a favourable one. Space precludes a full account of it, and we have concentrated instead on those aspects most relevant to the pseudepigrapha, especially the reputation of the magi as diviners and intermediaries with the Other World. However, to set these aspects in a fuller context, I set out below, *exempli gratia*, part of the description of the magi from the prologue (6–9) of Diogenes Laertius.⁷¹ It is typical of what reasonably well informed Greeks would have "known" concerning the magi, and is thus a sort of group portrait of those who from their perspective were the authors of the pseudepigrapha. "The magi spend their time in the worship of the gods, in sacrifices and prayers, implying that none but themselves have the ear of the gods, whom they hold to be fire, earth and water. They condemn the use of images, and especially the error of attributing to the divinities difference of sex. They hold discourse of justice, and deem it impious to practice cremation. But they see no impiety in marriage with a mother or daughter . . . Further, they practice divination (*mantikēn*) and forecast the future, declaring that the gods appear to them in visible form. Moreover, they say that the air is full of shapes which stream forth like a

⁶⁸ See BCM, n. 1 ad frag.; on the relationship of "Democritus" to "Ostanēs" see below, p. 554 ff.

⁶⁹ Apuleius' novel, the *Golden Ass*, is replete with such creatures, especially the first 3 books. Lucan's epic poem, the *Pharsalia* (VI.507 ff.), contains the most horrific exemplar. On the latter, and the type in general, see Gordon, art. cit. in n. 16, pp. 67–71; id., "Lucan's Erictho", *Homo Viator* (Studies for J. Bramble), edd. M. and M. Whitby and P. Hardie, Bristol 1987, 231–41.

⁷⁰ *De Iside* 46. For the particulars, and their interpretation, see above, pp. 457–8.

⁷¹ = BCM fr. D 2, II 67–70; see notes ad frag., and I 73–80. Another illuminating example is Dio *Or.* XXXVI.40 f. = fr. O 8 (BCM II 143 f.), quoted below, n. 158.

vapour and enter the eyes of keensighted seers. They prohibit personal ornament and the wearing of gold. Their dress is white, they make their bed on the ground, and their food is vegetables, cheese, and coarse bread. . . . With the art of magic they are wholly unacquainted. . . . Aristotle . . . declares that the magi are more ancient than the Egyptians; and further that they believe in two principles, the good spirit and the evil spirit, the one called Zeus or Oromasdēs, the other Hades or Areimanios . . . [Theopompus] says that according to the magi men will live in a future life and be immortal. . . ." (trans. Hicks). For the present purpose it is immaterial what is accurate information here and what is not. Genuine elements are readily recognizable and in fact preponderate: the fundamental Zoroastrian belief in the dualistic opposition of good and evil, of Ahura Mazda and Anra Mainyu; the reverence for the elements, especially fire; resurrection and *Frašo-kereti*; the (relatively) aniconic and non-anthropomorphic tradition; even the reference to next-of-kin marriage (*khvaetvadatha*).⁷² For the rest, the picture is that of ascetics within a fabulously ancient tradition, presented in a suitable and comprehensible Greek philosophical guise.⁷³

"Zoroaster"

Turning from the magi in general to the figure whom the Greeks accepted as unquestionably the greatest individual in the class, one notes of Zoroaster first that very little obvious magic is attributed to him.⁷⁴ His pseudepigrapha are virtually free of it, except in the diluted sense that much of the work deals with the arcana of nature and how to manipulate them.⁷⁵ The earliest ascription of specifi-

⁷² Here as a magian, rather than exclusively royal, practice; cf. HZ II 184; see also BCM I 78–80. For other references to the practice in Greco-Roman times see the index to this volume, s.v. *khvaetvadatha*.

⁷³ Other sources for the Greek image of the magi, their teaching and their practices, are assembled in BCM under the doctrinal fragments of "Zoroaster" (section "D", II 63–92); see also Clemen, Nachrichten; Benveniste, Persian Religion. As noted at the outset, it is important to remember that by and large what is reported by these sources does not overlap with the content of the pseudepigrapha. In other words, it is information about the supposed background of the supposed authors of the pseudepigrapha, not about what they actually wrote. On the "wisdom" of the magi, as an aspect of their piety, see also BCM I 93 f. (with notes).

⁷⁴ BCM I 149.

⁷⁵ Bidez and Cumont (I 147, n. 4) cite an interesting remark of Iamblichus the Neoplatonist (ap. schol. in Plato *Soph.* 216a, VI p. 250 Hermann) to the effect that nature herself "has been called a *magos* by some because of the sympathies and antipathies in nature". On this definition, those like Ps.-Zoroaster who explore and use those sympathies would be magicians too.

cally magical teaching to a text of "Zoroaster" is actually medieval: Cecco d'Ascoli (14th cent.) claims to quote Zoroaster *ad litteram* on the *climata*, which are powerful spirits set at the world's cardinal points and which may be invoked for divination with offerings of human flesh and blood.⁷⁶ In default of any extant fragments, the allusions to books of magic by Zoroaster in the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* (2nd cent. A.C. or later) and in Zacharias Scholasticus' *Life of Severus of Antioch* (6th cent.) are rightly treated with scepticism by Bidez and Cumont.⁷⁷ Of interest, however, are the comments of Zosimus (4th cent.) on the different prescriptions of Zoroaster and Hermes Trismegistus for encountering fate (*eimarmene*). "Zoroaster claims to avert (*apostrephesthai*) fate . . . through knowledge of all things above, boasting of the magic of corporeal speech (*mageia ensōmou phraseōs*)", while Hermes, whose way Zosimus implicitly endorses, recommends instead an acceptance of fate's buffetings in this mortal world and a flight to the divine and immaterial.⁷⁸ Unfortunately, we do not know to what work or works Zosimus refers, but his comments certainly capture the active and practical bias of Zoroaster's pseudepigrapha.

Of more concern, however, are the factors which established Zoroaster's reputation as an astrologer,⁷⁹ since it is above all as an astrological writer that he emerges from the preserved fragments of the pseudepigrapha. Here again, we are dealing with a Western image of the prophet, not with an internal Zoroastrian tradition, and still less with a historical reality. One must remember, too, that the pseudepigrapha themselves will have reinforced the image. Not only will astrological writings have been fathered on Zoroaster

⁷⁶ Fr. O 104.

⁷⁷ I 149 f. Ps.-Clement = fr. O 98, Zacharias = fr. O 103.

⁷⁸ Fr. O 99; see also Festugière, RHT I 44. "Magic of corporeal speech" seems to refer to the manipulation of letter symbolism, such as the correspondence of vowels and planets; see BCM, notes ad frag.

⁷⁹ Zoroaster as astrologer: BCM I 36; frs. B 7 (*Suda s.v. astronomia*: "The Babylonians first discovered this art through Zoroaster; among them was Ostanēs too. They established that human fates from birth correspond to the movements of the heavens. The Egyptians and Greeks received the art from the Babylonians"); B 21 (Ammianus Marcellinus XXIII.6.33: "... and on their [i.e. the Brahmins'] instruction mastered the principles of the motions of the universe and the stars"); B 33a (Pompeius Trogus ap. Justin *Hist. Philipp.* I.1.9: "... who is said to have first discovered the magical arts and the principles of the universe and to have diligently observed the motions of the stars"); B 51 (Malalas, etc.: "... the notorious Persian astronomer . . ."). See also below on Zoroaster as a Chaldean; also the tradition that Zoroaster foretold the appearance and significance of the "star of Bethlehem": above, p. 450. It was of course the story of the star and the visit of the magi to the nativity (Mt. 2:1-11) that firmly established the magi and their prophet Zoroaster in Christian tradition as astrologers. Medieval sources routinely describe Zoroaster as the founder of astrology, as of magic.

because Zoroaster was thought to have been an astrologer, but Zoroaster's status as an astrologer will have been confirmed by the writings attributed to him.⁸⁰

One factor was a chance coincidence of name. As part of the arcane network of correspondences, the Greeks were ever on the lookout for the hidden significances and "real" meanings of words. Usually, their ingenuity in finding them was exceeded only by the absurdity and groundlessness of the proposed etymologies. The element *-astr-* in *Zōroastrēs*, which of course is no more than the standard Greek rendering of the prophet's name, evoked the common word for star, *astron* or *astēr*. Relatively early, then, *Zoroastres* is taken to signify "star-worshipper" (*astrohytēs*: lit. "star-sacrificer") and the person is believed to exemplify the activity implicit in his name.⁸¹ A later and more elaborate etymology, by adding in the initial element *Zō-*, saw in Zoroaster the "living star" and a story emerged deriving an appropriate fate therefrom: Zoroaster died smitten by the living (*zō-*) flux (*-ro-*) of fire from the star (*-astr-*) which he himself had invoked or which, in a hostile version, so acted in revenge for the constraints under which the sorcerer-astrologer had placed it.⁸² With such a name, it is scarcely surprising that astrological writing would gravitate to the person of Zoroaster.

A second and more serious factor was the tradition that makes of Zoroaster a "Chaldean".⁸³ Although for the most part the Greeks

⁸⁰ In view of the relative lateness of the sources that describe him as an astrologer (see preceding note—no source predates the earliest layers of the astrological pseudepigrapha), it is indeed probable that Zoroaster's reputation followed from his supposed writings quite as much as did his writings from his reputation. It is perhaps as a consequence of the astrological character of the book *On Nature*, to which he appears to allude, that Porphyry places Zoroaster among the Chaldeans in Babylon: *Vita Pythag.* 12 = BCM fr. B 27 (see n. 3 ad frag.; also I 109 f.).

⁸¹ Dinon and Hermodorus (both 4th cent. B.C.) ap. Diog. Laert. prooem. 8 (= BCM fr. D 2, II 67 lines 24–6). Cf. also above, p. 368.

⁸² For the etymology, Ps.-Clement *Homilies* IX.3, II 242C Migne (= BCM fr. B 45, II 50 col. b ad fin.); for the story, BCM fr. B 45 (Ps.-Clem. *Recognitions* and *Homilies*) and 51a–f (Malalas, etc.); Ps.-Clement is the more hostile source, while Malalas *et al.* have Zoroaster himself call down the celestial fire as the consummation of his life. The stories show a conflation of Zoroaster with Nimrod (see above, pp. 437–8): hence the star invoked is Orion, the catasterism of the giant hunter who is Nimrod's Western equivalent.

⁸³ BCM I 33–8. Bidez and Cumont demonstrate (i) that a Pythagorean tradition that the master had studied under Zoroaster was partly responsible for locating Zoroaster in Babylon as the site of the encounter of the two sages (cf. above, p. 368); and (ii) that it is from a Semitic form of the prophet's name, associated particularly with this "Chaldean" Zoroaster, that his alternate Greek name, Zaratas (vel sim.), descends. (Zaratas occasionally takes on a life of his own

readily distinguished the magi of Iran from the Chaldeans of Babylon, there was a tendency among the less well-informed to conflate these learned eastern priestly cultures, especially since the two met and mingled in Babylon following the conquest of Cyrus.⁸⁴ Since the Chaldeans were both in fact and reputation formidable astrologers, once Zoroaster is located in Babylon, he too becomes an astrologer.

It was argued by Bidez and Cumont that more than just the setting of Zoroaster's name on the astrological pseudepigrapha stemmed from the cultural interaction of magi and Chaldeans.⁸⁵ Their theory was that the Iranian religion, or at least a branch of it, acquired from the Chaldeans in Babylon an astrological coloration and sophistication to its cosmology. It was from this branch that the Magusaeans of Syria and Anatolia descended, and it was they, suitably hellenized, who produced the pseudepigrapha in which astrology is so prominent. The image of Zoroaster as astrologer thus echoes a partial truth: his heirs were astrologers, though he most certainly was not, and they acquired their learning in Babylon where he himself was said by some to have lived and taught as a Chaldean. Elegant and persuasive though this scenario is, it fails on the manifest absence of a peculiarly Chaldean quality to the astrology of the pseudepigrapha, which is by and large indistinguishable from the mass of Greek astrological writing.⁸⁶ As we shall see, the traces of Babylon—or Anatolia—are minor and somewhat hypothetical. The authors of Zoroaster's astrological pseudepigrapha, and for the most part their sources too, are best seen as

as a separate individual.) The principal sources that describe Zoroaster/Zaratas as a Chaldean or as the first instructor of the Chaldeans and the founder of their art are: frs. B 27 (Porphyry *Life of Pythagoras* 12: "... in Babylon he [Pythagoras] associated with the other Chaldeans and joined Zaratas, by whom he was purified ... and instructed ..."); O 85 (Lydas *On the Months* II.4: "... the Chaldeans in the circle of Zoroaster and Hystaspes and the Egyptians organized the days into the week from the number of the planets ..."); B 30 (Lucian *Mennipus* 6: "... I decided to go to Babylon and to ask one of the magi, Zoroaster's disciples and successors ..."); B 26a (Alexander Polyhistor ap. Clement *Strom.* I.15: "... Pythagoras was a pupil of Zaratos the Assyrian ..."); B 21 (Ammianus Marcellinus XXIII.6.32: "... much of this learning [sc. magian religion] Zoroaster the Bactrian added from the secrets [*arcana*] of the Chaldeans"); B 7 (*Suda*—see above, n. 79—that the Babylonians learnt astrology from Zoroaster); B 25a (Diodorus of Eretria and Aristoxenus ap. Hippolytus *Ref.* VI.23.2, p. 149.29 Wendland: that Pythagoras went to "Zaratas the Chaldean"). On Aristoxenus' testimony see the article by P. Kingsley, cited above, p. 368 ff. with n. 22.

⁸⁴ BCM I 33–6.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ W. and H. G. Gundel, *Astrologumena*, 60–6. The Gundels favour, if anything, an Egyptian provenance.

astrologers in the burgeoning Greek tradition who expropriated Zoroaster's name because Zoroaster, the "living star", was a "known" Chaldean and hence manifestly an astrologer. The authority of the puissant and exotic name was all that was required.

Before turning finally to the actual pseudepigraphic works, one should attempt a very brief sketch of the Greek image of Zoroaster in its totality, such as it would have been present, in whole or part, in the minds of the works' original readers.⁸⁷ At the heart of that image was the one element that was essentially true: that Zoroaster was the prophet and founder of the religion of the Iranian peoples. The rest was mostly fantasy. He was set in the vastly ancient past, 5000 years before the Trojan War or 6000 before either Xerxes or Plato,⁸⁸ a dating which does not seem to have been found incompatible with the tradition that he instructed Pythagoras in historic times!⁸⁹ He is variously located: one tradition makes him a king in Bactria who waged unsuccessful war with the mythical Ninus and Semiramis of Babylon,⁹⁰ and we have noted that in another he becomes a Chaldean or teacher of the Chaldeans. His life is that of the typical Neopythagorean sage: a mission to teach and preach preceded by a period of silence and ascetic withdrawal.⁹¹ As Pythagoras' reputed master, his wisdom was thought to have entered the mainstream of Greek philosophy according to the familiar pattern by which Greece learnt from the sages of older oriental cultures—sages who were in fact largely her own creations. As has been emphasized, Zoroaster was also deemed the founder of both magic and astrology, though somewhat eclipsed in the former by his successor Ostanēs. He was equated also with Jewish and Biblical figures: Seth, Nimrod, Ezekiel, Balaam, Baruch,⁹² but enters the Middle Ages predominantly as a sinister magician.⁹³

The starting point for considering Zoroaster's Greek pseudepigrapha is the testimony of the elder Pliny on Hermippus, "who wrote most diligently about this art (sc. magic) in its entirety and

⁸⁷ Within the space of a paragraph it is impossible to disentangle the image's chronological development. The whole subject is in any case well and exhaustively treated in BCM (I 5–55).

⁸⁸ To the nearest millennium, these 3 dates are essentially the same. They are given by Diogenes Laertius proem. 2, citing Hermodorus and Xanthus the Lydian (fr. B 1a, lines 13–18, with nn. 2–4), by Plutarch *On Isis* 46 (fr. B 1c), and by Pliny *NH* XXX.2.3, citing Eudoxus and Aristotle (fr. B 2, with n. 5).

⁸⁹ See n. 83, above, and BCM I 32–4; and cf. above, p. 440.

⁹⁰ BCM I 8–10; the tradition probably derives from Ctesias.

⁹¹ *Ib.*, pp. 25–8. An illuminating description of Zoroaster's retreat and mission in Dio *Or.* XXXVI.40 f. (= BCM fr. O 8) is quoted below, n. 158.

⁹² *Ib.*, pp. 42–50; see also above, p. 436 ff.

⁹³ *Ib.*, p. 55.

commented on the two million lines composed by Zoroaster, listing the contents of his (i.e. Zoroaster's) volumes" (*qui de tota ea arte diligentissime scripsit, et viciens centum milia versuum a Zoroastre condita, indicibus quoque voluminum eius positis, explanavit*).⁹⁴ Hermippus was active in Alexandria in about 200 B.C., and we assume that the works of Zoroaster on which he commented were those collected in the great library there. Within the first century of the Hellenistic age, then, an enormous quantity of writing had been fabricated and circulated in Zoroaster's name. That it was the product, essentially, of the third century is suggested by the silence of earlier authorities of the classical age about the existence of any such corpus.

Unfortunately, it is impossible to assess the extent of overlap between Hermippus' collection and the material still extant under Zoroaster's name or the works whose titles are known. It should not, however, be assumed from Pliny's context that the collection was magical. Hermippus' own work, to which Pliny refers, was entitled *Peri magōn*, and will have covered the learning of the Eastern magi (as reconstructed in the West), not the arts of home-grown magicians. In broad terms, one may suppose the contents of "Zoroaster's" works, on which Hermippus commented, to have been similar—a medley of contemporary wisdom judged compatible, by standards then current, with that remote and alien source. Its astrology, if such it contained, will have been quite crude in comparison with that of the extant pseudepigrapha, since the art in the third century was still in its infancy. Bidez and Cumont are surely right in construing *versuum* as lines of text rather than "verses" in the sense of lines of poetry.⁹⁵ Although the collection may perhaps have contained some verse material, it is most unlikely to have consisted exclusively of a single didactic poem of the monstrous length implied—or even of several shorter pieces of that nature—since, apart from the poem *On the Virtues of Stones* (see below), no trace of an extensive verse corpus attributed to Zoroaster is attested. Whatever the content and form, the two million lines, on the estimate of Bidez and Cumont,⁹⁶ will have filled some 800 standard papyrus rolls—a formidable collection by any measure. But if the numbers were systematically rounded upwards, the grand total may be something of an exaggeration, and the collection may well have included duplicates or variants of some of the same works.

⁹⁴ NH XXX.2.4 = fr. B2. See also BCM I 85–8; and on Hermippus, above,

p. 508.

⁹⁵ BCM I 86 f.

⁹⁶ *Ib.*, p. 87.

There is also the disagreeable possibility that some, perhaps much, of the collection consisted of simple forgeries made for profit. We know from Galen (2nd cent. A.C.) and from a sixth-century commentator on Aristotle that competition for prestigious acquisitions among well-endowed royal libraries, particularly the Alexandrian one founded by Ptolemy II Philadelphus, created a lively market for the manuscripts of famous and ancient authors; furthermore, that the unscrupulous and the greedy satisfied that market by fabricating what was not otherwise and genuinely available.⁹⁷ This, says Galen, was the origin of much of the spurious literature still in circulation in his day. It cannot of course be proved, but it seems not unlikely that Zoroaster, bearing as fabled and antique a name as one might wish, and with the advantage moreover of never having written any real books against which to test the false, would have been an ideal author for the inventions of these entrepreneurs of the book trade. How many of those 800 or so rolls of Zoroaster in the Alexandrian collection, one wonders, were made to order, as it were, for a quick drachma? And might the same be true of parts of the pseudepigrapha known to us by title or in fragments? It is an uncomfortable possibility, which is generally overlooked. Critics for the most part assume that the motive behind pseudepigraphy in fields such as the "Zoroastrian" was, at its best, a genuine sense of working so closely in the master's tradition that the use of his name was substantially accurate, or, at worst, merely the expropriation of a famous name to give weight to one's own propositions, sincerely held. In either case the integrity of the actual author *vis-à-vis* his composition is not in question.⁹⁸ By and large, this assumption underlies the present excursus. But given the evidence on the activities and incentives of forgers, the possibility must also be kept in mind that some part of Zoroaster's pseudepigrapha could have been composed by those without the slightest conviction in its contents and solely for financial gain. Perhaps, though, in the end it makes little difference: however sordid and artificial its origin, the

⁹⁷ Galen *In Hipp. de nat. hominis* I.42; *Commentaria in Aristotelem graeca*, ed. A. Busse, XVIII, 1, Berlin, 1900, 128, ll. 5–9. See B. M. Metzger, "Literary Forgeries and Canonical Pseudepigrapha," *JBL* 91, 1972, 3–24, at 5 f.; the article is an excellent general study of pseudepigraphy and its motives. Galen was himself the victim of forgers, so much so that he felt compelled to protect himself by writing a bibliographic essay entitled *On His Own Books*!

⁹⁸ Momigliano, although he uses the harsh term "forgeries" and rightly questions the consequences for a civilization of "being fed" on such a diet, does not doubt the essential sincerity of the pseudepigraphers' motivation: they believed in what they wrote, although they culpably manipulated its provenance—and paid the price in their own self-deception (*Alien Wisdom*, 144–8).

work is the work, and it acquires its authenticity as it is accepted in, and passes down, the tradition.

Three works of "Zoroaster" in the tradition of Hellenistic learning are known to us by title,⁹⁹ two major, one minor. The major works are the treatise *On Nature* (*Peri physeōs*) and the *Asteroskopika* or *Apotelesmatika*, variant titles both indicating a work of technical astrology and meaning respectively "star observations" and "results (sc. of astrological predictions)".¹⁰⁰ *On Nature* ran to four "books" or volumes (i.e. papyrus rolls), the *Apotelesmatika* to five. The minor work was entitled *On the Virtues of Stones* (*Peri lithōn timiōn*) and was contained in a single volume. It was a lapidary, detailing the medical and magical properties of minerals. On the basis of Pliny's use of the phrase *Zoroastrem cecinisse* ("... that Zoroaster sang ..."), Bidez and Cumont concluded that it was composed in verse.¹⁰¹

Most of the fragments of "Zoroaster" are grouped by Bidez and Cumont under one or other of these three works. That is not because the fragments themselves all explicitly indicate their provenance—very few of them do—but rather as an organizing principle based on their subject matter. Many of them, in fact, may come from other works of "Zoroaster" whose titles have perished. And even for those which actually do belong to one or other of the named trio, one must not assume that they were all parts of a fixed text definitively composed by a single author at a certain date. These are works of learning that typically *accrete*; new material is added as the "science" advances.¹⁰² This process is most tellingly revealed in the two versions of the opening of *On Nature*, to be discussed next.

Of the three named works, *On Nature* is the most interesting, both for its more varied content and its frame narrative. The latter we have already noted: how the work took over the *mise en scène* of Plato's "Myth of Er" from the *Republic*, substituting Zoroaster's

⁹⁹ The title and number of volumes in each work are given in the *Suda* s.v. *Zoroastres* (= BCM fr. O 5); in addition, Proclus *In Remp.* II p. 109.7 Kroll (= fr. O 13, l. 6 f.) attests the 4 volumes of *On Nature*.

¹⁰⁰ On whether *Asteroskopika* and *Apotelesmatika* are alternative titles for the same work or denote 2 separate but very similar works, the former of one (?) book and the latter of five, see BCM I 134; W. and H. G. Gundel, *Astrologumena*, 63.

¹⁰¹ BCM I 128; Pliny *NH* XXXVII.49.133 = fr. O 55; *cano* (lit. "sing") is regularly used to mean "write in poetry about ...".

¹⁰² Galen (above, n. 97) protested against this sort of unscrupulous modification of his own medical writings. For an egregious, and very late, addition to "Zoroaster's" astrological works, see below, n. 145, on the second horoscope in fr. O 94.

name for that of the original hero, Er.¹⁰³ The material of *On Nature* is accordingly presented as truths revealed by the gods to Zoroaster who has assumed Er's parentage, nationality and fate, on a visit to the underworld after he had died—or apparently died—in battle: "These things I wrote, I, Zoroaster son of Armenios, a Pamphylian by race, who died in war, whatever I learnt from the gods while I was in Hades". This is the opening that Clement of Alexandria reports at the end of the second century A.C. Proclus, in the fifth, knows a significant addition: "... and whatever (sc. I learnt) from other enquiries".¹⁰⁴ It seems likely that in the interval *On Nature* had acquired what could no longer plausibly be assigned to divine revelation in the one infernal visit. One should not, however, cynically infer from this that the opening sentence was the total extent of the narrative frame, a few borrowed words prefixed in a careless bid for the authority of revelation. Proclus also furnishes the detail that in the middle of the work Zoroaster converses with "Cyrus the king" ("though which Cyrus isn't clear").¹⁰⁵ Some attempt, then, was made to carry the narrative through into the body of the work.

Colotes, an Epicurean philosopher of the mid third century B.C., charged that the plagiarism of the Myth of Er flowed in the other direction: that it was Plato who had substituted Er's name for Zoroaster's.¹⁰⁶ The natural inference from this is that Colotes knew, or knew of, the pseudepigraphic treatise *On Nature* and mistook the derivative ("Zoroaster's") for the original (Plato's)—wilfully, perhaps, in sectarian zeal. If that is so, then *On Nature*, or a version of it, was in existence by the middle of the third century B.C.¹⁰⁷ Otherwise, it is not until well into the Christian era that dated authors attest *On Nature*. Clement, as we have just seen, in c. 200 records the work's opening sentence; and Porphyry late in the third century, in writing on the life of Pythagoras, has that sage "listen to the discourse (sc. of Zaratos = Zoroaster) about nature (*ton peri phuseōs logon*)",¹⁰⁸ a good indication that he both knew *On Nature* and—surprisingly for one of antiquity's few literary sceptics—accepted it as genuinely Zoroaster's. The only other indication of the work's date is in the relative crudeness of its astrology, which

¹⁰³ Above, p. 518 with n. 63.

¹⁰⁴ Fr. O 13, l. 10 f.

¹⁰⁵ *Ib.*, l. 11 f.

¹⁰⁶ *Ib.*, ll. 2–6.

¹⁰⁷ BCM I 111.

¹⁰⁸ *Life of Pythagoras* 12 = BCM fr. B 27.

sets it perhaps as early as the mid third century B.C.¹⁰⁹, in harmony with Colotes' testimony. Proclus, in relating it to Plato's *Republic* notes the highly relevant detail that *On Nature's* planetary order places the sun in middle position, which is the Hellenistic norm, while Plato has of course his own earlier scheme setting the sun in second place immediately above the moon.¹¹⁰

And what of the substance and contents of *On Nature*? About this we know only two facts with certainty, both communicated by Proclus: first that its "volumes were crammed with astrological speculations"; and secondly that "of those things spoken about, only Necessity (*Anankē*) was mentioned by (proper?) name, and she, he (i.e. "Zoroaster") says, is the air".¹¹¹ From the latter we can at least infer that *On Nature*, whatever more practical information it may also have purveyed, covered cosmology at a fairly rarefied level. The identification of the air with Necessity may also furnish the first of several conceivable links with real Zoroastrianism that we shall find scattered here and there in the pseudepigrapha, since in Zoroastrianism the wind god Vayu is also the *yazata* of the breath of life and thus, by his coming and departure, the determinant of human fate, i.e. of its Necessity, as a Greek might term it.¹¹²

On Proclus' warrant concerning *On Nature's* contents, Bidez and Cumont assigned to it some substantial astrological fragments excerpted from Proclus himself and from Cassianus Bassus, a sixth-century author taken up into the Byzantine agricultural compilation, the *Geoponica*. These two writers attribute the excerpts to "Zoroaster", but not explicitly to *On Nature*. Since more than one astrological work was compiled under Zoroaster's name, the ultimate provenance of these fragments must remain an open question. The following are the more important ones (the first two from Proclus, the others from the *Geoponica*): O 14, on the positions of sun and moon at conception and birth for seven-month children; O 15a, the same, for both seven- and nine-month children; O 39, a table, necessarily very approximate, of the times of moonrise and moonset for the thirty days of a lunation, useful on the assumption that some agricultural tasks are best done when the moon is above

¹⁰⁹ W. and H. G. Gundel, *Astrologumena*, Zeittafel, p. 378, place the "original material" (*Grundstock*) of Ps.-Zoroaster some time after 250 B.C.

¹¹⁰ Fr. O 13, ll. 19–22.

¹¹¹ *Ib.*, ll. 12–15.

¹¹² See n. 3 ad frag. (BCM II 160); HZ I 79 f., II 238 f. W. and H. G. Gundel, however, trace the idea and equation to Egypt and the sky goddess Nut: *Astrologumena*, 62 f., n. 4. One must remember, too, that Necessity figures in the original Myth of Er: the "spindle of Necessity", set on her knee, is the axis on which the universe turns (*Republic* 616 f.).

the horizon, others when it is below; O 40, prognoses for the year based on the sign of the zodiac occupied by the moon at the heliacal rising of Sirius on July 20th;¹¹³ O 41, the same, based on the first thunder heard after the rising of Sirius; O 42, a *dōdekaēteris* of Jupiter, i.e. prognoses from the sign of the zodiac occupied by Jupiter in each of the twelve years of its period of revolution; O 43, a prognosis for crops by planting a miniature garden shortly before the rising of Sirius and observing the relative growth of different species—those plants which Sirius blasts will of course not do as well.

Of this strange and technical farrago—one wonders, did “Zoroaster” really need to descend to the underworld to obtain it from the gods?—W. and H. G. Gundel remarked that it differs little from the general run of Hellenistic astrological material of its type.¹¹⁴ Nevertheless, there are touches, as Bidez and Cumont contended,¹¹⁵ which do perhaps point to a provenance in Babylon, Anatolia, Syria, or even Iran—not for the work itself, but for the antecedents of some of the information variously conveyed in its fragments. First, thunder omens (O 41) are particularly a feature of Babylonian celestial divination. Secondly, the miniature test garden (O 43) belongs originally to eastern Mediterranean religious ritual rather than to astrology: it is a type of “Adonis garden”, planted in honour of that dying god or hero, and arguably Syrian in provenance.¹¹⁶ Third and most important, Sirius, which figures prominently in three of the fragments (O 40, 41, 43), while equally important in Egyptian astronomy, where its rising marks the start of the “Sothis” year, was carefully observed in Babylon, Iran and, perhaps, Anatolia.¹¹⁷ In Iran, Sirius was the star of Tištrya, the *yazata* who annually fights the drought-demon to recover the life-giving waters.¹¹⁸ Bidez and Cumont justly cite from the *yašt* to Tištrya lines which prefigure, from an un-astrological age and culture, the predictive approach realized in a very different and

¹¹³ The “heliacal rising” is a star’s first visibility; it occurs each year on the date on which the star can first be seen to rise above the eastern horizon ahead of the sun in the pre-dawn twilight (on previous days it has been too close to the sun to be observed at all).

¹¹⁴ *Astrologumena*, 63.

¹¹⁵ *BCM* I 122–6.

¹¹⁶ *Ib.*, p. 126 and II 188 (n. to fr. O 43); see, in general, M. Detienne, *The Gardens of Adonis*, tr. J. Lloyd, Atlantic Highlands, N.J., 1977.

¹¹⁷ On the use of Sirius risings in Babylonian astronomy see O. Neugebauer, *A history of Ancient Mathematical Astronomy*, Berlin and New York 1975, I 363–5, 542 f.

¹¹⁸ *HZ* I 74–8, II 204–6; *BCM* I 124 f.

technical format in the Sirius fragments of Ps.-Zoroaster:¹¹⁹ "We worship Tištrya . . . rising with a good year for the land or a bad year. When will the Aryan lands have a good year?" Plutarch reports of "Persian" theology the belief that Hōromasdēs had "established one star beyond all as the guardian and "foreseer" (*proöptes*), Sirius".¹²⁰ Finally, Manilius in his astrological poem of the early first century A.C. speaks of those "who observe its . . . [heliacal] rising from the high summit of Taurus" and predict therefrom the weather, the harvests, and the issues of peace and war.¹²¹ Taurus is the great mountain range of Cilicia. If Manilius is referring to actual astrological practices in that part of the world, the practitioners could well have been Magusaeans, analogous to those who there formulated the horoscope of the cult of Antiochus of Commagene a century earlier, and caused it to be displayed on the magnificent lion monument on the summit of Nimrud Dagħ.¹²² One must, though, be cautious: the allusion to Taurus may equally well be just Manilius' poetical compliment to his Cilician predecessor, Aratus.¹²³

Bidez and Cumont also assign to *On Nature* (as frs. O 16–23) the plant names which are found attributed to Zoroaster at various points in the botanical works of Pseudo-Apuleius and of Dioscorides, the latter in the interpolated parts (i.e. Ps.-Dioscorides).¹²⁴ Pamphilos of Alexandria, who composed a botanical lexicon in the first century A.C., is the postulated intermediary. Also as possible fragments from *On Nature* Bidez and Cumont set out a selection of magical prescriptions on the nature, collection, preparation and use of certain plants ascribed by Pliny, not to any particular author, but to the magi collectively (frs. O 24–36).¹²⁵ The postulated intermediary of this group of fragments is an author of the early second century B.C., Bolos of Mendes (in Egypt), who ascribed his writings to Democritus, probably because he drew *inter alia* on material falsely attributed to that eminent fifth-century philosopher.¹²⁶ Clearly, we are here far from anything that can with

¹¹⁹ BCM I 125, n. 7; Yt. 8.36.

¹²⁰ *De Iside* 47; cf. above, p. 458.

¹²¹ *Astronomica* I.401–11.

¹²² Above, p. 323–4.

¹²³ Note ad loc. in G. P. Goold, ed., Cambridge (Mass.) and London 1977, 37.

¹²⁴ BCM I 116.

¹²⁵ *Ib.*, pp. 117–20; one assumes, with Bidez and Cumont, that Pliny means "magi" rather than "magicians".

¹²⁶ The classic work on Bolos is M. Wellmann, *Die Physika des Bolos Demokritos und der Magier Anaxilaos aus Larissa*, Abh. der Preussischen Akad. der Wiss., Phil.-hist. Kl., 1928, no. 7. Bolos is of equal or greater importance as the medium of transmission for "Ostanes": see below, p. 560 ff.

confidence be ascribed to “Zoroaster’s” *On Nature*, but Bidez and Cumont were not irresponsible in their attributions, in that if *On Nature* did not contain these actual nomenclatures and recipes, it will have contained material of much the same sort. The sample, then, is true to the character of *On Nature*, if not to its precise contents. There is no reason to deny, moreover, that ultimately *some* of the material goes back to real magian sources and magian lore, given Zoroastrianism’s traditional concern with helpful plants as parts of the good creation of Ahura Mazda and potential allies in the fight against the evil counter-order of Anra Mainyu and the daevas.¹²⁷ To give the flavour of the material, I translate one of the fragments from Pliny:¹²⁸ “The magi are obsessed with (lit. “crazy about”—*insaniunt circa*) this plant (sc. *verbenaca*). Smearred with it, they gain whatever they want in prayer, they drive out fevers, they cement friendships, and there isn’t an illness they don’t cure. It has to be gathered at the rising of the Dog (i.e. the constellation of which Sirius is the brightest star), when neither sun nor moon can see it (i.e. when both are below the horizon), with beans and honey first offered as an expiation to the earth; it must be marked round with iron, dug out with the left hand and lifted clear; it must be dried in the shade with its leaves, stalk and roots separate. They say that if a dining-room is sprinkled with water in which it has been steeped, the parties will be jollier. It is ground up as a charm against snakes . . .”.

The lapidary of “Zoroaster” *On the Virtues of Stones* appears to have been for minerals what the botanical part of *On Nature* was for plants. The work itself is nowhere explicitly cited, but Bidez and Cumont again assume that anything attributed to Zoroaster concerning stones and their magical and medical uses had its origin there (frs. O 55–61, mostly from Pliny). Likewise, they print under the same heading Plinian, and certain other, material on stones attributed simply to the magi, on the supposition that Ps.-Zoroaster’s *On the Virtues of Stones* was its ultimate source (frs. O 62–75).¹²⁹ As with the botany of *On Nature*, one need not doubt that elements of genuine magian lore lurk behind some of the informa-

¹²⁷ BCM I 114 f.

¹²⁸ Fr. O 34 = Pliny *NH* XXV.59.106 f.

¹²⁹ On the work’s postulated transmission see BCM I 128–30. It is paralleled by another “magian” lapidary, perhaps derived from “Zoroaster’s” or perhaps from a common source, that of “Damigeron”, known in a late Latin translation: text in R. Halleux and J. Schamp, edd. and tr., *Les lapidaires grecs*, Paris 1985 (see also their introduction, pp. xxii–vii; they are more sceptical than Bidez and Cumont about the role of Bolos in the transmission).

tion, whether or not it was all channelled through the single titled work. The inference that that work was therefore a Magusaeen composition is however entirely unjustified.

With the *Apotelesmatika* (or *Asteroskopika*) we return exclusively to astrology. Again, none of the fragments grouped by Bidez and Cumont under this heading explicitly carries the title in either form—merely the attribution to Zoroaster¹³⁰—so there can be no guarantee that they all actually come from this work, although its compendious nature as a large technical handbook that was doubtless augmented over the centuries makes it likely that several of them do.¹³¹ The contents and provenance of the major fragments are as follows: O 79, from “Palchus”,¹³² a very substantial excerpt on the receipt of letters: the position of the heavens at the moment of receipt indicates the content of a letter, its veracity, the likelihood of its fulfilment, and the character, motives, etc., of the sender and the courier; O 80, also from “Palchus”, a long excerpt on setting out on voyages: predictions based on the position of the moon relative to the five planets proper (i.e., the sun not included); O 81, *ibid.*, on the outbreak of war, predicted from the positions of Mars; O 83, from the late second-century astrologer Vettius Valens, a calculation of the maximum length of life allotted by the moon; O 88–95, excerpts from Abenragel,¹³³ an eleventh-century Arabic astrologer, of which the most important are O 88 f., on determining

¹³⁰ In one instance, O 80, even the assignment to Zoroaster is justified not by explicit attribution but by the close relationship to the preceding fragment within the context of the host author.

¹³¹ One is left, moreover, with some residual concern about the lack of explicit criteria in BCM for the distribution of the astrological fragments between *On Nature* and the *Apotelesmatika*. And the sense in which passages which were probably fitted in many centuries later can be said to belong to the original work is surely a very tenuous one.

¹³² Palchus used to be thought an astrologer of the early 6th century. In fact his name, which transliterates the Arabic al-Balkhī (“he from Balkh”), was first imposed on a Byzantine astrological compendium by Eleutherius Elias Zebelenus in the late 14th cent.: D. Pingree, “Classical and Byzantine Astrology in Sassanian Persia”, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* (forthcoming). Much of the material ascribed to Palchus is of course considerably earlier. The Zoroaster fragments also appear in Theophilus the Philosopher (8th cent.), and likely have an earlier lineage back through Sasanian astrology, perhaps ultimately to Hellenistic Greek (Pingree, *ib.*). It is possible that the ascription to Zoroaster entered at the Sasanian stage (see below).

¹³³ Ibn Abi 'l-Ridjal: on whom, D. Pingree, *EI*, 1971 ed., s.v. For the excerpts from Abenragel, Bidez and Cumont were dependent on V. Stegemann, who was in the process of publishing them separately: “Astrologische Zarathustra-Fragmente bei dem arabischen Astrologen Abū 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī i. abī 'r-Riḡāl (II. Jhdt.)”, *Orientalia* 6, 1937, 317–86. These excerpts have since been traced to an Arabic translation of a Sasanian astrological text, the *Kitāb al-mawālīd*, ascribed to Zaradušt: Pingree, *o.c.* On the implications, see below.

the circumstances in which the sun and other planets function in a horoscope as *haylāj* and *kadhkhudāh*,¹³⁴ and O 94, the horoscope of two individuals who died, or appeared to die, but then came back to life. This material, varied though it is, all exemplifies standard technical astrology, whether of the genethliological type (i.e., that concerned with the making and interpretation of individual natal horoscopes) or of the catarchic type (i.e., that concerned with favourable and unfavourable circumstances for activities and new initiatives). An extremely late source, Cecco d'Ascoli (died 1327), reports—indeed, claims to quote from Zoroaster *ad litteram*¹³⁵—something less narrowly practical: O 96, a doctrine of four great ages of 12,000 years each, ruled successively by the quadrants of the eighth sphere, i.e. the sphere of the fixed stars, and marked by the emergence of semi-divine men who change the world order, abolishing the old laws and bringing in new.

In all this varied astrological material—the tip, one assumes, of a very much larger mass—there is nothing suggestive of a genesis earlier than the second century B.C. and much that is indicative of the developed astrology of the first century B.C. or later—in some instances very much later. The earliest host source (as so often) is Pliny in the first century A.C. In the same passage that carries an astrological datum of “Zoroaster”, Pliny cites as another authority one Attius, apparently in a book named after an earlier author Praxidicus.¹³⁶ Praxidicus, as we know from Theophilus of Edessa, drew on “Zoroaster”.¹³⁷ Thus, at least two generations of writers intervene between Pliny and the astrological work of Ps.-Zoroaster, or some portion of it.¹³⁸ This Ps.-Zoroaster, then, cannot be later than the first century B.C. Another indication of date, though a very broad one, and a detail of great interest in itself, is Ps.-

¹³⁴ These terms are Arabic transliterations of Pahlavi *hilāg* and *kadag xwadāy*, which in turn translate Greek *aphetēs* (“starter”) and *oikodespotēs* (“lord of the house”). The *aphetēs* and *oikodespotēs* are planets which occupy points of significance in a horoscope and from which the length of life and the planets which will rule the life’s subdivisions are calculated. On this tangled astrological topic see Bouché-Leclercq, o.c. in n. 13, pp. 404–22.

¹³⁵ Cf., from the same source, the magical excerpt O 104 (above, p. 522).

¹³⁶ Fr. O 82b = *NH* XVIII.55.200; cf. fr. O 82a, in which both Zoroaster and Attius “who wrote *Praxidica*” are listed in the preface to *NH* XVIII as authors consulted. We know nothing further of either Attius or Praxidicus.

¹³⁷ Fr. O 81: see BCM II 225.

¹³⁸ BCM I 135 f. It is possible that another writer of the 1st cent. A.C., the influential astrological poet Dorotheus of Sidon, also drew on Ps.-Zoroaster: see BCM II 220 ad fr. O 80; the derivative—if such it is—passage from Dorotheus (V.25.1–12) may now be found in D. Pingree’s edition: Dorotheus Sidonius, *Carmen Astrologicum*, Leipzig 1976, pp. 398 (the original Greek verses quoted by Hephaestion of Thebes) and 282 f. (an English translation of the Arabic text).

Zoroaster's use of an alternative nomenclature for the five planets.¹³⁹ This was a descriptive system, which avoided the personal and divine names, perhaps as being insufficiently "scientific": Saturn = *Phainōn*, the "shining"; Jupiter = *Phaëthōn*, the "brilliant"; Mars = *Pyrōeis*, the "fiery"; Venus = *Phōsphoros*, the "light-bringer" (*qua* morning-star); Mercury = *Stilbōn*, the "twinkling". This nomenclature was very much a feature of the Hellenistic age and was current from about the middle of the third century B.C. to the early second century A.C. It was superseded by the recrudescence of the old divine names which are those used in most of the extant astrological texts (Ptolemy, Vettius Valens, etc.). The descriptive names were employed (together with a variant system of divine names) on the Nimrud Dagħ lion horoscope (62 B.C.).¹⁴⁰ Its use both at Nimrud Dagħ and in a text of Ps.-Zoroaster could conceivably be manifestations of a common Magusæan astrology, although the nomenclature was so widespread that its occurrence in Ps.-Zoroaster does not by itself indicate an Anatolian provenance for the material in question.¹⁴¹

There are elements in the material which do suggest Zoroastrian, or, more broadly, Iranian, sources as being among the many tributaries to the pool of "Zoroaster's" astrology. For the most part, though, these elements appear to be quite late. If so, as *supplements* to the corpus, they do not help to establish its creation in Magusæan circles. Much ancient astrology, in its transmission, passed through Sasanian Iran and the Pahlavi language *en route* from the Greeks to the Arabs.¹⁴² Among others, the astrological writings of Ps.-Zoroaster appear to have undergone some accretion at this stage. Indeed, we now know that in part at least they were *re-created*. There exists, in an Arabic translation in two manuscripts, a Sasanian astrological treatise, the *Kitāb al-mawālīd*, which is

¹³⁹ BCM I 136–9. On this nomenclature see F. Cumont, "Les noms des planètes et l'astrolâtrie chez les Grecs", *L'Antiquité Classique* 4, 1935, 5–43, at pp. 19–32.

¹⁴⁰ Above, p. 323. 3 planets are named: *Phaëthōn Dios* (i.e. of Zeus) = Jupiter, *Stilbōn Apollōnos* = Mercury, *Pyrōeis Hērakleous* = Mars.

¹⁴¹ Bidez and Cumont are not convincing when they assert that the use of this system "creates a very strong presumption that the five books of the *Apotelesmatika* were composed in the kingdom of the Seleucids" (I 139).

¹⁴² D. Pingree, "Astrology", *Enc. Brit.*, 15th ed., *Macropaedia*, vol. 2, 222; id., "Astronomy and Astrology in India and Iran", *Isis* 54, 1963, 229–46, at p. 240 ff.; id., art. cit. in n. 132 (above). The line of descent (Greece to Iran to the Arabs) can readily be observed in Dorotheus of Sidon: see Pingree's edition (above, n. 138). On Sasanian astrology in general, see id., "Astrology and Astronomy in Iran", *EIr* II 858–71, at pp. 862–8. Sasanian astrology also incorporates a stream from India (itself in part derived from the Greeks!). The eventual mixture is returned, via the Arabs, to Byzantium and, eventually, Western Europe.

ascribed to Zardušt, i.e. to Zoroaster himself.¹⁴³ It is from this treatise, ultimately, that the Abenragel fragments (O 88–95) were excerpted. In a fictitious autobiography within the treatise, “Zardušt” claims to have studied astrology and magic under one Iliyūs (= Aelius) in Harran, a city on the eastern marches of Syria and a famed centre of star-worship. More significantly, the treatise contains the horoscope of a person who apparently died and came back to life again in the same city;¹⁴⁴ the horoscope is datable, through the planetary positions given, to 9 April 232 A.C.¹⁴⁵ An original of the third century composed in Harran is therefore likely.¹⁴⁶ The work would have been written in Greek, and it drew on Greek astrology for its matter.¹⁴⁷ It was subsequently translated into Pahlavi, undergoing revisions in the sixth and seventh centuries and finally translation into Arabic in the eighth.¹⁴⁸

Did anything *already* ascribed to Zoroaster enter this process, or was the ascription imposed when the work itself took shape, perhaps by the Sasanian translator? As yet this question cannot be conclusively answered. It is true, as David Pingree has demonstrated,¹⁴⁹ that much, perhaps most, of “Zoroaster’s” astrology was consolidated in Sasanian times and transmitted by Sasanian astrologers—a discovery which, ironically, returns it to the orbit of the magi, though at a much later date and in a very different environment from Bidez and Cumont’s Magusaeans. Undoubtedly, too, much that had not originally been attributed to Zoroaster would at that stage have been credited to him. Nevertheless, the possibility that the original of the *Kitāb al-mawālīd* drew on material already associated with “Zoroaster” cannot be entirely excluded. One element in particular echoes a motif from elsewhere

¹⁴³ Pingree, o.c. in n. 132. I am deeply grateful to Professor Pingree for sending me a pre-publication typescript of this article and for comments on the genesis and transmission of the astrology attributed to Zoroaster.

¹⁴⁴ This is the first of the horoscopes in the Abenragel excerpt O 94 (BCM II 238).

¹⁴⁵ Pingree, o.c., n. 48. The second horoscope in the Abenragel excerpt (O 94, II 239) is an addition, perhaps by Abenragel himself or an immediate successor, since I find that the only date that fits its given planetary positions falls towards the end of his life or shortly beyond—25 September 1058! There could be few clearer examples of the way in which this sort of “scientific” material accretes for many centuries in the shadow of an authoritative pseudonym.

¹⁴⁶ Pingree, o.c.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. Identifiable sources are Dorotheus, Vettius Valens and Hermes Trismegistus.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. Pingree postulates the same route for the transmission of the material which ends up, ascribed to Zoroaster, in “Palchus” (see above, n. 132), and tentatively also for that in the *Geoponica* (above, p. 530 f.).

in Zoroaster's pseudepigrapha. The strange circumstance of the revenant's horoscope recalls the *mise en scène* of another of "Zoroaster's" works, the book *On Nature*, in which the prophet likewise appears to die but returns to life again. The revived "Zoroaster" was himself the purported author and narrator of *On Nature*; it is suggested that the revived subject of the horoscope in the *Kitāb al-mawālīd* was likewise, in the original, also its purported author.¹⁵⁰ If so, then the parallel is striking, and one is tempted to conclude that the Zardušt of the *Kitāb al-mawālīd* is not entirely a creation of the Sasanian redactors but was drawn in the original from the yet earlier "Zoroaster" of *On Nature*. Whether any of that "Zoroaster's" astrology rode in concurrently, one cannot tell, but it is not outside the bounds of possibility.

The excerpt of "Zoroaster" from the fourteenth-century author Cecco d'Ascoli (O 96), if it in fact has a pedigree of any antiquity, probably passed through, or originated in, Sasanian astrology in the same way as the Abenragel excerpts. A distinguishing feature of Sasanian astrology was its preoccupation with universal history and world ages.¹⁵¹ Thus, it is much more probable that the doctrine of the four great epochs and their lawgivers which is the subject of the Cecco d'Ascoli excerpt entered Ps.-Zoroaster at that later stage than in Hellenistic times through the Magusaeans. The doctrine has, certainly, a Zurvanite flavour, but that is as characteristic of the later period, at least in its astrology, as of the earlier.¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ Pingree (o.c.), who suggests also that this original author may have been the "Aelius" who became (as "Īlīyūs") the teacher of Zardušt in the Sasanian and Arabic recensions. I should prefer to see "Zoroaster" as the "author" (and the revenant) *ab initio*, just as he was in *On Nature*.

¹⁵¹ Pingree, "Astrology" (cited in n. 142, above), 222; id., "Astronomy and Astrology in India and Iran" (cited ib.), 242 ff.; id., "Astrology and Astronomy in Iran" (cited ib.), 864 f., 867 f. An innovation of Sasanian astrology, perhaps the only real one, was the theory that "history is the unfolding of the influences of . . . Saturn-Jupiter conjunctions", the great cycle of which is the period of 960 years in which the conjunctions pass through all 4 triplicities of the signs of the zodiac (Pingree, "Astronomy . . .", 245; cf. id., "Historical Horoscopes", JAOS 82, 1962, 487–502, esp. p. 487 f.). This is the subject of the "Persian book attributed to 'Zardušt the philosopher'" which Bidez and Cumont report as their fr. O 97. On the grounds of the lateness of its Arabic vehicle, they reject it as spurious; and, indeed, in the sense that it does not seem to descend from a Hellenistic astrological "Zoroaster", it probably is. Arguably, though, it is a product of Sasanian astrology and as such analogous to much else in Zoroaster's astrological pseudepigrapha.

¹⁵² On the Zoroastrian world ages and their Zurvanite basis, see HZ II 234–7. In our excerpt the classic total of 12,000 years—a millennium for each sign of the zodiac—has been quadrupled: instead of 4 epochs of 3,000 years each, the individual quadrants rule for 12,000 years apiece. The quadrants, like the 4 *climata* in the other Cecco d'Ascoli excerpt (O 104: above, p. 522), are somewhat reminis-

There remains one datum in the corpus that is indisputably Zoroastrian. Lydus (6th century A.C.), in a section on the planets and the week which he attributes in a general way to "the Chaldeans around Zoroaster and Hystaspes and the Egyptians", says of Zoroaster, specifically and alone, that he placed the sun "before" the planets while the Greeks made it one of them.¹⁵³ This is rightly interpreted as an allusion to the old Iranian and Zoroastrian cosmological view that sees an ascending order from earth to the stars (fixed stars and planets undifferentiated), the moon, the sun, and finally heaven.¹⁵⁴ In this sense, the sun is "before" the stars as being higher than them, closer to the ultimate heaven. If this doctrine was expounded in the *Apotelesmatika* or some other astrological work of Ps.-Zoroaster, it will have sat in very uneasy juxtaposition with the standard Greek astronomical conception, there presupposed, which treats the sun as one of the planets and places it among them, usually in the middle position in order of distance from the earth.¹⁵⁵ It accords equally ill with the cosmology of *On Nature* in which we know for certain that the sun was placed in the middle of the planets.¹⁵⁶ This detail nicely confirms—if confirmation were needed—that there is no single, consistent "Zoroaster" behind the pseudepigrapha.

Hymns of the magi in Dio Chrysostom

Very different from the practical "science" which constitutes the bulk of Zoroaster's pseudepigrapha are the hymns of "Zoroaster and the children of the magi" which, at the end of the first century

cent of the 4 great stellar commanders of the 4 quarters of the heavens in the 2nd chapter of the *Bundahišn*: see Henning, art. cit. below in n. 155, p. 231; Pingree, "Astrology and Astronomy in Iran", 865 f. The contention of Bidez and Cumont (II 241 f.) that the passage dimly reflects some teaching on the precession of the equinoxes seems to me unfounded.

¹⁵³ *De mensibus* II.4, 6 = BCM fr. O 85.

¹⁵⁴ MH II 229 f. (n. 2 to fr. O 85). This is the route of celestial ascent taken in the *Book of Arda Viraz*: above, p. 430. The Iranian order appears to have been known to the Greeks at a very early date; it underlies the cosmology of Anaximander in the 6th cent. B.C.: see HZ II 156.

¹⁵⁵ So, for example, in fr. O 83. Treating the sun and moon as planets, essentially on a par with the other five, is of course fundamental to the techniques of astrology. A similarly uncomfortable coexistence of the 2 systems may be seen in the *Bundahišn* (chs. II and V), where a younger "scientific" tradition, inherited from Greek (and Indian) astrology, jostles with the old orthodox cosmology: see W. B. Henning, "An Astronomical Chapter of the *Bundahišn*", JRAS, 1942, 229–48 (esp. pp. 230, 233, 239); D. N. Mackenzie, "Zoroastrian Astrology in the *Bundahišn*", BSOAS 27, 1964, 511–29.

¹⁵⁶ Above, p. 530.

A.C. or the beginning of the second, the wandering orator and philosopher, Dio of Prusa (Dio Chrysostom, the "golden-mouthed"), claims to be paraphrasing in his thirty-sixth *Oration*.¹⁵⁷ Though doctrinal in content—they are in fact cosmological allegories—Dio sets them firmly in a *liturgical* context. Thus, if at all genuine, they would be "Zoroastrian" in a far more integral and profound sense than any of the other pseudepigrapha could possibly be.

Dio describes these hymns, or rather the first of them, as a "remarkable myth" which "is sung by the magi in secret rites" (para. 39). In the myth, the supreme god, Zeus, of whose sovereignty over the universal community of gods and men Dio has just been speaking, is celebrated as the "first and perfect driver" of the chariot of the world (*ibid.*). What follows is an extended allegorical account of the horses of his cosmic team. Dio repeats the magian provenance of the myth and the hymn, contrasting Greek silence on the topic (39 f.): "but Zoroaster, and the children of the magi, having learned it from him, sing it" (40).¹⁵⁸ The hymn is further linked to cult practice by relating it to the team of Nisaeon horses maintained in Zeus' honour by the magi, "among other things which they do in accordance with sacred utterances" (41).¹⁵⁹

The myth tells how under the driver's skill and strength the universe courses in a single motion "ceaselessly over ceaseless

¹⁵⁷ *Or.* XXXVI (called the "Borysthenian" or "Olbian" from its dramatic setting in Olbia on the Black Sea at the mouth of the Borysthenes river) para. 39 to end = BCM fr. O 8 (and see I 91–7). The date of the speech is "ca. 98 or later" (C. P. Jones, *The Roman World of Dio Chrysostom*, Cambridge, Mass., 1978, 135).

¹⁵⁸ Dio then gives a brief excursus (40 f.) on Zoroaster and the magi. I reproduce it here because it encapsulates succinctly, elegantly, and in the most positive light the Western image of the magi and their prophet. "For the Persians say that Zoroaster, because of a passion for wisdom and justice, deserted his fellows and dwelt by himself on a certain mountain; and they say that thereupon the mountain caught fire, a mighty flame descending from the sky above, and that it burned unceasingly. So then the king and the most distinguished of his Persians drew near for the purpose of praying to the god; and Zoroaster came forth from the fire unscathed, and, showing himself gracious toward them, bade them to be of good cheer and to offer certain sacrifices in recognition of the god's having come to that place. And thereafter, so they say, Zoroaster has associated, not with them all, but only with such as are best endowed with regard to truth, and are best able to understand the god, men whom the Persians have named Magi, that is to say, people who know how to cultivate the divine power, not like the Greeks, who in their ignorance use the term to denote wizards" (trans. H. Lamar Crosby). See also above, p. 520 f. (on the magi) and p. 525 (on Zoroaster); on the retreat of Zoroaster, BCM I 25, II 143 n. 3.

¹⁵⁹ On the genuineness of this practice, see below.

cycles of time" (42). The laps of sun and moon, of which alone the Greeks sing, are mere parts of this integral common motion (39 f., 42). Of the team of the cosmic chariot, the horse which is the strongest, most beautiful and swiftest (since it runs the outside track, highest in the heavens) is sacred to Zeus himself; it is fiery, with the brilliance of flame; it is the heavens themselves and all the bodies therein, stars, planets, sun and moon (43 f.). As "dearest to Zeus", it receives from the magi "the first sacrifices and honours" (45). The second horse, inferior and slower than the first, is sacred to Hera; it is the element of air (*ibid.*). The third, lower still, is Poseidon's, the element of water (46). Pegasus is its avatar. Lowest of all is the horse of Hestia, goddess of the hearth: this is the earth itself, immovable, yet harnessed to the team (*ibid.*). For the most part, the team runs in harmony; but "after a long interval of time and many cycles", a fiery breath from the celestial horse of Zeus ignites the others, especially the lowest, the earth, burning it, mane and all (47 f.). Likewise, at vast intervals, sweat from Poseidon's horse deluges its yoke-mate, the horse of earth, in a great flood (49). These disasters of universal conflagration and cataclysm are recalled by the Greeks, less accurately as isolated events, in the myths of Phaethon and Deucalion. Violent though they are, the catastrophes, as the magian myth reveals, yet exemplify the order and divine governance of the universe: they are the consequences of checks which the charioteer administers to his team (50). But in a still more dreadful denouement, it happens that at the end of an immense (to us) cycle of time, the prowess of the first horse so utterly overwhelms all the others that they are subsumed into it, melting together as if they were images of wax (51-3). This single entity, which the universe has now become, is no longer the team alone; it includes the charioteer—indeed, it *is* the charioteer: "simply the soul of the charioteer, or rather the soul's intellect and ruling principle" (54).

From its single state the universe recreates itself. Longing for its old "governance" (lit. "handling of the reins") in the harmonious ordering of differentiated constituents (sun, moon, stars, living beings, plants), it softens its brilliance into a gentle and creative "fiery air" (55 f.). Here a new metaphor comes into play, that of the "sacred marriage" (*hieros gamos*) of two high gods which generates and makes fertile the world. The great universal god, Zeus, unites with Hera—Fire with Air—to create all things (56 f.). And with the new metaphor and myth a second hymn is intimated. For Dio again speaks of "the children of the wise" who "sing a hymn in secret rites" but the subject of the hymn is this time not the cosmic

chariot of Zeus but his "blessed marriage" with Hera (56).¹⁶⁰ Myth and hymn close with a eulogy of the vigour and beauty of the renewed creation and of the joy of its creator therein (58–60).

The question of course is how much of all this is Dio's invention and how much the real liturgical hymns of real magi. That Dio *could* have drawn directly on a genuine and living Zoroastrian tradition is well within the bounds of possibility. He was a native of Anatolia (of Prusa in Bithynia) and travelled widely there, and in his day the Magusaeen communities of Anatolia still flourished. So he could have been instructed by their magi. It is unlikely that he would actually have heard hymns performed. He nowhere claims autopsy—and would surely have done so, had he heard these ones in person—and the rites of which they were part, he twice mentions, were secret. Apparently, though, nothing prevented the divulgence of the hymns outside their ritual context, or at least the divulgence of a summary and an explication.

On the other side, nothing absolutely precludes the view that Dio invented the hymns, explications and all, in his study.¹⁶¹ They embody, after all, the concluding myth of a philosophical essay, and it had long been the convention to authenticate this element and render it more interesting and elevated by ascribing it to a particular source, preferably an exotic one. In the genre, it was not required that the source be real. The allegorical subject of the first hymn, the team of horses, is itself suspicious. It recalls the great myth of Plato's *Phaedrus* (246–57) in which the human soul soars aloft as a chariot drawn by winged steeds to join the perfect teams of the gods in their courses across the heavens. Disaster strikes here too, as the human soul, unable to control its horses, crashes to earth—and to mortal incarnation. The doctrine signified is quite different from Dio's, the cycle of the individual soul as against the cycle of the cosmos, but the signifier, the metaphor of the team of horses coursing the heavens, is the same. Dio might well have chosen his myth on Plato's precedent (and in his honour)—and then have cast around for a suitable attribution to alien sages. Nor do those elements which are genuinely Zoroastrian or which corre-

¹⁶⁰ I follow Bidez and Cumont in discerning a second hymn: BCM I 92–4. The "children of the wise" who sing this second hymn are of course the same as the "children of the magi" who sing the first.

¹⁶¹ This is essentially the view of Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom*, 146: "We can almost visualize the birth of one of these forgeries [i.e. one of the Zoroastrian pseudepigrapha] in the *Borysthenicus* by Dio . . . His Magian hymn may imitate some Persian or rather pseudo-Persian text . . . , but, as we have it, it is Dio's own

spond to something in Iranian religion establish the genuineness of the hymns. Again, the motif of the horses is a case in point. Dio is correct when he alludes to the chariot of Zeus in Persian cult. Such a team was part of the religious apparatus of Xerxes in his invasion of Greece and of Darius at the battle of Issus.¹⁶² But these facts would have been known by Dio through Greek literature. It is thus just as likely that Dio imported the detail from that source to validate the "magian" provenance of his myth as that he learnt it from real magi. Dio speaks of the maintenance of the team of Zeus as something which the magi still did;¹⁶³ but it would be rash indeed to conclude from this, given the context and its logic, that the Iranian diaspora of his own day actually perpetuated an element of cult which is otherwise attested only for royal Achaemenian practice at great state and military occasions centuries earlier.

Primarily, though, it is the thoroughly Stoic nature of the doctrine allegorized that brings the hymns under suspicion. The cyclical theory of cosmic history, conflagration (*ekpyrōsis*) and cataclysm, the emphasis on the elements and their allegorization as gods of the Greek pantheon,¹⁶⁴ the primacy of fire and its elevation as the supreme deity which is both immanent in and coterminous with the universe and at the same time its ruling and rational principle and its creative force—all this is commonplace Stoicism.¹⁶⁵ It does not in itself disprove the prior existence of cosmological hymns of the Magusaeans, but it does suggest that the particular allegorical cast in which we find them is Dio's, not theirs. Bidez and Cumont maintained that the Magusaeans had assimilated Stoic doctrine so thoroughly that the interpretations as well as the myths were theirs,¹⁶⁶ but in default of evidence for Stoicized magi apart from this very passage, the claim, though admittedly within the realm of possibility, is unconvincing.

A feature of the first myth that makes it quite plausible that Dio has imposed a Stoic interpretation on a Magusaeans hymn with different (though not utterly dissimilar) intent is the ill fit of the allegory. He himself draws attention more than once to the "strangeness" of the myth and the "inconsistency" of its images. It is "intractable", he says, and lacks the "persuasiveness" and

¹⁶² Herodotus VII.40, Quintus Curtius III.8 ff.; HZ II 165 f., 286 f.

¹⁶³ *Trepousi* = "they maintain", in the present tense (para. 41).

¹⁶⁴ Note that the etymological pun, Hera = air (*Hēra* = *aēr*), only works in Greek. Such etymologizing was itself particularly a feature of Stoicism.

¹⁶⁵ See the commentary to the passage in BCM II 142–53.

¹⁶⁶ BCM I 97. Note also the very considerable degree of hellenization in the Iranian diaspora demonstrated earlier in this volume.

“charm” of a Greek myth (42 f.). Especially clumsy and illogical is the way in which the motionless earth, the horse of Hestia, is yet a member of a moving team (46); likewise, the merging of the horses as if they were wax, yet wax shaped not by an external agency but by an inherent dynamic (51 f.); finally, the identity of the team itself which shifts from the combined elements to the soul of the universe, with the focus finally on the charioteer rather than the horses (54). All these awkwardnesses receive explicit comment from Dio. Two explanations present themselves. Either Dio is cleverly furnishing authenticating—yet spurious—colour, by constructing a “barbarian” hymn that cannot realize its own allegorical aim and is made to strain under its own inconsistencies; or else he has imported only the allegorical overlay, and the inconsistencies arise naturally because the Greek philosophical meanings are incompatible with the underlying magian hymn. The latter view is perhaps preferable, if only because the former argues a conscious striving for realism on Dio’s part which is rather implausible. It is not that Dio was not clever enough to create both the hymn and its interpretation in realistic dissonance to each other; merely, that such a novelistic technique would be an anachronism hard to parallel.

It is not unreasonable, then, to suppose that Dio has heavily adapted and Stoicized a pair of original hymns, handed down by the Magusaeans and sung within a liturgical context. These hymns will have had a didactic function, expounding cosmology and cosmogony through two metaphors, that of a charioteer and his team of horses and that of the sacred marriage. A further metaphor—and an underlying reality—appropriately enough, will have been fire. Both will have been hymns of worship as well as teaching: praising the lordship and benign creativity of Zeus/Ahura Mazda. All this of course, in default of supporting evidence for the existence of such hymns among the Magusaeans, is hypothesis, but nothing precludes our entertaining it.

Allowing that the hymns did exist as a Magusaeen reality, there are motifs in them that resonate with Magusaeen doctrine—or with what one may suppose Magusaeen doctrine to have been with its blended heritage from Iran and Babylon.¹⁶⁷ First, the great re-

¹⁶⁷ One should be acutely aware of the risk of constructing here a bridge resting on two insubstantial piers. On the one side, the magian hymns may be illusions, fantasies of Dio’s making; on the other, the doctrines of the Magusaeans are themselves largely reconstructions, composed partly of what one imagines *a priori* that Anatolians drawing on Iran and Babylon in a hellenized context would have produced, and partly of what is found in Dio’s magian hymns! The fullest attempt at reconstructing Magusaeen doctrine was made by Cumont himself, and it

creation at the close of the second hymn evokes the Zoroastrian *Frašo-kereti*.¹⁶⁸ The vigorous perfection portrayed is surely more than just the start of a Stoic cycle which merely replicates its predecessor. Secondly, the sacred marriage of Zeus and Hera echoes the same institution recorded on the Aramaic inscription from Arabissus (Arebsun) in Cappadocia.¹⁶⁹ In the latter the personification of the "Mazda-worshipping Religion" is celebrated as both wife and sister of Bel/Ahura Mazda: she so identifies herself, and he greets her as such. Zeus and Hera, too, are brother and sister as well as husband and wife (although Dio does not explicitly refer to the former aspect), which would make their relationship in Iranian terms a *khvaetvadatha*-union. Kinship marriage of this sort was primarily an Iranian human institution, not a divine one,¹⁷⁰ but the Arabissos inscription and Dio's magian hymn would be two instances which attest it on the divine plane, and it is surely significant that they are both of Anatolian provenance. Thirdly, the doctrine of alternating fire and flood, conflagration and cataclysm, while Stoic, is also, it seems, Chaldean. Berossus taught a theory of universal conflagrations and floods, coincident with conjunctions of all the planets in Cancer and Capricorn respectively.¹⁷¹ It could as well have entered the magian hymn from the Magusaeans' Chaldean heritage as from Dio's Stoicizing.

focused necessarily on eschatology, since that is where the bulk of the evidence, or would-be evidence, lies: "La fin du monde selon les mages occidentaux", RHR 103, 1931, 29–96 (pp. 33–44 on the hymns). It is a brilliantly articulated and ingenious reconstruction, but it is best viewed with more than customary scepticism. It builds yet another dubious bridge, linking the doctrines of the Magusaeans to the doctrines of the Roman Mithraic mysteries as essentially one and the same set of teachings, which thus warrants drawing on the latter to flesh out the former (see below).

¹⁶⁸ BCM II 153 n. 1 (to fr. O 8 ad fin.); Cumont, art. cit., pp. 43 f.

¹⁶⁹ See HZ II 274 f.; BCM I 95 n. 2.

¹⁷⁰ Certain family relationships among the gods, intended originally as metaphors, were used later by Zoroastrian scholastics as justification for human *khvaetvadatha*-union. These divine relationships were never meant in a sexual or reproductive sense (as the Greek divine relationships clearly were). Thus, *Ārmaiti*, *yazata* of devotion and of the earth, is called by Zoroaster the daughter of Ahura Mazda (Y.45.4). But she is also called the mother of *Aši*, goddess of good fortune, whose father is Ahura Mazda (Yt.17.16). Nevertheless, to use such relationships to attribute to Zoroastrianism anything like the concept of the fructifying union of the Sky Father with Earth Mother on the Greek model would be profoundly false to the spirit of the religion. See Boyce, "Ārmaiti", EI² II (1986) 413, 415.

¹⁷¹ Ap. Seneca *Nat. Quaest.* III.29.1 (cf. p. 387, above); Cumont, art. cit., p. 35 (cf. p. 39, on the flood alone). Fire, of course, plays its part in Zoroastrian eschatology, but it is as the medium by which the righteous and the unrighteous are tested—it melts the river of metal—rather than one of cosmic destruction: HZ I 242 f. Cf. also above, pp. 364, 366.

Indeed, the whole apparatus of great temporal cycles, manifest in the hymn, accords well with what we know of the Magusaeans' concern with Time and their Zurvanite bias.¹⁷²

One detail, beyond all others, convinced Cumont of the genuineness of the magian hymns.¹⁷³ According to Dio, the magi explained that the great conflagration, allegorized in their own hymn as the prime horse's burning of its team mates, was recorded by the Greeks in the myth of Phaethon (para. 48). Phaethon, the story goes, borrowed the chariot of his father Helios, the sun god, was unable to control it, and so ran amok, to his own death and much ruin in the world. A decade before *Les Mages hellénisés*, a relief representing Phaethon receiving the solar team was discovered in a shrine of the cult of Mithras at Dieburg in Germany.¹⁷⁴ For Cumont this was confirmation of a central hypothesis that the Mithras cult was itself the product of the same Anatolian Magusaeans whose liturgical and cosmological hymns were reported by Dio.¹⁷⁵ For the Magusaeon myth (or, more precisely, what the magi told Dio was its Greek equivalent) and the Mithraic cult relief recorded one and the same incident. This was too remarkable an equation for mere coincidence. There must, then, have been a means of transmission that carried both the myth and its underlying eschatology on the far journey from hellenized Anatolia to Roman Germany. That medium had to be the Mithras cult, since there was no other conceivable candidate. Dio's hymn, then, was the key to the meaning of the relief from Dieburg, for they were documents of essentially the same religion. And by the same argument in reverse, the Mithraic relief validated the magian hymn; for what was indubitably genuine in the one sacred context, that of the mithraeum, had to be genuine in the other, related context, that of Dio's Magusaeon informants.¹⁷⁶

It is the last point only that concerns us here; for our subject is the status of Dio's hymns as manifestations of pseudo-Zoroastrian

¹⁷² BCM I 64 f., 67 ff., II 144 n. 4. Again, one must guard against circularity: it is precisely Dio's hymns that tell us what the Magusaeans believed about temporal cycles.

¹⁷³ For reasons which will be apparent from n. 167 (above), it was particularly Cumont, of the two authors of BCM, who was concerned with the magian hymns and their putative Magusaeon—and Mithraic—background.

¹⁷⁴ Described and illustrated in M. J. Vermaseren, CIMRM II no. 1247.

¹⁷⁵ Art. cit. in n. 167, p. 36; id., "Le nouveau bas-relief de Dieburg", JdS 1927, 122–6; BCM I 92.

¹⁷⁶ These arguments on the implications of the Dieburg relief are summarized, with a brief critique, in my "Mithraism since Franz Cumont", ANRW II 17.4, 2002–115, at p. 2036 f.

literature—or perhaps in this case alone, of real, if marginal, Zoroastrian literature and liturgy—not the large and formidable question of the genesis of Mithraism and the role of the Magusaeans therein. That question has in any case been addressed earlier in this volume.¹⁷⁷ Yet the two issues are inextricably mixed. If the Magusaeans were, as Cumont contended, proto-Mithraists (or the Mithraists evolved Magusaeans—it amounts to the same), then Dio's incendiary horse and the Dieburg Phaethon probably would intimate the same eschatology, and the relief would indeed validate the hymn as genuinely Magusaeen at its core, however overlaid with Dio's rhetoric and the Stoa's philosophy. If the premise is not granted, however, then a coincidence in the name and person of Phaethon is all that links the hymn and the relief, two documents which in all other respects are widely remote from each other.¹⁷⁸ Apart from their separate provenance (Roman Germany against hellenized Anatolia—or the imagination of a Greek orator), they do not even tell the same story: for Phaethon's disaster with the solar chariot is scarcely identical with the incendiarism of the horse of Zeus, and we have only Dio's word that the magi made the equation. This could as well be Dio himself casting around for the nearest Greek equivalent for a "barbarian" myth which he had heard—or invented. And even if it was the magi who made the connection, the implication is that the Phaethon story, as the *Greek* equivalent, was not their own doctrinal vehicle for eschatology at all. There is indeed nothing self-evidently eschatological about the Dieburg Phaethon which might reinforce the putative link with the magian hymn.¹⁷⁹ On the other side, still less is there anything self-evidently Mithraic, or that resonates with Mithraism as we know it, in the magian hymn—except that one side reference to Phaethon.¹⁸⁰ Relief and hymn are thus poles apart, unless they can be spanned as distant manifestations of the same religion. My sense is that they cannot, not least because the only concrete evidence for a common doctrine of Magusaeans and Mithraists is precisely this one shared detail of Phaethon as a symbol of eschatological conflagration. The detail has to establish the common doctrine of which it

¹⁷⁷ Above, p. 475 ff.

¹⁷⁸ For a full and, in my view, effective critique, see R. L. Gordon, "Franz Cumont and the Doctrines of Mithraism" in *MSt. I*, 215–48, at pp. 237–41.

¹⁷⁹ The relief is, though, suggestive of an allegory of the elements, and of fire in particular: Beck, loc. cit.; Gordon, art. cit., p. 241.

¹⁸⁰ Gordon, art. cit., p. 237 f. Mithras himself is impossible to discern anywhere in the hymns or myths which they relate, although Cumont (art. cit.) has to impose him there since, *ex hypothesi*, this Magusaeen eschatology is also Mithraic eschatology.

is supposedly a manifestation, and that is to impose on it a weight which it is too slight to bear. One concludes, then, that the Mithraic relief cannot confirm the genuineness of the magian hymn—which of course in no way impugns the possibility of the latter's genuineness on other grounds already discussed.

Mithraic texts as pseudepigrapha ?

Mithraism is the context of the final block of Zoroaster's pseud-epigrapha to be examined here. Bidez and Cumont listed as from the "sacred books" of "Zoroaster" half a dozen texts of a few words each which, at the time, were the sum of Mithraism's written remains (dedicatory inscriptions excluded).¹⁸¹ Such, for example, is the line of Greek verse hailing the worshipper of Mithras as "initiate of the bull-theft, intimate of the glorious father", which Firmicus Maternus ascribes to the cult's *propheta*.¹⁸² The sayings, as Bidez and Cumont described them, are certainly liturgical, in the sense that they belong in the context of acts of worship. Not so certain is that they come from "liturgical books",¹⁸³ in the sense of extended writings; some could as well be free-standing *symbola* or slogans of the faith. If one were making the collection today it would be much expanded, principally by the inclusion of the painted texts from the Sa Prisca Mithraeum discovered just before *Les Mages hellénisés* was published.¹⁸⁴

Fascinating though these texts are, it is doubtful whether they should be classed as Zoroastrian pseudepigrapha, except in one rather trivial sense. Mithraism, in its own estimation and in the eyes of Greeks and Romans outside the cult, was the "Persian" religion. Zoroaster, as the great prophet of Persia, inevitably became the prophet and founder of Mithraism too. That he was indeed accepted as such, we have the reliable evidence of Porphyry.¹⁸⁵ Founders are often believed to have composed the sacred books of their religions, whether or not they actually did so, and it is in this sense that any Mithraic text (indeed, any piece of

¹⁸¹ Listed collectively as fr. O 9; and see BCM I 98.

¹⁸² Fr. O 9a = Firm. Mat. *De err.* 5.2. The "bull-theft" refers to one of Mithras' own exploits.

¹⁸³ The heading under which they are listed in BCM (II 153): "Livres liturgiques des mystères de Mithra".

¹⁸⁴ Most accessible in M. J. Vermaseren, *Mithras, the Secret God*, 172–80; briefly described (with references to more recent readings) in Beck, art. cit. in n. 176, p. 2029.

¹⁸⁵ *De antro* 6: Zoroaster as the instituter of the Mithraic "cave", the cult's place of worship.

Mithraic teaching or practice) can plausibly be referred to Zoroaster. This blanket attribution has a certain formal validity, but it is attested explicitly only for the *symbolon* quoted above, where the line is said to have been “handed down to us by Mithra’s prophet (*propheta*)”.

But of course Bidez and Cumont intended pseudo-Zoroastrian authorship in a far more significant sense. Mithraism, on Cumont’s view, as we have just seen, was an essentially Magusaeen religion. Its sacred texts, then, or at least most of them, will have been composed by Magusaeans, just as the Magusaeans composed the eschatological myth whose Mithraic issue was the Dieburg relief.¹⁸⁶ We return, then, to the same alternatives that confronted us over Dio’s magian hymns. If Mithraism, its teachings and liturgy, did indeed descend directly from the Magusaeans, then its texts (or some of them) might reasonably be supposed to have been composed by Magusaeans—and thus to be Zoroastrian in a real though remote sense. If not, not. The texts themselves furnish no key. They are not so markedly “Western” or “Eastern” as to be manifestly and exclusively the products of Mithraists on the one side or of magi on the other.¹⁸⁷ Rather, on the general unlikelihood that

¹⁸⁶ BCM I 98. The classic exposition of Cumont’s theory of the origins of Mithraism in Hellenistic Anatolia is the first chapter of his *Mysteries of Mithra*, at pp. 11–32; in that age and place, he proposes (p. 15), “Mithraism received approximately its definitive form”.

¹⁸⁷ One might argue an eastern origin for the *symbolon* preserved as a graffito in the Dura-Europos mithraeum: “the fiery breath which for magi too is the baptism of holy persons” (= fr. O 9e). Its mere appearance at Dura on the Euphrates is not the issue, since the Dura mithraeum, despite certain orientalisms in iconography (and perhaps one or two echoes of real Zoroastrianism: see Bivar in MSt. I 93, and above, p. xxx, on the boar accompanying Mithras in the hunting scene as an avatar of Verethraghna), is very much the product of the developed Mithraism of the West (see Beck, art. cit., pp. 2010, 2014–17). Rather, it is the presence of the term *magoi* (attested elsewhere in the Dura graffiti as a category of Mithraist), and the reference to the “fiery breath” recalling the eschatological blast of fire from the horse of Zeus in Dio’s magian hymn (para. 47: the word *asthma*, “breath”, is used there too).

Reference to the Dura mithraeum leads one to mention two of the frescos there, flanking the cult niche and depicting a pair of throned figures in oriental dress, each holding a scroll and staff. Cumont boldly suggested that they were portraits of Zoroaster and Ostanas as founders of the cult (“The Dura Mithraeum”, tr. E. D. Francis, in MSt. I 151–214, at pp. 182–4). If so, the scrolls would represent the cult’s sacred texts, its Law, of which the sages were the putative authors or revealers. But the frescos could as well represent the founders of this particular mithraeum, or two of its dignitaries and “fathers” at some stage, an alternative supported by the facts that their dress is precisely Palmyrene and that it was by Palmyrene auxiliary troops stationed at Dura that the mithraeum was founded (see n. 174 to Cumont’s article, quoting Rostovtzeff; also H. J. W. Drijvers, “Mithra at Hatra?” in *Ét. mithriaques*, 151–56, n. 150). The scrolls in that case

Mithraism took the major part of its doctrines and worship directly from the Magusaeans,¹⁸⁸ one may conclude that it is most improbable that its texts came from that source either. Mithraism's texts, and the lost works of which they are the tiny remnants, are best seen as precisely that: texts evolved in the cult's own context, in some instances no doubt ascribed to Zoroaster, and drawing sometimes on Eastern—or would-be Eastern—sources, but composed nevertheless by Mithraists, not by Magusaeans.

The tractate Zostrianos

It is as "teachings of Zoroaster" that the tractate *Zostrianos* from the Nag Hammadi Coptic Gnostic Library is described in the colophon to its text.¹⁸⁹ The actual author, or the author whom the tractate wishes us to accept as such, is the eponymous Zostrianos, cited with Zoroaster in the colophon, who is the narrator and protagonist of the spiritual voyage described in the text and the recipient of the wisdom there revealed.¹⁹⁰ "Zostrianos" may of course be a pseudonym, representing a figure potent to contemporaries, though obscure to us, whose authority, together with his name, some lesser Gnostic sectarian has assumed. Obscure, but not entirely unknown: in one of the most remarkable and fortunate coincidences in the recovery of ancient literature, the *Zostrianos* of this newly discovered tractate appears to be precisely the Zostrianos whose "apocalypse", Porphyry tells us, Plotinus' pupil Amelius refuted in "up to forty volumes", while he, Porphyry, tackled the

would still represent the cult's sacred texts, and from that the *magisterium* of these elders, their authority to teach. The weak point in Cumont's attractive hypothesis is that Ostanès, unlike Zoroaster, is nowhere attested as a prophet or lawgiver of Mithraism.

¹⁸⁸ This is not the point at which to argue the issue, which in any case has been explored earlier in this volume (above, p. 470 ff.). The Cumontian theory of Mithraism as the immediate successor and, as it were, Roman manifestation of the religion of the Magusaeans has been, in my view, conclusively refuted by R. L. Gordon, art. cit. in n. 178. For a review of the general question, see Beck, art. cit. in n. 176, pp. 2063–71.

¹⁸⁹ The *Zostrianos* is the first tractate of the 8th codex (VIII, 1). It is accessible in translation (by J. H. Sieber) in NHL, 402–30; colophon on p. 430; "Zostrianos / Oracles of truth of / Zostrianos / God of Truth / Teachings of Zoroaster". The cryptography of the colophon was deciphered by J. Doresse, "Les apocalypses de Zoroastre, de Zostrien, de Nicothée, . . .", Coptic Studies in Honour of W. E. Crum, Washington 1950, 255–63. I am deeply indebted in this section to Dr. Howard Jackson for his advice and learning in matters Coptic and Gnostic.

¹⁹⁰ The title *Zostrianos* is modern, the codex being defective at the start of the work.

parallel apocalypse of Zoroaster.¹⁹¹ We have thus recovered an entire work which is indubitably a Zoroastrian pseudepigraphon and one, moreover, whose setting and circulation, not to mention date, were already known.¹⁹² The tractate *Zostrianos* fits, as it were, snugly into a ready niche.

Although the *Zostrianos* has the distinction of being the longest of the Nag Hammadi tractates, its codex is badly damaged and much of the text is too lacunose to be comprehensible. Nevertheless, its outlines, and a mass of detail too, are clear.¹⁹³ "After an account of the initial troubling questions raised by *Zostrianos*, the tractate proceeds to describe the visit of the angel of the knowledge of the eternal All, a guide for the heavenly journey which ensues. In his ascent through the various levels of the aeons, *Zostrianos* is baptized in the names of the heavenly powers, and is instructed in the names and relationships of the numerous inhabitants of the heavenly world. The chief divine being is the Triple Powerful Invisible Spirit; the divine emanations include the Virgin Barbelo, the three great aeons (the Hidden One, the First-Appearing One, and the Self-begotten One), and many others. After his glorious heavenly experiences, *Zostrianos* returns to the world of perception, writes his knowledge on three tablets, and preaches the liberating salvation of light and knowledge, 'the salvation of masculinity'."

In form, the tractate is a quest for illumination, typical of its day: the initial doubts, the guided celestial ascent, the encounter with cosmic and spiritual powers, the revelation, the return to earth to

¹⁹¹ Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus* 16 (= BCM fr. O 105, II 249 f.). The unmasking of these pseudepigrapha by Amelius and Porphyry is discussed above, p. 510. In accepting the identity of the Coptic *Zostrianos* with the "book of *Zostrianos*" that was Amelius' target (Amelius would of course have been working with a Greek version), I follow H. C. Puech, "Les nouveaux écrits gnostiques découverts en Haute-Égypte", *Coptic Studies* . . . Crum (above), 91–156, at p. 107 f., and J. H. Sieber, "An Introduction to the Tractate *Zostrianos* from Nag Hammadi", *Novum Testamentum* 15, 1973, 233–40. Scholarship is not always willing to believe its good fortune: the match of the 2 works has been doubted by Doresse, art. cit., and L. Abramowski, "Nag Hammadi 8,1 'Zostrianus', das Anonymum Brucianum, Plotin Enn. 2,9 (33)", *Platonismus und Christentum: Festschrift* . . . Doerrie, edd. H. Blume and F. Mann, Münster 1983, 1–10.

¹⁹² Date: Since Amelius' and Porphyry's critiques of the Gnostic apocalypses were undertaken at Plotinus' behest, the clear implication of the Porphyry passage is that the *Zostrianos* was in circulation during the lifetime of Plotinus (died 270 A.C.). Aspects of Gnosticism criticized by Plotinus himself (*Enneads* II.9.6) occur in very similar detail in the recovered *Zostrianos*, making it probable that Plotinus had read it and had it in mind (Sieber, art. cit., p. 238).

¹⁹³ I quote Sieber's admirable summary, NHL (1st ed., 1977), 368.

preach with new and unchallengeable authority.¹⁹⁴ Its concerns are the familiar Gnostic ones: the salvation of the elect and the rites, experiences and illuminations which seal that salvation; the flight from generation—and the female—in this mortal world; the fantastic celestial hierarchies, familiarity with whose hidden orderings, histories, meanings and effects is the essence of the adept's *gnosis*.

By contrast, what we do *not* find in the *Zostrianos* is anything distinctively Zoroastrian.¹⁹⁵ Nor do we find anything distinctively *pseudo-Zoroastrian*, anything that might link this tractate to other putative works of Zoroaster issuing from the Greco-Roman world of the Levant.¹⁹⁶ This important, though negative, fact has already been emphasized, for it is what, from our point of view, is the most remarkable feature of the *Zostrianos*.¹⁹⁷ The tractate vividly confirms that there is no such thing—or ever was—as a distinctive corpus of pseudo-Zoroastrian literature and learning with its own canons

¹⁹⁴ On the literary forms for the quest and receipt of illumination, see Festugière, RHT I 309 ff.; on the celestial journey, above, n. 17. As parallels to the quest of Zostrianos one might cite, from the realm of Greco-Egyptian magic, the so-called "Mithras Liturgy" (above, ib.) and the autobiographical letter of Thessalus (above, n. 16; see esp. J. Z. Smith, o.c.). The anonymous adept of the former meets his gods in the heavens; Thessalus has a vision of Asclepius in a sacred room on earth. Particularly germane is Thessalus' progress from doubt to certainty, from tentative pupil to assured master.

¹⁹⁵ The more general question of a Zoroastrian background to, or influence on, Gnosticism was discussed above, p. 460 ff.

¹⁹⁶ Though see above, p. 518 f., on the motif of the journey to the Other World and of magi as purveyors of other-worldly illumination. Zostrianos ascends to heaven, "Zoroaster" in *On Nature* descends to the underworld. If this motif were confined to pseudo-Zoroastrian literature, it would be of real significance. But of course it is not, and its presence in the *Zostrianos* is obviously better accounted for as a Gnostic topos than as a pseudo-Zoroastrian one. It is interesting, however, that the only other mention of Zostrianos (as a person) in ancient literature occurs in a context that also refers, in a very garbled way, to Ps.-Zoroaster's *On Nature*. Arnobius (*Adv. nat.* I.52 = BCM fr. B 4) adduces in a list of sages "Armenius the grandson of Zostrianos and Pamphylus the associate of Cyrus" (!). Armenius and Pamphylus are ghosts spun off from the "Zoroaster" of *On Nature*, where, it will be recalled (above, p. 529), the prophet was paraded in the stolen guise of Plato's "Er, son of Armenius, a Pamphylian by race".

On another tack, something might perhaps be made of the fact that the *Zostrianos* is one of the tractates emanating from the Gnostic sect known as the Sethians from their spiritual descent from Adam's son Seth. Arguably, the Sethians were influenced by Zoroastrian doctrine (although this is not palpably so in the *Zostrianos*), and it was under Seth's name that the story of the magi and the "star of Bethlehem", which most certainly does have Zoroastrian connections, was transmitted to its principal source, the *Opus imperfectum in Matthaeum*: see BCM I 45–7, II 119 (= fr. S 12); also, above, p. 448 ff. The Sethian scriptures, including the original of the *Zostrianos*, may have been composed in Syria (Apamea?), where it is more plausible that actual Zoroastrian influence could have been exerted than in Egypt. (For a sceptical view of G. Widengren's hypothesis that the Sethians were an offshoot of an original Judaeo-Iranian gnosis, see above, p. 462 n. 494.)

¹⁹⁷ Above, p. 495.

and characteristics. Each work is discrete, with only the tenuous and formal bridge that each author in his separate sphere of "wisdom", whether astrologer, or Magusaeen priest, or Gnostic visionary, chose to draw on the powerful name of Zoroaster or another of the magi for legitimating authority.¹⁹⁸ Such a name was "Zostrianos". It is perhaps a contraction of "Zo(roa)strianos", signifying a member of Zoroaster's clan (-ianus being merely a Latin gentile suffix), or, by extension, his disciple or religious heir (cf. *Christianoi*). But, whether or not, it carried the authentic seal of Persian wisdom. And to ensure that there was no mistaking the source, the colophon to the text named Zoroaster too.¹⁹⁹

"Ostanes"

In the tradition of magian learning, as the Greeks perceived (and themselves constructed) it, our final subject, Ostanes, is almost as important as Zoroaster. We have seen how in Pliny's influential account it is Ostanes rather than Zoroaster who is the true founder and disseminator of the art of magic and the inventor of its most gruesome forms.²⁰⁰ As Zoroaster was to astrology, so Ostanes was to alchemy, a supposed early authority and teacher, alongside the founders in other traditions of oriental wisdom, notably the Egyptian. There are, though, important differences. Zoroaster's biography in the western sources was rich and varied and remote in time and place; Ostanes' is simple and set within a single historic

¹⁹⁸ See above, n. 196: the garbled Arnobius passage could perhaps imply that at some stage someone did actually group together the very dissimilar *On Nature* and *Zostrianos* on the supposed criterion of Persian or magian authorship. The *Zostrianos* tries once to convey the pretence that its author comes from a separate ethnic tradition (3.15 f.): "According to the custom of my race I kept bringing them (sc. my doubts) up to the god of my fathers". In a somewhat ambiguous context, Zostrianos' father appears to be called Iolaus (4.10). The name is Greek (Heraclides' companion being its most famous bearer), not Iranian. (Dr. Jackson informs me that as far as he can tell it occurs nowhere else in Gnosticism.)

¹⁹⁹ That the double ascription was a means of orienting the reader to the less familiar Zostrianos by naming the more familiar Zoroaster (in effect, "what you have just read is in Zoroaster's tradition") was essentially Sieber's argument (art. cit.). The Nag Hammadi collection alludes once elsewhere to another work of "Zoroaster": the *Apocryphon of John* (II, 1.19.10) mentions a "book of Zoroaster", to which the reader is referred for a list of the angels who presided over the creation of certain "passions" of the "natural and material" human body. This sort of exhaustive listing of powers is thoroughly Gnostic. But perhaps one can also catch in the surrounding passage a faint and distorted echo of the two creations, spiritual and material (*mēnōg* and *gētīg*: see HZ I 229 ff.), of classic Zoroastrianism: "And all the angels and demons worked until they had constructed the natural body. And their product was completely inactive and motionless for a long time" (19.10–14, tr. F. Wisse, NHL 115 f.).

²⁰⁰ Above, pp. 516, 529.

context. He was one of the magi who accompanied Xerxes on the expedition of 479 B.C. and who were believed to have lingered on and interacted with Greek intellectuals of the western littoral of Asia Minor, then Persian territory. In particular, he was the supposed teacher of the great atomist philosopher, Democritus of Abdera (c. 460–370).²⁰¹ The function of this slim biography is transparent: it is to fix the transmission of Persian wisdom to Greek science at a specific, historic and highly dramatic juncture in the long story of the political and cultural encounters of the two nations. The biography, in other words, authenticates the transmitted wisdom, or, to view the matter in a more accurate if harsher light, licenses its production by Greeks of a later age.

To appreciate the biography's function is not necessarily to dismiss its factual basis. That there were learned magi in Xerxes' train is scarcely open to doubt, or that they would have exchanged views with learned Greeks in the satrapies of Asia Minor. Though proudly distinct culturally, the two nations were not closed to each other intellectually. There had been contacts before and there would be more later.²⁰² It is not impossible, then, that one of these magi was called (in Greek) Ostanēs,²⁰³ or that his colleagues, with or without him, had dealings with the family of Democritus, or even that the young Democritus himself was instructed by them or by their successors still resident in Asia Minor. What is not credible, however, is the alleged fruit of that collaboration, the supposed works of Democritus on arcane wisdom (magical, alchemical and the like) which transmit the supposed teaching of his master Ostanēs. Because the real Ostanēs and the real Democritus were figures of relatively recent and myth-free history (in comparison, for example, with Zoroaster and Pythagoras), and because the latter was an actual and prolific Greek author, it does not follow that the arcana that passed under their joint names must, in however attenuated a sense, have stemmed from their collaboration.²⁰⁴ Rather, as we shall see, those arcana are the inventions of

²⁰¹ That Ostanēs accompanied Xerxes, Pliny *NH* XXX.8 = BCM fr. 1; that Democritus was taught by magi (and Chaldeans), Diogenes Laertius IX.34 (cf. Philostratus *Lives of the Sophists* I.10 for the same story concerning Protagoras). See BMC I 167–9; HZ II 171 f., 195 f.

²⁰² For the earlier contacts and interactions, see esp. M. L. West, *Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient*, Oxford 1971; HZ II, ch. IX.

²⁰³ On the name see Justi, *Namenbuch*, 52 s. "Austanes".

²⁰⁴ Bidez and Cumont make no claim for the transmission from the real Democritus or Ostanēs of anything more than "some notes collected by the sage of Abdera on the various beliefs of the Orient" (I 171). I am sceptical of even that much.

the Hellenistic age—and later. Indeed, for all the historicity of the original figures, the “Ostanes” and the “Democritus” with whom we must deal here are equally the inventions of that age. In this they differ not a whit from our “Zoroaster”.

Where “Zoroaster” and “Ostanes” do, however, differ is that the latter is even more elusive as a pseudonymous author—or congeries of authors. That is because “Ostanes” is in large measure a second-order invention, created within the primary figment “Democritus” as the alien sage who imparts and validates the Greek’s wisdom. Often, then, we have to do not with the actual works of a pseudo-Ostanes but with the imagined oral and written teaching of a character in the narrative of Ps.-Democritus. In these circumstances “Ostanes” and his “works” prove equally fictitious, whereas with “Zoroaster” one is generally confronted with real texts, albeit of a spurious author. Moreover, “Ostanes” possesses a higher proportion of matter which is arguably discrete, in the sense that it is probably not excerpted from larger pseudepigraphic works (such as Ps.-Zoroaster’s *On Nature*), but consists rather of a mass of smaller items such as spells or forged letters to which the sage’s name has been randomly attached.²⁰⁵ A *corpus* of the pseudepigrapha of Ostanes is thus even more difficult to discern than a corpus of Ps.-Zoroaster. Indeed, to try to do so is a somewhat pointless undertaking. It is more profitable to review the excerpts as matter in which Ostanes figures as the validating authority rather than the author.

In fact, only a single title of a work by “Ostanes” is known, and that is mentioned in one fragment only. Philo of Byblos, after describing the qualities of the supreme god according to Zoroaster, reports that “Ostanes too says the same about Him in the (book) entitled *Oktateuch*”.²⁰⁶ The title *Oktateuch* can signify one of two things: either the work was divided into eight volumes (cf. Pentateuch), or else it somehow concerned the Ogdoad, i.e. the eight celestial spheres (the seven of the planets and the one of the fixed stars, the ultimate heaven).²⁰⁷ If the latter, then it was a work of cosmology at a high and general level, a characteristic which can in any case be inferred from the inclusion of the nature of the supreme deity in its contents. In Philo’s fragment, “Zoroaster” reports one

²⁰⁵ Spells and recipes, e.g. frs. 27, A 14; letters, e.g. frs. 28, A 15, A 16. Of the same sort, no doubt, were the magical “books” with attributions to “Zoroaster the magus” and “Ostanes the magus” burnt publicly in Beirut, according to Zacharias Scholasticus (fr. 26 = Zor. fr. O 103, and see above, p. 522).

²⁰⁶ Ap. Eusebius *Praep. Evang.* I.10.52 = BCM fr. 7 (Ost.) = fr. O 11 (Zor.).

²⁰⁷ On the alternatives see BCM I 173 f. (esp. n. 3 on the Ogdoad).

very strange feature of this god: that he has a hawk's head.²⁰⁸ Otherwise, the qualities are on the whole standard and predictable: "first, indestructible, unseen, unbegotten, without parts", and so on.²⁰⁹ Whether all this was in the *Oktateuch*, quality for quality, or whether "Ostanes" merely followed a similar theological outline, it is impossible to tell. The final quality listed appears to allude to the type of work which "Zoroaster", and by inference "Ostanes" too, wrote. God is the "self-taught *physikos* (i.e. natural philosopher), perfect and wise, the unique inventor of sacred physics (*hierou physikou*)". The term *physikos*, used here equally of natural philosophy and the natural philosopher, indicates precisely what it was that "Zoroaster" and "Ostanes" did: an investigation of Nature (*physis*) from macrocosm to microcosm, tinged, since this is "sacred physics" and God himself is the ultimate "physicist", with the arcane and the revelatory.²¹⁰ God, by definition of his nature, is the guarantor of the work of these two sages.

The mass of learning for which Ostanes is cited as an authority may be divided, according to subject matter, into three blocks: (1) cosmology and theology, including the lore of demons, angels and the souls of the dead: in sum, the study of the spiritual powers of the universe from highest to lowest—and how they may be manipulated; (2) the lore of the natural world (animals, plants, minerals) and its magical uses, based on the principles of universal sympathies and antipathies; (3) the theory and practice of the special art of alchemy, both as philosophical quest and as mastery over nature.²¹¹ One notes, as with "Zoroaster", the *practical* bias of all this "wisdom". Because all things in this universe are linked, all things may be exploited—by the adept who has the philosophical key to their linkages. Finally, in surveying all this material to which the name of Ostanes has been applied as validating authority, we

²⁰⁸ An Egyptian motif? See BCM II 157 n. 1.

²⁰⁹ Three of the qualities are less trite, and two have possible links with Zoroastrianism. (1) The epithet "*charioteer* of everything fair" recalls the main metaphor of Dio's magian hymns (above). (2) In "father of Lawfulness and Justice" BCM (II 158 n. 4) hears echoes of the "Bounteous Immortals", divinities created by Ahura Mazda who embody *inter alia* various abstract virtues (HZ I 196 ff.). (On the third less usual quality, God as *physikos*, see below.)

²¹⁰ It would be pleasing if this excerpt from "Zoroaster" could be attributed to his *On Nature* (*Peri physeōs*). Unfortunately, this is precluded, at least as the immediate source, since Philo assigns it to an otherwise unknown *Sacred Collection of Things Persian* (*Hiera synagōgē tōn Persikōn*)—see BCM I 101. It might of course have entered this *Sacred Collection* in turn from *On Nature*. For a conspectus of the Hellenistic *physikoi*, writers in this genre, see Wellmann, o.c. in n. 126, p. 3 f.

²¹¹ The organizing principle of the 3 blocks is essentially that of BCM, slightly modified.

shall note (again, as with Zoroaster) particularly those isolated elements for which an ultimate provenance may be claimed with any plausibility from the orbit of actual Zoroastrianism.

(1) Of the more important theological fragments we have noted that from the *Oktateuch* (ap. Philo of Byblos) concerning a supreme god. The most substantial, however, comes from Cosmas of Jerusalem (8th cent.) and conveys an elaborate hierarchy of the universe's divine powers.²¹² From the "unseen god, highest of all", stem the seven planetary deities. These are arranged according to their zodiacal "houses", and each is allotted two "house-mates" (*synoikoi*), one for each of his two houses (e.g., Zeus, the planet Jupiter, receives Hera and Poseidon). Below these in turn are 36 other gods, a mixture of the personal (e.g. Cybele) and the abstract (e.g. Health), whose number reveals them to be decans, i.e., the powers of each third of each sign of the zodiac. Finally, from these descend another sixty who set the spheres of the universe and of the seven planets in motion. The gods are those of Greco-Roman paganism at its most inclusive, and the system is ordered within an astronomical/astrological frame.²¹³ In flavour, if not in detail, it is similar to other theological systems of late paganism, notably that of the fourth-century Neoplatonic apologist Sallustius in his work *On the Gods and the Universe*. It is altogether remote from Zoroastrianism, except perhaps for an echo of the *fravašis* behind the somewhat strange divine category of "ruling spirits of men".²¹⁴ If there are links with authentic Zoroastrianism, they lie not in the content of the excerpt but in the introductory list of sages through whom the teaching is supposed to have passed from Zoroaster to Ostanēs, its ultimate expounder.²¹⁵ It is possible that the source of the excerpt was actually Ps.-Ostanēs' *Oktateuch* and that it follows on from the treatment there of the supreme god.

Of the remaining theological material, mention may be made of five of the more interesting excerpts: (a) Fr. 8a, from Lactantius Placidus, a late antique scholiast on the Latin poet Statius, that "Ostanēs reports that among the Persians the sun is called by the proper name 'Mithra'".²¹⁶ It is possible that in this context "Persians" means not the Iranian peoples but the initiates of the Roman

²¹² *Ad carmina S. Gregorii*, Migne PG XXXVIII col. 461 = BCM fr. 8b (and see I 175–8).

²¹³ In this it is somewhat reminiscent of the system of the Chaldeans described by Diodorus (II 30 f.)

²¹⁴ BCM II 274 n. 9; on the *fravašis*, HZ I 117 ff.

²¹⁵ BCM II 273 n. 2.

²¹⁶ *Ad Theb.* I.718; on Mithra as the sun, see above, p. 479 ff.

cult of Mithras to whom that label was certainly applied both by themselves and by others. (b) Fr. 10, from Nicomachus of Gerasa (c. 100 A.C.),²¹⁷ that “the most distinguished of the Chaldeans and Ostanēs and Zoroaster call the celestial spheres ‘cattle’ (*agelai/ageleia*)”. Although this nomenclature is backed by much Greek etymologizing (which may or may not have been in Nicomachus’ source),²¹⁸ the metaphor is quite foreign to Greek astral lore. But in Zoroastrianism one of the planets, the moon, does have a bovine name and bovine associations,²¹⁹ and one is reminded of the cattle motif in Mithraism, a religion both “Persian” and heavily astrological.²²⁰ (c) Fr. 11, one of the so-called “theological” oracles of Apollo, quoted by Porphyry,²²¹ in which Ostanēs, “far the greatest of the magi, king of the seven-tongued (sc. lyre, as symbol of the harmony of the spheres)”, is commended as the discoverer of the proper invocations of the seven great planetary gods.²²² Ostanēs’ invocations are “voiceless”, which Bidez and Cumont take as an allusion to the supposed quiet murmuring of the magi at prayer and in liturgy, as perceived by the Greek ear.²²³ It will be noted that the last four excerpts discussed (8b, 8a, 10, 11) all concern in one way or another the seven planets. Clearly, this is a theme running through Ps.-Ostanēs and perhaps suggests a common provenance from the *Oktateuch* as the book of the Seven and the One. (d) Fr. 13: Tertullian (c. 210 A.C.) cites Ostanēs among other sages for the doctrine that the spirits of those who die untimely (the *ahori*) or by some singularly violent death (the *biaeothanati*) linger close to our world and are thus accessible to sorcerers for magic and divination.²²⁴ (e) Fr. 14: from another Christian apologist, Minu-

²¹⁷ Ap. [Iamblichus] *Theologumena Arithm.* 42.

²¹⁸ See BCM II 283 n. 2 (ad frag.).

²¹⁹ *Gao.čithra*, “having the seed of the bull”, because it was in the moon that the seed of the primal bull, slain by Anra Mainyu, was purified (HZ I 139; for ramifications in Mithraism, see Beck, “Cosmogony and Cosmology in Mithraism”, forthcoming in EIr.).

²²⁰ The western Mithras is both bull-killer (as in the standard cult icon) and a notorious cattle-thief (“cattle-stealing god” being one of his cult titles); the code word for the benches in mithraea where the initiates reclined is “cattle stalls” (*praeseptia*: inscription in the Aldobrandini Mithraeum in Ostia—Vermaseren, CIMRM II no. 233). See also above, p. 302 n. 221.

²²¹ Ap. Eusebius *Praep. Evang.* V.14.

²²² The emendation of *kai Rhean* (“and Rhea”) to *k’Arēa* (“and Ares”, i.e. Mars), which completes the set and removes the interloper, is to be accepted: see BCM, n. 2 ad frag. (II 285).

²²³ *Ib.*, n. 3. For actual Zoroastrian practice, which is quite different, see above, p. 452 n. 447.

²²⁴ *De anima* 57; the topic, to which at most “Ostanēs” was one of many contributors, is explored at some length in BCM (I 180–6). On the magi as reputed experts on the world of spirits and of the dead, see above, p. 518.

cius Felix (early 3rd cent.), that Ostanes, "the first of the magi in eloquence and industry", discussed the angels attendant on God's throne as "ministers and messengers" and the "vagabond terrestrial demons, inimical to humanity".²²⁵ The magi, by whom Minucius may mean simply "magicians", "not only know about demons but also perform miraculous tricks through them".²²⁶ With these last two excerpts one descends from the theology of the higher gods to the demonology of spirits and thence to the latter's application in sorcery and divination, on the classification of which Ostanes is cited by Pliny as the leading authority.²²⁷

(2) There are a number of scattered citations of Ostanes as an authority on the lore of animals, plants and minerals, and on its magical applications. One might give as an example the lapidary of Damigeron-Evax on the stone galacite, praised in particular by Ostanes, "the master of all the magi":²²⁸ it is efficacious in restoring milk—note the Greek etymology—to women and to ewes, and the ways of administering it are described; Ostanes called it *lethargus* "because it engenders forgetfulness (*lethe*) of all ills"; it is especially useful for those called to account by an incensed superior because it will make him forget his grievance; by the same token it will appease the gods. Bidez and Cumont rightly saw this material as products, ultimately, of the enquiries and learning of the Hellenistic *physikoi*, those philosophers of Nature who traced her arcane linkages throughout the cosmos from highest to lowest, in particular across the three great orders of the animal, the vegetable and the mineral, analyzing those linkages in terms of the polarized opposites of "sympathy" and "antipathy", i.e. attraction and repulsion.²²⁹ If we may trust Philo's testimony (above), God himself, according to both "Zoroaster" and "Ostanes", was just such a "natural philosopher" and the founder of their science. As Festugière well characterized it,²³⁰ the science was always intensely

²²⁵ *Octavius* 26.11; on other relevant authors see BCM I 178–80.

²²⁶ *Ib.*, 10.

²²⁷ *NH* XXX.5.15 = BCM fr. 12, discussed above, p. 516 f.

²²⁸ *De lapidibus* 34 = BCM fr. 24a. The lapidary is extant as a late Latin translation of a Greek original: see now the edition of Halleux and Schamp (above, n. 129). The other citations of this sort are: frs. 18–20, from Pliny; 21a–p, plant nomenclature in Ps.-Dioscorides and Ps.-Apuleius (see above, p. 532, on "Zoroaster" in these two sources); 22, from Archigenes (early 2nd cent. A.C.) ap. Alexander of Tralles; 23, from Aelius Promotus (early 2nd cent. A.C.).

²²⁹ BCM I 189–98; and see above, p. 497. On the *physikoi* see Wellmann, l.c. in n. 210; Festugière RHT I 194 ff. In the Ostanes excerpt cited above (fr. 24a), the operative sympathy, for example, is that between galacite (mineral) and sheep (animal); the amulet of galacite to restore milk in a woman unwilling to take the mineral in an infusion is made from a pregnant sheep's wool.

²³⁰ RHT I 194; and see above, p. 496.

practical and exploitive—Nature's sympathies and antipathies were there to be *used*—and that is why its manifestations in the fragments of Ostanēs (as of Zoroaster) seem more magical than scientific even in a debased sense.

Rightly too, Bidez and Cumont, following Max Wellmann, saw as the key figure shaping this tradition, and as the effective transmitter of most of the lore of "Ostanēs", one Bolos of Mendes in Egypt, who wrote in the ambience of the great research centre of Alexandria in about 200 B.C.²³¹ Bolos is doubly relevant in that he was not only at the fount of this whole tradition but was also the true author behind the persona of "Democritus", and thus, at one remove, probably also behind "Ostanēs" too. For "Ostanēs" and "Democritus" are inextricably linked in the tradition as "master" and "pupil". The two works which, it is supposed, transmit most of "Ostanēs" (and "Zoroaster" too) in this field were composed by Bolos writing under the name of Democritus and in his person: the *Cheirokmeta* (literally "things wrought by hand", i.e. a book of artificial recipes and remedies) and the *Physika Dynamera* ("Physical Potencies") or *Concerning Sympathies and Antipathies*.²³² More difficult to discern are the works which lie *behind* Bolos. Was he drawing on books of a pseudo-Democritus or a pseudo-Ostanēs,²³³ or was he

²³¹ BCM I 170 f., 189–93 (cf. pp. 112, 117–20, on Bolos and "Zoroaster"); Wellmann, o.c.; Festugière RHT I 197–200.

²³² Tatian (*Orat. ad Graecos* 17 = BCM fr. 16) speaks of the Democritus of *Concerning Sympathies and Antipathies* (i.e. Bolos) "boasting about the magus Ostanēs". Actually, this is the sole *direct* citation of "Ostanēs" within the fragments of Bolos (and there are none at all for "Zoroaster"). That "Ostanēs" (and "Zoroaster") did in fact pass through Bolos has to be inferred in a round-about way: see the passages of BCM I cited in the preceding note; also Wellmann, 14 n. 9, 15 n. 1. The inferences, I believe, hold. Sceptics may however prefer to view Bolos as archetypal of the tradition which shaped and transmitted "Ostanēs" rather than, in all cases, the actual medium of transmission.

Pliny's testimony is relevant here, for he juxtaposes Democritus and Ostanēs in a manner that suggests he is drawing on a source which related the two, and Bolos is the obvious candidate. At *NH* XXVIII.5–7 (= BCM fr. 17; and see above, p. 519) he castigates Ostanēs as the inventor of the abominable practice of anthropophagy for magical ends, and then immediately speaks of the "extant commentaries of Democritus" on the subject. This is precisely the same grisly extension of the magic of sympathies which Tatian (above) mentions in the works of that "Democritus" who promoted "Ostanēs" and who was in reality Bolos of Mendes.

²³³ Pliny (*NH* XXX.2.8—see above, p. 516) speaks of Ostanēs as the author of the earliest commentary on magic still extant, but his language does not imply that he had handled or consulted it. The whole passage, indeed, which moves from the work of Ostanēs to that of his pupil Democritus (a Democritus, incidentally, who Pliny insists against the sceptics is the real Democritus the philosopher), can be read on the supposition that Pliny (or his source of information) has taken at face value a fiction, namely the "book" of "Ostanēs", within the larger construct of Bolos' "Democritus".

substantially the inventor of these authorities, as he was certainly the person who gave them their definitive shape?²³⁴ Bidez and Cumont maintained that actual pseudonymous works exist in Bolos' background, and in one instance, which happens to be especially germane to the present study, they believed that they could isolate a salient characteristic. Noting that, while the plant names in Ps.-Dioscorides and Ps.-Apuleius ascribed to Zoroaster are generally Greek, those ascribed to Ostanès appear to be "barbarian" (possibly Persian and Aramaic), and combining these data with Pliny's observation that "Democritus" (i.e. Bolos) had listed the *magica vocabula* of plants in the *Cheirokmeta*, they postulated an "Ostanès" who had originally composed in Aramaic (the written language of the Magusaeans), transmitting *inter alia* Iranian botanical lore.²³⁵ The prospect is an intriguing one, but the evidence seems rather slight for a complete Aramaic text of a pseudo-Ostanès which has otherwise left no trace. It need not be doubted, however, that in a more diffuse way Iranian plant lore, including nomenclature, reached the net of Bolos' researches.²³⁶ Who attached the name of Ostanès to it and when is anyone's guess: mine would be Bolos himself.

(3) The ubiquitous "Democritus" likewise dominates, as the vehicle of transmission, the third and final activity of the magus "Ostanès"—alchemy.²³⁷ The relationship is the same, pupil to teacher; and one has the same suspicion, arising from the lack of specific extant or cited works of "Ostanès" (except for obviously very late ones), that the Persian sage is again a *construct* within the larger invention of "Democritus", designed to validate the latter's teaching and to give his persona depth and plausibility. At any rate, whether or not he has any independent existence, "Ostanès" belongs to the alchemical school of "Democritus", the earliest and

²³⁴ The form of part at least of Bolos' work is perhaps revealed in the allusion to Ostanès in BCM fr. 23. The host author, Aelius Promotus (early 2nd cent. A.C.), says: "I observed (such-and-such a process) with my teacher Ostanès". BCM (II 303, note ad frag.) argues plausibly that the passage was lifted unchanged from Bolos where the original first-person observer and narrator would have been "Democritus".

²³⁵ BCM I 190 f.; no etymological analysis is offered, however (n. 5). On Ps.-Zoroaster's nomenclatures, see above, p. 532 f.

²³⁶ The excerpts, however, other than the nomenclatures, seem to offer no particularly Iranian or Zoroastrian details, except perhaps for fr. 18 (see BCM, notes ad frag., II 297 f.).

²³⁷ On alchemy, see above, n. 12. On Ostanès as alchemist, BCM I 198–212; J. Lindsay, *Origins of Alchemy in Graeco-Roman Egypt*, London 1970, 131–58 (somewhat credulous, but with the merit of presenting almost all the excerpts in translation).

simplest of the identifiable traditions.²³⁸ It is as a character in Ps.-Democritus' work *Physica et mystica* and as the revealer of a key philosophical formula that "Ostanes" is of some significance in the history of alchemy.

The *Physica et mystica*, part of which is extant in a late and disordered version, treats of the standard alchemical divisions of gold, silver, stones and purple. The original is perhaps of the late first or second century A.C., although, given its *dramatis personae* and the nature of "Ostanes'" revelation, behind that original may lurk in turn a work of our old friend Bolos.²³⁹ In an elaborate *mise en scène*,²⁴⁰ Democritus narrates (in the first person) how he studied alchemy in Memphis under Ostanes, who had been sent there by the then king of Persia to instruct the Egyptian priesthood in the art.²⁴¹ Ostanes dies suddenly before the lessons are complete, and Democritus tries with scant success to wrest them from his uncooperative ghost.²⁴² He is told only that "the books are in the temple". Some time after a fruitless search, at a banquet in the temple a column splits open of its own accord, and Ostanes' son (of

²³⁸ See Taylor, art. cit. in n. 12, p. 114 f.: "These (i.e. alchemists of the Democritean school) carry out their alchemical work by superficial colouring of metals and by the preparation of alloys by fusion"; the more complex processes of distillation and sublimation were eschewed.

²³⁹ On the *Physica et mystica* and its antecedents, see BCM I 198 ff.; Festugière RHT I 224–33. Festugière traces the work back to Bolos' *Baphika* ("Art of Dyeing"), Taylor (see preceding note) to his *Cheirokmeta*. The experiment performed by "Ostanes" and observed by (?) "Democritus" in the excerpt which Aelius Promotus probably lifted from Bolos (fr. 23—see above, n. 234) is essentially an alchemical one.

²⁴⁰ Fr. A 6. The account of the *Physica et mystica* is supplemented by other sources, notably Syncellus (fr. A 3) and Synesius (A 4a).

²⁴¹ This interesting detail is from Syncellus (fr. A 3). The setting under the Persian empire provides an element of historical verisimilitude (as in certain of the ancient historical novels). Ostanes is here called a Mede, and his star pupils are Democritus the Greek, Maria the Jew, and Pammenes the Egyptian. The three are clearly the symbolic leaders of "national" traditions within alchemy, with Ostanes representing a Persian stream, in this instance the most authoritative one. The different pseudonational traditions became something of a *topos* in the later alchemical literature: cf. frs. A 16 (Syriac letters of "Pebechios" and "Osron") and A 19 (the Arabic "Book of the Thirty Chapters" ascribed to Ostanes). That there was ever a genuinely Persian school of alchemy—or for that matter any other national school—would however be an unwarranted inference. In the same excerpt from Syncellus, we learn of an incipient quarrel between the three pupils over the question of secrecy and the encipherment of formulae. Ostanes, who is generally depicted as favouring secrecy (cf. frs. A 1, A 5a, A 16), sides with Democritus and Maria against Pammenes.

²⁴² Note again the motif of conjuring the dead. Ironically, the magus is here the unappreciative object of his own magian art.

the same name) draws forth and divulges his father's "books".²⁴³ These consist, to everyone's amazement, solely of the triple formula: "a nature takes pleasure in a nature, a nature vanquishes a nature, a nature rules a nature" (ἡ φύσις τῇ φύσει τέρεται καὶ ἡ φύσις τὴν φύσιν νικᾷ καὶ ἡ φύσις τὴν φύσιν κρατεῖ).²⁴⁴ It is the old principle of universal sympathies set as a leading premise on the younger art of alchemy.²⁴⁵ It is the central contribution of "Ostanes" to the art.

In most of the other excerpts, as in those which centre on the discovery of the triple formula, "Ostanes" is not in a primary sense the author at all. Instead, he functions as a character within the work (as in A 11, the "Dialogue of the Philosophers and Cleopatra", or A 16, the letters of "Pebechius" and "Osron")²⁴⁶ or as an obviously fictitious, second-order "author" fronting for the real composer (as in A 15, the letter of "Ostanes" to "Petasios", or A 19, the Arabic "Book of the Thirty Chapters" which purports to be Ostanes' vision).²⁴⁷ Much is from very late antiquity—or beyond. In sum, it is impossible to detect any significant work or works of a pseudo-Ostanes (or of pseudo-Ostanae) that are exploited by later authorities in a standard way; rather, Ostanes is a persona who is

²⁴³ This is the classic story pattern of the discovery of lost documents of great antiquity and/or authority, whose obvious function is to validate in an awe-inspiring fashion what is before the reader's eyes. The types are well explored by Festugière as a subset of accounts of the revelation of arcana: RHT I 309 ff., esp. p. 319 ff.; see also BCM I 205 f. Cf. fr. A 19 (the Arabic "Book of Thirty Chapters") in which Ostanes himself in a vision, after passing through 7 gates, discovers alchemical arcana on three of 7 tablets (the other four being indecipherable with age)—a striking combination of 3 modes of revelation: by vision, by quest or journey, and by recovery of a document.

²⁴⁴ Festugière (RHT I 231) rightly insists that the Greek definite articles are in this context properly translated by *indefinite*: "a (particular) nature takes pleasure in another (particular) nature . . .", not "nature takes pleasure in Nature . . .".

²⁴⁵ Cf. fr. A 9: Zosimus (4th cent.) quotes "Ostanes" on the "affinities" (*syngeneia*) between different minerals.

²⁴⁶ In the latter, Pebechius, an Egyptian who has discovered a text of Ostanes, writes to Osron, a magus, for assistance in deciphering the Persian.

²⁴⁷ The more important excerpts (in addition to those concerning the triple formula, above) are: A 9, from Zosimus, on "affinities" between minerals; A 10, possibly from the *Physica et mystica*, on tinctures; A 11, from a "Dialogue of the Philosophers and Cleopatra": Ostanes, among others, questions Cleopatra the alchemist, here portrayed as his senior; A 14, from an anonymous manuscript on the making of gold, miscellaneous procedures ascribed to Ostanes: see following note; A 15, a letter of "Ostanes" to "Petasios", on the making and effects of "divine water", a potent substance which can "raise the dead and kill the living, make the dark light and the light dark"; A 16, letters of "Osron" and "Pebechios": see preceding note; A 19, from the Arabic "Book of the Thirty Chapters", "Ostanes'" discovery of arcane tablets in a vision: see above, n. 243.

invented and re-invented down the ages as the occasion serves. By the same token, there is no coherent alchemical doctrine that can be ascribed to him. It remains only to state that there are few if any elements in the excerpts which relate in any way to Zoroastrianism.²⁴⁸ In the nature of the case, these, if they exist at all, are fortuitous and unsystematic, since there is no underlying Ps.-Ostanes expressing a genuinely Persian stream within the alchemical tradition. "Ostanes", in his vision in the Arabic "Book of the Thirty Chapters" discovers tablets in various languages promoting the various national wisdoms, Egyptian, Persian and Hindu. Predictably, in the "Persian" tablet there is nothing distinctively Persian and certainly nothing Zoroastrian.²⁴⁹ By now we would scarcely expect otherwise.

Conclusion

This survey of the writings attributed to Zoroaster and other magi in Greco-Roman antiquity has throughout sounded a rather negative note, starkly exemplified in the preceding paragraph. The links with historical Zoroastrianism are few and tenuous—the magian hymns of Dio Chrysostom furnishing possibly a solitary exception²⁵⁰—and even a coherent pseudo-Zoroastrian school within the Greek intellectual tradition of the Hellenistic and Roman ages is lacking. Instead, we find the opportunistic and piecemeal use of the names and persons of the great magi to confer an exotic authority on the diverse arcana of Hellenistic wisdom. The "hellenized magi" of Bidez and Cumont, real enough in their own sphere among the Magusaeans of Anatolia, vanish like ghosts of their own conjuring when one attempts to tie them to the corpus of the pseudepigrapha. For the corpus itself, *qua* corpus, crumbles at a touch.

Nevertheless, even negative conclusions can be fruitful. In the

²⁴⁸ In fr. A 14a "Ostanes" cites as an earlier Persian authority one "Sophar" (= Shapur?) who "set on a column a bronze eagle, descending into a pure spring to wash each day and be thus renewed"; but the underlying solar and temporal symbolism resonates, if at all, with Mithraism rather than Zoroastrianism: see BCM II 332 f., n. 4 ad frag. Fr. A 14f mentions a "cave of Ostanes" furnished with vessels and water; BCM (ib., n. 10) hears an echo of the archetypal Mithraic cave established, according to Porphyry (*De antro* 6), by Zoroaster. The echoes of Zoroastrian dualism which BCM hears in fr. 13 (II 329, n. 1 ad frag.) strike me as very faint indeed.

²⁴⁹ Fr. A 19, at BCM II 349 f.

²⁵⁰ Excluded from the survey, for reasons given at the outset (above, n. 4), was Hystaspes, whose *Oracles* certainly contain an authentic Zoroastrian stratum: see above, p. 376 ff.

first place, it may have been of some use to Zoroastrian studies, and perhaps even in a small way to the Zoroastrian faith, to have pruned away a mass of material which has been widely supposed, under the influence of Bidez and Cumont, to be of far greater relevance than it really is. Secondly, and more positively, surveying the pseudepigrapha has enabled us to view at the same time the image of Zoroaster and the magi and of their activities which developed within Greek culture during the long centuries of its varied interactions with the culture of Zoroastrian Iran. Given the historical importance of that cultural traffic between Greece and Iran, between Hellenism and Zoroastrianism, what the Greeks made of Zoroaster and the magi is surely germane to a history of the faith.

ABBREVIATIONS

[Note: cross-references are to the names of authors, editors or translators given in the bibliography, under which details of the work concerned appear. Since there are different systems for transcribing Pahlavi, the titles of Pahlavi texts may differ slightly there from the forms given below.]

AA	Archäologischer Anzeiger
AASH	Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae
Abh.	Abhandlungen
Abstr. Ir.	Abstracta Iranica
Acta Ir.	Acta Iranica
Acta Or.	Acta Orientalia
AHM	The Avestan Hymn to Mithra, see I. Gershevitch
Air. Wb.	Altiranisches Wörterbuch, see C. Bartholomae
AJ	Ayādgar ī Jāmāspīg, see G. Messina
AJA	American Journal of Anthropology
AMI	Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran
Annales, E.S.C.	Annales - Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations
ANRW	Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt, ed. H. Temporini and W. Haase, Berlin-New York
ANS	American Numismatic Society
APOT	The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English, see R. H. Charles
AS	Anatolian Studies
Av.	Avestan
AVN	Ardā Virāz Nāmag, see P. Gignoux
AW	Antike Welt
BAI	Bulletin of the Asia Institute
BaM	Baghdader Mitteilungen
BASOR	Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
BCH	Bulletin de correspondance hellénique
BCM	J. Bidez and F. Cumont, Les mages hellénisés, see J. Bidez
BEFEO	Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême Orient
BMC	British Museum Coin Catalogue
BSOAS	Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies
Bull. ép.	Bulletin épigraphique
CAH	The Cambridge Ancient History
CH India	The Cambridge History of India
CH Ir.	The Cambridge History of Iran
CHJ	The Cambridge History of Judaism
CIMRM	Corpus Inscriptionum et Monumentorum Religionis Mithriacae, see M. J. Vermaseren
CRAI	Comptes rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres
DAFA	Délégation archéologique française en Afghanistan
DAFI	Délégation archéologique française en Iran
DAW	Denkschrift Wiener Akademie
Dd.	Dādestān ī dēnīg, see E. W. West

Dk.	Dēnkard
DkM	Dēnkard, ed. D. M. Madan, Bombay 1911
EI	Encyclopaedia of Islam
EIr.	Encyclopaedia Iranica
EMM	Études sur les mystères de Mithras, see S. Wikander
Enc. Brit.	Encyclopaedia Britannica
Enc. Jud.	Encyclopaedia Judaica
Ep. Manuščihr	Epistles of Manuščihr, see E. W. West
EPRO	Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'empire romain
ERE	Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, ed. J. Hastings
Ét. mithriaques	Études mithriaques, see J. Duchesne-Guillemin
EW	East and West
Festschrift	Standardized title for repeatedly cited presentation volumes, see in bibliography under the name of the scholar honoured
FGrH	Fragmente der griechischen Historiker, ed. F. Jacoby, Berlin-Leiden, 1922-1958
GBd.	Greater Bundahišn, see B. T. Anklesaria
HbO	Handbuch der Orientalistik
HR	History of Religions
HTR	Harvard Theological Review
HUCA	Hebrew Union College Annual
HZ I, II	The first two volumes of this history, published in 1975 (reprinted with corrections, 1989) "The early period", and 1982, "Under the Achaemenians"
HZ IV	The planned next volume of this history, "Under the Arsacids and early Sasanians"
IJ	Indo-Iranian Journal
Ind. Bd.	Indian Bundahišn, see E. W. West
IOS	Israel Oriental Studies
Ir. Ant.	Iranica Antiqua
IsMEO	Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente
Ist. Mitt.	Istanbuler Mitteilungen
JA	Journal asiatique
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society
JCOI	Journal of the K. R. Cama Institute (Bombay)
JdI	Jahrbuch des deutschen archäologischen Instituts
JdS	Journal des Savants
Jewish Enc.	The Jewish Encyclopaedia
JHS	Journal of Hellenic Studies
JJS	Journal of Jewish Studies
JNES	Journal of Near Eastern Studies
JRAS	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society
JRGS	Journal of the Royal Geographical Society
JRS	Journal of Roman Studies
KZ	Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung auf dem Gebiete der Indogermanischen Sprachen, begründet von A. Kuhn (now renamed Historische Sprachforschung)
MAMA	Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua
Mém.	Mémoires
MP	Middle Persian
MSS	Münchener Studien zur Sprachwissenschaft
MSt.	Mithraic Studies, see J. R. Hinnells
MX	Mēnōg ī Xrad, see E. W. West
NC	Numismatic Chronicle

NHL	The Nag Hammadi Library in English, see J. M. Robinson
OGIS	Orientalis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae
OLZ	Orientalische Literaturzeitung
ONU	Obščestvennye Nauki v Uzbekistane (Tashkent)
OP	Old Persian
OTP	The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Vol. I, see J. H. Charlesworth
OTP II	Idem., second volume
Pahl.	Pahlavi
PRDd.	Pahlavi Rivāyat accompanying the Dādestān ī dēnīg, see B. N. Dhabhar, A. V. Williams
PW	Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft, ed. by A. F. von Pauly, G. Wissowa and others
RA	Revue archéologique
REG	Revue des études grecques
Rev. épigr.	Revue épigraphique
Rev. suisse de num.	Revue suisse de numismatique
RHR	Revue de l'histoire des religions
RN	Revue numismatique
SA	Sovetskaja Arxeologija
SAS	South Asian Studies
Sb.	Sitzungsberichte
SBE	Sacred Books of the East, ed. Max Müller
Skt	Sanskrit
Sources	Textual sources for the study of Zoroastrianism, see M. Boyce
St.Ir.	Studia Iranica
TLZ	Theologische Literaturzeitung
TMMM	Textes et monuments figurés relatifs aux mystères de Mithra, see F. Cumont
Tr. XAÈÈ	Trudy Xorezmskoj Arxeologo-Ètnografičeskoj Èkspedicii
Vd	Vendidad
VDI	Vestnik Drevnej Istorii
VT	Vetus Testamentum
WZKM	Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes
Y	Yasna
Yt	Yašt
Zādspram	Wizīdagihā ī Zādspram, see B. T. Anklesaria
ZDMG	Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft
ZPE	Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik
ZVYt	Zand ī Vahman Yašt, see B. T. Anklesaria
ZXA	Zand ī Xwurdag Abestāg, see B. N. Dhabhar