

S PUMA LUNARIS. BRINGING THE MOON DOWN TO EARTH, EXTRACTION OF 'MOON FOAM' AND ITS USE IN ANCIENT MAGIC

Abstract

The article is devoted to the ancient ritual of bringing the moon down to the earth. The author has compiled all sources in which you can read about it and discuss in detail how to obtain the so-called 'Moon foam' (*spuma lunaris*), focusing on its use in ancient magic. In addition, the article suggests that in the stories of the seduction of Selene by the god Pan and the hero Endymion may be elements of some aitiological myth explaining the genesis and phenomenon of bringing the moon to the ground. The annex to this article shows a similar ritual in Moroccan magic of the 19th and 20th centuries.

Keywords

Ancient magic, bringing the moon down to the earth, 'moon foam'

1. Bringing the moon down to earth – a chronological review of sources¹

Ancient Greek and Latin sources² frequently refer to the pulling down of

¹ It seems that none of the studies contains a complete list of such testimonies. Besides the sources listed in the studies frequently contain no more than general comments on the skills of Thessalian witches. The largest catalogues of sources relating to the rite of pulling the moon down to earth are found in: Tavenner 1916: 20, n. 96; Tavenner 1920: 54, 75–82; Préaux 1973: 119–123; Hill 1973: 221–238; Tupet 1976: 215–242; Lunais 1979: 221–233, esp. 226, n. 26; Cazeaux 1979: 265–275; Bicknell 1984: 67–75; Johnston 1999: 113; Gordon 1999: 159–275, esp. 223 ('Pulling down the Moon'); Phillips 2002: 378–386; Mili 2014: 259–299 ('The Land Rich in Herbs'), esp. 287–289 and 294–295.

² At the British Museum there is a tablet found at Niniveh (SAA 16, 063; Winckler, SKT 2, 44 [K 01366]) and dated to the reign of Esarhaddon (7th century BC.). It contains a complaint to the king, including: 'Zazâ, the wife of Tarši, and her sons should not be kept alive. O king, my

the moon to earth, a skill the witches of Thessaly were said to excel in.³ The earliest reference that we can identify may be that from a lost mime by Sophron of Syracuse,⁴ active in the fifth century BC, who according to Athenaios (XI 59.480b) authored a piece *The Women Who Say They Expel The Goddess* (Ταὶ γυναῖκες αἱ τὰν θεὸν φαντὶ ἐξελεῖν⁵).⁶ According to the scholia to Theocritus,⁷ the latter based his idyll *The Spell* (Φαρμακεύτριαι) on the said piece and while he does not mention pulling down the moon directly, his protagonist Simaitha, calls during her night-time incantations the bright Selene (*Idyll*. II 10–11: Σελάννα, φαῖνε καλόν) and the chthonic Hekate (*Idyll*. II 12: χθονία θ' Ἑκάτα). When, however, the barking of the dogs announces the latter's arrival, Simaitha in fright orders her servant, Thestylis to strike a bronze vessel (τὸ χαλκέον ὡς τάχος ἄχει), which as we know from other sources⁸ – served to prevent an eclipse of Selene (*Idyll*. II 33–36).

The earliest direct reference to bringing down the moon that can be safely dated is, however, found in the *Clouds* by Aristophanes, performed in 423 BC. The comedy's protagonist, Strepsiades ponders how to evade paying interest on a loan and has the bright idea of removing the moon from the firmament. Since it was lunar months that determined the payments, he reasons naively, without the moon the monthly payments would no longer be necessary. Thus Strepsiades says (vv. 749–752):

lord! The priest is a brother-in-law of Tarsi. Their wives bring down the moon from the sky!' (my thanks to Zuzanna Kaluta, Anna Kolba, Dominika Lewandowska for drawing my attention to the text). It is, however, unique as evidence for the practice, see Reiner 1995: 97–101.

³ We deliberately evade the controversial question of the relationship between the lunar eclipse and the magic of bringing the moon to earth. In the article mentioned in n. 1, Hill argues that it was always a disappearance due to magic and never an eclipse. The issue is not, however, so straightforward for both phenomena were blamed on magic. We do not wish to concern ourselves with the subject that requires a separate study when we focus on the issue of 'lunar froth'.

⁴ Körte 1929: 1100–1104; Furley 2008: 649–651.

⁵ Unfortunately ἐξελεῖν is not unambiguous, see Furley 2008: 650: 'The world ἐξελεῖν (*exelān*) contained in the title can be interpreted in different ways: either as the transitive verb "to cast out" (in the sense of exorcism) or the intransitive "to set off" = "to be on one's way" (sc. to the sacrifice/feast). In one case the punctuation in the papyrus and the meaning of a word (8 'there!') indicate a change of speaker (→ Speaker, change of). Overall, both the mimetic nature of the play and its theme of a magical act (*práxis*) in the private sphere are reminiscent of the *Pharmakeútria* of Theocritus (cf. schol. on the latter, contending that Theocritus had "revised" a mime by S.).'

⁶ Sophron in Theophrastus, *Characters*. Herodas, *Mimes*. Sophron and Other Mime Fragments, edited and translated by Jeffrey Rusten, I. C. Cunningham, Loeb, Cambridge, Mass. 2003, pp. 294–295.

⁷ *Sch. Theoc.* II a.b.; II 11/12 a.b.

⁸ See for example: Liv. XXVI 5.9; Tib. *Eleg.* I 8.22; Ov. *Met.* IV 330–333 and VII 207–208; Plin. *HN* II 9.54; Iuv. VI 441–443; Tac. *Ann.* I 28; Stat. *Theb.* VI 684–688; Claud. *De bello Goth.*, vv. 233–234.

γυναῖκα φαρμακίδ' εἰ πριάμενος Θετταλὴν
καθέλοιμι νύκτωρ τὴν σελήνην, εἴτα δὴ
αὐτὴν καθεῖρξαμι' ἐς λοφεῖον στρογγύλον,⁹
ὥσπερ κάτοπτρον, κἄτα τηροῖην ἔχων.

'what if I got hold of a witch from Thessaly
and made her magic the moon out of the sky.
I could put it away in a dressing case like a mirror,
and hide it where no one would ever find it'.

The Pseudo-Hippocratic treatise *The Sacred Disease* (Περὶ ἰηρῆς νόσου) should probably be dated to the late fifth century. Its author is highly critical (in chapter 2) of *magoi*, purificators, mountebanks, and charlatans (μάγοι τε καὶ καθάρται καὶ ἀγύρται καὶ ἀλαζόνες) for giving epilepsy the aura of a 'sacred' disease (ἁφιερώσαντες). He also takes a swipe at them (in chapter 4) for lying that they know how 'to bring down the moon (σελήνην καθαιρεῖν), to eclipse the sun, to make storm and sunshine, rain and drought, the sea impassable and the earth barren...'

Plato in his turn warns in the *Gorgias* (written some time in the 380s BC) against the temptation to please the Athenian people at any price while seeking political power (*Gorg.* 513a): 'so that we may not suffer, my distinguished friend, the fate that they say befalls the creatures who would draw down the moon – the hags of Thessaly; that our choice of this power in the city may not cost us all that we hold most dear (ὅπως μὴ, ὦ δαιμόνιε, πεισόμεθα ὅπερ φασὶ τὰς τὴν σελήνην καθαιρούσας, τὰς Θετταλίδας· σὺν τοῖς φιλτάτοις ἢ αἵρεσις ἡμῖν ἔσται ταύτης τῆς δυνάμεως τῆς ἐν τῇ πόλει)'. The passage was somewhat obscure already in antiquity prompting speculation as to the punishment meted out to the witches. According to Asclepiades of Tragilos (fourth century BC) they will lose one of their children or an eye.¹⁰ Other authors discussing Plato's mention¹¹ speak of eyes in the plural (τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν) and either 'children' (τῶν παίδων) or 'feet' (τῶν ποδῶν). Then Olympiodoros in this commentary to the *Gorgias*¹² writes in a slightly dif-

⁹ Literally a 'round case' (λοφεῖον στρογγύλον).

¹⁰ Asclepiades of Tragilos, *Tragoudoumena* (FGrH 12 F 20): ἡ γὰρ καταθύειν τῶν τέκνων ἢ τὸν ἕτερον τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν ἀπολλύειν. It is a fragment preserved in the scholia to the *Epitome* by the sophist Zenobios (see below, p. 42).

¹¹ 1. Ps.-Plutarchus, *Prov.* 113 (2.13), ed. Leutsch, Schneidewin, p. 338: τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν καὶ τῶν ποδῶν; 2. Zenobios 501 (4.1), ed. Leutsch, Schneidewin, p. 83.4: τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν καὶ τῶν παίδων; 3. Michael Apostolios 7.81, ed. Leutsch, Schneidewin, p. 417–8, l.2: τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν καὶ τῶν ποδῶν. See also *Liber Suda*, ε 2559: τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν καὶ τῶν ποδῶν.

¹² '39.2. In every case we should strive to grasp the good. For a man who wishes not to suffer injustice must be a friend of the ruling constitution, and a man who is a friend of the ruling constitution is assimilated to it, and being assimilated to it he is defiled in his soul and is wiped out root and branch in the manner of the Thessalian women. This is the story: nowadays at the time of eclipses people think that the *magi* are drawing down the moon. So too long ago it was believed that the Thessalian women said certain things, and they say that if ever they had

ferent context of the death of Thessalian witches' children and husbands. We will not, however, dwell on this complex issue here.¹³

We also know that Menander wrote a comedy titled *Thessala* (Θεττάλη),¹⁴ mentioned by Stephanus of Byzantium (θ 35. Θεσσαλία) and the scholia to Aristophanes's *Clouds* (v. 749).¹⁵ Pliny the Elder in a passage on magic says (*HN* XXX 2.7): 'I am indeed surprised that the people over whom Achilles once ruled had a reputation for magic so lasting that actually Menander, a man with an unrivalled gift for sound literary taste, gave the name *Thessala* to his comedy, which deals fully with the tricks of the women for calling down the moon (...*Thessalam cognominaret fabulam complexam ambages feminarum detrahentium lunam*)'.

It is also in order to mention the *akmé* by Theocritus, the author of the aforementioned idyll *The Spell* (*Idyll*. II), dated to the 280s or 270s, which in our view mentions pulling Selene down to earth so as to assist the protagonist in her magical practice.

In the fourth century Sosiphanes of Syracuse¹⁶ (died 336/333 or 324/321) authored the now lost tragedy *Meleager*. As we know from the scholia to *Argonautica* by Apollonius of Rhodes¹⁷ the play (Σωσιφάνης ἐν Μελεάγρῳ) contains the following fragment:

Μάγοιο ἐπφδαῖς πᾶσα Θεσσαλὶς κόρη
 δευδῆς σελήνης αἰθέρος καταβάτις.

'Every chit of girl of Thessaly can command the moon down
 from heaven by magic incantations – believe that if you will'.¹⁸

The ritual in question is the subject of a story in the aforementioned *Argonautica* by Apollonius of Rhodes. It is one of Medea's magical powers, as she (III 533) 'arrest the stars and the paths of the sacred moon' (ἄστρα τε καὶ μήνης ἱερῆς

the power to draw it down, they achieved the object of their aspiration; whereas if they were powerless to draw it down, they perished root and branch, themselves, their children, their husbands and their cities. The point he makes is this, that a man who assimilates himself to the prevailing constitution loses his soul root and branch. Observe that we should not trust these childish tales about [women] drawing down the moon—it is just an eclipse, but the majority of people are deceived by it' (pp. 251–252).

¹³ See new interesting studies: Villagra 2013: 67–76; Villagra 2017: 282–294.

¹⁴ PCG VI 2, p. 127.

¹⁵ See also scholia to the following verses of the *Clouds*: vv. 751 and 752.

¹⁶ Diehl 1929: 1167–1168; Zimmermann 2008: 659. It seems there were two tragedians of that name, one active in the fourth century who authored *Meleager* and another, belonging to the third century (born 306/306).

¹⁷ *Scholia vetera in Apollonium Rhodium ex Cod. Reg. Paris*; book III 533, pp. 242–243.

¹⁸ See Gordon 1999: 212; see also Phillips 2002: 380: 'With magical incantations every Thessalian maiden is a fraudulent bringer down of the moon from the aether'.

ἐπέδῃσε κελεύθους). When she flees her father's palace to cavort with Jason, it is the lunar goddess Mene herself who reproaches her (IV 57–61):¹⁹

Οὐκ ἄρ' ἐγὼ μούνη ματὰ Λάτμιον ἄντρον ἀλύσκα,
οὐδ' οἷη καλῶ περιδαίομαι²⁰ Ἐνδυμίωνι·
ἦ θαμὰ δὴ καὶ σεῖο κίον δολίησιν αἰοδαῖς
μνησαμένη φιλότητος, ἴνα σκοτίῃ ἐνὶ νυκτὶ
φαρμάσσης εὐκηλος, ἃ τοι φίλα ἔργα τέτυκται.

'So I am not the only one, after all, to flee to the Latmian cave, nor alone in burning for handsome Endymion.²¹ How often indeed did your crafty incantations, shameless one, remind me of my love, so that in the dark of night you could calmly work the spells that are dear to you'.

It is, however, in the poetry of the Augustan²² and early imperial period that we most commonly find the theme of pulling down the moon, both in direct descriptions of the ritual and in more or less indirect allusions. It is mentioned by: Vergil (*Ecl.* 8.69; possibly also: *G.* II 483 and *G.* III 391–393 as well as *A.* IV 513–514²³ and VIII 22–25), Horace (*Ep.* V 41–45,²⁴ *Ep.* XVII 77–78;²⁵ also possibly *Sat.* I 8.33–36), Tibullus (*Eleg.* I 8.21,²⁶ also possibly I 2.63), Propertius (*Eleg.* I 1.17–24;²⁷ II 28.37; IV 5.13), Ovid (*Am.* II 1.23, II 5.33–38; *Ep.* VI 85;²⁸ *Met.* IV 330–333; VII 207–209;²⁹ XII 263–264; *De medic.* 42; maybe: *Ars* III 83, *Rem.* 249–260)³⁰, Lucan (VI 499–506 and 668–669), Martial (IX 29.9; XII 57.15–17), Valerius Flaccus (VI 447–448, VII 330; also possibly VII 393 and VIII 29–30),³¹ Statius (*Theb.* VI 684–688;³² maybe also: I 105–106,³³ II 284, III 558–559), Silius Italicus (*Pun.* VIII 500). The magic procedure also finds mention in Petronius (*Sat.* 129

¹⁹ See also *Schol. ad Apoll.* 3.533a.b. and 4.59–61a.b.

²⁰ *περι δαίομαι* ed. Fränkel.

²¹ See also Cicero, *Tusc.* I 38.92.

²² See Tupet 1976: 92–103.

²³ See also Verg. *Aen.* IV 489: *vertere sidera retro*.

²⁴ Here a reference to getting the stars descend from heaven.

²⁵ See also *Epod.* XVII 4–5, which talks of the stars, not the moon.

²⁶ See also *Eleg.* I 2.45 which talks of the stars.

²⁷ Here a motif of altering the trajectory of the stars.

²⁸ See also Ov. *Ep.* VI 86: *tenebris abdere solis equos*.

²⁹ See also Ov. *Met.* VII 208–209: *currus quoque carmine nostro / pallet avi, pallet nostris Aurora venenis*.

³⁰ See also Ov. *Rem.* 256: *Nec subito Phoebi pallidus orbis erit*.

³¹ See also VII 499 which talks of the stars.

³² See also commentary to Stat. *Theb.* VI 686 in Lactatnius Placidus, with a quote from *Georg.* III 391–392 (see below, p. 53, n. 74).

³³ See also commentary on this locus in Lactatnius Placidus: *Talis erat lux illi, qualis est luna, cum laborat magica arte. Nam pagani magicis artibus credebant lunam posse mutari, unde Vergilius 'carmina vel lunam caelo deducere possunt' [sic]*; Hill 1973: 237: 'Such was her light as is the moon when it fails because of magic skill. For the rustics use to believe that the moon could be moved by magic skills. Hence Vergil: "songs can draw down even the moon from heaven"'.

and 134) and Seneca (*Med.* 791–792; *Phaed.* 420–422, 791; *Her. O.* 467–468). Not all the references listed above are unambiguous, sometimes it is the stars that are pulled down, while the Sun is merely stopped in its heavenly tracks. It should also be noted that the motif of pulling down the moon to earth is also found in later Latin poetry, for example Nemesianos (*Idyll.* 4, 68–72) or Claudian (*De bello Goth.* / *De bello Pollentin.*, 233–238; *In Ruf.* I 146–147).

It is also worth noting that Pliny the Elder in his *Historia naturalis* in addition to the aforementioned discussion of (*HN* XXX 2.7) Menander's *Thessala*, writes (*HN* XXV 5.10) that some hold solar and lunar eclipses (*solis luneque defectuum*) are the result of magic and herbs (*veneficiis et herbis*). He also notes (*HN* II 9.54) that the eclipsed moon is spurred into action by noise.

Pulling the moon down to earth is also mentioned in the work of Plutarch of Chaeronea (*De Pythiae orac.* 12.400b, *Coniug. praec.* 48.145c; *De defectu orac.* 13.417a),³⁴ Apuleius of Madaura (*Met.* I 3;³⁵ maybe also *Apol.* 31) and Lucian of Samosata (*Philops.* 14–15, *DMeret.* I 1; possible allusions in *Dialogues of the Gods* XI 1–2 and XII 1, *On Sacrifices* 7, *Alexander the False Prophet* 38–39, *Ikaromenippos* 13). Another writer to discuss such practices of Thessalian witches is Zenobios³⁶ (*Epitome* 4.1), a sophist active under Hadrian.

The Christian author of the *Refutatio omnium haeresium* (IV 37, ed. Litwa) set out to unmask the fraudulent practices that imitated pulling down the moon. Thessalian magicians who get the moon down to earth also feature in *Anthologia Graeca* (XIV 140), in a piece by a certain Metrodoros, whose identity is not firmly established³⁷ as well as in a later Byzantine lexicography (*Liber Suda*, θ 289: Θετταλή γυνή / *Thessalian woman*; ε 2559: Ἐπὶ σαυτῷ τὴν σελήνην καθέλκεις / 'you are drawing down the moon on yourself').

Another mention of the ritual, quite different from those listed and thus extremely interesting is found in Nonnos who instead of Thessalian witches talks of Indian brahmins (*D.* 36. 344–349):

ἀλλὰ σοφοὺς Βραχμῆνας ἀτευχέας εἰς σὲ κορύσσω·
 γυμνοὶ γὰρ γεγάσι, θεοκλήτοις δ' ἐπαιδαῖς
 πολλάκις ἡερόφοιτον, ὁμοῖον ἄζυγι ταύρῳ,
 οὐρανόθεν κατὰγοντες ἐφαρμάξαντο Σελήνην,
 πολλάκι δ' ἵππεύοντος ἐπειγομένων ἐπὶ δίφρων
 ἄσταθέος Φαέθοντος ἀνεστήσαντο πορείην.

³⁴ See also n. 14: Ps.-Plutarchus, *Prov.* 113 (2.13), p. 338, ed. Leutsch.

³⁵ See also I 8 (stars) and III 16 (threatening the sun).

³⁶ Janiszewski, Stebnicka, Szabat 2015, no. 1088.

³⁷ See Kaster 1988: 312–313, nos. 100 and 101.

‘Well then, I muster against you my wise Brahmins, unarmed. For they go naked; but their inspired incantations have often enchanted Selene as she passes through the air like an untamed bull, and brought her down from heaven, and often stayed the course of Phaëthon swiftly driving his hurrying car’.

To round off this review of sources, there are the ‘technical’ magical rather than literary texts. We find the ritual in question in the *Kyranides* (I 24. 17–22) with rituals that result in the congregation of all the shining stars (18. ἰδίᾳς ποιήσει συνδρομὰς πάντων τῶν φαινόμενων ἀστέρων), expanding the face of the moon to enormous dimensions (19. ὄψει τὸν δίσκον τῆς σελήνης ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ ἥμισυ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ), or appearance at the magician’s feet of something called *stoicheion* (20. ἴδοις ἂν παμμέγεθες γινόμενον τὸ στοιχεῖον καὶ ἐστὸς παρὰ τοὺς πόδας σου), which was translated into Latin by Paschalis Romanus³⁸ in 1169 as ‘Fortune’, and in an anonymous English translation of 1685 features as a ‘star’ (‘he will think that all the Stars run into one’). What interests us here is the enlargement of the moon since it presumably implies the moon approaching the earth so closely that it blocks off most of the sky.³⁹

The rite of bringing the moon down to earth also features in the corpus of so-called Greek magical papyri. It is, however, found in the rather peculiar texts from *P.Fay.* 5 (= *P. Mich.* inv. 5) dated to the turn of the second and third centuries AD.⁴⁰ At the beginning of the surviving spell, someone boasts of their enormous power (tr. E. N. O’Neil): ‘... [the sun] will stand still; and should I order the moon, it will come down (... στήσεται, κἂν σελήνη κελεύσω); and should I wish to delay the day, the night will remain for me; and should we in turn ask for day, the light will not depart; and should I wish to sail the sea, I do not need a ship; and should I wish to go through the air, I will be lifted up’. Then, however, this typical boast turns into a lament over an inability to cause or relinquish love (contradicted by the plethora of means to do just that available in ancient magic). It has long been noted⁴¹ that the text does not fit Greek magical papyri and comes presumably from an ancient romantic⁴² and is not a technical instruction, despite its publication in the corpus of *PGM*.

³⁸ In *Textes latins et vieux français* ..., 95.

³⁹ Compare Nemesianus, *idyll.* 4, v. 70: *quo luna tumet* (ed. Williams).

⁴⁰ *PGM* XXXIV 1–24 (vol. II, pp. 159–160); tr. in Betz 1996: 267–268.

⁴¹ Bonner 1921: 111–118; Dodds 1952: 133–137; Stephens, Winkler 1995: 101–157.

⁴² See also: 1. *PGM* XIII 734–1077 (tr. by M. Smith in Betz 1996: 189–195), where the magician calls the divinity: ‘I call on your name, the greatest among gods. If I say it complete, there will be an earthquake, the sun will stop and the moon will be afraid (ὁ ἥλιος στήσεται, καὶ ἡ σελήνη ἔνφοβος ἔσται) and the rocks and the mountains and the sea and the rivers / and every liquid will be petrified; the whole cosmos will be thrown into confusion’ (p. 192). There is no mention of pulling the moon down to earth but of scaring it; the context, however, (eg. stopping the sun identical to *PGM* XXXIV 1–24) makes it possible that the same rite may be involved; 2 *PGM* IV 2296–2299.

Written sources aside, the rite of bringing the moon to earth is probably depicted in a vase painting from the collection of sir William Hamilton (1730–1803), the copy of which was published in 1795 by J.H.W. Tischbein.⁴³ The image was subsequently copied on several occasions⁴⁴ while the vase itself has apparently been lost.⁴⁵ We can see two naked women facing each other, one with a sword and the other – a wand of some sort. Their free hands are stretched ahead and raised slightly towards a disc levitating over their heads. The disc features a female face in profile and is entwined in a cord, one end of which falls all the way to the ground. One of the women has over her head the inscription καλή ('beautiful'),⁴⁶ while from the other's mouth issue the words κλύθι πότνια Σελάνα⁴⁷ ('hear Mistress Selana').

The accounts of the ritual listed above differ in character, most of them are literary constructs in the service of poetry. They nevertheless go to show just how widespread was the conviction that witches could disrupt and divert the course of nature,⁴⁸ as illustrated by the act of pulling the moon down to earth.⁴⁹ In our view, however, aside from a demonstration of power, something of much more import and practical use was at stake.

2. 'Skimming' the moon

The numerous references in ancient literature to the magic ritual of bringing the moon down to earth allude to the extraction of some lunar substance though this is only mentioned in some of the sources. The most extensive description of the substance in question is found in Lucan. Thus in Book 6 of his *Pharsalia* we read (VI 499–506) that prior to the battle of Pharsalos, as the armies of Caesar and Pompey entered Thessaly, the latter's son, Sextus Pompeius, visited the witch Erictho to learn the outcome of the coming contest. The Thessalian magician then brought a dead body to life to foretell Caesar's triumph. Lucan uses the opportunity to make general remarks on magic and the power of magic songs (v. 497: *carmina*) writing (VI 499–506):

⁴³ Tischbein 1795: pl. 44.

⁴⁴ Lenormant 1857: vol. II, 389–390 and pl. CVIII; Roscher 1897: 3166.

⁴⁵ Hill 1973: 224, n. 4.

⁴⁶ See *Theoc. idyll.* II 10–11: Σελάνα, φαῖνε καλόν, and A.R. IV 170: καλὸν σέλας.

⁴⁷ Miller 1867: 456–457; Dilthey 1872: 375–419, esp. 389–390; Hill 1973: 224, n. 4 (κλύθι πότνια σελή[νη]).

⁴⁸ Spaeth 2014: 41–70, esp. 44–48.

⁴⁹ It should be noted here that a number of magical procedures regarding the moon are found in medieval sources – see Bartlett 2008: 51–55. See for example, reactions to a lunar eclipse as referenced in the sermons of Maximus of Turin (*sermo* 30 and 31), or Caesarius of Arles (*sermo* 13.5).

... Illis et sidera primum
 praecipiti deducta polo, Phoebeque serena
 non aliter diris verborum obsessa venenis
 palluit⁵⁰ et nigris terrenisque ignibus arsit,
 quam si fraterna prohiberet imagine tellus
 insereretque suas flammis caelestibus umbras,
 et patitur tantos cantu depressa labores
 donec suppositas propior despumet in herbas.

'By these witches the stars were first brought down from the swiftly-moving sky; and the clear moon, beset by dread incantations, grew dim and burned with a dark and earthy light, just as if the earth cut her off from her brother's reflection and thrust its shadow athwart the fires of heaven. Lowered by magic, she suffers all that pain, until from close quarters she drops foam upon the plants below'.

In the text quoted above, the magical practice results in peculiar behaviour of the moon, here referred to by the name of the lunar goddess (*Phoebe*). Thus her bright face (*Phoebeque ... serena*) pales (*palluit*) and shines a black, 'earthy' light (*nigris terrenisque ignibus arsit*). Lucan compares the phenomenon to a lunar eclipse but emphasises that it is the result of magic (*diris verborum obsessa venenis*). The moon is thus compelled to descend so low (*donec suppositas propior*) as to leave some sort of a residue on the grass (*despumet in herbas*). The Latin text does not name the substance at all, we only have the verb *despumo*⁵¹ which refers to the action of collecting residue or 'skimming'. The verb is a compound of *de* + *spumo*, with *spuma*⁵² standing for any sort of scum on the surface of water, milk, blood or other liquids. Hence the word *despumo* is usually taken to mean skimming off foam or froth.

Back to Lucan though: the lunar residue settles *in herbas* with *herba*⁵³ meaning not just grass but any herb, especially if used as a medicine, poison or magic potion. In other words, the result of the magic acts described by Lucan is that the moon deposits some residue on the plants which, as we will soon learn, is of enormous significance in magic. This leads to the key implication that the end of the ritual is not always merely bringing the moon down to earth is not but the production of the said residue which is of enormous significance in magic (the question is: how often is this the case?).

What ends the lunar residue may serve is shown later in Lucan's narrative when Erictho starts bringing the dead back to life (VI 667–669):

⁵⁰ OLD s.v. *dirus*; *obsideo*; *venenum*; *palleo*.

⁵¹ OLD s.v. *despumo*: '1. To remove the froth or foam from, skim; to draw foam from b to cause to stop foaming, settle. 2. To remove (scum or other unwanted matter). 3. (intr.) a To discharge or deposit foam. b to stop foaming, settle down'.

⁵² OLD s.v. *spuma*.

⁵³ OLD s.v. *herba*.

*Pectora tunc primum ferventi sanguine supplet
Vulneribus laxata novis: taboque medullas
Abluit: et virus large lunare ministrat.*

‘Then she began by piercing the breast of the corpse with fresh wounds, which she filled with hot blood; she washed the inward parts clean of clotted gore; she poured in lavishly the poison that the moon supplies’.

Thus the Thessalian witch pours a healthy dose of the lunar substance into the cadaver’s entrails so that it may rise up⁵⁴ and prophesise. The use of the words *virus ... lunare* indicates that the substance in question is the residue deposited by the moon on some vegetation, as described earlier.

Valerius Flaccus in his *Argonautica* emphasises Medea’s skills as a magician (VI 439–450) to the extent that she was admired by Phrixos (VI 447–448): ‘though he knew that Atracian poisons made the moon to foam and that spells of Haemonia were rousing up the ghosts’ (*Atracio lunam spumare veneno / sciret et Haemoniis agitari cantibus umbras*). This author then uses the verb *spumo* in place of Lucan’s *despumo*.

Despumo returns in Apuleius’s *Metamorphoses*, where some are said to believe (I 3): ‘that because of magic rivers can suddenly reverse their flow, the sea be becalmed, the winds cease to blow, the sun stand still, the moon be milked of her dew, the stars uprooted, the daylight banished, the night prolonged’; (... *magico susurramine amnes agiles reverti, mare pigrum colligari, ventos inanimes exspirare; solem inhiberi, lunam despumari, stellas evelli, diem tolli, noctem teneri*). Thus among the practices ascribed to magic is ‘skimming’ of the moon (*lunam despumari*) which, it bears noting, follows in the text the act of stopping the sun (*solem inhiberi*).

A less obvious, and all the more interesting for it, reference is found in Statius’s *Thebaid*. Thus in a simile the poet likens a discus thrown high during an agon that comes quickly down to earth to the magical practices of the witches of Thessaly (VI 685–688):

*sic cadit, attonitis quotiens avellitur astris,
Solis opaca soror; procul auxilientia gentes
aera crepant frustra que timent, at Thessala victrix
ridet anhelantes audito carmine bigas.*

‘So falls, whenever she is torn from the astonished stars, the darkened sister of the sun; afar the peoples beat the bronze for succour, and indulge their fruitless fears, but the Thessalian hag triumphant laughs at the panting steeds who obey her spell’.

Thus Statius provides a fairly extensive – for a casual mention in a simile – description of the event. Thus a triumphant (*victrix*) Thessalian witch uses an

⁵⁴ See Prudent. C. *Symm.* I 89–94, esp. 89: *Thessalicae doctissimus ille magiae*.

incantation (*carmine*), to influence the moon (referred to as *Solis ... soror*) which is said to 'fall' (*cadit*), wrenched (*avellitur*) from the stars and darkened (*opaca*). Its state is poetically described as the lunar chariot running out of breath (*anhelantes ... bigas*). We are clearly dealing with the same procedure as described by Lucan, namely the darkening and pulling down the moon. It is interesting that both poets emphasise the moon is blackened (Luc. *Phars.* VI 502: *nigris terrenisque ignibus arsit*) or darkened (Stat. *Theb.* VI 686: *opaca*).

We also find in Statius a reference to the magic ingredient of lunar origin itself. In book 2 of the *Thebaid* there is a description of the famous necklace (II 265–305) made by Vulcanus for his wife, Venus. The goddess of love then gifted to her daughter, Harmonia on her wedding with Kadmos. The sinister object brought misfortune to its owners:⁵⁵ Harmonia, Semele, Jocasta etc. Polyneices gave it to his wife, Argea who in turn gifted it to Eriphyle, the wife of the prophet Amphiaraus as part of her effort to persuade him into launching the expedition against Thebes that was to prove his undoing.⁵⁶ The evil power of the necklace was the result of its maker's anger at Venus for her infidelities – Vulcanus poured all sorts of evil into his work (II 282–285):

*tum varias pestes raptumque interplicat atro
Tisiphones de crine ducem, et quae pessima ceston
vis probat; haec circum spumis lunaribus ungit
callidus atque hilari perfundit cuncta veneno.*

"then divers plagues doth he interwine, and the king adder snatched from Tisiphone's grisly locks, and the wicked power that commends the girdle; all these he cunningly anoints about with lunar foam, and pours over them the poison of delight".

Thus Statius provides us with information on the magic lunar foam 'skimmed' by the witches from the moon. He refers to it specifically as *spuma*, even *spuma lunaris*. It must, however, be borne in mind that the word *spuma* may mean any residue collecting on a surface and then gathered. The translation to *foam* (or *froth*) is just one possibility.

Statius may also provide us with another important piece of information concerning the identity of the *spuma lunaris*, an apparent attempt at 'rationalising' magic. It is worth noting the appearance of the moon on the firmament brings about dew (I 336–338):

*Iamque per emeriti surgens confinia Phoebi
Titanis late, mundo subvecta silenti,
rorifera gelidum tenuaverat aera biga:*

⁵⁵ Crusius 1884–1890: coll. 1830–1833, esp. col. 1830; Stoll 1884–1890: coll. 1336–1337.

⁵⁶ See for example: Paus. VIII 24.8–10 and IX 41.2; Ath. IV 232e; Diod. XVI 64.2.

‘But now through the wide domains which Phoebus, his day's work ended, had left bare, rose the Titanian queen, borne upward through a silent world, and with her dewy chariot cooled and rarefied the air’.

We are thus dealing with dew brought by Selene-Phoebe, a common trope in ancient literature.⁵⁷ It may well be that the dew that collected on grasses and other plants in the evening gave rise to the idea of a magic lunar secretion on earthly vegetation.

It may well be that another ‘rational’ explanation is found in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. In describing how Medea restored Aeson, Jason’s father to youth, the poet gives a detailed list of the ingredients thrown by the witch into the infusion: ‘She adds hoar frost gathered under the full moon’ (*Met.* VII 268: *addit et exceptas luna pernocte pruinas*). The *pruina* is ‘frost’ or a frozen coating. The word is etymologically close to (see *OLD* s.v.) the English *freeze* (*pruṣvā* in Sanskrit). The lunar froth may thus in practice have been silvery frost collected in the moonlight.

3. Lunar froth in PGM VII 862–918

That ‘lunar froth’ was actually used in rituals rather than being a poetic invention, is attested in one of the magical papyri. The document in question is poorly dated (to some time between the third and the beginning of the fifth century) and is currently at the British Museum, *P. Lond.* 121.⁵⁸ It is a roll inscribed on both sides, two meters in length and 33 centimeters wide, that contains a number of magic texts, including:⁵⁹ ‘Lunar spell of Claudianus⁶⁰ and [ritual] of heaven and the north star⁶¹ over lunar offerings’ (Κλαυδιανού σεληνιακὸν καὶ οὐρανοῦ καὶ ἄρκτου τε/λετὴ > ἐπὶ σεληνιακῶν).⁶² The book (ἡ βίβλος) with a description of the ritual, a property of the twelve gods (<δ>ώδεκα ἰδία θεῶν), was found at the Egyptian town of Aphroditopolis, ‘[beside] the greatest goddess, Aphrodite Urania, who embraces the universe’ (ἡ ὁρέθε ἐν Ἀφροδιτόπολει <παρὰ> τῇ θεᾷ μεγίστῃ Ἀφροδίτῃ Οὐρανίᾳ, [ἣ] τις τὰ πάντα περιέχει).⁶³ After the introduction, the papyrus goes on to describe the ritual dubbed ‘The preparation for Mistress Selene’ (ἡ κατασκευὴ τῆς κ[υ]ρίας Σελήνης) in the following terms (tr. E.N. O’Neil):

‘Take clay from a potter’s wheel and mix a mixture with sulfur, and add blood of a dappled goat (αἰγὸς ποικίλης) and mold an image of Mistress Selene

⁵⁷ See Preaux 1973: 64 (and n. 2), 131, 183.

⁵⁸ *PGM* II, p. 1; see also Maltomini 1995: 107–122.

⁵⁹ *PGM* VII 862–918; tr. Betz 1996: 141–142.

⁶⁰ See Berthelot, Ruelle 1888: 26: Κλαυδιανός, ἀνεπίγραφος ὁ φιλόσοφος.

⁶¹ Fauth 1984: 93–99.

⁶² Lycourinos 2012: 19–32, esp. 26–28.

⁶³ See Speyer 1970.

the Egyptian, as shown below, making her in / the [870] form of the Universe (παντόμορφον). And make a shrine of olive wood and do not let it face the sun at all. And after dedicating it with the ritual that works for everything, [put it away,] and thus it will be dedicated in advance. And anoint it also with lunar ointment (χρίση δὲ αὐτὴν καὶ τῷ σεληνιακῷ χρίσματι) and wreath it. And late / at night, at the 5th hour, put it away, facing Selene [875] in a [pure] room. And also offer the lunar offering and repeat the following in succession and you will send dreams, you will bind with spells. For the invocation to Selene is very effective. And after anointing yourself in advance [with] the ointment, appeal to her (προχρισάμενος δὲ <μετὰ> τοῦ χρίσματος ἐντεύξη)ʹ.

As we can see the ritual addressed to ‘Mistress Selene the Egyptina’, identified with Aphrodite Urania, the shrine of the goddess is anointed with a ‘lunar ointment’ (τῷ σεληνιακῷ χρίσματι). The participant in the magic rite is anointed as well and though it is not said with what, it would seem logical the ointment to be same, especially as the magician then pronounces ‘the lunar spell’ (ὁ λόγος σεληνιακός).

The rest of the magic ceremony is of little interest to us though it may be worth noting that the magician asks the goddess to send him ‘a sacred angel or a holy assistant’ (ιερόν ἄγγελον ἢ πάρεδρον). There are a dozen such assistants, one for each hour of the night. The object of all such actions is to lure the beloved.

It is thus clear that magic rites addressed to the moon goddess used ‘lunar ointment’ to consecrate items used in the magic (Selene’s shrine in this case) and provided the anointed magician with the power to invoke the divinity and her angels. The lunar liquid did not just help raise the dead (as with Lucan’s Erictho) or filled anointed objects with sinister force (vide Harmonia’s necklace) but played an important role in magic as a whole. And in this case, it is not poetry that tells us this but a ‘technical’ text.

4. Trope of gathering lunar light by virgins in their garments

A new and exceptionally interesting element (worth detailed treatment) is introduced to the subject by the aforementioned Apollonios, who uses in his *Argonautica* the following simile (IV 167–171):

ὥς δὲ σεληναῖην διχομήνιδα παρθένος αἴγλην
 ὑπόθεν ἐξανέχουσιν ὑπωροφίου θαλάμοιο
 λεπταλέῃ ἐανῶ ὑποῖσχεται· ἐν δὲ οἱ ἦτορ
 χαίρει δερκομένης καλὸν σέλας· ὧς τότε Ἰήσων
 γηθόσυνος μέγα κῶας εἰς ἐναεῖρατο χερσίν·

‘And as a young girl catches on her delicate gown the beam of a full moon as it shines forth high above her upper room, and her heart within her rejoices as she beholds the beautiful gleam, so joyfully then did Jason lift up the great fleece in his hands’.

Apollonios says that a young, unmarried ‘virgin’ (παρθένος) during a full moon (σεληναίην διχομήνιδα) catches (ὑποῖσχεται) the light of the moon (αἴγλην) entering her chamber (θαλάμοιο) with her soft garment (λεπταλέῳ ἑανῶ); she then delights in the beauty of the moon’s brilliance (καλὸν σέλας). The process of the catching is described with the word ἴσχω. It is accomplished with a thin, delicate fabric or garment (λεπταλέος ἑανός), capturing the light of the moon settling on it (αἴγλη, σέλας). We are apparently dealing with the description of gathering of the light of the moon, not by witches but by unmarried maidens – a kind of love magic or some form of divination by would-be brides.

5. Etiology of pulling down and ‘skimming’ the moon

It is possible that an attempt has survived to tell some sort of an etiological of the first (and paradigmatic) bringing of the moon to earth. For in praising in the *Georgics* (III 391–393) the noble white of a sheep’s fleece, Vergil says:

*munere sic niveo lanae, si credere dignum est,
Pan deus Arcadiae captam te, Luna, fefellit
in nemora alta vocans; nec tu aspernata vocantem.*

‘Twas with gift of such snowy wool, if we may trust the tale, that Pan, Arcadia’s god, charmed and beguiled thee, O Moon, calling thee to the depths of the wools; nor didst thou scorn his call’.

The text provokes doubts that we are not going to discuss here. R.A.B. Mynors suggests in a commentary to the *Georgics*⁶⁴ that most likely Pan turned into a ram white as snow and in this form seduced Luna, just as Zeus had done with Europa in the guise of a bull: the moon goddess would have seen the animal shining bright in the forest, where sheep would not normally not be seen and ran after it before being caught and raped by the rapacious Pan.

Another interpretation of the Vergilian story is, however, possible: the Arcadian god put on the hide of a ram or sheep and thus lured Luna. Pan⁶⁵ is after all frequently described as dressing in animal hides. XIX Homeric Hymn has interesting things to say about that. At the beginning the ‘longhaired, unkempt’ (vv. 5–6:

⁶⁴ Virgil, *Georgics*, ed. R.A.B. Mynors, pp. 238–239.

⁶⁵ See Borgeaud 1988: 238–239, esp. 115 and 238–239; see also: Roscher 1890: 148–164; Frentz 1967: 129–130.

ἀγλάθειρον, αὐχμήενθ') Pan 'has every snowy crest' (v. 6: πάντα λόφον νιφόντα λέλογχε). The Greek νιφόμεναι may not be insignificant in the context of Vergil's *nivea*, although it applies to the mountain peaks rather than the colour of the hide. It is then said of the god that, 'on his back he wears a spotted lynx-petl'⁶⁶ (vv. 23–24: λαῖφος δ' ἐπὶ νῶτα δαφνιδὸν λυγκὸς ἔχει). The anonymous writer of the hymn adds that, when Pan was a child, his father Hermes was 'carrying his son wrapped in warm skins of mountain hares'⁶⁷ (v. 43: δέρμασιν ἐν πυκνιδόσιν ὀρεσκῶοιο λαγωῶδ). Cornutus shows Pan as dressing up in the hides of deer and leopards (27.2: νεβρίδα δὲ ἢ παρδαλῆν). This selection of a mere few examples demonstrates that a snow-white fur would suit the image of the god. That this is the correct reading of the *Georgics* can be seen from ancient interpretations which provide another important piece of information: Vergil's seducer of Luna may be different from the traditional one.

Macrobius in *Saturnalia* (V 22, 9–10) says that:

9. *Apud Vergilium Pan niveo lanae munere Lunam inlexisse perhibetur 'in nemora alta vocans': 'munere sic nivea lanae, si credere dignum' est et reliqua. in hoc loco Valerius Probus, vir perfectissimus, notat nescire se hanc historiam sive fabulam quo referat auctore. 10. quod tantum virum fugisse miror. nam Nicander huius est auctor historiae, poeta quem Didymus, grammaticorum omnium quique sint quique fuerint instructissimus, fabulosum vocat. quod sciens Vergilius adiecit, 'si credere dignum est'; adeo se fabuloso usum fatetur auctore).*

'In Virgil Pan is said to have lured the Moon with a snow-white gift of wool:⁶⁸ "calling her into deep groves" (G. 3.393) "with a snow-white gift of wool, if that deserves our credit" (G. 391 †), and so on. Here Valerius Probus, a most accomplished man, remarks that he does not know on whose authority Virgil relates this anecdote or myth (fr. 9). 10. I am amazed that this escaped the great man: for Nicander is the source of this anecdote, a poet whom Didymus – the best trained of all grammarians who are or have been – calls a "myth-monger" (*Strange Tales* fr. 5). Aware of this, Virgil added "if that deserves our credit", thus acknowledging that he had used a myth-monger as his source'.

Macrobius invokes Marcus Valerius Probus, a Latin grammarian of Berytos, who was active in the latter half of the first century AD and authored, among other books, a lost commentary to the *Georgics*.⁶⁹ He wrote of Luna's seduction by Pan but is ignorant of where Vergil got his information from. Macrobius boasts of his knowledge of the myth's origins: Luna's seduction with a white fleece comes from the Greek poet Nicander.

⁶⁶ Borgeaud 1988: 63, 178, 215.

⁶⁷ Borgeaud 1988: 63–64, 101–102, 116, 239.

⁶⁸ Lat. *lana*, see *OLD* s.v. *lana* – '1. The natural covering of sheep, wool'.

⁶⁹ Steup 1871: 112 and 116.

In his commentary to the passage of the *Georgics* (III 391) under discussion Servius, writes⁷⁰ that Vergil in this story substituted Pan for Endymion. The latter, rejected (*spretus*) by the goddess, was herding some white sheep (*pavit pecora candidissima*) and thus managed to attract the goddess. Servius adds how this intercourse came about is to remain a secret though it constituted a sacrilege (*sacrilegium*) towards Luna.

We also possess an extensive version of a commentary⁷¹ to the same passage of the *Georgics* known as *Servius Danielis* after Pierre Daniel who was responsible for its first publication in 1600. The text, dated as late as the seventh or eighth century,⁷² says that Pan, in an effort to appear to Luna more in a more beautiful guise (*ut illi formosus videretur*), covered himself in a fleece white as snow (*niveis velleribus se circumdedit*) and thus attracted the goddess; this version was according to the commentary proposed by Nicander the Greek. Unfortunately lost is the text by Nicander of Colophon, a rather troublesome poet active in the mid-second century BC although he may have had an earlier namesake (mid-third or the turn of the third and second century) who was a poet too. The author of the *Georgics* was almost certainly the younger Nicander, active under Attalos III (138–133).⁷³ The problem is that Servius has Endymion instead of Pan in this role.

If originally it was Endymion who attracted the lunar goddess by donning a white fleece, he did not do so to cover his ugliness since his beauty was exemplary. It was thus the white colour of the fleece worn by Endymion (a shepherd as well as a hunter) that proved tempting. When the shapely Endymion was replaced with Pan, it made sense to explain the donning of the fleece as an attempt to cover his ugliness. The problem is that Pan, as we have seen, is famous for wearing animal hides (lynx, hare, deer, leopard) and would thus make sense as the one wearing the fleece. There may simply have been more than one story about a lover luring the moon goddess to earth, united by the motif of a fleece white as snow with its connotations of the silvery disc of the moon.

⁷⁰ *Servii Grammatici qui feruntur in Vergilii Bucolica et Georgica commentarii*..., p. 307 ad v. 391: MUNERE SIC NIVEO L. S. C. D. mutat fabulam: nam non Pan, sed Endymion amasse dicitur Lunam. qui spretus pavit pecora candidissima et sic eam in suos inlexit amplexus: cuius rei mystici volunt quandam secretam esse rationem. SI CREDERE DIGNUM EST tantum de Luna sacrilegium; L.S.C.D. = lanae, si credere dignum est.

⁷¹ *Servii Grammatici qui feruntur in Vergilii Bucolica et Georgica commentarii*..., pp. 307–308: et aliter: (FEFELLIT) id est cepit et fefellit. et bene 'si credere dignum est', quia dicturus erat impie in deam. fabula sic est: Pan cum Lunae amore flagraret, ut illi formosus videretur, niveis velleribus se circumdedit atque ita eam ad rem veneream illexit. huius opinionis auctor est Nicanuder: nec poterat esse nisi Graecus.

⁷² Kaster 1988: 169–197 (Chapter 5. 'Servius'), 275–278 (52. 'Aelius Donatus'), 356–359 (136. 'Servius'); Daintree 1990: 65–79; Fowler 1997: 73–78.

⁷³ Pasquali 1913: 55–111; Nicander of Colophon, *The Poems and Poetical Fragments*, 3–8, 218; White 1987; Fantuzzi 2006: 706–708.

It is easy to see why Vergil chose Pan from the pair of Luna's lovers. The pastoral god from Arcadia suits the atmosphere of the *Georgics* better than Endymion and his penchant for animal hides made him a perfect candidate to appear in the white fleece.

Who then, Pan⁷⁴ or Endymion? What matters to us is the white fleece that attracted the goddess. We know that a sheep fleece or wool was used for collected residues from surfaces. According to Strabo (XI 2.19) the people of the Caucasus would gather gold in the form of lumps, sand or dust by putting fleeces in the rivers which would give rise to the story of the golden fleece. Wool was used for gathering poppy latex for the production of opium. Pliny the Elder in his *Historia naturalis* (XX 76.199) says that poppy latex is collected through wool or, if in small quantities, is left to dry and scratched with the fingernails. The liquid is then dried in the sun.

The lunar goddess would thus descend for erotic rendez-vous with Endymion but was once trapped and raped by Pan. We also have here echoes of a tradition about attracting the goddess of the moon to earth⁷⁵ using a fleece. It is with these stories that we should associate the skimming (*de+spumare*) of the moon secretion. The erotic tone of the stories about Selene's descent to earth led to the association of the rite of pulling down the moon with love magic.

Appendix

'Lunar paste' in Moroccan magic of the 19th and 20th centuries

In 1910 the book on Moroccan magic by Émile Mauchamp, the French doctor killed during the Marrakesh riots of 1907, was published posthumously. The book treats of 'lunar paste' (*pâte lunaire*)⁷⁶ in widespread use in the nineteenth century and collected in the following way:⁷⁷ the day before a full moon a new, carefully washed kneading trough would be brought to a place of sinister activity

⁷⁴ See also: *Probi qui dicitur in Vergilii Bucolica et Georgica commentarius*, p. 383 (In Verg. Georg. III 391): MUNERE SIC NIVEO CAPTAM TE, LUNA, FEFELLIT, IN NEMORA ALTA VOCANS NEC TU ASPERNATA VOCANTEM. Pan, Mercurii filius, cum Lunam concupisset, et haberet optimum pecus, poscente ea partem pecoris pro concubitu dicitur pollicitus, et duas partes fecisse gregem, quarum alteram candidiorem, sed lanae crassioris: Lunam deceptam candore deterius pecus abduxisse poeta significat.

⁷⁵ The belief in the relationship of the lunar deity to earth is of considerable interest. It is best seen in the surprisingly chthonic character of the moon in Plutarch (*De facie* 942 d-e, see also *De genio Socratis* 591a-b) who identifies it as the seat of Kore-Persephone.

⁷⁶ Mauchamp 1910: 255–260; see Tupet 1976: 97–99 (where other examples of similar rituals from North Africa that do not come from Mauchamp's book).

⁷⁷ Mauchamp 1910: 255–256.

(‘les diables’), namely any ‘impure’ place such as a shambles, cesspool or cemetery but also the vicinity of a mosque, synagogue or tomb, especially a saint’s tomb, since these would also attract devils. Water is then collected from seven streams or seven wells while calling on the devil to help in pulling down the moon. Then during the full moon a witch blackens her right eye, paints her right cheek, puts bracelets and rings on her right hand and foot, makes a braid on the right side of her head. Thus prepared, she takes the kneading trough, water and other ingredients to the cemetery, strips naked and calls on the ‘spirit of darkness’ (*les esprits des ténèbres*) to come from the moon, while walking from end to end with a small green pennant on a reed. She then pours the water from the seven streams or wells into the trough and lights incense with benzoin and coriander (‘le benjoin et la coriandre’) on a sheet of metal nearby. At the time the moon ascends to its zenith and then descends... all the way to the trough. There is a suddenly strong wind, the water froths and overflows the vessel (‘Alors on voit la lune monter au zénith, puis descendre lentement jusque dans le pétrin. Immédiatement une tempête s’y déchaîne, l’eau écume et déborde’). The witch collects the froth into a container and compels it to serve for the good and the bad. When the container is full, the witch puts out the incense and empties the trough while the freed moon returns slowly to the sky... (‘la lune libérée remonte lentement au ciel...’). On her return home⁷⁸ the witch mixes the lunar froth with other substances, such as dust, musk, amber, mastic, white benzoës resin (‘en poudre, du musc, de l’ambre, du mastic, du benjoin blanc’). Thus she creates a kind of a lunar paste (*pâte lunaire*) to serve a variety of magic purposes.

Mauchamp gives a number of uses for the pas,⁷⁹ which plays the role of the ‘magic intermediary’. Someone or something is surreptitiously smeared (or fed) with it while an appropriate spell is said. The spell will frequently match the phases and states of the moon to the objectives desired by the witch. Thus to win someone’s favour, the person’s forehead is to be smeared with the paste while a spell is said calling for friendship to arise as the moon rises in the sky amid darkness. In order to end a friendship, one calls for it to cease as the darkness comes when the moon sets. Thus, using the lunar paste, Moroccan witches would bring about diseases and ailments (for example, impotence) and provoke or end love. In their rites they would frequently mix the lunar paste with menstrual blood or sperm.

We have no wish to study Moroccan magic here but all this provides excellent analogy for the ancient texts on pulling the moon down to earth and gather-

⁷⁸ Mauchamp 1910: 256–257.

⁷⁹ Mauchamp 1910: 257–260.

ing *spuma lunaris*.⁸⁰ It is clear that bringing down the moon was not an end in itself but a means of procuring a lunar substance of magical efficacy – both in antiquity and in more recent times.

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⁸⁰ Reports from Marocco are not the only stories about such rituals. In Bulgaria, it was believed that witches bring the moon from the sky in the form of a cow that they milk to get magical milk. See Moszyński 1934: 464–465 (my thanks to dr Sławomir Poloczec for drawing my attention to this book).

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