

Stuttgart IV, 601.

⁴³ See, Steppan, *Die Atos Laura*, 80-81; 84.

⁴⁴ The date of this structure is unclear, and dates range from the ninth century. P. Grossmann "Beobachtungen an der Kefeli-Mescid in Istanbul," *Istanbuler Mitteilungen* 16 (1966), 241-249, a dating with which Thomas Steppan concurs, Steppan, *Die Athos Laura*, 82. Thomas F. Mathews' assessment is that the building dates to the twelfth century or later. Mathews 1976, *Byzantine Churches in Istanbul*, 190.

⁴⁵ Steppan, *Die athos Laura*, 82; Mathews 1976, *Byzantine Churches in Istanbul*, 159.

⁴⁶ Mathews, "Observations," 127.

⁴⁷ Mathews, *Observations on the Church of Panagia Kamariotissa*, 127.

⁴⁸ Bouras, "Η ἀρχιτεκτονική της Παναγίας τοῦ Μονυχίου," 25-26.

⁴⁹ Müller-Wiener, *Bildlexikon Zur Topographie Istanbul*, 88; J. Mainstone, *Hagia Sophia: Architecture, Structure and Liturgy of Justinian's Great Church* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988), 91-2; Robert Mark & Ahmet Ş. Çakmak, *Hagia Sophia from the Age of Justinian to the Present* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 54.

⁵⁰ The only literary source that states that Trdat was the architect of the structure is found in a 1567 copy of Stephen Asolik's *Universal History*, which states "On the construction of by King Gagik of the church called Saint Gregory in the town of Ani. The master of the church is Trdat." Text translated in E. Dulaurier, *Recherches sur la chronologie arménienne technique et historique*, Paris 1859, vol. I, 280. See W. Eugene Kleinbauer, "Zvart'nots and the Origins of Christian Architecture in Armenia," *Art Bulletin* 54 (1972), 246.

⁵¹ M. Hasratyan, "La Tétraconque a niches d'angles de Moxrenis," in *Revue des Études Arméniennes*, Tome 21 (1988-89), 365-384.

⁵² Mathews 1973, *Observations on the Church of thr Panagia Kamariotissa*, 127.

⁵³ Gurlitt, *Die Baukunst Konstantinople*, 36.

⁵⁴ Bettini 1940, *Un Inedito Mosaico del Periodo Paleologo a Costantinopoli*, 33.

⁵⁵ Hammer-Purgstall, *Constantinopolis und der Bosporos*, 451.

⁵⁶ Nikos Atzemoglou, *Τ' ἀγιάσματα τῆς Πόλης* (Athens: Resos, 1990), 30-31.

⁵⁷ Eric Addis Ivison, *Mortuary Practices in Byzantium* (c. 950-1453) (Doctoral Thesis, University of Birmingham, 1993.), vol I, 118-29.

Early Byzantine Amulets: Unorthodox, yes; Incorrect, no¹

Jacquelyn Tuerk Stonberg

Currently, scholars regularly label texts as illiterate mistakes when they are ungrammatical, but grammar that is alternative to our expectations need not always warrant that label. Hundreds of early Byzantine medical amuletic texts survive that were used for generations to address disease, and these display alternative grammar. Calling amuletic inscriptions "mistakes" undercuts their authority to function therapeutically, and yet that is the purpose for which hundreds were made across centuries. The burden of proof is on the interpretation that limits meaning, and calling an amuletic inscription a "mistake" limits its meaning. And yet the practice of interpreting ungrammatical texts as "mistakes" is long-standing and even institutional. This is for good reasons, because mistakes do happen, especially in multiple copying as was the case with amuletic texts. Furthermore but, it is impossible to know what was in the minds of the people who made such texts or who wore them. Exploring alternative grammar in near-orthodox and unorthodox examples helps us to track alternative authorities, including any perceived authority to heal.

At the core of this argument is a simple proposition: some of the psychological power of amuletic texts resides in

their grammar. This is in addition to the natural and supernatural powers upon which they were believed to call.² The power of word choice appealed to rhetoricians from antiquity through the present, including the power of language to shape epistemologies. On the other hand, for most modern historians of ancient and medieval magic, the power of images and texts appears primarily in subject matter that depicts natural or supernatural beings and personifications, in the physical material of a stone or relic, and in ritual use of the object. I propose that the psychological power of textual amulets resides in grammar as well.

Such textual "mistakes" are often called so by modern scholars when texts are unorthodox or only near-orthodox in content. But it is near impossible to draw a clear line between which texts and images were regarded as "orthodox" or "unorthodox," when so many different voices were claiming orthodoxy for themselves, especially before the Triumph of Orthodoxy in 843. So-called mistakes in some magico-religious texts often appear in conjunction with visual imagery that is unorthodox as well. Whether and by whom a text is considered orthodox or unorthodox is central to its authority and efficacy to heal or comfort their user. If a text is labeled as a mistake, this only undermines its authority. How then could mistaken texts wield the authority to heal, aid, or comfort?

In an effort to salvage the authority of texts of power, I argue against any perceived mistakes. It is more productive to search for possible meaning than to risk the loss of meaning because we underestimate the texts. A conservative interpreter might think to argue for less meaning. However, truly conservative interpreters would hedge their bets, opening as many doors as possible without claiming anything definitive. He or she has no risk since any over-stretched position can always be modified with the help of colleagues' critique and would be opening conversation in new directions.

Magical objects, by their very nature, open doors of possible and varied meanings. Their unorthodox verbal signs are equally matched by their unorthodox visual signs. Perhaps by examining the unorthodox images we can find a model for interpreting the "mistaken" or unexpected words. Near-orthodox and multi-cultural examples of amuletic iconography track authority that is alternative to correct and "orthodox" institutions. If we can understand the power of unorthodox or "incorrect" visual forms, then perhaps we could find more room for unexpected verbal forms. Especially with amulets, whose content as well as market are often multi-cultural, unexpected linguistic forms are to be expected, not as mistakes, but as alternative grammars with alternative authority.

Through a case study, I will analyze how alternative seats of authority, other than the theological, include the semiotic. But first, it is important for questions of authority to explore the context of multi-religious iconography on amulets. Late antique and early medieval amuletic tokens survive in copious numbers and stand as one of the largest groups of extant and intact artifacts from the period.³ Inscriptions commonly appear on many of these tokens, the most popular of which asks directly for help either in a particular cause or in general.⁴ Amulets attest to people's deep desire for aid from a powerful force and authority over human suffering. Amulets were constructed of metal, clay, or parchment, were of mass-produced workmanship, and were normally designed to be worn around the neck as is evident by suspension holes, by historical texts that describe how they were worn, and by images that depict people wearing them.⁵ Many were designed, produced, and sold within the markets of Egypt, Syria, and Palestine, among other places in the eastern Mediterranean, and are generally dated roughly to the third through seventh centuries. They are known by several names among modern scholars: tokens, pendants, amulets, and charms, among

other appellations. Although this group of objects is large in number and rich in cultural information, they were largely overlooked by scholars until only recently, presumably because their very un-orthodoxy and multiculturalism eludes any clear category.

Late antique and early medieval tokens commonly display inscriptions in Greek. They call for help from holy powers that are sometimes Christian or non-Christian, of one cultural environment or another, or mixed. One multicultural example is a fifth- to sixth-century engraved bronze amulet from Syria or Israel-Palestine that is now in the Kelsey Museum at the University of Michigan.⁶ Its inscription asks for help, and surrounds a figure on a horse who is often identified in ancient instruction manuals for making amulets as the Israelite King Solomon. This rider appears trampling a female demon that is identified by scholars according to various names, among them, "Gylou" who was believed to endanger newborn children.⁷ On the other side the amulet depicts Christ with a lion, an eagle, an ox, an angel, so-called *ring signs*, prayers, and beasts. Multi-cultural iconography is not unusual for eastern Mediterranean amulets. As a further example, a Coptic folded parchment amulet, inscribed to protect a certain Philoxenos from all evil, also contains lines from Psalm 91 in conjunction with the names of the Jewish God Sabaoth Adonai, the Persian deity Mithras, the divinities Orpha and Orphamiel, the Aramaic words of Jesus on the cross, incipits of the Christian Gospels, and Arabic lore concerning the names of Allah.⁸ A bronze amulet from Syria, also at the University of Michigan, gives Jewish names in Greek rather than in Hebrew, a common thing on amulets: "ΙΑΩ ΣΑΒΑΩΘ ΜΙΧΑΗΛ ΒΟΗΘΙ" (that is, "Iao Sabaoth Michael Help" Hebrew names for God and the archangel).⁹ The same inscription appears on many other amulets, including one in The David and Albert Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago.¹⁰

The request for divine help regularly appears on both canonical Christian amulets and unorthodox amulets.¹¹ It expresses a deep desire for the aid of a powerful force, an authority over what ailed and troubled the people who wore the inscription. In many instances, Jewish and Christian biblical texts suggest prayers for help with mundane ailments as much as for spiritual aid.¹² Various Hebrew and Greek words communicate the idea of "help" and appear throughout the Old and New Testaments as the idea of divine protection and assistance is central to the psychological mission of biblical texts. Textual evidence from the Bible, however, may be misleading because the makers and users of "help" tokens may or may not have been familiar with similar biblical quotations, as they may or may not have been Jewish or Christian practitioners. Comparisons between the Bible and amuletic texts suggest not that the request for "help" on tokens recapitulates ideas from the Bible, but rather, that various texts, biblical and amuletic, represent conceptual schemes common to Jews, Christians, and people who practiced other religions, more than one religion, or no particular religion at all.

The request for help appears not only in Jewish and Christian instances, of course, but also in multi-cultural ones and on amulets that display an ambiguous religious affiliation. For instance, the phrase "one god help Markianes" occurs on a Greco-Samaritan hematite amulet.¹³ Although the request to 'one god' is recommended for apotropaic use in *Deuteronomy*,¹⁴ the epithet on amulets does not necessarily refer to the Judeo-Christian God, or to a monotheistic belief. On several extant examples, it refers to various gods depending on context, including polytheist contexts, for instance, a common inscription, "One Zeus Sarapis."¹⁵ Ambiguous texts give us no indication of the religious affiliations of the users of such amulets. To say that the texts are Christian, Jewish, or polytheist is too simple, not least because these catego-

ries themselves are not stable. Such texts may indicate that the people who wore them may have been monotheists who worshipped one god, or who imagine many forms of one god, or who were polytheists or monolatrists who venerated one particular god above the rest, or superstitious blasphemers, or people who were more or less familiar with the holy texts of one or more religions, or who valued the holy texts of other religions alongside their own. These are just a few of the possible complications that make these amulets more and more interesting as historical documents of mentalities. These complications also open the question of the different values that we might put on religion as opposed to magic.

Definitions between religion and magic have long been problematic, as discussed by Valerie Flint and others, with little practical difference between which objects and activities were called one and which were called the other.¹⁶ These definitions were as controversial in late antiquity and the middle ages as they are now, as the early Church Fathers fought to distinguish their theology from others.¹⁷ In antiquity, the word *pagan* was often used to define practitioners of magic. That is, the title was employed by Church Fathers to denigrate practices that they themselves did not approve. The word *pagan* remains as problematic now as it was in antiquity because it does not designate any single religion or practice, but rather, it is an exclusive term (such as gentile or heretic) that was used to designate people, things, and practices that were not of the speaker's faith. It says more about the speaker than about the person or thing of which he or she is speaking. It defines what someone or something is considered not to be, but it does not describe what it is.

Examples of amulets demonstrate that it was not unusual for people to engage more than one faith. For instance, a papyrus amulet that was designed to protect the entrance to a house from reptiles mentions the names of the Greek goddess Aphrodite, the Egyptian god Horus, the Christian saint

Phocas, and the Jewish divine name Iao Sabaoth Adonai.¹⁸ It may have been used by Christians or pagans, Jews or gentiles, Greeks or Egyptians. A glass paste amulet from Egypt displays Jewish names together with that of an Egyptian god: "Iao Sabaoth Michael Thoth."¹⁹ Surviving amulets indicate a multi-religious sentiment fueled by a large market across the broad geography of the Mediterranean and the wide span of several centuries, from antiquity through the middle ages. Their great numbers (in the hundreds) suggest that multicultural mentalities were central to late antique Levantine material culture.

Engaging syncretic beliefs in the late antique Levant, powerful words inscribed on tokens addressed spiritual need, physical disease, desire for pregnancy, fear of travel by sea, and demonic possession, among other human fears, needs and desires. Words were believed to embody power in themselves, just as images were believed, for example, to cry, bleed, and take revenge.²⁰ For example, the famous icon of St. Theodore, written about by Anastasius, bled when a Saracen shot an arrow into it.²¹ A similar well known example of this, but regarding words on the other hand, is given by John Moschos (d. 619) in his story about some boys who were playing liturgy and speaking the ritual words, "Take, eat, this is my body." The words must have been mighty because as the boys were about to break the bread, fire fell from heaven and consumed the communion, showing God's displeasure, not his assent.²² These are, as opposed to "magical" amulets, relatively orthodox examples: icons and the liturgy. But even these were not always "orthodox" and they have their own history of becoming acceptable and canonical, with a time before which they were considered idolatrous by some. Was it the orthodoxy of words and images that determined their capacity to get things done – like cure or curse – or was their power possibly understood to derive independently of their associated deity? In other words,

what else, other than the believed power of a deity, added to the power of words and images? There are several possible factors that feed the social and psychological power of words. Foremost and obvious among these factors is their content, but I will focus instead on the lesser recognized factor of their grammar.



As a particular case study, an early Byzantine lead amulet generates authority in part by the grammar of its inscription: "Write Holy Mary help the hysteria."²³ The image on the other side of the amulet depicts the uterus as a face with seven snake-like appendages.²⁴ This amulet and several related amulets that address the hysteria reside now in The State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg.²⁵ This one in particular measures 43 mm. These tokens were worn to address problems that ranged from excessive uterine bleeding to less serious gynecological ailments, and may even have been worn by women and men alike for indigestion. These tokens featured ten years ago in an authoritative and widely cited article by Jeffrey Spier.²⁶ He assumed that this inscription is the mistake of an illiterate copyist working from an instruction manual, wherein "write" was not originally part of the intended inscription but was merely instruction to the artisan.²⁷ Numerous editors of similar inscriptions have noted similar mistakes, but have not addressed the continuing usage of the resulting mistaken instructions or inscriptions. Spier himself cited the authority of Kotansky, Naveh,

Sijpesteijn, Daniel and Maltomini.²⁸ Indeed, he pointed out that on this particular amulet the word "help" is spelled in two different ways: "BOIΘI" (in the center) and "BOHΘH" (around the edge) as indication of illiteracy.²⁹ Spier offered several other inscriptions on amulets, gems, and lamellae with similar mistakes that include the instructions or headings for amuletic texts, for example, as they appear in the *Greek Magical Papyri*, an instruction manual for making amulets. He mentioned inscriptions that, he explained, ignorantly retain the catalog description indicated by the word "ΤΙΠΟΣ" (for) as in "for the benefit of the hysteria," "for migraine," and "a charm for averting evil" as if it were part of the ritual formula itself.³⁰

The amulet's text seems like a mistake, and most likely it was. The assumption of illiteracy is an obvious explanation, but that this common assumption is so overwhelmingly persuasive gives all the more reason to explore alternative explanations. In order that we not too willfully close options for understanding ancient and medieval mentalities, we should not preemptively underestimate the sophistication of multi-cultural words and images in use as they continually re-adjust throughout their various social and psychological functions. And even if the amulet maker did make a mistake and most of the amulet users were illiterate, as they most likely were, it still functioned for literate people as well.

Any particular amulet represents only one generation of copying, and it is impossible to know which one. In any of the multiple generations of copying we can equally expect correction, as well as mistakes, by a chance literate reader or writer. What classifies as literate and illiterate among workers who copied out texts and made inscriptions is a questionable and fine line. Or if, say, the workers were totally illiterate, then inscriptions would have suffered more and ever continuing alterations than they did. But more to the point than questions about the amulet maker are questions

about the amulet readers and users. It was they who invested it with therapeutic authority, whether born of a mistake or not. The assumption that this inscription is a mistake does not take into account how the resulting amulet was used and believed to be useful, rather, it belies any powers that the amulet held for its users. Once a text appears on an amulet, it becomes associated with the material amulet itself and with the particular intention with which that amulet was made and used. Once it appears on an amulet, an inscription appropriates the authority of that amulet and its tradition, regardless of the content or "correctness" of the inscription. Indeed, several examples do seem to be mistakes. But to follow such a line and to argue that the makers and generations of users of these tokens were mistaken merely discourages further inquiry.

Even if every single maker and user were illiterate, that still does not mean that people did not understand what was written, for there was a rich and active oral tradition surrounding ritual power in early Christianity and late antiquity. It is possible that people felt that they knew what the amulet said, but were mistaken. But in that case, the resulting inscription was as good as the "correct" one from the point of view of efficacy. In the case that the inscription relied upon an oral tradition, the two various spellings of "help" – as cited by Spier as indication of illiteracy – could alternatively be explained as spellings that take as a model oral language over written language. If the oral signification of the word were satisfied, then the "correct" spelling is irrelevant. Within the two "misspellings", BOIΘI and BOHΘH, the Greek vowels I and H present different written forms, yet share similar sounds or phonologies. These alternative spellings exemplify the authority of oral practice on equal footing with written linguistic conventions. The amulet may represent a grammatical mistake, but only if written language is privileged over oral language. But ultimately, the

subjective psychological efficacy of the amulet is not bound by objective truth-value, and therefore any talk of a mistake is irrelevant.

Written texts are typically favored as authoritative over oral texts because those are the kinds of sources available to modern historians. Indeed, oral texts seem to be rarely recorded – but this only *seems* so. There exist, in actuality, ample indications of oral texts preserved through written and visual documents themselves, and this amulet is one of them. The modern preference for written texts over oral texts is itself historically bound. This preference also indicates one of the tentative and weak divisions that have been used to distinguish between "magic" and "religion" – the latter being granted more authority because of the copiousness of its written tradition, and the former being practically invisible in comparison. Ultimately, authority stems not from the form of documents (whether written, oral or pictorial) but from the people who made and used them.

So there really is less difference here between written and oral texts when it comes to their authority in the moment. If someone designed an amulet for a particular function, and someone buys it for that function, then the intentions themselves (the ones involved in making and buying) can motivate a psychological search and generate belief in the power of the amulet. Both creative intentions stimulate each other – the one that initiates the designing and the one that completes the interpretation of the amulet – especially in the context of repeated copying as with amulet making. In some circumstances, people believe that words are powerful, and then people use them on amulets for various intentions of healing, safety, fertility, and even revenge. In other circumstances, people engage amulets in order to address a certain already manifesting problem, and thereby invest the words on the amulets with appropriate meaning. People commonly invest words with the power to affect other ob-

jects, people, and circumstances by creating a relationship of metonymy, or, as a previous generation of anthropologists described it, sympathy. Whether or not one subscribes to a worldview that empowers metonymic or sympathetic signs, the ultimate justification for the power of words on amulets is their use. To label them as "incorrect" because they do not make sense to observers discourages any further investigation of their power. It also discourages a rich opportunity to sample a different culture's way of using signs to construct mental and emotional realities, to see their conceptual schemes in action, and to nuance what "mistake" means.

In repeated production (as in the case of most amulets) words, images, and signs gradually cease to represent some original model, and begin to be a representation of themselves: copies of copies. Further, a repeatedly copied sign then begins to exert influence on shaping the original would-be models, ways of reading those models and the meaning of those models. Representations, which seem to be copies, become originals in relation to a new copy in a system with no absolute original. In a matrix of mutually influential identities, there are no secure models and there are no pure copies. A mistake in copying can occur only when there exists a secure model. A model for this amuletic case study is unknown to us today. Even the texts that are given in ancient manuals for making amulets are likely copies themselves. Some scholars may suggest that proper Greek as we study it now is the model, but why should we privilege our knowledge of Greek spelling and grammar over that of the native speakers who originally used amulets? More to the point, any model is not the original location for the authority that enabled an amulet to function psychologically. Once any variation in a system of representation occurs, a new meaning is engaged, and to consider it a mistake misses the rich possibilities for the continual renovation of meaning in ever changing social conditions. What, then, is the meaning

of this "mistake" on the amuletic case study? After many generations, clones become clones of themselves. A clone grows closer to being an individual the more tales it has to tell. And this is just the task for which amulets are made – to tell narratives and to lend their mass-produced narratives to the personal narratives of the people who wear them. This psychological copying or imitation by the wearer does not, as one might at first expect, make people less individual. On the contrary, this type of story building distinguishes the amulet from some impotent mistake.

Spier was not, of course, disregarding the psychological efficacy or hermeneutics or narratives of the amulet in question when he suggested that it displays a mistake. He was not studying those aspects. But it is a short and easy mental leap to make from his assertion of the amulet's mistake to the amulet's lack of authority. I am belaboring this point because it illuminates larger and important issues of authority – how it is constructed now by modern scholars and then in late antiquity. The authority that ancient and medieval people assigned to certain words, images, and objects saturates religious, medical, and magical material culture and practices of all sorts. And on the other hand, regarding modern scholars, when we prioritize ancient and medieval objects for our attention, recording, and displaying, we necessarily read authority into them. When one is looking for a prayer to Holy Mary, one feels that the phrase "Write Holy Mary help the hysteria" copied verbatim onto the amulets seems nonsensical or a mistake. When we do this, we are calling into question its authority and disregarding the historical fact of its functional use.

I have already suggested an oral tradition behind these semantics. But there are further ways in which this inscription, "Write Holy Mary help the hysteria," can make sense. More than simply being a request directed toward Holy Mary for help, it could function as a command to the user to

write these words perhaps elsewhere, perhaps several times, or perhaps in one's imagination as one reads it repeatedly. And the command itself may have wielded psychological or spiritual power. This is not unheard of in the ancient and medieval world, that a written commandment requires one to write it repeatedly toward an apotropaic end. As one example, the phrase "One God" appears commonly on many amulets and even door lintels.³¹ *Deuteronomy* (6:6-9) commands this very thing, to write this phrase repeatedly: "And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. And you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them on the door posts of your house and on your gates."³² So the inscription on the amulet could well be a command to write "Holy Mary help the hysteria" repeatedly, or at least to say it out loud.

The words actively teach the human agent how to proceed to solve an immediate personal problem. The voice of the amulet retroactively commands something of the amulet maker or user. It both initiates and completes the maker's action; it is both the command to write and the resultant writing itself. The personification of the voice of the amulet (the command to write) lends its message an added authority and thus may render the formulaic quality more efficacious. The command itself, with agency, initiates a spiritual dialogue between Holy Mary and the amulet maker, rather than the amulet maker initiating such a dialogue himself. The inscription evidently conveys more authority than the craftsman or patient feels capable of commanding out of his or her own authority. In this sense, the amulet's inscription functions similarly to the intercession of saints, relics, and icons as images and objects that have agency. Thus, its seemingly mistaken

inscription, by representing the magical agency of the amulet, musters slightly more authority than a correct rendition would in the form of a simple prayer, "Holy Mary help the hysteria." Indeed, this simple prayer is already in the imperative form, but who is the speaking agent? In usage, and perhaps even according to some artisan's manual, such as the *Greek Magical Papyri*, these amulets are not necessarily prayers to Holy Mary, but rather, they could be instructions on how to solve a problem. By codifying the effort -- with the imperative verb -- its success is endorsed, offering a psychologically persuasive guarantee.

A second inscription on this amulet forms a circle frame around the first one, and does not make any similar mistake. "ΘΕΟΤΟΚΗ ΒΟΗΘΗ ΣΕ ΤΟΝ ΦΟ," "Theotokos help the one bearing," presumably this amulet.³³ It asks the Theotokos to help with no instruction words such as "write." So perhaps the amulet maker knew the difference between inscriptions with and without imperative instructions, or it could be, as Spier suggests, that the amulet maker was just copying what he did not understand, and out of ignorance included "write" in one instance of following instructions and neglected to include the implicit instructions in the second inscription. The simultaneous appearance of these two inscriptions makes it more difficult, however, to assign one as a mistake and the other as correct. But perhaps the amulet maker was copying these two phrases in which the instruction "write" was given only once. We cannot know.

Further emphasizing the rhetorical power of the imperative formula, the infinitive of the Greek word *graphe* means to write, but it also means to draw, paint, inscribe, or represent with marks. In this word, verbal semantics and pictorial signification coincide, so that the amulet could just as well translate: "Draw Holy Mary help the hysteria." The image on the other side of this amulet shows us what such a drawing looks like (fig. 1). It depicts a face with seven tentacle-

like appendages, which Jeffrey Spier argued represents the hysteria itself. The depiction stands as the fulfillment of the verbal command "graphe!" If drawing initiates the request for help, as in "Draw Holy Mary help the hysteria," then the presence of this image substantiates the request. If one of the imperative commands "draw!" is given as already fulfilled by means of the image, then through precedent, the other imperative command, "help!," seems closer to being fulfilled. The image completes the inscription and thereby it renders the verbal command for help more imminent and psychologically persuasive. Certainly, it is more plausible that "graphe" here means "write" and not "draw." But if we think that an amulet maker may have made a mistake in writing out this inscription, then perhaps a viewer might have made a mistake in reading the inscription. On one hand, I suggest that there are no mistakes here, and on the other hand, I suggest that mistakes abound to create new meanings. This largely depends on one's interpretation, which varies from wearer to wearer.

Towards protection and aid, the semantics of "graphe" do even more work here. In addition to indicating "to write" and "to draw," "graphe" could also mean "invoking," whom else but Holy Mary. Such an interpretation would actively enroll her aid and protection to the benefit of the amulet user by naming the very action. "Invoke" does more than instruct the viewers in their prayer, it also initiates the invocation itself, giving it a head start through signification. Interpretations are slippery and vary widely from interpreter to interpreter, especially over the generations of use that this amulet might have seen. A magical object exercises more powerful the more it can accommodate various interpretations. The amulet's words helped to sooth someone's fears in the face of disease, infertility, or even possible death; it moved human souls meaningfully. It was for such soul-moving that this amulet was designed to address disease.

I have suggested a few ways in which this inscription may have contributed to the therapeutic purpose of the amulet, but any hermeneutic enterprise must also take into account the visual form of the inscription. The several inscriptions on this amulet appear in retrograde, a technique that was commonly used to make marks in bread, wax, or clay. But why was retrograde used on this amulet and on similar other ones that were presumably worn or hung or in some cases buried? Again, the word "graphe" makes sense of this unexpected quality. The meaning of "graphe" extends beyond the acts of writing and drawing to making a mark of any sort, such as a brand, seal, or stamp. In light of these alternative meanings, the retrograde of the inscription indicates that the amulet may be understood as a seal or stamp. Stamps were used in late antiquity and the early middle ages as official signatures, over the openings of household containers to protect their contents from theft and misuse by unauthorized persons, on bread in rituals, and on clay tokens from religious pilgrimage sites, among many other uses. They *authorized* the origins, ownership, use, and protection of things. In the Christian baptism ritual, from its earliest centuries, seals were ritually placed upon souls as protection against daemons.³⁴ In late antique and early Christian material contexts – including examples of phylacteries for health, exorcistic rites, canonical beliefs, and popular amulets – "seals" of the soul protect, bind, witness and even guarantee states of being.³⁵ On letters, wines bottles, and souls alike, seals served as protection. In the case that the amulet was understood as a stamp seal, it was designed as a device for protection. Here, the form of the inscription (the retrograde) and the content of the inscription (asking for help) reinforce each other and the psychological potency of the amulet. The inscription and image on it could be reproduced indefinitely in other materials. Such reproduction would strengthen the power of the words and image through repetition, and could

function generically for regular use by any number of family members and descendents who required similar aid from the amulet. In the service of frequent use, the reproducible retrograde, if the amulet were used as a stamp, was extra valuable because its stamping function renders its psychological medicine both generic and inexhaustible.³⁶

A retrograde inscription approaches having the quality of an image. This amulet capitalizes upon the image-like character of retrograde inscription in that a circular band of more retrograde inscription surrounds and frames the image of the hysteria on the other side of the amulet. This inscription refers to a holy lord, abbreviated on the amulet as "AFIO KY," and the hysteria appears physically bound around by this invocation, further marking the image with the intention made clear in the words. The visual result is that the words and image work together to create an effect stronger than either the words or image could have had alone. The visual placement of the image encircled within an inscription further suggests that the amulet participates in the tradition of seals as protection. As the inscription encircles the image of the hysteria, so also may divine aid protect the wearer's uterus and abdomen.

We can never know the extent of the success of this and similar amulets. Nor can we ever know what psychological role their grammatical self-referentiality played, whether such self-referentiality did indeed strengthen their power, or played any role at all in interpretation and therapeutic psychology. But if it did, then maybe this amulet can tell us something about other less direct textual charms, pilgrimage tokens, and medical amulets that were sold in the same markets and, possibly, to the same clients. If the grammatical self-referentiality psychologically persuaded many people, then this amulet might stand as a model for interpreting any of the hundreds of tokens that survive with the simple inscription "help." This and other "Write Holy Mary Help"

tokens might provide modern scholars with models for interpreting various magical amulets that ask for help, pilgrimage souvenirs that ask for help, dedicatory inscriptions on liturgical silver that ask for help, and any number of the common examples of inscribed powerful objects from late antiquity and the early middle ages. At the very least, the "Write Holy Mary Help" tokens suggest examples of textual self-referentiality that were in circulation in the late antique Levant. They opened and maintained a world of text-based power that was an alternative source of personal help to the more Church-accessible orthodox prayers. After all, both sets of texts, orthodox and unorthodox, were governed by the same belief systems and conceptual schemes. These grammatical and semiotic possibilities sufficiently warrant interest and investigation toward understanding magic, religion, and science in early medieval conceptual schemes. The psychological power of texts leads to the further question of the power of images, in their own special type of visual language.³⁷

Notes

¹ I am grateful to C. Faraone for encouraging me to write this article. He pointed out to me that the type of self-referential text that I discuss here on unorthodox amulets is rare, if present at all, on christian amulets.

² Such a distinction between natural and supernatural powers had been cited long ago often as the division between magic, religion, and science, now debunked by several scholars, among them M. Meyer and R. Smith.

³ Especially large collections are in the British Museum in London (which has approximately 800 amulets), the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, the Kelsey Museum at the University of Michigan, the Taubman Medical Library at The University of Michigan, the Museo Sacra della Bibliotheca in the Vatican Museums, the Coptic Museum in Cairo, the Greco-Roman Museum in Alexandria, and the Museo Archeologico Nazionale in Aquileia. For early medieval amulets from Western Europe, see the Museo Archeologico Nazionale in Cividale del Friuli.

⁴ G. Vikan has extensively studied these examples and placed them into

historical contexts. See *Byzantine Pilgrimage Art* (Dumbarton Oaks: Washington D.C., 1982).

⁵ For an example, see a fresco of a monk wearing one around his neck, in Vikan, *ibid.*, fig. 17.

⁶ Kelsey Museum of Archaeology #26119, diameter 5.4 cm. Published by C. Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets, Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian* (University of Michigan: Ann Arbor and Oxford University Press: London, 1950) 219-20, no. 324. Also see J. Godwin, *Mystery Religions in the Ancient World* (Thames and Hudson: London and San Francisco, 1981) 68-69, no. 33. L. Nees, *The Gundohing Gospels* (Medieval Academy of America: Cambridge, Mass, 1987) 210, fig. 69. And H. Maguire, E. Maguire, and M. Duncan-Flowers, *Art and Holy Powers in the Early Christian House* (Krannert Art Museum, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, University of Illinois Press: Urbana 1989) 214-215, pl. 134. A near identical amulet is in the Dumbarton Oaks collection; see M. C. Ross, *Catalogue of the Byzantine and Early Mediaeval Antiquities in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection, vol. I: Metalwork, Ceramics, Glass, Glyptics, Painting* (Dumbarton Oaks: Washington D.C., 1962) 53-54, no. 60.

⁷ S. Johnston, "Defining Dreadful: Remarks of the Greek Child-Killing Demon," *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, eds. M. Meyer and P. Mirecki, *Religions in the Graeco-Roman World* 129 (E. J. Brill: Leiden and New York, 1995) 361-390. J. A. Scurlock, "Baby-Snatching Demons, Restless Souls and the Dangers of Childbirth: Medico-Magical Means of Dealing with Some of the Perils of Motherhood in Ancient Mesopotamia," *Incognita* 2 (1991) 1-112.

⁸ Entitled "Amulet to protect Philoxenos from all evil," from the collection of M. Robert Nahman, on parchment, repeatedly folded, published by J. Drescher, "A Coptic Amulet," in *Coptic Studies in Honor of Walter Ewing Crum*, ed. Michael Malinine, *Bulletin of the Byzantine Institute of America* 2 (Byzantine Institute: Boston, 1950) 265-270; trans. by M. Meyer, in M. Meyer and R. Smith, eds., *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* (Harper Collins: San Francisco 1994 [reprinted by Princeton University Press 1999]) 115-117, #61. The very interesting name here, "Philoxenos," begs the question of whether it was somebody's given name or a common appellation meaning "lover of foreigners," as in foreigner deities whose help might be required of the amulet-wearer.

⁹ Inventory #26115. Published by Bonner, as in note 6, 303, #299.

¹⁰ Inventory #1988.57. One side shows the Much Suffering Eye with the inscription above. The other side shows the Holy Rider. It is published in the *Smart Museum Bulletin* (The Smart Museum, University of Chi-

cago: Chicago, 1988-90) 40; in Maguire, Maguire, and Duncan-Flowers, as in note 6, 217, #136; and in *Survival of the Gods: Classical mythology in medieval art: an exhibition by the Department of Art, Brown University, Bell Gallery, List Art Center, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, February 28-March 29, 1987* (Department of Art, Brown University: Providence, 1987) 68-9.

¹¹ Familiar from *The Gospel of Matthew* 15:25 "Lord, help me."

¹² *Psalms* 46:1, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." *Psalms* 124:8, "Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth." *Hebrews* 13:6, "So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." *Psalms* 121, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore." *Hebrews* 4:16, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." *Psalms* 42:5, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance." *Hosea* 13:9, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help." *Acts* 26:22, "Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come." *Romans* 8:26, "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

¹³ Published in Bonner, as in note 6 above, 299, #276.

¹⁴ M. Clermont-Ganneau, in the *Quarterly Statements of the Palestine Exploration Fund* (Palestine Exploration Fund's Quarterly Statement 1882) 26, suggests that the pan-religious phrase "One God" is of Jewish origin from the fourth verse in the sixth chapter of *Deuteronomy*, which contains the word "Jahovah-ahad," rendered in the *Septuagint* by "One Lord" preceding the Ten Commandments.

¹⁵ Bonner, as in note 6 above, 174-5, discusses several examples of this phrase and related phrases. He points to examples in the British Museum, inventory numbers 56445, 56446, and 56523.

¹⁶ V. Flint, *Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe* (Princeton Univer-

sity Press: Princeton, 1991). M. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World* (Routledge: New York, 2001). H. Maguire, 'Magic and the Christian Image,' *Byzantine Magic*, ed. H. Maguire (Dumbarton Oaks: Washington D.C., 1995) 51-72. A. Kazhdan, "Holy and Unholy Miracle Workers," also in *Byzantine Magic*, 73-82. Meyer and Smith, as in note 8 above. J. Neusner, E. Frerichs, and P. Virgil McCracken Flesher, eds., *Religions, Science, and Magic: In Concert and In Conflict* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1989). M. Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (Harper and Row: San Francisco, 1978). A. Barb, "Survival of the Magic Arts," in *Conflict Between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century*, ed. A. Momigliano (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1963) 110-125. For anthropological studies, see S. J. Tambiah's *Magic, Science, Religion and the Scope of Rationality* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge and New York, 1990); and B. Malinowski, "Magic, Science, and Religion," *Science, Religion, and Reality*, ed. J. Needham (MacMillan: New York, 1925).

¹⁷ Ancient and medieval texts that critique magic range widely from writings of the Church Fathers and books of the New and Old Testaments and biblical commentaries, to histories and law codes, and saints' lives. See Plutarch's *On Superstition*; Pliny's *Natural History* XXVI, XXVIII, & XXX; Ammianus Marcellinus' "Valentinianus Valens Gratianus" III. xxix.2; and Apuleius of Madaure's *Apology* XXVI. In the Old Testament, New Testament, and Apocrypha see: *Genesis* 9:20-27 & 10:6-14; *Exodus* 7:10-13; *Numbers* 22-25; *Samuel I* 28:8-25; *Book of Enoch* 6:1 & 8:3-4; *Acts* 8:9-25 & 13:6-12; *James* 5:14-15 healing prayers; *Acts of SS. Simon and Jude*; *Tobit* 6:8-9; *Acts of Peter and Paul*. Among the Church Fathers and Emperors see: J. Chrysostom's *Homily 28.3 on Matthew 7:23-24*, ed. P. Schaff in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* 10 (The Christian Literature Co.: New York 1886-90) 191; Origen's defense of Christianity against charges of magic in *Contra Celsum*; Augustine's *The City of God*, I-XI, XVIII, & XX-XXI; John the Bishop of Nikiu's *Chronicle*, trans. R. H. Charles in *The Chronicle of John, Bishop of Nikiu: Translated from Zotenberg's Ethiopic Text* (Williams and Norgate: London, 1916 [reprint Evolution Publishing: Merchantville, New Jersey, 2007]) 139-140; J. Moschos, *Pratum Spirituale*, ed. J. P. Migne, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca*, (J.P. Migne: Paris, 1857-98) 87:3, chapter 145, cols. 3008-9; *Theodocian Code*, IX.16.iii; *Corpus juris civilis*, or *The Civil Law*, vol. I, title xxiii (18), trans. S. P. Scott under the title *The Civil Law including the Twelve Tables, the Institutes of Gaius, the Rules of Ulpian, the Opinions of Paulus, the Enactments of Justinian, and the Constitutions of Leo* (Central Trust: Cincinnati, 1932; rpt. AMS

Press: New York, 1973). Among saints' lives and miracles see: *Life of St. Andreae Sali of Nicephore*, sec. 129-130, ed. J. P. Migne, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca*, 111, cols. 625-888; *The Life of St. Irene, Abbess of Chrysobalanton*, V, 74 defends her several times against charges that she was a sorceress, ed. by J. O. Rosenqvist (University of Uppsala: Uppsala, 1986); Sophronius' *Miracula of SS. Cyrus and John*, ed. A. Mai, "Sophronii Monachi Sophistae Narratio Miraculorum SS. Cyri et Iohannis Sapientum Anargyrorum," in *Spicilegium Romanum* III (Rome, 1840) miracles 55 & 59, pp. 556-559 & 572-577. For extensive treatments of the primary sources see: D. de F. Abrahamse, "Magic and Sorcery in the Hagiography of the Middle Byzantine Period," *Byzantinische Forschungen* 8 (Adolf M. Hakkert: Amsterdam, 1982) 3-17; H. J. Magoulias, "Lives of Byzantine Saints as Sources for Data for the History of Magic in the Sixth and Seventh Centuries," *Byzantion: Revue Internationale des Études Byzantines* 37 (Société belge d'Études byzantine, Wetteren, 1967-68) 228-269; and D. Aune, "Magic in Early Christianity," *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II.23.2 (Walter de Gruyter: Berlin, 1980) 1507-1557, who cites an extensive bibliography on this topic including some of the above.

¹⁸ The 9.2 x 6.3 cm papyrus, possibly sixth century, Oxyrhynchus 1060, is published and discussed by M. Meyer, "A Sixth-Century Christian Amulet," *Bulletin of the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity* 8 (Claremont Graduate University: Claremont, California, 1981) 9, and also in Meyer and Smith, as in note 8, 48-49, #25. "Iao" may stand as a Hebrew name of God, "YHWH," that is often vocalized as Yahweh. "Sabaoth" is an ancient Israeli military term for hosts or armies. "Adonai" is Hebrew for "my lord," a name from the Hebrew Scriptures linked to the ineffable name of God "YHWH." See again Meyer and Smith for numerous examples of multi-religious amulets, especially 387. Further multi-religious examples can be found published by Bonner, as in note 6.

¹⁹ #26091, Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, The University of Michigan, published on their website <<http://www.lsa.umich.edu/kelsey/>> and by Bonner, as in note 6, #361.

²⁰ *The Life of St. Mary the Egyptian* tells us that she asked an icon of the Virgin how to escape her life as a prostitute and the icon itself gave some very practical advice, to cross over the Jordan and thus begin a new life among people who do not know her. Discussed by Magoulias, as in note 17 above, 261-262. Saint Mary's life is analyzed and translated by M. Kouli in *Holy Women of Byzantium: Ten Saints' Lives in English Translation*, ed. A. Talbot (Dumbarton Oaks: Washington D.C., 1996) 65-68. The earliest version of Mary's story, Kouli explains, is in the *vita* of Kyriakos by the sixth-century hagiographer, Cyril of Skythopolis.

See E. Schwartz, *Kyrrillos von Skythopolis*, in *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur* 49.2 (Walter de Gruyter: Leipzig, 1939) 233-234; cited by Kouli, 65. *The Miracles of Saints Cyrus and John* tells us of a sick man who incubated in their church, and in a dream the saints appeared and took him before an icon of Christ that spoke and told him to visit another icon of Christ and to anoint himself with the oil burning there. See *Miracula SS. Cyri et Iohannis* in "Sophronii Monachi Sophistae Narratio Miraculorum SS. Cyri et Iohannis Sapientum Anargyrorum," ed. A. Mai in *Spicilegium Romanum*, III (Rome, 1840) mir. 35, 365-379. Cf. Magoulas, as in note 17, 262. Also discussed by Kitzinger, "The Cult of Images before Iconoclasm," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 8 (Dumbarton Oaks: Washington D.C., 1954) 106-107. One icon of Christ sends the man to another. This indicates a difference in the agency of the two icons, although the referent-agent (Christ) is the same.

²¹ Anastasius, writing on the monks of Sinai, tells us that when a Saracen shot an arrow into the icon of St. Theodore in his church in Karsatas (a village four miles outside of Damascus) the image bled, and a few days later all twenty-four of the Saracens that were in the place were found dead. See Anastasius Sinaites, *Le texte grec des récits du moine Anastase sur les saints pères du Sinai*, ed. F. Nau (*Oriens Christianus* 2, XLIV, Rome 1902) 64-65; cf. Kitzinger, as in note 20, 101. Anastasius himself assures us that he saw the hole made by the arrow and the blood on the icon, blood which he takes as proof of the icon's agency in this deed of revenge.

²² J. Moschos, *Pratum Spirituale*, 176; Migne, as in note 17 above, vol. 87, cols. 3044-45. Cited by Magoulas, as in note 17, 228 note 3. In a further example, the words of the Eucharistic consecration, the *epiklesis*, were absent-mindedly memorized and repeated by a coenobitic monk, after which time, Moschos writes, it was canonically forbidden to memorize the service if one was not ordained, or to repeat these words outside the sanctuary because they were believed to be powerful in themselves. J. Moschos, *Pratum Spirituale*, 25, ed. Migne as in note 17 above, vol. 87 (1903) cols. 2869-72.

²³ The amulet is in the St. Petersburg State Hermitage Museum, w-1159, from the collection of the Russian Archaeological Institute in Constantinople and P. Khirlanghidj. Its diameter measures 4.3 cm. Published in N.V. Zalesskaia, "Amulettes byzantines magiques et leurs liens avec la littérature apocryphe," *Acts du XIVe congrès international des études byzantines*, Bucharest, 1971, iii (Bucharest, 1976) 244, fig. 3. Described visually with inscriptions recorded in V. Laurent, "Amulettes byzantines et formulaires magiques," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, XXXVI (Walter de

Gruyter: Berlin, 1936) 307-9, #4. Laurent was working from a trace and a photograph of the amulet that he received from G. Moravcsik at the National Museum of Budapest. At that time, Laurent writes, the owner of the amulet was unknown to him. A drawing of it is published in P. Khirlanghidj, in *Echos d'Orient* 9 (Paris, 1906) 77. Laurent warns that Khirlanghidj's commentary is erroneous. Most recently published and analyzed by J. Spier, "Medieval Byzantine Magical Amulets and Their Tradition," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 56 (University of London: London, 1993) 52, #9, shown in Plate 1d, and discussed throughout the article, 25-62. On one side is an image of the hysteria as a round face with seven radiating tentacles and a cross on top of the head. Surrounding this image is an inscription in retrograde: "ΗΣΟ ΒΟΕ ΑΓΙΟΣ ΑΓΙΟ ΚΥ ΒΚ," with reference to the Trisagion (and its exorcistic and liturgical connotations), and abbreviations (BOE and KY) for "help" and "lord." On the other side is the inscription in retrograde: "ΓΡΑΦΙ ΥΣΤΕΡΑ Ι ΑΓΙΑ ΜΑΡΙΑ ΒΟΙΘΙ." Both Laurent and Spier give transliterations that translate into "Write holy Mary help the hysteria." Surrounding this inscription is another one in retrograde: "ΘΕΟΤΟΚΗ ΒΟΗΘΗ ΣΕ ΤΟΝ ΦΟ." Laurent takes "ΦΟ" as an abbreviation for "ΦΟΡΟΥΝΤΑ." It translates into "Theotokos help the one bearing," presumably, this amulet. Laurent reports, but Spier does not, another inscription around the edge of the amulet: "ΤΙΡΟΣ ΒΟΗΘ(Ε)ΙΑΝ ΤΗΣ ΥΣΤΕΡΑΣ," "To help the hysteria."

²⁴ Before Spier's iconographic identification of this image as the uterus, the scholars who previously discussed this image identified it as a Medusa. The seven arms and one cross, identified carefully by Spier, are described by Laurent as eight serpents.

²⁵ Analyzed by Spier, as in note 23 above.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Spier, as in note 23 above, 48 notes 131 and 132.

²⁸ Cited by Spier, in his note 32: R. Kotansky, J. Naveh, and S. Shaked, "A Greek-Aramaic Silver Amulet from Egypt in the Ashmolean Museum," *Le Muséon: Revue d'Études Orientales* 105.1-2 (Louvain, 1992) 7, 18, 20f; P. J. Sijpesteijn, "A Syrian Phylactery on a Silver Plate," *Oudheidkundige Mededelingen uit het Rijksmuseum van Oudheden te Leiden* 59/60 (Leiden 1978-79) 192; F. Maltomini, *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 66 (Bonn, 1986) 159 ff.; and R. W. Daniel and F. Maltomini, *Supplementum Magicum, Papyrologica Coloniensia*, I (Opladen 1990-92) 92.

²⁹ Spier, as in note 23 above, 48 & 52.

³⁰ Spier, as in note 23 above, 47, note 130. More on these amuletic texts can be found in the following. Spier, 52, #8 features the hysteria. For the

migraine example see R. Kotansky, "Incantations and Prayers for Salvation on Inscribed Amulets," in *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*, eds. C. A. Faraone and D. Obbink (Oxford University Press: Oxford and New York, 1991) 112ff. For the charm averting evil see O. Neverov, "Gemmes, bagues et amulettes magiques du sud de l'URSS," *Hommages à Maarten J. Vermaseren*, II, eds. M. B. de Boer and T. A. Edridge (Brill: Leiden, 1978) 848, #50.

³¹ For example: A bronze amulet in the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology #02.6119, diameter 5.4 cm, that depicts the Holy Rider, see the museum's website for an image, published in Maguire, Maguire, and Duncan-Flowers, as in note 6 above, 214-215, pl. 134. A near identical amulet is in the Dumbarton Oaks collection; see Ross, as in note 6 above, 53-54, no. 60. The phrase appears on a Greco-Samaritan hematite amulet published in C. Bonner, as in note 6 above, 299, #276, and a few others on pages 174-175, and 303. W. Prentice analyzes this phrase as it appeared on Christian door lintels in Syria in "Magical Formulae on Lintels of the Christian Period in Syria," *American Journal of Archaeology* 10.2 (Boston University: Boston, April-June 1906) 137-150.

³² Still today in obedience of this command, the phrase hangs on some Jewish families' doors in the form of a mezuzah.

³³ See note 23 above for a full description of the amulet's inscriptions. Laurent (307-9, #4) takes "ΦΟ" as an abbreviation for "ΦΟΡΟΥΝΤΑ."

³⁴ For historical analysis of the Seal of Baptism, see F. Dölger, *Sphragis: Eine altchristliche Taufbezeichnung in ihren Beziehungen zur profanen und religiösen Kultur des Altertums*, series *Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des Altertums* Bd. 5, Heft 3/4 (Schöningh: Paderborn, 1911 [rpt. Johnson: New York, 1967]) 68-69. C. Hahn compares the "sealing" of baptism to pilgrims' ampullae as "seals," in "Loca Sancta Souvenirs: Sealing the Pilgrim's Experience," *The Blessings of Pilgrimage*, ed. R. Ousterhout, *Illinois Byzantine Studies* 1 (University of Illinois Press: Urbana, 1990) 90. For primary sources on the Seal of Baptism, see G. Nazianzen, *Homily on Pentecost (Oratio XLI, In Pentecosten)*, section 3, in Migne, as in note 17 above, vol. 36, col. 432A; cited by J. Danielou, S.J., *The Bible and The Liturgy*, series *University of Notre Dame Liturgical Studies* 3 (University of Notre Dame Press: Notre Dame, 1956) 56. Paul, *Letter to the Galatians* 6:15 in the *New Testament*; cited by Danielou, 64. Gregory Nazianzen tells us that the Christian need only "seal" himself with the sign of the cross in order to repel the attacks of a demon and to put him to flight; *Holy Baptism*, Migne 36, col. 372A; also cited by Danielou, 60.

³⁵ For material examples see Maguire, Maguire, and Duncan-Flowers, as in note 6 above, 4-5 & 8-9, fig. 7. Also see G. Bohak, "Traditions of

Magic" exhibition at the University of Michigan posted on the internet through the University's web site <<http://www.lib.umich.edu/pap/exhibits/magic/>>, fig. #27. J. Russell, "Archaeological Context of Magic in the Early Byzantine Period," *Byzantine Magic*, ed. H. Maguire (Dumbarton Oaks: Washington D.C., 1995) 35-50. For Coptic magical papyri see examples in Meyer and Smith, as in note 8 above, 112-119, #60-61 & 63. Popular "Seal of the Living God" phylacteries relate to stories of Solomon's famous seal that controlled daemons. For the legend of Solomon's Seal see C. C. McCown, *Testament of Solomon edited from manuscripts at Mount Athos, Bologna, Holkham Hall, Jerusalem, London, Milan, Paris and Vienna* (J.C. Hinrichs and G.E. Stechert & Co.: Leipzig and New York, 1922) 10, 19, and 39. Bonner, as in note 6 above, 97. Cyril of Jerusalem writes that marking your soul with the "seal" of grace protects one from being swallowed up by demons; *Mystagogic Catecheses*, Migne, as in note 17 above, vol. 33, col. 441C, and elsewhere similar sentiments in vol. 33 cols. 373A, 472B, and 816B; cited by Danielou, see note 34 above, 61-62. When some of St. Anthony's followers were frightened by the loud and violent presence of demons who came to torment him, he told the people simply to "seal themselves;" in St. Athanasius, Patriarch of Alexandria (d. 373), *The Life of St. Anthony*, 13, trans. and annotated by R. T. Meyer (Newman Press: Westminster, 1950) 110-111; cited by Danielou, 62.

³⁶ That the inscription is in retrograde leads to questions concerning the related non-retrograde inscriptions reproduced in wax or clay, and on the original die. What role do originals and reproductions play in relation to one another in these cases?

³⁷ When I pointed out the self-referential quality of this amulet to Professor C. Faraone, he reflected that magical texts do not display self-referential language as do religious texts, and he suggested that self-referentiality might be a useful way of distinguishing between magical texts and religious ones. But I am hesitant to draw any distinction between the two because I believe them to be largely subjective categories dependent upon the speaker's own belief system.