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*Les saviors magiques et leur transmission de l'Antiquité à la Renaissance*  
by Véronique Dasen and Jean-Michel Spieser

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*Reviewed by*  
Michael Zellmann-Rohrer  
University of Oxford  
[michael.zellmann-rohrer@classics.ox.ac.uk](mailto:michael.zellmann-rohrer@classics.ox.ac.uk)

This collection of essays is the result of an international colloquium at the Université de Fribourg and a subsequent round table at the 22nd Congrès international des études byzantines in Sofia, both held in 2011. Its 21 original contributions are united by their attention to various ritual practices and systems of knowledge broadly associated with magic in pre-modern Europe and the Mediterranean. These are divided by the editors into two parts. Those in the first part consider 'processus de transmission et d'appropriation des rites et pratiques magiques de l'Antiquité à la Renaissance' [x]; those in the second, 'pratiques magiques dans le domaine byzantine' and 'la problématique de l'opposition entre magie et religion, sinon entre celle de magie et savoirs' [xiv-xv]. No single coherent definition of Byzantium is offered but these latter contributions generally center upon the city of Constantinople from the ninth to 14th centuries AD. Between the two parts, a wide range of rites and practices that could be considered within or bordering upon magic are reviewed and our knowledge thereof substantially increased, including amulets and incantations for protection and healing, cursing *via* inscribed tablets, rituals to inflict erotic passion, necromancy, divination, alchemy, and medical astrology. The majority of the contributions (13) are in French, the rest in English; each is provided with an abstract in English.

The introduction hails a boom in recent scholarship on 'la magie antique' [ix] and its overlap with fields such as astrology and medicine; and the present volume is certainly a welcome contribution to that enterprise, particularly commendable for its consistent attention to the concrete reflection of such practices in objects and written texts. I suggest at the outset that more might have been done to integrate the two halves or, by number of pages, the 'Byzantine' quarter and the 'western' three-quarters—a division presumably

left over from the genesis of the volume in two separate colloquia—as well as to place the individual contributions in dialogue with one another. I suggest a few examples of this at the conclusion of this review. Even in the synthetic introduction, comparison of Byzantium with the occident is hinted at only briefly [xviii n8]. This criticism does not of course diminish the convenience of uniting a substantial number of original contributions within a single volume.

The definition of magic and the distinction between it and religion have occupied generations of scholars and continue to be contested—no small part of the debate concerning the validity of a distinction in the first place or of a separate category for magic. The editors in their introduction speak of magic as distinct from but to be studied along with religion, though the distinction is not theorized beyond an acknowledgment of ‘l’immense problématique des rapports entre magie, savoirs, religion’; the opposition ‘licit’ and ‘illicit’ is proposed as more operative, at least for the Byzantine sources [xv]. The question of what ‘magic’ is for the purposes of this volume or, more particularly, what is ‘un savoir magique’, is left open by the introduction. But several of the contributors take it up independently.

R. Gordon is quite explicit: ‘I use the term magic in a purely conventional sense, to denote a group of sub-types of instrumental religion linked by family resemblance’ [253n1]. M. Martin [5] and H. Bernier-Farella [354] stress the role of social construction in both magic and religion. Others acknowledge the blurring of categorical divisions in other ways: for S. Kerneis there are affinities between magic and law (*ius*) in Rome, ‘une parole efficace, performative dont l’efficacité résidait dans le prononcé exact des formules’ [25], while E. Zwierlein-Diehl, at least with respect to users of amuletic gems, can speak of ‘devotees of the magical religion’ [96]. The approach of J.-M. Spieser [333–351] is to take the Christian Church’s definition of magic at its word as a step in defining its position thereto.

It seems in general, then, that magic includes what modern scholars benefit from including—in what has become a convenient category in the study of intellectual history.

The editors in the introduction neatly survey the scope and extent of the contributions, and I will now add my own assessment of their individual merits.

M. Martin [5–24] considers the tradition of the practice of aggressive ritual binding (*envoûtement*) in the medieval and early modern period, with a focus

on the West. After a review of similar practices in Mesopotamia and Egypt and among the Hittites, which might have provided the origin of the Greek practice, Martin finds that the Hittite practice shows the closest resemblance to the Greek *κατάδεσμος* (Latin *defixio*) and suggests that there may be a broad Indo-European tradition, but that the Greek practice is substantively original. In general, Martin supposes a double process of tradition for this practice by both oral and written means, the oral being the most prevalent, for which he adduces the classical authors Lucian and Apuleius. At a key moment in this earlier transmission, Martin considers the spread of binding from Greek to Roman practice, namely, by cultural contact in Magna Graecia, then from Rome throughout the Roman provinces. A more nuanced discussion of how its adoption in those areas brought changes in form and content would have been desirable and would have supported the author's conception of magic, in which he draws on Mauss [1902–1903], as innovative and adaptable [5].

Martin illustrates the written mode of transmission primarily with two recipes from late ancient Greek handbooks preserved on papyrus from Egypt, which he presents in French translation only.<sup>1</sup> Aside from the obvious problems of reliance on so small a sample and on texts heavily influenced by local tradition (a significant portion of Preisendanz and Henrichs 1974, P 4 is in the Egyptian language), it is important to note that the latter recipe [Preisendanz and Henrichs 1974, P 4] serves a distinct, separate type of binding in erotic magic. Some discussion of the differentiation between erotic and other kinds of binding directed at personal enemies would have been useful. Indeed, the bibliography especially on the erotic side is rather bare: one might refer above all to Faraone's account [Faraone 1999].

Martin next traces binding into the medieval West: lead tablets with indecipherable signs excavated from Merovingian graves, a few examples from medieval France, and references in medieval authors to maleficent practices involving weaving. It is not entirely clear to me, however, how a homily condemning the use of inscribed metal tablets as phylacteries for protec-

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<sup>1</sup> The texts in question are an opisthographic book-roll of the third or fourth centuries AD, probably from Thebes or the Fayum and now in London, British Library pap. 121 [Preisendanz and Henrichs 1974, P 7.429–458] and the 'great Paris magical codex' from Thebes, Bibliothèque nationale de France cod. suppl. gr. 574, dated to the fourth century AD [Preisendanz and Henrichs 1974, P 4.296–335].

tion against storms ‘fait une référence très claire à la survie des tablettes de malédiction’ [18]. The piercing of a figurine with iron needles recounted in 10th-century England is likewise a rather vague reminiscence.<sup>2</sup> A general weakness in the medieval account is, again, a lack of attention to what local traditions may have contributed to the traditional inheritance. Martin’s treatment is particularly strong in accounts of trials and investigations from France, with consideration of the use of effigies, especially of wax, and of a sort of ‘Christianization’ in the baptism of these figurines. He points, finally, to the fascinating survival of the inscribed *defixio* tablet as late as the 17th century in Britain. An intriguing point is made in the conclusion about ritual binding as a release for passionate emotion, though the article has not theorized the mechanism for how this release happens nor provided any concrete grounds for evaluation of the closing question ‘combien de crimes, combien de viols l’évoûtement a-t-il permis d’éviter?’ [24].

S. Kerneis [25–42] considers a smaller and more localized subset of material evidence for binding (*defixio*) tablets from Roman Britain, specifically following a distinction developed by H. Versnel, a separate category of ‘prayers for justice’ as examples of an alternative system of justice outside of that controlled by the state. Kerneis concentrates on a group of about 100 tablets found at the sanctuary of Minerva/Sul at Bath, dated to the second through fourth centuries AD and concerned with theft, with the question ‘quelle relation entretenaient les prières judiciaires avec la mentalité magique’ and a related attempt at reconstructing the ritual procedure at the temple that would have accompanied the tablets. In general, despite formal similarities with ways of seeking justice in the legal system and a divergence in sphere from the secret execrations of curse tablets, an ‘action magique’ [29] remains at the core of the procedure. Applying anthropological *comparanda*, the solemn, public cursing of thieves by theft victims in Borneo discussed by Frazer, Kerneis interprets the Bath rituals as a means of applying pressure to the culprit, the goal being the return of the item and restoration of peace in the community. In Kerneis’ view, this judicial *defixio* is a compromise, adding ‘enchantement’ to Roman legal forms that convinced provincial users of the efficacy of the procedure and ultimately serving as a form of Roman-

<sup>2</sup> For the wide, if not universal, cross-cultural extent of aggressive ritual involving the mutilation of effigies (‘sympathetic magic’), see already [Frazer 1911–1915](#), 1.54–69.

ization. Kerneis imputes a great deal of agency to priests in this model, e.g., ‘les prêtres sont à leur façon les acteurs de la romanisation des provinces’; but in the case of Roman Britain, where little evidence for the priestly role is adduced, it seems to be mostly the author’s assumption that priests will have been central to this first, reconciliatory stage.

J.-M. Spieser [333–351] provides an orientation to the stance of the Christian church towards what it itself defined as magic at an early phase of its existence, the third through seventh centuries, in the process focusing particularly on amulets. Beginning with the proliferation of amulets in the third century, which he ties to a breakdown of ‘le système conceptuel qui unissait les acteurs de l’empire romain’ [334], Spieser traces how Christianity ‘se développe dans le cadre conceptuel de son époque’ and so includes the use of amulets and apotropaic ritual [339]. Such amulets show combinations of Christian and non-Christian iconography and text. Christians are in general embarrassed by the proximity between their ritual—and by the acknowledgment of miracles and ‘le pouvoir des mots’—and that of pagans and so take pains to delineate and to defend Christ from the label of magician. For patristic authors, the project of defining a separate Christian identity entails conceding the efficacy of magic while also strongly condemning it. Slower in its progress is the Christianization of the tendency to resort to invisible forces for protection in the form of amulets, a category rather broadly drawn by Spieser to include ‘blessing’ tokens given to pilgrims (*eulogia*). Indeed, this amuletic inheritance lasts all through the medieval period in both East and West.

Amulets are also at the core of an essay entitled ‘An Antique Magical Book Used for Making Sixth-Century Byzantine Amulets?’ [43–66], in which J. Spier considers continuity in magical practices through written media in a period of transition. Despite his admission that, in reference to his title, ‘no sixth-century magical book in fact survives’ [43], we are fortunate to have the remains of several Greek formularies on papyrus from the fifth and sixth centuries,<sup>3</sup> which might have been considered here. Spier’s main conclusions

<sup>3</sup> E.g., *P.Ant.* 2.66 [Daniel and Maltomini 1990–1992, 2 no. 94], *P.Ant.* 3.140 [Daniel and Maltomini 1990–1992, 2 no. 99], *P.Mil.Vogl. inv.* 1245–1253 [Maltomini 1979, 58–93; Daniel and Maltomini 1990–1992, 2 no. 96], *P.Mil.Vogl. inv.* 1251 [Maltomini 1979, 94–112; Daniel and Maltomini 1990–1992, 2 no. 97], *P.Mil.Vogl. inv.* 1254–1262 [Maltomini 1979, 113–120; Daniel and Maltomini 1990–1992, 2 no. 98].

are valid and well demonstrated—that a significant amount of such continuity from pre-Christian practice did exist in early Byzantium, specifically, in formulae visible in the text inscribed on apotropaic metal amulets—and he has made a useful contribution to an area which could surely benefit from further examination, for which the more detailed study promised here [44n3] will also be eagerly awaited, and in which for example the grouping of amulets by workshops or ateliers and the criteria for those distinctions may be further developed [44–45]. The essay is open to criticism on several points of detail, however.

First, a more rigorous examination of the *‘historiolae, little stories that resemble folktales’* [54] which Spier frequently identifies among the amuletic formulae with reference only to Heim’s useful but dated study [1893], seems necessary [see, e.g., Frankfurter 1995]. Another of the formulae, which urges the harmful entity to flee because some higher power is pursuing it, was not completely ‘Christianized by the fifth century’ as Spier claims [54]. Indeed, Poseidon appears in the role of pursuer in an incantation still circulating in a Byzantine compendium of veterinary medicine<sup>4</sup> and a variant of the formula in a 15th-century manuscript threatens another affliction, ‘the king of Hades chains you’.<sup>5</sup> For the intriguing mention of the fierce dog (λάβραξ ὁ κύων)<sup>6</sup> in the amulet discussed on pages 54–55, whose presence is apparently

<sup>4</sup> Hippiatrica Parisina 22 φεῦγε οὖν κακὴ μάλι, διώκει σε Ποσειδῶν [Oder and Hoppe 1924–1927]; cf. Heim 1893, no. 65.

<sup>5</sup> Vassiliev 1893, 334 from Vatican, BAV cod. Barber. gr. III 3, «φεῦγε κείον, φεῦγε ἡμί-κτιον· ὁ βασιλεὺς τοῦ ἄδου σε δεσμεύει.» [τοῦ ἄδου *coniec*: τὸν ἄδον *cod.*, Vassiliev].

<sup>6</sup> Spier’s reading «ΛΑΒΡΑΞ» (for which «ΛΑΒΡΑΧ» is presumably a mere mechanical error) is difficult to confirm on the photograph [fig. 6]: only a single letter appears to be present between «ΚΑΙ» and «ΒΡΑΞ», which resembles neither «Λ» nor «Α». Indeed, I would prefer to read «Ο», supposing an error on the part of the engraver: «ΚΑΙΟ<ΛΑ>ΒΡΑΞΟΚΥΩΝ» for «καὶ ὁ <λά> βραξ ὁ κύων». The sense is, in any case, substantively the same.

intended to ward off demons, there are in fact several parallels in amulets of a similar type,<sup>7</sup> though its interpretation remains uncertain.<sup>8</sup>

The discussion of the wandering womb [55ff] could be enriched by reference to C. A. Faraone's thorough study on belief in, and measures against, this supposed malady in classical and late antiquity [2011]. Spier adduces an amulet, now in the British Museum and said to be from Akko, of uncertain function and interpretation, as a plausible precedent for some of the formulaic phrasing of a group of later Byzantine amulets specifically targeting the wandering womb, and on which he has written a fundamental study [Spier 1993]. In the text of that amulet, of which Spier presents a partial edition on pages 55–56, it seems better, based on the accompanying photograph [fig. 7], to take «EIAIEC» with the following «M» and to regard the resulting «EIAIECM» as a simple graphic error of the engraver for «EIAIECAI» («AI» confused with «M»), that is, «ειλίεσαι» for «ειλύεσαι», a *koine* form for «ειλύη» ('you coil'), rather than Spier's «ειλί<cc>εic». <sup>9</sup> The interpretation offered for «ματέρα ἀπουγίεν» (*sic*), with the translation 'he healed the womb',<sup>10</sup> is very doubtful.

Spier is surely right that the core of the 'spell to calm the womb' [56ff] is 'clearly very old' and surely its original form is not Christian. But it might have been of interest to present a nuanced view of how this core was in fact subject to some amount of Christianization in its combination with

<sup>7</sup> Most recently, *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* 36.1316 (found in excavations at Tyre); three further examples of uncertain origin: Seyrig 1934, 5–9 (with Barb 1972 and Robert 1965, 267n1); Barb 1972, 344–353 and 353–357.

<sup>8</sup> I wonder whether there may be an association with the Babylonian goddess Gula of Isin. On apotropaic dog statues among the Assyrians and a collection of recipes for making such figures and inscribing them with apotropaic names such as 'conqueror of the unfriendly', borne out by applied examples found in the palace of Ashurbanipal, see Faraone 1987, 269–270. On the figure of Sisinnios, add a reference to Schwarz 1996, the most convincing explanation so far offered for the etymology and mythological context of the name.

<sup>9</sup> If this were the underlying verb, we might expect the *koine* form «ἐλίεσαι» (or «ἐλίεσαι») rather than the Ionic «ειλίεσαι».

<sup>10</sup> As if «μήτραν ἀφύγιεν», from an otherwise unattested «ἀφυγίζω» (cf. «ἀφυγιάζω»?) A form of «ἀπειργώ» (by-form «ἀπειργίζω»?) might be preferable, «ἀπουργίεν» for «ἀπειρξεν» ('he warded off' or 'he checked'). In any case, the difficulty calls for some comment by the editor justifying his reading.

Christian formulae, a process quite visible in the material which he has himself gathered in [Spier 1993](#). As it stands, his discussion focuses on four unpublished amulets, each illustrated by photographs. For the first three [figs. 11–13], Spier provides only partial transcriptions of the Greek text; and in some cases the readings are doubtful or difficult to confirm on the photographs. A fuller description of the entire object in each case, especially the text beyond the side or few lines quoted, would have been desirable, though the author may well already be in the course of remedying this in his more detailed study. It is of great interest, for example, that the amulet pictured in figure 13 and discussed on pages 62–65 in fact provides a personal name for the fierce hound mentioned above, Titianos (ὁ λάβραξ κοίων [l. κύων] «Τιτιανός», ll. 5–6, is clear on the photograph). Finally, the connection between what Spier terms the ‘hungry wolf’ formula on the Byzantine amulets and an incantation in a late ancient Latin medical collection by Marcellus of Bordeaux [[Niedermann 1916](#), 20.78] is intriguing but not as certain as it is presented here: the commonality is only in the coincidence on both sides of wolves and eating, whereas it can easily be objected that the voraciousness of wolves is well known wherever they are encountered.

R. Gordon also considers the graphic side of ritual [253–300], selecting the *charaktêr* (χαρακτήρ) as a representative example of the ‘ritualised manipulation of writing’ [253]. Gordon traces tradition and innovation in these marks, tentatively defined as significant graphic signs, ‘intentional but not conforming to linguistic rules’ [255], which will be familiar to specialists from their ubiquity in both handbooks and amuletic applications. His contribution provides a welcome application of critical theory to the study of such signs, as well as a systematic basis for their description, well illustrated with reproductions of the signs themselves.

Gordon has selected a sample of more than 1,000 *charaktêres*, of which he finds 12 occurring in ‘precisely the same form more than fifteen times’ (reproduced on page 264). He sketches a hypothetical process by which the signs could transgress ‘all the basic assumptions behind conventional writing-systems’ yet still form a ‘communicative system’ by relying on a set of 31 ‘basal’ signs derived primarily from the Greek and Latin alphabets, subjected to ‘a few estranging devices,’ especially the addition of circles at the termini (*signes pommelés*) to create great variety [266]. Gordon finds that this basic process could account for 85% of the sample, the rest perhaps



derived from signs in the Egyptian language, *sigla* in technical literature, or random invention. The routinized process of sign-creation would have been especially appealing in contexts of low technical proficiency, while high-quality products were accompanied by the most inventive *charaktères*, e.g., the well known ‘divination kit’ from ancient Pergamon.

The so-called Greek magical papyri constitute an important early source for *charaktères* and here, where his command of the material and resulting analysis is at its strongest, Gordon locates the ultimate origins of the signs in Graeco-Egyptian practice, specifically, the dynamics of the introduction of the Greek language to the Egyptian temples. The bilingual priests offered ‘magical services’ to Greek clients, drawing on traditional Egyptian expertise with the introduction of material from Greek and Jewish sources. Throughout the Roman period, with the general decline in the skill of writing in hieroglyphic and the substitution of pseudo-hieroglyphs, ‘it was often the idea of hieroglyphs rather than the text they communicated that was important’ [260–261]. The divinity and symbolic signification claimed for hieroglyphs by Greek authors resemble the claims made for *charaktères* and so the development of the latter is likely associated with Greek reception of hieroglyphs, while they seem particularly favored ‘by practitioners on the margins of the temple tradition, those in most frequent contact with clients requiring pragmatic magical services’ [263].

The rest of the essay is devoted to a survey of re-appropriation, or creative misunderstanding, of the *charaktères* in Coptic, Byzantine, and Western medieval magical practice.

In Coptic sources, Gordon finds a high degree of routinization and the dominance of one particular subtype, the *signe pommeté*. A related development in the later first millennium is their close connection with images of Christian holy figures. In Gordon’s distinction—*charaktères* in Coptic practice are intended for ‘an implied human reader’, especially due to their presentation in lengthy series, in contrast to Graeco-Egyptian practice where the aim is ‘spirit-attention’ [276]—there is perhaps an underestimation of the presence of the former goal in the latter practice. What is to prevent us from supposing, with no less foundation, that the practitioners behind the Coptic texts simply believed that their spirits would pay attention best to such accumulations? It is worth pointing out also, *à propos* of spirits, that the Coptic name « ΤΕΝΑΜΙC » (‘tenamis’), with which the lesser spirits are labeled in the text P.Heid. inv.

Kopt. 686, can probably be understood as a deformation of the Greek «δύναμις» ('*dunamis*'),<sup>11</sup> that is, 'Power' [*contra* 276n64] and, hence, referred to the Δυνάμεις (Powers) of the angelic hierarchy attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite.

For Byzantine practice, Gordon is mainly concerned with 'clerical or scribal magic' [280], for which he relies on handbooks and recipes represented by relatively late manuscript material dating to the 15th through 19th centuries,<sup>12</sup> where there is continuity in name (χαρακτήρ) but a 'quite different overall impression' in the much livelier graphic form [285]. He points to 'uncertainty about how best to go about composing *charaktères*' in the absence of institutional training (such as the Graeco-Egyptian temples), the transmission context being instead the 'clandestine textual community' and the tradition being supplemented by the admixture of other types of signs. What Gordon adduces as one instance of the latter, termed 'sigilla', however, and reproduced on page 289,<sup>13</sup> seems to recall the *charaktères* that he adduces from the much earlier Pergamon divination equipment, a point which might have been explored further. Gordon points out that *charaktères* are rare on Byzantine amulets—though it is worth bearing in mind that these are in general rare—with the exception of the *hystera* amulets studied by Spier [1993]. While Gordon concentrates on direct attestations, commendably in my view, perhaps select *testimonia* to such use of signs would have helped fill in the gaps in the Byzantine tradition. I suggest a couple of examples from the *acta* of the 14th-century patriarchal court at Constantinople of pros-

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Förster 2002, s.v. δύναμις.

<sup>12</sup> Gordon is to be commended for accurate engagement with these important yet difficult and understudied texts. I offer here comments on two points of detail: on p. 283n82, the text accompanying the amulet-design in the Bolognese codex numbered 17 in Delatte 1927, 604, «...ἰδοῦν Κολομών υἱὸς Δαυὶδ...» is better translated '...Here is Solomon, son of David', etc., a common idiomatic use of «ἰδοῦν» in fact frequently employed in texts of this type to introduce *charaktères* themselves, e.g., «ἰδοῦν οἱ χαρακτήρες» ('Here are the *charaktères*'). On p. 285, «καὶ παράχουσε τοὺς» should be translated 'and bury them' (i.e., the inscribed *charaktères*), not 'and it will pull them in' (i.e., potential customers), though Gordon is probably right in seeing the use of lead from a fishing net as the substrate material (and the timing of the ritual near the Full Moon) as symbolic for the desired attraction of business to a workshop.

<sup>13</sup> From an 18th-century manuscript now in Athens: see Delatte 1927, 19.

ecution and punishment for magical practices which show that these signs were present in earlier Byzantine usage, at the very least in the vocabulary of plausible defamation. In one, dated to 1338, the accused is said to have been apprehended defiling the name of Christ by writing it and treading upon the ink, as well as writing down *χαρακτήρες* and invocations of demons.<sup>14</sup> In another, a specialist from Thessalonica is said to have created an amulet for a monk to win ecclesiastical advancement, including writing the Lord's Prayer backwards and upside-down, the names of the targets of the monk's quest for favor, and *χαρακτήρες*, which the monk duly wore stitched into his clothing after exposing it to the stars overnight, and which was discovered on his person in court.<sup>15</sup>

In the Western medieval tradition, Gordon finds that signs comparable to *charaktères* are rare until the introduction *via* Latin translation of Arab, Greek, and Jewish texts in the 12th century. Some earlier prescriptions for the use of *caracteres*, so called, in amulets are known, however; and, of course, we should bear in mind the significantly smaller overall quantity of early medieval manuscripts. For these *caracteres* and later forms influenced by the external traditions, Gordon relies on the study by Grévin and Véronèse [2004]. He finds a significant amount of innovation in both form and terminology

<sup>14</sup> Miklosich and Müller 1860–1890, 1.180 (no. 79); Hunger *et alii* 1981–1995, 2.124 (no. 113):

ὅς καὶ γράφειν τὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ ἀληθινοῦ θεοῦ μέγιστον καὶ θεώτατον ὄνομα καὶ σβεννύειν καὶ πατεῖν τῷ μέλανι, ἅμα δὲ καὶ χαρακτήρας καὶ ἐπικλήσεις δαιμόνων ἐκτίθεσθαι.

<sup>15</sup> Miklosich and Müller 1860–1890, 1.343–344 (no. 153); Hunger *et alii* 1981–1995, 3.152 (no. 199):

ὁ Καππαδόκης...τήν τε γὰρ κοινήν τῶν Χριστιανῶν ἡμῶν προσευχὴν τὴν εἰς τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν καὶ κατὰ χάριν πατέρα ἀναπεμπομένην γράμμασιν ἀντικτρόφως καὶ ἐν-ἀλλὰξ ἔγραψεν ἐν χάρτι τινὶ παραγεγραφὸς τούτω καὶ τὰ ἅπερ ἐξελέξατο, καθάπερ ἐβουλήθη, ὀνόματα, ὥστε εἶναι αὐτοὺς εὐηγίους καὶ εὐενδότους καὶ καθυπαγομένους ἕνεκα τῶν ζητημάτων αὐτοῦ, πρὸς δὲ καὶ χαρακτήρας τινὰς...πάννυχον κείμενον δι-εβίβασεν ἀντικρὺ τῶν ἄστρον...ὁ μοναχὸς τῷ ἱματίῳ προσράγας τοῖς στέρνοις εἶχεν ἐγκείμενον.

That the entire synod witnessed the *χαρακτήρες* is stressed:

τῶν προσγεγραμμένων ἐν τῷ χάρτι κατὰ τὸν ἀναγεγραμμένον τρόπον χαρακτήρων καὶ γραμμάτων ἀριδίλως ἀναφανέντων εἰς μέσον συνοδικῶς.

(e.g., also ‘figura, signum, sigillum’, etc.) but, all in all, a relatively minor role for these signs in medieval European practice.

In conclusion, Gordon remarks that in the long term, the ‘incomprehensibility’ [263] which had made *charaktères* so popular a ritual implement eventually proved a weakness: time and again, users attempted to recover some sort of signification by linking the signs to more intelligible figures, ‘a tacit admission that mere unintelligibility in the long run is no basis for a claim to power’ [299]. Worthy of special note, finally, is the ‘exhaustive database of Graeco-Egyptian *charaktères*’ which Gordon signals [270n53], under development by K. Dzwiza at the University of Heidelberg. Its eventual completion will no doubt greatly benefit the study of this long neglected textual practice.

E. Zwierlein-Diehl turns to the use of engraved precious stones for protection and healing, in particular, ‘the afterlife of magical gems’ in the medieval and early modern West [87–130]. She considers this afterlife in three parts: tradition, transformation, and innovation. Under tradition falls the continued use of gems as originally intended, that is, as amulets and occasionally as seals, as attested in the archeological record and indirectly through the copying and reading of lapidaries. Discussion of the seals goes into much more detail in tracing discussions of hematite and heliotrope from Pliny through various medieval and early modern compendia;<sup>16</sup> further discussion of the amulets would have been welcome. Under ‘transformation’, Zwierlein-Diehl considers new interpretations given to the iconography of gems as described in lapidaries, with particularly detailed discussion of the treatise attributed to the Jewish author Techel. There, however, it seems more proper to speak of an introduction of a different tradition, namely, a Jewish one, brought to bear on familiar materials and needs. Under ‘innovation’, finally, comes new scholarly interpretation of magical gems in the Renaissance as products of an early Christian heresy. The scholarly interpretation substitutes for a ‘living tradition’ about the meaning of the stones, but also ‘[q]uite independent of

<sup>16</sup> A couple of minor points on Zwierlein-Diehl’s treatment of Latin texts: ‘spells’ [98] is not the best translation for the *carmina* by which the heliotrope is said to predict the future in the passage cited from Damigeron-Evax but rather ‘poetic utterances’ *vel. sim.*: these are oracular responses given in meter, part of a venerable tradition extending back to Greek antiquity. On p. 107, in Techel no. 33, ‘equus spumans’ should be translated ‘a horse foaming at the mouth’ rather than ‘a leaping horse’.

this learned development, belief in the magical powers of these gems continued unabated' [108]. Zwierlein-Diehl's discussion of these developments is particularly strong, tracing collaboration between scholars and engravers, and well illustrated with photographs. This Renaissance innovation encompasses not only interpretation but also production, a particularly interesting example of which is a Hellenistic cameo of Harpocrates inscribed in the Renaissance with another image of the divinity and an invocation, 'a highly learned' original composition.

Á. M. Nagy also deals with the medieval and early modern reception of engraved gems, concentrating on a single engraved motif, a human figure with the head of a rooster and snakes for legs (the 'cock-headed anguipede') often accompanied by a Greek version of the Hebrew tetragrammaton [131–155]. His discussion fills a gap in the study of such gems between their original production in classical and late antiquity and their rediscovery in the well-known publications by Macarius and Chifflet in the 17th century. As Nagy traces it, the motif was first adopted by a gradually Christianizing culture in late antiquity in combination with Christian iconography, at least some of them luxury products. Medieval re-use saw such gems built into the design of the decoration of reliquaries and incorporated into royal and other official seals, as shown by their surviving impressions on documents; both are evidence of 'une nouvelle interprétation du schéma' alongside 'gnostique' and 'magique' [140]. Several of the gems used as seals, Nagy suggests, were in fact produced in the medieval period. At the same time, there was a diffusion of information about the motif in Western medieval lapidaries, both Latin and vernacular, thanks to its inclusion in the influential *Liber sigillorum*. The prevailing textual description refers to a helmeted human figure trampling snakes, in contrast to a smaller group of late-Renaissance descriptions likely based on observation of ancient *exempla*. Nagy argues that the former group does not represent a misreading of the iconography but is instead an expression of the prevailing interpretation of its meaning, which is consistent with an amuletic function claimed for it by the lapidaries for protection against enemies. A later 'péjorative' reading emerged in the 16th and 17th centuries and cast the anguipede as one of the mythological Giants. Here, Nagy finds the genesis of the influential theory of Macarius that the anguipede-schema represents 'l'héritage matériel des hérétiques' [152].

A. Mastrocinque also selects a single gem type for his contribution [157–167], which he terms the fusiform or spindle hematite and finds noteworthy for its uncommon physical disposition. These gems are engraved with images but, in the absence of any traces of piercing or mounting on surviving specimens, could not have served the usual function of amulets worn on the person. It could be objected, however, that such objects might have been worn in other ways: metal tubes and capsules as containers for amuletic objects, suspended in turn around the neck of the bearer, are well attested. In any case, Mastrocinque points out plausibly that the use of hematite (blood-stone) suggests that these gems targeted blood. More speculative, but still worth entertaining, is his suggestion that the spindle form was intended to facilitate insertion of other medicinal substances into the nostrils to stop nosebleeds. Mastrocinque concludes with a brief discussion and catalogue of 16 examples of objects with prismatic form, speculating about identification of workshops responsible for the production of subsets of this group and a possible function for the objects ‘as seals to transmit a divine force to medical substances’ [167].

V. Dasen continues the attention to stones used for healing and protection [195–220], tracing the ‘anthropomorphisme’ applied in antiquity to such objects in one specific sense, how writers about and users of precious stones attribute gender to them, and how this gender factors into their application. Dasen begins by tracing evidence for ancient belief in the animation of stones more generally in descriptions of transformations between stone and other organic substances, as well as of substances that occupy a liminal space between the two (such as coral), of stones resembling or extracted from animals, and of stones that resemble parts of the human body. She then provides an interesting review, though with a tendency to collapse evidence from ancient sources (e.g., Pliny the Elder) with those of a much later date (Marbode of Rennes, Mandeville), of the principles by which stones were categorized as masculine (ἄρρην) or feminine (θηλυκ) in lapidaries or, in one case, as bisexual (διφής): principles such as color, texture, and other physical features, the aetite, for example, perhaps a kind of geode, being associated with birth because its form suggests pregnancy.<sup>17</sup> But, as Dasen points out

<sup>17</sup> Dasen’s treatment of literary sources is not without occasional errors of detail: e.g., the reading of Pliny’s *Nat. hist.* 37.151 [211: wrongly cited as 37.150] to claim that the stone *baroptenus* produces monsters: ‘on n’en veut pas comme amulette, parce qu’il

by applying the corrective of archeological evidence for the use of precious stones as amulets, these sex-based distinctions did not restrict use to one human gender or another.

The essay by P. Gaillard-Seux [169–194] shifts to the use of substances derived from animals but applied to similar aims, namely, to medical remedies based on the swallow, particularly, to the powder or liquid produced from its young and stones extracted from its body especially for disorders of the eyes. Gaillard-Seux argues that such practices, which were transmitted to the medieval West by way of late ancient medical authors such as Marcellus of Bordeaux and derived in turn from earlier, Hellenistic *physica* such as that attributed to Democritus (Bolos of Mendes) and circulating under the names of various eastern sages such as Zoroaster, ultimately originated in the ancient Near East.

The author sees in lore about the swallow and the plant *chelidonia* (celandine)—which acquired an association with healing the eyes by association with the swallow, which was supposed to be able to heal its own eyes—the sort of analogical reasoning based on natural sympathy characteristic of magic. In the discussion of Pliny the Elder, there is a preference for a particular type of swallow that builds its nest underground, reached by a tunnel, to treat maladies of the throat because, Gaillard-Seux supposes, the nest resembles the human throat. Any accompanying ritual acts that might have made such sympathetic logic clear, however, will have been stripped out by the medical writers: the validity of this hypothesis seems stronger in some cases than others, however, as with Marcellus of Bordeaux, who shows little hesitation in describing magical ritual.<sup>18</sup>

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engendre des monstres [*proiciture portentosa*]. The Latin should in fact read *proicitur ueluti portentosa*, wherein there is nothing to suggest any generative function of the stone; rather, it is rejected as an amulet (*adalligata*) because it is monstrous (i.e., monstrously ugly). To the discussion of the recipe against bleeding in the Leiden codex, UB VLQ 9, add Barb 1952, an important study with emendation of the text.

<sup>18</sup> E.g., the transfer of warts from the patient to another person by a ritual involving contact with pebbles or the healing of wounds by the analogous mutilation and healing of a plant [see Niedermann 1916, 34.102 and 33.26, respectively]. Note that Marcellus claims in the preface to his *De medicamentis* to have included in his collection anything whatsoever useful for the promotion of health and healing, no matter how lowly the source:

The connections that Gaillard-Seux draws with traditions in the Near East and Egypt are intriguing but more difficult to document, e.g., the association between celandine and swallows modeled on that between the dove and olive branch in the biblical deluge, the lunar associations of ‘columbids’ as relevant to the treatment of epilepsy, and a further link with Aphrodite (cf. Ishtar and Isis) that adds a religious dimension beyond the appeal to natural sympathy.

F. Marco Simón examines ‘nigromancy’, or necromancy, in the early modern period as attested by accusations of its performance in trials under the Inquisition in Aragón [67–85]. Marco Simón concentrates on one particular trial, that of Joan Vincente in 1511, and conducts an analysis of the ritual practices described in the official transcript with particular attention to intersections with known handbooks such as the *Clavicula Salomonis*, which Vincente stood accused of possessing.<sup>19</sup> There is further consideration of other techniques ascribed to Vincente, including lecanomancy, and their background in the Greek magical papyri and elsewhere. Marco Simón finds a general resemblance to late ancient practice and traces traditions attributing magical knowledge to the biblical King Solomon as well as the treatises attributed to him that passed from Byzantium to the West, and Hebrew and Arabic texts translated into Latin.

Marco Simón shows that such practices were far from a peripheral phenomenon in late medieval society: earnest practitioners seeking direct access to divine power ensured variation, updating, and adaptation in the transmission of material over long periods of time. For secular and ecclesiastical courts,

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*si quid umquam congruum sanitati curationique hominum uel ab aliis comperi uel ipse usu adprobauit uel legendo cognouit, id sparsum inconditumque collegi...nec solum ueteres medicinae artis auctores...lectione scrutatus sum sed etiam ab agrestibus et plebeis remedia fortuita atque simplicia...didici.*

<sup>19</sup> References here are sometimes incomplete, e.g., where in Caesarius of Heisterbach does ‘the notion of the circle as a protective device’ appear [74]? What is the shelf-mark for ‘the Raulinson manuscript of the Bodleian Library’ which also contains this device [74]? Is it perhaps the same one mentioned on p. 75, again without shelf-mark but with reference to [Kieckhefer 1998](#)? What Marco Simón means by a ‘classic Byzantine treatise on magic’ is unclear [75] in referring to [Greenfield 1988](#), 286–287 and, indeed, the notion of ‘classic’ and ‘treatise on magic’ cannot help but seem at odds.



in turn, this constituted a serious concern. Among the practitioners, there was a particular role for minor clergy, such as Vincente himself.

The textual evidence of the flourishing survival of handbooks is undisputed but the veracity of the accusation against Joan Vincente and others is an issue not explicitly addressed by the author. One wonders whether the fact that Vincente obtained an annulment of his death sentence from the papal curia, as Marco Simón points out [72], might indicate problems in the evidence or the possibility of false confessions. Further, more attention could have been paid to distinguishing between the venerable and widespread stereotypes and rhetorical *topoi* of sorcery from the *realia* of late medieval practice. Just how much of the trial transcript of Vincente could have been supplied by the former?

F. Gury considers what may be ancient evidence for another branch of occult knowledge, alchemy, in a welcome investigation of a neglected aspect of the monarchic project of the Roman emperor Caligula [221–251]. In this closely argued and well documented account, Gury begins with Pliny's account of how Caligula managed to produce gold of high quality from orpiment but at prohibitive expense and extremely low efficiency [*Nat. hist.* 33.79], which on examination Gury finds plausible grounds for posing the question whether Caligula was 'le premier prince alchimiste d'Occident' [227]. There is also the purely chemical explanation belonging more to metallurgy than to alchemy that the procedure involved simply the refinement of large amounts of orpiment-ore containing also trace amounts of gold. The distinction, as drawn by Gury after comparing the method described by Pliny with later alchemical recipes, is the introduction into technical recipes of the mystical, drawn from eastern influences as well as of elements of Greek philosophy. Gury finds that Caligula's process was not purely empirical: the choice of orpiment was probably informed by knowledge of its religious significance in Egypt as well as its obvious resemblance to true gold, to which he may have hoped it could be transformed. Caligula was well-versed in chemicals (poisons) and the ability to produce gold would have suited his well-known eagerness to procure money by all available means. But it will also have satisfied a separate, 'véritable fascination pour l'or' which included bodily contact, which Gury in turn ties to the emperor's desire for deification, inspired by the solar symbolism of gold in ancient Egypt and its use along with orpiment in mummification. Indeed, this raises the intriguing possibility

that gold-making was associated with his initiation into the rites of Isis-Hathor. Gury notes the ‘Egyptophilia’ of Caligula’s family, in particular, of his father Germanicus, who sought an oracular response from the Apis bull, an incarnation of Ptah, who was himself associated with metallurgy. Various members of Caligula’s entourage were also versed in the occult. All in all, alchemical *savoir* would have been readily accessible to him, even if it cannot be conclusively proven that he made use of it.

W. Hübner [301–330] provides a useful but necessarily cursory survey of the ancient project of *melothesia*, part of a Platonic and Neoplatonic system of projecting ‘les structures du macrocosme céleste au microcosme du corps humain’ [301], here the mapping of the 12 zodiacal signs onto the various parts of the human body. In medieval and Renaissance medicine, *melothesia* was of particular importance for determining the correct location for bloodletting. Hübner concentrates on the iconographic evidence for this mapping, attested beginning in the medieval period, and his discussion is richly illustrated with reproductions from manuscripts. A primary problem in this visual mapping was how to superimpose a circular form, the zodiacal circle or ecliptic, upon a (normally linear) representation of the human figure. Some approaches contorted either the one or the other: the preference was to keep the human figure erect, as a mark of dignity. It also proved possible to combine a circular zodiac with a standing human figure marked at the appropriate points with duplicate signs, as in the *Très Riches Heures* of the Duke of Berry. Alternatively, rays were drawn to link the signs on a circular border with the parts of a standing figure in the middle. Over time, the presence of the celestial circle diminished in favor of a rectangular arrangement of the signs around the human figure, again linked by rays. Hübner notes survivals into the 20th century in the American *Farmer’s Almanac*. Some consideration of the development, or lack thereof, of *melothesia* in Byzantine astrology, given the clear roots of the Western practice in ancient Greek texts, would only have further enriched this study.

With the contribution of H. Bernier-Farella [353–369], the focus of the volume shifts from the West to Byzantium (more so than that of Spieser, which introduces the Byzantine section but seems to engage more with the world of late antiquity), though the concern about tracing change and continuity with respect to classical antiquity remains. Bernier-Farella’s topic is necromancy, a reflection on rituals of communication between the living and dead in

antiquity and Byzantium; in particular, the terminology used to describe such practices and to what extent they represent ‘survivance’.

Beginning with antiquity, she finds that necromancy is not originally assimilated to the semantic field of magic, as attested in Homer, Herodotus, Plutarch, and Pausanias, but rather constitutes a subspecialty within divination. A more pejorative characterization of necromancy is found in Artemidorus of Ephesus and the presence of institutional control seems to be a distinguishing factor between ‘la nécromancie ordinaire’ and ‘la nécromancie magique’, as well as the communication with the more dangerous ‘restless dead’ as studied by S. Iles Johnston [1999]. Nor was necromancy, in the broad definition of Bernier-Farella, immediately condemned in patristic Christian texts. Here she adduces an anecdote about Macarius of Egypt in which the anchorite finds a human skull in the desert and questions it as to its former owner (a pagan priest) and the conditions of his and other souls in hell. There is no question, of course, of this text applying the narrower label of necromancy, along the lines of Bernier-Farella’s ‘nécromancie magique’, to that act of communication. An innovation in the patristic period is the attribution of all divination, including necromancy, to demons, whereas earlier Platonic theory cast *daimones* as only intermediaries for the gods; imperial law reserves condemnation only for the private practice of necromancy.

Bernier-Farella next searches for a coherent place for necromancy in later Byzantine practice, objecting to Maguire’s term ‘survival’ as indicating obsolescence [Maguire 1995, 1], and considering also interaction with the dead in funerary ritual and incubation. Her attempt to demonstrate the currency of necromancy in this period, not implausible in itself, stumbles somewhat in interpretation of the late Byzantine evidence. By the surprising reference on page 363 to a ‘lecture d’un épisode de craniomancie conservé par un papyrus de la fin de la période byzantine’ [my underline] is apparently meant instructions for a ritual preserved in a *paper* manuscript codex. No such material is to be found in the reference given by Bernier-Farella at note 34 to ‘Codex Parisinus 2425’. We must look instead to a 15th-century codex copied by Georgios Mديات, BnF cod. gr. 2419, ff. 140v–141r.<sup>20</sup> The subsequent in-

<sup>20</sup> The instructions there were first edited by Cumont in collation with another copy of the same text in a manuscript now at Milan (BNA cod. H 2 inf., f. 225r) [see Cumont in Boll *et alii* 1898–1953, 3.53] and later by Delatte [1927, 450], who added further material from the same codex.

terpretation that the user is supposed to place the skull ‘sur les ossements d’un animal et sur la fourrure d’une belette’ is not entirely accurate. The directions here in fact read:

ἔπαρον πλευρὸν φουρκικμένου καὶ ποιήσον ἓνα πόλον καὶ βάλε μέσον δέρμα γαλῆς  
μελαίνης καὶ βάλε τὴν κεφαλὴν ἐπάνω εἰς αὐτό,

that is,

Take a rib of a hanged man (φουρκικμένον: cf. Latin *furca*)<sup>21</sup> and make a pole and put in the middle the skin of a black weasel and put the head on top of it.

Terming the ritual ‘un schéma principalement hellène’ without any consideration of the possibility of influence of the Arabic, Jewish, Turkish, or even Western traditions over centuries of Byzantine practice seems rash, especially in view of the text prescribed for inscription on the skull, « μπουκακαριακ λουτζηφερ », the last being a Greek transliteration of the Latin *Lucifer*. I see no justification for the claim ‘c’est-à-dire Lucifer phénico-syrien’.

B. Pitarakis also selects a specific ritual practice, the amuletic use of the iconographic motif of the lion *passant*, in an account well illustrated with photographs and drawings [371–396]. This motif she locates most notably on a group of early Byzantine metal amulets from the Near East, then traces it both backwards to more ancient traditions of medical astrology and forwards in its absorption ‘dans les pratiques de piété populaire’ in later Byzantium. The early Byzantine evidence comes in the form of prescriptions for amuletic rings in the medical compendium of Alexander of Tralles as well as actual amulets from the archeological record. In the case of the red jasper gem now in Paris [373: Delatte and Derchain 1964, no. 280], Pitarakis interprets the object as targeting colic but with an inscription addressed to bile (reading « κολέ » as « χολή », apparently a misprint for « χολή », <sup>22</sup> reasoning that bile was considered the principal cause of colic. It also seems possible, and simpler, to regard « κολε » as orthographically correct as engraved, referring to the colicky colon itself, which is addressed in the vocative (so, articulate « κόλε ») and ordered to retire (« ἀναχώρι » for « ἀναχώρει »), that is, to stop acting up.

<sup>21</sup> See DuCange 1688, s.v. φουρκίζειν.

<sup>22</sup> See Heim 1893, no. 60 for treatment of this incantation

Among the amulets, particular attention is paid to a group of:

- (a) oblong metal pendants depicting the lion along with a mounted figure (often called the holy rider) lancing a demon, a group of animals attacking the ‘suffering’ evil eye and various inscriptions (e.g., the acclamations of « εἰς θεός » and invocations for help with « βοήθει »); and
- (b) circular metal medallions with similar iconography and inscriptions ordering a demon to flee the bearer, with Solomon (or an angel) in pursuit,<sup>23</sup> or the *incipit* of *Psalms* 90.

In the example of the latter type cited on 388n47 in the collection of Dumbarton Oaks, I suggest—based on the photograph published in the catalogue of [Ross 1962](#), no. 60—that at the end of the psalm text around the circumference we should be read « ἐπί » (for « ἐρεῖ »), not « εκ » as previous editors have taken it. Further, Pitarakis publishes for the first time photographs of both sides of the Solomonic medallion amulet in the Benaki Museum, inv. 11497 (she prints text for only side b), whereby we can now correct the reading given by the first edition on side a:<sup>24</sup> read the unassimilated « ἄγγελος » in place of « ἄγγελος ».

In general, Pitarakis finds, the lion could have alternatively beneficial and maleficent connotations, i.e., astral and Mithraic associations but also metaphorical representations of the disease to be combatted or the evil to be warded off, the latter borne out by references in the New Testament and the Testament of Solomon. Pitarakis suggests numerous other iconographic associations, including representations of stylite saints and other Christian symbols. The attention to the iconographic and textual whole of each amulet considered is commendable, though in the absence of explicit contemporary *testimonia* some of the reconstructed significations must remain conjectural.

C. Morrisson [409–429] also considers amuletic objects in Byzantium of an even more specific kind, coins transformed for wearing as amulets. These are attested from the sixth and seventh centuries onward, some also inscribed with prophylactic Christian invocations, variations on « κύριε βοήθει τῷ φο-

<sup>23</sup> The same ‘flight-and-pursuit’ formula mentioned in the contribution of Spier, above.

<sup>24</sup> V. Phoskolou in [Papanikola-Bakirtzi 2002](#), *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* 55.732.

ποῦντι» ('Lord, help the bearer'). Drawing on previous work by Maguire [1997], Morrisson analyzes such objects as products of 'une piété privée dans laquelle l'Église avait réussi à canaliser le besoin de protection des fidèles' [413]. The present study goes into greater detail concerning the objects themselves, based on a well-illustrated sample (which the author hopes will be augmented in the future) drawn from the collections of Dumbarton Oaks and the Bibliothèque nationale de France; and advances our knowledge of both the techniques of transformation and the temporal distribution of the attestations of the practice. Simple perforation for suspension is the most common means of preparation. There is a great increase in attestations after the end of iconoclasm in 843. Morrisson also discusses a related use of 'pseudo-monnaies' featuring in particular the sanctified Constantine and Helena or other paired figures which could pass for them. Relevant to the theme of the first portion of the volume, the author also shows how the practice was taken up in the medieval West. It also continues after Byzantium, e.g., in the modern Greek *konstantinata*, with a particular preference for Venetian coinage, in which the presence of the *mandorla* may indicate a desire for amuletic protection against the evil eye.

Three contributions treat broader categories of Byzantine ritual practices which at least overlap with what might be considered magical. J.-C. Jouette [461–475] focuses on a period from the 11th to the 12th century in Constantinople itself, considering Byzantine folklore about supernatural properties of ancient statues in Constantinople, reprising to some degree previous studies on Constantinopolitan statuary [Dagron 1984, Mango 1963]. Jouette finds a general distrust of the statues manifested in historiographical sources and remarks on their divinatory and talismanic function, the latter concerning particularly talismans supposed to have been set up by Apollonius of Tyana. The latter in particular were tolerated because they belonged 'au domaine naturel et au monde physique' [474].

C. Cupane considers reflections of 'magie malveillante' in Byzantine literature [477–496]. She draws particularly on historical narrative and literary fiction, from the ninth through the 14th centuries and the ritual categories of aggressive magic and binding. The result is a useful survey of the various methods employed—inscribed tablets, nails, figurines—and the social position of their users. Cupane concludes that attestations for 'superstitious' practices span all levels of society, not merely the lower classes. The reader may be left with a

question on Constantinopolitan statuary similar to one raised the chapter by Marco Simón, a question which Cupane addresses in only one case [490]: Just how much of the literary references to such well-attested classical practices as the use of inscribed tablets in bindings (*κατάδεσμοι* and *defixiones*) are mere antiquarian commonplaces of a piece with the markedly classicizing prose of their authors, as opposed to reliable contemporary detail?

A. D. Vakaloudi provides a survey of erotic magic and magic ‘for acquisition of glory and power’ [497–516], certainly a desideratum in Byzantium, though the present contribution must be approached with caution. No definition is offered, temporally or geographically, for ‘the Byzantine era’ [497]; and though the author is not alone in this in the present volume, her lower temporal terminus appears to be the unusually early fourth century AD [cf., e.g., 504], which calls for discussion. It is also difficult to share Vakaloudi’s conclusion, proclaimed at the outset, that ‘the origin of the myth of Faust is originally found in Byzantine magic, as proven by the Byzantine sources’ [497]. Cited in support of this grand claim is the work of A. Kazhdan. But Kazhdan does no more than apply the noncommittal, convenient epithet ‘Faust-like’ to a group of Byzantine narratives referring to contracts with the devil [1995, 77]. The reader will not gain much that is new from Vakaloudi’s review of literary references to black magic; the treatment by Cupane elsewhere in this volume is to be preferred. Indeed, some questionable interpretations are offered here: e.g., a description of a contract between an Antiochene man and the devil in a narrative source as ‘full of every (kind) of lamentation and threat’ («παντὸς θρήνου καὶ ἀπειλής γέμουσαν») is connected ‘with the characteristics of γοητεία (harmful magic)’ [501], that is, as if it is itself a spell of some kind paralleled by the Greek magical papyri. The narrative appears rather to describe only the contents of the contract, i.e., the threats entailed in a breach by the Antiochene and the lamentable implications from the Christian perspective of the author of the narrative.

But the most serious problem with Vakaloudi’s study is that she uses Greek papyri from Egypt as a fundamental source—‘The Magical Papyri are the most basic sources in revealing the most hidden desires and actions of the Byzantine society. [514]’—without orienting the reader to that corpus of texts or considering theoretically how they differ from the literary sources used elsewhere in her account. On a more practical level, the method of citing the papyri changes confusingly between first editions and the standard col-

lected corpus of Preisendanz [as revised in [Preisendanz and Henrichs 1974](#)]. Vakaloudi appears to view this entire genre indiscriminately as Byzantine, even those texts dated as early as the third century AD, e.g., [Preisendanz and Henrichs 1974](#), P LXI [506], which is even more problematic because the text is in fact bilingual, a mixture of Greek and Egyptian, and probably contains further influence from Nubian.<sup>25</sup> Vakaloudi does not engage with the seminal work of C. A. Faraone on ancient Greek erotic magic and its reflections in these papyri from Egypt [1999] and even claims that erotic magic was created by the Byzantines under the influence of ideas about the inspiration of erotic passion in demons [503]. The payoff from the application of these sources also disappoints: a discussion in only the most general terms of similarities between instructions for ritual practices for erotic magic preserved on papyrus from Egypt, and hagiographical accounts (the use of demons, the infliction of ‘burning’ on the target, the use of analogy in ritual) without attention to the stark differences in context between Egypt<sup>26</sup> and Constantinople or the various other settings of the hagiographical narratives. The consideration of Byzantine literary references to such practices, which tend to be accepted at face value as authentic records, could have been usefully supplemented by discussion of handbook recipes with similar aims in later Byzantine manuscripts.<sup>27</sup>

H. Maguire deals with representations and accusations of magical practices in the Byzantine literary and artistic record [397–408]. In particular, he surveys how accusations of sorcery set forth in these media, especially illuminated manuscripts, were deployed in the conflict over icons in the ninth century. Particular emphasis falls on the patriarch John the Grammarian, who is said, and pictured, to have practiced both divination and sorcery (*γοητεία*), the latter including the successful use of a kind of sympathetic magic (*στοιχειώσις*) involving the symbolic destruction of statues to combat enemy troops threat-

<sup>25</sup> See [Dieleman 2005](#), 142–143. Similarly, the even earlier [Preisendanz and Henrichs 1974](#), P XII [513], on which see [Dieleman 2005](#), esp. 29–35.

<sup>26</sup> Note, for example, the invocation of the Egyptian god Osiris and the use of the scarab beetle, an ancient Egyptian symbol, in the example cited on p. 508.

<sup>27</sup> A considerable quantity of such material is available in [Delatte 1927](#). For post-Byzantine Greek, there is even more, e.g., the 19th-century handbook edited by Papatomopoulos [2006]. See also the useful, albeit dated, synthesis of [Koukoules 1948](#), 2:230–234.



ening Constantinople. The author also considers an elaborate contemporary portrait in a ninth-century illustrated copy of the *Homilies* of Gregory of Nazianzos of the erstwhile magician and future saint Cyprian attempting to perform erotic magic. Maguire neatly establishes that the illustrator has drawn on sources outside the narrative of Gregory for the details of Cyprian's magical equipment, which included an astrological sphere and two effigy figurines, an elaboration in which later Byzantine illustrators of the same scene showed no interest, perhaps because they lacked the highly charged ninth-century context.

In the same vein as Maguire and Spieser, M. Mavroudi [431–460] takes up the process of differentiation between disparaged magical practice and praiseworthy devotion or rather, as she frames it, between licit and illicit conduct with respect to Christian divinities, in reference to a particular kind of divination based on physical responses of Byzantine icons as described in literary sources. The starting point for her discussion is a well-known passage in the *Chronographia* of the Byzantine statesman and philosopher Michael Psellus [Renauld 1926–1928, 6.66] describing the use of perfumes by the empress Zoe. These perfumes (ἀρώματα) were intended for the adoration of the empress' icon of Christ, called Antiphonetes (ἀντιφωνητής, The Answerer). (Zoe took the responses that the icon provided *via* changes in its color as a means to predict the future.) The ostentatiously erudite Psellus was familiar with Neoplatonic philosophy and Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, as well as with Proclus and Iamblichus, all of which, Mavroudi suggests, was of heightened interest due to increased contact between Constantinople and heterodox Christians in Italy, in Mesopotamia, and in areas recently recovered from the Arabs. Divination and spiritual illumination, a central part of Neoplatonic texts, were also the terms in which Psellus understood and portrayed Zoe's devotion to her icon, which involved using the perfumes: she is 'united' with the divine light by her fervent piety (ταύτην τὸ περὶ τὸ θεῖον θερμότατον ἐέβασ τῷ πρώτῳ καὶ ἀκραιφνεστάτῳ φωτὶ ἀκριβῶς, ἴν' οὕτως εἶπω, συνεκέραιεν). But, as Mavroudi is careful to point out, this devotion stands in explicit contrast to pagan theurgy. Zoe's veneration of the icon includes the use of strings of 'the most beautiful of names' (« τὰ κάλλιστα τῶν ὀνομάτων »), which Mavroudi refers to Neoplatonic use of divine names in pursuit of illumination. Psellus clarifies that Zoe was not acting in a pagan or superstitious fashion (οὔτε ἐλληνικώτερον οὔτ' ἄλλως περιεργότερον) and that the use of perfumes would not have seemed any more problematic to contemporaries than the offering

of incense. Mavroudi also considers Psellus' account of the 'animation' of an icon of Mary at Blachernai and shows how he adduces the Old Testament ephod as a Christian icon,<sup>28</sup> a component of the priestly vestments interpreted as early as Josephus as a form of oracle, functioning through the emission of light of various colors from its decorative gemstones, and further as a symbol of legitimate divination in the Old Testament in contrast to divination by lots or necromancy.

Throughout, Psellus asserts the superiority of a Christian understanding of images, incorporating terms from theurgy to actual pagan theurgy with its reliance on fallible human and demonic agency. Mavroudi convincingly demonstrates that, for Psellus and his intended audience at least, there was nothing magical or illicit about Zoe's practices with respect to her favorite icon, which could be comprehended entirely within a Christian belief system attentive to precedents drawn from the Old Testament.

As a coda to this exculpation of Zoe, as it were, Mavroudi reviews another document previously considered as relevant to Zoe's interest in perfumes [478: cf. Luck 2006, 473 with n48], a recipe for an unguent (ἄλειμμα) attributed to her (τῆς κυρα Ζωῆς τῆς βασιλίccic [sic]) in a later Byzantine manuscript.<sup>29</sup> Mavroudi demonstrates that this recipe has simply a cosmetic rather than an aromatic purpose and need not be attributed to the authorship of Zoe herself based merely on its title, which could be only a sort of 'advertising' by assimilation of an otherwise anonymous home remedy to a famous and preternaturally youthful figure.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> In Psellus' explanation for deferring discussion of the ephod, in an essay on the rhetoric of praise [Renauld 1926–1928, 6.76–82], cited on page 452,

καὶ δεῖ τὸν εἰς λεπτὸν κατιόντα τοῖς θεωρήμασι μακρὸν ἀνελίξει λόγον τὸ περιεπτωγμένον τοῦ νοῦ ἀναπλοῦντα καὶ ἀναπτύσσοντα.

is perhaps better rendered:

Anyone who would treat these sights in detail would have to unwind [i.e., set forth] a long discourse in unraveling and unfolding what is enfolded in the mind. with «ἀναπλόω» and «ἀναπτύσσω» both serving, along with «ἀελίccω», a classicizing metaphor of exposition and explication based on the physical structure of the papyrus book-roll.

<sup>29</sup> Florence, BML cod. Plut. 7.19, ff. 226v–227r.

<sup>30</sup> I offer here some minor textual notes on the recipe for Zoe's unguent [456–457], which do not affect the main thrust of the argument:

On the whole, I find that this volume achieves high scholarly quality, offers great interest and value to students of the ancient, medieval, and early modern civilizations of the Mediterranean and Europe, and of the transmission of knowledge within and among them; and that it is entirely worthy of inclusion in library collections. A few general desiderata remain. For a book that is sure to become a standard reference, and in which textual sources are crucial, it is unfortunate that closer attention was not paid to

- (a) Mavroudi interprets «εἶθ'» as «εἴθ'» (while faithfully reproducing the accentuation supplied by the scribe). But the word is perhaps better understood in both cases as «εἶθ'» ('next'), given the «καί» preceding the second instance: hence, it marks the subsequent step in the process,

then, having mixed the aforesaid [ingredients] in this way and pounded them likewise, add sweet oil; and then in this way use [it]

for

εἶθ' οὕτως τὰ προλεχθέντα ἐνώσας καὶ αὐτὰ ὁμοίως κοπανίνας βάλε μύρον· καὶ εἶθ' οὕτως χρῶ

(I atticize the orthography of the Greek text here).

On this reading, then, the sweet oil (μύρον) is not optional but on equal footing with the other ingredients.

- (b) Better sense could also be obtained from the recipe by expanding the abbreviations «ταφι<sup>δ</sup>» and «ιχα<sup>δ</sup>» in the manuscript as «ταφίδων» and «ιχαδών», respectively, instead of as «ταφίδες» and «ιχαδες»; and construing them in each case with «λίπος» ('oil of grapes', 'oil of figs').
- (c) The 'two suggestions on how to avoid procrastination when a sick person is taking a bath' described in this same medical recipe collection [458] would seem to refer, if indeed the title (quoted in n104, πρὸς τὸ μὴ ὀλιγορεῖν [*sic pro* ὀλιγορεῖν] ἀσθενῆ εἰς τὸ λουτρόν) accurately describes the contents, to methods for keeping the patient from *fainting* in the bath: cf. *Lexikon zur byzantinischen Gräzität s.v. ὀλιγορία*. An examination of a digital facsimile available through the Bibliotheca Medicea Laurenziana seems to confirm this: the title is followed by instructions specifying that the patient should place a pickled olive under his tongue and then bathe [l. 226v ἐλαίαν κολυμβάδα βαλέτω ὑπὸ τὴν γλῶσσαν καὶ λουέσθω].
- (d) Further, while another recipe does indeed follow this one, it in fact has a title of its own («[π]ρὸς σταφυλῆν κεχαλασμένην»), which refers to a disorder of the tonsils, and the body of which prescribes gargling with the juice of cabbage leaves (ἀνάστελλε κράμβης φύλλα μασηγόμενος καὶ τὸν χυλὸν κατέχων εἰς τὸ στόμα καὶ ἀναγαργαρίζων) and, therefore, has nothing to do with bathing.

orthographically correct presentation of primary source texts, particularly in Greek,<sup>31</sup> though this problem is hardly unique to the present publication. The volume is furnished with useful indices of personal names and places, 'analytic' terms, and manuscripts and papyri; additional indices of citations of primary source texts from the classical, medieval, and early modern periods, and, given their importance to several contributions, an index of references to objects (gems, amulets, tablets, other inscriptions) would also have been helpful. Finally, one might have hoped for further dialogue or at least cross-referencing between the contributions: e.g., Gordon's discussion of *charaktêres* with Pitarakis' examination of the lion motif which occurs with such signs in certain early Byzantine amulets [389–394]; the entirely independent discussions by Maguire and Jouette of John the Grammarian's destruction of a statue in the hippodrome at Constantinople for the purpose of inflicting harm on an invading army; or studies of similar ritual practices, aggressive binding broadly considered, from western and Byzantine sources by Martin and Cupane respectively.

<sup>31</sup> In the spirit of contribution to its already considerable value, I offer the following corrigenda: p. 56 ἀκούσα → ἀκούσας; p. 170 *madefactum* → *malefactum*; p. 173n12 καλάμω → καλάμω, μέλας → μέλας; p. 183 *oculi* → *oculis*; p. 185 ἀποστάζοι → ἀποστάζοι, ἀμβλωπιάν → ἀμβλωπιάν, Ἡ → Ἡ; p. 248 επιθυμία → επιθυμία; p. 263 ἀφθέγκτοι → ἀφθέγκτοι, νοοῦμενων → νοομένων; p. 268n48 χαρακτήρ → χαρακτήρ; p. 281 Ὑστέρα → Ὑστέρα, αρνίον → ἀρνίον; p. 284n83 σφράγις → σφραγίς; p. 285n85 χαρακτήρα, χαρακτήρες → χαρακτήραι, χαρακτήρες; p. 286 χαρακτήρα → χαρακτήραι; p. 289 σφράγιδες, βούλλαι → σφραγίδες, βούλλαι; pp. 299 and 300 καρακτήρ → χαρακτήρ; p. 354 νεκυομαντείας → νεκυομαντεία; p. 361 εἰδωλολατρεία → εἰδωλολατρεία [note also that the citation of the source text in the *Patrologia Graeca* is incorrect and should read 57:403 not 453]; p. 361 καὶ ἑλληνικά → καὶ ἑλληνικά; p. 372n2 εὐρικόμενον → εὐρικόμενον, ὡς → ὡς; p. 373 χωλή → χολή; p. 377n17 εἶς → εἶς; p. 385 εἶς → εἶς; p. 388n46 κ(υρ)ίῳ → κ(υρ)ίῳ, εἶς θ(εὸ)ς ὁ νικῶν τὸν τὰ κακὰ → εἶς θ(εὸ)ς ὁ νικῶν τὰ κακὰ (νικῶν preferable, for νικῶν); p. 388n47 Εἶς → Εἶς; p. 413n13 βαστάσης → βαστάσης, ἀγίου → ἀγίου, θεομήτορος → θεομήτορος, χρυσῆν → χρυσῆν; p. 432 ρεῦμα → ῥεῦμα; p. 452 ποικύλην ἔχον → ποικίλην ἔχον, ποικίλλη → ποικίλη, ἐπεσημαίνεται → ἐπεσημαίνεται; p. 447 ἐμφάνειες → ἐμφάνειαι; p. 472 ἀνθρωπόμορφον → ἀνθρωπόμορφον, κητόπλαστα → κηρόπλαστα; p. 473 στηλωτικοὶ τῶν ἀποτελεσμάτων → στηλωτικοὶ τῶν ἀποτελεσμάτων, ἀποτελεσμάτιχοι τῶν στηλῶν → ἀποτελεσματικοὶ τῶν στηλῶν; p. 480 ὕφάμασιν → ὕφασμασιν; p. 484 ἑλληνικῆς → ἑλληνικῆς; p. 486 οἰκίας → οἰκίας; p. 487 χαρακτήρας → χαρακτήρας; p. 510 αὐτῆς → αὐτῆς, δυνηθῆ → δυνηθῆ, ἀν → ἀν, της → τῆς, περιχνομένου → περιχνομένου; p. 514 καταγεγοητεῦθαι → καταγεγοητεῦσθαι.

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