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Protecting Against Child-Killing Demons:
Uterus Amulets in the Late Antique and Byzantine
Magical World

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ACADEMIC DISSERTATION

Academic dissertation to be publicly discussed, by due permission of the Faculty of
Arts at the University of Helsinki in lecture room 6, on the 9th of June, 2017 at 12 o'clock.

Helsinki 2017

Abstract

This doctoral dissertation examines medicinal-magical amulets pertaining to the uterus and the protection of women and children, the accompanying tradition of magical texts, and the mythology and folktales of demons believed to kill children and parturient women. The amulets and the folktales of the demons they were believed to protect against are intertwined. The amulets cannot be studied merely as archaeological or art historical objects, but must be taken together with folktales and narrative charms. The amulets discussed in this dissertation are from Late Antiquity (250–750 CE) and the Middle Byzantine period (843–1204 CE), and they come from the areas of Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Greece, and Asia Minor. The stories of the demons these amulets protected against are even earlier; the first mentions date to the time of Sappho in Archaic Greece (6th–7th centuries BCE), and they still appear in manuscript copies as late as the 15th century CE.

The amulets discussed in this dissertation represent only a fraction of the amulets from Antiquity to Byzantine times intended to aid in pregnancy and childbirth. They must be seen as part of a tradition of amulets and narrative charms (stories that themselves acted as magical protection) against disease-causing demons. In narrative charms, the demon (who is both disease-causing and the disease itself) is depicted as animal-like, non-human, and usually rising from the sea. She meets a divine figure (Artemis in the older versions of the story, King Solomon, Jesus, or Virgin Mary in the later ones), who interrogates and banishes her.

In addition, I propose that seeing the amulets in the context of belief in the evil eye may help explain many of their features and accompanying stories. The evil eye was thought to cause all manners of maladies. Contextualized in terms of the Indo-European and Semitic wet-dry division of life, the evil eye steals the liquids of life: mother's milk, blood, and semen. By attacking the very essence of the household and its continued survival (i.e. reproduction), the evil eye was a significant element behind the amulets and narrative charms. Furthermore, the concept of the evil eye was an extremely important tool in conflict resolution in small, close-knit communities, as a specific conflict could be resolved by placing blame on an immaterial scapegoat while maintaining social cohesion by not identifying any single individual as guilty.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to my dissertation advisors, Prof. Mika Kajava (University of Helsinki) and Prof. Peregrine Horden (Royal Holloway, University of London), as well as the external examiners of my dissertation, Prof. Attilio Mastrocinque (Università di Verona) and Prof. Daniel Ogden (University of Exeter), who graciously also agreed to act as the opponent at the public defence of my dissertation. Special thanks go to Dr. Kaius Tuori (University of Helsinki) for his immense help and support.

I would also like to thank the members of the *Public and Private in the Roman House* research project, Dr. Laura Nissin (University of Helsinki), Samuli Simelius (University of Helsinki), and Juhana Heikonen (Aalto University), and of the *Reinventing the Foundations of European Legal Culture 1934-1964* research project, Dr. Jacob Giltaij (University of Helsinki), Dr. Tommaso Beggio (University of Helsinki), Dr. Magdalena Kmak (Åbo Akademi University), and Ville Erkkilä (University of Helsinki).

I would like to extend my thanks to Dr. Erkki Sironen (University of Helsinki), to Dr. Chris Entwistle and Dr. Virginia Smithson at the British Museum, and to Helen Hovey and Claire Burton at the Ashmolean Museum. In addition, I want to thank Laura Aho (University of Helsinki) and Elina Salminen (University of Michigan) for their assistance, support, and friendship.

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α   "Classical Traces of Metamorphosis in the Byzantine Hystera Formula", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 70 (2017), 151–166.

β   "Metamorphosis, Mixanthropy, and the Child-killing Demon in the Hellenistic and Byzantine Period", *Acta Classica* 60 (2017), forthcoming.

γ   "A Note on the Aspects of the Greek Child-killing Demon", *Classica et Mediaevalia: Danish Journal of Philology and History* 66 (2017), forthcoming.

δ   "Comparing Greco-Roman Uterus Votives and Byzantine Uterus Amulets", *Studia Antiqua*, forthcoming.

In the indices, page numbers without a Greek letter refer to the dissertation itself, while page numbers with a Greek letter refer to the articles (e.g. β2 refers to page 2 in the article "Metamorphosis, Mixanthropy, and the Child-killing Demon in the Hellenistic and Byzantine Period"). If the version of an article included in this dissertation is a pre-publication version, the page numbers refer to that version only and do not correspond to the final, published article.

Abbreviations in the index locorum follow the style of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*. Where an abbreviation does not exist in the *OCD*, Liddell and Scott's *A Greek-English Lexicon* is used instead. However, abbreviations in the individual articles may differ from this practice.

Introduction

This doctoral dissertation examines medicinal-magical amulets pertaining to the uterus and the protection of women and children, the accompanying tradition of magical texts, and the mythology and folk belief surrounding the use of these amulets. The amulets studied in this dissertation are from Late Antiquity (250–750 CE) and the Middle Byzantine period (843–1204 CE), and they come from the areas of Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Greece, and Asia Minor. In these amulets several magical traditions, folktales, and myth cycles are combined in a syncretistic fashion. On one hand, we have the folk belief of the "wandering womb", according to which the uterus was an independent entity that could move around within the body and cause illness.[1] On the other hand, there is the belief in female demons who kill children and women both during and shortly after pregnancy. This was undoubtedly an important explanatory and comforting narrative tool for women facing miscarriage and the death of an infant. This sort of demon was most commonly known as Gello[2] in Greece and Byzantium, Abyzou in Late Antique Eastern Mediterranean, and Alabasdria[3] in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt.[4] Both the wandering womb and the child-killing demons can also be understood as manifestations of the evil eye.

Magical amulets used to protect against child-killing demons cannot be studied without also studying narrative charms and stories about these demons – stories that themselves also acted like non-physical amulets. The Melitene charm is the most widespread one. It is the story of a woman named Melitene, whose children have been

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[1] Pl. *Ti*. 91c; Aret. *CA* 2.10; *PGM* VII 260–271; Hippocr. *Steril*. 35; Hippoc. *Nat. mul*. 3–8, 14, 26, 30–31, 32.46, 38, 40, 44, 47–49, 54, 58, 62, 87; Sor. *Gyn*. 3.29 (while Soranus does not believe the uterus is an animal, he refers to this common belief (1.3.8 in Temkin 1991)); Gal. *De loc. aff*. 6.5; Gal. *De uteri dissectione* 4. As Hippocratic writers thought women were wet and spongy by nature (Hippoc. *Mul*. 1.1), the uterus was considered to be at rest and at its most fertile when it was as close as possible to this natural wet state. If the uterus dried, it would leave its proper place and move on its own around the body in search of moisture (Hippoc. *Mul*. 1.30). It was thought that the uterus was attracted to pleasant smells and repulsed by unpleasant ones; therefore, the uterus could be cajoled back to its proper place by placing sweet-smelling ointments or fragrances near the vagina and evil-smelling ones near the nostrils (Hippoc. *Mul*. 1.26). On the medical conceptions of women and their anatomy in Antiquity and the Medieval period, see e.g. Fleming 2000; Green 1989, 2000, 2001; King 1998; Nutton 2012; see also Horden 2011 and Bliquez 1981.
[2] West 1991; West 1995, 311-314.
[3] A fresco from Bawit, Egypt shows Alabasdria conquered by the rider saint (Perdrizet 1922, 14, fig. 6).
[4] See Sorlin 1991, 430 for a table detailing the various names, attributes, and geographical locations of these demons.

killed or stolen by Gello, and how Gello's secret names are revealed and used as a defence against her.

This dissertation is comprised of four published articles which examine the subject from different angles. I will give a short summary of each article below, followed by a general introduction to the amulets, their dating, and their characteristics. Since the length and scope of the journal articles are limited, I will then give a short history of the main points of the previous scholarship that has informed the current dissertation, which was not possible to include in the articles themselves. After this, I will review the tradition of the magical texts accompanying the amulets. Following this, I will review features of the magical formulas not dealt with in my article "Classical Traces of Metamorphosis in the Byzantine Hystera Formula" and provide a more detailed look into the iconography of the amulets.

In "Classical Traces of Metamorphosis in the Byzantine Hystera Formula" (*Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 70 (2017), 151–166), I approach the iconography and magical formulas of amulets employing the concepts of metamorphosis and mixanthropy. I propose that in addition to the existing literary and technical traditions, parts of the magical formulas found on Middle Byzantine uterus amulets were borrowed from non-magical sources – namely, from Classical epics and plays – where a combination of animals similar to animal comparisons in the formula of the amulets appears in conjunction with metamorphosis and mixanthropy. Thus, the hystera formula reflects the belief, already present in Antiquity, that the uterus was "an animal within an animal".[5]

"Metamorphosis, Mixanthropy, and the Child-killing Demon in the Hellenistic and Byzantine Period" (*Acta Classica* 60 (2017), forthcoming) explores the established themes of metamorphosis and mixanthropy in the depictions of child-killing demons in mythology and folklore, the role of these demons as scapegoats, and the conflation of the child-killing demons with the wandering, infertile uterus. For example, similar methods were used both to repel demons and to calm the uterus, as these were considered to be one and the same. The migraine demon Antaura was connected to the child-killing demon – both appear in nearly identical versions of the *historiola* (narrative charm) of a disease-causing demon coming out of the sea and meeting a holy figure who banishes her. This connection is strengthened by the fact that migraine sufferers report fewer migraine attacks during pregnancy and more near or during menstruation.

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[5] Aret. *CA* 2.11: ζῷον ἐν ζῴῳ.

"A Note on the Aspects of the Greek Child-killing Demon" (*Classica et Mediaevalia: Danish Journal of Philology and History* 66 (2017), forthcoming) diachronically traces traits shared by the child-killing demons, such as a connection to the sea (often in relation to an archetypal ἅλιος γέρων, "old man of the sea", character in mythology), a combination of avian and marine attributes, the seduction of young men, and the stealing and eating of babies. The article suggests that the demons posed an antithesis to the ideal Greek woman, and thus they were a safe target on which to project fears about what would happen if women did not stay in their societally acceptable place. The demons are approached through the Greek concept of ἄωροι, the prematurely dead, and, following Renée Hirschon and Karen Hartnup, the paired concepts of "open" and "closed" that defined female nature in Greek thought.

In "Comparing Greco-Roman Uterus Votives and Byzantine Uterus Amulets" (*Studia Antiqua*, forthcoming), I compare the manufacture, use, and purpose of votives and amulets, explore the mechanisms of function that were believed to grant efficacy to the votives and amulets, and chart the circumstances of women's lives in Antiquity and in the Byzantine period that contributed to the use of votives and amulets.

Late Antique, Middle Byzantine, and Russian uterus amulets

The Late Antique and Middle Byzantine amulets represent but a fraction of the body of amulets, designed to either aid in pregnancy and childbirth or protect against the evil eye, which existed and were used from Antiquity to Byzantine times.[6] These amulets were meant to protect women and children from child-killing or child-stealing demons on which the high rates of both infant and maternal mortality were blamed. The child-killing demon was connected to the evil eye, and many amulets protected from both. Amulets were also thought to provide safety from the threat of the wandering womb; this was a

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[6] Unlike the Late Antique and Middle Byzantine amulets studied here, most amulets were made of perishable materials – such as papyrus, paper, parchment, and bone – and have not survived. Evidence of the use of amulets written on pieces of parchment or paper can be found in records of court proceedings from a trial in the Palaeologian period (1261–1453 CE) concerning the use of textual amulets. The prosecution of magical practitioners had become a matter of religious discipline instead of imperial legislation in the 4th century CE. None of the textual amulets that were the focus of the court proceedings have survived. Maguire 1995b, 5–6; Greenfield 1995, 126, n. 19; Fögen 1995. On trials and legislation concerning magic, see also Liebs 1997; Stolte 2002.

common belief in Antiquity and still in Byzantine times. Many of the iconographic motifs of the amulets are related to written charms against child-killing demons, which will be explored in detail in the section "Magical texts".

The Late Antique amulets come from Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, and they are dated between the 3rd or 4th and 7th centuries CE.[7] These flat bronze amulets were worn as pendants, as evidenced by the suspension loop at the top, and are oval, spade-, or leaf-shaped.[8] In this section I will focus on the amulets with Greek inscriptions,[9] but the same kinds of amulets were used over a broad geographical area and were inscribed also in Hebrew.[10] These amulets have in common three main inscriptions (with variations): 1) εἷς θεὸς ὁ νικῶν τὰ κακά, "one God who conquers Evil", 2) Ἰαω Σαβαώθ Μιχαήλ βοηθεῖ, "Iao, Lord of Hosts, Michael, help",[11] and 3) φεῦγε Ἀβίζου, Σισίννιος σε διώκει, "flee, Abyzou, Sisinnios pursues you". The demon Abyzou is known from other contexts, like the *Testament of Solomon* (where she is called Obyzouth),[12] to be a child-killing demon.

The bronze pendants depict one or several of the following iconographic motifs: a standing saint figure (with a staff or a whip),[13] the rider saint banishing a female

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[7] Spier 1993, 44–45; Mitchell 2007, 291; Ameling et al. 2014, 136. Late Antique bronze amulets usually lack context or provenance, and they are rarely found in stratigraphically controlled excavated contexts (Mitchell 2007, 273–274). Russell (1995, 36) discusses how this lack of find contexts and proper documentation makes it impossible to have any information about the people who originally owned and wore the amulets, and he also notes the problems of publication and illegal sales of antiquities to private collectors. On similar problems in medical archaeology, see Baker and Carr 2002; Baker 2013.

[8] Bonner 1946, 28. See also Foskolou 2014, 334–335.

[9] From the same period, there are amuletic rings, pendants, and armbands that employ the motif of the rider saint vanquishing a female demon. The numerous haematite amulets from the 3rd century CE onward (e.g. nos. 430–450 in Michel, Zazoff, and Zazoff 2001, 268–280) depicting the rider saint with a female demon are of special interest here; their haematite material suggests that they were for controlling bleeding and maintaining pregnancy, especially when coupled with the rider saint defeating the female, presumably child-killing, demon. While these amulets clearly belong in the same tradition, they are only focused on in passing in this dissertation. The reason is that while they name the rider saint Solomon and use short inscriptions, σφραγὶς Θεοῦ and σφραγὶς Σολομῶντος, they do not feature longer prayers (*historiolae*) or any kind of magical formula comparing the demon, disease, or the uterus to animals in the way that the Late Antique bronze amulets and Middle Byzantine uterus amulets do. See e.g. Walter 1989–1990.

[10] See e.g. two bronze pendants with Samaritan letters, both from the second half of the 4th century CE (nos. 2169 and 2170 in Ameling et al. 2014, 11–15). The first (Old Jaffa Museum of Antiquities, Tel Aviv-Jaffa inv. no. 67.069, IAA inv. no 1970-3131), a leaf-shaped one, was found in a Samaritan tomb-cave in Tel Aviv; the second (Old Jaffa Museum of Antiquities, Tel Aviv-Jaffa inv. no. MHY.O.2469, IAA inv. no. 2007-3129), an oval one, was found in a cemetery in Tel Baruch, north of Tel Aviv. Both have nearly identical inscriptions, praising God (YHWH) as a great warrior.

[11] Some variations add the names of other archangels (Γαβριήλ, Οὐριήλ), the name Ἀβράξας, or the cherubim (χερουβίν). Ameling et al. 2014, 136–137.

[12] *Test. Sal.* 13. Several manuscript versions of the Melitene *historiola* name the child-killing demon conquered by Sininnios as Abyzou (see Greenfield 1989, 106).

[13] E.g. British Museum inv. no. OA.1374, Dalton 1901, 112, no. 555; Spier 2014, 53, fig. 6; Barb 1972, 344–353, amulet 1, figs. 1–2.

demon,[14] and the evil eye pierced with a trident or three arrows and attacked by lions, leopards, snakes, and an ibis.[15]

Some of these Late Antique amulets display a magical formula that is similar (but not identical) to the hystera formula found in Middle Byzantine uterus amulets. This magical formula compares the disease to different animals. A good example is the Babina amulet in the British Museum (inv. no. OA.1374),[16] which states that its function is to "protect Babina" (φύλαξον Βαβίναν). On its obverse it reads εἷς θεὸς ὁ νικῶν τὰ κακά, listing the names of Iao, Sabaoth, Solomon, Michael, Gabriel, and Uriel. On its reverse it questions the disease plaguing Babina "Why do you rage like a lion? Why do you bellow like an ox? Why do you coil like a serpent?"[17] This is followed by the phrase ἔδησεν ἄγγελος ἔλυσεν κύριος ματέρα ἀπουγίσεν… ἀκοῦσα ἔφυγεν; although interpreted with some uncertainty, it is translated by Spier as "the angel bound; the Lord loosed; he healed the womb; having heard, he fled".[18] The healing of the uterus (ματέρα, accusative form of μήτηρ) suggests that it functioned as a uterus amulet.

Another example in the British Museum (inv. no. G 324, EA 56324)[19] has the following inscription on its obverse: "Hunger sowed you, air harvested you, vein devoured you. Why do you munch like a wolf, why do you devour like a crocodile, why do you bite like a lion, why do you gore like a bull, why do you coil like a serpent, why do you lie down like a tame creature?"[20] The reverse shows a four-footed animal treading on a snake, and lists various animals as well as Apollo ("Horse, mule, ibis, erect phallus of man, ostrich, Apollonios of Tyana").[21] According to Bonner, all of these "things [are]

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[14] E.g. Mitchell 2007, 290–292, fig. 10a; Waelkens and Poblome 1997, 337–338, nos. 289–291 (Archaeological Museum of Burdur inv. nos. SA 94.UAN 74; SA-94-YAN-328; SA-95-UAN-159). Waelkens and Poblome catalogue these three bronze amulets as "Byzantine amulets against the evil eye".

[15] Delatte and Derchain 1964, 72–73; Vikan 2008, 53–55; Ameling et al. 2014, 136. See e.g. Ameling et al. 2014, no. 2256.

[16] British Museum inv. no. OA.1374, Dalton 1901, 112, no. 555.

[17] τί ὡς λέων μαίνῃ; τί ὡς ταῦρος μυκᾶσαι; τί ὡς δράκων εἰλίσσεις; Translation by Spier 2014, 55, with modifications.

[18] Spier 2014, 56. Mika Kajava from the University of Helsinki suggested to me the reading ἄκουσα ἔφυγεν, "she fled against her will", referring to the fleeing female demon.

[19] Bonner 1951, 334-335, no. 51.

[20] λιμός σε ἔσπιρεν. ἀὴρ ἐθέρισεν. φλέψ σε κατέφαγεν. τί ὡς λύκος μασᾶσε; τί ὡς κορκόδυλλος καταπίννις; τί ὡς λέων βρώχις; τί ὡς ταῦρος κερατίζις; τί ὡς δράκων εἰλίσις; τί ὡς παρᾶος κυμᾶσε; Translation by Bonner 1951, 334.

[21] ἵππος, μοῦλος, ἴβις, εὐθεῖα κωλῆ ἀνδρὸς, στρουθοκάμηλος, Ἀπολλώνιος ὁ Τυανεύς. Translation by Spier 2014, 59.

hostile to the evil eye",[22] so perhaps listing these animals is the equivalent of drawing the evil eye attacked by animals.

The Middle Byzantine uterus amulets are sometimes referred to as "hystera amulets" because of their distinctive magical formula addressing the uterus (Greek ὑστέρα). Middle Byzantine uterus amulets are found in Greece and Asia Minor; they have been dated between the 10th and 12th centuries CE by Jeffrey Spier,[23] although earlier dates for some of the finds have been suggested by Vitalien Laurent and Gary Vikan.[24] They are not found during this period in Syria, Palestine, or Egypt, which had all been under Arab control since the 7th century CE, and where Late Antique bronze pendant amulets have been found. Middle Byzantine uterus amulets are metallic or gemstone pendants, tokens, and rings.[25] The method of manufacture of the metallic amulets varies, with some specimens cast in moulds and others being die-struck.[26]

The amulets are decorated with numerous iconographic motifs. Some are common images found on all types of amulets, such as pentagrams, palm fronds, and crosses, while others are Christian, such as the bust of Christ, the Virgin, and Saint Anne with the child Mary. Most importantly, the amulets bear the image of a snake-surrounded head ("hystera motif").

Many of these amulets are inscribed with what is known as the "hystera formula", a magical formula addressing the uterus, calling it "black, blackening" (μελάνη μελανωμένη) and comparing its behaviour to that of wild animals (usually a snake and lion, sometimes also a bull), and finally commanding it to calm down like a tame animal (usually a sheep or lamb, sometimes also the sea or a cat). Many examples omit this final part, such as the inscription on a lead pendant from Asia Minor: ὑστέρα μελάνη μελανωμένη ὸς ὄφης ἠλήεσε κὲ ὸς δράκον συρίζι ("uterus, black, blackening, coil like a snake and hiss like a serpent).[27] The amulets also include other inscriptions to convey that

[22] Bonner 1951, 335.
[23] Spier 1993, 31–33.
[24] Laurent 1936, 306; Vikan 1984, 78.
[25] See e.g. Grabar 1974. On the rings, see Chadour and Jopien 1985, 111–112, no. 164 (Kunstgewerbemuseum, Cologne inv. no. H 937 Cl. Neg. Nr. L 2192/27, L 7932/46) and 165 (Kunstgewerbemuseum, Cologne inv. no. G 848 Cl. Neg. Nrn. L 7430/03, L 7430/04).
[26] Spier 1993, 25.
[27] Translation by Spier 1993, 29, with modifications. A lead pendant from Asia Minor (State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg inv. no. ω-198; see Spier 1993, no. 1, pl. 1a).

they are intended for the well-being of the uterus,[28] as well as the Trisagion formula[29] and verses of Psalm 90(91).[30] The inscriptions of the amulets will be further discussed in the section "Formulas of the amulets".

In addition to the Middle Byzantine uterus amulets, there are Russian specimens referred to by scholars as *zmeevik* or "serpent amulets". They are "the only type of amulet from the ancient world to survive and develop in Russia to any significant extent".[31] The earliest specimens found have been dated to the 11th century CE. The manufacture and use of *zmeevik* is not a separate phenomenon from the Middle Byzantine uterus amulets, but a continuation.

The amulets have Greek and Slavonic inscriptions, and some specimens have both on one amulet. The amulets with Greek inscriptions were either imported to Russia from Byzantium or copied after Byzantine specimens. The ones with Slavonic inscriptions were probably made in a Balkan or Russian workshop. The inscriptions include "One God, vanquisher of evil" (εἷς θεὸς ὁ νικῶν τὰ κακά, as found already in the Late Antique bronze pendants), the Trisagion, the "Seal of God" (σφραγὶς Θεοῦ), the "Seal of Solomon" (σφραγὶς Σολομώντος), and verses from Psalm 90(91).

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[28] These are not intentional, but the result of the amulet-maker mistakenly inscribing the title of the spell from the magical handbook along with the actual inscription: πρὸς ὀφέλιαν ὑστέρας on a lead amulet (Numismatic Museum, Athens inv. no. 1207; see Spier 1993, no. 8) and ὑστηρεκὼν φυλακτήριον on a lead pendant (Archaeological Museum of Corinth; see Spier 1993, no. 10), a bronze ring (Archaeological Museum of Corinth; see Spier 1993, no. 44), and a silver ring (Archaeological Museum of Corinth inv. no. 7677(?); see Spier 1993, no. 40). I am not completely sure of the inventory number of the last one; Foskolou 2014 (344, fig. 15) has an image of a ring in Archaeological Museum of Corinth with the inventory number 7677 that she says is copper. The photograph of this ring matches perfectly the drawing of ring no. 40 in Spier 1993, but Spier (1993, 57) says it is silver, not copper.

[29] Ἅγιος ὁ Θεός, Ἅγιος ἰσχυρός, Ἅγιος ἀθάνατος, ἐλέησον ἡμᾶς. The amulets often shorten this to Ἅγιος Ἅγιος Ἅγιος.

[30] *Ps*. 90(91) (NIV): "1 Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. 2 I will say of the Lord, 'He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.' 3 Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. 4 He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. 5 You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, 6 nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. 7 A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. 8 You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. 9 If you say, 'The Lord is my refuge,' and you make the Most High your dwelling, 10 no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. 11 For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; 12 they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. 13 You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. 14 'Because he loves me,' says the Lord, 'I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. 15 He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. 16 With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.'" Verse 13 is especially relevant considering the animal comparison of the hystera formula. See also Giannobile 2003.

[31] Ryan 2006, 53.

Their iconography strongly resembles that of the Middle Byzantine uterus amulets in that they feature the hystera motif and the rider saint. In addition, they feature the symbol of a cross, the Virgin and Child, archangel Michael, and the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, among others. Some *zmeevik* amulets replace the hystera motif with the evil eye, which is attacked by animals and knives. I think this strengthens the argument that the unfertile, restless uterus is the equivalent or a symptom of the evil eye.

The *zmeevik* amulets also address *dna*, the Slavic translation of ὑστέρα. The word can mean the uterus, but it also refers to the internal organs and internal disorders of the body personified as a demon. The *dna* was thought to affect men as well: there is a prayer against *dna* in the 11th-century CE *Euchologium Sinaiticum*, which describes the *dna* as upsetting all the limbs and the entire body, and having 130 claws.[32]

The relationship of the Late Antique amulets and the Middle Byzantine uterus amulets remains an unsolved problem. Common themes of both Late Antique amulets and Middle Byzantine uterus amulets are the rider saint motif, a magical formula employing animal comparisons, and the flee-formula, which identifies the demon as Abyzou and the saint as Sisinnios.[33] I do not believe that it can be mere coincidence for such similarities in iconography and a similar magical formula to be found in both groups. The two groups of amulets belong to the same tradition. However, a significant differentiator between the amulet groups is that no Late Antique amulet (that I know of) addresses the uterus or calls the demon/disease "black, blackening". Nor is there, to my knowledge, a Late Antique amulet that uses the hystera motif. Therefore, that motif must have been discovered in the intermediate period before Middle Byzantine uterus amulets with the motif started appearing in the 10th century CE.[34]

Previous research

Magical amulets have been studied since the Renaissance. Interest in amulets was rekindled in the 19th century when several articles on the subject were written both in

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[32] Spier 1993, 27–28; Ryan 2006, 53–56.
[33] Ashmolean Museum inv. 1980.53 (see Spier 1993, no. 33).
[34] This assumes Spier's dating to be correct. If one follows the earlier dating proposed by Laurent and Vikan, some of the Middle Byzantine uterus amulets would be contemporary with the bronze pendants.

Western Europe and in Russia. I will outline the main scholarly works concerning uterus amulets, medicinal-magical texts, and the mythology of child-killing demons that have informed this dissertation, in roughly chronological order, treating works from the same scholar together.

Wilhelm Drexler's "Alte Beschwörungsformeln" introduces nine amulets, each with a variant of the hystera formula. He notes Plato's passage on the nature of the uterus (*Ti.* 91c), a spell against the ascent of the uterus in the magical papyri (*PGM* VII 260–271), and, most interestingly, parallels of the hystera formula in later European sources. There is the medieval Italian charm against *male del fianco e di matrone* (disease of kidneys and the uterus),[35] as well as German examples, such as

> Mutter, Mutter, alte Frau, schlafe wie ein Kätzchen, wie ein Mäuschen, zusammengerollt in deinem Lager! Mutter, Mutter, wärme dich – ich werde dich mit einer eisernen Egge überfahren, werde dich mit eisernen Koppelseilen fesseln.

Another charm, against colic, reads "Mutter heckte, Mutter legte, Leg' dich an dieselbe Wand, Wo dich Gott hat hingesandt. Im Namen G. d. V. u. s. w."[36] Note that here the command to lay down ("Leg' dich") is directed at the colic, similarly to the command to calm or lay down directed at the uterus in the hystera formula (e.g. ὡς ἀρνίον κοιμοῦ, "lie down like a lamb").

In 1913, Louis Arnaud published his article "L'exorcisme κατὰ τῆς ἄβρας attribué à saint Grégoire". This charm against *abra*, foul wind, attributed to Gregory of Nazianzus, has been published in M. Dmitrievski's *Euchologion* and is originally from 1153 CE, from the monastery of Mount Sinai. Arnaud translates the charm in which the "abra" in question is named Abizou.[37] Arnaud discusses the rhyming of the charm, such as Ἄβρα ἀπὸ ὕδατος, ἄβρα ἀπὸ αἵματος, ἄβρα ἀπὸ κρούσματος, and in the spirit of experimental philology he comments on the effect it had on him when he read the charm aloud in a fast tempo.[38] I think that Arnaud's emphasis on the tempo and rhythm of the formula is crucial. In addition to producing a near-hypnotic rhythm, it was important to name all possible

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[35] See the exorcism of Saint Athanasius the Great, which, among other things, protects from pain in the kidneys; it is discussed on pages 34–35 of this dissertation. On *male del fianco e di matrone*, see also Spier 1993, 49.
[36] Drexler 1899, 602, 605.
[37] Arnaud 1913, 293–294.
[38] Arnaud 1913, 294–295. See also Barb 1950 for rhythm and rhyming of magical charms and nursery rhymes, many of which are "the last remains of old incantations, gradually disfigured" (Barb 1950, 4).

aspects of the demon in order to prevent it from finding a loophole and escaping the exorcism. Arnaud examines the meaning of *abra*, wind, in different contexts, and he connects it with the Modern Greek term *aerika*, under which all kinds of demons and spirits who roam between heaven and earth are grouped, and Death itself, who was personified as a spirit, *aerikon*.[39]

In his article "Amulettes byzantines et formulaires magiques", Vitalien Laurent presents eight Byzantine amulets with "tête de Méduse" – the head of Medusa, later referred to as the "hystera motif" by Jeffrey Spier. The amulets are a bloodstone amulet from Przemysl,[40] a lead amulet in Istanbul,[41] two lead amulets in the Vatican Museum,[42] a lead amulet in the collection of Henry Chandon de Briailles,[43] a lead amulet now in the State Hermitage Museum,[44] a lead amulet in National Museum in Athens,[45] and a bronze amulet in the Dallegio collection.[46] Laurent discusses the magical formulas inscribed on the amulets.

The bloodstone amulet from Przemysl has an interesting variation of the hystera formula: ἡστέρα μελάνη μελανομένι, ὁς φοης [=ὄφις] κήλησε, ὁς θάλασα γαλήνησον, ὁς πρόβατον πραῆν κὲ ὁς κάτνος (κοιμοῦ?).[47] Laurent proposes different solutions ("une triple hypothèse") for the final κάτνος, which is not encountered in any other variant of the hystera formula: either the word is an unknown abbreviation, the editor of the text Laurent is working from made up a nonsense word, or the engraver of the amulet made a mistake in the inscription.[48]

Because of the ὡς particle preceding κάτνος, I am inclined to agree with his solution number three – that this is meant to be another animal or entity that the uterus is compared to (like a snake or the sea) but that a mistake was made in the inscription. The

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[39] Arnaud 1913, 299–301.
[40] Laurent 1936, 301-307. Muzeum Narodowe Ziemi Przemyskiej inv. no. MP-H-1865. See Spier 1993, no. 57.
[41] Laurent 1936, 307. Istanbul Archaeology Museums inv. no. 801.
[42] Laurent 1936, 307. Vatican Museum inv. nos. 146 and 150. See Spier 1993, nos. 31 and 32.
[43] Laurent 1936, 307. See Spier 1993, no. 26.
[44] Laurent 1936, 307-308. National Museum of Budapest had an imprint of the amulet, now in State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg inv. no. ω-1159. See Spier 1993, no. 9.
[45] Laurent 1936, 309. Numismatic Museum in Athens inv. no. 1207. See Spier 1993, no. 8.
[46] Laurent 1936, 309-310. See Spier 1993, 28, n. 23.
[47] Laurent 1936, 305. Laurent proposes restoring the final verb of the formula to κοιμοῦ, "calm down", making the formula ask the uterus to "comme le chat repose-toi". "Uterus, black, blackening, calm like a snake, be calm like sea, be gentle like a lamb and like a cat…". Translation by Spier 1993, 29, with modifications.
[48] Laurent 1936, 304.

corrections Laurent proposes are καπνός (smoke) and κάτος (cat).[49] In "Classical Traces of Metamorphosis in the Byzantine Hystera Formula" I have preferred the reading καπνός (smoke), but I now favour the reading κάτος (cat), as I noted in "Comparing Greco-Roman Uterus Votives and Byzantine Uterus Amulets". Animal comparisons are such an integral part of other known variants of the hystera formula that a cat seems more likely than smoke (which does not appear in any other variant of the formula), even though hystera formula variants can include another non-animal entity, the sea.[50]

Campbell Bonner's 1946 article "Magical Amulets" delves into the world of gem, metal, and papyrus amulets. He touches on the bronze pendant amulets from Palestine and Syria[51] but does not elaborate on them. Regarding the use of amulets in general, Bonner notes that while amulet-users belonging to the upper classes could afford expensive and well-made amulets made by a professional, high-end magician, the large body of surviving amulets is of lesser quality, clearly imitating the designs of more expensive amulets but failing in their execution. This testifies to the non-discerning user's need for cheap, quick magical fixes.[52] Yet it must be remembered that making even a cheap amulet still required time and tools, either for working the metal or inscribing the hard stone.[53]

Bonner's *Studies in Magical Amulets* (1950) is one of the bedrocks of research on ancient magic. He divides medical amulets into categories based on their purpose. Chapter four of his work focuses on medical magic pertaining to the abdomen: digestive amulets (which includes the Chnoubis amulets)[54] and colic amulets;[55] chapter five on medical amulets against fever; and chapter six on uterus amulets.[56] Bonner

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[49] Laurent 1936, 305.

[50] In addition to the Przemysl amulet, the sea appears in a green jasper intaglio from Spain that used to be in the collection of W. Talbot Ready (see Drexler 1889, 596-597, no. 8; Spier 1993, no. 56).

[51] Bonner 1946, 36.

[52] Bonner 1946, 41-42.

[53] The general quality of amulets also varies by time period: the quality and workmanship of amulets from the 1st century BCE onwards was lower than that of the amulets from Classical and Hellenistic periods. Bonner 1950, 51-62.

[54] Chnoubis is an Egyptian-based character usually depicted with a serpentine body and leonine head surrounded by rays. Chnoubis was typically engraved on medical gemstone amulets meant to combat abdominal illnesses. Vikan (1984, 1990) has supported the view of the hystera motif as a modified Chnoubis. Frank R. Tomley's entry on Chnoubis in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* agrees with this view, saying that the figure evolved during Late Antiquity into the gorgon head that is found on "Christian uterine or Medusa amulets, which derive directly from pagan uterine amulets" (Kazhdan et al. 1991, 425). On Chnoubis, see also Mastrocinque 2005b, 61–79; Kotansky 1997.

[55] Bonner 1950, 62–66. On colic amulets, see also Bonner 1942.

[56] Bonner 1951, 79–94.

discusses uterus gems and amulets with the pot-like uterus symbol[57] and the uterus key.[58] Bonner then focuses on the "octopus" type of uterus amulets, continuing with the "Medusa" type of Middle Byzantine uterus amulets. Of the "Medusa" figure, he says "it is almost certainly derived from the 'octopus' version of the uterine symbol".[59] He then discusses the belief in the uterus as having an independent life, and he speculates on the choice of the octopus/Medusa symbol for representing the uterus: "one can only suggest that the rounded organ was felt by suffering women to be a centre from which stabbing pains radiated in various directions, and that this gave rise to the amulet types of the octopus and the snake-encircled Medusa".[60] I find this a very astute observation – there is a tendency in scholarship to focus on art historical analyses of magical motifs and to downplay the physicality of the conditions necessitating the use of these amulets.

Bonner's article "Amulets Chiefly in the British Museum" (1951) introduces corrections and additions to his *Studies in Magical Amulets* published the previous year. He briefly returns to the bronze pendants from Syria and Palestine[61] that depict the "Evil One" either as a female human or a non-human creature (sphinx or serpent).[62] Bonner describes a figure on the amulets, "a monster made up of the head, arms, and trunk of a man combined with the long body and tail of a snake". According to Bonner, this "may be regarded as a natural development from the small, crushed, barely human figures" in monuments, coins, and amulets that depict Nemesis trampling and crushing enemies.[63]

In his 1953 article "Diva Matrix", Alphons Augustinus Barb discusses Greek, Roman and Egyptian uterus amulets and representations of the uterus on gems and uterus votives in conjunction with the Chnoubis figure, along with numerous plates of images. From the antiquaries of the 17th century, he moves on to discuss the "Divine Womb" in Gnostic mythology, and uterus symbols in the Ancient Near East and Greece. In an appendix,[64] he discusses the "Gorgon's head" or "Medusa" type of uterus representation. After going

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[57] Bonner 1950, 79–83.
[58] Bonner 1950, 84–87.
[59] Bonner 1950, 84–85, 90.
[60] Bonner 1951, 91.
[61] Especially relevant here are nos. 50 (British Museum inv. no. 56473) and 51 (British Museum inv. no. G 324, EA 56324) on pages 333–334. See also the discussion of no. 72 (Seyrig Collection, no inventory number given) on pages 341–342.
[62] Bonner 1951, 313.
[63] Bonner 1951, 314.
[64] Barb 1953, 208–212.

over Medusa's parentage and role in mythology,[65] Barb finally concentrates on Byzantine amulets that address the uterus and describe it like an animal. Barb connects these uterus amulets to the appearance of Obyzouth in the *Testament of Solomon* and the entry "Gorgonē" in *Physiologus Graecus*,[66] stating that "testimonies of this kind, … , usually brushed aside as hybrid 'syncretism', may well represent original, archaic conceptions preserved in popular tradition".[67] However, I am not sure if even the amulets themselves preserve any "original, archaic" traits – let alone tractates such as the *Testament of Solomon* – since they are the product of learned magic transmitted through magical handbooks.

In his 1964 article "Three Elusive Amulets", Barb introduces three amulets, of which the second one, a Byzantine "Judaeo-Christian amulet",[68] is relevant in the context of this dissertation. The amulet, a copy of a lost original, is inscribed on both sides. It is difficult to determine which is obverse and which reverse, and Barb thus refers to the "Christian" side and the "Gnostic" side, using the terminology of his time. It is the "Gnostic" side which is of special interest here. The amulet combines Jewish, Christian, and Egyptian visual elements, quotes Psalm 90(91), and bears the following inscription: Σισίννος Βισισίννος καταπατεῖτε τὴν μυσερὰν μηκέτι ἰσχύειν. Σφραγὶς τοῦ Σολομῶντός σε κατήργησεν. Μιχαὴλ Γαβριὴλ Οὐριὴλ Ραφαὴλ δεσμεύουσιν σε. Ἁλιμερβιμαχ ("Sisinnos Bisisinnos, tread down the abominable [female] one that she should not have strength any more. The seal of Solomon has annihilated thee. Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, Raphael fetter thee. Alimerbimach.")[69] It is clear that the amulet belongs in the tradition of charms against the child-killing female demon Abyzou, whom Saint Sisinnios conquers.

Barb's article from 1966, "Antaura. The Mermaid and the Devil's Grandmother", continues the themes of "Diva Matrix". Barb introduces the Antaura charm – a migraine charm in the form of a *historiola*. When Antaura comes out of the sea, shouting and crying like an animal, she is met by Christ, who banishes her into a bull's head in the wild mountains. Barb then discusses other charms against wind (*abra* or *aura*) demons who come out of the sea and cause disease, and who are met and vanquished by holy figures such as Artemis, Christ, archangel Michael, and Saint Sisinnios. These

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[65] Barb 1953, 210.
[66] Sbordone 1991 [1936].
[67] Barb 1953, 211.
[68] Barb 1964, 10–17, pl. 2a–b. British Museum, inv. no. 1938, 10-10, 1. For references of earlier publications on the lost original and other copies, see Barb 1964, 10, n. 52–53.
[69] Translation by Barb 1964, 12–13.

charms parallel those of Lilith meeting the prophet Elijah and the child-killing demon Abyzou or Obyzouth meeting Solomon. Barb explores Abyzou's connection to the Abyss in Babylonian mythology[70] and to the gorgon head image in amulets that address the uterus. Barb notes that in addition to addressing the uterus and comparing it to animals – much in the same way as the wind demons shriek and cry – the magical formula in these amulets addresses the uterus as "black, blackening". Barb then compares this to a version of the narrative charm where Abra is met by archangel Michael, who addresses her as "black and blackish".[71] To my knowledge, Barb is the first to make this connection between the narrative charms employing the "encounter motif" (i.e. a holy figure meeting the demon and vanquishing her) and the demon being addressed as "black and blackish", similar to the wording of the hystera formula.

In his 1972 article "Magica Varia", Barb introduces five amulets, three of which are of interest here. The first, "Die Amulette für die beiden Söhne der Christina", is a bronze pendant with an image of a standing saint with a staff banishing a female figure. The inscription tells us that the saint is Sisinnios and the banished demon is none other than the child-killing Abyzou: φεῦε, φεῦε Ἀβίζον ἔνθα γὰρ κατοικῖ Σισίνις καὶ Σισινία καὶ ΟΛΑΒΡΑΞ κοίων. Φύλαξον Κοσταντίνον, ὅν ἔτηκενθ Χριστίνα. εἷς θεός. Barb connects this amulet with the group of Late Antique bronze pendant amulets that feature Sisinnios and the demon Abyzou, one example of which is the 6th century CE (or later) bronze pendant from Akka.[72] The second amulet, also a bronze pendant, is very similar to the first. This one lacks an image of a saint banishing the demon, but the inscription, which starts from the obverse and continues to the reverse, is nearly identical: φεῦγε, φεῦγε Ἀβίζιον ἔνθα γὰρ κατοικεῖ Σισίνις καὶ Σισινία … The third amulet, "Die Ibis-Amulette", is also bronze. It does not name Sisinnios or Abyzou, but instead features the rider saint, a lion, an ibis with snake, and the inscription Ἰάω Σαβαὼθ Μιχαὴλ βοήθι πίνω ("Iao, Lord of Hosts, Michael, help, drink"). This formula is very common in this group of Late Antique amulets. I will discuss the meaning of πίνω later in this dissertation, in the section "Formulas of the amulets".

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[70] Barb 1966, 5–6, 10.

[71] Barb 1966, 3, 9. This charm is the same one as in the *Euchologion* at the monastery of Mount Sinai, which was treated by Arnaud.

[72] British Museum inv. no. OA.1374, Dalton 1901, 112, no. 555. I have written about this amulet in the article "Metamorphosis, Mixanthropy, and the Child-killing Demon in the Hellenistic and Byzantine Period".

In his 1984 article "Art, Medicine, and Magic in Early Byzantium", Gary Vikan examines pilgrimages, healing shrines (e.g. of Symeon the Younger), and amulets which were not only apotropaic but medicinal as well. Special attention is paid to silver armbands from the 6th–7th centuries CE which, addressing abdominal issues and digestion, feature the rider saint, Psalm 90(91), and Chnoubis. The amuletic purpose of these armbands is clear from the recurrent use of verses from Psalm 90(91), the rider saint motif, and magical symbols such as the *pentalpha*.[73] Vikan links these armbands to several other medicinal amulets with a Chnoubis or Chnoubis-like figure, such as a silver ring from the Menil collection[74] with Psalm 90(91) and a "degenerate form" of Chnoubis,[75] which Vikan dates to the 7th or 8th century CE. Vikan then links the Menil silver ring to other gem amulets with a Chnoubis figure, Ἰαω-inscription, and magical characters such as stars and Zs, and especially to amulets used for treating colic, as instructed by Alexander of Tralles (by placing the Z on an eight-sided ring).[76] Vikan himself points out[77] that the Menil collection's silver ring is not octagonal, but the other factors are apparently strong enough for him to make this connection. I worry that Vikan may be making too big of an associative leap here.

Vikan notes the confusion between Chnoubis and the "Gorgon-head" symbol[78] (which Spier calls the "hystera motif") when referring to gem no. 42 in Bonner's article, "A Miscellany of Engraved Stones".[79] He notes that the "identification with" and "partial transformation into" the gorgon head was facilitated by the existence of a Late Antique tradition of "Medusa" amulets (i.e. uterus amulets with the hystera motif). He posits that the hystera motif is a transformed Chnoubis figure: in the conversion from Chnoubis to hystera, Chnoubis's tail has been detached and removed, while the rays sprouting from his head have acquired heads of their own. Discussing these uterus amulets, Vikan notes that symbols which often appear in Late Antique gem amulets – such as a Z, star, and *pentalpha* – have strong relations to Chnoubis and, through the Chnoubis amulets**,** to the uterus.[80] I do not find Vikan's hypothesis of Chnoubis transforming into

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[73] Vikan 1984, 74–76.
[74] The ring is in the Menil Collection, Houston. Vikan's figure 13 (Vikan gives the inv. no. as II.B24) is the same as no. 47 in Spier 1993 (who gives the inv. no. 490.740).
[75] Vikan 1984, 76.
[76] Alexander of Tralles was a 6th-century CE Greek physician from Lydia.
[77] Vikan 1984, 76, n. 64.
[78] Vikan 1984, 77, n. 70.
[79] Bonner 1954.
[80] Vikan 1984, 77–78.

the hystera motif to be very probable. In addition, I think the proposed connection of these magical symbols to the uterus through Chnoubis is rather tenuous, as these symbols are common to all types of magical amulets.

Vikan underlines the importance of the material haematite used in amulets to stop blood. He introduces the imagery of the "Palestinian christological cycle" in addition to the Chnoubis and rider saint, and he also discusses a series of octagonal golden rings for the protection of married couples and for Omonia, "(married) harmony". Vikan suggests that these rings were both amuletic and medicinal. According to Vikan, they were not only used for successful procreation, but also supported abdominal and uterine well-being. He asks, "how else can marital health be understood than in terms of healthy and successful procreation?"[81] Therefore, he argues, they were functionally comparable to the uterus amulets.[82]

These marriage rings were further discussed in 1990 in Vikan's article "Art and Marriage in Early Byzantium". This article, which discusses marriage and material culture in Byzantium, examines marriage rings with the inscriptions ὑγιᾶ or ὁμόνοια. One of the pendants in the Piazza della Consolazione marriage necklace[83] is given as an example of the importance of the material, hematite, for its protection from miscarriage, therefore ensuring safe childbirth. Vikan mentions the hystera formula in conjunction with the wandering womb[84] and proposes the "possible proactive role against the 'wandering womb' of the earthen marriage tokens". He again underlines the significance of the octagonal shape of the rings and the link to colic rings prescribed by Alexander of Tralles.[85]

I have to agree with Alicia Walker in her criticism of Vikan (see below, pages 26–27). I think that straightforwardly equating marital harmony with procreation and children oversimplifies the matter. To answer Vikan's question of how marital health can be understood other than in terms of healthy and successful procreation, I would say it can just as easily be understood in terms of mutual love, respect, and piety, which can hold a marriage together even if a couple does not have children.

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[81] Vikan 1984, 83.
[82] Vikan 1984, 81–84.
[83] Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1958, inv. no. 58.12.
[84] Vikan 1990, 156.
[85] Vikan 1990, 161. Vikan's conclusions have been criticized by Kitzinger 1988, 72, n. 71, and Walker 2001. See also Gonosova and Kondoleon 1994, 49; Maguire 1996, 150; Walter 1989–1990, 36. For the quote from Alexander of Tralles, see note 144 of this dissertation.

Richard P. H. Greenfield has studied different variants and the manuscript tradition of the Melitene charm. The oldest manuscripts are from the 15th century, although the story is encountered much earlier. The variants can be divided into two main types: "the Sisinnios/Melitene type" and "the Michael type". Of the 32 versions analysed by Greenfield, seven are of the Sisinnios/Melitene type, 22 are of the Michael type, and three "contain versions of both types".[86] The Sisinnios/Melitene type centres around Melitene and her brothers, Saint Sisinnios and Saint Synodoros. The saints chase and battle Gello in elaborate sequences involving shape-shifting until she surrenders and tells her secret names that can be used as a defence against her.[87] The Michael type is more straightforward, as Gello is met by archangel Michael (or another holy figure), who interrogates and banishes her. Some of the manuscripts of the Michael type overlap with parts of the *Testament of Solomon*.[88] This same structure is seen in the migraine charm, discussed earlier in the summary of A. A. Barb's research, and one manuscript version features the 12 children of Abyzou, who live inside the victim's head, causing migraine.[89] I disagree with Greenfield on only one point. While Greenfield sees Gello's transformations as incongruous and suggests that they could be explained by the influence of non-Greek parallels of the *historiola*,[90] I think Gello's capability to shape-shift is actually integral to the story and Gello's character.

Sarah Iles Johnston has studied the relationship of the dead and the living and the roles of the dead in Ancient Greek society. The role that dead girls and women take up is tied together with child-killing demons, expectations placed on women in society, and the societal role and significance of envy. A woman whose death had been untimely (ἄωρος) – before she married and had children – was thought to be in danger of becoming a vindictive ghost who killed children and other women in childbirth (Johnston calls such a ghost ἄωρη, plural ἄωραι).

In addition to their behaviour, which went against every tenet of Greek society, they are depicted as not quite human in other ways as well. They are shape-

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[86] Greenfield 1989, 91–92.
[87] Greenfield 1989, 93.
[88] Greenfield 1989, 104, 115–116. Greenfield speculates "whether this version may represent a very early version of the story, if not the original, but it is perhaps more likely that an already existing, independent form was incorporated as is the case with several other episodes, and altered to fit into the overall framework of the *Testament*".
[89] Greenfield 1989, 119.
[90] Greenfield 1989, 93, n. 17.

shifters – partly animals, hermaphroditic, ugly and unfeminine – not proper women, but not men either.[91] All of these child-killing demons started out as mortal women who lost their children tragically enough to turn them into demons.[92]

Johnston makes a connection which I find to be integral to understanding what the child-killing demons are about: linking envy and the evil eye with ἄωραι. Even though the Greeks recognized the possibility of using magic to hinder someone's reproductive success, when confronted with childlessness, the explanation they turned to was not malignant magic directed against individuals. Johnston can find no spells for causing childlessness prior to the Late Roman period, and even then they remain exceedingly rare. One may perhaps find this odd at first, as the Greeks used a multitude of spells to affect the outcome of mundane matters, but Johnston reasons that "childbirth did not take place in a zero-sum environment". There was nothing to be gained from preventing another woman from having a child. However, there is one emotion that motivates action even when there is nothing to be gained: envy. Accordingly, it is envy that drives the ἄωραι, who are jealous of the living for their success as wives and mothers.[93] Their role is normative: they, their actions, and their envy are cast as demonic, and therefore envy is denounced as well. As the ἄωραι are outsiders, it is safe to blame them for childlessness or the death of a child or parturient woman, whereas accusing someone from the victim's own community for the misfortune would threaten the integrity and balance of the community.[94]

Jeffrey Spier extensively studies the history, formulas, and iconography of the Middle Byzantine uterus amulets in his 1993 article "Medieval Byzantine Magical Amulets and Their Tradition".[95] In Appendix I, he catalogues all the Middle Byzantine uterus amulets to have come to his attention so far. This remains the most comprehensive list of these amulets known to date, and my dissertation relies heavily on the material Spier has collated. In Appendix II, he makes an excursion to cover Late Antique bronze amulets.

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[91] Felton 2016 describes how Roman descriptions of witches emphasize their unpleasant physical appearance, lack of hygiene, and sexual perversions (see, e.g. the description of Erichto in Luc. 6.515–568). See also Ogden 2002, 102–145; Ogden 2008, 45–56. The individuals in a society who would most likely be accused of witchcraft were the same ones who would be selected as scapegoats: the outcasts on the bottom of the social hierarchy (Simón 2014, 73).
[92] Johnston 1999, 163–164, 173–175, 177–179, 181–182.
[93] See also Demand 1994 for the role and social context of motherhood in Classical Greece.
[94] Johnston 1999, 188–199, 224.
[95] Spier 1993.

In his chapter "A Revival of Antique Magical Practice in Tenth-Century Constantinople",[96] Spier gives an overview of the tradition of these amulets, from the Late Antique bronzes to Middle Byzantine uterus amulets and the Russian *zmeevik* or "snake amulets". He also introduces a new amulet not included in his earlier article, "Medieval Byzantine Magical Amulets and Their Tradition".[97]

In the chapter "An Antique Magical Book Used for Making Sixth-Century Byzantine Amulets?" in 2014, Spier expands on the 6th–7th-century CE bronze amulets touched upon in Appendix II of his 1993 article, focusing especially on the variation and transmission of amulet formulas. These bronze amulets from Syria and Palestine contain a magical formula comparing a demon to a series of animals. As Spier suggests, there must have been a literary prototype of this magical formula, which was revived in later, Middle Byzantine uterus amulets.[98]

While there is variation in the execution of the hystera motif and the hystera formula, they are so similar across the board that there has to have been a magical handbook that gave instructions for the manufacture of such an amulet. However, no such handbook or manuscript has been found so far, and it might never be.[99] As long as one is not found, I would argue that there are limits to how much can be accomplished by

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[96] Spier 2006.

[97] I neglected to take this new amulet into account in my article "Classical Traces of Metamorphosis in the Byzantine Hystera Formula" when analysing the frequency of the hystera motif and hystera formula appearing together, separately, or with other elements. However, this amulet in no way contradicts my findings laid out there; the amulet features the hystera motif, the saint motif, and lacks the hystera formula – all common elements of hystera amulets. Another one that escaped my attention is an early medieval ("alto-medievale") bronze amulet from Gela, Sicily, originally published by Manganaro 1994 and expanded on by Giannobile 2002 and Mastrocinque 2005a. It is fragmentary, with only part of the inscription surviving. It is difficult to say whether the now-missing part depicted the hystera motif. If it did not, this is the only example I know of that has the hystera formula without the hystera motif. The formula is distinctive as well; Mastrocinque (2005a, 170) restores the line as ὑστέρα μελάνη ἀμαυρομένι.

[98] Spier 2014, 56.

[99] Spier 2006, 33: "Both the source and the discoverer of the incantation are likely to remain unknown." Smith (1979) has touched on this issue. The majority of all preserved magical amulets of Antiquity are gemstones, but only 18 spells in the entire corpus of the Greek magical papyri (contemporary with most of the gemstone amulets) mention gemstones. Metallic amulets are mentioned far more often in the papyri. Smith has suggested the existence of a separate literary magical tradition, which is connected with the gemstone amulets but not with the papyri and metallic amulets. According to Smith, the stones reflect Palestinian, Syrian and Anatolian traditions instead of Egyptian ones. Bonner (1946, 27) has noted that "the texts of these papyri have much in common with the necessarily briefer inscriptions on magical stones, and must be studied in connection with them". Russell (1995, 36) has questioned the validity of extrapolating magical practices found in Greco-Egyptian magical papyri for the Roman and Byzantine worlds as a whole. The amulets come from a broader geographical area and are more homogenous with each other than with the ritual practices found in the papyri. For a compendium of gems and gem amulets from Late Antique and Early Christian periods, see Spier 2007; for later gems from Medieval and Early Modern periods, see Zwierlein-Diehl 2014 and Buora 2006; see also Bellucci 1980.

scholarly speculation, and it is impossible to say which variants of the hystera formula represent the original "in full"[100] and which are "corrupt".[101]

In his chapter "Antaura, the Migraine Demoness", Roy Kotansky analyses a silver amulet against migraine found in Carnuntum (modern Austria), as well as others in the same tradition. A charm with the same structure – namely, the Michael-type of Melitene charm – is found in a wealth of manuscripts. The Antaura charms share this structure with Solomon's encounters with child-killing demons in the *Testament of Solomon*. Kotansky offers another interpretation of the words αὔρα ("breath, wind") and ἀνταύρα ("opposing wind") in light of the symptoms of the condition the amulet protected against. Some migraine sufferers experience "migraine auras" before a migraine attack – flashing or pulsating lights. Kotansky suggests that "these experiences … may represent the same phenomenon alluded to in our ancient spell – a phenomenon that is on the Carnuntum amulet markedly personified and rationalized in folkloristic terms as a glimmering demoness. The demoness's arising out of the water to confront the potential sufferer alludes to the various 'aural' experiences immediately preceding the onslaught"[102] of the migraine itself. While this interpretation is certainly inspired, visual migraine auras, such as the zig-zag pattern, are often geometric, and I am not sure how this would be conceptualized as a demon. Kotansky also finds parallels to the migraine charms that employ the encounter motif in Gospel narratives where Christ meets and vanquishes demons.[103]

In her chapter "A Reconsideration of Early Byzantine Marriage Rings", Alicia Walker responds to and critiques the views presented by Vikan. Following Kitzinger's critique of Vikan, she states that "his identification of the function of the rings as specifically medical is not supported by evidence intrinsic to the objects themselves".[104] While Walker recognizes the validity of Vikan's analysis regarding the Early Byzantine amuletic armbands from the 6th and 7th centuries CE,[105] she considers the marriage rings dated to the 4th to 7th centuries CE to represent love magic, protecting and strengthening the love

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[100] Spier 1993, 44, 50.
[101] Spier 1993, 29.
[102] Kotansky 1994, 66.
[103] Kotansky 1994, 66–67.
[104] Walker 2001, 150.
[105] Walker 2001, 154; see Vikan 1990, 154, 160–161.

and marital bliss between husband and wife rather than being medicinal amulets meant to protect the uterus and assist in childbirth.[106] I agree with her in this conclusion.

Karen Hartnup has studied popular beliefs and popular Orthodoxy in 16th–17th-century Greece, especially as presented in Leo Allatius's *De Graecorum hodie quorundam opinationibus*. After discussing Allatius's credibility and use as a source, as well as Allatius's life and influences, she moves on to three figures in Greek popular belief: Gello, *vrykolakas*,[107] and *tympaniaios*.[108] The last two are both types of revenants, resurrected corpses that would not decompose. In her study of Gello in popular religion and Gello's role in life's milestones, marriage and baptism, Hartnup places Gello in the social context of 16th- and 17th-century Greece.

She considers the imbalance of the marriage market of the 16th and 17th centuries and how this resulted in dowry inflation. Preferential endowment of the eldest daughter left younger sisters without a dowry and unable to marry. Hartnup follows Johnston in connecting Gello with envy. Just as in Antiquity, in the 16th and 17th centuries, a woman who died without having fulfilled her potential for childbearing while alive became a threat through her jealousy of the living. Such jealousy could turn the woman into a *gello*. The preferential treatment of the eldest daughter resulted in envy and jealousy between the eldest sister and the younger sisters, who would remain unmarried. This envy and jealousy provided perfect grounds for transformation into a *gello*.[109]

Hartnup also responds to Allatius's enquiry why the Greeks did not baptize their children earlier or immediately after birth, since in the Christian tradition the most efficient way of protecting a child from a *gello* was considered to be baptism. Birth causes pollution, and the pollution of the mother extends to the child. As a sacrament, baptism could not be performed during an impure time, set as 40 days after birth.[110] This corresponds to the bleeding after birth, which lasts about six weeks.[111] According to the medical understanding of the time, the mother's blood was needed to nourish the male

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[106] Walker 2001, 150–151, 155–156, 162, 164.
[107] Hartnup 2004, 173–198, 226–236.
[108] Hartnup 2004, 199–226, 226–236.
[109] Hartnup 2004, 85–172. See also Sorlin 1991, 428–429.
[110] See also Sorlin 1991, 432–424 for the connection of purity, pollution, and baptism.
[111] Forty is a recurring magical number in the biblical context. The rain during the Flood lasted for 40 days and 40 nights (*Genesis* 7:4); the Israelites spent 40 years in the desert (*Numbers* 32:13); Jesus fasted for 40 days (*Matthew* 4:2; *Mark* 1:13; *Luke* 4:2); and there were 40 days between the resurrection and ascension of Jesus (*Acts* 1:3). Forty is also the central number in some practices against the evil eye (see examples in Dundes 1981, 277; Hardie 1981, 116 (no. 3), 118–120 (no. 7); Veikou 2008, 99–100).

seed for it to grow into a baby inside the mother's uterus.[112] Since it is the mother's blood which nourishes the foetus during pregnancy, the mother's blood equals fertility. It is this fertility that Gello is ultimately after, because at the most basic level, Gello *is* infertility. The mother's blood, which runs in the veins of the child, is what Gello wants to suck from the baby. Another facet of this was the belief that blood brings pollution and pollution attracts demons like Gello. Therefore, the pollution of blood was tied together with the fertility of blood.

William F. Ryan took up the Slavonic and Russian versions of the Melitene charm in his "Ancient Demons and Russian Fevers".[113] In the Slavonic and Russian charms, a type of female fever demon called *triasavitsa* (plural *triasavitsy*, literally "shaker", referring to the shivering caused by high fever) is conquered by a variety of saints, including Solomon and Sisinnios.[114] In addition to narrative charms, the *zmeevik* amulets were used as protection against *triasavitsy*.[115] In the Slavic and Russian traditions, *triasavitsy* often appear as 12 demons, derived from the 12 names of Gello (compare this with the 12 children of Abyzou causing migraine). These 12 demons are then further identified as the daughters of Herod.[116] Moreover, there are stories that do not feature Sisinnios or explicitly name the daughters of Herod, but clearly belong in the same tradition. In these, a saint – usually sitting on a rock, on Mount Athos, or by the river Jordan – meets 12 demonic sisters who are going to torment mankind. The saint questions and banishes them in a manner already familiar from the *Testament of Solomon* and the Melitene charm.[117] While the Russian tradition had lost the connection to children and childbirth, which was explicit in the Greek and Byzantine traditions,[118] the fact that *zmeevik* amulets were used against *triasavitsy* proves that the fever demons were derived from (if not equated with) the child-killing demon. This is further supported by the 15th-century Greek charm in *Anecdota atheniensia* intended against both hystera and fever (see below in this dissertation on

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[112] Hartnup 2004, 105–131.
[113] On the written magical tradition of Orthodox Slavs, see also Mathiesen 1995.
[114] Ryan 2006, 38.
[115] Ryan 2006, 39–40.
[116] In another tradition, 77 different fevers are identified as daughters of Herod, who are turned into evil winds in an echo of the Antaura charm. 77 and 72 are particularly important numbers in magic (Ryan 2006, 43, 46), and Gello often has either 72 or 77 names (plus a half-name) (Greenfield 1989, 101, 112, 120, 133, 134) or there are 77 and a half *abras* that cause disease (Greenfield 1989, 118). See also Skemer 2006, 111; Ryan 1999, 295.
[117] Ryan 2006, 49.
[118] Ryan 2006, 42.

pages 33–34).[119] Ryan suggests that this connection "may perhaps have arisen in part from a fanciful association of the New Testament stories of Salome … and the Massacre of the Innocents, together with popular beliefs about Russian mermaids or *rusalki* [water-sprites]".[120]

In her book *Mixanthropes*, Emma Aston traces the history of human-animal mixanthropes and the meaning of metamorphosis and mixanthropy (a term coined by Aston to denote the human-animal or animal-animal combination) in Greek myth and religion.[121] I have leaned heavily on Aston's work, especially in my analysis of the metamorphic qualities of the hystera motif and hystera formula in my article "Classical Traces of Metamorphosis in the Byzantine Hystera Formula". Aston underlines the strong connection between the sea (or water in general) and metamorphosis. Metamorphosis and mixanthropy are common to sea and river deities such as Proteus, Nereus, Oceanus, Triton, Thetis, and Acheloos.[122] Another deity to whose character and cult metamorphosis is central is Dionysus. In vase-paintings,[123] Dionysus is almost always depicted as fully anthropomorphic, while his shape-changing known from myth – he can morph completely into an animal or appear as a mixanthrope – is reflected in the mixanthropic character of his retinue (θίασος).[124]

Recurring animals in scenes of metamorphosis are the bull, the snake, and the lion. For example, in Euripides's *The Bacchae*, the chorus addresses Dionysus: "Appear as a bull or many-headed serpent or raging lion to see."[125] As I have noted in "Classical Traces of Metamorphosis in the Byzantine Hystera Formula", these are the same animals that appear in the magical formula of the Middle Byzantine uterus amulets.[126]

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[119] Delatte 1927, MS no. 124, Bibliothèque du Sénat, F. 275ᵛ, page 141, lines 22–29.
[120] Ryan 2006, 51–52.
[121] See also Aston's contribution to *The Oxford handbook of animals in classical thought and life*, "Part-animal Gods" (Aston 2014).
[122] Aston 2011, 57, 160–161.
[123] Metamorphosis is not always depicted in vase paintings as a mixanthropic form, on its own, or in between forms, but sometimes as the starting form and destination form in a sequence, without an intermediary stage. On metamorphosis in Greek myth, see also Forbes Irving 1990 and Buxton 2009.
[124] Aston 2011, 127, 128, 129, 200, 277, 302.
[125] Eur. *Bacch.* 1018–1019: φάνηθι ταῦρος ἢ πολύκρανος ἰδεῖν δράκων ἢ πυριφλέγων ὁρᾶσθαι λέων. Translation by Buckley 1850.
[126] Not all metamorphosis scenes feature these exact animals or all of them. See e.g. Lucian *Philops.* 14: τὴν Σελήνην κατέσπασεν, πολύμορφόν τι θέαμα καὶ ἄλλοτε ἀλλοῖόν τι φανταζόμενον· τὸ μὲν γὰρ πρῶτον γυναικείαν μορφὴν ἐπεδείκνυτο, εἶτα βοῦς ἐγίγνετο πάγκαλος, εἶτα σκύλαξ ἐφαίνετο. ("He drew down the moon, a many-shaped spectacle, appearing differently at different times; for at first she exhibited the form of

Aston shows that the Greek practice of scapegoats also has a connection to both metamorphosis and the sea as part of a larger theme of mixanthropes and shape-shifters jumping into the sea (such as Glaucus), as well as scapegoats (φαρμακοί) thrown into the sea.[127]

Aston feels that in addition to myths receiving a material form in visual depictions, myths may also have been created in response to already existing images. As an example of this, she cites the head of Medusa, which, in her opinion, "may well have existed as a decorative motif before the first appearance of the myth in which she is decapitated by Perseus";[128] the *gorgoneion* motif already appears in Homer, while the first mention of the story of Medusa and Perseus is in Hesiod. However, Aston does not seem to take into consideration the possibility that Hesiod did not invent the story himself, but simply recorded an already existing myth – and a resulting pictorial representation of the gorgon head – which could also have been known to Homer. Aston offers no explanation as to where the *gorgoneion* image and its apotropaic function were derived, if not in response to the myth recorded by Hesiod.

The normative role of the child-killing demons brought to the fore by Johnston is also the focus of Camilla Asplund Ingemark and Dominic Ingemark's chapter "More than Scapegoating. The Therapeutic Potential of Stories of Child-Killing Demons in Ancient Greece and Rome". Approaching the issue through ancient therapies of emotions and contemporary narrative therapy, they propose that stories of these demons acted in a therapeutic way and helped people to mentally prepare for a potential crisis.[129] The indefinite, looming fear of losing a child was turned into a definite, controllable fear through "naming the problem" and pinning the threat on an external entity, therefore

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a woman, then she turned into a handsome bull, and then she looked like a puppy." Translation by Harmon 1921, 341.)

[127] Aston 2011, 129, 177–178. Related to the scapegoat practice is a rite on Tenedos, recounted by Aelianus. A calf is sacrificed to Dionysus Anthroporraistos ("Dionysus the Man-slayer"). The man who deals the death-blow to the calf is pelted with stones, and he flees until he reaches the sea. Ael. *NA* 12.34: Τενέδιοι δὲ τῷ ἀνθρωπορραίστῃ Διονύσῳ τρέφουσι κύουσαν βοῦν, τεκοῦσαν δὲ ἄρα αὐτὴν οἷα δήπου λεχὼ θεραπεύουσι. τὸ δὲ ἀρτιγενὲς βρέφος καταθύουσιν ὑποδήσαντες κοθόρνους. ὅ γε μὴν πατάξας αὐτὸ τῷ πελέκει λίθοις βάλλεται δημοσίᾳ, καὶ ἔστε ἐπὶ τὴν θάλατταν. ("The people of Tenedos keep a cow that is in calf for Dionysus the Man-slayer, and as soon as it has calved they tend it as though it were a woman in child-bed. But they put buskins on the newly born calf and then sacrifice it. But the man who dealt it the blow with the axe is pelted with stones by the populace and flees until he reaches the sea." Translation by Scholfield 1959, 57–58.)

[128] Aston 2011, 216.

[129] Asplund Ingemark and Ingemark 2013, 78, 81, 83.

casting the child-killing demons as scapegoats.[130] I fully agree with their assessment of the demons as scapegoats and the centrality of their role in the redefinition of fear into something tangible that could be fought. I am less certain whether the stories were meant to help women prepare for the possibility of losing their children. Surely no one wanted to think that this possibility could be realized, and stories of these demons, such as the Melitene *historiola*, acted in and of themselves as charms against them.

Magical texts

Magical texts concerning pregnancy and childbirth can be divided into two groups: one, charms to promote pregnancy and protect against miscarriage in general, and two, charms specifically intended to ward against child-killing demons.

Charms belonging to the first group can be found in *Papyri Graecae Magicae* and *Papyri Demoticae Magicae*. None of the spells in *PGM* or *PDM* name any of the child-killing demons or claim to repel them, but magical incantations for halting bleeding and recipes meant to aid pregnancy can be found in both. Lines 1–9 in *PGM* XXIIa give two spells for "bleeding", but it is unclear whether simply bleeding from a wound, not the uterus, is meant. Both instruct that a Homeric verse be "recited to the blood in order to heal bleeding". The first (*PGM* XXIIa 1) most likely refers to *Il.* 17.714 and the second (*PGM* XXIIa 2–9) to *Il.* 1.75.[131] In *PDM* xiv 953–955, we have another spell for the cessation of bleeding. This definitely refers to uterine bleeding, as the instructions say "for a woman".[132] In addition, *PDM* xiv 961–965,[133] *PDM* xiv 970–977,

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[130] Asplund Ingemark and Ingemark 2013, 78–80.

[131] Translation from Betz 1986, 260. For a study on blood charms used to stop bleeding from the nose or a wound, see Barb 1948; see also Mastrocinque 2014b, 161–162. A bronze amulet (in a private collection; see Spier 1993, no. 38 (pl. 3d)) with the hystera motif depicts the scene from *Mark* 5:25–34 of Christ healing the woman with the issue of blood (Haemorrhoissa). The same scene is depicted in a 6th–7th century CE silver-mounted haematite amulet from Byzantine Egypt (Metropolitan Museum inv. no. 17.190.491), without any mention of the uterus. On the Haemorrhoissa, see Baert et al. 2012. Philostorgius the Arian (*Historia Ecclesiastica* 7.3) tells of a statue erected by the Haemorrhoissa in Caesarea Philippi: "Concerning an image of our Saviour erected by the faith of a pious woman in grateful remembrance of her cure from a bloody flux, Philostorgius writes, that it was placed near the fountain in the city among other statues, and presented a pleasant and agreeable sight to the passers-by. And when a certain herb, which grew up at the foot of this statue, was found to be a most effectual remedy against all diseases, and especially against consumption." Translation by Walford 1855, 475.

[132] *PDM* xiv 953–955: "A prescription to stop blood: Juice of 'Great-Nile' plant together with beer; you should make the woman drink it at dawn before she has eaten. It stops." Translation by Janet H. Johnson in Betz 1986, following the edition of Griffith and Thompson 1904, verso, col. v/1–3.

PDM xiv 978–980 and *PDM* xiv 981–984 all give magical recipes for "stopping fluid" in a woman. *PGM* VII 260–271 offers a spell against the wandering womb, "for the ascent of the uterus". It first addresses the uterus (ἐξορκίζω σε, μήτραν), and then it requires a spell, with *voces magicae*, to be written on a tin sheet which is then carried on one's person as an amulet. *PGM* CXXIIIa 48–50 shares a spell "for childbearing", advising the woman in childbirth to place a piece of pottery on her right thigh while saying "Come out of your tomb, Christ is calling you."[134]

Charms belonging to the second group specifically name and target the child-killing demons. These include narrative charms (*historiolae*) against demons, such as Solomon's encounter with the child-killing demon Obyzouth in the *Testament of Solomon*,[135] and the charms naming Gello in the Greek magical handbook *Cyranides*.[136]

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[133] *PDM* xiv 961–965: "A prescription (two prescriptions to stop blood): Leaf of …., leaf of fresh 'copper-fly' plant. Pound, put [it] on yourself while you lie with the woman. Another: Myrrh, garlic, gall of a gazelle; pound with / old scented wine; put [it] on yourself while you lie with her." Translation by Janet H. Johnson in Betz 1986, following the edition of Griffith and Thompson 1904, verso, col. v/9–13.

[134] *P.Cazzaniga*, nos. 1–6=*P.Mil. Vogl.* inv. 1245, 1246, 1247–1248, 1249, 1250, 1252–1253. This is the same as no. 96 in Daniel and Maltomini 1992, 70. The papyrus is from the 5th (Betz 1968, xxviii) or 5th–6th centuries CE (Daniel and Maltomini 1992, 232). Similarly, a magical manuscript from the beginning of 12th century CE (MS Sloane 475, British Library) instructs a piece of virgin parchment to be tied around the birthing woman's right thigh to help childbirth (*ut cito pariat femina. scribe in carta pura et liga super dextrum genu*). See also MS Kane 21, F. 1ᵛ and F. 2ʳ (Princeton University Library) from ca. 1430 CE for two childbirth amulets. See Skemer 2006, 81, 151–152. In another, a 13th–15th century charm for difficult birth preserved in a manuscript in the British Library (MS Harley 2558, F. 117ᵛ, British Library), the child is likened to Lazarus, whom Christ compels to come out (*in nomine patris, Lazare*). See Olsan 2003, 360, 366, Table 1; Dasen 2005, 577. For a gem depicting the resurrection of Lazarus, see Mastrocinque 2014a, 194, no. 535. In addition, a 10th-century CE or earlier Coptic prayer "The Praise of the Archangel Michael" (*Heidelberg Kopt.* 686; Meyer, Smith, and Kelsey 1994, 326–341, no. 135; see also Horden 1999, 295) attempts to combat labour pains and ease childbirth by naming the individual labour pains of the Virgin Mary. The first labour pain is called Choroei, the second Abko, and the third Hanautos (Meyer, Smith, and Kelsey 1994, 335).

[135] *Test. Sal.* 13. Manuscript copies of the *Testament of Solomon* are encountered up to the 15th century (Greenfield 1995, 127, n. 22–23). See also Greenfield 1989; Oikonomides 1975–1976. For *historiolae* in general, see Skemer 2006, 105–107.

[136] *Cyr.* 2.31.20–21: ἐὰν δέ τις καθεύδῃ ἐπὶ δορᾶς ὄνου, παντοίους δαίμονας οὐ φοβεῖται, οὐδὲ τὴν Γελλὼ καὶ νυκτερινὰ συναντήματα. (Kaimakis 1976, 164.) *Si quis dormierit vel quieverit super corium asini, nulla daemonia timebit nec etiam Gelo nec Gillum, id est strigas, aut nocturnos occursus.* (Delatte 1942, 123, lines 3–5.) "If one sleeps on donkey skins, there is no need to fear any kinds of demons, nor Gello and nightly visitations." My translation. *Cyr.* 2.40.35–38: εἰ δὲ τοὺς δύο ὀφθαλμοὺς ζώσης τῆς ὑαίνης ἐξέλῃς καὶ περιάψῃς τοῖς δυσὶ βραχίοσιν ἐν πορφυρῷ ῥάκει, ἀποδιώξεις πάντα φόβον νυκτερινὸν καὶ τὴν Γελλὼ τὴν πνίγουσαν τὰ βρέφη καὶ τὰς λεχοὺς ἐνοχλοῦσαν, καὶ πᾶν δαιμόνιον φεύξεται (Kaimakis 1976, 178). *Si vero duos oculos viventis hyenae extraxeris et ligaveris ad duo brachia in purpureo panno, abicies omnem timorem nocturnum et strigam quae necat infantulos et insidiatur concubitus vel partus, et omnis daemon fugiet.* (Delatte 1942, 132, lines 4–8.) "If two eyes of a live hyena are removed and wrapped in two pieces of purple cloth, all nightly fears will be chased away, as well as the Gello, suffocator of children and women in childbed, and all demons will be driven away." My translation. *Cyr.* 3.1.91–93 does not explicitly name Gello, but the instructions are clearly for protecting a pregnancy: Ἀετίτης δὲ λίθος ὁ κρουόμενος καὶ εὐειδής, πυρρὸς τῇ χρόᾳ, φορούμενος φυλάττει τὰ ἐν τῇ κοιλίᾳ βρέφη καὶ οὐκ ἐᾷ ἐκτιτρώσκεσθαι αὐτά. ἐστὶ δὲ καὶ εὐτόκιον. (Kaimakis 1976, 190). *Aetitis autem lapis, qui ad tactum deintus sonat et rubeus est colore et ut cera, gestatus servat in alvo fetus et non sinit abortivus fieri: est enim velocis fetus.* (Delatte 1942, 147.)

Also in the second group is the Melitene charm, which survives in multiple copies. The earliest manuscripts date from the 15th century, with the latest versions as late as the late 19th or the 20th century.[137] Itself acting as a charm or exorcism against the infanticidal demon, the story gives instructions for making an amulet that will ward off the child-killing demon, and it provides a prayer with names of saints. The main characters are Melitene and her brothers, Saint Sisinnios and Saint Sisynodoros. The details vary in the different manuscript versions, but the basic structure of the story is as follows. Melitene's children have been killed or stolen by Gello. Now pregnant again, Melitene tries to protect herself and her unborn child by sealing herself in a fortress. The saints, Melitene's brothers, come to visit her but Melitene fears that Gello will slip in as well and hesitates to let them in. Finally Melitene lets Sisinnios and Sisynodoros into the fortress, but her fears prove to have been well-founded, as Gello enters the fortress with the saints in a disguise. Gello kills or steals Melitene's unborn child and flees, and the saints pursue her. The saints reach Gello on the seashore where, after a series of shape-shifting transformations, the saints seize her and force her to give back Melitene's children. The saints also force Gello to reveal her secret names, which will keep her away if written on an amulet. In some manuscript versions this is accomplished through a bargain between Gello and the saints. The saints must give her their own mother's milk (or in one manuscript variant, Melitene's milk) in exchange for Melitene's child, either by regurgitating the milk from their mouths or producing it from the palms of their hands. Because I have delved into the transformations of both Gello and the saints, the meaning of metamorphosis in the *historiola*, and its significance for Gello's character in "Metamorphosis, Mixanthropy, and the Child-killing Demon in the Hellenistic and Byzantine Period", I will not repeat those observations here. The mother's milk, however, appears in a charm against hystera/fever in *Anecdota atheniensia*.

The 15th-century *Anecdota atheniensia* contains at least three charms: one against Gello, one against hystera/fever, and one against, among other things, envy. The

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"The eagle stone, cut and beautiful, with a flame-coloured surface, protects the child in the womb if you carry the stone with you, and prevents a miscarriage. It is beneficial to childbirth." My translation. Claiming to be a revision of a text found in archaic Syriac steles, *Cyranides* originates from Alexandria in the 1st or 2nd century CE. A Latin translation was not made until 1169. On *Cyranides*, see Kahane, Kahane, and Pietrangeli 1966; Fowden 1986, 1–44, 79; Winkler 1985, 262–265.

[137] Greenfield 1989. This *historiola* also appears on a Palestinian metal amulet (Israel Museum inv. no. 69.3.146, Amulet 15 in Naveh and Shaked 1985, 104–122, pl. 13, fig. 17) and in two Aramaic incantation bowls (Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem inv. no. Heb. 4° 6079, Bowl 12a in Naveh and Shaked 1985, 188–197, pl. 28, and the Metropolitan Museum, New York inv. no. 86.11.259, Bowl 12b in Naveh and Shaked 1985, 189–197).

first, the charm against Gello (Φυλακτήριον εἰς παιδία μικρά. περὶ Γέλου), lists Gello's twelve and a half secret names, followed by the names of angels and archangels.[138]

The second, the charm against hystera/fever (Πῶς νὰ γράφῃς ἀστέρα διὰ μικρὰ παιδία), gives an inscription to be written around an image of a snake (*figura serpentis inscriptione circumdata*):

> ἀστέρα μελάνη μελανωμένη, αἷμα τρώγεις, αἷμα πίνεις, ᾿ς τὸ αἷμα συντελείεσαι, φεῦγε, ῥῖγος, ἀπὸ τὸν δοῦλον τοῦ Θεοῦ ὁδεῖνα καὶ τάξω σοι πέντ πίνακα μέλι καὶ πέντε πίνακα γάλα νὰ τρώγῃς καὶ νὰ πίνῃς φεῦγε, ῥῖγος, ἀπὸ τὸν δοῦλον τοῦ Θεοῦ ὁδεῖνα. ἀμήν. ς. κ. ς. φ. Θ. ἀμήν.
>
> How to draw the hystera for (the benefit of) small children. Womb, black, blackening, eating blood, drinking blood. Stop devouring blood, flee, fever, by the servant of God so-and-so and I lay out for you five plates of honey and five plates of milk to eat and to drink. Flee, fever, by the servant of God so-and-so. ς. κ. ς. φ. Θ. Amen.[139]

The charm starts out by addressing the uterus (ἀστέρα), but then changes to fever (ῥῖγος, literally translated as "frost", referring to the shivering caused by a fever). The charm seems to try to encourage the uterus/fever to eat and drink honey and milk instead of blood. In "Classical Traces of Metamorphosis in the Byzantine Hystera Formula", I have argued that the milk here is related to the role that mother's milk plays in the Melitene *historiola*: milk replaces children, while in the charm against hystera/fever, milk and honey replace blood. I will return to this issue of milk and blood in the section "Formulas of the amulets".

The third is an exorcism in *Anecdota atheniensia* is attributed to Saint Athanasius the Great, the archbishop of Alexandria (Ἑτέρα, τοῦ ἁγίου Ἀθανασίου Ἀλεξανδρείας τοῦ μεγάλου).[140] It is meant to protect "from jealousy and envy, from magic and spells, from curses and hexes, from oaths and swearing, from pain of the soul, from pain of the heart and head and kidneys, and from all diabolical activities".[141] The spell goes on to address the evil entity causing these ailments, invoking God, the Holy Spirit, and angels. This evil entity is addressed as a "malicious and impure demon, called Abyzou

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[138] Delatte 1927, MS no. 210, Société Historique, F. 64, page 117, line 10–page 118, line 4.
[139] My translation. Delatte 1927, MS no. 124, Bibliothèque du Sénat, F. 275ᵛ, page 141, lines 22–29. Barb sees ἀστέρα as "a corruption" of ὑστέρα (Barb 1953, 237, n. 301).
[140] Delatte 1927, MS no. 825, Bibliothèque Nationale, F. 6ᵛ, pages 230–238.
[141] My translation. ἀπὸ ζήλου καὶ φθόνου καὶ ἀπὸ μαγείας καὶ φαρμακείας, ἀπὸ κατάρας καὶ ψαλμοκατάρας, ἀπὸ ὅρκου καὶ ὁρκωμοσίας, ἀπὸ ψυχόπονον, ἀπὸ καρδιόπονον καὶ κεφαλόπονον καὶ νεφρόπονον καὶ ἀπὸ πάσης διαβολικῆς ἐνεργείας. Page 230, line 33–page 231, line 1. ψαλμοκατάρας appears to be a compound noun made of ψαλμός and κατάρα, meaning a spell that was sung or accompanied by music.

and Adiouth and among humans called Gello, who roams the whole world, flogging and strangling children, injuring the bodies and eyes of humans".[142]

This exorcism, which works against envy and headache (κεφαλόπονον), explicitly names the demon Abyzou/Gello. Her traits and behaviour are familiar. She is envy – whose role in creating child-killing demons has become familiar through the work of Sarah Iles Johnston and Karen Hartnup, as mentioned earlier. She is the same demon as Antaura, causing migraine – namely, pain in the head and visual migraine auras (therefore "injuring eyes"). She strangles children and afflicts bodies and eyes, as she tells Solomon during their encounter:

> "Who are you?" She replied, "Obyzouth. I do not rest at night, but travel around all the world visiting women and, divining the hour (when they give birth), I search (for them) and strangle their newborn infants. I do not go through a single night without success. … Otherwise, my work is limited to killing newborn infants, injuring eyes, condemning mouths, destroying minds, and making bodies feel pain."[143]

Formulas of the amulets

The amulets bear several inscriptions, such as the Trisagion, excerpts from the Bible and Psalms (e.g. Psalm 90(91)), the flee-formula,[144] and the hystera formula. The hystera formula addresses the uterus, comparing it to different animals and asking it to calm down. The formula has a range of variations, some mentioning several animals, some substituting one of the animals for the sea or adding another element, such as "woman" (γυνή). All versions of the formula convey the same idea: by describing and recognizing the behaviour of the uterus, one can command it; furthermore, one can make it calm down

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[142] My translation. δαιμόνιον πονηρὸν καὶ ἀκάθαρτον, τὸ καλούμενον Ἀβυζοὺθ καὶ Ἀδιούθ καὶ παρὰ ἀνθρώπων ἡ λεγομένη Γιλοῦ, τὸ περιερχόμενον εἰς πάντα τὸν κόσμον καὶ μαστίζον καὶ πνῖγον τὰ βρέφη, τὸ ἀδικοῦν τὰ σώματα καὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς τῶν ἀνθρώπων. Page 235, lines 15–19.

[143] *Test. Sal.* 13.2–4. Translation by Duling 1983, 974.

[144] A good example of the flee-formula ("Flee, name-of-demon, so-and-so pursues you!") is a silver amulet (Ashmolean Museum inv. 1980.53) which addresses the demon Abyzou Anabardalea and commands her to flee, for Saint Sisinnios is pursuing her. Spier 2014 has extensively studied the use of the flee-formula in uterus amulets. A good example of the flee-formula used in other contexts is the recommendation of Alexander of Tralles, who advises using an octagonal ring to treat colic, by taking "an iron ring and make its hoop eight-sided, and write thus on the octagon: 'Flee, flee, O bile, the lark is pursuing you.'" He says, "I have used this method many times, and I thought it inappropriate not to draw your attention to it, since it has a power against the illness." Translation from Vikan 1990, 161. See Puschmann 1878–1879, II, 377, VIII.2. On the therapeutic approaches of Alexander of Tralles, see Bouras-Vallianatos 2014; Duffy 1995, 95.

by comparing it to a calm, tame animal or entity, such as a lamb or the sea.[145] One variation of the Middle Byzantine hystera formula reads ὑστέρι μελάνη μιλανομένι ὁς ὄφης ἤλήεσε κ ὁς αέον [=λέων] βρυχᾶσε κὲ ὁς ἀρνίον κυμοῦ ("uterus, black, blackening, slither like a snake and roar like a lion and lie down like a lamb"),[146] another one ὑστέρ μελάνι μελανομέλη η μελάη. ὁς ὄφης ἤλήες κὲ ὁς δαρκον [=δράκον] συρχήζης κὲ ὁς λέο βυρχᾶσε κ ὁς ἀρνήον κυμῆθητ ("uterus, black, blackening, like a snake slither and like a snake hiss and like a lion roar and like a lamb lie down"),[147] while a third example incorporates the sea, ὑστέρα μελάινη μελαινομένη ὡς θάλατταν γαλήνησαινει ("uterus, black, blackening, be calm like the sea").[148]

The naming and adjuring of the uterus itself in the Byzantine amulets is not a completely new development. Two close parallels from earlier sources address the uterus: *PGM* VII 260–271, which starts with ἐξορκίζω σε, μήτραν, and a Beirut amulet against the wandering womb, which starts with ἐξορκίζω σε, μήτρα (see pages 40–41 of this dissertation). However, attaching the epithet "black, blackening" to the uterus is not encountered previously.[149]

Comparing the object of the spell to animals is not unprecedented either. The previously mentioned Babina amulet is a good example, and there are other earlier healing amulets that employ a similar magical formula with animal comparisons. The object of the magical formula is the demon believed to cause the disease, and the demon is compared to animals. In "Metamorphosis, Mixanthropy, and the Child-killing Demon in the Hellenistic and Byzantine Period", I have shown how child-killing demons have animal traits and how demons take the appearance or voice of animals and are described in animalistic terms. The hystera formula is a part of this tradition of conceptualizing disease, bodily malfunction, or adversity as the work of demons, and then comparing this demon to

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[145] I have discussed the use of the indicative mode vs. the imperative mode in amulets in "Classical Traces of Metamorphosis in the Byzantine Hystera Formula", n. 36.

[146] Engraved onyx amulet, once in Peter Paul Rubens's collection; subsequently Albert Rubens's collection, see Drexler 1899, 594, no. 1; Spier 1993, no. 52.

[147] A banded agate amulet, once in the ducal collection of Gotha, see Spier 1993, no. 54, pl. 4g–h.

[148] A green jasper intaglio, once in the collection of W. Talbot Ready, see Drexler 1889, 596–597, no. 8; Spier 1993, no. 56.

[149] Late Antique bronze amulets call the demon μεμισημένη and δολομήχανε. For the relationship of these earlier epithets with μελάνη μελανωμένη of Middle Byzantine uterus amulets, see Spier 1993, 44–45. In the 4th century CE, δολομήχανε appears in Gregorius Nazianzenus, *Carmina* II.I.55: φεῦγ᾽ ἀπ᾽ ἐμῆς κραδίης, δολομήχανε, φεῦγε τάχιστα (Thierry 1972, no. 12). Cf. Aesch. *Eum*. 52, where the Erinyes are called μέλαιναι ("black") and βδελύκτροποι ("disgusting, abominable").

animals.[150] The meaning of animal comparison and the themes of metamorphosis and mixanthropy are dealt with in more detail in my article "Classical Traces of Metamorphosis in the Byzantine Hystera Formula". Therefore, I will concentrate here on two issues: mentions in the uterus amulets of eating and drinking blood, and the copying of the formula.

Eating and drinking blood

The word πίνω, "I drink", appears already in the Late Antique bronze amulets that depict the rider saint conquering a female demon.[151] In addition to the ὑστέρα μελάνη μελανωμένη and formula comparing the uterus to various animals, the Middle Byzantine amulets occasionally contain a reference to eating and drinking blood. A lead pendant reads ὑστέρα μελάνι μελνομένι δεδεμένι ἔμα φάε πίε ("uterus, black, blackening, having been bound, eat [and] drink blood"),[152] a silver pendant reads ὑστέρα μελάνη μελανωμένη ἔμαν τρὄη ἔμαν πή ("uterus, black, blackening, eat blood, drink blood"),[153] and another silver amulet just says πίνω.[154]

This has been seen as a reference to the amulet's function of protecting the uterus and pregnancy by preventing bleeding – the uterus was supposed to "eat" or "drink" blood instead of letting it out.[155] The charm against hystera/fever introduced in the previous section replaces blood with milk and honey, analogous to the way the Melitene *historiola* replaces the child with mother's milk.[156] But if the goal of these amulets is to

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[150] The history of the hystera formula has been studied in Spier 1993, and earlier antecedents of the animal comparison formula have been detailed in Spier 2014 and summarized in the section "Previous research".

[151] See e.g. three examples in the British Museum: inv. no. G 323, EA 56323 (5th–6th century CE, Michel, Zazoff, and Zazoff 2001, 281, no. 453); inv. no. G 594, AMK 97,3-16,1 (5th–6th century CE, Michel, Zazoff, and Zazoff 2001, 282, no. 454); inv. no. G 324, EA 56324 (6th–7th century CE, Michel, Zazoff, and Zazoff 2001, 282, no. 455).

[152] A lead pendant in a private collection (see Spier 1993, no. 6 (pl. 1b)). Translation by Spier 1993, 29.

[153] Menil Collection, Houston inv. no. 490.824 (see Spier 1993, no. 34 (pl. 3b)). Translation by Spier 1993, 29.

[154] A silver amulet from Asia Minor (Ashmolean Museum inv. no. 1980.53).

[155] Spier 1993, 46. On the connection between milk and blood, see Sorlin 1991, 434–435.

[156] Ghosts are repelled with milk in Statius and Tibullus. Stat. *Theb.* 4.543–547: *Argolicas magis huc appelle precando Thebanasque animas; alias avertere gressus lacte quater sparsas maestoque excedere luco, nata, iube; tum qui vultus habitusque, quis ardor sanguinis affusi.* ("Rather bring Argive and Theban souls hither with your prayers and bid all others, my daughter, sprinkled four times with milk, turn their steps away and depart the dismal grove. Then tell me, come, their countenances and mien, their appetite for the spilt blood." Translation by Shackleton Bailey 2004, 245); Tib. 1.2.47–48: *iam tenet infernas magico stridore catervas, iam iubet aspersas lacte referre pedem.* ("Now with magic shrillings she keeps the troops of the grave before her; now she sprinkles them with milk and commands them to retreat." Translation by Postgate 1913, 201.) In Ovid, ghosts are appeased by offering them beans instead during the Lemuria festival. Ov. *Fast.*

promote pregnancy by encouraging the uterus to eat or drink blood instead of letting it bleed out (miscarriage or menses), why would it make sense to *prevent* the uterus from eating and drinking blood by offering milk and honey instead? For the amulet to work and for pregnancy to be successful, it is essential that the uterus retain blood, therefore "eating" or "drinking" it.

It is possible that two parallel traditions are intermixed here. In one, the uterus should eat and drink menstrual blood and therefore retain preserve the pregnancy. In the other, which is the one we see in the cases of substitutions of milk and honey, this is not what "eating" or "drinking" blood refers to. The blood that the uterus is discouraged from eating and drinking by offerings of milk or honey is the blood of the child.[157]

This theme of the child-killing demon drinking or eating the blood and/or flesh of her victims is present in the well-known *historiola* where a disease-causing demon meets a saint or a deity who interrogates and vanquishes the demon and sends her to the mountains.

In a Greek version of the *historiola*, reproduced in Pradel 1907, it is Christ who meets and averts the demon. Christ sends her to the mountains in the head of a bull, where she will be free to "eat flesh" (κρέας φάγετε) and "drink blood" (αἷμα πίετε).[158] Another version of this is found in MS Parisinus Gr. 2316, F. 319*b*, where Christ again meets the migraine demon and banishes her to Mt. Ararat, saying "there you may eat, there may drink" (ἐκεῖ νὰ φᾷς, ἐκεῖ νὰ πῇς).[159] This appears to be an abbreviated version of the eating of flesh and drinking of blood encountered in Pradel 1907. In another version, MS no. 973,[160] the reference is not as clear as in the previous examples. Here the demon Abra is also "going to eat people's bones and destroy their flesh" (Ἐγὼ ὑπάγω

5.436–444: *nigras accipit ante fabas, aversusque iacit; sed dum iacit, "haec ego mitto, his" inquit "redimo meque meosque fabis." hoc novies dicit nec respicit: umbra putatur colligere et nullo terga vidente sequi. rursus aquam tangit, Temesaeaque concrepat aera, et rogat, ut tectis exeat umbra suis. cum dixit novies "Manes exite paterni," respicit et pure sacra peracta putat.* ("First he receives black beans and throws them away with face averted; but while he throws them, he says: 'These I cast; with these beans I redeem me and mine.' This he says nine times, without looking back: the shade is thought to gather the beans, and to follow unseen behind. Again he touches water, and clashes Temesan bronze, and asks the shade to go out of his house. When he has said nine times, 'Ghosts of my fathers, go forth!' he looks back, and thinks that he has duly performed the sacred rites." Translation by Frazer 1931, 293.)

[157] The blood in the child's veins was the blood from the mother. It was this – the mother's blood and her fertility – that Gello wanted to suck from babies. On the connection between blood of the uterus, that of the child, and that of the mother, as well as blood and pollution, see Hartnup 2004, 95–96, 105–131.

[158] Pradel 1907. Translation by Kotansky 1994, 61, following the translation of Barb 1966, 2–3.

[159] Translation by Kotansky 1994, 62.

[160] MS no. 973 (*Euchologion* of the monastery of Mt. Sinai), dated 1153 CE, in Dmitrievskij 1965 [1901], 118ff.

ἀνθρώπου ὀστέα φαγεῖν καὶ τὸ κρέας ἀφανῖσαι).[161] Even though this is not exactly drinking or eating blood and flesh, the sentiment is the same.[162] In a parallel from Jewish folklore, the demon Lilith – the same type of child-killing demon that the amulets were meant to protect against – meets the prophet Elijah and tells him she is going to steal a newborn and "to drink his [the child's] blood, to suck the marrow of his bones and to eat his flesh".[163] I believe that at least some of the references to "eating" and "drinking" blood in the amulets refer to this tradition.

Copying of the formula

The formulas were most likely copied directly from literary sources. In magical handbooks from the 15th–19th centuries, there are still variations of the hystera formula.[164] Some amulets exhibit spelling mistakes and vernacular forms. These variations in the formula may give clues to the social class and level of education of the amulet-makers. There are several possible explanations for these occurrences: simple carelessness of the scribe (the amulet-maker may have been mass-producing amulets and not really paying attention to each individual amulet); the amulet-maker did not understand what they were copying (either did not know Greek or was illiterate);[165] or some magical handbooks and papyri were written in vernacular Greek.

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[161] Translation by Kotansky 1994, 63. In Pradel 1907 and MS Parisinus Gr. 2316, Bibliotheque Nationale, F. 319b, Antaura causes only migraine-related symptoms.

[162] Versions of this *historiola* are also found in the *Testament of Solomon* and in a 15th-century manuscript (MS Parisinus Gr. 2316, F. 432ʳ–433ʳ, Bibliothèque Nationale), but these versions lack the reference to the eating and drinking of blood or flesh. In the *Testament of Solomon*, King Solomon encounters the child-killing demon Obyzouth and the following exchange takes place: "'Who are you?' … She replied, 'Obyzouth. I do not rest at night, but travel around all the world visiting women and, divining the hour (when they give birth), I search (for them) and strangle their newborn infants.'" (*Test. Sal.* 13.3–4. Translation by Duling 1983, 974.) In MS Parisinus Gr. 2316, Bibliothèque Nationale, F. 432ʳ–433ʳ, the same encounter takes place, but this time it is archangel Michael who meets the demon: "The archangel Michael said to her, 'Where have you come from and where are you going?' The abominable one answered and said, 'I am going off to a house and, entering it like a snake, like a dragon, or like some reptile, I will destroy the animals. I am going to strike down women; I will make their hearts ache, I will dry up their milk... I will strangle [their] children, or I will let them live for a while and then kill them...'" Translation by Greenfield 1988, 184, and n. 558.

[163] Naveh and Shaked 1985, 118–119. This *historiola* survives in very late versions: see Naveh and Shaked 1985, fig. 19 for a printed amulet from 18th-century Germany. See also Barb 1966, 4, notes 30–32.

[164] Spier 1993, 47–49.

[165] Most magical practice did not require literacy from the practitioner. Greenfield 1995, 119; Russell 1995, 36; Skemer 2006, 28.

An example of a mistake is the inscription on an amulet in the Athens Numismatic Museum,[166] which begins with the words πρός ὀφέλιαν ὑστέρας ("for the well-being of the uterus"). In magical papyri and handbooks, the title of the spell usually begins with the particle πρός, telling what the spell was for. The title, however, was not meant to be inscribed on the amulet itself. In another example, an amulet in the State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg,[167] the inscription of the amulet begins with γράφι ὑστέρα ("write/draw hystera"). This is clearly not part of the formula, but an instruction for making an amulet, which was mistakenly included. Another amulet, in the Archaeological Museum of Corinth,[168] has the inscription ὑστήρεκων φυλακτήριον, which is clearly the title of the spell.

An indication that the amulet-maker was not familiar with the Greek literary language – possibly as a result of not having received a formal education – can be found in a lead amulet in a private collection.[169] Around the amulet is the inscription ὑστέρα μελάνι μελνομένι δεδεμένι ἔμα φάε πίε ("uterus, black, blackening, bound, eat and drink blood"). The unamended form of the inscription follows the spoken Greek of the time (γ preceding a front vowel is so soft that it is left out, although the omission of α in μελνομενι may be simply a slip-up).[170] The ungrammaticality of the inscription raises questions. It is possible that the amulet-maker did not know Greek and simply wrote down the formula that was repeated orally to them, that the amulet-maker knew the formula by heart but had never seen it written down, or that they copied it from a source written in vernacular Greek.[171]

These instances in the Byzantine amulets can be compared to a scribal error seen in a 1st-century BCE or CE amulet from Beirut against the wandering womb. The spell was written on a small golden sheet, rolled up and carried inside a golden amulet case. The spell repeatedly names "Ipsa" and refers to "Ipsa's womb".[172] Ipsa, however, is

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[166] Numismatic Museum, Athens inv. no. 1207 (see Spier 1993, no. 8 (pl. 1c)).
[167] State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg inv. no. ω-1159, collection of the Russian Archaeological Institute in Constantinople and P. Khirlanghijd (see Spier 1993, no. 9 (pl. 1d) and pp. 47–48).
[168] A silver amulet in Archaeological Museum of Corinth inv. no. 7677(?) (see Spier 1993, no. 40 (pl. 4d)).
[169] See Spier 1993, no. 6 (pl. 1b).
[170] On editing and transcribing Byzantine Greek inscriptions, see Sironen 2015.
[171] It is not impossible that the manuscript or papyrus that the formulas were copied from was written in vernacular Greek. In the 12th century, vernacular Greek was starting to appear as the language of literature, although on a smaller and more limited scale than the vernacular languages of literature in Western Europe at the same time. Around the 1150–1180s, the vernacular Greek novel made an experimental appearance, but then faded away with the death of Emperor Manuel I in 1180. It is not implausible that other types of literary sources could have been written in vernacular Greek even earlier.
[172] ἐξορκίζω σε, μήτρα Ἴψας, ἣν ἔτεκεν Ἴψα, ἵνα μήποτε καταλείψης τὸν τόπον σου, ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου θεοῦ ζῶντος ἀνικήτου, μένειν ἐπὶ τῷ τόπῳ Ἴψης, ἣν ἔτεκεν Ἴψα. "I adjure you, womb of Ipsa, whom Ipsa bore, in order that you never abandon your place, in the name of the lord god, the living, the

not the name of the woman, but the Latin equivalent of the Greek ἡ δεῖνα, shorthand for the place in the spell where the customer's own name was supposed to be written. This suggests that the amulet-maker did not understand what they were writing, but simply copied the words.[173] I think it is also possible that this was not a mistake and the amulet was not meant for use but it was a sample amulet for display to potential customers instead.

Iconography of the amulets

In this section, I will introduce iconographic motifs of the amulets and how they relate to the myths and written charms against child-killing demons. The main motif is naturally the hystera motif. Recurring motifs that refer to the *historiola* of a demon meeting Artemis/Michael/Christ/Solomon[174] and to the Melitene *historiola* are the angel figure and a saint figure. Another recurring motif is the rider saint defeating the child-killing demon, who is either trampled by the horse or pierced by the rider's lance. Furthermore, the evil eye is prominent in the Late Antique amulets.

Hystera motif

In addition to the hystera formula, the hystera motif is a defining feature of the Middle Byzantine uterus amulets. The motif is a face, surrounded by snakes, resembling the typical iconography of Medusa. Yet it has nothing to do with Medusa's known character or her role in myths – Medusa is not interested in harming women or children specifically, unlike child-killing demons such as Gello. It has been suggested that the iconography of Medusa, which has been used as an apotropaic sign, was only used as a model and was meant to depict the uterus itself.[175] The execution of the motif varies. Sometimes the face and the snakes are depicted in great detail, whereas in other cases the face and the snakes

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unconquerable: remain in the place of Ipsa, whom Ipsa bore." Translation by Kotansky 1994, 265–269, no. 51 (Cabinet des Médailles, Paris, Collection Froehner no. 287). See also Faraone 2003, 192–193.
[173] Kotansky 1994, 265–269, no. 51; Faraone 2003, 192–193.
[174] The same structure and the encounter motif are used in a spell against jaundice in the post-Byzantine *Dimitsana Manuscript*, in which Virgin Mary meets the jaundice demon Oktor/Oktar (Tselikas 2008, 74).
[175] Bonner 1950, 89–90; Barb 1953, 211; Spier 1993, 38–39.

are very stylized.[176] If we look at the 60 amulets in Spier 1993,[177] one in Spier 2006,[178] and two in Kızıltan and G. Baran Çelik 2013,[179] the hystera motif is combined with some sort of variant of the hystera formula in 26 amulets, while 36 amulets have the hystera motif without the hystera formula. There are no examples of a formula unaccompanied by the hystera motif (with the possible exception of the fragmentary bronze amulet from Gela).[180]

The motif has also been interpreted as Chnoubis. The problematic relationship of the Chnoubis figure and the hystera motif has been a much discussed issue in previous scholarship,[181] and I have summarized the main points of the debate in the article "Classical Traces of Metamorphosis in the Byzantine Hystera Formula".

The use of the distinctive hystera motif is a new development and is not found in any earlier amulets or magical texts (Greco-Roman uterus gems may depict the uterus as a jar-like or winged object), including the Late Antique bronze amulets. Are there any earlier or other representation of the motif or its possible antecedents? Perhaps so. Similar images appear in the Anna Perenna fountain, an Aramaic incantation bowl, and two papyri. The fountain and incantation bowl are earlier than the appearance of the hystera motif in the Middle Byzantine uterus amulets, while the two papyri, *P.Heid. inv. Kopt.* 679 and *P.Berlin* 8503, are, respectively, slightly earlier than and contemporary with the amulets. I will describe them below and consider whether these could be related to the hystera motif.

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[176] Examples of very detailed specimens are a lead amulet from Asia Minor (State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, collection of O. Noury-Bey inv. no. ω-198), a lead amulet in a private collection (see Spier 1993, no. 6 (pl. 1b)), a bronze amulet from Asia Minor (State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, collection of the Russian Archaeological Institute in Constantinople inv. no. ω-634), a lead amulet in the Ashmolean Museum (see Spier 1993, no. 25 (pl. 2c)), a lead amulet in the Ashmolean Museum inv. no. AN1980.55 (see Spier 1993, no. 35 (pl. 3c)), a silver amulet from Asia Minor (Menil Collection, Houston inv. no. 490.824), two agate amulets (once in the ducal collection in Gotha, see Spier 1993, no. 53 (pl. 4f); Möbius 1941, 28, fig. 15) and no. 54 (pl. 4h)), and an onyx amulet (once in Peter Paul Rubens's and Albert Rubens's collections, see Spier 1993, no. 52 (pl. 4i)). Examples of very stylized amulets with little or no detail include a lead amulet (Numismatic Museum in Athens inv. no. 1207), a lead amulet from Asia Minor (Zurich market, L. Alexander Wolfe and Frank Sternberg, Auction xxiii, 1989, lot 258), and a lead amulet in a private collection (see Spier 1993, no. 30 (pl. 2e)).
[177] See 59 amulets in Appendix I and one as an addendum on page 62 of his article.
[178] Gerhard Hirsch, Munich, Auction 205, 22–25 September 1999, lot 1170; Spier 2006, 34, fig. 1A and 1B.
[179] Kızıltan and Baran Çelik 2013, 133, nos. 80 (Istanbul Archaeology Museums inv. no. 11.20 (M)) and 81 (Istanbul Archaeology Museums inv. no. 11.188 (M)). There is also one new find identified as a hystera amulet in Pitarakis 2015, 340, no. 98 (not included in the analysis).
[180] Mastrocinque 2005a.
[181] E.g. Vikan 1984; Spier 1993.

A possible early variant of the hystera motif may be found in a *defixio* from the Anna Perenna fountain[182] in Rome. The *defixio* "Curse against the judge Sura"[183] is from the end of the 4th century CE. In the centre of the *defixio*, set inside a rhombus, is a figure with a face, four lines protruding upwards from the head, and a violin- or cello-shaped body. The plaque at Museo Nazionale Romano delle Terme states that the rhombus symbolized the vagina and the figure "undoubtedly represents the uterus".[184] Neither Blänsdorf or Piranomonte offer this interpretation, although Piranomonte backs the suggestion of the rhombus as a symbol of the vagina. Piranomonte suggests the figure might represent Anna Perenna herself.[185] While Blänsdorf agrees that the figure is female, he suggests that it represents some kind of demon.[186]

The Aramaic incantation bowl[187] is from the 4th–6th/7th centuries CE. The spell is for protecting a tomb and also includes a curse. The bowl features a "curious illustration of an undefinable human figure" and a single *signe pomméte* next to it. The figure has a face with large eyes, three lines protruding downward that might be legs, and two "arms" or "ribbons" with stripes from its left side. However, Naveh and Shaked do not see a demonic figure here, but propose that the "ribbons waving to the left of the figure may be associated with the ribbons which constitute a symbol of royalty in Sasanian iconography".[188]

The two papyri are *P.Heid. inv. Kopt.* 679 and *P.Berlin* 8503. *P.Berlin* 8503 is from the 8th century CE.[189] The figure is a face with two arms with stripes and rounded ends, rectangular ears; here there are no spikes rising from the head. There are seven *signes pommétes* near the figure, and the rest of the page is filled with text. The text curses a man called Mouflehalpahapani. *P.Heid. inv. Kopt. 679* is from the 11th century CE.[190]

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[182] See Piranomonte 2010 for the fountain and its finds and Blänsdorf 2010 for the *defixiones* and texts of the fountain. Three inscribed monuments from the 2nd century CE were found at the fountain, two of which are dedicated to the sacred nymphs of Anna Perenna (*nymphis sacratis Annae Perennae*). A total of 22 *defixiones*, found in lamps at the fountain as well as in the basin itself, are dated to the mid or late 4th century CE (including one that appears to be 2nd–3rd century CE).

[183] Museo Nazionale Romano delle Terme, Dipartimento Epigrafico inv. no. SAR 475567.

[184] Piranomonte 2010, 211.

[185] Piranomonte 2010, 211.

[186] Blänsdorf 2010, 226.

[187] Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Institute of Archaeology inv. no. 1402, see Naveh and Shaked 1985, 152–159, Bowl 4, pl. 18–19, fig. 22. On Aramaic magic bowls, see e.g. Juusola 1999.

[188] Naveh and Shaked 1985, 13, 27, 153.

[189] Kropp 1931, vol. 2, 243–247; Meyer, Smith, and Kelsey 1994, 199–202, no. 95.

[190] Meyer, Smith, and Kelsey 1994, 222–224, no. 110; Bilabel and Grohmann 1934, 410–414, no. 142; Untermann 2011, 32.

While the recto has text, the verso is filled with *signes pommétes*,[191] and a figure resembling the hystera motif appears both on the recto and verso of the papyrus. The figure consists of a face with seven spikes rising from it straight upwards, four "arms" with stripes and frayed ends, and two curved lines on each side of the head. The papyrus contains a curse for harming a person through the use of wax dolls.

I would be very hesitant to connect these four figures to the hystera motif. While there is a certain resemblance with the hystera motif and the figure in *P.Heid. inv. Kopt.* 679, the figures on *P.Berlin* 8503, Bowl 4, and the Anna Perenna fountain do not on their own bring to mind the hystera motif – only because they, in turn, resemble *P. Heid. inv. Kopt.* 679. The face and four lines rising from the head of the Anna Perenna figure resemble the figure in *P.Heid. inv. Kopt.* 679 and *P.Berlin* 8503, but the Anna Perenna figure lacks the snaking "arms" or "ribbons".

In the case of Anna Perenna, while it would be appealing to see this figure as a variation of the hystera motif and speculate about the possibilities of linking hystera symbolism with nymphs, the number of hairs or spikes protruding from the figure's head does not match the number of snakes commonly found in the hystera motif, nor is the overall visual appearance or context similar enough to the hystera motif to make a connection. While the figure may be a variation on the same theme of uterus depiction, it cannot be said to be a version of the hystera motif specifically.

In addition to the visual discrepancies between these four figures and the hystera motif, it must be noted that all of these four figures appear with curses. This clearly sets them apart from the hystera formula and the function of the uterus amulets; the hystera formula does not curse the uterus, but addresses it and commands it to behave in a certain way. Even though comparison and likening the act of one being to that of another are part of both the hystera formula and curses, the structure is very different. In curses, the victim is prevented from doing something, as seen in the curses in *P.Berlin* 8503, "you must have speechlessness, as is among the dead, that Mouflehalpahapani may have speechlessness, like that of the dead",[192] in Anna Perenna, *tollite oculus dextru sinesteru, ne possit durare virtus arbitri Surae, qui natus est de vulva maledicta*,[193] and in the Aramaic bowl, "The burnt (thing) which I attach, which (is) the coulter of the plough, like

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[191] Gordon (2014, 280–281) points out that similar characters (*signes pommétes*) appear on the Middle Byzantine uterus amulets as well, which may or may not be connected to the hystera motif.
[192] Translation by Marvin Meyer in Meyer, Smith, and Kelsey 1994, 200–201.
[193] Blänsdorf 2010, 224.

a sickle, shall introduce into his heart, that his mouth shall not speak and his heart shall not know."[194] In contrast, the hystera formula describes the behaviour of the uterus and goads it – it does not prevent a set behaviour (even though some Late Antique versions of the animal comparison formula, e.g. the Babina amulet, question the behaviour of the uterus by adding the τί particle).

Anna Perenna fountain[195]

Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Institute of Archaeology inv. no. 1402[196]

P.Heid. inv. Kopt. 679 recto

P.Heid. inv. Kopt. 679 verso[197]

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[194] Translation by Naveh and Shaked 1985, 153.
[195] Photo of the plaque at Museo Nazionale Romano delle Terme by Kaius Tuori.
[196] Image reproduced from Naveh and Shaked 1985, pl. 18–19.

P.Berlin 8503[198]

Saint figure and angel figure

Both the saint figure and the angel figure refer to narrative charms with the encounter motif (e.g. the "Michael type" of Melitene *historiola* and Solomon's encounters with demons in the *Testament of Solomon*). The tradition of the *historiola* where a holy figure, such as an angel, interrogates and vanquishes a demon was dealt with in the section "Formulas of the amulets". In these *historiolae*, it is usually archangel Michael who meets the child-killing demon, not Raphael. However, in the *Testament of Solomon*, the child-killing demon Obyzouth names archangel Raphael as the one who can vanquish her.[199]

The standing saint figure with a whip, subduing the female demon, is depicted on several Late Antique bronze amulets.[200] Many of the Middle Byzantine uterus amulets portray a saint figure, either alone, with the hystera motif, or with Gello. The saint figure appears on a haematite amulet from Maastricht (with the hystera motif and formula

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[197] Images from http://www.rzuser.uni-heidelberg.de/~gv0/Papyri/VBP_V/142/VBP_V_142.html. Accessed on 21st of April, 2017.

[198] Image reproduced from Meyer, Smith, and Kelsey 1994, 200. Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung.

[199] *Test. Sal.* 13.5–6: "When I, Solomon, heard these things, I was amazed. I did not look at her shape, for her body was darkness and her hair savage. I, Solomon, said to her, 'Tell me, evil spirit, by what angel are you thwarted?' She said to me, 'By the angel Raphael; and when women give birth, write my name on a piece of papyrus and I shall flee from them to the other world.'" Translation by Duling 1983, 974.

[200] E.g. British Museum inv. no. OA.1374, Dalton 1901, 112, no. 555; Spier 2014, 53, fig. 6; Barb 1972, 344–353, amulet 1, figs. 1–2.

together on the other side),[201] a lead pendant (also with the hystera motif and formula together on the other side), a silver pendant from Asia Minor, and a bronze pendant.[202] Regarding the last two, the silver and bronze pendants, the hystera formula is written on the same side of the amulet as the saint figure, and the other side has the hystera motif.

In the Middle Byzantine uterus amulets, the angel figure can be depicted either alone or together with other motifs. The angel is shown together with the rider saint and Gello on four amulets,[203] but it can also stand alone, as seen with the haematite cameo from Ephesus.[204]

A silver pendant[205] combines different versions of the *historiola*. The amulet bears an angel figure and is inscribed φεῦγε, Ἀβίζου Ἀναβαρδαλεα Σισίνις σε διόκι καὶ ἄγελος Ἀραφ… Here the amulet tells the child-killing demon Abyzou to flee, for Sisinnios is pursuing her. This refers back to the Melitene charm. In addition to Sisinnios pursuing the demon, the amulet adds another protective figure: an angel called "Araph…" This could either be a mangled form of Raphael or refer to the angel Arlaph/Araaph/Archaph, who appears on some Late Antique bronze amulets.[206] Below I will describe three examples from Schlumberger's "Amulettes byzantins anciens" (1892) and Seligmann's *Der böse Blick und Verwandtes* (1910).

The first example is a bronze amulet from Kyzikos.[207] On the obverse, the amulet has the Trisagion and a lion attacking the evil eye and trampling a female figure on the ground. An inscription around the border reads Μιχαὴλ Γαβριὴλ Οὐριὴλ ῾Ραφαὴλ διαφύλαξον τὸν φορõντα ("Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, Rafael, protect the one who wears this"). The reverse shows an angel and the rider saint trampling a supine female figure. The inscription around the border reads φεῦγε μεμισιμένι Σολομὸν σε διόκι καὶ ἄγγελος Ἀρααφ ("flee, detested one, Solomon and the angel Araaph pursue you").

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[201] Haematite cameo, the "Seal of St. Servatius" (in Maastricht Cathedral, see Drexler 1899, 594–595, no. 2; Spier 1993, no. 58 (pl. 5d)).
[202] Lead pendant (Spier 1993, no. 28 (pl. 2d)), silver pendant (Menil Collection, Houston inv. no. 490.824, see Spier 1993, no. 34 (pl. 3b)); bronze pendant (Ashmolean Museum inv. no. AN1980.55, see Spier 1993, no. 35 (pl. 3c).
[203] Lead pendant (Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto inv. no. 986.181.74, see Spier 1993, no. 20); lead pendant (Zurich market, L. Alexander Wolfe and Frank Sternberg, Auction xxiii, 1989, lot 258, see Spier 1993, no. 21 (pl. 2b), lead pendant (see Spier 1993, no. 22), silver pendant (Ashmolean Museum inv. no. 1980.53, see Spier 1993, no. 33 (pl. 3a).
[204] Ephesus Archaeological Museum, Selçuk inv. no. 2105 (see Spier 1993, no. 55 (pl. 5b)).
[205] Ashmolean Museum inv. no. 1980.53.
[206] Spier 1993, 37–38, 41, 60–62.
[207] Seligmann 1910, 314–315, no. 17, fig. 233 on page 449.

Seligmann 1910, no. 17.

      The second example is a copper amulet from Constantinople.[208] The reverse shows a large feline (perhaps a lion) and a snake attacking the evil eye and trampling a female figure on the ground. The figure seems to have a non-human bottom half, with the legs resembling snakes or an octopus. The inscription around the border reads τὸ κοσθυπάθος διόκι σε ζοθὺκ μαχέρα ὀξύτερον ἴλεος … [ιιι ος η?]. The image on the obverse is damaged, but the inscription around the border reads φεῦγε μεμισιμένι διόκι σε ὁ ἄγγελος Ἄρχαφ καὶ Οὐριέλ φεῦγε μισουμένη ("flee, detested one, angel Archaph and Uriel pursue you, flee, hated one").

Schlumberger 1892, no. 3; Seligmann 1910, no. 18.

      The third example is from Smyrna.[209] On the obverse, the angel figure spears the demon figure. The inscription around the border reads φεῦγε μεμισιμένι Αρααφ ὁ ἄγγελος σε διόκι ("flee, detested one, angel Araaph pursues you"). On the reverse, a large feline tramples a demon figure which is lying down. The inscription reads σφραγὶς Σολομόνος φύλατε τὸν ψορορῦντα ("seal of Solomon, protect the wearer").

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[208] Seligmann 1910, 315, no. 18, fig. 234 on page 453 = Schlumberger 1892, 77–78, no. 3.
[209] Schlumberger 1892, 75–77, no. 2.

Schlumberger 1892, no. 2.

The rider saint

Several amulets that feature the hystera motif also depict the rider saint.[210] On the Middle Byzantine uterus amulets, the demon figure – under or in front of the horse, trampled or pierced with the rider's lance – is understood to stand for the child-killing demon on the basis of contextual clues: the hystera formula and the inscription φεῦγε Ἀβίζου. Scholars seem unified in the view that the demon figure (often – but not always – depicted with long, dishevelled hair) is female.[211]

On the occasions when the saint is named, it is often Solomon.[212] Usually the rider saint is not named, possessing only a thinly inscribed halo surrounding his head. This echoes the visual practice found in Early Byzantine (330–843 CE) tapestries. These tapestries did not name the figures depicted, and as a result, they could be associated with various rider saints (e.g. Solomon, Saint George).[213] Only after iconoclasm did it become

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[210] One in the Ashmolean Museum (no inventory number given, Spier 1993, no. 15); Cabinet des Médailles, Paris Schlumberger 63; State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, collection of the Russian Archaeological Institute in Constantinople inv. no. ω-1161; one formerly in Constantinople, property of P. Khirlanghijd (Spier 1993, no. 18); Cabinet des Médailles, Paris Schlumberger 19; Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto inv. no. 986.181.74; Zurich market, L. Alexander Wolfe and Frank Sternberg, Auction xxiii, 1989, lot 258; Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna inv. no. 3266; two in private collections (Spier 1993, nos. 22 and 24); Ashmolean Museum inv. no. 1980.53; Istanbul Archaeology Museums inv. nos. 11.20 (M) and 11.188 (M); the addendum in Spier 1993, 62. See also Spier 1993, 55–56.

[211] E.g. Russell 1995, 40–41.

[212] Solomon's role and meaning in the amulets has been studied by Perdrizet 1922 and Vikan 1984, 79–80; see also Verheyden 2012.

[213] Russell 1995, 56–57. None of the Middle Byzantine uterus amulets name St. George, but in certain Transylvanian bells from the 1530–40s, St. George is presented together with the hystera motif. The purpose seems to be apotropaic. Such bells were meant to protect (with the noise they made when rung) from *aurae nocivae* – literally noisome winds. These included actual storms and bad weather, as well as tempest demons (*tempestates aeris demonumque*). The rider saint motif is also present as a pictorial motif in 15th–16th-century stove tiles from Transylvania, Moldavia, and Walachia. In addition to the rider saint motif, the imagery of the tiles includes St. George slaying a dragon, a standing orant next to a cross, crosses, rosettes, geometric figures, pentagrams and other magical symbols, birds, monsters and hybrid creatures, masks, and symbols of an open hand (also known as the Hand of Fortune or the Hand of St. John). A very special area

more common to identify the saints with a legend.[214] From the 9th century CE onwards, a standard iconography of saints was developed, making it possible, even without an inscription, to identify specific saints based on hairstyle or facial features. This was part of the post-iconoclastic quest for a new, more precise codification of Christian iconography. Images now needed to be detailed enough for the viewer to easily recognize who the saint was, as it was the saint himself who held the power, not the image of him. The image was merely an intermediary, and the more accurate and detailed it was, the more effectively, it was thought, the prayer would reach the saint. However, as it was not the image or amulet itself that possessed the power, having more than one copy was useless, since the worshipper could still reach only the one saint in question, and his power would be just as great no matter how many times one called him.[215]

The evil eye

The evil eye depicted on Late Antique amulets is "generally related to the curse that the demon Gylou cast upon her victims, [and] destroyed any good fortune or luck".[216]

In contrast, the evil eye is not present on the Middle Byzantine amulets together with the hystera motif or the hystera formula. However, there is a Byzantine

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in need of protection inside the house were the passageways between the outside and inside of the house: windows, doors, thresholds, and chimneys. Protecting the entrances to the house by magical means, threshold magic was one of the main apotropaic functions of such tiles. Gruia 2007, 10–12, 16, 18–20, 23–24. See also the example of a 19th-century silver-brass alloy ring in Ashmolean Museum (inv. no. WA1978.112) with an octagonal bezel depicting St. George slaying a dragon in intaglio.

[214] The same contrast between the identification of pre- and post-iconoclastic images is present in other media as well. As examples, Maguire raises silver-gilt chalices from the 6th or 7th century CE and silver-gilt rock crystal chalices from the 10th century CE. In the 6th–7th century CE chalices, saints are differentiated according to their rank and status (bishops, deacons, soldiers) and they differ, to some extent, in their facial features. Because they are not named, without inscriptions they are very hard to tell apart with any certainty. In the 10th-century CE chalices, each saint is identifiable by an inscription. In the post-iconoclastic period, there was clearly a new-found need to name saints (Russell 1995, 58). See also Walter 2003, 270–284.

[215] Maguire 1995a, 55–56, 68–69.

[216] Fulghum 2001, 143. "Gylou" is an alternate spelling of Gello. Recently, John H. Elliott has studied the evil eye in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, Rome, and in Biblical sources (Elliott 2015, 2016a, 2016b). He lists amulets from Herculaneum, Egypt, and Byzantium that depict the evil eye surrounded and attacked by animals. These animals include crocodiles, lizards, elephants, scorpions, lions, dogs, swans, serpents, hippopotamuses, and bees, as well as signs of the zodiac and (non-animal) thunderbolts (Elliott 2016a, 235–237). An early 5th-century CE bone plaque from Butrint also depicts the evil eye with an animal motif. The bone plaque is carved, with a hunting dog leaping over the evil eye. The hunting dog is a powerful symbol of status and power, and it serves here the same function as the tridents and knives piercing and the animals attacking the evil eye on amulets in order to render it powerless (Mitchell 2007, 294–296, fig. 11d; see also Mitchell 2007, 282–283).

silver-plated copper amulet from Smyrna[217] that names the evil eye as φθόνος and depicts it as attacked by three knives, two lions, an ibis, a snake, and a scorpion, with a female figure lying beneath the animals. The inscription around the border reads σφραγὶς Σολομόνος ἀποδίοξον πᾶν κακὸν ἀπὸ τοῦ φοροῦντο ("Seal of Solomon, banish all evil from the wearer"). The other side shows the rider saint trampling a female figure lying beneath the horse (identical to the figure under the evil eye and the animals on the other side of the amulet) with an inscription around the border which reads φεῦγε μεμισιμένι Σολομόν σε διόκι Σισίννιος Σισιννάριος ("Flee, detested one, Solomon, Sisinnios and Sisinnarios pursue you"). [218] Together with the trampled female figure and the naming of Solomon, Saint Sisinnios and Saint Sisinnarios, the rider saint clearly shows that this is a protective amulet against the female child-killing demon Gello/Abyzou and that the evil eye should be understood as functionally equivalent to the demon. The female figure on both sides has a human top half and snake-like bottom half.[219]

Schlumberger 1892, no. 1.

From the amulets presented so far, we can see that the evil eye and the child-killing demon are interchangeable, and that the demon can be depicted as partly animal (namely, a snake). In the article "Classical Traces of Metamorphosis in the Byzantine Hystera Formula" and the section "Formulas of the amulets" of this dissertation, we have seen that the *hystera* formula of the Middle Byzantine uterus amulets compares the uterus itself to animals, especially to a snake (ὄφις and/or δράκων). As demonstrated in the

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[217] Amulet no. 1 in Schlumberger 1892, 74–75 = amulet no. 14 in Seligmann 1910, vol 2, 313–314, fig. 230 on page 443.
[218] The demon is also addressed as μεμισημένη in Schlumberger 1892, amulets no. 2 (p. 75–77) and no. 3 (p. 77–78). On the evil eye in the *Testament of Solomon* and Solomon defeating demons who cast the evil eye, see Elliott 2016b, 86–89.
[219] Compare this with a 5th-century CE haematite gem amulet in the British Museum (inv. no. G 1986,5-1,14) that depicts the rider saint and his horse trampling the female demon. Here the demon is depicted fully as a snake (Michel, Zazoff, and Zazoff 2001, 279–280, no. 450).

article "Metamorphosis, Mixanthropy, and the Child-killing Demon in the Hellenistic and Byzantine Period", Lamia (and *lamias* as a class of demons) is most often depicted as wholly or partly a snake;[220] it seems to be what she is in her fundamental nature.

But a snake is not the only animal that the evil eye or the child-killing demon – or the evil eye – can be depicted as. Child-killing demons appear in Ovid as *striges*, vampire-like birds who suck the blood of babies at night.[221] The evil eye appears as an owl in bronze, copper, and lead amulets from Tunisia: on the obverse they show an owl and on the reverse a Latin inscription that addresses *invidia*, envy. The inscription identifies the amulet as being against envy, that is, the evil eye; therefore, the owl can be seen as representing envy and the evil eye (*oculus invidiosus*).[222] Both the demon and the evil eye can thus be represented by animals, and in this way they are connected.

This connection of the evil eye and the female demon has remained intact until modern times. During her fieldwork in 1989 in the Cretan village of Eleftherna, among other material Christina Veikou gathered three charms against the evil eye (*thiarmos*). One of these is a clear continuation of the tradition represented by the Antaura *historiola*, where a disease (in Antaura's case, the migraine) roams the earth, until she – the disease is always female – meets Christ or another holy figure, who separates her from her intended victim and banishes her into the wilderness. I will reproduce the Cretan charm in full:

> In the name of Christ, God and all the Saints. The *thiarmos* set off, the anguish, the evil gaze to go to the earth, to exterminate the sheep, to bring old men into dotage, to drive old women mad, to attack the baby in the cradle. The prophet Christ was looking at him and tells him: Where are you going, *thiarme*, anguish, evil gaze of the earth? I am going to exterminate the sheep, to bring old men into dotage, to drive old women mad, to attack the baby in the cradle. Yes, but come back and go away to the high mountains, where no ox bellows, where no dog barks, there you shall eat, there you shall drink, there you shall reside, and look for wild creatures to slaughter, to eat their meat, to suck their blood, and quit the innards of this [person], the servant [of God]… Five, ten, fifteen, twenty, twenty-five, thirty, thirty-five,

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[220] Ant. Lib. *Met.* 8; Paus. 9.26.7–8; Dio Chrys. *Or.* 5.12–15, 5.25–27; Philostr. *VA* 4.25.3–4; *LIMC* Apollon 998 (Musée du Louvre inv. no. CA 1915). See also Ogden 2013, 86–92.

[221] Ov. *Fast.* 6.131–168.

[222] Merlin 1940, 489. Merlin does not give a precise dating for the amulets, but they must be from the Roman Imperial era: at least one was found in the ruins of Ammaedara (where *Legio tertia Augusta* settled in 30 BCE, modern Haïdra), their inscriptions are in Latin, and inscriptions such as *leo de tribus Juda* (e.g. Merlin's amulets nos. 1, 3, and 5, p. 487–488) place them in the syncretistic Judeo-Christian tradition. On these amulets, see also Sorlin 1991, 428–429. For a Greek parallel of *leo de tribus Juda*, ὁ λέων ἐκ τῆς φυλῆς τοῦ Ἰούδα, see Delatte 1957, 51 (MS Θ 20, Monastery of Megisti Lavra on Mount Athos).

forty. [The healer counts, touching the sufferer from head to toes.] May the Forty Saints help you and escort you.[223]

The issue of the relationship of the evil eye and the female child-killing demon and references to eating flesh and drinking blood (or just drinking) are illuminated by Alan Dundes's essay "Wet and Dry, the Evil Eye: An Essay in Indo-European and Semitic Worldview". Tracing the underlying principles behind the evil eye belief complex, Dundes gives an overview of the main points of the immense literature on the subject. Earlier research[224] has revealed that belief in the evil eye is present in India, the Near East, and Europe, but not among the native peoples of the Americas, sub-Saharan Africa, Australia, or Oceania. It is a specifically Indo-European and Semitic belief.[225]

A very important division in both the Indo-European and Semitic worldviews was the wet-dry division, correlating to the life-death division. Dundes sees four principles behind the evil eye belief complex, but notes that they are not necessarily consciously understood in the cultures they are found in.[226] The first is life's dependence on liquid (e.g. water, milk, semen). Losing liquids means death. This makes sense if one thinks of the environment of the ancient Indo-European and Semitic peoples, that is, steppes and deserts, not tropical zones or rainforests. The second is that there is a finite amount of goods. The third is life's "equilibrium model", which is related to there being a finite amount of goods. In order for someone to be rich, someone else must be poor, and in order for someone to have fluids, someone else must lack fluids. Therefore, those with wealth are envied by the poor and must take precautions against envy (i.e. the evil eye) by engaging in charity or by not displaying their wealth, for example. The fourth is that on a symbolic level, an eye (or a pair of eyes) can be equated with breasts, testicles, or the penis.[227] Furthermore, there appears to be some variation in the intentionality of the evil

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[223] Veikou 2008, 99–100. For the Modern Greek tradition of the evil eye among Greek immigrants in Australia, see Chryssanthopoulou 2008.

[224] Roberts 1976 examines cross-cultural variables associated with the belief in the evil eye in 186 different cultures. Belief in the evil eye correlates with e.g. dairy production (p. 241–242), large domestic animals (p. 243), large communities of more than 1000 people (p. 245), patrilineal descent (p. 245–246), caste stratification and hereditary slavery (p. 248–249), a developed judiciary (p. 250), and corporal punishment of children (p. 257).

[225] Dundes 1981, 259.

[226] In some cases, belief in the evil eye has nothing to do with liquids in the modern cultures it is found in (e.g. modern Italy).

[227] Dundes 1981, 266–267. The importance of social control of envy (e.g. in ancient Israel) can be seen in the Ten Commandments: "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor." (*Exodus* 20:17 (NIV)).

eye, leading one to ask, was it cast on purpose by people who possessed it or did it emanate on its own from the person possessing it?[228]

The evil eye is known in folklore to cause a variety of problems, from the ruining of one's personal health to the destruction of the household, including cattle and other household animals. Mother's milk and lactating mothers were thought to be specifically targeted by the evil eye.[229] Dundes uses the Melitene *historiola* and the significance of mother's milk in the story as an example. Gello is a manifestation of the evil eye and, as such, she requires the liquids of life: children's blood and mother's milk.[230]

If one thinks of the amulets and narrative charms as ultimately being against the evil eye – one of whose threats is killing children and mothers – that is after the life-giving liquids – the meaning of the word πίνω on the amulets becomes apparent: it is the evil eye who drinks blood and other liquids of life.[231] The idea that the amulets and narrative charms are really against the evil eye helps also explain why the demons in question cause so many different ailments and not just one specific one. Almost none of the demons who kill children are *solely* known for child-killing; it is only one of their functions.[232] In addition, they kill cattle and household animals, and they cause disease – just like the evil eye. Like the evil eye, they attack the existence and continuity of the household (οἶκος) by attacking the reproductive capabilities of women.

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[228] Dundes 1981, 259–260; Harfouche 1981, 88.
[229] Harfouche 1981, 87–90.
[230] Dundes 1981, 272–273.
[231] Dundes (1981, 297) sees the Tantalus myth through this wet-dry continuum. In the Greek myth, Tantalus has been condemned to Tartarus, where he must suffer eternal hunger and thirst. He stands in a shallow pool of water next to a fruit tree, but whenever he reaches for the fruit to eat, it rises up, and when he reaches for water to drink, it recedes. Therefore, hell here signifies being eternally denied liquids. Bonner discusses an amulet with the "Tantalus formula". On this amulet, a uterus symbol is combined with snakes on each side. The inscribed command διψὰς Τάνταλε αἷμα πίε is aimed at a snake, *dipsa* (a type of viper whose bite was believed to cause unquenchable thirst, see Ogden 2013, 220). Bonner proposes that the amulet is a cure for menorrhagia, and while he concedes that using the vocative Τάνταλε to address the snake is odd, the purpose was to indicate that the snake is "thirsty as Tantalus" (Bonner 1950, 87–88). See also Faraone 2009.
[232] In a 15th-century manuscript (MS Parisinus Gr. 2316, F. 432ʳ–433ʳ, Bibliotheque Nationale), archangel Michael meets a demon, the "abominable one", who destroys the household animals, strikes down women, causes them heartache, dries up their milk (a direct reference to the evil eye sucking up and drying up the life-giving liquid), and strangles their children. In the *Testament of Solomon*, Solomon meets the demon Obyzouth, who in addition to strangling new-borns, travels the world "injuring eyes [a reference to migraine auras], condemning mouths, destroying minds, and making bodies feel pain" (*Test. Sal.* 13.4, translation by Duling 1983, 974).

Conclusion

The amulets discussed in this dissertation come from a broad geographical area – from Europe to Asia Minor, from the Black Sea to Egypt – and their use covers an expansive swathe of time – from the 3rd century CE to the 13th century. The stories featuring the demons these amulets protected against are even earlier; the first mentions date back to the time of Sappho in Archaic Greece (6th and 7th centuries BCE), but still appear in manuscript copies as late as the 15th century.

The amulets and the folktales of demons are intertwined. Amulets cannot be studied merely as archaeological objects or through the lens of art history, but must be seen in conjunction with folktales and narrative charms.

In addition, I would underline the importance of understanding the physicality of the illnesses and ailments which were believed to be caused by demons, and how this physicality was manifested in the design of the amulets and details of the narrative charms. Examples of this are the visual migraine auras caused by the demon Antaura, as suggested by Kotansky, and Bonner's proposition that the hystera motif with its many arms represented the radiating pain of menstrual cramps.

I believe that taking the evil eye belief into consideration helps to explain many of the features of the amulets and accompanying folktales. The evil eye, still an object of belief in parts of the Eastern Mediterranean, was thought to cause all manners of sickness. Contextualized in terms of the Indo-European and Semitic wet-dry division of life, the evil eye steals the liquids of life: mother's milk, blood, and semen. This threat stands behind the amulets and narrative charms. It can be seen in the Melitene *historiola*, where Saint Sisinnios and Saint Sisynodoros produce their own mother's milk from their mouths or from the palms of their hands, as well as in the word πίνω and other references to eating and drinking blood in both Late Antique and Middle Byzantine uterus amulets. In this way, the evil eye attacks reproduction, the very essence of the household and its continued survival.

The evil eye was seen as emanating like a natural force from the person who possessed it. The concept of the evil eye was an extremely important tool in conflict resolution in small, close-knit communities. A conflict could be resolved by placing blame

on an immaterial scapegoat while maintaining social cohesion by not naming any single individual as guilty.

Stories of these demons were told as fairy tales to children.[233] I find it interesting that all accounts of these demons, the main emotion is fear or ridicule,[234] not compassion. In Greece and Byzantium, being childless effectively ostracized a woman from her peers and her society. In addition to not being able to have the children she wanted, she also lost her social position and was shunned and marginalized. It was even believed in Greece and Byzantium that women who died unmarried and childless would become child-killing demons themselves.[235] According to myth, that is what happened to Gello (who died)[236] and to Lamia (whose children were killed or who was made to kill her own children by jealous Hera).[237] They subsequently – and perhaps understandably – became demons. I would posit that you can only afford to feel compassion for someone who is not too close to you, whose tragedy is not your tragedy. You cannot feel compassion – only fear – if there is too real a risk of becoming like the one you feel compassion for. For the women in Greece and Byzantium, the risk of dying in childbirth or losing their children was too close and palpable for them to commiserate with figures such as Gello or Lamia.

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[233] Lucian *Philops*. 4; Str. *Geogr*. 1.8.
[234] Cf. Ar. *Vesp*. 1035 and 1177–1179; Ar. *Pax* 758; Ar. *Eccl*. 77; Crates *Frag*. 20.
[235] Johnston 1999, 164–165 (see also 188–199, 224); Hartnup 2004, 155–157 (see also 85–172).
[236] Zen. 3.3.
[237] Diod. Sic. *Bibliotheca historica* 20.41.3–5; Duris *FGrH* 76 F 17; Storey 2011, 219–220; West 1995, 293–297.

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