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THE MAGIC OF WRITING AND THE WRITING OF MAGIC: THE POWER OF THE WORD IN EGYPTIAN AND GREEK TRADITIONS

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One of the most curious results of the confluence of Greek and Egyptian cultures during the fifth and subsequent centuries B.C.E. was the attribution of the Greek alphabet, especially its unique set of vowels, to the Egyptian god Thoth.[1] In his *Philebus*, Plato imagines that

> a person in Egypt called Theuth . . . originally discerned the existence, in that unlimited variety, of the vowels—not 'vowel' in the singular, but 'vowels' in the plural—and then of other things which, though they could not be called articulate sounds, yet were noises of a kind. There were a number of them too, not just one, and as a third class he discriminated what we now call the mutes. Having done that, he divided up the noiseless ones or mutes until he got each one by itself, and did the same thing with the vowels and the intermediate sounds; in the end he found a number of the things, and affixed to the whole collection, as to each single member of it, the name 'letter.' It was because he realized that none of us could ever get to know one of the collection all by itself, in isolation from all the rest, that he conceived of 'letter' as a kind of bond of unity, uniting as it were all these sounds into one, and so he gave utterance to the expression 'art of letters,' implying that there was one art that dealt with the sounds.[2]

It is an odd scenario and probably would have struck an Egyptian priest as quite unfamiliar. For to the Egyptians Thoth was a scribe, lord of the hieroglyph that symbolized ideas, acts, powers, and often consonants, but not vowels. Thoth's very utterances were physical, efficacious things, not the supernal notes and chords that Plato imagined. Still, the Greek penchant for mystic origins would not let up: Diodorus Siculus asserted that Thoth not only invented the alphabet but

> . . . was the first also to observe the orderly arrangement of the stars and the harmony of the musical sounds and their nature. . . . He also made a lyre and gave it three strings, imitating the seasons of the year; for he adopted three tones, a high, a low and a medium . . .[3]

Diodorus had quite obviously turned Thoth into Orpheus—similarly renowned in Greece for inventing letters, but not letters as visual symbols so much as cosmic tones.[4] Thoth's contribution to the cosmos was the "divine word," referring to pictures endowed with the power to protect and transform the world or to unfold as instructions for the world's creation and maintenance.

This projection of Greek alphabetic ingenuity onto Thoth was not so much a process of *interpretatio graeca* as a kind of "Egyptianism"—the romantic attribution of whatever was mysterious, powerful, and ancient in character to Egypt and its fabulous gods, in the way modern Americans and Europeans have venerated the "Wisdom" of the "East"—India, China, Egypt, or Arabia.[5] But Egyptian priestly groups may themselves have lent credence to Greek Egyptianism, since it was they who, during the first cen-

turies of the Common Era, were adopting vowels—and the Greek alphabet as a whole—to improve the pronunciation of their own ritual texts. Clearly the Graeco-Roman period provoked some radical shifts at the deepest levels of both Greek and Egyptian cultural traditions.

This paper will examine the impact of this Graeco-Egyptian synthesis—a synthesis practiced as earnestly on the Egyptian side as on the Greek—on magical spells and amulets. It will be argued that the traditional "magic"[6] of Greece and Egypt reflected these cultures' indigenous attitudes to, and uses of, writing. Borrowing tentatively from recent discussions of the relationship between writing and culture by Jack Goody and Marcel Détienne, I will explore how the amulet "technologies" of Greece and Egypt reflect divergent concepts of the written word.

The amulet and its spells form, in a way, a crucible of a culture's evolving technology of signification—of *forming* meaning—and thus they reflect in subtle ways the indigenous concepts of the oral and written word of a given culture.[7] This is because the writing and the very construction of spells on ancient amulets carried both visual and mnemonic-oral significance. Whereas early Greek amulets tended to function more in the mnemonic-oral mode and Egyptian amulets more in the visual mode, the second half of this paper will examine two popular "systems" of spells, vowel strings and magical characters, as crossovers between the written and the oral in the evolving magical traditions of a Graeco-Egyptian culture (which I understand broadly as a pan-Mediterranean phenomenon).

I. From Concepts of the Written Word . . .

In a series of lectures at Cornell University in 1987, Marcel Détienne compared Greek and Egyptian cultures in their attitudes toward writing, as these attitudes came out in their mythologies of writing and its origin, and the culture-heroes who brought writing to culture. Whereas Egyptian mythology gave the act of writing a central place in the running of the world, Greek traditions betrayed a consistent ambivalence towards a medium of communication that, in Plato's view, obliterated memory and, in the legend of Palamedes, preserved lies that could bring down heroes. Palamedes had invented writing as well as measurements and dice, the latter two inventions allowing moderns some insight into the *function* of writing as it was imagined in its origins. But, as Détienne noted, it was also by writing that Palamedes himself was brought down, executed because of a treacherous letter that Odysseus had forged in his name: writing in its origins was thus also an instrument of deceit.[8]

The dangers of far-reaching theories notwithstanding, Détienne's main contrast of attitudes toward writing can be amply documented not only by various studies on the nature of the hieroglyph and writing in Egypt, but also by the curious way in which writing was domesticated and traditionalized in Greece. Rosalind Thomas has recently demonstrated the ambivalent attitudes Greeks held toward written records, reflecting a society that stood *between* oral and written forms of representation, record, and authority.[9] The Greek nostalgia for a sacred time of oral transmission—the heroic age of Homer—lay partially behind the relegation of writing to a "newcomer's" ambiguous status.[10] Even as writing itself achieved a routine role in Greek society as a pragmatic tool and instrument of democracy, myths and legends *about* writing expressed ambivalence, in striking contrast to Egypt's letter-driven cosmologies. Whereas in Egypt writing established and ordered the cosmos, in Greece the importation of writing brought with it (according to mythology) deceit and laziness.

When writing was symbolically elevated or romanticized in Greek culture, Détienne argued, it was in the service of the oral, the musical, rather than because of the intrinsic properties of the symbols (as in Egypt). In traditions of Orpheus deriving from at least the fourth century B.C.E., sound and its structure represented a pacifying and civilizing force in the evolution of classical culture; and the ritual expression (in music, annotated in letters) of the cosmic system became a means to *gnôsis*.[11]

Letters were *stoicheia*: symbols not only of sounds but of cosmic "elements." Singing them brought one to a state of perfection, while the alphabet itself came to reflect the cosmic structure. The ambiguous word *stoicheion* captures, again, the tendency of Greek culture to transcend the writing itself, to reach an "oral" state of pure planetary sound, to abstract ideas from the immediate forms of reality.[12] In this "Orphic" mode writing held significance as the expression of voice; but voice and tone were ultimately more significant as the essential divine elements than writing. So even while engaging in the most abstract speculation on the nature of the alphabet, even while Orpheus himself became the "master" of a considerable body of instructional pseudepigrapha, Greek culture continued to emphasize orality and a mental life unencumbered by fixed text.

Indeed, Plato in the *Cratylus* views names and their letters *not* as intrinsically linked to their referents (as would an Egyptian scribe) but rather only *in service to* things-in-themselves. The alphabet is like a paint-box, letters mixed to form a name according to the peculiar sound of the letter and the character of the thing named. Letters and names have no purpose but to facilitate reference to reality: "The knowledge of things is not to be derived from names. No, they must be studied and investigated in themselves."[13]

In the traditions that came to attribute the invention of writing to Orpheus, it was really sound in its abstract, cosmic, pre-verbal sense for which the god was praised, while the *stoicheia* or books that captured that sound were essentially its *medium*.[14] Orphic liturgical texts preserved the "voice" of Orpheus: Euripides refers to "Thracian tablets that the Orphic *voice* [*Orpheia . . . gêrus*] inscribed."[15] Even if one were still to accept the engraved gold tablets from Greece and Italy as "Orphic," their contents would still clearly represent the god's *verbal* instructions to the deceased, rather than a visually organized map to the Underworld (as one finds, for

example, in Egyptian mortuary texts like the *Book of Gates*, earliest examples from ca. 1300 B.C.E).[16] One may acknowledge Burkert's assertion that the Orphic traditions' "characteristic appeal to books is indicative of a revolution: with the Orphica literacy takes hold in a field that had previously been dominated by the immediacy of ritual and the spoken word of myth."[17] Yet writing continues to be the almost incidental medium for a fundamentally oral (or aural) message, whereas in Egypt the *medium* was the message—the writing by its very nature was efficacious, not just the content.

The *pictographic* nature of Egyptian hieroglyphic writing made it quite distinct from the Greek alphabet of phonetic characters. On seeing hieroglyphic texts on walls or papyrus one is immediately struck by the visual continuity between pictographic writing and iconographic illustrations. Not only are actual characters shared, but quite often hieroglyphs themselves carried ideographic or logographic meaning: the character signified the word, or an entire idea or cosmic force. While phonetic writing with hieroglyphs had developed from these ideographic signs, the characters themselves remained pictographic: animals, people, and objects.[18] Moreover, in ritual texts the individual characters continued to carry the kind of concrete power imputed to iconographic symbols. For example, the human and animal characters in mortuary prayers often appear "neutralized"—meticulously mutilated or replaced—when inscribed in certain parts of tombs, in order that these characters not come alive and impede a successful afterlife.[19] The very sound of words was fixed to their written expression, and to a large degree writing could substitute for vocal utterance, as in the healing and mortuary spells which are meant to "work" merely through their inscribed presence on stelae and tomb walls.[20] A recent introduction to hieroglyphic writing stresses "its capacity, because of its pictorial and unrestricted nature, to be exploited for purposes other than straightforward linguistic communication."[21] Writing with pictographs allowed a degree of scribal self-consciousness unattainable with the simple phonetic signs of an alphabet. The written word, indeed, was a *sacred* object.[22]

Thus, in contrast to the Greek system, whose characters had evolved expressly to replicate the spoken word, the pictographs of hieroglyphic writing could reify their subjects as well as the order of things expressed. By the very nature of the "word" and its letters, a continuum existed between the signified object, name, or deity, the writing of the word, and the very characters on stone or papyrus that spelled out the word.

These unique powers of hieroglyphic writing made it the indispensable and dynamic center of the Egyptian cultic-priestly world. In contract to the largely *democratic* context of writing in Greece (e.g., as documentation of an oath), Egyptian letters were the chief technology of a hierocratic scribal elite who preserved and enacted rituals—and by extension the cosmic order itself—through the written word. Writing in Egypt was maintained by and for a priesthood with the intention of encoding or *fixing* ritual and cosmology in a timeless and ideal reality. Rituals proceeded according to texts which themselves could only be read and interpreted by priests.[23]

Hieroglyphic writing represented cultic (or at least priestly) speech and activities; its language was discontinuous with popularly spoken Egyptian. Writing itself was intertwined with the preservation and efficacy of the cult. Thus the writing system itself served to circumscribe and bind hieroglyphs with cult. Within the cultic-priestly sphere hieroglyphic writing was conceived as rendering precision in pronunciation with liturgical performance, and systematization to the cosmos and pantheon. But temples were not silent places. Hieroglyphic writing conveyed ritual *speech*, recording and organizing the prayers and incantation, the *vocal* expressions of power. Even innovations in spoken liturgy, once written, instantly achieved an archaistic timelessness, as if it had always been so. Consequently, in Egyptian ritual there was an ancient correspondence between the precisely vocalized "word of power"[24] and its hieroglyphic representation. Egyptian ritual represented a manipulation of words that alternated subtly between both forms.[25]

These dual modes might indeed get paradoxical. The companion of the god Heka—"magic," the power in the cosmos drawn upon in priestly ritual—is described in an Edfu inscription as "possessor of spells, bearing her writings which are in her mouth."[26] That is, Egyptian spells draw together the written and the vocalized into one multivalent concept, the "word of power."[27]

It was the god Thoth who stood over this concept of the "word of power," mythically bridging the vocal and the written modes of efficacy. As *scribe* of the gods, Thoth symbolized the effective power of words as carried into the visual symbol and vice-versa. Thoth, lord of the name, of communication and signification, combined in his mythic purview both pronunciative and visual expressions of the "word" in Egyptian thought and life.[28] In the dramatic seasonal recitation of Isis' and Nephthys' lamentations over the death of Osiris there is special importance in the assertion that "Thoth recites your liturgy and calls you with his spells."[29] One could reinforce any spell or recitation in Egyptian religion by asserting that Thoth himself was pronouncing it, as in the following antivenin spell: "You fall under the knife, O Poison, while Thoth, the eldest, the son of Ra, the child whose name is hidden, [pronounces] the formula, being the master of your cranium."[30] In a healing spell he is "Thoth [who] turns the script into words."[31]

Through these functions Thoth became virtually the culture-hero of the Egyptian temple scriptorium, or "House of Life." The very sacred space and temples by which the Egyptian hierocracy organized itself and by which the land itself gained order originated in Thoth's writing and measuring.[32] Just as priestly writing maintained the cult and thereby order in the cosmos, so Thoth was extolled as "he who has given words and script, who makes the temples to prosper, who founds shrines, and makes the gods to know what is needful."[33] Thoth's authority over the scribal act led to his

role as archetypal author and master pseudonym of books, particularly those of ritual formulae, written from at least the Middle Kingdom (ca. 2000 B.C.E.) well through the Roman period (ca. fourth century C.E.).[34] Indeed, the popular Egyptian story of Setne Khamwas revolves around the search for "a book of magic written by the god Thoth himself."[35] And so it is as the culture-hero behind names and words of power that the fourth-century C.E. Egyptian alchemist Zosimos of Panopolis explained Thoth: "In the original hieratic language the first man, the interpreter of all that exists and the giver of names to all corporeal beings, is designated *Thouthos*."[36]

It was Thoth as scribal culture hero, as the god of the writing that priests used for their liturgical control of the cosmos, that Détienne contrasted with the bringers of writing in Greek tradition: to Palamedes with his pragmatic and "ludic" invention, or to Orpheus with his musical (and secondarily semantic) invention. In Greek tradition, it was an invention with slothful (for Plato) or even deadly (in Palamedes' case) consequences.[37] Détienne's contrast is vivid and insightful, for such mythic aetiologies do indeed express the deeper attitudes of cultures. So although it would be an over-statement to phrase the contrast simply as "Greek orality" versus "Egyptian graphocentrism," once can perceive a definite contrast in the sociology and popular use of writing in Greece and Egypt: in Egypt writing was sacred; in Greece it was not (though it could, under certain circumstances, acquire a *relative* sacredness).

One can push this distinction between Greece and Egypt further, to a resulting difference in the relative power or "magic" viewed as intrinsic to the written word in Greece and Egypt. In Egyptian culture the written word held sacred power by the very nature of the "letters," the *hieroglyphoi*.[38] Insofar as the Greek alphabet directly symbolized the phonetics of speech, so in Greek culture writing was a self-conscious medium in the service of speech.

One could hardly deny that the written *medium* became domesticated and routine in Greece. Furthermore, as we shall see, the attractive permanence of the written "voice" brought writing quickly into the service of private rituals and magic, as a means of continuing the effect of a real or mythical primary rite through the "endless" repetition afforded by an inscribed amulet. But what was "sacred" in the written text was not the writing per se but the "message," whether Orpheus' very teaching, a ritual recitation, or a direct request from a god or daemon.

II. . . . To Concepts of the Magic Spell

I now wish to explore the implications of these variant concepts of the written word by looking at representative examples of magical texts and spells from Greece and Egypt. One would expect these texts to reflect in some way the indigenous views and uses of writing, such that Greek spells might express an incipient "orality" while Egyptian spells might be effective by virtue of their very letters.

A. Greek

Recent studies on Greek amulets have recognized their fundamentally oral nature. Petropoulos has argued that the erotic spells among the magical papyri derive from oral incantations; and indeed, his observations rest upon the fact that the *written medium* had little effect on the construction or visual representation of the "text," which invariably read like speech.[39] Analyzing the structure and function of Greek *defixiones*, Faraone has found that the formulation of the spell directly reflects oral utterance—"I bind NN"; "Restrain NN!"—and that the preparation of the medium itself (a lead tablet) derives from gestures performed to render the victim "like" lead.[40] Thus again, the ritual performance—in this case including attendant gestures—dominates the written spell; the written spell essentially "records" the ritual.[41]

These inscribed spells carry the implication that the initial ritual "speaks on" through the written words, like a Buddhist prayer-wheel that "spins out" the prayers written on its inner drum. Thus Kotansky has described the evolution of inscribed Greek amulets as meant to carry or continue incantations beyond the ritual, the primary performance, of an invariably *verbal* rite.[42]

Indeed, such a profound sense of the verbal act, the *epôidê*, do the Greek amulets express, that already in Greek tradition an association developed between "original" *epôidai* as transmitted in written amulets and the preternatural songs of the god Orpheus.[43] Like Thoth in Egypt, Orpheus developed into a god of magic and master of spells. Following the distinctively Greek attitude toward the written medium, however, Orpheus is a singer, not a scribe, a producer of mystically powerful sounds anterior to language itself.[44] Thus, as we saw in Euripides' *Alcestis*, it is his voice, not pen, that is carried through the pseudepigrapha and spells in his name; and thus the *epôidê* continues to carry an oral or spoken sense, even in its most incomprehensible conglomerations of letters.[45] Although magic could be written in Greek tradition, writing itself was not magic.[46]

The most important counter-example of magical writing in Greek tradition might be the *Ephesia grammata*, strings of incomprehensible syllables that became a staple of private liturgy and cursing in Graeco-Roman times.[47] Their use in the Greek magical papyri certainly suggests their use in incantation and chant, but the earliest reference to *Ephesia grammata* describes them as carried in "sewn pouches," implying that they held power *in written form*.[48] Furthermore, there were traditions that boxers and wrestlers became invincible by wearing "Ephesian letters."[49]

Such evidence might offer an example of "letters of power" similar to hieroglyphs. By labelling these obscure signs "Ephesian," of course,

Greeks reflected the alienness of whatever *Ephesia grammata* originally were, describing what may have been a distinctly non-Greek set of symbols under the rubric of a city long-viewed as a place of odd religions (cf. Acts 19:17-19). Thus in their *origin*, the *Ephesia grammata* may not have been Greek letters at all, but exotic symbols purveyed as "magical."

In their popular use in Greek magic, however, *Ephesia grammata* worked distinctly as incantations: pronounceable, formed of Greek letters, with luscious syllables like *lix*, *tetrax*, *damnameneus*, *ablanathanalba*, etc. With the expansion of the "corpus" of *Ephesia grammata*, recognizable names and words were incorporated. So in spite of their name—*grammata*—and their effectiveness on tablets, *Ephesia grammata* were fundamentally components of oral incantations: "Those who *intoned* them," says Diogenianus, "conquered in everything."[50] Their inscription on statues, amulets, or lead tablets would thus also reflect an "oral" communication transmitted or preserved in writing.

But it cannot be denied that *Ephesia grammata* express a pronounced sense of the written word as sacred in a continuing sense—carrying power in its fixed and amuletic state. Perhaps in this phenomenon (and in the exotic name "Ephesian") one might see the readiness of Greek culture, in its ambivalence towards the written word, to comprehend its power magically. This readiness may then lie behind the flourishing Graeco-Egyptian syntheses of different forms and means of power that are found in the magical papyri of the Roman period.[51]

B. Egyptian

For a culture in which literacy was exclusively the provenance of the priesthood, one must consider how the "power" of spells was meant to be accessible to the illiterate populace. We may distinguish three routes of such accessibility: the *vicarious*, in which people observe or trust in the proper performance of rites by sections of the priesthood; the *direct ritual*, in which a client submits to healing or other rites (gestures and incantations) for his or her immediate or imminent benefit, and is subsequently presented with an amulet prepared in the context of temple ritual; and the *concretely efficacious*, in which people "tap" the letters or words of inscribed spells by pouring water over them—a distinctly "non-Greek" approach to letters! Whether the spell was enacted, uttered, or simply "washed off," so Egyptologists have recognized, the power of the spells inhered in the very names and letters, the very *hieroi glyphoi*, more than in some primary *epôidê*.[52]

The magical function of the very *symbols* of writing is immediately apparent to anyone visiting a collection of Egyptian antiquities: scarabs, stylized eyes (the "Eye of Horus"), and other stereotyped images occasionally associated with particular gods, carved in some semiprecious stone, constitute the *typical* amulet in Egyptian culture for living and dead alike. But

these same images were used in hieroglyphic writing, too.[53] A semiotic continuity between graphic symbol and efficacious icon exerted a strong influence on the conception of the hieroglyph, for the very hieroglyphic symbols which carried semantic or logographic meaning in the context of writing systems also functioned as amulets, symbols of power. Needless to say, one does not find *alphas* and *omegas* molded as amulets in Greek magic. But to investigate the "literary" nature of magical power it is helpful to examine instances in which more complete "texts" are employed as amulets.

In the centuries preceding Egypt's hellenization (third century B.C.E.) one such text was the oracle ritually produced and inscribed for an individual. So-called "amuletic decrees" from the Egyptian Late Period (late eighth century B.C.E. through the conquest of Alexander) describe all the conceivable dangers and demonic forces in (and after) life, against which a certain god would protect the owner:

> We shall keep her safe from every (kind of) death, from every (kind of) illness, from every (kind of) accusation, . . . from every evil eye, from every evil glance (?), . . . from a harsh oracle and a harsh word. We shall keep her safe from the gods who seize someone in flight (?), from the gods who seize someone by capture (?), from the gods who find someone in <the> country and kill him in the town . . . from every god and every goddess who assume manifestations when they are not appeased.[54]

Such texts were presumably uttered in some temple ritual, following which the papyrus copy was rolled into a small wooden tube, and delivered to the client for apotropaic purposes throughout her or his quotidian life. Thus to some extent the amuletic decree reflects the "orality" of the ritual. Furthermore, its genre derives from the contract—in this case, a contract by the particular temple gods to guard the client against all the named dangers. However, the repetitive structure, emphasizing the names or characters of each individual "danger" in life, bespeaks the unique Egyptian conception that through *naming* in a ritual context—especially a cursing or apotropaic context—one gains power over the named. That is, the amuletic decree functions by virtue of the fact that it bears the actual names of all the dangers.[55] A Greek amulet manufactured for similar ends would derive its power from the appeal or invocation itself, uttered initially and perhaps inscribed on the amulet: for example, a "leaf" (*phyllon*) that, according to Socrates in Plato's *Charmides*, would cure headaches only if applied while uttering a spoken formula (*epôidê*). "Without the spoken formula the leaf had no power," says Socrates (155E); while in Egypt the written amulet could operate independently *as* the spoken utterance of a god.

Another significant example of the texts' power conveyed through the very inscription of words appears in the so-called *cippi* of Horus and their associated "magical" statue bases.[56] These consisted of stelae bearing the image of the child Horus, standing on crocodiles and holding an assortment of reptiles and animals in his hands, often surrounded by other "savior" gods in various scenes. In the more elaborate *cippi*, inscribed mythological narratives of Horus and Isis relevant to the healing of venoms would cover the rest of the stele, including its back, sides, and even

the base upon which the stele would be customarily erected.[57] Most importantly, dug out of the *cippus*' stone base was often a small pool, meant to collect water poured over the *cippus* itself.

These *cippi* of Horus demonstrate that in Egyptian ritual and medical tradition, the power inherent in the image of Horus triumphing over reptiles, the images of other salvific deities, and the mythological narratives themselves inscribed in hieroglyphs could be "washed off" and transferred to water for ingestion or amuletic protection against the bites and stings of certain Egyptian fauna. In one sense this phenomenon merely demonstrates Frazer's principle of magical "contagion";[58] but the fact that it is the images and words that are transferred contagiously in this case expresses the Egyptian concept of the *physical* hieroglyph, word, or name as a concrete medium for the "power" of the word, name, god, or myth that is signified. In the story of Setne-Khamwas (extant in Demotic from the Ptolemaic period), a scribe demonstrates the same assumptions in his way of memorizing a book: he copies it onto new papyrus, soaks the copy in beer, and "when he knew it had dissolved, he drank it and knew what had been in it."[59] Insofar as the spells inscribed on the *cippi* correspond to spells recorded in ritual papyri (for example, *P.Turin* 1993), it is probable that they were also uttered aloud in healing rituals by priests, who could read the spells. The *cippi*, therefore, ensconced in pilgrimage shrines connected with major temples, made the power of the spells available on an ongoing basis to the non-literate "folk" as well as priests.

C. Conclusion

In surveying Greek and Egyptian magical uses of the written word, it has become increasingly apparent that the assumptions about its inherent power varied between the two cultures. Greek spells and amulets not only imitate direct speech, they often (as in the Orphic texts) depend on the very authority of a primary speaker and occasionally are designed for subsequent intonation (e.g., through liturgical notation—"[utter this] 7 [times]"). One might go so far as to say that in Greek magical tradition the "core" ritual was what was spoken.

One would characterize Egyptian magical ritual quite differently. Although rituals commonly involved the combined gestures of molding, breaking, burning, spitting, uttering, and dramatic movements, the instrumental "core" that integrated the rite was the written word, list, or amulet. The gestures followed written instructions; the utterances gave dramatic forces to the permanent writings; and the preparation of written text established the total ritual in the cosmos. Like Greece, Egypt did have its "messages" to gods, imitative of human speech: the letters to the dead.[60] But even here the directed message hardly exhausted the semantic and efficacious power of the text; far more often power was dispensed and continu-

ally accessible through the actual written letters—sacred either by their pictographic characters or by the content of the spells they composed.

III. The Interface Between the Written and the Oral in Graeco-Egyptian Amulets

Although originating with such remarkably different perspectives on the written word, Greek and Egyptian magical traditions converged during the Hellenistic and Roman periods, with the result that a considerable literary corpus exists, the "Greek magical papyri," representing a *synthesis* of ritual approaches to power from various Mediterranean cultures.[61] For its dominant linguistic and mythological inheritances this synthesis has been denoted *Graeco-Egyptian*.[62] A glimpse of two magical writing "systems" employed in Graeco-Egyptian amulets and spells demonstrates how both Greek and Egyptian ritual scribes appropriated and reinterpreted each others' symbols in a continuing effort to express power through new visual media.

At issue here are the Greek vowels, as these were employed as symbols and components of incantation during the Graeco-Roman period; and magical characters, configurations of lines and circles inscribed on amulets as a pseudo-alphabet or cryptography. In each of these systems the power of the oral and the written media *converged* uniquely.

A. The Semiotics of Vowels

The use of mere vowels as a kind of magical speech, an extension of ritual incantations to supernatural powers, generally falls under the category of *ephesia grammata* or *voces magicae*. This broad field of incantations that modern philologists have found untranslatable includes, among many conceivable sources, names and epithets of deities from around the ancient Mediterranean world, equally traditional forms of assonance and alliteration, creative wordplay such as one finds in children's word-games, and, presumably, actual ecstatic glossolalia.[63] In Graeco-Egyptian spells, long strings of vowels are often found woven among the more "consonantal" *voces magicae* with no apparent difference in sense (or non-sense):[64]

> Add also the following [spell], which is to be written on laurel leaves, and . . . placed beside your head, rolled up. It is to be spoken also to the lamp, . . . : "ΒΟΑΣΟΧ ΩΑΕΗ ΙΑΩΙΗ ΩΙΑΗ ΝΙΧΗΑΡΟΠΛΗΞΣΘΟΜ ΩΘΩ . . . Υ ΙΕ ΙΩ ΗΙ ΙΑΗΛ ΙΡΜΟΥΧ ΩΝΟΡ ΩΕΥΕ ΙΥΩ ΕΑΩ ΣΑΒΑΩΘ . . ."

But in many places in the magical papyri the seven Greek vowels appear in a form which suggests that special significance has been attributed to their *visual representation*, as if the inscription of the vowel symbols extended or transcended their vocalic pronunciation. This phenomenon appears most vividly in the so-called *carmina figurata*, the named geometric arrangements in which *magical* texts would instruct words and names to be inscribed on corresponding *amulets*. By constructing a palindrome,

klima ("seven-layered"), *pterugion* ("wing"), or *plinthion* ("square") out of a magical name, a professional would be representing it in multiple dimensions, and thereby deriving increased power from the name. Although *carmina figurata* were employed to represent a variety of *voces magicae*, they seem to have been especially popular for representing vowels:[65]

A E H I O Y Ω
E H I O Y Ω
H I O Y Ω
I O Y Ω
O Y Ω
Y Ω
Ω

klima[66] (tiered)

A
E E
H H H
I I I I
O O O O O
Y Y Y Y Y Y
Ω Ω Ω Ω Ω Ω Ω

klima[67] (pyramidal)

A E H I O Y Ω
E H I O Y Ω A
H I O Y Ω A E
I O Y Ω A E H
O Y Ω A E H I
Y Ω A E H I O
Ω A E H I O Y

pterugion[68]

A A A A A A A
E E E E E E E
H H H H H H H
I I I I I I I
O O O O O O O
Y Y Y Y Y Y Y
Ω Ω Ω Ω Ω Ω Ω

plinthion[69]

A E H I O Y Ω
E H I O Y Ω A
H I O Y Ω A E
I O Y Ω A E H
O Y Ω A E H I
Y Ω A E H I O
Ω A E H I O Y

plinthion[70]

Vowels were thus used in multiple ways to extend the *visual* power of magical amulets—and to symbolize angels, cosmic regions, or even Christ.[71] Indeed, it is a striking development in the use of writing that the vowels—originally a revolutionary contribution to the *phonetic* alphabet—could become concretely powerful as *visual* symbols. Furthermore, there is clear evidence that this "concretization" of the vowel symbols developed in conjunction with a growing use of vowels as an actual part of certain types of invocational or mystical liturgy. An *oneiraitêton* invokes a power "whose name is composed of 30 letters, in which are the seven vowels, through which you name [the] universe, gods, lords."[72] A Coptic ritual text invokes a power "by the names of the seven *stoicheia* which are inscribed in the breast of the Father: these are A (x7) E (x7) H (x7) I (x7) O (x7) Y (x7) Ω (x7)."[73] And Ammianus Marcellinus lists, among the elite practitioners of "magic" executed in a fourth-century imperial purge,

> . . . a young man in the public baths . . . [who was] noticed touching the marble of the bath and his own breast alternately with the fingers of both hands, reciting the seven Greek vowels as he did so. He believed that this would relieve a stomach complaint, but he was dragged into court, tortured, and beheaded.[74]

Vowel mysticism and incantations in fact arose from a Greek philosophical mysticism which regarded the vowels as uniquely powerful *stoicheia*—utterable symbols of cosmic forces and their corresponding sounds. Franz Dornseiff, whose *Das Alphabet in Mystik und Magie* is still the basic work on the subject, traced these traditions to the very concept of the written

letter in Greek culture: a polyvalent symbol for number, musical note, and vocalized sound.[75] Through centuries of Orphic and Pythagorean speculation on the cosmic nature of "true" sounds and planetary harmonies, there developed the notion that humans might participate in those harmonies through ritually "singing" the vowels. And it is important to note that in the development of these systems of thought there was never a firm border between liturgical *participation* in and theurgical *control* of the cosmic elements through chanting their sounds.[76]

In late antiquity, vowel liturgies were taken up by Christians such as Clement of Alexandria as expressions of God's nature (Rev. 1:8's *Alpha* and *Omega*) or name (the mysterious, vowel-less Tetragrammaton of the Jewish Bible, YHWH), and by more eclectic religious sects as a suprahuman language or means of transcendence.[77] For example, Marcus, a disciple of the great Gnostic thinker Valentinus, is credited with the following discourse, a vowel liturgy meant to bring a congregation mimetically into participation with heavenly choirs:

> The first heaven utters the Alpha, the one after it Epsilon, the third Eta, the fourth, which is in the middle of the seven, utters the force (or: sound) of Iota, the fifth Omicron, the sixth Upsilon, and the seventh, which is the fourth from the middle, expresses the Omega. . . . All these powers, he says, when lined to one another, sound forth the praises of him by whom they were brought forth. The glory of this sound is sent up again to the Forefather. The echo of this utterance of praise is brought down to earth, according to him, and becomes the shaper and parent of the things on earth.[78]

Marcus' liturgy simultaneously reflects two different ritual traditions in the late antique Mediterranean world. The image of entire heavens in the process of chanting praises to God reflects apocalyptic images of heavenly liturgy, at that time in abundant circulation among Jewish and Christian communities throughout the Mediterranean world.[79] The description of the different tones, symbolized by vowels, each emitting from a different heavenly stratum and coming together in harmony, recalls Platonic-Pythagorean images of cosmic sounds, such as that in the Myth of Er: "On each of the rims of the [celestial] circles a Siren stood, borne around in its revolution and uttering one sound, one note, and from all the eight there was the concord of a single harmony."[80] It is likely that Marcus and others were interweaving these rather similar traditions, playing with the mystical elements of each in order to lead participants through a kind of heavenly ascent to a mystical identification with the pure elements of the cosmos: "the soul also, when for its purification it is in need and distress, exclaims Ω, as a sign of praise, so that the soul above may recognize its kinship with it and may send down to it a helper."[81]

The vowel liturgies, it seems, expressed a certain conviction in and longing for a "perfect order" in the heavens.[82] And yet the practice of the liturgies, and the utterance of *voces magicae* in general, seem to reflect a desire to transcend ordinary speech, to imitate the "speech" of the gods or the *stoicheia*. Thus Patricia Cox Miller, in an important contribution to the study of ritual speech in late antiquity, has suggested that the use of vowels and

voces magicae was intended to transcend not only writing but speech itself, whether through the deliberate composition of "spiritual sounds" or as a mimesis of actual glossolalia.[83] The liturgy in the Coptic *Gospel of the Egyptians* seems to combine both:

> O Iesseus! [..] ôêoôôuua! In very truth! O Isseus-Mazareus-Iessedekeus! O living water! O child of the child! O name of all glories in very truth! O eternal being! IIII HHHH EEEE OOOO YYYY ΩΩΩΩ AAAA! In very truth! HI AAAA ΩΩΩΩ! O being, which beholds the aeons in very truth! A EE HHH IIII YYYYY ΩΩΩΩΩΩΩ! O existent for ever and ever in very truth! IHA AIΩ in the heart! O existent upsilon forever unto eternity! You are what you are! You are what you are! . . . For what being can comprehend you by speech or praise?[84]

In this way the phonetic alphabet of the Greeks, with its dynamic reflection of orality through the denotation of vowels and consonants, comes paradoxically to the point of nullifying itself: the very vowels which make the alphabet functional become the symbolic and vocalic means to *transcend* language in its regular phonetic order.[85] Such a "radical" orality that would transcend speech through the use of its own alphabet is equally manifest in the visual representations of vowels on amulets and their corresponding manuals: sound and image perpetually reflect each other. The visual power of a *klima* is "implied" when strings of vowels are presented in the appropriate sequence of A EE HHH IIII OOOOO YYYYYY ΩΩΩΩΩΩΩ.[86] When one utters vowels in such a sequence one presumably "draws" the *klima* vocally—thus the name *carmina figurata* ("shaped hymns"). Another magical text instructs one to "speak the whole name thus, in wing formation [*pterugoeidôs*]," referring to the word AKRAKANARBA written in diminishing order as if to fit into the shape of a *pterugion*.[87] Thus the *carmina figurata* and any ritual representation of vowels were meant quite expressly to carry on the utterance of those vowels in some particular liturgical fashion.

Perhaps this interface of oral and written media, this "concretization of the oral," is best represented in a series of cartouches inscribed on an early Byzantine (pre-800) theatre wall to protect the city of Miletus, in Asia Minor. Each of the seven cartouches is crowned with a magical or astrological character and then the vowel set in a different order (IEOYAHΩ, IHΩAYEO, YAHOIΩE, etc.). Within each cartouche is written a vowel set in "leftward moving" order (AEHIOYΩ, EHIOYΩA, HIOYΩAE, etc.) and then the imprecation "Holy one, guard the city of the Milesians and all who dwell therein." Evidently these vowel sets and their corresponding signs represent angels (although no Hebraic angel-names are inscribed), for an additional inscription below the line of cartouches invokes "Archangels! Guard the city of the Milesians and its inhabitants." The *visual* power of the characters, the vowels, and the seven cartouches is functionally incidental to the "oral" invocation the inscription perpetually "utters." That is, the signs and the vowel variations merely direct the invocation to each angel (or planet) in turn.[88] This type of iconographic inscription contrasts vividly with the magical function of Egyptian wall-carvings and inscriptions, which do not invoke so much as represent the inherent active power of deities and their respective forms of protection or beneficence.[89]

It was through "Egyptianism," the Graeco-Roman idealization of and projection onto Egypt, that vowels earned a unique status in Egyptian ritual texts. Not only were Egyptian priests themselves committed to promoting the general authority of Thoth over all aspects of speech, but the Greek vowels provided a unique precision in pronouncing the sacred texts. Egyptian religion put tremendous emphasis on the efficacy of words (many of which were untranslatable), but with only rudimentary phonetic signs the Egyptian writing system was unable to render the names and words with corresponding precision.[90]

Vowels enter Egyptian ritual texts with the advent of Coptic in approximately the second century C.E.[91] For example, in brief sections of the Demotic magical papyrus of London and Leiden (ca. third century C.E.), magical words are glossed in Greek letters (supplemented by several Egyptian characters) above the Demotic Egyptian letters. The form is known as Old Coptic, and its application appears to have been almost exclusively ritual texts.[92] Occasionally the Greek letters appear in the text itself: "*May they tell me that about which I am asking here today, in truth, truly, there being no falsehood therein* AEHIOYΩ *spirit of strife*!"[93] More often, *P.London-Leiden* switches to the Greek alphabet at those points where *vocalic* or non-consonantal spells begin, or it supplements the Demotic (non-vocalic) magical words with Old Coptic glosses.[94] Indeed, one can see both in *P.London-Leiden* and in the genesis of the Coptic language itself that vowels—and an exclusively phonetic alphabet in general—provided a unique degree of *precision* in the pronunciation of sacred words and names.[95] Thus the first examples of Old Coptic, where Greek letters are used to represent Egyptian, consist almost entirely of magical texts, whose use required incantatory precision.[96]

Only a phonetic alphabet would be able accurately to represent a system of ritual speech in which, according to the third-century Alexandrian Christian Origen, "Certain sounds and syllables which are pronounced with or without aspiration, with either long or short vowel-sound, control those who are invoked, probably by some natural power imperceptible to us."[97] Indeed, it was the centrality of ritual technique in Egyptian religion from earliest times through the Roman period that led to the earnest adaptation of the Greek phonetic alphabet to Egyptian incantation texts: "You should recite this spell in Greek," one spell instructs *in Demotic*.[98] The sense that the Greek alphabet might "release" the static power of Egyptian letters and inscriptions created a literary fiction around the authority of spells: "I speak your names which thrice-great Hermes wrote in Heliopolis with hieroglyphic letters. . . . "[99]

In this latter spell, from the great Paris Magical Papyrus, we are given an indication of the cultural context in which the Egyptian and Greek writing systems came to be syncretized. The appeal to Hermes *trismegistos* be-

speaks the Hermetic tradition, which arose as an intellectual priestly sect adopting Greek philosophical ideas while still claiming the authority of the scribal god Thoth over all writings, speculations, and rituals they produced.[100] It was particularly the Hermetic tradition that sought to frame what were essentially Greek forms of ritual speech as the translations of hieroglyphs, thus giving the impression that the power in Egyptian letters could be simply translated into Greek.[101] Thus the Coptic (originally Greek) *Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth*, in which the initiate "calls your name that is hidden within me: A Ω EE ΩΩHHH ΩΩΩ III ΩΩΩΩ OOOOO ΩΩΩΩΩΩ YYYYYYY ΩΩΩΩΩΩΩΩΩΩΩΩΩΩΩΩΩΩΩΩΩ," concludes with the striking admonition to "write this book for the temple at Diospolis in hieroglyphic characters . . . on stelae of turquoise."[102] The text, that is, pretends to be the translation of these very turquoise stelae.[103]

Opinions seem to have varied in late antique Egypt on the facility or propriety of the Greek language to express hieroglyphic text; and rarely is the difference between the two writing systems so succinctly put as in this lament from the *Corpus Hermeticum*:

> [The teachings of Thoth] will be thought more obscure in time to come, when the Greeks think it fit to translate these writings from our tongue into theirs. Translation will greatly distort the sense of the writings, and cause much obscurity. Expressed in our native language, the teaching conveys the sense of the words; for the very quality of the sounds and the [intonation] of the Egyptian words [*onomata*] carry in themselves the power of the things said. Therefore, my king, as far as it is in your power (and you are all powerful), keep the teaching untranslated, in order that secrets so holy may not be revealed to Greeks, and that the Greek mode of speech, with its [arrogance] and feebleness, and showy tricks of style, may not reduce to impotence the holiness and strength and effectual power [*energetiken*] of the words. For the speech of the Greeks, my king, is devoid of power to convince; and the Greek philosophy is nothing but a noise of talk. But *our* speech is not mere talk; it is an utterance replete with workings.[104]

Here one can almost sense the anxiety of some priestly group watching the sanctity and exclusivity of the temple scriptorium being gradually replaced with Hermetic theosophical study-groups, and the "wisdom" of those scriptoria, hitherto based in texts and letters, beginning to be represented in the alphabet of everyday speech. (Of course, it might be premature to judge this an honest lament, since its message would reinforce the "Egyptianist" allure of the sacred hieroglyphs: they are untranslatable, and yet being translated.[105])

But it may be among these more traditional or exclusive enclaves of Thoth that the very attribution of vowels to Thoth arose. Demetrius of Phaleron (ca. 270 B.C.E.) describes how "the priests of Egypt, when singing hymns to their gods, utter the seven vowels in succession and men listen to the singing sound of these vowels instead of to the flute or the lyre, because it is so euphonious."[106] Vocalic chants as a type of priestly liturgy is not in itself inconceivable. Evidence from both archaeology and the Hermetic tradition itself demonstrates the prominence of the Thoth-cult in Egypt through the Roman period; and one is tempted to attribute to this cult some kind of liturgical mimesis of Thoth's preeminent animal-form,

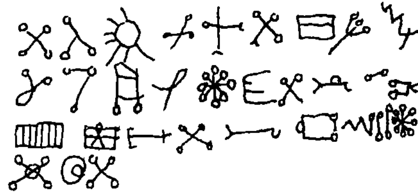
the baboon.[107] That is, when *PGM* XIII invokes Helios-Re in "falconic [*hierakisti*]" and "baboonic [*kynokephalisti*]," when *PGM* V instructs the ritualist to pronounce "the e(psilon) like a baboon [*kynokephalisti*] [and] the o(micron) as before," and when *PGM* IV invokes Horus to "appear to me, lord, because I call upon you as the three baboons call upon you, who speak your holy name in a symbolic fashion, A EE HHH IIII OOOOO YYYYYY ΩΩΩΩΩΩΩ—speak as a baboon," there may be the reflection of genuine "simian" incantations in the native cults of Thoth.[108] In such a case Plato's attribution of vowels to Thoth, with which we began this paper, and their use as both a type of magical incantation and a divine name of sorts, could have derived from an Egyptian liturgical practice of "vocalic" hymns, which came to be understood as the ritualized pronunciation of the seven vowels.

Yet, in the contexts in which vowels are presented in the Graeco-Roman period, it would be more appropriate to observe a *synthesis* of Greek liturgical speculation and Egyptian "magical" authority—Thoth, the god of the creative utterance and the effective sign. Through such an "Egyptianist" ideology and through the Hermetic tradition, then, a Greek concept of sound and phonetic representation that was essentially alien to Egypt came into synthesis with Egyptian concepts of the visually powerful word, a ritual language that was continuous with that of the gods, and the authority of a *god* of written spells, all of which were alien to the Greek tradition of writing.

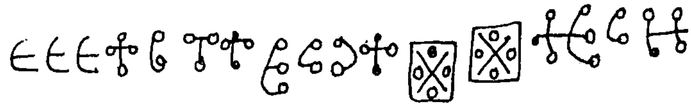
B. Divine Writing: the *Charaktêres*

Charaktêr is the general term for the small designs and figures found in lines or clusters on magical papyri and gems, having no apparent source in any known alphabet, and yet employed in such a way that a "meaning" (albeit inutterable) is implied in their sequence or arrangement.[109] The most common forms of magical *charaktêres* consist of asterisks and configurations of straight lines with small circles or lobes on each end (see illustration). They appear in a variety of contexts, ranging from loose clusters inscribed on certain magical gems, to their integration with a larger drawing or *figura* on a magical text or tablet, to integration with a recognizably alphabetic text as if to suggest phonetic symbols "transcendent" of the normal alphabet, much as *voces magicae* were supposed to be transcendent of normal language.

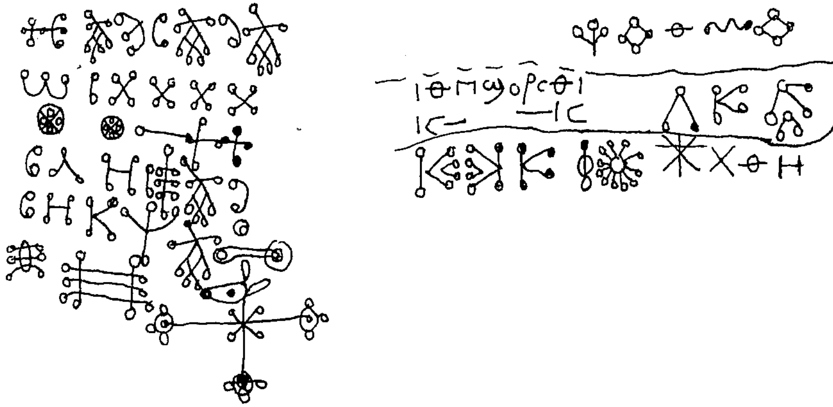
In magical papyri the *charaktêr* sequences are invariably meant to be inscribed on substances that, thereby, assume empowered, apotropaic, or otherwise "magical" significance; for example, "Offer a sacrifice, inscribe the following *charaktêres* on a silver tablet and put frankincense over them. Wear it as an amulet. It will freely render service . . . "[110] And in greater detail:



On lead tablet from Rom; 4th cent. CE. *From:* Wünsch, "Deisidaimoniaka," *Archiv für Religionwissenschaft* 12 (1909) :37.



On cloth amulet from Cairo Geniza (T-S A. S. 142.174). *From:* Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1985), 216-17.



On leather strip (London, British Museum, Hay 10434$^{r, v}$). Text published without photographs in W. E. Crum, "Magical Texts in Coptic—II," *JEA* 20 (1934) :199.

> Take a seven-leafed sprig of laurel and hold it in your right hand as you summon the heavenly gods and chthonic daimons. Write on the sprig of laurel the seven *charaktêres* for deliverance. The *charaktêres* are these: [*charaktêres*] . . . the first *charaktêr* onto the first leaf, then the second again in the same way onto the second leaf until there is a matching up of the 7 *charaktêres* and 7 leaves. But be careful not to lose a leaf [and] do harm to yourself. For this is the body's greatest protective charm, by which all are made subject, and seas and rocks tremble, and daimons [avoid] the *charaktêres*' magical powers which you are about to have. For it is the greatest protective charm for the rite so that you fear nothing.[111]

Even more than vowels, then, magical *charaktêres* function primarily as visual symbols—as a kind of sacred writing associated both with the technical preparation of magical substances and the pronunciation of magical

spells. Moreover, it would appear that the semantic power of *charaktêres* was not dependent on actual antecedents or "meanings" to the symbols. It was based, rather, on the *idea* of a sacred alphabet or writing system.

The vast population of "semi-literates" in the late antique world would have included individuals able to improvise written spells for clients unable to tell the difference between real and imitated writing.[112] And yet, when one finds such "artificial" writing it is often impossible to tell whether it is a product of falsified literacy, deliberately constructed magical *charaktêres*, or a systematic cryptography in which each character stands for a particular sound, name, or deity.[113] The magical *charaktêres* used throughout Graeco-Roman, Graeco-Egyptian, and Coptic ritual texts and amulets have enough formal diversity to suppose that they were, like artificial writing, often improvised. But the dominant style of composition—bent or crossed lines with bulbs on the ends—suggests that professionals shared a *purpose*, if not in some areas an actual *system*, in composing magical *charaktêres*.[114]

Magical *charaktêres* functioned, it seems, not so much as "artificial" writing or cryptography, but as "sacred" writing, in the sense of heavenly books.[115] From the distinctive attitude toward the written word in the late antique Mediterranean world had arisen a widespread folklore of the heavenly book whose contents would be intelligible only to deities, angels, or the enlightened.[116] In the second-century Christian *Shepherd of Hermas*, for example, the protagonist receives a small book from a divine figure and begs to copy it; but "I could not distinguish the syllables" until, "after fifteen days, when I had fasted and prayed greatly to the Lord, the knowledge of the writing was revealed to me."[117] Such a view of the writing in heavenly books is also evident in the Egyptian Gnostic *Gospel of Truth*, which describes the "letters" of

> . . . the living book which [the Father] revealed to the aeons, at the end, as [his letters], revealing how they are not vowels nor are they consonants, so that one might read them and think of something foolish, but they are letters of the truth which they alone speak who know them. Each letter is a complete thought, like a complete book, since they are letters written by the Unity, the Father having written them for the aeons in order that by means of his letters they should know the Father.[118]

But here, as Laurent Motte has recently shown, the heavenly "letters" in fact denote Egyptian hieroglyphs (described in such a way as to inspire Gnostics).[119] The vast majority of hieroglyphs are not phonetic but determinative, signifying the ideas and sense out of which words might be constructed. In this text such ideograms are viewed as spiritually superior to the phonetic combinations afforded by Greek (a sentiment we have encountered before, in Hermetic literature). Could a similarly Egyptianized image of a divine writing system with logographic or even cosmic meaning lie behind the use of magical *charaktêres*?

Graeco-Roman awe at hieroglyphs had certainly turned them into magical icons by the Roman period: in Iversen's words, "The mysterious symbolic qualities with which Greek ignorance of their true character endowed

the hieroglyphs, became, therefore, their main charm and attraction."[120] Thus an incantation in the magical papyri opens typically with a claim that "I speak your names which Hermes *trismegistos* wrote in Heliopolis with hieroglyphic letters."[121] It would make sense that these incomprehensible yet mysterious signs might, in the more general context of heavenly books and writing, function as a prototype or archetype for a body of sacred characters that was magical in presence but lacked referential meaning. And it is therefore striking to find Apuleius describing the "letters" of an Egyptian ritual text in terms more suitable for magical characters:

> [The priest] brought out from the hidden quarters of the shrine certain books in which the writing was in undecipherable letters. Some of them conveyed, through forms of all kinds of animals, abridged expressions of traditional sayings; others barred the possibility of being read from the curiosity of the profane, in that *their extremities were knotted and curved like wheels or closely intertwined like vine-tendrils*. From these writings he indicated to me the preparations necessary for the rite of initiation.[122]

The link between *charaktêres* and hieroglyphs also seems to appear in their respective relationships to *figurae magicae*, the often elaborate iconography that organizes the internal field of many amulets or is appended to spells in ritual handbooks. One finds, indeed, that the iconographical tradition in Graeco-Egyptian amulets was clearly rooted in native Egyptian iconography.

The iconographic component of magical texts gained particular importance in the Coptic period (after the fourth century C.E.), when the very figures themselves were drawn in the style of *charaktêres*.[123] But iconography seems to have been a vital part of amulets and rituals even during the period represented by the Greek magical papyri (first to fifth centuries C.E.). Images in this corpus include not only traditional Egyptian symbols like the "Eye of Horus" (*PGM* III.416ff., V.85ff.; *PDM* lxi.92-94), the scarab (*PGM* II.155-60), the serpent (*PGM* V.590ff.), and images of the Egyptian chaos-god Seth (*PGM* VII.941ff., XII.21ff., XXXVI.10ff. and 86ff.), but also more novel drawings, often of whip-bearing warrior figures like the anguipede (*PGM* III.70ff., XXXVI.245ff.). These drawings were generally meant to be ritually inscribed on a second medium, which thereby became an amulet. Although there were certainly broad influences and iconographical traditions reflected in the figures in the magical papyri, the semiotic legacy of the Egyptian hieroglyph in the magical papyri is particularly obvious: not only are real hieroglyphs used, but many figures and *charaktêres* have actually been shown to derive from traditional hieroglyphs or sacred iconography.[124] This continuing, if senseless, use of hieroglyphs in late antique magical texts is paralleled significantly in late antique mummy decorations, a declining but earnestly pursued craft well into the Coptic period.[125]

The use of common *charaktêr* forms in the Egyptian Gnostic *Books of Jeu* (ca. fifth century C.E.) as apotropaic seals also recalls Egyptian traditions of the hieroglyph. Adepts used these seals in ritual "ascents" through gates watched by evil archons (whose roles in obstructing the unsealed

closely resemble the obstructing monsters in Egyptian mortuary texts like the *Amduat*, known from ca. 1500 B.C.E. and the *Book of the Dead*, which was still being copied in the early Roman period). Penetration of each gate depended upon having the appropriate seal, each of which is drawn in the text.[126] Thus not only do the *Books of Jeu* display literary parallels with Egyptian texts, but their uses of the *charaktêr* specifically recall the *ritual correspondence* between graphic images and literary contents, between picture and hieroglyph, in Egyptian texts. The use of images (two- or three-dimensional) in tandem with a text for ritual purposes has considerable antiquity in Egypt. Pictures, as "super-hieroglyphs," often functioned as literal extensions of the text—as supplementary description or magical *force*.[127] And whether such images portrayed gift-bearers of the next world, the monstrous guardian of a secret gate to the next world, or a bound or speared image of a donkey, they were supposed to function sympathetically and effectively. For example, it was customary in Egyptian rituals of execration to destroy an image of the god Seth, who signified all that was marginal and threatening to state, cosmos, and order. But this ritual execration carried over into texts and reliefs, which often posed Seth as a bound or imprisoned ass: by "binding" him in the image one incapacitated his power in reality.[128] So also by portraying a gate to the land of the dead and its corresponding monster and name, mortuary texts like the Amduat (and their Coptic heirs, the *Books of Jeu*) grant power over that monster and passage through that gate.

Even more direct links between *charaktêres* and hieroglyphs appear in Graeco-Egyptian magical gems and the designs in magical papyri for making talismanic "stelae." Magical gems often deliberately imitate the iconographic arrangement of Egyptian magical stelae: traditionally, a deity (usually Horus) is surrounded with spells; but in this case the "spell" consists of *charaktêres*, only some of which can be identified as, or derived from, actual hieroglyphs.[129] One particularly vivid example from the Hermitage provides a link between hieroglyphs and *charaktêres*: an image of the standing Osiris is surrounded with hieroglyphs that are obviously authentic, but so scattered as to be unreadable and therefore entirely talismanic.[130]

In the Greek magical papyri ritual instructions often include drawing a rough cartouche or stele on an amulet according to a design in the papyrus. Within these "stelae" are *charaktêres*, often combined with other figures or actual hieroglyphs.[131] The use of the "stele" form, particularly in texts of Egyptian provenance, was evidently meant to imitate the frames in which one normally found hieroglyphs in the Egyptian countryside.

With the decline of the priesthood under Roman rule, as well as the general illiteracy of the Graeco-Egyptian populace with respect to Egyptian writing, it would have been the rare individual who, presented with hieroglyphic inscriptions, could read them as anything more than arcane symbols of power. My present argument extends this observation of the practical significance of hieroglyphs as "letters of power" to the genesis of

magical *charaktêres*, a diverse corpus of "letters of power" distinctive for its *lack* of a referential system (aside from rare and idiosyncratic exceptions). The argument, however, rests not on the haphazard linking of spurious parallels but on the widespread Graeco-Roman fascination with hieroglyphs, coupled with the identical *functions* of magical *charaktêres* and hieroglyphs on amulets. One would hardly exclude influences from other "sacred alphabets" renowned in antiquity for their holiness, like Hebrew, upon the diverse forms that magical *charaktêres* took in the Mediterranean world.[132]

In a subsequent stage of the magical *charaktêres* they appear as the actual names of cosmic powers. A curse-tablet from Hebron (third to fifth centuries C.E.) opens: "I invoke you, *charaktêres* . . . "; another from Apamaea (fifth to sixth centuries C.E.) addresses the "Lords, most holy *charaktêres* . . . "; and a cloth amulet in Hebrew (fourth to seventh centuries C.E.; see illustration) invokes "you holy *charaktêres* and all praiseworthy letters. . . . "[133] Furthermore, some spells use magical *charaktêres* [*kl qtyyh*] in such a way as to imply phonetic or name-equivalents: "I conjure you by the great and terrible names which the winds fear and the rocks split when they hear it: . . . [magical *charaktêres* drawn]"; or, in the aforementioned Miletus theatre inscription, seven magical *charaktêres* with their corresponding vowel sets are beseeched as "Holy Ones" and "archangels."[134]

It is true that the very indefinite nature of magical characters facilitated the construction of *charaktêr-systems*, such as cryptographies for the Greek alphabet, or symbols for each of a series of cosmic bodies (angels, planets, dekans, *stoicheia*).[135] But the tendency to build such systems out of the infinite world of magical *charaktêres*, a tendency I would regard as *subsequent* to the growth of the magical *charaktêres* themselves, seems to reflect more than a general penchant for systems. The notion that characters might function as a pronounceable alphabet seems to take us back to Greek speculation on the music of the spheres—sounds in this case that could not be represented by the letters of the alphabet.[136] In this way magical *charaktêres* themselves become *stoicheia*—"letters"—not only as additions to the alphabet but also in the sense of *signs* of the cosmic elements and their sounds. Thus the ineffable orality of Greek magic was combined with the concrete efficacy of the visual signifier in Egyptian magic. Magical *charaktêres* came to represent sounds inexpressible through the twenty-six letters of the Greek alphabet.

Another striking result of the Graeco-Roman fascination with the hieroglyph appears in the arcane speculations on the iconography of Greek letters. Insofar as Greek letters did not originally hold pictographic or logographic value in and of themselves, such speculation would have reflected an intense awareness that *other* writing systems in the world *were* logographic or pictorial. Although Greeks themselves never mastered the decipherment of hieroglyphs, famous attempts such as Horapollon's *Hieroglyphica* (fourth century C.E.) demonstrate a fascination with the idea that

letters might be pictures.[137] In the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* (second century C.E.) Jesus describes the *alpha*: " . . . how it has lines and a middle mark which goes through the pair of lines which you see, (how these lines) converge, rise, turn in the dance, three signs of the same kind, subject to and supporting one another, of equal proportions; here you have the lines of the Alpha."[138] A fifth- or sixth-century Coptic treatise on the mysteries of the Greek letters analyzes the iconography of the alphabet in even greater depth:

> The *delta* is the image of the upper sky, the invisible, the sky of skies. And the lower line of the *delta* is the image of the invisible earth which is underneath the abyss. And the sky of skies, whose figure is indescribable, descends by its extremities, to the east and to the west, to lose itself in all the inexpressible depth, and to be connected to the lower earth in the abyss, according to an exalted mystery; thus it conforms to the iconography of the *delta*.[139]

Clearly an *alpha* or *delta* with such pregnant symbolism would have vastly more intrinsic power than if it merely stood for a phonetic sound. Indeed, what is apparent in such letter speculations is an attempt to recapture or reinvest the type of symbolism with which hieroglyphs were supposed to be endowed, but now in the *stoicheia* of the Greek alphabet. Greek letters themselves might become truly magical in a way reminiscent of hieroglyphic symbols.[140] The early Christian phenomena of the *nomina sacra* (in which sacred names are written symbolically in supralineated abbreviations) and the magical cryptography that Egyptian monks and hermits applied to their cell walls, both clearly demonstrate that Greek *writing* was assuming a sacred power once unique to hieroglyphic writing.[141]

C. Conclusion

The era spanned in this paper, roughly the fifth century B.C.E. through the seventh century C.E., covers the early period, growth, and culmination (in Coptic culture) of Greek and Egyptian cultural mingling. In a broader sense it also represents Hellenistic and late antiquity, with its attendant phenomena of orientalism, quests for ancient wisdom, reverence for the written word, longing for transcendence and control of cosmic powers, and a shift in the locus of those powers from temple to individual or book. It is within this context and due to these cultural trends that the distinctive powers with which Greek and Egyptian writing systems were popularly endowed merged and even crossed: Greek letters became hieroglyphs, complex iconographic symbols, while Egyptian hieroglyphs could be "spoken" in Greek; Egyptian priests claimed Greek vowel sounds as the divine inheritance of Thoth, while Greeks turned the same vowels into the visual insignia of cosmic forces; and Greek and Egyptian traditions of writing became the means of promoting each other.

NOTES

1. I thank John Gager, Chris Faraone, and Martha Himmelfarb for helpful criticisms on previous drafts; Robert Ritner for invaluable criticisms of Egyptological sections; and especially Sarah Iles Johnston for her interest, advice, and good-humored patience in the final stages.

The following abbreviations will be used for frequently cited works:

AKZ = Angelicus M. Kropp, *Ausgewählte koptisches Zaubertexte* (Brussels 1931).
Boylan = Patrick Boylan, *Thoth: The Hermes of Egypt* (1922; rpt. Chicago 1987).
Collected Dialogues = *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton 1961).
Davies = W. V. Davies, *Egyptian Hieroglyphs* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1987).
Détienne = Marcel Détienne, "The Gods of Writing," Townsend Lectures delivered at Cornell University February 17 through April 7, 1987 and at Princeton University, April 23, 1987. A synthesis of the ideas was previously presented as "L'écriture inventive (entre la voix d'Orphée et l'intelligence de Palamède)," *Critique* 475 (1986) 1225-34. Page numbers cited in the present work refer to the published article.
Dornseiff = Franz Dornseiff, *Das Alphabet in Mystik und Magie*. STOIXEIA, 7 (Leipzig 1925).
ERE = *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. James Hastings (New York 1911).
EPRO = *Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'empire romain* (Leiden).
Faraone and Obbink = *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*, ed. Christopher A. Faraone and Dirk Obbink (New York 1991).
Fowden = Garth Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes: A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind* (Cambridge 1986).
GMPT = *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, Including the Demotic Spells*, gen. ed. Hans Dieter Betz, vol. 1 (Chicago 1986).
Iversen = Erik Iversen, *The Myth of Egypt and Its Hieroglyphs* (Copenhagen 1961).
LCL = Loeb Classical Library.
NHC = Nag Hammadi Codices.
NHLE = *The Hag Hammadi Library in English*, 3rd ed., ed. James M. Robinson (San Francisco 1988).
PGM = Karl Preisendanz, *Papyri Graecae Magicae: Die griechischen Zauberpapyri*, 2nd ed. by Albert Henrichs, 2 vols. (Stuttgart 1974); translated and expanded in *GMPT*.
Ritner = Robert K. Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization, 54 (Chicago 1993).

2. *Phlb.* 18 B-C, trans. R. Hackford, *Collected Dialogues*.
3. D.S. 1.16.1, trans. C. H. Oldfather, LCL (London 1933).
4. Cf. Plu. *De Is. et. Os.* 55, in which Thoth turns the sinews of Seth-Typhon into a lyre.
5. See esp. Iversen, chap. 2; Henri Joly, "Platon égyptologue," *Revue philosophique* 2 (1982) 255-66; and K. A. D. Smelik and E. A. Hemelrijk, "'Who Knows Not What Monsters Demented Egypt Worships?' Opinions on Egyptian Animal Worship in Antiquity as Part of the Ancient Conception of Egypt," *ANRW* II, 17.4, pp. 1856-58, 1869-98, 1920-55. In general on Greek "orientalism" see Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism* (Philadelphia 1973) I:211-14; Arnaldo Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom: The Limits of Hellenization* (Cambridge 1975); and Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York 1978).
6. The word "magic" as used in this paper is meant to be akin to the word "power," and not to be distinguished from a putative alternative system of thought that would encompass "religion" and "prayer." While the word *mageia* existed as a category of ritual in the Graeco-Roman world, its meaning shifted relative to circumstances (generally accusations). Moreover, recent studies have shown an absolute continuum between the forms of ritual and speech employed in the spheres of "magic" and "religion": see esp. Alan Segal, "Hellenistic Magic: Some Questions of Definition," in *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions*, ed. R. van den Broek and M. J. Vermaseren, EPRO 91 (Leiden 1981) 349-75 (rpt. in Segal, *The Other Judaisms of Late Antiquity*, Brown Judaic Studies, 127 [Atlanta 1987] 79-108); C. Robert Phillips, "The Sociology of Religious Knowledge in the Roman Empire to A.D. 284," *ANRW* II, 16.3, pp. 2711-32; John Gager, "A New Translation of Ancient Greek and Demotic Papyri, Sometimes Called Magical," *Journal of Religion* 67 (1987) 80-82; and essays by Christopher A. Faraone, Roy Kotansky, and Fritz Graf in Faraone and Obbink. See also H. S. Versnel's suggestive "Some Reflections on the Relationship Magic-Religion," *Numen* 38 (1991) 177-97, which seeks to preserve "magic" as a general category of ritual, not necessarily opposed to "religion."

It is important to note that in Egypt no word akin to *mageia* existed. Even the Egyptian word *heka*, often translated as "magic," denotes the ritual use of supernatural power as part of the cosmos. See Ritner 67-72, ch. 6.
7. On amulets and writing see Barbara Freire-Marreco, "Charms and Amulets (Introductory and Primitive)," *ERE* III:392-55; Joshua Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition: A Study in Folk Religion* (1939; rpt. New York 1984) 104-13, 122-24, 139-52; Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London and New York 1982) 75-77, cf. 32-33; and Jack Goody, *The Interface Between the Written and the Oral* (Cambridge 1987) 129-38.
8. Détienne. On the legend of Palamedes' death by the deceit of Odysseus see Apollod. *Epit.* 3.8 and Paus. 10.31.2. On Plato's condemnation of writing as leading to the decline of memory and true wisdom, *Phd.* 275A-B.
9. Rosalind Thomas, *Oral Tradition and Written Record in Classical Athens* (Cambridge 1989), esp. 34-94. See also on the Greeks' ambivalence towards the practical use of writing William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, MA 1989) 72-73, 88-92.
10. Cf. Eric A. Havelock, *Preface to Plato* (Cambridge, MA 1963), esp. chs. 3 and 7; and Jack Goody and Ian Watt, "The Consequences of Literacy," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 5 (1963) 326-29. It is striking to find in a Jewish tradition from about the first century C.E. similar sentiments expressed towards writing: the fallen angel Penemue "taught men the art of writing with ink and paper, and through this many have gone astray from eternity to eternity, and to this day. For men were not created for this, that they should confirm their faith like this with pen and ink": *1[Similitudes of] Enoch 69.9-10*, trans. M.A. Knibb, "1 Enoch," *The Apocryphal Old Testament*, ed. H. F. D. Sparks (Oxford 1984) 252.
11. Détienne 1232-34; and in general Dornseiff 11-14. Dornseiff's invaluable study is summarized in Jon-Christian Billigmeier, "Alphabets," *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York 1987) I:216-22.
12. Dornseiff 14-17.
13. *Cra.* 439B, trans. Benjamin Jowett, *Collected Dialogues*.
14. Détienne 1232-34.
15. Eur. *Alc.* 967-69. Cf. W. K. C. Guthrie, *The Greeks and Their Gods;* rev. ed. (Boston 1954) 310-11.
16. On the gold funerary tablets, see, among recent discussions, Fritz Graf, "Dionysian and Orphic Eschatalogy: New Texts and Old Questions," in *Masks of Dionysius*, ed. T. Carpenter and C. Faraone (Ithaca 1993) 239-58; Charles Segal, "Dionysus and the Gold Tablets from Pelinna," *GRBS* 31 (1990) 411-19; Susan Guettel Cole, "New Evidence for the Mysteries of Dionysus," *GRBS* 21 (1980) 223-38; and W. Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Cambridge, MA 1985) 293.
17. Burkert, ibid. 297.
18. The basic source for the nature of hieroglyphs is Alan Gardiner's *Egyptian Grammar*, 3rd ed. (London 1957), esp. 6-10; cf. §§ 56, 73 on the importance of ideograms and graphic organization.
19. Pierre Lacau, "Suppression et modifications de signes dans les textes funéraires," *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache* 51 (1913) 1-64.
20. See the illuminating discussion of mortuary prayers and iconography inscribed in Egyptian tombs in A. J. Spencer, *Death in Ancient Egypt* (Harmondsworth 1982) 63-73.
21. Davies 35.
22. See in general Serge Sauneron, *The Priests of Ancient Egypt*, trans. Ann Morrissett (New York 1960) 118-25; John Baines, "Literacy and Ancient Egyptian Society," *Man* 18 (1983) 572-99; Davies 14-19; Erik Hornung, *Idea into Image: Essays on Ancient Egyptian Thought*, trans. Elizabeth Bredeck (New York 1992) 31-36; as well as comparative observations by Goody and Watt (above, note 10) 313-19 and Goody, *The Logic of Writing and the Organization of Society* (Cambridge 1986) 26-44.

23. See Goody and Watt (above, note 22) 13-22, developed further in Goody (above, note 22) 26-35; and Baines (above, note 22) 572-99.

24. I use "vocalized" rather than simply "oral" because the language of Egyptian texts was sacred, and, as noted, discontinuous from popular language. Egyptian ritual speech was not meant for communication so much as verbal efficacy, much in the sense of "speech acts" as delineated by J. L. Austin, J. R. Searle, and S. J. Tambiah: see Austin, *How to Do Things With Words*, 2nd ed., ed. J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisá (Cambridge 1975); Tambiah, "The Magical Power of Words," *Man* 3 (1968) 175-208, and "Form and Meaning of Magical Acts," in *Modes of Thought*, ed. R. Horton and R. Finnegan (London 1973) 199-229; Emily M. Ahern, "The Problem of Efficacy: Strong and Weak Illocutionary Acts," *Man* 14 (1979) 1-17.

25. Cf. Baines (above, note 22) 579, 585, 588.

26. Trans. Ritner 36.

27. See Ritner 35-45. Compare the tale of the Egyptian monk Achilles, who, when found spitting blood out of his mouth, explained, "The word of a brother grieved me, I struggled not to tell him so and I prayed God to rid me of this word. So it became like blood in my mouth and I have spat it out. Now I am in peace, having forgotten the matter": *Apothegmata patrum*: Achilles 4, trans. Benedicta Ward, *The Desert Christian* (New York 1975) 29.

28. See Boylan 92-97; Ritner 35-49.

29. *P.Berlin* 3008.5.12, trans. Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature* (Berkeley 1973-80) III:120.

30. *P.Vat.* 19a 2.6-7, trans. P. E. Suys, "Le Papyrus magique du Vatican," *Orientalia* 3 (1934) 72.

31. *P.Ebers* [1]1, 1-11/*P.Hearst* [78] 6 5-11, trans. J. F. Borghouts, *Ancient Egyptian Magical Texts*, Nisaba, 9 (Leiden 1978) 45 (no. 71).

32. Cf. Boylan 88-91, and C. J. Bleeker, *Hathor and Thoth*, *Numen* Suppl., 26 (Leiden 1973) 140-42.

33. Boylan 95.

34. Ibid. 94, 99-101, 129. On the continuity of these views in the Graeco-Roman period, see Fowden 22-31, 57-65.

35. *P. Cairo* 30646/30692, trans. Lichtheim (above, note 29) III:127.

36. *On the Letter Omega* 8, trans. Howard M. Jackson, SBL Texts and Translations, 14 (Missoula, MT 1978) 27. On Zosimus' Hermeticism see Fowden 120-26.

37. Détienne interpreted the god Thoth in one of the Townsend Lectures entitled "The Greek Masks of Thoth, the Egyptian" (Cornell University, March 3, 1987) and again in "The Gods of Writing" (Princeton University, April 23, 1987).

38. Cf. Ritner 44-47.

39. J. C. B. Petropoulos, "The Erotic Magical Papyri," *Proceedings of the XVIIIth International Congress of Papyrology*, gen. ed. Basil G. Mandilaras (Athens 1988) II:215-22.

40. Christopher A. Faraone, "The Agonistic Context of Early Greek Binding Spells," in Faraone and Obbink 3-22.

41. Cf. Christopher A. Faraone, "Aeschylus' *hymnos desmios* (*Eum.* 306) and Attic Judicial Curse Tablets," *JHS* 105 (1985) 153 and n. 21.

42. Roy Kotansky, "Incantations and Prayers for Salvation on Inscribed Greek Amulets," in Faraone and Obbink 108-10. This use of amulets continues in more elaborate form in Ethiopia, where fragments of "magic scrolls" specially prepared for a healing ritual are presented to the patient for ongoing protection: Jacques Mercier, *Ethiopian Magic Scrolls*, trans. Richard Pevear (New York 1979) 15, 21-23. However, we must distinguish the "silent" function of amuletic texts from the "prayer book" style amulets, which are meant to function as mnemonics for occasional recitation: see now Micahel D. Swartz, "Scribal Magic and Its Rhetoric: Formal Patterns in Medieval Hebrew and Aramaic Incantation Texts from the Cairo Genizah," *HThR* 83 (1990) 166.

This concept of the inscribed magical spell as *continuing* an initial act resembles the *historiola*, a brief reference to a mythical event whose invocation is meant to realize the same event (or powers analogous to those involved in this event) again in the life of the wearer or ritualist (see David Frankfurter, "Narrating Power: The Theory and Practice of the Magical *Historiola* in Ritual Spells," in *Ritual Power in the Ancient World*, ed. Marvin Meyer and Paul Mirecki, Studies in Antiquity and Christianity [Minneapolis, forthcoming]). Yet the "primary performance" of the *historiola*'s magic occurs "in illo tempore"—in mythical time—as opposed to an occasion in the life of the wearer (see Mircea Eliade's excellent discussion, "Magic and the Prestige of 'Origins,'" in idem, *Myth and Reality*, trans. Willard R. Trask [New York 1963] 21-38). It is perhaps for this reason that *historiolae*—the precise textual references to the "primary performance" in myth—tend to become severely abbreviated, as with the mere citation of biblical verse in Jewish amulets to invoke the "primary performances" of the god YHWH; see Gaster (above, note 7) 453A and Trachtenberg (above, note 7) 104-13.

43. Cf. Henri Hubert, "Magia," *Dictionnaire des antiquités grecques et romaines* (Paris 1904) III:1499.

44. Détienne 1230-33, which was developed in "The Voice and the Book of Orpheus" (Cornell University, March 10, 1987).

45. Cf. Kotansky (above, note 42) 112-19.

46. Cf. Harris (above, note 9) 29.

47. See esp. Chester C. McCown, "The Ephesia Grammata in Popular Belief," *TAPA* 4 (1923) 128-40, and L. H. Jeffrey, "Further Comments on Archaic Greek Inscriptions," *Annual of the British School of Athens* 50 (1955) 75-76; Kotansky (above, note 42) 110-12.

48. Anaxil. fr. 18 Kock (in Jeffrey [above, note 47] 76).

49. E.g., the story of the Milesian and Ephesian letters preserved in *Suid.* s.v. *ephesia grammata* (ed. Adler I:483 no. 3864).

50. Diogenian. 4.77, trans. McCown (above, note 47) 131ff.

51. Compare the use of commemorative stelae and inscriptions in Greece not as texts so much as symbols of the events they commemorated, as discussed in Thomas, (above, note 9) 49-60. Thomas points out, however, that the value of these stelae lay far more in the fact that they were inscribed than in the concrete letters thereon (51, 59).

52. Baines (above, note 22) 588-89. See also E. A. W. Budge, *Egyptian Magic*, Books on Egypt and Chaldea, 2 (1901; rpt. New York 1971) 124-28; George Foucart, "Names (Egyptian)," *ERE* IX:151-55; Warren R. Dawson, "Notes on Egyptian Magic," *Aegyptus* 11 (1931) 28; Serge Sauneron, "Le monde du magicien égyptien," *Le monde du sorcier*, Sources orientales, 7 (Paris 1966) 32-34, 48-49, cf. 42-43 on amulets corresponding to rituals.

53. See esp. Budge (above, note 52), ch. 2; Davies 20; the useful discussion by John H. Taylor, "129. Set of Amulets," in *Mummies and Magic: The Funerary Arts of Ancient Egypt*, ed. Sue D'Auria et al. (Boston 1988) 180-83; and David P. Silverman, *Language and Writing in Ancient Egypt* (Pittsburgh 1990) 37-44.

54. *P.B.M.* 10083^{r}, lines 23-44, trans. I. E. S. Edwards, *Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum*, Fourth Series: *Oracular Amuletic Decrees of the Late Kingdom* (London 1960) I:3-6.

55. See Edwards, ibid. I:xviii-xxiii. The practice and formulae continued in the Graeco-Roman period in the form of self-dedications to local gods, who would protect the dedicators from named dangers: see Herbert Thompson, "Self-Dedications," *Actes du Ve congrès international de papyrologie* (1938) 494-504. Two Coptic examples show the continuity of the form in the Byzantine period: Leiden 441 (= Anastasy 9), a general apotropaic spell (see *AKZ* II:161-75, Spell XLV), and British Library Ms. Orient. 5525, a childbirth spell (*AKZ* I:15-21; II:199-207). An analogous function is achieved through inscribing the names of parts of the body and their respective guardians, implying a "sympathetic" connection between guardian, name of part, and the part itself; see Dawson (above, note 51) 26-27, and A. Massart, "A propos des 'listes' dans les texts égyptiens funéraires et magiques," *Analecta Biblica* 12 (1959) 227-46.

56. See P. Lacau, "Les statues 'guérisseuses' dans l'ancienne Égypt," *Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres, Commission de la fondation Piot, Monuments et Mémoires* 25 (1921/22) 189-209; Keith C. Seele, "Horus on the Crocodiles," *JNES* 6 (1947) 43-52; Adolf Klasens, *A Magical Statue Base (Socle Behague) in the Museum of Antiquities at Leiden* (Leiden 1952); E. Jelínková-Reymond, *Les inscriptions de la statue guérisseuse de Djed-Her-le-Sauveur* (Cairo 1956); Jean-Claude Goyon, "L'eau dans la médecine pharaonique et copte," *L'homme et l'eau en Méditerranée et au proche orient* I, Travaux de la Maison de l'Orient, 2 (Lyon 1981) 147-50; Claude Traunecker, "Une Chapelle de magie guérisseuse sur le parvis du temple de Mout à Karnak," *JARCE* 20 (1985) 65-92; and Robert K. Ritner, "Horus on the Crocodiles: A Juncture of Religion and Magic in Late Dynastic Egypt," *Religion and Philosophy in Ancient Egypt*, ed. W. K. Simpson, Yale Egyptological Studies, 3 (New Haven 1989) 109-11. Bernard V. Bothmer dis-

cusses an analogous phenomenon in magically-inscribed heads: "Egyptian Antiquities," *Antiquities from the Collection of Christos G. Bastis* (Mainz am Rhein 1988) 67-69 (cat. no. 24).

57. See translations and discussions by Budge (above, note 52) 130-36, cf. 147-53; A. Moret, "Horus sauveur," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 72 (1915) 213-87; Klasens (above, note 56); Jelínková-Reymond (above, note 56) 1-84; Borghouts (above, note 31) 59-76 (nos. 87, 90-95, 101, 104).

58. See his *Golden Bough*, 3rd ed. (New York 1935) I.1:174-214. Compare the juridical "poison ordeal" in Numbers 5:21-28, in which an adulterous woman must drink water passed over a written curse, and, further, Trachtenberg (above, note 7) 122-24. Dierk Wortmann notes that *PGM* C (= *P.Colon.* 2861) was damaged by water, suggesting that its contents—an accumulation of magical symbols, words, and vowels—had been ritually "washed off" into a potion: "Neue magische Texte," *BJ* 168 (1968) 102-03. *PGM* IV advises one to "lick off the leaf . . . [on which has been written] I EE OO IAI. Lick this up, so that you may be protected; . . ." (lines 785, 788-89). For a contemporary parallel, see Abdullahi Osman El-Tom, "Drinking the Koran: The Meaning of Koranic Verses in Berti Erasure," *Africa* 55 (1985) 414-31.

59. Setne I, 4.4, trans. Lichtheim (above, note 29) III:131.

60. See A. H. Gardiner and K. Sethe, *Egyptian Letters to the Dead* (London 1928); Edward Wente, *Letters from Ancient Egypt* (Atlanta 1990), ch. 12; and Ritner 170-74. John Baines has suggested an associated oral rite in the preparation of these letters, "Practical Religion and Piety," *JEA* 73 (1987) 86-88.

61. See *PGM* and *GMPT* in general.

62. Cf. A. D. Nock, "Greek Magical Papyri," *JEA* 15 (1929) 227-30; Campbell Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets, Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian* (Ann Arbor 1950) 7-8, 22-26.

63. In general see the collection of Karl Wessely, *Ephesia Grammata* (Vienna 1886). For various discussions of the origin of *voces magicae*, see Nock (above, note 62) 229; McCown (above, note 47); Hans Alexander Winkler, "Die Aleph-Beth-Regel: Eine Beobachtung an sinnlosen Wörten in Kinderversen, Zaubersprüchen und Verwandtem," *Orientalistische Studien Enno Littmann*, ed. R. Paret (Leiden 1935) 1-24; Bonner (above, note 62) 11-12; Jefferey (above, note 47) 75-76; Gershom G. Scholem, "On the Magical Formulae AKRAMACHAREI and SESENGEN BARPHARANGES," in *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition* (New York 1965) 94-100; Howard M. Jackson, "The Origin in Ancient Incantatory *Voces Magicae* of Some Names in the Sethian Gnostic System," *Vigiliae Christianae* 43 (1989) 69-79; Fritz Graf, "Prayer in Magical and Religious Ritual," in Faraone and Obbink 190-95; Heinz-J. Thissen, "Ägyptologische Beiträge zu den griechischen magischen Papyri," in *Religion und Philosophie im alten Ägypten*, ed. Ursula Verhoeven and Erhart Graefe, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta, 39 (Louvain 1991) 297-302.

64. *PGM* II.10-15, trans. John Dillon, *GMPT* 12. Note in this case that the vowels have come into association with the divine name ΙΑΩ, which was connected with the "unpronounceable" Jewish divine name *YAHWEH*.

65. Cf. Dornseiff 58-60, 63-67; W. Deonna, "ABRA, ABRACA: La croix-talisman de Lausanne," *Genava* 22 (1944) 120-34; C. Lenz, "Carmina Figurata," *RAC* 2 (1954) 910-12; David G. Martinez, *P.Michigan XVI: A Greek Love Charm from Egypt (P. Mich. 757)*, American Studies in Papyrology, 30 (Atlanta 1991) 105-11. Compare other *voces magicae* in *carmina figurata* in *PGM* XVIIa, XXXIII, XLIII, CXX. Sarah Iles Johnston (personal communication) has suggested a relationship between *carmina figurata* and *technopaegnia*, the craft of shaping poems in accordance with their subjects that arose in the Hellenistic period. In his article "Technopaegnia: Hellenistic Pattern Poetry," *Temblor* 10 (1984) 200-04, Stanley Lombardo attributes the craft to the increasingly writing-oriented culture of Hellenism, combined with Stoic speculation on the nature of the sign (204).

66. *PGM* I.13-19; LXII.95-96; *P.Michigan* 136, 11.126-32, in W. H. Worrell, "Coptic Magical and Medical Texts," *Orientalia* 4 (1935) 23.

67. *PGM* XCVIII; cf. *PGM* V.83-90 and XIXa. Palindromes were often contructed in "wings": thus a "vowel palindrome" ΑΕΗΙΟΘΩΩΘΟΙΗΕΑ in *PGM* CXXX.

68. *PGM* XIII.905-11.

69. *PGM* XXXVI.204-10, XLII, XLIV. On *plinthia* see also W. C. Grese, *GMPT* 63 n. 176 (*ad PGM* IV.1305).

70. *PGM* X.43-50.

71. *P.Oxy.* 924 (vowel symbols in Christian amulet); London Ms. Or. 5525.116-19, in *AKZ* I:20 and III:29 (vowel symbols with corresponding archangels); *PGM* X.42-49, in *GMPT* 150 (vowel symbols with corresponding archangels); Miletus theatre inscription (*CIG* II 2895), in H. LeClerq, "Alphabet vocalique des Gnostiques," *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie* 1 (1907) 1268-70, and Dornseiff 41 (changing vowel sets addressed as archangels and invoked for civic protection).

72. *PGM* VII.706-07, trans. W. C. Grese, *GMPT* 138.

73. London Ms. Pr. 6794.40-42 (*AKZ* I:31). A *zêta* is employed to signify sevenfold repetition; cf. R. W. Daniel, "Some *Phylaktêria*," *ZPE* 25 (1977) 151. For another example of visual markers for the incantation of vowels see Christopher Faraone and Roy Kotansky, "An Inscribed Gold Phylactery in Stamford, Connecticut," *ZPE* 75 (1988) 261-62.

74. Amm. 2.28, trans. Walter Hamilton, *The Later Roman Empire* (Harmondsworth 1986).

75. Dornseiff 11-16.

76. On the use of Greek vowels in mysticism and liturgy see especially Charles-Émile Ruelle, "Le chant des sept voyelles grecques," *REG* 2 (1889) 38-44, 393-95; H. LeClerq (above, note 71) 1268-88; Dornseiff 35-60, 81-82; Kropp, *AKZ* III:27-31, 135-36; Billigmeier (above, note 11) 217 and 219; and Joscelyn Godwin, *The Mystery of the Seven Vowels* (Grand Rapids, MI 1991). On musical theurgy see now Sarah Iles Johnston, *Hekate Soteira: A Study of Hekate's Roles in the Chaldean Oracles and Related Literature*, American Classical Studies, 21 (Atlanta 1990) 90-110.

77. Clem. Al. *Strom.* 6.16.141; compare Eus. *PE* 11.6.36; and in general J. Vergote, "Clément d'Alexandrie et l'écriture égyptienne," *Le Muséon* 52 (1939) 205-07. On *alpha/omega* symbolism see Dornseiff 122-25. The Gnostic Christian *Gospel of the Egyptians* (NHC IV.52.19ff.), itself a baptismal liturgy, calls the vowels the "seven powers of the great light."

78. *Ap.* Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adv. haer.* 1.14.7, trans. Werner Foerster, *Gnosis: A Selection of Gnostic Texts*, trans. ed. R. McL. Wilson (Oxford 1972) I:207. On Marcus' conception of the vowels see Dornseiff 126-33.

79. E.g., *1 Enoch* 71:11-12; *Ascension of Isaiah* 7-10; *Apocalypse of Abraham* 16-18. On the Jewish tradition of heavenly liturgy see Martha Himmelfarb, "Heavenly Ascent and the Relationship of the Apocalypses and the *Hekhalot* Literature," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 59 (1988) 91-93; Carol A. Newsom, "He Has Established for Himself Priests: Human and Angelic Priesthood in the Qumran Sabbath Shirot," in *Archaeology and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Lawrence H. Schiffmann, Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha suppl., 8 (Sheffield 1990) 101-20.

80. Pl. *R.* 617B, trans. Paul Shorey, *Collected Dialogues*.

81. *Ap.* Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adv. haer.* 1.14.8, translation based on that of Foerster (above, note 78) I:208.

82. Compare the *Testament of Solomon* 4.8, where "a voice of the echo of a black heaven" produced a demon, Onoskelis. It is not surprising that, as angels became associated with "pure" sounds, demons assimilated "impure" or dissonant sounds, especially in this case from the stages of creation.

83. Patricia Cox Miller, "In Praise of Nonsense," in *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality: Egyptian, Greek, Roman*, ed. A. H. Armstrong (New York 1986) 481-505. Naomi Janowitz has made similar observations about *voces magicae* in Jewish *Hekhalot* mystical texts: "Parallelism and Framing in a Late Antique Ascent Text," *Semiotic Mediation* (San Diego 1985) 165-66.

84. *Gospel of the Egyptians* (*NHC* III, 66.8-22/IV, 78.10-79.11), synoptically translated by Bentley Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures* (Garden City, NY 1987) 118; cf. Alexander Bhlig, Frederik Wisse, and Pahor Labib, *Nag Hammadi Codices III, 2 and IV, 2: The Gospel of the Egyptians*, Nag Hammadi Studies, 4 (Grand Rapids, MI 1975) 198-202, on glossolalic and christological aspects of this discourse.

85. One is reminded of the late antique cultural "tendency" essential to Gnosticism, to transcend this world through inverting its categories; see esp. Jonathan Z. Smith, "Birth Upside Down or Right Side Up?," in *Map is not Territory*, Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity, 23 (Leiden 1978), 147-71.

86. *PGM* I.26; IV.1005-06; XIII.207-08, 626, 631, 856-57; cf. V.81-90; and see Faraone and Kotansky (above, note 73) 265.

87. *PGM* II.1-2 (cf. 11.4-5), trans. John Dillon, *GMPT*. Cf. IV.1004-05: "Speak your holy name in symbolic fashion [*symbolikôi schêmati*]."

88. *CIG* II 2895, on which see H. LeClerq (above, note 76) 1268-70; Dornseiff 41; and R. Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (New York 1987) 219, 257. On angel-vowel correspondences see above, note 72.

89. Spencer (above, note 20) 62-70; cf. Baines (above, note 22) 576. The principal is the same as that observed in Lacau's "Suppression et modifications de signes dans les textes funéraires" (above, note 19).

90. See Foucart (above, note 51) 152; Georges Posener, "Le mot égyptien pour désigner le 'nom magique'," *Revue d'égyptologie* 16 (1964) 214.

91. See Jan Quaegebeur, "De la préhistoire de l'écriture copte," *Orientalia lovaniensia periodica* 13 (1982) 125-36, who disputes Albert Gessman's dating of the Coptic script to 350-300 B.C.E.:"The Birthdate of the Coptic Script," *University of South Florida Language Quarterly* 14 (1976) 1-4.

92. The earliest example of Old Coptic, for example, is the Schmidt Papyrus, dated paleographically to ca. 100 C.E. and containing the complaint of a woman to Osiris at his shrine at Hasro (?). See Helmut Satzinger, "The Old Coptic Schmidt Papyrus," *JARCE* 12 (1975) 37-50.

93. *P.London/Leiden* XIV.15-16 (= *PDM* xiv.409-10), trans. Janet H. Johnson, *GMPT* 219 (italicized words in Demotic). See the manuscript facsimile in F. Ll. Griffith and Herbert Thompson, *The Demotic Magical Papyrus of London and Leiden* (1905; rpt. ed. Milan 1976) II, col. XIV.

94. E.g., *P.London/Leiden* XVII.27 (= *PDM* xiv.516); compare XVII.1 (= *PDM* xiv.589), XXVII.8 (= *PDM* xiv.812), with vowels in Old Coptic superscript.

95. H. Idris Bell, *Cults and Creeds in Graeco-Roman Egypt* (1953; rpt. ed. Chicago 1975) 72; Walter C. Till, "Coptic and Its Value," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 40 (1957) 229-30; Iversen 31; A. F. Shore, "Christian and Coptic Egypt," *The Legacy of Egypt*, 2nd ed., ed. J. R. Harris (Oxford 1971) 420; Janet H. Johnson, "Introduction to the Demotic Magical Papyri," *GMPT* lv-lvi.

96. See Quaegebeur (above, note 91) 129-30, and esp. Helmut Satzinger, "Die altkoptischen Texte also Zeugnisse der Beziehungen zwischen Ägyptern und Griechen," *Graeco-Coptica: Griechen und Kopten im byzantinischen Ägypten*, ed. Peter Nagel (Halle-Wittenberg 1984) 137-46.

97. Origen, *Exhortation ad martyrum* 46, trans. Henry Chadwick, *Alexandrian Christianity*, Library of Christian Classics, 2 (London 1954) 426.

98. *P.London/Leiden* IV.7 = *PDM* xiv.99, trans. Janet Johnson, *GMPT* 201.

99. *PGM* IV.885, trans. W. C. Grese, *GMPT* 55.

100. See Fowden, esp. 186-95.

101. Cf. Fowden 53-68, 79-91. The appellation *trismegistos* derives from special hieroglyphic references to Thoth, which honorifically added two or three "greatness" symbols to his name. This iconographic device was then translated into Greek as if part of his name. See François Daumas, "Le fonds égyptien de l'hermétisme," in *Gnosticisme et monde hellénistique*, ed. Julien Ries (Louvain-la-Neuve 1982) 3-25, esp. 7-10.

102. NHC VI, 61.9-15, 19-21, 28-30, trans. James Brashler et al., *NHLE* 326. The word for "hieroglyph" here is *s-hai ncahpransh* ("writing of a scribe of the house of life").

103. On such "literary fictions" in Egyptian and Graeco-Egyptian literature, see A.-J. Festugière, *La révélation d'Hermès Trismègiste*, 2nd ed. (Paris 1950) II:309-54; Fowden 22-31, 57-62.

104. *Corpus Hermeticum* 16.1-2, ed. A. D. Nock and A.-J. Festugière, *Corpus Hermeticum* (Paris 1960) II:232, trans. modified from Walter Scott, *Hermetica* (1924; rpt. ed. Boston 1985) I:262-65. Compare Davies 35-36 on the multivalent power of Egyptian writing compared to alphabetic.

105. Cf. also Iamb. *Myst.* 7.4-5 (§§256, 258); *P.Oxy.* XI.1381, 11.32-51. It was evidently Egyptian priests like Chaeremon who were disseminating the rudiments of hieroglyphs as "mysteries": Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 5.4.20-21) evidently picked up his knowledge of Egyptian writing from such a source; see Vergote (above, note 77) 220-21, and Pieter Villem van der Horst, *Chaeremon: Egyptian Priest and Stoic Philosopher*, EPRO, 101 (Leiden 1984), fr. 20D; cf. 69 n. 1 and fr. 12, 62 n. 1.

106. Demetr. *Eloc.* 71, trans. G. M. A. Grube, *A Greek Critic: Demetrius on Style, Phoenix* Suppl., 4 (Toronto 1961) 79.

107. See L. Kákosy, "Problems of the Thoth-cult in Roman Egypt," *Acta Archaeologica Hungaricae* 15 (1963) 123-28; Dierk Wortmann, "Kosmogonie und Nilflut," *BJ* 166 (1966) 99-100; Gérard Santolini, "Thoth le babouin et le palmier doum," in *Mélanges Adolphe Gutbub* (Montpellier 1984) 211-18. It was in his role as scribe that Thoth was most often represented as a baboon (see Boylan 99-100, 170); thus, according to Aelian, "the Egyptians taught Baboons letters" (*NA* VI.10); and according to Horapollon (fifth century C.E.) "There is in Egypt a race of baboons trained in letters" (*Hieroglyphica* 14, ed. Sbordone [1918] 40-41).

108. *PGM* XIII.81-82 (cf. lines 454-71, and see Morton Smith in *GMPT* 174, 184); *PGM* V.27-28; *PGM* IV.1003-07, trans. W. C. Grese, *GMPT* 58. In general on the "kynokephalic" theory of vowel hymns see Theodor Hopfner, *Griechisch-ägyptische Offenbarungszauber*, Studien zur Palaeographie und Papyruskunde, 21 (1921; rpt. Amsterdam 1973) I:§§778-80 (cit. Faraone and Kotansky [above, note 73] 265).

109. See the general description in A. Delatte and Philippe Derchain, *Les intailles magiques gréco-égyptiennes* (Paris 1964) 360-61.

110. *PGM* XXXVI.280-81, trans. Hubert Martin, Jr., *GMPT* 276.

111. *PGM* I.264-76, trans. E. N. O'Neil, *GMPT* 10.

112. Cf. Herbert C. Youtie, "ΑΓΡΑΜΜΑΤΟΣ: An Aspect of Greek Society in Egypt," *HSCP* 75 (1971) 161-76; idem, "ΒΡΑΔΕΩΣ ΓΡΑΦΩΝ: Between Literacy and Illiteracy," *Scriptiunculae* (Amsterdam 1973) II:629-51.

113. See, for example, the "letters" inscribed on some magical gems, see Morton Smith, "Relations Between Magical Papyri and Magical Gems," *Acts of the XVth International Congress of Papyrology*, Papyrologica Bruxellensia, 18, Part III (Brussels 1979) 135.

114. Michael A. Morgan suggests that the bulbed lines themselves "may derive from the punch writing on Greek allotment plates which were worn in a similar fashion to amulets": *Sepher Ha-Razim: The Book of the Mysteries*, SBL Texts and Translations, 25 (Chico, CA 1983) 46 n. 14. Camille Julian attributes the characters in one cache of magical texts to the instruments used by sorcerers: "Au champ magique de Glozel," *REA* 29 (1927) 162-66.

115. That the use of characters tended *not* to be cryptographic is demonstrated by the important Jewish apocalypse-grimoire *Sepher Ha-Razim*, whose manuscripts differ considerably on the characters meant to denote the same set of angels' names; see Morgan, ibid. 52 n. 35.

116. The standard work on this subject is Geo Widengren's *The Ascension of the Apostle and the Heavenly Book*, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1950:7 (Uppsala 1950), but see also the exhaustive review of Jewish and Christian traditions by Jean Daniélou, *Theology of Jewish Christianity*, trans. John A. Baker (London 1964) 194-204, as well as Miller (above, note 83) 486-92, on the magical idealization of writing in Graeco-Roman antiquity. Particularly vivid examples of the heavenly book tradition appear in 2 *Enoch* 22:10-23:6; 33:5-10; 40:2-5; *Ascension of Isaiah* 9:22.

117. Hermas, *Vis.* 2.1.3-2.2.1, ed. and trans. Kirsopp Lake, *The Apostolic Fathers*, LCL (Cambridge, MA 1913) II:18-19.

118. NHC I, *3* (= XII, *2*), 22.39-23.28, trans. Harold W. Attridge and George W. MacRae, *NHLE* 43.

119. Laurent Motte, "L'hiéroglyphe, d'Esna à l'Évangile de Vérité," *Deuxième journée d'études coptes*, Chaiers de la bibliothèque copte, 3 (Louvain 1986) 111-16.

120. Iversen 45.

121. *PGM* IV.885-87, trans. W. C. Grese, *GMPT* 55. Compare the common instruction in magical texts to write "in hieratic" (*Sepher Ha-Razim* 95-98 [Morgan 29-30]) or even on "hieratic papyrus" (ibid.; *PGM* I.232; V.304).

122. Ap. *Met.* 11.22, trans. J. Gwyn Griffiths, *Apuleius of Madauros: The Isis-Book* (*Metamorphoses*, Book XI), EPRO, 39 (Leiden 1975) 96-97 (emphasis mine). Griffiths' summary of attempts to relate the circular and intertwined letters to late forms of hieratic Egyptian (285) exhibits the tenuousness of this identification.

123. E.g., *British Museum* 10122, in W. E. Crum, "Magical Texts in Coptic—II," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 20 (1934) 197-99 and pl. XXVI, 2-3.

124. Cf. Richard Wünsch, *Antikes Zaubergerät aus Pergamon*, Jahrbuch des kaiserlich deutschen archäologischen Instituts, 6 (Berlin 1905) 32-35; Bonner (above, note 62) 22-26 (cf. 12 on magical characters); Irene Grumach, "On the History of a Coptic Figura Magica," *Proceedings of the Twelfth International Congress of Papyrology*, ed. Deborah H. Samuel, American Studies in Papyrology, 7 (Toronto 1970) 169-81; and Wortmann (above, note 107) 62-112, on the simplified and often stylized use of Egyptian iconography in magical amulets. See also A. Delatte's discussions of the Egyptian roots of various amulets imagery, "Études sur la magie grecque," *Le Musée belge* 18 (1914) 23-60. William M. Brashear has published a series of minute papyri with crude drawings, apparently meant to function as amulets (instead of three-dimensional amulets like scarabs?): see his *Magica varia*, Papyrologica Bruxellensia, 25 (Brussels 1991) 74-79 and pls. 6-7.

125. E.g., British Museum mummies nos. 29583, 29588, and 54057 (Rm. 60). In general see G. Elliot Smith and Warren R. Dawson, *Egyptian Mummies* (1924; rpt. London and New York 1991) 140-41, and P. D. Scott-Moncrieff, "Death and Disposal of the Dead (Coptic)," *ERE* IV:454-55.

126. See Carl Schmidt and Violet MacDermot, *The Books of Jeu and the Untitled Text in the Bruce Codex*, Nag Hammadi Studies, 13 (Leiden 1978); and remarks by P. D. Scott-Moncrieff, *Paganism and Christianity in Egypt* (Cambridge 1913) 192-93; Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis*, trans. P. W. Coxon (San Francisco 1977) 171-75; Himmelfarb (above, note 79) 80-84. On the construction of characters in *1* and *2 Jeu* see Paul Corby Finney, "Did Gnostics Make Pictures?," in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, ed. Bentley Layton, *Numen* Suppl., 41 (Leiden 1980) I:436-37.

127. Cf. Budge (above, note 52) 104-24; Baines (above, note 22) 576, 587, 593 n. 5; Herman Te Velde, "Egyptian Hieroglyphs as Signs, Symbols and Gods," *Visible Religion* 4/5 (1985/6) 63-72.

128. Cf. Plu. *De Is. et. Os.* 31, 50; Philippe Derchain, "A propos dune stèle magique du musée Kestner, à Hanovre," *Revue d'égyptologie* 16 (1964) 19-23, pl. 2; idem, *Le Papyrus Salt 825: Rituel pour la conservation de la vie en Égypte*, Mémoires de l'Académie royale du Belgique, 58, 1 (Brussels 1965), figs. X-XIII; Maarten J. Raven, "Wax in Egyptian Magic and Symbolism," *Oudheidkundige mededelingen uit het rijksmuseum van oudheden te Leiden* 64 (1983) 7-47. Compare, on Greek traditions of sympathetic figures, C. A. Faraone, "Binding and Burying the Forces of Evil: The Defensive Use of Voodoo Dolls in Ancient Greece," *CA* 10 (1991) 165-205.

129. E.g., Delatte and Derchain (above, note 109) nos. 178-79, 183-86, 202, 376-77. The authors indicate specific hieroglyphs in nos. 178, 183, and 201.

130. Leningrad, Hermitage inv. 6624, in O. Ya. Névérov, "Gemmes, bagues et amulettes magiques du sud de l'URSS," *Hommages à Maarten J. Vermaseren*, ed. M. B. de Boer and T. A. Edridge, EPRO, 68, 3 vols. (Leiden 1978) 840-41 and pl. CLXXI (= no. 21).

131. E.g., *PGM* III.294, 298; IV.2705-08; VII.215-17, 930-39; X.30-35; XLIX; LX.1-5; LXIV.1-12; CVI.1-10; cf. III.154-59. Cf. Roy Kotansky, "A Silver Phylactery for Pain," *The J. Paul Getty Museum Journal* 11 (1983) 175-76. Characters supplementing magical figures: *PGM* XXXVI.35-68, 178-87.

132. Cf. the "script imitative of Punic-Phoenician" on a magical gem published by Roy Kotansky, "A Magic Gem Inscribed in Greek and Artificial Phoenician," *ZPE* 85 (1991) 237-38 and pl. Ib-c.

133. B. Lifshitz, "Une tablette d'imprécation," *Revue biblique* 77 (1970) 81-83 and pl. 9; and John Gager, ed., *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells* (New York 1992) 203 (no. 106); Wilfred Van Rengen, "Deux défixions contra les bleus à Apamée," *Apamée de Syrie*, ed. Janine Balty, Fouilles d'Apamée de Syrie, Miscellanea, 13 (Brussels 1984) 213-34; Joseph Naveh and Saul Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem 1985) 216-17, pl. 32.

134. *PGM* XXXVI.264, trans. Morton Smith, *GMPT* 275. On the Miletus inscription see above, note 89. Compare *PGM* III.536: "I have spoken your signs and symbols (*ta sêmeia kai ta parasêma*)." Other spells or amulets using characters for names include *PGM* VII.399-404, 415; XII.398.

135. Cf. Wünsch, "Unedierte Fluchtafelne," *ARW* 12 (1909) 36-45; Delatte (above, note 124) 70-74; Van Rengen (above, note 133) 216-19 (the most notable attempt to show a system behind the use of characters). A correlation to the zodiac is clear in *PGM* VII.810-21, on which see Hans Georg Gundel, *Weltbild und Astrologie in den griechischen Zauberpapyri*, Münchener Beiträge zur Papyrusforschung und antiken Rechtsgeschichte (Munich 1968) 52-55. See also Johnston (above, note 76) 108-09.

136. On the idiosyncratic nature of character systems see Trachtenberg (above, note 7) 141, and Lawrence H. Schiffman and Michael D. Swartz, *Hebrew and Aramaic Incantation Texts from the Cairo Genizah*, Semitic Texts and Studies, 1 (Sheffield 1992) 44-45.

137. See Iversen 43-49; on Clement of Alexandria's more accurate achievements in describing hieroglyphs see Vergotte (above, note 78) 199-221.

138. *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* 6.4, trans. O. Cullman, in Edgar Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha*, I: *Gospels and Related Writings*, rev. ed., ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher, trans. R. McL. Wilson (Philadelphia 1991) 445. This passage was known among the followers of the second-century Gnostic teacher Marcus (see Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adv. haer.* I.20).

139. Ed. and trans. A. Hebbelynck, *Les mystères des lettres grecques* (Louvain 1902) 115.

140. Cf. Claes Blum, "The Meaning of ΣΤΟΙΧΕΙΟΝ and its Derivates in the Byzantine Age: A Study in Byzantine Magic," *Eranos Rudbergianus*, Opuscula philologica Gunnaro Rudberg, 44 (1946) 315-25, who demonstrates that the word *stoicheion* itself carries the sense of "talisman" in late antiquity (see esp. 323). See also Nicole Gourdier, "Le vêtement et l'alphabet mystique chez les coptes," *Actes du IVe congrès copte*, I: *Art et archéologie*, ed. Marguerite Rassart-Debergh and Julien Ries (Louvain-la-Neuve 1992) 135-40, who argues for a Hebrew origin for the mystical interpretations of Greek letters.

141. On *nomina sacra* see Colin H. Roberts, *Manuscript, Society, and Belief in Early Christian Egypt* (London 1979) 26-47. On cryptography see Frederik Wisse, "Language Mysticism in the Nag Hammadi Texts and in Early Coptic Monasticism I: Cryptography," *Enchoria* 9 (1979) 101-20.