Stopping Evil, Pain, Anger, and Blood: The Ancient Greek Tradition of Protective Iambic Incantations

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I N RECENT YEARS the publication and re-edition of a series of late-classical lead amulets from Crete and Sicily have revealed a fairly widespread Greek tradition of protective hexametrical incantations similar in its geographical and chronological range to that of the so-called Orphic Gold Tablets.[1] This tradition is, moreover, reflected in even earlier Greek literature, for example in the description of Helen's famous *pharmakon* in the *Odyssey* and the boast of the disguised Demeter in her Homeric hymn.[2] Although the dactylic hexameter appears to have been a more popular vehicle for protective incantations in the Greek world, recent studies of magical papyri, lamellae, and gemstones reveal that the iambic trimeter and occasionally the trochaic tetrameter were used in similar ways. These new studies provide ample material for a fuller and more nuanced discussion of various features of the genre, such as length, syntax, and metrical shape, as well as special poetic effects, for example alliteration and word repetition.

[1] D. R. Jordan, "A Love Charm with Verses," *ZPE* 72 (1988) 256–257; "The Inscribed Lead Tablet from Phalasarna," *ZPE* 94 (1992) 191–194; "Three Texts from Lokroi Epizephyrioi," *ZPE* 130 (2000) 96–101.

[2] *Od.* 4.220–226 and *Hymn.Hom.Cer.* 227–230; see C. A. Faraone, "Gli incantesimi esametrici ed i poemi epici nella Grecia antica," *QUCC* 84 (2006) 11–26, for discussion. The same boast shows up later in the metrical version of the Hippocratic oath and at the start of Theocritus *Id.* 11, a poem that is centrally concerned with magic and medical healing; see C. A. Faraone, "Magic, Medicine and Eros in the Prologue to Theocritus' Eleventh *Idyll*," in M. Fantuzzi and T. Papanghelis (eds.), *Brill's Companion to Greek and Latin Pastoral* (Leiden 2006) 75–90.

When he published his comprehensive collection of Greek and Latin incantations in 1893, Richard Heim was able to list only three iambic types, all used as phylacteries and all either quoted by Roman-period writers or extant in inscriptions of similar date.[3] More than a century later almost a dozen different types are known, duplicate versions have multiplied, and, as we shall see, there are now a number of iambic incantations that can be securely dated to the Hellenistic period, if not earlier. In this study I shall document and describe the ancient Greek tradition of iambic incantations by discussing the use of iambic trimeters in three different areas: (i) the protection of doorways, (ii) the curing of colic and anger, and (iii) the stopping of pain, rheum, and other pathological symptoms.[4] In each of the three areas, moreover, I try to distinguish how these spells evolved over time and try to imagine how the pre-literate oral versions of them may have sounded.

(i) *Protective charms at the door*

One of the three types of iambic charms discussed by Heim was a popular two-verse inscription that was allegedly inscribed on a house by a newlywed in the time of the fourth-century philosopher Diogenes the Cynic:[5]

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[3] R. Heim, *Incantamenta Magica Graeca-Latina* (*Jahrb. für class. Philol.* Suppl. 10 [Leipzig 1893]) nos. 53 (Marc. Bord. 29.23), 117 (15.89), and 139 (Diog. Laert. 6.50). In his appendix on the metrical form of incantations (544–550) he lists only these three as examples of iambic charms.

[4] Iambic trimeters are also occasionally used in curses and erotic spells, but they will not be treated here. With one exception—R. Daniel and F. Maltomini, *Supplementum Magicum* (Opladen 1990–1991: hereafter *SM*) 49.54 (see n.73 below)—they tend to be longer hymns to underworld deities, similar to the iambic hymns in the magical handbooks (e.g., Hymns nos. 6 and 17 of those collected at the end of *PGM* II). See for example the poetic sections in two lead tablets inscribed with erotic spells: *SM* 42.1–8 and 63–65 (eleven trimeters invoke chthonic beings for help), 20–25 (twelve choliambs invoke chthonic beings and Egyptian gods for help), and 57–61 (six trimeters probably from a mystery liturgy end with a plea "save me"). See Jordan, *ZPE* 72 (1988) 256–257, for discussion of the last mentioned.

[5] Diog. Laert. 6.50: νεογάμου ἐπιγράψαντος ἐπὶ τὴν οἰκίαν. For a full bibliography see O. Weinreich, "De Diogenis quae fertur epistula XXXVI et de epigrammatis Graeci historia," *ArchRW* 18 (1915) 8–18, and most recently R. Merkelbach, "Weg mit dir, Herakles, in die Feuershölle!" *ZPE*

ὁ τοῦ Διὸς παῖς καλλίνικος Ἡρακλῆς
ἐνθάδε κατοικεῖ· μηδὲν εἰσίτω κακόν.

The son of Zeus, resplendent in victory, Heracles,
lives here. Let no evil enter!

A pseudepigraphic letter of Diogenes, which probably dates to the Roman imperial period, claims that this incident took place in the city of Cyzicus and that the philosopher, after seeing the same inscription written on another house, asked the bystanders why it was inscribed on individual homes rather than on the gates of the city, and how did they think that Heracles, a single god, could be in each of these houses at the same time.[6] Since all of the literary and epigraphic versions of the charm are of Roman date or later, it was for a long time impossible to know whether the anecdote about the late-classical doorways of Cyzicus was historically plausible.

In the 1960s, however, excavators working at Gela found a small terracotta disk, which they dated by archaeological context between 300 and 280 BCE. It has two suspension holes on the upper edge and it depicts on one side a frontal face in relief that was identified by the original editor as a Gorgon (*fig.* 1).[7] The reverse side has a version of the Cyzicus inscription divided into four lines:[8]

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86 (1991) 41–43, especially n.1 for a dozen or so examples from areas as far apart as Pompeii and Kurdistan. A Latin version from Salzburg, *CIL* III 5561 (*Felicitas hic habitat, nihil intret mali*), and a parody during the reign of Commodus (Dio 72.20.3) both point to wide use in the Roman period. Most of these examples are not metrical, but it is rather easy to keep the second verse intact, even when the divine helper is replaced by someone other than Heracles; see e.g. *IGLSyrie* IV 1579, a sixth-century lintel inscription from Syria in which a long series of Christian abbreviations and names is followed by the second trimeter ἐνθάδε [κ]ατοικεῖ· μηδὲν ἰσίτω κακόν.

[6] Ps.-Diogenes *Ep.* 36 (Hercher). See Weinreich, *ArchRW* 18 (1915) 8–10, for text, date, and commentary.

[7] P. Orlandini, "Gela: Topografia dei sanctuari e documentazione archeologica dei culti," *RivIstArch* 15 (1968) 20–66, at 54–56 with fig. 38a.

[8] P. Orlandini, "Attività della Sopritendenza di Agrigento," *Kokalos* 14–15 (1968–1969) 329–331, pl. XLVIII fig 2.

Figure 1: Terracotta Disk from Gela (after Orlandini 1968 fig. 38a–b)

Ἡρακλῆς ἐν-
θά<δε> κατοικεῖ·
μὴ ᾿σίτω μη-
θὲν κακόν.

Although it may be tempting to assume that this inscription preserves a faulty version of the numerous later Roman texts, the lineation of the Sicilian inscription clearly parses the text as a trochaic tetrameter catalectic rather than an iambic trimeter,[9] and the artful variant μὴ ᾿σίτω μηθὲν κακόν with its prodelision of the imperative εἰσίτω suggests a composer working in a living poetic tradition, rather than a clumsy workman misquoting an iambic original. It was also in the 1960s when archaeologists discovered near a house-door on Thasos a third- or fourth-century CE inscription, which preserves—some five to six centuries later—a similarly trochaic version of the text (Ἡρακλῆς ἐνθ[άδε κατοι]κεῖ· μηθὲν εἰσίτω κακόν) and suggests that the trochaic version persisted side by side with the iambic one, despite the popularity of the latter.[10]

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[9] This depends on the restoration of ἐνθά<δε> in line 2. C. Gallavotti, "Scritture della Sicilia ed altre epigrafe archaice," *Helikon* 17 (1977) 97–136, at 123–125, prefers the uncorrected text, which he claims is a paroemiac plus a lecythion, but he provides no parallels for such a meter in a protective incantation.

[10] P. Bernand and F. Salviat, "Inscriptions de Thasos," *BCH* (1962) 608–

There are more than two dozen extant examples of these inscriptions and all aim at barring some vague or generalized evil (κακόν) from the house, with a few instructive exceptions. A Christian lintel-inscription from the area of Halicarnassus reads: σταυροῦ [παρόντος] οὐδὲν ἰσχύει Φθόνος ("As long as the cross is present Phthonos is not in the least powerful"). Parallels from Syrian lintels guarantee the restoration and add another evil: ἐχθρός ("an enemy").[11] These inscriptions clearly derive from the second of the Kallinikos-verses: they are iambic trimeters, whose second half οὐδὲν ἰσχύει φθόνος is identical in metrical shape to μηδὲν εἰσίτω κακόν. After a particularly destructive earthquake during the reign of Justinian, the people of Antioch allegedly set up a much different inscription over the doors to their houses: Χριστὸς μεθ' ἡμῶν· στῆτε.[12] This charm seems to be the first part of an iambic trimeter and it is directed at some plural entities, who are perhaps living in the earth and presumed to be responsible for the earthquake: "Christ is with us. Stop (sc. moving)!"[13] As in the Kallinikos-inscriptions, we find here two entities: some troublemakers, who are causing the earthquake, and a single protector, who is thought to dwell in the house.

Another novel use of this incantation appears in a late-antique magical handbook from Egypt, which preserves a recipe for an image of Hermes that will bring profit to and

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609 no. 23.

[11] L. Robert, "Échec au mal," *Hellenica* XIII (Paris 1965) 265–271, at 265. The two Syrian examples he gives can be tweaked to give an iambic trimeter (the deletions in the second example are mine) σταυροῦ παρόντος ἐχθρὸς ο[ὐ κατισ]χύσει (choliambic) and σταυροῦ προκειμέν' {ου} οὐδὲν ἰσχύει {ὁ} φθόνος.

[12] Weinreich, *ArchRW* 18 (1915) 17, no. (e) quoting a late Byzantine author, Nicephorus Callistus Xanthopoulus (*HE* 17.3).

[13] The plurality of the addressees is odd, since (as we shall see below) the use of the intransitive imperative of ἵστημι is usually directed at a single source of danger, for example an approaching snake or a wandering womb. Therefore στῆτε is either directed at some plural entities below the earth whose movements are thought to cause earthquakes or (less likely) it is a mistake for στῆθι, the singular form that we find in the snake and wandering-womb amulets discussed below in the third section.

enhance production in a workshop (*PGM* IV 2359–2373). We are told to fashion a statuette of Hermes with his traditional symbols (a herald's wand in his left hand and a money pouch in his right) and to insert into its hollow base a piece of papyrus inscribed with the following non-metrical text (2365–2367):

> χαιωχεν ουτιβιλμενουωθ ατραυιχ
> δὸς πόρον καὶ πρᾶξιν τῷ τόπῳ τούτῳ
> ὅτι Ψεντεβηθ ἔνθαδε κατοικεῖ.
> *Chaiôchen outibilmenouôth atrauich*
> Grant profit and production to this place
> Because Psentebêth lives here.

The close connection in this magical recipe between the statue of Hermes and the text inserted into it supports Merkelbach's suggestion that the Kallinikos-inscriptions may have in some cases called attention to an image of Heracles that stood inside of the house to be protected.[14] There is, in fact, a similar combination of text and image in the case of the terracotta disk from Gela, on which Heracles is doubly present: his name appears in the inscription on the reverse, and the face on the obverse can, I suggest, be better interpreted as a poorly-rendered frontal depiction of Heracles himself with his lion's head cap, rather than as a Gorgon's head.

A perhaps even earlier doorway incantation is also iambic, but it invokes no protector: θύραζε κῆρες οὐκέτ' Ἀνθεστήρια ("To the door, spirits! It is no longer the Anthesteria!"). Scholars, since Roman times, have debated whether the second word should be written as *kêres* ("spirits"), *Kâres* ("Carian [slaves]") or both. Our earliest witness is the paroemiographer

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[14] Merkelbach, *ZPE* 86 (1991) 41–43, discusses a story in the *Life of Phokas*, in which a merchant named Theon keeps a statue of Heracles in his house, until a Christian leader orders him to remove it, at which point Heracles complains that he has been "dwelling (κατοικῶν) for many years in the house." In the magical recipe, however, the statue is of Hermes-Mercury and the protective boast that "Psentebêth (presumably a secret name of Hermes) lives here" is hidden within the statue, which is itself hidden in a wall, although the spot is to be marked by a wreath, and the sacrifice of a rooster and Egyptian wine. Thus unlike the publicly displayed Kallinikos-inscriptions, this text is a doubly occult instrument and its goal is the economic success of a workshop, rather than the protection of a house from evil.

Zenobius, who lived in the imperial period and seems to have used earlier sources. He thinks the persons invoked are Carians, and it is not until the time of Photius some seven centuries later that we hear the alternate explanation that they are "spirits."[15] The latter (and later) explanation has, however, consistently been the most popular among scholars of Greek religion, because it fits so well with two other apotropaic gestures that also occurred on the last day of the Anthesteria festival: chewing buckthorn leaves and smearing the house-door with pitch. On the other hand, because the chant is composed in iambic trimeters and was preserved in a gnomological collection, others have suggested plausibly that the verse was culled from some lost Attic comedy and may have been dreamed up by a comic playwright.[16] I suggest that those on both sides of the debate may be correct: since comedy frequently stages and parodies recognizable religious rituals (e.g. the Rural Dionysia in Aristophanes' *Acharnians*) and magical spells,[17] it may well be the case that the confusion between "spirits" and "Carians" was a deliberate parody aimed at turning (perhaps with a simple gesture) this traditional Athenian ghost-banning chant into a joke at the expense of some onstage Carian slaves. Parody would also explain how the words *kêres* and *Kâres* get confused in the tradition, since they are metrically, but not phonetically, equivalent. In any event,

[15] See e.g. H. J. Rose, "Keres and Lemures," *HThR* 41 (1948) 217–228; H. W. Parke, *The Festivals of the Athenians* (Ithaca 1977) 116; and R. Hamilton, *Choes and Anthesteria* (Ann Arbor 1992) 50–51. Photius also used earlier sources.

[16] W. Burkert, *Homo Necans* (Berkeley 1983) 226–230, provides a concise history of this debate beginning with Crusius and Rohde. The idea seems to be that, when the *pithoi* filled with fermented wine are opened on the first day of the Anthesteria, spirits rise from the underworld and wander about the houses. On the third and final day, the chant forces them out of the house and the pitch and buckthorn keep them away.

[17] See, e.g., C. A. Faraone, "Aristophanes *Amphiaraus* Frag. 29 (Kassel-Austin): Oracular Response or Erotic Incantation?" *CQ* 42 (1992) 320–327, for an Aristophanic parody of a hexametrical erotic incantation, and "Twisting and Turning in the Prayer of the Samothracian Initiates (Aristophanes *Peace* 276–79)," *MusHelv* 61 (2004) 30–50, for an Aristophanic parody of a protective prayer found on a type of amulet.

the focus on the entranceway of the house in the chant and in the application of pitch must be important, and I agree with the general consensus that the chant was originally designed to force ghosts (or perhaps mummers or scapegoats imitating them)[18] out of the house. I see no reason, moreover, why this incantation could not be recited at other times of the year as well, especially when a householder feared a ghostly presence.[19]

The early dating of both the Kallinikos-inscription and the Anthesteria chant is important, for it suggests that these kinds of protective iambic verses were deployed at least as early as the Hellenistic period and, in the case of the latter, probably much earlier. The sources for the Anthesteria trimeter, moreover, suggest it was performed orally and thus provide a good model for imagining the lost oral-prehistories of iambic charms generally in the centuries before the widespread epigraphic habit of the Roman imperial period finally preserved them in inscriptions. Indeed, there is no hint that the Anthesteria charm was ever inscribed on a building and it probably remained a purely oral phenomenon. There are other important differences between the two trimeters. The Kallinikos-inscriptions were placed on the outside of the building and we must imagine that any oral precursor to it was proclaimed in a similar position at or before the door. The Anthesteria chant, on the other hand, was an expulsive one, presumably recited within the house from where the homeowner forced the spirits to the door (θύραζε) and then (presumably) outside of the house, perhaps with some threatening gesture. In this respect the chant is similar to the usually hexametrical chants which accompanied scapegoat and other expulsive rituals.[20]

[18] Burkert, *Homo Necans* 228–229 and *Greek Religion* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1985) 238 and 240.

[19] The wording is ambiguous enough that it can pertain to the last day of the Anthesteria, but also to any other day of the year, except the first two days of the festival. For example, if an Athenian discovered a ghost haunting his house six months after the festival, he could still conceivably say: "To the door, spirits! For it is no longer the Anthesteria!"

[20] C. A. Faraone, "Hipponax Frag. 128W: Epic Parody or Expulsive Incantation?" *ClAnt* 23 (2004) 209–245.

(ii) *Charms for curing colic and calming anger*

Another category of iambic incantation, which also has occasional trochaic variations, aims at treating stomach pain and anger, two categories that are closely interrelated in ancient Greek thought. The late-Roman medical writer Marcellus of Bordeaux, for example, tells us how to fashion a gold ring to cure colic: inscribe the bezel with a fish or dolphin and the hoop inside and out with the following iambic trimeter (*De med.* 29.23):[21] θεὸς κελεύει μὴ κύειν κόλον πόνους. The syntax of the second half of this verse is ambiguous, but the word order suggests: "The god commands that the belly not conceive pains." A ring in the Galleria in Florence was apparently manufactured according to these instructions, although the inscription is slightly different: it is preceded by a cross, it reverses the final two words and it gives the metrically deficient ἔχειν instead of κύειν: θεὸς κελεύει μὴ ἔχειν πόνους κόλον.[22] An unpublished octagonal ring in the Cabinet des Médailles (purchased in Beirut) begins with a similar trimeter:[23] θεὸς κελεύει μὴ κύειν κόλον πόνον ἐν δυνάμι Ιαω ("God commands that the belly not conceive pain, under the authority of Iaô"). Another ring, a simple gold band from Rome, is decorated on the outside with an undulating serpent punctuated by clusters of magical letters and symbols (*fig.* 2).[24] On the inner surface we find a similar inscription, but the verb is in the first-person sing-

[21] M. Niedermann, *Corp.Med.Lat.* V 231; Heim, *Incantamenta* no. 53. Marcellus goes on to say that if the patient's belly hurts on the right side, he should wear the ring on the right hand, if on the left the left hand.

[22] See C. W. King, *Early Christian Numismatics and Other Antiquarian Tracts* (London 1873) 197, for description.

[23] It is in the Seyrig Collection (no. 9). The first word θεός is abbreviated as ΘΕ instead of ΘΣ, so perhaps the author mistakenly thought the verb κελεύει was an imperative.

[24] Originally in the Collection Alessandro Castellini (no. 920), but then purchased by Schlumberger: G. Schlumberger, "Amulettes byzantins anciens destinés à combattre les maléfices et malades," *REG* 5 (1892) 73–93, at 85–86, and W. Drexler, "Eine magische Formel des Marcellus Burdigalensis auf Ringen," *Philologus* 58 (1899) 608–609, for discussion.
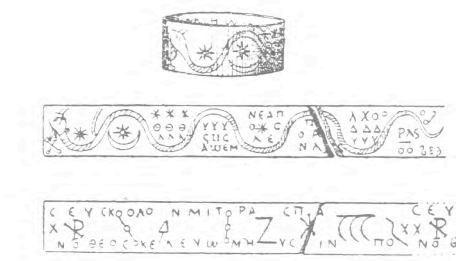
Figure 2: Gold Band from Rome (after Schlumberger [1892] 85)

ular and the final two words are reversed:[25] θεὸς κελεύω μὴ [κ]ύειν πόνο[ν] κόλον ("A god, I command that the belly not conceive pain"). It may be the case, however, that this last-mentioned ring was designed for healing the womb, not the intestine: the trimeter is followed by the letters μιτρασπασευς, perhaps a corruption of μήτρας πάσης. If construed with the final word of the trimeter (κόλον) this phrase identifies the "belly of the entire womb" as the focus of the healing charm.[26] There is, in fact, frequent crossover or confusion between magical amulets for the intestine and stomach, and those used for the uterus.[27] Could it be that the odd use on all of the rings of a verb of conception (κύειν) indicates that the tradition originally arose from a spell to assuage pain in the uterus? A

[25] In the present and imperfect tenses κύειν is used only with female subjects who can "conceive" a child or (more rarely) who are "pregnant with" a child (in the accusative). This suggests that we translate the phrase as I have, "that the belly not conceive pain(s)."

[26] Drexler, *Philologus* 58 (1899) 608–609, interpreted these letters as μήτρα ἔπασχε ("The womb was suffering") and believed that it stood at the start of the charm.

[27] See S. Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen im Britischen Museum* (London 2001) I 178–182. The word *kolon* usually refers to the large intestine, but can also refer more generally to the lower belly, where the womb resides. The scribe presumably added the extra words here to pre-empt what must have been a common confusion.

final and slightly different version of the command-spell appears on a small four-sided bronze prism from Antioch, which also dates to the Roman imperial period and was worn as an amulet:[28] Φοῖβος κελεύει μὴ κύιν πόνον πόδας ("Phoebus commands that the feet not conceive pain!").

As the parallel texts below reveal, these verses clearly derive from the same tradition, spread at least as widely as Beirut and Bordeaux:

(1) θεὸς κελεύει μὴ κύειν κόλον πόνους (Marcellus of Bordeaux, gold ring)
(2) † θεὸς κελεύει μὴ ἔχειν πόνους κόλον (similar gold ring in Florence)
(3) θεὸς κελεύει μὴ κύειν κόλον πόνον (bronze ring from Beirut)
(4) θεὸς κελεύω μὴ [κ]ύειν πόνο[ν] κόλον (gold band in Rome)
(5) Φοῖβος κελεύει μὴ κύιν πόνον πόδας (bronze prism from Antioch)

In the first, third, and fourth examples the triple alliteration of *kappa* is extraordinary and is rightly thought to be part of the magical efficacy of the verse.[29] The substitution in the final example of "Phoebus" (for "god") and "feet" (for "belly"), and the use of the first-person verb κελεύω in no. 4 all reveal the flexibility of the formula. We also saw how words added extrametrically at the ends of the third and fourth examples further specify the anonymous "god" as an ally of Ιαô and the "belly" in question as the "whole womb." In the final example we see a rather different use of this charm for foot-pain, which might perhaps be explained by someone who mistook the word κόλον for κῶλον ("limb," especially "leg"), a common mistake in the late-Roman period.[30] The switch from gold medium to bronze in nos. 3 and 5 may also be a significant variation. The word

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[28] *IGLSyrie* III 1083 and C. Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets* (Ann Arbor 1950) 76–77. The amulet is inscribed with elongated letters that fill up all four sides of the prism.

[29] Bonner, *Studies* 64, preserves the alliteration nicely in his English version: "God bids the bowels breed no banes." In no. 4, the alliterative consonant is placed at the start of the second foot of each metron.

[30] See LSJ s.v. κῶλον II.6 for this misspelling of κόλον. When King, *Early Christian Numismatics* 197, quotes the passage from Marcellus, he gives κῶλον instead of κόλον, suggesting that he was using a text of Marcellus with this variant.

order is, however, consistent in three of the five cases: (1) the verb of command; (2) the infinitive "to conceive"; (3) "pain" presumably as its accusative subject; and then (4) the part of the body affected.

It is not entirely clear to whom the word θεός refers in the first four examples. The cross that precedes it in the second example suggests that its manufacturer or owner may have been thinking of the Christian god, whereas the addendum to no. 3 ("by the authority of Iaô") points to a hierarchical structure in which the unnamed θεός is an underling of Iaô.[31] We might also imagine that the animals depicted on rings nos. 1 and 2 (fish or dolphin) and 4 (serpent) were thought to be divine and (in the fourth text, "I command …") to speak the inscribed iambic verse. The dolphin, of course, is a ready symbol of Apollo, who as Phoebus is identified as the commander in the final example. The idea that Phoebus Apollo gave such commands probably arises from his role as an oracular god, since there are a handful of extant oracles in which the Delphic god is the subject of the verb κελεύειν.[32]

[31] Iaô is the common Greek rendition of the name of the Jewish god Jahweh, but by the Roman imperial period it appears as a powerful name on scores of texts and there is no way to know whether its Jewish origins were known to the scribes and patrons or if this mattered to them personally. It is interesting that in *PGM* I 262–347, an elaborate magical spell designed to produce oracular dreams or oracles, a hymn invokes Jahweh and Michael in parallel with Zeus and Apollo as hierarchical sources of prophecy: see C. A. Faraone, "The Collapse of Celestial and Chthonic Realms in a Late Antique 'Apollonian Invocation'," in R. Abusch, A. Y. Reed, and P. Schäfer (eds.), *Heavenly Realms and Earthly Realities in Late Antique Religions* (Cambridge 2004) 213–232, for discussion. If I am correct to see a reference to Apollonian oracles in the verb κελεύει (see the next note), then we might understand that Apollo-Michael is also the "god" in no. 3, where the "god" issues commands under the authority of Zeus-Jahweh.

[32] H. W. Parke and D. E. W. Wormell, *The Delphic Oracle* II (Oxford 1961) nos. 17.1, 173.1, 230.1 (κελεύω) and 43.1 (Ἀπόλλων … κελεύει). The verb always appears at the end of the hexameter. When Sophocles in *Oedipus Rex* 90 has Creon report that "Phoebus commands us (ἄνωγεν ἡμᾶς Φοῖβος) … to drive out the pollution," he probably has this convention in mind. Cf. Parke/Wormell no. 363.1, Φοῖβος ἄνωγεν. On the other hand, the use of κελεύειν may have been more common than we think in magical texts; see, e.g., a pair of identical Roman-era bronze amulets from southern France,

The case for Apollo is, in fact, strengthened by Pliny the Elder, who, after describing a poultice used to cure superficial abscesses, adds (*HN* 26.93 = Heim, *Incantamenta* no. 136):

> Those with experience (*experti*) have assured us that it makes all the difference, if, while the patient is fasting, the poultice be laid upon him by a fasting and naked maiden, who must touch him with the back of her hand and say: "Apollo declares that the plague cannot grow if a naked maiden quenches it" (*negat Apollo pestem posse crescere cui nuda virgo restinguat*). And with her hand so reversed the maiden must repeat the formula three times and both (i.e. she and the patient) must spit on the ground three times.

It has not been noticed that the first five words of the incantation (*negat Apollo pestem posse crescere*) divide into twelve syllables and comprise a passable iambic senarius, which also translates the basic syntax of most of the Greek charms θεὸς κελεύει μὴ κύειν πόνον.[33] The Latin version even retains the alliteration of the Greek original, albeit with a different consonant (*A-pollo pestem posse*). It would seem, then, that in the first century CE an oral Apolline version of this charm was popular enough to have been translated into Latin and become popular with the cognoscenti. Pliny also provides priceless information about the oral performance of this charm with special ritual gestures (the use of the back of the hand and spitting) and he gives us a somewhat contrary hint how to interpret the difficult syntax of the Greek versions. Since in the Latin version the pathology (*pestem*) is the subject of the infinitive *crescere*, it may well be that in the original Greek version the noun πόνον is the subject of κύειν. This interpretation is also suggested by the word order on three of the five rings, in which πόνον precedes the body-part and thus suggests that we translate "God commands that the pain not grow/swell, with respect to the belly/feet."[34]

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which ask a supernatural power named Thôsouderkou to turn away various evils from a vineyard "because the god Ôamoutha commands it" (κελεύει θεὸς Ὠαμουθα): R. Kotansky, *Greek Magical Amulets* I (Opladen 1994) 11A and B.

[33] For *negare* as "forbid" see *OLD* s.v. 5, even in cases where the subject is not a god. Thanks to R. Kaster for metrical advice.

[34] The noun κῦμα, "wave" or "billow," which derives from κύειν, sug-

An alliterating trimeter from Aeschylus' *Eumenides* suggests that such single-verse iambic incantations may have a much earlier history. Athena, after threatening the Furies obliquely with the thunderbolts of Zeus, commands them to do her bidding (830–832):

γλώσσης ματαίας μὴ 'κβάλῃς ἔπη χθονί,
καρπὸν φέροντα πάντα μὴ πράσσειν καλῶς.
κοίμα κελαινοῦ κύματος πικρὸν μένος.
and do not discharge upon this land the words of an idle tongue
so as to cause all things that bear fruit no more to prosper.
Lull to repose the bitter force of your black wave of anger.[35]

Commentators rightly assert that the triple alliteration of *kappas* in the final verse is designed to sooth the angry Furies and that there is probably a reference to their black bile in the alliterative phrase "black wave" (κελαινοῦ κύματος).[36] The close connection in Greek thought between anger and bile is well known, of course, as is the idea that anger is a pathology that could be treated medically.[37] I suggest, therefore, that Aeschylus, as he does elsewhere in the *Eumenides*,[38] may be mimicking a popular incantation—in this case an alliterating iambic verse used to stop or sooth anger.[39]

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gests that the verb may in some cases have meant "to swell" or "to increase" (as happens to a pregnant woman) and thus be approximately translated by *crescere*.

[35] Transl. H. Lloyd-Jones, *Aeschylus: Oresteia* (Berkeley 1979) 261.

[36] E.g. A. H. Sommerstein, *Aeschylus Eumenides* (Cambridge 1989) ad loc.

[37] See LSJ s.vv. χολή and χόλος; J. M. Redfield, *Nature and Culture in the Iliad* (Chicago 1975) 14–18; and C. A. Faraone, "*Thumos* as Masculine Ideal and Social Pathology in Ancient Greek Magical Spells," in S. Braund and G. Most (eds.), *YCS* 32 (2003) 151–160.

[38] For two other cases of incantatory language in the *Eumenides*, see C. A. Faraone, "Aeschylus' ὕμνος δέσμιος (*Eum.* 306) and Attic Judicial Curse Tablets," *JHS* 105 (1985) 150–154, and *SM* 72 ii 2, a papyrus handbook in which we are instructed to raise our arms and say an invocation that includes an iambic trimeter, καὶ νὺξ μέλαινα καὶ στάσις κ' ἀγρυπνία, the opening words of which (as the editors point out) are similar to an iambic invocation sung by the Furies at *Eumenides* 745: ὦ νὺξ μέλαινα μῆτερ.

[39] A similar (albeit non-metrical) imperative occurs, for example, in a series of late Byzantine amulets against the wandering or agitated womb: "Womb black and blackening, like a snake you coil, like a lion you roar, go

As it turns out, a fragment of a fourth- or fifth-century CE magical handbook contains a series of iambic verses aimed, like Athena's, at calming an angry and bilious person. Although editors treat these four lines as a single charm, the lack of connecting particles between the first three and the fact that the first verse appears alone at the start of the same recipe, suggest that this text combines three originally independent incantations:[40]

> θυμοῦ σε παύσω καί σε πραϋνῶ χολῆς.
>
> σῖγ' ἐλθὲ καὶ διακράτει σιγὴν φέρων.
>
> θυμοὺς φρενῶν στῆσόν τε πάντας καὶ σβέσον
> ὀργὰς ἀπάσας ὀργίλων < ˘ − ˘ − >.
>
> I shall stop you from your anger and I shall calm you from your rage.
>
> Come silently and with silence control yourself.
>
> Stop all the angry outbursts of the heart and extinguish all the irritations of the irritable < … >!

These charms display a variety of poetic features. The first uses a pair of performative future verbs in the first person (παύσω and πραϋνῶ), whereas the two other charms offer a series of imperatives, addressed either to an angry person (σῖγ' ἐλθέ and διακράτει) or to a supernatural helper (στῆσον and σβέσον). Since the performative future seems to be a somewhat archaic feature that appears only rarely in post-Hellenistic incantations,[41] the first iambic verse may be much older than the late-antique papyrus that preserves it. The caesura is well placed and the last two words seem to be especially poetic.[42] And since

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to sleep [i.e. now] like a lamb!" (ὡς ἀρνίον κοιμοῦ). A variant invokes the calming of the sea: "like a snake you coil, become calm like the sea" (ὡς θάλασσα γαλήνισον)! See J. Spier, "Medieval Byzantine Magical Amulets and their Tradition," *JWarb* 56 (1993) 25–62, at 51–53, nos. 1–19.

[40] *PGM* IX 12–13 (= *PGM* Hymn 30). K. F. W. Schmidt, *GGA* 196 (1934) 184–185, was the first to identify and reconstruct the iambic verses; for detailed discussion and the most recent bibliography see Faraone, *YCS* 32 (2003) 152–153.

[41] C. A. Faraone, "The 'Performative Future' in Three Hellenistic Incantations and Theocritus' Second *Idyll*," *CP* 90 (1995) 1–15, at 13–15.

[42] The verb πραϋνῶ ("I will sooth") is extremely rare in magical texts,

this appears twice in the same papyrus in its fully metrical form (as is printed above), we can be confident about the text. The last two examples, on the other hand, are modern reconstructions that in contrast seem somewhat ham-handed especially regarding the caesura.[43] There are, however, some obvious similarities among the three, in the sing-song repetition and alliteration in each charm: παύσω and πραϋνῶ (both beginning in the last position of the metron and running over into the next): σῖγ' and σιγήν (both at the start of the metron); and στῆσον and σβέσον.

There is, then, good evidence that in the Roman period people used single or paired trimeters to treat colic and control anger, two pathologies that were often linked in the ancient imaginary. This was, moreover, a living poetic tradition; even within the limited space of a single verse, we find the careful use of alliteration, chiasmus, and word repetition. As in the case of the trimeters used to protect houses, we also have clear evidence of an earlier oral tradition. Pliny describes on expert authority the performance of a Latin version of the command-charm, and thereby provides us with valuable testimony about the oral prehistory of these charms. Since he lived in the mid-first century, at least a century before we have any evidence for the inscribed rings, it is probable that oral Greek versions of this charm (with Apollo in command) were in circulation as early as the Hellenistic period, before being translated into Latin. And indeed the variations in the text of the written versions themselves suggest that they had probably evolved over time as oral compositions. The performative future and poetic words in the first of the three anger charms in *PGM* IX point to the same conclusion, and the alliteration in the single iambic

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appearing twice more in the two volumes of *PGM* and never in the two volumes of *SM*. In one of its other appearances it falls at the start of an invocation directed to the god Hermes (*PGM* VIII 31–32) that has an iambic rhythm: πράϋνε πάντας καὶ δός μοι ἀλκήν, μορφήν. The use of the poetic word *cholê* in the first trimeter also points to an earlier stage of composition; see Faraone, *YCS* 32 (2003) 152 with n.25.

[43] The papyrus reads as follows (*PGM* IX 12–13): θυμοῦ σε πα<ύ>σω καί σε πραύνω χολῆς. ἐλθὲ καὶ διακράτει σιγῇ σιγὴν φέρων τε πα<ύ>σιν καὶ θυμοὺ<ς> στῆσον ψυχῶν πάντων ὀργάς τε πάσας σβέσον.

verse that Athena "casts" against the angry Furies suggests further that Aeschylus himself may have encountered in classical Athens similarly alliterating trimeters that were used to calm anger or colic.

(iii) *Charms for stopping disease and danger*

In recent years three other types of iambic incantations have come to light, in which the imperative στῆσον (deployed in the last of the anger charms discussed above) plays an important role. One type aims at controlling rheum or watery discharges, as in the opening lines of this fifth-century CE papyrus amulet:[44]

> † λαβοῦσα χάριν ἐκ τοῦ
> μονογενοῦς σου υἱοῦ
> στῆσον τὸ ῥεῦμα, τοὺς
> πόνους τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν
> Φοιβάμμωνος υἱοῦ τοῦ Ἀθα-
> νασίου.

> Because you received grace from
> your only-begotten son,
> stop the discharge,
> the pains of the eyes
> of Phoibammon, the son of
> Athanasius.

The amulet goes on to quote the first verse of Psalm 90, a protective text often found on walls, bracelets, and other phylacteries in Egypt and Syria.[45] Lines 3–4, however, come from the same iambic healing tradition under discussion:[46]

> στῆσον τὸ ῥεῦμα, τοὺς πόνους τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν

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[44] *SM* 26.3–4 and D. R. Jordan, "Choliambs for Mary on a Papyrus Phylactery," *HThR* 84 (1991) 343–346.

[45] Jordan, *HThR* 84 (1991) 344 with n.5.

[46] First noticed by Jordan, *HThR* 84 (1991) 344–345, who suggested that lines 1–4 comprise a pair of choliambs, and indeed the layout of the papyrus, which assigns two lines to each of the putative verses, seems to bear this out. It may be true that the awkwardly composed λαβοῦσα χάριν ἐκ τοῦ μονογενοῦς σου υἱοῦ is choliambic, but since the *lambda-mu* combination in the final word of the second verse (ὀφθαλμῶν) can be scanned either long or short, I see no reason why we need to insist it, too, is a choliamb.

The sixth-century medical writer Alexander of Tralles un-wittingly preserves another example of this type of stopping-spell, when he recommends the root of the plant *hyoskyamos* "for gout or any rheum" and then tells us to address the plant prior to digging it up:[47] "I say to you, I say to you, o sacred herb! I summon you tomorrow to the house of Phileas in order that you may stop the discharge in the feet and hands of this man or this woman."[48] Jordan points out that the result clause at the end of this invocation (ἵνα στάσῃς τὸ ῥεῦμα τῶν ποδῶν καὶ τῶν χειρῶν) seems to preserve what was originally an iambic spell similar to the one found in *SM* 26:[49] στῆσον τὸ ῥεῦμα τῶν ποδῶν καὶ τῶν χερῶν ("Stop the discharge of the feet and hands!"). In both cases the imperative is addressed to powerful supernatural agents, Mary in the papyrus amulet (*SM* 26) and the powerful herb in the oral charm preserved by Alexander.

A late third- or early fourth-century CE silver phylactery for pain in the feet seems to contain similar, albeit badly corrupt and lacunose versions of this kind of spell:[50]

[ca. 4 στῆσο]ν τὸν πόνον τοῦ ποδὸς τοῦ φοροῦ(ν)-
[τος τοῦτ]ο τὸ φυλακτήριον. ἄναξ θεῶν καὶ
[δαιμόν]ων Ιαω, παραστάθητί μοι καὶ παῦσο(ν)
[καὶ στῆσ]ον [Ἄμ]μονα τοῦ ἔχοντος αὐτὸν πό-
[νου τα]ῖς ἀστακαῖς.

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[47] Heim, *Incantamenta* no. 167. Theophrastus, a student of Aristotle, re-ports the similar practices of the "root-cutters" of his day, who addressed prayers to the herbs they collected; see John Scarborough, "The Pharma-cology of Sacred Plants, Herbs and Roots," in C. A. Faraone and D. Obbink (eds.), *Magika Hiera* (Oxford 1991) 146–151, and R. Gordon, "The Healing Event in Greco-Roman Folk Medicine," in P. J. Van der Eijk et al. (eds.), *Ancient Medicine in its Socio-Cultural Context* II (Amsterdam 1995) 363–376, at 368–369.

[48] The invocation here seems to have been used at one time to cure a man named Phileas, whose name has remained in the text.

[49] Jordan describes this charm as choliambic, but if, in fact, this type of charm does date back to an earlier period, then we can, I suggest, posit a purely iambic model, since classical and Hellenistic poets regularly vary the prosody of the first syllable of χειρῶν or χερῶν to facilitate the meter.

[50] *P.Köln* VIII 339.1–5 and D. R. Jordan and R. D. Kotansky, "A Spell for Aching Feet," *Kölner Papyri* 8 (1997) 70–76. It was found in Egypt.

One would not have suspected that these lines were originally iambic, were it not for the parallels cited above, and for the fact that (as the editors point out) they preserve (lines 2–3) one and a half fairly good trimeters: ἄναξ θεῶν καὶ [δαιμόν]ων Ια<ε>ω / παραστάθητί μοι.[51] The rest of the spell (not quoted here) is also riddled with iambic phrases. One might hypothetically reconstruct the last three verses as follows:

> ἄναξ θεῶν καὶ δαιμόνων Ια<ε>ω
> παραστάθητί μοι <⏑ –> παῦσον <τε> καὶ
> στῆσον Ἄμμονα τοῦ πόνου ταῖς ἀστ<ρ>αγ<άλ>αις[52]

The meter of this last line is, of course, disrupted, as is often the case, by the name of the patient, but this disruption vanishes if we replace his name with the generic handbook word τὸν δεῖνα ("So and so").

> o lord of gods and *daimones*, Yahweh,
> take a stand near me … pause and
> stop Ammon from the pain in his ankles …

Here Jahweh as addressee of the imperative takes on the role of Mary in the papyrus charm and here, too, the actual command is contained in a single iambic verse beginning with στῆσον.

This tradition of stopping spells, like the command-charms, is preserved in both oral (Alexander of Tralles) and written versions (papyrus and silver). And despite the lacunose state of the incomplete first line of the silver amulet, we can see that it does conform, at least, to the word-order of the two previous stop-

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[51] Jordan and Kotansky, *Kölner Papyri* 8 (1997) 72. Although the imperative needs to be supplied twice in lacunae (στῆσ]ον), this supplement (or παῦσ]ον) seems inevitable. I only quote the first half of this spell, but Jordan and Kotansky identify the small dismembered segments of at least five more iambic trimeters, the last of which they restore as a full trimeter: τῷ σῷ βροτῷ, Ιαεω, δέσποτα, τέλει. For the use of the imperative of *telein* at the very end of short hexametrical spells, see Faraone, *CQ* 42 (1992) 320–327.

[52] At the end of the last line the papyrus reads τα]ῖς ἀστακαῖς. Jordan and Kotansky, *Kölner Papyri* 8 (1997), suggest ad loc. that ἀστακή is a previously unattested cousin to a word that means "lobster" or the "hollow of the ear," but the text requires some body part closer to the feet, and so I tentatively suggest that it is a corrupted or a syncopated form of ἀστραγάλη, which is itself an Ionic version of the more common ἀστράγαλος ("ankle"). That the version preserved by Alexander Trall. is used against gout, a disease of the feet and the ankles, supports this restoration.

ping spells: στῆσον + pain or rheum + the affected area of the body, albeit with different syntax: imperative στῆσον + pain (genitive) + body part (dative).

The same pattern also appears in the command-spells discussed earlier, where the embedded infinitive replaces the imperative and the negative formulation μὴ κύειν πόνον is equivalent to στῆσον πόνον. It is helpful to look at the entire set together:

> θεὸς κελεύει μὴ κύειν πόνους κόλον
>
> Φοῖβος κελεύει μὴ κύιν πόνον πόδας
>
> στῆσον τὸ ῥεῦμα, τοὺς πόνους τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν
>
> στῆσον τὸ ῥεῦμα τῶν ποδῶν καὶ τῶν χερῶν
>
> στῆσον Ἄμμονα τοῦ πόνου ταῖς ἀστ<ρ>αγ<άλ>αις.

One important difference, of course, is the lack of articles in the command-spells and the use of the accusative of respect, both signs perhaps of a more poetic or older tradition. In the stopping spells, on the other hand, nouns are accompanied by articles and body parts almost always appear in the genitive.

We see similar word-order in an inscription on a triangular gemstone that commands someone to "Stop the blood!" (στῆσον τὸ αἷμα).[53] Here the mineral composition of the gemstone—hematite ("bloodstone"), which was believed to have naturally styptic qualities[54]—combines with the inscribed text to stop some kind of hemorrhage.[55] This short command for stopping the blood is also the start of an iambic trimeter and presumably in its original and fuller form went on to mention the body part from which the blood was flowing.[56] Here, then,

[53] S. Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen* (Berlin 2004) 193 with n.1004, and K. Preisendanz, "Amuletum ineditum," *PhilWoch* 52.35/38 (1932) 101–108.

[54] A. A. Barb, "Bois du sang, Tantale," *Syria* 29 (1952) 271–284, at 279–280, and A. E. Hanson, "Uterine Amulets and Greek Uterine Medicine," *Medicina nei Secoli* 7 (1995) 281–299, at 290–291.

[55] Probably from the nose, although the womb and anus are other possibilites, as is any wound. A. A. Barb, "St. Zacharias the Prophet and Martyr: A Study in Charms and Invocations," *JWarb* 11 (1948) 35–67, surveys a series of late Greek and early medieval charms against nose-bleed which in the Greek versions (40–42) begin with variations on στῆσον τὸ αἷμα.

[56] Note that τὸ αἷμα has the same metrical shape as τὸ ῥεῦμα and pre-

the word "blood" (also with its article) replaces the "pain" and "rheum" in the other examples and is part of the wider array of iambic incantations discussed above. A similar pattern appears in a group of apparently garbled or truncated single-verse iambic charms used to stop or prevent pain in the liver and in the hips. The first, a hematite gemstone, begins by addressing a god as "Lord" (his name is a long series of *nomina magica*), and closes with the plea: "Deliver Priscus from the pain of the liver!" The request itself ends with iambs and the usual sequence of "pain" then body part: ἀπὸ τοῦ πόνου τοῦ ἥπατος.[57] Two other hematite gemstones, nearly identical in their rather elaborate design and text, show an armed Ares on the obverse surrounded by an inscription:[58] Ἄρης ἔτεμεν τοῦ ἥπατος τὸν πόνο<ν> ("Ares cut the pain of the liver"). Here, however, the traditional sequence of "pain" + body part is reversed and the charm is unmetrical. The inscription is, however, twelve syllables long, suggesting that it was originally designed as an iambic trimeter. If we change the verb to the imperfect by switching the last two letters and then invert the order of the nouns that follow (so that it conforms to the pattern on the Priscus gemstone and all the other charms listed above) a good iambic trimeter emerges: Ἄρης ἔτεμνε τὸν πόνο<ν> τοῦ ἥπατος ("Ares often cut the pain of the liver").[59]

This charm, then, describes how Ares in the past traditionally cut the "pain" in the liver, presumably with the spear that he holds in the scene on the obverse. This follows a traditional Greek pattern of using stories (dubbed "historiolae" by scholars) that are narrated in the past tense and usually offer actions

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sumably could easily be substituted for it. It is not hard to imagine a full trimeter beginning with στῆσον τὸ αἷμα, that has a shape like στῆσον τὸ ῥεῦμα τῶν ποδῶν καὶ τῶν χερῶν. A small unpublished hematite gem in the Cabinet des Médailles (Seyrig Collection no. 58) depicts a goat on the obverse and the imperative παῦσον on the reverse; it is not clear whether the goat is the pathology or the addressee of the imperative.

[57] A. Delatte and P. Derchain, *Les intailles magiques gréco-égyptiennes* (Paris 1964) no. 461.

[58] Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen BM* nos. 385–386.

[59] We saw a similar reversal of the pain and body part in Marcellus' version of the command-charm.

of a god as an exemplum for the hoped-for outcome of a spell.[60] A popular sciatica charm, also engraved on hematite, has on its obverse a man bowed low and reaping grain and at least twice on the reverse an iambic dimeter: ἐργάζομαι καὶ οὐ πονῶ ("I work and I feel no pain").[61] Other amulets of this kind have on the reverse only a single word σχίων, apparently a truncated form of ἰσχίων.[62] Given the syntactical pattern of the trimeters collected above (pain, then body part), one wonders if someday an extended example of the dimeter may turn up that identifies the hips as the area of pain.

Most of the stopping charms discussed in this section direct an active aorist imperative (στῆσον or παῦσον) at a presumably powerful supernatural ally such as Mary or Iao, but amulets occasionally use the intransitive and passive aorist imperatives of ἱστάναι in protective and healing incantations, where they also seem especially attracted to iambic and trochaic meters. The intransitive imperative can be effective by itself, for example, as in this short fourth-century recipe: "If you see an asp and wish to stop it: Turn around and say 'Stop moving!' (στῆθι)."[63] In a papyrus amulet of the fifth or sixth century this same impera-

[60] W. M. Brashear, "The Greek Magical Papyri," *ANRW* II.18.5 (1995) 3380–3684, at 3438–3440. Historiolae often involve interactions between the gods, but I know of no story of Ares cutting Ponos, although the Ponos is occasionally imagined anthropomorphically in Greek thought (e.g. Hesiod *Th*. 226) and one could imagine a lost story or myth in which Ares cut him with a spear.

[61] Delatte/Derchain, *Les intailles magiques* nos. 261–262. The hiatus at the caesura is admittedly harsh. Because the reaper holds a sickle, an implement associated with Kronos, the figure is sometimes associated with that god, but there is no compelling reason to do so. The reaper is the quintessential sufferer of sciatica and other back and hip problems and that is why he appears. The first-person verb records the reaper's boast.

[62] The use of the objective genitive seems to be a shorthand way to indicate the use of the gemstone "for hips." Other examples of this kind of shorthand include the stomach (στομάχου: Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen BM* nos. 397, 399, 402, 403, 447) and the liver (ἥπατος: 385–386).

[63] *PGM* XIII 249–250. See also 260–264: "If you want to kill a snake say 'Stop moving (στῆθι), for you are Aphyphis!'" Once the snake is frozen in place, it can be split into two pieces by sympathetically splitting a palm frond lengthwise.

tive is likewise addressed to a discharge from the eyes, in a trio of trochees that might have stood originally in a trochaic or iambic environment (*SM* 32.10–11): καὶ σύ, ῥεῦμα, στῆθι. And in the first section of this study we saw how a doorway-spell designed to control earthquakes employed the plural of the same verb in an iambic context: Χριστὸς μεθ' ἡμῶν, στῆτε ("Christ is with us. Stop moving!"). In all these cases the intransitive imperative is addressed to the cause of anxiety itself (a snake, a discharge, or an earthquake), whereas the incantations discussed earlier in this section use the transitive imperative (στῆσον) and thus imply the presence of a presumably supernatural third party, who will stop the pain, rheum, or blood in various parts of the body.

The aorist passive imperative of ἱστάναι ("to stop"), alternating with an almost identical form of the verb στέλλειν ("to contract") shows up in another series of short incantations, which aim at preventing a woman's womb from wandering. They usually appear on hematite gems that depict the womb as an inverted jug, with a key at its mouth to control the flow of blood.[64] The three longest examples are full iambic trimeters: στάλητι μήτρα μή σε Τυφῶν καταλάβῃ ("Contract, womb, lest Typhon seize you!").[65] The remainder seem to be truncated versions of the same iambic verse, which always retains the initial imperative (in the extant examples στάθητι usually replaces στάλητι)[66] and sometimes its direct object as well.[67]

[64] For discussion see A. Delatte, "Magie grecque," *MusB* 18 (1914) 5–96, at 75–88; Bonner, *Studies* 83–84; and A. A. Barb, "Seth or Anubis II," *JWarb* 22 (1959) 368–371, at 370–371. Most of these incantations occur on hematite gemstones, except for the two gems from Athens published by Delatte and described as "black jasper," perhaps in error, as hematite has many shades of color and densities; see Hanson, *Medicina nei Secoli* 7 (1995) 281–299.

[65] L. Barry, "Notice sur quelques pierres gnostiques," *ASAE* 7 (1906) 241–249 no. 3; Bonner, *Studies* no. 140; and Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen BM* no. 379. Jordan, *HThR* 84 (1991) 345 n.11, was the first to note that this inscription is metrical.

[66] E.g. Delatte, *MusB* 18 (1914) 76 no. 34, and Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen BM* no. 351: στάθητι ("Stop moving!").

[67] E.g. H. Philipp, *Mira et Magica*: *Gemmen im Ägyptischen Museum der Staat-*

The variable length of these incantations nicely illustrates the tendency to truncate the ends of verse inscriptions, when they are engraved on small gemstones, a process that I suggested earlier for two gem types that carry shorter and unparalleled iambic inscriptions: στῆσον τὸ αἷμα and ἐργάζομαι καὶ οὐ πονῶ.[68] The difference palaeographically between the two imperatives is so slight (a variation of a single letter) that scholars usually treat στάλητι as a scribal error for στάθητι, on the grounds that the imperative forms of ἱστάναι appear so frequently on other kinds amulets and because the verb στέλλειν is used so rarely in magical incantations.[69] But we saw earlier that variations in key verbs and nouns occur elsewhere in the living traditions that produce and adapt these charms and we must, I think, accept both forms as traditional variations. Indeed, the fact that the three gemstones that preserve the full trimeter ("Contract womb, lest Typhon seize you!") all use στάλητι, while the truncated versions prefer στάθητι, suggests that στάλητι may have been the earlier form.

We have seen, then, how the ancient Greeks used iambic stopping-spells to control the flow of pathological discharges like rheum or blood, as well as the movements of wandering wombs and venomous animals. These iambic incantations consistently follow a similar syntactical pattern: first the imperative (e.g. "Stop!"), then the pathology (e.g. pain, rheum, blood), and lastly the afflicted body-part (liver, eyes, foot). In most cases these charms command or bid a supernatural entity to stop the pathology, except in those few cases where the danger or pathology (e.g. a snake, an earthquake, or a wandering womb) is itself addressed directly and becomes the subject of the imperative. Whereas the command-charms discussed in the previous section seem to be complete in a single verse, the stopping-spells sometimes invoke a supernatural helper, for example the Virgin Mary, Iao, or a powerful plant, who in

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lichen Museen (Mainz 1986) no. 184, στάθητι μήτρα ("Stop moving, womb!"); and Delatte, *MusB* 18 (1914) 76 no. 33, στάλητι μήτρα ("Contract, womb!").

[68] See nn.54 and 62 above.

[69] E.g. Delatte, *MusB* 18 (1914) 80 and 82, and still in Jordan, *HThR* 84 (1991) 345 n.11.

each case is identified in at least one other verse. And like most of the charms surveyed in this study, these stopping-charms survive mainly in Roman-era evidence, although the parallel survival of oral forms (e.g. the address to the plant in Alexander of Tralles), the variations within a single tradition, and the use of poetic forms (e.g. χερῶν) all suggest a poorly documented pre-history to the inscribed amulets surveyed here. There is also very early evidence that the Greeks used oral incantations to stop the flow of blood: at *Odyssey* 19.455–458 we hear how the sons of Autolykos bound up the wounded thigh of Odysseus and then stopped the flow of blood with an incantation.[70]

Conclusion

More than a century after Heim identified his three iambic incantations, there is much more and much earlier evidence for a popular tradition of iambic charms aimed at stopping a variety of natural and supernatural predators, diseases, and pests: discharges from the eyes, pains in the feet, snakes, earthquakes, wandering wombs, and angry outbursts. These charms are generally one or two verses long and follow a fairly consistent pattern: imperative/infinitive + pain, rheum, or blood + affected body part:

> θεὸς κελεύει μὴ κύειν πόνους κόλον
>
> Φοῖβος κελεύει μὴ κύιν πόνον πόδας
>
> Ἄρης ἔτεμνε τὸν πόνο<ν> τοῦ ἥπατος
>
> στῆσον τὸ ῥεῦμα, τοὺς πόνους τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν
>
> στῆσον τὸ ῥεῦμα τῶν ποδῶν καὶ τῶν χερῶν

All five of these verses are well composed, with strong breaks at the mid-line caesura. The first two were engraved on gold and bronze rings and also survive in a Latin translation of the first century CE. The third appears (albeit in the same garbled form) on two hematite gemstones. The final two survive on inscribed papyrus and silver amulets and in an oral charm quoted by a much later Greek writer, Alexander of Tralles. All

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[70] ἐπαοιδῇ δ᾽ αἷμα κελαινὸν / ἔσχεθον. See R. Renehan, "The Staunching of Odysseus' Blood: The Healing Power of Magic," *AJP* 113 (1992) 1–4, for bibliography and discussion.

are traditionally dated to the imperial period, but oral parallels and variations within the same types suggest an oral pre-history. In each case gods or other supernatural entities are implicated as the agents of the magical action: they command and cut the pain or they are themselves commanded to stop the blood and rheum. As we saw in the case of the command-spells, the use of alliteration may also have been a traditional feature of iambic spells, and a very early one, if we recall the alliterating *kappas* in Aeschylus' *Eumenides* (κοίμα κελαινοῦ κύματος πικρὸν μένος).[71] We noted other signs of diachronic change in cases where the author adapts a traditional spell to other purposes.[72] This is perhaps clearest in the group of the command-spells, which are primarily concerned with intestinal pain, but in two cases have been adapted to curing pain in the womb or the feet.

Most of the iambic charms address a single imperative to a god or some other supernatural entity, but we have seen other types as well. All three of the anger-calming charms in *PGM* IX, for example, use paired verbs that are arranged with great

[71] In fact we see evidence of a similar alliteration in the two earliest literary renditions of binding-spells: in the "binding-song" (*hymnos desmios*) of the Furies (in the same play, *Eum.* 329–330: παρακοπά, παραφορά, φρενοδα-λής) and in Pindar's rendition of the successful binding-spell that Pelops intones against Oenomaos (*Ol.* 1.75–78: πέδασον … πόρευσον … πέλασον). In the Pindar passage the alliterating verbs appear at the start of three short contiguous sentences, all of which have a pronounced trochaic iambic rhythm. For full discussion see D. Fisker, *Pindars erste Olympische Ode* (Odense 1990) ad loc.; W. Hanson, "The Winning of Hippodameia," *TAPA* 130 (2000) 19–40, at 25–26; and G. Howe, "Pindar's Account of Pelops's Contest with Oenomaus," *Nikephoros* 4 (1991) 55–120, at 72–83, who cites the earlier bibliography. S. Instone, *Pindar: Selected Odes* (Warminster 1996) 109, points out the alliteration.

[72] Such diachronic change may be reflected in a single iambic line identified by Jordan, *ZPE* 72 (1988) 255, in a long erotic curse (*SM* 49.54) inscribed on a lead tablet from Egypt: ἔντεινέ σου τὸ τόξον εἰς τὴν καρδίαν ("Aim your bow at the heart" of the victim), which in this charm is directed to a ghost (*nekydaimon*), but is probably derived from a spell originally addressed to some bow-bearing deity like Eros. This trimeter seems to be constructed along syntactic lines similar to many of the curative spells discussed earlier: it starts with an imperative, then adds the pathology (here the weapon), and ends with a body part.

care:

> θυμοῦ σε *παύσω* καί σε *πραϋνῶ* χολῆς·
> σῖγ' *ἐλθὲ* καὶ *διακράτει* σιγὴν φέρων·
> θυμοὺς φρενῶν *στῆσόν* τε πάντας καὶ *σβέσον*
> ὀργὰς ἀπάσας ὀργίλων <⏑ – ⏑ –>.

In each case the doubling of the verb is entirely pleonastic, since the second phrase is identical in its ideas and even its forms to the first. In other instances the pairing of verbs creates a drama of confrontation that threatens the demon or the disease in question:

> Ἡρακλῆς ἐνθά<δε> κατοικεῖ· μή 'σίτω μηθὲν κακόν (trochaic)
> Herakles lives here—let no evil enter!

> στάλητι μήτρα, μή σε Τυφῶν καταλάβῃ (iambic)
> Contract, womb, lest Typhon sieze you!

Both verses are well crafted, with the diaeresis or caesura separating the evil or misbehaving entity from the powerful supernatural ally, whose presence adds heft to the threat uttered by a mere mortal.

Finally it should be clear by now that the iambic tradition of protective and curative charms has a much earlier history than has previously been acknowledged. This is, of course, clearest in those cases where an oral version precedes the written one. Pliny's report, for example, of the Latin version of the command-charm suggests that this tradition can itself be dated to the late Hellenistic period. There is also good reason to think that the orally performed Anthesteria chant was used against ghosts in classical Athens and that the performative future and poetic craft of the first of the three anger-stopping incantations likewise point to its origins in an earlier period. Finally the parallels between the single-verse command-spells and Athena's alliterating command to the angry Furies suggest the use of similar iambic charms in classical Athens. But there is also mounting evidence that the Greeks deployed the written charms themselves much earlier. Indeed, the discovery at Gela of an early third-century version of the Kallinikos-inscription makes it more likely that Diogenes' fourth-century encounter with similarly inscribed charms in Cyzicus is historically accurate or at least plausible.

The practice, moreover, of engraving single protective verses on simple gold, bronze, and iron rings suggests that an inscribed amuletic ring mentioned by Aristophanes in his early fourth-century play *Plutus* may have also been part of this tradition (883–885):[73]

ΔΙ.   οὐδὲν προτιμῶ σου. φορῶ γὰρ πριάμενος
       τὸν δακτύλιον τονδὶ παρ' Εὐδάμου δραχμῆς.
ΚΑ.   ἀλλ' οὐκ ἔνεστι "συκοφάντου δήγματος."

Just Man: I have no concern for you, for I am wearing this ring purchased from Eudamos for a drachma!
Karion: But it does not have inscribed on it "for the bite of an informer."

The joke at the heart of this exchange is the equation of the predatory sycophant with noxious vermin or insects that bite or sting their victim.[74] I would suggest that the passage may refer to a simple ring inscribed with a single iambic verse, as in the command-spells discussed above. There are, moreover, a number of inscribed incantations ending with phrases similar to συκοφάντου δήγματος,[75] including a gemstone designed to

[73] See also Antiphanes fr.175 K.-A. for a ring used to cure an upset stomach.

[74] There is some disagreement about the text. Bonner relied on F. V. Fritzsche, *Quaestiones aristophanicae* I (Leipzig 1835) 215–216, who defended the text given above (the one found in most manuscripts), by pointing to the parallel at *Knights* 120–121, where the phrase ἔνεστιν "ἑτέραν ἔγχεον" ("it is written 'pour another one'") refers to words written out in a collection of oracles (Aristophanes uses the same expression four times in the *Birds* to refer to a written oracular text: 974, 977, 982, 989). A. H. Sommerstein, *Aristophanes Wealth* (Warminster 2001) ad loc., follows Fritzsche and cites Bonner's comments. Others, however, print the emendation of Coulon (οὐδέν ἐστι instead of οὐκ ἔνεστιν) and then translate, e.g. J. Henderson, *Aristophanes* IV (Loeb 2002): "But there is no antidote for an informer's bite."

[75] Bonner, *Studies* 4–5, and R. D. Kotansky, "Incantations and Prayers for Salvation on Inscribed Greek Amulets," in *Magika Hiera* 110–111, suggest that this passage provides evidence for inscribed magical rings that contained some similar phrase, e.g. σκορπίου δήγματος ("for the sting of scorpion"). See, e.g., the commands on a papyrus amulet of the fourth or fifth century CE, which close with a reference to the bites of noxious animals (*PGM* 3.2–6): διαφύλαξον τὸν οἶκον τοῦτον ... ἀπὸ ... δήγματος σκορπίου καὶ ὀφέως ("Protect this house … from … the bite of scorpion and snake"). Near the end of a sixth-century papyrus amulet against scorpions

ward off "every creeping thing" with a trochaic incantation.[76] It seems, in short, that although iambic incantations were not as pervasive in the ancient Greek world as hexametrical ones, they must now be recognized as a corpus large enough and geographically and chronologically diverse enough to merit continued and closer study.[77]

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we find a similar construction (*PGM* 2.5–7): ἀπάλλαξον τὸν οἶκον τοῦτον ἀπὸ παντὸς κακοῦ ἑρπετοῦ [καὶ] πράγματος ("Protect this house from every evil creeper [and] thing"). Note that the word πράγματος has the same shape and sound as the word δήγματος at the end of the Aristophanic trimeter and that the last three words have the closing cadence of an iambic trimeter. According to K. M. C. Dunbabin and M. W. Dickie, "Invida rumpantur pectora: The Iconography of Phthonos/Invidia in Graeco-Roman Art," *JAC* 26 (1983) 7–37, at 19, the use of the same magical amulets against both noxious beasts and *baskania* suggests that Aristophanes is also alluding to the envy of the sycophant.

[76] E. Drioton, "Un médaillon d'Horus sur les crocodiles," *ASAE* 45 (1947) 83–84, published a nearly round gemstone of grey jasper found in Egypt and of presumed Roman date; see Bonner, *Studies* 325, for discussion. It depicts Horus standing on crocodiles and holding in his hands a snake and scorpion. On the reverse is an invocation to Horus that ends with the command: διαφύλαξον τὸν φοροῦντ᾽ ἀπὸ παντὸς ἑρπετοῦ ("Protect the bearer from every creeping thing"), which is a truncated trochaic tetrameter.