Don C. Skemer

Magic Writ: Textual Amulets Worn on the Body for Protection

Textual amulets were portable devices filled with apotropaic text and images. They were believed to give the bearer magical protection against the demonic forces that were blamed for everything from plague and sudden death to toothache and bad luck. We now regard the once-common ritual practice of wearing textual amulets as magic, but in the far more uncertain world of the Middle Ages, they promised protection and healing to their users. Most often worn or carried on the body, textual amulets were one of the most widespread manifestations of the written word in the medieval world, and were used at all levels of society because of an almost universal belief in the magical power of particular words, symbols, and images to ward off evil. A concatenation of scriptural quotations, divine names, common prayers, liturgical formulas, Christian apocrypha, narrative charms or *historiolae*, magic seals, word and number squares, *characteres* (non-standard or magical script), devotional images, crosses and other religious symbols in amulets offered divine or supernatural protection to their bearers. Traditional Christian elements were supplemented over the centuries with elements borrowed from pseudo-Solomonic magic and Kabbalah. Medieval sources often referred to the textual amulet as *brevis* or *scriptura* in Latin and equivalent terms in the vernacular. For that reason, one can think of the textual amulet as a "magic writ"; that is, a piece of writing that looked like a brief official letter (*writ* in English), folded or rolled so that it could be worn on a person's body.[1]

In some societies, people have written powerful words and symbols directly on the body like a tattoo, but this practice was not common in the Middle Ages. Instead, people most often carried amulets made from pieces of writing material on which textual elements were written, inscribed, and eventually printed. The texts of protective amulets were generally confined to one side of a flexible writing support or *Textträger* — papyrus, metal sheets, parchment, or paper — that was then folded or rolled to reduce its size and make it more portable. Small devotional books could also be worn as amulets. Coincidentally, a *homo portans* armed with textual amulets can also be considered a *Textträger*, or bearer of texts for protection and healing. One could transport such amulets, depending on their size and number, by placing them

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1 This article was first given as paper entitled *Magic Writ: Textual Amulets from Papyrus to Printing* at the *Textträger-Kolloquium, Universität Heidelberg, Altertumswissenschaftliches Kolleg*, 7–8 June 2010. The author wishes to thank Professor Annette Kehnel for her suggestions. For a general introduction, see Skemer 2006; Barb 1963; Bartelink 1973; Bozóky 2003, 72-78; Bühler 1964; Cardini 1982; Duffy 1992, 267–298; Hansmann/Kriss-Rettenbeck 1966, 119–146.

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in containers, such as gold or silver suspension capsules, jewelled cases, cloth sacks, and leather pouches. Such containers ranged from purely utilitarian to highly decorated. Their drawstrings bound the amulets to the bearer, thus encircling the body protectively and positioning the amulets so as to offer general or specific protection.

People generally positioned protective objects over the heart because it was considered the gateway to the soul and the seat of memory. Shielding the heart with powerful words and images was believed to offer the bearer comprehensive protection against demonic invasion and evil spirits. When magical texts instruct someone to hang one or more amulets around one's neck, it was almost always assumed that they would thus cover the heart like a shield. When protection was the primary goal, people tended to wear textual amulets in this position night and day, just as many people today wear crucifixes and St. Christopher's medals over their hearts for good luck, more than as a sign of piety. Yet textual amulets could also be used in other ways, some of which may seem quite strange to us. They could be positioned on the body like bandages to cover wounds and afflictions; read devotionally like prayer books; gazed upon like portable icons; carried ceremonially into battle like shields; affixed to walls, like a broadside or poster; placed on valuable livestock, vineyards, or cultivated land to protect agricultural bounty; molded into ingestible substances such as bread or cheese and ingested as a form of sacred medicine; and rinsed in water so that some of the iron-gall ink would wash off to produce a potable word therapy. In addition to protective use, textual amulets could be used aggressively, in the manner of black magic or necromancy, by placing them in physical contact with other people in order to bind and control their actions.

Textual amulets were designed to be carried on the body, like certain types of medieval books that were produced in distinctive physical formats to make them easily transportable for personal devotion, itinerant preaching, calendar reckoning, medical reference, and other purposes. Among the best-known portable books were girdle books (*Beutelbücher*) and *vade mecum* folding books (*Faltbücher*), which were made in such a way that they could be suspended from one's belt. Small-format books of private devotion, narrow text rolls (*Textrolle*), wax writing tablets, and single-quire personal notebooks could be kept and carried in purses, sacks, satchels, and other leather or fabric containers. These could be worn over the shoulder by a strap like a modern handbag, or attached to the belt or girdle by a drawstring or two loops at the top.[2] Such books might contain textual extracts, bits of useful information, or

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2 There are relatively few extant examples of portable book containers. See Miner 1957, 55. For late medieval English pouches and cylindrical boxes of the sort that might have transported and stored amulet rolls, see Hobson 1929, 50. Pilgrims and other travelers with purses worn over the shoulder are common in late medieval art, as in Hampe 1902, 18 (fig. 12), 50 (fig. 39), 54 (fig. 44). For a recent study of pouches, purses, and other containers, illustrated with photographs and drawings, see Goubitz 2007. Such a purse worn on the belt is depicted in the illustrated manuscript of Laurent de Premierfait's French translation of Boccaccio's *Decameron* (Vatican Library, Pal. Lat. 1989), executed around

even magical recipes and exemplars for textual amulets. Pockets began to be added to clothing at the end of the Middle Ages, offering another means of carrying objects.[3] But books and valuables (e.g. coins, seals, keys) that a *homo portans* transported in sacks, purses, and pockets were there primarily for reference. Unlike other portable texts, amulets had to be properly positioned on the body to be effective.

A comprehensive study of the history of textual amulets requires physical evidence. Yet relatively few artifacts have survived because they were most often worn continuously on the body, rather than being safely stored in cupboards, chests, book boxes, and the sturdy containers that helped preserve codices, which were often protectively encased by wooden boards with leather covering and metal hardware (bosses, clasps). Even those textual amulets which survive in libraries and museums have often defied correct identification because of their unconventional texts and formats. The study of amulets has also been hampered because many theologians and canon lawyers viewed their use as superstition and idolatry. Yet at the same time, the community of Christian believers, including local clergy and much of the laity, did not hesitate to make or use textual amulets. Since the Enlightenment, another impediment to study has been a cultural prejudice against amulets and other forms of popular magic as irrational superstitions practiced by backward or primitive peoples. Textual amulets have often been studied in relatively narrow categories, sharply delimited by time, place, and culture, although they were a widespread ritual practice, crossing geographical boundaries.

When studying medieval textual amulets, like their predecessors among Egyptian magical papyri, one must remember the distinction between the inert and activated forms of texts. Richard Gordon properly distinguishes between "the receptaries or formularies on the one hand, which contain a whole variety of bare or 'inert' exemplary texts, and applied magic on the other [...] which have been written out onto a material surface, a *Textträger*".[4] This is a useful distinction, though it does not mention texts that were set down from memory without a written exemplar. We need to study extant amulets in their activated form—that is, as applied magic. Textual elements were assembled from written exemplars and other sources, then copied onto separate

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1411–14 for Duke John the Fearless of Burgundy; the manuscript was once part of the Bibliotheca Palatina in Heidelberg. The illustration accompanies Boccaccio's story about a love amulet, called *ung brief* (*Decameron* 9, 5), which Calandrino is readying for use on Niccolosa, the object of his affections. On his belt is a leather purse, in which he might have carried the amulet prior to using it by touching Niccolosa's body. Calandrino's friend Bruno, who had prepared the love amulet, is shown handing it to him. The miniature depicts a sequence of events in the story over time, including the unsuccessful seduction attempt. Cf. *Boccaccio Decameron* (1989), 209–10, reproducing the miniature on fol. 175r of the manuscript and transcribing the relevant text. For a discussion of Boccaccio's story, see Skemer 2006, 182–183.

3 Yarwood 1978, 325–326.

4 Gordon 2002, 70.

Fig. 1: Egyptian papyrus amulet, fourth–fifth century

writing supports for the use of people who are sometimes identified in the text by first name, and worn on the body in conjunction with other ritual practices. Extant artifacts provide important physical evidence, but must be supplemented whenever possible by contemporary textual sources that provide historical context about production and use. Studying textual amulets from an archeological standpoint extends the purview of codicology by rediscovering lost and ephemeral writing formats.

Innumerable papyrus amulets have survived in Egypt, and these document the gradual and incomplete transition from pagan to Christian magic. Fairly typical is a

twenty-line Greek fever amulet of the fourth or fifth century A.D. (Princeton Papyri Collections, II, 107), measuring 15.5 × 13.0 cm when unfolded (fig. 1). The text includes a series of divine names and badly misquoted passages from the Lord's Prayer, Psalm 90, and Isaiah.[5] Magical texts written on perishable writing supports for personal use were ephemeral by nature, but they survived in the refuse heaps of ancient Oxyrhynchus and other places in Egypt because of that land's arid environment and unique ways of discarding or reusing papyri, whether literary, sub-literary (including compendia of magic and textual amulets), or documentary. Elsewhere in the Mediterranean world, extant amulets often took the form of small inscribed sheets of precious or base metal, which could be inserted into suspension capsules with loops that permitted them to be worn around the neck. Textual amulets continued to be produced in the successor states of the Roman Empire, including the Byzantine Empire and the Islamic world. In the Latin West, the Church was the agent responsible for disseminating Christianity, along with ancient ritual practices, to pagans. In Western Europe, the earliest surviving amulets tend to be metal. Those that have survived in moist soil can be found with metal detectors. For example, the recently discovered Mercian royal hoard of Anglo-Saxon metalwork in Staffordshire, containing some 1500 gold and silver pieces that date from ca. 650 to the early eighth century, includes an inscribed gold band based on Psalm 67:2 or Numbers 10:35, which could have been an amulet.[6]

As in Patristic literature, we find scattered references to particular textual amulets (no longer extant) in theological treatises, sermons, chronicles, hagiography, penitentials, and other medieval sources through the twelfth century. These references suggest that the clergy, enjoying a virtual monopoly on reading and writing, quietly condoned or actively facilitated amulet production and use, even though canon law officially discouraged the practice as an exercise in idolatry and superstition. For example, Reginald of Durham (d. 1173) included an interesting reference to textual amulets in his collection of legends about the miracles of St. Cuthbert.[7] There we learn that Bishop Hugh de Puiset (or Pudsey) of Durham (r. 1153–98) had employed a layman named Richard of Wolviston (or Richard the Engineer) to rebuild Norham Castle, on the River Tweed in Northumberland, and add a stone keep to it. Around his neck, Richard wore a silk sack filled with small parchment amulets (*scripta*) based on the names of Christ and on scriptural quotations, probably including the apotropaic prologue of the Gospel of John (1:1–14), which had been used in textual amulets since antiquity. A Durham monk learned about Richard's amulets and offered him a small

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5 Kase 1936, 102–103, no. 107.
6 "When Moses had lifted up the ark, he said 'Rise up, Lord, and may your enemies be dispersed and those who hate you be driven from your face". Concerning this discovery, see Leahy/Bland 2009.
7 Raine 1835, 94–98 (chapter 47), 111–112 (chapter 54). There are other medieval literary accounts of such magic kits assembled from disparate sources, such as the one owned by the itinerant book illuminator Jean Gillemer around 1470. See Lecoy de la Marche 1892, 396–408; Bozóky 2003, 77–78.

piece of St. Cuthbert's burial shroud, a holy relic, which Richard added to his silk sack. Like other medieval people, Richard wore powerful names and words as a guarantee of divine protection rather than as a personal display of faith. But he carried them along with other magical or apotropaic objects.

Literary accounts about textual amulets were not mere stock tales. Rather, they describe a common ritual practice that transcended barriers of class, gender, and age. They could appeal to a broad cross-section of society because they placed limited demands on reading ability and were deeply rooted in faith, common beliefs, oral tradition, and collective memory. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, higher levels of literacy facilitated navigation of more textually complex amulets. Producers were now not just clerics, but also lay practitioners of medicine and the magical arts, and even local charlatans and healers. In the period of expanded lay literacy between the Black Death and the advent of printing, there was a proliferation of practical handbooks, medical compendia, commonplace books, household miscellanies, books of secrets, and other manuscripts containing versions of amuletic texts. Latin and vernacular versions of such texts were also copied onto flyleaves, pastedowns, margins, and other unused writing surfaces in Books of Hours, prayer books, devotional miscellanies, and other books.

Innumerable manuscripts containing non-activated amuletic texts are preserved in European and American libraries. For example, the Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg holds dozens of *Artzneibücher*, *Rezeptesammlungen*, and other compendia from the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries. The *Zauberrezepte* in these manuscripts include many amuletic texts that could serve as exemplars for textual amulets written on separate writing supports and activated for personal use. The Speyer *Arzneibuch* of 1321 (CPG 214) at Heidelberg includes individual German vernacular blood-staunching or childbirth amuletic texts, found amid common charms for verbal (not written) use, pharmaceutical recipes, and instructions for phlebotomy or other medical procedures.[8] Nearly identical copies of amuletic texts can be found in sources from different places. For example, two fourteenth-century manuscripts in the Princeton University Library contain a common narrative-style Latin fever charm based on an apocryphal story about St. Peter sitting outside Jerusalem's Latin Gate. One was copied informally on the inside back wrapper of a northern Italian legal miscellany (Princeton MS. 25). The amuletic text is in its activated form for use by Pietro and Alasia. It occupies a space of about 4.5 x 9.5 cm, similar in dimension to a small textual amulet, which perhaps served as an exemplar (fig. 2). The other is an exemplar in a southern French medical miscellany, chiefly in the Limousin dialect of the Occitan language, with some Latin, for use by a medical practitioner (Garrett MS. 80).[9]

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8 Schulz 2003, 181–182; Miller/Zimmermann 2005, 103–107, 454.

9 Princeton University Library, Princeton MS. 25: "Contra febrem † In nomine patris et filii et spiritus sancti amen. ante portam Iherusalem jacebat petrus, et aliis superuenit dominus et ait illi, quid jaces
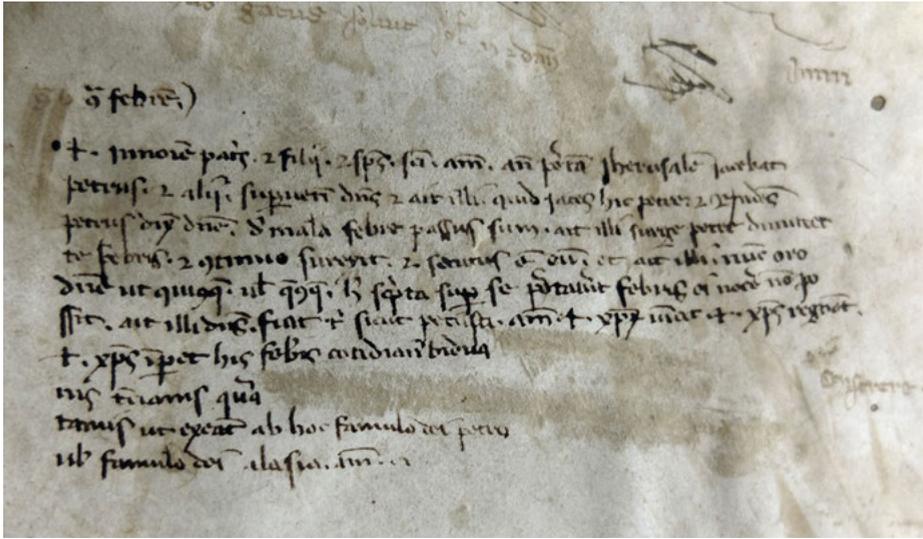
Fig. 2: Fever amulet copied in an Italian legal miscellany, fourteenth century
(detail from back wrapper)

While exemplars for textual amulets are very common, amulets in their acti-
vated form, often including the owner's given name, are a relative rarity in libraries
and museums. Careful study of the texts, images, physical presentation, and prove-
nance of extant amulets from the thirteenth to seventeenth centuries show how texts,
symbols, and images were combined to provide specific or general protection; and
how memory, reading, vocalization, performance, ritual, interactivity, visualization,
body-measurement, complex folding patterns, Christian numerology, the relation-
ship between producers and users, and other factors contributed to enhance magical
efficacy. Embedded instructions in Latin or vernacular languages provide insight into
the unwritten rules for fabricating and wearing textual amulets.

One of the earliest and most interesting textual amulets is from the mid-thirteenth
century: Canterbury Cathedral Library, Additional MS. 23.[10] It is complex enough that
one might wonder if it was created as a cleric's personal *grimoire*, or formulary of

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hic petre? et respondens petrus dixit domine, de mala febre passus sum. ait illi surge petre dimittet te
febris, et continuo surexit, et secutus est eum, et ait illi nunc oro domine ut quicumque uel quodcum-
que haec scripta super se portauerit febris ei nocere non possit. Ait illi dominus, fiat tibi sicut petisti.
Amen † christus uincit † christus regnat † christus imperat his febris cotidianis, biduanis, tercianis,
quartamis(!) ut exeatur ab hoc famulo dei petro uel famula dei alasia. Amen". The Latin text in Garrett
MS. 80, under the vernacular rubric "Breu per febre" is edited in Corradini Bozzi 1997, 139.
10 For a full description of the manuscript and a transcription of the text, see Skemer 2006, 199–212,
285–304. There is also a brief description in Ker 1977, 306–307.

amuletic texts, like a small rectangular folding book, though the lack of rubrication would have been a serious impediment to reference use. The manuscript appears to have been owned later by landowning families in the county of Kent, certainly in the fifteenth century, and at that point would have been used as an amulet. The parchment sheet has seven vertical and three horizontal folding creases; these numbers, sacred to Christians, were probably intentional. Yet it was small enough to be carried on the body, despite thirty-two thicknesses of parchment when folded and possibly rolled slightly for insertion into a sack or other container that the owner could wear. Many of the textual components of the Canterbury amulet are accompanied by explanations of their magical efficacy and intended applications. The user is reminded eight times about the benefits of wearing powerful words and symbols *super se* and is twice prompted to speak powerful names aloud and say the *Pater noster* three times. There are several references to the Heavenly Letter, a popular amuletic text that existed in many versions, based in part on the ancient apocryphal letter from Christ to King Abgar V of Edessa. The text of the Canterbury amulet contains numerologically significant lists of divine, angelic, and demonic names in the three languages that Christians held sacred (Hebrew, Greek, and Latin). Traditional Christian *nomina sacra* are supplemented by names commonly found in pseudo-Solomonic texts.[11]

On the Canterbury amulet's verso are seventeen pseudo-Solomonic seals and three blank seals, as well as five small magical figures, which offered multiple forms of protection to those who wore them or looked at them. Based on pseudo-Solomonic books of magic circulating in the West since the twelfth century, the seals promised protection against fire, storm, flood, sudden death, and other misfortunes. Two other seals were said to be those that the archangel Gabriel had delivered to Charlemagne and St. Columba. These seals are designed to complement bits of the dense text, presented with the built-in redundancy of traditional magic. On the amulet's face are six long lists of divine names, as well as a dense band of figures and circles based on *Chi-Rho* monogram and signs of the cross, incorporating divine names, including *AGLA* and *Alpha et Omega*. The Canterbury amulet offered all-encompassing protection through a concatenation of amuletic texts that overlaid conventional white magic, some of which went back to the early centuries of Christianity, with pseudo-Solomonic seals and figures of more recent origin.

Far more common than multi-purpose amulets like the Canterbury amulet were smaller folding amulets on parchment or paper. Their texts addressed specific dangers and afflictions or offered general protection against evil spirits and misfortune. The

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11 Names such as *anofenaton*, *cirice*, *craton*, *hameth*, *hebreyel*, *iothe*, *mefron*, *nomos*, *occinoos*, *orion*, *panthon*, *saday*, *sampra*, and *usion* are quite similar to those found in the *Sworn Book of Honorius* and other pseudo-Solomonic texts. For a very useful compendium of such elements in pseudo-Solomonic manuscripts, see Hedegård 2002, 219–291 "Index vocum mysticarum atque nominum daemonicorum, angelicorum et divinorum".

Fig. 3: German or Bohemian amulet, fourteenth century

earliest dated and best-known textual amulet of this sort is the Chartula of St. Francis of Assisi, containing the *Laudes Dei altissimi* and *Benedictio Fratris Leonis*, written on two sides of a piece of parchment measuring 13.5 × 10.0 cm.[12] St. Francis prepared it on Monte Alverno in 1224, before receiving the Stigmata (bodily marks matching the Five Wounds of Christ on the Cross), for his spiritual companion Brother Leo, who would wear it on his body for years (Assisi, Sacro Convento, MS. 344). It functioned as a prayer amulet, filled with divine names, blessings, and quotations from scripture, probably composed from memory. The *Chartula* survived because it was written by St. Francis and eventually venerated as a holy relic. But most extant textual amulets were not venerated relics. They were smaller folding amulets for ordinary people, like the one for Pietro and Alasia. When such amulets survived, it was often by accident, as a result of having been bundled with old family papers or reused in bookbindings.

Among such chance survivals is a textual amulet of German or Bohemian origin, probably dating from the second half of the fourteenth century.[13] Preserved at the

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12 For studies and editions of the *chartula*, see Lapsanski 1974, 18-37; Esser 1976, 134–146; Boccali 1978, 258–263; Lodi 1979, 1686, no. 3373; Langeli 1994, 103–159; Langeli 2000, 30–41, 79–82.

13 Austin, University of Texas, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, Popular Imagery Collection, box 11, no. 422. The unidentified book from which it was recovered had five sewing stations,

University of Texas at Austin, this 36-line parchment fragment, measuring 16.0 × 23.0 cm in its present mutilated state, survived because it was reused as a front paste-down in a book (fig. 3). The magical efficacy of the amulet, internally called *scriptura*, is largely based on standard lists of divine names in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin.[14] The text also includes the names of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus; liturgical formulas, such as "Christus vincit, Christus regnat, Christus imperat"; cryptic series of majuscule letters and characters, interspersed with red crosses; and other textual elements. The amulet was made for someone named Wenczlinus, the Latin diminutive of Wenzel, which is the German equivalent of the Bohemian name Venceslav. His name is written six times in red ink, including in the supplicant's appeal to Christ for protection against all evil ("custodi me famulum tuum Wenczlinum ab omni malo"). Wenczlinus is promised divine protection from all dangers to his body and soul ("ab omne periculo corperis et anime"). Brief quotations from a version of the Heavenly Letter were copied twice from the same exemplar and assure the owner that whoever carries these words on their body will not drown, die in a fire, or suffer death (that is, without having received the last rites of the Church). Despite naming a male supplicant, the text promises successful childbirth. This is not unprecedented in amulets incorporating the Heavenly Letter and suggests that the amulet was available for family use.

The principal visual element in Wenczlinus's amulet is the Crucifixion scene—Christ on the cross surmounted by the *Titulus Crucis* or *INRI* inscription. Christ's body is twisted, as was common in German artistic renderings of the Crucifixion at this time, and he is flanked by the Virgin Mary and the Evangelist John. This pen-and-ink drawing is tinted in red, blue, and green watercolors. Above the Crucifixion scene are two horizontal swords (tinted red), which may refer to the liturgical formula "Christus superat gladium", often used in amulets. Between the two swords is an arrow, perhaps a visual reference to plague arrows. To the right of the Crucifixion scene is a seal at the center of which is a three-barred cross, symbolizing the Crucifixion.[15] The cross has

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boards with five bosses, and the shelf mark A27. For a digital image and description (containing misleading information), go to: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/taro/uthrc/00484/hrc-00484p2.html (Retrieved 28.8.2014).

14 The principal list of divine names reads as follows, with losses (due to the mutilation of the manuscript) and conjectural readings in square brackets: "Incipiunt nomina domini nostri ihesu christi. Sother, messias, aios [i.e. hagios], emanuel, theos, panton, crondon [i.e. craton], kyrie, eloe, noysion, saluator, primogenitus, principium et uia, ueritas, sapientia, uirtus, paraclitus, ego, ego sum qui sum, qui est mediator, agnus, ouis, uitulus, aries, primus, ymago, gloria, splendor, mons, fons, uitis, flos, [ianu]a, petra, angelus, sponsus, pastor, sacerdos, propheta, [sanct]us, eternus, immortalis, rex, ihesus christus, iudex, lapis, omnipotens, misericors, karitas, dauid, stirps, saluator, radix(?), oluia [i.e. alleluia?] †† tetragramaton, cla[ ], sother, uis, ihesus christus". Another list reads, "Decem sunt nomina apud hebreos qui deus nomina [ ] eloy ely, eie, messias, sother, emanuel, sabaoth, adonay".

15 The cross is not a three-barred Western ecclesiastical cross. Instead, it appears to be related to the Eastern Orthodox or Slavonic cross, which has narrower bars at the top (for the *INRI* inscription) and at the bottom (for the *Suppedaneum* or footrest). In Byzantine and Russian art, the third cross-bar is

curled ends, perhaps a visual reference to Christ's twisted body. Along the rim of the seal, interspersed with crosses, is an abraded inscription that seems to read, "† AGLA † CCOCR † HELA". The first and third words are divine names, ultimately of Hebrew origin, and common in magical text. The second is a more cryptic series of majuscule letters, which might have stood for "Crux Christi O Christe Rex". Below the Crucifixion scene is the Greek letter *Alpha* surmounted by a cross pattée (*Tatzenkreuz*), both in red. Wenczlinus's amulet has four horizontal and three vertical creases, perhaps using Christian numerology to enhance the efficacy of its text and images. This folded amulet would easily fit inside a pouch or sack worn over the heart. In this amulet, textual elements and Christian imagery offered general protection as well as specific protection in a time of pestilence.

Other amulets, such as birthing amulets for parturient women, offered specific protection. Among the most common birthing amulets to survive are late medieval English and French amulet rolls dedicated to St. Margaret of Antioch, the patron saint of pregnant women. During the Middle Ages, her legend was closely associated with protection for women during pregnancy and childbirth. Such an amulet roll could be worn on the body in anything from a simple white linen *sachet* to a decorated leather case. Exterior surfaces of enclosures could even be decorated with religious images or liturgical formulas, which identified the contents and visually reinforced the textual amulets placed inside. Perhaps the finest example is a *cuir ciselé* cylindrical case or *capsa*, which encloses a six-membrane St. Margaret roll of 1491 (397.0 × 9.8 cm), probably of Parisian origin (New York, The Pierpont Morgan Library, M1092).[16] When closed, the fitted case and removable cap measures approximately 5.0 cm in diameter and 10.5 cm deep. On the exterior surface are three panels with cut-leather and painted portraits of St. Margaret with her crucifix and the Dragon, St. Peter with keys, and St. John the Baptist with the Lamb of God.[17] This case does not appear to have had loops for a carrying strap, so it must have been transported in a sack of some sort, perhaps a velvet or embroidered sack like those illustrated in late medieval

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usually tilted, but not in the amulet for Wenczlinus. See Grube 1957; Seymour 1898, 359. For another three-barred cross (albeit without curled ends) in a seventeenth-century German magic roll see footnote 26.

16 For descriptions of the roll and case, see Arnim 1984, 709–712; Plotzek 1987, 246–247, no. 86; Sotheby's 1995, no. 192: "The prayer to St. Geneviève, patron saint of Paris, suggests that it was written in Paris. The flanking of St. Margaret's image on the case with St. John the Baptist and St. Peter possibly implies that the pregnant woman was called Jeanne and her husband Pierre". The prayer related to childbirth reads as follows: "Pro muliere parturiente. Presta quaesumus omnipotens deus qui humanum genus multiplicans: quique ancille tue uterum dignanter fecundasti da ei cum salute anime et corporis in pariendo virtutem et ad sacrum baptisma tu me scientis uteri fructum pervenire. Per christum dominum nostrum amen".

17 Goubitz 2007, 11: "Containers of leather, made durable by tanning, naturally present an invitation to decoration. This was done especially on amulet containers and receptacles for fire-making equipment, because of their great significance to everyday life".

Fig. 4: French birthing kit, fifteenth–seventeenth century

Annunciation scenes. If worn on the belt or supplied with drawstrings of appropriate length, the sack and its powerful contents could be positioned over a pregnant woman's abdomen. However, the roll could also be removed for devotional and amuletic use.

The amulet roll opens with a badly rubbed miniature of St. Margaret emerging from the Dragon. Repeated opening of the roll and devotional rubbing contributed to the miniature's present condition. Below the miniature is a well-known *Vie de Saincte Marguerite*, written in 666 octo-syllabic verses, with the incipit "Après la saincte passion". In Christian numerology, 666 was the Number of the Beast (Revela-

tion 13:17–18), so the number of verses was very likely a veiled reference to St. Margaret's triumph over the Devil in the form of the Dragon. Toward the end of the roll are three brief Latin and French prayers appealing for the intercession of St. Margaret, St. Geneviève (patron saint of Paris), and the Virgin Mary; and an eight-line Latin prayer related to childbirth ("Pro muliere parturiente"). As attested by the level of presentation, the female supplicant ("ancilla tua") was probably a woman of relatively high social status, perhaps named Jeanne. While the prayer does not include instructions for amuletic use, the Latin prayer begins about 43.0 cm from the end of the roll and therefore could have been placed face-down on the parturient woman's abdomen.

Textual amulets were often kept together and used in groups. This was most common in "birthing kits" for use during labor and childbirth. A recently reunited kit from southern France shows how separate amulets could be used either singly or collectively (Princeton University Library, Princeton MS. 138.44).[18] In the seventeenth century, the kit was owned by a woman surnamed Lacroix, in Nogaro (Midi-Pyrénées région, Département de Gers), then a town with fewer than two thousand inhabitants, situated in Gascon wine country, about 150 kilometers from the Spanish border.[19] The birthing kit consisted of at least two handwritten and three printed amulets, which came to be kept in a purse (15.0 × 9.5 cm) of embroidered white silk, decorated with tulips and other flowers in red, green, and blue (fig. 4).[20] The design of the fabric was inspired by Indian chintz imported to England and Holland in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century.[21] The fabric was most likely reused from a woman's dress or bed hanging. The purse has a long strap made from a linen tape of the sort used in making clothes; it is approximately 50.0 cm in overall length, so that when

18 Concerning a French birthing kit of the thirteenth or fourteenth century, which a family in Aurillac, Département de Cantal, kept in a small rectangular linen sack (12.5 × 9.5 cm), see Aymar 1926.
19 Camus 1997, 2, 318–324.
20 There is evidence that Christians wore silk reliquary pouches around the neck as early as the tenth century. Some amulet sacks were similar in appearance to square reliquary purses with drawstrings. Extant embroidered examples survive from the thirteenth to eighteenth centuries. Cf. Belting/Jephcott 1994, 302–303; Owen-Crocker 2004, 265; Cronin 1998, 145. Most of the extant examples were for liturgical use in churches and monasteries. For thirteenth-century liturgical silk reliquary pouches from Sint-Truiden, Kerk O.L.Vrouw Hemelvaart and Tongeren, Kerk O.L. Geboorte, see the online database of Brussels, Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage, at http://www.kikirpa.be/ (Retrieved 28.8.2014). Images of these and many later examples of silk reliquary pouches can be found by searching the database under *bourse liturgique*. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, English monasteries sometimes used silk or linen pouches, often decorated to store royal charters and other folded parchment documents with wax pendant seals. Silk and linen were also used for the linings and drawstrings of these muniment pouches. One of the extant examples, made of silk and embroidered with gold flowers, was used to house a grant made by St. Thomas Becket as Archbishop of Canterbury to the Priory of the Holy Trinity, London. For a discussion and illustrations, see Palgrave 1836, cxxxvii–cxxxviii, cxxxvii, cxlviii, plate V.
21 For examples, see Crill 2008, 21, fig. 16; [34], plate 1.

worn around the neck, the sack and its contents would dangle lengthwise over the woman's abdomen, perfectly positioned to offer the woman comprehensive reproductive aid for fertility, pregnancy, labor, and childbirth.

The oldest of the textual amulets in the kit is a bifolium removed from a fifteenth-century French manuscript, most likely a Book of Hours that included a section of brief amuletic texts in French and Latin, promising protection to those who in good Christian devotion meditated about the Passion while gazing at particular apotropaic images. Women who could not bear children were instructed to place on their bodies a prayer accompanied by the painted image of the Measure of Christ. A second French charm ("orayson") relates to the Side Wound of Christ, which the Roman centurion Longinus had made with his lance. Here the text promises protection to those born under its red lozenge-shaped wound. The parchment manuscript leaf serving as a wrapper includes a Latin amuletic text, called a "brevet" in the French prefatory explanation. The bifolium and wrapper folded down to a small rectangle and may well have been used separately before being included in the present birthing kit sometime in the seventeenth century. At this time, much of the text in this amulet was copied by hand on a piece of paper, perhaps offering insurance against loss and allowing more than one person at once to benefit from the amuletic text, which did not contain the user's name.[22]

Other seventeenth-century items in the silk sack include two small broadside amulets on paper. The first of the two, possibly unique, is a French prayer to Our Lady of Montserrat ("Oraison tres deuote à la glorieuse V[ièrge] Marie de Montserrat, bonne en toute tribulation"). At the top of the broadside is a mutilated seal of the Abadia de Santa Maria de Montserrat, in Catalonia, depicting its Romanesque statue of *La Moreneta*, or Black Madonna, in the Benedictine abbey's mountainous landscape, with the motto "[Maria Virgo] Semper Letare". The prayer is accompanied by instructions about amuletic birthing use: "Item toute femme estant en trauail d'enfant, luy mettant ladite Oraison sur elle, tantost sera deliurée". The second is a French and Latin amulet, with an illustration of the Side Wound of Christ, promising successful childbirth and other forms of protection to those who offer a prayer based on the Side Wound of Christ ("Cest la vraye mesure de la playe du sacré coste de Nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ").[23]

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22 Similarly, there are two versions of a ca. 1400 plague amulet from Pisa for a man named Domenico (Pisa, Biblioteca Universitaria, MS. 736, nos. 2–3). For a discussion, see Skemer 2006, 178–180; Del Guerra 1933. A portion of Del Guerra's transcription is reprinted in Cardini 1982, 72. For a brief description of this textual amulet, among the manuscripts received from the Fondo Camici-Roncioni, see Mazzatinti 1916, vol. 24, 62, no. 726 (5) "[Orazioni contro la peste (sec. XV)]".

23 The text of the second amulet, printed in Paris, concludes with broad promises of protection, reminiscent of the Heavenly Letter: "Ceux qui prient auec foy la mesure de la Playe des coste de IESVS sont preserués de beaucoup de dangers specialement du feu, de l'eau, de la tempeste, de la peste, de toute blesseure, & des Demons: este de dangers les femmes qui sont en trauail d'enfant & les fait deliurer heureusement, &c.".

The two broadsides were folded up like amulets. A dealer's description that came with Princeton MS. 138.44 mentions that the sack also contained a printed ribbon, approximately 90.0 cm in length, with a Spanish inscription related Our Lady of Montserrat ("Medida de neustra s[eñ]ora de Montserrate"). No longer extant, the ribbon was long enough — the word *medida* refers to the measure of the Virgin Mary's abdomen when pregnant — to function as a birthing girdle encircling the parturient woman. Perhaps a pilgrim who had purchased it at the abbey, which had operated a printing operation since 1499/1500, brought the printed ribbon back.[24] Any of the printed items could have been purchased from an itinerant colporteur, who in a sense was also a *Textträger* when carrying and displaying his wares.

Accompanying these pieces is a contemporary paper wrapper. Judging from its folds and stains, the wrapper was folded in a lozenge shape to resemble the apotropaic Side Wound of Christ. Several red wax seals kept the textual amulets and broadsides inside the wrapper, so that the various items could be applied collectively to a woman's abdomen in the manner of a birthing girdle. On the wrapper is an inscription in a large round hand of the mid-seventeenth century, describing the contents as "Reliques De made[mois]elle Lacroix de Nogaro à l'usage des amis". The honorific title *mademoiselle* then meant that Lacroix was a laywoman, whether married or not. Perhaps she

Fig. 5: German amulet roll, seventeenth century (detail of three sections)

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24 Concerning the Montserrat press, see Roure/Marín/Parer 2007, 203, 215–216; Altés I Aguiló 1999.

was a local midwife or a wise woman dispensing reproductive magic. While these textual amulets were certainly not sacred relics as defined in canon law, they were no doubt considered such by Lacroix and her friends, and perhaps by users in the eighteenth century, if the silk purse dates from then.[25] Whether used individually or collectively, over a considerable span of time, these textual amulets were believed to deliver God's power to the faithful.

Contemporary with such birthing kits were German magic rolls based on a concatenation of traditional white magic, pseudo-Solomonic magic, and Christian Kabbalah. A fine example, recently acquired by the Princeton University Library, is a mid-seventeenth-century German amulet roll with a multi-purpose text, written on the face of a four-membrane parchment roll measuring 215.0 × 6.0 cm (fig. 5).[26] When fully rolled, it would easily fit into a pouch worn on the body to protect the bearer from a wide array of misfortune and adversaries. The name of the German amulet roll's owner is not indicated, but this does not mean that its contents were not activated for personal use. At the same time, the roll could conceivably also serve as a portable source of exemplars that could be copied out on small slips of parchment or paper for use as amulets.[27] Most of the thirty-seven seals on the roll offer the bearer divine protection

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25 In terms of canon law, there were classes of relics: first-class relics included instruments of a saint's martyrdom or notable body parts; second-class relics could include books and other bits of writing copied by saints and thus having come in contact with them, like a saint's garments; and third-class relics were other artifacts that came in contact with saints later, cf. Dooley 1931, 4.

26 Princeton University Library, C0938, no. 496. This roll was formerly in the private collection of Dr. Ernst Klug, professor of medicine at the Institut für Rechtsmedizin der Freien Universität, Berlin, and was donated by Bruce C. Willsie to the Princeton University Library. Another example from Germany is a five-membrane magic roll, usable in whole or part as an amulet. It was written on parchment (271.0 × 9.5 cm) in the first half of the seventeenth century. This amulet roll was sold in Munich at a Hartung & Hartung auction, sale no. 124, 3–5 May 2010, lot 50; and then again in London, Sotheby's, 7 December 2010, lot 34. On the roll's face are thirty-four pseudo-Solomonic and alchemical seals executed in green, red, and other colors. Some seals have German inscriptions explaining its value against a particular source of misfortune, from envy and hate to snakebites and witchcraft: "Neid vnd Haß, Vergiftung, Feindschaft, Zauberey, Feinde, Unversechener Zuefall, sturmb vnd Vngewiter, armueth vnd triebsaal, Thüer vnd Schlangen büß". Additional amuletic texts are written along the length of the dorse, including a three-barred cross and adjacent amuletic text based on divine names, the travel charm "Christus autem per medium illorum ibat", and other elements written in a German *cursiva currens*. The roll includes the name Johannes Michael, presumably the owner. A brief description of the *Zauberrolle* and selected images of magic seals is at http://www.hartung-hartung. de (Retrieved 28.8.2014) (24-134772); and Sotheby's 2010, 32, no. 34. An eighteenth-century amulet roll of magic seals and text, with writing on both sides, survives in Linz, Oberösterreichisches Landesmuseum, Inv.-Nr. F 10.418. Several images are available at http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Zauberrolle_1.jpg.

27 In describing a seventeenth-century English magic roll, which measured only 2.7 cm thick when fully rolled (London, British Library, Additional MS. 25311), W. Sparrow Simpson speculated that its seals could be "transcribed singly, on pieces of vellum, and carried about the person; or possibly, they were to be engraved on places of metal, and worn as medals". See Sparrow Simpson 1884, 314.

against evil spirits, disease, and death. The roll begins and ends with the Tau cross and the Tetragrammaton, the ineffable name of God (*YHWH*) written in Hebrew script (יהוה) and also transliterated ("Iod, He, Vau, He"). Particular series of majuscule letters (*magische Buchstabenreihe*) separated by crosses or *punctus* are meant to look cryptic and magical but can be decoded. At the beginning of the roll, the Tetragrammaton is accompanied by the inscription "† C † M † B †" (that is, "clarissimae memoriae benedictus"). One of the seals offers protection against the Devil and the plague through cryptic inscriptions similar to those found on contemporary religious medals and magic rings of that time period, such as "V.R.S.N.S.M.[V]" ("Vade retro satana. Nunquam suade mihi vana") and "N.D.S.M.D." ("Nunquam draco sit mihi dux"), both found in medals of the Cross of St. Benedict; and "Z.D.I.A." ("Zelus domus libera me. Deus expelle pestem de loco isto. In manus tuas Domine commendo animam meam. Ante coelum et terram Deus erat".), using conjurations and the Seven Last Words as protection against the plague.[28]

Several images are based on traditional Christian iconography, such as the ancient Chi-Rho monogram, inscribed "In hoc vince"; the Sacred Heart, inscribed "Ihesus Maria Joseph"; and a heart-shaped Crucifixion scene, accompanied by the hymn "Rex gloriae, venit in pace", written in a German cursive hand of the mid-seventeenth century. The text includes crosses of every description (including Greek and Tau), sacred numerology (for example, the number 72), and *characteres*. The text contains Hebrew names of God; and a large Tau cross, with an appeal for divine aid ("Per signum crucis Thau libera me Domine in nomine patris † et filius † et spiritui sancti † Amen".). Even more prominent are elements influenced by pseudo-Solomonic magic, including pentacles, triangles, squares, five- and six-pointed stars, and multi-rayed figures; divine names, such as *AGLA*, *Adonai*, *Elohim*, and *Alpha et Omega*; and retrograde writing. Unlike Jewish Kabbalistic examples written entirely in Hebrew, textual amulets based on Christian Kabbalah tend to use Hebrew script restrictively. In the German amulet roll, Hebrew is chiefly used in connection with the Tetragrammaton, which was configured into powerful apotropaic forms (seals, crosses, a mandorla, and a word square); and into ideograms based on the letter *Aleph*.[29] The amulet roll concludes with a large figure of the Tetragrammaton arranged as a Tower of Fortitude, surmounted by a figure of the Scale of 10 and a cross, though Kabbalists assigned the Tetragrammaton a gematria numerological value of 26. This figure is accompanied

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28 Canéto 1863; Elworthy 1895, 401.
29 On the importance of the Tetragrammaton in Kabbalah, as well as Kabbalistic elements in amulets, see Scholem 1987, 323–330; Wallace Budge 1961, 366–379, 390–405. For comparison, Bridgeman Education (London, The Bridgeman Art Library) offers digital images of at least three Jewish Kabbalistic amulets, which were written on parchment or paper in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries (Cavallon, France, Musée Juif Comtadin, image numbers XIR 230801, XIR 23082; and Jerusalem, Israel Museum, image number IMJ 328804). http://www.bridgemaneducation.com (Retrieved 28.8.2014).

by an apotropaic inscription from Psalm 60:4 ("Turris fortitudinis ante occidentem inimicis").

As with the French birthing kit, the German amulet roll was based on magical texts available in manuscript or print. The compiler's principal sources included manuscripts and printed compendia of ritual magic. One of the main sources was *Clavicula Salomonis*, the Latin version of a pseudo-Solomonic handbook, which was circulated in manuscript form and consulted in the libraries of practitioners of astrology and the magical arts in the seventeenth century. Hebrew word squares and related figures were borrowed from Christian Kabbalah. Some of the figures can be found in printed books, such as Henry Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim's (1486–1535), *De occulta philosophia*.[30] Copied from the *Clavicula* was the amulet roll's most vivid talismanic seal. This was the Face of Shaddai (first pentacle of the Sun), a personification of a Hebrew name of God, invoking its power and offering good luck to the possessor, with the Latin inscription "Ecce faciem et figuram eius per quem omnia facta sunt et cui obediunt omnes creaturae". Several pentacles have inscriptions from Psalms, promising triumph in arms; for example, the fifth pentacle of Mars, with Psalm 90:13 ("Super aspidem et basiliscum ambulabis et concalcabis leonem et draconem"); the sixth pentacle of Mars, with Psalm 36:15 ("Gladius eorum intret in corda ipsorum et arcus ipsorum confringatur"); and the sixth pentacle of Jupiter, imperfectly quoting Psalm 21:17–18 ("Foderunt manus meas et pedes meas et enumeraverunt omnia ossa mea"). Also copied from the *Clavicula* is the second pentacle of Saturn, which incorporated the all-purpose ancient Roman magic word square "SATOR AREPO TENET OPERA ROTAS".

In most cases, powerful words, symbols, and images worn on the body were far more important than the particular writing support or means of copying. Early printing supports this conclusion. Building on the popularity of textual amulets during the Middle Ages, mechanical reproduction on paper in the fifteenth century offered a new way to meet the growing lay demand for religious articles of all categories. From the 1420s, at least, decades before the revolutionary application of moveable type to printing, paper block prints of devotional images might add Christian prayers or popular jingles suggesting amuletic use. These could serve as amulets when based on imagery such as St. Christopher with the Christ child, and the Instruments of the Passion (*arma Christi*) or Mass of St. Gregory. In the second half of the fifteenth century, printed amulets and devotional broadsides coexisted with woodcuts and metal-cuts

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30 Ribadeau Dumas 1972; Clavicula Salomonis 2000; Henry Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim used some of the figures in *De occulta philosophia*, see Nowotny 1967, cxxvii (*Scala denarii*); ccxxx (word square based on the Tetragramaton, with additional letter *aleph*); cclxxvii (three seals based on the Chi-Rho monogram, with inscription *In hoc signo vince*, referring to the legend of Constantine's vision of the Christogram *IC XC NIKA* before the Battle of Milvian Bridge in 312 A.D., and a seal of Solomon, with six-pointed star, and a seal based on Hebrew letters).

incorporating brief devotional or amuletic texts. Printers often left the non-activated form "N[omen]" and a blank space for the owner's name. Handwritten amulets provided early printers with exemplars, physical models, and a commercial inducement to batch-produce broadside amulets along with devotional texts and images, indulgences, and other cheaply printed forms of popular literature.

Unlike handwritten amulets, which had been custom-produced like manuscript books, paper amulets could be printed on speculation, at a low unit cost. Paper amulets were printed in press runs from a few hundred to a few thousand in expectation of meeting a robust market demand, though they were inherently ephemeral and thus survive in meager numbers, if at all. For example, the Dominican convent of San Jacopo di Ripoli in Florence did a thriving business in producing textual amulets and devotional broadsides for sale, many of which were purchased wholesale by street peddlers and sold off one by one. Between 1476 and 1482, the ecclesiastical press established at the Dominican convent of San Jacopo di Ripoli in Florence printed about twenty-five devotional broadsides, including amuletic texts that could serve an amuletic function if they incorporated iconography or themes associated with protection.[31] One of the Ripoli broadside amulets, based on the Measure of Christ, was printed around 1480. A broadside paper amulet (10.5 × 22.0 cm) of the "Orazione della misura di Cristo", may be a surviving example of those printed at the Ripoli press (New York, The Pierpont Morgan Library, PML 16529). As with other early printed amulets, few examples survive despite the number of identical copies printed.[32] The transition from textual amulets from manuscript to print culture in the fifteenth century was never complete. In subsequent centuries, handwritten and printed amulets continued to co-exist and to borrow freely from one another, as they both did from oral tradition. Moreover, textual amulets continued to be used along with relics, pilgrim's badges and *ampullae*, religious figurines, and other objects believed to be sources of divine protection or good luck. Such objects included cheap trinkets produced in urban workshops, sold at pilgrimage sites, and hawked by illiterate street peddlers.

The study of textual amulets in the Middle Ages and early modern era sheds light on *homo portans* as *Textträger*. Amuletic texts were written on flexible writing supports that contributed to their portability, and they were among the most common objects that people carried with them. The choice of writing support was generally a matter of convenience; that is, producers tended to use the most prevalent writing

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31 Bühler 1937; Skemer 2006, 228–230, fig. 9; Rouse/Rouse 1988, 37–38, note 40; imprints listed on 70–94 include the following broadside prayers: nos. ii–vi, viii, x, xii, xiii, xvii–xix, xxix, xliii, xlvii, xlviii, l, liv, lix, lxi, lxvii, lxix, lxxv.

32 Printed amulets with single amuletic texts were as ephemeral as handwritten amulets. In the years 1512–20, for example, the Memmingen printer Albrecht Kunne produced a vernacular broadside amulet (23.2 x 14.2 cm) based on the Heavenly Letter ("Himmelsbrief: Ain abgeschrift des brieffs den gott gesant hat auff sant Michelsberg"), which survived in only one copy, now lost, at the Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg. See Schlechter/Ries 2009, 542, no. 926.

material available locally at the time (papyrus, metal sheets, parchment, or paper). Amulet producers in the Middle Ages, like their ancient forebears, occasionally used sacralized writing materials, such as sheets or strips of parchment removed from manuscripts of scripture or liturgy. As with ancient medical authorities like Marcellus Empiricus of Bordeaux, instructions in medieval handbooks and recipe collections might call for the use of virgin parchment (pergamena virginea or charta non nata) to guarantee ritual purity and enhance efficacy; pigeon's blood or myrrh to be used as ink; and a complex sequence of magical rites and operations, accompanied by retrograde writing and other practices associated with necromancy and aggressive magic. There is no way to know how common such exotic writing materials and rituals may have been in the magical universe of the Middle Ages. Producers of textual amulets needed a basic level of literacy and thus tended to be local priests and monks providing conventional Christian magic as part of pastoral care. Exotic writing practices and materials were no doubt more common among lay practitioners of magic.

By assembling powerful words and images into a material text activated for a particular person, one imbued them with special meaning. In the popular imagination, wearing textual amulets continuously on the body offered more lasting protection than that of verbal charms, which could only be uttered from time to time. Unlike religious medals and jewelry with space for brief inscriptions, textual amulets written on flexible writing supports could accommodate a more extensive, multi-purpose text, expandable over time, in a physical format that was at once lightweight, flexible, portable, concealable, inexpensive, and disposable. Folding sheets or small rolls allowed one to combine and overlay a range of amuletic texts in a physical format that facilitated use and enhanced power. Different physical configurations had particular advantages: folding created columns and cells for particular texts; rolls curled so that they surrounded the body protectively, most distinctly when they were wrapped around a pregnant woman's abdomen. Parchment was the best writing support for *de luxe* amulets with miniatures, which, like illuminated manuscripts, survived in disproportionate numbers. By the fifteenth century, paper was inexpensive enough to become the writing support of choice for the production and distribution of nearly identical printed amulets, as well as devotional broadsides and indulgences with possible amuletic functions.

In conclusion, textual amulets are best studied over the *longue durée*, in relationship to medieval book history and popular belief. In this way, one can see that textual amulets were one of the most enduring phenomena in the magical universe. They have been an integral part of the material culture of the *homo portans* over the course of thousands of years, from the ancient world through the Middle Ages. The production and use of textual amulets continued for millennia despite changes in their contents, methods of production, and writing materials. Textual amulets have proved to be relatively immune to changing geo-political realities, have thrived on religious syncretism, and stubbornly defied European rationalism and modern science. Even

today, they live on in cyberspace, where Internet vendors still offer the protective shield of written magic to people in need.

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