A Blood-Staunching Charm of Royal 2.A.XX and its Greek Text

Abstract: The *Royal Prayerbook* (British Library MS Royal 2.A.XX) contains several related prayers for staunching a flow of blood. One of these entries contains several portions of Greek text written in Greek characters. This paper suggests that these Greek sections come ultimately from a background of Greek incantations and amuletic texts, which were likely transmitted through Late Antique medical sources.

Keywords: Royal Prayerbook, Charms, Greek, Veronica, Insular scholarship, early medieval Britain

The *Royal Prayerbook* is one of four collections known together as the early Insular prayerbooks. The *Royal Prayerbook* has received notably less attention than the most famous member of this group, the *Book of Cerne*, in part because the latter includes several full-page illuminations. All four collections are related by date and provenance, all having almost likely been copied in the late eighth or early ninth century in western England.[1] While a certain amount of material overlaps among the collections, it has been generally accepted that they were organised to reflect different themes (with the Royal manuscript perhaps focusing on *Christus medicus*, Christ as the healer of mankind).[2] The learned interests of the Royal collection have also been noted, as some of its texts include phrases in Greek or Hebrew, and other items, such as the litany and Creed, must have been translated from Greek originals.[3] One text in the collection also contains words in Greek characters, a charm for staunching blood.

This text is one of several related charms (or prayers) apparently aimed at staunching excessive bleeding.[4] Three of these texts are closely related, sharing an overlapping motif drawn from the fifth-century poet Sedulius. There is furthermore a fourth blood-staunching text apparently from a different tradition in the same manuscript as well as one in a twelfth century hand. This article will focus in particular on the longest and most complex of these pieces, although I plan to discuss the other blood-staunching texts in a later publication. This longest charm occurs within the main body of the manuscript on folio 49v and reads:

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[1] The most significant study of these manuscripts is Michelle P. Brown, *The Book of Cerne: Prayer, Patronage and Power in Ninth-Century England* (London, 1996). The only edition of Royal 2.A.XX is published as an appendix to A. B. Kuypers's edition of the *Book of Cerne*: *The Prayer Book of Aedeluald the Bishop, Commonly Called the Book of Cerne* (Cambridge, 1902) 201-25.

[2] Brown, *The Book of Cerne,* 152; Jennifer Morrish, 'Dated and Datable Manuscripts Copied in England during the Ninth Century: A Preliminary List', *Medieval Studies* 50 (1988) 512-38, at 519-21.

[3] Brown, *The Book of Cerne*, 152. The litany and creed found in the Royal manuscript are Latin translations of an earlier version of the Greek litany and Creed found in MS Galba A. xviii. Lapidge suggests both pieces have an Antiochene origin and likely travelled to England with Archbishop Theodore in the seventh century: Michael Lapidge (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Litanies of the Saints* (London, 1991) 13-25.

[4] I use the term 'charm' for consistency with earlier scholarship. However, I do not mean to suggest that these texts were seen as unorthodox or 'magical' by their authors or users.

+ IN nomine s(an)c(t)ae trinitatis atque omnium s(an)c(t)orum adsanguinem restringendum scribis hoc COMAPTA OCOΓMA CTY/ ΓONTOEMA EKTYTOΠO + Beronice. Libera me de sanguinibus d(eu)s d(eu)s salutis meae CACINCACO YCAPTETE. per d(omi)n(u)m i(e)h(su)m xp(istu)m. Xp(rist)e ad iuua + Xp(rist)e adiuua + Xp(rist)e ad iuua. + Riuos cruoris torridi contacta uestis obstruit fletu rigante supplicis arent fluenta sanguinis Beronice Libera me de sanguinibus d(eu)s d(eu)s salutis meae. AMICO CAPΔINOPO/ ΦIΦIPON IΔPACACIMO fodens magnifice contextu fundauit tumulum usugma d(omi)ne adiuua.[5]

Ignoring the Greek text for the moment, a translation might read:

+In the name of the holy trinity and all of the saints, to restrain blood you write this: COMAPTA OCOΓMA CTYΓONTOEMA EKTYTOΠO + O Veronica, deliver me from bloods, O God, God of my salvation/health. CACINCACO YCAPTETE. Through the Lord, Jesus Christ. Christ, help + Christ, help + Christ, help + the touch of his clothes blocks the rivers of hot blood, by the moistening weeping of the supplicant the flows of blood dry up. O Veronica, deliver me from bloods, O God, God of my salvation/health. AMICO CAPDINOPOΦIΦIPON IΔPACACIMO. *Fodens magnifice contextu fundauit tumulum usugma*. Lord help.

Several items can be noted here. The first is the recurrence (near the beginning and end of the charm) of words taken from Psalm 50. The entire Vulgate verse reads: *libera me de sanguinibus, Deus, Deus salutis meae, et exsultabit lingua mea justitiam tuam* ('deliver me from blood, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall extol thy justice').[6] In the biblical context these words seem to mean something more like 'deliver me from the guilt of bloody acts' and have frequently been interpreted as referring to David's guilt for the death of Uriah, the husband of Bathsheba. However, it is easy to see how this line might seem appropriate in a context that mentions suffering caused by blood-related ailments. It is worth noting that the entire line (rather than simply the first half, as here) occurs in a closely related charm for blood staunching found in Basel OUB MS F III 5a, a manuscript from the area of the Anglo-Saxon mission in Francia.[7]

We can also recognise in the lines beginning *riuos cruoris torridi* a verse taken from Sedulius's abecedarial hymn *A solis ortus cardine*. Sedulius' works were well known in Anglo-Saxon England, most significantly his *Carmen paschale*, which was used as a model by both Aldhelm and Bede.[8] The lines quoted in the blood charm are the 'r' verse in the hymn and depict Christ's healing of the woman with the issue of blood: 'the touch of his clothes blocks the rivers of hot blood, by the moistening weeping of the

[5] Spacing and punctuation reflect the manuscript text; expansions indicated in the manuscript have been expanded in parentheses.
[6] Edgar Swift with Angela M. Kinney (ed.), *The Vulgate Bible*, 6 vols, III. The Poetical Books, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library, 8 (Cambridge, MA, 2011) Ps. 50 (51):16-17 (translation Douay-Rheims, 1899).
[7] This manuscript contains the only examples of blood charms using this motif found outside the *Royal Prayerbook*. I will discuss the relationship between these texts and the charms in the *Royal Prayerbook* in a separate article.
[8] See Carl P.E. Springer, *The Manuscripts of Sedulius: A Provisional Handlist* (Philadelphia, 1995) 7-8. For a detailed discussion of the influence of Sedulius' poetry upon Aldhelm, Bede, and Alcuin, see Patrick McBrine, *Biblical Epics in Late Antiquity and Anglo-Saxon England: Divina in Laude Voluntas* (Toronto, 2017) 223-69.

supplicant the flows of blood dry up'. Beginning with the *Acta Pilati* (an apocryphal text dating from the fourth century or earlier), this woman was sometimes identified with the name Veronica (or Βερενίκη in Greek).[9] This is undoubtedly the figure meant in the charm's invocation of 'Beronice', with the first letter reflecting a Greek spelling of the name. These elements all make perfect sense within a text directed towards stopping excessive bleeding, particularly of a menstrual kind, and generally reflect a learned environment interested in apocryphal traditions, the alphabet, and abecedarian texts (elements found throughout this collection and in the other early Insular prayerbooks).[10]

More difficult to understand have been the Greek elements within the charm. As mentioned above, there are two other related charms within the *Royal Prayerbook* and two more in Basel OUB MS F III 15a which all share the lines from Sedulius's poem and have other similarities, yet none of these other texts contain Greek words or phrases. To me, this suggests that there was a developed tradition of Anglo-Saxon blood-staunching charms and that the Greek elements of this charm were tacked onto existing material in order to create a longer charm. If this is the case, one wonders where these lines came from and what they might have meant to the compiler of the charm. I will discuss the first two lines in Greek and their possible origin before turning to the third line.

The first Greek characters on folio 49v read: COMAPTA OCOΓMA CTY/ ΓONTOEMA EKTYTOΠO. The last part of this line is reasonably straightforward, with EMA EK TY TOΠO almost certainly being meant to read τὸ αἷμα ἐκ τοῦ τόπου ('blood from the place'). This reading was posited by A. A. Barb who also suggested that 'from the place' was a common Greek euphemism for female genitalia.[11] The preceding word CTYΓON could be read as στῦγον from στυγέω 'to hate'. However, Barb has suggested an emendation to στῆσον, an imperative of ἵστημι, meaning 'to stand still, stop'.[12] Written in a majuscule script like that used in the manuscript, a C may easily have been misread as the graphically similar Γ. This seems a quite convincing suggestion, as στῆσον is a common command found on Greek amulets and charms and often occurs in a medical context of preventing the continuation of pain or a bodily discharge. There are several examples of this same term being used for blood staunching, typically in the phrase: 'stop the blood!'[13] If we accept this emendation, the line would then have the same general meaning as the Latin words *coniuro sta* ('I command you: stop') found in two other blood charms in the Royal manuscript.

This interpretation still leaves us with the first two words in the line: COMAPTA OCOΓMA. As was first pointed out by Barb, COMAPTA looks to be the magical word *soumarta* (σουμαρτα) common on Greek magical gems. This similarity has been

[9] Through a later but related tradition, this woman would also become identified with a holy image of Christ sometimes referred to as the vernicle or Veronica's veil.
[10] For more background on these texts, see Patrick Sims-Williams, *Religion in Western England: 600-800* (Cambridge, 2009) 273-327; Jennifer Reid, '*Caro Verbum Factum Est': Incarnations of Word in Early English and Celtic Texts* (PhD. diss. Toronto 2007) 158-227.
[11] Alphons Augustinus Barb, 'Die Blutsegen von Fulda und London', in Gundolf Keil and others (ed.), *Fachliteratur des Mittelalters: Festschrift für Gerhard Eis* (Stuttgart, 1968) 485-93, at 488.
[12] Barb, 'Die Blutsegen', 489.
[13] Barb, 'Die Blutsegen', 489. For discussion of this term in magical formulas from the Roman period, see Christopher A. Faraone, *The Transformation of Greek Amulets in Roman Imperial Times* (Philadelphia, 2018) 190. For further examples, see the collection of blood charms given in Alphons Augustinus Barb, 'St. Zacharias the Prophet and Martyr: A Study in Charms and Incantations', *Journal of Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 11 (1948) 35-67, esp. VI, VII, VIII, X.

independently suggested to me by experts on Greek magical texts.[14] The term appears to come from a Semitic verb *ŝmr* and originally may have meant something like 'guard!' or 'protect!' and is typically found written on the reverse of gemstones from the Roman period.[15] Nevertheless, by the period of the *Royal Prayerbook*, it would likely simply have been understood as a word of power. I have yet to encounter any convincing interpretation of ΟCΟΓΜΑ, but I would suggest it also comes from a background of Greek magical texts.

The second group of letters (presented as CACINCACO YCAPTETE in the manuscript) poses some difficulties. Howlett's solution is to suggest the reading σα σινσασο υσαρτετε, which he read as τὰ συντάσσω εἰσαρτᾶται and translated as 'I bind things together. It is bound together'. But this is not the obvious meaning of the word συντάσσω which normally means to 'put together' or to 'arrange' or εἰσαρτάω which is not attested in Greek would instead probably mean something like 'it is hung in'.[16] Another reading of this line was presented by Lloyd Daly who suggested the reading κακινκάκως ὑπάγετε. The word ὑπάγετε is the second person plural imperative meaning 'go!', a command used by Christ in Matthew 8:32, when he tells the demons inhabiting two demon-possessed men to flee into a herd of pigs. The word κακινκάκως he takes as a double adverb meaning something like 'miserably'.[17] In this interpretation, this line would be a type of exorcism, presumably originally intended to drive away sickness. Although this interpretation has a certain appeal, ὑπάγετε is quite far from the manuscript reading, YCAPTETE. What is more likely, I believe, is that we have more words coming from Greek magical texts here. Barb has suggested a division σασιν σασου σαρτετε and compares these words to other bipartite and tripartite series beginning with 's' in Greek magical texts, such as SANVI SANSANVI SAMANGALAPH, SASI SAMACHIOTH, or SISISRO SISIPHERMOU.[18] Other examples of series beginning with 's' can be seen in medical recipes of Marcellus of Bordeaux, including three examples related specifically to curing bleeding.[19]

Although these readings are debatable, it appears clear that the charm found on folio 49 of the Royal Prayerbook is incorporating material from the corpus of Greek magic. The question follows: where would the author(s) of this charm have encountered these texts? One of the main routes through which magical texts passed from the ancient period to the Middle Ages was through medical handbooks. Medical remedies involving incantations or amulets in Greek characters are preserved in a number of Late Antique

[14] Dr Roy Kotansky and Prof. Christopher Faraone have both suggested this reading to me in personal correspondence.

[15] For a discussion of possible etymologies of this term and references to where it occurs, see Roy Kotansky, *Greek Magical Amulets: The Inscribed Gold, Silver, Copper, and Bronze Lamellae Part I Published Texts of Known Provenance* (Opladen, 1994) 252-53. See also Faraone, *The Transformation of Greek Amulets*, 185-86.

[16] I am thankful to Dr Roy Kotansky for his help with this analysis.

[17] This would be a late adverbial construction: Ed Kurtz, 'Das Adverbium κακυγκάκως', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 3 (1894) 152-55.

[18] Barb, 'Die Blutsegen', 489. For a more general discussion of the use of repetition and germination to form tripartite groups in charm texts as well as in Marcellus' collection, see Alderik H. Blom, 'Gaulish in the Formulae of Marcellus of Bordeaux? Methodological Considerations' in Stefan Zimmer and others (ed.), *Kelten am Rhein. Akten des dreizehnten Internationalen Keltologiekongresses* (Mainz am Rhein, 2010) 13–24, at 16-19.

[19] See the summaries provided in Faraone, *The Transformation of Greek Amulets*, Appendix F.

medical compendia, most notably those compiled by Marcellus of Bordeaux and Alexander of Tralles whose works were popular in the West.[20] They are also found in smaller and fragmentary works.[21] Although I have not been able to identify the exact source, it seems very likely that at least the first section in Greek came from this type of collection. The medical origin of the source is betrayed in the introduction *ad sanguinem restringendum scribis hoc* ('to draw back blood write this'). We can compare this introduction to similar remedies from Marcellus' *De medicamentis*:[22]

> De sanguine ipso qui fluit nomen eius in fronte scribe, cui medendum est, adversum profluvium narium, statim subvenies. Scribes carmen hoc in charta virgine et linteo ligabis et medium cinges eum vel eam, quae patietur de qualibet parte corporis sanguinis fluxum: sicy cuma cucuma ucuma cuma uma maa. 10.33-34.
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> [Concerning the blood which flows, write his name on the forehead of him who is to be healed against the flow of nostrils; you will immediately help. You will write this charm on clean parchment and you will tie it with a linen thread and encircle the middle of him or her who suffers from a flow of blood from any part of the body: sicy cuma cucuma ucuma cuma uma maa.]
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> Ad aurem eiusdem partis, de qua per narem sanguis fluit, dici oportet ter novies σοϰσοϰαμ συϰυμα; etiam postea similiter dices. Scribes in charta virgine et collo suspendes lino rudi ligatum tribus nodis ei, qui profluvio sanguinis laborat: ψ α ψ ε ψ η ψ ε ψ η ψ α ψ ε. 10.69-70.
>
> [To the ear on the same side from which blood flows through the nostril, it is necessary to say three times nine times: σοϰσοϰαμ συϰυμα. Likewise, you will also say this afterwards. You will write on clean parchment and you will suspend from the neck with a rough linen thread with triple knots bound to him who suffers from a flow of blood: ψ α ψ ε ψ η ψ ε ψ η ψ α ψ ε.]

These examples are all drawn from Book 10, which deals with problems of the nose as well as other conditions. As we can see in these examples, Marcellus recommends making amulets using writing in both Latin and Greek alphabets. In three of the examples above, there is no clear meaning to the words given. In the first such example, the function of the charm seems to relate to the diminishing of the words; perhaps as the

[20] Marcellus compiled his medical work *De medicamentis* in Latin around the turn of the fifth century. Alexander of Tralles' great work, *Θεραπευτικά*, was written in Greek in the sixth century but was later abridged and translated into Latin. For an introduction to the Latin version of Alexander's text, see D. R, Langslow, *The Latin Alexander Trallianus: The Text and Transmission of a Late Latin Medical Book*, Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies, monograph 10 (London, 2006). For background on how these authors were instrumental in the transmission of formulas from the ancient world into the Christian era, see Michael Zellmann-Rohrer, *The Tradition of Greek and Latin Incantations and Related Ritual Texts from Antiquity through the Medieval and Early Modern Periods* (PhD Berkeley 2016) esp. Introduction and Chapter 4.

[21] Some of this material is summarized in English translation by Faraone, *The Transformation of Greek Amulets*, Appendix A-I.

[22] Text taken from Marcellus Empiricus, *De medicamentis*, ed. Georg Helmriech (Leipzig, 1889) 110, 112.

word gradually disappears the bleeding will vanish also.[23] I know of no convincing interpretations of the other two inscriptions and suggest that we have here *voces magicae* without a clear meaning, such as we appear to find in the blood staunching charm discussed in this article.[24] It is clear that at least portions of Marcellus' text, as well as at least some of the Latin text of Alexander of Tralles, circulated in England in a slightly later period, as they provide the Latin source text for numerous Old English remedies occurring in *Bald's Leechbook* and the other Old English medical collections.[25] There is no reason to think that such texts were not in circulation earlier in the period, and, indeed, the instructions in the Royal blood charm (*ad sanguinem restringendum scribis hoc*) seem to indicate that a similar type of medico-magical source was available to the author of this charm.

Finally, I will turn to the third Greek addition found within the prayerbook entry: the text that reads AMICO CAPDINOPO/ ΦΙΦΙΡΟΝ ΙΔΡΑCACIMO, which is perhaps the most intriguing portion of the charm. As has been noted by several previous scholars, the line is an imperfect palindrome.[26] This is best appreciated when the line (presented continuously in the manuscript) is given in boustrophedon form:

AMICOCAPDINOPOΦ
I
OMICACAPΔINOPIΦ

As we can see, there are several errors here if we would like to see this as a perfect palindrome. The letters alpha and omicron (very similarly shaped letters in the manuscript) have been confused twice, a Latin D has replaced the delta in the first line, and an I and O have been confused once. As was first pointed out by Lloyd Daly, the corrected palindrome very closely resembles an entry found in one other source, the collection of short poems known as the *Greek Anthology*, or, in this case, more specifically the *Planudean Anthology*. The *Greek Anthology* is a collection of poems, mostly epigrams, surviving in two separate manuscripts dating from the tenth and fourteenth centuries. This collection incorporated earlier anthologies of poems, with the

[23] For a discussion of this amulet, see Christopher A. Faraone, 'Does Tantalus Drink the Blood or Not? An Enigmatic Series of Inscribed Hematite Gemstones' in Ueli Deli and Christine Walde (ed.), *Antike Mythen: Medien, Transformationem und Konstruktionen* (Berlin, 2009) 248-73, at 268-69. Faraone suggests tentatively that the original word may have been κῦμα ('wave' or 'flood') referring to the flood of blood being stopped.

[24] Meid has suggested that numerous formulae recorded in Marcellus's text (including the first two given above) may be derived from words in Gaulish: Wolfgang Meid, *Heilpflanzen und Heilsprüche*: *Zeugnisse gallischer Sprache bei Marcellus von Bordeaux* (Innsbruck 1996) 48-49. However, it seems more likely that most of these phrases belong to the Greco-Roman magical tradition: Blom, 'Gaulish in the Formulae of Marcellus of Bordeaux?'.

[25] For a discussion of the Latin sources used in Old English medical corpus, see Maria Amalia D'Aronco, 'How "English" is Anglo-Saxon Medicine? The Latin Sources for Anglo-Saxon Medical Texts', in Charles Burnett and Nicholas Mann (ed.), *Britannia Latina: Latin in the Culture of Great Britain from the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century* (London, 2005), 27–41, and Emily Kesling, *Anglo-Saxon Medical Texts in their Literary Context* (forthcoming) Chapters 1, 2.

[26] For discussion, see Barb, 'Die Blutsegen', 489-90; Lloyd Daly, 'A Greek Palindrome in Eighth-Century England', *The American Journal of Philology* 103 (1982), 95-97, at 96; David Howlett, 'Hellenic Learning in Insular Latin: An Essay on Supported Claims', *Peritia* 112 (1998) 54-78, at 63-65.

result that the entries within range widely in date from the early classical period to the Byzantine period.[27]

The two extant manuscripts of this collection contain similar but not identical contents, and this palindrome is among the entries found only in the later of the two manuscripts, Codex Marcianus gr. 481. This version of the text was put together by the Byzantine monk Maximus Planudes in Constantinople. Our palindrome occurs along with two others on folio 65r of the Marcianus manuscript. These read as follows:

> Ἀθλήσας ἤδη πώλῳ πηδήσας ἦλθα.
> Ἀμήσας ἄρδην ὀροφηφόρον ἤδρασα σῆμα.
> Ἀλύξας ὥρην ἠνεμωμένην ἤρωσα ξύλα[28]

As mentioned above, all three texts are palindromes and are sometimes referred to as *karkinoi stichoi* ('crab verses') by classicists, playing on the idea that they can be read from either side. Although these texts are not found in the earlier manuscript (known as the Palatine Anthology), Cameron has suggested that a gap in the manuscript indicates they were meant to be included and that they were part of the no-longer extant Anthology of Cephalas, written around the turn of the tenth century in Constantinople.[29] Another palindrome grouped with these texts was found written as a graffito in Pompeii, so it is possible that the lines above may also be of a much earlier date.[30] So far as I am aware, however, the blood charm found in the Royal manuscript is the only known outside occurrence of any of the three lines listed above.

The line employed in the Royal manuscript is a dactylic hexameter and appears to describe the construction of a building. I would offer the translation: 'after cutting [the thatch], I constructed the lofty roof-bearing sign/tomb'.[31] In his edition of the *Greek Anthology*, Beckby refers to this line and the two other palindromes next to it as 'sinnlose Worte' ('meaningless words').[32] However, Daly has suggested that this line should be understood as alluding to the text of Homer's *Iliad* 24.451. This part of the poem occurs during the scene in which Priam approaches the dwelling of Achilles to reclaim the body of his son Hector, and we learn that the Myrmidons have thatched it with grass:

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[27] Alan Cameron discusses the relationship between the Greek Anthology and earlier collections of epigrams in detail in *The Greek Anthology: From Meleager to Planudes* (Oxford, 1993).

[28] Hermann Beckby, *Anthologia Graeca*, 4 vols. (Munich 1958), vol. 4, XVI, 387b. [After the struggle I came bounding on a foal/ after cutting [the thatch], I constructed the lofty roof-bearing sign (or tomb)/ after escaping from the windblown spring, I sowed wood.] My translations, made with reference to Beckby's translation.

[29] Cameron, *The Greek Anthology*, 273. Scribe C has made a note that in the Palatine manuscript that eleven lines are to be supplied in a lacuna. This corresponds with the lines occupied by the palindromes in the *Planudean Anthology* (which includes two longer palindromes in addition to those listed above). Cameron suggests that these texts must have been located in the chapter for anathematic epigrams in Cephalas' anthology.

[30] Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum (*CIL*) 4.2400b; cited in Michael Squire, 'Texts on the Tables: the Tabulae Iliacae in their Hellensitic Literary Context', *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 139 (2010) 67-96, at 81.

[31] Howlett offers an interesting alternative interpretation of the palindrome line, suggesting it was meant to read: αιμα σου σαρδινος ροφει ιεφορ σονιδρας νος αμια [The sardine stone sucks your blood doolb ruoy skcus enots enidras eht] ('Hellenic Learning', 64-65). However, the fact that such a similar line occurs in the *Greek Anthology* leads me to favour Daly's suggestion.

[32] Beckby, *Anthologia Graeca*, 559.

ἀλλ᾽ ὅτε δὴ κλισίην Πηληϊάδεω ἀφίκοντο
ὑψηλήν, τὴν Μυρμιδόνες ποίησαν ἄνακτι
δοῦρ᾽ ἐλάτης κέρσαντες: ἀτὰρ καθύπερθεν ἔρεψαν
λαχνήεντ᾽ ὄροφον λειμωνόθεν ἀμήσαντες:
ἀμφὶ δέ οἱ μεγάλην αὐλὴν ποίησαν ἄνακτι

[But when they came to the hut of Peleus' son, the lofty hut which the Myrmidons had built for their king, hewing for it beams of fir– and they had roofed it over with shaggy thatch, gathered from the meadows; and around it they made for him, their king, a great court with thick-set stakes.][33]

Daly noted not only the depiction of a building being thatched but also the fact that the dwelling is described as 'lofty'. Although the word used in the Homeric episode for 'lofty' is not the same as that in the palindrome, the description is similar.[34] The palindromes found in the *Greek Anthology* should probably be viewed alongside other intellectual but playful word-games popular in Greek and Roman literary society. Perhaps the best-known example of such 'word-play' from the antique period is the famous ROTAS-SATOR square, which can be read both horizontally and vertically, and backwards and forwards.[35] The square was very popular not only in the ancient world but also in the Middle Ages (a version is found in the margins of an eleventh century Anglo-Saxon manuscript, MS CCCC 41).[36] Word squares also existed in Greek.[37] Scholars have suggested these types of palindromic texts 'draw self-conscious attention to the mediating *form* of language' and reflect the 'bookish self-consciousness of the [Hellenistic] age'.[38] Such texts can also be read alongside riddles, which have also been found inscribed on walls as graffiti. A large number of riddles are found in the *Greek Anthology*, which represents the single largest source of such texts in ancient Greek.[39] If the palindrome found in the Royal manuscript was originally intended to refer to Achilles' dwelling in Iliad 24, as Daly suggests, I wonder if perhaps we should understand this as some type of riddle as well. Homeric events were a common source material for riddles.[40] Although Daly associated the depiction with the Homeric scene,

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[33] Homer, *Iliad*, translated by A. T. Murray, rev. by William F. Wyatt, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA, 2014) 24.448-52. Greek text: *Homeri Opera*, David B. Monro and Thomas W. Allen (ed.) (Oxford, 1920).
[34] In the Iliad the word ὑψηλός is used instead of ἄρδην in the palindrome text but both can mean 'lofty'.
[35] The literature on the word square is vast. For a brief introduction to this and similar squares, see Rebecca R. Benefiel, 'Magic Squares, Alphabet Jumbles, Riddles and More: The Culture of Word-Games among the Graffiti of Pompeii' in Jan Kwapisz, David Petrain, Mikolaj Szymanski (ed.), *The Muse at Play: Riddles and Wordplay in Greek and Latin Poetry* (Göttingen, 2013) 65-79, at 67-70.
[36] For discussion of this square within the context of the Corpus manuscript, see Karen Jolly, 'On the Margins of Orthodoxy: Devotional Formulas and Protective Prayers in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 41' in Sarah Keefer and R. H. Bremmer (ed.), *Signs on the Edge: Space, Text and Margins in Medieval Manuscripts* (Leuven, 2007) 135–83, at 169 and Kesling, *Medical Texts in Anglo-Saxon Literary Culture* (forthcoming) Chapter 3.
[37] Benefiel, 'Magic Squares', 70.
[38] Squire, 'Texts on the Tables', 81; Karen Gutzwiller, *A Guide to Hellenistic Literature* (Oxford, 2007) 42-43.
[39] Christine Luz, 'What has it Got in Its Pocketses? Or, What Makes a Riddle a Riddle?' in *The Muse at Play: Riddles and Wordplay in Greek and Latin Poetry* 83-99, at 83.
[40] For some examples, see Luz, 'What has it Got in Its Pocketses?', 88-91

the words used are not found in the Homeric account and the term σῆμα, which would in this interpretation have to be understood as something like 'dwelling', normally means 'sign' or 'token'. It is also possible that the other two palindromes listed alongside this one in the *Anthology* may also be types of riddles, but I do not proffer any solutions for them.

The line occurring immediately following the palindrome in the Royal manuscript at first appears to be nearly meaningless: *fodens magnifice contextu fundauit tumulum*. A literal translation of the manuscript text should read something like 'digging in a course, he laid the foundation of a tomb magnificently', and its sense within the larger blood charm is at first obscure.[41] Nevertheless, upon closer scrutiny, it becomes clear that this is an attempted translation of the palindromic text.[42] The Latin words correspond closely to the grammatical constructions in the Greek: participle, adverb, adjective, conjugated verb, noun. Some of the Latin words are better translations than others of their Greek counterparts, and it is only by reading Greek that the meaning of the Latin becomes clear. I would suggest for this line the translation: 'digging, he constructed a grandly/loftily covered tomb'. The word *fodens* (from classical 'fodiens'), which means 'digging' or sometimes 'piercing', has apparently been chosen as an acceptable translation of ἀμήσας ('cutting'). This does not clearly convey the meaning of the original sentence, yet it is possible that the choice of this word was guided by the *tumulum* ('tomb'), an acceptable translation of σῆμα, and the idea of a tomb as something generally below ground.[43] There are a couple of small errors here, although these may well have arisen in transmission. Ἤδρασα, a first person verb, has been translated by *fundauit,* third person, but the original may well have read *fundaui*, with the 't' having been carried over from *tumulum* in the process of copying.[44] I would suggest that *contextum* ('interwoven') has also been confused at some point for *contectum* ('covered'), here translating ὀροφηφόρον ('roof-bearing'), and an 'm' has been omitted.

Whoever attempted this translation appears to have been fairly competent in the Greek language. This person clearly knew Greek morphology, as he or she was able to correctly identify the form of the Greek words and the majority of the time has provided a reasonable translation. However, it seems to me that the original meaning of the text (that is, the thatching of a building) has been lost on the translator. If this line was also intended to refer to Achilles' dwelling in *Iliad* 24, this too has surely been missed. I would suggest that the author of this translation was someone other than the scribe responsible for the *Royal Prayerbook* and probably also not the compiler of this blood-staunching charm (if those two figures are not identical). Greek text is marked on the manuscript page of the Royal manuscript with long crossed bars apparently meant to mark individual words (these also correspond to the word spaces), yet these do not identify the correct word breaks, suggesting the scribe had no real knowledge of Greek. The words of the translation (*fodens magnifice contextu fundauit tumulum*) must have followed the Greek line in the source text (or perhaps were entered below it) and were simply copied along with the Greek by the compiler of the charm, although it is uncertain if this person was aware these words were meant to be a translation of the Greek.

[41] This is David Howlett's translation from his article 'Hellenic Learning', 65.

[42] The idea that this line represents a translation of the Greek was first noticed by Daly: 'Palindrome', 96.

[43] I thank my friend Dr Kristen Mills for this suggestion.

[44] I would like to thank the anonymous reviewer of this paper for this suggestion.

Another mystery remains here, namely, the meaning of the word *usugma*, which follows after the translation of the palindrome and precedes the closing refrain of *domine adiuua* ('Lord help!'). Daly suggests that this may be a transliteration of the Greek word ὄρυγμα ('trench, ditch') and that this word may help explain the choice of *fodens* ('digging') earlier in the translation.[45] However, he does not suggest an origin for the word or why it is transliterated here when the other Greek words have been translated. Howlett has suggested that this word is a transliteration of Greek ζεῦγμα ('band'- that is, something for joining things together) but this would require a confusion of ζε for υσ before transliteration.[46] Another interesting suggestion was made by Rebecca Fisher, who sees this word as a transliteration of the term ΟϹΟΓΜΑ occurring in first line of Greek used in the charm.[47] If this were the case, it would strongly suggest that all three portions of Greek text travelled together, probably in a medico-magical source as I suggested above. Yet there are some difficulties with this interpretation, such as why do we have here a transliteration proceeded by a translation? And why does ΟϹΟΓΜΑ stand alone, without the initial word ϹΟΜΑΡΤΑ, which would also very likely have been found untranslatable to the author? And, finally, why have the two omicrons been transliterated as 'u' rather than as 'o', the more obvious choice?[48] These questions lead me to doubt this solution as well. The meaning of *usugma* in its original context remains uncertain to me, yet I would suggest it was copied into the body of the charm by accident and probably began a separate text.

Should we assume that this text (the palindrome and the accompanying translation) was copied from the same type of source suggested for the two other Greek sections discussed above–that is, some kind of medical compilation? Palindromes have always been popular in magical texts, and healings using Homeric verses, especially from the *Iliad*, were common in antiquity due to Homer's authority and status as the first divinely inspired poet–although typically these were direct quotations from the text rather any sort of paraphrase.[49] Nevertheless, it appears to me somewhat unusual for an item in a medical text with words meant to be copied verbatim to have been the subject of translation. The line also has a clear and mostly uncorrupted meaning, which possibly marks it as different from the other lines where the original meaning of the text is difficult (or sometimes impossible) to identify. However, if this piece did travel in another type of collection (for instance a collection of epigrams or riddles), it is unclear how the compiler decided to include it within this particular charm, as other sections of Greek appear to have been taken from a source with cures clearly marked as relating to blood disorders.

Overall, the sequence of events easiest to imagine is that a single compiler expanded an existing Anglo-Saxon charm by adding material from a collection of

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[45] Daly, 'Palindrome', 96-97.

[46] Howlett, 'Hellenic Learning', 65.

[47] Rebecca Fisher, *Writing Charms: The Transmission and Performance of Charms in Anglo-Saxon England* (PhD. diss. Sheffield 2011) 63.

[48] It has been suggested to me that *usugma* may represent the original spelling of the word, with the error occurring in the Greek majuscules instead. However, if this is the case, I am unaware of any other recorded instances of this word.

[49] For discussion of this phenomenon as well as examples, see Derek Collins, 'The Magic of Homeric Verses', *Classical Philology* 103 (2008) 211-36; Derek Collins, *Magic in the Ancient Greek World* (Malden, Ma, 2008) Chapter 4.

medical remedies he (or more probably she) had on hand.[50] The first addition was an entire entry: *ad sanguinem restringendum scribis hoc COMAPTA OCOΓMA CTY/ ΓONTOEMA EKTYTOΠO*. Two other phrases from the same collection, perhaps even from the same section on blood disorders, were then selected, likely because they were also written in Greek. These were copied, along with the translation following the third piece either in the main text or in a margin, and interspersed between the Latin elements of the original charm.

If the two blood charms found in the *Royal Prayerbook* sharing the Sedulius verses had an Insular authorship– as seems likely given their manuscript tradition– they show a creative process whereby a prayer to Veronica to staunch a flow of blood was combined with a psalm verse and a section from a hymn by Sedulius to make an elegant and devotional plea against this condition. Then, in a third text, found only on folio 49, this earlier tradition was expanded further by the addition of new material, perhaps coming from a medical handbook. These additions associated the previous prayer with the ritual action of writing (*scribis hoc*) and moreover gave it the flavour of Greek, the language of scripture, and of the words spoken by Christ in the gospel when he said to the bleeding woman: ὕπαγε εἰς εἰρήνην καὶ ἴσθι ὑγιὴς ἀπὸ τῆς μάστιγός σου ('go in peace, and be healed of your disease').[51]

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[50] I will address the possible authorship of this text and the other blood charms found in the Royal manuscript in more detail in a later publication. However, Michelle Brown has previously suggested that some members of the early Insular prayerbooks (including Royal) may have been intended specifically for a female audience: Michelle Brown, 'Female Book-Ownership and Production in Anglo-Saxon England: the Evidence of the Ninth-century Prayerbooks' in Christian J. Kay and Louise M. Sylvester (ed.), *Lexis and Texts in Early English: Papers in Honour of Jane Roberts* (Amsterdam, 2001) 45–68, at 55-57. The topic of this remedy, which is almost certainly directed towards uterine bleeding, would also be consistent with female authorship or patronage.

[51] Text taken from Barbara Aland and others (ed.) *Novum Testamentum Graece* (Stuttgart 2015) Mk 5:34 (translation NRSV).