

MAGICAL HYMNS FROM ROMAN EGYPT

A STUDY OF GREEK AND
EGYPTIAN TRADITIONS
OF DIVINITY

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INTRODUCTION

Since the time of the largest find of magical papyri at the beginning of the nineteenth century,¹ the study of the Graeco-Egyptian magical literature of the second–fifth centuries AD has undergone at least two stages of misconceptions.² At first, it was neglected as the classicist ideal of the period prevented most scholars from seeing the potential of textual material that was considered the degenerate product of syncretistic folk superstition. Then, with the beginning of the twentieth century, an interest in ancient magic started to awaken and increasingly developed within several disciplines up to the present. In 1928–31 Karl Preisendanz and his collaborators assembled all the surviving material known at the time in the edition that remains the basic tool for a study of the corpus: *Papyri Graecae Magicae – Die Griechischen Zauberpapyri I–II (PGM)*.³ Despite the merit of making the texts easily accessible, they decided to omit the Demotic sections of the papyri without giving any explanation,⁴ and thus unintentionally contributed to strengthening a second misleading conception. The Greek

¹ The so-called Theban Magical Library: a group of papyri discovered by villagers in Thebes some time before 1828 and acquired by Giovanni Anastasi (1780–1857), the Swedish–Norwegian Consul General in Egypt. Between 1828 and 1839 he sold his collection of papyri to different museums, thus scattering it all over Europe. Among the thousands of texts there was also the ‘Library’, together with other magical papyri of uncertain provenance: a collection containing the most impressive magical texts (as far as contents and conservation status are concerned) ever discovered. Unfortunately, almost nothing is known about the circumstances and place of the find. Brashear 1995, 3400–5. Cf. Zago 2010, especially 31–71.

² For the history of studies and relative bibliography see Brashear 1995; Ritner 1995a.

³ The third volume, containing indices and explanations of the magical words, reached only the stage of galley proofs (1941), photocopies of which are still available to scholars.

⁴ It appears even more significant if we consider that in many cases the Greek and the Demotic sections were written by the same scribe.

language tended to be confused with ethnic Greek culture, so that, even if the complex tangle of multicultural religious influences was certainly recognized and taken into consideration as one of the fundamental characteristics of these texts, they continued to be studied mainly by classicists. For example, though Egyptian tradition was clearly one of the main constituents of the background of the *PGM*, the separation between the Greek and Demotic material, as well as the impasse created by the usually specialized linguistic competences, prevented Egyptologists from taking an interest in this corpus for a long time.

With the end of the last century, Graeco-Egyptian magical texts seem to have finally found their place within the study of ancient Mediterranean cultures. All the Demotic material was available to scholars by the 1970s, though in separate publications (*PDM*),⁵ together with the second edition of Preisendanz's *PGM* revised by Albert Henrichs. A first attempt to join the two separate corpora was made by Hans Dieter Betz who, supervising a team of both classicists and Egyptologists, in 1986 published *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation – Including the Demotic Spells*, which, compared to Preisendanz's edition, included fifty new papyri that had appeared in various publications since 1941. Even if this volume cannot be considered a proper 'edition', as it does not include the original texts, it has two great merits: it set a standard for future studies underlining the essential unity of Greek and Egyptian magical texts and it made them accessible to the general public. In 1990–2 Robert W. Daniel and Franco Maltomini published one hundred new Greek texts⁶ with translations and notes in the two volumes of *Supplementum Magicum*. The core of the corpus was thus established, while other magical texts have continued to appear in

⁵ Griffith and Thompson 1904–9; Bell, Nock and Thompson 1933; Johnson 1975; Johnson 1977; for other minor documents, cf. Ritner 1995a, 3343–5. See also Quack 2008. For more details see **Intro** n.56.

⁶ Not only on papyrus, but also on metal and wooden tablets, ostraca and other supports. Forty-one of these magical texts had already appeared in translation in Betz's edition.

various publications up to the present. At this stage, the change in scholarly attitudes towards Graeco-Egyptian magic was complete.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS

Greeks and Egyptians in Graeco-Roman Egypt and the survival of indigenous religious tradition: an outline

The recognition of the importance of the Egyptian element in the *PGM* raises some particular questions: who wrote or collected these texts? Greeks or Egyptians? This in its turn implies a more general issue: can we distinguish between ethnic identities in Graeco-Roman Egypt? And what about cultural identities and religious traditions? Are the *PGM* the product of a hybrid society or not? An extensive account of the scholarly opinion on the issues of ethnicity, cultural identity and plurality or fusion of religious traditions in Graeco-Roman Egypt lies outside the scope of this study, but I will summarize some main points which are essential to establish the basis of my methodological approach to the *PGM*.⁷

First, it has to be noted that, since the main interest here is the cultural set-up, we can focus on the Greek and Egyptian elements and leave aside the Roman. In fact, under Roman rule Egypt remained a Greek-occupied land and, despite the political and social changes, it is hard to identify any specific penetration of Roman tradition as far as cultural interactions are concerned.⁸ Furthermore, when dealing with the *PGM*, such a Graeco-Egyptian focus is even more justified: Latin does not appear in the corpus and, more importantly, the compilatory nature of the *PGM* sets both the composition of these texts

⁷ For a thorough treatment of the subject see the literature quoted throughout this chapter.

⁸ Even the use of Latin remained very limited and mainly confined to the military administration: Bowman 1986, 158; Bagnall 1993, 231–2, 244; Montevicchi 1988, 445; Evans 2012; Jördens 2012, 250–2; Depauw 2012, 500–1.

and the origin of their sources earlier than their late date (though, as far as the composition is concerned, hardly before the time of the Roman conquest: see below pp. 22–3 point 3).

The Greek immigrants in Ptolemaic Egypt who lived in the few Greek poleis (especially Naukratis, where Greeks already settled in the sixth century BC, Alexandria, Ptolemais and later Antinoopolis) might have often succeeded in keeping their ethnic identity distinct. However, mainly in the countryside, marriages between indigenous Egyptians and Greek settlers were common so that a few generations after the conquest of Alexander the Great in 332 BC ethnicity became difficult to determine. The study of onomastics can be misleading too since the children of these mixed unions could be given Greek or Egyptian names, or indigenous Egyptians could take a ‘second’ Greek name (and sometimes vice versa).⁹ They could also acquire the status of ‘Hellenes’ through military service or playing a role in the administration, but the prerequisite for, or the result of, these activities must have been a certain degree of Hellenization.¹⁰ When Alexander conquered Egypt, the necessity for a smooth takeover of the Egyptian administration created a system of cooperation with the Egyptian upper class. Soon after, the increase in the demand for ‘Hellenized’ officials promoted the diffusion of Greek schooling throughout Egypt, and whoever, regardless of ethnic origin, wanted to have a

⁹ Lewis 1986, 27–36; Huzar 1988, 351, 356–7; Peremans 1981; Bagnall 1993, 232–3; Vandorpe 2012, 268–9, 271–2; cf. Colin 2001, 8–15.

¹⁰ In the Ptolemaic period ‘Hellenes’ identifies a category of people enjoying some fiscal privileges, but the term does not seem to refer to ethnic Greeks or descendants of Greeks exclusively. Even when Augustus changed the social organization establishing that everyone who was not a Roman citizen, a citizen of the Greek poleis, or a Jew was ‘Egyptian’, this categorization did not reflect any ‘ethnic’ reality. On the whole subject see Thompson 2001; Thompson 1994, 75; Bowman 1986, 63; Lewis 1983, 31–5; Lewis 1986, 24–5, 29–30, e.g. 139–52; Lewis 1970, 10; Huzar 1988, 362–4; Bagnall 1993, 232; Bagnall 1997; Vandorpe 2012, 262–7; Jördens 2012, especially 249–50; Stephens 2003, 241–2. See e.g. the example of Horpakhepesh in Klotz and LeBlanc 2012.

position in the administration had to learn Greek: as the language of the ruling class it became a sort of *lingua franca* and was used by indigenous Egyptians too.¹¹ From the papyrological documentation we know that a wide range of Greek authors was available to the literate upper class. Since ‘classical’ authors had always been employed for the teaching of Greek, whoever learned the writing also acquired some familiarity with Greek literature, i.e. with one of the highest expressions of Greek culture.¹² Nevertheless, the use of Greek did not necessarily indicate an exclusively Greek cultural background, and despite the possibility of mixed unions and/or Hellenization, the cultural differences were still felt: many natives did not learn Greek and had fiscal disadvantages; the Ptolemaic legal system had separate courts for Greek and Egyptian speakers and manifestations of mutual contempt are often attested. The general impression is that Greeks and Egyptians remained culturally more distinct than it would seem at a first glance.¹³

An interesting example is the use of the two Egyptian scripts, Demotic and Hieratic. First, Egyptian literacy had always been rooted in the temples since it was fundamental for the performance of temple rituals and it was in the ‘Houses of life’, annexed to the temples, that texts were copied and studied and writing and reading were often taught, so that the role of the scribe was

¹¹ Welles 1970, 508–9; Lewis 1986, 26–7; Ritner 1995a, 3361; Depauw 1997, 41–4; Depauw 2012, 494; Frankfurter 1998, 248–50; Cribiore 1996, 43–8; Thompson 1994, 72–5.

¹² Thompson 1992; Thompson 1994, 76–7; Bowman 1986, 61, 122; cf. Bagnall 1993, 99–100; Depauw 2012, 496; Cribiore 1996, 48–9; Cribiore 2001, 178–80, 192–204, 225–38; cf. Miguélez Caverio 2008, 23–9, 97–105, 197–263.

¹³ See Thompson 2001, 302–3, 306–11, 313–15; Thompson 1994, 80–2; Lewis 1983, 40–1, 156–7; Lewis 1986, 4–5, 26–36, 85–7; Bowman 1986, 61, 125–6; Bagnall 1997, 7; Huzar 1988, 359–62; Montevicchi 1988, 420–1; Vandorpe 2012, 268–70; Jördens 2012, 253–7; Bowman 1986, 61, 125–6; especially on the Ptolemaic legal system Yiftach-Firanko 2009, 541–52; Manning 2010, 165–201.

hardly separable from priestly office.¹⁴ In particular, the knowledge of Hieratic had been confined to the temple scriptorium since about the seventh century BC, following the introduction of Demotic as the script of the administration. The latter in its turn, with the introduction of Greek, gradually lost its *raison d'être*. Demotic was confined to communication with those natives who did not know Greek and, as a literary language, was mainly kept alive by the 'hard core' of the Egyptian tradition, the temple scriptorium,¹⁵ where Demotic works (mainly cultic-religious texts, but also narrative and scientific literature) continued to be copied and composed at least until the second century AD.¹⁶ However, while Greek influences have been hypothesized in Demotic literature, Greek literature does not seem to show any particular Egyptianizing traits.¹⁷ This is not surprising if we consider that there were certainly many more 'Egyptians' reading Greek literature than 'Greeks' reading Egyptian. There are examples of Greek speakers who learned, or tried to learn, Demotic, but they are very few and must represent an exception.¹⁸ Though Egyptian texts might

¹⁴ Baines 1983, especially 580–3; Wentz 1995, especially 2216, 2219–20; Vleeming 1994; Tait 1994, 190–2; Hoffmann 2012, 545–6; Cribiore 1996, 40; Clarysse 2009, 565–8, 573; cf. Williams 1972, 216; Jasnow and Zauzich 2005, I.33–6.

¹⁵ Depauw 2012, 494–9; Frankfurter 1998, 210–12; Sauneron 1962a; Cribiore 2001, 22–3; Dieleman 2005, 21–3; Ritner 1993, 204–14, 220–33; Thompson 1994, especially 82–3; by the end of the first century AD Demotic had almost disappeared from the administration, also owing to Roman policy, which strongly favoured Greek.

¹⁶ See Quack 2005a; also Depauw 1997, 24–6, 85–121; Hoffmann 2012; Jasnow 2002; cf. Mertens 1992, now outdated.

¹⁷ Thissen 1999; Podemann Sørensen 1992, especially 171–2; Bowman 1986, 162–4; Hoffmann 2012, 549–51; Jasnow 2002, 214–15. However, the subject is still debated: see Depauw 1997, 86; cf. e.g. Rutherford 2000; Stephens 2003, especially 6–12, 17–18, 254–7.

¹⁸ Especially in order to gain a living in medicine. See Bowman 1986, 124; cf. Lewis 1986, 153–6; also Fewster 2002, especially 236–45. Considering the difficulty of the script, compared to alphabetic Greek, and its relative uselessness for social ascent, Greek settlers and their descendants could not have been particularly keen on learning Demotic (or other Egyptian scripts).

be translated into Greek,¹⁹ their scantly accessibility helped to keep Demotic literature the privileged field of expression of the Egyptian cultural background.²⁰ It is not by chance that Demotic was also more persistent in areas such as the Thebaid, which had a very small Greek population but powerful priestly and military indigenous families and was the site of various Egyptian rebellions.²¹ Furthermore, a proficient user of Demotic, not to mention Hieratic, must have come from the Egyptian priestly milieu and thus must have been in contact with the centre of the Egyptian cultural transmission, the temple.

It has often been pointed out that the survival of the indigenous tradition was closely connected with the Egyptian priesthood and temples, and thus with the persistence of religious traditions (it is not accidental that the last preserved Demotic texts, apart from the graffiti left in Philae by pilgrims and priests, belong to magico-religious literature).²² One of the purposes for which the Ptolemaic rulers preserved these indigenous institutions was the necessity to legitimize the small Greek immigrant elite. In order for the Ptolemies to present themselves as restored Pharaohs and be accepted by the population, it was necessary to promote a programme of construction and decoration of

¹⁹ E.g. the famous case of Manetho, whose *History of Egypt* seems to have been translated from Egyptian, or the *Myth of the eye of the sun*, for which we have both the Demotic and Greek versions: Dillery 1999; Depauw 1997, 92–3; West 1969; cf. Ryholt 1998. For cultic/ritual texts see e.g. Merkelbach 1968, 13–30; Quack 1997.

²⁰ See the common scholarly opinions about the so-called Demotic ‘nationalistic’ literature (Podemann Sørensen 1992, 168–70; Bowman 1986, 30–1; Frankfurter 1998, 242–8; Lloyd 1982, 37–55; Ray 1994, 63–6) and how they may have to be reconsidered (see Quack 2009a; Quack 2011b).

²¹ Manning 2010, 104–16; Montevecchi 1988, 441–2; Foraboschi 1988, especially 823–4; Łajtar 2012; Pestman 1995; cf. Clarysse 1995, especially 19; cf. Johnson 1986; on the role of language in ethnicity see Hall 1997, especially 177–81.

²² On this and all the following, Bowman 1986, 166–86; Bagnall 1993, 235–7, 240–1, 251; Frankfurter 1998, 14–15; also Hoffmann 2012, 557; Kákosy 1995a, especially 2898–931; Quack 2002; Verhoeven 2005; cf. Dunand 1979, 124–8.

monumental temples in line with Egyptian tradition, and thus collaboration with the Egyptian priestly class became fundamental.²³ Similarly, many religious practices rooted in the Egyptian temples were preserved during the Graeco-Roman period: for example, the mummification and burial of sacred animals or the processions of local gods' images or bark shrines outside the temples (often with oracular purposes).²⁴ Leaving aside the great Egyptian temples, we can find both Greek and Egyptian shrines and cults displaying different degrees of 'syncretism'. For example, traditional festivals may have involved comedians and athletes on the Greek model, while at the same time the Greek element was often represented only by Greek equivalent names given to Egyptian gods (e.g. Zeus-Ammon), and typically Egyptian deities, such as the crocodile god Sobek, the hippopotamus Taweret and the dwarf Bes, were still venerated in the Roman period.²⁵ The range of cults and deities was vast, and anyone, regardless of their cultural background, could worship one or the other god without any difference, but in many cases the nature of the divinity, despite an added Greek name, remained faithful to its origin.²⁶

When a real fusion can be observed with certainty, it appears to have been motivated primarily by political reasons: that is the case with the pair Sarapis/Isis. Ptolemy I probably chose to promote the cult of the Memphite living Apis bull because it

²³ The temples depicted the foreign rulers, but the iconography, hieroglyphic writing and religious themes stuck to the Egyptian tradition. See Bagnall 1993, 48; Huzar 1988, 379–80; Manning 2010, especially 82–3, 90–6; Thompson 1994, 72–3; Clarysse 2009, 576; Minas-Nerpel 2012 (focusing on the Roman period); see also Milne 1928, 230.

²⁴ Frankfurter 1998, e.g. 38–9, 44, 153–7; Łajtar 2012, 180–1; Taylor 2001, 244–63; Kákosy 1995a, especially 2958–60, 3018–20; Clarysse 2009, 569–70; cf. **Concl.** pp. 338–9.

²⁵ Frankfurter 1998, 58, 98–9, 106–11, 121–31; Quaegebeur 1983; Pfeiffer 2005; Kaper 2005, 305–6; Whitehorne 1995; cf. Bernard 1969, 30–1; cf. Smelik and Hemelrijk 1984, 1863–9, 1879–905, 1955–81.

²⁶ Frankfurter 2012, 320–1; Kákosy 1995a, 2948–92; Whitehorne 1995, 3053, 3058–85; Dunand 1999.

was theologically connected with kingship as the bearer of the divine office and, once deceased, it was identified with Osiris, the most popular Egyptian deity. The sovereign needed to convert the Egyptian religious and royal tradition into a form comprehensible to Greeks, thus *Wsir-Hp*, Osiris-Apis, was given the Hellenized Egyptian name Sarapis and a Greek iconography on the model of Zeus-Hades. Sarapis was needed to reinforce the image of royal power and give the king the possibility of being deified as living god, especially among non-Egyptians. However, despite this politically motivated syncretism, it seems that among the indigenous population Sarapis continued to be perceived just as an *interpretatio graeca* of Osiris.²⁷ Therefore, his connection with Isis was almost automatic. Isis was originally mainly a mother goddess in close connection with royalty, being the wife of Osiris, king of the gods, and the mother of Horus, who inherited his father's kingdom. She was also known to be a great magician – for example, she revived the dead Osiris and healed the poisoned, or otherwise sick, Horus – and was connected with the inundation of the Nile in her form of the star Sothis, Sirius, whose rising coincided with the beginning of the inundation. These characteristics, reinterpreted according to the occasion, made her easy to associate with the majority of female Mediterranean deities. For example, her connection with the inundation, and thus the produce of the earth, as well as her involvement in the revival of Osiris, the dead god, made her look like a chthonic deity of vegetation (e.g. Demeter/Ceres, Persephone/Proserpina, Cybele); her identification with Sirius, in connection with the

²⁷ Quack 2013, especially 237–8, 241–7; Pfeiffer 2008; Schmidt 2005; Hölbl, *LdÄ* 'Serapis'; Stambaugh 1972, especially 12–13, 41–4, 61–5; Dunand 1973b, 45–66; cf. Welles 1962; Tran Tam Tinh 1984, 1713–22; see also Borgeaud and Volokhine 2000; cf. Plu. *De Iside* 362b–d. On the establishment of the cult of Sarapis as Ptolemy's response to a public demand from Greeks already living in Egypt see Paarmann 2013, especially 275–8. In particular on Osiris-Apis, see Devauchelle 2010; Devauchelle 2012, stressing the predominance of Osiris and the minor role played by Apis in the 'birth' of Sarapis.

rising of water, allowed her association with lunar goddesses (e.g. Selene/Luna, Artemis/Diana, Hecate); as queen of the gods she was Hera/Juno, as magician she was Hecate; in Egypt she was identified with Hathor, the cow, sky goddess of love, joy and music, but, since the *interpretatio graeca* equated Hathor with Aphrodite, Isis ended up absorbing the Greek goddess of love too. The strongly attractive power of Isis' cult made almost all the female Mediterranean deities susceptible to being used as different names for Isis 'the One'.²⁸ Nevertheless, since in the royal ideology of classical Egypt Isis represented the throne and cosmic protection of the king, the tendency to universalize this goddess as the counterpart of Sarapis seems to 'reflect the agenda of particular syncretistic constituencies more than religion "on the ground"'.²⁹ Despite their political promotion, Sarapis and Isis are the best example of the syncretistic trend of the period which coexisted with the persistence of indigenous traditions.

The Egyptian temples that had been fundamental for the preservation of this indigenous lore witnessed their final decline under Roman rule. Following the Egyptian programme of Augustus, the temples started to lose their economic independence in favour of the state, and their administration was centralized under a Roman official and kept under strict control by a complex bureaucratic system. The situation became even worse when, with the reform of Septimius Severus around AD 200, the temples were brought under the administration

²⁸ E.g. Vanderlip 1972, 1.14–24, 26; the famous passage in Apul. *Metam.* XI.2.5, cf. Griffiths 1975, 145–57; P. Oxy. 1380; Collart 1919; in general, Tran Tam Tinh, *LIMC* 'Isis', especially IV, 793–6; Witt 1971, especially 100–10, 123–51; Dunand 1973b, 1–26, 66–108; Leclant 1986; Merkelbach 1995, 51–3, 60–2, 94–8; cf. Bowman 1986, 176–8.

²⁹ Starting from Arsinoë II, sister-wife of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, the king's consort was identified with Isis and the establishment of the dynastic cult was completed. On the whole subject see Frankfurter 1998, 101–6; Dunand 1973b, 27–66; also Žabkar 1988, 12–15, 89–90; Pfeiffer 2008, 394–6, 398–400; Van Oppen de Ruiter 2007, especially 101–6, 210–19, 512–16.

of local town councils and thus had to rely on the fluctuation of local economies.³⁰ With the gradual disappearance of the public structures that had always guaranteed the transmission of indigenous traditions, for the Egyptian lore to survive it had to shift from the public to the private sphere and to adapt as much as possible to the dominant cultural perspective, i.e. to Hellenize (cf. below pp. 18–19).³¹ This process is paralleled by the gradual disappearance of Demotic in the first century AD and the adoption of Greek even for traditional religious practices such as oracle questions.³²

In conclusion, Graeco-Roman Egypt was a society in which cultural overlaps and mutual influences were certainly possible, whether triggered by the availability of different cultural inputs (e.g. a learned Egyptian with Greek education) or imposed by the ruling class (e.g. the Hellenization of Osiris-Apis). However, in many cases it seems more correct to talk about cultural coexistence than cultural merging. At the same time, while using ‘Greek’ and ‘Egyptian’ to define ethnicity is at least hazardous, it is still possible to refer to ‘Greek’ and ‘Egyptian’ cultural backgrounds, and it should be specified that throughout this study, the use of these terms refers to different cultural backgrounds and does not necessarily imply ethnicity.

As far as the *PGM* are concerned, the complexity of their ritual details or the multiple appearance of identical formulae in different papyri tells us that the corpus had a long history of written transmission (see below pp. 22–3, point 3), which clearly points towards a literate upper class as far as the compilers of the spells are concerned. Since Demotic/Hieratic literacy, indigenous religious traditions and temple infrastructure were

³⁰ Lewis 1983, 91–3; Kákosy 1995a, 2898–948; Huzar 1988, 356, 371–2, 380–1; Geraci 1988, especially 409–11; Milne 1928, 230; Montevicchi 1988, 433, 449, 455; Vandorpe 2012, 263; but see also Klotz 2012b, especially 1–5.

³¹ Bagnall 1993, 261–8, 315; Bowman 1986, 179–80; Lewis 1983, 48–9; Frankfurter 1998, 27–30, 198–203, 221–4, 238–64; Frankfurter 2012, 321–2; Depauw 2012, 496; Lajtar 2012, 181. Cf. Zago 2010, 125–33.

³² See **Intro.** n.15; Naether 2010, 370–4; Buchholz 2013, especially 95–8.

interconnected, the appearance of both these Egyptian scripts in the *PGM* allows us to locate this literate elite within the Egyptian priestly milieu which, though certainly Hellenized, remained also the hard core of Egyptian culture.³³ Whether these texts testify to an actual cultural fusion or only to cultural juxtaposition is the question this study tries to answer at least with reference to the nature of divinity displayed by a special subsection of the *PGM*, the so-called Greek magical hymns: metrical passages of variable length that constitute part of the praising section within some spells of the corpus.

‘Magical’ papyri and ‘magical’ hymns: notes
on the features of a ‘genre’

In 1871 the publication of Taylor’s *Primitive Culture* marked the birth of ethnology as an independent science and, subsequently, of cultural anthropology. The development of these new disciplines posed the necessity of finding a broader definition for notions such as religion, science and magic in order to make them applicable to cultures other than Western civilization. After Frazer’s cultural evolutionism, which interpreted the magical approach as a ‘first stage’ typical of primitive societies, the scholarly trend tended to narrow the difference between magic and religion, considering them as contemporary answers to similar culture–nature interactions. Through the work of such scholars as Mauss, Durkheim, Malinowski and Pettazzoni³⁴ it became clear that ‘magic’ was hard to define in an unambiguous way, and the relativity of the concept started to

³³ Ritner 1995a, 3361; Depauw 1997, 41–3; Frankfurter 1998, 248–50; Frankfurter 1997.

³⁴ Especially J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, whose second widened edition appeared in 1900; M. Mauss, ‘Esquisse d’une théorie générale de la magie’, *L’Année Sociologique*, 1902–3; É. Durkheim, *Les Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*, 1912; B. Malinowski, *A Scientific Theory of Culture*, 1944; R. Pettazzoni, the introduction to *L’onniscienza di Dio*, 1955.

be stressed: it seems it can be effectively defined only by contrast with its opposite (religion or science) and that the thin line dividing magic from religion varies according to the historical and socio-cultural context of the society we decide to analyse.³⁵

In spite of this long-standing debate, the subject is still controversial and it seems necessary to specify that in this study the terms 'magic' and 'magical' are used in a conventional way in relation to the procedures, conceptions, texts, images and objects that are normally classified under the category 'magic' in studies on the ancient world. The concept of 'magic' is not subjected here to any critical evaluation.³⁶ However, it may be

³⁵ See J. Middleton, 'Theories of magic', in 'Magic', in M. Eliade (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, New York 1987, IX, 82–9; also De Martino 1984; Wax and Wax 1963; Braarvig 1999; Tambiah 1990; Thomassen 1999; see also e.g. Van Baal 1963; Van Beek 1975; Versnel 1991.

³⁶ Given the controversy and ambiguity surrounding the concept of magic, the best solution in studies of this kind would seem either to ignore the subject (and just give bibliographical references) or to develop/choose a specific theory/definition for it. However, I believe this concern especially arose, as it usually happens, because magic became a quite 'fashionable' topic. As a matter of fact, it does not seem that lately defining e.g. 'religion' or 'science' is felt as a necessity as much as defining 'magic' (though they are hardly separable concepts, as shown by history of religions and cultural anthropology), so that the problem appears to be more factitious than real. Therefore, facing the impasse of 'ignoring magic' versus 'developing a theory of magic', I opted for a third solution: to give only a few pieces of information which are generally accepted in studies on the subject and, when mentioning more specific theories by specific scholars, to underline that they are only possible interpretations (for further details and in-depth analyses see the bibliography throughout this sub-chapter). In fact, first of all, I believe the nature of this study does not require either the selection and discussion of a pre-existent 'theory of magic' or the creation of a new one. This book focuses on the nature of divinity in the magical hymns according to its Greek/Egyptian cultural background and not on the definition of the concept of magic in the magical papyri or in Graeco-Roman Egypt. Nevertheless, instead of completely avoiding the subject, I decided to add this small introductory sub-chapter for the sake of the readers who are not acquainted with this material: it simply summarizes those characteristics of the magical papyri that induced modern scholars to label them as 'magical' and adds some generally accepted considerations about Western/Greek magic and especially Egyptian magic.

worth spending a few words to summarize the reasons why the papyri under examination, and especially the hymns they contain, are called ‘magical’ by modern scholars (I shall focus on internal evidence).

Most importantly, the rituals prescribed by the magical papyri always take place in a private setting (such as the magician’s house), and are usually performed by the magician alone, in very few cases with the help of one assistant. This places them outside mainstream religion inasmuch as they are not directly connected with an official religious institution (such as a temple, a sanctuary, or a sacred site). Secondly, the papyri often appear as an amalgam of different religious traditions and, for example, the more traditional Greek deities are coupled or identified with Egyptian gods or Jewish angels, and are given secret names usually in the form of *voces magicae*.³⁷ Hence, as a general impression, the religious imagery of the papyri also seems to lie outside mainstream religion. Furthermore, it has been stressed how the rituals often imply the magician’s ability to change the course of nature and to coerce the will of gods, daimons, angels, or spirits of the dead (sometimes through blackmailing them), and how this power of compulsion would be perceived as impious from an orthodox religious point of view. Similarly impious would be the final goal of the rituals, since they often aim either at securing mundane privileges for the performer or at harming, deceiving or compelling someone else – though this is not always the case. Finally, the spells often describe themselves as ‘secret’ or recommend secrecy, which partly makes sense in

In the Conclusions to this study, the subject is briefly touched upon again within some remarks on the difference between the Greek and Egyptian conception of divinity, but even in this case the discussion just refers to a generally accepted feature of ancient magic.

³⁷ Brashear 1995, 3429–38, with rich bibliography: sequences of letters apparently without meaning but with a special sound or visual impact whose origin is often to be found in ‘foreign’ words or divine names. See also Mastrocinque 2003, 98–112; Addey 2011. Also Tardieu, Van den Kerchove and Zago 2013.

opposition to an authority that forbids them, but at the same time it is also a contrivance to create their allure: they contain a secret knowledge not to be shared with everybody.³⁸

The same features apply to the magical hymns, first of all because they appear in the magical papyri, but also because they display some magical elements in themselves, which distinguish them from traditional Greek hymns. For example, they can incorporate *voces magicae* as secret names of the deities addressed or can identify the same deities with multiple foreign gods; their text can refer to the aim of the spell in which they are contained, such as to communicate with a dead person, or to send a demon to torment a woman until she surrenders to the performer's lust; they can also describe the magical procedure (such as blackmailing) or the ingredients used by the magician for that particular spell, and so on.

Last but not least, another fundamental characteristic of the papyri should be added to the list of the magical features, i.e. that these magical handbooks were often used by magicians (or better 'ritual specialists', see pp. 18–19, and 23–4 point 4) to perform/create *ad hoc* spells for their clientele, and thus to gain a profit.³⁹ While paying a tax, for example to consult an oracle institution (or nowadays leaving an offering when visiting a church), was probably perceived as fundamental for the maintenance of the sanctuary and its personnel, the earning of money by a private practitioner could have more often raised suspicion of charlatanism, and thus be connected with unorthodox magical practices.

In fact, though the above-listed magical features are based on the standard 'Western' concept of magic, they do not differ

³⁸ For the 'magical' features of the papyri see Brashear 1995, 3390–5; Ritner 1995a, especially 3347–53; cf. Dickie 2001, 26, 38–40 (especially on the secretive nature of magic), 42–3, 46. Cf. also Johnston 2010a, for the relation between men and gods in divinatory spells; Quack 2002, especially 43.

³⁹ On this and many of the previously mentioned characteristics of the papyri see Quack 2010a; also Quack 2011c, 143–4; specifically in Greece, Johnston 2008, 177–9.

very much from the attitudes that could be labelled as magical in fifth-century BC Greece.⁴⁰ As in many other times and cultures, it seems that ‘magic’/‘magical’ was usually ‘a third-person attribution rather than a first-person self-designation’.⁴¹ It was a sort of ‘derogatory label’ given to practices or beliefs that, though perhaps once perceived as religious, acquired a nuance of illicitness owing to changed socio-cultural views, to a shift from public to private, or to their association with a specific group of people. The clearest example is the Greek tendency to designate foreign ritual practices as magic, which somehow corresponds to the attribute ‘magical’ given to the mixture of multicultural deities and names in the magical papyri: the definition of religious orthodoxy is achieved by contrast with the religious world of the potentially dangerous and hostile barbarians.⁴² At the same time, this self-definitional stigmatization could occur within Greek culture itself, for

⁴⁰ Various reasons have been proposed for the emergence of the notion of magic in fifth-century BC Greece. For example, in a very interesting analysis, Dickie (2001, 18–46) suggests that it was a spontaneous phenomenon originally in connection with specific practices or groups of people perceived as illicit or impious, and underlines the fluidity of the notion itself. On the other hand, Graf (1995; Graf 1997a; Graf 1997b, especially 109–14), stressing how in Homer the use of poisons/potions, incantations and necromancy had no negative connotation in itself, connects the shaping of the notion of magic to the fifth-century BC development of philosophical theology and medical science: philosophers began to challenge the idea that communication between men and gods was possible, and physicians made clear how diseases and illnesses had no supernatural causes. The final result was to ‘stress the separation between the world of nature (humans included) and the divine realm’ (Graf 1995, 40; also Braarvig 1999, 37–40; Ankarloo and Clark 1999, 244–52) and to foster the rise of magic as an autonomous category. Whatever the case, the concept of magic remained ambiguous since it was often liable to variation according to the point of view: see e.g. Graf 2011; Johnston 2008, 145–53. See also Phillips 1991; Versnel 1991; Smith 1995; Ritner 1995b, 43–8.

⁴¹ Smith 1995, 18.

⁴² A common example can be seen in the evolution of the word *magos*, originally just a Persian religious specialist: see Nock 1972a; see also Hall 1989, especially 143–54; Hartog 1988; Hall 1997; Ogden 2001, 128–48; Cartledge 2002; Dieleman 2005, 239–54; Asirvatham, Pache and Watrous 2001, xiv–xvi.

example as shown by the famous example of Plato attacking the sorcerers of his time:

Beggar priests and prophets go to the doors of the rich and persuade them that they have the power ... to cure any wrong ... and that they will harm an enemy, a just man or an unjust man alike, for a small fee ... since they persuade the gods ... to serve them by certain charms and bindings.

... those who ... charm the souls of many of the living by alleging that they charm the souls of the dead. They undertake to persuade the gods through the practice of sorceries with sacrifices and prayers and spells and try to destroy ... entire houses for the sake of money.⁴³

It would seem from these passages that, given the above-mentioned characteristics, Plato would not have had any problem in calling the magical papyri 'magical'.⁴⁴

On the contrary, the same could have hardly happened in Pharaonic Egypt. As Ritner⁴⁵ thoroughly explained, the native equivalent term for magic, *ḥkꜣ*, did not have any negative or unorthodox connotation in itself, but referred to a sort of creative *logos* emanating from the creator god and personified

⁴³ Plato, *Resp.* 364b–e, *Lg.* 909a–d; cf. Ogden 2002, 20–3; **Concl.** n.127. See also Johnston 2008, 109–43.

⁴⁴ Nevertheless, see Johnston 2008, 144–79, especially 146–7, underlining that 'magic' is often very similar to mainstream religion and that the differences are just in details. On the whole subject of Graeco-Roman magic see also e.g. the select bibliography in the first volume of *MHNH* and especially Segal 1981; Deubner 1982, 275–98; Faraone and Obbink 1991 (with rich bibliography); Remus 1982; MeMi; Schäfer and Kippenberg 1997; Jordan, Montgomery and Thomassen 1999; MiMe (in particular Hoffman, 179–94, and Frankfurter, 159–78); Bremmer 1999; Noegel, Walker and Wheeler 2003; Ciruolo and Seidel 2002; Dickie 2001; Kákossy 1995a, 3023–8.

⁴⁵ On this and all the following, Ritner 1993, 4–28, 217–20, 236–49; Ritner 1995a, 3353–5; Ritner 1995b; Borghouts 1987; also Te Velde 1969–70; Koenig 2013; cf. Quack 2002. Dickie 2001, 22, suggests that it may be impossible to find the notion of magic in the conceptual system of the Ancient Egyptians since it is not certain that Heka (see below) was 'the personification of what we would call magic' (in the 'Western' sense of a 'hidden, illicit force'). See also Lloyd 2011, especially 99–105.

in its turn as a god, Heka. This deity embodied the performative force through which the transition from ideal (speech) to actual creation (matter) is achieved, the force connecting the abstract with the tangible, the divine with the human/natural world. The nature of *ḥkꜣ*, a word that can be connected with the idea of ‘consecrating imagery’ thanks to a phonetic pun, underlies the “‘imagistic’ nature of the magical process’ thanks to which, for example, ‘the king’s ritual presentation of food, diadems and prisoners is a *reflection* of the god’s granting of life, prosperity and victory’ and the king himself is the ‘living image’ of the god.”⁴⁶ This sort of sympathetic link was fundamental in the creative process and thus inherent in all cosmos and ethically ‘neutral’ in itself. Even hostile magic, such as cursing, was an integral part of the daily temple rituals, and ‘magicians’ were not foreigners or members of a special category employing alternative methods in comparison with a given set of religious practices, but rather temple priests, representatives of official religious values, who had access to the sacred books of the temples.⁴⁷

This kind of attitude towards magic contrasted with Greek and even more with Roman views (since they were particularly concerned with the subversive power of foreign religions),⁴⁸ and thus had to suffer from the cultural clash of Greek and then Roman domination. In parallel with the decline of the temple institution, the traditional Egyptian *ḥkꜣ*⁴⁹ was forced to shift from the openness of public religion to the privateness of ‘magic’, acquiring a shade of unorthodoxy from the Roman cultural perspective. With the progressive weakening of the

⁴⁶ The quotations are from Ritner 1995b, 50; cf. Eaton 2013, 5–8, 11.

⁴⁷ E.g. Gardiner 1917; Frankfurter 1997; Frankfurter 1998, 198–203; Quack 2002; Kákossy 1995a, 3025; Dieleman 2005, 203–54; cf. Dunand 1979, 124–5.

⁴⁸ See Smelik and Hemelrijk 1984; Graf 1997b, 102–9; Kippenberg 1997; Ankarloo and Clark 1999, 253–66. Cf. Zago 2010, 115–25.

⁴⁹ On Egyptian magic see also e.g. Ritner 1989; Koenig 1994; Koenig 2002; Assmann 1997b; Szpakowska 2006; Roccati and Siliotti 1987; cf. Borghouts 1978.

temple influence and legitimization, professional priests started to operate more and more at a local level as ritual experts shifting from official clergymen to unsanctioned ‘magicians’. As Frankfurter suggested,⁵⁰ the composition of the *PGM* may be considered as part of the complex process of ‘adaptation’ mentioned above (see p. 11) that was triggered by socio-economic reasons and carried out by the Egyptian priestly ‘upper class’ which, in order to preserve its prestige and religious heritage, had to promote traditional beliefs and rituals by re-adapting them according to the expectations of the Hellenized ruling class. Thus, the transition from Egyptian religious traditions to Graeco-Egyptian magic could represent not only the underground displacement of Egyptian public religion triggered by the Roman cultural perspective, but also the priests’ attempt to conform to the stereotyped idea that their Hellenized rulers had of them,⁵¹ or at least to ‘translate’ their traditional beliefs (and integrate them with the Greek ones) in order to make them more comprehensible and appealing to the new mixed readership and clientele.

PGM AND PDM

The climate of interdisciplinary debate around Graeco-Egyptian magical literature during the last decades of the twentieth century succeeded in establishing some basic characteristics of the *PGM* and the *PDM*. As already mentioned, in spite of the accidental formal division between the two corpora, it is generally accepted that they should be considered as one. In fact, in the majority of cases the two languages appear on the

⁵⁰ Frankfurter 1998, 198–237; Frankfurter 1997; Frankfurter 2000; Frankfurter 2012; also Kákosy 1995a, 3025–35.

⁵¹ Also Dieleman 2005, 1–10; Dieleman 2012, 338–42; Schwendner 2002; Clarysse 2009, 584; cf. Klotz 2012a. On ‘transmythological redundancy’ as the characteristic of traditional Egyptian magical literature which allowed foreign mythological motives to be easily accommodated see Podemann Sørensen 1992, 174–80.

same papyrus (often written by the same hand) so that some texts included in the *PDM* are nothing but sections of a corresponding *PGM* or vice versa.

For the identification of the different papyri, the system of numbering introduced by Preisendanz and continued by Betz will be used for both the *PGM* and the *PDM* (Roman numerals).⁵² For the sake of convenience, when the Greek documents are referred to the acronym will be omitted, while it will be kept for the Demotic ones. The documents published in *Supplementum Magicum* will be identified according to the system of numbering used in that edition (*Suppl.* plus Arabic numerals).

The contents of the corpora can be divided into two main categories: handbooks and applied spells. The handbooks could be included among literary texts (though they are preferably considered as a separate category together with the rest of the corpus) since they are collections of spells, a sort of recipe books, to be consulted when needed. The magical procedures described normally include a ritual section, an invocalional one and a list of ingredients (not necessarily in this order or clearly separated from each other). The majority of spells require the writing of formulae or symbols on a sheet of papyrus or metal tablets, etc. These pieces of formularies, often provided with the personal names of the parties involved, attest the actual use of a specific spell by a specific person: they are the documentary pendant to the handbooks, constituting the 'applied magic'.

Most papyri are dated between the second and fifth centuries AD. Some of the longest handbooks are part of the so-called Theban Magical Library, as they were found together, allegedly in a tomb, in or around Thebes.⁵³ The provenance

⁵² Preisendanz: from I to LXXXI. Betz: from LXXXII to CXXX. As far as the *PDM* are concerned, the system of numbering adopted by Betz is to be preferred even if the volume is not a critical edition.

⁵³ For earlier or later examples, the criteria and the precise dating of the papyri, see Brashear 1995, 3419–20, 3491–3. On the issue of the 'library' being a private collection, or belonging to a temple library see Tait 1995, especially 173–4; cf. **Intro.** n.1.

of the other papyri is mostly unknown.⁵⁴ Apart from Greek and Demotic, Hieratic and Coptic are used for short passages or glosses. Though the two corpora are substantially different in extent (almost 200 papyri for the *PGM*⁵⁵ against five for the *PDM*⁵⁶), it also is possible to identify, apart from common characteristics, some differences:

1. Though in the past the *PGM* corpus tended to be considered as an amalgam including various religious traditions (Mithraic, Babylonian, Christian, Gnostic, Persian and especially Jewish), it has become clear that this notion has to be reappraised. 'Foreign' elements are certainly present, but they consist mainly of divine names and *voces magicae*⁵⁷ often used as alternative and/or secret names of the gods

⁵⁴ See **Intro.** n.1. Definitely part of the 'Library' were IV, V, Va, XII (*PDM* xii), XIII, XIV (*PDM* xiv), while for I, II, III, VII, LXI (*PDM* lxi) and *PDM* Suppl. the same provenance is possible but not certain: Brashear 1995, 3402–4. For VII as not part of the 'Library', see Gordon, forthcoming.

⁵⁵ Considering only those in the publications by Preisendanz, Betz and Daniel and Maltomini that form the standardized corpus; for the recent editions of other material see Brashear 1995, 3478–84.

⁵⁶ These are the four handbooks included in Betz (see **Intro.** n.5) plus a fifth fragment of handbook (P. BM 10808), for which see Dieleman 2004; Sederholm 2006 (though problematic, see Quack 2009b); cf. Crum 1941; Quack 2004, 428 and footnote 10. Ritner 1995a, 3343–5, adds also a tablet and an ostrakon plus a few other papyri (from the 'Faiyum Temple Archive': Reymond 1977), but they can hardly be considered magical, see Quack 1998, footnote 2. The count of the Demotic texts is still to be enlarged by a number of unpublished sources, which anyway will not change the respective order of magnitude very much, but are important for the historical development of the genre: e.g. P. Brooklyn 47.218.47 v. (mostly in Hieratic script but linguistically early Demotic) and P. Heidelberg Dem. 5 (Professor J. F. Quack is working on the publication of both texts), which contain invocations to Imhotep to obtain visions, possibly in dreams. More interestingly, it should be noted that the Demotic texts are earlier in date (the latest ones date from the first half of the third century) compared to many of the Greek ones (which can date also to the fourth/fifth centuries). Cf. Ritner 1995a, 3334, on the subject and on the controversial issue about what can and what cannot be classified as 'magical'.

⁵⁷ See **Intro.** n.37.

invoked. The cases in which a ‘foreign’ influence could be possible at a conceptual, ritual or formulaic level are rare and still under debate.⁵⁸ Thus, the main components of the corpus remain the Greek and Egyptian ones. On the other hand, the ‘foreign’ elements in the *PDM* are reduced to a minimum: though sometimes they can appear in *voces magicae* or in allusions to, for example, Jewish tradition, in many other cases they are non-existent, so that these texts can be defined as mainly Egyptian in nature.

2. Many of the procedures, rituals, formulaic structures and conceptions of divinity attested in the corpus can be traced back to Egyptian religious tradition. These include the possibility of threatening the gods and forcing them to act in a specific way, the use of ‘pure boys’ as mediums in oracular procedures, the magician’s ability to identify himself with divine entities, the use of *voces magicae*, the power attributed to the knowledge of the ‘true’ secret divine name, etc.⁵⁹
3. The longest applied spells seem to have been compiled by consulting the handbooks and copying from them. At the same time, the handbooks are not original compositions, but the result of a long process of collection and re-elaboration of earlier material. This is clearly shown, for example, by the direct quotation of previous sources, the recording of multiple variants for a single spell or magical formula, scribal or translation mistakes, and by the fact that portions of text clearly deriving from the same source are found in different papyri. This specific textual history, also

⁵⁸ For the ‘foreign’ elements in the *PGM*, Brashear 1995, 3422–9, with rich bibliography; cf. Riess 1935; in the *PDM*, Ritner 1995a, 3351–2.

⁵⁹ E.g. Brashear 1995, 3390–5; Kákossy 1995a, 3028–43; Sauneron 1951; Ritner 1995a, 3345–55, 3362–71; Ritner 1993, in particular 112–19, 157–9, 193–9; Koenig 1994, 60–72, 156–65; Quack 2011d; on the power of names as typical of post-classical syncretism see Pulleyn 1994, especially 23–5.

fostered by the conservative attitude of magic,⁶⁰ creates some dating problems, not for the extant papyri, but for their sources or the sources of their sources. Generally, these can almost always be placed at least one century earlier in comparison with the dating of the papyri. Moreover, among the unpublished Demotic texts there are manuals e.g. from the Saitic or Ptolemaic periods, and the oldest Greek handbooks date as far back as the first century BC/AD.⁶¹ They are quite exceptional cases, but their existence might still suggest that this was the period in which the Greek manuals began to circulate, to be copied and modified until they reached the stage attested by the later papyri.

4. As outlined above (see pp. 11–12 and 19), a considerable part of the compilation process of the handbooks, if not all of it, must have been carried out within the Egyptian priestly milieu, i.e. by ritual experts who had, or had had at a certain stage, access to temple libraries and were trained in the Egyptian scripts. Considering the dearth of magical handbooks in the papyrus findings from temple libraries such as Tebtunis or Soknopaiou Nesos,⁶² these ritual experts were

⁶⁰ On textual history see e.g. Brashear 1995, 3414–16; Dieleman 2011; a detailed analysis of the bilingual *PGM* XII/*PDM* xii and *PDM* xiv/*PGM* XIV in Dieleman 2005, especially 47–101. A tendency to conservatism is inherent in magic: the effectiveness of the spell depends on how precisely the rituals and formulae are performed and recited, and thus the room for changes is quite limited (Kákossy 1995a, 3044–8). Nevertheless, the ritual specialist could for example add further instructions, formulae (and maybe modify them), or change an ingredient, as demonstrated by the many versions of basically similar spells or by the explicit recording of textual variants of the same spell or formula. But at the same time the very existence of these versions and variants testifies to a continuity in the spells' structure and formulae, exactly as for example the many parallels of the same invocations found in different papyri. For the possibility of documenting change see e.g. Bohak 2008, 146–8; Quack 2010a, 47–51. For conservativeness in Egyptian literature see Parkinson 2002, 33, 50–3.

⁶¹ E.g. XX, *Suppl.* 71, 72; P. Oxy. 4468. See LiDonnici 2003.

⁶² See e.g. Ryholt 2005; Quack 2002, 57–9. Nevertheless, it is possible to find handbooks with instructions for treating ailments and preparing amulets;

probably off-duty priests in search of additional income to whom a person in need of a spell could turn.⁶³ Therefore, the use of Greek as the main language of the corpus cannot be considered significant in the attribution of these compositions to a specific cultural environment, not even for those papyri that have Greek as their only language. For example, *PGM V* was part of the same ‘Theban Magical Library’ that brought to light the two longest *PDM*,⁶⁴ and thus it should belong to the same priestly milieu.⁶⁵

Given these fundamental characteristics of Graeco-Egyptian magical texts, some conclusions that form the basis of the present study have to be drawn. First, the method of composition of these texts, together with their conservative attitude, allows us to search for possible sources or parallels within both Greek and Egyptian material. This is true not only from a philological point of view, but also from a conceptual one. For example, in some cases it is possible to trace formulaic expressions and ritual procedures, as well as religious conceptions, back to the Middle Kingdom or earlier.

Second, even if the handbooks were compiled within an Egyptian priestly milieu, this does not mean that, among the sources that were used, there could not have been texts originally composed in a Greek cultural environment. Even in this case, the use of Egyptian sources would not be a matter of debate, as Egyptian influence is predominant in the Greek texts too (point 2), but perhaps the production environment of this supposed Greek material could be other than the temple

on this and on the compilers of the magical papyri and their connection with the temple scriptorium see Dieleman 2011.

⁶³ See **Intro.** n.39; Quack 1998, especially 85, 89.

⁶⁴ *PDM* xii and xiv.

⁶⁵ Not to mention that, if I, II, III, VII, LXI (*PDM* lxi) and *PDM* Suppl. could be ascribed to the same find with certainty (cf. **Intro.** n.54), it would mean that all the longest preserved handbooks derive from the same Egyptian priestly milieu.

library.⁶⁶ Even if we decide to exclude this hypothesis, the differences between the *PGM* and the *PDM* demonstrate that for the compilers of the handbooks, often proficient in Greek and Demotic, the use of one or the other language was not just a matter of caprice. The scarcity of ‘foreign’ elements in the *PDM*, starting from the supremacy of the national pantheon, indicates that these texts were meant to be used by Egyptians, exactly as the ‘seclusive’ nature of the language employed already suggests. On the contrary, the abundant presence of the Greek pantheon in the *PGM*, together with a variety of ‘foreign’ elements, demonstrates that whoever wrote them had a specific group of users in mind: Hellenized ritual specialists and their clients (cf. above p. 19). Sometimes I will use the word ‘audience’ for the sake of convenience, but with inverted commas to mark that for these texts it is not possible to talk about a group of people actually witnessing their enactment, but about the group of users at whom they were targeted, which includes both the ritual specialists working with the handbooks and their clientele with possibly no first-hand experience of the texts.

In conclusion, even if we accept that the only compilers of the handbooks were ritual experts with a priestly Egyptian background, the study of the *PGM* can still be significant not only for the Egyptian but also for the Greek contribution to the magico-religious thought of the Graeco-Roman period. As the *PGM* had to appeal to Hellenized specialists and clients, whoever wrote them must have referred to the Greek tradition whenever the context allowed, whether consulting ‘originally’ Greek written sources or not.

PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

This study aims at investigating the nature of the most representative deities of a special subsection of the *PGM*: the magical

⁶⁶ Cf. Dieleman 2005. In general, on the opposite trend (adoption of Egyptian ideas by Greek writers) cf. Stephens 2003, especially 5–16, 249–57.

hymns. The analysis will attempt to address the question: how 'Greek' and how 'Egyptian' are they? The final goal is to establish what divine features can be ascribed to a Greek or Egyptian background, and thus to try to understand whether the nature of divinity described by the magical hymns displays actual evidence of mutual religious influence or not. With the syncretistic trend starting in the Hellenistic period, the supra-national development of divinity often transformed the traditional gods into new entities. However, it is also true that most distinguishing features (epithets, areas of competence, mythologies, etc.) are still traceable to the specific deities in their original cultural environment.⁶⁷ So, the question remains: are the gods of the magical hymns Greek or Egyptian in nature? Can they still be traced back to one or the other religious tradition? And thus, were the magical hymns originally composed in a Greek or Egyptian cultural background? The magical hymns can be further investigated in their connection with the *PGM*: can the treatment of divinity in the magical hymns tell us something about the cultural background of the compilers of the *PGM*? Why were some Greek or Egyptian divine features preserved and others not? Are these reasons strictly related to the appearance of these gods in a magical context? Can they tell us anything about the religious plurality and/or fusion of the two cultures?

The magical hymns have been chosen because they are 'pure' invocations, i.e. they are usually not interrupted by long digressions about ritual procedures, which makes them highly suitable for conveying the greatest number of details about the nature of divinity in the minimum space. Furthermore, they have always been considered the most 'authentically Greek' component of the corpus because of their metrical nature and the appearance of deities, epithets and mythological references

⁶⁷ E.g. Grandjean 1975, for an example of this methodological approach applied to an Isis aretology. Cf. Quaegebeur 1983.

belonging specifically to Greek tradition.⁶⁸ Since most early misconceptions about the *PGM* derived from having given too much importance to the Greek cultural background, it seemed intriguing to analyse what was thought to be the most probable Greek contribution to the corpus. At the same time, the magical hymns represent our best chance to locate ‘originally’ Greek elements or textual parallels within the *PGM*.

Every line of the magical hymns will be analysed, even if it does not contain any direct reference to the god addressed. As this investigation is text based, the contextual information can be equally important for determining a Greek or Egyptian background. For example, the recurrence of particular rituals in connection with particular gods will help to illuminate the original areas of competence of the deities in question in connection with their Greek or Egyptian background. Similarly, whenever relevant, the stylistic structure and specific rhetorical features of the hymns will be examined in connection with the content they express. In fact, in view of the compilatory method of composition of the *PGM*, the style of the hymns could convey as much information about their origin as their content.

The methodology adopted consists in analysing the hymns in the light of earlier Greek and Egyptian sources and religious-magical traditions in order to find possible textual or conceptual parallels. In this way it will be possible to define what can be considered ‘originally Greek’ or ‘Egyptian’, meaning:

- attested in Greek territories in an autochthonous cultural context and at the same time not attested in Egypt – and vice versa;

⁶⁸ Brashear 1995, 3420–2. They also seem to be typical of Greek texts, being unparalleled in the *PDM*. However, considering that Pharaonic magical literature often employs hymnic invocations (e.g. the Harris magical papyrus, Leitz 1999, 31–50), this impression could be due to our scant knowledge of the Egyptian metrical system.

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- and/or showing a continuity within an ascertained Greek or Egyptian cultural tradition which is attested in the Graeco-Roman period and, preferably, traceable to an earlier date.
- Even if the focus will be kept on the Greek and Egyptian components, whenever ‘foreign’ elements appear, they will be acknowledged and briefly discussed.

MAGICAL HYMNS

History of studies

As already mentioned, the magical hymns have always been thought to be the relics of an originally Greek literary production. Thus, dealing with these metrical sections (mainly hexametrical), the early scholars’ approach was to try to restore an *Urfassung*, an archetype, eliminating non-metrical portions and *voces magicae* (considered as later interpolations) and adjusting the text preserved for the sake of correct prosody. The clearest example of this tendency can be seen in Preisendanz’s edition, where thirty reconstructed hymns were published at the end of the second volume.⁶⁹ Although they proved useful for scholars, they were rather misleading, exactly like the decision to omit the Demotic sections in bilingual papyri. These choices fostered the illusion of dealing mainly with originally Greek material and somehow prevented the awakening of Egyptologists’ interest for a long time.

The development in the studies on the *PGM* made clear how the attempts to restore an *Urfassung* were almost useless. Heitsch thought that the great popularity of these hymns and their continuous adaptation to different contexts were the basic reasons why it is now impossible to reconstruct their ‘pre-magical originals’;⁷⁰ nonetheless, the main problem lies in the impossibility of being sure of our restoration hypotheses. These

⁶⁹ In the revised edition of 1973–4.

⁷⁰ Heitsch 1959, 220.

hymns could have existed as separate compositions at an early stage, but this is hard to prove, since they remain unparalleled outside the *PGM*. The evident risk in any attempt at restoration is of obtaining a text that never existed. At this stage, the prevalent idea is, quoting Brashear, ‘that while some hymns were probably composed in magic circles for the use of the conjuror, others might in fact descend from ancient Greek literary endeavour’, and that ‘the hymns obviously include much that could be traced back to ancient Greek precedents if only we had the means necessary for comparing them’.⁷¹

While renouncing attempts at reconstruction, we can still search for parallels and possible sources, especially because there is general agreement that the magical hymns represent a later copying stage of texts that date from the first/second century AD, which, in their turn, could have been composed through reworking earlier material.⁷² The clearest evidence of this process is the appearance of sections of the same hymn within different papyri.⁷³ Another feature, which may shed light on the composition of the hymns, is the presence of Homeric verses, perfectly fitted into the new context. Though Homeric verses are certainly an originally Greek element, their appearance does not guarantee a Greek background either for the whole hymn or for the nature of the deity addressed, since Homeric texts were very popular and much copied in Graeco-Roman Egypt and widespread even within magical literature.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Brashear 1995, 3420–1; Nock 1929, 222; Furley 1995, 39–40.

⁷² Nock 1929, 223–8.

⁷³ E.g. the hymn to Hermes, preserved in three different papyri of different dates: fourth, third and second/third centuries AD (V 401–20, VII 668–80, XVIIb). Though the earliest text presents some variants, it is clearly an older version of the later ones: during almost three centuries, not much had changed.

⁷⁴ The best examples are the so-called *Homeromanteia* (cf. VII 1–148, Maltomini 1995), lists of Homeric verses employed for oracular purposes, but Homeric verses are used as magical formulae also in spells; Schwendner 2002; Collins 2008a, 104–31; Collins 2008b; Naether 2010, 330–1; Karanika 2011; Faraone 1996, especially 83–5.; cf. also Faraone 2006.

However, the insertion of Homeric verses is significant for understanding the composition process and its background: either the compiler knew Homer by heart (which usually implies a ‘Greek’ education, see **Intro** n.12) or, having to choose a specific verse for a specific context, he consulted a Homeric text, or at least a list of Homeric verses (which implies the availability of these sources and thus points again to a temple library connection). In conclusion, even if it is probably true that most magical hymns were composed in magical circles, this does not mean we cannot still try to trace back their precedents and cultural background thanks, especially, to the particular textual history of the *PGM*.

A different approach adopted by studies in magical hymns tried to distinguish between Greek and oriental/Egyptian contributions. In fact, in these metrical sections, as in the rest of the corpus, it is possible to find references we cannot explain by referring to a classical Greek background, for example the solar god addressed as *κάνθαρος*, ‘scarab’.⁷⁵ Following the path opened by Norden,⁷⁶ Riesenfeld⁷⁷ took into consideration the differences in the stylistic structure of the Greek and Near Eastern hymns, and tried to explain some divine aspects in the light of Egyptian tradition. For example, using an epithet such as *ἀεροειδής* (‘airlike’) for the solar god would be justified by the existence of a close relationship between the sun, the air and the wind in Egyptian religious thought. Riesenfeld noticed how introductory formulae such as *χαῖρε* (‘hail’), *ἴλαθι* (‘be propitious’), or *κλῦθι* (‘listen’) would be typical of Greek hymnography, while an equivalent such as *σὲ καλέω* (‘I call to you/invoke’) would be typical of the ‘oriental’ hymnic style. Similarly, the use of compound epithets and their accumulation would be typical of the Greek hymn,⁷⁸ while the ‘oriental’ hymn would use, for the same purpose, substantival participles,

⁷⁵ E.g. III 207–8, IV 943.

⁷⁸ See Morand 2001, 68–75.

⁷⁶ Norden 1956.

⁷⁷ Riesenfeld 1946.

relative clauses, or simple adjectives followed by a complement. For example, an attribute such as ὁ μέγας ἐν οὐρανῷ ('the mighty in the sky') would follow the oriental pattern, while an attribute such as χρυσοφαής ('aglow like gold') would follow the Greek. These considerations may be interesting if we are trying to discover the ethnic origin of the authors, as they provide information on how the writer's mentality was linguistically structured. Nevertheless, as both stylistic patterns can appear inside the same hymn, the only possible conclusion is that we are dealing with both Greek and Egyptian rhetorical models. Furthermore, if we employ this approach to understanding whether Greek or Egyptian sources were used during the composition process, the outcome risks being unsatisfactory. Even if we admit that a phrase such as ὁ μέγας ἐν οὐρανῷ follows an Egyptian stylistic pattern, there is nothing that prevents it from being completely Greek. At the same time, a language like Greek, which frequently employs compound epithets, could have chosen this rhetorical contrivance in order to render an 'Egyptian' phrase expressed with relative clause or adjective and complement. This kind of stylistic approach, whether involving linguistic or structural features, becomes really significant only when it focuses both on formal and conceptual peculiarities.⁷⁹ In this case it becomes possible to distinguish between instances in which the language copies a 'foreign' pattern but conveys traditional ideas and instances in which the 'foreign' pattern embodies concepts alien to Greek tradition.

This kind of stylistic-conceptual approach underlies the remarks of Ritner who, insisting on the importance of Egyptian sources and cultural background for the understanding of the *PGM*, favoured the hypothesis that the Egyptian priests themselves could have composed the hymns (as probably all

⁷⁹ For a focus on the Greek or Egyptian origin of the conception of divinity conveyed by the hymns see MT.

the handbooks). In support of this theory, he showed how the hymns of the so-called slander spells⁸⁰ have Egyptian parallels in late Pharaonic rituals attributing sacrilege to demons or personal enemies, and in Egyptian magical literature from the Pyramid Texts onwards.⁸¹ At a conceptual level, the ‘ritual blame shifting’ did not exist in classical Greek tradition, while it was quite common in the Egyptian; the situation is the same, at a rhetorical level, for the model phrase ‘NN said/did it, not I’; finally, there are Egyptian parallels in poetic and magical contexts. Apart from hymns, Ritner also underlined how some strange Greek expressions can be explained if we understand them as translations from the Egyptian. One of the most significant examples is the term *μυστήριον*: it seemed to refer to an exclusively Greek tradition and, therefore, suggested that the theology of mystery cults had a part in the *PGM*. Nevertheless, as Ritner pointed out, ‘while the *PGM* uses *μυστήριον* the contemporary Demotic spells retain the native equivalent *sšḫ*’ (‘secret’, ‘mystery’) which has always been used in Egyptian literature simply to designate magical rites and spells’.⁸² This compound approach, taking into consideration style, language and religious-magical traditions at the same time, is the one I will try to follow in analysing the magical hymns. They will be examined line by line and overall, in order to find out which conceptual, stylistic, linguistic and ritual features can be ascribed to a Greek background and which to an Egyptian one.

Background of the magical hymns

As Brashear has stressed,⁸³ the difficulty in understanding the transmission of the magical hymns consists in the lack of means for comparing them with ancient Greek precedents,

⁸⁰ Here hymn 13.

⁸¹ Ritner 1995a, 3368–71; Quack 1996, 331–2.

⁸² Ritner 1995a, 3363–8, *versus* Betz 1991.

⁸³ Above p. 29.

and the real problem may be our scant knowledge of the Greek hymns used in cultic/ritual contexts. They were often not recorded in inscriptions, or possibly were transmitted orally, and thus it is very difficult to trace their textual history. Furthermore, the surviving corpora of hymns are not particularly helpful since it is not certain whether they were used in ritual or were literary compositions meant for different contexts (*Homeric Hymns*, Callimachus' *Hymns*). The *Orphic Hymns* (*OH*) may represent an exception since the corpus seems to have been a sort of 'prayer book' used by an Orphic community, but it could also be the expression of a very specific religious reality.⁸⁴ The similarities between magical hymns and *OH* have often been pointed out, but they are mainly stylistic in kind: there is a general impression of formal unity, which suggests that these texts should date back to the same period (first/second century AD), but not even one entire verse is actually paralleled.⁸⁵

Despite the scarcity of extant Greek cultic/ritual hymns, there are examples that suggest they could be quite popular and spread widely, possibly through the circulation of copies written on papyrus. Such is the case of the Paean to Apollo-Asclepius, inscribed copies of which have been found in Athens (second century AD), Ionia (fourth century BC), Macedonia (second century AD) and Ptolemais in Egypt (AD 97).⁸⁶ The differences in date also suggest that these texts, like other hymns, could be highly conservative and the availability of written copies of Paeans like this in Egypt might underlie the

⁸⁴ Furley 1995, 29–30; Furley and Bremer 2001, I.5–7, 13–14, 41–50; Aloni 1980; Bulloch 1984; cf. Klinghardt 1999, especially 6–11; on the cultic role of the *OH* see Dieterich 1911, 101–10; Ricciardelli 2000, xxxiv–xxxvii; Morand 2001, 80; Guthrie 1993, 257–8.

⁸⁵ Kern 1910; Kern 1911; cf. Dilthey 1872; Dieterich 1911, 101–10; Rudhardt 2008, 166–7; Ricciardelli 2000, xxviii–xxx; Morand 2001, 86–8.

⁸⁶ *IG* 2.4509; *SEG* 4.626; *SEG* 3.497; Bernand 1969, 652, no. 176 and commentary; cf. *SEG* 51.2170 *bis*; Oliver 1936, 114–18; Klinghardt 1999, 8–10; Rutherford 2001b.

appearance of the epithet Paian in one of the hymns to Mandulis from the temple of Kalabchah (Talmis) or in the magical hymns of the *PGM*.⁸⁷ Similarly, in one case we can find in the magical hymns an Apollo Paian who ‘dwells in Colophon’. The epithet refers to Apollo Clarius, who had a famous oracle in the village of Claros in the territory of Colophon, Ionia.⁸⁸ Such a precise reference could suggest the influence of the hexametrical oracles of Apollo Clarius, preserved mainly epigraphically or in quotations by ancient authors. In fact, some of these oracles present similarities with the magical hymns: there are mentions of Iao and Aion, deities typical of magical literature, and even some lexical parallels.⁸⁹ Unfortunately, the oracles displaying these features are all late (not earlier than third century AD) so that, considering the process of composition of the *PGM*, it is very difficult to decide whether they were used as sources for the composition of the magical hymns or vice versa. The similarities between the two corpora seem again to imply the circulation of ritual (in this case oracular) texts and their affinity with the magical hymns, but cannot tell us much about the textual history of these compositions.⁹⁰

A different case is represented by the recent publication of a lead tablet from Selinous, dated to the fifth/fourth century BC. It bears some hexameters, probably originating in the fifth century BC, and seems to have functioned as a protective charm to be worn by the initiated. The text has been interpreted in different ways: for example, in connection with the ‘traditional *legomena* of a rite of initiation into the worship of

⁸⁷ Bernand 1969, 583, no. 167, line 1 (beginning of the Roman period); see I.1.

⁸⁸ See 7.4 and I n.448.

⁸⁹ Merkelbach and Stauber 1996, with rich bibliography: for Aion see no. 26.2 (cf. I.15); for Iao no. 28.3 (cf. I.5); for lexical parallels see nos. 25.1, 26.14, 27.1 (cf. I.16, αὐτοφυής, 3.25, ἀδίδακτος, 7.16, ἀστυφέλικτος); no. 25.2 (πολυώνυμος, e.g. *PGM* VI 24, cf. 8.26, πολύμορφε). Further discussion on these parallels in Nock 1972b; Livrea 1998.

⁹⁰ Cf. Miguélez Caverio 2008, 180–6.

Demeter and Core' or with Dionysiac-Orphic mysteries.⁹¹ Paian is mentioned thrice for his healing power, Hecate (one of the main deities of the magical hymns) appears as the traditional companion of Persephone in her journey into/out of the Underworld, and there are also apotropaic magical words to be found again in the *PGM*.⁹² More interestingly, verse 8 in Col. i is paralleled in *PGM* LXX 12 (third/fourth century AD) and seven verses (Col. i, 8–14) are paralleled in *Suppl.* 49 64–70 (third/fourth century AD).⁹³ In both cases the hexameters appear within invocations but not proper magical hymns. Nevertheless, their persistence proves that the compilers of the *PGM* had at their disposal some metrical ritual texts that originated in a Greek cultural environment and with a long history of transmission.⁹⁴ In this case they may belong to the ritual sphere of the mysteries, but their strong prophylactic nature puts them in close connection with the protective charms of later magical literature. Similarly, the use of inscribing prophylactic incantations and prayers of salvation on portable amulets is well attested in Greek practice, sometimes in connection with mystery cults.⁹⁵

The other approach to reconstructing the textual history of the magical hymns is to look for their antecedents in Egyptian

⁹¹ The so-called Getty Hexameters: Jordan and Kotansky 2011. See now Faraone and Obbink 2013, with many detailed essays. For the connection with Orphic mysteries see Furley, forthcoming. Cf. Gordon 2014.

⁹² Col. i.6, 13, ii.4, 14, 22, iii.7; the magical words, the so-called *Ephesia Grammata*, belong to Greek tradition: Preisendanz, *RAC* 'Ephesia Grammata', 515–18; Schultz 1909; McCown 1923; Bernabé 2003; Bernabé 2013.

⁹³ Cf. *Suppl.* p. 203; for parallels and discussion, Dieterich 1911, 101–3; Jordan 1988, 256–8; Jordan 2001, 190–1.

⁹⁴ Cf. Klinghardt 1999, 28–9. Cf. the cursing rituals found in the *PGM* that developed from earlier Greek *defixiones*: see Faraone 2010, 388–90.

⁹⁵ Kotansky 1991, especially 107–12, 114–16; Graf 1991; cf. Betz 1991; cf. the so-called Orphic golden lamellae dating from the end of the fifth century BC to the second century AD, Pugliese Carratelli 1993; Tortorelli Ghidini 2000, 17–41; see also Faraone 2000, especially 197–209; Faraone 2006; Faraone 2011a, for the possible oral transmission of Greek hexametrical incantations.

literature, as Ritner did for the slander spells (above p. 32). The use of hymns within magico-religious contexts is well attested in Egypt, and one of the best examples is the Harris magical papyrus (XX Dynasty) which incorporates liturgical hymns to Shu and Amun-Re reused as incantations e.g. against snakes and crocodiles.⁹⁶ A Brooklyn magical papyrus of the Late period (paralleled in a Carlsberg papyrus of the late Ptolemaic–early Roman period) still invokes the deity with a long list of the standard hymnographic epithets of the Theban Amun-Re (cf. below pp. 46, and 49–50).⁹⁷ Furthermore, Egyptian religious hymnography was very conservative. For example, Ptolemaic temple hymns are often paralleled in different locations, and some of them are re-adapted copies of texts that can be traced back at least to the New Kingdom and, in some cases, even to the Middle Kingdom:⁹⁸ they might have been copied from a pre-existent monument, but papyrological finds confirm that religious texts were usually stored in the temple archives.⁹⁹ Similarly, two hymns to Amun in the Harris magical papyrus mentioned above are found again in an extended version in the Persian period temple of Amun-Re at Hibis.¹⁰⁰ Another hymn to Amun from the same temple testifies to the standardization and popularity of these hymns thanks to its various attestations: from the edifice of Taharqa by the sacred lake in Karnak, through the Great Pylon of the

⁹⁶ Leitz 1999, BM EA 10042 I.1–III.3, III.10–VI.4; Lange 1927, especially 8–12. On this and the following, Quack 1998, especially 79–81, 87–9.

⁹⁷ P. Brooklyn 47.218.156 in Sauneron 1970, 4.3–4.4 and commentary; paralleled in P. Carlsberg 475; see Quack 2006b; cf. Ritner 1989, 113–14. See especially Assmann 1997b.

⁹⁸ See e.g. Feder 2001 and Czerny 2008, for a Middle Kingdom hymn to Min-Amun with many later parallels (also in the temple of Amun-Re at Hibis).

⁹⁹ Žabkar 1980; Žabkar 1988, 129; Minas-Nerpel 2012, 363–4; Baines 1994, especially 26–7; Graefe 1991, discussing passages traceable back to the Pyramid Texts; also Klotz 2012a, 564, 566.

¹⁰⁰ Leitz 1999 (=Lange 1927), BM EA 10042 III.10–VI.4 = Klotz 2006, IV, III. Cf. Knigge-Salis 2007, 223–8; Quack 2002, 60–1.

temple of Isis at Philae, to a Demotic ostrakon of the late Ptolemaic–early Roman period.¹⁰¹

This conservatism allows us to consider much earlier texts when searching for parallels for the magical hymns, but since it is impossible to detect direct lexical parallels, the real problem is to understand if and how Egyptian hymns could be rendered in Greek. Fortunately, there are some examples of Greek hymnography that have been analysed in depth in order to determine whether they could represent or include ‘translations’ of Egyptian praises: mainly the Isiac hymns and aretalogies.¹⁰² Their study has shown that, despite a new interpretation of some traditional features, many attributes of the deity can be traced back to her Egyptian epithets and functions present in both Demotic praises of the Graeco-Roman period and in earlier Hieroglyphic/Hieratic religious texts.¹⁰³ In particular, the four *Hymns* of Isidorus of Narmuthis, which are among the earliest examples of these praises (first century BC), are closer to indigenous religious feelings despite the *interpretatio graeca* of many divine features.¹⁰⁴ In both hymns and aretalogies, traditional contents can be expressed in a different way, but in other cases it seems we are dealing with a direct translation,¹⁰⁵ and even some stylistic/grammatical features are likely to copy Egyptian equivalents.¹⁰⁶ In particular, these

¹⁰¹ Klotz 2006, II; Smith 1977.

¹⁰² Mainly the four *Hymns* of Isidorus of Narmuthis (Vanderlip 1972) and the aretalogies from Andros (*RICIS* 202/1801), Kyme (*RICIS* 302/0204), Thessaloniki (*RICIS* 113/0545), Ios (*RICIS* 202/1101) and Maroneia (*RICIS* 114/0202); cf. Leclant 1984, 1694–1700.

¹⁰³ Especially Peek 1930; Festugière 1949, 221–34; Müller 1961; Bergman 1968; Grandjean 1975; Zabkar 1988, 135–60; Dousa 2002; Quack 2003; Kockelmann 2008; Stadler 2009a, 160–2; Jördens 2013.

¹⁰⁴ Dousa 2002, especially 166–8.

¹⁰⁵ E.g. *ntrt* ‘gt = θεὰ μεγίστη, ‘mightiest goddess’, *hnwt* = ἄνασσα, ‘queen’, *mw-t-ntr* = μήτηρ Ὁρου, ‘mother of Horus’, *špšt* = ἀγαθὴ τύχη, ‘good fortune’; for these and other cases see Kockelmann 2008, 49–68, also summarizing previous contributions.

¹⁰⁶ Quack 2003, 336–9, 362–3; Kockelmann 2008, especially 46 no. 80.

compositions might have been influenced by the Philae hymns and other temple hymns.¹⁰⁷ These examples demonstrate that, even if it is difficult to reconstruct an Egyptian archetype for the compositions in their entirety, Egyptian hymns could be consulted and Egyptian epithets could be translated. Even if partly re-elaborated or widened, Greek metrical renderings of Egyptian praises were possible and might have been more frequent than the extant sources indicate. When a magical hymn addresses the deity as 'self-engendered scarab', the influence of Egyptian hymnography seems to be undeniable:¹⁰⁸ exactly as various Egyptian magical rituals and procedures underlie the *PGM* spells, Egyptian religious literature could have been a source for the composition of the magical hymns (as Ritner demonstrated for the slander spells, above p. 32), perhaps through the mediation of documents such as the Harris or Brooklyn magical papyrus, where liturgical hymns, or scraps of them, had already been incorporated in magical incantations. For example, it has been noted that a dream oracle of the god Bes attested in three versions in the *PGM* (VII 222–49, VIII 64–110, CII 1–17) might derive from a passage of the Harris magical papyrus (8.5–9.5).¹⁰⁹

It is thus possible to catch a glimpse of continuity in both Greek and Egyptian religious literature, but, considering the scarcity of Greek parallels and the difficulty of 'translation' for Egyptian parallels, to rely on the textual transmission does not seem to be the best approach to determine the Greek/Egyptian nature of divinity in the magical hymns. Until new finds illuminate the history of these texts, for the purpose of this study it seems more promising to concentrate on the magico-religious conceptions and stylistic features displayed by the magical hymns, and thus to follow the approach adopted by the latest studies on the subject.

¹⁰⁷ Žabkar 1988, 135–60.

¹⁰⁸ See 3.10–11, 1.32, αὐτογένεθλε, and especially 5.5.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Frankfurter 1998, 172–4, 180; Frankfurter 1997, 121–5.

Egyptian and Greek hymnography: a brief comparison

From a general structural point of view, there are no real differences between Greek and Egyptian hymns.¹¹⁰ They both follow a tripartite scheme, which can be described using the terminology normally applied to Greek hymnography:¹¹¹

- *epiclēsis*: invocation stating the name (or more names) of the addressed deity, epithets (genealogy), cultic toponyms, etc.¹¹²
- *eulogia*: predication of the deity's power and privileges and actions
- *euchē*: prayer (direct appeal to the god so that he may fulfil the speaker's petitions).¹¹³

Thus, if we are looking for characteristic features, we have to turn either to more specific, internal, structural patterns or to particular stylistic choices.¹¹⁴ For example, within the *eulogia* the

¹¹⁰ A distinction is usually made between hymns and prayers according to the context in which they were used (collective/individual, public/private, etc.), the level of involvement of the speaker, the balance between the *eulogia* and the *euchē*, etc. (Barucq 1962, 22–4). Here I shall try to summarize a few general aspects that can be considered valid for both sub-genres. For a summary of the history of the studies on Egyptian hymns, Knigge-Salis 2006, 9–30 (though in other respects a very problematic publication: see Quack 2007).

¹¹¹ Furley and Bremer 2001, I.50–64; Bremer 1981, especially 194–7; Furley 1995, 34–5. For Egyptian hymns, Assmann, *LdÄ* 'Hymnus'; Barucq 1962, 24–31, who uses a slightly different subdivision. Cf. Burkert 1994.

¹¹² A typical feature of the Greek *epiclēsis* is what Race 1982, 5–8, calls 'finding the ἀρχή': the poet refers to the action of 'beginning' the hymn and/or hesitates pretending not to know how to begin. On the contrary, Egyptian hymns normally start with a sort of 'title' or introduction stating the kind of religious act involved, the names of the god and the worshipper, and the time of the day or the way in which the hymn has to be recited (Barucq 1962, 48–59, 126–32).

¹¹³ In Egyptian hymns this section is extremely reduced (and the petitioner is normally identified with the Pharaoh); on the contrary, the prayers tend to extend it and focus on the individual (Barucq 1962, 24–9).

¹¹⁴ Metrics cannot be taken into consideration: though there are various studies on the Egyptian metrical system, the issue is still under debate. What seems to be certain is the 'stress' nature (vs. the Greek and Latin

Greek hymn normally adds a 'narrative' section describing one or more remarkable mythological deeds performed by the deity in question in order to please the god and 'suggest suitable ways for him to act'.¹¹⁵ The same cannot be said for the Egyptian hymn, in which a real narration is absent in the majority of cases as the mythological events are presented as preassumed so that they, and their consequences, may be mentioned but not recounted, with the sole exception of cosmogonical narratives. Similarly, the Greek *eulogia* can include a so-called *hypomnēsis*, a section that reminds the god either of the way in which he helped the speaker on a previous occasion or of the way in which the speaker previously honoured the god. In Egyptian hymnography, while the latter kind of *hypomnēsis* can be found in the *euchē*,¹¹⁶ the former does not exist. That is, the Greek worshipper refers to the specific way in which the god previously intervened in his life or in the community's in order to create a precedent for the fulfilment of the prayer, while in the Egyptian hymns we can recognize only a vague cause-and-effect relation between the general essence of the god and his ability to help the petitioner.¹¹⁷ Likewise, where the Greek hymn can describe in detail how the god was born and obtained his functions, the Egyptian tends simply to state his genealogy and consider his functions as innate.

These structural differences can all be considered as 'concretizations' of the underlying expressive patterns, inherent in one or the other culture, which Norden called 'dynamische

'quantitative') of the Egyptian metre. See Fecht 1964; Fecht 1965; Fecht 1993; Foster 1975, especially 6–8; Mathieu 1994 (and his earlier articles there quoted). For a summary of the studies, Parkinson 2002, 112–17.

¹¹⁵ Furley 1995, 40–5; divine intervention would be the purpose underlying all three sections of the hymn; cf. Race 1982, 10–12.

¹¹⁶ Egyptian hymns tend to focus on the moral virtues of the petitioner and not on the specific actions he did to please the god (Barucq 1962, 380–5).

¹¹⁷ In Egyptian hymnography, a separate case is represented by the so-called prayers of penitence: the speaker describes his present affliction as a divine punishment inflicted on him for his previous sins and asks for forgiveness (Barucq 1962, 24, 29–30).

Prädikationsart' and 'essentielle Prädikationsart', referring respectively to the Greek and the Near Eastern way of praising a god.¹¹⁸ In the 'dynamic predication', or 'predication of powers', the deity is lauded according to his/her actions or ability to do something ('you do/did/will do this and that'), while, in the 'essential predication', the greatest part of the hymn is devoted to the description of the intrinsic characteristics of the god, of his/her essence ('you are this and that').

Obviously, these differences in praising patterns depend on differences in theology, which, in their turn, result from a different logical system underlying the conception of reality. In Egyptian thought, the affirmation of identity is a way of describing reality: synthetic symbology of images is preferred over an analytic logic of descriptions. For example, Egyptians can choose an image implying various attributes and simply say that the god X manifests himself in the form of a scarab, while if a Greek wanted, just hypothetically, to express the same range of attributes he would say that god X is the god of the sun at dawn and he created himself at the beginning of time; following the same 'imagistic' principle of the Egyptian *ḥkꜣ* connecting the divine with the human/natural world (above pp. 17–18), the scarab, owing to its particular characteristics (see 3.10–11), can be a manifestation, an image of the solar god. Similarly, instead of being 'victorious' (adjective), the god X can be 'Horus the one who overthrows his enemies' (identity). For, even saying that a god is another god does not mean anything but to attribute the qualities of the second deity to the first one. Following the same principle, the gods, apart from 'having some qualities', can 'become something else', i.e. they can manifest themselves in different forms or different deities (*ḥprw*, 'forms, manifestations', from the verb *ḥpr*, which means both 'to become' and 'to come into existence', 'to be'). In the course of Egyptian history when different cult centres grew in

¹¹⁸ Norden 1956, 207–39.

importance, their principal deity tended to assume universal connotations. Therefore, this system of *hprw* became even more extended, since the minor local deities could be interpreted as ‘manifestations’ of the god of the capital.¹¹⁹

This peculiar system of thought partially explains why, speaking of style in general, the characteristic that Parkinson recognized in many Egyptian literary genres as a possible trace of an early oral culture is certainly a distinctive feature of Egyptian hymnography: ‘the patterning of expression is often additive rather than subordinative and the use of formulae is prominent and aggregative rather than analytic, as when epithets appear in long sequences’.¹²⁰

In particular, the Egyptian hymnic speech tends to develop according to two basic stylistic forms that Assmann called ‘Nennen’ and ‘Verklären’. The former, consisting in ‘naming’ the god’s names, epithets and functions, is also present in the Greek hymn with the difference that, in the Egyptian, it can become extremely extended and adheres to a ‘nominal style’ (adjectives, appositions, participles): it describes the ‘atemporal’ essence of the god. The latter, which uses a ‘verbal style’ (finite verbs), consists in the depiction of the nature of the god ‘in process’, in his transfiguring into his various manifestations: it describes the ‘temporary’ essence of the god.¹²¹ In any case,

¹¹⁹ Hornung 1996, especially 113–28; Piankoff 1964, 5, 10–19; Pfeiffer 2005, 288–9; Kaper 2005, especially 305; see **Intro.** n.151. This possibility of appearing in different manifestations is not just a prerogative of gods: in a difficult situation even someone with the right knowledge can become something else, assuming those qualities that will help him overcome the present danger. The same idea underlies the identification with deities within magical literature: the magician obtains access to a mythical situation in which the god has specific characteristics necessary for the magical procedure. See Nordh 1996, 49–61, especially for curse and blessing formulae; cf. Federn 1960.

¹²⁰ Parkinson 2002, 56.

¹²¹ Assmann, *LdÄ* ‘Hymnus’. For a detailed discussion on the concepts of ‘Nennen’ and ‘Verklären’ (the latter first formulated by Schott 1945, in relation to Osirian funerary cults) see Assmann 1975, 26–45; Assmann 1969, 342–58, 363–7; Assmann 1996; different terminology but similar ideas in Barucq 1962, 94–9, 133–73; BD, 29–33.

even if a verbal style of predication is used, in most cases the Egyptian hymn does not strictly 'narrate', i.e. it does not recount actions or events that have a specific place or development in time, but describes the way in which the deity manifests himself in the world in an undefined but constantly present time. If a story is told, it is almost always cosmological and not mythological: to quote the definition given by Assmann for the Egyptian solar hymns, we should talk of an 'iconography of images' instead of a 'mythology of stories'.¹²²

To give an example, the hymns belonging to the traditional solar theology, the style of which influenced all Egyptian hymnography starting from the Ramessid period, describe the cyclical journey of the sun. The manifestations of the sun god correspond to the four phases of the solar course so that the hymn is organized into four thematic units represented by the four times of the day: morning, midday, evening, night. Even if these different phases can be interpreted on more than one semantic level (the cosmic, the ritual, the funerary and the kingship level), they always describe the same process of cyclical regeneration. The verbal style, prevalent in these compositions, is not used to narrate events that have a starting and an ending point in time, but as performative speech depicting a series of changes in state, of transfigurations, re-enacting themselves every day.¹²³ Apart from this specific case, the absence of proper narrative sections is a phenomenon involving all Egyptian hymnography, so that it can be considered as a distinctive feature in comparison with Greek hymns: we can find many

¹²² Assmann 1995, 38–42; Assmann 2001a, 102–13; on the particular status of myth in Egyptian literature see Baines 1996, especially 364–5. The Isis aretologies would seem to represent an exception, but actually they cannot be considered as an example of traditional Egyptian hymnography because, apart from their late date, they address in Greek an already Hellenized deity so that even traditional contents can be expressed with different stylistic patterns (see pp. 37–8 above).

¹²³ Assmann 1969, 333–9; Assmann 1975, 27 ff.; Assmann 1995, 38–66; Assmann 1996, especially 328–9; Barucq 1962, 252–6; BD, 115–20.

‘allusions’ to well-known myths (especially cosmological) but would never find a narration, such as that about the god’s childhood in the *Homeric Hymn* (*HH*) to Hermes.

Two other rhetorical features largely adopted in Egyptian poetry and practically irrelevant in the Greek are the so-called *parallelismus membrorum* and the extensive use of wordplays that are characteristic of the highest stylistic registers.¹²⁴ The former can be defined as the correlation of ‘members’ (cola, verses, or simply phrases, depending on the extent of the analysis) in couplets (triplets, or more) obtained by placing semantic equivalents in an equivalent syntactic position. The semantic relation established within these ‘thought couplets’ can be of various kinds, going from synonymy to antonymy (e.g. ‘the mountains tremble in the time of his rage, the earth shakes when he starts roaring’, or ‘justice was given to him who does what is liked, and injustice to him who does what is disliked’).¹²⁵ As far as wordplays are concerned, they are inherent in the Egyptian attitude towards writing and speaking, which considers these actions as ‘creative’, ‘life-giving’: through the utterance or the writing of a name what is named is not only identified as a specific entity, but it is also brought into existence. The ‘name’ of something is a fundamental part of its ‘essence’, and ‘not to have a name’ means ‘not to exist’.¹²⁶ This principle also explains the great importance of the name in magic, where for example threatening ‘the name of someone’ corresponds to a threat of annihilation, and knowing the secret name of a god means to have power over him.¹²⁷ In Egyptian

¹²⁴ See Parkinson 2002, 120, 124–5; Barucq 1962, 292.

¹²⁵ Hintze 1950, 146–9; Assmann, *LdÄ* ‘Parallelismus membrorum’; Norden 1956, 355–64. For the *parallelismus membrorum* applied to the study of the Egyptian metrical system see Foster 1975, especially 8–17, and Foster 1994 with bibliography.

¹²⁶ Exactly as the name is considered to be one of the five components of the human being: Vernus, *LdÄ* ‘Name’; Piankoff 1964, 3–9.

¹²⁷ Brunner-Traut, *LdÄ* ‘Namenstilgung’; cf. Nordh 1996, 94–6 on curses with the formula ‘his name shall not exist’.

literature this name–essence equivalence explains why the former is often conceived as an explanation of the latter in the so-called etymological puns, for example, ‘his name is hidden (*imn*), in his name of Amun (*Imn*)’.¹²⁸ The name–essence connection probably also underlies the use of this stylistic contrivance applied to longer units: an entire phrase can be formed by different words deriving from the same root or by the same word repeated in a different inflection (polyptoton) in order to draw attention wholly to a specific concept, for example *nfr nfrt nfr r.f*, ‘only the goodness of the good man is good beyond him’.¹²⁹ this taste for the *figura etymologica* and the polyptoton is another distinctive feature of Egyptian hymnography, together with the etymological puns.

In conclusion, in terms of form, the main differences between Greek and Egyptian hymns are more stylistic than structural. On the other hand, distinctive features can more easily be recognized if we examine the content: that is, theological ideas that find an expression in specific recurrent motifs. Basically, the Egyptian hymn (unlike the Greek), from the New Kingdom onwards, becomes very standardized as the solar and Osirian themes start to spread over the entire pantheon and all the principal deities acquire the potential to become creator gods. Thus, the motifs previously confined to a specific domain become characteristic of the greatest part of Egyptian hymnography. It is worthwhile briefly to summarize here some of these motifs that, though already present in Egyptian religious thought in different contexts, start to appear together in the New Kingdom with the Theban elaboration of the Amun-Re theology. They owe their significance to their absence from classical Greek hymnography and can thus be considered as distinctive of Egyptian religious thought.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Spiegel, *LdÄ* ‘Ätiologie’, 80–3; Assmann 2001a, 83–7.

¹²⁹ Parkinson 1991, 43, B1 337/B2 72; Parkinson 2002, 124–5.

¹³⁰ This is a summary of Assmann’s analysis; for a comprehensive discussion, Assmann 1975, 64–77; Assmann 1979; Assmann 1983; Assmann 1995,

The god is described as

- ‘One’, ‘unique’: but without excluding the existence of the other gods that are conceived as manifestations of the ‘One’.
- ‘Hidden’: his name is unknown, nothing can be known about him, he is hidden as he can manifest himself in every form or in every other deity, he is the one ‘who makes himself into millions’, *unus qui est omnia*.
- ‘Primordial’: he is the first god of the primeval time who came into being by himself.
- ‘Creator’: he created everything that exists.
- ‘Sun god’: as such he can manifest himself in various forms corresponding to the three/four phases of the sun (dawn, midday, sunset/night), e.g. child/adult man/old man (human), scarab/lion/ram (animal).
- ‘Cosmic god’: he did not only create the world, he also ‘is’ the world.
- ‘Maintainer of the cosmos’: he preserves his creation by nourishing and reviving the cosmos every day and does this especially by manifesting himself in the three life-giving elements light, air (wind, breath) and water (mainly of the Nile).
- ‘Ruler god’: he rules over his creation.
- ‘Ethical authority’: he governs life and death, fate is in his hand, he is omnipresent and omniscient, he is the lord of justice and truth, salvation or punishment depends on him.

These themes, which have been summarized in the expression ‘henotheistic pantheism’, did not disappear after the New Kingdom, but were extended to other deities and had a new

102–210; Assmann 1996, 329–34; Assmann 1997a, 168–207; Assmann 2001a, 189–244; also Assmann *LdÄ* ‘Sonnengott’; Knigge-Salis 2006, 63–70, 78–9 (**Intro.** n.110, always cf. Quack 2007); cf. Barucq 1962, 172–3, 202–9, 220–9, 295; BD, 32–6; MT, I.127–9; Klotz 2012b, 58–66. Also Otto, *LdÄ* ‘Amun’, especially G. See also Zandee 1992 for many Egyptian epithets of the creator god.

peak of popularity during the Libyan and Persian periods. It has been suggested that this late Egyptian hymnography, in a period of great cross-cultural interchange, was influenced by Jewish theology and other foreign conceptions. Although this is probable, the motives typical of the Ramessid Theban Amun-Re remain still present and easily identifiable even when slightly modified, so that these compositions maintain a great continuity with earlier religious thought.¹³¹

From the Third Intermediate period onwards the solar, cosmic and creative aspect of the god is increasingly represented by iconographic means through the hybrid images of the polymorphic deities, the so-called *Panthei*.¹³² In their simplest forms we can find, for example, the four-ram-headed Amun-Re embodying the cosmos through the completeness expressed by the number four in Egyptian symbology (four cardinal points, four winds, four elements, etc.). His image is thoroughly described by one of the above-mentioned hymns to Amun-Re from the Persian period temple of Hibis where the creative-cosmic aspect of the god is especially stressed.¹³³ The more complex images are also often found in connection with Amun-Re, and seem to have been an artificial creation aimed at graphically representing the idea – originally developed by the theology of this god – of a cosmic solar deity whose body is the world and who reunites in himself the whole

¹³¹ Stadler 2009a; Klotz 2006, 1–3, 10–15; Knigge-Salis 2007; also Knigge-Salis 2006, especially 279–306 (**Intro.** n.110, always cf. Quack 2007). On the continuity and evolution of the Amun-Re theology see also Kákosy 1995a, especially 2962–8.

¹³² For criticism on the use of this term and on earlier scholarly interpretations see Quack 2006a, 175–6; Koenig 2009, 320–1, 323. On polymorphic deities and all the following see Sauneron 1970, 13–14; Sauneron 1960, 284–5; Kaper 2003, 79–104; Quaegebeur 1984; Assmann 1997b; cf. Sternberg-El Hotabi 1999, 25–7; Michel 2002, especially 6–16, 27; cf. Mastrocinque 2003, 74–8.

¹³³ Quaegebeur 1991, especially 260–3; Klotz 2006, 9, IV.31–2, 167–70, cf. II.53–65, 182–5. On the four-ram-headed solar god see also Quack 1996, especially 315, 321–2; on the number four see **I** n.206.

pantheon.¹³⁴ The best example is the so-called Bes-Pantheos. This god, attested from the end of the Third Intermediate period and especially popular in the Late and Ptolemaic periods, is a hybrid deity with the head of the original (lion)-dwarf god Bes,¹³⁵ two or more arms and wings, and often ithyphallic; his body can have animal grafts (especially leonine protomes and the tail of a falcon) and be covered with eyes; he wears a complex headdress, usually with ram horns, solar disc, uraeus and animal protomes functioning as multiple heads; he can be encircled by flames and stand on an ouroboros snake which can contain a series of dangerous animals that have been interpreted either as his helpers or as vanquished enemies (see 1.15 p. 81).¹³⁶ Another popular polymorphic deity in the

¹³⁴ It has usually been hypothesized that these polymorphic deities are a representation of the *b3w* of Amun-Re, his 'effective powers' (see literature on polymorphic deities in **Intro.** n.132). The *b3w* of a god are the means through which the divine power can manifest itself and operate remotely in the world, and thus they can also be personified as independent entities in the so-called emissaries of the gods: they embody the visible aspects of the divine puissance (Žabkar, *LdÄ* 'Ba'; Žabkar 1968; Borghouts 1987, 37–9; Taylor 2001, 15–16, 20–2; Sauneron 1960, 284–5; Assmann, *LdÄ* 'Persönlichkeitsbegriff' und -bewußtsein'; cf. Loprieno 2003, 207–11; Goelet in Von Dassow, Wasserman, Faulkner and Goelet 1994, 150–3). According to this theory the polymorphic images would stress the invisibility, concealment and transcendence of the god, who cannot be depicted directly but only through the representation of his *b3w*. Unfortunately, this interpretation is based on one single passage from the previously mentioned Brooklyn magical papyrus (**Intro.** n.97), which was supposed to state that the polymorphic deity represented in a complementary vignette is 'the Ba's of Amun-Re'. However, Quack (2006a, especially 178–81) demonstrated that this passage cannot be used to explain the nature of the deity since it was misinterpreted and does not refer to the polymorphic image of the papyrus. See also Quack 2006b, especially 58–60; Quack, in press.

¹³⁵ On the early lion iconography of Bes see Romano 1980 and 1998 with bibliography; on the solar symbolism of dwarfs in Ancient Egypt, Dasen 1993.

¹³⁶ Tran Tam Tinh, *LIMC* 'Bes' II.F; Sternberg-El Hotabi 1999, 110–12; Frankfurter 1998, 124–32; cf. DD, 126–41; Michel 2002, 4–6; cf. Hilton Price 1901. The two proposed functions of the dangerous animals in the ouroboros snake are actually not incompatible since the vanquished enemies of the god, once defeated, could have served as his helpers and protectors: see Ritner 1993, 128 footnote 583; Quack 2006a, 177–8.

Graeco-Roman period is the sphinx god Tutu (Tithoes),¹³⁷ whose iconography seems to be a representation, a *twtw*, ‘image’, of Amun-Re.¹³⁸ The Panthei, reuniting in themselves so many powers with their band of attributes and animal components, had, together with a solar-creative aspect, a strong apotropaic–destructive function, which explains their popularity in late Egyptian magic.¹³⁹ For example, Bes-Pantheos can appear on the so-called cippi of Horus on the crocodiles: these stelai, especially popular during the Late and Ptolemaic periods, focused on a central image of Horus the child and were inscribed with healing or repelling spells against dangerous animals; the power of the incantations could be absorbed by drinking water that had been poured over the stele.¹⁴⁰ On one of the best-preserved cippi, the Metternich Stele (XXX Dynasty), we can find texts that, in abbreviated versions, also recur on other cippi. The central theme is the myth of Isis asking the help of Thoth to save Horus the child stung by a scorpion. Together with this and similar mythological *historiolae*, we find images of the four-ram-headed Amun-Re and invocations and hymns to for example Re, Min and to a solar deity called ‘the old man who rejuvenates himself in his time, the elderly man who becomes child again’ (alluding to the daily regeneration of the sun), who may be identified with Bes-Pantheos appearing at the top of the back of the stele.¹⁴¹ In the previously mentioned magical papyrus of the Brooklyn Museum, aimed at providing magical

¹³⁷ His nature is solar and apotropaic at the same time. See Kaper 2003; Sauneron 1960; Quaegebeur, *LdÄ*, ‘Tithoes’; Kákosy 1995a, 2982–5.

¹³⁸ Kaper 2003, 111–13, 190, 204; Michel 2002, especially 21–3.

¹³⁹ Puech 1930; Frankfurter 1998, 115–20; Frankfurter 2012, 328–9; Michel 2002, especially 6–9, 13–16; Quack 2006a; Quack 2006b, 58–62.

¹⁴⁰ Kákosy, *LdÄ* ‘Horusstele’; Kákosy 1987; Kákosy 2000; Kákosy 2001; Kákosy 2002; Satzinger 1987; Sternberg-El Hotabi 1999, especially 8–19; Gasse 2004; Ritner 1989, especially 105–11; Frankfurter 1998, 47–9.

¹⁴¹ Golénischeff 1877; Sander-Hansen 1956, especially 30–1, lines 38–9; Scott 1951; Kousoulis 2002; Seele 1947, 46–8; Budge 1904, 267–74; cf. Kákosy 1999, 20; Malaise 1990, 706.

protection against all enemies alive or dead, all the dangers of this world and the Netherworld,¹⁴² two vignettes depict Bes-Pantheos and the text invokes him with many traditional epithets of Amun-Re and seems to describe him as ‘the great and mysterious forms of Amun which are usually hidden to gods and men’.¹⁴³ Furthermore, the four-ram-headed Amun-Re can appear on the Late period hypocephali used in funerary magic to grant the protection of the head of the deceased,¹⁴⁴ and Bes-Pantheos often appears on Graeco-Egyptian magical amulets.¹⁴⁵ Therefore, from the Late to the Roman period the Theban theology of Amun-Re did not only survive in temple texts, but also played a prominent role in late magic and popular religion thanks to the development of the polymorphic deities and of their strong apotropaic–destructive function.¹⁴⁶

Selection and organization of the material

The choice of the magical hymns implies that the Greek deities will be used as the starting point for the organization of the selected material, since these metrical sections are not addressed to Egyptian or ‘foreign’ gods. However, talking about either ‘Greek’ or ‘Egyptian deities’ at this stage is just a convenient contrivance and refers simply to their names and not to their natures.

¹⁴² Sauneron 1970, 6–11.

¹⁴³ Sauneron 1970, 4.2, 4.6–4.7, 11–16, fig. 2–3 (and cf. P. Carlsberg 475, in Quack 2006b); Klotz 2006, 50–1; cf. Ritner 1989; on the continuity between polymorphic deities and the Theban theology of Amun-Re see also Assmann 1979; Assmann 1997a, 192–207; Assmann 2001a, 234–44.

¹⁴⁴ The fact that these hypocephali have been found on the body of the clergy of Amun or Montu puts them in strict connection with Theban theology: Varga 1961; Klotz 2006, 182–3.

¹⁴⁵ Bonner 1950, 156–60; DD, 126–41; Michel 2001, 37–9; Michel 2002, especially 6–12 on the solar and cosmic aspects of the Pantheos; Quack 2006a, 182–6; cf. Bakowska 2001; Zwierlein-Diehl 2007, 220–1. Sternberg-El Hotabi 1999, 163–70 on the continuity of the motif.

¹⁴⁶ Quack 1998, especially 79–81, 87–9.

My studies on the *PGM* have led me to the conclusion that the magical hymns can be divided into two main groups showing thematic unity according to the deities involved, whether directly addressed by the hymns or addressed by the spells in which the hymns appear. First of all, the majority of metrical sections invoke five main deities: a solar god (sometimes Helios); a creator god; Apollo; Hecate; and Selene.¹⁴⁷ These hymns are often also longer than the remaining ones (addressed to Hermes, Aphrodite and Typhon-Seth).¹⁴⁸ They can be further divided into two subgroups: hymns to the solar/creator god (Helios) and Apollo, and hymns to Hecate and Selene.

In fact, as is typical of the *PGM*, these deities are often associated, if not identified, with each other or with other gods.¹⁴⁹ Generally, this phenomenon is one of the distinctive traits of the religious ideology that started to spread with the Hellenistic period, when the overcoming of particularistic trends ushered in a new mobility of peoples and ideas and a new cosmopolitan approach. The prevalent tendency towards the depersonalization of divinity favoured not only the coupling of the national deities with the corresponding 'foreign' ones (which somehow is inherent in polytheistic systems), but also the shifting of many minor deities into the field of action of the main ones.¹⁵⁰ Such ease of assimilation was certainly promoted

¹⁴⁷ Helios-Apollo and Selene-Hecate remain two of the most significant deities of the *PGM* even when we consider the whole corpus according to the frequency of occurrences of deities' names and to the frequency of spells addressed to them.

¹⁴⁸ V 400–20, VII 668–80, XVIIb (Hermes); IV 2902–39 (Aphrodite); IV 179–201, 261–73 (Typhon-Seth); plus a short metrical section addressed to multiple chthonic deities/entities in IV 1459–69.

¹⁴⁹ Considering the juxtaposition or interchangeability of their names and not the deep nature of the gods in question.

¹⁵⁰ Sometimes this process ended by divesting deities of many of their individual connotations, to the point of considering them more as universal symbols of a specific natural aspect: for example, the growing importance, starting from the first century, of the worship of the sun god, who eventually assimilated almost all male deities, both Greek and foreign. For a detailed summary of the situation in Roman Egypt see Kákosy 1995a, 2948–88; on

by contact with Egyptian religion, which had always adopted this expedient in order to bring back into unity the multifarious local manifestations of the same gods and/or to gather under a single name or symbol the multiple aspects of a kind of divinity which was conceived more as a plurality of manifestations (*hprw*, and ‘forms’, *irw*) of the same power than of distinct identities (the obvious example being Re-Atum-Khepri).¹⁵¹ Furthermore, magic was no doubt a privileged field for this phenomenon: the necessity of knowing the ‘hidden, true name’ in order to obtain control over a deity favoured the use of divine names or epithets as ‘secret’, second names of different gods (almost as happens with the *vores magicæ*).

Returning to the magical hymns to the solar/creator god (Helios), Apollo, Hecate and Selene, for example, in II 64–183 a first metrical section addressed to Apollo is followed by a second addressed to Helios; but the addressee has not changed and the two gods appear to be identified. In VI 1–47 the magician is supposed to have an encounter with Helios, but he invokes Apollo Phoibos.¹⁵² In IV 2622–707 the ritual involves an image of Hecate, but the spell and the hymn are addressed to Selene. In IV 2708–84, 2785–890 Hecate, Core, Artemis, Persephone and Selene are used as different names of the same goddess.¹⁵³ Generally speaking, all these deities

different forms of syncretism see Lévêque 1973; cf. the remarks of Smith 2003, 30–6 on magic as religion of ‘anywhere’.

¹⁵¹ See **Intro.** n.119; Hornung 1996, especially 185–96, 217–26; Barucq 1962, 179–80; Griffiths 1982; cf. Dumas 1965, 48–9, 115, 120–4; Pfeiffer 2005. This process became more and more noticeable starting from the New Kingdom: Knigge-Salis 2006, 78–9 (**Intro.** n.110, always cf. Quack 2007); Dunand 1973a, 85–9. On the contrary, in Greek religion the main tendency is not to identify, but to assimilate through myth or genealogy.

¹⁵² Similarly, in III 187–262 we find two interchangeable hymns: one to Helios, the other to Apollo. In another hymn to Helios (IV 296–466, 1928–2005) the god is invoked as his Egyptian equivalent, Horus.

¹⁵³ Similarly, in IV 2441–621 a first hymn invokes a goddess as Artemis, Persephone, Selene and Aphrodite, while a second hymn calls her Selene and ‘Hermes and Hecate at the same time’ (the only exception as far as gender is concerned, cf. **II.25–44, G**). The hymn in IV 1390–495 invokes a goddess

appear to be susceptible to being identified with each other according to their gender. In the majority of cases it is clear, even at a first reading, that, when considering the whole spells, the male or female gender corresponds to a solar/creative or lunar/chthonic basic nature of the deity invoked. The only few exceptions are found among the hymns addressed to the male deity, where in a couple of cases it is not immediately clear whether the god has solar traits or not. Nevertheless, these two groups appear to be 'complementary' inasmuch as they address deities that are perceived by the compilers of the *PGM* as representing two main poles: the solar-creative and the lunar-chthonic aspect.

On the contrary, in the remaining hymns to Hermes, Aphrodite and Typhon-Seth, the deities tend to stick to their specificity even when considered in the context of the spells. Moreover, they cannot be considered complementary or be paired in any way, so that their hymns require a different kind of analysis: they cannot be directly compared as far as the nature of divinity is concerned, and should be investigated as single units according to the single deity. Therefore, they are not analysed in this study, which focuses on the hymns to the solar/creator god (Helios), Apollo, Hecate and Selene.¹⁵⁴ According to the features outlined above, the selected material has been organized in relation to two 'divine units': hymns addressed to the male¹⁵⁵ deity and hymns addressed to the female chthonic/lunar deity (for the sake of convenience they

called interchangeably Persephone-Core or Hecate, but it is followed by a second invocation in which the same Hecate and Core appear as separate entities in simple association. This is just a brief overview but the same trend is attested throughout the whole corpus.

¹⁵⁴ This subdivision also reflects a different scholarly usage. In fact, the hymns selected for this study are also those more often discussed or quoted by scholars, while the remaining metrical sections are more rarely dealt with and thus would appeal to a more specific audience. Nevertheless, I plan to publish these 'minor' hymns (with commentary and analysis) in the near future.

¹⁵⁵ The solar-creative, lunar-chthonic subdivision proved useful in order to create two theoretical units, but it applies when considering not only the

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have been assigned a number corresponding to the order in which they will be discussed):

<i>PGM</i> hymns	Identification numbers
Male deity:	
- I 296–327, 341–7	1
- II 2–7	6
- II 81–102	7
- III 198–230	3
- III 549–58	4
- IV 436–61, 1957–89 and VIII 74–81	2
- IV 939–48	5
- VI 6–44	8
- XII 244–52	9
Female chthonic/lunar deity:	
- IV 1399–434	10
- IV 2242–347	11
- IV 2522–67	12
- IV 2574–610, 2643–74	13
- IV 2714–83	14
- IV 2786–870	15

Immediately after **3** there is another metrical section used as an alternative or further invocation (III 234–58). Preisendanz published it as hymn 12, but the passage is so fragmentary that it has been almost entirely reconstructed. Thus, it will not be taken into consideration, though some of the epithets that are certainly recognizable will be recorded and analysed within the commentary to the other hymns.

hymns in themselves but also the spells in which they appear. The analysis will show how the hymns to the female deity always display a lunar/chthonic aspect even when considered only in themselves; the same does not apply to the hymns to the male deity which, considered outside the context of their spells, do not always display a solar/creative aspect. Therefore, I choose the generic title ‘hymns to the male deity’ in order to avoid confusion between my programmatic subdivision and the actual nature of divinity described by the hymns belonging to this category.

The fundamental edition remains Preisendanz, *Papyri Graecae Magicae – Die Griechischen Zauberpapyri* (Pr), to be complemented by the more recent Merkelbach and Totti, *Abrasax* (MT), in which only some of the hymns are published. In fact, although I checked all the texts of the hymns against digital images of the papyri, I can hardly talk of a ‘new’ edition. The very rare cases in which my reading is different from the previous editions (recorded in the apparatus as Bortolani) usually concern a single letter which anyhow does not affect the meaning of the text, or sometimes I adopt or discuss readings that, though not appearing in the final text chosen by MT or Pr, were suggested by Preisendanz’s collaborators or by previous editors and appear in his critical apparatus. Nevertheless there was still room for some minor improvements. For example, in a few cases square brackets (used for a lacuna or a gap in the text) were misplaced, or angle brackets (used for erroneously omitted characters), were used instead of curly brackets (used for characters considered superfluous by the editor), or vice versa. In a few other cases I reject generally accepted emendations. Furthermore, I suggest some new interpretations that will be discussed in the commentary.

A reference to Pr or MT appears at the beginning of every hymn: this means that, if not otherwise stated in the apparatus, the text of the hymn is the same as the mentioned edition. Whenever the papyrus presents graphical features (such as the insertion of a letter above the line) that do not create any interpretation problem, they will generally not be recorded. Similarly, all the corrections and readings proposed by Preisendanz’s collaborators do not appear in my apparatus: I indicate them only when a reading was either adopted in my text, or is significant for the interpretation of the contents (for the exhaustive critical apparatus, see Preisendanz’s edition).

Furthermore, it should be remembered that when Pr appears as the guide edition, I do not refer to the ‘reconstructed’ versions of the hymns appearing at the end of the second volume (they are mentioned at the beginning of every hymn only for the sake

of comparison). Since my aim is to preserve the original context as much as possible, I do not consider the different reconstruction attempts unless indispensable for the meaning (such as the erroneous omission of a word). This means, first, that the different attestations of the same hymn are analysed separately, unless they are almost identical: in that case, the variants are recorded in the critical apparatus. Secondly, the non-metrical sections or *voces magicae* are included when they appear within the metrical text. Finally, there are no significant corrections to the metre, and thus, as a general impression, prosody will be much clumsier than usual. Moreover, the metre will not be analysed unless it is significant for readings affecting the interpretation of the content. In spite of prosodic imperfections, the hymns are arranged in verses. The translation is different from Betz's edition in as far as it tries to be as literal as possible, even if, sometimes, overlaps are unavoidable.

Although the line-by-line commentary to the hymns can prove useful in itself and be consulted when needed, it is fundamental for the development of the discussion since it investigates the Greek or Egyptian nature of divinity, and thus draws the bases for the final Conclusions. For this reason, the concluding chapter very often refers back to passages in the commentary which are indispensable for a comprehensive understanding of this study. Given the importance of the commentary, I wanted it to be easily readable and as fluent as possible. Therefore, considering also that, though partly philological, it mainly focuses on religious conceptions, I decided not to follow the practice (customary for philological commentaries) of embedding the footnotes in the text, but I deliberately kept them separate.

Latinate forms are generally used for the names of Greek deities (with a few exceptions for those deities whose names always appear in Greek spelling within studies on the *PGM*) and those of Egyptian follow Redford (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*. In some very rare cases abbreviated references to classical authors differ from LSJ since they are slightly expanded in order to be unambiguous.