Unveiling Emotions in Graeco-Egyptian Magical Papyri

Panagiota Sarischouli
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki
psarisch@lit.auth.gr

Abstract

The present study introduces a fascinating new theme in magic studies: it explores how humans experienced and expressed emotions while performing magical acts, focusing on their manifestations in various Graeco-Egyptian magical recipes and activated texts, which – although heavily formulaic in structure and in form – offer many opportunities for exploring the manifold influence of emotions on human behaviour.

Keywords

Emotions, Graeco-Egyptian Magical Papyri

The present paper begins with the rather banal observation that our life is often governed by emotional contexts, rather than rational order. Whether in antiquity or in modern times, individuals are often engaged in sexual and familial dramas, seek revenge for real or imagined wrongs, are bitten by the «green-eyed monster» of jealousy,[1] but also hope for divine assistance in practical eventualities. But, while in modern times most of us seem to have found other ways to handle stressful situations, individuals in antiquity would often seek help from ritual experts, albeit motivated by different concerns, which seem to relate to times and customs.

A starting point in studying emotions is of course defining them. Although there is no consensus among modern emotion theorists[2] on a satisfactory definition of what constitutes an emotion, modern psychology[3] teaches us that an emotion is caused by the perception of a specific *stimulus* that, in the first place, causes the triggering of bodily response (e.g. facial expression, skin conductance, vocal alteration or changes in heart rate). The following reflection of these components (*stimuli* and somatic responses) into consciousness usually (though of course not necessarily) activates the tendency to either act in a constructive manner (e.g. try to attract a desirable partner) or to aggressively undo the

[1] As in Shakespeare's *Othello* Act 3, scene 3, 165-171, or *The Merchant of Venice*, Act 3, scene 2.
[2] For the controversial relation between modern theory and ancient emotions, see Cairns 2008. For the problems involved when studying the display of emotions in past societies, see Cairns / Fulkerson 2015; Plamper 2015; Matt 2014.
[3] See e.g. Ekman 1999.

supposed wrong (e.g. take revenge on an enemy). This definition makes it clear that the very nature of our source material is the main obstacle for historical research on emotions: we only have the written word at our disposal, in which a lot of information, such as facial expressions or tone of voice, is not available. A further difficulty emerges due to the underlying antithesis between what an individual declares that he/she feels in a written text (and even more so, in a text intended to serve magico-religious purposes), and how this is perceived by the reader of the text, since the cognitive function of language allows not only to express one's feelings, but also to camouflage a feeling as another, as part of a communication strategy.

The study of emotions through the written word is not new to modern scholarship: recent research – lead primarily by Angelos Chaniotis – has turned to exploring how ancient humans experienced, expressed, or represented emotions,[4] as most history-related disciplines come to recognise that the evaluation of emotions detected not only in archaeological source material (such as mosaics, frescoes, sculpture etc.), but also in narrative sources (both literary and non-literary) provides a totally different research perspective, compared to more traditional approaches. The papyri undoubtedly represent a field open to investigation, as they have only sporadically been studied in relation to emotions,[5] whereas the study of emotions in magical papyri has been integrated into research to a much lesser extent,[6] since ritual texts raise some further difficulties compared to documentary genres, such as petitions or letters.

Let us first turn to some peculiarities of the Graeco-Egyptian ritual texts, which we – simplifying – call "the Greek and Demotic Magical Papyri" (hereafter referred to as PGM and PDM): before a practitioner of magic could carry out a magical ritual, he/she would need to know how to perform it. The simplest (though not the only) way to do so would be to read (and, most probably, adapt) a recipe found in an instructional handbook (also known as magical formularies or grimoires), containing one or more recipes for performing various types of rituals. Although this, again, is something of a simplification, a common recipe usually includes:

a. an introduction in which we often find the so-called "mystifying motifs", a common marketing strategy applied almost routinely in Greek (and occasionally also in Demotic) formulary prescriptions.[7] The "mystifying motifs" have, no doubt, served as a means, on the part of the authors or the redactors of the texts, to secretly manipulate the feelings of the

[4] See e.g. Chaniotis / Ducrey 2013; Chaniotis 2012.

[5] For emotions in Greek papyrus texts (private letters and petitions), see Clarysse 2017; Kotsifou 2012 a, 2012 b, 2012 c. For emotions in letters written in Demotic, see Depauw 2006, 281-284.

[6] See mainly Alvar Nuño 2017; Gordon 2013.

[7] A thorough discussion of the advertising strategies used by the authors (or the redactors) of the Greek magical recipes can be found in Dieleman 2005, 254-280; Dieleman offers (on pp. 261-276) a helpful overview of the various types of "mystifying motifs", which may be briefly categorised as follows: (i) pseudepigraphy (the text is attributed to a god or a famous author), (ii) authenticity testimony (e.g. the text could claim to be an original letter addressed from a famous magician to another, or an authentic translation from Egyptian to Greek, or that it was discovered in a temple or on a stele), (iii) proof of efficacy (the recipe claims to having been tested), and (iv) command to maintain secrecy from laity (usually in the form of an imperative, such as "hide", or by emphasising its divine character, which may not be shared).

implied readers, for they mainly aimed at providing the users with additional confidence in the efficacy of the ritual,

b. instructions on how (e.g. which incense to burn or what ink to use) and when to perform the ritual, and
c. the magical formulae that are to be spoken or written in order to create an empowered object: a ring, a papyrus-strip, a stone or a liquid.[8]

A significant part of our knowledge on Graeco-Egyptian magic is thus based on these rather technical documents.

The sands of Egypt have also preserved a number of applied or activated texts (i.e. amulets, phylacteries or curse tablets addressed to a specific target),[9] which are actually the magical objects created in the course of a ritual. The applied texts are usually simpler in form than the recipes found in magical manuals: a typical applied text contains only formulae, occasionally alongside magical drawings and *charaktêres*. However, since the applied texts were usually also copied from magical handbooks, it is often difficult to distinguish the two major categories of magical texts from each other. Applied texts are, nonetheless, more personalised, since the generic name marker is usually replaced with the actual names of the agent and his/her victim.

Whether formularies or applied charms, the Graeco-Egyptian magical texts are generally extremely formulaic in structure and in form, regularly expressing the same idea in identical or similar wording, and do not usually contain typical emotional words, such as «hope»[10] or «fear»[11] (at least not on the agent's part). This practically means that the emotions initiating a magical procedure cannot be easily traced by means of a computer word search; it is their purpose, rather than any specific vocabulary, that is indicative of the emotions that initiated them. While this assertion is more or less true for revelatory divinations as well as for healing or protective procedures, it cannot be dogmatically maintained for ritual prescriptions related to erotic and destructive magic, nor for a series of activated texts, such as forcible erotic charms, phylacteries, or curse tablets, which do contain emotional words (e.g. «love», «hate», «enmity», «strife» etc.).[12]

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[8] When the formulae were spoken or written, the practitioners would have to replace the generic "so-and-so", son / daughter of so-and-so, with the name of the agent and that of the intended recipient. It is interesting to note, in this context, that many magical formulae were considered so effective that they have circulated among the authors or the redactors of magical texts (initially, the native priesthood), who often decided to re-use them in similar contexts.

[9] The extant Graeco-Egyptian applied texts are far less in number than formulary texts; Gordon / Gasparini 2014, 40 n. 13 refer to 37 applied texts written on papyrus, 15 on lead, 6 on *ostraka*, one on linen, and one on parchment.

[10] Hope and related words appear rarely in the PGM and, when they do, they are mostly used as part of Christian formulaic expressions (such as ἐλπίζειν in PGM LXXXIII 1-20 [P.Princ. II 107 = SM I 29] at 10-13, and ἀπελπίζειν in PGM P20 verso at 33-37); cf. also PGM IV 3125-3171 at 3169, in which ἐλπίς appears in a pagan context.

[11] Fear and related words (such as ἔμφοβος or ἐμφόβως and φοβεῖσθαι) are usually associated with the fear of the divine name: in e.g. SM I 46, 12-14; 47, 12-14; 48 J, 14-16; 63, 1-2. On the topic, see Martinez 1991, 70-74.

[12] Ἐρᾶν occurs in e.g. SM I 45. 7. 48; 47. 27; 48 J-K 12. 24. 38; ἔρασθαι in SM I 37 A 7-9, B 3; φιλεῖν appears in SM I 39. 5. 12. 14; 42. 17. 38. 51; 45. 30. 32. 43. 48. 51; 47. 27 etc., while μισεῖν is found in SM I 45. 50; II 55 D-G 4. 5. 13, and μίσημα in SM II 55 D-G 14.

Considering the above, our overview includes only a brief reference to revelatory divinations, even though these rituals represented one of the major activities of local priests or freelance ritual specialists. The desire to foretell the future, no doubt, emanates from a series of desires and fears, which are, however, rarely – if ever – explicitly stated in the texts. Individuals who feared what the future would bring, while consciously or unconsciously expecting a specific result to occur, often turned their hopes toward those who claimed to be able to somehow «see» or «hear» the future; that is, by interacting with gods and spirits in the course of an oracular ritual,[13] or by receiving dream-visions with divine revelation.[14]

All these texts are emotionally charged with (invisible) hopes, fears and expectations, some of which can be recovered when we look at the way that the texts are advertised in their introductions, which describe their power.[15] Our first example demonstrates how the author (or redactor) of a 4th-century *praxis* for acquiring both foreknowledge and memory uses a "mystifying motif" to convince the reader of its efficacy: «A procedure greater than this one does not exist. It has been tested by Manetho, [who] received [it] as a gift from god Osiris the greatest».[16] By alluding to Manetho and his close connection to Osiris,[17] the author/redactor of the prescription undoubtedly aims at developing an illusory hope in the effectiveness of the ritual.

Healing or protective procedures seem also to have been mainly motivated by fear interwoven with hope. Through a usually complex ritual process, certain objects were believed to take on divine power, which an individual would use for healing or protection by either wearing the empowered artefacts (for example, an amulet in the form of an inscribed stone or a papyrus text), or by consuming them (for example, a potion or a drug), or even by anointing or washing themselves with the applied objects (e.g. magical ointments or liquids). It is interesting to note that defensive magic was the most wide-spread genre in Pharaonic times, when people desperately tried to find ways to ward off evil gods and corpse-daimons, which were believed to motivate the bites of dogs, snakes and scorpions, or caused bad dreams, diseases and other afflictions.[18] Although in Graeco-Roman times people no

[13] Usually, the practitioner addressed his questions to a young boy (the medium) who would respond under the influence of spirits, while a divinity might also be invoked to speak through the medium: cf. e.g. PGM VII 540-578; PDM xiv 150-231; 750-771.

[14] Revelatory divinations include a broad range of complex rituals and practices, such as lamp or vessel divinations (by the terms λυχνομαντεία and λεκανομαντεία, the texts refer to divinations by either interpreting the flame of an oil lamp [e.g. PGM VII 250-54, 255-59, 359-69; XXII b 27-31] or by inspecting a bowl filled with water [e.g. PDM xiv 1-92, 239-95, 528-53, 627-35, 851-55]), rituals aiming at a «god's arrival» (a term used in Egyptian magic to describe a procedure in which a god is seen in a dream-vision, revealing the secrets the practitioner is interested in: e.g. PDM xiv 150-231 at 170-175 = VI 21), spells for inducing revelatory dreams, dream oracles, and many more.

[15] For the advertising strategies used by the authors (or the redactors) of the Greek magical recipes, cf. n. 7 above.

[16] PGM III 424-466 at 439-440; trans. W. C. Grese, GMPT 30.

[17] The Manetho mentioned in our text is identified as the Egyptian historian and archpriest at Sebennytus and Heliopolis who flourished during the reigns of the first two Ptolemies. Though the validity of this assumption cannot be fully confirmed, Manetho is believed to have played an essential role in the introduction of the cult of Sarapis, a hybrid god who emerged from the fusion of Osiris and the Apis bull, combining Hellenistic and Egyptian traits. Plut., *De Is. et Os.* 28. 362A refers briefly to the connection of Sarapis and his cult to Manetho of Sebennytus.

[18] For daimonology in ancient Egypt, see e.g. Beck 2018; Quack 2015; Kousoulis 2011; Lucarelli 2011, 2010; Szpakowska 2009.

longer thought they needed to be protected from nightly visions of the serpent god Apep / Apophis or other daimons, they still used apotropaic amulets to ward off evil, protective charms or magico-medical recipes to guard health, and healing prayers to overcome their fear of death. There can be little doubt that fear and/or hope introduced the need to be protected by such amulets, recipes and charms;[19] the texts, however, usually contain no explicit reference to emotions.[20]

But, emotions can be recovered when we look more carefully at the texts: thus, in a fever-amulet written on a papyrus strip, which was folded five times to be worn on the body of the patient, we read: «deliver Techosis […] from the quotidian fever with shivering that possesses her, on the present day, in this very hour, now, now, quickly, quickly».[21] Although the paired repetition of urgency adverbs at the end of the text is undoubtedly a formulaic element, it may have also served as a powerful "vehicle of hope" for its wearer.[22] An explicit reference to hope is found in our next example, which is issued from a Christian milieu: PGM P 20 verso[23] is a protective mid 6th/7th-century A.D. amulet written on parchment, which incorporates (at ll. 33-37) a well-known Christian prayer for the sick from Alexandrian liturgy (*kephaloklisia*): «You are the hope of the hopeless, the help of the helpless».[24]

The so-called «productive magic», a genre which includes procedures to increase wealth or improve business efficiency, and to ensure prosperity or favour, is also closely related to the emotion of hope, although emotions are, again, rarely explicitly stated in the texts. One exception is a formulary favour-procedure, which is found in a 4th-century A.D. magical handbook: the text instructs the practitioner on how to make a phylactery that will increase the prosperity of a temple or business. The practitioner is to invoke the god Aiôn[25] with the following words: «please, Aiôn, ruler of hope, giver of wealth».[26]

Let us now proceed to have a closer look at genres, in which emotions are more clearly expressed, such as erotic magic, a genre that is abundantly represented both in the PGM and PDM, but also in a

[19] The role of hope in healing magic is discussed in detail in Sarischouli 2021 a.

[20] For example, there is hardly any emotional content present in an inscription found on a haematite falcon amulet (SM I 6), in which the falcon-god Horus-Harpocrates is imagined to recite the text: «I am he upon the lotus, ... protecting ⟦…mon⟧, true priest, for the time of life he has, from all evil, and wrath of the gods and daimons, and from all sorcerers» (trans. R. W. Daniel / F. Maltomini). However, the identification of Horus-Harpocrates as the one protecting the owner of the amulet seems to work as an emotional trigger meant to instil trust in the power of the magical object. Note that the name of the priest seems to have been damaged on purpose by a rival or enemy in order to deactivate its magical protection, and thus to expose its owner to the various kinds of misfortune named: see Skeen 2000, 150 ff.

[21] SM I 9; trans. R. W. Daniel / F. Maltomini.

[22] Kotsifou 2016, 189 provides a similar explanation for the use of language of urgency in prayers for justice on papyrus (on which, see below).

[23] BKT VI 7. 2 = LDAB 6225 = TM 64984 = Van Haelst 733.

[24] The phrase has a close parallel in Ephraem Syrus, *Ad imitationem proverbiorum* 224. 4: σὺ γὰρ εἶ ἡ ἐλπὶς τῶν ἀπηλπισμένων, καὶ ἡ βοήθεια τῶν ἀβοηθήτων.

[25] Aiôn is a Hellenistic deity associated with time who plays a significant role in Graeco-Egyptian magic. Essential literature for the god can be found in GMPT, 331-332.

[26] PGM IV 3125-3171 at 3169; trans. M. Smith, GMPT 99.

series of erotic *defixiones* from Egypt and the broader Mediterranean region.[27] The general consensus holds that erotic rituals were usually performed by (or on behalf of) men hoping to instil erotic passion in women,[28] though we also know of a few spells, which were expected to work for both genders,[29] but also of spells intended to help a woman attract another woman,[30] or a man attract another man.[31]

In the PGM, erotic passion is predominantly – though not exclusively – described as a torturous disease, which is to be inflicted on the victim: love madness,[32] psychological torture,[33] burning,[34] or a swooning sensation,[35] forgetfulness or selective loss of memory,[36] loss of sexual shame and sexual blockages,[37] sleep disturbances and insomnia,[38] bodily weakness and faintness[39] as well as abstinence from food and drink[40] are some of the manifold tortures that the principal wishes to induce on his (or, rarely, her) victim.[41]

One fine example can be found in an attraction-procedure contained in a magical handbook, in which the male practitioner is to instruct Helios to «enter] into the [soul] of her, NN … and [burn her heart], her guts, [her liver, her spirit, her bones …».[42] Another example can be found in a male-authored, female-targeting *defixio*, in which Ammonion wishes to bind Theodotis, who «may no longer have experience of another man than me alone, Ammonion, she being enslaved, driven mad, flying through the air in search of Ammonion».[43] A third example can be found in a lesbian amatory *defixio*, in which a certain Sophia conjures a corpse-daimon to «burn, set on fire, inflame the soul, heart, liver, spirit» of her beloved Gorgonia with love and affection for her, and «torture her body night and day».[44]

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[27] The study of erotic magical papyri constitutes a scientific field that has attracted substantially more scholarly interest than all the other types of Greek magic. Essential reading: Edmonds 2019, 91-115; Pachoumi 2013, 2012; Faraone 1999; Martinez 1995, 1991; Gager 1992, 78-115. Many scholars (e.g. Martinez 1995, 354-355; Winkler 1991, 227-228 and 1990, 90) argue that there is a certain discrepancy between literary narrative and the image of reality as seen through the papyrus texts. Others, however, remain sceptical about this assumption; see e.g. Pachoumi 2013, 314-315; Dickie 2000; Faraone 1999, 38-40.

[28] See Winkler 1991, 227; cf. Faraone 1999, 43 n. 9; Gager 1992, 80-81, 244-245.

[29] E.g. PGM IV 94-153, at 144-146: «[say] these things on behalf of women. But when [you are speaking] about women, then speak, conversely, so as to arouse the females after the males» (trans. M. W. Meyer, GMPT 40); XXXVI 69-101, at 69: «it attracts men to women and women to men» (trans. E. N. O'Neil, GMPT 270).

[30] E.g. SM I 42; PGM XXXII 1-19.

[31] E.g. PGM XXXII a 1-25, while PGM LXVI 1-11 and SM II 54 are, most likely, also homosexual love charms. Occasionally, the gender of the spell's user or victim remains unclear, as in PGM CXXII 26-50 (= SM II 72 col. II 1-25).

[32] «Liebeswahn» (or «amorous paranoia») is the common psychological term. Cf. e.g. PGM IV 2756; XXXVI 71; XIX a 53; SM I 42. 16-17.

[33] Often denoted with κεντεῖν, «to prick», as in e.g. PGM XIX 52.

[34] In e.g. PGM IV 2765-2766. On the topic, cf. LiDonnici 1998.

[35] In e.g. PGM LXI 15.

[36] In e.g. PGM LXI 29-30

[37] In e.g. PGM XVII a 6-8.

[38] In e.g. PGM LXXVIII 1-14.

[39] In e.g. PGM XXXVI 356-358.

[40] In e.g. PGM LXI 17-19.

[41] See e.g. Winkler 1990, 96, and 1991, 230-233.

[42] PGM VII 981-993 at 989-990; trans. E.N. O'Neil, GMPT 144.

[43] SM I 38. 9-11; trans. R. W. Daniel / F. Maltomini.

[44] SM I 42. 14-16; trans. R. W. Daniel / F. Maltomini.

Although the notion of torture is, no doubt, a formulaic feature, burning feelings, sleep disturbances, bodily weakness, and a strong emotional disorder are also regularly seen in real life as the physical, emotional and psychological symptoms suffered by someone who is sexually attracted to another, regardless of gender. The detailed references in the PGM to these symptoms may have served the desire of reflecting erotic passion from the principal to the victim. In fact, in the prayer (written in iambic trimeters)[45] of another attraction-procedure the emotional condition of the principal is described with similar symptoms as those he wishes to inflict on his victim, for he cries, bitterly groans, is tortured and feels pain in his heart.[46]

The notions of torture and sickness can also be traced in Egyptian literature, thus perhaps indicating their genuine Egyptian roots: already in the New Kingdom *Love Songs* of the Chester Beatty Papyrus I verso,[47] erotic passion was thought to be a sickness accompanied by physical, emotional and psychological pain: in the seven stanzas of the first Chester Beatty Cycle, two young lovers who were unwillingly separated from each other are imagined to sing of their love. In the second stanza, the female lover, separated in the house of her mother, sings of her longing for the arrival of her beloved, while describing her feelings as an illness.[48] In the seventh stanza, after seven days of separation, the male lover is overwhelmed by his feelings. He sings of his lovesickness: neither the physicians nor the magicians can heal his pains. The only remedy for his malady would be to meet again with his object of passion.[49]

It is, however, worth noting that *erôs* is treated as a disease associated with multiple emotional and psychosomatic symptoms also in ancient Greek literature and medicine, which means that this notion cannot be easily attributed to either a Greek or an Egyptian origin. We can trace several passages describing the bodily and/or psychological torture caused either by the absence or rejection of the beloved one. To name but two of the many outstanding literary examples: in Sappho's fr. 31 LP, the poet admits

[45] Preisendanz, vol. II, Hymn 25 (on p. 263); cf. Bortolani 2016, 219-242.

[46] PGM IV 1390-1495 at 1405-1412: «With fiery serpents, he, NN, has mixed / with tears and bitter groans leftovers from / his own food, so that you, O luckless heroes / who are confined there in the NN place, / may bring success to him who is beset / with torments. You who've left the light, O you / unfortunate ones, / bring success to him, / NN, who is distressed at heart because / of her, NN, ungodly and unholy. / So bring her wracked with torment—and in haste!»; trans. E. N. O'Neil, GMPT 65.

[47] P.Chester Beatty I (pBM 10681 = TM 139343) is written in Hieratic; along with other texts aimed at entertainment, the verso of the papyrus roll contains three collections of love songs: the first cycle is comprised of seven stanzas, in which a regular alteration between a male and a female speaker occurs; the odd numbered stanzas (first/third/fifth/seventh stanzas) are assigned to the male lover, while the even numbered ones (second/fourth/sixth stanzas) to the female lover.

[48] Chest.Beat.LS. 32: «My lover enkindles my heart by his voice, causing yearning (lit. "illness") for him to seize me»; trans. V. A. Tobin apud Simpson 2003, 322-327 at 323.

[49] Chest.Beat.LS. 37: «affliction has spread throughout me, my limbs have become heavy, and I have forgotten my own body. Even if the foremost physicians were to attend me, my heart would not be soothed by their medicines. As for the magicians, there are no resources in them, and my affliction cannot be cured. Only (if someone were to) say to me, "Look! It is she!" would revive me, for her name alone can refresh me […]. More beneficial to me than all medicines is my beloved, she is better than all medical skill. My healing is her coming in to me. (Let me but) see her, and then I will be healthy. Let her open her eyes, and my body will be vigorous, let her speak, and I shall be firm. When I embrace her, she banishes (all) ill from me […]»; trans. V. A. Tobin apud Simpson 2003, 322-327 at 327.

that she herself has almost reached the «verge of death» at the sight of her beloved, which made her suffer from changes in heart rate and skin conductance.[50] On the other hand, Simaitha, in Theocritus' *Pharmakeutria* (2. 84-85), describing her own reaction at the first meeting with her – now unfaithful – lover recalls that «a parching fever laid her waste» and she was «ten days and ten nights abed».[51] Remarkably, many Greek and Roman physicians[52] acknowledge the torturous bodily and psychological symptoms of unsatisfied erotic desire as the symptoms of a mental and/or bodily disease.[53]

The intense emotions emanating from sexual desire have also motivated the numerous Greek and Demotic separation-procedures, in which the malignant Typhon-Seth is the god usually invoked:[54] the so-called *diakopoi* were used when the principal wanted to separate a desirable woman or (more rarely) man from their partners, mainly motivated by sexual jealousy, an emotion which the Greeks attributed to *Phthonos*.[55] A fine example can be found in a 3rd-century A.D. formulary text, which instructs the practitioner not only on how to separate the beloved woman from another partner, who has supposedly wronged her, but also on how to attract her affection for him.[56] Of course, the ritual experts had both the knowledge and the means to respond to even the most complex demands of their clientele; an example is found in another formulary text,[57] which claims to be able to create a breach between two male friends[58] or lovers,[59] but also works against a husband and wife, if a variant formula is used.

Similar to erotic *defixiones*, seductive separation-procedures are found not only in Egypt, but also in many other places of the ancient world. Their use is also recorded in Greek literary sources, where

[50] For a comparison between the intended tortures of forcible erotic procedures and the actual psychosomatic symptoms of *erôs*, as described in Greek literature, see Petropoulos 1993, 52.

[51] Cf. also Eur, *Hipp.* 38-40; Plat., *Symp.* 185 e 6-188 e 5; Ap. Rhod., *Argon.* 3. 962-72; Plut., *Vit. Demetr.* 38. 4-5; Longus 1. 17. 2-6.

[52] E.g. Gal., *Praen*. 14. 632. 7-8, 633. 10 Kühn; Sor., *Gyn.* 1. 7. 30 ff.; Paul., *Aeg.* 3. 17.

[53] Some argue that chastity promotes good health, while others suggest sexual intercourse as a treatment. On the topic, cf. Pachoumi 2012, 75 ff., and 2007, 106 ff.

[54] Literature on the Graeco-Egyptian separation-procedures and *defixiones* can be found in SM II, p. 222 n. 1; cf. also Deaddrick 2011, 66-84; Pachoumi 2013.

[55] In antiquity, *Phthonos* was believed to be the embodiment of jealousy and envy, and was particularly associated with relationships involving sexual jealousy (as in PGM IV 1400). However, it should be noted that, in modern social psychology, envy and jealousy are not considered to be synonymous, but are viewed as distinct emotions, though one might feel envious and jealous at the same time. A well-accepted in general, but debated in detail, belief among modern researchers is that one might simplify the difference between envy and jealousy by saying that envy requires two parties, a person envying another and an envied object, while jealousy at least three: a jealous person, an object of affection, and a person or more who wish to attract the attention and/or love of the object. Both envy and jealousy are considered to be «social emotions», i.e. they require interactions between individuals, like anger or love; however, envy is produced by unfavourable comparisons, which are usually combined with feelings of inferiority, self-disapproval, and occasionally lust, whereas jealousy appears to be a more intense emotion, which is due to a lack of self-sustainability, and is usually combined with feelings of anxiety and fear of rejection or loss: see Parrott / Smith 1993.

[56] PGM LXI 39-71 at 45-46: «Lizard, lizard, as Helios and all the gods have hated you, so let her, NN, hate her husband for all time and her husband hate her», and further on at 71: «let her, NN, love me»; trans. E. N. O'Neil, GMPT 292.

[57] PGM XII 365-375 at 372-374: «Give to him, NN, the son of her, NN, strife, war, and to him, NN, the son of her, NN, odiousness, enmity, just as Typhon and Osiris had. But, if it is a man and a woman, "just as Typhon and Isis" had»; trans. P. Sarischouli, GEMF 15.

[58] For disjunctive charms that were not motivated by sexual jealousy, see SM II 55 intro.

[59] Another example of a separation-procedure between homosexual partners is PDM xii 76-107 [PGM XII 453-65].

emotions are more vividly evoked. A fine example is found in one of Lucian's *Dialogues of the Courtesans*, in which Melitta, an Athenian hetaera of the 2nd century A.D., seeks the help of a Syrian sorceress to force Charinus, her former lover, to long for her, on the one hand, and to hate Simichê, her competitor, on the other.[60]

We may now leave the fascinating genre of erotic magic aside and turn to curse tablets, which, no doubt, «reveal a dark little secret of ancient Mediterranean culture», as Gager 1992, 3 points out in the introduction to his book. These curious objects[61] were motivated by a series of dark emotions, such as antagonism or revenge, hatred, fear, sadness or despair, and often by a combination thereof. Roughly one-quarter of all tablets that are extant today concern erotic matters; the rest of the surviving tablets are directed against business or athletic competitors,[62] concern judicial disputes, while one distinctive category are the pleas for divine justice and revenge, which are labelled as «prayers for justice».[63]

A famous curse associated with a familial drama is the Curse of Artemisia (PGM XL): this late 4th-century B.C. papyrus text represents the earliest example of a judicial prayer, in which we have a public expression of one's emotions in a context closely related to magic; the display of emotions here is more overt compared to simple curses.[64] Artemisia, the offspring of a mixed Ionian-Egyptian family,[65] appeals to Oserapis and the gods seated with him as divine judges of the Underworld, requesting the punishment of her erstwhile lover who, on account of a debt, had deprived their deceased daughter of her burial goods.[66] In revenge for denying their daughter a proper burial,[67] Artemisia demands from the gods that the man may be evilly destroyed on land and on sea, and deprived of funeral rites, both at his own death and that of his parents. The Curse of Artemisia is clearly the response to a perception of injustice which results in a passionate desire for revenge. In this case, the desire for revenge is expressed through a socially accepted custom,[68] which even allows

[60] Luc., *Dial. meretr*. 4: «Bacchis, don't you know any of those old women – there are any number of them about, "Thessalians", they call them – they have incantations, you know, and they can make a man in love with you, no matter how much he hated you before? Do go and bring me one, there is a dear! I would give the clothes off my back, jewellery and all, to see Charinus here again, and to have him hate Simichê as he hates me at this moment»; trans. H. W. Fowler / F. G. Fowler, Oxford 1905.

[61] Curses are usually, though not exclusively, written on lead or other metals; the texts instruct the practitioner to bury them in a grave, so that the spirits of the dead would carry out the desired goal, or to deposit them under the victim's doorway: see e.g. Edmonds 2019, 55-90.

[62] A list of curse tablets against athletes can be found in Jordan 1985, 214; cf. also SM II 53 intro.

[63] For the form and structure of judicial prayers, see Versnel 2010, 278 ff.; 2009, 22-25; 2002, 49 ff., 1991, 68-69. On the role of emotions in prayers for justice, see Kotsifou 2016; Salvo 2012; Versnel 2002.

[64] For emotions and emotional language in curses, see Chaniotis 2009, 63-68; Versnel 2003.

[65] Ray 1994, 55 argues that the Greek text can be transposed phrase-for-phrase into Demotic, which he interprets as indicating an «Egyptianisation» of the Greek inhabitants of Egypt.

[66] Herodotus reports (2. 136) a nomos of the Pharaoh Asykhis providing for the use of mummies as collateral for a loan.

[67] A parallel for this text is SM II 52 (first century A.D.).

[68] To ensure that Oserapis and the other divine judges of the Underworld hear her plea, Artemisia deposited the papyrus text in the god's temple; in this way, the curse would be visible not only for her lover, but also for passers-by involved in his life.

her a bit of *Schadenfreude* (i.e. pleasure in another's misfortunes).[69] Artemisia is undoubtedly enraged at this man, but at the same time she is also anxious,[70] desperate and frightened of her child's after-death fate. Although her curse ends with a final angry demand from the gods, and a frustrated threat against anyone who would dare to remove the curse from the god's temple, Artemisia would probably be willing to lift her curse from the victim (and literally take the papyrus text away from the temple), if only her daughter's father would undo the injustice.[71]

A more common example of a curse is a 3rd-century A.D. lead tablet inscribed with a malevolent charm. Though the reasons that led to its use remain unclear (a business- or juridical-conflict?), the agent's malice is evident. The victim, a man named Chichoeis, may be cursed with muteness, and his opponents may hate him with great hate and not wish to see him at all.[72]

Conclusions

The study of the transmission of magical knowledge in antiquity illuminates aspects of a society much more complicated than we often think, as human behaviour is the product of a complex interaction among psychological, social, cultural, and gender factors.

In Pharaonic Egypt – and most probably also throughout the Ptolemaic period – the senior temple priesthood, and particularly the lector-priests, were predominantly concerned with helping people to deal with their fears (both real and imagined), such as diseases and the attacks of malevolent beasts and insects (curative magic), but also nightly visions of evil daimons (protective magic). With the Roman occupation of Egypt and as the legislation imposed severe financial pressure on Egyptian priesthood, the repertoire of the temple priests was adapted to suit the demands of the Greek-speaking inhabitants of Alexandria and other metropoleis along the Nile valley, who represented a new market. Thus, although the impressive production of Late Egyptian ritual texts (written mainly in Greek and Demotic) remains emphatically Egyptian in methodology and strategies, the texts now incorporate elements not only from the Egyptian, but also from Greek, Jewish, and Persian ritual traditions. More importantly, the Greek and Demotic magical papyri are focused on the practical aspects of magic, which the priests previously considered as completely marginal, for people were now seeking practical assistance with their everyday concerns. Among the *c.* 400 Greek and Demotic formulary

[69] See Versnel 1999.

[70] Eidinow 2007, 139-231 examines curses and their connection to anxiety.

[71] For PGM XL, see the literature cited by Brashear 1995, 3554.

[72] SM II 55. 1-16: «Make Chichoeis, whom Tachoeis bore, mute over against Herakles, whom Herakleia bore, and over against Hermias, whom Didyme bore. Let them hate Chichoeis. Let Hermias, whom Didyme bore, hate Chichoeis, whom Tachoeis bore. Cause him, Chichoeis, to be mute over against Herakles, whom Herakleia bore. Let them hate him with great hate, and may not wish to see him at all»; trans. R. W. Daniel / F. Maltomini.

prescriptions that have been recovered in Egypt, we find numerous divinations, forcible procedures to attract or separate sexual partners,[73] alongside various *praxeis* to ensure business-success, wealth, attractiveness or revenge. Though far less in number than formulary prescriptions, the Graeco-Egyptian activated texts reproduce the same themes, as both categories are mainly concerned with acquiring (i) divine assistance and (ii) control over other people.[74]

We may surely deduce from the above that Late Egyptian ritual texts represent the accommodation of Egyptian priesthood to the new circumstances: local priests (and, later, ritual experts who did not belong to the inner-circle of Egyptian priests) had most likely sold their recipes to support their other income.[75] Therefore, these texts vividly substantiate the claim that emotions are culturally determined, and therefore play a significant role in the formation and transformation of social and religious identities. That said, the use of formulaic language and the choice of a specific vocabulary both in the formularies and applied texts at times conceals emotions, and at times intensifies their communication. Of course, *all* magical practices are based on the hope that they will have some kind of outcome. Assuming that they were hardly ever performed for the sake of fun or experimentation, we can trace expectations coloured by hope and anticipation of success in almost all kinds of magical procedures. Nonetheless, hope cannot be the only emotion initiating a magical procedure, unless its purpose was to cure despair, and there is no such text. As we have seen, the performance of a magical ritual was rarely, if ever, motivated by a single emotion; by contrast, many different emotions and emotion-related states were either simultaneously or sequentially merged when an individual resorted to seeking the help of a ritual expert to deal with his or her problems. Lust, envy, loneliness, fear, pain, anxiety, wrath, grief or disappointment can all act as emotional triggers leading to the search for the comfort of hope.

[73] See Gordon / Gasparini 2014, 40.

[74] One question that remains to be answered is whether or not magic helped individuals in antiquity with improving their lives in general, and in particular their interpersonal relationships. Although this seems to be a rhetorical question that tries to answer itself, one is tempted to ask further: If the ritual experts could never fulfil their promises, why it is that magic seems to have permeated every single aspect of the lives of our ancestors, and consistently aroused so much concern? It appears that reality can never possibly top what imagination can conjure up: each individual who sought the assistance of a ritual expert to solve their small or big problems (from complicated love affairs to the desire for infliction of serious damage on one's enemy, and from migraines to severe or even deadly diseases) created a subconscious process of denying the significance of opposing evidence or any logical argument. H. D. Betz, GMPT intro (p. xlviii) is probably right in assuming that people simply wanted to believe in magic, for «magic is the art that makes people who practice it feel better rather than worse, that provides the illusion of security to the insecure, the feeling of help to the helpless, and the comfort of hope to the hopeless».

[75] On the topic, see now Escolano Poveda 2020; cf. Sarischouli 2021 b; Gordon 2019, 94-103; Dieleman 2005, 285-294; Dickie 2001, 195-241; Frankfurter 1998, 198-237.

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