The Religious Anthropology of Late-antique ‘high’ Magical Practice

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The texts from Roman Egypt nowadays known, rather misleadingly, as the Greek Magical Papyri are sacred texts that invoke theological knowledge not as life-model, as in the case of the ‘religions of the book’ but as a means of achieving privileged, direct access to the Other World. Above all, they offer numerous scenarios of a specialised form of divination, the direct vision of a god, and instructions for compelling a spirit to act as one’s servant (a pa/redrov, paresta/thv). If there is any mileage for us as historians of Greek and Roman religion in the notion of pre-modern ‘religious individualisation’, whether in respect of reported religious experience, religious expressivity or intellectualisation, we might reasonably expect to find traces of it in such a corpus of ritual prescriptions.

The Magical Papyri

Some preliminary remarks about the magical papyri are in order. As a group, they should really be called ‘Late-Egyptian Ritual Texts mainly in Greek and Demotic’, but such a name could only find favour in the Circumlocution Office. Their basis is essentially Egyptian, combined with eclectic but limited borrowings from Greek and Near-Eastern traditions, particularly Jewish.¹ These texts are of two kinds. Group 1) consists of formularies, which are collections of ritual prescriptions, called ‘recipes’ because, like the individual entries in cookery-books, they address an implied reader who is assumed to be

¹ For brief accounts, see K. Preisendanz, ‘Die griechischen Zauberpapyri’, Archiv für Papyrosforschung 8 (1926) 104-67; idem, ‘Die Überlieferung der griechischen Zauberpapyri’, in Miscellanea critica: Festchrift zum 150-jährigen Bestehen des Verlages B.G. Teubner, 1 (Leipzig, 1964) 203-17; W. Brashear, ‘The Greek Magical Papyri: An Introduction and Survey. Annotated Bibliography (1928-1994)’, ANRW II.18.5 (1995) 3380-684 at 3398-422. The standard edition is K. Preisendanz, Die griechischen Zauberpapyri² (ed. A. Henrichs) (Stuttgart 1973-74) (= PGrMag here), which consists of minor alterations to the original 2 vols. of 1928-31 plus the new texts that were to have been included in vol. 3 (1941), the blocks of which were destroyed in the war. The most valuable part of this volume, the Indices, has never been published, though samizdat photocopies exist of the proofs. Texts published since Preisendanz are collected in R. Daniel and F. Maltomini, Supplementa Magica (2 vols) (Opladen 1990-92).
capable of performing the ritual. A few formularies, Group 1a, which I describe in greater
detail below, are compendious (the longest in Greek contains 53 recipes); most (Group 1b),
however, are brief, and contain only one or two. Like the mass of ordinary papyri, Group
1b come from the rubbish dumps of Lower Egypt, and their very existence points to a
relatively casual exchange of recipes between practitioners. Group 2) includes the
individual ‘activated’ texts, which were likewise all recovered from dumps in Lower
Egypt. With one notable and one or two minor exceptions,² none of the activated spells
bears a close relation to the surviving formulary recipes in Goups 1a and b.

Group 1a consists of most of the papyrus formularies once owned by Giovanni
Anastasi (1780-1857), an Armenian merchant originally from Damascus, who was one of
the tribe of dealers who made a living from the grand-scale looting of Egyptian antiquities
that occurred after Napoleon’s ill-fated expedition to Egypt in 1798-99.³ Some time before
1828 Anastasi acquired through his agents from fellahin in Luxor (Thebes) in Upper Egypt
a collection of papyri, mainly magical, in five scripts/languages, hieratic, Demotic, Old
Coptic (i.e. Egyptian represented in Greek characters), Coptic and Greek, allegedly found
together in a tomb. Anastasi sold four of them to the Rijksmuseum in Leyden in 1828,⁴ and
another to the British Museum in 1839 (PGrMag V). When, after his death, his remaining
collections of antiquities were auctioned in 1857, some further items from this find were
sold, to the British Museum, the Bibliothèque Nationale and the Louvre.⁵ In addition to this
group from around Luxor, Anastasi also acquired several other long formularies.⁶ Whether
these too were part of the supposed ‘Theban Library’ cannot now be established. All that
can be said is that three of them (PGrMag I, II and III) at any rate are closely similar to the
Greek texts of the ‘Library’ in style and choice of recipe.⁷

² The main exception relates to the philtrokatadesmos (PGrMag IV 296-466), which has been found in several
versions in Egypt, some close to that version, some divergent.
⁴ Including P.Leid. J.384 verso = PGrMag XII (partly in Demotic = PDem xii), the codex P.Leid. J.395 = XIII,
⁵ One of the BM papyri was later recognised to be the larger section of P.Leid. J.383, and is now known as the
London-Leyden Demotic magical text. The codex bought by the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris is the longest
and most famous Greek magical book, now known as PGrMag IV. Like some others, it contains a handful of
recipes in Old Coptic (Egyptian written in Greek characters) and Coptic, and some words in hieratic and
Demotic.
⁶ A fragmentary text with Coptic passages was bought from him by M.J.F. Mimaut in 1837 (PGrMag III); two
others (PGrMag I, II) were sold to Karl Richard Lepsius for the Staatliche Museen in Berlin at the auction in
1857. At least one further text was acquired under unknown circumstances by the British Museum in 1888
(PGrMag VII).
⁷ It is however certain that Anastasi claimed that another of them (PBritMus XLVII = PGrMag VI), which he
sold to the British Museum in 1839, came from Memphis. It is strikingly different in conception from the others.
Another formulary, PGrMag XXXVI (= P. Oslo 1), in a IVᵃ hand, which was said to have been found in the
Fayum and is likewise quite different from the Theban group, was bought by Sam Eitrem in 1920. It is the last
long text of this type to have come to light.
The Greek hands of all these Anastasi texts are generally dated to the late third/early fourth century AD. The physical contents of the ‘Library’ itself, whatever they were exactly, seem to have been concealed or buried around 350. However, two of the long Demotic texts (London-Leyden and \emph{P.Leid J 384 verso}), written by the same man, are now tentatively dated to late II-early III\textsuperscript{p}, so that the tomb, if that is where the ‘Library’ was found, included Demotic manuscripts at least 150 years old when they were buried. As with all these long formularies, they are individual or personal compilations of recipes from a variety of earlier sources. In the case of the Demotic manuscripts, it is conjectured that these individual recipes were composed over the previous century or so.\textsuperscript{8} The II-III\textsuperscript{p} is likely also to be the date of many of the original recipes collected in the Greek texts. What is odd about the Demotic texts, as Jacco Dielemann has shown, is that they are most probably not originals but translations from recipes written in Greek. In other words they pseudo-originals deliberately rendered back into the sacred language, Egyptian (not the current spoken language at that time, but still a somewhat decadent form of the truly sacred languages/scripts, hieroglyphic and hieratic).\textsuperscript{9} By that date, the only persons capable of reading and writing Demotic were temple-priests.

Authorizing magical practice

All these texts make a generic claim to be capable of achieving specific changes in the world by ritual means. They purport to be instructions whose correct performance will enable the practitioner to obtain, say a revelation from a god, a prophetic dream, protection from fever, attraction of a sexual partner, the death of an enemy; or a whole bundle of such aims. It hardly needs saying that the broader meaningfulness of such claims is underwritten or protected by a whole series of implicit assumptions about the nature of the divine world, its possible modes of intervention in human life, the prestige and efficacy of theological knowledge, the rhetoric of conjuration, the power of certain words and names, and so on – the underpinning that, at least within the world of this dispositif, makes appeal to magic a rational and plausible step.

Although as a class the magical papyri do have a background in dynastic Egyptian temple magical practice, that is not their Sitz im Leben. They emanate from a context in

\textsuperscript{8} J. Dielemann, \textit{Priests, Tongues and Rites: The London-Leiden Magical Manuscripts and Translation in Egyptian Ritual (100-300 CE)}. RGRW 153 (Leyden, 2005) 41-44.

\textsuperscript{9} It was the decision to include all the Demotic texts in the English translation organized by Hans-Dieter Betz, The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation (Chicago 1986, 1993\textsuperscript{2}) (= \textit{GMPT} here) and the commentaries on them by R.K. Ritner, that has contributed most to the appreciation of the Egyptian background of these texts among non-Egyptologists.
which the traditional genres of ‘every-day’ temple-magic in Dynastic Egypt, particularly protective magic against demons, crocodiles, snakes and scorpions, are much less attested, and new, or hitherto much less common, genres become dominant, for private malign and aggressive (mainly erotic) magic; for personal success and attractiveness; written phylacteries. Techniques of miniaturisation (of rituals, of ritual paraphernalia), of do-it-yourself, individual action by the practitioner, are typical of this new mode.10 Two things seem to have changed. First, the demands of the clients, whom I take to have been mainly the relatively prosperous and enterprising Greek-speaking inhabitants of Alexandria and the metropoleis of Lower Egypt. Secondly, although a training in temple-magic is taken for granted (the practitioner is assumed to be technically competent, to know how to apply ‘eye-paint’, conduct a bowl-divination with or without medium, recite a fixed prayer, pose as a god, compose a letter to the dead, be able to obtain ‘hieratic papyrus’, natron, and other ingredients), the relative decline of the temples in these areas forced the priests to become more like the ‘scorpion-charmers’ of the street and the village, who lived from the magical services they could sell to clients.11.

The immediate need to generate authority in the Anastasi formulaires thus derives from the desire to continue a glorious ancient tradition within a changed world.12 Some continue a practice found in Dynastic-period spells by claiming to be able to deliver an astonishing range of results. One asserts that it works for every thing and every rite ... It attracts in the same hour, it sends dreams, it causes sickness, produces dream visions, removes enemies when you reverse the spell, however you wish.

PGrMag. IV 2622-26, tr. E.N. O’Neil

Another presents itself as a

spell of attraction... It inflicts sickness excellently and destroys powerfully, sends dreams beautifully, accomplishes dream revelations marvellously and in its many demonstrations has been marvelled at for having no failure in these matters.

PGrMag IV 2441-46, tr. E.N. O’Niel

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11 J.Z. Smith, ‘The Temple and the Magician’, in idem, Map is not Territory (Chicago, 1993) 172-207 (orig. 1978); idem, ‘Trading Places’ (n.8) 23-27. Examples are PGrMag I 84-85: kai\ (to\ n geo\ n) ei\ v steno\ n to/pon e)negkw/n, o#pou katoikei=v, kaq[i/sth. p]rw-ton de\ to\ n oil]kon strw/sav, kaqw/v pre/pei, ‘take (the god) into a small room, where you live, and sit him down. But first clean the room, as is fitting ...’ (cited again below); III 193; 302; IV 1859-61 ~ 2187-89; VII 540-41;727; 875 XII 164; XIII 5-7; 1034 XXXVIII 5-6. In all these cases oikos means a room in a house, but occasionally it seems to denote a workshop or place of business, e.g. XII 104: e)n w\{| oil/kw| pragma/teuomai e\ gw\ <o#>de.
The majority however deliberately evoke Egypt and aspects of Egyptian temple-practice. Sacred Egyptian sites are invoked, e.g. Heliopolis, Memphis, the grave of Osiris at Abydos. A repeated claim is that the text (sth/lh) presented had originally been inscribed in a temple or came from a temple library:

This papyrus itself, the personal property of the twelve Gods, was found in Aphroditopolis [beside] the greatest goddess Aphrodite Ourania, who embraces this universe.

*PGrMag* VII 863f.

Such texts are often called i(erai/, in order to emphasize their special status, equivalent to coming from the temple. Another method is for the practitioner himself to claim to be a senior priest:

For I am a *prophetes*, and since I am about to call a terrible, fearful name ... open [the holy temple], the world [built on the earth] and welcome Osiris, because I am ...

*PGrMag* VII 323-27

The spell of attraction already cited is ascribed to Pachrates, the *prophetes* (*hm-ntr* priest) of Heliopolis (*PGrMag* IV 2446f.). Another technique invoking the past is the claim to be able to know a name of power as written in hieroglyphics, at a time when knowledge of this script had died out even among priests:

I speak your names which the thrice-greatest Hermes wrote in Heliopolis with hieroglyphic letters ...  

*PGrMag* IV 886

Other techniques are the invention of pseudo-hieroglyphs, the *charakteres*, which were designed to stand out from the text just as hieroglyphs did from a hieratic text, and are treated as themselves divine and compelling; and the inclusion in the text of divine images, themselves deemed to instantiate the immediate presence of the deity. The two most compelling forms of authority however are knowledge of ‘true’ divine names, perhaps mostly words or phrases in Egyptian so deformed that the original cannot be restored, and the deployment of an extraordinary range of arcane theological reference (though individual recipes vary greatly in this respect).

We thus encounter a general context, a (limited) decline in the fortunes of the temple in the Roman period, which might be expected to evoke new forms of religious expressivity, a new emphasis on moral purity, a tendency to ascesis, and a search for enlightenment, in a word the sort of development that Jan Assmann and Robert Meyer have suggested did take place in the Late period, especially under the impact of the Persian and Macedonian conquests - the re-adaptation of the wisdom literature of the Middle Kingdom, the emphasis on the heart as the seat of piety, the interpretation of conquest by foreigners as divine repayment for past
immorality.13 Yet the overt rhetoric of the formularies is completely different, insisting on the continuing ability of the priestly ritual tradition to deliver marvellous results of the highest order. To a great extent of course this is a matter of genre: the effort to adapt temple-magic to the requirements of a different type of client legitimated the idea that an ancient tradition was simply being renewed. It is for example quite striking that the purity envisaged in these texts is wholly ritual, a matter of washing oneself, abstaining from certain foods, and cleansing the room with natron, almost as in the Old Kingdom rules, and has no internal moral correlate; just as there is no perceptible hesitation about including recipes intended to kill targets.

Reading against the grain

This generic formula however is not the end of the matter. There are a number of features of these texts that do not fit with the dominant confidence in the efficacy of ritual prowess. Some of these are the result of the editorial process. For example, we sometimes find parentheses which record that another manuscript or version of the recipe has a different formula [e)n a)llw~| (a)ntigra/fw|],14 but the matter is left at that – the implied reader is given no advice as to which version is preferable; yet confidence in the efficacy of pure ritualism is founded on the authority of the fixed text. The existence of multiple versions evidently prompted some collector-practitioners to try their hand at creating syntheses, which in turn often led to confusion and unclarity, so that the version we possess cannot possibly have been carried out without makeshift decisions and changes. A prominent example here is the ‘cat-ritual’ of P. Mimaut (PGrMag III). Another interesting case occurs in PGrMag XIII, one of the Greek papyri at Leyden, which calls itself the bi/blov i(era\ e)pikaloume/nh Mona/v, alternatively the Eighth Book of Moses. It consists of a codex containing two variant versions of the same elaborate ritual, constructed around a cosmogony (ll.1-233, 343-734), each followed by a variety of particular applications. The text does not comment on the fact that they are basically the same: the title of the second version actually begins on the last line of the first (XIII 3ff. = 343ff.). In this case simple parataxis avoids the need to come to a decision about which text is more authoritative.

Another feature of the magical papyri relevant here is the frequency of references to failure of the ritual. In lecanomancy or lychnomancy with medium, for example, the latter is

14 e.g. PGrMag II 50, IV 500, VII 204, XII 201, XIII 731; in plur., V 51.
frequently imagined to present difficulties, failing to see the light of divinity or the apparitions which have been invoked. In these cases the practitioner must resort to a different formula until the medium does ‘see’, or must allow him to do the work himself until the vision appears. In direct visions of god (au!toptoi), the god may refuse to come and require compulsion; or refuse to answer, sometimes called ‘stubbornness’ or ‘slowness’. The practitioner may have to wake up from sleep in order to persuade a dream vision to come. One recipe allows for three consecutive days of failure of a divination ceremony; another seven. In PGrMag II 50-59, an alternative recipe allows an initial delay of five days, and prescribes the usual compulsion formula; but, surprisingly, imagines the possibility of yet further delay, ‘If he does not obey even then...’ (55). The daemones may simply be contrary: ‘If delay occurs in order not to tell you an answer...’ PDemMag xiv. 1168 = GMPT 249; or there may be something more fundamentally wrong with the purification procedures of the practitioner: ‘If you do not purify it, it does not come about. Purity is its chief factor’. Although a form of the rhetorical figure of auxesis may be at work here, the initial admission of defeat serving to emphasise the constraining power of the compulsion formulae, there is here at least an awareness of the difficulties of the enterprise, strikingly at odds with the dominant rhetoric of automatic efficacy and amazement. Between the lines, the implied reader gathers that success may be a great deal less common than the vulgar suppose.

The possibility of failure returns irrepressibly in another guise, the issue of the credibility of what is revealed. We repeatedly find in the invocations to the divinities or daemones references to this anxiety: do not deceive me, speak the truth, let truth happen to me, speak accurately, do not be ambiguous, do not be treacherous, speak surely from your memory, he speaks with you truthfully with his mouth opposite your mouth - there are dozens of formulae of this kind. A related fear also surfaces, that the apparition may not be what it purports to be, but something else: ‘send me the true Asclepius and not some deceptive daemon in the guise of the god’; ‘do not substitute a face for a face, a name for a true name, truly [without] falsehood in it!’ If it is truly uncertain whether an apparition is authentic, then ritual magic has no special advantage over any other kind of divination, which can also only be proved in the event.

We also sometimes encounter frankly fictional devices designed to provide convincing local colour when imagining encounters with divine beings but whose mode is quite

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15. PDemMag xiv. 515f. = GMPT 224. Note also ‘Its chief factor is purity. It is more profitable than the youth; it is profitable for you yourself as a person [acting] alone’ (ibid. 885f. = GMPT 240.
16. E.g. PGrMag I. 319-21; II.7; 10; III. 194; 288; VII. 634f.
17. PDemMag xiv. 266f. = GMPT 211. This question, among others, was discussed at length by Pythagoras of Rhodes in his Psychomanteia (Aeneas of Gaza, Theophrastus p. 54.4-10 Colonna), cf. K. Ziegler, s.v. Pythagoras #11, RE 24 (1963) 304f.
18. The possibility of deception is however never generalised in this way.
incompatible with the genre of the ritual prescription. We may call this phenomenon the urge towards supplementation. In one case, when Helios-Apollo appears, he will be holding a libation-bowl; if you ask, he will come and give you a drink.\textsuperscript{19} Recipes for acquiring a divine assistant (\textit{pa/redrov}) are the passages in the formularies that come closest to the image of the magician in late Egyptian texts. In one such recipe, the practitioner is to greet the oracular \textit{paredros} in the usual manner of greeting friends, with a handshake and a kiss, and force him to swear an oath of fidelity. Whereupon,

clasping him by the hand, jump down \{from the roof\}, and, leading him into the narrow room where you live, [sit] him down.\textsuperscript{20}

Here the practitioner will have prepared a feast, and wine from Mendes in the Nile Delta, to be dished by a ritually-pure servant who must not speak. The practitioner takes the opportunity to ask the \textit{paredros} for advice and instruction.

After three hours, the god will suddenly jump up. Tell the servant to run to the door. Say: ‘Depart, lord, blessed god, to your permanent home, as it pleases you’. And the god disappears.\textsuperscript{21}

In this sequence, the underlying aim of magic, the temporary fusion of the divine world with the humdrum world, is fully realised in narrative form. The impulse to lay bare has found its logical fulfilment. But the sheer banality of the supper with a god proves the wisdom of the tacit rule enjoining evasion in such contexts. And in giving way to the temptation of such micro-narratives, the authorial voice has broken the illusion that these are purely ritual prescriptions.

Another case illustrates the dangers inherent in meddling with the Other World: in \textit{PGrMag} IV 52-85, a rite for summoning a \textit{daemon} to make a revelation, the practitioner is to throw some bits of food out at a certain spot, and fix up a lamp to singe a scarab suspended from a reed; and must then hurry back home and lock himself in ‘in case he [i.e. the \textit{daemon}] arrives before you: for if you are caught out of doors, you will be locked out by him’ (60-62). Having got indoors, the practitioner is recommended to stay calm, ‘for he will come up all of a sudden and prevail upon you with threats (he will be armed) to set the beetle free’ (69-71). Once again the impulse towards supplementation undercuts the claim to pure ritual efficacy – in a micro-narrative like this (and they are very common), a secondary, or even tertiary, authorial voice makes itself heard.

Yet another unresolved tension arises between the claim to be reproducing rituals that derive their authority from their specifically Egyptian character and the constant invocation of

\textsuperscript{19}\textit{PGrMag} VII 737f.;
\textsuperscript{20}\textit{PGrMag} I 82-84.
\textsuperscript{21}ibid. 92-94. cf. another similar rite: ‘[A star] will come down and stand right over your room (or house-top), and when the star has dispersed (?) in your sight, you will behold the angel whom you evoked sent to you...’ (I 74-76).
alternative magical traditions, the appeal to famous Greek, Jewish, Persian or other ‘masters’ such as Pythagoras, Moses, Ostanes or Apollobex. Some recipes are given individual titles which enshrine the authority of such mythic non-Egyptian figures, e.g. Ci/fov Darda/nou, Sword of Dardanus, or Dhmokri/tou Sfai=ra, Sphere of Democritus. This habit is linked to the process of borrowing texts or models from non-Egyptian sources, most obviously the numerous Greek verse-hymns (which may however actually be compositions by the practitioners) and the heavy Jewish texture of some recipes. This appeal implies the relativisation of the Egyptian tradition, which now appears as simply one among several authoritative magical traditions.

Constructing authorial voices

Beneath the confident simplicity of the ‘instructional imperative’ there are thus a number of intriguing hesitations, supplements and relativisms. They are not allowed to contradict the claim to highly-effective ritual transactions, but they allow us to invoke the idea of discrepant authorial voices. It is in this connection that the broad distinction between the formularies of Group 1a and b becomes important. Most obviously, as relatively ambitious personal collections from a variety of sources, the texts of Group 1a (Anastasi) reveal a clear preference for certain types of praxis. About 35% of all the recipes in this group (excluding PGrMag VI) are for various kinds of divination, a type of recipe which is hardly found in the short formularies. Of these, 29 are instructions for obtaining dream-visions, 23 for obtaining responses via a child-medium, and 33 for the most highly-prized form, the au!toptov, the personal vision of a god while one is awake. Divination is the most self-referential aspect of the practitioner’s activity. The most obvious reason for this is that both the experience and the results are highly subjective. Less obviously, although they sometimes have a service-function for third parties, their primary role is to supply the practitioner himself with esoteric information, such as voces magicae, and verify or correct existing practice. In a note appended to the ‘Mithras liturgy’, the god’s revelation is said to have prompted the author to alter his practice: “Do not use the ointment [the recipe for which has just been given] any longer, but throw it into the river: you {are to} seek revelation by wearing the great mystery of the scarab.

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22 Dieleman, Priests (n. 8) 263-75.
23 The verse form of the 26 Greek hymns, as edited by E. Heitsch, are printed on pp. 237-64 of PGrMag vol. 2. On the Jewish recipes, see N. Fernández Marcos, ‘Motivos judíos en los papiros mágicos griegos’, in AA.VV., Religión, superstición y magia en el mundo romano (Cadiz 1985) 101-27.
24 The only true example of a divinatory recipe (actually an activated example) in Suppl. Mag. is no. 66 = SEG 41: 1619.
brought back to life by the twenty-five birds; and to seek revelation once each month rather than three times a year, at the full moon".  

Similarly, it is Amenhotep/Asclepius himself who provides Thessalus with the key information whose absence from Nechepso’s book had led to his initial failures as an iatromathematician. Divination was therefore directly related to the creation of a ‘personal signature’ in ritual magic, the legitimation of individual choices, innovations and editorial decisions.

A second consideration is the degree to which divinatory texts employ what we might call ‘practical theory’ about how the revelation is mediated. In some cases, named gods are invoked to appear to provide information on their own authority; in others, there occurs the notion of the ‘god on duty’, who is to be told by a higher divinity to fulfil his revelatory function. In a request for a dream-revelation, the god is represented as entering into the practitioner directly. These illocutionary and narrative options represent concrete instances of theory at work. Such concern with how foreknowledge is mediated contrasts sharply with the total absence of theoretical reflection about how the magical compulsion itself works, which is the premise of the entire enterprise. The contrast is surely significant. For it suggests that the introduction of theory is tactical, is not simply ‘learning’ but a function of the circumstances in which such divination was undertaken and of the underlying claim to authority over the system. Formally, the incantations are addressed to the gods or daemones; but inasmuch as these utterances contain theory - contain facts and possibilities produced by theoretical notions - they have also other addressees: that is, the practitioner who may utter them; and the implied reader of the forulary collection itself. Practical theory of this kind is a form of intellectualisation, a sign of an ability to distance oneself in some degree from the ritual praxis itself.

There is a further point. The emphasis on divination in the Group 1a texts suggests that those who made these selections viewed themselves to a significant degree, indeed overwhelmingly, as a channel of communication between two worlds. Subjectively, I suggest, dealing with divinatory texts, the experience of inducing indicative dreams, the practice of lecanomancy with medium, the induction of an authentic divine presence became a guarantee of sincerity and merit, and indirectly a reassurance of the objective validity of ritual magic as a

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27. Eg. PGrMag IV 930-1114; IV 3086-3124; Va; VII. 550f.; 628-42; 727-39; PDM xiv.232-38 = GMPT 209; 239-95 = GMPT 209-13; 695-700, 701-5 = GMPT 232f.. It is also common for gods to be instructed to send named angels, daemones or shades, e.g. PGrMag IV 1-25; 52-85; VIII.80f.; PDM xiv. 93-114 = GMPT 200f. The influence of the forms of trials, where witnesses are summoned to give evidence; and of army duties, seems to be traceable in these representations.
28. PGrMag IV 3206f.
whole. The moral superiority of direct revelation from the gods over ‘ordinary’ magical practices is central to Philostratus’ claim that Apollonius of Tyana was no mere wizard (γοης). This reminds us of the distinction Heliodorus puts into the mouth of Kalasiris, the Egyptian priest (profh/thv) in the Ethiopian Story, a novel now generally dated to the first half of the third century, if not a little earlier:

One kind (of Egyptian wisdom) is popular, we might say creeping along the ground, ministrant to images and wallowing among corpses, addicted to simples, and relying on incantations. It neither attains any good end itself, nor brings any good to those who use it; most often it finds itself at fault, such successes as it achieves being painful and meagre ... But the other knowledge, ..., the true wisdom, of which this other has spuriously assumed the name, and in which we priests of prophetic line are trained from our youth, looks upwards to the heavenly region: companion of the gods, partaker of the nature of the higher powers, it traces the motions of the stars and gleans foreknowledge of the future.

Aithiop. 3.16.3-4 tr. J.R. Morgan (adapted)

Although the substance of the distinction here does not quite fit, since the Group 1a formularies contain a substantial amount of ‘creeping magic’ as well as divinatory rituals (and is not notably interested in astrology), it seems clear that Kalasiris is here registering the existence of a hierarchy of aims and skills analogous to that implicit in the papyri of this group. The grand effort by Iamblichus in De mysteriis aegyptiacis to defend theurgy against the accusation of magic is a further step in the same direction. The impulse to distinguish between low and high magic must owe something to the Roman view of the matter, but was surely also driven by internal differences of self-representation within the group of practitioners, differences that seem to have inspired the preferences visible in the Anastasi formularies.

Variety of authorial voices, supplementation, practical theory and implicit ethical hierarchisation in the Group 1a formularies suggest the possibility that the composition of such books, performed by unusually skilled and dedicated scribe-editors, contributed to the construction of an implied reader with a variety of capacities and expectations. Such variety made possible a ‘modularity’, a flexibility of role-conceptions, belied by the dominant tone of ritual efficacy. Such modularity is an aspect of what we might mean by religious individualisation. As the same time, we cannot help thinking that by the time the Anastasi formularies came to be buried in the mid-IV, the books themselves had become repositories of imagined glories, monuments to the claims and skills of a past age, just as

29 One might even suggest that such revelations were the correlate within ritual magic of the ‘theological oracles’ used by contemporary philosophers to protect claims and insights.
30 5.12, 7.20, pp.173, 274 Kayser. It evidently also underlies the marvel vouchsafed to Plotinus in his séance in the Iseum at Rome (Porphyry, Vit. Plotini 10.15-25 = 1, 17 Henry-Schwyzer).
the decision in the late II-III$^\text{p}$ to translate living recipes in Greek into Demotic was intended to monumentalise this aspect of cultural memory. It was the long formulary collection itself and its implied solitary reader that were now required to carry the burden of continuing the ancient tradition of the temple lector-priests.