

REVIEW ARTICLE

OUT OF THE CLOSET: RECENT CORPORA OF MAGICAL TEXTS

Questions of definition aside (to paraphrase Justice Stewart's now legendary 1966 dictum on pornography: "I know magic when I see it"), from the first discoveries of Greek magical papyri at the beginning of the last century—and for most of the next two hundred years—the study of magic in classical and Hellenistic antiquity has suffered from either benign neglect or outright hostility. The first and most famous case of overt benign neglect involved the renowned "Curse of Artemisia"¹ that was published immediately upon its discovery in 1826. By all rights its appearance should have been greeted with fervent jubilation. After all, it was one of the first Greek papyri ever to come to light. Furthermore, it was—and to this day, still is—one of the oldest papyri bearing Greek writing, dating to the middle of the fourth century B.C.E. (Furthermore, as was only realized in 1987, it is a rare example of a *πρωτόκολλον*, the first sheet of papyrus in the manufacturer's roll.) Despite all its singular merits, far from being received with any acclaim, the "Curse of Artemisia" was simply disregarded and forgotten, until Friedrich Blass "rediscovered," republished, and rescued it from oblivion in 1882.

Blatant hostility followed hard on the heels of neglect. The final decades of the nineteenth century saw the publication of most of the ancient magical handbooks preserved on papyrus, and the turn of the century witnessed a flurry of activity in the field of ancient magic. Wilamowitz, however, scornfully repudiated Hermann Usener and his student, Albrecht Dieterich, as "Verehrer des Aberglaubens," and archly dismissed their research as "Botokudenphilologie,"² thus setting the tone for the vast majority of classical scholars to follow for years to come.

Now, as this century and millennium draw to a close, studies traditionally under taboo such as human sexuality (in all its variants) and superstition in the ancient world have come out of the closet and into their own, drawing increasing attention from scholars in multifarious disciplines. The last few decades have seen a flurry of publishing activity in the field of ancient magic, with a welter of books for the layman and scholarly monographs and articles written by and for students not only

1. K. Preisendanz and A. Henrichs, eds., *Papyri Graecae Magicae* (Stuttgart, 1973–74), no. XL; hereafter cited as *PGM*.

2. Quoted by F. Pfister, *ARW* 35 (1938): 183. The Botocudes are a now extinct tribe of eastern Brazil. Their name obviously represented for the scion of a turn-of-the-century German Junker family all that was foreign, barbaric, and abhorrent.

The gems that had been collected and eagerly studied by Renaissance antiquarians fared no better. Such art historians as J. J. Winckelmann in the eighteenth century and later A. Furtwängler in the nineteenth century summarily dismissed them as "artistically disgusting" ("künstlerisch abscheulich") and "not worthy of being regarded as art" ("nicht würdig, in Absicht der Kunst, in Betracht gezogen zu werden"). Such was the bias and thus was the tone set at the beginning of this century.

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of classics and ancient history, but also Egyptology, Judaism, Christianity, comparative religion, psychology, linguistics, anthropology, and sociology.³

Perhaps the most important aspect of the revitalization of the field is the recent spate of scholarly corpora (in both original languages and modern translations). These corpora are designed to put a wide variety of primary sources at the fingertips of scholars and upper-level students, as well as the educated general public. The following pages present a brief review of recent publications, specifically collections of ancient magical texts collected, edited, and translated according to various criteria (languages, media, subject matter). Some of the corpora discussed here are designed particularly for the layman. Other more technical tomes are obviously for specialists. These can also be read by the layman with profit, since the ancient magical texts have been translated into modern languages and the discussions of various features and phenomena displayed in these sometimes highly arcane and obscure incantations are clearly presented in quite readable form.

To begin with the more technical works—a volume each devoted to papyri, *lamellae*, and gems, respectively:

I. Robert W. Daniel and Franco Maltomini, eds., *Supplementum Magicum I–II* (=Abhandlungen der Nordrhein.-westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Sonderreihe Papyrologica Coloniensia 16.1,2). Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1990, 1992.

Karl Preisendanz's *Papyri Graecae Magicae I–III*⁴ re-edited the 147 then known Greek magical texts that had been published over the course of a century, beginning in 1826 with the "Curse of Artemisia" and ending with the outbreak of World War II. Since then publication of magical papyri and parchments has continued apace with some 130 texts appearing in articles scattered throughout various journals, monographs, and series. While H. D. Betz, with *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation I*,⁵ took steps toward continuing and supplementing the Preisendanzian corpus, he provided the reader with only the English translations of some of the newer texts that have appeared since 1941, and made no attempt at editing or presenting the original Greek texts. Thus, after a hiatus of fifty years, Preisendanz's corpus of magical texts has found a worthy successor in the *Supplementum* produced by such renowned experts in ancient Greek magic as Daniel and Maltomini.

For decades to come, scholars will be grateful to D. and M. for not only gathering but also scrupulously re-editing and explicating the numerous magical texts that have accumulated over the last half-century. Not content merely to reproduce each text in transcript, D. and M. have subjected every object to renewed scrutiny, and the results of their efforts are visible at every turn of the page, their volumes abounding with new and improved readings.

3. For a more complete literature list see W. Brashear, "The Greek Magical Papyri: An Introduction and Survey," *ANRW* II.18.5 (1995): 3603–84; "Annotated Bibliography (1928–1994)."

4. Stuttgart, 1928, 1931, 1941. In the meantime, the revised edition by Albert Henrichs (Stuttgart, 1973–74) has rendered the first edition by Preisendanz obsolete. The projected third volume with additional texts, a systematic catalogue of the hymns, and comprehensive indices, never appeared. The printing plates were destroyed in the air raid on Leipzig in 1943. From surviving examples of the page proofs xerox copies have since been made, so that by now most papyrological institutes have access to this volume.

5. Chicago, 1986.

The first volume contains fifty-one texts of applied magic: protective charms (both pagan and Christian) and erotic charms. The second volume with forty-nine texts presents applied charms (curses, pagan and Christian charms to win favor and restrain wrath, divinatory charms, and *incerta*), as well as the fragments of thirty-one magical handbooks. The texts are of Egyptian provenance, and, with the exception of no. 36 (in Latin), all are written in Greek. Apart from a hematite falcon (no. 6), texts on gem stones and other jewelry have been omitted, but included are those on metal or earthenware vessels, cloth, parchment, or metal chits. Likewise omitted are oracle questions, horoscopes, and other astrological texts.⁶ Given the difficulties in distinguishing a "magical" text from a devotional one, D. and M. have also opted to exclude Christian amulets that consist only of prayers, acclamations, or citations from Scripture or liturgy.

Each text is preceded by a complete bibliographical guide listing the first edition, subsequent discussions, photos, and so forth. Thereupon follow a general introduction describing the contents and peculiarities of the text, a transcription, and a detailed commentary, noting points of philological, folkloric, and historic interest. To each text is appended an English translation, thus making the book's contents more accessible to a non-Greek-reading public.

Two texts worthy of special note here are:

1. the Heidelberg Latin invocation (no. 36) that disappeared at the end of World War II. D. and M., using a typed transcript prepared by Preisendanz, show that the text, containing excerpts from Psalm 20, sheds interesting light on an aspect of the history of the Old Latin translation of the Psalter. These excerpts from the Psalm reflect the North Italian-African tradition. Hence, the papyrus may point to an intermediate stage in the transmission of the text from the West to the East. Likewise noteworthy is this early example of the adjunction of the *Benedictus* to the *Sanctus*, the earliest attestation heretofore being from sixth-century Gaul.

2. the little-known, fourth-century C.E. Oxyrhynchus parallel to the famous Philinna Papyrus (*PGM XX*, second century B.C.E.), with iatromagical recipes against erysipelas and "red eruption," here published for the first time in full (no. 88). Over fifty years ago Paul Maas, in his justly famous *tour de force* of papyrological sleuthing, identified and reunited two fragments in the Amherst and Berlin collections. He thereby demonstrated that they formed part and parcel of the earliest Greek magical formulary ever to have come to light.⁷ He drew attention to a parallel text of Roman date from Oxyrhynchus, citing only the most similar portions in his study. This later text had to wait until now for final publication. These two papyri, the Philinna papyrus and the Oxyrhynchus parallel, written as they were five to six centuries apart from each other, provide remarkable testimony to the conservatism of magic and magicians in antiquity. It is unfortunate that so little of each has been preserved so that no more comprehensive comparative studies can be undertaken.

Especially welcome are the exhaustive and detailed indices that conclude volume 2. They list personal and geographical names; Greek and Latin words; gods, dae-

6. A corpus of oracle questions is being prepared by L. Papini in the series *Corpora Papyrorum Graecarum*. For horoscopes on papyri see Donata Baccani, *Oroscopi greci. Documentazione papirologica* (= *Ricerca papirologica* 1) (Messina, 1992).

7. "The Philinna Papyrus," *JHS* 62 (1942): 36f. This second-century B.C.E. formulary is written in epigrammatic hexameters whose unmistakably literary flair Maas says would have appealed to a Pindar or Aeschylus.

mons, angels; *voces magicae*; abbreviations, symbols, monograms; an *index locorum*, a grammatical index, and a subject index. Surveys, covering the various materials (in addition to papyri, the occasional vase, lead tablet, linen cloth, ostrakon, parchment, stone or wooden tablet), dates, present locations, provenances, *editiones principes*, and photos complete this highly laudable work. Pedestrian though the subject-matter may be in the final analysis, the thorough and philologically precise treatment it receives in D. and M.'s volumes demonstrates that magical studies at the end of this century and this millennium are anything but Botocudan.⁸

II. Roy Kotansky, ed., *Greek Magical Amulets. The Inscribed Gold, Silver, Copper, and Bronze Lamellae I: Published Texts of Known Provenance* (= Abhandlungen der Nordrhein.-westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Sonderreihe Papyrologica Coloniensis 22.1). Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1994.

The self-stated purpose of Kotansky's work is to fill a gap in the *corpora* of ancient Greek magical texts by collecting all the known apotropaic or otherwise protective magical texts scratched into thin metal plates (to use the technical term, *lamellae*). The metals involved are usually gold and silver, less often copper or bronze. Tin seems so far to be unattested. Texts on lead (usually curses) are not included. (For these see J. Gager, *Curse Tablets*, reviewed below, pp. 380–82.) Although K. necessarily must often rely on the publications of his predecessors (since many of the originals have long since disappeared), it is to his credit that every text has undergone intense scrutiny and general revamping, often resulting in spectacularly new readings and interpretations significantly different from the ones heretofore read into the texts. While not claiming absolute certainty in every transcription (disclaimers are humbly submitted at every step along the way), K. nonetheless seems sometimes almost magically able to wrest at least a minimum of context and coherent wording from most of these wretched scraps of metal.

K. has gathered here in the first volume all the sixty-eight texts of known provenance that were previously published. For the most part, the language and alphabet involved are Greek (no. 56 showing both Hebrew and Greek), with the occasional Latin pieces (nos. 3, 8, 17, 31), or Latin in Greek transcription (no. 7)—not to mention the usual gallimaufry of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Demotic in Greek transcription that goes to make up the multitudinous *voces magicae* typical of these texts. The pieces date from the mid-first century B.C.E. to the fifth–sixth century C.E. and display a geographic distribution from Wales to Crimea, and from Tunisia to Syria.

8. As is always the case with such corpora, they barely make it to the bookstores before they are outdated. In the meantime the following Greek magical texts have come to light—seeds out of which a *Supplementum Magicum* III someday may grow!: P.Oxy. 3330 (Sortes Astrampsychi); 3831 (Homero-mancy); 3834 (formulary); 3835 (formulary); 3931 (formulary); P. Gent. inv. 85 vso (Sortes Astrampsy-chi); W. Clarysse and R. Stewart, *Chron. d'Egypte* 63 (1989): 309–14; P. Vindob. G. 42406; C. Harrauer and H. Harrauer, *WS* 100 (1987): 185–99 (Christian amulet); P. Berol. 21336 (formulary); 21337 (Christian amulet, sixth-century C.E.); 21341 (Sortes Astrampsychi); 21358 (Sortes Astrampsychi); W. Brashear, in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, ed. P. Meyer and P. Mirecki (Leiden, 1995), 199–233; P. Carlsberg 52 (formulary); P. dem. Louvre E 3229 (Greek formulary), P. Louvre E 7332 bis (Christian amulet); W. Brashear, *Magica Varia* (= Papyrologica Bruxellensia 25) (Brussels, 1991); P. Berol. inv. 11734 (formulary); id., *APF* 36 (1990): 49–61; BGU IV 1024–27, p. 11 (formulary); id., *APF* 38 (1992): 19; P. Monac. AS 6792 (invocation of a nekydaimon); id., "Ein neues Zauberensemble in München," *Studien zur altägyptischen Kultur* 19 (1992): 79–109; P. Berol. 17202 (formulary); id., *APF* (1995): forthcoming. K. Worp, *Seven Magical Papyri from Kellis*, forthcoming—not to mention numerous Christian amulets and oracle questions.

Line drawings as well as photographs accompany most of the entries. While photographs of inscribed metal surfaces do not usually help the reader decide for one reading or another, a plate of mediocre quality is better than none at all—especially if no photo has been published previously. That line drawings merely serve to reflect the biases, prejudices, and whims of interpretation of the decipherer responsible for producing them is an ineluctable fact of life. Nonetheless, line drawings are often the only surviving record the modern researcher has to work with, since many of these minuscule metal monuments have been lost or irreparably damaged since their discovery a century or more ago (no. 9, for example, was found in 1541 and no. 26 in 1544!). Even here, the astute modern observer (such as K.) can make improvements, relying on those advances in our knowledge of ancient magic that were unknown to our predecessors. Hence, the 1994 line drawings made by K. may someday also be the only surviving record for some of these *lamellae*.

Many of the texts are assigned dates for the first time since their discovery. Previously ascribed dates are often rejected and new ones suggested in their place. The chronological table K. compiles (p. xviii) thus demonstrates roughly the same curve as that of D. and M.'s magical texts, with an onset in the late Ptolemaic period, a gradual growth in the first and second centuries C.E., a boom in the third and fourth centuries, with a gradual drop-off in the fifth and sixth, as traditional magical charms are ultimately replaced by the "Solomonic" type of nominally Christian medallions.

Each text is introduced by a complete bibliography, noting not only the *editio princeps* but also every mention, discussion, or photographic reproduction ever made. A description then recapitulates the circumstances and archeological contexts of each *lamella*'s discovery. The Greek text is accompanied by exhaustive notes, elucidating these often enigmatically obscure texts and placing each one in a context, wherever possible. K. explains and defends his often new and revised readings against those of previous editors, adducing the evidence of parallel phraseology and underscoring them with convincing arguments.

The reader will be grateful to K. for collecting from obscure and long-out-of-print articles and monographs such justly famous texts as the renowned "Antaura" amulet first published by A. A. Barb in 1926 (no. 13); the *lamella* with Jewish liturgical formulae from Caernarvon, Wales (no. 2); the two bronze plates from Avignon, phylacteries against hail, published over a century ago (no. 11), now shown to contain much-transmogrified Homeric verses; the Vigna Codini amulet (no. 28); the Mithraic magical Time God (no. 29); the gout amulet containing a passage from the late veterinarian treatise, the *Hippiatrika* (no. 30); the Moses phylactery from Acre, Sicily (no. 32), where K. now is able to decipher a previously unrecognized fragment from the Aquilan version of Deuteronomy 32.1–3; and the Beirut silver amulet published by A. Héron de Villefosse in 1909 (no. 52) with its lengthy catalogue of archangels and their spheres of influence.

Some of the *lamellae* in this volume, if K.'s ingenious speculations are correct, may even have relevance to known historical personages. For example, K. connects the *nomen barbarum* Mousa in his no. 36 with Mousa Orsabaris, the daughter of Mithridates VI of Pontus, otherwise known only from Appian, *Mithr.* 117 and

numismatic legends. He also appends an excursus on the oriental titulature "king of kings." Possible references in this same amulet to Mithridates VI's legendary immunity to poisons are likewise considered. No. 60, on the other hand, concludes with an excursus on the phrase "to grant *epaphrodisia* before the King," a formulaic expression occurring in amulets and handbooks, which K. posits might be a calque of a late Egyptian idiom. Welcome is K.'s conscientious and concerted effort to track down Semitic influences for not only the multifarious and multitudinous *voces magicae* but also the occasional contextual idiosyncrasy.

The reader and reviewer can only hope that the second volume containing the published materials of unknown provenance as well as previously unpublished pieces, which continue to appear all the time, will not be long in forthcoming.

III. Erika Zwierlein-Diehl, ed., *Magische Amulette und andere Gemmen des Instituts für Altertumskunde der Universität zu Köln* (= Abhandlungen der Nordrhein.-westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Sonderreihe Papyrologica Coloniensia 20). Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1992.

This volume, like the two above, appears in the series (under the direction of Reinhold Merkelbach) that deals with papyrological and related areas of research. It presents the University of Cologne's entire collection of thirty-eight antique gems. A short introduction defines and delineates the concepts "magische Amulette" and "magische Gemmen," discarding the earlier, and incorrect, designation "gnostische Gemmen." Professor Zwierlein-Diehl likewise dispenses with other long-cherished notions. For example, concerning the gems' aesthetic quality, long impugned by devotees of classical art, she encouragingly writes: "[The magical gems'] quality is in fact not better and not worse than that of other gems of the imperial period which were produced in less-than-master-craftsmen's workshops."⁹ Regarding the gems' price and value: "Even the most slapdash (gems) had to be bought from a gem carver and were hence more costly than such amulets as one could produce oneself . . . by writing on a sherd, an olive leaf, a piece of cloth, papyrus, tin, or lead."¹⁰ Concluding the introduction is a cautionary appraisal: "It would not be correct to follow Goethe and Winckelmann in relegating every amulet-wearer to the circle of the benighted and superstitious. The religious attitude of the individual amulet-bearer might well be placed anywhere on a broad continuum, ranging from a sincere faith in the power of the (sun)god to primitive fetishism."¹¹ Z.-D., a recognized expert in classical archeology, precisely describes the iconographies of the various deities appearing on these amulets with all the art historian's expertise at her disposal. Special attention is devoted to the long-standing erroneous identification of the

9. "Tatsächlich ist die Qualität nicht besser und nicht schlechter als die von anderen kaiserzeitlichen Gemmen, die ausserhalb der römischen Meisterwerkstätten geschnitten wurden" (p. 16).

10. "Selbst die flüchtigsten Exemplare mussten vom Gemmenschneider gekauft werden, waren auf alle Fälle teurer als Amulette, die man selbst herstellen konnte . . . durch Schreiben auf eine Scherbe, ein Olivenblatt, ein Stück Stoff oder Papyrus, Zinn oder Blei" (p. 16).

11. "Es wäre unangemessen, wollte man mit Goethe und Winckelmann die Geisteshaltung aller Amulettträger schlechthin als finsternen Aberglauben abtun . . . Das religiöse Bewusstsein des einzelnen Amulettträgers dürfte innerhalb einer breiten Skala von dem aufrichtigen Glauben an die Macht des (Sonnen)Gottes bis zu primitivem Fetischismus variiert haben" (p. 17).

so-called Bes Pantheos with El-Kronos (proposed by C. W. King in 1887 and reaffirmed by A. A. Barb in 1969), which Z.-D. confidently puts to rest. A catalogue of the deity in all his various hypostases together with the appropriate names (when-
ever they can be ascertained) is given on pages 24–25.

New is Z.-D.'s interpretation of the name XNOYBIS (pp. 28–29). Z.-D. suggests that isopsephistic considerations led to the name XNOYMIS (which has no apparent isopsephistic value) being converted to the isopsephistically more significant XNOYBIS = 1332, or 3×444 . The magical and cosmological implications of the numbers three and four are well known and widely attested.

Throughout, Z.-D. adopts a soberly critical stance with regard to many long-held notions about a number of subjects in this field where researchers, too often having too little concrete data to go on, are often tempted to flights of fancy. For example, she dispenses with the notions that the popular cock-headed deity was created out of word games, anagrams, and popular etymologies (pp. 29–30). She stresses instead the cock's solar aspects, widely attested in gemmological iconography, and states: "In the end one gets the impression that the variations in the magical deities' physiognomy were created as pictures and not construed from linguistic speculation."¹²

Progress is likewise made on the subject of the snake-footed cock's name that almost consistently appears on his shield as IAO. Marc Philonenko was the first to take this attribution seriously, citing Psalm 3.4: "you Jahweh are the shield that protects me."¹³ Merkelbach (in Z.-D., p. 31) now points out that in the Septuagint, Yahweh is identified not with the shield but rather with a *ὑπερασπιστής*—a shield-wielding, protecting, front-line soldier. Summing up: the teratomorphic, snake-legged, cock-headed, shield-wielding creature is then the *ὑπερασπιστής* of Yahweh in person.

Especially valuable are the descriptions and identifications of the minerals involved (produced with the help of the University of Cologne's mineralogical institute); a discussion of ancient vs. modern mineralogical designations; stones' properties and attributes, natural and supernatural; clarification of the long-standing, semantic and gemmological muddle surrounding the designations "grüner Jaspis und Plasma."

Noting the many ancient gem amulet halves in contemporary collections, Z.-D. theorizes the stones may have been purposely split in two. Given the well-attested ancient practice of pulverizing gems and imbibing the powder, she postulates that the missing halves of the extant half-gem fragments ceased to exist long ago, having been reduced to powder and ingested soon after their manufacture. The existing halves are the remnants of such rites.

Ingenuous is Z.-D.'s explanation of the palindromic arrangement of seven magical signs inscribed on a grey, oval hematite that probably was to be used in an aggressive restraining spell (no. 28). Portrayed is a naked man, undoubtedly the foe, standing on a pedestal decorated with two rows of magical signs including the conventional ones for the sun and moon. When the stone is positioned so that the man

12. "Insgesamt gewinnt man . . . den Eindruck, dass die Variationen in der Zusammensetzung der Körperteile der magischen Gottheiten als Bilder geschaffen, nicht mittels sprachlicher Spekulationen konstruiert wurden" (p. 30).

13. CRAI (1979): 297–304.

is standing upright, the crescent moon appears with its horns facing to the right—the normal rendition of this sign in antiquity. The solar symbol, however, appears with its rays pointing downward: a highly unusual rendition of this equally ubiquitous symbol. When the stone is turned ninety degrees, making the man supine, the solar symbol then appears in its usual rendition with the rays pointing upward to the right at a forty-five degree angle. Z.-D. astutely suggests these variations in the renditions of these astrological symbols is not due to mere chance or an oversight on the part of the gem cutter. Rather they are conscious and deliberate, expressly designating the different times of day certain magical rituals were to be conducted.

Throughout, German translations are directly appended to the quotes from ancient authors, thus making the book's contents readily accessible to non-specialists. At the end of the volume are a register of comparable gems in other collections, detailed indices containing not only the usual lists of words, magical and otherwise, but also a list of subject matter and topics discussed. Finally, clear, large-scale photos with, at the most, four gems to a page round off this important, valuable, and enjoyable monograph.¹⁴

IV. Peter Schäfer and Shaul Shaked, *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza I* (= Texte und Studium zum antiken Judentum 42). Tübingen: J. C. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1994.

This book, co-authored by two renowned experts in Semitic magic, represents the first-fruits of a project sponsored by Berlin's Free University and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. It is the first of a projected three-volume series. When the series is finished it will be a complete corpus of the Hebrew-Aramaic magical fragments in the Cairo Geniza, making these texts available in transcription and German translation to specialists not only of Judaic studies but also of other disciplines pertaining to Greek, Jewish, and Arabian culture of late antiquity and early medieval times.

The editors classify the texts edited in this volume into the following categories:

1. Three theoretical dissertations: on determining the guilt or innocence of a woman suspected of being unfaithful; on the four principles, two good and two bad, that are in the world; and on the names in purity and names in pollution, illusion, and magic.
2. Five magico-medical prescriptions, home remedies for gynecological, cosmetic, medical, and marital problems as well as specifically more divinatory (i.e., oneirocritic and revelatory) texts, that betray the influence of ancient pharmaceutical *materia medica* (as reflected in the work of this name by Dioscorides).
3. Eleven amulets and formularies for amulets that are mostly apotropaic and amatory in nature.
4. One conjuration, combining magical and liturgical elements, that is supposed to bestow power over spirits, demons, and other malevolent entities.

14. Summary of the more detailed review in *Gnomon* 68 (1996): 447–53. See also on ancient gemmological studies: Hanna Philipp, *Mira et Magica* (Mainz, 1986); Guido Devoto and Alberto Molayem, *Archeogemmologia. Pietre antiche, glittica, magia e liteoterapia* (Rome, 1990).

The language is for the most part Hebrew, with occasional lapses into Aramaic, Arabic, or Syriac (both in Hebrew transcription). Furthermore, frequently interlarding these texts are Greek, Persian, or Arabic plant names in Hebrew transcription, indicating the cosmopolitan milieu in which these prescriptions originated. (Greek words are conveniently listed on pp. 10–11, 322.) While the editors date the compilation of these charms and *grimoires* from the Cairo Geniza to the tenth–twelfth centuries C.E., it goes without saying that their contents often reflect and derive from much earlier sources and prototypes.

Perhaps the best illustration of the longevity of such magical traditions and the text most pertinent to Greco-Roman magic (particularly the magical papyri) is that discussed on pages 115–18, a conjuration of a wandering, malevolent uterus. This Hebrew-Aramaic cantrip presents an unusually close, indeed sometimes word-for-word, parallel to the Greek charm in *PGM VII* 260–71 (third-century C.E.), indicating that the scribe responsible for copying this exorcism into the handbook probably had access to a Greek version of the 700-year-old *Urtext* that he used as his model. Curious hapax legomena that cannot be explained by Hebrew semantics interlard this charm. As Schäfer and Shaked demonstrate, these unusual letter configurations most likely derive from Greek words in the *Vorlage* that the translator/copyist apparently did not comprehend, simply reproducing them in phonetic transcription in Hebrew letters. For example, 'dr mnh, they suggest (p. 116), probably derives from the Greek title: πρὸς μήτρας ἀναδρομήν (*PGM VII* 260). Q'ytwn prytwn could also be a phonetic transcription of καὶ τὸν ὑπερέτην (p. 116), a phrase that does not appear in the version of the charm transmitted in *PGM VII* 260ff, but which may very well have been in the version the scribe was using. After all, other *nomina barbara* in the Hebrew charm such as sr'pis, dius, and sipipis do not appear in the Greek version either. These seem to derive, the editors suggest (p. 118), from *Sarapis, deus*, and *Sisyphos*, respectively. In another charm (p. 242) they find a figure familiar from Greek and Latin magical texts, 'brcsh—or, as he is more commonly known to students of ancient magic, *Abraxas*.

Exhaustive indices recording ancient sources, modern authors, as well as Hebrew, Greek, and German subject matter provide welcome and ready access to the editors' erudition and make this volume a particularly enjoyable tool to use. Ensuing volumes will contain (in addition to more conjurations and exorcisms) astrological and alchemical texts as well as others pertinent to the Hekhalot literature. One can only hope that the appearance of these volumes will soon follow—הִדֵּן הִדֵּן, תַּחֲנוּן תַּחֲנוּן.

While the foregoing four corpora were written for the needs of the specialist, the following two volumes were conceived and designed with the layman in mind.

V. John Gager, ed., *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

More than a thousand ancient curse texts, written on a variety of materials, usually metal but also stone, parchment, and papyrus, and dating from the late sixth century B.C.E. to the fifth century C.E., have been found all the way from England in the North to Nubia in the South, and from Spain in the West to Luristan in the East. The contexts in which they were written span a wide range of occupations: ath-

letics, theatrical competitions, judicial proceedings, amatory and business rivalries. The book under consideration here presents a *mélange* of these imprecations.

Curse Tablets and Binding Spells was produced by a consortium of five scholars who conceived and designed their corpus for scholars, students, and general readers. They furthermore opted to broach such traditional and hallowed barriers as geography, language, and chronology, which are usually erected in studies devoted to antiquity. Thus, their book includes material written not only in Greek and Latin but also Hebrew, Aramaic, Coptic, and Demotic as well. As a result, Jewish, Egyptian, Greek, Roman, British, pagan, and Christian texts appear side by side on a par with each other. Even a few Mesopotamian incantation bowls as well as Hebrew charms from the Cairo Geniza have been included in this catch-all compendium. Behind this seemingly disparate collection of material lies the conscious intention of the scholars to undermine the confidence with which cultural, geographical, and chronological labels are applied to these texts and traditions, as if such categories were rigid, strict, exclusive—and ancient.

In the jargon of magical studies *lamella* is the term used to designate good luck charms and phylacteries, such as those collected in K.'s *Greek Magical Amulets*. These phylacteries are usually scratched onto bronze, silver, or gold leaflets, while *defixiones*, deriving from the more sinister aspects of ancient hocus-pocus, are curses, binding spells, and the like written usually on lead. Included in the Gager collection are approximately 130 such curse texts in translation, each text being preceded by a brief introduction, relating the realia of the object(s) in question: provenance, dating, *editio princeps*, and the like. Each translation is accompanied by succinct notes explicating the *arcana* of these obscure texts to the layman.

Besides the normal media of metal tablets there are the occasional binding or curse texts written on other substances that are likewise included in this corpus, for example, the Mesopotamian and Iranian bowl spells (nos. 109, 122–25), other bowls (nos. 29, 35), gem (no. 126), papyri (nos. 27, 128–30), ostraca (nos. 26, 111), and cloth (fig. 15). Some of the entries, such as no. 107, consist not of the written word but of the paraphernalia of the particular curse: in this case, a collection of sixteen lead figurines, most of which are bound at the hands and/or feet.

After slogging one's way through this slough of hate, envy, maleficence, and malignity, it is reassuring to see that remedies and antidotes are available. Chapter 7 ("Antidotes and Counterspells") relates instances of the ancients' attempts to fend off the malevolent attacks of their earthly nemeses by invoking the assistance of supernatural powers.

Occasional black-and-white photos and line drawings, of not only the *lamellae* and *defixiones* but also various items of pertinent archaeological interest, intersperse and enliven the text.

Concluding this oeuvre is a welcome chapter collecting all the references to *defixiones* in ancient literary sources (from Homer to Eustathius) again in English translation. Thereupon follows a five-page "Glossary of Uncommon Words,"¹⁵ consisting for the most part of *voces magicae* and names of deities, and an index to the book's contents.

15. Cf. W. Brashear, "Papyri," (n. 3) 3576–603, n. 2: "Glossary of *Voces Magicae*."

VI. Marvin Meyer and Richard Smith, eds., *Ancient Christian Magic. Coptic Texts of Ritual Power*. San Francisco: Harper, 1994.

Until now, Angelicus M. Kropp's *Ausgewählte koptische Zaubertexte I–III*¹⁶ was the sole work of its kind to make available to the general reader a potpourri of Coptic magical texts both in the original Coptic and German translation. Now a second collection has been produced by a consortium of eleven Coptic scholars with the layman in mind. Here, presented in English translation, are 135 texts from over a millennium (from the first to the twelfth centuries C.E.). Virtually all derive from an Egyptian Christian milieu, and represent most of the extant Coptic magical texts on parchment and papyri from various collections around the world. An appendix presents the *editiones principes* of five previously unpublished Coptic texts in the Yale University Beinecke Library.

In the introduction the editors explain and defend the phrase “ritual power” used in their title, which designates procedures that can be distinguished from normal activity by framing behavior through injunctions and other formalities. While many rituals can be defined in terms of empowerment or power relations, the texts in this volume are overt expressions of power and force, with the ritualist consistently accomplishing his acts “by the power” of someone or something. The introduction goes on to discuss the inconsistencies and dangers of misinterpretation. I will not go into any more detail here and will simply repeat my opening sentence: “questions of definition aside . . .”

The book is divided into three parts. Part One comprises the earliest known texts written in Old Coptic, Greek, Coptic, and Arabic; Part Two individual spells or amulets; and Part Three handbooks, with such individual chapter titles as “Healing Spells,” “Protective Spells,” “Sexual Spells,” “Curses,” etc., further delineating and grouping the subject matter. The texts, written on papyrus, parchment, rag paper, pottery, and bone, again display the wide range of emotions, illusions, hopes, loves, and hates that the texts in the other corpora reviewed here reflect.

To the English translations are appended various explanatory materials instrumental for the better understanding of the text. Each chapter is prefaced with an introduction, as is each text, and textual and bibliographical data are provided for orienting the reader. Occasional line drawings and photos break up and enliven the text, giving the lay reader the chance to see for himself what the specialist has to deal with.

A glossary of terms, similar to those in Betz's *Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*, and G's *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells*, is a welcome aid for the lay reader. A rich bibliography, comprising the basic (but sometimes more obscure) literature on Coptic magical studies, concludes this admirable volume. There is, unfortunately, no subject-matter index, which would have made the book's heterogeneous contents more readily accessible.

Modern society often regards the past, especially the Greek and Hebraic cradles of Western culture, through rose-tinted glasses, glorifying its ancestors and their deeds. The ordinary school and university curricula impart to the student only a smattering of ancient literary production—the highlights, the purple prose of one

16. Brussels, 1930–31.

or two percent of the writing elite, the poets, the dramatists, philosophers, politicians, historians, and scholars. The mostly anonymous lower social classes—the handworkers, business men and women, merchants, housekeepers and prostitutes, farmers, sailors and sculptors—and their ideas, attitudes, thoughts, hopes, and fears remain for all intents and purposes unknown. Only a few of these people were able to read and write, relying usually on a professional to inscribe the thoughts they wished to convey on papyrus, stone, or metal. Their “literary productions” were limited for the most part to contracts, letters, petitions, and the like. Among their most appealing and revealing writings are the Greek, Coptic, and Demotic magical texts. Whether scrawled by the person desiring the magical effect or penned by a professional scribe, these relics of a bygone age are direct and eloquent testimony to the thoughts and beliefs of the man and woman in the street, briefly lifting the veil that otherwise obscures so much of their lives. The aforementioned books will allow the reader to see for him- or herself the charms of these charms.¹⁷

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17. Other recent related works of interest are: Ulrike Horak, *Illuminierte Papyri, Pergamente und Papiere I* (Wien, 1992); Fritz Graf, *La Magie dans l'antiquité gréco-romaine. Idéologie et pratiques* (Paris, 1994); Hans Dieter Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*² (Chicago, 1992); A. Bernand, *Sorciers grecs* (Paris, 1991); Richard Gordon, *Spells of Wisdom. Magical Power in the Graeco-Roman World*, forthcoming; S. I. Johnston, ed., “Exploring the Shadows: Ancient Literature and the Supernatural,” *Helios* (1994), a special edition devoted to divination, superstition, and magic in antiquity with articles by C. Faraone, F. Graf, D. Frankfurter, S. I. Johnston, et al.; B. Copenhaver, *Hermetica. The Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius in a New English Translation with Notes and Introduction* (Cambridge, 1992); M. Meyer and P. Mirecki, eds., *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power* (Leiden, 1995).

Related Semitic corpora are: Joseph Naveh and Saul Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae. Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem, 1993); L. H. Schiffman and M. D. Swartz, *Hebrew and Aramaic Incantation Texts from the Cairo Genizah* (Sheffield, 1992).