Magic in the Ancient Novel

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It is a well-known fact that magic was an important phenomenon in ancient societies, including Greek and Roman society.[1] Though eastern in origin, magic is well evidenced in Greek literature from as early as the *Odyssey*, especially in two passages which would subsequently enjoy great literary success – the episode of Circe in Book 10 and the *Nekuia* in Book 11, the journey to Hades prescribed by the goddess herself. In both passages we find a couple of motifs which give rise to a long literary tradition which extends to the novel: the transformation of men into animals by a woman and a scene of necromancy. The theme of metamorphosis is also linked in the *Odyssey* to an erotic element, so that here already we find love and magic intertwined. This will be another familiar topos in the tradition of ancient literature, in both poetry and prose – let us recall Plato's words in the *Symposium* where Eros is presented as a δεινὸς γόης καὶ φαρμακεὺς καὶ σοφιστής ('a clever enchanter, sorcerer, sophist', 203d). It comes as no surprise, then, that magic should occupy an important role in the ancient novel, and not just in the erotic novel in its different forms but also, as we shall see, in the biographical novel.

To hope to cover the whole of the ancient novel in the space available here is indeed an *adynaton*: Apuleius's novel alone is worth a special study (let us not forget that Isis is the goddess of magic) and has received considerable attention in this respect. That is why I shall allude only to the witches' tales in the first three books of the *Metamorphoses* and shall focus on the Greek novels. There is, as far as I know, no such publication on the Greek novel taken as a whole. This is the topic I should like to discuss here and one I am continuing to work upon.[2]

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[1] Luck 1985; Faraone-Obbink 1991; Graf 1994; Pelaez 2002; Montero-Perea 1999; Tupet 1976; Dickie 2003.

[2] For a treatment of necromancy in Apuleius and Heliodorus see Slater, Chapter 4 below; for magic in Heliodorus see Jones 2004.

I should like to order the texts I will deal with into three groups: (1) papyrus fragments and texts from indirect transmission; (2) incidental allusions to magic in the novels; and (3) episodes or tales focusing on magic. To distinguish between real magic and literary magic is very difficult, because we are always working with literary texts, and the presence of magic is a 'real', not a 'fictional' phenomenon, as I have said, but I think that some texts reflect a 'real' knowledge, an actual practice, of magical rituals. In order to demonstrate this fact, I shall compare the literary texts with the documents included in the Greco-Egyptian papyri edited by Preisendanz, although I have also taken into account those edited by Daniel and Maltomini.[3] We must remember that belief in magic in antiquity was a matter of fact and was common to all social classes: Apuleius himself was brought to trial for that very reason.[4]

(1) There are several Greek novel papyri in which magical apparitions are mentioned, but there is one especially important papyrus which, discussing an *eidolon* or magical image, describes the powers of a magician in love – the ability to change the course of nature, to sail without a ship or to fly through the air: it is only love he/she cannot overcome, since the earth produces no drug or *pharmakon* effective for that purpose.[5] It has been attributed to Antonius Diogenes' *The Incredible Things beyond Thule*, but I have my doubts. As the magical papyri mention many formulae and *praxeis* to attract the loved-one, this is an excellent example of literary *topoi* and high rhetorical magic. *The Incredible Things* seem to contain also some elements of magic which I leave aside here: the Egyptian priest Paapis or the mention of Pythagoras, for example.[6]

The passage from the *Babyloniaka* of Iamblichos mentioned by Photios in *codex* 94 strikes me as far more interesting. Photios highlights its stylistic qualities, as well as the author's skill as a narrator. The resumé cites a number of curious episodes, such as that of the Chaldaean man who forbids the burial of a maiden thought to be dead (74b42). Of special note, however, is

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[3] Preisendanz, 2001; Daniel-Maltomini 1990–92; Betz 1992, whose English translation I quote in this paper; Spanish transl.: Calvo Martínez and Sánchez Romero 1987. Muñoz Delgado 2001 is very useful; see also Brashear 1995.

[4] For social aspects in the first centuries of Empire Dickie 2003, 202–50, who takes Lucian into account, is very useful. Calvo Martínez 2005 is also interesting.

[5] P. Mich. inv. 5. See the fragment in Stephens-Winkler 1995, 175–78; López Martínez 1998, 227; and the useful survey of the fragment by Morgan 1998. For Antonius Diogenes see Phot. *cod.* 166.

[6] See the commentaries by the authors quoted in n.5.

the secondary story about Mesopotamia, Euphrates and Tigris (75b16ff), the sons of the priestess of Aphrodite. Tigris eats a rose and dies, but his mother performs a magic ceremony (*ekmageusasa*) and is convinced that he has become a hero. Afterwards, when she sees Rhodanes, who resembles her son, she cries out that he has returned to life and that Kóre has come with him. Then the author enumerates certain types of magic: the magic based on different animals, necromancy and ventriloquism, and adds an interesting detail: he is a *pepaideumenos* Babylonian (perhaps a *sophistes*) (75b27) and has learnt some magic himself (75b17ff):

> Καὶ διεξέρχεται ὁ Ἰάμβλιχος μαγικῆς εἴδη, μάγον ἀκρίδων καὶ μάγον λεόντων καὶ μάγον μυῶν· ἐξ οὗ καλεῖσθαι καὶ τὰ μυστήρια ἀπὸ τῶν μυῶν (πρώτην γὰρ εἶναι τὴν τῶν μυῶν μαγικήν). Καὶ μάγον δὲ λέγει χαλάζης καὶ μάγον ὄφεων, και νεκυομαντείας καὶ ἐγγαστρίμυθον. Λεγει δὲ καὶ ἑαυτὸν Βαβυλώνιον εἶναι ὁ συγγραφεύς, καὶ μαθεῖν τὴν μαγικήν, μαθεῖν δὲ καὶ τὴν Ἑλληνικὴν παιδείαν…
> And Iamblichos goes through the various types of the *magos*' skills – the *magos* concerned with locusts and the *magos* of lions and the *magos* of mice, which is how the word "mystery" is derived from "mouse", for mouse-magic was the original type – and he says there is a *magos* of hail and a *magos* of serpents and of necromancy and one who is a ventriloquist…The writer says that he himself is a Babylonian and has learned magic, but that he also had a Greek education…[7]

We shall return to this fact, as well as to the mention of roses and Chaldaeans, later.

(2) Incidental allusions to magic in the Greek novels are to be found in the *Ephesiaka* 1.5.6–8, where the parents of Anthia search for seers and priests in order to save their daughter, who is sick with love. They make sacrifices and libations, together with *phonas barbarikas* ('foreign expressions'), that is, the *barbarica onomata* ('foreign words') typical in magic, in order to propitiate certain *daimones*, thinking that it is all the fault of chthonic gods. Here we can see the typical *barbarika onomata* addressed to the gods that we find in the magical papyri. Achilles Tatius 5.26.12 also presents Leucippe culling herbs (*botanas)* by moonlight: she is considered a Thessalian woman, that is, a witch, and herbs and drugs (*pharmaka)* are seen as the only solution to help a hopeless lover. Although the text seems to refer to literary

[7] Translation by Stephens-Winkler 1995.

topoi, we shall see that the motifs appear also in magical papyri.We could add that books on magic are mentioned in Antonius Diogenes and in the *Historia Apollonii regis Tyri* RA 6 (referring to Chaldaeans).

(3) The third group is the most interesting for us, since episodes based on magic are fundamental to the novels about the *Ass,* both from a structural point of view and in the inserted tales so frequent in Apuleius. Also belonging to this group are the necromancy scene in Heliodoros and the novella of Nectanebo, the most interesting magic-related text of all the ancient novels. Let us begin with the *Ass.*

(i) It was Scobie who demonstrated that the story of a man transformed into an ass and then back into a man is of folk origin and common throughout the world.[8] Here, as in the belief that eating roses is the magical antidote, we are dealing with a popular belief, but one which is surely based on fantasy. Hence the use of the first person as guarantor of an utterly fictional story: the papyri contain no documents about transformations into asses, though there are some about transformations into snakes and birds, for instance. The witch who casts a spell on Lucius is also from Thessaly, a region whose women were of course well known in antiquity for their knowledge of magic, as we see in *Ass* 13. But let us concentrate on the *Metamorphoses* by Apuleius*,* whose work was much more influential, though the magic performed in the metamorphosis of the main witch is essentially the same in both novels.[9]

Apuleius famously uses the same basic narrative as the Greek *Ass* but fills it out with a large number of secondary stories. These include the story of the witches Meroe and Panthia, narrated by Aristomenes and featuring Aristomenes himself and Socrates (1.4.3–19), and the story of Pamphile, the name of the witch who is the hostess of Lucius in the novel by Apuleius (2.5.4–8; 11.6; 3.15.7—21). In both tales there is a repetition of certain motifs: all three witches are from Thessaly, have the power to transform nature, convert their enemies and especially their lovers into animals, are familiar with tombside imprecations, have the capacity to shift objects, make predictions and take lives. In the case of Pamphile there is even a description of her *feralis officina* ('deadly laboratory'), full of drugs, blood and parts of dead bodies, and of her capacity to force the *numina* to obey her.[10] Finally, having

[8] Scobie 1983.

[9] On these and other fantastic stories see Stramaglia 1999; García Teijeiro 2001.

[10] See the commentaries by Van Mal-Maeder 2000 and Van der Paardt 1971.

smeared herself in ointment and spoken with her lamp, she transforms herself into an owl in order to fly to her lover's side. Meanwhile, in order to punish a lover, Meroe and Panthia extract both his blood and his heart, entering the room with a lamp, a sponge and a sword. There is a combination here of folk belief and fantasy. But in both tales we can also note the presence of motifs we can find in the magical papyri, motifs such as the use of *formulae sepulcrales* ('necromantic formulae') and ointments, the capacity to tell the future, the lamp being used for this purpose, the reference to the blood and the heart of the dead (which Selene feeds on), the manipulation of corpses and skulls, and the mention of bay leaf and other plants.[11]

(ii). Also of interest is the story of Thelyphron (2.21–30). In what is generally classed as a *fabula lepidi sermonis* ('a tale of charming talk'), like the story of Aristomenes, we also see some Thessalian witches in action, transforming themselves into animals and, with their *diris cantaminibus* ('dreadful spells'), sending body-watchers to sleep in order to steal and sink their teeth into corpses. In this context a story is told of how the Egyptian prophet Zatchlas (2.28) brings a dead man back to life to rise up and state that he has been poisoned by his wife.[12] The prophet achieves this by applying a herb to the mouth and breast of the corpse (2.29), whilst invoking the sun. This scene of necromancy, which recalls the hairs made to walk by Pamphile (3.18) by casting them into the fire, can be compared to another scene in the *Aethiopica* (6.14–15) in which an old woman from Bessa in Egypt revives her recently deceased son, so that, much to his chagrin and rejection of such practices, he can predict the return of his still living brother. The ceremony involves digging a pit, making libations with milk, wine and honey, throwing in a human figure made of lard and crowned with laurel or fennel; then, sword in hand, the woman makes supplications with *barbara onomata* ('foreign words') to the moon, before sprinkling the pyre with her blood.[13] Heliodorus describes the deed as impure and typical of Egyptian women, while Calasiris adds that priests do their divining by means of ritual sacrifice and pure prayer, unlike the profane who crawl among the dead.[14]

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[11] *cf. PGM* III 15, 7–21; IV 2545; 2575; Fick 1985; Winkler 1991, who also comments on Heliodorus 6.14.2 and mentions Nectanebo.

[12] *cf. PGM* IV 2039–46 and Dickie 2003, 224–29. On necromancy, Hopfner 1935; Ogden 2001. On this Apuleian scene see now Slater, Chapter 4 in this volume.

[13] c*f. PGM* XII 278: *egersis somatou nekrou*. There is a good commentary on the episode in Stramaglia 2003; see now too the treatment by Slater in this volume (Chapter 4).

[14] Nevertheless, he mentions also a fictitious ritual against the Evil Eye in 3.11.1; 4. 5.2–3.

Heliodorus is probably more familiar with the *Odyssey* and Herodotus than he is with the Thessalian magic of Apuleius and the Egyptian papyri, since it is not women but men who generally perform the magic in these papyri. Recently, Ogden has related these scenes to others in Latin poetry (such as Lucan's Erictho), with the observation that corpses are also manipulated in the papyri.[15] Here we can also read of digging a pit, making libations and applying flax leaves to the mouths of the dead or *nekudaimon* (which is the name given in the papyri), while looking at or invoking the sun, though the moon will also do for such ceremonies. We should be careful to distinguish between the prophets Zatchlas and Calasiris: the first, who accepts such practices and even charges money for them, requires no blood; the second heightens the more barbaric aspects of the ritual, but condemns this kind of divination. Heliodorus appears not to be familiar with and to have no interest in Egyptian magic: the episode seems literary in origin, whilst in Apuleius we find an actual knowledge of magic together with the inclusion of other literary and fantastic elements. We shall find an even stronger contrast between two other prophets: Calasiris and Nectanebo. Finally, let us just add that in 2.12.3 Apuleius refers to the Chaldaean Diophanes, well-known for his oracles and predictions.[16]

(iii) Finally, we will focus on the most important magical episode in the ancient novel: the famous *novella* of Nectanebo in the *Historia Alexandri Magni*, which, like the tales of Apuleius, also contains some erotic elements. The folk tradition, together with historical fact, continues to play a major role here: various tales about the pharaoh and other similar texts of Egyptian nationalist origin seem to have been written in the Ptolemaic era.[17] Here I concentrate on recension *A* of the *Historia*, the oldest extant text, dating from around 300 A.D. or a little earlier, edited by Kroll in1926.[18] This recension seems the closest to the original and to present the *novella* in a more complete manner, so to speak, than *B,* which was written a century or two later, although *A* does have certain gaps which complicate the philologist's task and necessitate consultation of versions in other languages. In this particular case, the most complete version is the Armenian one, though I have also taken into

[15] Ogden 2001, 205. *Cf.* n. 7.

[16] See Stramaglia 2003, 95–98.

[17] Especially useful are Fraser 1972; Lloyd 1982; Koenen 1985; Tait 1994. A papyrus containing a Demotic fragment of Nectanebo´s dream from the late 1/early 2. century A. D. is in Ryholt 1998: I am grateful to Mª Paz López Martínez for this information.

[18] Kroll 1926; French translation in Tallet-Bonvalot 1994; Italian translation in Franco 2001, both with introduction and notes.

account *B*, the Latin version of Julius Valerius and also the Syriac version, which is highly compressed.[19] It is important to highlight the 'open tradition' of this text and especially the strong influence of the oral transmission, in which ancient elements are juxtaposed with more modern ones. For example, Fraser, in a recent book,[20] believes that the description of Alexandria is from the era of Hadrian, and it is striking how the start of the text carries an explicit reference to the name the Romans gave the explorers (1.1). There are, then, both ancient and more up-to-date layers in the composition of the text.

It was the Egyptologist Aufrère who noted the important similarities between this *novella* and the demotic papyrus of Leiden and Paris, perhaps the latest demotic papyrus we have, written in the first half of the third century A.D., and whose original can be no older than the first or second century A.D.[21] Some of its sections were originally written in Greek. Aufrère also noted that stories about a *magos* and a queen were already well established in Egypt. My purpose here is to compare the *novella* with the evidence in Preisendanz, since there is nothing new in Daniel and Maltomini which would alter that perspective. Of necessity I shall have to summarise the plot, but that is itself an interesting task.

The Pharaoh Nectanebo is a great magician and astrologist; sensing that Egypt is about to be invaded by the enemy, he flees to Macedonia and, dressed as an Egyptian prophet, settles in Pella, where he enjoys a reputation as a great seer. Queen Olympias goes to ask him what kind of divination he performs and Nectanebo provides us with a diviner's catalogue, from which we shall quote later. He claims to be an all-round expert but, since he is first and foremost an Egyptian prophet, he is a magician and an astrologer, which is why he can assure her that his predictions will come true. He then shows her a precious table with the signs of the zodiac, which is described in great detail. The queen asks him about Philip's intentions to marry, and the magician predicts that she will couple with a god and have a son who will avenge her on Philip. Nectanebo describes the physical appearance of the god, Ammon, who will appear to her in a dream. When this happens, she desires to continue her relationship with the god but Nectanebo, who is in love with the queen, warns her that the god will appear first in the form of a serpent and

[19] For the B recension see Van Thiel 1974; for the Latin version Rosellini 1993; for the Armenian Wolohojian 1969; for the Syriac Budge 1889.

[20] Fraser 1996.

[21] Aufrère 2000, with a large bibliography. The papyrus was published by Griffith and Thompson in 1904. Aufrère mentions Jasnow 1997, who observes a mistranslation of a possible Demotic original text in I 12, but I find it unconvincing, although I agree with him that this *novella* belongs to the earliest stage of the *Life*.

will then be transformed into Ammon, Hercules, Dionysus and finally the prophet himself. The queen is thus satisfied and becomes pregnant, while Nectanebo satisfies his desire by pretending to be the god.

In the meantime, Nectanebo sends Philip a dream informing him that Olympias is to bear the child of a god. Philip initially accepts the idea but is not totally convinced, and Nectanebo has to transform himself into a serpent at a banquet so that the queen can identify him as her lover. Philip then decides to accept the future child as his son. At the moment of childbirth, Nectanebo checks the positions of the stars in the zodiac and their characteristics, asking the queen to await the appropriate moment at which to give birth: the point at which Zeus-Ammon is at the very centre of the firmament. Thus Alexander is born, amid thunder, lightning and an earthquake. As is known, Alexander will eventually kill Nectanebo, also by deceit, only to discover that he was his true father. And this is how the *novella* ends.

It is worth pausing over some of the passages in the narration and comparing both the content and the vocabulary with those of the magical papyri. First of all, Nectanebo performs lecanomancy, which is a kind of divining with plenty of instances in the papyri and which is very old in Egypt: water, including rain water, is poured into a bronze vessel and in this case little wax figures are moulded which are then crushed by the pharaoh with a spell and a rod of ebony in one hand, as he invokes the messengers of the gods and the god Ammon:

> *Vita Alex*. *Recensio A* 1 1:
> ἐλάμβανε χαλκῆν λεκάνην καὶ γεμίσας αὐτὴν ὕδατος ὀμβρίου ἔπλαττεν ἐκ κηροῦ πλοιαρίδια μικρὰ καὶ ἀνθρωπάρια καὶ ἐνέβαλλεν αὐτὰ εἰς τὴν λεκάνην καὶ ἔλεγεν ἀοιδήν, κρατῶν ἐβεννίνην ῥάβδον, καὶ ἐπεκαλεῖτο τοὺς ἀγγέλους καὶ θεὸν Λιβύης Ἄμμωνα. καὶ οὕτω τῇ τοιαύτῃ λεκανομαντείᾳ…περιεγένετο·
> he took a bronze bowl and, filling it with rainwater, moulded little ships and men from wax and placed them in the bowl, and recited a spell by taking an ebony staff in his hand and called on the divine messengers and on Ammon, the god of Libya. And thus by this divination by bowl…he achieved success.

Compare:

> PGM IV 222:
> ἐπειδάν ποτε βούλει σκέψασθαι περὶ πραγμάτων, λαβὼν ἄγγος χαλκοῦν, ἢ λεκάνην ἢ φιάλην, οἷαν ἐὰν βούλῃ, βάλε ὕδωρ…λέγε τὸν λόγον τὸν

ὑποκείμενον καὶ προσκαλοῦ, ὃν βούλει θεόν, καὶ ἐπερώτα, περὶ οὗ θέλεις, καὶ ἀποκριθήσεταί σοι καὶ ἐρεῖ σοι περὶ πάντων.
Whenever you want to inquire about matters, take a bronze vessel, either a bowl or a saucer, whichever kind you wish. Pour water…speak the prescribed spell. And address whatever god you want and ask about whatever you wish, and he will reply to you and inform you about everything.

PGM VII 321:
Αὔτοπτος· λαβὼν ἀγγεῖον χαλκοῦν <καὶ> βαλὼν εἰς αὐτὸ ὕδωρ ὄμβριμον ἐπίθυε λίβανον ἀρσενικόν.
Charm for direct vision: Take a copper vessel, pour rainwater into it and make an offering of male frankincense.

PGM I 278:
καὶ στολίσας σεαυτὸν προφητικῷ σχήματι εἴχε ἐβεννίνην ῥάβδον ἐν τῇ λαιᾷ χειρὶ..
and dress yourself in a prophetic garment and hold an ebony staff in your left hand…

Cf. PGM IV 166.

Occasionally, there are references to the oil in which the figures the magician interprets are formed. The diviner's catalogue is of great interest (a similar catalogue is cited in Iamblichos):[22]

Rec. A 1.4:
εἰσὶ γὰρ ὀνειροκρίται σημειολύται ὀρνεοσκόποι μάντεις ἀμουμάντεις[23] γενεθλιαλόγοι μάγοι ἀστρολόγοι.
there are interpreters of dreams, of signs, of birds, diviners, casters of nativities, magicians, astrologists.

The table, *pinax,* which is described as *astrolabion* in the *epsilon* recension is not Egyptian in origin, as the term does not exist in Demotic, though simi-

[22] Other catalogues in *rec. B* 4; in Phrynichus 91,7; for Artemidorus: see Dickie 2003, 239. *Cf.* also Artemid. II 69.

[23] This word does not exist in Greek: perhaps it is possible to read Ἄμμωνος μάντεις ('diviners of Ammon'; *cf.* Plato *Phdr.* 275c8) or ψαμμομάντεις ('sand diviners').

lar zodiacal circles do appear in the papyri, where we read πινακίς:[24] I 4 πίνακα πολυτίμητον – *cf. PGM* III 277; VII 285; 300ª–10; VII 795. The *A* recension gives the fullest description; although the text is corrupt, it shows some coincidences with the Armenian and Valerius versions, as well as with some elements in *B*, and so may be old. The table has been compared to another which has appeared in Grand, in Roman Gaul, and it must be said that astrology is linked in the papyri to contexts of eroticism or lecanomancy.

The sending of dreams is also very frequent in the papyri, dreams which are very often erotic in nature:

> *Rec. A* 1.6:
> καὶ θεωρήσεις ὄνειρον καὶ θεόν σοι συγγινόμενον.
> and you will see a dream and a god having intercourse with you.

Cf. PGM IV 2451:

> ὀνειροπόμπησεν δὲ αὐτὸν βασιλέα ἐκδο<κ>ιμ<ά>ζοντος
> αὐτοῦ τὴν ὅλην ἀλήθειαν τῆς περὶ αὐτὸν μαγείας·
> sent dreams to the emperor himself as he thoroughly tested the whole truth of the magic within his power.

Cf. PGM III 172; V 487.

Afterwards, Nectanebo goes into the desert (in Pella!) to pick the appropriate herbs for the sending of dreams:

> *Rec. A* 1.6,.5:
> Νεκτανεβὼς…ἐπὶ τὴν ἔρημον δραμὼν τίλλει βοτάνας τὰς πρὸς ὀνειροπομπίαν ἁρμοζούσας, δι᾽ ὧν μαγεύσας τὸν Ὀλυμπιάδος ὕπνον ὄνειρον ἀναγεννᾷ ἧς ἤθελε πράξεως…
> Nectanebo…went into the desert and picked the herbs which were suited to the sending of dreams, by which he bewitched Olympias and produced a dream of the action he wished…

The *B* recension, the Armenian version and Valerius add that he moulds a wax figure with the name of the queen, lights some lamps and pours upon them the juice of the plants while summoning the gods:

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[24] See Aufrère 2000, 108ff.

Rec. B 1.5:
᾽Εξέρχεται…ὁ Νεκτεναβὼ καὶ λαμβάνει βοτάνας ἀπὸ τῆς ἐρήμου ἅς ἠπίστατο πρὸς ὀνειροπολίαν. καὶ ταύτας χυλώσας ἔπλασε κηρίον θηλυκόσωμον καὶ ἐπέγραψεν ἐν αυτῷ τὸ ὄνομα τῆς ᾽Ολυμπιάδος. καὶ ἅψας λύχνους <…> ἀπὸ τῶν βοτάνων ἐπεκαλεῖτο ὅρκοις τοὺς πρὸς τοῦτο πεποιημένους δαίμονας, ὥστε φαντασιοῦσθαι τὴν ᾽Ολυμπιάδα.
Nectanebo goes out…and collects from the desert herbs which he knew to be suitable to the sending of dreams. And he made an infusion with them, moulded a female figure of wax and wrote on it the name of Olympias. And lighting lamps (…) of herbs, he called with his oaths on the demons whose function this is, to bring an apparition to Olympias.

Cf. PGM IV 288:

βοτανήαρσις. Spell for picking a plant.

PGM IV 2969:
Παρ᾽ Αἰγυπτίοις ἀεὶ βοτάναι λαμβάνονται οὕτως·…
Among the Egyptians herbs are always obtained like this:…

PGM IV 296:
λαβὼν κηρὸν <ἢ πηλὸν> ἀπὸ τροχοῦ κεραμικοῦ πλάσον ζῴδια δύο, ἀρρενικὸν καἰ θηλυκόν·…
Take wax (or clay) from a potter’s wheel and make two figures, a male and a female…

PGM VII 408:
Εάν τινι ἐθέλῃς [ἐ]μφανῆναι> διὰ νυκτὸς ἐν ὀνείροις, λέγε πρὸς τὸν λύχνον τὸν καθημερινόν, λέγε πολλάκις…
If you wish to appear to someone at night in dreams, say to the lamp that is in daily use, say frequently…

PGM XII 15:
πο[ι]εῖ δὲ πράξε[ι]ς ταύτας καὶ ὀνει[ρο]πομπείαν…
(among his actions, he sends dreams…).

Cf. PGM I 329; VII 877; XII 339, etc.

PGM IV 930:
εἶτα ἐπὶ τοῦ λύχνου ὁ αὐτὸς λόγος λεγόμενος πρῶτος…
then the same first prayer is to be spoken to a lamp…

Cf. PGM II 58; IV 2371; VII 226; VII 540, 593; VIII 88; XII 10; XIII 11; XX 28; LXII 1, etc.

This is how he bewitches Olympias, who sees Ammon in a dream:

Rec. A 1.6:
ὁ γὰρ θεὸς οὕτος ἐρχόμενος πρὸς σὲ γίνεται πρῶτον δράκων ἐπὶ γῆς ἕρπων συρισμὸν πέμπων, εἶτα ἀλλάσσεται εἰς κεραὸν Ἄμμωνα, εἶτα εἰς ἄλκιμον Ἡρακλέα, εἶτα εἰς θυρσοκόμον Διόνυσον· εἶτα συνελθὼν ἀνθρωποειδὴς θεὸς ἐμφανίζεται τοὺς ἐμοὺς τύπους ἔχων.
This god, coming to you, at first will become a serpent which creeps on earth and emits a hissing, then will change itself into the horned Ammon, then into the brave Hercules, then into the thyrsus-bearing Dionysos; then, after having intercourse with you, he will appear like a god in human shape, having my features.

Cf. PGM XIII 271:

"σὲ μόνον ἐπικαλοῦμαι, τὸν μόνον ἐν κόσμῳ διατάξαντα θεοῖς καὶ ἀνθρώποις, τὸν ἑαυτὸν ἀλλάξαντα μορφαῖς ἁγίαις καὶ ἐκ μὴ ὄντων εἶναι ποιήσαντα καὶ ἐξ ὄντων μὴ εἶναι…ποίησόν με γενέσθαι ἐν ὄμμασι πάντων κτισμάτων λύκον, κύνα, λέοντα, πῦρ, δένδρον, γῦπα, τεῖχος, ὕδωρ (ἤ δ θέλεις), ὅτι δυνατὸς εἶ."
"I call on you alone, the only one in the cosmos who gives orders to gods and men, who changes himself into holy forms and brings into existence what does not exist, and makes existent things into non-existent things…make me seem to be, to the eyes of all creatures, a wolf, dog, lion, fire, tree, vulture, wall, water, or whatever you want – for you have the power".

PGM IV 1650:
ὦρᾳ β′ μορφὴν ἔχεις κυνός…ὦρᾳ γ′ μορφὴν ἔχεις ὄφεως…ὦρᾳ δ′ μορφὴν ἔχεις κανθάρου,… σχυσον τῷ φυλακτηρίῳ τούτῳ ἐν τῇ νυκτὶ ταύτῃ, εἰς ὃ τελεῖται πρᾶγμα. ὦρᾳ ε′ μορφὴν ἔχεις ὄνου…

> In the second hour you have the form of a dog…In the third hour you have the form of a serpent…In the fourth hour you have the form of a scarab… Mightily strengthen this philactery in this night, for the work for which it is consecrated. In the fifth hour you have the form of a donkey…

Cf. PGM XII 230.

When she wants to repeat the experience, Nectanebo talks of *autopsia*, which only appears in *A*. The *B* recension adds that she should cover her face, which we also read in Valerius and in the Armenian version. The references to lamps are very frequent in the papyri and associated with them is the idea of licanomancy. The metamorphoses of the god cited later by Nectanebo are also evidenced in the papyri, the transformations being normally into different animals.

Lest Philip should think that Olympias has been unfaithful, Nectanebo sends him another dream by bewitching a sea-hawk to make her husband see that the queen's vagina has been sewn up with a papyrus thread from the Nile and sealed with a gold ring bearing the head of a lion:

> *Rec. A* 1.8.1:
> Καὶ δὴ λαβὼν ἱέρακα πελάγιον καὶ τοῦτον μαγεύσας ὀνειροπομπίαν ποιεῖ. τῷ Φιλίππῳ. εἶδε γὰρ θεὸν εὔμορφον πολιὸν κεραὸν τρόπον Ἄμμωνος συγκοιμώμενον τῇ Ὀλυμπιάδι…
> And then, taking a sea-hawk and bewitching it, he sends a dream to Philip. So he saw a beautiful, grey-haired and horned god in the appearance of Ammon lying with Olympias.

Cf. PGM IV 211:

> ἱέραξ γὰρ πελάγιος καταπτὰς τύπτει σε ταῖς πτέρυξιν εἰς τὸ πλάσμα σου ταῦτα αὐτὰ δηλῶν ἐξαναστῆναί σε…ταῦτα ποιῆσας κάτελθε ἰσοθέου φύσεως κυριεύσας τῆς διὰ ταύτης τῆς συστάσεως ἐπιτελουμένης αὐθοπτικῆς λεκανομαντείας ἅμα καὶ νεκυοαγωγῆς.
> For a sea falcon flies down and strikes you on the body with its wings, signifying this: that you should arise…Having done this, return as the lord of a godlike nature which is fully conferred through this divine encounter.

Rec. A 1.8.2:
Ὑπενόησε δὲ καὶ τὴν φύσιν αὐτῆς Νειλώᾳ βίβλῳ καταρράπτειν αὐτὸν καὶ σφραγίζειν δακτυλίῳ χρυσῷ ἐν λίθῳ γλυφὴν ἔχοντι κεφαλὴν λέοντος, ἡλίου κράτος καὶ δοράτιον· ἔδοξε δὲ καὶ ἱέρακα ταῖς πτέρυξι διυπνίζειν αὐτὸν.
He thought also that he sewed on her sex with a papyrus of the Nile, and sealed it with a golden ring on whose stone the head of a lion, the powerful sun and a spear were engraved; it seemed also to him that a hawk awoke him with its wings.

PGM IV 2131:
ποίησον δάκτυλον, ἐφ' ᾧ γεγλύφθω λέων ἀκέφαλος…
make a ring on which a headless lion must be engraved.

Cf. PGM IV 2110:

ἀνδριὰς λεοντοπρόσωπος περιεζωσμένος, κρατῶν τῇ δεξιᾷ ῥάβδον, ἐφ' ᾗ ἔστω δράκων…
A lion-faced form of a man wearing a sash, holding in his right hand a staff, and on it let there be a serpent.

Cf. XII 28, XII 275.

PGM VII 580:
ἐπιγραφόμενον ἐπὶ χρυσέου πετάλου ἢ ἀργυρέου ἢ κασσιτερίνου ἢ εἰς ἱερατικὸν χάρτην φορούμενον σφραγιστικῶς ἐστιν. ἔστιν γὰρ δυνάμεως ὄνομα τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σφραγίς.
to be written on a leaf of gold or silver or tin or on hieratic papyrus. When worn it works mightily for it is the name of power of the great god and (his) seal.

PGM V 305–18:
Λαβὼν χάρτην ἱερατικὸν…θὲς ἐπὶ τὸν χάρτην τὸν κρίκον…κατάραπτε τὸν κρίκον, ἕως κατακαλυφῇ.
Taking hieratic papyrus…put the ring on the papyrus…wrap up the ring until it is completely covered.

Cf. PGM VII 413.

An interpreter of dreams assures him that his son will be famous and that his father is the god Ammon of Lybia, but faced with Philippus's doubts Nectanebo will transform himself into a serpent at a banquet and is thus identified by the queen as her lover:

> *Rec. A* 1.10.2:
> ἀλλάξας ἑαυτὸν διὰ τῆς μαγείας εἰς δράκοντα…ἦλθε διὰ μέσου τοῦ τρικλίνου καὶ ἐσύριζεν ἐξακουστὸν καὶ φοβερὸν σύρισμα.
> by turning himself into a serpent through his magic…he went into the middle of the dining-room and hissed in a resounding and fearsome way.

Cf. PGM XII 159:

> εἰσελεύσεται θεὸς ὀφεοπρόσωπος…
> The serpent-faced god will come in…

Cf. PGM IV 1650; VIII 12; XII 159.

> *PGM* XIII 48:
> ἀντὶ δὲ τοῦ συριγμοῦ δράκοντα δάκνοντα τὴν οὐράν, ὥστε εἶναι τὰ δύο, ποππυσμὸν καὶ συριγμόν…
> Instead of the hissing (draw) a snake biting its tail. So the two elements, popping and hissing…

Shortly afterwards, a bird's egg falls upon Philip and from it emerges a small serpent, which is interpreted as a sign of his son's royal status; in the papyri eggs are commonly mentioned in the performance of magic.

Cf. Rec. A 1.11:

> ὄρνις ἥμερος νεοττὸς εἰς τοὺς κόλπους αὐτοῦ ἁλλομένη ἔτεκεν ὠόν …ἀφ' οὗ ἐξεπήδησε μικρὸν δρακόντιον·
> a tame and young bird, which lept on to his lap, brought forth an egg…from which a small serpent sprang,

with *PGM* IV 50; IV 2460; V 377; XIII 235, etc.

Finally, when it is time to give birth, Nectanebo checks the position of all the signs of the zodiac, extensively in the *A* recension, far more summarily in *B* and the other versions.

We should add that the text cites technical magical terms, such as *praxis,* 'magical practice'; *logos,* 'formula'; *autopsia,* 'direct vision'*; mathematikos* for 'astrologist', *physis* for 'sex', or *Mene* to refer to the moon in the final zodiac episode, though earlier it is also referred to as *Selene*.[25] Indeed we have in this *novella* a full programme of magic: λεκανομαντεία, ὀνειροπομπία, αὐτοψία, λυχνομαντεία, ἀστρολογία, ὡροσκοπία, βοτανήαρσις, ὀνειρομαντεία, μεταμορφώσεις…. It is my belief that we are dealing with a genuine connoisseur of Egyptian magic and that raises a series of questions: who, when, where and for whom was the text written? It seems clear that the place was Egypt, but we shall try to be more specific.

The papyri tend to belong predominantly to the third and fourth centuries A.D., though there are actually references to books of ancient astrological doctrine, such as that attributed to king Nekepsus and to the late priest Petosiris (2nd century B.C.), which contain verse, like that of Bolos of Mendes (2nd century B.C.). The oldest papyrus in Preisendanz is papyrus XX, from the 1st century B.C. The language of the *novella* is often comparable to that of the papyri and, though Nectanebo is represented as a prophet from the Late Empire, nobody seriously questions the fact that these Egyptian magical practices date from many centuries before and that, as a technical and esoteric language, could be repeated without variation during all this time. Studies on the language of the *Life* and of the magical papyri could be helpful. Scholars tend to agree that the Nectanebo episode belongs to the oldest stage of the novel, and it is an opinion I share, though it might include later elements such as the tragic dénouement.[26] But we cannot reject the possibility that the language of the *novella* belongs to the first centuries A.D., although its plot must be earlier. A knowledge of magic links its author to Egyptian priestly circles and indeed we know how important the Serapeum at Memphis was for the reception of dreams by *incubatio*, that a dream is even attributed there to a certain Nectanebo, that this pharaoh was also worshipped as a hawk and was closely associated with Isis, the goddess of magic.[27] All this dates from the Ptolemaic era. What is more, Bagnall[28] has recently noted

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[25] In *R. A* I 33,11 the name of Sarapis appears in the guise of an *ainigma* (riddle) based on the sum of the letters of the god´s name. *Cf. PGM* IV 249 (*Typhon*); 455 (*Horus*).

[26] See nn. 15, 17, 19.

[27] It is observed by Aufrère 2000, 114ff.

[28] Bagnall 1996. See also Dickie 2003, 203.

the decline of the Egyptian temples in the Roman period for want of funding. It seems clear that the audience must have been familiar too with this kind of magic.

Our *novella* might usefully be compared to other similar texts, such as the so-called 'Nectanebo's Dream' – a possible explanation of Nectanebo's flight from Egypt; neither text is hostile towards the Macedonian conqueror, since they make him the Egyptian son of a pharaoh, unlike other ambiguous or negative texts such as the *Demotic Chronicle* and the *Oracle of the Potter*.[29] Its author, naturally, need not have been the same as in the rest of the novel, whose final composition, we have stated, was much later and might well have taken place in Alexandria.

Finally, I would just like to add that the enigmas surrounding the *Life of Alexander* seem endless.[30] That is why its study continues to fascinate and its legend is undying, magical, whether in oral or in written form, or even on the silver screen. And the possibility that authors of novels, perhaps *sophistai*, might at the same time be magicians (Iamblichos, perhaps Apuleius) provides a nexus between both sets of cultural practices which opens up new horizons and raises new questions to be borne in mind in the future.[31]

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[29] See the bibliography quoted in n. 16, and add Jasnow 1997, 102 for a discussion of the *Chronicle,* a probably positive, or, at least, ambiguous text. Huss 1994, 129ff is not so positive.

[30] See the paper by Paschalis in this volume.

[31] The fact that the sophist Polemon accuses his rival Favorinus of doing public magical performances is worthy of remark: see Dickie 2003, 238.

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