

Edward O. D. Love: *Code-Switching with the Gods. The Bilingual (Old Coptic-Greek) Spells of PGM IV (P. Bibliothèque Nationale Supplément Grec. 574) and their Linguistic, Religious, and Socio-Cultural Context in Late Roman Egypt*. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter 2016 (*Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde. Beihefte 4*). XX, 380 p., 10 pl. € 149.95. ISBN 978-3-11-046113-8.

Magical papyri have benefitted from a sharp rise in interest in recent years, and Edward Love's book fits neatly within that trend. It presents the edition of the Egyptian-language sections of a long bilingual magical papyrus, the title's 'PGM IV', which, for non-initiates, stands for manuscript no. four in the first volume of Karl Preisendanz, *Papyri Graecae Magicae*, published in 1928. In two volumes (the second one appeared in 1931), now commonly referred to as PGM, Preisendanz published the then known magical papyri which were either fully or mainly in Greek. In the latter case, he gave both the Greek and the Egyptian text of the papyrus, differentiating them typographically by using a Coptic font for the Egyptian sections. This went against the practice very common at the time which consisted in cutting up ancient multilingual texts by language and editing the different sections of each text in corpora that were defined by their language. For instance, only the Latin text of bilingual Latin–neo-Punic inscriptions from North Africa was published partly in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* or the *Inscriptions of Roman Tripolitania*, both of which omitted the neo-Punic sections, which were published separately in the collection *Iscrizioni puniche della Tripolitania*;¹ bilingual papyri of the early Islamic period were routinely edited with their Greek or Coptic text in one publication and the Arabic text in another, etc. Often coupled with a lack of illustration, that approach entirely negated the materiality and context of the texts in favour of a purely linguistic and content-centred approach. Today the tendency is to produce editions that reproduce the texts' variety in language and form, and often

1 CIL VIII was published in 1881, the *Inscriptions of Roman Tripolitania* in 1952, and Giorgio Levi della Vida's collection of Punic inscriptions posthumously in 1987 by Maria Giulia Amadasi Guzzo; more recent collections, on the other hand, present the full bilingual texts. See A.I. Wilson: *Neo-Punic and Latin Inscriptions in Roman North Africa. Function and Display*. In: A. Mullen/P. James (eds.): *Multilingualism in the Graeco-Roman Worlds*. Cambridge 2012, 265–316, esp. 267–268.

their arrangement on the page, even if this sometimes requires collaborative editions.

It is therefore surprising to see a publication that returns to previous practice. The papyrus studied by Love is BnF suppl. gr. 574, a long document of 36 leaflets written on both sides, and containing several spells, along with instructions on their proper usage. Most of the spells are in Greek, but some are bilingual Greek-Egyptian, whereby the instructions are in Greek and the actual spell in Egyptian. In 1928, Preisendanz had edited the papyrus in such a way that made this bilingualism obvious – even if the commentary offered was minimal. Love, on the other hand, has provided a systematic linguistic and ritual commentary, but provides only the Egyptian part of the bilingual spells in Chapter 1, which perhaps significantly is not entitled ‘edition’ but “‘The Old Coptic Magical Texts’ of P. Bibliothèque nationale Supplément grec. 574 (*PGM IV*)”. As the two languages are intertwined on the papyrus, for folio two verso, for example, only lines 15–16, 20–23, and 25–26 are given, omitting the lines in-between, before a long continuous section (lines 30–53 continued on 3r to line 16) in Egyptian. This part-edition of the text is presented in sections, with facing translation and a thorough annotation of the linguistic and formulaic features of each section, but no apparatus, and no reference to the four excellent plates at the end of the book.

This presentation, however, is only part of the story because it is complemented by Appendix 1. The author calls this “Interlinear transcription of the format of the text as extant in codex P. Bibliothèque nationale Supplément grec. 574 and transliteration of the text as established as *PGM IV*” [sic] (283). In practice, it is a mix between a diplomatic edition of the full text (Egyptian *and* Greek) much closer to the papyrological norm, and an interlinear ‘transliteration’. The text is ‘transcribed’ in a Coptic font, and ‘transliterated’ into the Latin alphabet according to the norms of demotic for its Egyptian sections, and into the Greek alphabet for its Greek sections. Transcribing Greek in the Coptic alphabet and then ‘transliterating’ it into the Greek one seems an odd choice not only editorially, but also in the assumptions it makes about the linguistic identity of the text and/or its author. Besides, a large part of the interlinear ‘transliteration’ remains in the Coptic font for a reason that is as far as I can see unexplained (the principles of Appendix 1 are explained on p. 12, and not repeated at the beginning of the Appendix). On the whole, the presentation of the text is unnecessarily complex, and could have been simplified enormously by adopting the standard norms of papyrological

editions, where the apparatus criticus and the line annotation would have contained, in one place rather than two, all the information the author wanted to convey. The result here is that nowhere do we find a proper edition of the text. Such an edition would have given the reader a much better sense of how the spell functioned and would have illustrated more accurately the author's commentary on bilingual ritual practice. As it stands, it needs to be used in conjunction with Preisendanz's 1928 edition. This is all the more regrettable as the readership for such material can include outsiders to the discipline, and a more user-friendly and autonomous publication of the text could have filled a growing need.

Chapter 2 – “The graphemes and phonemes of the ‘Old Coptic Magical Texts’ of P. Bibliothèque nationale Supplément grec. 574 (*PGM IV*)” – focuses on scripts, and more specifically what has been termed ‘Old Coptic’. This is Love at his best, offering a minute linguistic analysis of the Egyptian parts of the text, and weighing in on a long-standing discussion of the implications of allography (writing one language in the script of another) in the context of Egyptian.

Chapter 3 – “Contextualising the bilingual spells of P. Bibliothèque nationale Supplément grec. 574 (*PGM IV*)” – sets the stage for the analysis of the spells by introducing the framework that the author intends to follow, and briefly discussing the context and content of the text. The three following chapters (four to six) are successive in-depth analyses of the different bilingual spells contained in *PGM IV* organised by theme, starting with divinations (Chapter 4: “Contextualising the bilingual divinations of etc.”), followed by the ‘love spell’ – which the author prefers to call a ‘lust spell’ (6–7n.20) – in Chapter 5 (“Contextualising the bilingual ‘Old Coptic love spell’ of etc.”); finally, Chapter 6 deals with “Contextualising the bilingual exorcism of etc.”. Together with Chapter 2, this group of chapters form the core of the book and represent Love's greatest contribution to the understanding of *PGM IV*, and by extension, of the documentary forms, compositional aspects, and ritual mechanics of magical papyri more broadly. The ‘contextualisations’ he proposes cover the broader corpus of equivalent or similar material in a structured and systematic way, rendering an important service to all who have often tried and failed to find their way within that corpus.

Among the most interesting discussions in Chapters four to six are those of the ‘ritual mechanics’ of the different spells. Very thoroughly breaking down the content of the spells, as well as the instructions, Love elucidates the

practicalities of the bilingual spells, their immediate context of practice and composition. This is one of several places in the book where the reader would have greatly benefitted from at least a translation of the entire text, as it would have facilitated following what is sometimes a complex argument, but also a fascinating analysis.

Chapter 7, “The practitioners of the ‘Old Coptic Magical Texts’ of P. Bibliothèque nationale Supplément grec. 574 (PGM IV)”, widens the horizon to discuss issues of religious history on a more general scale. After a short historiographic section (7.1 “Conceptions of the practitioners of the GEMP” [= Graeco-Egyptian Magical Papyri]) Love examines the practitioner-client relationship (7.2) and what information can be gleaned from language use (7.3), before considering first what he calls ‘secondary sources’ – by which he means literary sources (7.4) – and then ‘primary sources’, meaning, in this case, documentary sources (7.5 and 7.6); a concluding section comes back to PGM IV (7.7). Bringing together all his earlier technical observations, Love argues with great conviction that the practitioners of the spells of PGM IV did not belong to the same priestly milieu to which the initial authors of the Egyptian spells’ *Vorlagen* belonged. He introduces a distinction between the latter and what he calls ‘potential’ and ‘contemporary’ practitioners. Potential practitioners were the individuals who transmitted the desacralised spells outside the temples, while ‘contemporary’ ones were those who commissioned and used *this specific manuscript* for their practice. Although one cannot exclude that these contemporary practitioners were priests, it remains impossible to know their identity for certain. The distinction, which mirrors broader discussions about composition, authorship, and copying of formulaic documentary texts, is crucial, and has potentially very important implications.

The weakest section here is 7.4 on ‘secondary’ sources, not so much because of its argument, but because it devotes a disproportionate amount of space to Coptic hagiographical texts dating a century or more later than PGM IV and ultimately unnecessary for the author’s argumentation. The reason for their presence is a long and heavily polemical discussion of David Frankfurter’s work,² and more specifically his contention that such spells were made

2 Mainly D. Frankfurter: *Religion in Roman Egypt. Assimilation and Resistance*. Princeton 1998 (Mythos. The Princeton/Bollingen Series in World Mythology. 133), but also his earlier *Elijah in Upper Egypt. The Apocalypse of Elijah and Early Egyptian Christianity*. Princeton 1993 (Studies in Antiquity & Christianity).

by priestly practitioners who were no longer in temples but itinerant, so to speak. Predictably, given his argument, Love finds Frankfurter's hypothesis unfounded and labours the point perhaps a bit too much, given that it is virtually irrelevant for his argument regarding PGM IV. The section reads like an excursus specifically inserted to criticise Frankfurter, while the author's lack of a background in Late Antiquity does not allow him to contextualise Frankfurter's work within the relevant scholarship.

There is no conclusion as such, but the last section of Chapter 7 (7.7) clearly recapitulates the book's main points. This is no luxury, as this is a dense study with much technical detail, and certainly not an easy read. Of the three Appendices that follow, I have already discussed the first (transcriptions/transliterations). Appendix 2 lists "the multivalent OC [Old Coptic] graphemes" of the text, and Appendix 3 examines "dialectical adherence", by listing linguistic parallels (or lack of them) for the Egyptian text of PGM IV. Bizarrely – and very inconveniently – the bibliography, although it follows the author-date convention, lists monographs and articles in two different sections, which makes looking up references in the footnotes unnecessarily laborious.

Love has produced a very interesting – and on the whole convincing – analysis of the Egyptian sections of PGM IV. His argumentation is solid and his knowledge of the material excellent. It is regrettable in this context that the books should be marred by a number of issues one might call technical or practical: the lack of a standard edition, and of the full text/translation; a layout of the bibliography that is not user-friendly; the absence of any serious copyediting by the publisher, which for a book that sells at €150 one might reasonably expect as a matter of course. Indeed, it is quite a shame – and rather ironical for a book focussing on linguistic norms and orthographic systems – that the many spelling mistakes and stylistic infelicities were not ironed out before publication.³ Addressing those defects would have greatly

3 Apart from the overuse of scare quotes, which are sometimes double, and sometimes single, there is also a repeated misuse of the hyphen for 'Egyptian language' and 'Greek language' even when the expression is not adjectival (for ex. p. 210, 'an exorcism in the Egyptian language' should have no hyphen, contrary to 'an Egyptian-language exorcism'; this is repeated throughout). Other examples include 'the principle questions' (leg. 'principal') on p. 223, 'the precedent polytheistic religious traditions' (leg. 'the preceding') on p. 210, 'the purpose the spell' on p. 211 is missing the preposition ('the purpose of the spell'), etc.

improved the book's overall economy, structure, and accessibility – and compared to the work done by Love on the rest, would have required minimal effort. Most of them, of course touch the form and readability of the book, and do not affect the content: *Code-switching with the Gods* remains an excellent piece of philological, linguistic, and documentary scholarship.

Arietta Papaconstantinou, University of Reading
Department of Classics
a.s.papaconstantinou@reading.ac.uk

www.plekos.de

Empfohlene Zitierweise

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