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**RELIGION, SCIENCE, AND THE TRANSFORMATIONS OF MAGIC:
MANUSCRIPTS OF MAGIC 1300-1600**

by

Frank F. Klaassen

**A dissertation submitted
in conformity with the requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of History
University of Toronto**

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Abstract

Religion, Science, and the Transformations of Magic: Manuscripts of Magic 1300-1600

**Frank F. Klaassen, Department of History, University of Toronto
Doctor of Philosophy, 1999**

This project treats magical manuscripts of English origin or provenance 1300-1600. The central theme of this project is the manner in which authors, collectors, and scribes of magic established their practices as legitimate or "true."

The first section deals with astrological image magic manuscripts 1300-1500. It demonstrates that this group of texts was understood as an extension of natural philosophy and transmitted with works of naturalia. In part due to concern about the legitimacy of the practices, scribes modified texts or selected them for copying according to scholastic scientific standards, epitomised by the *Speculum astronomiae*.

The second section deals with manuscripts of ritual magic from the fourteenth and fifteenth century. Ritual magic scribes had little if any interest in the literature of natural philosophy or naturalia. In comparison to scholastic image magic, ritual magic was more often open-ended, having no pre-defined results. Further, its procedures employed and encompassed the magical operator himself. Finally, unlike texts of image magic, ritual magic texts were transmitted in a much more fluid process and were frequently rewritten or entirely reinvented. These changes resulted from conscious adaptations to varying religious sensibilities or the use of "visionary technologies." A diverse, fluid, and adaptable tradition resulted, in which there was little systematic coherence. In turn, this lack of coherence further encouraged the use of non-textual

sources (e.g., visions) to establish what was true; in particular, truth was commonly understood to be accessible only through divine aid or illumination.

The third section demonstrates that there is a higher level of continuity between medieval and sixteenth-century magic than has been previously recognised. But the continuity should not be traced to scholastic image magic, which practically vanishes from the collections of practising occultists. Rather, medieval ritual magic deserves our attention as it forms the overwhelming bulk of the magical texts in sixteenth-century collections. In addition, the magical practices of Marsilio Ficino and Cornelius Agrippa subsume the operator and depend upon his condition, they employ non-textual means of establishing the truth, and their goals were fundamentally religious. In all these senses practicing sixteenth-century occultists may be seen as extensions of the medieval ritual magic tradition.

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Preface

An unusually engaging graduate seminar in 1991, led by Professor Brian Stock, provided the context in which this project was first conceived. But it would not have been possible without the assistance, support, and indulgence of many people. The financial support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, the University of Toronto, and the University of Toronto Alumni Association made the research possible. The collective wisdom of the members of the Societas Magica was a constant inspiration as I undertook the task of writing. Professors Joe Goering, Bert Hall, Kenneth Bartlett, and Andrew Hughes have continually provided valuable support, encouragement, and criticism. I would like, in particular, to thank James Carley, Claire Fanger, Maura Lafferty, Abigail Young, my father, Walter Klaassen, and my partner, Sharon Wright, for lending an ear as I struggled to make sense of my sources and commenting on my drafts.

More significant than these academic supports, were the day to day sacrifices made by my family. Incalculable is my debt to my parents, Ruth and Walter, who took months from their busy lives on several occasions to care for my children as I wrote, and who provided ongoing financial and spiritual support. Thanks also to my children, Jessica, Isaac, and Ahren, who (mostly) played quietly at the other desk while I worked. Finally, as we have struggled to forge academic careers and raise our family, Sharon's boundless energy, patience, and *joie de vivre* have been essential to bringing this project to completion.

Abbreviations and Shelfmarks

Abbreviations

- Carmody Carmody, Francis. *Arabic Astronomical and Astrological Sciences in Latin Translation: A Critical Bibliography*. Berkely and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1956.
- CSEL *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*. Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften.
- HMES Thorndike, Lynn. *History of Magic and Experimental Science*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1923-58.
- Ker N. R. Ker, ed. *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain; A List of Surviving Books*. London, Royal Historical Society, 1964.
- SD Vincent of Beauvais. *Speculum Doctrinale*. Baltazaris Belieri, 1624.
- SN Vincent of Beauvais. *Speculum Naturale*. Baltazaris Belieri, 1624.
- Singer Singer, Dorothea Waley. *Catalogue of Latin and Vernacular Alchemical Manuscripts in Great Britain and Ireland*. Brussels: M. Lamertin, 1928-31.

Shelfmarks

When citing codices from medieval library catalogues, I employ the shelfmarks assigned to them in the modern catalogue editions. Where a codex cited in a medieval catalogue survives in a modern collection, two shelfmarks can be associated with it. In this case, I generally include both shelfmarks (e.g., Canterbury, St Augustine's Abbey 1170 (=Oxford, Corpus Christi College 221)). The Appendices cite both shelfmarks and indicate the relationship between them as shown.

The following are my standard shelfmark forms for codices in frequently cited medieval catalogues. In all other instances, this information will be provided when the codex is cited.

- Canterbury, St Augustine's Abbey. James, Montague Rhodes. *The Ancient Libraries of Canterbury and Dover*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903.
- Merton (Medieval). Powicke, F. M. *The Medieval Books of Merton College*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1931.
- York, Austin Friars. Humphreys, K. W., ed. *The Friars' Libraries*. London: British Library in Assoc. with the British Academy, 1990.

Introduction

This study is an attempt to understand the intellectual circumstances which surrounded the copying, transmission, and creation of the texts of late medieval and early modern magic (1300-1600). The texts surveyed here do not include every practice which could conceivably have been regarded as magical. Rather, the study treats three principal categories or genres which were commonly deemed to be the most dangerous or reprehensible forms of magical practice travelling in written form. The first is image magic, which employs images engraved on such things as metal disks, rings, or precious stones. Its authors generally regarded its powers to be naturally, that is, astrologically, derived. Its detractors regarded the source of its power to be demonic. The second category is the notory art, which sought illumination or intellectual gifts from the holy spirit, through a programme of prayers, rituals, and meditative exercises. Once again, it was regarded by its detractors as demonically inspired. The third is necromancy, which called upon angelic and demonic powers. The summoning, binding, and deploying of demons through ritual performances form the core of this genre. I refer to both the notory art and necromancy as ritual magic because, like their parent, Christian religious performance, they have a deep concern with ritual action. Through the manuscripts of these genres we may access the varied and changing conceptions of magic held by a wide variety of scribes, collectors, and authors.

This study follows three principal themes. First, the broad temporal span of this study allows for an examination of the changes in the magical tradition in the context of broader intellectual shifts. In particular, this study seeks to understand how the renaissance occult traditions were outgrowths of medieval ones. Second, the traditions of magic frequently employ materials from other cultures; in fact, "alien" materials are commonly regarded as particularly desirable in magical ritual. Thus, almost by definition, this study is a history of cultural

appropriations. Third, the study of texts of magic in their manuscript context also allows us to understand something about the charged relation of magic to the wider intellectual and cultural setting. In particular I am interested in how proponents of this marginal intellectual tradition strove to establish their practices as truthful, legitimate, or orthodox, in the absence of broad popular, legal, and intellectual consent.

1. Summary

In order to understand the significance of individual manuscripts, it is necessary to chart their standard features. The present study attempts to do precisely that: to provide a general survey of these magical manuscripts as a first step in coming to terms with a largely unexamined tradition. It analyses eighty codices of British origin or provenance which contain (or contained) at least one such work of magic. A less formal survey of continental manuscripts and medieval catalogues formed a control group. The original codices have been reconstructed, to the extent that is possible, from surviving manuscripts, or from medieval library catalogues. With particular attention to the literature accompanying the text (or texts) of magic, it has been possible to identify the general interests and intellectual preoccupations of the scribes. By analysing the way in which the scribes treated the texts of magic on the page and the ways in which they transmitted those texts, it has been possible to understand their attitudes towards magic. This survey has two major results, one relating to the classification of magic in the later middle ages, and the other relating renaissance occultism to the magical traditions of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Prior to 1500, the magical texts I have examined fall into two groups and they are dealt with in the first two sections of this dissertation. The first group, epitomized by certain texts of Arabic image magic, was regarded as related to the scientific corpus and the library of *naturalia*.

Hereafter, I will refer to this group as "scholastic image magic," because the scribes understood and analysed these texts by employing theories of natural magic current in scholastic circles. These theories, however, were not uniformly accepted, and we may also detect caution or ambivalence in the treatment of image magic. One of the expressions of this ambivalence is the tendency to transmit or alter the texts in such a way as to make them conform, as much as possible, to the scholastic model of astrological magic. In particular, Albertus Magnus' *Speculum astronomiae* was employed to analyse the texts of image magic, but also to select which texts should be copied. The resulting set of treatises was static in its membership, content, and explanatory mechanisms through the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

The second section treats the very different situation surrounding ritual magic texts, such as the notory art or necromancy. Unlike scholastic image magic, these forms of magic employ complex Christian ritual and are, very much, the progeny of the liturgy and Christian religious sensibilities. What made this form of magic work was not a pre-existing natural force deriving from the stars, but the moral purity of the operator and the numinous power of the rites he employed. As a result, they tended to be transmitted in very different ways, and formed a separate stream of transmission. Since no static standard existed by which the scribes could evaluate these texts, the process of transmission was much more fluid. The scribes of ritual magic altered their texts to make them conform to their sense of what a powerful ritual would be, something which varied according to region, time, and individual taste. This process had the effect of making them *more* dubious by scholastic standards and far less systematic. Further, because this tradition sought to operate through visions, signs, and dreams, the results were far more open-ended and far less predictable. Perhaps in response to the resulting difficulties surrounding interpretation, perhaps as an extension of religious sensibilities, the practitioners sought guidance from the divine

to discover the truth in their visions and texts. In fact, the tradition of ritual magic developed techniques which were specifically designed to supplement or correct their texts. The result of all of this was to compound the problem even further, creating a very fluid and adaptable tradition with no systematic consistency, in which the received texts were an important guide, but were often of secondary importance. The "truth" did not reside in them. Rather, they were an often undependable means to an end, which was open-ended, unpredictable, and ultimately achievable only with divine assistance.

These two very distinct streams of magical practice did not enter the sixteenth century in the same manner, and the changes and continuities in these traditions are the topic of the third section. The traditional tracts of scholastic image magic almost ceased to be copied at that point. This is despite the apparent popularity of image magic in the renaissance as represented in the printed sources. Beginning in the late sixteenth century, these treatises reappeared and began to travel with texts of ritual magic, as they did consistently in the seventeenth century. At the same time, with a few modifications due to changing fashions, all of the traditions of medieval ritual magic continued to thrive without noticeable change. The same kinds of texts were copied, and a number of new, but substantially unoriginal ones, were added. A similar attitude towards the texts prevailed amongst sixteenth-century scribes and collectors. The texts were freely modified in the same ways they had been before, and a similar desire for solidity was expressed in appeals to the numinous. This desire was also expressed in the almost uniform attempt to use the works of the great sixteenth-century occultist, Cornelius Agrippa, as a standard.

The question which follows is: how do we account for the differences between the printed and manuscript sources? Humanist taste may, in part, explain why scholastic image magic declined so sharply, while ritual magic flourished unchanged. But a more satisfying explanation

may be derived by examining the practical works of two major figures of renaissance occultism, Marsilio Ficino and Cornelius Agrippa. The final chapter of this project demonstrates that the magical systems of Ficino and Agrippa have much more in common with the medieval traditions of ritual magic than is usually understood. A host of common elements may be identified. Their goals are ultimately religious; they employed many common techniques; their magical practices are non-restrictive and open-ended; the operator is encompassed by the magical process and his condition determines its success; and finally, they appeal to non-textual sources in the search for truth. In contrast, in the tradition of image magic, the techniques are not religious exercises in themselves, the condition of the operator is irrelevant, a particular technique has a predetermined result, and the tradition of natural philosophy serves as the benchmark for truth. If we may take Ficino and Agrippa's works as descriptive of the interests of renaissance occultists, the choice of ritual magic texts over those of image magic was a natural one. The works of image magic may have been of interest as an adjunct to, or support of, religious magic, but they were not central to the interests of renaissance occultists. Far greater was their desire to practice magic of a contemplative and religious flavour. In order to accomplish this, renaissance occultists had to draw upon the principal body of available practical literature, medieval ritual magic. The originality of their transformations of medieval magic is by no means lessened by the fact that they were, in this way, part of a tradition whose very nature was perennial transformation.

2. A Brief Historiography

The historiography of medieval literate magic has formed two principal streams. In one, historians have concentrated upon the relationship between science and magic, in the other, the relationship between religion and magic. Lynn Thorndike's eight-volume work, *A History of*

Magic and Experimental Science, epitomizes the approach that focuses upon magic and magical practices in relation to the history of science.¹ Although his monumental work includes a great deal of information on magic of a more "religious" kind, his treatment of necromancy and the notory art is very limited, due to the limited connection these texts had with natural philosophy. Thorndike's contention is that magic forms an important part of the history of science and cannot be separated from it. More recent essays have sought to further demonstrate how magic was often indistinguishable from science and technology in the medieval period. Bert Hansen has written on magic as science in the middle ages.² William Eamon's recent study of books of secrets follows the same general line of argument as it traces the shift from the notion of science as secret to science as public knowledge; he has also written on the blending of medieval magic and technology.³ Charles Burnett's very important work on divination and image magic also, in part, concerns the relationship of magic to conventional learning. In particular, he discusses how magic was often included as one of the seven liberal arts and what rationales may have supported such a categorization.⁴

In a distinct tradition, historians have treated the relationship between religion and magic. Norman Cohn and Edward Peters have examined the relationship of magic to broader cultural

¹Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, 8 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1923-1954) (hereafter HMES).

²Bert Hansen, "Science and Magic," in *Science in the Middle Ages*, ed. David C. Lindberg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).

³Eamon, William. *Science and the Secrets of Nature; Books of Secrets in Medieval and Early Modern Culture* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1994.) and "Technology as magic in the Late Middle Ages and the Renaissance," *Jamus* 70 (1983): 171-212.

⁴For the articles covering these topics see the collection of papers, Charles Burnett, *Magic and Divination in the Middle Ages* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1996).

issues, but the core of their interests have to do with the location of magic in the complex nexus of moral, legal, and religious thought. Norman Cohn seeks to understand the part that ritual magic played in late medieval conceptions of witchcraft and evil.⁵ Peter's book *The Magician, the Witch and the Law* treats the development of the legal notion of the witch from its sources in medieval sorcery and anti-magical invective.⁶ The recent work by Claire Fanger, Richard Kieckhefer, Robert Mathiesen, and Nicholas Watson more directly concerns the religious dimensions of literate magic.⁷ Fanger and Watson have begun to explore the intriguing example of John of Morigny, a monk who composed a "purified" version of the Solomonic *Ars notoria*, based upon his visions of the Virgin. Their studies explore his relationship to mysticism and theological issues. Mathiesen has examined the case of a similar work, the *Liber sacer*, as an example of religious dissent and "visionary technology." Richard Kieckhefer has been the only modern scholar to extensively treat the more marginal literature of necromancy. He has explored the crossover between religion and magic in a number of articles and in his recent book, *Forbidden Rites*.⁸ This edition and analysis of a fifteenth-century necromancer's manual fills a substantial gap in our understanding of necromantic practices. A considerable interest in the relationship of religion and

⁵Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons* (New York: Basic Books, 1975), pp. 164-205

⁶Edward Peters, *The Magician, the Witch and the Law* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978).

⁷Claire Fanger, ed., *Conjuring Spirits; Texts and Manuscripts of Medieval Ritual Magic* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1998). This volume will contain the following papers: Claire Fanger, "Plundering the Egyptian Treasure: John the Monk, his *Book of Visions*, and its Relation to the Notory Art of Solomon"; Nicholas Watson, "John the Monk's *Book of the Visions of the Blessed and Undeified Virgin Mary, Mother of God*: Two Versions of a Newly-Discovered Ritual Magic Text"; and Robert Mathiesen, "A 13th-Century Ritual to Attain the Beatific Vision from the *Sworn Book* of Honorius of Thebes."

⁸Richard Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites: A Fifteenth-Century Necromancer's Manual* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1997).

magic may also be seen in numerous recent books and articles on ancient, early medieval, and Jewish magic.⁹ Many of these studies deal with issues in natural philosophy to the extent that the condemnatory treatises they discuss treat them.

The rough division of historical studies represents two sets of modern interests. It is also the product of a very real division in the manuscripts themselves. Thus, the manuscript studies by David Pingree and Charles Burnett, which have made great inroads in manuscripts of image magic, have treated texts of ritual magic only incidentally.¹⁰ Few studies have attempted to treat both kinds of texts in a comparative way. Claire Fanger's doctoral dissertation examined the relationship between theological and philosophical discussions of magic, and magical practice, but did not attempt to treat extensively the works of the practitioners themselves.¹¹ In certain ways,

⁹A number of recent books have appeared which treat magic in the ancient world. Marvin Meyer and Paul Mirecki, eds., *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995). Christopher Faraone and Dirk Obbink, eds., *Magika Heira; Ancient Greek Magic and Religion* (Oxford University Press: New York, 1991). For Jewish intellectual magic see Michael D. Swartz, *Scholastic Magic: Ritual and Revelation in Early Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996). For a recent study of Byzantine magic see Henry Maguire, ed., *Byzantine Magic* (Dumbarton Oaks: Washington, D.C., 1995). For a recent treatment of early medieval magic see Valerie Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1991).

Some significant earlier examples of scholarship in this period are as follows. A.A. Barb. "The Survival of the Magic Arts" in *The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century*, ed. Arnaldo Momigliano (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), pp. 100-125. Peter Brown, "Sorcery, Demons and the Rise of Christianity: From Late Antiquity into the Middle Ages," in *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine* (London: Faber and Faber), pp. 119-146. Hans Dieter Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

¹⁰David Pingree, "The diffusion of Arabic Magical Texts in Western Europe," in *La diffusione delle scienze Islamiche nel medio evo Europeo* (Roma: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1987), pp. 57-102. Charles Burnett, "Talismans: magic as science? Necromancy among the Seven Liberal Arts," in *Magic and Divination*, pp. 1-15.

¹¹Claire Fanger, *Signs of Power and the Power of Signs* (PhD Diss., University of Toronto, 1993).

Richard Kieckhefer also has bridged the two traditions. In a general discussion of medieval conceptions of magic, he has demonstrated that medieval conceptions of magic were "rational" in the sense that medieval writers could rationally explain the workings of magic.¹² Kieckhefer's general study, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, also discusses a wide range of literature, separating necromantic magic from other forms such as charms, astrological magic, and divination, but does not engage in an explicit comparative analysis.¹³ D. P. Walker's seminal work *Spiritual and Demonic Magic* categorizes the literature of magic based upon its mechanisms, with spiritual or natural magic in one group, and demonic magic in the other. Yet the magical traditions cannot be categorized according to the mechanisms they employ; this division is largely the product of scholastic conceptions of natural and demonic magic. The real divisions lie in more general sets of interests. In the end, Walker's work, like that of Frances Yates, is far more concerned with natural magic than the medieval traditions of ritual magic. Only Clulee's work on John Dee has, to some extent, examined the question of Dee's interest in both ritual and natural magic. While his treatment engages the literature of ritual magic to a limited extent, his principal goal was to attempt to understand Dee's natural philosophy.¹⁴ Thus, no scholar has analyzed these two streams in relation to one another in any detail. The present study seeks to understand something about the broader issues in medieval and early modern magic by comparing those scribes and collectors interested in magic as "science" with those more interested in magic as "religion."

¹²Richard Kieckhefer, "The Specific Rationality of Medieval Magic," *American Historical Review* 99 (June 1994): 813-36.

¹³Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

¹⁴Nicholas H. Clulee, *John Dee's Natural Philosophy* (Routledge: New York and London, 1988).

A second division in the historiography of magic lies between examinations of medieval and renaissance magic. While Pingree's recent work on the *Picatrix* to some extent closes this gap, no explicit efforts have been made to link renaissance practitioners with their medieval forebears.¹⁵ Frances Yates' work served to legitimize the study of magic. Her desire to demonstrate the newness of renaissance magic and her focus upon ancient, "hermetic," and cabbalist sources led her to disregard the more explicitly religious magic of the later middle ages. While she recognized the importance of medieval natural magic, she explicitly denigrated medieval ritual magic as barbaric. This has led a generation of scholars to examine every possible source for renaissance magic except, I think, the obvious one.¹⁶ A good deal of ink has also been expended refuting or modifying the Yates thesis, in particular her contention that a "hermetic" or "cabbalist" tradition influenced the scientific revolution. But most of these efforts have not sought to re-examine the question of the medieval sources of renaissance magic, or have focused solely upon natural magic. The revisionist approach of Brian Copenhaver has demonstrated the importance of the scholastic and neoplatonic theories of magic.¹⁷ Others, such as Westman and

¹⁵David Pingree, *Picatrix: The Latin version of the Ghayat Al-Hakim* (London: The Warburg Institute, 1986).

¹⁶A good example is an article by Michael Keefer which seeks sources for Agrippan magic in hermetic sources rather than medieval ritual magic and, much worse, the sources Agrippa explicitly cites, which are neoplatonist. See Ch. 7, Sect. 3 for a fuller discussion of this issue. Michael H. Keefer, "Agrippa's Dilemma: Hermetic "Rebirth" and the Ambivalence of *de vanitate* and *de occulta philosophia*," in *Renaissance Quarterly*, Winter (1988) 614-53.

¹⁷Similarly, Brian Copenhaver has modified the Yates thesis to argue that the notion of hermetic philosophy had a "doxographic" function in the development of modern science. Brian Copenhaver, "Natural Magic, Hermeticism, and Occultism in Early Modern Science" in David Lindberg and Robert S. Westman, eds., *Reappraisals of the Scientific Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp 261-302. He has written extensively on this topic. See also "Scholastic Philosophy and Renaissance Magic in the *De Vita* of Marsilio Ficino," *Renaissance Quarterly* 4 (1984): 523-555; "Astrology and Magic" in *Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 264 - 300;

McGuire, have not concerned themselves deeply with the sources, focusing instead on the question of the relation of renaissance occult studies in general to the scientific revolution.¹⁸

Nauert's insightful study of Agrippa makes some observations about his medieval sources, and attempts to understand the renaissance fascination with magic in relation to medieval conceptions, but does so without any deep familiarity with the medieval sources. While Butler's study, *Ritual Magic*, does cross the boundary between medieval and renaissance, her understanding of the medieval traditions is deeply flawed due to her use of early modern printed sources.¹⁹ In addition, she does not seek to link ritual magic with the more popular traditions of renaissance magic. By following the collections of ritual and image magic into the sixteenth century, I seek to provide a more balanced picture of the sources for renaissance occultism. I also seek to understand renaissance occultists as a part of a long standing tradition of magic in the Latin West.

Only Keith Thomas' classic, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, seeks in some measure to incorporate in its analysis both "scientific" and "religious" traditions as they move from the late medieval period into the renaissance and reformation.²⁰ However, his focus upon the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries left the vast bulk of medieval material beyond the scope of his study. In addition, his broad thesis about the "decline" of magic, of necessity lacks some precision. In this study, I endeavour to demonstrate that the key element in the survival of magic is its ability to

"Renaissance Magic and Neoplatonic Philosophy: *Ennead* 4.3-5 in Ficino's *De vita coelitus comparanda*," in *Marsilio Ficino e il ritorno di platon: Studi e documenti*, ed. Gian Carlo Garfagnini (Firenze: L. S. Olschki, 1986), pp. 351-69.

¹⁸See for example Robert S. Westman and J. E. McGuire, *Hermeticism and the Scientific Revolution* (Los Angeles: Williams Clarke Memorial Library, 1977).

¹⁹E. M. Butler, *Ritual Magic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1949).

²⁰Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1971).

transform itself, to adapt to new sensibilities and expectations. When, for whatever reason, it cannot be transformed, it does not decline: it vanishes.

3. Assumptions

I have attempted to approach the treatises of ritual and image magic with respect for the scribes and authors. This does not imply that I regard their assumptions about the world to be in any way true. Rather, I take for granted that the magical processes which they describe were assumed to work and, in many cases, *did work*. As Robert Mathiesen has observed, modern psychologists have discussed the way in which profound, life-altering visionary experiences may be achieved through techniques very similar to those of medieval ritual magic.²¹ In addition, the medieval world-view provided abundant encouragement for the belief that these kinds of experiences could occur. Conventional Christianity commonly employed visions and reports of visions as a way of accessing divine mysteries, and as Richard Kieckhefer has observed, very few people in the medieval period did not believe in demons and angels.²² Given adequate suggestibility, the appearance of these creatures in ritually evoked visionary experiences is understandable, if not predictable. The practitioners may well have been unconventional, but given the psychological and anthropological evidence, the burden of proof lies with those who wish to dismiss this material as fabrication or the province of the insane. Of course, it is also conceivable that some of the authors and scribes failed in their magical efforts, but we have every reason to assume that they copied magical texts under the assumption that the practices described therein could work. Similar conditions prevailed surrounding image magic. Although there was some

²¹Mathiesen, "Beatific Vision," pp. 156-57.

²²Kieckhefer, "Specific Rationality," p. 818.

debate about *how* they worked — whether they operated due to astrological influence or demonic intervention — the assumption remained that they *did* work. Throughout this study, then, I implicitly assume that the practices described probably achieved some tangible results, and if they did not, that the practitioners would have better cause to doubt their texts or techniques than the principle that magic could work.

4. Some Limitations of this Study

This study does not engage the extensive literature of divination. The vast number of divinatory manuscripts made such an undertaking impossible within the confines of a dissertation. The less threatening nature of divination meant that its literature was more commonly copied and that it was less likely the copyist had to have an involved interest in divination in order to copy a work of this kind. The practices would likely have attracted the same kind of interest as present-day newspaper horoscopes. Thus, although they are certainly a part of the magical literature, their significance is more diffuse and difficult to assess. In addition, they did not generally provoke as extensive a range of theological, moral, and practical problems as did visionary, demonic, or transitive magic (i.e., having an effect on someone other than the operator). These more problematic forms of magic, which were "demonized" in literature and anti-magical invective, had a far greater significance to general conceptions of magic. They also had a particularly charged relationship with conventional religious practice and natural philosophy. By the same token, it may well be that current research, such as that undertaken by Charles Burnett, which includes divinatory texts, may cast a different light upon our understanding of medieval magical traditions.

A limitation, but also a strength, of this study is that it does not deal with the *Picatrix*. This text of Arabic magic, which straddles the image magic/rituals magic division, was important

in the later middle ages on the continent. As it describes its own practices as necromantic, and employs extensive ritual practices, the text was likely understood as part of the ritual magic tradition. But it does not appear to have arrived in England until the sixteenth century and was not demonstrably significant in magical circles until the seventeenth century. Thus, we may generalize about European attitudes towards magic, only with the understanding that some adjustments may be necessary in light of an analysis of continental medieval manuscripts of this work. On the other hand, we are in a position to understand how the traditions of ritual magic worked in the absence of its influence. This is useful, since it allows us to assess the nature of the native traditions of ritual magic, and to separate to some extent the influence of Arabic conceptions of magic, from those of the Latin West.

Finally, one of the difficulties with working with a large number of sources, all in manuscript form (most of which have never been fully described or commented upon), is that one is caught between the desire to paint a general picture of the library, and a desire to introduce the reader to the character of individual manuscripts. I have sought to walk a middle path. I treat in detail only those manuscripts which are representative of a genre or period and to otherwise limit my descriptions for the sake of brevity. Those desiring more detail may refer to the selected manuscript descriptions and lists in the Appendices.

Part I: Image Magic 1300-1500

Introduction: The Apothecary's Dilemma

The story goes that the thirteenth-century astrologer Guido Bonatti took pity upon a poor apothecary with whom he used to play chess. "Guido gave him a wax image of a ship, telling him that if he kept it hidden in a box in a secret place he would grow rich, but that if he removed it he would grow poor again."¹ In time the apothecary did grow rich. But he began to worry about the condition of his soul and confessed to a priest, who counselled him to destroy the image. The hapless apothecary did as he was told and was soon reduced to poverty once again. Evidently, having reconsidered the value of his justified condition, he returned to Bonatti to ask for a replacement. Bonatti chastised him, saying that the effects of the image were not magic but natural, and were derived from astrological conditions which would not recur for fifty years.

This wry reversal of the familiar moral tales about magic illustrates a significant division in the late medieval understanding of image magic. The apothecary's concern was an understandable one because, philosophical arguments aside, the trappings of image magic could very easily leave one in doubt about what powers might lie behind it. Had he been familiar with the literature on magical images, he might have been less concerned, since most of the texts would appear to have been regarded by their collectors as natural magic.

On the other hand, images were not always regarded as innocent natural magic. Those made of wax were frequently associated with necromancy in literature and court records. Even astrological talismans and ligatures (objects suspended from the neck) were sometimes regarded as diabolic. In a report of a late fourteenth-century execution in London, the condemned Tresilian, despite having to be forced to climb the gallows by a beating, claimed that "So long as I do wear

¹*HMES* II, p 835.

anything upon me, I shall not die."² At this the executioner had him stripped and "found certain images painted like to the signs of the heavens, and the head of a devil painted, and the names of many of the devils wrote in parchment." These being removed, Tresilian was duly hanged, naked, after which his throat was cut. He was left to hang until morning to be sure he was dead. While the record recognizes the astrological basis of a number of the images, the names on the talismans were assumed to be diabolic in origin, and the image was assumed to be of a devil. This concern about demonic involvement was also frequently raised in regard to the texts of image magic and was not without justification. While images were rarely, if ever, addressed to demons, it would have been very difficult for the uninitiated (if not for anyone) to be sure. The names employed in such devices might have been in transliterated or "pig" Hebrew, Arabic, Greek, or Chaldee (i.e., Syriac), if Latin characters were employed at all. The images might have had no apparent relation with the more familiar images of the zodiac. Perhaps more to the point, some texts advocate the use of various ritual procedures in the making of astrological images, which would also justifiably raise concerns for a late medieval reader. If the source of the image's power was purely natural, why employ a ritual procedure? To whom might the signs, the ritual incantations, suffumigations, and gestures be significant if not to demons? In the end, the apothecary would have to take what solace he could from the fact that most collectors of the texts of image magic (even those of the apparently necromantic variety) appear to have collected this material for their interest in natural philosophy or the natural world.

The stories of the apothecary and Tresilian also illustrate the importance of examining the manuscript evidence for late medieval interest in magic. Literary sources and court records leave a

²Thomas Bayley Howell, ed. *[Corbett's] Collection of State Trials* (London: Bagshaw, 1809), v. 1, pp. 115-19.

great deal in question and often communicate information third or fourth hand. Moreover, these sources exist precisely because of their dramatic content. In the case of literary examples and of reports of trials, the use of magic has always added colour and danger to a story. In the case of court records, one justifiably doubts the veracity of many of the charges of magic, which appear to have been a useful, if untruthful, addition to standard charges of sedition. They also made for an interesting elaboration upon a story such as that of Tresilian. The few true, practising magicians who faced prosecution and whose court records survive, form a problematic sample. To have been prosecuted for these kinds of crimes usually required an imprudent involvement in political conflicts or rash public displays. These sources may raise interesting questions about legal procedure, dissent, and non-conformity, but they are of a limited value to the study of intellectual magic except where they can be connected directly with other kinds of evidence.³ While examination of the manuscript sources will not ultimately solve the apothecary's dilemma, they can provide an understanding of the world-view of those interested in magic in the late middle ages, the vast majority of whom were never brought to trial or transformed into legend.

³ Claire Fanger and Nicholas Watson discuss the case of Brother John of Morigny, whose autobiographical work on the notory art survives. Records of his condemnation survive, making this a singular situation where we may compare the records of a prosecution with the original magical texts it concerned. See Claire Fanger, "Plundering"; and Watson, "Beatific."

Chapter 1

The Intellectual Context for Image Magic

Discussions of magic in the late medieval period tended to take two forms. Philosophical treatments often laboured to mark off small portions of magical literature as legitimate; moral and theological condemnation, often by the same authors who had treated magic positively elsewhere, tended to leave the impression that *all* magic was evil and functioned by the power of demons. The differences in treatment were, in part, occasioned by the stylistic requirements of the different contexts in which this topic was discussed. But taken together, they illustrate the fundamental ambivalence which dominates evaluations of magic in the Latin West. In order to provide a context for the chapters which will follow, I will begin with a brief exploration of condemnations of magic and the ways in which the practice of magic, image magic in particular, could be considered unorthodox or sinful. This section will not be exhaustive in any way; rather it will seek to establish the kinds of questions about orthodoxy and sin which might occupy the mind of the copyist, collector, or author of a magical text. We will then turn to a discussion of the relationship of image magic to the discipline of natural philosophy. Once again, this section will not be exhaustive, but will focus upon the central texts, in particular those which appear most often together with the manuscripts of image magic.

1. Magic, Orthodoxy, and Sin: Questions in the Mind of the Collector

Caesarius of Heisterbach relates that a group of German students studying necromancy in Toledo had seen no concrete results after a long period of study. By threatening his life, they convinced their master to give them a demonstration of his art. He took them to a deserted place,

drew a circle around them, and warned them not to leave the circle for any reason. The master summoned up a group of demons who first appeared as knights, attempting to frighten the students out of their protective circle. When this did not work, they appeared as voluptuous women, dancing seductively about the circle. One of the students was overcome by the display and accepted a ring from one of the demons. He was instantly dragged off to Hell, and the whole apparition vanished. The remaining students convinced the master, with further threats to his life, to attempt to retrieve their friend. He managed to convince the demonic forces to hold a sort of trial to decide whether the student had been justly dealt with. It was concluded that he did not deserve so radical a punishment and he was returned in a ruinous state. He subsequently entered a monastery where he remained for the remainder of his days.⁴

The subject of magic rarely evokes weak reactions. While magic cannot be described as a need,⁵ it does serve to mediate basic tensions in the human psyche. Our desire for power accompanies a sense of powerlessness. We wish for control in a world where most things are beyond our control. We fear that there are hidden machinations affecting our lives and wish to discover them. We are drawn to, and fascinated by, the wondrous, but fearful of the strange and unknown. The themes of magic and irrational evil persist in modern suspense and horror films. Not only did accounts of demonic magic evoke the same kind of reactions as the modern horror film, they also tended to take the form of that genre's radical or simplistic moralism. When the student of necromancy was whisked away to Hell, a moment of weakness had dragged him into

⁴Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogue on Miracles*, V. 4. Caesarius Heisterbacensis, *Dialogus miraculorum*, ed. Joseph Strange (Cologne, Bonn, and Brussels, 1851), pp. 279-81.

⁵Valerie Flint discusses a 'need' for the wondrous or magical in human life. The recognition of this need, drove the Church to incorporate practices otherwise understood as magical within the scope of legitimate Christian practice. Valerie Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe*, (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1991), p. 4.

what was potentially eternal perdition. His reaction upon having been saved from undescrivable horrors was similarly radical. He entered a monastery where he remained to the end of his days. As with modern horror film, there is a playful element to this story, but this does not obviate its horrific features: demons and the torments of Hell were very real and immanent. Medieval condemnations of magic drew upon these powerful resources.

Magic was most frequently classified as idolatry. Yet the sin was flexible enough to be categorized in a number of different ways. John Gower discussed it as a form of gluttony.⁶ Thomas of Chobham included some magical practices under *luxuria*.⁷ The classification of certain magical practices under the sin of pride by Bernardino of Siena is particularly resonant with the pretensions of learned magic.⁸ Much of the magical literature features the creation of illusions, presumably intended to impress others. It also proposes to make available powers over some very fearsome forces—powers usually attributed only to saints—and knowledge not available to the vast majority of humankind. The potential for the sin of pride is clearly high. To employ magical techniques suggests a certain lack of faith in providence, a pride in one's ability to avoid misfortune through magic as opposed to faith in God, and a despair that God will not ultimately provide for oneself. Most learned magic was not characterized as superstitious in the sense that it made undue use of holy things or involved, as it were, a surplus of religious fervour which flowed into dubious sorts of practices. The fact that superstition was associated with the laity is not

⁶John Gower, *Confessio amantis*, VI.

⁷Thomas of Chobham, *Summa confessorum*, ed. F. Broomfield (Louvain: Editions Nauwelaerts, 1968), p. 331.

⁸Mentioned in Kieckhefer, *Magic*, p. 194. Saint Bernardino of Siena, *Sermons*, ed. Nazareno Orlandi, trans. Helen Josephine Robins (Sienna: Tipographia Sociale, 1920), pp. 163-76.

entirely just; many texts of learned magic have this "religious" character and even texts of image magic make use of Christian prayer.

A most useful example of the a discussion of the orthodoxy of magic for the later middle ages appears in Vincent of Beauvais' *Speculum maius*. This premier medieval encyclopedia almost entirely bases its explicit discussion of magic almost entirely upon Gratian's *Decretum*.⁹ Not at all surprisingly, the principal patristic authority, Augustine, is by far the most frequently cited author. Vincent probably employed Gratian simply because general treatments of the topic by accepted authorities could easily be found there. His approach may be taken as exemplary of what others in a similar position might have done. The definitive statements of great authorities such as Augustine or Hugh of St. Victor did not lose their power over time. Thus, although Edward Peters is quite correct that there has been a tendency to overemphasize canon law as a source in the history of magic and witchcraft, this does not obviate the importance of legal texts as a source, much less the authorities to which the legal texts themselves referred. Further, although they began to speak directly to a known body of literature, the later moralists did not develop the established themes in any significant way. The subtleties developed in the philosophical discussions of William of Auvergne, Nicole Oresme, Aquinas, and Albertus Magnus were not of great concern to the moralist. Thus, the discussion employed in the *Speculum maius* not only had

⁹The only explicit discussions of magic occur in the *Speculum doctrinale*. Chapters 119 and 120 contain classifications of magic from Isidore of Seville and Richard of St. Victor. The passages are drawn from Isidore of Seville, *Etym.* VII, viii, 9 and Richard of St. Victor, *Liber Exemptionum*, I.I.xxv. The discussion of magic in the *Speculum doctrinale* otherwise drawn entirely from legal sources. Gratian's *Decretum* provides the bulk of the material for this discussion. Raymond of Penafort is a significant contributor as well. Most of the passages may be found in Raymundus Penaforti, *Summa de poenitentia et matrimonio cum glossis* (Rome, 1605), pp. 102-05. I have employed a reprint of the 1624 edition of the *Speculum maius*. Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum maius* (Baltazaris Belieri, 1624) (Reprint: Graz Akademische Druck-u. Verlagsanstalt, 1964-5). All subsequent references will be to this edition.

a wide currency due to the popularity of the work, but may be regarded as a constituent part of a conservative, orthodox position on magic. In particular, it exemplifies the kinds of questions which might occupy the mind of one attempting to make a decision about the orthodoxy of a magical work.

Vincent refers to it as a discussion of all the arts, but the *Speculum Doctrinale* is best described as a discussion of humanity-in-the-world. It divides roughly into six fields of knowledge: literary, moral, mechanical, physical, mathematical, and theological.¹⁰ As one could infer from the sources he used, Vincent treats magic as a crime and his general position is clear. Magic is a sinful art involving an inappropriate relation to the world. No explicit allowances are made for natural magic. Although some of the authorities might be interpreted as sympathetic to the idea, their statements are weak and indirect. One terse passage from Richard of St. Victor which does not appear in the discussion of magic begins with a distinction between astrology and astronomy, and then between legitimate and illegitimate astrology. Legitimate astrology is limited to uses in medicine and weather prediction but the rest of the art is vanity.¹¹ The only point in the explicit discussion of magic where magic is given a somewhat more positive treatment comes in chapter 121. Perhaps showing the influence of late twelfth- and early thirteenth-century thought, Raymond of Pennafort notes that there may be a natural and irreproachable rationale for the observance of what appear to be superstitious or magical practices.¹² Yet this by no means argues

¹⁰*HMES* II, p. 458.

¹¹*SD* XVI, 46. See Richard of St. Victor, *Excerpta* I. I. xii, 8-17.

¹²Item non condemnatur hic rustici qui servant tempora ad seminandum, vel arbores incidendas et simila, quae certam et naturalem habent rationem. Item de physicis circa medicinas dandas, et minutiones faciendas et simila. *SD* IX, 121. Raymond of Pennafort, *Summa*, p. 104b.

for the legitimacy of magical images or incantations, and lacks the authority of Augustine who dominates the discussion with his unequivocal condemnation of these kinds of magical practice.

The Augustine passages are drawn exclusively from Gratian and ultimately derive from standard works such as the *De civitate dei*, *De doctrina christiana*, and *Confessiones*. In addition, some of the passages derive from the *De natura daemonum*.¹³ Augustine's position on magic is relatively conservative, emphasizing the real or possible involvement of demons in any magical practices.¹⁴ His ideas about magic and astrology lack some precision and, of course, relate clumsily to the practice of magic in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Nonetheless, he remained the dominant influence in this period's anti-magical arguments.¹⁵ Chapter 116 of the *Speculum Doctrinale* contains a passage from the *De doctrina christiana* rejecting all characters, ligatures, and incantations as patent evidence of demonic involvement.¹⁶ A lengthy section in Chapter 117 is devoted to a passage from the *De natura demonum* which explains that the abilities demons have in performing seemingly miraculous deeds derive from the clear senses of their aerial bodies and the experience afforded by a long life. This passage concludes with the warning that God permits demons to carry out these operations partly as a test for Christians.¹⁷

¹³Gratian, *Decretum*, C. 26, q. III, c. 1-2. *CSEL XXXXI* (Sect. V, Pars III), pp. 579-618.

¹⁴For a survey of Augustine on the subject of magic see *HMES* I, pp. 504-527.

¹⁵This is a fact which Peters tends to underwrite in his study on medieval magic. Very few new arguments or approaches were developed which improved upon or surpassed Augustine and his influence can be clearly recognized in all of the major anti-magical writers of the period.

¹⁶Superstitiosum est quicquid institutum est ab hominibus, vel ad colendam sicut Deum creaturam, vel ad consultationes et pacta quaedam significationum, cum daemonibus placita atque faedata, qualia sunt molimina magicarum artium. Ad hoc pertinent omnes ligaturae, atque remedia, quae medicorum quoque disciplina condemnat, sive in praecantationibus, sive quibusdam notis, quas characteres vocant. *SD* XI, 116. Gratian, C. 26, q. II, c. 6.

¹⁷*SD* IX, 117. Gratian, C. 26, q. III, c. 2. Augustine, *De divinatione daemonum*, 3.

Augustine's emphasis upon the threat of demonic involvement dominates the discussion and is used as the major vehicle to condemn magic. The arguments within the legal sources are less comprehensive but betray certain similar themes. Like Augustine,¹⁸ the legal writers regard magic, even if innocent of demonic involvement, as bordering on idolatry and paganism. So, for example, early in this section Vincent includes a discussion which equates *sortes*, Egyptian days, and pagan rites with idolatry.¹⁹ Later in the *Speculum*, the text explains that the drawing of lots is not bad in itself but should be avoided as idolatrous.²⁰ A similar position is taken over the question of the efficacy of verbal formulae which may be legitimate if they are Christian prayers, spoken by the devout.²¹ Several papal prohibitions against various pagan practices are also listed.²² The threat of demonic involvement also forms the basis for the condemnations of two Church Councils.²³

A decision from the Council of Toledo and a passage from William of Thorigne seek to extirpate superstitious practices amongst clerics.²⁴ The latter passage forbids the use of charms and, in particular, their use surrounding the mass or on particular days.²⁵ Two passages from the

¹⁸Aside from the passage quoted above, the association between paganism and magic is largely implicit in the passages of Augustine included here. Several examples in Chapter 116 of the *Speculum doctrinale*, however, suggest this association. Here he speaks of the worship of animals and demons and of the observance of Egyptian days.

¹⁹SN IX, 115.

²⁰SD IX, 115.

²¹SD IX, 121. Cf. Raymond of Pennafort, *Summa*, ff. 104-5.

²²SD IX, 116.

²³SD XI, 118 and 122.

²⁴SD IX, 121 & 122.

²⁵Ex hoc potest haberi, quod non sunt reprobanda breuia quae fiunt in ascensione, cum non contineantur nisi verba euangelii. Sed supersitiosum est, si credatur quod minus habeant efficaciae si scribantur post lectum Evangelium, aut post Missam, aut alia die, quam si scribantur cum

Concilia anquirensi, one the infamous description and condemnation of the witches' sabbath (commonly known as "*Canon episcopi*"),²⁶ and the other an exhortation to priests to rid their parishes of the art of magic,²⁷ seek the eradication of more popular forms of magic. Although the groups are treated separately, each having their own peculiar superstitious practices, the message in both cases is essentially the same: magic is a criminal and superstitious practice, a species of idolatry, which more often than not involves the threat of demonic temptation and deception. Finally, chapter 119 records Richard of St. Victor's attempt to present a general taxonomy of magical practices of all varieties. Richard's classifications are similar to, and seem to be drawn from, Isidore through Hugh of St. Victor, which explains the presence of such practices as augury which had probably not been practised for centuries.²⁸

The interpenetration of moral and legal was common in the late medieval discussions and depictions of magic.²⁹ As a discussion of an art, even a criminal one, Vincent's presentation is somewhat unsatisfying, although the position it presents is characteristic of twelfth- and early

legantur sive proferantur in ecclesia verba euangelia quae ibi continentur. Illa autem brevia in quibus scribuntur quidam characteres, et quaedam nomina inusitata, quasi nomina Dei ineffabilia, in quibus dicitur: Quicumque portauerit super se instud breue, non periclitabitur sic vel sic, aut istud aut illud sibi euenit, proculdubio reprobanda sunt.... *SD IX*, 121. *Brevia* in this case must mean "charms." Cf. Gloss "f" in Raymond of Pennafort, *Summa*, pp. 104-5.

²⁶Quapropter sacerdotes per ecclesias sibi commissas, populo Dei omni instatia praedicare debent, ut noverint haec omnino falsa esse, et non a diuino, sed a maligno spiritu, talia fantasmata mentibus fidelium irrogari, arbitrentur. *SN IX*, 118. Gratian, C. 26, q. V, c. 12.

²⁷*SD*, 9, 122. Gratian, C. 26, q. V, c. 12.

²⁸The passages are drawn from Isidore of Seville, *Etym.* VII, viii, 9 and Richard of St. Victor, *Liber exeptionum*, I.I.xxv.

²⁹Kieckhefer, *Magic*, p. 176. One of the general points of Edward Peters' book on the subject is the transference of anti-magical invective from a rhetorical and moral context to a legal one. See Edward Peters, *The Magician, the Witch, and the Law* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978).

thirteenth-century thought. Little attention is given to the actual content of the magical arts although there are some weak hints of the possibility of natural magic. The discussion is dominated by theological and legal prohibitions, in particular those of Augustine, who was speaking to a tradition of magical practice which had undergone centuries of transformation. The resulting lack of accuracy did not appear to be of concern nor did it diminish the condemnatory power of the passages. The authority of the authors and the general force of their arguments were far more important. These boil down to a blanket condemnation which leaves little room for legitimate magic: any verbal formula, written sign, or object suspended from the neck used to some magical end was wrong and implicitly involved demons, except in some limited number of cases where the symbols were Christian ones, the verbal formulas were prayers, and the attitude was one of true devotion. Further, the magic was closely connected with superstition, paganism, and the sin of idolatry.

Subsequent authorities did not move substantially beyond these themes although they developed more subtlety as they came in contact with the texts of the magical tradition itself. The penitential literature, which focused upon salvation for the laity, emphasized an active demonic role in temptation and insisted that nearly all magical sins involved a collaboration with the devil.³⁰ After a short period in the twelfth century where magic seemed to have achieved a foothold amongst the categories of legitimate knowledge, it was banished by the profoundly influential statement of Hugh of St. Victor which was essentially a reiteration of Isidore.³¹ The influence of Hugh's position can be detected in Vincent of Beauvais through Richard of St. Victor. While

³⁰Peters, p. 80.

³¹I rely heavily in this discussion on Edward Peters' discussion, pp. 63-109. For a good discussion of the inclusion of magical arts amongst the seven liberal arts see Charles Burnett, "Talismans: magic as science? Necromancy among the Seven Liberal Arts," pp. 1-15.

some subtle adjustments were made to discussions of magic following these early efforts — especially by those who attempted to rescue portions of the literature — the new writers tended to repeat the earlier condemnations or their emphasis on demonic involvement, making the chorus of condemnatory voices almost unanimous. At the same time, an elaborate demonology was developing, especially in the context of monastic literature and ecclesiastical invective. Caesarius of Heisterbach, the author of the example at the beginning of this section, used elaborate stories about demons as a general topos for discussing temptation in his *Dialogus miraculorum*, a text which sought to prepare the novitiate for monastic life.³² The vision of the Christian world under attack by demonic forces, manifesting themselves in the world as religious dissent, was also bound up with the emotional piety of the period. The efforts by such as Thomas Aquinas and Albertus Magnus to discuss the issue of magic in the setting of natural philosophy, lent further credence to the belief that demons were the power behind most magical practices. Significant as well is the fact that all of these authors could now speak to a sophisticated and widely circulating magical literature. In summary, the literature on magic acquired an increased subtlety in its discussion of how demons might be involved in magic, but the threat of demons — a threat which resonated with the fear of idolatry and heterodoxy — remained the major theme in anti-magical discussions.

As Kieckhefer has suggested, the general conclusion one might draw from the anti-magical material is that "virtually all types of magic might be demonic."³³ The more devout no doubt tended towards the position of most of the anti-magical authorities who were quite unambiguous in their evaluation of all magic as implicitly demonic. Yet others sought out the small grey areas where some legitimacy might be accorded to certain magical practices on

³²Ibid., p. 93.

³³Kieckhefer, *Magic*, p. 184.

philosophical grounds. But in a period where the condemnatory voices were so unambiguous, and in which demons were a credible threat,³⁴ even the mind of one familiar with the philosophical discussions of natural magic must have been left fraught with arguments, impulses, and voices in dramatic conflict with each other. Our apothecary was understandably filled with doubt.

2. Images and Natural Philosophy

Theories about magical images draw heavily upon the well-spring of late antiquity and, in particular, later neoplatonism. The conviction that reason could not provide access to the divine and that the universe was tiered and intimately interconnected provided the motivation and theoretical framework for theurgy. This practice sought union with the divine through a variety of exercises including communication with ethereal beings and the manipulation of hidden influences in the world.³⁵ The writings of the Iamblichus, Proclus, and Synesius, which exerted a fundamental and direct influence upon Marsilio Ficino, the father of renaissance magic,³⁶ influence medieval natural philosophy indirectly. Amongst the works including extensive theoretical treatments of magic, only the *Picatrix*, an Arabic magical work, explicitly preserves the neoplatonic combination of magical operations with the search for spiritual enlightenment, although in this case magical practices of a much more mundane nature take the place of

³⁴Kieckhefer, "Specific Rationality," p. 818.

³⁵For Iamblichus on theurgy and the inadequacies of reason, see R. T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (London: Duckworth, 1972), p. 118-23. On theurgy, see E. R. Dodds, "Appendix I" in Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, transl. E. R. Dodds (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933).

³⁶See Brian Copenhaver, "Astrology and Magic" in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 264-300.

theurgy.³⁷ More commonly transmitted in the synthetic works and commentaries of their Arabic heirs, the neoplatonic theories concerning the manipulation of higher influences through associated physical objects were largely stripped of their theurgic features. No longer presented as part of a complex system of religious exercises and devotion, the theories survived as questions in natural philosophy.

The single most important work in this tradition is *De radiis stellarum*,³⁸ a treatise by the Arabic writer al-Kindi, which now exists only in its Latin translation.³⁹ The work explains how the

³⁷David Pingree has discussed how the confluence of sources ranging from neoplatonism to rather base forms of magical practice makes for a very basic tension in this work between other-worldly goals and mundane magical practices. David Pingree, "Some of the Sources of the *Ghayat al-Hakim*," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 43 (1980) 1 - 15. While the tension is not overcome in a way which is particularly satisfying, the compiler has made efforts to synthesize these divergent traditions arguing that the profundities and secrets of "science" are only accessed through *operibus et experimentis*, meaning the mundane magical operations. *Picatrix; The Latin Version of the Ghayat Al-Hakim*, ed. David Pingree, (London, The Warburg Institute, 1986), III, 12, i. There are other modern editions of the Latin *Picatrix*. Vittoria Perrone Compagni, "Picatrix Latinus; Concezioni Filosofico-religiose e Prassi Magica," *Medioevo* I: 237-345. For a modern translation of the Arabic version see, "*Picatrix*" *das Ziel des Weisen von Pseudo-Magriti*, transl. Helmut Ritter and Martin Plessner (London: The Warburg Institute, 1962). An incomplete version of a French translation may be found in, S. Matton, *La magie arabe traditionnelle* (Paris: Retz, 1977), pp. 243-317.

Other works of magic implicitly combine mundane operations with enlightenment. In the case of the *Sworn Book of Honorius* (see Ch. 4, sect. 2) necromantic operations are regarded as a legitimate part of the operations of one seeking the beatific vision. The notory art (see Ch. 4, sect. 1) combines these features as well. Neither of these texts do not provide theoretical discussions of a broad range of magical operations.

³⁸Al-Kindi, *de Radiis*, eds. M. T. d'Alverny and F. Hudry in *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et litteraire du moyen âge*, 41 (1974) 139-260. All subsequent references to this text will refer to the chapter and then the page number in this edition.

³⁹For a list of works attributed to al-Kindi some one-hundred and twenty years after his death, see *The Fihrist of al-Nadim; A Tenth Century Survey of Muslim Culture*, translated and edited by Baynard Dodge (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), pp. 217-18. A useful although outdated version of this list combines the Fihrist titles with titles of extant tracts in Arabic and Latin in George N. Atiyeh, *Al-Kindi; Philosopher of the Arabs* (Rawalpindi, Pakistan: Islamic Research Institute, 1966), pp. 148-210.

stars are responsible for all sublunary change, and how the "sage" may manipulate these processes through his superior knowledge. Al-Kindi begins with a general discussion of the acquisition of knowledge, using Porphyry's *Isagoge* as his framework to indicate to his philosophically uninitiated readers how one would go about discovering universals which al-Kindi implicitly equates with the influences of the stars. Certain people, particularly the sages of antiquity, were made especially perceptive in their examination of things and in the abstraction of knowledge.⁴⁰ He then moves on to describe how the *operatio* of each star is projected through rays into the world. All the stars' rays combine in various places to form a "harmony," which as a whole is responsible for the production of all terrestrial things. Everything existing in the world, either substantial or accidental, subsequently makes its own rays, since its form is a reflection of the sidereal form which produced it through stellar rays.⁴¹ Thus, all material things emit rays as well, and these rays also can effect change. Forms in the imagination, in conjunction with faith, also produce rays effecting bodily movement, which he divides into muscular movement and the movement of speaking.⁴² For the imagination to effect transitive movement, that is, to change a body not directly connected to the soul of the operator, some other additional cause is almost always required. An example of such a cause is a word or formula (*oratio*), which al-Kindi regards as a form impressed upon air. There are two sorts of words, those of human designation, and those having an ontological connection to the form they signify.⁴³ While both types of words have some effect, the effects of the latter are much more powerful and noticeable because they

⁴⁰*De Radiis*, 1; pp. 217-18.

⁴¹*De radiis*, 3; pp. 224-26.

⁴²*De radiis*, 5, pp. 229-33.

⁴³*De radiis*, 6, pp. 233-50.

directly reflect their sidereal form. When one of these "forms" is uttered by an operator, who at the same time imagines the form with due solemnity and firm faith, the combination and consonance of forms can have the effect of producing rays (like the corresponding star) which in turn transmit movement (i.e., change) to another object. The final few chapters repeat the same notions, using images and sacrifices in place of words as the "container" for the impressed form. Although the principal instance of al-Kindi's discussion involves magical words, his medieval European readers were more interested in magical images and it was usually in the service of images that this text was ultimately employed.⁴⁴

Scholars in the Latin West were initially ill equipped to deal with the vast library of astrological and astronomical material they inherited in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Albertus Magnus' *Speculum astronomiae*⁴⁵ sought to classify the considerable literature on astrology available in his time on bibliographic and theoretical terms and to eliminate material he did not deem acceptable to Christian orthodoxy. If, as Paola Zambelli has observed, astrology was integral to the medieval world-view, astrological images were at least integral to the debates about astrology in the medieval Latin West. The astrological library included a considerable number of magical works, most of them deriving from Arabic sources and concerned with the making of images. Thus it was incumbent upon Albert to sort through this literature as well. Chapter 11 of the *Speculum* treats the *sciencia imaginum*, which he includes as part of the science

⁴⁴Although not mentioned by Albert, the *de Radiis* was known and commented upon in Scholastic circles after him. D'Alverny, M.-T. and F. Hudry, "Al-Kindi *De Radiis*," pp. 173-79.

⁴⁵Paola Zambelli, *The Speculum Astronomiae and its Enigma; Astrology, Theology, and Science in Albertus Magnus and his Contemporaries* (London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1992). Zambelli defends Thorndike's position and demonstrates with further extensive scholarship that this text was likely a collaborative effort under the direction and sponsorship of Albertus Magnus. For a discussion of the historiography see, pp 1-42. For Thorndike's discussion of the subject see HMES II, pp. 692-717.

of elections. However, he is quick to qualify his apparently positive evaluation of images. Only one of three categories of images are to be regarded as legitimate. The first and most abominable category

requires suffumigations and invocation, such as the images of Toz the Greek and Germath the Babylonian, which have stations for the worship of Venus, [and] the images of Balenuz and Hermes, which are exorcized by using the 54 names of the angels, who are said to be subservient to the images of the Moon in its orbit, [but] perhaps are instead the names of demons, and seven names are incised on them in the correct order to affect a good thing and in inverse order for a thing one wants to be repelled. They are also suffumigated with the wood of aloe, saffron and balsam for a good purpose; and with galbanum, red sandalwood and resin for an evil purpose. The spirit is certainly not compelled [to act] because of these [names and suffumigations], but when God permits it on account of our own sins, they [the spirits] show themselves as [if they were] compelled to act, in order to deceive men. This is the worst [kind of] idolatry, which, in order to render itself credible to some extent, observes the 28 mansions of the Moon and the hours of the day and night along with certain names [given to] these days, hours and mansions themselves.⁴⁶

Albert goes on to condemn the second category as well, which he considers marginally better.

These do not employ names, but characters, which may represent planets or demons, which are

"exorcized by certain names (*per quaedam nomina exorcizandorum*).\" Unknown to the user,

Albert warns, the names may represent things contrary to the honour of the catholic faith.⁴⁷ He

⁴⁶I quote the English translation of Paola Zambelli, *Speculum*, p. 241. Est unus modus abominabilis, qui suffumigationem et invocationem exigit, quales sunt *Imagines* Toz Graeci et Germath Babylonensis, quae habent stationes ad cultum Veneris, quales sunt *Imagines* Balenuz et Hermetis, quae exorcizantur per quinquaginta quatuor nomina angelorum, qui subservire dicuntur imaginibus lunae in circulo eius, et forte sunt potius nomina daemonum, et sculpuntur in eis septem nomina recto ordine pro re bona et ordine transverso pro re cuius expectatur repulsio. Suffumigantur etiam pro bona re cum ligno aloes, croco et balsamo, et pro mala re cum galbano, sandalo rubeo et resina, per quae profecto spiritus non conguntur, se quando Dominus permittit peccatis nostris exigentibus ut decipiant homines, exhibent se coactos. Haec est idolatria pessima, quae, ut reddat se aliquatenus fide dignam, observat viginti octo mansiones lunae et horas diei et noctis cum quibusdam nominibus dierum, horarum et mansionum ipsarum. Zambelli, *Speculum*, p. 240.

⁴⁷Hic modus etiam a nobis longe sit; suspectus enim est, ne saltem sub ignotae linguae nominibus aliquod lateat, quod sit contra fidei catholicae honestatem. Ibid., pp. 240 and 241.

then provides an extensive list of works and incipits which fall under this category. The third category of images which Albert regards as legitimate are those which do not employ suffumigations, invocations, inscription of characters, or exorcisms, but derive their effects only from celestial sources. These employ simple astrological images, constructed under specific astrological conditions which are clearly related to the intended function of the images.⁴⁸ He then goes on to describe a detailed example of a legitimate astrological configuration for the engraving of an image of the moon and lists one of the translations of Thebit ibn Qurra's *De imaginibus* and a work on images attributed to Ptolemy as apparently legitimate.⁴⁹

The *Speculum astronomiae* became a classic in the schools although it never became a standard schoolbook.⁵⁰ Its authoritative discussion of works of astronomy and astrology provided an indispensable guide for those attempting to navigate this extensive and contentious literature. Figures as diverse and significant as Nicole Oresme, Peter of Abano, and Jean Gerson can be demonstrated to have employed the work in their discussions of the subject. Marsilio Ficino's use of the *Speculum* in his *De vita coelitus comparanda* towards the end of the fifteenth century attests to its enduring authority.

⁴⁸The third type is [that] of astrological images, which eliminates the filth, suffumigations and invocations, and does not allow exorcisms or the inscription of characters, but obtains [its] virtue solely from the celestial figure. Tertius enim modus est imaginum astronomicarum, qui eliminat istas spurcicias, suffumigationes et invocationes non habet, neque exorcizationes aut characterum inscriptiones admittit, se virtutem nanciscitur solummodo a figura caelesti.... Id., p. 246.

⁴⁹Id., pp. 246-49. Charles Burnett has demonstrated that Albert condemns the translation of Thebit ibn Qurra's *de Imaginibus* by Adelard of Bath as necromantic because it retains the ritual aspects of the original text. Charles Burnett, "Talismans: Magic as Science? Necromancy among the Seven Liberal Arts," in *Magic and Divination in the Middle Ages* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1996), pp. 1-15. All known British manuscripts are of the other translation by John of Seville.

⁵⁰Zambelli, p. 121.

Thomas Aquinas himself was not above these discussions and set his pen to the task of discussing magical images in the *Summa theologiae*⁵¹ and *Summa contra gentiles*.⁵² He also treated the subject in a more extensive way in an independent work *De occultis operibus naturae ad quemdam militem ultramontanum*.⁵³ The central issue for Thomas was whether an artificially created thing can have occult powers that extend in some way from its accidental qualities rather than from its substance. For example, could a gold disk carved with the image of the sun be a more effective vehicle of solar properties (or some such occult effect) than naturally occurring gold? Thomas would agree that it is possible that an occult influence might extend from a *naturally* occurring substantial form, and insofar as the heavens participate in the creation of the conditions for the reception of that substantial form, the occult influence can be seen to extend from or to be related to the stars.⁵⁴ He also allows that various individuals of a given species might have greater or lesser powers, depending upon the disposition of the heavens at the time they came into being.⁵⁵ However, he categorically denies that characters or signs, which are only

⁵¹St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, II.II.96.2 and 4

⁵²St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles*, III.105.

⁵³Joseph Bernard McAllister, *The Letter of Saint Thomas Aquinas De Occultis Operibus Naturae Ad Quemdam Militem Ultramontanum* (Washington, Catholic University of America Press, 1939). This includes the Latin text at pp. 191-97. I quote from McAllister's translation and give a page reference for the Latin text in the same volume. For a thorough discussion of this work see *Zambelli*.

⁵⁴...so all powers and activities of middle things which exceed the virtues of the elements, arise from their proper forms, and are traced back to higher principles, to the powers of heavenly bodies, and still further to separated substances. *De occultis* 15; p. 27. ...ita omnes virtutes et actiones mediorum corporum transcendentes virtutes elementorum, consequuntur eorum proprias formas, et reducuntur sicut in altiora principia in virtutes corporum caelestium, et adhuc altius in substantias separatas. p. 196.

⁵⁵Yet it is possible that in an individual of the same species the power and activity arising from the species should be found more or less intense according to a diverse distribution of matter and the different configuration of the heavenly bodies at the coming into being of this or that

accidental qualities or artificial forms, can be efficacious in this way. Any such effect would have to arise from some external power.⁵⁶ Possibly referring to al-Kindi, Aquinas also denies that human words can have any transitive efficacy derived from a natural cause (i.e., the stars) and insists that such an effect would have to derive from some separated substance (i.e., demons). Analogous to something made by an artisan, words are merely a thing produced by human skill for the purpose of expressing thoughts.⁵⁷

The fact that Thomas discusses the natural properties of magical images at length demonstrates the currency of the topic. Although his position would not explicitly allow it, Thomas may have also made an unintentional contribution to magical theory in the middle ages. Brian Copenhaver has demonstrated that his position is open to varying readings on a few points,

individual. *De occultis*, 16; p. 28. Possibile tamen est quod in uno individuo ejusdem speciei virtus et operatio consequens speciem remissius vel intensius inveniatur secundum diversam dispositionem materiae et diversum situm corporum coelestium in generatione hujus vel illius individui. p. 196.

⁵⁶If there were any such powers in artificial things they would not arise from a form (impressed) by heavenly bodies, since the form (produced) by the artisan is nothing other than order, composition and shape, from which such powers and activities cannot come. Clearly then, if artificial things evidence some such powers—for example, should serpents die at the sight of some sculpture or animals be paralyzed in their tracts or suffer injury—it does not come from some impressed and permanent virtue but from the power of an external agent, which uses these things as instruments for its own results. *De occultis*, 17; p. 28-9. Tales autem virtutes si quae essent in artificiatis, ex coelestibus corporibus nullam formam consequerentur; cum forma artificis aliud nihil sit quam ordo compositio et figura, ex quibus prodire non virtutes artificiata perficiant, puta quod ad aliquam sculpturam moriantur serpentes aut immobilitentur animalia vel laedantur, non procedit hoc ab aliqua virtute indita et permanenti, sed ex virtute agentis extrinseci, quod utitur talibus sicut instrumentis ad suum effectum. p. 196.

⁵⁷Just as images are made from natural matter, but get their form through human skill, so also human words have indeed their matter, that is, the sounds produced by the mouth of man, but they have their meaning and as it were their form from the intellect expressing its concept through such sounds. And so, for a like reason, human words do not have any efficacy for changing a natural body through the power of some natural cause, but only through some spiritual substance. *De occultis*, 19; pp. 29-30.

making it possible for Marsilio Ficino to arrive at an interpretation of Thomas' position that actually allowed that certain kinds of astrological images might have a natural efficacy not associated with demons.⁵⁸ In particular, Ficino relies upon a passage from *Summa contra gentiles*, which distinguishes the illicit *litterae* and *characteres* from *figurae*, which can have a natural effect. While Aquinas probably meant "shape" by it, the term *figurae* was ambiguous enough for Ficino to interpret it to mean magical figure.⁵⁹ In addition, the possibly spurious *De fato* suggests that certain astrological figures have a natural power.⁶⁰ Although conceivably correct, Ficino's interpretation is not an obvious one and requires considerable effort and a careful analysis of several passages from at least two separate works. While it is theoretically possible that others interpreted Aquinas in the same way, his position would probably have appeared much less complex and ambiguous to most readers.

The discussions by Albert and Thomas demonstrate that astrological images were either understood as a potentially legitimate portion of natural philosophy or at least as a topic deserving independent philosophical treatment. Yet these examples only hint at the wider currency of the assumptions which they spawned or which motivated their composition. Charles Burnett has discussed the presence of necromancy amongst taxonomies of the seven liberal arts and has demonstrated the rationale for such a classification. Certain aspects of the science of images were clearly regarded as legitimate and the term *necromantia* or *nigromantia* often came to have a wide meaning which included them. In some cases, as with Albert, images which were entirely

⁵⁸Brian Copenhaver, "Scholastic Philosophy and Renaissance Magic in the *De vita* of Marsilio Ficino," *Renaissance Quarterly* XXVII, 4 (1984) 523-54.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, p. 533.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, p. 532. [Aquinas], *De fato*, 5.

astrological in their function were considered non-necromantic. In other cases, as with Petrus Alfonsi or Gundissalinus, a division of good astrological necromancy and bad demonic necromancy was used.⁶¹ One way or another, a division was widely recognized within magical practices. Good magic depended solely upon power derived from the natural world, in particular the stars; bad magic derived its power from demons. While it is not always clear how the writers would distinguish good from bad images, many assumed that it was possible to do so given sufficient skill in astrology or the occult sciences.

Although examples could be multiplied, let us return to the treatment of images in the *Speculum maius* of Vincent de Beauvais as an example of the perspective of an intelligent thirteenth-century. His treatment roughly corresponds to that of Albertus Magnus. (The position of Thomas on the question could not have been incorporated for the simple reason that it had not been written yet.) The *Speculum doctrinale* condemns variously *sortes*, *divinatio*, *ars magica*, *necromantici*, *hydromantici*, *aruspices*, *phitonissa*, *salisatores*, *augure*, *astrologi*, *incantatores*, and *carminatores*, amongst others, as demonic or otherwise illicit.⁶² As I have noted, most of the proscriptions were drawn from legal sources, largely from Gratian, and focus upon various forms of divination. Chapter 121 rejects some written charms or characters, but 122 contains one of Augustine's sweeping condemnations of magic, including magical images (*pictaciola*).⁶³ Immediately after, a passage from Jerome argues that the use of stones and herbs to ward off demons may be legitimate. But in spite of the fairly thorough nature of these condemnations,

⁶¹Burnett, "Necromancy," pp. 1-6.

⁶²*Speculum doctrinale*, 9.115-21; cols. 848-53.

⁶³...*pictaciola pro quavis infirmitate scripta, super homines aut animalia ponunt praeter symbolum...* SD IX, 122; col. 853.

Vincent appears to consider some kinds of images potentially legitimate. The *Speculum naturale* describes a number of images carved on stones as part of its discussion of the occult properties of stones.⁶⁴ In this context Vincent draws upon the work on images by Thetel.

As Thorndike has noted, Vincent does not regard himself as an interpreter of the material he reports, but only a compiler⁶⁵ and so it would be imprudent to assume he supported the use of images simply because he reported them. Conversely, that Vincent does not explicitly discuss the theoretical questions of the functioning of images should not be taken as an indication that these ideas were not current. That Vincent's position is not sophisticated should not be of great concern. His presentation is important because it embodies the ambivalence with which magical images were approached in the later middle ages. He accords magical images a place in the work as a potentially legitimate part of natural philosophy, while other sections of the same work implicitly condemn them.

Valerie Flint has described the process by which astrology became an acceptable part of a Christian worldview in the Latin West as a spectacular and somewhat unlikely rescue.⁶⁶ While this may or may not be true of astrology as a whole, it is certainly true in the case of astrological images. To be sure, the philosophical reasoning that distinguished an astrological image from an image used for illicit worship or to enlist the aid of demons, was relatively sound by medieval standards. But it must be regarded as significant that anyone would make such efforts to rescue this science in the face of the frequent and explicit condemnation of images and ligatures by the

⁶⁴*Speculum Naturale*, VII. 25.

⁶⁵*HMES* II, pp. 462-63.

⁶⁶Valerie Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe*, (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 128.

Bible, church fathers, and subsequent authorities. The condemnatory voices were matched by an equally powerful attraction to magic. A desire to rescue ancient learning, a curiosity for the unusual, a yearning for wealth, power or control, or a fascination with the idea that these could easily be gained must all have motivated this rescue. Thus, the ambivalence of Bonatti's apothecary represents a much wider ambivalence in late medieval thought, which faced those who collected texts of image magic and their contemporaries.

Chapter 2

Manuscripts of Image Magic Before 1500

In part nightmare, in part fantasy of power, in part fascination and poetry, the idea of magic is inextricably bound up with the issue of representation in spoken words, visual signs, or physical gestures. In the sense that magical practices employ representations or apparent representations, all magic is image magic. Although pictorial representations ranging from written charms to necromantic circles appear in almost all late medieval magical practices, a relatively specific bibliography of image magic developed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. To some extent because of a common Arabic lineage, but principally because they were regarded as legitimate according to philosophical and astrological standards, these texts formed a coherent library which populated the codices of Europe. It is to these texts, their transmission and survival, and the interests of their scribes and collectors that we now turn.

1. The Texts

On the surface, talismans or seals appear to be a generic feature of magical practices of all kinds and occur in a number of different contexts, including manuscripts of ritual magic. In fact, sometimes the works of image magic which appear in ritual magic collections are almost indistinguishable in content from the ones treated in this chapter. Later chapters will demonstrate that the way the texts were understood, employed, and transmitted are their most significant distinguishing features. However, in the short term, the group of manuscripts which concerns us here is best defined by the names of its constituent texts. The most commonly recurring texts of image magic in the middle ages are: Thebit ibn Qurra's *De imaginibus*; the *Liber de imaginibus* by Thetel; a work on images ascribed to Ptolemy; another to Toz Graecus; a work on sculpted gems

attributed to Marbodius; the *Liber lune*; and the Hermetic *Liber de xv. stellis, xv. lapidibus, xv. herbis, et xv. imaginibus* (hereafter *De quindecim stellis*).¹ In these texts the images were engraved on disks, rings, or stones under certain astrological conditions.² In the end, however, there is no great variation in the content. Most of these texts are of Arabic origin.

Like most magical works, these texts do not make for exciting reading. They are systematic and lack long, fanciful, or theoretical introductions. They generally occupy only a few folios and typically describe a set of images corresponding to an astrological grouping or circuit (e.g., the seven planets or the twenty-eight lunar mansions). A short paragraph devoted to each image describes the material from which the image is to be made (precious stones, rings, or talismans), the necessary astrological conditions or times under which to carve the image, and the effects of the image. Sometimes the instructions include angel names to be recited or inscribed on the ring, sometimes substances with which the image is to be suffumigated. Occasionally, they will take a slightly different organizational approach, giving a chapter each to astrological conditions, materials, suffumigations, images, and angel names. The effects of the images are often quite

¹The standard listing for works of Arabic image magic and their manuscript witnesses may be found in Francis Carmody, *Arabic Astronomical and Astrological Sciences in Latin Translation: A Critical Bibliography*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1956). For a modern edition of the *De imaginibus*, see Francis J. Carmody, *Astronomical Works of Thabit B. Qurra* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1960), pp 167-97. See also HJMES I. 663-66. For Thetel, see "Cethel aut veterum Judaeorum Physilogorum de Lapidibus Sententiae" in Jean Baptiste Pitra, ed., *Spicilegium Solesmense* III (Paris: Instituti Franciae, 1852), pp. 335-37. For the Hermetic *De quindecim stellis*, see "Liber hermetis de quindecim stellis quindecim lapidibus quindecim herbis et quindecim imaginibus" in *Textes latins et vieux Français relatifs aux Cyranides*, ed. Louis Delatte (Liège: Université de Liège, 1942). On engraved gems see Lynn Thorndike, "Traditional Tracts on Engraved Gems," p. 235. For discussions of Arabic image magic see the numerous articles by Charles Burnett and David Pingree, *supra*. In particular see Pingree, "Transmission" for a general discussion.

²The only example I have encountered of necromantic wax images (common in reports about necromancy) is in Oxford, Bodleian, Additional B. I, ff. 1-2.

restricted, such as an image to rid a place of scorpions; they also may be somewhat more general, such as images of "separation" or "destruction."

2. The Manuscripts: Transmission, Survival, and Forgery

David Pingree has identified a number of stages and routes of transmission for texts and manuscripts of Arabic image magic.³ A few translations were made in Italy in the eleventh century along with some lapidaries deriving from antiquity, but most texts of image magic derive from Arabic sources through Spain. The first wave of material was translated in the twelfth century, reaching England before the middle of the thirteenth. A second wave of translations derived from the court of Alfonso and "spread into southern France, especially among the *médecins*, Christian and Jewish, of Montpellier, in the decades before and after 1300."⁴ This material found its way into northern Italy and Brabant during the fourteenth century. By identifying the accompanying works and translations, Pingree has been able to identify Montpellier as the major source for materials found in the library at the Abbey of St Augustine's, Canterbury, during the fourteenth century. Although the material flourished in France during the thirteenth century, as it did in England in the fourteenth, it spread through central and eastern Europe largely after the beginning of the fifteenth century.

Despite the popularity of Ficino's *De vita coelitus comparanda* and what is assumed to have been a renewed interest in image magic in the renaissance, the vast majority of the surviving manuscripts of image magic date from before the end of the fifteenth century and most date from

³Pingree, "Transmission," pp. 79-98.

⁴Ibid., p. 57.

the fourteenth century or earlier.⁵ Of the manuscripts in this survey, thirteen date from between 1250 and 1400, six from the fifteenth century, and only two from the sixteenth century. Adding manuscripts noted in medieval library catalogues (assuming for the sake of argument they were written in the same century as the catalogue) changes the numbers only slightly, seventeen appearing in the late thirteenth and fourteenth, ten in the fifteenth, and three in the sixteenth century. An unsystematic survey of continental codices and catalogues reveals a similar pattern with only nine of over one hundred manuscripts datable to after 1500 (and most of those nine are seventeenth-century manuscripts). The combined numbers indicate the considerable popularity of this literature, and the numbers of many of the constituent texts suggest the same. For example, there are at least thirty-one surviving copies in two translations of one of the more popular texts, the *De imaginibus* of Thebit ibn Qurra.

Although a relatively large number of manuscripts survive, the fact that they are "survivors" means that they have also passed through a process of selection which may have rendered them unrepresentative of the original medieval library. Medieval manuscripts of image magic would appear to have been, in large measure, preserved by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century collectors of alchemical and astrological works who may or may not have had any independent interest in image magic. Such great seventeenth-century collectors as Elias Ashmole and Sir Hans Sloane were amongst the significant later collectors responsible for preserving a number of the codices. Both had an interest in manuscripts with medical, alchemical, astrological, and, in the case of Sloane, magical topics. The codices entirely dedicated to magic collected by Sloane are ritual magic texts, most deriving from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Thus,

⁵See Appendix I.

these later collectors were probably indifferent to the presence of a few short texts of image magic.

While there are a number of known sixteenth-century collectors, the most important for the preservation of image magic texts was Thomas Allen (1532–1594) from whose collection were drawn the 256 codices donated by Kenelm Digby (1603–1665) to the Bodleian in 1632. Amongst his massive collection may be found six codices containing works on image magic. In addition, two copies of al-Kindi's *De radiis stellarum* not travelling with works of image magic, several collections of magically oriented experiments, and a small part of an *Ars notoria* can be also found amongst his codices.⁶ His strong interest in astrology can account for the presence of almost all of these codices. His associate John Dee also had a hand in the preservation of a texts of magic including three codices containing works of image magic amongst other material.⁷ Although Dee can be demonstrated to have had an interest in magical images through his marginal notes, there is no reason to believe this interest was particularly strong, certainly not strong enough to have eclipsed his more general occult and scientific interests which comprise the bulk of these volumes. This is the case with all the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century collectors. Very few of the codices of image magic they acquired dedicate a great deal of their contents to image magic. Since they were not the work of the collector in question but were acquired as a piece, it

⁶Al-Kindi, *De radiis stellarum* is contained in MSS 91 ff. 80–127 and 183, ff. 38–44. As an example of magically oriented experiments, the *Liber vaccae* may be found in MS 71, ff. 36–55 amongst alchemical material. Another collection of experiments comprises MS 67. Adam McLean reports figures from an *Ars notoria* in art. 3 of MS 218, but I have not seen this manuscript and cannot confirm this.

⁷Oxford, Ashmole, 1471, Oxford, Corpus Christi College 125, and London, British Library Harley 80, all contain numerous works of image magic. Julian Roberts and Andrew G. Watson, *John Dee's Library Catalogue* (London: The Biographical Society, 1990).

would be difficult to demonstrate that the presence of image magic motivated the acquisition of the codex.

This is, in fact, fortunate. In comparison to other forms of magic, medieval image magic was not particularly popular in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when far more interest would appear to have been paid to works of ceremonial magic. An independent interest in medieval image magic might well have driven a large number of copies into the hands of specialized collectors whose books ran a higher risk of not being preserved. This may have been the case with some of the texts of ritual magic. But as I shall demonstrate, works of image magic seldom travel with works of ritual magic except in codices written in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, so an interest in ritual magic could not serve to preserve or to facilitate the loss of manuscripts of image magic originating prior to 1500. In the end, it appears that our surviving codices were selected in a manner for the most part indifferent to the presence of image magic texts.

This does not necessarily mean that they are representative of the period. However, the evidence is strong that they are. That a number of surviving codices may be identified with those in medieval monastic collections suggests a relatively high survival rate after the dissolution.⁸ This argues that the surviving manuscripts may be representative of the medieval library. More importantly, the contents of surviving codices is also generally the same as the content of codices

⁸For example: British Library, Harley 13 = Canterbury, St Augustine's Abbey 1166; British Library, Rawlinson C. 117 = Canterbury, St Augustine's Abbey 1140; Oxford, Corpus Christi College 125 = Canterbury, St Augustine's Abbey 1277; and Oxford, Corpus Christi 221 = Canterbury, St Augustine's Abbey 1170.

I cite the shelfmarks given in James' edition of the fifteenth-century catalogue of the library at St Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury. All further citations will list shelfmarks from this edition. Montague Rhodes James, *The Ancient Libraries of Canterbury and Dover* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903).

in the catalogues of medieval collections.⁹ It remains possible that another entirely different group of scribes owned books which never found their way into libraries and were never collected by others and preserved, rendering the sample dealt with here unrepresentative. However, the chances of this appear very small.

The only remaining issue which bears upon the representativeness of the surviving manuscripts is the remote possibility that some may be forgeries. The relatively lower level of interest in image magic texts after 1500¹⁰ would not have made them a likely target for forgery. In addition, most of these texts are quite short, often running to only a few folios, which means that they were generally transmitted with other material of less dramatic content. A forged codex of the usual accompanying literature such as medicine, alchemy, or astrology would be unlikely to waste precious vellum on off-topic material. In addition, unlike extended works of ritual magic, these treatises do not attribute magical qualities to the book itself. So there would have been no motivation to produce a manuscript which looked old to give it numinous qualities or to make it appear more efficacious. As will become clear, most of the medieval collectors of this material would probably have ascribed a greater value to the accuracy of the transcription or translation or the authority of its author than to the age of the manuscript. Finally, collectors from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries tended to collect standard image magic texts with texts of ritual magic in their own notebooks. Collectors prior to 1500 very rarely do this. To produce a convincing

⁹The only major exceptions to this rule are two codices owned by John Erghome. As will be demonstrated, parts of these codices, which were probably independent prior to collection, follow the patterns of the vast majority of surviving codices as well as those known only through medieval catalogues. See Ch. 3, sect. 3.

¹⁰For a full discussion of the fortunes of image magic in the sixteenth century see Ch. 6, sect. 5 and Ch. 7.

forgery of a text of medieval image magic, it would be necessary to devote most of the codex to other topics, something which would make the forger's art quite uneconomical.

In summary, the forces which governed the preservation of image magic texts after 1500 appear to have been relatively indifferent to them. Where there was an active interest in magic, it was accompanied by a similar interest in the other contents of the work. Given that the surviving codices are indistinguishable in terms of their content from those known only through medieval catalogues, it can be assumed that the existing codices are both representative of the medieval library and that the process of transmission since 1500 has not isolated any particular set of texts. In the unlikely case that someone considered forging a codex including a work of image magic, the usual form of medieval codices containing the standard works of image magic would not have lent itself to economical forgery.

3. Scribes, Collectors, and their Interests

Magical images were widely regarded as a potentially legitimate part of natural philosophy insofar as the source of their power was celestial as opposed to demonic. Yet the range of interpretation was quite wide. Aquinas and others rejected the idea that astrological images could have any efficacy by virtue of the image itself. Albertus Magnus took a middle path accepting some, while rejecting most as necromantic. Others, like Adelard of Bath, appear to have taken a more liberal approach. Were anyone to accept al-Kindi's theoretical offerings as a whole, practically any magical practice at all could be regarded as astrological and therefore legitimate. The mere existence of a particular manuscript version of a work of image magic tells us only that someone wanted a copy of it and does not, in itself, suggest the scribe's attitude towards it. The

question remains as to why a scribe copied it, what his other interests might have been, and how he chose to interpret, categorize, and employ the treatise.

Works of image magic were often described as necromantic. Charles Burnett has discussed how the science of images was often considered a part of legitimate science under the rubric of "necromancy" as the seventh liberal art. His analysis of Adelard of Bath's translation of Thebit Ibn Qurra's work on magical images reveals a similar attitude towards images, probably that of Adelard himself.¹¹ Albertus Magnus refers to images which are not purely astrological as *imagines necromanticarum*.¹² In another example, a German medieval catalogue refers to works of image magic as necromantic.¹³ Works of necromancy are generally very explicit about the involvement of demons and the whole substance of these texts deals with the summoning, binding, employing, and dismissing of demons. None of the standard works of image magic explicitly employs this set of techniques. A large number, however, include some techniques which could be construed as involving the summoning of demons, usually non-astrological symbols, strange writing, incantations, or suffumigations. Yet whether these signs or rituals actually involved demons was a matter of interpretation. Given al-Kindi's expansive theories of magic, which included suffumigations and incantations, the Arabic authors of these treatises could very well have regarded them as entirely astrological in their mechanisms, certainly not the case with

¹¹Charles Burnett, "Talismans," pp. 1-15.

¹²*Speculum astronomiae*, 11 (Zambelli, 240-1).

¹³Collegium Amplonianum, Math. 54. The 1410 catalogue lists this entire volume as necromantic. Amongst the titles it lists can be found *Liber prestigiis*, which is most likely Adelard of Bath's translation of Thebit ibn Qurra's work on images, and another work on the seven figures of the seven planets and their prayers and suffumigations. Both are astrological in orientation but were evidently regarded as necromantic either because of the prayers and suffumigations or because of the images.

authors of Latin necromantic treatises. In addition, three of the most significant treatises were attributed to Thebit ibn Qurra, Ptolemy, and Thetel, all of whom were also authors of astrological or astronomical works. Thus a natural division exists between these works and those of necromancy. That the works of image magic were occasionally referred to as necromantic had more to do with a particular interpretation of how they worked than a real similarity between them and necromantic treatises. Certainly in comparison to an explicit work of necromancy, most of these treatises would have appeared comparatively innocent, and it is very unlikely that the scribes would not have distinguished the two.

The most obvious general feature of the collections that include the works on images is that almost without exception they contain some combination of astrological or astronomical works, alchemical works, books of secrets, natural wonders or recipes, or medical works. The principal (apparent) exception, a volume of John Erghome, is dealt with below.¹⁴ The only other major exceptions to this rule are collections such as Harley 80, ff. 75–84, a single fourteenth-century quire which contains *only* works on images. The rest of the codex contains astrological, natural, and scientific texts in various hands dating from the later fourteenth and early fifteenth century. It also now contains another quire, likely of continental origin, including texts on stones and the treatise by Thetel on the stones carved by the sons of Israel while in the desert. The codex may have partly been assembled as early as the fifteenth century but was apparently together, more or less in its current form, by the mid sixteenth century.¹⁵ There is also no evidence to

¹⁴Two codices in the collection of Erghome include works from the standard bibliography of image magic together with works of explicitly necromantic magic. This instance is discussed at length in chapter 3.

¹⁵The collection of lapidaries has fifteenth century English marginal notes (ff. 103 r-105 v). The manuscript belonged to John Dee according to Singer, App. I. K. 2iii.

suggest that the quire on image magic (ff. 75–84) was not originally written as part of a standard collection of naturalia before being included in this codex. This example may not confirm the pattern that texts of images were almost always collected with books about the natural world, but it certainly does not disprove it. The consistency of this pattern of collection suggests two features of scribal attitudes. The scribes and/or collectors regarded image magic as at least potentially connected with the natural world rather than demonic forces, and the scribes' general interests lay in the direction of various aspects of the natural world.

Three-quarters of the collections including works on image magic include texts dealing with issues in astrology and astronomy.¹⁶ Of these, all but one include works on the more "active" features of astrology of a non-magical kind, such as discussions of judicial astrology, the casting of horoscopes, prognostication of one form or another, the use of astrological influences in medical treatment, or the detection of thieves. Digby 193 is a codex devoted largely to issues in astrology and astronomy, and supplemented by works on mathematics. It contains two works on sculpted stones, one attributed to Marbodius, the other by Sahl ibn Bishr (Thetel), but is singular amongst the astrologically oriented codices as it contains no other work with explicitly practical, physical applications. Texts like the *Theorica planetarum* (ff. 1–9) or Johanne Sacrobosco's *Tractatus de sphaera* (ff. 17–22) make up the largest portion of the text. Yet even here, short discussions of good and bad hours (f. 15) and the relation of celestial influence to the practice of medicine (f. 36r) suggest the practical applications typical of all of the other codices. While the

¹⁶Royal 12. C. XVII; Sloane 312 (both collections); Society of Antiquaries 39; Ashmole 1471; Bodley 463; Digby 57; Digby 193; Digby 194; Selden Supra 76; Corpus Christi 221; York, Austin Friars A8 383; and Canterbury, St Augustine's Abbey 1275 and 1161.

I cite shelfmarks from K. Humphreys' edition of the medieval catalogue of the Abby of the Austin Friars at York. K. Humphreys, ed. *The Friars' Libraries*. London: British Library in Assoc. with the British Academy, 1990. All subsequent citations of volumes in this catalogue will employ this form.

practicality of their companion texts need not denote the practical use of image magic, they do indicate that the scribes were generally interested in a literature with practical applications.¹⁷ Works of image magic would appear to have been widely considered one of a number of applications of astrological principles.

A group historically associated with the practical use of astrology and images, or at least suspensions, ligatures, and rings, is medical doctors. Medieval medical practice was inextricable from astrology, and ligatures, suspensions, and images appear frequently in medical literature. This historical association is also strongly reflected in my sample. Six codices betray an explicit interest in medical issues¹⁸ and two additional codices were owned by an identifiable medical practitioner.¹⁹ Some might be as limited as a text in Digby 57, f. 137v, which associates parts of the body with the signs of the zodiac. Some, like Ashmole 1471, contain a variety of medical texts attributed to Galen, Hippocrates, and Constantinus Africanus.²⁰ John of London, one of the monks at St Augustine's whom David Pingree has identified as having an interest in magical images, and who also collected other works on magic, owned one codex containing the work on

¹⁷A rare exception to this rule is Cambridge, University Library Ff. vi. 53 (1391), which has no texts on astrology and none involving any physical and practical application except two lapidaries, one of them the text by Thetel. The collection contains largely legal and literary texts.

¹⁸Royal 12. C. XVIII; Ashmole 1471; Digby 57; Digby 79; Canterbury, St Augustine's Abbey 1275 and 1161.

¹⁹London, Society of Antiquaries 37, ff. 18-24. I include Ashmole 346 in this discussion, although it is an early sixteenth-century collection. For a full discussion of this manuscript and its relation to Society of Antiquaries 37 see ch. 2, sect. 4.

²⁰Galen, *Liber de spermate* appears at ff. 68r-71v, a *Vocabularium herbarum et medicamentorum* at 134v-136r, Constantinus Africanus, *Liber de coitu*, at ff. 173v-179v, followed at ff. 184v-188r by four treatises ascribed to Hippocrates.

images attributed to Ptolemy and also a work on urine.²¹ Medical texts fill twenty-three of his eighty codices catalogued at St Augustine's.²²

In addition to the circumstantial evidence of medical texts, two collectors are identifiable as medical practitioners. Society of Antiquaries 39 contains part of a collection by John Argentine, who was provost of King's College Cambridge in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century. The magical texts in Argentine's collection appear in the same order and supplemented with additional magical texts in Ashmole 346, the early sixteenth-century collection of another physician, John Scalon, a junior Fellow at King's during Argentine's tenure as provost.²³ Both of these collectors will be discussed in more detail below. For the time being, it need only be noted that in both cases we have a clear interest in magical images and that, in the case of the Society of Antiquaries manuscript, in the absence of the concluding *quod Argentyn* we would have no idea it was written by a doctor at all, since no medical texts appear in this collection. So many more of the codices might have been owned by medical doctors. As it is, next to monks, medical practitioners are the most commonly identifiable collectors of magical texts.

In alchemical collections, works of image magic blend in well with a host of similarly short alchemical works. Michael Northgate had a substantial amount of alchemical literature in his books and there are three alchemical collections in my sample.²⁴ In all of these, at least some of the texts of image magic involve the use of engraved stones. Selden Supra 76 and Ashmole 1416, contain a magical text concerned with images engraved on gems. Corpus Christi 125 includes two

²¹Canterbury, St Augustine's Abbey 1161.

²²James, *Ancient Libraries*, p. lxxxii.

²³John Venn and J. A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigiensis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927), I.iv.27.

²⁴Ashmole 1416; Selden Supra 76; Corpus Christi 125.

works on images in addition to the tract on fifteen stars, fifteen herbs, fifteen stones, and fifteen images frequently associated with alchemical texts.²⁵ So while magical and alchemical interests do cross over, the attraction might also have something to do with a more diffuse interest in literature about stones. The alchemists' interest in symbols and symbolic language might also have attracted them to engraved images.

While most of the codices can be classified under the major categories of astrology, medicine, and alchemy, these other interests flow together in most of the collections. It is rare that a single codex will not include texts from at least two of these categories, and a number of other identifiable interests also frequently occur. An interest in stones is also found independent of alchemy with non-magical lapidaries appearing in four of the codices.²⁶ In Wellcome 116 the principal interest appears to be stones. In Cambridge, University Library Ff. vi. 53., ff. 189-207v, two works on stones appear, one of them the text on engraved stones by Thetel. Books of secrets, experiments, and recipes of various kinds appear frequently. The *Secretum philosophorum*, a book of experiments and tricks classed under the headings of the liberal arts, occurs three times.²⁷ The *Book of Secrets* of Albertus Magnus occurs twice and the *Secretum secretorum* three times.²⁸ Corpus Christi 125 contains alchemical and astrological material but

²⁵Dorothea Waley Singer, *Catalogue of Latin and Vernacular Alchemical Manuscripts in Great Britain and Ireland* (Brussels: M. Lamertin, 1928-31), 1093-4.

²⁶Ashmole 1471; CUL Ff.vi.53; Wellcome 116; and Sloane 1784. For a continental example see Bodleian, Canon. Misc. 285.

²⁷Canterbury, St Augustine's Abbey, 1277; Digby 37, ff. 4-42; York, Austin Friars A8 362. See David Friedman, "Secretum Philosophorum," in *Conjuring Spirits*, ed. Claire Fanger (Stroud: Allan Sutton, 1998).

²⁸The *Secretis fratri Alberti* appears in Canterbury, St Augustine's Abbey 1275 and also in Digby 37, ff. 46-55. The *Secretum Secretorum* appears in Bodley 67, ff. 1-59r and Digby 228, ff. 27v-40v. Extracts appear in Society of Antiquaries of London 39, ff. 21-23.

also further diverse material: texts on the properties of animals, recipes, various forms of divination, chemical experiments, secrets, and even a book on tree planting. Yet no single kind of text appears in every codex containing image magic texts. Astrological texts travel with them most frequently but this is not without significant exceptions. Even within the astrological collections, there is no consistent interest in a particular feature of astrology as a discipline. In other words, while they were collected in the presence of a common interest in naturalia, texts of image magic should be considered a discrete interest. They were usually independently acquired and their transmission did not depend upon another set of texts or an interest in a specialized topic.

Because works on images often occupy a very small portion of the text—not least because many of these texts run to only a few folios—it is prudent to ask whether the works on images found their way into the collection purely by chance, by an association not of the scribe's conception, or by "piggybacking" onto another, non-magical text.²⁹ In the case of Selden Supra 76, discussed above, a short text could easily be tagged on at the end of one of the irregularly sized booklets/quires to provide the right amount of text for a gathering which would otherwise end in a folio-and-a-half of unused parchment — a kind of added bonus text. But this is not the case with Selden Supra 76, and I cannot find any instance where this may have happened. It is also conceivable that a magical text like Thebit ibn Qurra's *De imaginibus* could have been included amongst a larger number of the same author's non-magical works simply by virtue of having been written by the same author. Once again, this does not appear to be the case. Although his purely astrological works frequently travel three or four abreast, the *De imaginibus* generally

²⁹See for example, Bodley 463, a Spanish manuscript which contains multiple works on astrology in addition to two works on magical images.

does not travel in that company. As a rule, magical texts are transmitted with other magical texts rather than with astrological or other material by the same author.³⁰

It would be hazardous to assume that any codex containing a single magical work represents a compiler or scribe with active and practical magical interests. The text could simply have been copied as a curiosity or on a whim. However, the evidence suggests that the number of people for whom this was more than a passing fancy might have been relatively high. Of the twenty-six codices containing works of image magic, all but eight have more than one work on magical images and many have several. It appears that if you were going to collect or copy one work on magic, you were likely serious enough to copy others. In addition, even where only a single work of magic occurs, the collections are frequently practical in orientation.

Sloane 312 contains two collections of the fifteenth century, both of which betray very practical and involved interests. The first includes a text of judicial astrology, contains a text discussing the natures and properties of the planets, a text of image magic (Thetel's *De imaginibus*), and an astrological method for discovering thieves and stolen goods. It is more crudely written than many of the image magic texts and likely for personal use. The second collection also includes a work by Sahl ibn Bishr on magical images, followed by a short section of further images added by the scribe. Both collections betray practical interests if only insofar as they include texts judicial astrology and practical activities such as discovering thieves. In addition, both collections betray an active interest in the material. The first collection appears to be a personal notebook, and the second includes personal additions to the magical material.

³⁰Known cases of transmission, such as that between Society of Antiquaries of London 39 and Ashmole 346 (see Chapter 3), involve principally magical works.

To summarize, works of images are not accidental parts of the collections in which they are found. They constitute a genre which — within the broad category of *naturalia* — was not bound to a specific interest or group of texts. Everything about the codices examined so far suggests that the individual scribes did not stray far from the standard interpretations of astrological images we discussed in Chapter 1. They regarded magical images as a potentially legitimate part of natural philosophy, a practical extension of astrology, an adjunct to lapidaries or alchemical works, or a feature of the natural world. If the weight of circumstantial evidence were not enough to demonstrate that images were regarded in this way, the presence of the theoretical works tolerant of magical images is.

4. Natural Philosophy and the Transmission of Image Magic

The *De radiis stellarum* appears eight times amongst the codices containing works of image magic or the collections of those who owned them.³¹ The *Speculum astronomiae* appears once, in Digby 228, a significant codex which I will deal with below. Although it is principally interested in the psychosomatic effects of images, the *De physicis ligaturis* of Qusta ibn Luca also appears twice amongst these collections.³² The fact that such a high number of these theoretical works appear here is a good indication that they were considered important and that they formed a significant part of the interpretation of the magical material which they accompany. In fact, the

³¹Canterbury, St Augustine's Abbey 1140 (=Rawl. C. 117), 1166 (=Harley 13); Selden Supra 76, ff. 47r-60v; York, Austin Friars A8 159, 275, 362, 364, 385, and 452.

³²Canterbury, St Augustine's Abbey 1275 and 1277. Although 1277 survives as Oxford, Corpus Christi 125, the tract by Qusta ibn Luca does not appear to have survived with it. For a discussion of this treatise, see the section on Michael Northgate, ch. 2. sect. 4, ii.

theoretical works, in particular the *Speculum astronomiae*, can be demonstrated to have had a direct impact upon not only the interpretation, but also the transmission, of works of image magic.

The *Speculum Astronomiae* appears infrequently in collections of image magic. This absence may be accounted for by the fact that its tolerance for works of image magic was, in fact, relatively low. (The tacit, almost century-long, resistance by scholars of Albertus Magnus to accepting this work into the fold of his true works is, in this sense, somewhat surprising.) Yet, in a different way, it had a substantial effect upon the medieval magical library. Although Albert considered it possible to have magical images which operated entirely by astrological mechanisms, he only offered two works as examples of legitimate magical texts, the work on images attributed to Ptolemy and the translation of Thebit ibn Qurra's *De imaginibus* by John of Seville. Of the *Liber prestigiorum*, the bad translation of this work by Adelard of Bath, only five copies have been identified as existing or once existing, none of them in British libraries or manuscripts. This stands in stark contrast to the twenty-six versions of the "good" translation that can be identified, nine of them British. The other legitimate work according to Albertus, the book of images attributed to Ptolemy appears ten times in my sample, more often than any other image magic text. The fifteen star text and the images of the sons of Israel were not mentioned (thus, not condemned) in the *Speculum*. They appear seven and eight times respectively.

The works which Albert condemns, on the other hand, are copied much less frequently. The *Liber Lune* appears in four volumes. The *De imaginibus* of Belenus whom Thorndike identifies with Jigris ibn al-'Amid, appears in two volumes.³³ The *Liber imaginum veneris* of Toz

³³ Albert refers to this work generally at the beginning of the eleventh chapter and gives an incipit for a book of Balenuz called *De horarum opere*. Zambelli, *Speculum*, p. 242-44. The entry, *Belenus de ymaginibus* appears in Canterbury, St Augustine's Abbey 1275. Royal 12-C-XVIII, ff. 12r-15r, also contains a work on images attributed to Belenus. The incipit given by Albert *Dixit Balenuz qui et Apollo dicitur: Imago prima...* identifies the work with this copy. In the *Speculum*

Graecus appears only three times.³⁴ The Hermetic *De imaginibus septem planetarum* appears twice. This may be the *De septem annulis de septem planetarum* condemned by Albert under which title one text appears in Society of Antiquaries of London 39.³⁵ The *De quatuor annulis* attributed to Solomon appears twice.³⁶ While the titles of many of these texts make clear that they were founded upon astrological assumptions, they also employ techniques which were suspected by Albert to be demonic. The *Liber lune* involves suffumigations and incantations and the *De imaginibus of Belemus* involves the use of angel names. The version of the *De septem annulis* that appears in Society of Antiquaries of London 39 is in essence astrological although it also employs ritual features. The patterns of copying are not at all random and suggest two possibilities. First, the scribes may have employed the *Speculum* to assess the legitimacy of a text they were about to copy. Second, scribes may have applied the same kinds of standards as Albert did when they evaluated and copied the texts. An examination of treatises which were not discussed can provide some insight into this issue.

Albert notes that this is joined (*adjungitur*) to the *Liber lune*. This text appears to be a condensed version of the latter part of the *Liber lune* as it appears in Harley 80, ff. 77v-81r.

³⁴York, Austin Friars A8 362, 364 and 375. Albert condemns amongst the books of Toz Graecus *De imaginibus Veneris*. Zambelli, *Speculum*, p. 244. Thorndike, "Traditional Tracts," p. 248. The *De lapidibus veneris*, a part of which appears in Oxford, Bodley 463, f. 78, is simply a work on precious stones and their powers.

³⁵Carmody, 63. Thorndike, "Traditional Tracts," p. 247. Zambelli, *Speculum*, p. 244. Oxford, Corpus Christi 125, ff. 70-75 (?) (although this does not appear in the entry for this codex as Canterbury, St Augustine's Abbey 1277); York, Austin Friars A8 375. A text on the rings of the seven planets appears in Society of Antiquaries of London 39, ff. 6v-8v although the incipit does not correspond to the one given by Albert (*Division lunae quando impleta fuerit etc.*). Zambelli, p. 245. A ring is described for each planet which is to be made in the hour of the moon for that planet.

³⁶York, Austin Friars A8 362, lists a text which is possibly *De quatuor annulis*. Canterbury, St Augustine's Abbey 1538 (and 1603) lists *De annulis Salomonis*. Zambelli, *Speculum*, p. 244. See Thorndike, "Traditional Tracts," p. 250. A sixteenth-century collection contains a *De quatuor annulis* attributed to Solomon, Sloane 3847, ff. 66v-81.

Two tracts enjoyed a relatively wide circulation and were not condemned or evaluated at all by Albert. The hermetic *De quindecim stellis* makes connections between astrological influences, particularly those of fifteen fixed stars, and related herbs, stones, and images. While Albert may have objected to the text on the grounds that the names of the fixed stars might refer to demons (as he had rejected the use of lunar mansions), the fact that only a simple symbol is used would tend to free the talismans from some suspicion. In addition, the text does not include incantations, suffumigations, or other ritual procedures, and this would have made the text even more acceptable. However, it remains possible that Albert may have rejected the texts on some astrological technicality such as its use of fixed stars.

The work by Thetel would probably not have fared quite so well. It begins, "In the name of the lord, this is the precious book of the signs of Thetel, great and secret, which the sons of Israel made in the desert after leaving Egypt according to the motion and courses of the heavens."³⁷ The principle that the images derived their power from the heavens is more or less reflected in the text. It goes on to describe the talismans and their use, requiring no suffumigations, incantations, or other untoward ritual practices. The text even uses indirect language where the making of the image is concerned. Rather than counselling the reader to sculpt a particular image, the phrasing is "should you find" (*si inveniret*) such and such an image carved in a jasper. The cautious nature of the text, the apparently astrological nature of its images, and the absence of dubious ritual practices would, superficially at least, suggest that the text might have been acceptable to Albert.

³⁷In nomine domini hic est preciosis liber magnus signorum cethel atque secretus, quem fecerunt filii israel in deserto post exitum ab egipto, secundum motus et cursus siderum.... Digby 193, f. 30r. The text is substantially the same in Selden Supra 76, ff. 109v-115r, Digby 79, ff. 178v-179v and in Oxford, Corpus Christi 221, ff. 55-57.

However, it is more likely that he would have condemned the text. It has been suggested to the author that the cautious phrasing is due to a mythology which held that stones of this kind were to have sprung from the earth naturally, complete with their images. Yet the introduction makes it clear that the sons of Israel *carved* these stones and the indirect phrasing does little to cover up the fact that the images were meant to be carved by the reader as well. This coy approach does not inspire confidence that the text might not cover up other truly devious features. For example, although the text claims an astrological orientation, none of the four versions I have examined give any information about the astrological conditions under which the talismans were to be made or used. A superficial defence could be mounted on behalf of the work based upon the absence of the practices Albert condemned. Nonetheless, Albert demanded that the legitimate works match some fairly specific astrological standards. The crude astrological ideas exhibited in this text would not have inspired his confidence. It is possible, but unlikely, that he would have conditionally accepted the text in the way he did with the text by Ptolemy and Thebit. If an authoritative voice were needed to explain its copying, the less than canonical Thomas of Cantimpre, who included the work in his *De natura rerum*, might suffice. That the text would have been available in a number of exemplars through this encyclopedia may also account for the frequency with which it appears.

That the *Speculum* has a limited presence amongst the codices containing works of image magic might suggest that its role was not direct. Yet there is no reason to assume that the criteria applied by Albertus were not in the minds of those deciding whether or not to copy a text of image magic. The *Speculum* survives in almost fifty manuscripts dating from before 1500, so the chances are high that many of the scribes had access to a version. It is also possible that similar kinds of criteria were applied by the scribes without reference to the *Speculum* at all, but the

patterns of copying of image magic texts make this unlikely. That the two works specifically deemed legitimate by Albert should survive in the greatest numbers is powerful evidence of the lasting significance of this text. That the *Seals of Thetel* survives in relatively great numbers when Albert may well have condemned it also suggests that evaluations were, in fact, based upon a superficial use of the *Speculum* rather than calculated according to Albert's criteria. The legitimacy accorded this work by Thomas of Cantimpre might also account for the large number of witnesses. Finally, the fact that the *Liber lune* and the associated text by Belenus, which Albert condemns both in its methodology and by title and incipit as amongst the worst of magical treatises, survive in relatively higher numbers than others he condemned suggests that his strong words may have, in fact, increased interest in them. In the end it seems probable that the *Speculum* had some considerable influence over the transmission of the texts of image magic.

More to the point, if the *Speculum* was not used in the way I suggest, it remains that evaluations were being made more or less in the same way that Albert would have made them: by relying on the common assumption that certain forms of image magic could have natural, not demonic, powers. The translation of Thebit's *De imaginibus* made by John of Seville (prior to Albert) stripped out the dubious elements of the original, in particular the incantations. The resulting text was approved by Albert and was copied far more often than any other texts of image magic (twenty-six copies). The version by Adelard of Bath, on the other hand, retained the incantations, was condemned by Albert, and survives in substantially fewer copies (five).³⁸ In this way, the texts of image magic most adaptable to scholastic natural philosophy were copied more often than any others. The collections in which these texts appear are almost uniformly comprised of scholarly treatments of the natural world. They do not, generally, betray an interest in ritual

³⁸Burnett, "Talismans," p. 7.

magic, magical practices which run counter to all authoritative statements on magic. For these reasons I believe I have justification for describing these texts as "scholastic image magic" to distinguish them from the texts appearing in other contexts.

5. Doctors and Monks: Three Known Collectors

A considerable number of the scribes of scholastic image magic can be identified and their collections analysed. The most commonly identifiable professional groups were medical doctors and monks. Their interests are often very similar and follow the pattern I have already identified. This is not surprising since no highly specialized medical training was necessary to understand or use the texts of scholastic image magic (although it may have helped). There was also nothing to prevent a monk from having had a medical education or medical interests. In fact, the manuscripts attest to medical interests amongst the monks. Nonetheless, the peculiarities of their professional positions and the interests most often associated with these groups provide a more detailed picture of the variety of motivations and contexts surrounding the transmission of scholastic image magic.

i. Medical Practitioners: John Argentine and John Scalon

John Argentine was probably born in 1442 in Cambridgeshire, entered Eton around 1454 and took the statutory oath, aged fifteen, in 1458.³⁹ He became a Fellow of a college at Cambridge in 1461 where he was Bachelor of Arts by 1461-62 and Master of Arts by 1465-66. At some point he appears to have become a Doctor of Medicine and was Senior Proctor of the

³⁹I rely throughout this section heavily upon the description of John Argentine in Charles H. Talbot, *Medical Practitioners in Medieval England*, p. 112-15.

university sometime in 1472 or 1473. By 1473 he was Bachelor of Divinity, although he was not doctor of Divinity until 1504. In 1470 he wrote a poem perhaps suggesting some disillusionment with the academic world⁴⁰ and a work on diseases sometime between 1471 and 1476 which was never published, suggesting a return to medical practice.⁴¹ He was ordained acolyte in September of 1473 at Lincoln and subsequently held several benefices, probably beginning in 1478, although he accepted his first recorded benefice in 1488.⁴² He appears to have maintained a presence at King's, although not in residence, remaining a fellow until 1478. He was physician to Edward V and his brother, Richard, Duke of York, until they were murdered in 1483 and maintained his association with the court through the reign of Richard III.⁴³ In 1486 he was appointed physician to Henry VII's son, Prince Arthur, and Dean of his Chapel, which would have brought him frequently to Windsor until the prince's death in 1502. Argentine's distinguished career concluded with the post of Provost of King's College, Cambridge, which he held from 1501 to his death in 1508.

⁴⁰"Actus publice habitus in Acad. Cantab. contra omnes regentes universitatis," Corpus Christi College, Oxford, MS. 255, art . 6.

⁴¹Oxford, Bodleian, Ashmole 1437, no. 15.

⁴²Emden, p. 16.

⁴³C. A. J. Armstrong, "An Italian Astrologer at the Court of Henry VII," in *Italian Renaissance Studies, A tribute to the late Cecilia M. Ady* (London: Faber and Faber, 1960) p. 449. D. E. Rhodes, "The Princes in the Tower and their Doctor," *The English Historical Review* LXXVII (1962) 304-306. The latter criticizes earlier work by Armstrong where he misidentifies Argentine with a Strasbourg doctor. In the former article, Armstrong correctly identifies the doctor as John Argentine. In an addendum July 1962 of the *English Historical Review*, p. 624, the editor and D. E. Rhodes apologize to Armstrong and note they had not yet seen his article.

Society of Antiquaries 39 contains part of a collection by John Argentine.⁴⁴ His ownership is identifiable by the scribal identification "*Quod Argentyn.*" The hand dates the manuscript to the late fifteenth century and makes it unlikely that the owner was Richard Argentine, writing in the mid sixteenth century. The evidence which makes it most likely that the scribe was John Argentine may be found in another manuscript. The texts appear in the same order in the collection of another doctor, John Scalon, Master of Arts in 1503 from King's, whom I will discuss more fully below.⁴⁵ There is no further evidence of a connection between the two men. It is possible that the fragment was no longer a part of John Argentine's collection by the time it was copied. Yet the common membership in the relatively small community of King's College would make contact more probable. At least, their contemporary residency at Cambridge suggests this was the location where the copying took place and that the scribe of the original was, in fact, John Argentine.

The collection includes Thebit ibn Qurra's book of images, images extracted from the *Secretum Secretorum*, and the *De imaginibus* attributed to Ptolemy. It would certainly be in keeping with the care required of a stellar career such as Argentine's that two of the texts in his collection were ones identified by Albertus Magnus as apparently legitimate. The section of images from the *Secretum Secretorum* are amongst the relatively innocent texts on images, containing little ritual practice, and so, as a whole, the collection is among the more innocent.

⁴⁴D. E. Rhodes, "Provost Argentine of King's and his Books," in *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, (London: Bowes and Bowes, 1958), vol. II, pt. III, 205-11. Rhodes makes no mention of Society of Antiquaries 39, the manuscript examined here. *DNB* (1921) VI, 552. A. B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Cambridge to 1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), pp. 15-16. Charles H. Talbot, *The Medical Practitioners in Medieval England*, pp. 112-15.

⁴⁵Emden, *Biographical Register*, p. 509; John Venn and J. A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigiensis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927), I.iv.27.

Interestingly, it contains *no medical material*, so that in the absence of the "*Quod Argentyn*" there would be no evidence that it was written by a physician at all. The other texts are indicative of a doctor's interest in astrology, including an astrological table and a work by al-Kindi on astrology and the weather. Although it is currently bound with a small fifteenth-century collection of ritual magic texts, there is no evidence of any early connection between these two parts of the codex.⁴⁶ Argentine's portion is written in a tight, controlled secretary on parchment, the other in a sprawling fifteenth-century cursive on paper.

Amongst the rest of his books, there is no sign of interest in magic with one significant exception. Argentine makes the only fifteenth-century reference to the *Picatrix*, the infamous work of Arabic magic, making it clear that Argentine was actively interested in magical texts.⁴⁷ He was evidently interested in the classics and the evidence is strong that he had travelled to Italy and probably conducted his medical education at Padua.⁴⁸ Dennis Rhodes notes that his habit of signing his books in Italian,⁴⁹ not common in England at the time, suggests an Italian connection if only through Italian booksellers. He goes on to say that his use of "zouan" for "Giovanni" suggests Venice.⁵⁰ Yet given the consistent association of works of images with medical doctors, there is no reason to assume that his Italian sojourns had any influence upon his thinking on the topic, except for one issue. His knowledge of the *Picatrix*, the famous work of Arabic magic,

⁴⁶For a discussion of this manuscript see Ch. 5, sect. 3.

⁴⁷David Pingree, 'The diffusion of Arabic Magical Texts in Western Europe,' in *La diffusione delle scienze Islamiche nel medio evo Europeo* (Roma: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1987), p. 102.

⁴⁸Emden, p. 15.

⁴⁹No such ownership mark appears in the Society of Antiquaries manuscript.

⁵⁰D. E. Rhodes, "Provost Argentine," p. 208.

would very likely have had to have been derived from a continental source. No manuscript is known to have existed in England until some time later, and Argentine's is the only known fifteenth-century English reference to the work.⁵¹ Whether this knowledge influenced his thinking about magic is unclear. Another collector with Italian connections, John Typtoft, was for a time in possession of a codex containing a work on image magic. The codex, Oxford, Corpus Christi 125, is of English origin, deriving from the collection of Thomas Sprot and Thomas Wyvelsburghe, monks at St Augustine's, Canterbury. So although the texts or manuscripts may originally have derived from Italy or other continental sources, there is no reason to believe that humanist interests may be connected with magical interests in any distinct way.⁵²

It is instructive that Argentine evidently felt no concern about identifying himself as the scribe of a text of image magic. His early career suggests someone with ambition. His later career, especially the fact that he managed to hold onto politically sensitive positions through the reigns of Edward V, Richard III, and Henry VII, suggests that he was politically astute. Had the copying or owning of a text of image magic been considered dangerous, Argentine would probably not have done it at any stage in his career. It is certainly unlikely that he would have set his name to the manuscript. The common appearance of works of image magic in catalogues where the original owner is freely identified also indicates that these works were considered acceptable in some manner. Although they may have been considered superstitious, there was evidently no particular stigma attached to owning or copying works of image magic. In part this must be

⁵¹Pingree, "Transmission," p. 98.

⁵²The third part of this study suggests that, in fact, humanist interests may have been partly responsible for the decline in the copying of the standard medieval texts of image magic.

attributed to English law, which would allow the distinction between owning a book for study and for the practice of magic.

As I have noted, the texts in Argentine's collection appear in the same order in Ashmole 346, the collection of another physician Thomas Scalon, of Haddiscoe, Norfolk. Scalon was Bachelor of Arts in 1499 and Master of Arts by 1503 at Kings during the early part of Argentine's tenure as provost. Although at this point no more is known about him, his manuscripts survive and indicate that he was an active medical practitioner through the first half of the sixteenth century. He had strong astrological interests, like most contemporary doctors, and employed astrology in his practice. Nativities in his notebooks indicate that he was practising at least until 1555. One of his manuscripts currently travels with material that had been owned by the famous late sixteenth-century medical practitioner and collector, Richard Napier.

We are fortunate to have all 164 folios of Scalon's collection, made up largely of astrological and medical works but also including secrets and recipes. In addition to the magical material derived from the manuscript of John Argentine, Scalon has collected two works of magic giving direction on finding thieves or stolen goods. If taking the trouble to copy from several sources is any indication, John Scalon would appear to have had an involved interest in the subject, although astrology and medicine dominate this and his other manuscripts. In Ashmole 340, ff. 64-85, Scalon's hand records astrological tables through twenty-two folios. Ashmole 391, ff. 1-16, includes another set of works in his hand, principally astrological medicine and an astrological interpretation of the dreams of Daniel (ff. 3v-5). Nothing about these collections suggest practices which are not mundane astrological medicine, although tables of the kind contained in the first manuscript would have been necessary for the use of magical images. Similarly Ashmole 393, art. II, contains sixty-eight folios in his hand, mostly concerned with

astrologically oriented medical topics, largely medical recipes of various sorts. In addition, a work on experiments of a non-magical kind appears at f. 33rv. The configuration of interests in evidence here is by this point quite familiar, and in this respect the collection is rather unexceptional.⁵³

David Pingree has identified the medical centre of Montpellier as a particularly important location from which manuscripts of image magic were distributed. The tradition of the use of ligatures in medicine reinforced the strong association of medicine and magical images found in Arabic sources, as the theoretical work on images by Qusta ibn Luca attests. The fact that magical images should be found in the collections of those with medical interests and training should come as no surprise. Whether Argentine and Scalon had some personal contact remains unclear, although it appears likely. Certainly a common medical training would have formed an important context for a personal contact. This kind of personal contact would be a very important part of the transmission of magical works, which did not benefit from the same kind of institutional promotion as standard works of medicine and natural philosophy did.

ii. Michael Northgate and the Monks of St Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury

Although medical practitioners frequently collected magical texts, the most numerous identifiable collectors were usually monks. Monks are probably over-represented here, since records of many monastic libraries have survived and volumes belonging to monk's generally became part of the larger monastic collections when they died. The fortunes of the books owned by other collectors may not have had the same built-in mechanisms for their preservation or for

⁵³It has come to my attention that ff. 94-96 of Ashmole 346 may contain the text by Roger Bacon on the nullity of magic. I have not had time to identify this text nor to relate it to the material in the codex.

records to be made of their existence. In addition, monasteries provided a long-term intellectual context within which groups with common interests could develop. The number of monks at St Augustine's Abbey at Canterbury who collected magical texts is suggestive of such a situation. David Pingree has identified three monks of this Abbey of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries who collected texts of magical images and whose lifetimes would have overlapped.⁵⁴ Such groups and interests could only have been encouraged by the resources of this great intellectual centre.

The earliest collector is John of London, whom M. R. James identifies with the John mentioned by Roger Bacon, a youth whom Bacon educated and sent with presentation copies of his books to Pope Clement IV in 1267. His expansive collection reflects the interests of Bacon in math and astronomy, but also in magic, and consists of almost eighty volumes. Only three are theological, twenty-three concerned with math and astronomy, twenty-three with medical issues, ten philosophy, six logic, four history, three grammar, and one poetry. The remainder are miscellanies.⁵⁵ Of these volumes four, possibly five, contain magical works.⁵⁶ Codex 1140, now Rawlinson C. 117, and 1166, now Harley 13, both contain copies of al-Kindi's *De radiis*, devoting most of the rest of their pages to astronomical works. Codices 1161 contains a similar collection of astronomical material and the *De imaginibus* of Ptolemy. Codex 1538 (1603) a miscellany, contains copies of the *Ars notoria* and *De annulis Salomonis* probably the *De quatuor annulis* condemned by Albert. So, with the exception of the *Ars notoria* which I will deal with in the next chapter, the volumes follow the patterns I have so far described. Oxford, Corpus Christi 248, once Canterbury Codex 1145, includes a catalogue of astrological works evidently used in the

⁵⁴Pingree, "Transmission."

⁵⁵James, *Ancient Libraries*, p. lxxvii.

⁵⁶The entries 1538 and 1603 may be duplicate entries.

production of the *Speculum astronomiae*, either in the hand of Albertus Magnus or a close associate.⁵⁷

Thomas of Wyvelsburghe and Thomas Sprot were both monks of St Augustine's and both owners of Codex 1277, now Oxford, Corpus Christi College 125. Thomas Sprot chronicled the history of the abbey. Some of the manuscripts of this history extend to the end of the thirteenth century. It seems clear he lived into the early part of the fourteenth century. Thomas Wyvelsburghe, who next owned the codex, is mentioned in William Thorne's chronicle of Saint Augustine's Abbey in a passage concerning the acquisition of the benefices for churches in Sturry and Kennington in the early fourteenth century.⁵⁸ The codex contains a diverse collection of material, principally alchemical, but also including several works on image magic. It is preserved largely in the form in which it was catalogued.

Of all the collectors at St Augustine's Canterbury, the most interesting is unquestionably Michael Northgate, who was evidently active at the abbey in the early to mid fourteenth century. His collection of over twenty volumes, although modest in comparison to that of John of London, has a character of its own and, as James observes, affords insight into Northgate otherwise unavailable.⁵⁹ Six or seven of his volumes are devotional, three have to do with natural history, the other topics in his collection include surgery, astronomy, and alchemy. The large number of devotional works suggests a devout, religious man, and everything known about his life suggests the same. Northgate began his ecclesiastical career as a parish priest. During his time at St

⁵⁷Pingree, "Transmission," p. 86.

⁵⁸William Thorne, *Chronicle of Saint Augustine's Abbey Canterbury*, transl. A. H. Davis (Oxford: Blackwell, 1934), p. 422. James, *Canterbury*, pp. lxxxii and 348-49.

⁵⁹James, p. lxxvii.

Augustine's he composed the *Ayenbite of Inwy*⁶⁰ a translation of a French work, *Le somme des vices et de vertue*, written by Laurentius Gallus in 1279 for Philip the Second of France.

Three volumes out of the twenty listed under his name in the catalogue include works on magic: Codices 767, 1166, and 1170 (= Oxford, Corpus Christi College 221). As it would be very unlikely for this many magical texts to have appeared in his collection by accident, they attest to an active interest in the topic. Codex 767 contains orations extracted from an *Ars notoria*, a matter I will discuss in the chapter on that text. Codex 1275 is largely a medical codex, although it includes works of naturalia such as Albertus Magnus' *Secretum secretorum*, a book on tree planting, the book of experiments called *Vacca platonis*, extracts from the *Kiranides*, and an alchemical work attributed to Hermes. Three of the medical works concern surgery. The works on images which follow are *De quindecim stellis* and treatises attributed to Aburabez, Belenus, Hermes, and Thetel.

That the medical material coincides with naturalia and magical images in Codex 1275 is understandable. I have already discussed this standard pattern of interests at length, a pattern which has a relatively high level of intellectual coherence. How this fits in with Northgate's wider interests is somewhat less clear. If the position on magic taken by the *Ayenbite of Inwy* is any indication, his position on magic would have been unhesitatingly negative.⁶¹ His careers as a priest, monk, and translator of pastoralia suggest someone well aware of the problems associated with magical practice and interests. They also suggest someone who would have been concerned

⁶⁰Dan Michel of Northgate, *Dan Michel's Ayenbite of Inwy or Remorse of Conscience*, ed. P. Gradon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979). Also in a partial modern English translation by A. J. Wyatt, *The Ayenbite of Inwy (Remorse of Conscience)*, (London: W. B. Clive, 1889)

⁶¹*Ayenbite*, pp. 19, 40-41, and 43. Kitteredge, p. 51.

with living an upright life in the pursuit of a more or less orthodox faith. This leads to the question of whether there is some ground where his religious and magical interests may cross over.

Motivated by the same intellectual presuppositions which drove medical doctors, those with explicit religious interests could also draw upon a long-standing tradition of the use of the wonders of the world to direct attention to the divine. The well-known thirteenth-century Dominican encyclopedist, Thomas of Cantimpre, performed a valuable service for the preservation of texts of magic when he included in his *De natura rerum* the entire text of Thetel's work on images.⁶² He concludes this work with a short piece which describes the blessing of a stone to return it to its pre-fall—thereby more efficacious—state. For Thomas, the text was not altogether trustworthy nor were all sculpted gems to be regarded as effective. Although the form of the stones is to be honoured for its virtue, "yet hope is not to be put in them but, according to what is written, in God alone from whom the virtue of stones is derived."⁶³ Thomas' rationale for writing *De natura rerum* was that should people not be moved by sermons of the usual kind, they might be moved to religious devotion by stories of the wonders of the natural world.⁶⁴ So, the purpose of recording this information was certainly not to encourage the reader to sculpt gems but rather to give a credible report.

A similar project may have been at work in the assembly of Northgate's other volume, Codex 1170 (now Oxford, Corpus Christi 221). It includes extracts from an encyclopedia by the same name by the Carmelite John Folsham, in addition to another copy of Thetel, and a treatise on

⁶²Thorndike, HMES II, 390-2. See also John Block Friedman, "The Prioress's Beads 'of Smal Coral'," *Medium Aevum* (1970) 39, 301-305.

⁶³HMES II, 389.

⁶⁴Thomas Cantimpratensis, *Liber de natura rerum* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1973), p. 5 (91-96).

sculpted gems by Marbodus.⁶⁵ The remainder of this codex is taken up with recipes, medical recipes, and medical notes. So far, we have nothing out of the ordinary; one thinks of a collector interested in recipes, medicine, and aspects of the natural world with a particular interest in sculpted gems. What is very interesting about this fourteenth-century collection is that it is bound together with a twelfth-century collection, including the *Dialogues* of Gregory the Great and two saint's lives, in a late medieval binding. The catalogue of the abbey's library records the codex, including the *Dialogues* of Gregory the Great, so it must have been assembled some time before 1497, when the catalogue was written. The age of the binding could easily date its assembly and binding to the lifetime of Northgate.⁶⁶

It would be presumptuous to assume that this is, in itself, firm evidence that the binding of these two codices indicates that the new composite codex was used with Thomas of Cantimpre's project in mind or, for that matter, that Northgate was responsible for its assembly. However, the circumstantial evidence suggests that the combination was not coincidental. He was interested enough in magic and the natural world to collect quite a number of works on both topics and interested enough in devotional literature to write a vernacular work on the subject. His choices of profession and orders tend to confirm this interest. His collection of books is composed of approximately even numbers of devotional works and works concerned with medicine, alchemy, secrets, astrology, magic, and natural philosophy. If Northgate did not regard his devotional and "scientific" interests as coherent in quite the manner of Thomas of Cantimpre, it can certainly be

⁶⁵Thorndike wrongly identifies this as the work of Thomas of Cantimpre in HMES II, 397. The attribution is correct in Lynn Thorndike and Pearl Kibre, *A Catalogue of Incipits of Mediaeval Scientific Writings in Latin* (Cambridge, Mass.: Medieval Academy of America, 1963).

⁶⁶I am indebted to Mildred Budney for her advice on the dating of this simple and beautifully preserved binding.

said that both of these interests are represented in Oxford, Corpus Christi 221. More importantly, we have no grounds to assume that Northgate was in any way torn apart by this combination of interests; in fact, it would appear that it was quite natural for him.

The context of St Augustine's further suggests that this may be the case. As Pingree has demonstrated, from the late thirteenth century through the fourteenth, at least four monks were interested in magical topics at the abbey. That Codex 1277 (=Oxford, Corpus Christi 125) was owned consecutively by two monks, Thomas Sprot to Thomas Wyvelsburghe, confirms that the common interests were more than a private matter and that a small community of interest in magic probably existed there. It seems likely that we may add a fifth monk to Pingree's list. Simon Maidestone, monk of St Augustine's in the fifteenth century, was probably the owner of Oxford, Bodley 951, a large folio copy of the Solomonic *Ars notoria* which will be discussed below. While his surviving works do not contain works on Arabic image magic, both John of London and Michael Northgate also owned works in the tradition of the notory art. So the community of monks was larger than what Pingree has suggested, probably persisted for a longer period, and also had a wider common set of interests. Where their lifetimes may not, in every case, have overlapped, making personal connections possible, the continuity would have been provided by the library, which in time absorbed most of the personal libraries of the monks. I say "most" because the spectacular manuscript Bodley 951 was not catalogued at St Augustine's, suggesting that it may never have been absorbed into that collection. Thus, there may have been further copies of magical works in circulation in that community which did not survive, no longer bear the mark of an owner at St Augustine's Abbey, or for some reason did not become part of its library.

A common interest in medical topics could certainly form the larger intellectual context for the monks, within which their interest in image magic can be located and understood. Yet another dimension is suggested by the presence of Simon Maidestone, whose books contain no interest in medicine, but rather reflect more traditional devotional interests. John of London, Michael Northgate, and Simon Maidestone all owned copies of the *Ars notoria*. This suggests magical interests of a different kind. As I will demonstrate in the next chapter, the *Ars notoria* is a magical text of a much more explicitly religious variety, frequently collected with works suggestive of an involved interest in affective religious devotion. So the devotional and pastoral interests of Michael Northgate, which may well have formed a part of his interest in magic, may also have had a wider context among the monks of St Augustine's Abbey.

Chapter 3

Some Apparent Exceptions: Image Magic or Necromancy?

In the preceding chapter I described the common patterns of scribal interest associated with scholastic image magic. The scribes of these texts assumed that image magic was a potentially legitimate portion of the library of naturalia and natural philosophy; scholastic ideas served to support this notion. Like Albertus Magnus, the scribes also appear to have made a distinction between this sort of natural magic and practices involving demons. Almost no hint of the practices of necromancy, such as the invoking, binding, and employing of demons, can be found associated with this material. An interest in image magic thus appears to have been quite distinct from an interest in necromancy. Two apparent exceptions to this rule deserve closer examination. First, what are we to make of those texts of scholastic image magic which more closely approach ritual magic in content? Does the presence in a text of image magic of such practices as incantation, suffumigation, or the use of ethereal beings mean that the scribe regarded it as necromantic? Second, while it is usual for scholastic image magic to travel separately from necromancy, two volumes in the collection of John Erghome are a major exception. How do these volumes, which include magical practices ranging from image magic to necromancy, bear upon our understanding of the more usual patterns?

Albertus Magnus designated as necromantic both the texts of image magic which he considered illegitimate and texts of explicit demon-conjuring. Yet, like Albert, the scribes of scholastic image magic generally regarded their texts as a topic of natural philosophy. Except that they did not copy them as often, scribes usually treated works of scholastic image magic involving more explicit ritual procedures in the same manner as they did the approved works. Unlike true necromancy and other works of more explicitly ritual magic, which derive their power from religious rites, these texts cling to the library concerned with the natural world. The coherent set

of assumptions which surrounded the collection of the "legitimate" works of Arabic image magic applied, as well, to those which have a more explicitly ritual content.

The texts by the pseudo-Ptolemy or Thebit ibn Qurra contain little or no explicit ritual in their instructions for producing talismans, unless carving them or placing them in a particular place may be considered ritual. Works like the *De imaginibus* of Belenus or the *Liber lune* are quite different, as they prescribe the use of suffumigations or incantations. In addition, these works employ mysterious names sometimes applied to certain astrological conditions or locations, sometimes explicitly associated with angels. It was on the grounds of these ritual practices and the potential presence of demons that Albertus Magnus condemned these works as necromantic. Although his *Speculum astronomiae* appears to have had a wide-ranging impact upon the medieval library, those texts which he condemns and which were copied in spite of his warnings appear to have been collected for the same reasons and by the same group of scribes who collected those texts he did not condemn. The treatises I examine here are *De imaginibus septem planetarum*, *De quatuor amulis*, *Liber lune*, *De imaginibus* of Belenus, *Liber imaginum veneris* or *Liber veneris*, and a work on images attributed to Aristotle.

Approximately one third (eleven) of the thirty-one codices or parts thereof which contain image magic include works of this more dubious group.¹ They are copied far less frequently and most survive in fewer than four copies. Of the forty magical texts Albert identifies, most of which evidently concern image magic, he approves only two. If we are to take Albert's lists as at all indicative of the texts on image magic once available, only a tiny fraction of the illegitimate texts

¹Canterbury, St Augustine's Abbey 1275, 1277 (=CCC125), 1538 (1603); London, British Library, Harley 80; London, British Library, Royal 12.C. XVIII; Oxford, Bodleian, Ashmole 346; Oxford, Bodleian, Bodley 463; Oxford, Bodleian, Digby 228; York, Austin Friars A8 362, 364, 375. This list represents eight different scribes or collectors given that all of the material from York was owned by John Erghome.

survive. Albert condemned the overwhelming majority of magical material available in the thirteenth century, and so the numbers of condemned treatises available for copying was relatively high. In addition, these works usually appear in books owned by collectors with substantial personal libraries such as John Erghome, John of London, and Michael Northgate. These collectors would have had the resources to locate rare works and may have found it easier to justify their presence. They also tended to have collected several other works of image magic. Thus the condemned works appear to be the province of the specialist and bibliophile. About one-third of the scribes made copies of them.

The interests of this group does not differ substantially from those who collected only "legitimate" works. The medical collections of Thomas Scalon and John Argentine, discussed above, include images attributed to Aristotle.² Also containing medical material but additionally works on alchemy and secrets and Belenus' *De imaginibus* is a codex of Michael Northgate.³ Royal 12.C. XVIII includes the same text in a selection of largely astrological material.⁴ Bodley 463 combines works of image magic, including the *Liber veneris* with works of astronomy, astrology, and natural philosophy.⁵ The quires containing the *Liber lune* and other magical images in Harley 80 were bound together with other magical images and astronomical and astrological material by the sixteenth century and quite possibly earlier.⁶ The examples from the collection of

²London, Society of Antiquaries 37, ff. 21-23 and Oxford, Bodleian, Ashmole 346, ff. 116-117v. The source cited is the *Secretum Secretorum* and so this may not be the condemned material.

³Canterbury, St Augustine's Abbey, 1275.

⁴ff. 12-15.

⁵The *Liber veneris* appears at f. 78.

⁶The *Liber lune* appears at 77v.

Thomas Erghome and Digby 228 further confirm this as a standard configuration and will be dealt with in detail below. So the more dubious forms of image magic—those condemned by Albert—appear in substantially the same manuscript context as those he did not condemn, and the association between an interest in the natural world and magical images continues to be present despite the presence of untoward features in the works.

Not only do the collections surrounding these texts betray their owners' interest in the natural world, on some points they even betray a *more* involved examination of the available philosophical material on the subject of magic. Relative to their numbers, texts of this group are more often associated with works of magical theory. Of the ten volumes including the *De radiis*, the *Speculum astronomiae*, and Qusta ibn Luca's *De physicis ligaturis*, five contain works of this more dubious nature.⁷ This may be a further indication that the condemned treatises are the preserve of the specialist. This situation also may be due to a higher level of anxiety over whether these treatises were legitimate. A more detailed analysis of the only version of the *Speculum astronomiae* occurring together with a work on image magic in this sample will shed some light on this issue as well as the general question of scribal attitudes towards the more dubious forms of image magic.

1. The *Liber lune* and the case of Digby 228

The *Liber lune* is a work of Arabic image magic attributed to Hermes. Like many of the magical texts, the text has a more proximate author, Belenus, who reports the wisdom of Hermes

⁷Canterbury, St Augustine's Abbey 1275 and 1277 (=CCC125 but the text does not appear there) include Qusta ibn Luca's *De physicis ligaturis*. The lone copy of the *Speculum astronomiae* is to be found in Oxford, Bodleian, Digby 228, f. 76-79. Al-Kindi's *De radiis stellarum* appears in York, Austin Friars A8 362 and 375.

to us. The text of the *De imaginibus* of Belenus, is, in fact, closely related to the *Liber lune* and may derive from it.⁸ I would argue that the *Liber lune* probably came first. The initial chapters of this work lay out the theoretical framework for the later practical chapters, which put all the pieces together in a more coherent structure. It is from the latter section that the other work derives and although it makes sense on its own, it is less likely that a long preparatory section would be added to such a work than that it was extracted.⁹

After an introduction, the text discusses the twenty-eight mansions of the moon, giving their names, number, associated planets, whether the mansion is good or bad, and the kind of image one makes in it. For example, the first entry reads, "When the moon is in Alnath, that is in the first mansion which is the face of Mars and a bad mansion, in that [mansion] you will make images of separation and discord."¹⁰ The text then goes on to discuss the suffumigations used for good and for bad images and provides a list of the names to be used when exorcising the images. A final preparatory chapter discusses the hours of the day and night, their names, and the kind of images you would make in them. At that stage the text begins to provide more specific instructions for the use of particular images and it is from this portion of the text that the *De*

⁸The text of the *Liber lune* preserved in Harley 80, ff. 77v-81r is the most complete version of this text which I have seen. From a brief comparison of the texts, the version contained in Digby 228 appears to be an abbreviated version of this text, although lacking the introduction on f. 77v of Harley 80. Without an edition of this text it would be impossible to know whether Digby 228 is drawn from this manuscript. The version of *De imaginibus* attributed to Belenus in Royal 12.C.VII appears to draw upon the latter part of a version of the *Liber lune* more like Digby 228, as its relation to Harley 80 is somewhat more vague.

⁹Carmody suggests that most of the circulating texts relating images to the planets derive from a larger text on images which was broken up. Carmody, *Arabic Astronomical and Astrological Sciences*, p. 58-59.

¹⁰Cum fuerit luna in alnath, id est in prima mansionem, que est facies martis et est mansio mala, in ipsa facies ymagines separacionis et discordie. Harley 80, f. 87r.

imaginibus of Belenus appears to be drawn, the preparatory chapters having been dropped.

Thus said Belenus. Make an image in the first hour of the day to bind men so that, when made, he might not speak to another concerning him nor utter one bad word. Therefore, the image, which will be half of silver and half tin, will be four palms [wide] and to the image of that one for whom it is made, and in the first hour of the day. Let the name of the lord of the image have been sculpted in its head and in the back the name of the lord of the hour in which it was made. Let there have been written in the belly the lord of the image and other names of suffumigations with aloe and sandalwood and wrap [it] in white and clean cloth. Afterwards, bury it in his door. Thus, the binding is made to bind all tongues.¹¹

The purposes of this and the following images (to destroy a region) are indicative of the rest of the contents which range in intents from tricks to getting a woman to do your bidding to mass destruction.

To distinguish this text from the works of necromancy on the basis of content is a technical and somewhat abstract matter. We have a complex array of ethereal beings, we have images, and we have incantations which employ strange names. The ritual features of the processes, beyond the carving of the image, receive a considerable amount of attention. That this text does not involve the explicit binding of spirits, and that it uses a different medium for its images (metal disks as opposed to parchment), need not constitute a major difference if our concern is the presence of strange names and rituals and given that some ritual magic texts like the *Ars notoria* do not involve the explicit binding of spirits. In short, we should not wonder at the fact that Albertus Magnus designated this text as necromantic. However, the codicology of

¹¹Dixit belemit ymago fit in prima hora diei ad ligandas homines ut non loqueratur aliud de eo cum facta fuerit vel unum verbum malum in sepiternum fundatur igitur ymago cuius medietas sit ex argento et alia medietas ex stanguo fuerit ad mensuram 4 palmarum ad ymaginem ipsius pro quo fac, et in prima hora diei. et fit scriptus in capit' ipsius nomen domini imaginationis? et in pectore nomen domine hore prima cuiusque dierum fuerit: et sit sculptum in capite ipsius nomen domini ymaginis: et in pectore nomen domine hore prima cuiusque dierum fuerit: et sit scriptum ventre eius nomen domini? ymagis et ita sunt nomina subumigacionis cum aloe et sanetar rubeo; et involues in panno albo et mundo, postea sepelias ipsam? in porta eius, et est ligatio parata ad omnis linuqas ligandas. Harley 80, f. 79r.

this version of the *Liber lune* is very much like that of other works on images and, as we shall see, unlike that of most necromantic texts.

Digby 228 is a late fourteenth-century codex of seventy-nine folios, written on parchment by three scribes. The magical text is a somewhat abbreviated and incomplete version of the *Liber lune*, which runs to one and a half folios. Contemporary quire marks suggest the codex is complete to quire "h", the end of the extant codex, although it is possible they indicate reassembly. The major hand of the codex, mid fourteenth-century, begins at quire 5 (f. 15) and the texts it records run over the quire divisions until the end of quire 7 and then again through 8 and 9. At the end of quire 7 there was enough room for Scribe 2 to include part of the *Liber lune*. The *Liber lune* is incomplete. The scribe evidently stopped copying in the middle of the text and did not use up all available space on the last folio. In a similar way, Scribe 2 filled in the text of the *Speculum astronomiae* of Albertus Magnus at the end of quire 9. The scribe of the *Liber lune* (Scribe 2) dates all but ff 8-15 as a late fourteenth-century compilation as he fills quires 1-3 and the last leaves of quires 7 and 9. Another fourteenth-century hand fills quire 4. What this boils down to is that we can treat the *Speculum astronomiae* and *Liber lune* as direct indications of Scribe 2's interests, and the original material to which he added (written by Scribe 1) as a supplementary indication of his interests.

Digby 228 also includes the standard array of astrological and theoretical works, which we have demonstrated to be the usual company of image magic. In the first three quires a scribe has copied a few short astrological and astronomical texts, including a short commentary on the *Sphere of Sacrobosco* and a text which explains the astrological significance of being born on a particular day. There follow a commentary on Ptolemy's *Centiloquium*, a tract on comets, the *Flores Astrologiae* of Albumasar, a copy of the *Secretum secretorum*, amongst a host of other

astronomical and astrological material. In short, the volume appears to be very much like any other volume of astrological texts which includes image magic.

If this predictable array of subjects were not enough to indicate the general direction of our scribe's interest, Scribe 2 has copied the *Speculum astronomiae*, which confirms the fact that he was very much interested in astrology and, potentially, in magic. The eleventh chapter (discussed above) seeks to divide good works of magical images from bad. The *Liber lune* can be clearly identified as one of the "bad" texts, not only because Albert cites its name and incipit but also because he condemns the category of images which it employs. After condemning the texts by Hermes and Belenus, the use of the names of angels said to be subservient to the images of the moon, as well as incantations and suffumigations, Albert concludes,

This is the worst idolatry, which, in order to render itself credible to some extent, observes the 28 mansions of the Moon and the hours of the day and night along with certain names [given] to these days, hours and mansions themselves. May this method be far from us, for far be it that we should show that [sort of] honour to the creature which is due [solely] to the Creator.¹²

Next to this passage, either Scribe 2 or some relatively contemporary annotator, has drawn a hand with a pointing finger. Thus, the scribe or a later owner was very much aware of the significance of this passage to the *Liber lune*. Given that both the *Liber lune* and *Speculum astronomiae* (and probably the pointing hand) were written by the same scribe, there is no question that the presence of these two texts in the same codex is purposeful.

It is not clear at all whether this interest was practical or theoretical, or, in fact, if the material was collected as part of *anti-magical* interests. Whatever the case may be, the scribe has

¹²Haec est idololatria pessima, quae, ut reddat se aliquatenus fide dignam observat viginti octo mansiones lunae et horas diei et noctis cum quibusdam nominibus dierum, horarum et mansionum ipsarum. A nobis longe sit iste modus: absit enim ut ex hibeamus creaturae honorem debitum creatore. *Speculum*, 11; Zambelli, 240-41. I use Zambelli's translation.

chosen to approach the material through a work of magic theory and in conjunction with astrology. This fact firmly separates this work from all the codices containing necromantic material in this survey. In my survey, the *Speculum astronomiae* appears once¹³ and the *De radiis stellarum* of al-Kindi appears eight times in the manuscripts containing works on magic or in the larger collections of their owners. In every case, the text of magical theory appears together with works on images and in no case, except Erghome's *codices superstitiosi* (discussed in the next section), does it appear in a codex with ritual magic texts. As we shall see amongst works of magic involving the conjuring and binding of spirits, there is very little evidence of an interest in theory, until the sixteenth century. So if we were to include the *Liber lune* in the category of necromantic magic as Albertus Magnus has done, Digby 228 would be an unusual codex. Classified in terms of the scribe's approach and other interests, the codex unquestionably belongs among collections of scholastic image magic.

As a codex in this tradition, Digby 228 is entirely unexceptional. Astrology is as fundamental to most works on images as hierarchies of demons and angel names are important to works on conjuring. So it is logical that the theoretical works appear here and that Scribe 2 should have had an interest in the astrological works written by Scribe 1. Moreover, the *De radiis* is Arabic and the *Speculum astronomiae* refers to the tradition of images which is largely Arabic. These works also tend to be associated with speculations that there are certain forms of magic which are allowable on the grounds of being "natural." This is an explicit argument in the case of the *Speculum* and implicit in the *De radiis*. The theoretical grounds for the "natural" functions of an image are fundamentally connected to the theories about occult properties. So Scribe 1's copies

¹³It also appears in York, Austin Friars A8, 159, although this codex contains no magical works.

of such texts of naturalia as the *Secretum secretorum*, which concerns occult properties, can be seen to be part of a coherent set of interests.

So, the question remains whether to include the *Liber lune* in general, and this version of the text in particular, under the umbrella of necromantic magic. It would be folly for us to attempt to categorize it purely on the basis of content as Albert has done. After an extensive analysis of the astrological inheritance of Western Europe, we would ultimately have to conclude that it was a matter of interpretation whether the angels in this text were real, simply various flavours of stellar rays, or in fact demons. If we wish to understand the work, we must classify it according to scribal attitudes and interests. As a text in Digby 228 and in the context of the tradition of Arabic astrological image magic, the *Liber lune* belongs to a group of texts with a markedly more innocent agenda. Its collector understood the work in its theoretical context and may have had no practical interest in the subject at all. He may have decided upon reflection that the *Liber lune* was indeed bad magic, and not attributable to astrological mechanisms despite what al-Kindi and Albertus Magnus may have said. This we will never know. We do know that it cannot be taken as evidence for an interest in *necromantic* magic. The scribe/collector does not exhibit an interest in magic as a rite but rather has approached the work as an issue in astrology and natural philosophy. The scribe's interests lay in the direction of natural wonders rather than what Richard Kieckhefer has described as the "flamboyantly transgressive" rites of ritual magic.¹⁴

What our scribe may have decided about the *Liber lune* remains unclear. The finger in the margin pointing to the condemning passage in the *Speculum astronomiae* does not suggest confidence. That the scribe evidently broke off in the middle of copying the *Liber lune*, leaving it incomplete, may be the result of an imperfect exemplar. Yet almost a full page of blank parchment

¹⁴Richard Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites*, p. 10.

follows it, suggesting that the break may have been unplanned and motivated by doubt or caution. Despite the fact that this codex tends to further confirm the association of image magic and the natural world, the overwhelming impression is not one of confidence but rather of caution or ambivalence.

2. Michael Northgate's Codex 1275

The case of Michael Northgate's codex 1275 of the library of St Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury, is a particularly interesting one given the apparently devout nature of his life and his other intellectual interests. Donated by him, this codex is largely medical in orientation although it includes works of naturalia such as Albertus Magnus' *Secretum secretorum* and *De plantacionibus arborum*, the book of experiments the *Vacca platonis*, extracts from the *Kiranides*, and an alchemical work attributed to Hermes. Three of the medical works concern surgery.¹⁵ The works on images which follow are *De quindecim stellis*, and works on images attributed to Aburabez, Belenus, Hermes, and Thetel. At least two of these treatises, those by Belenus and Hermes, are amongst the works explicitly condemned by Albert.¹⁶

Like the case of Digby 228 the scribe of this condemned material has provided a theoretical work which could serve to explain, and perhaps even justify, the copying and use of these condemned works. Another of the medical texts, Qusta ibn Luca's work *De physicis ligaturis* forms a link between the largely medical content of this codex and the relatively extensive collection of image magic which follows it. This work on ligatures discusses the

¹⁵The listed titles are *Noua cirurgia magri Henr' de amunda villa*, *Experimenta diuersa in physical et Cirurgia*, *Cirurgia extracta de Gilbertina practica puerorum*. James, *Ancient*, p. 348.

¹⁶Zambelli, *Speculum*, pp. 240-45.

effectiveness of not only ligatures (i.e. things bound to the body for medical reasons, often meaning talismans) but also images and incantations. It concludes that while the ancients might have been correct in attributing power to ligatures, images, and incantations, the psychological effects of believing in them is sufficient to explain their effects. The examples recommended by the ancients which he goes on to cite are not magical images but suspended stones, or stones set in rings.¹⁷ Another text by the same title attributed to Dioscorides, which directly precedes it, is probably a collection of various medical ligatures not involving magical images.¹⁸

There is no evidence to assume the scribe considered the works of image magic to be medical. But it is clear that the works were directly connected with, or understood in relation to, medical literature and, in particular, the evaluations of Qusta ibn Luca. The arguments provided by him in no way justify the use of talismans, but they do seek to examine and evaluate image magic in the context of natural philosophy or the practice of medicine.

3. John Erghome's *libri superstitiosi*

The collection of John Erghome became a substantial part of the library of the Austin Friars at York sometime in the late fourteenth century.¹⁹ Amongst the approximately 300 books which the library catalogue lists as having belonged to him, five notices include works on magic and two contain a copy of the *De radiis stellarum*. None of these seven have been identified with

¹⁷HMES 1, 652-657.

¹⁸HMES I, 611. Thorndike refers to a seventeenth-century copy of this text in Sloane 3848, ff. 36-40.

¹⁹Humphreys, ed. *The Friars' Libraries*, pp xxix-xxx.

any surviving manuscripts.²⁰ Most of these entries follow the usual patterns we have so far described. Erghome catalogued one of the volumes containing the *De radiis* (A8 452) under the general heading of *Auctores et philosophi extranei*. Another volume containing the *De Radiis* (A8 385) and two volumes containing works on image magic (A8 375 and 383) he catalogued under *Astronomia et astrologia*. These latter two volumes contain a large number of works on image magic, including quite a few of those which Albertus Magnus condemned, amongst other works of astrology, astronomy, experiments, mathematics, and recipes. All but 362 and 364 follow the pattern we have discussed so far.

Volume A8 362 contains a collection of magical works unparalleled in its size and in the variety of its contents.²¹ To my knowledge, no existing codex contains so complete a collection of the magical works available in the fourteenth century. What is significant for our present purposes is that this codex contains not only the standard configuration of scholastic image magic (e.g. *Liber veneris*, *Hermes de imaginibus*, and *Liber imaginum Aristotelis*) and astrology/astronomy and magical theory (al-Kindi's *De radiis*), but also includes a substantial number of explicitly necromantic or ceremonial magic texts as well. Erghome lists a *liber Honorii divisus in 5 tractatus* which, as Humphreys notes, is probably the *Sworn Book of Honorius*, a text of ceremonial magic for achieving the beatific vision. It also includes numerous texts of explicit necromancy such as the *Vinculum Salomonis*,²² *Liber rubeus qui aliter dicitur sapiencia*

²⁰York, Austin Friars A8, 362, 364, 371, 375, 383, 385, and 452. The latter two include only the *De radiis stellarum* and no practical text on magic.

²¹For the complete contents of York, Austin Friars A8 362 and 364, please see below.

²²This assumes this is the same work as the one found in Wellcome 110 at f. 36. A sixteenth-century copy of an explicitly necromantic work.

*nigromancie, Tractatus de pentagono Salomonis,*²³ *Tractatus ad inclusionem spiritus in speculo,*²⁴ and *Tractatus ad habenda loquelam cum spiritu et effectum eternum*. The volume also includes the *Ars notoria* and *Ars notoria nova completa*, texts of ritual magic which all upon angels for spiritual and intellectual gifts. Several works like *Tractatus de nominibus angelorum ordine forma et potestate et mansione* are more suggestive of the practices of the *Liber lune*.

The second book (8A 364) includes the *Liber lune*, al-Kindi's *De radiis stellarum*, another work on images, a *liber prestigiorum Alkani philosophi* which is probably the work of the same title by Thebit ibn Qurra translated by Adelard of Bath also known as the *De imaginibus*.²⁵ The *Liber sacratus petri abellardi* is most likely not by Peter Abelard but rather another copy of the *Sworn Book of Honorius* or *Liber sacer* also known as *Liber sacratus*. While there are a few exceptions to the rule that scholastic image magic does not tend to travel with ritual magic, especially necromancy, none are so substantial as this. Not only is this combination of image and ritual magic unusual, but this codex includes both ritual magic and works of magical theory, which also rarely travel together. However, these examples are not as out of the ordinary as they first appear.

Both of these codices are collected under the heading "Prophecie et Supersticiosa," which likely means that on average the texts in these codices were not regarded as legitimate natural philosophy, astrology, or astronomy, but superstitious. In the case of 362, the list provided should be ample explanation for this classification. The case of 364 is somewhat different. Why is it that a

²³This may be the *Signum pentaculum* found in Sloane 3851, ff. 31v-53. HMES 2, 280.

²⁴Although this is a very common theme, this text may have been the text *Ad includendum in speculo spiritum* in Sloane 3884, ff. 57v-61.

²⁵Burnett, "Necromancy."

work including images and magic theory would be classified as superstitious when the *Liber lune* and five other works on magical images occur in another of Erghome's books in the company of works on astrology, classified as astrological and astronomical (375). Al-Kindi's *De radiis* also appears twice more in Erghome's collection (385 and 452), also amongst the astrological and astronomical works. A workable explanation for the classification of 364 as superstitious is one that we have already suggested, that the last work is not a work by Peter Abelard—certainly no work exists by such a name—but the *Liber sacer* or *sacratus* also known as the *Sworn Book of Honorius*, one of the most significant works of ritual magic circulating in this period.

This explanation for the classification makes sense in light of the fact that, where works on images tend to be relatively short and thus might not have played a part in the decision of how to classify a codex, the *De radiis* alone would likely have occupied several quires and have taken up a substantial part of any codex. In other words, the fact that two other copies of this text appear in codices not classified as superstitious may well be a significant matter. In addition, the classification of A8 375 as astrological and astronomical would appear to have as much if not more to do with the six works on magical images at the beginning of the treatise, than with the only other explicitly astronomical or astrological works, two short works by al-Kindi, listed as *De impressionibus* and *De subradiis planetarum*. The treatise *Philosophia* by William of Conches includes astrological topics but might be better described as cosmographical.²⁶ The other treatises are the *Pronostica Socratis Basilei*, a divinatory work, experiments, and some biblical material.²⁷ Thus it seems likely that Erghome did not consider magical images superstitious. It is very

²⁶HMES 2, 53-59.

²⁷For the *Pronostica Socratis Basilei*, see HMES II, 115.

unlikely that he considered them utterly superstitious and reprehensible, or a codex like A8 375 might well have been classed in that way.

To return to the case of 364, Erghome has no other volumes outside the class of superstitious works which contain works of necromancy or elaborate ritual magic like the *Sworn Book of Honorius*. As no works of this kind appear elsewhere in his collection under other headings, it seems likely that a volume with any such lengthy work of ritual magic was simply classified amongst the volumes of superstitious works. It might also be that the problematic contents of the *Liber lune* may have moved Erghome to classify the whole codex in this way, but since it appears elsewhere in scientific settings, this explanation is less convincing. Given the breadth of material commonly found in individual codices, a cataloguer who had to classify an entire codex under a single subject heading would have had to make a decision based on the average content of a book, the relative importance of the included texts, or perhaps the first text in the codex. As it stands we can regard the classification of this codex only as an indication of what he thought (or wished others to assume he thought) about magic in general. This could not be taken as evidence for a synthetic approach to all magical texts, or an indication that Erghome assumed no internal divisions existed amongst the constituent texts. In other words, Erghome could well have regarded Thebit and al-Kindi as belonging to quite a distinct category from the *Liber sacer*, as the rest of our scribes evidently did, and as the scribes of most of Erghome's volumes, which include magical works, would appear to have assumed. That Erghome probably classified the document cannot be taken as evidence that he thought image magic and necromantic or ritual magic were the same. If so, then the choice of constituent texts would have been his, and one would still be left wondering why he organized and classified them in this fashion.

Yet it remains that Erghome may well have had a hand in *assembling* these volumes.

Erghome would have been one of very few with the resources to compile such a collection of magical works from such disparate traditions, and if he did not collect each piece individually, he may have combined several volumes in a single codex. Not knowing how the books were structured (e.g., where the quire divisions might lie) would make it difficult to offer a convincing argument for why a certain text may have ended up in a certain codex on codicological grounds. However, the structure of the codex may be inferred from the contents. It is likely that a collector such as Erghome would have been ill at ease splitting up a set of gatherings if it would mean breaking up one of the texts. So it is likely that any pieces he acquired would have remained as a single unit. Close examination of the manner in which the texts in 362 and 364 are organized reveals a clustering of related topics. In turn, this evidence gives strong indications of how the volumes may have been physically assembled.

Humphreys' entry for 364 runs as follows (I include in parentheses some of Humphreys' suggestions. Square brackets indicate works I believe to be solidly identifiable.):

- a. liber ymaginum lune
- b. liber ymaginum veneris
- c. liber radiorum [more than likely al-Kindi, *De radiis stellarum*]
- d. liber prestigiorum Alkani philosophi [possibly Thebit ibn Qurra, *liber prestigiorum (De imaginibus)*, trans. by Abelard of Bath]
- e. liber sacratus Petri Abellardi [more than likely the *Sworn Book of Honorius*]

Items a through d all relate to magical images and would not be an unusual collection of scholastic image magic. This suggests the possibility the volume may have been initially split between items d and e Al-Kindi's *De radiis* appears elsewhere in Erghome's collection in scientific volumes and although Erghome might have considered it incorrect natural philosophy, he would not likely have regarded it as superstitious. That the remaining works of image magic were all

condemned by Albertus Magnus might explain their presence in a codex of superstitious works. In this scenario, Erghome would have combined an otherwise unusual collection of image magic with the *Sworn Book of Honorius*. It is also possible that an initial scribe wrote the first four items and the fifth was filled in at a later date. The case of 362 argues much more convincingly that these volumes are composites of earlier collections.

As it is difficult to describe otherwise, I include Humphreys' complete entry for 362.

- a. Liber sompnarii Ybin Cyrin' in 8 partibus et pars in cifra (Humphres identifies this as Achmet (Ahmed) ibn Sirin , Oneirocricon, prob. tr. Leo Tuscus as in Oxford Bodl. Digby 103; Thorndike HMES II.291-3.)
- b. liber qui intitulatur de iudiciis astrorum (Humphreys suggests this may be Alkindi.)
- c. 9 ymages extracte de libro veneris [*Liber veneris*]
- d. brevis tractatus quatuor capitulis de sompno et visione (Humphreys identifies as Alkindi, tr. Gerard of Cremona)
- e. tractatus de operibus et occultis actionibus naturalium (Humphreys suggests Thomas Aquinas, *De occultis operibus naturae*)
- f. liber Hermetis de celo et mundo distinctus in 6 partes
- g. theorica artis magice in 56 capitulis [al-Kindi, *De Radiis*]
- h. flores coniunctionis veritatis geomancie distinctus in theoricam et practicam
- i. introductorium ad geomanciam docens terminos artis
- k. tractatus de pentagono Salomonis
- l. tractatus ad inclusionem spiritus in speculo
- m. opus capitis magni cum aliis capitibus pertinencibus
- n. tractatus ymaginum secundum mouimentum planetarum et operacionibus eorum (Humphreys suggests Belenus, *de imaginibus septem planetarum*)
- o. tractatus ymaginum Gyrgit filie Circis de opere ymaginum distinctus in theoricam et practicam
- p. Hermes de ymaginibus
- q. idem in alio tractatu de ymaginibus
- r. tractatus Hyllonii de arte ymaginibus
- s. tractatus de nominibus angelorum et effectibus eorum
- t. vinculum Salomonis
- u. tractatus de valeriana
- x. tractatus de spiritu cibile
- y. tractatus de capite Saturni
- z. liber Honorii diuisus in 5 tractatus [*Sworn Book of Honorius*]
- aa. tractatus ad habendam loquelam cum spiritu et effectum eternum
- ab. aliud opus preciosum ad magnum effectum
- ac. liber rubeus qui aliter dicitur sapientia nigromancie
- ad experimentum bonum sortis

- ae. tractatus Fortunati Eleazari de arte euthontica ydaica et epytologica [Humphreys identifies as Eleazar of Worms or Salomon, *De quatuor annulis*, the latter seems more likely]
- af. tractatus de nominibus angelorum ordine forma et potestate et mansione
- ag. tractatus de Floron
- ah. tractatus qui dicitur secretum philosophorum diuisum in 7 partes secundum quod pertractat 7 artes
- ai. liber veneris in tres partes diuisus [*Liber veneris*]
- ak. liber ymaginum Aristotelis
- al. tractatus Hermetis de ymaginibus
- am. alius tractatus ymaginum
- an. exceptciones horarum a Ptholomeo descripte
- ao. fforme ymaginum in singulis signorum faciebus
- ap. ffinis artis notorie veteris
- aq. ars notoria noua completa
- ar. multa experimenta

Once again, this time in a much more complex codex, works on images, works on magic theory, and works which are usually collected with them appear together, suggesting prior codicological divisions. Items a. through i. would certainly appear to be very much like the standard collections which include image magic with its parts on astrology and geomancy. The piece on judicial astrology, item b, would seem very out of place in this collection. The fact that it appears here strongly suggests that it was included as part of a separately produced set of gatherings originally composed only of works of image magic and associated items. If item e is, in fact, the letter of Thomas Aquinas on occult virtues, this argument is considerably strengthened. The alternate scenario, in which the scribe selected all the texts individually for copying, is far less satisfying. Why have these two works been copied into this codex as examples of superstitious works? Items n through r would also appear to be of a piece and s are suggestive of the material found in such texts as the *Liber lune* or *De imaginibus* of Belenus. Finally, items ah through ao also would appear to have been of a piece. Again suggesting that this section was produced separately before being included in the volume is the presence of the *Secretum philosophorum*

(item ah). Given that this text sports rather innocent tricks and sleights of hand, it would scarcely qualify as superstitious in the way the *Vinculum Salomonis* might. As with the astrological text and the work by Aquinas, it is the kind of text commonly found with image magic and in fact occurs in our sample with the pseudo-Ptolemaic *De imaginibus* in Digby 37. Separate from these blocks of texts are known works of necromancy and ritual magic in addition to other items apparently involving ritual magic: items k through m, t through ac, ag, and ap through aq.

So the organization of the texts in these two codices strongly suggests that they were assembled in pieces from other volumes. Were they all copied at once, the presence of several non-magical texts would be very hard to explain. Far from being exceptions to the rule that scholastic image magic and ritual magic tended to travel separately, they further confirm this pattern. The presence of theoretical works further demonstrates the association of scholastic image magic with theoretical interests. Even if we were to assume for the sake of argument that Erghome saw no differences between the texts he compiled, the clustering of topics makes clear that earlier scribes did. The most likely scenario is that Erghome assembled these books himself from other volumes. His classification, *libri superstitiosi*, thus may be taken to apply to both works of image magic and also to works of ritual magic. He unquestionably regarded ritual magic as superstitious, since no other works of ritual magic appear under other classifications in his collection. His position on image magic remains less clear. That codices in large part devoted to image magic were classed as astrological suggests that he regarded them as a potentially legitimate part of that discipline or at least legitimately associated with that part of the library. This would not prevent him from regarding them as superstitious as well, or potentially so. The texts of scholastic image magic were thus different from ritual magic, but their precise relation to legitimate natural philosophy remained ambiguous.

Conclusion of Part I

The Ambivalence of the Scribes

The scribes of image magic were generally interested in issues relating to the natural world. Their codices suggest their principal interests were topics such as alchemy, natural philosophy, astrology, and astronomy. Other interests represented are mathematics, secrets, experiments, recipes, magical stones, and other naturalia. The scribes understood and interpreted the magical material they had with the available tools, in particular works of natural philosophy. An important theoretical work, the *De radiis stellarum* of al-Kindi often appears together with works on image magic, despite the fact that it is devoted to incantations or magical words. The *Speculum astronomiae* appears infrequently in the codices containing works of magic but appears to have had some considerable influence upon which texts were chosen for copying. The functioning of magical images was generally understood to be potentially connected to the natural world and many of the scribes clearly assumed this to be the case. This was apparently so even in the case of codices containing texts which had been condemned by Albertus Magnus, and which displayed features clearly suggestive of demonic involvement.

By the same token it is not clear that the scribes *unqualifiedly* regarded this material as scientific. The picture presented by the manuscripts has consistent features like the consistent association of image magic with medieval scientific materials. On the other hand, the manuscripts also consistently give no clue as to whether the scribes or collectors regarded them as *unambiguously* legitimate parts of natural philosophy. Another defining feature of medieval attitudes towards these works lies precisely in this ambiguity, that is, in the fact that it was not always clear to the scribes or collectors themselves that image magic was legitimate. A codex is less the record of an argument than of an association of a certain group of texts for some purpose.

So we should not regard the presence of a work justifying the use of images or discussing this as being in any way indicative of the decisions made by the scribes. Rather it suggests a topic which was of concern, a selection of materials potentially used in the pursuit of an argument, but not an argument itself. In this sense, the codices containing theoretical works suggest doubt, where those which do not, suggest confidence on the part of the scribe as to the status of the works of magic. The Digby scribe may well have decided that the *Liber lune* was bad magic and rejected it on that ground and the evidence suggests as much. Despite the fact that John Erghome appears to have regarded image magic as having some legitimate astrological status, he also classed these kinds of works under the category of superstitious works in two significant codices, casting into doubt the association of image magic with legitimate astrology. So at least a portion of the codices appear to have been the work of scribes or collectors who were not sure about the status of the works of image magic.

Amongst the other examples there is no evidence to suggest that the scribes and collectors regarded texts of image magic as *unqualifiedly* legitimate natural philosophy. In fact, the categories of "natural magic" or "secrets" or "experiments" were not created to bring this kind of literature about the natural world unqualifiedly within the circuit of accredited scientific or philosophical inquiry. When Albert suggested that the *De imaginibus* of Thebit ibn Qurra and Ptolemy's work on images might be legitimate, he added the qualification that, were there some secretly necromantic features of the works, they too would be illegitimate. In the end Albert himself was not sure. This ambivalence in the most definitive statement on texts of image magic accords these works a middling status, an associate membership in natural philosophy ultimately dependent upon probabilities. The liminality of image magic is also attested by its manuscript history, which was distinct from texts of natural philosophy or astrology. Texts of image magic

were commonly transmitted, several at a time, and travelled back to back in most codices. They were not mixed in, here and there, with other texts in most codices in a manner which would indicate that the scribes regarded them as just another astrological treatise. A scribe probably had to make a special effort to find them. So while they commonly travelled with books of astrology, they had a separate codicological status as well, and this applied equally in their relationship to texts of alchemy, medicine, and secrets. To be sure, they formed a distinct topic within the library of astrology and so they might be grouped together for organizational purposes. However, this alone cannot account for the almost ubiquitous grouping of these texts into single codicological units. Their ambiguous relation to legitimate philosophical inquiry must be counted amongst the other possible reasons for this liminal status.

Thus manuscripts offer no evidence that the scribes regarded relation of image magic to natural philosophy as entirely unproblematic; in fact, ambivalence may well be regarded as a common feature of their attitudes. Perhaps driven by concerns about what might lurk behind apparently legitimate images, or that the legitimate features of the art would be rejected because of the apparently illegitimate ones, scribes tended to transmit the texts in such a way that they became standardized and static. Their content was adjusted to orthodox standards by removing certain ritual features such as incantations. They were set on the page like works of natural philosophy and included in codices on this subject. They were selected for copying with reference to philosophical standards as set out in the *Speculum astronomiae*. For all this, the ambivalence remained. It had to; image magic was attractive precisely because of its ambiguous status.

Thomas of Cantimpre was interested in magical images in particular because the mechanisms which drove them were hidden; their effects, out of the ordinary. Without these surprising qualities, the value of much of this material would have been lost. Of what value, in

Britain, is a text which offers instructions for an image which will rid a place of scorpions? The value is clear. The effect and the processes used are "wonderful." In this sense, magical images are like material in books of secrets, recipe collections, or experiment literature. Interest in them is driven by a desire to know the unknown and to control the uncontrollable. But the practice of image magic involves much more profound oppositions than this broader literature of *naturalia*. Its operations are much more powerful, and they draw directly upon higher powers. At the same time, they promise (if implicitly) not only access to these hidden powers, but an understanding of them. The potential dangers and sins associated with the practice of image magic were much more extensive and extreme than those associated with recipes, secrets, or experiments. Not only did they involve the threat of demons and numerous forms of sin, they often employed some form of rite. At the same time, a substantial philosophical literature offered the chance that these powerful and apparently dangerous practices might be legitimately practised by Christians. So the essential ingredient in the success and independence of these texts lies precisely in the tension between these potentially sinful, mysterious, and frightening qualities and the conviction that the processes involved are knowable and the practices blameless. In other words, the scribes and collectors of image magic were particularly interested in magic that was *also* science, magic that fell within the circuit of controllable, identifiable mechanisms, while maintaining its dubious status. For this reason we must not read "scientific" when we see "natural magic." These terms are not synonymous. Despite what Bonatti might have told the confused and impoverished apothecary, despite his assurances that the effects of his image were entirely natural, no solution could be offered to his dilemma, because there was not one.

Part II: Ritual Magic 1300 to 1500

Introduction: Brother John's Dilemma

Brother John of Morigny thirsted after enlightenment.¹ But to pursue this by necromantic means filled him with dread and fear for his soul. He unburdened himself to Jacob, a doctor friend, who suggested that the *Ars notoria* was his best alternative, since it employed angels instead of demons.² Through this art John might achieve intellectual gifts and complete knowledge of the arts and sciences. After a programme of prayers and meditations, these gifts would be infused in him from the Holy Spirit. The suggestion launched John, who was given to visions which filled the sky and shook the earth, upon a lengthy exploration of the notory art. Some of these visions he believed to be legitimate, but he harboured a certain ambivalence towards the more frightening ones.³ A number of angelic appearances convinced him that the art was evil. In one, an angel demonstrated that the prayers of the Solomonic *Ars notoria* had been imperceptibly woven together with necromantic incantations.⁴ Unknowingly he had been calling upon demons for assistance, not angels.

As a result, John gave up all hope of practicing a good form of magic and dabbled in demonic magic, despite his fears. During this time he became so proficient in necromancy that he began, and by his later account finished, a book on the art.⁵ But he was already being plagued by a

¹The following is based upon the synopsis of Graz, University Library MS 680. Claire Fanger, "Plundering the Egyptian Treasure: John the Monk, his *Book of Visions*, and its Relation to the Notory Art of Solomon", in *Conjuring Spirits; Texts and Traditions of Medieval Ritual Magic* (Sutton: Stroud, 1998), pp. 242-9.

²Ibid., p. 243.

³Ibid., p. 244.

⁴Ibid., pp. 244-45.

⁵Ibid. p. 245.

new set of visions. In one, an angel delivered him over to a demon to be killed; in another, Christ himself appeared and convinced John to abandon the magical arts altogether by beating him severely.⁶ Having finally renounced all of these magical arts, his next cycle of visions no longer involved demons. Rather than filling him with dread, they filled him with joy.⁷ There seems no question in John's mind that these were visions of the divine. He was, certainly, no longer plagued by the terrifying and explosive appearances which he had experienced before. In the end, John requested that the Virgin give him permission to compose a new book of thirty simple prayers which would render knowledge of scripture, the arts, and the sciences. This work would destroy and supersede the old and evil *Ars notoria*. The Virgin granted his request "as though unwilling and heavily" saying that she would also give him the requisite eloquence to accomplish the task.⁸

The Prologue to the *Liber Visionum* in Graz, University Library, MS 680, from which this summary is drawn, is considerably more complex than we can treat here. But this outline of the story provides a crucial illustration of the process of transmission of ritual magic texts as well as the conditions and forces which surrounded it. John's two magical works (a necromantic work, and the *Liber visionum*) were both written out of personal visionary experience, and he seems to take it for granted, that writing a work of magic was the natural product of these kinds of experiences. The *Liber visionum* was influenced by Christian mystical writings, and perhaps, philosophical discussions of magic. The work was also partly composed of material from the existing magical literature. But let us take a closer look at the process of transmission.

⁶Ibid., pp. 245-46.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., p. 247.

Claire Fanger has analyzed the available texts with particular attention to what John says (and does not say) about how he transformed the Solomonic *Ars notoria*. John claims to be "plundering the Egyptian treasure," which is to say, that he has taken large, presumably legitimate, portions of the Solomonic version into his new system.⁹ Fanger demonstrates that John evidently regarded this 'plundering' as a part of a divine project guided by angels and the Virgin. His "purifying" largely consisted of adding to the beginning of the text the cycle of prayers which he had composed, and of stripping out from the Solomonic version the words which were said to be transliterated from ancient languages.¹⁰ Commenting upon the editing process, Nicholas Watson suggests that "the book creates the impression that the prayers were approved or confirmed by the Virgin in dreams, and that the reality of angelic intervention was assumed, more than experienced." He further suggests that the dream-visions were used more for the purpose of confirming work already completed and for dealing with specific questions.¹¹ Assuming that the visions were less than John presents, on what basis might he have made his decisions to alter the text?

John was unquestionably aware of the major currents in late medieval religious thought. He was well versed in the rhetorical fashions of mystical writings and employed them in this work.¹² He was also evidently aware of a range of potential theological problems. In one of the

⁹Ibid., pp. 225-35.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 220-22.

¹¹Nicholas Watson's article "John the Monk's Book of the Visions of the Blessed and Undefined Virgin Mary, Mother of God: Two Versions of a Newly-Discovered Ritual Magic Text" in *Conjuring Spirits*, p. 168

¹²Ibid. Watson discusses the rhetorical features of the works in relation to mystical writings of the late middle ages.

prayers he asks permission from the Virgin to write what became the *Liber visionum*. As Fanger points out, the concern he addresses here is whether it is appropriate for him to pursue knowledge, or whether, in this pursuit, he might stray too far into the realm of intellectual curiosity. This sensitivity to subtle moral or theological issues may also have motivated his concern with demonic involvement. Augustine warns against the use of any strange words, and Aquinas rejected the notory art, in part because it employed incomprehensible orations. These may have driven John to remove the *verba ignota* from the Solomonian *Ars notoria* when he produced the *Liber visionum*.¹³ But such a partial accommodation to authority alone would not serve to justify the practices he ultimately promoted.

Fanger regards the *Liber visionum* itself as a record of John's struggles, "part of an active and ongoing theological conversation about an occult practice" in which "his arguments are framed partly in terms of his own direct visionary experience, and partly terms of biblical and doctrinal authority."¹⁴ Certainly, as Fanger suggests, he engages the arguments which major philosophers and doctrinal authorities made. Yet, the word "conversation" implies that his choices were not as opposed as they were. No authority or writer of any stature allowed that the notory art was even potentially legitimate. So, unlike a scribe employing Albert's *Speculum astronomiae*, John necessarily was an outsider attempting to argue his way in. If he was aware of the authoritative statements—and it appears that he was—his choices were, ultimately,

¹³The injunctions against unknown words in magic were common and derive ultimately from Augustine. See for example, Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* 19-21, which appears in Gratian *Decretum* II, ca. XXVI, q. 2, c. vi. As Fanger suggests John may be referring to the *verba ignota* mentioned by Aquinas in *Summa theologiae* Secunda Secundae 96. However, it may also be that John is referring to Augustine or the *ignota linguae nominibus* in the *Speculum Astronomiae* (IX).

¹⁴Fanger, "Plundering," p. 234.

accommodation or defiance. It is understandable then, that he would invoke a higher authority by claiming divine sanction. With visions of the divine as his authority, he had the confidence and the justification to pursue his project. But as Fanger's descriptions suggest, these visions played an active role in his struggles and were not only a justificatory mechanism.

A good example of the important part visions played in the process of rewriting, is the case of the *verba ignota*, the prayers from the Solomonic *Ars notoria* putatively in ancient languages. John removed these when he composed the *Liber visionum*. His autobiographical account gives the strong impression that this was powerfully motivated by the intense dread inspired by the visions these prayers brought on. But the key moment in his narrative account came when an angel demonstrated that these passages were secretly necromantic. Even if we were to assume that the account of this vision is entirely fictitious, it would appear that he was genuinely afraid of these portions of the text. Someone as bold with his unconventional opinions as John of Morigny would not likely have removed these simply due the injunction of authority. If he had wished to retain these portions in some way, then he may well have formulated some justification to do so.

All of this argues that his visionary experiences (whether real or the expression of his personal concerns) were the basis upon which he made his decisions, not, finally, major intellectual figures or authorities. Assuming for the sake of argument that the *Liber visionum* was written in deference to authority alone (which it seems clear it was not), this was not the case with his necromantic work. Necromancy ran counter to church doctrine in every way. In all probability the work was composed in much the same way as the *Liber visionum*, by beginning with existing texts and modifying them or supplementing them based (as he says) on his experience in the art. So in principle, the important issue was personal experience, not wide reading; truth was to be

found in places other than the text itself. Moreover, he could only modify and justify the arts of ritual magic to a certain extent using orthodox sources, beyond that point, he could gain sanction for this work only through direct divine intervention. So let us examine more fully the question of the relation of the written text to the vision, and the status of the vision itself.

John was quite confident that the visions he ultimately achieved were true visions of the divine. Moreover, the account in the *Liber visionum* gives the impression that John was suspicious of the visions inspired by his early work with the Solomonic *Ars notoria*. Yet he is explicit that it was only by his later experiences that he really knew the visions were false and demonically inspired. In one case, he realized later that a vision, which he had taken to be a conversation between the members of the Trinity, was false. If he ultimately became confident that he could distinguish true from false visions, as he implies, he had not always been so. Indeed, a section at the end of the prologue gives instructions on how to distinguish good from bad visions.¹⁵ Evidently, John was not convinced that his readers would have the skill in discernment which he had learned, at least, not when they began to practice the art. All of this makes clear that the process of interpreting visions was a very important matter and, perhaps, much trickier than John let on.¹⁶ That magical practices were frequently transmitted in the form of a text further complicated matters.

John's seems quite sincere in his belief that he had been able to produced a pure and good work, sanctioned as a whole by God. Evidently, he was confident and vocal enough about it to have come to the attention of the authorities, who condemned and burned the work. Yet, in

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 248-49.

¹⁶For a very useful and insightful discussion of the problem of visions and truth, see William A. Christian, Jr., *Apparitions in Late Medieval and Renaissance Spain* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1981).

various ways, his prologue reveals his suspicion of scribes and written works. The *Ars notoria* was a text which had been secretly corrupted. John's injunction that the *Liber visionum* not be changed betrays his concern that the same thing might happen to it. The prologue also emphasizes the authority of vision or divine intervention over any text, even that of the *Liber visionum* itself. Practical visionary experience in the art of necromancy, not wide reading, was what made him able to compose a book on the topic. While he wrote the prayers for the *Liber visionum* himself, it was with eloquence derived from the Virgin. An angelic vision, not study and textual analysis, was what revealed to him the demonic sections of the *Ars notoria*. In all these ways, a suspicious attitude towards texts contrasts strongly with the emphasis on vision and divine intervention as the source of truth. Moreover, in many of these examples, human skill or reason had to be supplemented by divine aid in order to be sufficient to its task.

The emphasis on the centrality of divine intervention and the use of visions are radical enough, that even the text of John's divinely sanctioned work conceivably could be subject to change, despite John's injunction that the reader not alter it. John certainly believed that he had produced an "authoritative" version, and that any changes to the text would be problematic. However, he undercuts this identification of his text with truth, by allowing that it could be changed, based on new revelations from God or the Virgin.¹⁷ John may have done this to give himself an "escape clause," in case the work was deemed heretical. He might have assumed the possibility of scribal errors and that new visions would help the readers to identify them. He also may have done this to formally acknowledge that God or the Virgin had absolute authority over the text (even to the point of revoking its legitimacy), and perhaps, by implication, to demonstrate

¹⁷Nota quod nichil debes agere minuere vel mutare de omnibus que scripsimus tam in orationibus quam in figuris, ymaginationibus et institutionibus, nisi a Deo vel Virgine gloriosa tibi prius fuerit divinitus inspiratum, id est revelatum. Watson, pp. 204-5.

his confidence in the veracity of his *own* visions. Any of these options argue that John was sincere about the effectiveness and goodness of his methods. This is particularly the case, since it results in some considerable ambiguity over the status of the volume he has written. For the reader, it severs the authority from the written text itself. Because he left the door open for changes to be made to the text based upon further revelations, strictly speaking, the text could only be regarded as authoritative when John prepared it. In fact, given the copying habits of scribes of ritual magic (like the ones who John claimed had altered the *Ars notoria*), the chances were good that many different versions of the "authoritative" text might appear, each putatively derived through divine intervention and each different from the others. His claim that devious scribes had secretly woven necromantic incantations into the Solomonic *Ars notoria* does not inspire the same confidence in the received texts that it does in the original. So what were later copyists to think about the version *they* had? Presumably John assumed that their own visions would provide evidence for the book's legitimacy or that further visions of the Virgin would in some manner confirm it.

John's struggle to discover the truth in the texts of ritual magic and in his visionary experiences, and the manner in which he found it (at least in the short term), are definitive of the problems and solutions of scribes across the whole spectrum of ritual magic. The text John originally employed did not suit his purposes, because it appeared to be demonic magic. The basis upon which he made this decision had to do with his awareness of authoritative teachings, but also his own religious sensibilities, concerns, and visionary experiences. It was in vision, prayer, and ritual that he found some surety. In short, he appealed—once again—to the very things which previously had rendered some very frightening experiences for him, the numinous features of human experience. His own deception by demons and his efforts to help his readers avoid this pitfall emphasize the problems inherent in this return. Unlike the case of the *Speculum*

astronomiae and scholastic image magic, John's personal attempt to create an orthodox version of the notory art could not, ultimately, appeal to any unified textual authority. It follows that his efforts to revise the notory art had to be an original formulation, peculiar to him. This only added to the confusion of voices characteristic of this genre. Moreover, the way the *Liber visionum* was transformed legitimizes, if it does not demand, visionary confirmation or elaboration by later scribes. In fact, it appears that, in time, John's text *was* altered.¹⁸ And so it goes.

¹⁸For example, the McMaster version (Hamilton, McMaster University Library, Unnumbered MS) includes a section on the making of a magical ring. See Watson, pp. 206-215.

Chapter 4

The *Ars notoria* and *Liber Sacer*

The discovery of a version of the *Liber visionum* by Nicholas Watson in a manuscript at McMaster University prompted an upwelling of scholarly activity surrounding the literature of these kinds of visionary "technologies."¹⁹ The fascinating convergence of magical traditions and mysticism in these texts, especially in the *Liber visionum*, often passes very close indeed to legitimate Christian practice. While the orthodoxy of these practices may justifiably be questioned, the essentially religious flavour, intentions, and goals cannot. The case of John of Morigny offers a profoundly interesting example of a visionary and religious life bound up with the traditions of both the notory art and necromancy.

So little work has been done on the notory art topic in the past that each year yields substantial amounts of new evidence. As a result, the conclusions of this section must be considered tentative. For example, when I undertook the research for this project, the *Liber visionum* had not yet been discovered. Even after the discovery, several years passed before Claire Fanger found that CLM 276 and Graz 680 contained fuller and earlier versions of the text. Only then did the truly fascinating features of the *Liber visionum* come to light. With the autobiographical details and the new manuscripts, it was now possible to understand a good deal about the practice of the notory art and how it was written, re-written, and transmitted. It was also possible to identify John with a known condemnation. Many more copies may well surface in time. The search for manuscripts also continues to locate previously unknown witnesses of the Solomonic and other versions. Our exploration here must, therefore, be particularly cautious.

¹⁹The collection of articles in Claire Fanger, ed., *Conjuring Spirits*, includes articles by Nicholas Watson and Claire Fanger on the *Liber visionum* and articles by Richard Kieckhefer and Robert Mathiesen on the *Liber sacer*. Klaassen, "Manuscripts," treats both of these texts and Camille, "Art," treats manuscripts of the Solomonic *Ars notoria*.

1. The Notory Art

The *Ars notoria* ascribes its authority to Solomon. It elaborates upon the account in II Chronicles 1: 9-12 and II Kings 3: 11-12, where God appears to Solomon in the night. Amongst other things Solomon has asked for he is granted *sapientia, scientia et intelligencia*.²⁰ That a wider group of people might expect these kind of gifts from God is suggested by Daniel 1: 17, where God endows Daniel and the four children with intellectual gifts, or Luke 21: 15, where Christ promises to endow certain Christians with the gift of wisdom. A story in the *Dialogus miraculorum* of Caesarius of Heisterbach attests to the currency of these kinds of ideas in the later middle ages. A priest is given the gift of preaching in his sleep.²¹ The commentary on this miracle refers back to the biblical story of Solomon. In a similar way, the *Ars notoria* seeks the acquisition of knowledge and/or other special gifts, such as rhetorical skills, through a programme of prayers, rituals, and meditations employing complex drawings. It is from these drawings, or *notae*, that the art derives its name.

Some necromantic emulations of the notory art exist, and one sixteenth century necromantic manual includes a Solomonic *Ars notoria*.²² However, the genre was generally

²⁰Technically, Solomon asks for *sciencia et sapiencia* and is given *sapiencia et intelligencia*. The *Glossa Ordinaria* overlooks this and uses all three words to designate what God bestowed upon Solomon. The *Glossa Ordinaria* is silent about the issue of acquiring knowledge in this way. *Glossa Ordinaria* ad. II Philo. 1-12 (Lyra ed.), 1139-1140.

²¹Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus Miraculorum*, 10, 4. Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogue on Miracles*, transl. H. von E. Scott. (London: G. Routledge, 1929), vol 2., p. 174; Caesarii Heisterbacensis, *Dialogus Miraculorum*, ed. Joseph Strange (Bruxelles: J. M. Heberle, 1851), p. 217.

²²For a necromantic emulation see Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites*, p. 193-196; CLM 849, ff. 3r-5v. The sixteenth century necromantic collection, Sloane 3853, also contains prayers from the Solomonic *Ars notoria* at ff. 159v-174v.

confined to more innocent procedures and goals than necromancy. Analyses and condemnations of this form of magic may regard the art as demonic, but they do not confuse it with necromancy or image magic. Rather, they tend to restrict themselves to the question of whether it is possible and appropriate to acquire knowledge or skills through prayers, fasts, and figures.²³ Although not all forms of the art employ figures—or even *cogitationes* as John of Morigny has done—all restrict themselves to the acquisition of intellectual gifts and knowledge.²⁴ So, despite its name, the defining feature of the notory art is not so much the use of *notae*, as the goal of spiritual and intellectual enlightenment.

a) An Underground Classic

The notory art makes up a portion of the magical texts of the middle ages quite out of proportion to the small amount of attention it has received. For example, E. M. Butler's discussion of ritual magic makes no mention of it and Lynn Thorndike's discussion runs only to a paragraph.²⁵ Amongst the surviving manuscripts, texts from this group recur quite frequently. An un-systematic search of Western European Catalogues turns up almost fifty fourteenth- through sixteenth-century manuscripts. At least six of these are of British origin or provenance.²⁶ British medieval library catalogues tell a similar tale where this text is listed almost as many times as all

²³For example Aquinas' condemnation of the art is based upon his demonstration that demons cannot illuminate the intellect although they may be able to relate some small portions of the sciences in words. *Summa Theologia*, *Secundae secunda*, Quaest. 96, Art. 1.

²⁴Sloane 3853, f. 159v-174v contains an *Ars notoria* which does not include figures or descriptions of them.

²⁵HMES II, 281-283.

²⁶See Appendix II.

other texts of more explicitly ritual magic put together. To this point, I have found seven notices, for a total of thirteen.²⁷ Its continuing significance through the sixteenth century is attested by numerous manuscript versions written in that century.²⁸ It was also condemned by name in the indices of Milan and Venice of 1554 as a category parallel to necromancy.²⁹ In the seventeenth century, it appeared in print in a Latin edition and an English translation,³⁰ In time, more

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸See Appendix IV.

²⁹London, British Library, Harley 181 contains three different versions of the genre. London, British Library, Sloane 3853 is a necromantic collection in which I have identified a previously unknown version. Oxford, Bodleian, Ashmole 1515 contains an attempt at a translation of the Solomonic text. I discuss all these examples in chapter six.

For the condemnations of the notory art, see J. M. De Bujand, *Index de Venise 1549, Venise et Milan 1554*, Index des Livres Interdits, vol. III, (Sherbrooke: Centre d'Etudes de la Renaissance, 1987), pp.412 and 434. See also, HMES, VI, 146.

³⁰A printed version of an *Ars notoria*, not the version in Bodley 951, appears in at least four early seventeenth century editions of the *Opera omnia* of Cornelius Agrippa.

Three editions of Agrippa's *Opera omnia* may be traced to the Beringi at Lyons. Each of these contains the *Ars notoria*. The first line of the preface differs in each: "Non dubito, quem titulus Libri no" (Lyons, [Lugduni] Beringi fratri, [16??] A); "Non dubito quin titulus Libri nostri de Occul-" (Lyons, [Lugduni] Beringi fratri, [16??] B); and "Non dubito quin titulus libri nostri de Occulta." (Lyons, [Lugduni] Beringi fratri, [16??] C). See John Ferguson. *Bibliographical Notes on the Treatises De occulta philosophia and De incertitudine et vanitate scientiarum* of Cornelius Agrippa. Privately Published by the Edinburgh Bibliographical Society (vol. XII), 1924. A copy of this rare volume (25 printed) may be found at Robarts Library, University of Toronto. Ferguson's search was not exhaustive and there may well be further editions.

One, possibly two, editions of Agrippa's *Opera Omnia* were published by Zetzner in Strasburg in the early sixteenth century. The *Ars notoria* was not only amongst the texts included with Agrippa's works, but was evidently deemed important enough to advertise its presence on the title page. While these volumes have been attributed to the Beringi - and indeed the title page of the first volume employs the Beringi seal and claims Lyons as the place of publication - the device and motto of Zetzner appear on p. 135 of the Appendix. I have examined a single codex containing volume one, volume two, and the Appendix (Strasburg, Zetzner, 1605A). John Fergusson has examined a similar (perhaps the same edition) in which two of the three volumes appear as separate codices (Strasburg, Zetzner, [n.d] 16?? and Strasburg, Zetzner, 1605B). This, and a discrepancy between his description and the volume I have seen suggest two editions rather than one. See John Ferguson, *Bibliographic Notes on the Treatises De occulta philosophia and De incertitudine et vanitate scientiarum of Cornelius Agrippa*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh

manuscripts may surface, either having been catalogued as works on notarial abbreviations (the cataloguer having confused *ars notaria* with *ars notoria*).³¹ or, as in the case of the McMaster Manuscript, having been thought to be prayer formularies. Why then, would the notory art have such a low profile relative to necromancy or other forms of magic?

The low profile of the notory art in modern examinations of medieval magic may be explained by its relatively harmless intents. We have few records of prosecutions for using or possessing a work of the notory art³² as opposed to the relatively frequent occurrence of prosecutions for the possession of works of necromancy which were frequently associated with seditious plots. This is not surprising. The notory art posed no threat to anyone other than the operator, except insofar as it might be heretical or encourage interest in even more dubious forms of magic. In addition, its practices did not appeal to the prurient interests so often motivating discussions of magic. In part, no doubt, this also explains why the *Ars notoria* did not find its way into literary and artistic representations of magical practice, which are taken up almost entirely with conjuring. Representations of necromancers were, more than often, a vehicle for discussing

Bibliographical Society, 1924), pp. 19-21.

For an English translation, related to the version contained in Bodley 951 see, *Ars Notoria; The notary art of Solomon, shewing the cabalistical key of magical operations...* translated by Robert Turner (London: Cottrel, 1657) (Wing T3326).

³¹In the list of books case Warden Richard Fitzjames borrowed from Merton College Library may be found an *ars notaria*. The first word of the second folio is given as "haybala" making it unlikely that this text concerns notarial abbreviations. F.M. Powicke, *The Medieval Books of Merton College* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1931), p. 213.

³²John of Morigny's condemnation for heresy likely resulted from the fact that he published his 'findings' verbally and in manuscript form. For a discussion of the condemnation see Watson, p. 163-64 and Fanger, "Plundering", p. 222-25. See also *Les Grandes Chroniques de France*, ed. Jules Viard, (Paris: Société de l'histoire de France, 1920-53), vol. 9 (1937), pp. 23-24

hell, the devil, demons, and immanence of evil and divine retribution, providing a colourful context and plenty of dramatic material.

The situation may also be explained—even justified—by the fact that its survival rates, relative to necromancy, were higher, making them appear more prominent in our survey of manuscripts than they were. Like short necromantic experiments, a common way for short works on the notory art to survive was to be tucked away in a larger collection. Such is the case with a number of examples in this survey.³³ Of the volumes dedicated solely to magical practice, it seems likely that larger manuscripts of the notory art had a higher chance of surviving than similarly large necromantic volumes. In part this has to do with the generally higher quality of the manuscripts. Survival would also have been improved by the relatively innocuous nature of the art. The operations involve angels, not demons, and they do not seek transitive effects, but only effects upon the operator. The frequently beautiful and moving prayers also belie the more instrumental features of the text, so that they were sometimes mistaken for prayer formularies.³⁴ This is not the case with necromantic experiments, which are easily identifiable by the presence of magic circles or other figures and by lines like, "*Coniuro vos spiritus maligni....*" Its relative harmlessness also would have made it less worrisome to catalogue, hence the large number of medieval notices. So, for a wide variety of reasons, the ars notoria stood a better chance of being recorded in a catalogue, or of surviving in manuscript, than a necromantic collection. It follows that we cannot assume that the larger number of survivals indicate that this practice was more popular than any other form of ritual magic.

³³See for example to collection of Richard Dove, Sloane 513, discussed below.

³⁴This was the case with the manuscript of the first version of the *Liber visionum* discovered by Nicholas Watson, Hamilton, McMaster University Library, Unnumbered MS.

Nonetheless, its considerable manuscript presence is paralleled by a large and independent presence in medieval descriptions of magic. The frequency with which it was treated by writers in the later middle ages indicates its currency in late medieval conceptions of magic. Amongst those who discuss or condemn this text are, Michael Scot, Thomas Aquinas, Peter Abano, Giovanni da Fontana, Nichole Oresme, James the Carthusian, Dionysius the Carthusian, Thomas Ebendorfer, Vincent of Beauvais, Augustinus Triumphus, and Trithemius.³⁵ It would not be hard to multiply such references and this alone suggests its importance, whatever the relative survival rates may have been. In addition, its putatively holy intentions and methods posed a different set of problems for the commentators than necromancy did so that its independent treatment was more than a formal division.³⁶ Unquestionably, this text has received a good deal less attention than it merits from historians of the middle ages and early modern period alike.

b. Transmission and the Shorter Versions

It is difficult at this time to make any general comments about the texts of this genre. It would appear that the original text, or texts, have Hebraic roots and connect themselves directly

³⁵Michael Scot, *Introduction to Astrology*. Bodleian 266. f. 2 and 20 v; Aquinas, *Summa, Secundae secunda*, Quest. 96, Art. I; Peter of Abano, *Conciliator*, Diff. 156 and *Lucidiator*, BN 2598, fol. 101r, "ars dicta notaria fortunati (HMES II, 903-4); Giovanni da Fontana, S Marco VIII, 72 (Valentinelli, XI, 93), fol 26r. (HMES IV, 171.); Nicole Oresme, *De divinationibus* (HMES III, 420-421); On James the Carthusian, see HMES IV, 287; On Dionysius the Carthusian, see HMES IV, 291-3; Thomas Ebendorfer, HMES IV, 295; Vincent, of Beauvais, *Speculum quadruplex; sive, Speculum maius*. (Graz, Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1964-65.) [facsimile reprint of B. Belleri, 1624.], III, cviii, 3, col. 1117; Trithemius makes the claim that "he had written a book giving an occult method by which a person totally ignorant of Latin could learn in an hour's time to write anything he wished in that language." HMES VI, 439.

³⁶See for example Aquinas' treatment of the *Ars notoria* as an independent problem. *Summa theologiae* Secunda Secundae, 96.

with the figure of Solomon.³⁷ It was the Solomonic version which first occupied the interests of John of Morigny, and it was in relation to this text that he composed the *Liber visionum*. A number of abbreviated, adapted, or entirely new versions may also be found, especially in the sixteenth century. These are treated in the third section of this study. Many, like Sloane 3008, and the version found in Sloane 513, the collection of the monk Richard Dove,³⁸ are quite short, running to only a folio in length. In general terms, these, like the longer versions of the notory art have to do with the acquisition of knowledge or intellectual skills such as memory.

In my sample of manuscripts, these shorter versions tend to travel in company similar to that of images: works of astrology, alchemy, natural philosophy, mathematics, and in the case of the collection of Richard Dove, monk at Buckfast, physiognomy and chiromancy. The notory art rarely travels with works of necromancy prior to 1500.³⁹ Yet there is comparatively little astrological content in any of the versions I have described here, from which it might be inferred that the scribes did not associate the art with ideas about natural magic as they did in the case of

³⁷ Marie Thérèse d'Alverny traces the text to monastic origins in the twelfth century and ultimately to the Judaic roots. Marie Thérèse d'Alverny, "Récréation monastiques: les couteaux à manche d'ivoire," in *Receuil des travaux offert à M. Clovis Brunel* (Paris: Société de l'école des Chartres, 1955), vol. I, p. 19. The same author's "Survivance del la magie Antique" in *Antike und Orient im Mittelalter: Miscellanea Mediaevalia* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1962), pp. 157-9, discusses a manuscript from Limoges (Paris BN MS. Lat. 3713) containing symbols like the 'sceau de Salomon'.

³⁸D. A. Bell, "A Cistercian at Oxford: Richard Dove of Buckfast and London," *Studia Monastica* 31 (1989) 67-87.

³⁹A work of necromancy appears together with a work on the notory art in an indenture to the Library at Merton College in 1483. Given the first word of the second folio (*haybala*) this must be a work of the notory art. F. M. Powicke, *Merton College*, pp. 213-15. The work appears in Erghome's compendium of superstitious works (York, Austin Friars A8, 362) but also appears in another of his volumes (York, Austin Friars A8, 371) with works on natural philosophy and experiments. Sloane 3853, analyzed below contains a shortened Solomonic *Ars notoria*. See chapter 6.

works of image magic. Certainly, Albertus Magnus' criterion that the images used must be of an astrological variety could not be used to justify use of *notae*. Given that al-Kindi's theories were developed principally to justify the effectiveness of magical incantations, in particular, words putatively deriving from pristine languages, they might be applicable here. Yet the verbal formulas are meant to be prayers, and so, unlike al-Kindi's magical words, technically are not meant to achieve an automatic response. While it is not impossible that these texts were conceived of in similar terms to texts of image magic, this seems unlikely. That the texts of the notory art make no such pretensions tends to confirm this. A more credible interpretation of the evidence would be that these versions of the *Ars notoria* interested a group of people similar to those who were attracted to image magic. For example, the short notory art which appears in Sloane 513 may have been collected as part of a larger interest in divination. It is also possible, in the case of small versions not appearing with other magical texts, that the small size allowed the text to be included as a novelty.

Whatever may have motivated the scribes to collect them in the first place, the reasons they have survived relate to the codices that contained them, not the texts themselves. Two (Sloane 513 and 3008) and possibly three (Ashmole 1416) of these shorter versions survive. By comparison, only one longer version of the text survives which can be connected with a medieval British collector (Bodley 951). This strongly suggests that the smaller versions are over-represented in this sample, due to higher survival rates. The four references from medieval catalogues, all of which appear to be of the longer sort, also suggest that the longer version was much more numerous than the current survivals would indicate.

c. Bodley 951 and the Solomonic *Ars notoria*

From an analysis of the Turner Edition and CLM 276, Fanger has suggested a tentative general structure for the Solomonic *Ars notoria*, recognizing that both of these texts are late, and may themselves be compilations from different sources. These texts are composed of three parts. The first part treats exercises called the "generals," i.e. rituals for memory, eloquence, understanding, and perseverance, and the prayers which strengthen them. The second part treats exercises called the "specials," which pursue the seven liberal arts (trivium and quadrivium), philosophy, and theology. Each has its requisite prayer accompanying a *nota*, which is a graphic representation of the prayer. Fanger mentions a third part as well, the *nova ars*. This, she suggests, may be a deviant version of part one, as it also contains prayers for strengthening memory, eloquence, and understanding. The practice of the notory art involves the repetition of these prayers under certain lunar conditions, and at certain times of the day. The *notae* are to be employed in conjunction with these prayers and meditated upon. Some of the prayers are composed in Latin, others in what purports to be transliterated Greek, Hebrew, and Syriac. Like the *Liber sacer*, which we will examine presently, the procedure for the art would take some time to complete, probably well over a week, assuming it was possible to complete each stage successfully. Presumably one would progress from the generals through the seven liberal arts, and then conclude with the acquisition of philosophy and theology.

Our premier example of a late medieval *ars notoria* manuscript is Bodley 951, a fifteenth-century large folio manuscript (12 1/8 by 17 1/8 inches) running to 21 folios. The text of Bodley 951, which belongs to the Solomonic variety of the notory art, is not complete. The first quire contains the beginning of the *Ars notoria* in a two-column format with a formal, two-column, framing gloss. The gloss is a legitimate one with lemmata preceding commentary on the text. A

catchword at the end of the first quire (8v) does not match up with the following page, suggesting a lost quire. 'Notes' for all seven liberal arts, philosophy, and theology may be found in the following gatherings. Palaeographic elements suggest the manuscript may be Germanic in origin.⁴⁰

The dramatic size of the manuscript is matched by the fabulously complex figures in the second half. They are executed in colour and frequently fill the entire large folio pages. The notes are superficially similar to necromantic figures of the kind used in conjuring, but unlike necromantic figures, these "notes" usually take the form of a formalized presentation of a given prayer. They are also considerably more complex and required a high level of skill to execute. In one instance a prayer is written in a thin line of text which spirals outwards from the centre of a circle to over 12 inches in diameter.⁴¹ In other cases the prayers are written in complex connected globes resembling cabalist trees. It must have required a considerable amount of time to design the pages and to match the prayers to the size of the various shapes that were to contain them.

The glossed text contained in the first quire is another interesting feature. The size of the document gives it a powerful and sophisticated appearance, especially when contrasted with the small, scrawled necromantic collections of the period. Fanger has noted that the text of part one appears to be composed of two texts, one ritual, the other discursive. In particular, she notes that the person of the author shifts from Appolonius to someone speaking about him. In Bodley 951, the ritual section is the main text and this is glossed. It does not appear that the Turner edition, which Fanger has employed, was based upon this manuscript. At least, I have not been able to identify any passage in the gloss which also appears in Turner. Nonetheless, it may well be that

⁴⁰ Long and very fine finial strokes on the letters suggest German origin. In addition, the typically Germanic abbreviation for "est" appears in the gloss (a vertical jagged line).

⁴¹Oxford, Bodleian, Bodley 951, f. 9r.

Turner's source document was structured in this way. Converting a glossed text to a single text could result in the rather confusing arrangement in the Turner edition. The "discursive" sections would, thus, derive from a gloss. A German manuscript of the notory art also, apparently, contains a gloss.⁴² So Bodley 951 is not an isolated example.

While this manuscript is singular in its size and complexity, another lengthy version of the *Ars notoria*, Sloane 1712, is similarly continental and accompanied by complex colour images. Michael Camille has analyzed the illustrations in two other similar volumes, Turin, Biblioteca Nazionale E. G. 13 and BN lat. 9336.⁴³ Bodley 951 is now a solitary traveller and, given its size, probably always has been. Sloane 1712, which contains two works on the notory art, is also now unaccompanied by other texts, although there is no indication that they had always been thus. What is clear from all of these manuscripts is that a great deal of time, effort, and possibly money, were devoted to their production, a clear indication that they were taken very seriously.⁴⁴ Certainly no manuscript of a magical text I have ever examined, other than an *Ars notoria*, takes as much care with its production as Bodley 951.⁴⁵

Fanger has noted John of Morigny owned a deluxe volume, and she has speculated that Thomas Aquinas probably had access to one.⁴⁶ So this would appear to be not only a common

⁴²Kues, Hospitals zu Cues 216.

⁴³Michael Camille, "Visual Art," pp. 110-39.

⁴⁴It is interesting to note that one of the grounds mentioned for the condemnation of John of Morigny was the excessive concern he had with the production of the book and the cost of such a production. *Les Grandes Chroniques de France*, pp. 23-24.

⁴⁵Only Royal 12 A. XLII, a version of the Sworn Book of Honorius comes close to these. Robert Mathiesen has suggested that this manuscript was probably written in the sixteenth century.

⁴⁶Fanger, "Plundering," pp. 222-25.

feature of the manuscripts of this genre, but a particularly important one. The requirement that the figures be used for contemplative purposes might serve to promote this kind of presentation. A monastic setting might have furnished the resources for the production of this kind of manuscript. But more significantly, the monastic tendency to associate scribal activities with devotion make this a logical location for such a production to take place. The appearance of the text was clearly regarded as an important feature of its numinous properties. The visual power of such a manuscript is also considerable, if due only to its size. Finally, the sense of danger in owning such a self-consciously executed volume, whose contents would be relatively easily identifiable, might imbue the work with a certain power as well. That all of these features associated the volume with the numinous was, no doubt, the intention of the scribes and collectors.

d. The Ars Notoria and the Monks at St Augustine's Abbey at Canterbury

A fifteenth century owner of Bodley 951, Simon Maidestone, was very likely a monk of the same name of the Abbey of St Augustine at Canterbury. None of his other books which are identified in the medieval catalogue of that library betray any interest in magic. One contains Maidestone's copy of a gloss on Paul's Epistle, a *Summa* also from his own pen, and a *repertorium biblie*.⁴⁷ The argument that Maidestone was the owner of this volume is strengthened, not so much by his own books, as by the occurrence of the notory art amongst the collections of two other monks of the same abbey. At least two versions of this text⁴⁸ also appear in the Library of St Augustine's at Canterbury in the collection of John of London and Michael

⁴⁷Canterbury, St Augustine's Abbey 209, 1616, and 1791.

⁴⁸St Augustine's Abbey, 1603 which might be a duplicate copy or entry of St Augustine's Abbey, 1538.

Northgate. Both of these collectors also had an interest in image magic, and we have discussed their collections in Part I. So it would appear that the community of monks interested in magic at St Augustine's, which David Pingree has identified, was somewhat larger than he has suggested. It also appears that their magical interests were broader and included the *Ars notoria*, as well as Arabic image magic.

Both John of London and Michael Northgate were collectors of the standard texts of image magic. This raises the question of the relation of the notory art to image magic and also to the wider set of interests in which image magic was generally located. We have already argued that the notory art cannot be justified in the same way that a text of image magic might. Certainly no major theologian or philosopher had suggested such practices might be legitimate. In addition, those elements of the notory art which might connect it with other works of *naturalia*, such as the observance of astrological conditions, are minor parts of the procedures. Further, the Solomonic version employs not only figures, but also lengthy and incomprehensible "prayers." This would make it impossible to justify according to Albert's astrological criteria. Whatever the reason for collecting these texts might have been, it probably had little to do with the theoretical interests which underlay the collection of image magic. But let us turn to an example which would appear to challenge this statement.

John of London, a monk of St Augustine's, Canterbury sometime in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century owned the following volume.⁴⁹

de miraculis beate marie virginis
Item quaedam extrauagancia de papis
Item de sermonibus quedam
Item ars notoria Salomonis

⁴⁹On the identity of this monk, probably known to Roger Bacon, see Montague Rhodes James, *Ancient Libraries*, p. lxxxvii.

Item liber de anulo Salomonis
 Item tractatus de lepra et cura eius
 Item ciromancia in Gallico secundum iij translationes cum omnibus characteribus et
 varietatibus figuratorum pictis⁵⁰

In this volume, we find both the *De anulo Salomonis*, a work of image magic, and works on medicine and divination, topics commonly appearing in collections containing image magic. The treatise on rings was one Albertus Magnus regarded as belonging to the better of the two detestable varieties of image magic.⁵¹ At the same time the texts directly preceding the *Ars notoria*, in particular the sermons and the text on the miracles of the virgin, are also common companions of the notory art. Another example is the next volume we will examine, and this is also a common configuration amongst the continental manuscripts.⁵² In the end, the volume is clearly a miscellany and while it may be indicative of John's broader interests it cannot be taken as a strong example of a collection consciously assembled by him on thematic lines. The same cannot be said of our next example.

Michael Northgate was the owner of Oxford, Corpus Christi 221, a volume which I have argued may be an indication of a link between pastoral interests and magical images. For the most part his collection reflects the usual combination of image magic with scientific and medical topics. The catalogue of the Library of St Augustine's also records as once his, codex 767, which includes prayers extracted from an *Ars notoria*.

⁵⁰Canterbury, St Augustine's Abbey 1603. This entry appears to be duplicated in entry 1538 of the same library.

⁵¹*Speculum astronomiae*, 11.23 (Zambelli, p. 240-41). HMES II 699.

⁵²See for example, Graz, Universitätsbibliothek 680, which contains a wide range of devotional material, including sermons, in addition to a copy of the *Liber visionum* of John of Morigny. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Lyell 51, ff. 86-120, contains a section in a fifteenth-century Austrian hand which includes what appears to be the *Ars memorativa* together with sermons, the *Ars predicandi*, a work on the virtues and vices, and a section of the *Ars Brevis* of Ramon Lull.

Liber catholice fidei editus a beato Augustino anglorum apostolo qui vocatur Manuale et in eodem libro (pseudo-Augustine)⁵³

Stimulus amoris (James of Milan or Walter Hilton)⁵⁴

Angeli[s]ca [ieromancie] ierarchie (poss. pseudo-Dionysius - the suggested exclusions derive from the M. R. James ed. of the catalogue and suggest this reading)⁵⁵

Bartholomei de Ripa Romea Oraciones extracte de arte notoria

Oratio ad spiritum sanctum et incipit *veni creator*

Memoria passionis dominice

Oratio missa a beata Maria sancto mauricio parisiensis episcopo [Maurice of Sully, 1120-1196?]⁵⁶

Oratio ad sanctam appolloniam pro dolore dencium

Orationes spirituales

Confessio generalis

Quod homo debet preparare se ad recipiendam corpus christi et liber de confessione nouiciorum⁵⁷

One need not analyze this codex in detail to recognize its generally devotional nature. It includes a variety of devotional and religious works in addition to several compilations of prayers. This sort of context is consistent with continental examples of the notory art and strongly suggests that it

⁵³ A text attributed to Augustinus, "Manuale de salute sive aspiratione animae ad deum" appears in several early modern editions. There is a single, limited edition modern reprint. *Alost in Flandria anno M.CCCC.LXXIII : facsimile van de drie oudste Zuidnederlandse drukken Aalst 1473*, intro., K. Heireman (Aalst: Dirk Martenscomite, 1973.)

⁵⁴ This work by the late thirteenth-century Franciscan, James of Milan, previously was attributed to Bonaventure. A fourteenth-century reworking of the text was produced by the English mystic, Walter Hilton. See *Opera omnia sancti Bonaventurae*, ed. Adolphe C. Peltier, (Paris: L. Vives, 1864-71), vol. XII, pp. 631-703. Walter Hilton, *Stimulus divini amoris : that is, The goad of divine love, very proper and profitable for all devout*, (London : R. & T. Washbourne, 1907); Walter Hilton, *The goad of love : an unpublished translation of the Stimulus amori, formerly attributed to St. Bonaventure*, ed. Clare Kirchberber, 42 (London, Faber and Faber 1952).

⁵⁵ For a modern edition, see Pseudo-Dionysius, the Areopagite, *De caelesti hierarchia*, ed. P. Hendrix (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1959).

⁵⁶ B. Gams, O.S.B., *Series Episcoporum Ecclesiae Catholicae*, (Leipzig: Verlag, 1931), v. 2.

⁵⁷ James, *Ancient Libraries*, p. 276.

was conceived as bearing some relation to religious or devotional material.⁵⁸ A few further comments should be made about this codex before we pass on.

The fact that the prayers are extracted might be taken to indicate that the original magical purposes of the text are no longer present. The prayers of the Solomonic *Ars notoria* are, for the most part, very orthodox in content. In fact, if one were to encounter them independent of their original magical context, one would not be able to distinguish them from any other Christian prayer. For example, Sloane 3853 contains prayers extracted from the Solomonic version of the text. One of the prayers ends as follows.

And you, who are my God, who, in the beginning, created the heavens, the earth, and everything from nothing, who formed everything in your spirit, fulfil, restore, and heal my soul, that I might glorify you through every work of my thoughts and words. God, Father, confirm my prayer and augment my intellect and my memory to undertake your blessed vision with my little living body and to perceive your more than lofty and eternal essence, you who live and reign forever.⁵⁹

A prayer of this flavour would be quite at home in Northgate's codex and, indeed, in any orthodox Christian setting. Yet, Sloane 3853 also contains prayers written in *verba ignota*, making it easily identifiable as a version of the notory art and as a magical work. We have no way of knowing if these more dubious "prayers" appeared in Northgate's volume. Even if none of the prayers in

⁵⁸See for example, Erfurt, Wissenschaftliche Bibliothek, Amplon. Quarto 28. Which contains, amongst other material, a work on the seven virtues and a treatise on the *Lords Prayer*. Interestingly the codex also includes a treatise on the *ars dictamini*. Graz, Universitätsbibliothek 1016, contains books two to four of Lombard's *Sentences* and, interestingly, an exegetical note on Exodus 20: 20 on sacrificing to false gods. See also the examples discussed above, n. 52, Graz, Universitätsbibliothek 680 and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Lyell 51, ff. 86-120.

⁵⁹Et tu, qui es deus meus, qui in principio creasti celum et terram et omnia ex nichilo, qui in spiritu tuo omnia reformas, comple, instaura, sana animam meam, ut glorificem te per omnia opera cogitationum mearum et verborum meorum. Deus, pater, orationem meam confirma, et intellectum meum auge, et memoriam meam ad suscipiendam beatam visionem tuam meo vivente corpusculo et ad cognoscendam super excelsam et super eternam tuam essenciam, qui viuis et regnas per infinita secula seculorum. f. 162 v.

unknown languages were found in this volume, it remains that the catalogue openly cites the source of the prayers as an *Ars notoria*. So it is unlikely that they appear here simply because they were nice prayers.

A number of features of this collection suggest more involved magical interests. A general confession was an integral part of most forms of ritual magic.⁶⁰ One could only pursue these forms of magical exercises in a state of purity. The presence of the work on confession for novitiates tends to make this less likely, although it could have been included in the codex in the same gathering as the general confession. The prayer for a toothache similarly suggests a collection which may have had more instrumental purposes than an ordinary devotional collection. Finally, the name Bartholomeus de Ripa Romea is associated with magical topics. A collection of works on magical stones and images usually attributed to Albertus Magnus, appears in Wellcome 110 under the name, Bartholomeus de Rippa Romea. He is also cited in the sixteenth century on this topic.⁶¹

The apparent presence of the *Celestial Hierarchy* of Pseudo-Dionysius in this codex argues much more powerfully that it concerned itself with the instrumental features of angelic magic or devotion. The first three chapters of this work concern human and heavenly hierarchies.

⁶⁰For example a prayer of confession appears in Rawlinson D. 252, ff. 49r-50r as part of preparations for necromantic rituals. See Ch. 5, sect. 4. b.

⁶¹Thorndike notes that the name Bartholomaeus de Ripa Romea also appears amongst the authorities cited by Camilo Lunardi in his 1502 work *Speculum lapidum* (Venice: G. G. Sessa, 1502), although he tentatively connects the name with Bartholomew of England, HM-S VI, p. 310. London, Wellcome 116, pp. 1-37, contains a work on stones and images for stones attributed to Bartholomaeus de Ripa Romea. The material is actually drawn directly from the *De mineralibus* by Albertus Magnus, and *De lapidibus*, attributed to him. The fourteenth century date and English origin of the manuscript are not incompatible with Thorndike's suggestion. However, the fact that the work is drawn directly from Albert and not from Bartholomew of England's encyclopedia, *De proprietatibus rerum*, suggests that de Ripa Romea may well have been a different person.

In particular, the work concerns itself with enlightenment, which is passed through the spiritual ranks in order to uplift all to the imitation of God.⁶² A particularly interesting facet of this work is its concern with the use of apparently incongruous images as the appropriate means to access the divine.⁶³ The parallels with the angels of the notory art (who communicate heavenly gifts) and the meditative exercises are obvious. Even the pseudo-Dionysius' discussion of images might be regarded as having bearing upon the *notae* of the notory art. So it would not appear coincidental that they occur side by side in this volume. If the full title given in the catalogue, "Angelisca ieromancie ierarchie," does not refer to the work by pseudo-Dionysius, the word "ieromancie" is very suggestive of the practices of the notory art, perhaps meaning something like divination from the divine. In this case we may have the record of two works of the notory art here.

Another work also suggests the volume may have been assembled due to a coherent set of interests relating to the notory art. *Stimulus amoris* is the title of a work by the Franciscan James of Milan which concerns meditative exercises. Unaware of the present codex, Nicholas Watson has compared this text to the *cogitationes* which John of Morigny presents in the *Liber visionum* in place of the *notae*.⁶⁴ John advises the reader to meditate upon these *cogitationes* in much the

⁶²Paul Roren, *Pseudo-Dionysius; A commentary on the texts and an introduction to their influence*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 47-58. See in particular, *Celestial Hierarchy* 3, for angelic enlightenment.

⁶³Chapter 2 is entitled "That divine and heavenly things are appropriately revealed, even through dissimilar symbols." In an elaboration of his apophatic theology, pseudo-Dionysius argues that incongruous images are more effective for contemplative efforts, especially for the inexperienced, because they do not lead one astray. Less startling images might lead one to assuming that God was, in fact, literally like them, by definition a false assumption. It should be clear, however, that Pseudo-Dionysius principally discusses scriptural imagery. Roren, pp. 57-8 and 73.

⁶⁴Watson, "John the Monk," p. 174. It should be noted that Watson was not aware of this manuscript record when he made this astute comparison.

same way the original text suggests meditations on the *notae*.⁶⁵ It is conceivable that the current volume represents a project like that of John of Morigny, in which the *notae* were stripped out to be replaced by cogitationes. It is also possible that Northgate (or the prior collector/scribe) recognized the parallels between the works and combined them for this reason. As the notory art was relatively well known, it is unlikely that this was done in ignorance of the work's magical contents. So, although the precise contents, and the spirit in which they were collected, are unclear, the volume appears to have some considerable coherence in subject matter.

The compiler's interest in the notory art appears to be woven together with mystical piety and certainly exists in the presence of considerable devotional interests. In fact, he may well have regarded his interest, or active involvement, if he had any, as defensibly orthodox. Northgate had collected enough volumes including works on image magic that the presence of a version of the notory art in his collection cannot be regarded as coincidental.⁶⁶ It seems entirely feasible that he was responsible for compiling it.⁶⁷ While the codex cannot be used to demonstrate that he was practicing the art, it certainly suggests that he had a very involved interest in the topic, an interest that went well beyond simply owning the text. The presence of a classic work dealing with angelic mediation between God and humanity and a work involving meditations of the kind employed in

⁶⁵It should be observed that Walter Hilton, who re-wrote substantial portions of this work in his version (of the same title), tended to avoid the more abstract language of the pseudo-Dionysius, as well as topics such as divine union. The work may be seen as part of an overall movement away from abstract spirituality, to a more Christo-centric one. In fact, Hilton regarded the work as a weapon against false mysticism. Kirchberger, ed. *Stimulus amoris*, p. 24.

⁶⁶For analysis of Northgate's image magic collections, see above, Chapter 2.

⁶⁷The fact that Walter Hilton had re-written the *Stimulus amoris*, meant that more English manuscripts circulated under this title. This increases the possibility that this text was the one by Hilton, which would, in turn, make it more likely that this codex is of English origin. However, it remains possible that the title refers to the earlier work by James of Milan.

the notory art, makes it clear that he may well have been exploring the issues surrounding the *Ars notoria*. That the text is an extract rather than a full version, might suggest caution on his part. On the other hand, if Northgate compiled it, he would probably have had access to the copy owned by John of London which would have been a part of the library by the time Northgate was at the Abbey of St. Augustine. As a whole, the collection gives the impression of a careful but deeply involved examination of the text through more orthodox sources.

2. The *Liber sacer* or *Sworn Book of Honorius*

The prologue of the *Liber sacer sive liber juratus* or *Sworn Book of Honorius* claims that the persecutions of magic by the institutional church are not only misguided, but demonically inspired.⁶⁸ A reasonably credible "papal letter" is quoted, in which the arts of magic are condemned, and the church is ordered to root them out. Having been forewarned by God of the great persecutions to come, the Masters of Magic—described as having a host of wicked spirits under their command—decided to compile their art in a single book rather than destroy their enemies. A council of 811 masters was called, and Honorius of Thebes was chosen as the representative. Under angelic guidance, he composed the present volume of 92 chapters. The church authorities then satisfied themselves with burning trifles, while this volume, the core of a sacred, divinely sanctioned magic, survived. The prologue ends with instructions on the transmission of the text, to which any owner of the volume must swear. Only three copies can be made at a time, and they cannot be given to a woman or a minor, but only a godly man, tested for

⁶⁸For a discussion of the prologue see Robert Mathiesen, "Beatific Vision", pp. 143-162. Mathiesen uses the term "beatific vision" to describe the vision to be achieved by the major ritual in this text.

one year. The practitioners must not reveal their secrets, and must aid each other in the spirit of love and brotherhood. Finally, should the 'master' not be able to pass the work on to a suitable disciple, the work must be buried with him. The owner of the manuscript was supposed to swear to uphold these regulations in order to get a copy, and this is the basis for one of its titles, *Liber juratus*..

The surviving versions are incomplete, containing only two rituals, the second for conjuring angels and the first to achieve what is best described as the beatific vision. It appears likely that the text was once longer, and that we have a fragment (or fragments) or an abridgment, rather than an intentionally unfinished work. A table of contents lists 92 chapters, most of which do not appear in any version, and which correspond only vaguely with the text. The table of contents also includes what appear to be comments by an earlier scribe, who says he has declined to include the last two chapters because they were contrary to the Christian faith. This would be a subtle and unlikely touch by an author wishing make credible the claim that the work was once much bigger than what he presents. In addition, the structure of the surviving chapters is more characteristic of a fragment than of an incomplete work. The first ritual would appear to be the summit of the magical art, and the piece on angel conjuring which follows is something of an anti-climax. Although it is odd (and unusual) for the highest magical exercise to come first in a coherent work of this kind, one would expect an intentionally prepared incomplete text to have a somewhat more effective structure. In the end, it remains conceivable that the work was intentionally prepared as an incomplete text, although the author would have had to have added some fairly subtle (and unnecessary) touches. It seems more likely that the text was originally much longer than any of the surviving copies and that the surviving texts are fragments or

abridgements. This would be consistent with the usual treatment of ritual magic texts, which were often freely modified.

After the prologue and table of contents, the volume begins with detailed instructions for the performance of two magical ceremonies. The ceremony for achieving the beatific vision, which forms the bulk of the work, has been described and discussed in detail by Robert Mathiesen in his recent article.⁶⁹ Mathiesen suggests that the ceremony probably consisted of two parts. The first, lasting twenty days, seeks to purify and prepare the operator through the reciting of a cycle of thirty-seven prayers. Each day the operator is to take communion and hear a Mass of the Holy Spirit into which several prayers are to be inserted. The aid of a sympathetic priest is essential for this process. During the first three days, the operator must fast and recite eighteen of the thirty-seven prayers, in a particular order, at Matins, Terce and Sext. During the following days a similar cycle of praying and fasting is to be followed and the operator must continue to take communion and hear mass. It is interesting to note that the sixty-nine prayers are contained in a section of the work entitled "Psalter" followed by a shorter text called "Litany." The prayers consist of standard Christian prayers and also *verba ignota*, that is, what purports to be transliterated Syriac and Hebrew.

The second section, lasting eight days, begins with a new cycle of prayers which frequently invoke a name of God. The operator must continue to fast but, retiring to a isolated place, must recite biblical texts, the "Litany" and prayers from the text. After these, the operator is to recite thirty-one prayers, the "Litany," and perform a particular ritual. This dizzying procedure is to be accomplished three times a day for seven days. At the end, in a clean room, the operator

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 147-57. I draw heavily upon Mathiesen's discussion in the following description of the contents of the work.

circles a bed with ashes, in which he must write the one hundred names of God. After further prayers and ablutions, he dons a hair-shirt and black clothes, and recites a final prayer. During the sleep that will follow, the text claims, he will achieve a vision of God in His glory. Such a wearying programme of prayers, ritual, and fasting, could certainly achieve some dramatic, if not believable, results. As Mathiesen notes, whether or not they actually involved the divine is a matter for the theologians.⁷⁰

As it appears in the surviving manuscripts, the *Liber sacer* has more in common with the *Ars notoria* than it does with texts of necromancy, in the sense that it seeks visions of the divine. To be sure, it is more audacious in its claims to access to the divine and has a less firm foothold in scripture. The text involves an extensive cycle of the same sort of prayers and borrowings from liturgical sources. One of the sections could involve binding spirits according to the text, but the section can also be used for invoking the lower levels of angels which, like demons, can be bound. However, there is no trace of the standard necromantic formulas of summoning, binding, and deploying.

Other elements suggest the text should be located somewhere between the notory art at necromancy. The text includes a sort of directory of angels, spirits, and demons whom the magician may employ. On the other hand, the table is organized according to astrological divisions, suggesting practices and sources akin to Arabic astral magic. In addition, the sympathetic, and even approving, evaluation of necromantic practices in the surviving portion of the work suggests that there was once a great deal more necromantic material in this work than now appears. The prologue claims that the 811 contributing magicians had legions of demons under their control and that the demonic forces were the inspiration behind the persecution of the

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 156.

images who controlled them. Later in the introduction, the powers of different peoples to work in magic are discussed. Jews and pagans cannot conduct successful operations in magic because they are not Christian. Although Jews can bind some spirits "by the power of the holy names of god spirrites but Jwes (sic) because they are nott signed w^t the sign of god, that is to saye with the signe of the crosse therefore they spirrites will nott answere them trewly...."⁷¹ The table of contents refers to chapters dealing with the necromantic operations of summoning and binding spirits, in addition to magic of a very nasty variety (e.g. death and destruction). So although the explicitly necromantic material does not appear here, the author or redactor of the surviving versions clearly regards this kind of operation as legitimate, if not desirable.

The manuscript evidence is not so ambiguous. Evaluated by its contents, the *Liber sacer* is an important work of medieval magic. The same may be said if we examine the numbers of manuscripts. Two fourteenth-century copies survive⁷² and two versions of the work appear in the catalogue of the Austin Friars at York, amongst the superstitious works of Thomas Erghome, discussed above. A further two sixteenth-century copies survive.⁷³ The manuscripts also suggest that the *Liber sacer* stands on a middle ground between the *Ars notoria* and works of necromancy. In the surviving manuscripts, it travels alone or in like company,⁷⁴ and never travels

⁷¹Royal 17.A.XLII, f 8r.

⁷²Sloane 313 and Sloane 3854.

⁷³London, British Library, Sloane 3885 and London, British Library, Royal 17. A. XLII. Two more derive from the seventeenth century: London, British Library, Sloane 3826, ff. 58-83 and London, British Library, Sloane 3883, ff. 1-25.

⁷⁴Sloane 313 and Royal 17.A.XLII are both solitary texts. Sloane 3854, ff. 112-39, may be an exception as it is currently bound with other necromantic works one which has been identified as Italian in origin. This version of the *Liber sacer* is written in a single hand, not repeated elsewhere in this collection which now includes seventeenth century material. Chances are good that this is not a British manuscript and that it was collected relatively late.

with works which would indicate a general interest in the natural world. The two volumes of superstitious works collected by Erghome put the *Liber sacer* together with a wide array of magical works, including images and al-Kindi's *De radiis stellarum*. But as has been demonstrated, its companion texts in these volumes were originally ritual magic.

Although, as in the case with necromantic works, there is no indication of an interest in *naturalia* or theory present in the *Liber sacer*, the text does present itself as an overarching synthesis of magical literature. In this sense, the closest analogues are the *Picatrix* and Cornelius Agrippa's *De occulta philosophia*. The *Picatrix* employs a characteristic Arabic blend of Aristotelian epistemology and neoplatonic cosmology, suggesting that the operator must employ the more base forms of magic as stepping stones to higher and more purified operations involving planetary spirits. As will be discussed in the last chapter, Agrippa's project of synthesizing occult literature into a vast and ultimately magico-mystical project is very similar. That a sixteenth-century scribe made additions to the *Liber sacer* from Agrippa, suggests that the similarities were not lost on him.⁷⁵ Like both the *Picatrix* and Agrippa's *De occulta philosophia*, it blends the more base forms of magic with the high flown goals of contact with the divine. Like Agrippa, it does so in an explicitly Christian form. The significance of this text, thus, lies not only in its somewhat subversive relation to orthodox Christian practice,⁷⁶ but in the fact that it presents magical practice as a synthesized whole, and assigns a spiritual value to other forms of magical practice, including necromancy. Of course, the author's attempt to create a synthetic work, one

⁷⁵Mathiesen, p. 145.

⁷⁶"Honorius explicitly and powerfully challenges the ideological foundation on which the 'insiders' of his age were busily constructing the power and authority of the late medieval church and the state in Western Europe. It is because of this challenge above all else, that the *Sworn Book of Honorius* merits far more attention from medievalists than it has received in the past." Mathiesen, p. 143.

which subsumes necromantic practices under the visionary technologies of the notory art, may be as much a matter of wish-fulfilment, as an attempt at creating something others might value. As we turn to our exploration of further forms of ritual magic, the considerable diversity of this literature will become more apparent. For now, it is worth observing that this text, probably dating from the first part of the thirteenth century,⁷⁷ undertakes substantially the same project as the *Picatrix* long before that work became a significant presence in the West, and some three hundred years before the publication of Agrippa's *De occulta philosophia*.

Conclusion

Some of the manuscripts containing an *Ars notoria* contain works similar to those commonly collected with image magic. Some of the collectors who were interested in image magic, in particular, John of London and Michael Northgate, were also interested in the notory art. The occurrence of the *Ars notoria* in their collections was not coincidental, nor does the text appear to have been considered a novelty, something which cannot be said for a number of the smaller versions. Northgate's codex, containing extracts from the *Ars notoria*, demonstrates how differently this text was treated from a work of image magic. The *Ars notoria* occupied a codex separate from those containing image magic texts. Where Northgate may have connected image magic with the wondrous features of God's world and the pastoral project of Thomas of Cantimpré, he collected the notory art together with prayers, sermons, works of affective devotion and meditation, and the *Celestial Hierarchy* of Pseudo-Dionysius. The perspective involved in the examination and performance of image magic is that of the audience or analyst:

⁷⁷Mathiesen definitively dates the work to the thirteenth century, probably the papacy of Gregory IX. Mathiesen, p. 145-47. Peters and Thorndike assign a similar date without discussion. Peters, pp. 110-12. HMES II, 279-81.

one watched the wondrous event occur. The perspective involved in the practice of the notory art—as it is in the practice of affective devotion—was one of the participant: the magical event occurred within or around oneself.

The immediacy of these arts, sets them apart from image magic. Just as the religious uses of image magic literature are more distant from the magical event, the religious dimensions of this visionary magic in the *Ars notoria* and *Liber sacer* are much more pronounced. Northgate's volume suggests that he interpreted the notory art through devotional and mystical texts. It also suggests that he understood the notory art as continuous with Christian devotion, in some sense. The prologue to the *Liber sacer* self-consciously sets the work outside Christian orthodoxy as defined by the institutional church. At the same time it insists upon the holiness of its practices. The necromancers are the holy protagonists, battling to survive the onslaught of a demonically inspired persecution by the bishops and pope. That the principal ritual in the surviving portions of the work seeks the beatific vision, insists that we understand the text not only within the history of magical practice, but also within the history of religious dissent.

While the devotional aspects of these texts need to be taken seriously, we cannot forget that more dangerous elements lurk in the background. The story of John of Morigny's sometime interest in necromancy, and the approving evaluation of necromancy in the *Liber sacer*, suggest that there was some considerable fluidity between necromancy and visionary magic. It is not so much the case that the visionary material was any less devout. It is certainly the case that we may detect, in the background of much of this literature, a fascination with both the holy and the unholy, a fascination which drew upon the effects, not only of wonder, but of fear.⁷⁸

⁷⁸For a very insightful discussion of the question of religion and necromancy see Kieckhefer, "Holy."

Central to this study is the treatment of the texts and manuscripts. The scribes of both the notory art and the *Liber sacer* reflect similar habits in their treatment and transmission of texts. In general they show a willingness, if not an inclination, to re-write the texts. In this, John of Morigny's story illustrates many further details common to the scribes of this literature. Both texts are principally transmitted through personal connections, although both also appear in medieval library catalogues. There is no great consistency in the contents of notory art manuscripts, and it would appear that many of the texts are compilations from different sources. The *Liber sacer* describes itself as a compendium, and the surviving version appears to be an abbreviated version. Finally, both are vision inspired. The Solomonic *Ars notoria* was said to have been dictated by an angel, the Blessed Virgin and angels aided John in the composition of the *Liber visionum*, and the *Liber sacer* was written by Honorius with angelic guidance. The angelic direction in this process may either be taken literally or as a cover-up for re-writing to one's own taste. In either case, it was religious sensibilities which dictated the contents of the work.

Scribes cannot have been unaware of the resulting fluidity of texts. In both cases, we can see efforts to deal with this problem. Features of the book and its transmission are sanctified. If the texts of the notory art were not consistent or "solid" in any other respect, the powerful and numinous appearance of the manuscript could certainly give this impression, as it was, no doubt, designed to do. Although scribes of the *Liber sacer* generally do not concern themselves with the appearance of the book, it lists complex rules governing its transmission and copying, to which the owner must swear. Similarly, John of Morigny enjoins his readers not to alter the text. The most interesting example of the attempt to deal with the multiplicity of voices in this tradition may be the greater project of the *Liber sacer*. It was not self-consciously and explicitly synthetic; rather the work presents itself as a compendium. Yet it treats the magical traditions as a coherent

whole, something which could be epitomized and collected into a single, systematic volume. The work was a constructive project, probably driven by a desire for solidity and systematization. In this, the work would ultimately fail, and its abbreviated remains would, in fact, contribute to the confusion which had initially inspired its composition.

Chapter 5

Necromancy and other Ritual Magic

...by the vertu of all the holy masses & goddys devyne seruyce & prayeris said & song in euery holy place vniuersall...

Necromancy is one of the more peculiar progeny spawned in the rich, turbid waters where Arabic, Hebraic, Greek, and other ancient literature flowed together in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Latin Christendom. There is something of Frankenstein's monster about it. Stitched together from improbable and varied sources, it acquired a confused but dramatic life of its own, and it survives in one form or another to the present day.¹ Like some versions of the *Ars notoria*—but unlike Arabic image magic—it was a very Christian art. Despite the instrumental, self-centred, and often puerile nature of its goals, the practitioners of necromancy were deeply concerned with creating or performing rituals of Christian origin. Unlike scribes of image magic, who tended to copy their texts in much the same way they would a work on natural philosophy, scribes of ritual magic tended to transform the ritual content of their sources into a Christian form. As we shall see, the frequently unsophisticated nature of this transformation often resulted in odd combinations of practices, caught somewhere between seemingly incompatible traditions.

The word *necromantia* originally meant divination from the dead. But the Christian doctrine that the souls of the dead could not be communicated with, and that any thing appearing to be a ghost would have to be a demon, helped shift the meaning of *necromantia* to the conjuring of demons, rather than ghosts. Because the term retained its obvious etymological connections to "divination from the dead," the term was also frequently rendered *nigromantia*—a less ambiguous term, having a literal meaning of something like "black magic." Although the precise origins of

¹See for example, Martin Coleman, *Communing with Spirits* (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1988).

much of this literature remain unclear, certain elements can be identified. The structure of a ritual for exacting service from an other-worldly being, i.e. preparation, prayers, invocations, constraints, manifestation, petition, and dismissal, was fixed in custom already in ancient times.² The Hebraic tradition offered complex hierarchies of angels and their names. The Arabic writers offered a tradition of "astral magic" which often involved a high degree of ritual performance frequently involving astrological images and "planetary deities." Because it worked within an astrological and neoplatonic framework, the effects of this kind of magic extended, in an automatic fashion, from beings unaware that they were being "invoked," if they were sentient at all.³ It did not, therefore, involve the difficult issues surrounding the use of visions and powerful, sentient beings of one form or another. The Christian tradition offered the crucial elements which made the magical practices at once powerful, convincing, titillating, and dangerous: the liturgy and various other programmed practices of the church, in particular, exorcism.⁴

Richard Kieckhefer has identified the idea of exorcism, exorcist manuals, and a clerical underworld as key elements in the development of necromancy.⁵ That *exorcizatio* and *coniuratio* are used interchangeably in necromantic treatises strongly suggests this connection. More significantly, it was part of the Christian tradition of exorcism that the power of God could be invoked by an upright Christian to command a demon. The way to do this was described in the liturgy itself. A few minor elaborations upon this rich pre-existing tradition, and a certain lack of

²E. M. Butler, *Ritual Magic*, p. 17.

³For the classic text see David Pingree, ed, *Picatrix: The Latin version of the Ghayat Al-Hakim* (London: Warburg Institute, 1986).

⁴Kieckhefer, *Magic*, pp. 165-75.

⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 151-56.

judgement or caution were the only elements necessary for the birth of necromancy. The texts which developed demanded an extensive and wearying program of fasts, purgations, sexual abstinence, prayers, confession, communication, and hearing of mass, as requisite for the performance of any necromantic operation. In short, the necromancer had to become something of an ascetic, saint, or religious fanatic in order to begin practicing the art. A clerical calling, thus, may well have helped not only in practical ways, such as the time it afforded, but because of its direct, regular involvement in religious matters. As we shall see, the manuscripts themselves attest to the clerical nature of some of these treatises. The demand for the participation of a priest in the rituals, the familiarity with the liturgy, not to mention the prerequisite Latinity all suggest this group.⁶ Yet there seems no reason to assume practicing necromancers were limited to the lower clergy. Many appear to have monastic connections, and the literary representations of necromancers frequently describe them as monks, rather than priests or clerics in lower orders.⁷ While the practices may have been born amongst monks and clerics, a number of more diffuse contributing factors must also be taken into account to explain not only the birth, but also the longevity, of this art.

The deep concern in the Latin West with the precise and appropriate and uniform performance of Christian ritual would have to be reflected in its magical traditions. As in the case of liturgical performances, much attention was given to small details, such as the days when a

⁶Kieckhefer, *Magic*, pp. 151-56.

⁷One of the more dramatic and entertaining examples is the Romance of Eustace the Monk mentioned by Kitterege. Eustace, trained at Toledo by the devil, ultimately becomes a powerful necromancer and pirate. Kitterege, *Witchcraft*, p. 45-6 See Henry Lewis Cannon, "The Battle of Sandwich and Eustace the Monk," in *English Historical Review*, XXCII (1912), 649-670. *Roman d'Eustache le Moine*, ed. Francisque Michel (Silvestre: Paris, 1834); *Eustache le Moine*, ed. Wendelin Foerster and Johann Trost (Niemeyer: Halle, 1891). Harleian MS 636, fol 201.

ritual could be performed, the modes of preparations (often including a specific mass), gesture, the direction the operator faced, the kinds of clothing worn, the tone of voice, and the prayers. Sometimes the services of an ordained priest were also required. Unlike the orthodox analogues, such as the mass, the lack of official sanction made it necessary for the operator to be morally pure in order for the rituals to be efficacious. In this sense, the practical requirements were even more strict than those of the church.

The great significance which Christianity granted to demonic forces also accorded necromancy a special status as a window into that dark world. The morally neutral presentation of necromancers in many late medieval sources may be related to the rather useful role necromancers played as literary devices. They could offer credible and colourful details about the nature of evil, demons, the devil, and Hell.⁸ In this sense, necromancy should be understood as part of a wider medieval interest in other-worldly visions. Yet the unselfconscious way they are represented in literature may also derive from a very real role they played in medieval society, which, in turn, suggests another source for necromantic practices.

Amongst the colourful figures who appeared before the inquisitor Jacques Fournier, was a man who mediated between deceased members of the community and their families. Claiming to be able to see the spirits of the dead, he offered advice with regard to the status of their departed relatives. For example, based upon his observations, he would suggest the acts necessary to free a soul from purgatory.⁹ A similar role was played by the necromancer in a Franciscan chronicle.

⁸Kieckhefer has noted this positive treatment of necromancy. Kieckhefer, "Holy."

⁹Jean Duvernoy, ed., *Le registre d'inquisition de Jacques Fournier, évêque de Pamiers (1318-1325)* (Toulouse: Bibliothèque Meridionale, 1965), pp. 128-43. This formed the basis for a discussion in Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou: The Promised Land of Error*, transl. Barbara Bray (New York: George Braziller, 1978), pp. 342-56.

Here, the necromancer conjured the soul of a departed bishop from Hell for the pope.¹⁰ In a story from Caesarius of Heisterbach, mentioned above, demons dragged a living man directly to Hell, and a necromancer was able to assist in retrieving him. Although it might have been difficult to justify in theological terms, the story suggests a certain fluidity between the living and the dead into which the necromancer had some insight.¹¹ In this report, the necromancer even had some limited influence over the fate of the unfortunate man as an advocate. As we shall see, practical exercises for mediating between the living and the dead occasionally occur in the texts of necromantic magic.¹² So the idea and practice of communicating with the dead through a medium also must be counted amongst the sources for necromancy. Yet all of these influences do not speak to the rebellious or transgressive features of this art.

The negative views of necromancy, in particular its use of demons, undoubtedly dissuaded most from practicing it. Yet these features also may have added to its attraction for others. R. I. Moore has discussed the power that heretical leaders could gain by virtue of their confident and wild transgressions.¹³ The developing tradition of necromancy drew heavily upon liturgy as a source for rituals. When compared with the orthodox analogues, the practices of necromancy would have had powerful negative associations. The boldness of necromantic appropriations from

¹⁰Joseph L. Baird et. al. transl., *The Chronicle of Salimbene de Adam* (Binghamton, 1986), pp. 6-7. MGH Scriptorum XXXII, p. 32.

¹¹Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogue on Miracles*, V. 4. Caesarius Heisterbacensis, *Dialogus miraculorum*, ed. Joseph Strange (Cologne, Bonn, and Brussels: J. M. Heberle, 1851), pp. 279-81.

¹²See for example, Oxford, Rawlinson D. 252, ff. 66v-67v.

¹³"New sects and Secret Meetings: Association and Authority in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries" by R. I. Moore, in *Voluntary Religion*, eds. W. J. Sheils and Diana Wood (Blackwell, 1986), pp. 47-68.

the liturgy, the shocking interplay of holy and unholy,¹⁴ and its inordinate claims to power would certainly be analogous to the dramatic transgressions of heretical leaders. Its allure as a literary device, if not as a practice, must in part be attributed to its "bad attitude."

1. General Features of the Manuscripts

In establishing my sources for this study, it has been necessary to distinguish between necromancy proper and necromancy as a rhetorical designation. Although Albertus Magnus insisted that the vast majority of image magic was secretly necromantic, he meant by this that the astrological features were merely a disguise for magic which relied on demonic aid. Although Albert might have grouped these texts together for rhetorical purposes, he would certainly have recognized the difference between a text whose rituals explicitly involved binding demons, and one which made the pretence of being purely astrological. For us to describe texts like the *Liber lune* as necromantic would be problematic. It is not at all clear that the authors or scribes of this text regarded its magic to be demonic, since, as we have demonstrated, these sorts of texts were interpreted, as they were intended to be, through the discipline of astrology. Further, even in the popular imagination, necromancy was only occasionally associated with astrology or natural philosophy, and much more frequently with hierarchies of demons, conjuring, binding, and the explicit, transgressive use of Christian rituals. Its practitioners were not astrologers, but priests and monks. As literary devices, necromancers provided a dramatic way of discussing the nature of evil, demons, and the horrors of Hell, not issues related to astrology. Further, none of the standard texts of scholastic image magic which we have examined *refer to themselves* as

¹⁴Kieckhefer, "Holy."

necromantic.¹⁵ Those which do, involve extensive ritual practices and assume that the discipline they promote employs spiritual beings.

In a recent article, Charles Burnett discusses taxonomies which name necromancy as one of the liberal arts. He uses the *Liber prestigiorum* by Thebit ibn Qurra as an example of a text which may explain this categorization. The taxonomies to which Burnett refers suggest that there is a good portion of necromancy, i.e. necromancy according to science, which is, in essence, astrological image magic. Although his discussion is very useful in understanding how such a taxonomy could have been conceived, it does not speak to the content of truly necromantic treatises. Given Albertus Magnus' use of the term, not to mention its popular usage, it is very unlikely that any late medieval practitioner or collector of image magic would have referred to their image magic texts as necromantic. Although texts involving astrology appear in necromantic collections, the selection of materials for this chapter begins with the assumption that necromancy involves the explicit use of spiritual beings, usually demons, who are bound by the operator through ritual procedures. Excluded are those texts where the author and scribes clearly conflated such a spiritual being with an astrological influence, where al-Kindi's theories about images could adequately explain the procedures, or where the interpretive structure brought to bear upon the text was clearly that of natural philosophy. These texts were relegated to the group of texts for Part I of this study. Where such works occur *together* with necromantic materials, they are, of course, included in the second group. It will be found that the astrological material included here

¹⁵This is not the case with the *Picatrix* which, in its Latin translation, refers to its astral magic as necromancy. Because this text does not appear amongst British manuscripts of magic until well into the sixteenth century, it has not been possible to include it in the analysis. However, such practices appear blended in amongst necromantic works in collections of necromancy and appear to have been considered to be part of the science. My distinction here relates principally to the material discussed in the first part of this study, the texts of scholastic image magic.

was generally intended to be in the service of necromantic practice, and that it was transmitted and transformed in ways which the texts of scholastic image magic were not.

Unlike texts of image magic, a significant portion of this literature appears in informal notebooks, where the constituent texts are frequently not identifiable by bibliographic means. Like recipe literature, these collections have a fluid, largely anonymous content, the lineage of which would be very difficult to trace. Therefore, an adequate study of this literature cannot be accomplished from a reading of texts identifiable by standard bibliographic tags (title, author, incipit, etc.). Further, few of the texts of late medieval necromancy ever found their way into print. In part, this may have been due to the lack of coherent treatises. With the exception of the *Ars notoria*, the modern printed volumes of ritual magic derived from texts which first appeared, or were written, in the sixteenth century.¹⁶ (As a result, Butler's survey, *Ritual Magic*, did not treat a substantial portion of the late medieval literature, because it relied on printed sources.) So, unlike the other material we have surveyed to this point, late medieval necromancy can only be accessed through the manuscripts of individual necromantic collections.

In this survey, the earliest references to works of necromancy may be found in the two volumes of superstitious works in Erghome's collection. An entry found in the indenture of the Merton College Library dated 1483 mentions a "book of necromancy."¹⁷ The fifteenth-century *Liber de angelis* is another interesting but discrete text.¹⁸ In some other fifteenth-century

¹⁶Robert Mathiesen has suggested that the *Clavicula Salomonis* translated by S. Lidell MacGregor Mathers, and frequently referred to as medieval (or even more ancient) in origin, first occurs in Latin in the sixteenth century. Medieval references to the same title refer instead to the *Sephar Raziel*. Paper delivered at The 32nd International Congress on Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo Michigan, 1997.

¹⁷Powicke, p. 215.

examples, an isolated, anonymous necromantic experiment occurs amongst other non-magical material. Although the *Sworn Book of Honorius* claims to be the combined knowledge of a council of 89 masters with power over demons and maintains a positive opinion of necromancy, no explicitly necromantic exercises are contained in any of its manuscript witnesses. The earliest surviving collections for our study are Rawlinson D. 252, Sloane 3849, ff. 17-19, and Society of Antiquaries of London 39, ff. 1-17, all written in the fifteenth century. By comparison, the *Ars notoria* and the standard works of Arabic image magic survive in thirteenth-, fourteenth-, and fifteenth-century versions. Before moving on to discuss the manuscripts in more detail, a few observations should be made about the survival and transmission of the manuscripts of necromancy dating from before the sixteenth century.

It would be an understandable, but false, assumption that works of ritual magic are more prone to forgery than any other form of medieval magic. The texts of ritual magic which were of principal interest in the seventeenth and subsequent centuries, such as the *Clavicula Salomonis*, did not derive from the Latin middle ages. When forgeries of the medieval works might have been made, the market for them would have been small, if it existed at all, and the forger's time would have been better spent on more lucrative projects. In a few cases scribes have used anachronistic hands which have resulted in misdating, but this was merely a way to imbue the book with numinous qualities, not an attempt to deceive the reader. As these cases derive from the sixteenth century they will be discussed in the third part of this study. For now we need only observe that in such cases the scribes did not seek to deceive the reader, but rather, to produce a mysterious, archaic, or powerful *looking* book. Because the use of an intentionally anachronistic hand was not

¹⁸Juris Lidaka, "The Book of Angels, Rings, Characters and Images of the Planets: Attributed to Osbern Bokenham," in *Conjuring Spirits*, pp. 32-75.

meant to deceive the reader, the scribes of these works left a great many obvious signs of the book's true age. So the few cases which might be considered forgeries are not. This fact, combined with the low quality of most of the other manuscripts, makes it very unlikely that any of the manuscripts analyzed in this section are forgeries.

Of the ten fourteenth- and fifteenth-century manuscripts of ritual or necromantic magic which we examine here, two do not survive, and four were not likely preserved due to an interest in necromancy.¹⁹ A fifteenth-century hand has recorded a short anonymous necromantic experiment on the last leaf of a fourteenth-century codex containing a text on geomancy and Chaucer's *Conclusions of the Astrolabe*.²⁰ An experiment for seeing angels in the nails of a boy also appears in the *Commonplace Book of Robert Reynes of Acle*, in the company of charms.²¹ A necromantic experiment cited by Richard Kieckhefer occurs at the end of a short collection of experiments for achieving a woman's affections, mostly sleights of hand and the like, and not in the least necromantic.²² Finally, a short work of ritual magic involving angels and planetary squares, entitled *Liber de Angelis*, is contained in three discrete bifolia, originally from another collection.²³ These bifolia were stitched into the centre of a gathering in a medical collection. Thus, accidental survivals constitute a large portion of the surviving ritual magic collections (three out of seven occurrences before 1500). However, this is not likely representative of the original.

¹⁹See Appendix IV.

²⁰London, British Library, Sloane 314, ff. 106v.

²¹Cameron Louis, ed., *The Commonplace Book of Robert Reynes of Acle; An Edition of Tanner MS 407* (London: Garland, 1980), p. 169. Quoted in Richard Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites*, p. 97.

²²London, British Library, Sloane 121, 90v- 93v. Kieckhefer, *Magic*, p. 171.

²³Cambridge, University Library, Dd.xi.45, ff. 134-39.

There were much better reasons to preserve a common place book, or a work by Chaucer, than a wretchedly executed collection of necromantic magic, lacking in any redeeming features. Further, there were good reasons—personal if not legal—to hide one's necromantic collection or to destroy it, if one's interest in the subject waned. If it passed into someone else's hands, it also ran a high risk of being destroyed. This is what would appear to have happened to the two necromantic collections mentioned in library inventories.²⁴ So it is safe to assume that there were a considerably larger number of necromantic and ritual magic collections in existence in the middle ages than the surviving manuscripts suggest.

The Rawlinson Collections (Oxford, Bodleian, Rawlinson D. 252), which we will discuss in detail, did not appear in a major collection until the eighteenth century, when Rawlinson acquired them. They were donated to the Bodleian in 1752 with the other 5,205 volumes of the collection.²⁵ Even in this massive collection, this significant manuscript is one of only two such examples, the other deriving from the sixteenth century (Rawl. D. 253). The survival of Rawlinson D. 252 would appear to have been more a matter of chance than the result of any occult interests on the part of the collector. Although the Sloane collection preserves a large number of necromantic or ritual magic collections, most of these derive from the sixteenth or

²⁴York, Austin Friars A8 362 and Oxford, Merton College (Medieval Catalogue) 1053. The manuscript at York, owned by John Erghome, contained sections which were drawn from a necromantic collection. The manuscript at Merton was borrowed by Warden Richard Fitzjames on 19 May 1483. One of the works is describes simply as "a book of necromancy." This need not mean that it literally contained either true necromancy, or that it was a collection. However, the record of the volume is from the fifteenth century which makes it unlikely that it was a work of image magic. The use of the term "necromantia" to describe image magic appears to have been an earlier habit. Assuming the contents *were* necromantic, it is likely that it was a collection, as that is the usual form of this genre when it occupies an entire codex. See F.M. Powicke, *Merton College*, p. 213.

²⁵I. Philip, *The Bodleian Library in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), pp. 93-98.

seventeenth centuries. Only one, Sloane 3849, contains material written in Britain during the fifteenth century.²⁶ The three bifolia containing the *Liber de Angelis* were preserved because they were stitched into the centre of a gathering in a medical collection, perhaps simply having been stuffed there at some point.²⁷ Similarly, the Society of Antiquaries manuscript was not likely preserved due to the portion dealing with ritual magic. According to the description inside the front cover, the volume was in private collections until 1807. That this codex was deemed valuable at all probably had to do with the vellum portion dealing with images, which had been written by John Argentine. The scrawled cursive of the first portion, which records the ritual magic section of this codex, is very unattractive and of little apparent value. Only a collector interested in the occult might have seen fit to preserve the manuscript for the sake of this part, but, as we have noted, the interests of occultists after 1650 had shifted away from such texts. It is just as likely that purely antiquarian interests drove the preservation, and that the second section was the principal interest. All of this suggests that the attrition rate for ritual magic collections was probably very high and the likelihood of forgery very low.

2. General Features of Necromantic Collections

In what follows, the necromantic collection will form the basis for my discussion, as opposed to the isolated occurrences of necromantic experiments in larger, non-necromantic codices. If my arguments are correct that there was a high attrition rate amongst manuscripts of necromancy, collections of conjuring texts would have been the more frequent context in which

²⁶Where some sixteenth-century manuscripts managed to find their way into the early major book collections, a large number of these were collected because they were copies owned by such significant figures as Simon Foreman, not necessarily because of their necromantic content.

²⁷Cambridge, University Library Dd. xi. 45, ff. 134-39.

this material was transmitted, despite the fact that they account for only half of the surviving manuscripts. In addition, in the four examples where necromantic texts accompany non-magical material, the information they afford about the significance of necromantic magic is frequently ambiguous. They may have been recorded as curiosities. Certainly, the survival of these texts had to do with the other material in the codices, so they cannot be taken as representative. Further, only the example from the commonplace book was written by the primary scribe of the codex. The necromantic experiment in Sloane 121 is part of a small collection of tricks and sleights of hand to impress a woman. The collection is not, in itself, a necromantic work, at least, not obviously so, and only a small part of a larger codex, which makes it difficult to assess the reason for its presence.²⁸ In the other examples, one text was added by a later scribe (Sloane 314) and the other text, contained in three previously independent bifolia, was added to a already complete book (CUL Dd.xi.45, ff. 134-139). So these examples tell us little about how necromantic texts were regarded. For our present examination, the necromantic collection is more fruitful for analysis than the single text codices, or codices including a single necromantic experiment.

As we examine these collections, it will be found that, a significant general feature of collections of necromantic ritual magic covered in this study is a lack of interest in astrological literature, alchemy, books of secrets, natural philosophy and other naturalia, in short, the interests usually accompanying the standard texts of Arabic image magic. This is especially the case prior to 1500. In addition, despite the fact that they were widely available, I have yet to find a single

²⁸Sloane 121, 90v-93v. Kieckhefer mentions this manuscript and also ponders over the question of the presence of necromantic experiment amongst these tricks and sleights of hand. *Magic*, p. 171. In his later book, *Forbidden Rites*, he suggests that we regard the creation of illusion as category of magical performance. This manuscript would suggest that illusion magic was a genre which cut across usually distinct forms of magic, from to parlour tricks to demonic conjurations.

instance where one of these works of scholastic image magic occurs in a ritual magic collection prior to 1570. To be sure, other works concerned with magical images do occur in this context. But, usually, such astrological material has been absorbed under the umbrella of necromantic practice, in such a way, that the technical details of astrology may not have survived or are not a central concern. The two sorts of magical collections are also transmitted in fundamentally different ways. Where the standard texts of image magic were translated with an eye to preserving their original form and, in particular, their astrological connections, image magic texts in ritual collections have been altered in ways which indicate a greater concern with transforming the original ritual elements into a Christian form. Further, the collectors of ritual magic texts were frequently less concerned with preserving the text as a whole or mentioning the author or source. Another significant feature of ritual magic collectors, and one also in evidence among enthusiasts of the notory art, was a tendency to innovation and synthesis. Unlike image magic collections, these texts were not copied with an eye to preserving the original text. Rather, the scribes modified, enhanced, or synthesized the existing material in order to make them more efficacious or acceptable. In short, collections of ritual magic are very different from those of image magic. Not only does this difference relate to content, but to the translation of the texts, their transmission, and mode of collection. In fact, it seems likely that two streams of transmission ran side by side. While cross-overs may surface in a more extensive survey of continental manuscripts, it cannot be taken lightly that all the examples in this survey speak with a single voice. Finally, the most important feature of these manuscripts, and one which in large measure explains their distinctive nature, is the deep concern they have with ritual practices, in particular, rites of a Christian variety

3. Astrological or Ritual Magic: Society of Antiquaries 39

Although the second portion of this codex was owned and written by John Argentine, a collector of image magic, there is no evidence that he had any connection with the first 17 folios. The first section is written on parchment, the second on paper, and the earliest foliation (of the entire codex) is at least sixteenth-century. If his scribal practices were at all consistent, his controlled, even severe hand is altogether different from the sprawling fifteenth-century cursive which records the texts in this collection. The scribe is usually accurate, yet, frequently does not bother with abbreviation marks if the meaning is clear without them. The three magical treatises which comprise the collection may be distinguished from one another with some effort, but the standard writing technologies for distinguishing between chapters and texts are carelessly applied, making it difficult to do this at a glance. The collection was clearly for personal use. As the three existing texts are complete and no internal quires are missing, the codex may be complete in its current form. On the other hand, an early foliation begins on the first folio with seventeen, and the existing collection is short. So it may have included other works of magic at one time.

The first text concerns the construction of magical rings, although nothing remains of the introduction which might have made it possible to identify it with one of the texts condemned by Albert. The remainder of the text is regular in its organization and appears otherwise complete. The first chapter begins after two mutilated lines, which reveal nothing about the text. The chapters give instructions on the construction of rings in each of the twenty-eight mansions of the moon. They are divided by lines across the page, but are identifiable only by the number of the mansion listed in the first line. The text is complete insofar as it treats each of the mansions. The instructions are quite formulaic making it possible for the scribe or author to abbreviate the later

chapters considerably. A single chapter will thus suffice to give a good impression of the text and the techniques it promotes.

In the third mansion let a concave gold ring be made. In its hollow put undefiled parchment, on which is written in human blood these names: denetica alibiat stablacctis virciseri. At the beginning of dawn on the following day, with the ring thus completed, take it before an open field and suffumigate it with the [blood(?)] of a dead man and say this prayer, on bended knee facing the field. "Lord God Omnipotent, who, from the remotest heaven, looks upon the abyss, who made man in his image and likeness—through which abundance of mercy the living live and the dying die—I entreat that as I touch the ring with my saliva, on whatever day or hour, those very spirits whose names are enclosed should make battling, armed knights to appear before the eyes of whoever I wish." In so doing, touch the ground with the ring while making this sign [symbol]. Afterwards, wrap it in black cotton and keep it very clean. When you wish to operate, say, touching the ring with your saliva, "O you spirits whose names are enclosed, I conjure you through him, to whom you chiefly must yield obedience, that you accomplish what I desire." This having been said, you will see wondrous things.²⁹

Each chapter instructs the reader to write figures and names on parchment, and to enclose them in a ring. These actions are to be performed in a given mansion of the moon, accompanied by prayers and ritual practices. In each case, the power of the ring is invoked by touching it with one's saliva. Presumably the operator is intended to surreptitiously touch the ring to his tongue. The names, figures, suffumigations, and substances used for writing vary from section to section. Although the prayers remain substantially the same, they shift slightly so that the biblical

²⁹Ut milites armati bellantes videatur [punctuation mine—angle brackets indicate mutilation] In mancione 3a fac fieri anulum auream concavum, in cuius concauitate ponas pergameneum virgineum, in quo sunt scripta de sanguine hominis hec nomina: denetica alibiat stablacctis virciseri. Anulo sic completo, tene ipsum die sequenti <in> aurora introitu alicuius campi et suffumiga ipsum cum <...> hominis mortui et dic, flexis genibus versus campum, hanc oracionem. Domine deus omnipotens, qui de ultimo celo vides abissos, qui homines ad ymaginem et similitudinem tuam formasti, per quem viuunt viuentes et moriuntur morientes largitatem tue benignitatis, exoro quatinus quacumque die vel hora tangam anulum de saliuua mea isti Spiritus, quorum nomina sunt intus inclusa, faciant armatas milites bellantes ante oculos illarum, quibus voluero apperere. In hoc facto, tange terram cum anulo faciendo hac signum [symbol]. Postea involuere findone nigra, et custo eum mundissime, et cum volueris operari, dic, tangendo cum saliuua tua anulum, "O vos spiritus, quorum nomina intus sunt inclusa, coniuro vos per illum, cui debetis principaliter obedire, quatinus quod desidero faciatis." hoc dicto videbis mirabilia. f. 2v-3r.

references have something to do with the power of the ring. The ring to make an illusory river appear requires a prayer which refers to the stories from Exodus, in which Pharaoh's army was drowned in the sea, and water flowed from the rock struck by Moses.³⁰

Some superficial features of these texts are similar to those used in the image magic texts we have examined. Rings are employed, although in this case the names and figures are inscribed on parchment not on the ring itself or the stone it holds. Simple figures and angel names are written, and the rings are suffumigated with various substances. The rings are constructed in the twenty-eight mansions of the moon, much like the images in the *Liber lune*. Finally, like the standard works on image magic, the work is relatively short and systematic in its presentation. Here, however, the similarities end.

Closer examination of the rituals reveals that the practices are much more akin to necromancy. Amongst the works of image magic we have examined to this point, binding rituals are implicit if present at all. Albertus Magnus argued that the astrological connections could be simply a disguise for necromantic activities, which is to say, attempts to force spirits to do one's bidding. If he is correct, the disguise is such that the binding is not an obvious feature. Even the most objectionable image magic texts, like the *Liber lune*, do not employ rituals which, in themselves, suggest the binding of a spirit, except insofar as a suffumigation or the reciting of angel names might be regarded as an act of worship or part of an illicit pact. In the present text, binding is more explicitly represented by enclosing the spirits' names in rings. A prayer invoking God's aid in achieving this end, duplicates the necromantic practice of invoking a higher power to

³⁰Ibid., f. 2r. For a discussion of the use of these "historiola", see David Frankfurter, "Narrating Power: The Theory and Practice of the Magical *Historiola* in Ritual Spells," in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, ed. Marvin Meyer and Paul Mirecki (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), pp. 457-76.

bind a lower one. Although the words commonly used in conjuring texts to refer to this process do not appear here (*constrigere*, *vinculum*, etc.) the meaning is clear. Necromantic texts employ a combination of good and evil powers to bind demons, but also regularly employ prayers to God or the names of God to bind them. So this somewhat simpler method of compelling spirits to do one's bidding bears all the marks of a necromantic treatise and would certainly have deserved Albert's condemnation.

The final verbal formula is not a prayer at all, but directly commands the spirits by the power of God. This makes somewhat peculiar the claim that the spirits employed are angels. The use of the word *angelus* as synonymous with *spiritus* is relatively unusual in necromantic literature, which generally recognizes that, while it is not improper or impossible to compel a demon, an angel's help may only be requested by prayer. Technically, the text may have meant *angeli mali*, i.e. demons, where it simply says *angeli*. Once again, this is not generally the term used in the necromantic literature for demons, where they are more often referred to as *spiritus* or *spiritus maligni* or *demones*. The conflation of angels with particular stars or astrological conditions is somewhat more understandable, and this, as we have seen, commonly occurs in the translations of Arabic image magic texts. The names of the angels used in the *Liber lune* each correspond to one of the mansions of the moon; other texts have similar structures.³¹ As we have noted, the combination of simple images, names, and suffumigations is also common to Arabic material. Michael Swartz has examined similar kinds of techniques in medieval Jewish magical material, where amulets are used to invoke angels through God's power.³² So the use of angel

³¹See for example our discussion of the *De imaginibus* of Belenus.

³²Michael S. Swartz, "Scribal Magic and its Rhetoric: Formal Patterns in Medieval Hebrew and Aramaic Incantation Texts from the Cairo Genizah," in *Harvard Theological Review* 83:2 (1990) 163-80.

names, in addition to these other features, suggest either Arabic or Hebraic sources. The use of explicit binding rituals and extensive prayers is less common in Arabic literature, at least in the material which appeared in the Latin West under Arabic names. Prayers like the one quoted above which refer to the *Old Testament*, might conceivably be Hebraic in origin and the use of these kind of *historiola* was also common in Jewish amulets.³³ But one prayer, referring to the miracle of the water transformed into wine, clearly identifies the text as, at least in part, Christian.³⁴ So it seems likely that we have a text or practice, Hebraic or possibly Arabic in origin, which has been re-worked in an explicitly Christian form. As we shall see, whatever the origin of this text may have been, this Christianizing process is one of the features common to collections of necromantic magic.

The next text in the collection identifies itself at *Tractatus de sigillis septem planetarum et amuli*, quite possibly the text on seven rings text attributed to Hermes which Albertus Magnus condemns.³⁵ Although the text attributes authorship to one Philos, the fact that the text goes on to discuss the use of sigils as the "first philosophy" is suggestive of Hermes Trismegistus, often regarded as one of the world's first philosophers. Each of the first seven chapters discusses one of the planets, its sigil, angel, and ring. The subsequent chapters concern the use of the rings or sigils. One, for example, which employs the sigil and angel of the sun, seeks to provide the

³³Ibid. On *historiola* see David Frankfurter, "Narrating Power". The article discusses the use of these kinds of formulas in ancient magic.

³⁴Domine deus omnipotens qui olim aquam in vinum transumtasti et qui de ultimo celo vides abbissas.... Ibid., f. 3r. John 2: 1-10.

³⁵Et est unus liber *De septem amulis septem planetarum* qui sic incipit: *Divisio lunae quando impleta fuerit etc.*" Albertus Magnus, *Speculum astronomiae*, XI. Zambelli, p. 244.

operator with a magic horse.³⁶ Unlike the first, this text is more astrological and does not involve ritual binding or explicitly Christian ritual. The beings involved are said to be angels, not demons. Although less systematic than a text like the *Liber lune*, it is in every way consistent with the material from Arabic sources. Finally, there is no question that this text would fall amongst Albertus' condemned texts. It not only involves angel names but the far more dubious ritual practices of animal sacrifice and fasting. The question which this, and the astrological nature of this text, raises is why this text might be present in this collection, and whether it might be suggestive of the interests elsewhere connected with the more mainstream texts of scholastic image magic? But only an evaluation of the whole collection can give use a clear idea of what interests may have driven the collector.

At first glance, the third text in this collection appears to confirm the association of astrology with magical images and further suggests the set of interests which connected them. The text, *Preceptualis ars magice*, sets out in systematic form the astrological conditions and hours in which various kinds of "experiments" should be conducted. Yet these experiments are not of the variety we have generally found in the collections of image magic. Rather, the text explicitly describes them as "*ex arte exorsizationi*," which is to say, experiments in the conjuring of demons. After a list of the standard preparations for necromantic operators, such as shaving, washing, the wearing of clean clothes, and the avoidance of sin, the text lists the operations appropriate to various days. It goes on to explain how, for certain operations, one must take care to observe the astrological conditions and their humoral qualities. The discussion is comparable to the discussion of astrological conditions at the beginning of the *Liber lune* and, aside from the

³⁶The text of appears after the first chapter at f. 6v, but belongs later in the text where its incipit is given as the first chapter in a seven which discuss the use of the sigils of the planets at f. 8v.

explicitly necromantic nature of the operations in question, there is ultimately little difference between the two.

Yet after three folios, this discussion is followed by two chapters concerning the hours of the day and night appropriate for necromantic operations. Here things take a decidedly non-astrological turn.

Also note that anyone can exorcize well in any hour of the night, excepting the hour of matins, or in which matins are sung, for many spirits fear to come while the hours are sacred, because the divinity of god expels demons, and on that account, that hour is not good to begin an exorcism.³⁷

In fact, the discussion of necromantic operations in the hours of the day and night throughout this chapter takes into account the canonical hours.

Note that four principal kings cannot be bound in any hour of the day, except in the darkness of night. Likewise the spirits called kings can not be bound in any hour of the day except before Prime. Likewise the princes, from Terce up to midday, and from the next hour to Vespers, or to Compline. Next mich.es [text mutilated] from the next hour to Compline or from Compline to the setting of the sun of day.³⁸

Very much unlike the *Liber Lune*, the astrological hours are complemented by the observation of canonical hours. Once again, if the origin of this text was originally Arabic or Hebraic, it has been thoroughly Christianized.

As Charles Burnet has demonstrated, when the work on images by Thebit ibn Qurra was translated by John of Seville, the incantations were stripped out.³⁹ If the resulting translation had

³⁷Item nota quod quilibet bene potest facere exorsismus in qualibet hora noctis excepta hora matutinali vel qua canta[n]tur matutine nam spiritus multi abhorient venire dum hore sunt sacre quia diuinitas dei expellit demones et ideo in illa hora non est bona inceptio exorsismorum. Ibid., f. 16v.

³⁸Nota quod quatuor reges princip[a]les non possunt constringi in aliqua hora diei nisi in crepusculo noctis Item spiritus dic[t]i reges non possunt constringi nisi ante primam Item principes, a tertia usque meridiem, et a iuxta usque ad vespervas, uel ad co[m]pletorium. Item miche<...>es, a iuxta hora usque ad completorium, vel ad completoria usque ad defeccam solis diei. Ibid., f. 17v.

³⁹Charles Burnett, "Talismans: magic as science?"

any value, it was by virtue of the fact that the remaining text was, in theory, purely astrological. By Christian standards, the alteration brought the image magic text closer to astrology and natural philosophy. The texts were also transmitted with, and in the same manner as, works of natural philosophy. The opposite process has occurred with texts appearing in ritual magic collections. Rather than attempting to emphasize the astrological features of the texts, the authors or translators of ritual magic texts explicitly employed binding rituals to achieve the aid of demons or angels. Rather than stripping out the incantations and other ritual practices, the scribes or authors have translated them into Christian ritual. The use of the liturgical hours in the last text is one such adaptation. The alterations made to the rituals in the first text also translate the ritual into a Christian form. Rather than simply preserving the astrological features, which translated relatively easily, efforts were made to translate the ritual features into a form understandable to and resonant with the sensibilities of the Latin West. In this case, this involved the use of prayers of a Christian variety and *historiola* from the New Testament. So despite the ubiquity of astrology in these texts, the ritual features are clearly central to the way in which the material was transmitted and transformed.

If there are any features common to all of these texts in this collection which may explain why they came together in the form they did, it would have to be that they all concern themselves deeply with ritual in the practice of magic and that they have been transformed accordingly. Both the first and last texts involve the explicit, ritual binding of spirits and the observation of hours of the day and night pertaining to Christian rituals. The first employs Christian *historiola* and prayers. The middle text does not involve the same kind of explicitly necromantic ritual but employs suffumigations, food prohibitions, and animal sacrifices. These texts also form a sort of anti-ritual in the sense that they explicitly—and most likely self-consciously—do what illicit works

of magic were assumed to do, that is, by the illicit use of Christian ritual, they conjure demons. Unlike works of image magic which cling to natural philosophy for legitimacy, these works either rejected the orthodox view on necromancy as wrong, or simply persevered in the face of it.

It should also be noted that this collection contains none of the usual explicit rituals for conjuring demons and serves to demonstrate the diversity of ritual magic practice preserved in Latin manuscripts. Kieckhefer's perceptive discussion of the psychology of the necromancer refers principally to those works which concern the actual summoning of demons, where the operator is supposed to actually see the demon appear.⁴⁰ While the texts in this collection involve the binding of demons or angels, they do not seek to summon them. Only the last treatise suggests this kind of operation, and it provides only the correct times to carry out the operations. It is not impossible that the text was used only in pursuit of the kind of magic described in the preceding two texts. There is certainly no firm evidence that the collector was interested in the direct conjuring of demons. Thus, the complex dynamics involved in the fearful relation to the numinous which Kieckhefer has described, in his discussion of what might be called "visionary necromancy," may not apply in this case. The magical operations described here involve a somewhat more distant relation to demons and angels, and, at least insofar as the texts describe it, involve no fearsome and explosive appearances. The more mystical necromancer who stares up the nostril of the devil is, in part, motivated by these dramatic and numinous features. He may well have been less satisfied with this text in which the scent of brimstone is not so strong. But let us turn to an example of more explicit necromantic practice.

⁴⁰Kieckhefer, "Holy."

4. The Rawlinson Necromancers: Rawlinson D. 252

a) The Structure of the Codex

In Rawlinson D. 252, a fifteenth-century necromancer's collection, two informal hands have copied a wide variety of short texts in a personal notebook. Quires 7 through 9 (ff 63-80) of this manuscript are written by a fifteenth-century English hand, and the remainder of the volume, excluding some seventeenth-century annotations, was also written in the fifteenth century by an English scribe. The scribe of quires seven through nine fills these quires and neither scribe runs onto pages written by the other. So, it is impossible to ascertain in what order, when, or by whom it may have been added. Although they are in roughly contemporary hands, they could, technically, have been joined as late as the seventeenth century when they were first foliated. The fifteenth-century part of a table of contents at f. 98v skips over the texts in quires seven through nine. This table refers only to the larger texts on conjuring in the first six quires, so the scribe might simply not have bothered to record any of the texts in quires seven through nine. The seventeenth-century collector did take the time to record the titles and folios of this section, including the short texts. Although he filled in the folio numbers beside the fifteenth-century list, he did not supplement it. If his concern was to produce a complete table of contents for the entire volume to that point, he would have had to add many small works in the list for the first six quires, something he did not do. If he had found the volume in its current condition, why update only that section and not the whole? One possibility is that he also recognized this hand as a later addition and recorded its contents for that reason. This might explain why the quires occur in the middle of the volume rather than at the end, which would be a more logical place to insert them. Someone who was being careful about the contents might have figured out that they were separate and put them there. The other possibility is that the seventeenth-century scribe compiled

the two, which might explain his concern to include them on the table of contents. That he included the three different quires after quire six could be explained by the fact that this was a point at which they could be included without breaking up the flow of a text in the original volume. In either case, it is probable that quires seven through nine were originally a separate collection, or derived from another larger collection. In what follows we will treat them separately as "Rawlinson B." Unless I refer specifically to the B section, it can be assumed that am speaking about the A part.

The collections were likely intended for personal use only. Both hands are rough cursive and, beyond section markers, the notebook uses only rudimentary textual aids, sometimes leaving it unclear where one text ends and the next begins. The table of contents, which appears about half way through the codex, lists only the major works of conjuring in the volume, excluding a wide assortment of smaller texts. Yet there is a greater coherence to the volume than first appears. For example, there are some indications of connections between the texts. In some cases, one text refers to another. For example, one conjuration ends with a reference to the *Vinculum Salomonis* a conjuration to be used in the case of a spirit who refuses to appear. The text appears elsewhere in the volume but the scribe does not provide a cross reference.⁴¹ In most of the cases, not even a title is given which might indicate to where one's ritual performance should proceed. At one point, with no explanation, the complete text of the first chapter of the Gospel of John appears, with no indications about where or how this may have been used in magical operations.⁴² This is only one of perhaps thirty such small texts scattered throughout the codex, each lacking in

⁴¹The initial reference to the *Vinculum Salomonis* appears at f.62v. The text itself appears at f. 87v.

⁴²f. 35v.

cues as to where they might be used. The scribe had no need to give such instructions as the text was intended for personal use only and no other reader was assumed.

The fact that the texts are not organized in a linear fashion, and that there is frequently no obvious coherence to the order in which the work has been assembled, should not be taken as an indication that the scribe did not know what he was doing. As in the case of the *Vinculum Salomonis*, some texts would have been applicable only in certain circumstances, but could be used in the case of any conjuration. Logically, they would not be copied out several times at the appropriate point in the ritual, but would appear once in the codex for use when needed. The lack of sections at the beginning of the conjurations which describe purification rituals does not indicate that the scribe dismissed such activities. Rather, as such general instructions do appear in other places in the text, the practitioner likely applied them in each case rather than copying out the same rules again and again.⁴³ But let us turn to a concrete demonstration of this method of organization.

A seventeenth-century scribe, who was forced to add numerous cross-references to the collection in order to make it useful, points out the ways in which the text was to be used. In Rawlinson A, for example, a *Coniuracio licencialis* appears at 36v. This is to be said to get the spirit to depart in a peaceful manner, following a magical operation, and to ensure a peaceful and subservient return, when the spirit is conjured again. This text and folio are referenced by the seventeenth-century hand at the end of two full conjurations, the point in those performances where this text ought to be used.⁴⁴ Cross-references in this same hand fill the book. All this

⁴³For example *Regula imuocationis* are listed at f. 120v which list preparatory prayers for conjuration. Another example is a section entitled [*Coniu*]raciones dicenda in omne operaciones, at 36r.

⁴⁴ff. 40v-47v and 48r-59r.

suggests a much higher level of sophistication in this personal collection than is immediately obvious from the disordered and often carelessly copied text. More significantly, the lack of explicit organization—which necessitated cross-referencing when a later owner used the collection—suggests very strongly that the collection was not copied as a whole, but was compiled. Only a scribe very familiar with the notebook, having compiled it personally, would be able to use it easily without such cues.

Not every necromancer's manual is organized in this manner. The Munich handbook, for example, preserves the integrity of the original texts, as do other examples from the fifteenth and sixteenth century in this survey.⁴⁵ Yet a common attitude towards the texts of magic may be detected in all of these cases. The scribes of most texts of ritual magic felt free to rewrite the text in some manner. For the Rawlinson scribes (and/or their source texts), this attitude extended to the manner in which the material was recorded, in the sense that they felt free to reorganize and extract from the originals (if, indeed, they had ever been more coherent). Like many other features of ritual magic collections, this has the effect of de-emphasizing the importance of the text itself, in the sense that there is no longer a direct correspondence between the organization of text and the ceremony.

When John of Moringy rewrote the Salomonic *Ars notoria* he was far less concerned about the source of the original material than the authenticity of his new work. Similarly, the Rawlinson scribes had little regard for the source. Whereas manuscripts of image magic consistently identify the author or source of the text and usually strive to preserve the whole text,

⁴⁵See for example, Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites* (an edition of CLM 849) and Society of Antiquaries of London 39. Both of these manuscripts are compilations of more or less complete works. Although they are not as freely extracted as the Rawlinson manuscript, their constituent works have also been re-written and adapted.

the Rawlinson scribes seem more concerned with content. In one example from Rawlinson B, we find material which may derive from similar sources as the standard works of image magic. The instructions for only two rings are recorded, without mention of source or author. The fact that the rings are identified with the planets suggests that it might have derived from a text with rings for each of the planets.⁴⁶ The texts which follow have to do with the consecration of rings, but this fact is not immediately obvious, as they are treated as if they were a new section. If they all derived from the same source, there is no indication of this. One way or another, they are almost certainly only extracts, especially given the very short length of the texts. Were material from a text of scholastic image magic to appear here, it would probably have been broken into bits and pieces, with no introduction or mention of the author. In this sense these collections have more in common with the *Commonplace Book of Robert of Acre*, mentioned above, or a recipe book, than collections including scholastic image magic texts. The presentation on the page, the organization of texts, the ways they are extracted, and the ways they are identified (or not) make this collection quite different from image magic collections. As we shall see, these superficial differences are also reflected in the actual content of the collections. Each is an expression of a general attitude amongst scribes of ritual magic. Truth was not associated with the received texts of the tradition, that is with accurately copied texts, but with an authentic and efficacious ritual, however that might have been derived.

b) An Overview of the Contents

The vast bulk of the codex is devoted to conjuring, complete with crude illustrations of pentagrams and other magical figures, lengthy prayers, incantations, successive operations for

⁴⁶ff. 79v-80v.

summoning, binding, and dismissing demons. Far more than any other type of magic, these texts are concerned with elaborate ritual performances, such as fasting, preparation of materials or tools, wearing of special clothes, suffumigations, consecrations, exorcisms, conjurations, and prayers. The ritual performances are devoted to the standard goals of finding treasure or stolen goods, detecting a thief, getting spirits to do your bidding, discovering secret information, or creating illusions. One of the standard texts which appears here is the *Vinculum Salomonis*, which is employed to deal with a recalcitrant spirit, who will not appear when summoned. This title appears amongst those listed by John Erghome in his *libri superstitiosi* and appears again in a sixteenth-century collection in Wellcome 110.⁴⁷ The collection also includes a certain amount of necromantic magic employing astrological conditions which might be classed as "astral magic," although, as we shall see, it has been largely incorporated into necromantic practices.

One of the principal techniques employed by Scribe A is the conjuring of spirits with the use of a young boy.⁴⁸ Typically, the ceremonies involve the conjuring and binding of demons in much the same way as would occur without the use of a young boy. After the usual dramatic prayers, suffumigations, gestures, and creation of magic diagrams, the child was then supposed to be able to see demons or spirits, either in some object such as glass or fingernails, or in the air. The technique is an old one. John of Salisbury mentions that a priest attempted to use him for this purpose when he was a boy, but that he could see nothing.⁴⁹ The conjuration which Benvenuto

⁴⁷York, Austin Friars A8 362 t. Wellcome 100 beginning at f. 36.

⁴⁸Ff. 1-23, 92-94, 109-110, 139v-42, and 159-62, for example, are taken up with a number of experiments of this kind.

⁴⁹John of Salisbury, *Frivolities of Courtiers and Footprints of Philosophers*, trans. Joseph B. Pike (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), pp. 146-7. Kieckhefer, *Magic*, p. 151. HMES II, 168.

Cellini attended in the colosseum was also accomplished with a boy medium and serves as a good record of the dramatic results which could be achieved with a suggestible or creative and imaginative child.⁵⁰ In this case, the boy saw demons in the smoke and darkness, and managed to thoroughly terrify the adult participants in the ceremony. The fact that this technique endured may well be attributed to the more dependable results it returned. In an age when every living adult believed in the immanence and power of demons, a child, involved in the complex and evocative rituals recorded here, could easily be convinced that he could see something. He could also discover that he had a marvellous power by *pretending* that he could. One way or another, the results for the operator would be just as effective and satisfying.

The Rawlinson A collection devotes many of its pages to treasure hunting, identifying thieves, and finding stolen goods, practices most often associated with the professional practice of necromancy. Much less dangerous than efforts to inflict harm by occult methods or to curry favour in politics, these practices addressed common and real concerns for people, and so, may well have made it possible to make something of a living. There is very little in this collection which does not directly correspond with what we know about professional necromancers in England in the late middle ages. The standard professional services included treasure hunting,⁵¹ discovery of thieves or stolen goods,⁵² and relating to love and chastity.⁵³ A large number of the

⁵⁰Benvenuto Cellini, *Vita* l.xiv-l.xv. For an English translation, see *The Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini*, transl. by John Addington Symonds (Doubleday: Garden City, N.Y., 1946), pp. 118-22. For an Italian edition, see *Vita* (BUR: Milan, 1985), pp. 240-46.

⁵¹f. 156.

⁵²ff. 103-107r, 109-118v, 121v-24v, and 126-30

⁵³Rings for love occur at ff. 45-6. An experiment to discover who has known a woman may be found at ff. 109-10.

texts are also devoted to achieving oracles with the aid of a young boy.⁵⁴ The prediction of the future was also a standard service of a magical practitioner and, as we have noted, we have recorded cases of the use of boys for such things. Many of the invocations have no pre-defined purpose.⁵⁵ By way of comparison, the Munich Manual and the other collections in our survey devote little if any space to treasure hunting and detection of thieves. As I have demonstrated, the way the collection is laid out on the page suggests that it was assembled by the scribe and was not copied as a whole from a single source. Assuming this represents the interests of the scribe, rather than an oddly selective set of sources available to him, our scribe may well have been a professional practitioner. Certainly, at some point in the transmission of the texts, a concentration of materials on this topic occurred.

The constant feature of the texts in these collections is not a theoretical framework but a common interest in elaborate rituals. In particular, the scribes and authors of this material evidently consider contemporary orthodox rituals, and more or less credible elaborations upon them, as particularly powerful or desirable in magical operations. A formula for confession appears on f. 49, although in this case, a concluding section has been added explicitly designed for the protection of a necromancer. A ritual for those with "dolorem in oculis" would seem out of place in this volume, except that it involves the use of a Psalm (perhaps a kind of analogue for a secret of nature in a volume interested in image magic).⁵⁶ An interesting section at f. 81 demands that whoever desires salvation must, before all else in this work, hold to the catholic faith. The

⁵⁴The experiments on ff. 1-29 all employ this technique.

⁵⁵For example, most of the experiments involving young boys just cited have no pre-defined purpose. The first, for example, proposes to render the truth on any matter, f. 1r.

⁵⁶f. 125.

section goes on to provide the Chalcedonian Trinitology, the Nicene Christology, the Litany of the Saints, and assorted prayers.⁵⁷ Psalms appear at various points.⁵⁸ The chapter of John, which Scribe A has included for ritual purposes, was recited at the end of every mass in late medieval England.⁵⁹ Its use in the mass and also in exorcism, not its philosophical tone, are the contexts from which it derived its significance for the operator. Its power derived from its use in orthodox ritual. In the codex, this biblical text is assumed to have magical power in its own right, in the same fashion as the various invocations or orations. In addition, this kind of borrowing reveals an active and creative religiosity. Since this passage is not contained within one of the constituent treatises on conjuring, but stands on its own, the practitioner may well have incorporated contemporary religious practices into his magical operations himself.

By comparison, texts on images tend to be relatively transparent witnesses to their Arabic or Hebraic sources. Only one similar example occurs in the texts of image magic, where Thomas of Cantimpre records a blessing for a stone. Here, however, we have the repetition of a prior author's suggestion, not the active creation of a new ritual practice. In addition, Thomas did not mean the work to be practical, but rather sought to draw the reader to devotion by the awe it might inspire as a *story* or *report*. What dominates the image magic text is not the ritual procedure, but the occult power in the stone or image. In collections containing scholastic image magic texts, the occult power in the stones or images and the associated frame of interpretation are the centre of focus, rather than the ritual procedures. While they might have had religious

⁵⁷Quicumque vult saluus esse, ante omnia opus est in isto opere ut teneat catholicam fidem. Quam nisi quisque integram inuiolatamque seruauerit, absque dubio in eternum peribit. f. 81r.

⁵⁸ For example f. 38v and 63r.

⁵⁹Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c. 1400-c. 1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 124.

goals or have been meant to inspire religious devotion, they are not the records of personal, albeit unorthodox, religious exercises. To put it another way, where manuscripts of image magic tend to represent the impulse to preserve and analyze, the Rawlinson Collection represents active and ongoing synthesis and elaboration.

c) Astrology and Image Magic in the Rawlinson Collections

The standard works of scholastic image magic are entirely absent from the Rawlinson Collections despite the fact that raw probability would predict the opposite. This codex runs to 160 folios and includes approximately 70 separate items, each between a few lines and 5 folios in length. One might reasonably expect one of these image magic texts to appear here, especially as they were at least as numerous as necromantic texts, and, given their presence in the major libraries (e.g. St Augustine's Abbey and York Austin Friars), comparatively accessible. Were one of the scribes interested in any number of occult topics, from alchemy to the notory art, these texts could well have appeared in the same codices, making exposure to scholastic image magic more likely. It is understandable that a scribe might not include a text of conjuring in an astrological codex, since it might be prudent to hide your conjuring text. There is no reason to exclude a text like Thebit's *De imaginibus* in your collection of conjuring texts, if you were interested in such things. Amongst the texts of necromancy, in this survey, which were compiled before 1500, this does not happen. The only exception is Erghome's collection of "superstitious" works, and this codex betrays the same division of ritual magic and image magic within itself, probably having been compiled from sources in which the two forms of magic were independent.⁶⁰ In fact, short sections on rings or images do occur in necromantic collections, but they appear to

⁶⁰See above, Ch. 3, sect. 3.

derive from a distinct set of manuscript or oral sources. If they were ultimately derived from the same sources as scholastic image magic, they have become different kinds of texts in a distinct and parallel stream of transmission. The Rawlinson Collections suggest the same. Some of the techniques they employ are informed by astrology or structured around astrological conditions, yet there is scant evidence of the kind of interests in natural philosophy or *naturalia* which we have found in the collections of scholastic image magic.

The fact that similar kinds of techniques and interests seem to be represented in both the necromantic and image magic collections demands careful examination. A section in Rawlinson A, containing several texts (29v-35r), presents material usually associated with images, in a fashion reminiscent of works like the *Liber lune*. The texts furnish an array of astrological information, such as "the howses of the vii planetts" and "the natures and kinde of the xii synes perteynyng to the elements."⁶¹ That lists of angel names, more astrological details, and suffumigations appear amongst the subsequent pages is further suggestive of the practices of Arabic image magic. Just as in the case of the *Liber lune*, the material is presented in a systematic manner. Each of the elements of the magical process appears in a separate section, organized according to the time of operation.

Closer analysis reveals that this portion of the text should probably be regarded as two independent sections, and that the goals of the magical practices presented in them are very different from scholastic image magic. The first section of astrological information concludes with a folio and a half of instructions, a small portion of which will suffice to demonstrate how the scribe employed them.

⁶¹ff. 29r-30r

When the sun is in a warm and dry figure, it is good to conjure infernal spirits, when in warm and wet, ariel spirits, when cold and humid, aquatic spirits, and when cold and dry, terrene spirits.⁶²

The pursuit of the "magic art" is also listed under one of the conditions (*ad faciendum artis mayce* [i.e., majice]) which might imply something different, like astrological image magic, but it is accompanied by the activities of speaking with spirits and finding stolen goods (*ad loquendum spiribus* [sic] *et furta habenda*). While the verb *coniuro* might conceivably be applied to the processes involved in standard image magic, more instructions, somewhat further on, make clear that the technique proposed is, in fact, the creation of the standard necromantic circle for a conjuration.

Therefore see to it always that the air is clear before you begin to make the circle. But if clouds arise when you are making the circle, do not do any more. But if clouds arise after you have made the circle and completed it, then operate, since the sign is that you will have no impediment.⁶³

At least to this point in the section, necromantic practices are the central goal. While image magic texts were often identified as necromantic, they do not explicitly involve talking with spirits or angels or the creation of necromantic circles. Where a conjuration might be used to get a spirit to do your bidding or to give you information, the effects of the standard image magic texts were almost invariably limited to such things as binding tongues or protection from enemies.

With the conclusion of this section, the scribe returns to a discussion of astrology. This time, however, the topic shifts from the appropriate astrological conditions for conjuring demons,

⁶²Quando sol est in figure calido et sicco, bonum est coniurare spiritum infernales. In signo calido et humido, spiritus aereos. In signo frigido et humido, spiritus aquaticos. In signo frigido et sicco, spiritus terreos. Ibid.

⁶³Vide ergo semper quod aura sit serena antequam incipias facere circulum. Si autem, in faciendo circulum, surrexerunt nubes, noli amplius facere. Si autem, post factum circulum et peractum, surrexerunt nubes, tunc operare, quia signum est quod bene expedies ... f. 31r

to angel magic. Once again, this section contains all the elements of Arabic image magic, although, unlike many of them, it does not deal with lunar mansions. Several tables in Latin link planets with hours. There follow three tables correlating angels and suffumigations with the days of the week, which are, of course, listed by their standard planetary names.⁶⁴ In some instances, works of image magic also detail astrological conditions, appropriate hours for operation, and the suffumigations and angel names associated with them.

Closer examination, however, reveals important elements which are quite unlike the standard works of image magic. To begin with, no descriptions of images appear here. Given the personal nature of the book, it is conceivable (although unlikely) that the images were described elsewhere, were not transcribed from the original text, or were not written down for the purposes of secrecy. It is also possible that the angel names themselves were the only written or engraved sign to be employed. The lack of astrological symbols would make the text considerably harder to justify according to the standards of scholastic thought. A number of other features make it clear that we are dealing with quite a different kind of text. The angel names are Hebraic, not Arabic.⁶⁵ This could suggest a Hebraic source, or, in a pattern that we have already seen, that the Arabic names have been replaced in a Christian context, where the Hebrew names would have been regarded as more acceptable or efficacious. Although the materials are similar, the suffumigations do not correspond with patterns in Arabic sources which I have seen. The *Liber lune* and Albertus

⁶⁴ff. 31v-34v.

⁶⁵The same angel names appear next to each day of the week on f. 33v but the order shifts in a circular fashion with each day. The fourth angel of the current day becomes the first angel of the subsequent day. In a circular fashion the first three are moved to the end of the subsequent day. Hence the first three days of the week run as follows:

Die dominica. Raphael. Auael Michael Gabriel Captiel Samael Satquiel
 Die lune. Gabriel Captiel Satquiel Samael Raphael Auael Michael
 Die Martis. Samael Raphael Auael Michael Gabriel Captiel Satquiel

Magnus's discussion of image magic both hold that certain suffumigations are to be used for good purposes and others for bad. Rather than associating a suffumigation with the nature of the magical activity, the Rawlinson scribe links a suffumigation to each day of the week and, interestingly, assigns a final one to the magical operator (*Subfumigatio tua*)! Suffumigating the operator might well derive from the use of incense in the mass, since Arabic magic characteristically suffumigates only the image.⁶⁶ The single, short prayer included in this section is addressed to God and invokes the Trinity. This is a familiar pattern in ritual magic texts, in which Christian elements have been superimposed upon what appear to be practices or structures originally deriving from Arabic or Hebraic sources. Further, the prayer to God and the angels in this section includes the line "....and you aforementioned glorious angels know the questions which I desire to ask, helpers and hearers to me in all my business...."⁶⁷ Asking questions of angels, which would appear to be, at least, part of the intent of this text, is well outside the bounds of the scholastic image magic texts.

Only one short section in the Rawlinson B collection cannot be demonstrated to be motivated by an interest in conjuring or similar kinds of activities. Yet even in this case, involving the making of two rings, the astrology is unsophisticated and the practices overlaid with Christian ritual. The second instruction for the making of a ring appears to be something of a composite text, more focused on making an image on goat skin than the ring which it initially discusses.

The ring of Mercury ought to be made from copper, just like Mars, in order to have every knowledge and victory in every struggle with any lord, and that you will not be

⁶⁶The materials correspond marvellously with the characteristics of the planets which are associated with the days. For example, Aloe is used for Monday, pepper for Tuesday (Mars), and red sandalwood and saffron for Sunday. f. 34v.

⁶⁷Et vos Angeli gloriosi prenominati mee questiones quam volo querere scitis, auxiliores et mihi omnibus negociis meis adiutores.... f. 33v.

condemned by any judge. When you wish to operate, fast on the day of mercury (Wednesday) to the evening. That same night, make this character [illustration] and the name of the angel, which is Yparon, with the blood of a fox or cat on the skin of a he-goat. When you come before the judge or any other man, write this character on your chest or forehead [sic] with the name of the Angel. Hold the document in your hand, and he will not have the power to condemn you. Make the ring in day of mercury and his hour.⁶⁸

Very similar to some of the instructions in the Society of Antiquaries collection, both a ring and a leather amulet are mentioned here. In the passage which follows, evidently meant to be connected with the preceding two passages, the rings and, presumably, the leather amulet, are referred to as "creatures of the planets" and "exorcised" to make them effective. The spirits of the planets are said to have created the powers of the rings by the power of the angels Uryel, Salatiel and Acoel. The prayer exorcises the planetary materials in preparation for their magical use, through the power of God.⁶⁹ A subsequent prayer to God, invoking the Tetragrammaton, explicitly requests

⁶⁸Anulus mercurij debet fieri de cupro, sicut est mars, ad habendum omnem scienciam et victoriam in omni placito cuiuscunque domini, et quod non condemnaberis ab aliquo iudice. Quando vis operare, sis ieiun[us] die <sigil for mercury> usque ad noctem. Eodem nocte, cum sanguine vulpis vel mureligi, fac istum characterem [figure] et nomen angeli, que est yparon, in pelli hirti, et quando venis coram iudice vel aliquo alio homine, scribe hunc karactar in pectore tuo vel in fronte cum nomine Angeli, et tene cedulam in manu tua, et ipse non habebit potestatem condemnandi te, et facies anulum in die <sigil for mercury> et eius hora. f. 79v

⁶⁹Exorcizo vos creaturas planetarum dedicatas eorum spiritibus et in earum horis fabricatas et earum potencia factas, per .Uryel Salatiel Acoel et per potenciam, que vobis condonata est in creacione vestra in principio, quibus dicens "Relinquo munera que sunt preciosa, ita quod vos ad illa adiuuetis que desiderare volo et petere, et quod tale adiuuamentum prebeatis ad quale particulos estis fabricate vel scripture estis per virtutem per quam vos constrinxi estis prestante deo in secula seculorum amen. [I exorcise you, creatures of the planets, consecrated to their spirits and constructed in their hours and made by their power, through uryel, salatiel, acoel, and through the power which was bestowed upon you in your creation in the beginning, saying to them [ie uryel etc.]: "I relinquish gifts which are precious so that you may furnish benefit to those things which I wish to desire and seek, and so that you may furnish such benefit to those particulars, you [i.e. the rings] were constructed and you were inscribed through the power by which I have constrained you: you exist with God disposing forever and ever, amen."]

It is interesting to note that the opening line echoes the first line in the standard exorcism for salt in the preparation of holy water. "Exorciso te creatura salis per deum +" *Manuale ad usum percelebris ecclesie sarisburensis*, ed. A. Jeffries Collins (Henry Bradshaw Society:

that the *ring* may be effective. We have here the basic material for Arabic image magic, i.e. an astrological image engraved under certain astrological conditions and a cosmology which conflates astrological influences with the planetary "spirits." On the other hand, the astrology is not sophisticated, referring only to planetary hours and days. The angel names are, once again, Hebraic, not Arabic. Further, the processes involve a number of ritual performances, including an exorcism (which echoes the standard exorcism for salt in the preparation of holy water), the invoking of higher powers, and Christian prayer. Finally, the ring has become only a part of the process, displaced to a large extent by the leather amulet. All of these, suggest not only that this text is at least a "hybrid," but that, as in all the rest of the constituent texts, the scribe is centrally concerned to elaborate an authentic, or at least believable, Christian magical ritual. This interest in ritual, and apparent disinterest in the technical details of astrology, may be detected in other features of these two collections.

Neither collection contains a hint of interest in natural philosophy, theories of magic, or even *naturalia* in general, despite the presence of astrological material. Some portions of the Rawlinson notebook seek to provide general information which, in theory, applies to all cases. For example, the scribe provides general discussions of astrological conditions the association of certain planets with certain days, suffumigations for each day, and days which are not good for magical operations.⁷⁰ Similarly, we have "orationes dicenda[e] in omni opera."⁷¹ But none of this amounts to an abstract, philosophical analysis of the processes which underlie the magical

London, 1960), p. 1. See also, *Manuale Romanum; Medolani, 1474* (Henry Bradshaw Society: London, 1899), p. xxv.

⁷⁰ff. 29v-35v.

⁷¹f. 37r.

operations, such as was known to, or actually copied out by, the scribes of image magic. Finally, no texts of natural wonders, secrets, astronomy/astrology, alchemy, natural philosophy, or magical theory appear here which might point to a common interest in these materials if not a theoretical orientation. Some written charms appear, "goode to bere upon a bedy for many causis..." At one point (f. 62v) a short table identifies the usual shorthand symbols for the planets, which is the closest this volume gets to "secrets", astrology, astronomy, or natural philosophy. Thus, the texts of the Rawlinson Collections contain magical practices which are superficially similar to those found in collections of scholastic image magic. But like Society of Antiquaries 39, ff. 1-17, these practices are employed, understood, transmitted, and collected in almost entirely different ways.

d) Angels, Demons, and Hidden Knowledge in the Rawlinson Collections

Albertus Magnus was dubious about the use of angels in magic and regarded angel names as a poor camouflage for demonic involvement. On the other hand, some, like John of Morigny, took the division very seriously indeed. So long as John felt he was able to make the distinction between angelic and demonic magic, he avoided necromancy. Yet when he felt this was not possible, he abandoned his hopes for good magic and practiced necromancy for a period. This raises two questions. First, how did practitioners of necromancy regard angel magic? Second, what are the commonalities between the two which might encourage John to choose necromantic magic as a replacement for his failed attempts at angelic magic.

We have already discussed two principal features common to necromancy and the notory art—and, in fact, common to almost all the constituent texts of ritual magic. They are united in their interest in ritual, and they are transmitted in similarly "creative" ways. To these features we

can add three more. First, angelic and demonic magic are inextricable in necromantic practice. Second, their processes are open-ended. By definition, visions and their interpretations will vary widely, whatever the operators may have assumed about them. So, whatever controls might be placed on what the operator saw through suggestions in the instructions, the results would likely have been different for each practitioner. This built-in principle of variation was further complicated by the regular occurrence of open-ended instructions. The rituals themselves often have no pre-determined results. In turn, the new texts produced by practitioners varied because the scribes employed these open ended rituals to build upon, modify, or correct their practices. Finally, no doubt due to the resulting chaos and lack of systematization, they sought to rely upon angelic or divine guidance to identify the truth.

Broadly speaking, a common interest in visions and ritual link necromancy and the notory art. Yet the association goes deeper, in the sense that angelic and demonic magic are often practiced simultaneously by the same people and in some cases were blended together. In magical collections of all varieties, we have seen a non-gnostic use of angels names in the construction of magical images. The *Ars notoria* involved purely angelic magic but the *Liber sacer* was only largely so. Although more highly ritualized than the practices of the standard image magic texts, necromancers also employed angels in aid of magical images, sometimes as protection, sometimes even in binding rituals. In part, the similar cosmological status of planetary deities or spirits, angels, and demons meant that they were often conflated, especially where a translator of an Arabic or Hebraic text felt compelled to nudge a category like a planetary deity into a Christian cosmology. While no one would have argued that demons were indistinct from angels, the Society of Antiquaries collection which we have discussed is a good example of how ambiguous the

resulting blending can be. While this confusion of categories appears more or less accidental, the "divinatory" use of angels in necromancy was not.

The acquisition of knowledge, particularly associated with the notory art, finds analogues in necromantic practices. The first passage in the necromancers manual edited by Richard Kieckhefer (CLM 849) is an interesting example.⁷² Undoubtedly modeled upon an *Ars notoria*, it promises knowledge of the liberal arts, employs Hebraic sounding angel names, and seeks to achieve its goals through dream visions. But instead of supplicating, the operator conjures; instead of *notae*, we have *circuli*. In short, the text is necromantic. No necromantic collection in my sample, prior to 1500, contains this sort of explicit blending, although it may prove to be more common when a survey of continental manuscripts has been accomplished. The Rawlinson collectors record magical operations which, like the notory art, employ angels in the pursuit of visions and knowledge, but there is no evidence that the authors mimicked or drew upon the tradition of the notory art, as the scribe of CLM 849 has done. Rather, these rituals seek knowledge more applicable to the goals and problems of necromantic practice.

In some cases angels were employed for treasure hunting or detecting thieves and stolen goods. A prayer written by Scribe A at f. 50 seeks the aid of a guardian angel to protect the necromancer from worldly evils, but also from evil demons. Given the large number of treasure hunting and thief detection rituals, one suspects this piece was a support for the pursuit of these goals. The very last folio in the collection contains a prayer for a dream vision (*Ad visionem in sompno* (f. 162r.)). Unfortunately, as it occupies the last folio of the original manuscript, it is badly worn. Although very short, it is similar to an *Ars notoria* in the sense that it seeks a dream in which an angel appears to reveal things. The initial prayer asks for information about "this

⁷²CLM 849, 3r-5v. Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites*, pp.193-196.

thing", indicating that the reader is to fill in the specifics, but it gives no clue as to what the thing might be (*ut doceant et respondeant michi rectam veritatem istius rei N.*). The plural would be more suggestive of the general form of knowledge sought through the *Ars notoria*. Although otherwise badly mutilated, that last page contains a prayer, which evidently makes request concerning a treasure. One fragment of its text seems to imply that gold, silver, or gems are to be transferred from their hiding place.⁷³ Thus, it appears likely that the "thing" mentioned in the first section was simply treasure, and unlikely that this was a figurative way of speaking about a storehouse of knowledge.

Most of the passages, however, are unspecific about the kind of knowledge they seek. One example at f. 14v makes use of a magical image (a pentagram inscribed with the names of five angels) and an abbreviated prayer. The short passage, amounting to a few lines only, invokes several "good angels" in pursuit of answers to "my questions."⁷⁴ The nature of the knowledge is not specified. Another passage amongst the astrological material in section A describes angels as "helpers and supporters in all my business," but also as ones who "know the questions which I desire to ask."⁷⁵ So the principle that angels have a particular role in providing knowledge, in response to general or specific questions, recurs throughout the collection.

Another more extensive passage bears the somewhat more evocative title "Concerning the old bearded man (*de sene barbato*).⁷⁶" The instructions purport to bring on a vision of an old man who will appear and reveal things. After extensive ritual performances, including prayers and the

⁷³...[de?] aliquo loco thesaurum Afferat silicet Aurum Argentum aut gemmas... f. 162v.

⁷⁴Pro bonis angelis dic istud. Raphael, Gabriel, Michael, Cherubyn, Ceraphyn, Arriel, Pantaseron, Mucraton, Sandalon, et vos angeli gloriosi mee questiones quam volo etc. f. 14v.

⁷⁵Et vos Angeli gloriosi prenominati mee questiones quam volo querere scitis auxiliares et mihi omnibus negociis meis adiutores.... f. 34.

creation of a complex magical figure, the text concludes, "then take yourself to bed and an old, bearded man will come to you who will respond to you concerning everything."⁷⁶ The technique is similar to that of the *Sworn Book of Honorius*. The goal of dream visions also may be found in some versions of the *Ars Notoria*.⁷⁷ While one is left to infer the identity of the old man, the prayer, addressed to God, refers to him as a messenger (*nuntius*) whom God is to send. So the assumption would appear to be that he is an angel. In the end, we can safely assume that Scribe A would have employed this angel in a manner consistent with its cosmological status and in the pursuit of specific kinds of information. What knowledge the old, bearded one might reveal to the sleeping operator is not specified. The modest size and tone of the piece (one folio) do not suggest the grand goals of the notory art. Certainly, no indication is given that the old man is capable of infusing spiritual or intellectual gifts. Instead, his function seems to be limited to the verbal communication of unspecified information.⁷⁸ Given the practical goals of many of the rituals, one suspects that the scribes' questions might be similarly practical and worldly, yet there is no mention of treasure or stolen goods here, and the nature of what the old man might reveal is quite open-ended.

Other passages which seek knowledge suggest that the information sought may have concerned the practice of magic itself. One contains a prayer in which the operator seeks divine and angelic aid. While the "aid" ultimately might have been employed in the pursuit of pecuniary, or at least worldly goals, the intermediate goals and the language it employs suggest otherwise.

⁷⁶Deinde pone te ad lectum et ad te veniat senex barbatus qui tibi de omnibus respondebit. f. 99v.

⁷⁷See for example Harley 181, f. 75r-81v. I discuss this portion of this sixteenth-century manuscript in Ch. 6, sect. 2.

⁷⁸This is also the case in the Harley example just cited.

Let irreprehensible memory, incomprehensible wisdom, undeniable power fill my abode. Let your wisdom, sweetness and graces flow upon my mind. Let every one of your holy angels with all the powers of the heavens, desire to look upon and illuminate my face and heart without end. Let the wisdom by which you made everything, the intelligence by which you transformed everything, the enduring blessedness by which you established the angels, and the love and generous charity through which you taught Adam every science, form me, fill me anew, instruct me, correct me, restore me, and make me anew *that I might be made wise in understanding and undertaking the laws of your angels and in the vision and knowledge of spirits*, in salvation of body and mind and the salvation of everyone believing in your name which is blessed forever. Amen. [Italics mine]

Therefore, I pray to you undivided Father of all, and I trust in all your pity. So harken to my petition, you who mercifully hear those distinctly crying out to you. Grant me, I entreat, Lord my God, in grace, wisdom, virtue, and power, that an angel or angels, that is, this one or these [i.e. fill in name(s)] would appear benignly to me whenever I invoke them and/or fulfil my truthful petition through your glorious majesty and holy name, blessed in eternity, God who lives and reigns forever. Amen.⁷⁹

The prayer falls into two parts. As is typical, the first section sets the tone, reminds God of past glories and mercies, and serves to assure Him of the operator's holy intentions. The second makes the specific request. But the nature of the "truthful petition" is unspecified. It is unlikely that the prayer is simply a kind of general request for God's aid in the pursuit of angelic and demonic magic, which might or might not involve visions. The prayer asks that the angels involved appear in a non-threatening form and this certainly suggests a vision. Further, as the operator is supposed

⁷⁹Memoria irreprehensibilis, sapiencia incomprehensibilis, efficacia incontradicibilis impleat consticionem meam. Sapiencia tua dulcedo et gratie tue mentem meam inn[e]at. Omnes sancti angeli tui, cum omnibus virtutibus celi, faciem meam et cor meum sine fine intueri et illuminare desiderent. Sapiencia qua omnia fecisti, intelligencia qua omnia reformasti, beatitudinis perseverancia qua angelos constituisti, dilectio et largitatis caritas, qua adam omnem scienciam docuisti, informet, repleat, instruat, corrigat, instauret, et reficiat me, ut fiam prudens in mandatis intelligendis et suscipiendis angelorum tuorum et spirituum visione et noticia [for noticiam], in salutatem corporis et anime mee et omnium credencium, in nomine tuo, quod est benedictum in secula Amen.

Te igitur omnium pater simplex exoro, et in tua pietate tota confido. Exaudi ergo petitionem meam, qui ad te denote clamantes benigniter exaudis. Da, queso, domine deus meus in graciam sapienciam virtutem et potenciam, quatinus angelus vel angeli, silicet iste vel isti .N., quociens ipsum vel ipsos inuocauo, mihi benigniter appereat, vel aut et petitionem meam veracem sufficiant perimplere, per gloriosam magestatem tuam et nomen sanctum benedictum in eternum, qui vivit et regnat, deus per omnia secula seculorum Amen. f. 78

to fill in the specific petition, the prayer would not appear to serve as a general prayer for success, but rather an operation in its own right. Typically, the *historiola* in a prayer or incantation reflect the request. The operator's reminder to God of the wisdom given to Adam and the repeated references to wisdom, memory, and knowledge suggest that the goals sought in the second section have to do with acquiring knowledge. As in the examples from Scribe A, the knowledge sought might be very specific, and there is no way of knowing what an individual practitioner may have done with the prayer, given its rather open-ended nature. While it would be prudent to assume that the *final* goals of the text were instrumental, a few observations about what these passages can tell us about the *process* of magic must be made.

While conceivable (as magical literature contains such examples), it would be incongruous to use this operation to inflict harm or gain the favour of a lady. The content strongly suggests that the appropriate use would have been the pursuit of some kind of knowledge or information. So it is very interesting that aside from the *historiola* about Adam, the only specific reference to knowledge in either passage has to do with becoming wise in "understanding and undertaking the laws of your angels and in the vision and knowledge of spirits." There are a number of ways of interpreting this phrase, each of which lead in fruitful directions. First, the passage makes clear that angelic magic and demonic magic are of a piece and not to be separated. Second, the passage suggests that a central issue for a necromancer was to know the laws which govern the angels, or perhaps which extend from the angels. It also seeks wisdom in the vision and knowledge of spirits. We may well detect in this the voice of an operator, like John of Morigny, who is struggling to decide whether what has appeared is an angel or a demon, and, if a demon has appeared, in what measure it may be trusted. This question leads to the most significant feature of

this passage, that is, the way in which it bears upon the relation of ritual magic to truth or knowledge.

The "truth" for a collector of image magic was to be found in the literature of natural philosophy and in the accurate rendering of the text. As we have demonstrated, and as our examples will continue to demonstrate, necromantic treatises were freely extracted, modified, and transformed. They could not rely on a broader literature which supported the idea that their magical processes could be safe and effective. Rather, the confidence that what they were reading or seeing was true had to be achieved in other ways. This problem was the basis of John of Morigny's struggles. In the case of this prayer, truth could only be assured by an appeal to God, angels, or saints. Further, if the operations were intended to pursue information about angels and demons, and this seems likely, the prayer indicates one of the ways in which new knowledge could be attained, assuming the appeal for a vision was successful. If the operator was unsuccessful in his pursuit of visions of this kind, it indicates, at least, an openness in the literature to knowledge acquired in this way or to the principle that the text itself was not the final word. The necromancer assumed his magic to be fluid and something upon which he could build with further operation. This is to say that ritual magic was regarded by its practitioners as a living process, not limited to the instructions provided in the volume. Further, although it does not assume the kind of culminative and progressive acquisition of knowledge characteristic of Arabic thought, and the *Picatrix* in particular, the parallel with this classic of Arabic magic is significant.

That the scribes, collectors, and authors of ritual magic texts altered, extracted, and transformed them as freely as they did indicates that this open-endedness is very much a feature of the tradition. We have seen how, in the transmission of ritual magic texts, scribes would incorporate ritual practices which had numinous associations for them. It is not so different for

such a person to appeal directly to experiences of the numinous to correct, transform, or supplement his art, assuming such things had occurred. The appeals for angelic visions may well be one way in which these transformations took place. Another such example is more explicitly necromantic.

In a procedure described by Scribe B a demon is conjured. After this, the scribe goes on,

When the spiryt is apperyd: What is thy name? Under what state and what dynite [i.e. dignity] hast thou? What is thy powyr and thy offyse? Undyr what planet and sygn art thou. Of what parte arte thou of the world? Of which element art thou? Whych is thy monyth? What is thy day and thyn owyr? What is thyne howre, day or nyght? Whych is thy winde? What be they carettes that thou abyst to? Whych is thy mansion and thy day? Which is thy sterre? Which is thy stone? Which is thy erbe? What is thyne offyse to do. What is thy metale? What is thyne Aungellys name that thou moste obeyst to. And in what lykenes aperyst thou? How many commyst thou wythall?⁸⁰

In short, the process is entirely open-ended, and the author, assuming he was able to achieve a vision or employ an effective medium, would be able to record new information to be used in subsequent operations. A similar passage was recorded by Scribe A following a conjuration:

And if [the spirit] appears, show him the pentacle of Solomon and ask him his name and his office and what is character is and under what governor he is and what his days, hours, and months are, etc.⁸¹

Once this kind of information was attained, the scribe could employ it in operations like the general purpose conjuration of any malign spirit (*cuiuscumque spiritus maligni*).⁸² In this example, the operator was required to supply only the name of the spirit, but presumably, if more information had been acquired, it could also be employed to construct conjurations tailored to a specific spirit. These kinds of operations implicitly recognize that the knowledge contained in the

⁸⁰f. 65.

⁸¹ f. 102v

⁸²f. 24r-28v.

texts is limited and can be supplemented. Image magic scribe texts had a more or less static philosophical system to appeal to, these scribes did not. In fact, the way in which they transmitted the texts was antithetical to the development of systemic solidity. The consistent demands in demonic invocations that the demons speak truly⁸³ or desist from mocking the operator,⁸⁴ and the prayers for divine and angelic aid in discerning the truth in visions, underline the fact that there is some doubt that the rituals may provide the operator with the truth. It only compounded the problem that the necromancer had to turn again to the numinous for aid in discerning that truth.

Unlike image magic, where the whole result of the operation is identified, the passages seeking hidden knowledge—and a considerable number of the other rituals—are open ended, relying upon visions and their interpretation. Even in the case of the pursuit of treasure through visions, the operator would have had far more difficulty in discerning the truth, than in a more controlled divinatory exercise such as geomancy. This open-endedness also characterizes the way in which the art was supposed to be learned and practiced. The writers clearly assumed that skill in necromancy did not derive from a book, but from progressively acquired skills and experience, not to mention divine aid. Unlike collectors of image magic, who could derive confirmation, explanation, or emendation of their texts in natural philosophy, practitioners of ritual magic had to look to different, non-textual sources. These might be their own spiritual resources—perhaps bolstered by the power of the rituals they employed—or visions and dreams which could provide both confidence, confirmation, and, presumably, information. Even if the "visions" or divine

⁸³See for example f. 22v, 12v, and 14r.

⁸⁴f. 37.

influences upon the operator were less direct, "more assumed than experienced,"⁸⁵ it makes little difference. What is important is that, in principle, additional truths could be derived from these numinous sources, truths which might or might not be available in the texts. This attitude which locates truth outside the text, is in part driven by the fluid, unsystematic, and unstable nature of the written tradition; it also compounds this situation. With such forces at work, it is not hard to understand why scribes engaged so liberally in the perennial re-invention of ritual magic.

The use of Christian liturgy, prayers, creeds, and scripture throughout the work may, thus, be seen to function in several ways. The numinous power of this material would have been beyond question for anyone, and may have served to convince initiates that the art was in some measure acceptable. It may have served as an implicit argument against those who would condemn it. It could certainly have served to dispose the practitioner or a boy medium to suggestibility. But all of these may be secondary to the part they played in convincing the practitioner not only that the art was acceptable in religious terms, but that truth might be derived from it. The balance they helped to effect between holy and unholy, thus, was underlaid with another balancing act between revealed truth and the received text, true interpretation and confusion, truth and deception.

⁸⁵Nicholas Watson uses this phrase to characterize the impression which John of Moringy gives in his descriptions of his own visions. Watson, p. 168.

Part III

The Sixteenth Century

Chapter 6

Collections of the Sixteenth Century

While faith in natural magic and astrology, in sympathy and antipathy, and the like, may be seen as great and widespread during the period which we have just reviewed as in any preceding age, use of superstitious ceremonial and magical rite, of incantation, word and number, has fallen off markedly. Occult virtues and relationships in nature are still believed in, but magical procedure is largely abandoned. Thus the way is open for mathematical and scientific method.¹

These words, which conclude Thorndike's volumes of the *History of Magic and Experimental Science* on the sixteenth century, epitomize a perspective on the historical relation between early modern magic and science from which later scholarship has not radically deviated. Frances Yates argued for the presence of a magical tradition variously styled "hermetic" or "cabbalist and hermetic" that fuelled the scientific revolution. Her works have themselves been re-evaluated by a new generation of scholars who argue for a middle course, insisting upon the importance of occultism as a feature of the sixteenth-century worldview, without making it into a major motive force behind the scientific revolution. Yet throughout the debates, most participants have not taken issue with Thorndike's focus upon the medieval traditions of natural magic. Most assume this to be the principle area of continuity—or at least the most significant one—between the medieval and the renaissance traditions of magic.

The intent to purchase magic a place in the history of science has served to legitimize the topic, but it has also left a great deal of material unexamined. In particular, it has driven historians to focus on the "high points" of sixteenth-century occultism, such as Ficino, Agrippa, and John Dee, whose works may be demonstrated, with varying degrees of success, to promote natural

¹HMES V, p. 591.

magic. As Claire Fanger has recently suggested, scholars have tended to take disavowals of medieval ritual magic by renaissance occultists at face value, assuming thereby that ritual magic was not a significant influence upon them.² In marked contrast to this assumptions we find a vast literature of ritual magic in sixteenth-century hands, apparently the overwhelming majority of the practical magical literature in manuscript, which treats natural magic as a secondary feature, if it includes it at all. It may be that the reason so little work has been done on sixteenth-century magical collections is due to the lack of material in manuscript which confirms assumptions about the importance of natural magic. Whatever the explanation may be, it remains that many of the available sources, and the intellectual climate which surrounded them, have not been adequately examined in relation to renaissance occultism. Clulee's position that we need to carefully distinguish between various forms of magical practice in the sixteenth century is clearly correct.³ To be sure, natural magic continued to be an important part of renaissance discussions of occult topics, and little explicit reference is made to medieval sources in those settings. However, the records of those actually practicing the art of magic—those who were not merely employing magical ideas for rhetorical or philosophical purposes, or purchasing magical texts as a curiosity—tell a different story.

While manuscripts of scholastic image magic virtually disappeared around 1500, ritual magic texts flourished in manuscript. Medieval texts such as the *Liber sacer*, *Vinculum*

²Claire Fanger, "Medieval and Early Modern Angels: Some Observations," International Congress on Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo Michigan, May 1998.

³Nicholas H. Clulee, "At the Crossroads of Magic and Science: John Dee's Achemastrie," in B. Vickers, ed., *Occult and Scientific Mentalities*, pp. 57-71. Clulee further argues that we must take care not to assume that the various magical interests of such thinkers as John Dee were of a continuous whole. His interest in magic as science, for example, was profoundly different and distinct from his interest in angel conjuring.

Salomonis, and various versions of the notory art, continued to be copied and transformed through the century, and a number of new texts appear amongst the texts of necromancy and angel conjuring. Including manuscripts of the notory art, *Liber sacer*, necromantic collections, and other ritual magic material, my survey contains twelve manuscripts of ritual magic from the fifteenth century, twenty-two in the sixteenth, and even greater numbers in the seventeenth.⁴ Interest in this kind of literature was also represented in printed works. Three editions of the *Fourth book of Occult Philosophy* (a work concerning ritual magic, which circulated under Agrippa's name) and a similar text called *Arbatel* were printed around the middle of the sixteenth century.⁵ This is not to mention the multiple editions and translations of both the *De vita coelitus comparanda* of Marsilio Ficino and the *De occulta philosophia* of Agrippa.⁶ That these works

⁴See Appendix V. This list has been growing steadily through the period of my research. I suspect a good deal more material will surface in time.

⁵The spurious *Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy* passed through three Latin editions (Marburg, 1559 and Paris 1565 and 1567). It was also published in English translation in London, 1655.

⁶A Latin edition of the *Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy* appeared in the 1600 and 1630 editions of Agrippa's *Opera Omnia* published at Lyon. The work also appeared in two English editions in London, 1655 and 1665. There were three printed editions of the *De occulta philosophia* in the sixteenth century. The edition published at Cologne in 1533 by Johannes Soter was overseen personally by Agrippa. Its publication had been delayed by the intervention of the Dominican Inquisitor Conrad Köllin of Ulm. A partial edition may have been printed at Antwerp in 1531 and in Paris by Christianus Wechelus. Subsequent editions include three early seventeenth-century editions of his *Opera omnia* published at Lyons, one or two at Strasbourg, and an English edition, London 1651. See above, p. 112, n. 30 for more extensive information on the editions of the *Opera Omnia*. John Ferguson, *Bibliographical Notes on the Treatises De occulta philosophia and De incertitudine et vanitate scientiarum of Cornelius Agrippa* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Bibliographical Society, 1924).

An ars notoria is included in at least one of Agrippa's *Opera Omnia* editions. Another was published in English translation in London, 1657.

A wide variety of other texts concerning ritual magic were also published in the various Beringos Fratres editions of Agrippa's *Opera omnia*. For example, the copy used for the Georg Olms Verlag reprint (Hildesheim and New York, 1970) includes such texts as "De speciebus magiae ceremonialis...", "De illorum daemonum qui sub lunari collimitio versantur...", and "Libri

were circulating in Britain is amply attested by library records and the copies evidently made from them.⁷ The multiple publications of the *Beringos Fratres* in seventeenth-century Lyons, the English translation of the Solomonic *Ars notoria* and the *Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy*, and other such printed works continued the pattern in the seventeenth century. In the end, it would be difficult to attempt to compare the popularity of ritual magic in the fifteenth with the sixteenth century on the basis of such shifting evidence. At the same time, it cannot be denied that the traditions were flourishing and in no danger of diminishing in popularity in the sixteenth century.

In this chapter I will attempt to demonstrate the strong continuities the sixteenth-century ritual magic collections had with those of the preceding century. It will be found that most of the changes in the collections and the interests they reflect may be explained with reference to the traditions of ritual magic itself. While the great *magi* of the renaissance may offer a detailed look at how an intelligent practitioner of magic would interpret and re-invent the tradition, they do not alter the tradition in any fundamental way, at least as it is represented by sixteenth-century collections. I will also demonstrate that (with two exceptions) the texts commonly associated with theories of natural magic disappear from manuscript collections until the seventeenth century, and

arbatel magiae...."

The British Library Short Title Catalogue lists the following 13 editions of the *De triplica vita* the third part of which is the *De vita coelitus comparanda*: Florence, 1489; Florence, 1490; 1501; Argen., 1511; Venice?, 1525?; Basel, 1532; Paris, 1547; Lyon, 1560; 1584; Paris?, 1616; Strasburg, 1521; Venice, 1498; 1520?.

⁷For example, the 1489 edition of the *De triplica vita* appears in at Syon Monastery library in the early sixteenth century. Mary Bateson, ed., *Catalogue of the Library of the Syon Monastery, Isleworth*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1898), B 27. Sixteenth-century probate inventories list occurrences of the works as well. *Private Libraries in Renaissance England: A collection and Catalogue of Tudor and Early Stuart Book-Lists* (Binghamton, New York: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1995), Vol IV. For the *De occulta philosophia* see 94.16 in the collection of Lewis Jones. For the *De triplica vita* see 110.230 in the collection of Philip Johnson. For a collection containing both see 112.78 & 166 in the collection of John Tatham. For examples of copies of Agrippa and pseudo-Agrippa see Ch. 6, sect. 1.

do not, for the most part, appear independently in print. To return to the quotation with which this section began, I hope to demonstrate that, far from diminishing, an interest in "ceremonial and magical rite" flourished in the sixteenth century. Further, I will argue that we need to re-evaluate our assumptions about the centrality of natural magic in renaissance occultism, in particular where the occultists had practical interests.

1. Ritual Magic Collections: The Example of Sloane 3853

Although we may detect new influences and perhaps a broader intellectual horizon in these collections, neither the texts nor the way they were regarded and transmitted changed a great deal with the coming of the renaissance. The same texts which had comprised these collections in the fifteenth century still populated the manuals of the sixteenth, although with a few additions which did not alter the landscape a great deal. Necromancy and the notory art were still the most prominent focus of ritual practices. In addition, the same kinds of conditions surround the treatment and transmission of the texts. A focus on resonant ritual over precise transmission, a tendency to seek the truth in appeals to the numinous areas of human experience, these did not change. The transmission of texts remained a fluid and creative process. So also continued the concern with discovering the truth, both in the texts themselves and in the practical results they might produce. But let us turn to a case which may be taken as exemplary of sixteenth-century collections.

Textual and palaeographic evidence suggests that Sloane 3853 was composed in the middle or latter part of the sixteenth century. The first part of the volume is written in a sixteenth-century British secretary hand (ff.3-45 and 141v-74), and an italic hand fills in one section and completes the volume (ff. 138-41r and 176-266). Although the secretary hand could suggest a

date considerably earlier, the scribe does what most scribes of ritual magic did after 1533: he refers to Cornelius Agrippa (f. 53v.). It is possible, but relatively unlikely, that the scribe had access to an early manuscript version of Agrippa's *De occulta philosophia* (completed by 1510). The balance of the evidence, however, suggests that the manuscript must be dated to after the printed edition of *De occulta philosophia* in 1533. The scribe refers to one of his own texts as "De occulta philosophia." The borrowing of the title of Agrippa's *magnum opus* suggests a later date, when Agrippa's renown had spread sufficiently to encourage such emulation. Other palaeographic evidence also suggests a later date. On f. 140v, the secretary hand follows the potentially later italic, and the table of contents, which is written in secretary, records the contents of the sections in italic. The two sections have evidently been composed by the same scribe or by two scribes working contemporaneously. This pushes the date more towards the middle or latter part of the century.

With a few possible exceptions, the collection does not differ a great deal from the fifteenth-century collections we have examined. It begins with a long work called the *Thesaurum spirituum*. At 42 folios this is a relatively extensive single work on conjuring, which corresponds roughly to the text of the same work in Sloane 3885, ff. 25-57 (s. xvi). It involves instructions for the binding and deploying of demons, involving the standard set of preparations, the construction of magical circles, the construction of a magical room, the composition of a magic circle, its consecration, and its inscription with characters and sigils. The second text is the *Sephar Raziel*, a text of Hebraic origin, which I will discuss in more detail below. There follow a wide spectrum of conjurations, materials for the performance of angelic magic, and consecrations. The italic hand then records another work for conjuring the "four kings," a practice mentioned from time to time

in the literature.⁸ In comparison to the Rawlinson collections, this text is well organized and more respectful of the integrity of individual works. But in this way it is more akin to other fifteenth-century manuals like CLM 849 or the ritual section of London Society of Antiquaries 39. It might be argued that the presence of the *Sephar Raziel* indicates a new interest in more explicitly Hebraic material, but the "Hebraic" texts had been a common feature of magical collections for hundreds of years by the time this manuscript was written.

The usual medieval pattern of collection in which the genres of necromancy and the notory art travelled in separate codices continued in the sixteenth century.⁹ It is thus conceivable that the presence of an *ars notoria* at ff. 138-41 might mark a change from standard practices of medieval collectors. But once again, the evidence is inconclusive. Circumstantial evidence suggests that the occurrence of an *Ars notoria* and necromantic works in the same manuscript was either not new or the result of patterns already detectable in the fifteenth century. A necromantic notory art appears in CLM 849, the fifteenth-century handbook from Germany, edited by Richard Kieckhefer. Similarly, the ambivalences of John of Morigny suggest that the lines between the genres may not have been so firmly drawn as the surviving manuscripts suggest.

One of the first features one notices in Sloane 3853 is the crude cypher used to disguise certain words in the headings. The scribe replaces each vowel with the consonant which follows it in the alphabet. Thus, *conjuratio* is rendered *cpnjwrbrtkp*. While a little startling at first, the cypher

⁸The practice is mentioned in a list of operations suitable for particular hours of the day or night in London, Society of Antiquaries 39, ff. 15-17. It also appears in Rawlinson D. 252, 31v in a similar list.

⁹The other versions I have examined all follow this pattern: London, British Library, Harley 181; Oxford, Bodleian, Ashmole 1515; and Simon Foreman's copy, Bodley 8909 (Jones 1), dated 1601.

would not deter or fool anyone of normal intelligence, especially since it is applied only to certain significant words which can be inferred from context. Rather, the practice served to lend a certain air of mystery to the codex. This kind of self-conscious production of a book which *looks* magical may also be seen in Royal 17.A. XLII, a manuscript containing a translation of the *Liber sacer* composed in black letter on parchment. The mock frontispiece for Sloane 3847, f. 2r also has the effect of loudly advertising the contents of the volume. While the texts of fifteenth-century magic could involve self-conscious efforts to impress the reader visually, only scribes of the notory art had expended this much energy on design in order to make the text *appear* magical. The kinds of overt attention to the design of magical texts evident in the sixteenth century may be in response to a more tolerant intellectual environment or the vogue magic enjoyed in this period. As with the late medieval manuscripts of the notory art, these scribal affectations may have been an attempt to make the manuscript appear more efficacious or credible, or in order to impress a reader or potential purchaser. But like the earlier examples of the notory art, these efforts may also be part of a continuing desire to associate the text with the numinous, with power and truth.

The references to, borrowings from, and emulations of Agrippa also demonstrate the need for a solid landmark around which the tradition could orient itself. No single author is referred to as often, with the possible exception of Solomon. In Sloane 3853, the scribe uses the title "De occulta philosophia" to describe the first text which is the *Thesaurum spirituum* of Robert the Turk, an obvious form of emulation of Agrippa's work. Further, a note on 53v refers to the Cornelius Agrippa either as a source for information or as a point of comparison. Amongst the other works which also refer to the Agrippa is the Royal manuscript just mentioned. Robert Mathiesen has demonstrated that its scribe drew directly from the *De occulta philosophia* to add

to this version of the *Liber sacer*.¹⁰ Others simply mention Agrippa by name.¹¹ Still others contain extracts from the spurious *Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy* or references to it.¹² All of these references, copies, emulations, and additions or corrections to manuscripts occurred within fifty years of the publication of these two books. The speed with which Agrippa's work became the standard reference must be attributed not only to the synthesizing genius of the work itself, but also to the wider need for an orientation point in an otherwise chaotic tradition.

To summarize, although ritual magic manuscripts on the whole may have *looked* more magical in the sixteenth century, the self-consciously produced magical work was not new to the sixteenth-century collection. The desire for authority which may have driven these efforts to connect the text with the numinous on a visual level, may also have motivated the use of Agrippa's writings as a stable standard. Necromantic practice continued to form the greatest portion of the collections and continued to be mixed freely with angel magic, even "pure" forms of the notory art. The continuing presence of the notory art indicates, as well, that the core texts of the fifteenth-century tradition of ritual magic, necromancy and the notory art, remained central in the sixteenth century. The appearance of the Hebraic *Sephar Raziel* may suggest renaissance influence, but Hebraic material had already been of significant interest to scribes of magic for centuries. Finally, the extracted prayers of the notory art and the emendations from Agrippa indicate that the practice of modifying and adapting the received texts continued.

¹⁰Robert Mathiesen, "Beatific Vision," p. 145.

¹¹Sloane 3849, f. 38v and Oxford, Bodleian, e. Mus 238, f. 4r, 3v, and 2r.

¹²See for example, Sloane 3884, ff. 40v-44 refers to Cornelius Agrippa and Peter Abano whose spurious works occur together in editions of the *Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy*. Sloane 3851, ff. 75-91 contains the entire text of this work and Additional 36674, f. 23 contains extracts.

2. Adaptations

Ritual magic adapted itself to its surroundings from generation to generation and from scribe to scribe. While the texts of scholastic image magic were altered somewhat early in their transmission to the Latin West, they were transformed according to a static set of assumptions, epitomized in the *Speculum Astronomiae*. As a result, texts contained in this group and their contents remained relatively static to the end of the fifteenth century. The ritual magic tradition had no such landmark by which to evaluate its texts. Although Agrippa might fill in technical information, or serve in general ways to direct interest, his obscure writings were shy on practical instruction and could not have been used to establish any kind of orthodoxy. Rather, what was transmitted in the manuscript tradition continued to be what worked, or what was deemed likely to work. Material was chosen and changes were made according to what was most resonant with the practitioners and scribes. As a result, the tradition maintained its credibility and its numinous associations over time. This fluid mode of transmission also tended to increase the diversity of systems and approaches, which in turn kept the material from becoming systematized, stagnant, or locked in relation to a particular period or orthodoxy.

Among the early changes, we have noted how some Arabic, Hebraic, or Greek texts of image magic were transformed to adapt them to Christian ritual sensibilities. Necromancy itself began as a combination of the Christian practice of exorcism and a variety of other magical traditions. Amongst the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century adaptations, we have noted the *Liber visionum* of John of Morigny, the vision-inspired adaptation of the Solomonic *Ars notoria*. Although not as dramatic as the work of Brother John, adaptations in the sixteenth-century texts are numerous, diverse, and often curious. The adaptability of this tradition will be in evidence

throughout this chapter but let us examine a few interesting examples which will demonstrate the wide range of variations the tradition produced.

Harley 181, a manuscript of the late sixteenth century, contains three texts in the tradition of the *Ars notoria*. The first begins "If thou wilt be perfect in phisik and surgery. thou must begyn this arte in a frydaye in lent in the waxinge of the Moone...."¹³ The text that follows provides instructions for the performance of the ten constituent sets of orations and preparatory exercises. Despite the introductory words, nothing more is said about medical skills. The gifts which the text promises, clarity of mind, good manners, virtuousness, and understanding, might be seen as contributing to the practice of medicine. But they are amongst the goals of the standard notory art and are not specific to the practice of medicine. It would appear that we have a rather simple adaptation, perhaps for the purpose of selling the book to a specific person, perhaps reflecting the particular interests of the scribe.

The last text in the collection is another variation on the notory art, entitled *De arte crucifixi*. The operator is instructed to fashion a wooden cross. This is to be consecrated and put in a secret room under certain ceremonial conditions. After a programme of prayers, the operator will receive a dream vision in which a wide array of information may be provided by Christ.

And if you proceed well in this operation and do it regularly, there will appear to you for some time, even when not asked for, the crucified Christ and he will speak with you, face to face, just like one friend to another, instructing you concerning many truths from which you will be able to know the truth of every uncertain question either for you or for someone else. For, through this art the past present and future, the counsels and secrets of kings, the rites of spirits, the sins of men, the status of the dead are known. We [sic] will even be able to know hidden thought and their actions, a future event, a hidden treasure, a thief, a robber, health of a friend or enemy. Through this experiment you will easily attain the fullness of the arts, alchemy, medicine, theology and the remaining sciences and arts, minerals, powers, virtues, the power of stones, the bindings of words, the offices and

¹³British Library, Harley 181, f. 2r.

names and characters of spirits, good and bad, the properties of creatures and other things in the world which are knowable.¹⁴

It is interesting to note that Christ will appear even when not called upon. This qualifying phrase suggests that the author or scribe of this passage did not expect to have control over his visionary experiences. The phrase may have been a self-conscious effort to emulate the experiences of more orthodox mystics, few of whom had any control over their visions. It is also possible that it may express the real experiences of the author who, like John of Morigny, found himself plagued by unrequested visions. In either case, the author wishes to connect the text with authentic visionary experiences which have few pre-determined results.

The list of information sought in this operation is interesting for a number of reasons. First, it is suggestive of the kinds of interests the scribe might have had, or the ones which were deemed appropriate. The list contains the common goals of ritual magic practices and suggests the typical interests of that genre, such as discovery of treasure, detection of theft, and getting access to secret information. But the additions are noteworthy. The interest in powers of stones is more typical of image magic texts. The arts of alchemy and medicine also figure very prominently, suggesting that the mention of "phisik and surgery" in the first text was not accidental. So in comparison to ritual magic texts of the fifteenth century we have two new features: first, the

¹⁴Et si bene in operatione processeris, ipsamque in consuetudinem duxeris, apparebit tibi CRUCIFIXUS interdum etiam non rogatus, loqueturque tecum ore ad os, sicut amicus ad amicum, docens in pluribus veritatem a qua poteris scire omnis questionis dubie veritatem, vel pro te vel pro alio. Nam per hanc artem cognoscuntur preterita, presentia, et futura, consilia et secreta regum, rita spirituum, peccata hominum, status mortuorum. Etiam scire poterimus occultas cogitationes, et earum actiones, eventum futurorum [read futurum], thesaurum absconditum, furem, latronem, valetudinem amici et inimici. Complementum artium, Alkimiam, medicinam, theologiam, reliquasque scientias vel artes, mineras, vires, virtutes, lapidum vim, et colligationes verborum, officia et nomina spirituum, atque karacteres bonorum et malorum, proprietatesque creaturarum, ceteraque in mundo scibilia per istud experimentum leniter consequeris. Harley 181, f. 80 v.

users' interest in the practice of medicine is made quite explicit; and second, the user's interests also include more diverse topics in the area of natural philosophy. However, other features of this text remain congruent with earlier texts: we have the continued use of visions to acquire information which can, in turn, be used for other magical operations; the operation has few pre-determined results; and the author wishes to connect it with authentic visionary experiences. In other words, the open-ended and self-generating nature of the ritual magic tradition continues in the sixteenth century, along with the concern with discerning the truth.

The breadth of information attainable with this ritual deserves further comment as it goes far beyond the earlier versions of the notory art we have examined in this study. It covers not only the standard arts and sciences but also offers information about a wide variety of other occult arts, including necromancy. It also proposes to answer the kinds of questions characteristically covered by necromantic experiments, such as the location of treasure or stolen goods, or the status of the dead. In short, the genre has expanded its scope considerably over earlier versions. Like the case of Sloane 3853, the boundaries between the notory art and other forms of ritual magic appear to be less defined than they used to be. It is possible that the monastic scribes of the earlier versions were more inclined to separate the notory art from necromancy. This would be particularly understandable if, as seems likely in some cases, they regarded it as a work of affective devotion. Thus, the "corruption" of the notory art in these post-dissolution manuscripts may not be a matter of renaissance synthetic tendencies, but merely the predictable result of the lack of this built-in control. Certainly, the change (if it is a change at all) is a predictable elaboration of the medieval traditions, given the interest in hidden knowledge in fifteenth-century necromantic collections and the prior cross-overs between the two genres we have already mentioned. But let us turn to a simpler adaptation and one which we can more easily locate in contemporary trends.

Like Harley 181, an increasing number of the texts of ritual magic were written, at least in part, in the vernacular. Already a feature of the fifteenth-century collections such as Rawlinson D. 252, this habit becomes much more common in the sixteenth century. The majority of the sixteenth-century examples include English, especially for the headings or introductions. It is also much more common to find English translations of the larger works such as the *Ars notoria*, *Clavicula Salomonis*, and *Liber sacer*. For example, Ashmole 1515 contains an aborted attempt to produce a translation of the *Ars notoria*, and Royal 17-A-XII contains a translation of the *Liber sacer*. The latter manuscript was a rather ostentatious production on vellum in a shaky effort at black-letter which we have discussed as an example of an "archaizing hand." In general, the original language of the incantations or prayers is maintained, i.e., Latin, "Hebrew," and "Syriac."

Sloane 3849 is a particularly interesting example in which the use of the vernacular is of a more radical nature than most. Texts of ritual magic, especially those written prior to the end of the fifteenth century, tend to employ prayers in Latin, in particular where they were originally derived from the liturgy or the bible. Some versions of the notory art insist that the orations could not be translated because the words of the original language contained magical properties. The *De radiis stellarum* of al-Kindi also associates magical qualities with words from ancient languages.¹⁵ In short, ancient languages or the languages of religious ceremony can evoke a sense of the numinous, and this association would have been strengthened by the common assumption that ancient languages had some sort of primordial power. This quality in the incantations is generally valued more than whether the operator understands what is being said. In fact,

¹⁵*De radiis*, 6. Al-Kindi, *de Radiis*, eds. M. T. d'Alverny and F. Hudry in *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et litteraire du moyen âge*, 41 (1974) 233-50.

incomprehensibility might well have increased their perceived power. In the case of this manuscript, however, all of the biblical passages *and prayers* appear in English.

The Latinity of the scribe may have been limited, as is suggested by the occasional phonetic spelling (e.g., *meserere* for *miserere*). Certainly, the work was produced for use by people more comfortable in the vernacular and for whom the vernacular was as good as Latin had been for prior practitioners. By the time this text was written, sometime around the middle of the sixteenth century, the vernacular had seen significant liturgical uses for some time.¹⁶ Many of the texts it employs, like the Psalms, had been circulating in translations for even longer. It is thus likely that we have a magical manuscript which marks one of two transitions. It could be taken as an indication that the vernacular texts had been in use long enough to have begun to accrue the necessary numinous associations desirable in magical practices. It could also be taken as an indication that the scribe considered the understanding of the prayers more significant than the traditional form. Either way, the text has been modified to accommodate changing religious sensibilities.

So texts of ritual magic continued to be adapted to new conditions and sensibilities, such as the growing use of the vernacular in religious ritual, or the interests of the professional groups which transmitted them (e.g., medical practitioners). The texts also moved in what may be new directions. In one example the notory art effectively subsumes necromancy and topics in natural magic within itself. Yet all of these adaptations naturally extend from the medieval traditions of ritual magic and cannot, in themselves, be associated with the renaissance.

¹⁶For a useful discussion of the use of the vernacular which goes beyond the association of literacy and heresy, see Anne Hudson, *The Premature Reformation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 390-445.

3. New Texts

We have seen how medieval scribes of ritual magic adapted, modified, extracted, or re-created existing texts from a wide range of sources. Sixteenth-century scribes continued this tradition and similarly added new material. Having examined a number of fifteenth-century examples in detail in the previous chapter, we are better situated to recognize new entries to the tradition and to evaluate what they might tell us about changing scribal interests. The evidence suggests, once again, that the changes were relatively minor. While the inclusion of new material conceivably could have been driven by renaissance tastes, there is nothing in the nature of any of these texts which would have prevented them from being included in similar collections prior to 1500.

Often described as a classic of medieval magic, the *Picatrix* also makes its first appearance in England in the latter part of the century in Ashmole 244 and Sloane 3822. While this text had a continental presence far earlier, it is interesting to note how long it was before the text travelled to England. The first hint of its influence may be found in the commonplace book of John Argentine.¹⁷ The personal nature of the transmission of the more dubious texts of magic might well explain its slow progress. No example of the text is known to have been in England before the middle of the sixteenth century. It would appear that, far from being a classic of medieval magic (at least in England), it probably had its greatest influence in the latter part of the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries.¹⁸ This raises two questions. Does the appearance of this text mark a change in interests and was it driven by renaissance interests?

¹⁷Pingree, *The Latin Picatrix*, pp. xv-lxix. See also Pingree, 'The Diffusion of Arabic Magical Texts in Western Europe,' p. 102.

¹⁸Ibid.

The magic of the *Picatrix* is more characteristic of the material which commonly appears in ritual magic collections despite the fact that it is centrally concerned with image magic. Unlike the largely Arabic texts of scholastic image magic, this text includes a wide range of ritual practices. These invoke entities, such as planetary deities, commonly assumed by Latin authors to be demons. A philosophical justification of these practices, which the text refers to as "necromantic," accompanies the practical instructions. It argues that the sage must employ lower forms of magic and work his way upwards in a process which will ultimately lead to spiritual enlightenment. The text would have been very difficult to justify according to scholastic standards, but the kinds of practices it contained and its goal of enlightenment were common in ritual magic collections prior to 1500. So the fact that it occurs in sixteenth-century ritual magic collections does not suggest a change in interests, except insofar as the astral magic it proposes was more sophisticated than what we have seen in fifteenth-century collections. While its appearance in the sixteenth century might conceivably have been dictated by renaissance influences (such as Ficino's use of the text), the interests and tendencies of fifteenth-century scribes are sufficient to explain its presence. This being said, a detailed examination of the continental manuscripts would be necessary to establishing this with any certainty.

Another noticeable addition to the contents of the ritual magic collections are two texts claiming ancient Hebraic roots, the *Sephar Raziel* and the *Clavicula Salomonis*. Neither text appears in our survey until the sixteenth century.¹⁹ The *Sephar Raziel* appears in Sloane 3853, ff.

¹⁹Robert Mathiesen has suggested that the *Clavicula Salomonis* probably first appears in Latin in the sixteenth century and that references to the text prior to this date are probably to the *Sephar Raziel*. The *Clavicula* was probably the most significant text of ceremonial magic in the seventeenth and subsequent centuries. Paper presented at 32nd International Congress on Medieval Studies, May 8-11, 1997. A modern edition by S. Liddel Mathers draws upon some of the early English translations. S. L. Mathers, ed., *The Greater Key of Solomon* (Chicago: De Laurence Co., 1914).

41-53 and more often in the seventeenth century. The *Clavicula* appears in Sloane 3847, ff. 2-66, and British Library, Additional 36674, ff. 5-22. Notes on both texts appear in Ashmole 1790, ff. 116, possibly in the hand of Richard Napier.²⁰ While both texts pre-date this period, the renaissance interest in Hebrew as a mystical and pristine language, which usually took the form of cabbalist studies, could conceivably have driven the introduction of these texts.²¹ On the other hand, like the *Picatrix*, these texts would be in no way out of place in a fifteenth-century collection. Both employ magical figures and ceremonies and both appeal to angelic or demonic forces. They are not cabbalist texts and can be connected with that tradition only insofar as they are Hebraic and employ divine names. Finally, the versions which appear in Sloane 3847 are Christianised in the way most texts absorbed into the Latin ritual magic tradition were.²² On balance, the evidence suggests that the inclusion of these texts was entirely in keeping with the habits and interests of medieval scribes.

Sloane 3847 is also significant since it is the first codex of ritual magic which also includes three of the standard works of scholastic image magic. *De quindecim stellis*, *De ymaginibus* of Thetel, and *Liber imaginum Zebeil* (Sahl ibn Bishr) all appear at folios 84-112, following the *Clavicula Salomonis* (which comprises more than half of the 114 folios in this collection) and another work on images attributed to Solomon, *De quatuor anulis*. The scribe dates the codex

²⁰William Henry Black, *A Descriptive, Analytical, and Critical Catalogue of the Manuscripts Bequeathed unto the University of Oxford by Elias Ashmole* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1845), 1502.

²¹The premier example of Christian cabbalism is Johannes Reuchlin, *De arte cabbalistica*, trans. Martin and Sarah Goodman (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993).

²²See for example the *Clavicula Salomonis* in Sloane 3847, ff. 2-66 where masses and Christian prayers are employed.

1572, a date which I can find no convincing reason to reject.²³ This combination of ritual magic with scholastic image magic texts is very rare prior to this period, but it becomes a common feature of seventeenth-century collections.²⁴ It might be argued that these texts appear here because the scribes of ritual magic had developed a new interest in natural magic. The instance of a notory art promising information about natural magic, which I have discussed above, tends to confirm this line of reasoning. However, the only hint in Sloane 3847 of the naturalia which characteristically accompanied scholastic image magic in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries is a single recipe entitled "An excellent medicine for the stone" (f. 82) and a list of "Egyptian days" (99r). Whatever may have driven the inclusion of the texts of scholastic image magic in this codex, this alteration in the usual pattern of copying is significant, and I will return below to the question of why this shift may have taken place. For the time being it should be recalled that image magic had appeared in ritual magic texts in the middle ages and was not in itself foreign to the interests of ritual magic scribes prior to the renaissance.

In summary, ritual magic absorbed a number of new entries to its codices in the sixteenth century, but none of these texts suggest that scribal interests had departed in any significant way from those of medieval scribes of ritual magic. In no case would renaissance tastes be necessary to explain the changes. As image magic had been a constituent part of ritual magic texts in the middle ages, there is no reason to regard the presence of these texts in such sixteenth-century

²³ f. 1. As there would have been little value in misdating such a work by fifty years or so, I am inclined to accept the date given by the scribe. I do so in the awareness that the hand might suggest a slightly later date. It is unclear on what basis Bond and Thorndike dated the work to the seventeenth century although it may have been because of some unquestionably seventeenth-century portions. Thorndike does not discuss the dating at all.

²⁴ See for example, Sloane 3826, Sloane 3850, Sloane 3883, Wellcome 426, and Ashmole 1442.

collections as surprising. What is interesting is that these collections include the texts of *scholastic* image magic.

4) Doctors and Ritual Magic Collections

In an address to the faculty of medicine at the University of Paris, John Gerson warned that doctors should stay clear of necromantic practices.²⁵ To be sure, it is not clear what he meant by necromancy, as this term was often applied to the practice of image magic in anti-magical texts (e.g., Albert's contention that some astrological image magic texts were secretly necromantic). Yet it was also a doctor who counselled John of Morigny to attempt to work with the notory art rather than necromancy. Some of the monks at St Augustine's who owned texts of the notory art were also interested in medical topics.²⁶ Although there is no evidence amongst the early necromantic collections that the scribes, authors, or users may have been involved in the practice of medicine, there is also no evidence that they were not. So Gerson may not have been so far off the mark. The situation in the sixteenth century is different. Whoever may have been collecting the material before, it was now very common for ritual magic collections to betray their owner's medical interest or direct involvement in the medical profession.

²⁵In 1402, Jean Gerson issued a treatise *De erroribus circa artem magicam*, apparently an expanded version of a speech he had delivered to medical students at the university. Edward Peters, *The Magician, the Witch and the Law* (University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia, 1978), p. 143. The text of the *conclusio* may be found in the *Chartularium universitatis Parisiensis*, ed H. Denifle and A. Chatelain, Vol 4. (Paris, 1897), no. 1749, pp. 32-36. For Gerson, see Jean Gerson, *Oevres complètes*, vol 10 (Paris, 1973), pp. 77-90.; HMES IV, 114-31.

²⁶Michael Northgate and John of London both owned medical works. See Chapter 4. It is also worth noting that, while John Erghome would not appear to have had a practical interest in magic, he did own medical works as well as texts of ritual magic.

The presence of medical practitioners may be detected in subtle ways. In an example we have already examined, the collection of *artes notoriae* in Harley 181, two of the three texts include medical topics amongst their goals. A few late sixteenth- or seventeenth-century notes claiming Paracelsus as a source fill in blank spaces in the ritual necromantic treatise Sloane 3853.²⁷ Sloane 3849 includes a short treatise entitled "a noble experiment of King Solomon" which provides extensive astrological information for the year 1577 including such details as when to let blood, purge, sow or plant (ff. 17-22). It has the appearance of an astrological almanac and also identifies which angels reign in each month and what their powers are. The text that follows concerns the invocation of angels, so the collection was probably used for angel magic. While the volume need not have been owned by a medical practitioner, medical topics are included. A further example is Sloane 3851, which contains prayers for success in magical experiments by Robert Searle, practitioner in surgery and astronomy.²⁸

One particularly interesting example is Bodley, Additional B. 1., evidently the portable handbook of some kind of medical practitioner. This small (155 x 105 mm) notebook was written on the parchment offcuts from a fifteenth-century antiphoner and bound with a simple parchment cover from the same source. Its discoloured corners suggest regular use. The first scribe, dating from the early part of the sixteenth century, records a procedure for discovering thieves through the invocation of angels.²⁹ A second passage describes an extensive ritual for seeing spirits in a crystal.³⁰ The second scribe, writing in the latter part of the century, began with necromantic

²⁷See for example f. 8v.

²⁸Sloane 3851, f. 6.

²⁹ff. 1r-2v.

³⁰ff. 3-10.

efforts at thief detection and went on to record a more standard collection of charms, medical recipes, and prayers for medical purposes. These include prayers for pregnant women who are travelling, bloodletting, fevers, insomnia, and nightmares.³¹ Further non-medical prayers include detection of thieves and for a horse which is forespoken.³² The presence of some Latin suggests at least a modest level of academic training, and the use of these kinds of prayers in medical practice was, in fact, not unusual as may be inferred from the collections of Richard Napier.³³

Another example, written by a medical doctor and academic in the university community, may be found amongst the collected papers in British Library, Additional 36,674. This notebook has been identified as belonging to Dr John Caius, founder of Gonville and Caius College. It includes an extract from the spurious *Fourth book of Occult Philosophy*, attributed to Agrippa, and the *Heptameron* of Petrus de Abano (f. 23), probably drawn from one of the early printed editions.³⁴ After f. 38, follow miscellaneous necromantic notes. An extensive analysis of the occult interests of academics at Oxford and Cambridge in the sixteenth century by Mordechai Feingold examines this manuscript amongst others. He demonstrates that a considerable number of significant members of these communities had a lively interest in topics ranging from astrology to

³¹ff. 11-48

³²Ibid.

³³We have noted the presence of notes, apparently by Richard Napier, on the *Clavicula Salomonis* and *Sephar Raziel* in Sloane 1790, f. 161. On Richard Napier in general, see Michael MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety, and Healing in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

³⁴The early editions are Marburg (1559) and Paris (1565 and 1567).

necromancy. Caius was, in fact, only one of many examples which Feingold has uncovered³⁵ and his analysis deserves further comment.

Feingold has demonstrated the presence of considerable occult interests at English universities and that they were tolerated under most circumstances, so long as the practitioners kept their interests private. The only public forum this material attained was as a topic in public debates. No doubt the slightly risky nature of occultism and its colourful features (as well as its often inconsequential nature) made it a perfect issue for the debating platform. Certainly the debates were not designed to nurture interest in the topic. The value of his essay for my current purposes is that it also examines the extensive network of personal connections through which these interests were nurtured.³⁶ Although it was not his explicit intention, Feingold's essay demonstrates that, as in the later middle ages, ritual magic texts were generally transmitted through personal connections in the sixteenth century.

5. The "Decline" of Scholastic Image Magic

The peak in the production of the standard texts of image magic came in the fourteenth century or earlier, and a steady production took place through the fifteenth. Of the manuscripts of image magic surveyed in this study, sixteen may be dated to the fourteenth century, ten to the

³⁵Mordechai Feingold, "The occult tradition in the English universities of the Renaissance: a reassessment," in *Occult and Scientific Mentalities*, ed. Brian Vickers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 73-94. In this essay, Feingold convincingly demonstrates that Giordano Bruno's reception at Oxford related more to his abrasive personality than any closed mindedness on the part of the university community. He also demonstrates that there was a high level of official tolerance for occult interests among members of the university community.

³⁶See for example the case of John Heron who was known as a conjurer and necromancer. Feingold notes that two of his students were subsequently recorded in the annals of their college as "juniores socii recessere a mathematicis, et ad artes demonicas se contulerunt." *Ibid.*, p. 84.

fifteenth and only two to the sixteenth century.³⁷ A similar situation prevailed on the continent where copyists in the early part of the sixteenth century produced very few of the manuscripts of these texts of Arabic image magic which number over one hundred.³⁸ Of the two examples deriving from sixteenth-century England, we have already examined one. The magical material in Scalon's notebook, Ashmole 346, derives largely from John Argentine's collection of the late fifteenth century. It seems likely that he copied the material early in the century, as a student, perhaps under the mentorship of a rather old John Argentine. In this sense, at least, the collection may be seen to belong to the traditions of the fifteenth century. The other example, Sloane 3847, is a manuscript we have already discussed. Dated 1572, it is the first English manuscript to display the characteristic feature of seventeenth-century collections, in which scholastic image magic began to travel with texts of ritual magic, rather than natural philosophy, astrology, alchemy, and other works of naturalia. All the signs from the manuscript evidence suggest that scholastic image magic, where it was understood as part of natural philosophy, had come upon a rather sudden demise. However, printed literature would appear to tell a different story.

The wide popularity of Ficino's *De vita coelitus comparanda*, first published in 1489, would seem to suggest a strong and continuing interest in image magic.³⁹ Amongst the most

³⁷See Appendix I.

³⁸While my survey of continental manuscripts is by no means systematic or comprehensive, to this point I can identify few sixteenth-century manuscripts of image magic with any certainty, from a list of over one hundred and thirty four British and continental manuscripts. Although I have not seen the manuscript, Carmody mentions Weisbaden 79 as containing a work of image magic. Two other exceptions may be Prague 1592 and Berlin 965, as it is possible they contain images by Thetel. An edition of Thebit ibn Qurra's *De Imaginibus* was printed in 1559 at Frankfurt. While some of the material from the treatises of Arabic image magic may have circulated in extracted form in compendia, to my knowledge, no other independent publication of this kind may be traced to the sixteenth century.

³⁹See note 5 above for the publication history.

popular of Ficino's works, this book promoted the use of magical images in pursuit of good health and drew heavily upon the theoretical traditions of Arabic philosophy, medieval scholasticism, and medical theory. In short, Ficino's classic of renaissance magic stood very much in the tradition of medieval collections including image magic. It was in large measure responsible for making the idea of magic fashionable in the sixteenth century.⁴⁰ What makes this situation even more peculiar, is that, as a practical and theoretical manual, the *De vita* leaves a great deal to be desired. The theoretical background is delivered in a summary way so that only specialists would be able to recognize the philosophical basis for his justification.⁴¹ The practical instructions are limited and would leave anyone seriously desirous of practicing image magic quite unsatisfied.⁴² So one is driven to inquire why a period so enamoured of such a work should apparently have so little interest in the tradition upon which it was based, or at least its manuscripts.

In fact, other printed works also attest to a continuing interest in the topic of images and actually contain texts of scholastic image magic. A lively literature on the virtues of stones, for example, preserved much of the medieval lore on images in printed books. The *Speculum Lapidum* of Leonardus Camillus concerns the properties of stones and also contains a large section on magical images carved in stones. After a theoretical discussion of natural magic, the work goes on to list magical images from various sources, including the standard authors Razi,

⁴⁰On the more liberal use of the term "magic" see, HMES V, 13-4.

⁴¹A good example of a typical reading of the *De vita coelitus comparanda* is that of Frances Yates. Of no mean intellectual power, she found his theoretical justification "obscure." *Giordano*, p. 63. While Copenhaver is quite right to suggest that Ficino's meaning is much clearer than Yates suggests, he speaks from the perspective of a philosopher wishing to demonstrate that Ficino deserved to be taken seriously. Yates was, in fact, correct insofar as Ficino's meaning would not have been clear to most of his non-specialist readership.

⁴²For example, the *De vita* concentrates almost exclusively upon the health of the Saturnian.

Thetel, and the Hermes. Some of these are re-written, some are extracted from other authors, most are more or less direct transcriptions from the circulating manuscripts. Two printed editions derive from the early part of the sixteenth century.⁴³ In addition, the hermetic *De quindecim stellis* accompanied an edition of Ptolemy⁴⁴ and Thebit ibn Qurra's *De imaginibus* was published at Frankfurt in 1559. So the question remains, why should there be so little *manuscript* evidence for an interest in images?

It might be argued that a shift to printed books would tend to reduce the number of manuscript copies of such works as the availability of printed versions would eliminate the need for producing personal copies of them. Most of the texts of scholastic image magic were available in one context or another and an astute collector could have acquired most of the major works in one volume or another. Yet printed books were still expensive in the sixteenth century, and their production was very much determined by the market. As a result, they often appealed to more general audiences and did little to alter a continuing and lively manuscript culture for more specialized works. So the availability of printed works will not explain the lack of manuscript copies. This situation does, however, suggest a more plausible explanation.

A crude but useful distinction may be made between the printed volumes and the sixteenth-century handwritten collections. The collections of magical works, almost without exception, are personal and practical volumes. The printed editions of image magic need not have been so. In order to be economical, printed books had to have mass appeal, and it would be

⁴³I have employed, Camillus Leonardus, *Speculum Lapidum* (Hamburg: Christianum Liebeziel, 1717). It was published in Latin editions in 1502 (Venice), 1516 (Venice), and 1610 (Paris). Italian editions date from 1565 and 1617. An English edition was printed in 1750 (London). HMES VI, pp. 298-302.

⁴⁴Venice, 1449.

unlikely that the majority of purchasers were interested in the topic for practical reasons. Indeed, with the exception of the edition of Thebit ibn Qurra's *De imaginibus*, all of the printed works were not solely concerned with magic, much less magical images. The lack of sixteenth-century personal manuscript copies strongly suggests the specialists were simply not interested in them. When scribes of *ritual magic* became interested in this literature late in the sixteenth century, they began to make manuscript copies despite the availability of printed versions. Moreover, printed versions of ritual magic works did not reduce the number of ritual magic manuscripts. As we shall see, manuscripts of ritual magic increased in number in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, despite the availability of some such works in print. In fact, many sixteenth-century manuscripts of ritual magic can be shown to have made from printed volumes. So a workable explanation of this situation would be that the printed volumes containing works on image magic were generally purchased and employed as entertainments or reference books. They may also have been employed as illustrations of the popular renaissance notion of a world as filled with, and united by, natural correspondences. The practicing occultists, represented by those leaving hand written copies, were centrally interested in ritual magic and, only towards the end of the century, in the texts of scholastic image magic. What this will not explain is why interest in these texts of image magic may have fallen off.

One explanation might be that growing scepticism towards astrology in the sixteenth century drove its more suspect subdivisions, like image magic, out of the canon of astrology where they had formerly belonged. Jim Tester has suggested that the twelfth through fifteenth centuries may be regarded as a period of integration, and that a growing chorus of criticism of astrology culminated in the sixteenth century. A 'Paduan revolution' began to bring the synthesis

apart.⁴⁵ Ultimately, the separation of astrology from astronomy, and science from metaphysics led to the destruction of astrology late in the seventeenth century. These long term changes can certainly help to account for how the treatment of magic changed over these two centuries. Yet these changes were gradual and complex. Astrology itself was still relatively vibrant in the early part of the seventeenth century. Many of the constitutive elements of the medieval theories explaining the functioning of magical images survived well beyond the sixteenth century. The edition of Ptolemy containing the hermetic *De quindecim stellis* is an example of this continuing tradition. In the sixteenth century, an occult property—a property which could not be explained with reference to the object which possessed it (e.g., a magnet, an electric eel, etc.)—was frequently assumed to be derived from astrological influences, and this notion survived well into the seventeenth.⁴⁶ So while the fortunes of astrology and the commonly associated ideas about occult properties may account for the long term transformation of astrological magic, they will not account for the dramatic, short term changes early in the sixteenth century.

Part of the change simply may have derived from changes in taste. Thorndike has suggested that the renaissance interest in classics initially resulted in a turning away from medieval scientific sources, sometimes in the vain belief that a new science, purged of medieval accretions, could emerge from the classics. Thorndike also notes a decrease in interest in the medieval and Arabic commentators.⁴⁷ That the authors of image magic were largely Arabic and the texts associated with scholastic and Arabic thought may account for its lukewarm reception in the first part of the sixteenth century. That manuscripts of the *Speculum astronomiae* and the *De radiis*

⁴⁵Tester, pp. 218-19.

⁴⁶Copenhaver, "Fishes."

⁴⁷HMES, V, pp. 1-4.

stellarum also fall off sharply in the sixteenth century tends to confirm this line of reasoning.⁴⁸

Further, the manuscript copies of Arabic image magic begin to re-appear in the latter part of the century in different company than they had kept in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. They begin to travel with ritual magic, suggesting that the old scholastic synthesis of natural philosophy and image magic was no longer so central a feature of scribal interest. On the other hand, the printed editions including works on image magic demonstrate that there was a considerable market for the literature despite its Arabic sources and scholastic associations.

A final explanation might be that the works were simply not available or known to copyists who might have been interested in them. Ritual magic collections were entirely capable of absorbing these texts prior to the middle of the sixteenth century, as is attested by the presence of image magic of various forms in necromantic collections of the fifteenth century. As I have demonstrated, the situation which prevailed, at least in England, was that two separate streams of transmission existed side by side. The personal connection was the most significant setting for the transmission of ritual magic material. Whether it was John of Morigny's doctor friend, or material passing from Simon Foreman to Richard Napier, ritual magic depended upon personal connections, as it was less likely to be preserved and transmitted for purely academic reasons. Image magic, on the other hand, as a more or less legitimate feature of astrology and of the scholastic world-view, was transmitted and preserved in monastic and university libraries. No doubt it was often preserved as a part of a larger, more legitimate interest in astrology and natural philosophy. Thus, with the dissolution of the monasteries, a significant context for transmission of image magic texts in England had disappeared, which in turn might account for the lack of new

⁴⁸In a recent edition of the work only 4 of the 52 manuscripts of the *Speculum Astronomiae* listed derive from the sixteenth century. Albertus Magnus, *Speculum Astronomiae*, eds. Stephano Caroli, Michela Pireira, and Stephano Zamponi (Pisa: Domus Galilaeana, 1977).

copies. However, the continental production of scholastic image magic texts also fell off sharply in the sixteenth century, so the dissolution alone cannot account for the situation. And of course even after the dissolution in England the secular intellectual community and university context remained significant arenas for interests in both ritual and image magic (as may be witnessed in the interests of John Caius and John Dee). John Dee acquired several volumes containing works of scholastic image magic from St Augustine's (e.g., CCC 125). So the texts continued to be available to occultists despite the dissolution of the monasteries.

To summarize, the sudden lack of interest in the scholastic image magic (represented by the lack of new manuscript copies) remains difficult to account for. The growing scepticism towards astrology, a lack of interest in material of scholastic or Arabic origin, the availability of scholastic image magic texts in print, and (at least in England) the dissolution, may in part account for a decline in manuscript production. These forces will not account for the almost complete disappearance of this literature in magical manuscripts, nor its transference to collections of ritual magic. In the next chapter we will turn to sixteenth-century occultists to attempt to understand this shift in interest, and in particular, the induction of scholastic image magic texts into the cannon of ritual magic.

Conclusion

The shift from medieval to renaissance is scarcely noticeable in the collections of ritual magic. The content of ritual magic texts and collections changed little, and interest in the medieval forms of ritual magic continued unabated, if it did not increase. If the printed books and collections do not represent an increase, they certainly attest to a continuing and lively interest. The production of more texts with a *magical appearance* suggests that scribes had a less furtive

or more extroverted attitude. There was also a continuing religious dimension to these texts. Not only did they concern themselves with the numinous areas of human experience, with vision, dreams, angels and demons, but the continuing significant presence of the notory art and *Liber sacer* indicate that the religious features of this tradition were still very strong.

Collections of ritual magic had previously been able to incorporate a great variety of magical and liturgical material, and the sixteenth century brought further synthesis and blending of genres. Once largely separate, genres such as the notory art and necromancy more frequently swallowed each other up. The notory art claimed access to the secrets of conjuring while conjuring manuals included deeply pious versions of the notory art. Late in the century, the texts of Arabic image magic usually associated with late-medieval natural philosophy and naturalia were absorbed into the ritual magic collections after a sharp decline at the beginning of the sixteenth century. That so many of the ritual magic collections can be connected with medical practitioners may in part explain why the texts of image magic migrated to that context. With the dissolution of the monasteries, the medical and university communities became the single most important setting for the transmission of magical texts in England.

While a more tolerant attitude towards intellectual magic may have prevailed in the sixteenth century, the circumstances and issues which surrounded the transmission of this tradition were substantially the same. Personal contacts were the principle conduit through which the texts were transmitted. In addition, the content of the tradition continued to be fluid. Although some of the same texts were copied repeatedly, the copies vary considerably in content, and each collection has its own character. The texts still frequently took the form of extracts. They were also adapted to the requirements of new circumstances and users. An uneasiness with the continuing fluidity of this genre no doubt motivated the constant references to Agrippa's works,

both legitimate and spurious. The texts also continued to employ divine powers to achieve discernment. These kinds of efforts are accompanied by the sense that the truth was beyond human reach and that this weakness made divine aid essential to discovering the truth.

The relation of ritual magic to the renaissance requires further exploration. The effects upon the traditions of ritual magic by the renaissance appear to have been relatively minor. Agrippa's *De occulta philosophia* may have had a somewhat systematizing effect in a few contexts, but there is no evidence it had the kind of effect that the *Speculum astronomiae* had had upon the transmission of scholastic image magic. A propensity to synthesis, an interest in Hebraic sources and the Hebrew language, and the creation of books which *appear magical* all predate the influence of the renaissance occultists. However, a number of questions remain. First, why was the decline in the copying of scholastic image magic texts so sudden? Second, why were the texts of medieval ritual magic accepted, barbaric Latin and all, almost without hesitation? Third, what bearing does the ongoing tradition of ritual magic have upon our understanding of renaissance magic? To answer these questions we must begin with an examination of the positive contributions of the two most important figures in renaissance occultism, Marsilio Ficino and Henry Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim.

Chapter 7: Ritual Magic and the Renaissance

The previous chapter examined the extent to which the renaissance transformed occult traditions as represented in sixteenth-century manuscripts, and it was demonstrated that it did not change them in any substantial way, at least in the short term. Those changes that the collections and texts did undergo in the sixteenth century were, in almost every way, natural continuations of transformations underway in ritual magic in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Rather than examining the influence of the renaissance upon the magical traditions, this chapter will examine the reverse question, the ways in which renaissance occultism was a continuation of the tradition of medieval ritual magic. A topic of particular concern will be the apparent disjuncture between the interests represented in the printed literature and those in the manuscripts. A complete examination of this question is not possible within the confines of the present study. So we will examine renaissance occultism through two of its most important exponents, Marsilio Ficino and Cornelius Agrippa. The discussion will be limited to a question which has been central to this investigation, the complex interrelation of truth, text, and the divine. While renaissance occultists brought an expanded set of philosophical texts to bear upon the interpretation of magical texts, the complex problem which was at once the nightmare and creative core of medieval ritual magic may also be seen operating at the very core of renaissance magic.

1. Was Ritual Magic More Humanist?

It is ironic that anyone in the sixteenth century should choose to copy a sprawling work of ritual magic, poorly transmitted, disorganized, and written in appalling Latin, over a work of reasonably well written Arabic image magic in an ordered and sensible form. However, from the sixteenth century on, ritual magic was chosen far more often by those who copied magic texts,

and the texts of scholastic image magic tended to be ignored. Before treating Ficino and Agrippa, we must examine the possibility that ritual magic may have been more "humanist" than might first appear. In particular, what are the features of this literature which may have motivated the continued interest in ritual magic during the renaissance?

Charles Nauert has explored this question to a certain extent, and although his study of Agrippa did not probe deeply into late medieval magical traditions, his suggestions remain important. An enthusiasm for antiquity may have made more acceptable a tradition which "claimed to stem from the ancient Persian Magic, the sages of Egypt, and the Hebrew elders."¹ The tradition of medieval magic also connected with renaissance conceptions of man as microcosm, mediator between mundane and divine because it "expressed the divine power in man."² Finally, Nauert sees the magician as standing outside an ordered universe and outside rationality; his magic disrupts the order and defies the bounds.³ To put it another way, man is the hero in the story of magic, as he is in the mythology of the renaissance.

Each of these points has a strong element of truth in it; however, the situation is much more complex than Nauert describes. To suggest that medieval magic disrupts the order of the scholastic universe is problematic, especially since scholastic writers had their own, quite ordered notions about natural magic.⁴ For that matter, even demonic magic did not stand outside the

¹Nauert, p. 231. On Nauert's faulty understanding of late medieval magic, see for example his emphasis upon the Picatrix as the greatest of medieval magical works. p. 231.

²Nauert, p. 232-35.

³Nauert, p. 236.

⁴For an extensive scholarly discussion of this issue, see Richard Kieckhefer, "The Specific Rationality of Medieval Magic," *American Historical Review* (June 1994) 44, 3: 813-36. Kieckhefer's main point is that medieval thinkers conceived of magic as rational, which is to say that they thought it could work and that its workings were governed by principles (of theology or

natural order, but rather outside the moral order. Demons were quite natural and had characteristics which could be defined in philosophical terms.⁵ An "enthusiasm for antiquity" did not encourage the copying of Thetel's work on the images carved by the "Sons of Israel" while in the desert, nor the Hermetic *De quindecim stellis*, at least in the first part of the sixteenth century. While it cannot be disputed that there is something Promethean about magic which would have been very attractive to renaissance writers—and this is especially the case with ritual magic—this alone cannot account for the continued interest in this literature. The desire for literature in which Man was the hero, or more specifically a magus, might have encouraged readers in the direction of ritual magic texts, but this would not drive readers to reject scholastic image magic. So the situation is considerably more complicated than Nauert is able to cover, especially since his emphasis was upon the renaissance alone.

The pattern of manuscript copying suggests that an anti-scholastic attitude may have been an important feature of the way in which the texts were vetted. Keeping in mind that many of the image magic texts claimed great antiquity and usually do pre-date scholasticism, it might be thought that a humanist scribe, all else being equal, might have been likely to choose a text which was not associated with scholastic thought. Perhaps more to the point, such a scribe may well have been less inclined to browse a codex containing medieval natural philosophy than to pick up

of physics) that could be coherently articulated. Also useful are Brian Copenhaver's various articles on the subject, in particular "Scholastic Philosophy and Renaissance Magic in the *De vita* of Marsilio Ficino," *Renaissance Quarterly* XXXVII, 4 (1984) 523-54.

⁵This point of view extends back at least as far as Augustine who discusses the abilities of demons in relation to their physical make-up. The problem with employing them in divination was their mendaciousness and the lack of trust in God that such divination would involve. Augustine, *The Divination of Demons (de divinatione daemonum)*, translated by Ruth Wentworth Brown, in *Treatises on Marriage and other Subjects* (Series: The Fathers of the Church.) (The Fathers of the Church, Inc.: New York, 1955). Aquinas' treatment similarly deals with the physical abilities and nature of demons. *Quodlibet*. IV, 16. Examples could be multiplied endlessly.

a volume dedicated solely to ritual magic. Assuming the scribe was in a position to choose between the two, he might have opted for ritual magic because it often explicitly positioned itself outside the mainstream of medieval thought and ran counter to scholastic sensibilities. Yet this scenario does not match up well with the evidence. Although supported by a certain portion of the scholastic tradition, image magic texts did not explicitly appeal to their authority. Further, if an anti-scholastic attitude drove an interest in ritual magic, then it should have driven interest in image magic as well, since Aquinas categorically rejected both forms as demonic. Aquinas was also the core of moral theology in the sixteenth century and very much the standard by which orthodoxy was measured, even for humanists, so even this possibility must be suggested with caution.⁶ Assuming, for the sake of argument that a scribe did pass over codices of scholastic natural philosophy, image magic also often travelled in the company of other texts, such as alchemical ones, which did not lose their popularity in the sixteenth century. As a result, the scribe may well have had access to the texts in a non-scholastic setting. Further, if an anti-scholastic attitude alone drove scribes away from the standard texts of image magic, why did they appear in the works of Agrippa and Ficino?

In the end, an interest in antiquity, in ancient languages, and in literature reflecting the popular man-as-magus mythology may have driven an interest in medieval ritual magic. An anti-scholastic attitude might, in some cases, explain why the literature of image magic did not hold the same level of attraction as ritual magic. But the evidence remains very ambiguous.

⁶A good example of the importance of Aquinas at this point may be found in the early chapters of the *De vita coelitus comparanda*, by Marsilio Ficino. Here Ficino argues that his ideas about natural image magic are in consonance with Aquinas. This is discussed above in Chapter 1.

2. The *De vita coelitus comparanda* of Marsilio Ficino

The *De vita coelitus comparanda* is not the hermetic manifesto which Frances Yates wished it to be. Nonetheless, she was quite correct in her view that Ficino's approach to the subject of magic and the literature of the occult set the tone for the sixteenth century. Published in 1489, the work became something of an "underground classic." In it, Ficino wove neoplatonic ideas together with the theories of medicine and magic current in the medieval west. With these he formed the theoretical basis for magical practices which included the use of astrological images.

Ficino's debt to neoplatonic and scholastic philosophy in the *De vita coelitus comparanda* has been well documented. Brian Copenhaver has demonstrated how Ficino justified the use of astrological images through a synthesis of arguments from Aquinas' *De occultis operibus naturae* and Plotinus' fourth *Ennead*.⁷ While one may question Ficino's interpretation of Aquinas, his position is founded upon the long standing tradition of theory, extending from neoplatonism through al-Kindi and such scholastic figures as Albertus Magnus. His success lay in his ability to harmonize material from diverse sources, giving the impression that ancients, Moslems, and Christians spoke with a more or less unified voice on the subject of magic. Further, the work makes it appear that there were ancient roots for his practices, which extended back to a pristine past and such figures as Hermes Trismegistus.

⁷Brian Copenhaver, "Renaissance Magic and Neoplatonic Philosophy: 'Ennead' 4.3.5 in Ficino's 'De vita coelitus comparanda,'" in *Marsilio Ficino e il Ritorno di Platone: Studi e Documenti II*, ed. Gian Carlo Carfagnini (Firenze, 1984), pp. 351-369; "Scholastic Philosophy and Renaissance Magic in the *De vita* of Marsilio Ficino," *Renaissance Quarterly* XXXVII, 4 (1984) 523-554; and "Iamblichus, Synesius and the Chaldean Oracles in Marsilio Ficino's *De vita libri tres*: Hermetic Magic or Neoplatonic Magic?" *Supplementum Festivum: Studies in Honor of Paul Oskar Kristeller*, eds James Hankins, John Monfasani and Frederick Prunell, Jr. (Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies: Binghamton, New York, 1987), pp. 441-55.

Unlike the works of Arabic image magic, which did not seek to justify themselves but simply assumed their legitimacy as works of practical astrology, the *De vita* begins with a theoretical discussion. With a rather clever interpretation of Aquinas, Ficino justified the practice of magic as orthodox. By synthesizing this interpretation with ideas from Plotinus, he situated his ideas within the fashionable platonic philosophical context of the renaissance. As a trained doctor, he was also able to weave this theoretical material into an otherwise traditional medical framework. Like many of his medical predecessors who employed astrological images or amulets in their treatments, Ficino presented images simply as a part of the therapy one could pursue, and in fact, not a necessary one. He also called upon a wide range of classical sources and located the origins of his magic in a pristine past. This broad ranging synthetic approach was characteristic of a philosopher standing in the tradition of scholastic thought, but actively integrating the newly available corpus of platonic literature. The strength of his arguments provided a powerful defence for magical practice, but it did so by giving the impression that a coherent body of magical philosophy from the past lay buried, scattered like gold in a variety of intellectual traditions.

To Ficino's readers, intellectual magic appeared to be a wide ranging synthetic and constructive project. Not only did he situate his work within the major philosophical schools of the day, but he wove them together with astrology, medical theory, and a variety of ancient sources. The more astute readers would have been aware of his unacknowledged debt to ritual or astral magic texts like the *Picatrix*.⁸ In addition, such features as his use of a magical room were very likely derived from medieval ritual magic practices.⁹ Moreover, Ficino was duly cagey about

⁸Yates, *Giordano Bruno*, pp. 68-76

⁹Ficino's version of the magical room contains astrological images. *De vita coelitus comparanda*, XIX. For an example from a ritual magic collection, see Sloane 3853, f. 6 which gives an involved description of a magical room.

what his real opinions were, giving the justified impression that he was hinting at a great deal more than he was saying. As a neoplatonist, he was very much immersed in a tradition which often used metaphoric and esoteric language impenetrable to the uninitiated. In this way, Agrippa's vast synthetic project and its esoteric approach may be understood as a logical extension of the direction Ficino was already taking. But before turning to explore this, we must examine two features of the *De vita* in more detail.

Ficino was far closer to the traditions of ritual magic than most scholars have suggested, and this may be demonstrated by the magical practices he proposes, as well as his attitude towards his sources. Ficino extended magical theory well beyond what al-Kindi had done, making it possible to derive magical effects—in his case the positive influences of the heavens—from a wide range of activities and objects. Music, clothing, food, people, suffumigations, medicines, words, gestures, and figures (either in talismans or in the imagination), could all provide the desired astrological influence through their formal connection with that influence. The therapy he suggests would probably have involved combining all or some of these things.

Since the heavens have been constructed according to a harmonic plan and move harmonically, and since they bring everything about by harmonic sounds and motions, it is logical that through harmony alone not only men but all lower things are prepared to receive, according to their abilities, celestial things. In the preceding chapter we distributed the harmony capable of receiving things above into seven steps: through images (as they believe) put together harmonically, through medicines tempered with a certain proper consonance, through vapours and odors completed with similar consonance, through musical songs and sounds (with which rank and power we wish to associate gestures of the body, dancing, and ritual movements), through well-accorded concepts and motions of the imagination, through fitting discourses of reason, through tranquil contemplations of the mind.¹⁰

¹⁰Quoniam vero coelum est harmonica ratione compositum, moueturque harmonice, et harmonicis motibus atque sonis efficit omnia, merito per harmoniam solam non solum homines, sed inferiora haec omnia pro uiribus ad capienda coelestia praeparantur. Harmoniam vero capacem superiorum per septem rerum gradus in superioribus distribuimus: per imagines uidelicet (ut putat) harmonice constitutas, per medicinas sua quadam consonantia temperatas, per uapores

So, due to the real formal connection of these things with the sun, solar influences could be derived from a combination of things such as a cock, a lion, white wine, and yellow clothing. More interesting for our current purposes are the "solar" songs, gestures, suffumigations, words, images, imaginings, or thoughts.

For a late fifteenth-century reader, the only parallel for such a complex set of practices would have been found in the works of ritual magic which, as we have seen, variously employ contemplation, gesture, suffumigation, incantation, and images. To complicate matters even more, as a Christian neoplatonist, Ficino made a distinction between evil demons and demons as non-rational intermediaries for the various flavours of astrological influence. As we have seen, this distinction was also, at least implicitly, observed amongst the texts of ritual magic.¹¹ Although there is ample evidence to suggest that Ficino was attempting to create a Christianised version of ancient neoplatonic theurgy in the *De vita*,¹² there is no evidence that he was at all interested in necromantic practices. Nonetheless, the work strays a good distance into the territory which classically was the province of practitioners of ritual magic. He has taken many of the standard magical ritual practices and has Christianised them in a novel way. More significantly, like the

odoresque simili concinnitate confectos, per cantus musicos, atque sonos, ad quorum ordinem uimque referri gestus corporis saltusque et tripudia uolumus; per imaginationis conceptus motusque concinnos, per congruas rationis discursiones, per tranquillas mentis contemplationes. *De vita coelitus comparanda*, 22. Translation from Brian Copenhaver, ed. and trans., subsequent page references will be to this edition.

¹¹See above, ch. 4, sect. 2..

¹²Copenhaver's analysis of the *De vita* suggests that Ficino struggled with his sources wishing to draw something legitimate from the theurgic practices of later neoplatonism. Being greatly enamoured of magical practices which might have an efficacy beyond the purely physical and medical effects but being duly wary of the implications for Christian orthodoxy, his position remained ambiguous. Copenhaver, "Iamblichus, Sinesius, and the Chaldean Oracles." On theurgy see George Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus* (Philadelphia: Penn State Press, 1995).

scribes of ritual magic, he has not removed suffumigations, ritual gestures, magical images, and other such potentially offensive material, but has transformed them in such a way that these can be regarded as Christian and orthodox. But there is another area where Ficino's approach to the received traditions parallels that of ritual magic scribes.

The strong astrological and medical content of the work have tended to dominate our understanding of Ficino. D. C. Allen has discussed Ficino's apparently ambivalent attitude towards astrology, noting in particular, how Ficino seems credulous of astrology at one point and sceptical at another.¹³ Ficino's position has never been regarded as determinist, but the *De vita* is usually cited (as it is by Allen) as an indication of Ficino's apparent acceptance of a fairly mechanistic model of astrology. Certainly, it is heavily astrological and assumes the influences of the heavens. Yet, a close examination of Ficino's treatment of astrology reveals that his position was probably more consistent than has been recognized and that his attitude towards the methods and literature of astrology was very similar to the attitudes of ritual magic scribes.

The twenty-third chapter of the *De vita* Ficino is entitled, "To live well and prosper, first know your natural bent, your star, your genius, and the place suitable to these; here live. Follow your natural profession."¹⁴ In this chapter Ficino introduces us to one of the central features of the book. In order to fit oneself to the heavens, one must first know oneself; without this knowledge you may well pursue a life in which the heavens will not only not be able to help you, but in which the heavens may be in conflict with you.

¹³D. C. Allen, *The Star Crossed Renaissance* (New York: Octagon Books, 1966), p. 12-18.

¹⁴Ut prospere vivas agasque, imprimis cognosce ingenium, sidus, genium tuum et locum eisdem convenientem. Hic habita. Professionem sequere naturalem. *De vita coelitus comparanda*, 23; pp. 370-71

Whoever is born possessed of a sound mind is naturally formed by the heavens for some honorable work and way of life. Whoever therefore wants to have the heavens propitious, let him undertake above all this work, this way of life; let him pursue it zealously, for the heavens favor his undertakings. Assuredly for this above all else you were made by nature—the activity which from tender years you do, seek, play-act, choose, dream, imitate; that activity which you try more frequently, which you perform more easily, in which you make the most progress, which you enjoy above all else, which you leave off unwillingly. That assuredly is the thing for which the heavens and the lord of your horoscope gave birth to you.... Therefore anyone having thoroughly scrutinized his own natural bent by the aforesaid indicators will so discover his natural work as to discover at the same time his own star and daemon. Following the beginnings laid down by them, he will act successfully, he will live prosperously; if not, he will find fortune adverse and will sense that the heavens are his enemy.¹⁵

After a discussion of the ways in which one might use this knowledge, he notes three methods by which one can determine one's demon, mentioning Porphyry, Julius Firmicus, and the Chaldeans. He concludes this discussion as follows:

Therefore let us first of all search out the inclination of our nature and of our daemon—*whether by that experiment and careful attention which we narrated above, or by the astrological art which I have just now recounted.* We will judge a person to be unfortunate who has professed no respectable employment; for he who does not undertake respectable work does not in fact have a daemonic guide in his profession, and he scarcely has a daemonic guide for his natural self either, for it is the duty of the stars and daemons (or guiding angels divinely stationed on guard) to act always, excellently, and on a grand scale. Still less fortunate is the person who, as we said above, subjects himself, by a profession contrary to his nature, to a daemon unlike his Genius. [Italics mine]¹⁶

¹⁵Quicumque sanae mentis suique compos nascitur, est a coelo ad honestum aliquod opus et uitae genus naturaliter institutus. Quisquis igitur coelum optat habere propitium, hoc opus, hoc genus imprimis aggrediatur, hoc sedulo prosequaretur. Coelum enim suis fauet inceptis. Ad hoc impsum vero prae caeteris es natura factus, quod primum a teneris annis agis, loqueris, fingis, optas, somnias, imitaris; quod tentas frequentius, quod facilius peragis, quo summopere proficis, quo prae caeteris delectaris, quod relinquis invitus. Hoc est sane ad quod te coelum rectorque coeli genuit.... Quicumque igitur per argumenta quae modo diximus suum ingenium perscrutatus ita naturale suum opus inueniet, inuenerit simul suum sidus et daemonem. Quorum exordia sequens aget prospere, uiuetque feliciter, alioquin et fortunam experietur aduersam et coelum sentiet inimicum. *De vita coelitus comparanda*, 23; pp. 370-71.

¹⁶Sive igitur ab illa, quam in superioribus narrabam, experientia dilligentiaque, sive ab hac arte, quam modo recensui, primum inuestigemus naturae daemonisque instinctum, infortunatum esse censebimus, qui officium nullum profitetur honestum. Nam et ducem professionis re vera non habet, qui opus honestum non aggreditur; et ducem naturalem vix ullum habet, quoniam stellarum

In other words, in order to arrange oneself to receive favourable influences from the heavens, one must determine one's astrological makeup. To do this, any of four methods may be chosen and Ficino gives no indication here, or elsewhere, that such an open-ended situation is problematic. The three astrological techniques he suggests may be used or not, and the confidence with which Ficino offers these choices indicate that how the operator arrives at the information is ultimately a matter of personal choice.

It should come as no surprise that the core of Ficino's magic could rest simply upon personal choice or self-reflection. This sort of response was, no doubt, second nature to a humanist philosopher. That this should form the basis upon which an astrological system should function is an interesting twist. Rather than worrying about the diversity of possible readings—which diverse methodologies will naturally render—Ficino has provided a non-textual and non-technical way of discovering the truth, a method which subsumes and transcends a literature which seldom speaks with one voice. To return to the question of Ficino's attitude to astrology, we may conclude that, while he took astrological influence for granted, his use of astrological methods and source texts were non-restrictive. More importantly, the use of these methods and the interpretation of their results hinged on personal choice or reflection. As in the case of ritual magic, this circumvents the problems of textual inconsistencies and the unpredictable nature of magical practice through non-textual sources, reflection, contemplation, vision, and divine illumination or guidance. The "truth" did not reside in the text or method. Where the methods and texts were insufficient, these non-textual sources filled in. Like Ficino's magus, these scribes had to interpret the results of their investigation in order to use them.

daemonumque sive angelorum ducum divinitus ad custodiam dispositorum officium est agere semper et excellenter atque latissime. Infortunatum insuper eum, ut supra diximus, qui professione naturae contraria diversum a genio subit daemonem. *De vita coelitus comparanda*, 23.

A second important feature of the magical processes Ficino describes should also be pointed out. In Ficino's system, the operator lies at the centre of the process. Unlike image magic where the magical event has little to do with the operator (except having been indirectly caused by him), Ficino's magus is *himself* the magical image. Without the operator and his self-reflection, there is no magic. To use scholastic language, Ficino's operator is not only the efficient cause, but the formal, final, and material causes as well. When Ficino's operator seeks to balance the astrological influences in his life, the magical event occurs within the operator. It is also defined by the operator's state and brought about by the operator's actions. Further, the goal of discovering one's intended way of life and employing Ficino's magical system is not only a practical matter, but a moral one. It is a way in which the operator may give the greatest possible expression to the gifts given by God.

Ficino's magic thus bears close resemblance to the traditions of medieval ritual magic for a number of reasons. The practices involve a wide assortment of actions which were common to the ritual magic tradition and similarly place the operator *within* the magical process. Like the ritual magic scribes, he has reformulated the potentially offensive elements of the magical practices upon which he has drawn, into what he regards as an orthodox form, rather than removing them. In addition, these practices are not only meant to be acceptable to Christians, but directly beneficial to their physical and spiritual lives. Finally, his use of prior methodologies is not restrictive, but open-ended, relying as much upon individual choice or reflection as it does upon the received methods. These formal similarities hint at a greater debt to the medieval ritual magic tradition than has been usually recognized. More importantly, they suggest that there was more harmony between the printed literature and manuscript evidence than is first apparent. If we may take Ficino's *De vita coelitus comparanda* as representative of a renaissance approach to magic,

we may understand why the ritual magic material was attractive. While Ficino employed natural magic, and in particular, the traditions of scholastic image magic, these were merely a part of a larger project. In this project, occultists struggled with the interpretation of their sources as they transformed (once again) prior magical and religious sources into a new Christian magic.

3. The *De occulta philosophia* of Cornelius Agrippa.

Cornelius Agrippa's project flowed logically from Ficino's but was much more ambitious. He sought nothing less than the synthesis of all occult literature, including not only the medieval material, but all the material newly available in the renaissance. That the project was as successful as it was indicates just how unconventional and brilliant a mind was at work in it. Ultimately comprising three volumes, his *De occulta philosophia* became an instant classic in the library of occult learning. The work won him a place on the Indices of Venice and Milan of 1554 and Rome of 1554, as well as in the processes of the Holy Office at Fruii.¹⁷ That he was singled out by name this often at a time when most condemnations of magic were of a blanket nature is an good indication of his influence. More than any other work it shaped the content and direction of sixteenth-century occultism; at least, amongst sixteenth-century manuscripts of ritual magic, no other name recurs with such frequency.

A brief summary of the first two books of the *De occulta philosophia* will give a fairly strong impression of the daring breadth of its subject matter, and the way in which Agrippa attempts to 'uncover' a coherent structure in the vast library of occult learning.¹⁸ The first book is said to concern the elemental world and the magical properties of physical objects. The

¹⁷HMES VI, 146-50.

¹⁸A good summary of the first two books may be found in Yates, *Giordano*, pp. 131-37.

examination runs from plants and animals to magical properties of humans, and how the virtues are distributed from the heavenly bodies. The second book concerns the celestial or mathematical world, which is to say, various forms of abstract representation. These are more powerful than things from the elemental world because they more closely approach celestial things. Topics include the arts of astrological images, geomancy, planetary names to be used in incantations, Chaldean numbers, magic number squares and the associated seals, musical harmony and the harmony of the human physique, and the images and faces of the zodiac to name but a few. Much of this section takes the form of extensive charts relating numbers, Hebrew letters, angel names, celestial influences and such like. Despite the breadth of material covered here, these books are only preparatory to what follows.

With these words Agrippa begins the third book, making it immediately obvious what direction he intends to take.

Now it is time for us to turn to higher matters, and to that part of magic which teaches us to be skilled in and to understand the laws of religion, how we ought to arrive at the truth by divine religion, and how rightly to cultivate our spirit and mind, through which alone we can comprehend the truth.... But whoever relies on natural things alone, leaving religion behind, is most often wont to be deceived by evil demons, but contempt for sin, cure of sin, and protection against evil demons are born from the understanding of religion, since none is more pleasing and acceptable to God than the man perfectly pious and truly religious, who surpasses other men as much as he himself stands apart from the immortal gods. Therefore, having been first purged, we ought to offer and commend ourselves to divine piety and religion, and then, our senses being asleep, to await with a quiet mind that divine ambrosian nectar (nectar, I say, which Zecharia the prophet calls wine begetting virgins praising and adoring that supercelestial Bacchus, greatest of the gods and of the priests, the high-priest, the author of regeneration, whom the old poets sang as twice born, from whom rivers most divine flow into our hearts.¹⁹

¹⁹Tempus est nunc ad altiora nos convertere et ad eam magiae portionem, quae nos docet callere et scire leges religionum et quomodo veritatem religione divina debeamus adipisci et quomodo animum et mentem, qua sola possumus veritatem coprehendere, rite debeamus excolere.... Quicunque vero religione relicta naturalibus tantum confidunt, solent a malis daemonibus saepissime falli; ex intellectu autem religionis contemptus medelaque nascitur vitiorum et contra malos daemones tutamentum: denique nil Deo gratius et acceptius quam homo

Thus, the highest form of magical practice is, in fact, synonymous with religion and has everything to do with divine illumination. Yet Agrippa does not intend that we altogether dispense with the first two books.

Thus it should be known that, just as something is often produced through the influx of the first agent without the cooperation of middle causes, in the same way, something may be done by the work of religion alone, without the application of natural and celestial virtues. But no one can work by pure religion alone, except he who is made totally intellectual. But whoever, without the mixture of other powers, works by religion alone, if he perseveres long in the work, will surely be swallowed up by the divine power and cannot live long...²⁰

So the purpose of the first two works is to support the more elevated practices in the third by preparing and strengthening the operator.

There follows a long discussion of a kind of mystical theology, which incorporates a good deal of neoplatonic and cabbalist language and structure. Frances Yates' summary of this section highlights Agrippa's use of Orphic Hymns, Cabalism, and pseudo-Dionysius.²¹ Agrippa then treats

perfecte pius ac vere religiosus, qui tam homines caeteros praecellit, quam ipse a diis immortalibus distat. Debemus nos igitur prius quidem purgatos offerre et commendare divinae pietati et religioni et tunc divinum illud ambrosianum nectar—nectar, inquam, quod Zacharias propheta appellat vinum germinans virgines—sotis sensibus, tranquilla mente expectare, laudantes, et adorantes supercoelestem illum Bacchum, summum deorum et sacerdotum antistitem, regenerationis autorem, quem bis natum veteres cecinere poetae, a quo tam devinissimi rivi in corda nostra emanant. *De occulta philosophia*, III, 1; I quote from Cornelius Agrippa, *De occulta philosophia libri tres*, ed. V. Perrone Compagni (E.J. Brill: Leiden, 1992), pp. 402-03. Subsequent page references will be to this edition.

²⁰Sciendum ergo quod, sicut per primi agentis influxum saepe producitur aliquid sine cooperatione mediarum causarum, sic etiam per solum opus religionis fit aliquid sine applicatione naturalium coelestiumque virtutum; sed nemo potest operari per puram et solam religionem, nisi qui totus factus est intellectualis. Quicunque autem sine admixtione aliarum virtutum per solam religionem operatur, si diu perseveraverit in opere, absorbetur a numine nec diu poterit vivere... *De occulta philosophia*, III, 6; pp. 414-15

²¹Yates, *Giordano*, pp. 138-40. It should be noted that Yates' summary of this book concentrates almost entirely upon the first ten chapters and devotes little time to the remaining forty-seven, especially those chapters where necromantic practice is discussed. This contrasts sharply with her comprehensive treatment of the second book. Her summary gives the impression

such topics as divine emanations, divine names, seals, intelligences, spirits, evil spirits, how good spirits preserve us against or help us overcome evil ones, cabalist methods for calculating angel names, and in what way evil spirits can be bound.²² In the next section of the book he goes on to discuss the nature of humanity, the manner in which it is an image of God, its structure, and the powers of the soul, mind, reason, and imagination.²³ He concludes with various forms of contact with the divine in the form of "frenzy," prophesy, divine oracles, and the preparations one must make in order to receive divine oracles including purifications, suffumigations, and ceremonies (although he is not specific about precisely how to do this).²⁴ Agrippa's descriptions refer, as much as possible, to classical, biblical, patristic and philosophical sources, and do not provide any explicit instructions. But even this superficial summary reveals considerable continuity with the medieval literature of ritual magic.

Much like works of medieval ritual magic, Agrippa employed various forms of magical practice but these are subordinate to the more elevated visionary and religious goals which are his primary interest. Like his medieval predecessors he has incorporated astrological images amongst the these subordinate or supporting forms of magic; like them, he has also re-oriented their use to the pursuit of his religious goals. The difference is, that he has not done this by re-writing the texts (like most scribes of ritual magic), but by gathering the entire library of occult learning behind the pursuit of religious goals. In this respect, his project follows the pattern of the *Sworn Book of Honorius*. While Agrippa is duly cagey about giving practical instructions, it is clear from

of a heavily "hermetic" document.

²²*De occulta*, III. 6-35.

²³*De occulta*, III. 36-44.

²⁴*De occulta*, III. 45-54.

the summary of the third book that his religious magic draws heavily upon medieval traditions. While Yates is quite correct that Agrippa interprets this literature through the lens of neoplatonic philosophy and cabalism, this re-interpretation does not prevent us from seeing his considerable debt to the practical literature available to him in medieval ritual magic texts. If this is "not the old hole-and-corner business of the persecuted medieval magician" as Yates would have it, magic which is "not medieval in spirit," it is very heavily medieval in both its content and goals.²⁵ If not apparent to Yates, Agrippa's debt was clear to the publishers of Agrippa's *Opera omnia* (Lyons, 1600) who included a version of the Solomonic *Ars notoria* (amongst other works of ritual magic) in the second volume.²⁶ But let us turn to the question of the "spirit" of Agrippa's magical practice.

Yates tried to demonstrate that Agrippa's magic is not "medieval in spirit" by emphasizing the language Agrippa uses and the sources he calls upon in support of his magical interests. There is no question that this aspect of the *De occulta* is heavily humanist and completely unlike the any work of medieval ritual magic. The sophistication of his learning and Latinity outstrip many of the texts we have examined. His references to neoplatonic, hermetic, orphic, and other classical sources, are naturally peculiar to a renaissance author, as are his efforts to synthesize these sources with his practices. Nonetheless, there is good reason to question whether these characteristics should define the *spirit* of an intellectual project. Agrippa's debt to medieval magic (both in terms of his practices and his goals) should be sufficient evidence for characterizing his work as "medieval in spirit," despite the fact that it is wrapped in more fashionable language and

²⁵Yates, *Giordano*, p. 142.

²⁶In her summary of the third book, Yates makes no reference to the sections dealing with conjuring. Id, pp. 137-41.

adapted to a new set of sources. But let us turn to some more fundamental features of his interest in magic, his struggles with the interrelated problems of interpretation, texts, and access to the divine.

There is a very confident tone in the work which often leads to dizzying heights, such as the well known passage where the Agrippa claims the magus can become a co-worker with God.²⁷ Yet elsewhere in his writings, his bombastic confidence dissolves into another voice, far less confident about human powers.

O how many writings are read concerning the invincible power of the magic art, concerning the prodigious images of the astrologers, the marvellous transformation of the alchemists, and that blessed stone which Midas-like immediately turns every base metal it touches to gold or silver. All these writings are found vain, fictitious and false as often as they are practiced to the letter. Yet they are propounded and written by great and most grave philosophers and holy men. Who will dare call their teachings false? What is more, it would be impious to believe that they have written falsehoods in those works. Hence the meaning must be other than what the letters yield up.²⁸

While Agrippa believes that the magus may rise to fantastic heights, this passage from his letters suggests that the way is blocked by the interpretive difficulties and the apparent inaccuracies of the occult literature. The contents and publication history of his two major works demonstrate that Agrippa's pessimism eventually went well beyond what is expressed here, into a more explicit scepticism, intimately bound up with his magical interests.

²⁷*De occulta philosophia*, II, 50.

²⁸O quanta leguntur scripta de inexpugnabili magicae artis potentia, de prodigiosis astrologorum imaginibus, de monstrifica alchymistarum metamorphosi, deque lapide illo benedicto, quo, Midas instar, contacta aera mox omnia in aurum argentumve permutentur: quae omnia comperiuntur vana, ficta et falsa, quoties ad literam practicantur. Atque tamen traduntur ista scribunturque a magnis grauissimisque philosophis et sanctis viris, quorum traditiones quis audebit dicere falsis? Quinimo credere impium esset, illos data opera scripsisse mendacia. Alius est ergo sensus, quam literis traditur. *Epistola* V, 14; *Op. Om.* v. II. p. 873-74. The letter is dated 1527. HMES V, 132.

Initially completed around 1510, the *De occulta philosophia* circulated in a limited number of manuscript copies. Although it contained only the first two books, it was already a massive work summarizing a dizzying range of magical practices. In 1530, Agrippa published a denunciation of all human wisdom entitled *Concerning the vanity and uncertainty of the arts and sciences*. This denunciation included an explicit (although carefully worded) rejection of magical literature. But this rejection was only part of a more radical argument, which proposed a largely unbridgeable gap between truth and the human power to perceive it. The work is an unremitting and methodical denunciation of all human arts and sciences and their claims on the truth. While maintaining the existence of ideal forms, he denies any but the most limited human access to them — a fairly typical Ciceronian or platonic scepticism. He emphasises the fallibility of every human being, including church Fathers and such figures as Jerome, the translator of the Bible. In fact, he claims rhetorically, they all *lied*. All this would seem like a radical break from his earlier interests and magic in particular. However, two years later, he published a revised version of the *De occulta philosophia*, which included the third book, claiming that he did this to make his errors known.²⁹ Coming from a man steeped in esoteric traditions in which the truth was seldom communicated directly, and who explicitly says in the *De occulta* that he is not telling the whole

²⁹The edition published at Cologne in 1533 by Johannes Soter was overseen personally by Agrippa. Its publication had been delayed by the intervention of the Dominican Inquisitor Conrad Köllin of Ulm. A partial edition was printed at Antwerp in 1531 and in Paris by Christianus Wechelus.

story,³⁰ this was not taken very seriously and has led to endless speculations about what Agrippa was up to.³¹

It has been the position of Charles Nauert, Michael Keefer, and V. Perrone Compagni that there is a continuity between these two works. Perrone argues that Agrippa's project in both is simply to seek the reform of knowledge and religious life, including magic. Nauert has proposed that we may see a gradual movement towards a more mystical approach to knowledge and religion in Agrippa's writing, pointing out that both works conclude with the necessity of divine illumination.³² Keefer also argues that continuity between the two texts may be found in Agrippa's insistence upon the necessity of divine illumination. He also sees a struggle between two opposed approaches to the idea of rebirth, one Christian and pauline, the other hermetic and non-Christian.³³ Yet, while there is ample indication that Agrippa was struggling, it is unlikely that the opposition of "hermetic" and Christian ideas were major parts of the drama.

A more likely scenario is that Agrippa was attempting to synthesize or reconcile philosophical, theological, and occult or magical sources. In the introductory chapter of the *De*

³⁰See for example *De occulta*, III, 2. This chapter discusses the importance of secretiveness in religious matters. Agrippa concludes that he will not be explicit about many things out of reverence for his topic. "Non decet itaque arcana, quae inter paucos sapientes solo ore communicanda sunt, publicis committere literis: quare veniam mihi dabit, si multa eaque potiora ceremonialis magiae arcana sacramenta silentio fuerim praetergressus." III, 2.

³¹For a discussion of the debate prior to 1965, see Nauert, *Agrippa*, pp. 157-159.

³²Nauert, *Agrippa*, pp. 157-221. In particular, Nauert points to early concerns on the part of Agrippa about the use of rationality as an approach to God. Nauert, p. 200.

³³Michael H. Keefer, "Agrippa's Dilemma: Hermetic "Rebirth" and the Ambivalence of *de vanitate* and *de occulta philosophia*," in *Renaissance Quarterly*, Winter (1988) 614-53. While this article is flawed by not taking cognizance of the cabalist and neoplatonic traditions, in particular the fact that both texts reflect a consistent neoplatonic pessimism or "scepticism," it lends further credence to Nauert's contention that the notion of illumination is fundamental to both works. Keefer has also rightly identified the occultist flavour of the *De vanitate*.

vanitate, where he makes his opening remarks about the powerlessness of reason to achieve blessedness, he cites Porphyry and Iamblichus as his authorities, not Paul or a hermetic source.

For (as Porphyry and Iamblichus say) the accumulation of words, and a multitude of disciplines, is a blessedness which receives no increase, in proportion to the quantity of reasons and words. Because if it were so, nothing should prevent those who have gathered together all disciplines from being blessed, and he who lacks these, not blessed at all, and the philosophers would be more blessed than priests.³⁴

Given the authors, the passage to which he refers is likely from the *De mysteriis aegyptiorum* a work written by Iamblichus in reply to a letter of Porphyry to Anebo. The work is a discussion of Egyptian magic and is centrally concerned with the theurgic practices of later neoplatonism, religious exercises which sought to overcome the otherwise unbridgeable gap between the embodied soul and the divine. The precise passage is very likely the following.

[A] conception of the mind does not conjoin theurgists with the Gods; since, if this were the case, what would hinder those who philosophize theoretically, from having a theurgic union with the Gods? Now, however, in reality this is not the case. For the perfect efficacy of ineffable works, which are divinely performed in a way surpassing all intelligence, as the power of inexplicable symbols, which are known only to the Gods, impart theurgic union.³⁵

Iamblichus maintains two levels of contact with the divine, one rational and relating to the soul, and one more direct through the intellect.³⁶ For Iamblichus, the soul can only participate indirectly in the divine; the intellect can have direct contact by rising to angelic status. This status could only

³⁴Non enim (ut aiunt Porphyrius et Iamblicus) verborum accumulatio disciplinarumque multitudo beatitudo est, quae nec ullum insuper pro rationum ac verborum qualitate [read: quantitate] accipit incrementum: quod si ita esset nihil prohiberet illos, qui omnes congregauerunt disciplinas, esse beatos; hunc vero, qui his careat, nequaquam: essentque philosophi sacerdotibus beatores. *De vanitate*, I, p. 14.

³⁵*De mysteriis aegyptiorum*, II, 11. Iamblichus of Chalcis, *On the Mysteries*, ed. Stephen Ronan with the translations of Thomas Taylor and Alexander Wilder (Chthonois Books, 1989), p. 62, col. b.

³⁶*De mysteriis aegyptiorum*, II, 11. For a full discussion of Iamblichus on this question see R. T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (London: Duckworth, 1972), pp. 118-23.

be achieved through theurgic practices, in which the gods are not commanded but respond voluntarily. Our summary of the third book of the *De occulta philosophia* will indicate that Agrippa had some such activities in mind with his discussions of the use of celestial intelligences, demons, angels, and the physical and ceremonial preparations he regarded as necessary to achieve divine frenzy or prophetic visions. His reference to this passage in this rather significant part of the *De vanitate* further confirms Keefer's contention that the *De vanitate* has a occultist core. It also suggests that the core is discussed in neoplatonic terms and not, as Keefer suggests, hermetic ones.

An somewhat different position on Agrippa is taken by Paola Zambelli. She argues that Agrippa's rejection of magic in the *De vanitate* was authentic. While Agrippa began with a Ficinian notion of the magus as philosopher, magician, and priest, by 1526 he had decided that the magus (philosopher and magician) could not be reconciled with the priest. This is the position he takes in the *De vanitate*. (p. 82) Zambelli's interpretation of the *De vanitate* is convincing in the sense that it does not require as much reading between the lines, which is the weakness of the position taken by Nauert and Keefer to which I have added. On the other hand, Zambelli's position is less successful in accounting for Agrippa's publishing history. If Agrippa had rejected religious magic, why publish a *re-written* version of the 1510 *De occulta* with a greatly expanded section on religious magic? If he merely wished to make his errors known, the earlier version, encompassing natural and mathematical magic would have been sufficient. In addition, his rejection of every human science was highly rhetorical. So, for example his claim that Jerome was capable of error did not nullify the value of scripture. As a result, one is driven to take his rejections of human sciences in general, and the *theologia gentilium* in particular, with a grain of

salt. In the end, neither interpretation is without its faults. Both positions, however, point to a common set of problems and it is to these which we will now turn.

What is significant for my purposes here is that Agrippa's scepticism is intimately related to his magico-mystical or religious interests. This brings us to the central issues in Agrippa's philosophical project. If, as I suggest, Agrippa went so far as to assume an identity between Paul's ideas about the interpretive and prophetic gifts and the two levels of contact with the divine proposed by Iamblichus and Porphyry. How successful such a synthesis may have been, or whether it would have satisfied the restless Agrippa cannot be explored here. The evidence certainly argues that it was not merely a passing fancy. This synthesis unites both the *De occulta philosophia* and the *De vanitate*, his two major works. It also resolves two of Agrippa's principal struggles, his attempts to reconcile a magical and a Christian worldview, and to reconcile his desire to have access to the divine (and his conviction that this was possible) with impenetrable texts and human fallibility. Even if we were to agree with Zambelli that Agrippa discarded these ideas, or was struggling unsuccessfully in his effort to synthesize Pauline and neoplatonic ideas, it remains that he is deeply concerned with the interwoven problems of interpretation, of discovering truth, and of access to the divine. In the *De vanitate* and elsewhere, Agrippa presents the epistemological problem of the near inaccessibility of truth as a problem in the interpretation of texts. The only way we may access truth in a text is through a purity of spirit and God's grace, and that grace is not a dependable presence even for God's chosen prophets. Thus, Nauert correctly identifies the question of interpreting texts as one of Agrippa's central concerns.³⁷

³⁷ A feature of the *De vanitate* which deserves further careful analysis is that Agrippa ultimately returns a positive evaluation of the interpretive mode of accessing truth although radically limited in its scope. Closer analysis of this work with an eye to this question may lead to a more nuanced understanding of how Agrippa regarded human interpretive skills.

Whatever may have become of Agrippa's occult interests, they had resulted in a radically more abstract, mystical, neoplatonic approach, very sceptical of texts, yet employing a combination of interpretation and religious inspiration to access their hidden truths.³⁸ Agrippa's project was highly religious, at least insofar as the topics he dealt with are fundamental issues in religious thought. Further, the practices he evidently recommends are very much the sort of practices we may find in the medieval ritual magic traditions. Not only does he seek contact with the divine through visionary experiences involving angels and demons, but he subordinates natural and celestial magic to these efforts. Agrippa has presented occult thought as a vast and—despite its wildly diverse sources—a unified discourse with a mystical core. In this sense he stands in the tradition of such texts as the *Sworn Book of Honorius*. Finally, like ritual magic, because the principle for determining truth is the divine, Agrippa's magic remains entirely open-ended. Thus, Agrippa's *De occulta philosophia* very strongly perpetuates the spirit of medieval ritual magic.

4. Conclusion: Truth, Text, and Doubt

If we may take Ficino and Agrippa as representative of renaissance interest in magic, we may begin to understand why the renaissance occultists should have had a much greater interest in the literature of medieval ritual magic than natural magic. The speculative basis for the magical systems developed by these two authors is unquestionably neoplatonic. Yet neoplatonism (and for that matter most of the other occult literature, orphic, hermetic, and cabalist) could not provide the necessary practical instructions. For these, renaissance occultists had to turn to the extensive library of medieval ritual and natural magic. When they did, they would naturally gravitate to texts

³⁸V. Perrone Compagni also suggests that Agrippa's occult interests survived well past the publication of his *De vanitate*, referring, in particular, to his letters. Introduction to *De occulta philosophia*, ed. V. P. Compagni, p. 7.

which reflected their broad goals, their less restrictive approach to methodology, their desire to place the operator at the centre of the magical event, and their essentially religious interests. The narrow focus and restricted effects of the texts of scholastic image magic would understandably be far less attractive.

Ficino's *De vita coelitus comparanda* has been regarded as a part of the tradition which presented magic as natural philosophy. This flies in the face of Ficino's neoplatonic interests, where magic (i.e., theurgy) was an integral part of religious practice. It also flies in the face of Ficino's religious language and the ritual features of the magic he proposed. For Ficino, the stuff of natural philosophy, and even astrology itself were only means to an end, an end which subsumed them. The purposes to which his magical practices might be put are then restricted only in the sense that the operator's condition would have demanded certain kinds of astral influences over others. Ficino's magic also hinged upon personal choice and reflection. Without it, the rest was worth nothing. More than this, the results of personal reflection were taken as seriously as those derived from the received methods. Finally, the goal of his system was both contemplation, as is suggested by his deep interest in theurgic practices, but also a life in concord with the heavens, which is to say, in concord with God's intentions. An Augustinian morality underlies the work, which insists upon the necessity of using the gifts at your disposal for good. In short, the magic of the *De vita coelitus comparanda* is non-restrictive, contemplative, and religious.

Agrippa, much more than Ficino, explicitly gathered materials from the texts of medieval ritual magic. He also gathered material from a dizzying range of magical and divinatory practices, all of which he subsumed under a common magical system. Like his teacher, Trithemius, this project was deeply mystical and religious. At its core it rejected all human systematization, all worldly knowledge, and in fact, all magical knowledge, in favour of the truths achieved through

divine illumination. Like John of Morigny, a long struggle with the magical traditions, and in particular with texts, drove him to a position where he believed truth could only be achieved through divine illumination. Charles Nauert regards Agrippa to stand at the crisis point in the tradition of the Renaissance. While there is great merit in this argument, there is also considerable justification for seeing Agrippa as a crisis point in an even more extensive history of occult learning going back several centuries. A crisis brought on, not by difficulties in renaissance thought as such, but by the very nature of a long standing tradition where text, doubt, and the numinous stood in constant tension. Agrippa's work is perhaps the greatest creative achievement stemming from this unsolvable dilemma at the core of medieval ritual magic.

Conclusion

Religion, Science, and the Transformations of Magic

A wealth of evidence for the practice of magic in the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries may be found in manuscript form. Some of magical texts were the property of intellectual giants like John Dee, most were not. As a whole they serve to describe the general nature and direction of the magical tradition rather than the powerful, original formulations of a single thinker. But lacking an understanding of this wider tradition, we risk misunderstanding the work of the intellectual landmarks. The disavowals of medieval ritual magic by renaissance authors should not be understood as an indication that they did not draw upon its literature. Ficino and Agrippa not only reformulated the materials of medieval ritual magic, but developed and pursued the intellectual struggles central to that tradition. In this way, their projects may be recognized to be consonant with the projects of the majority of sixteenth-century collectors of magical texts rather than antithetical to them.

An examination of the manuscripts also makes it possible to identify genres of magical texts according to the habits and interests of collectors rather than categories of library organization or taxonomies of knowledge. In some medieval libraries scholastic image magic and ritual magic were both categorized as superstitious; in some medieval taxonomies both fell under the heading of necromancy. Yet these two genres were collected by distinct groups with distinctive interests; they were also transmitted in very different ways. The manuscripts also allow us to understand how the scribes of these genres regarded and employed the received traditions of magic, and how they squared their magical interests with conventional Christian ideas about

magic. In both cases, the 'alterior' features of magic are in constant tension with, and perhaps balanced by, conventional ones in the form of natural philosophy or orthodox devotion.¹

The title of this project implies two of its principal themes: the transformations of magic and the relation of magic to religion and science. The title is an intentional echo of the famous study by Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*. In the most general sense, the history of magical manuscripts suggests that magic does not so much "decline" in the face of cultural change as either transform or vanish. The traditions of ritual magic were often transformed dramatically from scribe to scribe, driven by the complex tensions between the experience of the numinous, the search for truth, the problem of interpretation, and a chaotic textual tradition. The lack of any means to systematize this form of magic and the fact that it drew upon contemporary religious sensibilities or visionary experience allowed it to continually renew itself and retain its resonance. The traditions of scholastic image magic were selected and transformed from Arabic image magic and survived in large measure due to those transformations. In the sixteenth-century, interest in the texts of scholastic image magic, as represented by independent practical manuscript copies, appears to have almost entirely vanished. The absorption of these texts into ritual magic late in the renaissance marks another transformation in usage and interpretation.

Some of these transformations may be linked with larger intellectual shifts. Scholastic image magic, in particular, was largely created during the high middle ages as part of the absorption of the Aristotelian and Islamic intellectual corpus. The disappearance of these texts at the beginning of the sixteenth century may also be linked with the renaissance, and a desire amongst occultists for a less restrictive, more religious form of magical practice. On the other

¹Paul Friedman and Gabriel M. Spiegel, "Medievalisms Old and New; The Rediscovery of Alterity in North American Medieval Studies," in *American Historical Review* (June 1998) 677-704.

hand, literate magic was an ongoing intellectual tradition in its own right. Many of the forms of magical practice persist through the three centuries covered by this study, so also do the struggles of the scribes. The development of the tradition was driven not only by exterior forces, but by the conditions which surrounded the transmission and use of magical texts. The traditions of ritual magic indicate not only how great the changes can be, but how great the continuities. Despite the high level of interest in cabalism and neoplatonism in the renaissance, the vast bulk of magic texts in manuscript (and the manner they were transmitted and transformed) were medieval in origin. Despite his classicizing, the content of Agrippa's magic was in large measure derived from medieval sources; his goals, struggles, and the resolutions of his struggles are continuations from the medieval tradition of ritual magic. Agrippa should not only be seen as the epitome of renaissance occultism, but as the culmination of the problems and struggles of ritual magic scribes in the preceding three hundred years.

One of the most significant transformations covered by this study may prove to be that much of the practical magic which survives into the renaissance not scientific in orientation but rather religious, contemplative, personal, or *psychological*. It maintains a deep scepticism for received methods and texts, while simultaneously promoting a magical system in part based upon them. Under these conditions, the materials and methods (some once having been considered natural philosophy), become almost more like hermeneutical devices than elements of a restrictive, literal worldview. In Ficino and Agrippa's projects the elements of the tradition involving natural philosophy were subsumed in a larger, non-restrictive, and religious or psychological project. The literature of natural philosophy merely served these higher goals, aiding magical practice and spiritual ascent. But more importantly, this scientific literature comes second in an epistemological process in which personal reflection, contemplation, and divine illumination are primary. To take a

modern perspective upon the process, the encompassing of the scientific material into religious magic, shifts magic much more fully into the territory of psychology.

To return to the title, if we need to modify the notion of the "decline" of magic, we also need to examine the terms "religion" and "science" especially as they have been commonly opposed to magic.² Although it was not a central argument, this study makes clear that the terms "religion" and "science" cannot be understood as absolute in any sense; rather, they should be understood as modes of conventionality against which the traditions of magic were in constant and fertile tension. To the apothecary, a magical image might appear to be astrological, but it was impossible to be sure that it was not secretly demonic. The scribes of scholastic image magic transmitted and interpreted the texts according to the standards of natural philosophy, but the resulting relationship remained ambivalent. For this reason, we must take care not to call natural magic "science" or "natural philosophy." In a similar way, Brother John sought to reconcile ambiguous unorthodox practice with orthodoxy, and visions and unstable textual traditions with the truth they promised. The authors and scribes of ritual magic employed conventional religion to create believable and resonant magical practices, which often had more or less conventional religious goals. At the same time, the lack of any official sanction for their practices and the great inconsistency of the manuscripts meant that they frequently had to seek divine guidance and sanction as they made sense of the tradition. This only served to compound the problem by generating a greater plurality of texts. In both cases, image and ritual magic, these tensions are fundamental parts of what make them magic.

²The classic work is J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (London, MacMillan, 1911). See also Bronislaw Malinowski, *Magic Science and Religion* (New York: Doubleday, 1954). For a recent re-evaluation of the intellectual tradition represented by these figures, see Stanley J. Tambiah, *Magic, Science, and Religion, and the Scope of Rationality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

The practices we have examined in this study have a great deal to do with language, representation, and interpretation. To interpret a visionary experience, to assign a magical power to a mysterious sign, and to identify an event as magically produced all have to do with the imposition of meaning upon otherwise meaningless or random signs. Magic occurs at the point where the organizing and categorizing function of language cannot accommodate human experiences, at the point when the humans assign meaning to random and meaningless events, and at the point where we make concrete associations between representations and the world. In each case, it draws its power and capacity to fascinate from the slippery and ambiguous nature of representation. Where language otherwise fails to describe or account for an event, we employ the terms "magic" and "miracle" to describe it. Magical *practice* reverses the process by making the understandable, and very human, assumption that there is a connection between representation and meaning, or meaning and event. For example, words of unknown languages are commonly assumed to have power over the world, not only because they are strange, but because they have a structure and sense which is unknown to the hearer. Where medieval people employed Syriac or Hebrew, modern representations of magic in film and literature employ Latin as the magical language. Divination is another example which, by a more or less random process, creates a structure lacking in meaning upon which meaning is projected. This structure can be as simple as a negative or positive response to a question or as complex as a horoscope or dream vision. The power of the human impulse to assign meaning in this way may be seen around us in the continuing allure of the newspaper horoscope and other astrological works, tarot cards, the ouija board, the *I-Ching*, the Book of Revelation, the prophesies of Nostradamus, and a host of other divinatory systems and prophetic texts. Modern psychotherapy and psychoanalysis draw upon similar resources. Magic thus may be said to inhabit the fringes of conventional language and

representation, relying upon their structure and coherence, but simultaneously thriving upon their failings. If magic has declined at all, the human impulses which gave birth to it have not.

APPENDIX I

Collections Containing Works of Scholastic Image Magic

Thirteenth Century Collections (2)

Oxford, Bodleian, Digby 79 +

Oxford, Bodleian, Selden Supra 76

Fourteenth Century Collections (16)

Canterbury, St Augustine's Abbey 1170

Cambridge, University Library Ff.vi.53 +

London, British Library, Harley 80, ff. 75-84

London, British Library, Harley 1612, ff. 14-20

London, British Library, Royal 12.C.XVIII. + (glossed by fourteenth century British hand)

London, British Library, Royal 12.E.XXV.

London, Wellcome 116 +

Oxford, Bodleian, Ashmole 1471, f. 1-83, 137-193.

Oxford, Bodleian, Bodley 463 + (ff. 1-138 Spanish in origin. In England by early fifteenth century and bound with rest of volume probably in fifteenth century.)

Oxford, Bodleian, Digby 57

Oxford, Bodleian, Digby 193

Oxford, Bodleian, Digby 228

Oxford, Corpus Christi College 221 (=Canterbury, St Augustine's Abbey 1170)

York, Austin Friars A8 362

York, Austin Friars A8 364

York, Austin Friars A8 375

York, Austin Friars A8 383

Fifteenth Century Collections (10)

Canterbury, St Augustine's Abbey 1161

Canterbury, St Augustine's Abbey 1275

Canterbury, St Augustine's Abbey 1277

Canterbury, St Augustine's Abbey 1545

Canterbury, St Augustine's Abbey 1538 (=Canterbury, St Augustine's Abbey 1603?)

Canterbury, St Augustine's Abbey 1603 (=Canterbury, St Augustine's Abbey 1538?)

London, British Library, Harley 80, ff. 103r - 105v (but potentially the whole codex)

London, British Library, Sloane 312, ff. 1-41 +

London, British Library, Sloane 312, ff. 43-255 +

London, Society of Antiquaries of London 39, ff. 18-24

Oxford Bodleian, Digby 37, ff. 1-55

Oxford, Bodleian, Digby 194 +

Oxford, Corpus Christi College 125 (=Canterbury, St Augustine's Abbey 1277)

Sixteenth Century Collections (3)

London, British Library, Sloane 3847, ff. 2-116

Oxford, Bodleian, Ashmole 346

+ Indicates manuscript not of British origin or potentially not of British origin

? Indicates dubious dating or contents.

APPENDIX II

Collections Containing Works of the *Ars Notoria*

Thirteenth and Fourteenth Century

Canterbury, St Augustine's Abbey 1539 (1603)

London, British Library, Sloane 1712

York, Austin Friars A8 371

York, Austin Friars A8 362

Fifteenth Century

London, British Library, Sloane 513

London, British Library, Sloane 3008

Oxford, Bodleian, Ashmole 1416 ?

Oxford, Bodleian, Bodley 951

Oxford, Merton College (Medieval) 999

Sixteenth Century

London, British Library, Harley 181

London, British Library, Sloane 3853

Oxford, Bodleian, Ashmole 1515

Oxford, Bodleian, Bodley 8908 (Jones 1)(dated 1601)

APPENDIX III

Manuscripts of the Sworn Book of Honorius

Fourteenth Century

London, British Library Sloane 313

London, British Library, Sloane 3854

York, Austin Friars A8 364

Sixteenth Century

London, British Library, Sloane 3885

London, British Library, Royal 17. A. XLII.

Seventeenth Century

London, British Library, Sloane 3826, ff. 58-83?

London, British Library, Sloane 3883, ff. 1-25

APPENDIX IV
**Manuscripts of Necromancy and Other Ritual Magic of the Fourteenth and
Fifteenth Century (not including the *Ars notoria* and *Liber Sacer*)**

Fourteenth Century

York, Austin Friars A8 362

Fifteenth Century

Cambridge, University Library, Dd.xi.45, ff. 134-139

London, British Library, Sloane 121, 90v- 93v

London, British Library, Sloane 314, ff. 106v

London, British Library, Sloane 3849, ff. 17-19 (poss s. xvi. in)

London, Society of Antiquaries of London 39, ff. 2-17

Oxford, Bodleian, Rawlinson D. 252 (excluding ff. 63-80)

Oxford, Bodleian, Rawlinson D. 252, ff. 63-80

Oxford, Bodleian, Tanner 407

Oxford, Merton College (Medieval) 1053

APPENDIX V
Ritual Magic Collections of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries
Including Manuscripts of the *Ars notoria* and *Liber Sacer*

Sixteenth Century (22)

Cambridge, University Library Ll. i. 12.

Cambridge, University Library, Additional 3544

Chatsworth, (UK) 73 D - 1879

London, British Library, Additional 10,862 ? (poss. s. xvii)

London, British Library, Additional 36674

London, British Library, Harley 181

London, British Library, Royal 17. A. XLII.

London, British Library, Sloane 3822

London, British Library, Sloane 3847, ff. 2-116

London, British Library, Sloane 3847, ff. 152-159

London, British Library, Sloane 3849, ff. 7-16 and 20-27

London, British Library, Sloane 3849, ff. 17-19 and 30-51(various hands)

London, British Library, Sloane 3853 ff. 3-137 and 142-174

London, British Library, Sloane 3884

London, British Library, Sloane 3885

London, Wellcome Institute, Wellcome 110

Oxford, Bodleian, Additional B. 1., ff. 1-10

Oxford, Bodleian, Ashmole 244

Oxford, Bodleian, Ashmole 1515

Oxford, Bodleian, Ralwinson D. 253

Oxford, Bodleian, e Mus. 238

Oxford, Bodleian, e Mus. 245

Seventeenth Century (16)

Cambridge, Trinity 1419

London, British Library, Harley 3536A?

London, British Library, Harley 3981?

London, British Library, Sloane 1307

London, British Library, Sloane 1309?

London, British Library, Sloane 3091?

London, British Library, Sloane 3821

London, British Library, Sloane 3825

London, British Library, Sloane 3826

London, British Library, Sloane 3645

London, British Library, Sloane 3847

London, British Library, Sloane 3850

London, British Library, Sloane 3851

London, British Library, Sloane 3853

London, Wellcome Institute, Wellcome 426

Oxford, Bodleian, Bodley 8909

APPENDIX VI

Descriptions of Selected Manuscripts

Canterbury, Abbey of St Augustine 767

From the medieval holdings of St Augustine's Abbey. See Appendix VII.

Canterbury, Abbey of St Augustine 1170 (=Oxford, Corpus Christi 221)

From the medieval holdings of St Augustine's Abbey. See Oxford Corpus Christi, 221 in Appendix VII.

Canterbury, Abbey of St Augustine 1277 (=Oxford, Corpus Christi 125)

From the medieval holdings of St Augustine's Abbey. See Oxford, Corpus Christi 125.

London, British Library, Sloane 312

Sloane 312 contains two collections of the fifteenth century, both of which suggest very practical and involved magical interests.

Ff. 1-41.

This is a practical collection including a text of judicial astrology (ff. 1-12), a text discussing the natures and properties of the planets (ff. 15v-24), a text of image magic (Thetel's *De imaginibus*, ff. 24v-27v), and an astrological method for discovering thieves and stolen goods (ff. 29-42). The collection is more crudely written than many of the image magic texts and likely for personal use.

Ff. 43-225.

The texts in this collection are largely practical astrology. The first three items (ff. 43-136) concern judicial astrology; the last three, elections and nativities (ff. 183-255). The magical works are a work by Sahl Ibn Bishr on magical images (ff. 136v-147v) which is followed by a short section of further images added by the scribe (*Additiones mea*, ff. 147v-156).

London, British Library, Sloane 3847

The codex contains two collections of the sixteenth century.

Ff. 2-116

The scribe dates the writing of this portion of the codex to 1572, a date which I can find no convincing reason to reject. In particular, as there would have been little value in falsely

dating the composition of such a work by fifty years or so, I am inclined to accept the date given by the scribe even though the work could be dated to the seventeenth century.

This is the first collection of ritual magic in this survey which also includes three of the standard works of scholastic image magic. *De quindecim stellis*, *De ymaginibus* of Thetel, and *Liber imaginum Zebel* (Sahl ibn Bishr) all appear at folios 84-112, following the *Clavicula Salomonis* (which comprises more than half of the 114 folios in this collection) and another work on images attributed to Solomon, *De quatuor amulis*. This combination of ritual magic with scholastic image magic texts is very rare prior to this period, but it becomes a common feature of seventeenth-century collections. The only hint in Sloane 3847 of the *naturalia* which characteristically accompanied scholastic image magic in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries is a single recipe entitled "An excellent medicine for the stone" (f. 82) and a list of "Egyptian days" (99r).

Ff. 152-159

A magical treatise concerning spirit conjuring for the purpose of treasure hunting and detection of thieves. This short treatise is a single quire, enclosed by pastedowns or a paper cover from a non-magical work.

Bibliography: Scott, 330-1, 469. HMES I, 663-666; II, 281 and 808. Lynn Thorndike, "Traditional Medieval Tracts Concerning Engraved Astrological Images," in *Melanges Auguste Pelzer* (Louvain, 1947).

London, British Library, Sloane 3853, ff. 3-137

The codex includes material from the sixteenth and seventeenth century. This portion is complete and dates from the mid sixteenth century. Written in Latin and English, the collection includes various works of ritual magic. The scribe emulates Agrippa by calling one of the constituent texts "de occulta philosophia" and refers to him by name in one of the later texts. The magical works include an extensive work of ritual magic the *Thesaurus spiritum secundum Robertum Turconem et Rogerum Bacon* (ff. 3-45v), the *Cephaz Raziel* of Solomon (ff. 41-53), *The Divine Seal of Solomon* (ff. 127-8), in addition to various other experiments, magic circles, and instructions for invocation of spirits.

Bibliography: Scott 538. HMES II, 280, 281, and 808. Kieckhefer, *Magic*, pp. 159-61.

London, Society of Antiquaries of London 39

This volume contains two collections. The first derives from the fifteenth century and concerns ritual magic; the second dates to the latter part of the century and includes image magic.

Ff. 2-17v.

This portion of the codex is a fifteenth century collection of ritual magic which is largely

concerned with images. Watermark on f. 8 might be Briquet 1162 (Gènes 1487). It contains three texts: a work on rings to be made in the 28 mansions of the moon; a texts on planetary rings and sigils; and a text entitled *Preceptualis ars magice* which discusses the hours appropriate to various forms of magical practice. Although ostensibly a collection of image magic, the collection is better classified as "ritual magic" if not "necromancy." It is treated in detail in Chapter 5.

Ff. 18-24

This small collection of texts of magical images and other naturalia was copied by John Argentine, medical doctor and provost of Kings College, Cambridge. It includes: Thebit ibn Qurra's, *De imaginibus*, *Imagines secundum Ptholomeum*; and images extracted from the *Secretum Secretorum*. The texts were copied by John Scalon (Ashmole 346), a student at Kings during Argentine's tenure as Provost.

Bibliography: C. A. J. Armstrong, "An Italian Astrologer at the Court of Henry VII," in *Italian Renaissance Studies, A tribute to the late Cecilia M. Ady* (London: Faber and Faber, 1960) p. 449. D. E. Rhodes, "The Princes in the Tower and their Doctor," *The English Historical Review* LXXVII (1962) 304-306. The latter criticizes earlier work by Armstrong where he misidentifies Argentine with a Strasbourg doctor. In the former article, Armstrong correctly identifies the doctor as John Argentine. In an addendum July 1962 of the *English Historical Review*, p. 624, the editor and D. E. Rhodes apologize to Armstrong and note they had not yet seen his article. D. E. Rhodes, "Provost Argentine of King's and his Books," in *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, (London: Bowes and Bowes, 1958), vol II, pt. III, 205-211. Rhodes makes no mention of Society of Antiquaries 39, the manuscript examined here. *DNB* (1921) VI, 552. Emden, *Cambridge*, p. 15-16. Charles H. Talbot, *The Medical Practitioners in Medieval England*, p. 112-5. Ker 1 300. L. Thorndike, *Mélanges Auguste Pelzer*, 1947, pp. 233, 256. HMES I, 663-666.

Oxford, Bodleian, Ashmole 346

The first 164 folios of this volume are an early sixteenth-century collection by the physician Thomas Scalon, in Latin and English. Thomas was a physician and graduate of Cambridge University. The volume is entirely paper with no visible watermarks. The collection includes medical, astrological, and other physical works. Topics include bloodletting, weights and measurements, winds, the names and powers of herbs, a poem on astrology, the size and distance of the sun, and names of the planets. Scalon has included over 90 separate items, most of which are quite short (a folio or less in length).

The magical works (ff. 113-119) are three works of image magic: Thebit ibn Qurra, *De imaginibus*; Ptolemy, *De imaginibus*; and magical images extracted from the *Secretum Secretorum*. These are preceded astrological work for discovering thieves (ff. 100-112v). The magical works were undoubtedly copied from London Society of Antiquaries 39 written by John Argentine, provost of King's College. An astrological calculation "ad meridiem Cambrigie anno domini 1460 completo" tends to confirm the location.

Bibliography: Black, 252-7; Emden, *Cambridge*, p. 509; John Venn and J. A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigiensis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927), I.iv.27.

Oxford, Bodleian, Digby 228

This is a late fourteenth century collection which combines the work of at least two scribes. The later scribe filled in spaces left by the earlier one, so the whole codex (excepting ff. 8-15) can be regarded as a single collection. The codex combines astrological texts (occupying most of the pages) with various tracts of naturalia and natural philosophy. Amongst the astrological material may be found Haly's commentary on Ptolemy's *Centiloquium* (f. 8-12), Albumazar's *Flores astrologiae* (f. 16-19), extracts from the *Sphere* of Sacro Bosco (ff. 1 and 66), along with a host of other similar texts and tables. The *Secretum Secretorum* is the most lengthy example of naturalia (ff. 27v-40v). Also included is an incomplete piece by Bradwardine on motion (f. 56-65). Most of the 26 items are four or five folios in length. Many are extracts.

A portion of Albertus Magnus' *Speculum astronomiae* fills the last three folios. A work explicitly condemned in the *Speculum*, the *Liber lune*, appears at f. 54.

Bibliography: HMES II, 223-5. Singer, 29xxxv.

Oxford, Corpus Christi 125 (=St Augustine's 1277)

This volume of 175 folios (parchment) is a compilation of Latin texts from the thirteenth through the fifteenth century. It was owned by two monks at the Abbey of St Augustine at Canterbury (Thomas Wyvelesburgh and Thomas Sprot) and became part of the Abbey's library (Codex 1277). Most of the texts are alchemical (but the codex includes a wide variety of material including properties of animals, recipes, tree planting, and chemical experiments. Later owners include John Typtofte and John Dee. The works of image magic include the hermetic *Quindecim stellis* and another text, *Liber de septem figuris planetarum*.

Bibliography: HMES II, 2, 205, 207, 218, 221, 223, 308, 334-7, 529, 783, 796, 809, and 845. Ker 30. Singer, 1093-4; Carmody II, 12; Carmody II, 24b;

Oxford, Corpus Christi 221 (=St Augustine's Abbey 1170)

See Appendix VII.

York, Austin Friars, Codex 8A 364

This codex was part of the medieval collection of the Austin Friars at York. A full description and discussion of this codex may be found in Chapter 3, Section 3.

York, Austin Friars, Codex 8A 362

This codex was part of the medieval collection of the Austin Friars at York. A full description and discussion of this codex may be found in Chapter 3, Section 3.

APPENDIX VII:

Selected Manuscripts of Michael Northgate

The books of Michael Northgate were inventoried as part of the library of the Abbey of St Augustine's at Canterbury. I employ the medieval shelfmarks as they appear in M. R. James' edition of the catalogue of the abbey's library. Because they form a substantial collection I list them here together.

Canterbury, St Augustine's Abbey 767

The Catalogue lists the contents as follows:

Liber catholice fidei eidtus a beato Augustino anglorum apostolo qui vocatur Manuale et
in eodem libro
Stimulus amoris
Angeli[s]ca [ieromancie] ierarchie
Barthi de Rippa Romea Oraciones extracte de arte notoria
Oratio ad spm scm et incipit veni creator spc
Memoria passionis dominice
Oratio missa a beata Maria sancto mauricio parisien' episcopo
Oratio ad sanctam appolloniam pro dolore dencium
Orationes spirituales
Confessio generalis
Quod homo debet preparare se ad recipiendam corpus xi et
liber de confessione nouiciorum Michis de Northgate cum g.g.

Bibliography: James, *Ancient Libraries*, p. 276.

St Augustine's Abbey 1170 (=Oxford, Corpus Christi 221)

This codex is singular not only for its contents also due to its simple and beautifully preserved medieval binding. The codex falls into two parts. The first is a fairly typical collection of naturalia including a natural encyclopaedia (ff. 2-52). This is followed by two works on magical images in stones. The first is attributed to Marbodius (f. 53-54). The second is work of Thetel on the images carved by the son's of Israel while in the desert (f. 55-57). These are followed by recipes and medical works. The second section includes some saint's lives and a portion of the dialogue on miracles by Gregory the Great.

The entry (Codex 1170) in Catalogue of St Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury, includes two works at the beginning of the codex which do not survive. "*Kalendaris Rogeri Bacon et in eodem libro and Tabula ad sciendum quis planeta dominetur omni hore cuiuslibet diei.* (*Ancient Libraries*, p. 331)

Canterbury, St Augustine's Abbey, 1275

The Catalogue lists the contents as follows:

Noua cirurgia magri Henr' de amunda villa et in eodem libro
 Experimenta diuersa in physica et Cirurgia
 Secreta fratris Alberti
 liber Rasis et diascoridis de naturis animalium
 Extracta de libro kyranus
 Epistola Regis Egipti ad Octauianum Imperatorem
 vacca platonis
 Constabenuce de phisicis ligaturis
 Cirurgia extracta de Gilbertina practica puerorum
 Geberus de floribus naturarum
 Diascorides de phisicis ligaturis
 liber hermetis de xv. stellis. xv. herbis xv. lapidibus et xv. figuris
 Tractatus Alberti de plantacionibus arborum
 liber hermetis de ymaginibus
 Thebit de ymaginibus
 Aburabez de ymaginibus
 Belenus de ymaginibus
 Secreta hermetis in Alkemia Breve breuiarium de Alkemia
 liber de conuersione corporum
 Antipocras empericis et
 Bernardus de Gordon de iuuamentis oculorum Mich de Northgate cum ff

Bibliography: James, *Ancient Libraries* , p. 348. On Qusta ben Luca seen HMES I, 652-57.

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