

Wouter de Rooij

s4591313

Bachelor Thesis Literature Resubmission

Dr Sándor Chardonnens

15 August 2019

**Only a Christian deals in absolutes:**

**The morality and nature of planetary spirits in necromantic manuscripts in late  
medieval England**

ENGELSE TAAL EN CULTUUR

Teacher who will receive this document: Dr Sándor Chardonnens and Prof Dr Odin Dekkers

Title of document: Only a Christian deals in Absolutes: The morality and nature of planetary spirits in necromantic manuscripts in late medieval England

Name of course: Bachelor Thesis English Language and Culture, Literature

Date of submission: 15 August, 2019

The work submitted here is the sole responsibility of the undersigned, who has neither committed plagiarism nor colluded in its production.

Signed

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. de Rooij', is written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized and somewhat illegible due to the cursive nature of the handwriting.

Name of student: Wouter de Rooij

Student number: s4591313

## Abstract

This thesis will explore the moral status of planetary spirits which have been appropriated from Jewish and Islamic magic traditions into late medieval Middle English manuscripts that deal with necromancy. Through an analysis two manuscripts from that period, this thesis will conclude that late medieval necromancers considered these originally morally grey spirits to be definitively good or evil.

*Key terms: Spirit, necromancer, necromancy, angel, demon, daemon, celestial, planetary, magic, ritual*

## Contents

Introduction.....	5
Chapter 1: On Necromancy and Conjurat. ....	7
Chapter 2: Edited Excerpts from London, British Library, Sloane 3853 Manuscript and Royal 17.A.XLII Manuscript. ....	16
Conclusion .....	32
Works Cited .....	35
Appendices.....	36

## Introduction

Necromancy was a notorious practice throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Only a few manuscripts detailing necromantic experiments and rituals remain, due to them being strictly forbidden and condemned by the Church. Research like Richard Kieckhefer's (1997) book *Forbidden Rites: A Necromancer's Guide to the Fifteenth Century* seeks to explore what a necromancer was trying to achieve with his art and answer questions of what types of spirits the necromancer conjured, to what end he conjured them, and how he conjured them. These spirits that the necromancer would conjure were generally considered to be demons or devils, according to Kieckhefer.

There were also necromancers who belonged to the clergy, as detailed by Kate Mesler (2012) in her work *The Liber Iuratus Honorii and the Christian Reception of Angel Magic*. She discusses a manuscript of *The Sworn Book of Honorius*, which is a book dealing with necromantic rituals to summon angels. A problem that Kieckhefer and Mesler touch on but do not conclusively answer, is the question of the morality of these various spirits (spirits will henceforth be used as an umbrella term for all things that a necromancer conjures up). Angels and demons are nowadays traditionally of course seen as good and evil, but both Mesler and Kieckhefer suggest that the moral status of these spirits was not clear cut at all.

Kieckhefer and Mesler also discuss the influences of foreign magic practices on these Christian European magic traditions. Mesler in particular states that starting in the early thirteenth century, more and more manuscripts from Jewish (i.e. Hebrew) and Islamic (i.e. Arabic) origins were being translated into Latin and much later into English. These magic manuscripts commonly featured their own rituals and, more importantly, spirits. These spirits were, as both Saif (2015) and Mesler state, either morally ambiguous (meaning that they could be either good or evil depending on their own volition and behaviour) or morally neutral and/or undefined. This is a gap in the field of research done on magic manuscripts and I would like to attempt to close that gap.

I would like to explore two things in this thesis. First, I will attempt to shed light upon the ambiguous nature of angels and demons themselves, and second, I will examine how Jewish and Islamic magic texts have influenced European magic texts and how spirits from the former two are depicted in the latter.

I will do so by applying the frameworks of Kieckhefer, Klaassen (2013), Mesler and Saif to excerpts from two Middle English manuscripts, which are London, British Museum, Sloane 3853 Manuscript and Royal 17.A.XLII Manuscript. These excerpts have been edited and translated into Modern English by myself. I hypothesise that late medieval necromancers would have appropriated these Jewish and Islamic spirits as being definitively good or evil, regardless of what their moral status originally was. The necromancer would have done this in order to be sure that he would not summon a spirit that in his mind was harmful to him.

This dilemma is not only applicable to late medieval necromancers, but it is also an issue that plagues contemporary society. With refugees from the East coming here to the West, the people already living in the West have no idea of the intentions or moral compass of these foreigners. Are these foreign influences good, or are they a threat to society? Perhaps they are neither. Perhaps they are just people trying to live their lives and are not necessarily wholly good or bad, just like most other people. As this thesis will show, the treatment of spirits from medieval Islamic and Jewish magic traditions is no different.

## Chapter 1: On Necromancy and Conjuration.

### 1.1: Defining Necromancy

If the goal of this paper is to determine how medieval necromancers dealt with foreign spirits, then it is necessary to first determine what exactly the term *necromancy* entails. In modern interpretations of the word (i.e. fantasy literature, videogames and role-playing games), necromancy is the magic art of resurrecting dead bodies to fight for the necromancer or otherwise do their bidding. This definition is also reflected by Richard Kieckhefer in his book *Magic in the Middle Ages*, in which he explains this is a quite early definition of necromancy which originally meant “the divination (*mantia*) by conjuring the spirits of the dead (*nekroi*)” (Kieckhefer 1989, 152). It is easy to imagine why this art was frowned upon, as meddling with the dead is even nowadays seen as something that is disrespectful and indecent, and as such it makes sense that the Christian authorities would condemn this conjuring of dead spirits. Note that resurrecting the dead is something that does occur in the New Testament, in which Jesus brings back Lazarus from the dead four days after Lazarus had been buried (New Testament, John 11:1–44). The difference between Jesus resurrecting Lazarus and a necromancer summoning the spirit of a deceased person, is that Jesus achieved his feat through (His belief in) the power of God (i.e. a miracle) and a necromancer would have achieved his purpose through contacting a demon, thereby doing something only God should be able to or allowed to do.

The term necromancy became synonymous with the conjuring of demons specifically in the later Middle Ages, as Kieckhefer explains. He notes in his book *Forbidden Rites: A Necromancer’s Manual of the Fifteenth Century* that necromancy came to have a more specific definition and application, and he cites fifteenth-century writer Hartlieb’s definition of the term as [*Nygramancia*] being the first forbidden art<sup>1</sup> or the black art. The reason why it was considered the black art by Christian thinkers, was because this art involved the necromancer binding themselves to a demon and making a pact with said demon. The demon would then thought that the dead could not be animated by themselves (i.e. through any human means). They instead believed that a demon would take on the appearance of a dead person and pretend to be the deceased.

---

<sup>1</sup> There were seven forbidden arts, according to Hartlieb (cf. Kieckhefer 1997), necromancy being the first. The other six are: hydromancy (water magic), aeromancy (air magic), pyromancy (fire magic), chiromancy (palm-reading) and spatulamancy (divination by an animal’s shoulder blade).

Because of this, the term necromancy eventually came to mean *the conjuring of demons*, and this was the commonly accepted definition of the term in late medieval Europe and this was explicitly demonic magic, according to Kieckhefer.

One important aspect to note here, is that the manuscript London, British Library, Sloane 3853 (henceforth Sloane 3853 or Sloane MS) uses the term *nygromancie*<sup>2</sup> and not *necromancy*. Is a *nygromantic* ritual then fundamentally different from a *necromantic* ritual? The contents of the manuscript seem to suggest not. In fact, the conjuration that is described here seems to follow the standard ‘building blocks’ that Kieckhefer outlines in his book *Forbidden Rites*: The necromancer is first supposed to make some sort of ritual preparation by cleansing himself physically by shaving his head<sup>3</sup> (it is not specified if only the head meant or whether this includes facial hair too), paring one’s nails<sup>4</sup>, and then bathing oneself (especially one’s hands and feet) in a bath made with fragrant and sweet herbs and spices like laurel<sup>5</sup>, and mentally by fasting for three days abstaining himself from all carnal lusts<sup>6</sup>. After the necromancer has done all this, he can then begin pronouncing the so-called *conjuration*. The conjuration, according to Kieckhefer, is an essential part of the necromantic ritual, and can in essence be simply defined as ‘the conjuring of spirits.’ This conjuration is comprised of four parts: the **declaration**: “I dessier and request...”, the **address** “O thou spryt or sprytes [...] thou [*nomen*]<sup>7</sup>,” the **invocations**: “by the vertu of God almyghtye”, and the **instruction**: “slinges onto my tyme apoyntyd to cal thou<sup>8</sup>” (Sloane 3853, fol. 208v.). The specifics of this conjuration are relevant to the present question for two reasons, which are first, that the *address*-part of the conjuration usually contains the name or type of spirit that the necromancer tries to summon, so this could provide a clue as to what the necromancer considered to be a good or bad spirit, and second, that I can ensure that the manuscripts I will be looking at are in fact dealing with necromantic experiments.

---

<sup>2</sup> Sloane 3853 fol. 208v: ‘In what daye thou shalt begyn to the science of *nygromancie*’

<sup>3</sup> Sloane 3853, fol. 208v: ‘and *thou* shalt shave thy head...’

<sup>4</sup> Sloane 3853, fol. 208v: ‘and pare thy nayles’

<sup>5</sup> Sloane 3853, fol. 208v: ‘Bothe of handes and fett the bathe thee an swete bathe made with lorell levis and other swet thynges and then bathe thy selfe with clene bathes and swete.’

<sup>6</sup> Sloane 3853, fol 208v: ‘and abstayne thyselve from all carnall lustes’

<sup>7</sup> [*nomen*]: If the name for the intended spirit was not listed, the scribe would write a *majescule* (i.e. big letter) ‘N’, which was the standard abbreviation for the Latin word *nomen*, meaning name. This indicated to the necromancer that he was required to fill in the name of the intended spirit himself.

<sup>8</sup> It was believed that spirits (particularly evil spirits) did not like to be summoned to serve mortals, so the **declaration** would have to be specific so that there was no room for the spirit to bend the rules of the conjuration. The declaration in question here thus specifies that the spirit must come to the necromancer at the exact appointed time that the necromancer will indicate. See Kieckhefer 1997.

Since the ritual described in Sloane 3853 is clearly a necromantic one according to the characteristics described by Kieckhefer, it is worth wondering why the scribe chose to describe his ‘science’ as *nygromancy* instead of *necromancy*.

Klaassen provides an explanation for this apparent discrepancy, as he points out that “writers commonly used the term *nigromancy* to refer to magic of which they approved and *necromancy* for magic of which they did not” (Klaassen 2013, 10). It is known that necromantic rituals circulated in underground clerical circles. Monks, friars, priests, and boys who only served a minor role in their respective orders engaged in this black art for one reason: the pursuit of knowledge (Kieckhefer 1989, 153-155). They of course already had some knowledge of ritualism, exorcism, which, as will be discussed later, is closely related to conjuration, and other forms of science such as medicine. Necromancy, then, would logically be simply another field of study for these clergymen. This would explain why the scribe of Sloane 3853 would classify the experiments therein as *nygromancy* and not as necromancy, because to him, it would be a justifiable science. The problem that arises, as also indicated by Kieckhefer (1989), is that the term clerical is a very ambiguous one. Virtually any man or boy who had once been ordained or served as a server could be considered as belonging to the clergy (Kieckhefer 1989, 154). Even somebody who had studied basic Latin and ritual practice could fall into this category. There is thus no real conclusive way to determine what the occupation of the scribe of Sloane 3853 was, save that it was his job to copy the text for somebody else. That means that his attitude to the use of the words *nygromancie* versus *necromancie* is also hard to determine. Both Klaassen and Kieckhefer cite various excerpts from other manuscripts from the fifteenth and sixteenth century and these seem to also use the term *nygromancie* and not *necromancie*. There is no indication that any moral value is given to this term, so presumably this spelling was simply more commonplace at the time. Since the difference in the use of terms only lies in the attitudes towards them, I will consider them to be synonymous for the purposes of this thesis and refer to them both as *necromancy* henceforth.

Now, seeing as to how both Klaassen and Kieckhefer choose to define necromancy as specifically the conjuration of **demons**, it is interesting that a late medieval manuscript like Sloane 3853 does not specify the nature of the spirit or spirits that are summoned. It simply states “thou spryt or sprytes I dessier and request thou [N]omen.” It seems that the categorisation of conjuring demons is in this case not sufficient.

This leaves to wonder: how would a necromancer know what type of spirit he would be conjuring when this was not specified by the conjuration? There are examples of conjurations that specifically *address* “benign spirits” or “all demons” (Kieckhefer 1997, 132-133), which ensure that the necromancer has the correct intended spirit, but how will a necromancer *discern* what type of spirit they are summoning when the spirit in question is not morally black or white?

## 1.2: Discerning Spirits

The problem a necromancer faced, was potentially not knowing if the spirit he summoned was good or evil. Katelyn Mesler tells of an eighth-century self-proclaimed prophet named Aldebert, who was, among other things, accused and convicted of summoning demons by calling them by their name. When Aldebert was questioned about this, he said in his defence that he had not spoken the names of demons, but of eight angels. The synod presiding over his case ruled, however, that since only three angels are named in the Latin Christian scriptures (namely Michael, Gabriel and Raphael), the other names Aldebert had uttered must have been those of demons posing as angels. This idea of there only being three angels and everything beyond those three being a demon makes the job of a magician wanting to summon either an angel or a demon very easy: if he intends to summon an angel, he prays to God for that certain angel to come down to him, and if he intends to summon a demon, he needs to call that demon by its name and to pray God to compel that demon to come. As Jewish and Arabic (but for the purposes of this section mostly Jewish) traditions of magic became more popular and widely studied in both necromantic and theological circles, the moral ambiguity of these angels and demons shifted. Mesler provides a schema of how angelologies (i.e. the study of angels) between Jewish, Latin Christian and Arabic traditions compare to one another. This schema outlines a number of relevant notions. Firstly, in Jewish magical tradition, all angels have names and identities, as opposed to the Latin Christian tradition of only the three archangels having an identity. Second, Mesler states that Jewish traditions considered angels to be morally ambiguous, saying that angels could be either good or evil (note that this does not include demons). Finally, both angels and demons can be summoned in the exact same manner in Jewish magic practice, which is directly adjuring the intended spirit through the power of God, whereas in Latin Christian practice there is the distinction between prayer in the case of angels and adjuration in the case of demons.

All these facts combined not only make angels harder to distinguish from demons, but also from themselves, since now there can also be good and bad angels. Mesler does not provide a good solution to this problem. The only way to know which spirit the necromancer summons, and whether it is good or bad, can be discerned by being specific in the address and instruction of his conjuration, according to Kieckhefer (1997, also cf. Mesler 2012). What this means is that the necromancer can specify a number of things to which the spirit should adhere. He can for example address specific angels or demons by their name by saying an address along the lines of ‘I conjure you, O Brimer, Suburith, Tranayrt, Lyroth, Berien, Damay’ (Kieckhefer 1997, 133).

This is however no indication of the moral compass of these spirits. There is nothing in this address that indicates whether these are angels or demons, so presumably a necromancer would have to know this by heart in order to not accidentally summon a demon when he had rather wanted to summon an angel. Mesler provides a possible way out of this predicament for the necromancer, as she notes that as part of the conjuration, the necromancer can utter a request to God to send down his angels by asking if “[he] May be worthy to join in a friendly manner with [His] holy angels, who may, with [His] full permission, be willing to thoroughly fulfil his just desires” (Mesler 2012, 122). This way the necromancer can be sure of two things: the spirits that will come to him are angels and they will be compelled to do his bidding, which is not always the case. The spirits (meaning *any* spirits) by nature do not like being bound or being told what to do, so they will attempt to trick, frighten or hurt the necromancer in any way they can. The necromancer must therefore also specify that the spirit is to appear in a pleasing form that is “in no way offensive, dangerous or frightening” (Mesler 2012, 123).

I will briefly touch on the form of spirits, because that too is a source of ambiguity for the aspiring necromancer. Accounts on the forms of spirits vary and some are more conclusive than others. The spirits can, in some instances, be adjured to take on any form that is not horrible to look at, as noted before. Other spirits, and especially demons, do have a fixed physical form in which they will appear, as mentioned by Joseph Peterson in his archive of 72 spirits. An example of this would be “*Agares* who cometh up in the form of a fair Old man riding upon a Crocodill” (Peterson 1999). This can be a useful tool for the necromancer, since if he intends to summon a spirit that should appear in the form of a man riding a crocodile but instead gets a spirit in the form of a black crow, then he knows he has done something wrong and can hopefully dismiss the spirit before any harm is done and try again.

Kieckhefer also notes that it is up for debate whether or not spirits have a corporeal form, but he points out that the consensus seemed to be that spirits did have a physical or phantasmal when they did appear to magicians.

The form of the spirit might help out the necromancer in discerning which spirit he is dealing with and aid him in attaching a name to said form, but this is still left up to the knowledge of the necromancer to determine whether or not the spirit is good or evil, since the descriptions of these spirits rarely *explicitly* mention anything about a spirit's moral compass. What makes this even more problematic is the fact that in Jewish magic traditions, angels are morally ambiguous as well, meaning they can be both good and evil (Mesler 130). So even if a necromancer successfully avoids summoning a demon and manages to summon an angel, he might still not be totally free from harm because the angel in question might be evil and will try to deceive or hurt the necromancer.

So then, the necromancer might be inclined to conjure a demon. The demon is certainly evil, but at least the necromancer knows what he is in for. Alas, even when it comes to this matter, our necromancer would be sorely mistaken. The nature of demons is not always as clear cut. Kieckhefer explains there is a dichotomy to be made when classifying what a demon is. There is on one hand the early Christian notion that a demon is a fallen angel who has made the conscious moral decision to rebel against God (1997, 154), which means that they are morally evil. The other description of demons comes from the Graeco-Roman concept of *daimones* in Greek or *daemones* in Latin (henceforth *daemons*), which are spirits linked to the natural world. Their natural sphere is the layer of space between Heaven and Earth in which they reside. These daemons are sometimes considered the same as fallen angels, but Kieckhefer explains that there are also references to these spirits being benign or neutral and cannot be classified as either demons or angels in classical Christian terms (1997, 155). Saif also reflects this neutral status of daemons, and states that astral spirits from Islamic magic traditions also fit into this category, since they are also natural entities. Saif furthermore states that it was believed that these daemons had a hierarchy, much like angels in Christianity. She stresses that because of this hierarchy, a daemon does not necessarily have to be evil and that a distinction can be made between *calodemons* ('good knowing ones') and *cacodemons* ('bad/evil knowing ones') (Saif 2015, 177). This means that the classification 'demon' is no longer sufficient to discern whether the necromancer has a good or evil spirit on his hands.

The necromancer is now back to square one, where all he really knows is that he is summoning a spirit, he knows that spirit's name and maybe its appearance, but other than that there is nothing that tells him what that spirit is good for unless its full identity is known. If the necromancer simply adheres to the simplest Latin Christian view of angels and demons, then there is not much amiss. There are three archangels that are named, so of those he knows identity for sure, and all other spirits are not named and are therefore probably demons. It becomes trickier when Jewish tradition is thrown into the mix, because then all the other angels have names, but since those were not recognised by the Church (Mesler 131) as such but rather as demons and getting oneself involved with those was of course strictly forbidden. Adding on top of that the Islamic notion that not even all demons are bad and that all spirits are daemons that can be divided into good and bad ones makes it even more impossible for a necromancer to discern what type of spirit he will be conjuring. What would his solution be, then? How would the necromancer deal with and classify these morally ambiguous spirits so that it would be clear to him what kind of spirit he was going to summon? To explore this question further, the next chapter will explore the nature of these morally ambiguous spirits in more detail and provide a few preliminary ideas of how necromancers incorporated these spirits into their experiments.

### 1.3: The incorporation and reception of astral magic and celestial spirits

Around the twelfth century, magic was fairly unanimously condemned as being a demonic practice (Klaassen 2015, 20-22), for which Klaassen lists several reasons. The most relevant reasons for the present question are that, in the eyes of contemporaneous philosophers, magic involved idolatry and worshipful acts, which could be viewed as a lack of faith in God or even paganism, since the magician is not praying to God for the desired magical or miraculous effect, and that the magician was asking a demonic spirit to perform said magical or miraculous task, which would be considered a temptation of the Devil and an act against God's will. This practice of natural magic involving images and idols was thus not reconcilable with the strictly Christian magic, since this was considered idolatry (Klaassen 2015, 24-25).

Around the twelfth century, more and more translations of Islamic and Hebrew thinkers were translated to or written in Latin. These works of philosophers like Al-Kindi mainly concerned astrology and astronomy. Al-Kindi's book *De radiis stellarum (Of the Rays of Stars)* deals with fashioning focusses and talismans in order to harness and direct the rays of the stars. This idea of making talismans in order to capture some sort of magical or miraculous power is,

according to Klaassen, very similar to image magic, which attributed magical effects to talismans or ligatures (magical items that were worn around the neck). These works of thinkers like Al-Kindi were incorporated by scribes in works of natural sciences and were thus seen as a legitimate science, even though the parallels with natural magic are apparent. Now the following problem arises: How come that the image magic, or magic of any kind for that matter, was widely condemned as being demonic and unscientific, and these new foreign astral magic practices were accepted as science. The distinction lies in how the scientific workings of both practices were perceived. Klaassen mentions that the rituals in Al-Kindi were generally not “understood as commanding higher powers but rather as the automatic responses of one portion of the cosmos to one another” (Klaassen 24), while natural magic was generally considered to involve communication with some otherworldly entity (i.e. a demon). This image of astral magic explains why it was considered as part of the natural sciences by scribes and collectors, since it comes across as replicable, experimental and exact. Astrology and astronomy were furthermore also heavily steeped in mathematics, which gives astral magic a way more scientific outlook than natural magic. Furthermore, it should be noted that image magic as described above (i.e. assigning magical properties to talismans and images) is different from necromancy, which should be considered *ritual magic*, which involves the magician going through several phases of ritual preparation, the drawing of magic circles and seals in which to enclose and direct the intended spirit and making sacrifices. The magic itself is thus not assigned to the materials the necromancer uses, which would be the case for image magic.

With the knowledge about natural magic, image magic and astral magic in mind, I will now explore how astral magic came to be incorporated into ritual magic (in the form of necromancy). Necromancy, like most forms of magic, was not recognised as part of the *naturalia* and was equally condemned for being demonic, but somehow the generally accepted experiments of astral magic did make it into necromantic manuscripts, as is reflected in Sloane 3853 fol. 209v – 210v. These pages at length discuss gaining certain magical effects or benefits from the planets. This is clearly inspired by or based on astral magic, yet the manuscript treats it as “nygromancie”<sup>9</sup>. Klaassen mentions the Arabic work *Liber Lune (Book of the Moon)* as an example of Arabic image magic being designated as necromantic. He discusses how the text

---

<sup>9</sup> Sloane 3853, fol. 209v.: “Marke that in this art of **nygromancie** that every planet begynnethe his raygne in aurora sue duei *and every daye* takethe his name of the nature *and complexyon of the planetes.*”

introduces the twenty-eight mansions<sup>10</sup> of the moon, the names and planets associated with that mansion, and whether or not that mansion is good or bad. The text then goes into more detail about the nature of the images (i.e. talismans) needed to harness the powers of these mansions, and Klaassen describes how these must be marked with the names of lords and ladies of the relevant hours of the day. These lords and ladies of the hours, Klaassen stipulates, are to be interpreted as celestial spirits. The link to necromancy is now easily made: a series of names and words must be uttered or written down in order to *bind* a celestial entity, a certain ritual must be performed in order to achieve a specific effect, and an incantation must be made. The manuscript of which *Liber Lune* is a part does not specifically mention demons or spirits, as stated by Klaassen, but still it was cast aside as being necromantic in nature (60-61).

The fact that this foreign text, while strictly dealing with the same type of astral magic as those that were included in the natural science, is being dismissed as necromantic, is relevant to keep in mind when I move on to examine the excerpts from the two manuscripts in the next chapter. I will apply the notion of these dismissive attitudes to the source text and see whether this sentiment seems to be reflected in those texts.

---

<sup>10</sup> In Arabic astrology, the 28 mansions of the moon describe the 28 days of the lunar cycle, so the moon travels through a different mansion each day of the month.

## Chapter 2: Edited Excerpts from London, British Library, Sloane 3853 Manuscript and Royal 17.A.XLII Manuscript.

In this chapter I will present two edited versions of 16<sup>th</sup> century manuscripts which pertain to necromancy and angel magic, and will apply the theoretical frameworks put forth by Mesler (2012) and Klaassen (2015), to see how 16<sup>th</sup> century European (i.e. English) necromancer incorporates influences from Hebrew and Islamic magic. For the analysis of both source texts I have opted to use excerpts. For the fully edited manuscript texts, see Appendix C.

### 2.1: Background to *London, British Library, Sloane 3853 Manuscript*. (Henceforth *Sloane 3853*).

Sloane 3853 is a manuscript in two parts, both dealing with necromancy. The first part is predominantly written in Latin and the second part is predominantly Middle English. I will use the latter for the present research, as it contains a lot of material and ideas from magical theories that appear to be non-Christian.

By comparing the letter forms found in *Sloane 3853* to the letterforms letter forms analysed by Petti (1977, 4) it seems likely that the source text dates back to the late 16th century. A comparison with the plates provided in Dawson & Kennedy-Skipton (1968, 36-38) seems to put the script at around 1550, which is in line with the dating of the letter forms in Petti. Another clue to the dating of the manuscript is a watermark found in the margins of the text. This watermark dates back to 1551, which means that the text was likely written in the few years after. Altogether that puts the manuscript at 1550-1560.

### 2.2 Background to *London, British Library, Royal 17.A.XLII* and the Sworn Book of Honorius

I have opted to use the second part part of the Royal 17.A.XLII (henceforth Royal MS) on the planetary angels and not the first section of the Royal MS. The Royal MS is a collection of manuscript fragments that relate to angel magic, most of which are related to the Liber Iuratus Honorii (henceforth The Sworn Book of Honorius). The Royal MS (so not the Liber Iuratus) itself is dated to the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century since it contains references to Cornelius Agrippa, which are not found in older manuscripts (Peterson, 2009). The first part of the manuscript is a translation of the Liber Iuratus Honorii, which is a manuscript originating from the 12<sup>th</sup> century (Peterson 2009, Mesler 2012) strictly deals with Christian magical traditions and is therefore of no use to the question at hand. The second part of the manuscript does feature a lot of non-Christian influences (specifically spirits), which should provide a good insight into the appropriation of foreign traditions.

For the textual background of the manuscript I will shortly cite Peterson (2016):

Seemingly the work of a single author, the *Sworn Book* has an internal coherence based on medieval science and theology. In short, it is a comprehensive method of magical attainment, not a collection of unrelated spells like most magic texts that have come down to us. The centrepiece of the text is the ritual to attain nothing less than the beatific vision. Subsequent rituals use the same framework for both spiritual and material benefits, using prayers, conjurations, seals, swords, a wand, circles, and names of God, as well as names of angels and demons. A long list of various practical uses that can be obtained appears at the beginning of the book.

### 2.3: Editorial Decisions

When transcribing and editing the excerpts below, I took the following matters into account, which I will discuss separately:

- Spelling, punctuation and abbreviations
- Names and key terms
- Folia and page breaks
- Omitted pieces of source text
- Drawings and non-textual elements

#### 2.3.1: On Spelling, Abbreviations and Punctuation

The spelling for both manuscripts has been modified to fit modern standards as much as possible. Any abbreviations found in the manuscript have been spelled out fully to facilitate the reader as much as possible, unless these abbreviations have some conceptual significance, in which case they have been treated as key terms as discussed in 3.3.2..

Punctuation has also been adjusted to modern standards, to best serve the flow of the edited text.

#### 2.3.2: On Names and Key Terms

With my previous comment on spelling in mind, I have chosen to keep all names and certain key terms unaltered, meaning that those are written as they were found in the source text. These terms have been put into *italics*.

#### 2.3.3: On Omitted Pieces of Source Text

Since the version of the *Sworn Book* that I am discussing is an English translation of an earlier Latin version, some parts have been omitted for reasons unknown (Peterson 2009). These

omitted parts deal with planetary demons and are therefore very relevant to the question at hand. Joseph Peterson provides a Modern English translation of the Latin text, which he has taken from another manuscript. I have included these translations in the running text. They have been indented and cited to indicate that they are not edited by myself.

#### 2.3.4: Other

I would finally like to note that I have, in addition to adding my own punctuation, here and there added words that I felt made the text flow more smoothly, without changing the content of the sentence or text as a whole. These additions of my own have been indicated in [square brackets].

#### 2.4. Appropriation of non-Christian spirits in Sloane 3853 and Royal MS.

As touched upon in the first chapter, a necromantic ritual always involves a *conjunction* at some stage. This conjunction, as explained by Kieckhefer (1997) and Klaassen (2015), is very much akin to the Christian practice of *exorcism*. If ‘an upright Christian’ (Klaassen 2015, 116) could invoke the power of God to make a demon leave a possessed person through exorcism, then it would be logical that the process of conjuring a spirit would work similarly. The necromancer speaks the proper parts of the conjunction, as outlined by Kieckhefer, but instead of *instructing* the spirit to go back to from whence it came, the necromancer can *instruct* said to whatever else he wants that spirit to do. Folio 208v of *Sloane 3853* is a good example of this form of conjuring a spirit:

‘O thou spirit or spirits I desire and request thou [*nomen*<sup>11</sup>] by the virtue of God almighty that thou prepare thouself: sling onto my time appointed to call thou. This thou must do in the morning when the Sun is up and at evening when she goes down.’

Necromancy is at its core a very Christian art (Klaassen 2015, 116), as it attempts to utilise exorcisms and other ritual practices that stemmed from explicitly Christian sources. This specific conjunction does not show any overt influences from other religious beliefs or from other magical traditions, but is a rather straight-forward twist on an *exorcism*: the necromancer invokes the ‘virtue of God almighty’ to make the spirit obey whatever instruction comes next, which in this case is to appear to the necromancer at a certain time specified by the necromancer. The conjunction does not specify any characteristics of the spirit in question, so the necromancer would have to know which spirits are good or bad before summoning one by name. Since the consensus at the time was that cavorting with spirits was an evil practice, it is fairly safe to assume that spirits were generally considered to be demonic in nature. Fortunately for the necromancer, angels, from a purely Christian perspective, are morally good (Mesler 2012, 130), so if he summons an angel by their name, then he does not need to worry whether the spirit he summons is evil, since angels are by their very nature *good*. The problem that would have arisen for the necromancer, however, was that in there were only three *named* angels in Latin Christianity, namely Michael, Gabriel and Raphael. This is a very limited pool of good spirits to

---

<sup>11</sup> [*nomen*]] MS .N.: The conjurer is supposed to speak the name of the desired spirit here.

draw from, so if the conjuration of (one of) these three does not yield anything, the necromancer has run out of options.

Necromancers would mend this problem by incorporating spirits and practices from other religions and traditions (Klaassen 2015, 116), to further their own selfish goals. It did not really matter if the new source materials were Christian or not, as long as they could aid the necromancer in his quest for power or whatever else he was after. All he had to do, was make sure that the new material fit his Christian world views. So, if he wanted to have access to seven named angels instead of only three, then he could just appropriate those from Hebrew magical tradition. Mesler (2012, 130) showcases that according to Jewish/Hebrew magical tradition, *all* angels are named, which means that the necromancer could invoke these angels too, if he knows their name. Mesler continues that if one knows the angel's name, then that person has power over said angel, which is exactly what the necromancer would seek after. Sloane 3853 folia 124r-127r. list seven spirits, among which are Michael, Raphael and Gabriel:

[Fig. 1]: *Gabryel*

[Fig. 2]: *Capciel*

[Fig. 3]: *Sachiell or Satquiell*

[Fig. 4]: *Samaell or Samuell*

[Fig. 5]: *Michaell*

[Fig. 6]: *Anaell*

[Fig. 7]: *Raphaell*

Since Anaell, Samaell, Sachiell and Capciel do not stem from Christian traditions, they must come from another magical tradition. It is likely that these other four have been taken from Hebrew traditions in order for the necromancer to expand his array of spirits he could conjure. The interesting thing to note here, however, is that according to Hebrew traditions, angels are what Mesler calls 'morally ambiguous', by which she means an angel is neither wholly good or wholly evil. This dichotomy of good and evil is however in no way reflected in *Sloane 3853*. The images (See Appendix A) show that all seven angels are depicted roughly the same: they all have wings (except for Gabriel for unknown reasons) and they are all wearing a cross. Furthermore, the way these are listed gives the impression that they are all part of the same collective of angels, ergo, there is no real explicit distinction between the unambiguously morally good Raphael, Gabriel and Michael, and the other four angels. This all together seems to strongly suggest that

the necromancer took these four other angels (which were morally ambiguous according to Hebrew doctrine), lumped them together with the three angels he already knew by name, and considered *all* of them to be morally good. Now, he had seven spirits to potentially call upon instead of three. There is, however, an enormous number of named angels in Hebrew magical tradition (Mesler 2012, 116), so why would the necromancer restrict himself to only appropriating seven of them? Judaism does traditionally have seven archangels, so it would make sense to equate them with the three archangels from Latin Christian tradition. The angels listed in *Sloane 3853* do appear as archangels in separate Hebrew traditions, but do not appear together as this particular group of angels being *the* seven archangels (Metzger & Coogan 1993, 54). It is thus likely that the necromancer took this idea of there being seven archangels from Hebrew traditions and incorporated it into his work, but the angels he chose to include are at first glance seemingly not related other than the fact that they are all considered archangels by one Hebrew tradition or another. A closer inspection of the images reveals that their selection might not be completely random, however.

[Fig. 1]: *Gabryel*: Moon

[Fig. 2]: *Capciel*: Saturnus

[Fig. 3]: *Sachiell* or *Satquiell*: Jupiter

[Fig. 4]: *Samaell* or *Samuell*: Mars

[Fig. 5]: *Michaell*: Sun

[Fig. 6]: *Anaell*: Venus

[Fig. 7]: *Raphaell*: Mercury

As shown here and as seen in Fig. 1-7, the angels are all accompanied by the names of the seven planets<sup>12</sup> alongside their own names. The way the angel names are juxtaposed with the names of the seven planets seems to signify that the planet names are different names or additional titles for the same spirit. This way of listing all or many names of a spirit is commonly seen in necromantic manuscripts, especially with names of God. Thus, the image seems to imply that the archangels to a degree *are* the seven planets. References to the seven planets or the angels being connected to these planets are found neither in Christian magical traditions nor in Hebrew magical traditions, so they must come from another magical tradition.

---

<sup>12</sup> It was believed at the time that there were only seven planets in our solar system. In no particular order: The Sun, The Moon, Mercury, Mars, Jupiter, Venus, Saturn.

The practice of using celestial bodies (i.e. stars and planets) in magic rituals stems from Arabic sources, as Klaassen explains. Arabic astral magic and image magic, would utilise the position and influence of the planets and the stars to infuse talismans and other images with wondrous power (2015, 128). He mentions performing a ritual in ‘the house of Mercury’ during which the magician has to inscribe an image on the ground. The magician does this correctly, he can make an army of spectral knights appear to do his bidding. Part of this Arabic astral magic also involved the belief that the celestial bodies were autonomous spirits themselves, whose ‘influence’ on the terrestrial plane (i.e. Earth) could be harnessed and manipulated through rituals (Saif 2015, 173). Klaassen also mentions that astral magicians could conjure up these celestial spirits through rituals that were not dissimilar to necromantic rituals. Thus, it makes sense that these celestial spirits of the Sun, the Moon etc., have been personified as archangels in *Sloane 3853*. The necromancer learns of powerful spirits that embody the planets, then learns that they can be summoned through rituals that are similar to the ones he already knows, and decides that he wants to include them in his experiments. All he has to do, is make sure that these nameless, highly abstract spirits get a name and fit in his Christian doctrine. This is where the Hebraic magic tradition comes in, providing seven *named* angels to connect with the seven celestial spirits of the planets. Three of the seven angels he already knows to be archangels from his own Latin Christian background, so he takes the other four, turns those into archangels too, and makes them rulers of the planets which simultaneously embody the planets they respectively rule. This way, the necromancer has managed to fit three seemingly incompatible magical traditions into his black-and-white Christian doctrine.

While this excerpt only contains a few lines of text and seven images, it can still provide a lot of insight into how and to which degree a 16<sup>th</sup> century necromancer incorporated foreign influences into his works. Klaassen (2015, 115) states that from the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards, Christian necromancers attempted to include ‘ancient’ manuscripts from Greek, Jewish/Hebrew and Arabic backgrounds into their experiments. He states that necromancers were not so much concerned with the scientific accuracy of their writings or with how compatible these foreign practices were with their own practices, but they were rather only concerned with results; those results being that a spirit would do their bidding and grant them a boon. The fact that the necromancer is not very much concerned with accuracy is reflected in folia 124r-127r., because he seems to have stitched together two magical traditions of different origins (the Arabic

celestial spirits on one hand, and the Hebraic archangels on the other), even though there is nothing in either tradition that suggests that the seven spirits mentioned are angels and/or archangels, there is nothing that suggests that those angels are related to celestial bodies in any way, or that the celestial bodies are in any way angelic or personified at all. These are then all adaptations that the necromancer has to have made in order to make all these ideas fit his Christian magical tradition of necromancy.

A similar pattern can be found in Royal MS fol. 23r:

‘The names of the seven angels that have power upon the 7 days in the week and upon the 7 stars<sup>13</sup> [...] which in these chapters be these:

Capziel, Satquiel, Samael, Raphael, Anael/Amael, Michael and Gabriel.

And the power of these is that Capziel is the power of Sabaday [Saturn], Satquiel of Zedet [Jupiter], Samael of Madim [Mars], Raphael of Hamina [Sol/The Sun], Anael of Noga [Venus], Michael of Cocab [Mercury], and Gabryel of Labana [Luna/The Moon].

And every one of these sitteth in his heaven.’

This passage showcases traits similar to the ones found in Sloane 3853. The angelic spirits mentioned in Sloane 3853 are also mentioned here, and they seem to be tied to the same planets as the ones in Sloane 3853.

One thing that stands out about this similarity is that both Sloane 3853 and Royal MS get the planets that are connected with Raphael and Michael wrong. Peterson (2009) provides a list of angel names and titles found in over 20 manuscripts, and in this ‘angel registry’ he mentions that Raphael is commonly associated with Mercury and Michael with the Sun. In both manuscripts, however, these two are the other way around. This could just be an honest mistake on the scribes’ part, but in the case of Sloane 3853, it appears to be more than a simple mistake. The names that appear next to the images of the respective spirits show that Michael was originally tied to Sol in Sloane 3853 and Raphael tied to Mercury, but a closer inspection reveals that the scribe crossed out both names and swapped them. It could be the case that the scribe from Sloane 3853 had first written down the seven planetary spirits correctly, had access to (a version of) the Sworn Book

---

<sup>13</sup> *The 7 sterres*] ‘The seven stars’, by which are meant the aforementioned seven planets.

and saw that it had Raphael and Michael switched around, took the text within to be a credible source on angel magic, and corrected himself accordingly.

Another thing to note about the listing of the seven planetary angels in Royal MS, are the names that precede the symbols representing the seven planets, which I have transcribed in square brackets for the sake of ease. The names seem to be derivations of the *Hebrew* names of the seven planets. This is striking, since planetary spirits typically stem from Arabic magical tradition, so one would expect the names to be of Arabic origins as well. The fact that the names of both the angels and the planets are Hebraic in origin, however, suggests that there is no Arabic source involved in this part of the manuscript, but rather that this section was solely inspired by Hebraic source material. This is in line with Mesler's angelology, which states that angels in Hebrew traditions were commonly associated with 'days of the week, signs of the zodiac, months, planets...' (130), so it could very well be that these seven angelic spirits came from a Hebraic manuscript which had them linked to the seven planets.

There is furthermore nothing explicit about this passage that suggests that it was inspired by astral magic in any way, save for the mention of the seven planets and their respective angels, but since these are also found in Hebraic magic traditions, it seems more likely that this passage was solely inspired by Hebraic sources. This section is part of the first part of the Sworn Book, which mostly deals with (achieving) the Vision of the Deity, which is literally the sight of God himself, but for the magician practically simply means *clairvoyance*. Mesler states that the contents found in the first part of the Sworn Book are not uncommon for Christian magical traditions, and that the scribe of that part probably belonged to the 'clerical underworld' (cf. Kieckhefer 1997). This would imply that the first part of the manuscript is not influenced by Hebraic magic traditions, but the inclusion of Hebraic names and of planetary angels makes it seem otherwise. Mesler furthermore suggests that the second part of the Sworn Book is heavily influenced by Hekhalot<sup>14</sup> literature (117), but I would argue that this excerpt from the first part of the Sworn Book also showcases influences from Hekhalot traditions. The chapter in which fol. 23v. is included contains so-called *suffumigations*, which is the act of achieving visions through the creation of fumes. The manuscript lists several suffumigation for signs of the zodiac (fol. 22r.) in Latin, and in between these suffumigations the angelic spirits from 23v. have been included in Middle English. There are no instructions to suffumigate these planetary angels,

---

<sup>14</sup> Hekhalot literature refers to a branch of Jewish magic that deals with visions of 'celestial palaces'.

which leaves to wonder why they were included. It could be the case that the suffumigations were taken from Latin Christian magical traditions, since they are a quite common part of necromantic rituals (Klaassen 2016, 28). The inclusion of the seven angels might stem from Hekhalot literature which might have included similar suffumigations, and might have been added later since it might have seemed to fit the rest of the chapter. If this little piece came from a Hebrew source which was added later, then it would also make sense that this excerpt is in Middle English while the rest is in Latin, since it would have been included together with the other later inclusions of foreign magical traditions. This would mean the first part of the Sworn Book is indeed mainly based on Latin Christian magic traditions, and that the Hebraic elements were added some time later, together with the subsequent second, third and fourth sections, the first of which I will discuss now.

Having seen the nearly purely Christian magical tradition featured in the first part of the Sworn Book, it will be interesting to contrast this with the planetary angels discussed in the second section of the Sworn Book.

The second section of Royal MS starts with an introduction of its contents and chapters, as shown below:

(Fol. 66v) Now that we have finished the first treatise of this book, here follows now the second, which like as the first had 6 chapters, of these which we have by the grace of God entreated<sup>15</sup>.

So has this [second] book 27 [chapters] as here follow:

The first of the knowledge of the Heavens, of the knowledge of the angels of every Heaven, of the knowledge of every angel, his will and power, of the knowledge of the seals of every angel, of the knowledge of the superior of (Fol. 67r.) every angel, of the knowledge of the office of every angel, of the Invocation and company of every angel, how to obtain the will of every angel [...]

To clearly see the difference between the predominantly Latin Christian first section and this one, I will contrast and compare this introduction with the introduction of section one:

‘(Fol. 4v.) [...] the chapters of this first work: the first chapter is of the composition of the great name of God [...], the second chapter is of the vision of the Deity, the third of the

---

<sup>15</sup> *By the grace of God entreated.* ‘Entreated’ means simply ‘treated’ here.

knowledge of divine power, the fourth of the forgiveness of sins, the fifth that a man should not fall into deadly sins, the sixth of the redemption of souls out of purgatory [...].’

Comparing the introductions to both sections one and two, their differences become quite apparent.

The first section seems to solely pertain to typically Christian concepts, such as the Vision of the Deity, sins and forgiveness, and a bit of necromancy at the end in the form of ‘redeeming’ souls from purgatory. Themes of sin and forgiveness are common in necromantic texts, since it was believed that only a man of pure mind and soul could invoke the power God to compel spirits to do his bidding. The second section on the other hand seems to pertain to a plethora of things, including angels of every kind, other types of spirits, Earthly creatures and materials, planets, stars and elements. This is interesting since where the first section seemed to attempt to stick to a consistent theme of achieving the Vision of God and being in good graces with God in general, the contents of the second section seem to be somewhat all over the place and for the most part do not relate to the first part in any way, if at all.

The introduction of the second part furthermore clearly showcases more influences from Hebraic traditions as seen before in folio 23r. Folia 26v.- 27r. go into clearly Hebraic elements, like ‘the Heavens’, which is a concept taken from Hekhalot (*lit.* ‘Palaces’) literature based on the idea that a magician can travel into the ‘celestial palace’ of God (Mesler 2012, 127). It also provides the necromancer “the knowledge of every angel, his will and power, of the knowledge of the seals of every angel, of the knowledge of the superior of every angel, of the knowledge of the office of every angel”, which showcases two more aspects from Hebraic magical traditions: it features hierarchy of spirits and a multitude of spirits that each have their own functions within that hierarchy. The multitude of spirits is not explicit, but if the scribe had intended to provide ‘the knowledge of every angel [in Latin Christian magical traditions]’, then he would have only had to discuss Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, which he would probably have written down differently if that were the case. Note that I purposely say ‘spirit’ here and not ‘angel’, since technically, in Hebraic traditions, the entities within the hierarchy are not all explicitly named angels. Mesler indicates that traditionally, the celestial spirits are divided into nine groups which are: cherubim, seraphim, thrones, dominations, virtues, principalities, powers, angels and archangels (125). These spirits are a bit vague since all of these are supposedly angelic spirits, but there is also a subdivision of these angels of which one are *angels* and *archangels*. This

distinction is also made in the introduction of the second section, but the scribe of the manuscript seems to make the distinction between ‘angels’ and ‘spirits of the air/earth/fire etc.’, while these are all considered to be angels in Hebraic traditions, albeit of lower rank in the hierarchy (Mesler 127). The manuscript does not say anything about the nature of these spirits at this point, but this is an important aspect to keep in mind, since the scribe does apparently make a distinction between angel and spirit at some point.

The introduction continues:

(Fol. 66r. cont.)’[to know] how to obtain all things present, past and to come, to know the planets and stars and their influences, to alter and change the influence of the planets, to change the day into night and the night into day, [...] to know all herbs and trees and all beasts upon the Earth and their virtues, to know the nature of man and all the deeds of men that be secret or hidden, [...] to see purgatory and hell and to know where souls there are to have this book consecrated.’

This part of the introduction contrasts with the rest of the introduction since it does not pertain to spirits or angels but instead pertains to things found in nature, the elements and the planets. The knowledge of beasts, trees and herbs clearly pertains to natural magic and *naturalia*<sup>16</sup>, which is a form of magic practice that attempts to divine things and achieve wondrous things by utilizing the magical properties of materials found in nature. In necromantic ritualism, the usage of natural materials usually involves sacrifice or the inclusion of said materials in a magic circle. The usage of *naturalia* in magic was thus not uncommon for necromancers, but it was heavily expanded upon under the influence of Arabic magic (Klaassen 2016, 24). *Naturalia* featured an important role in Arabic *image magic*, which relied upon the creation and usage of talismans and other idols to redirect the ‘rays of the planets’ (Klaassen 24-25). The planets supposedly all give off rays that beam down onto our earthly plane and cause a physical reaction here. By manipulating these, the magician could achieve things like controlling the weather and *changing night into day*. This also ties into the chapter listed above that should describe to the magician how he can manipulate the (influence of) the planets, which is again a typical aspect of Arabic magical traditions. What is interesting about how these Arabic influences are incorporated, is that the magician apparently has the ability to learn the ‘virtues’ of the spirits and the natural elements. This is remarkable, because according to Arabic traditions, spirits are inherently morally neutral (Mesler 2012, 137) and only act out of instinct based on their nature,

---

<sup>16</sup> Anything found in nature that might be used in rituals like rocks, plants and animal blood.

yet the scribe seems to ascribe some characteristic trait to them in the form of *virtues*, which signals that there is something that does give these spirits some sense of morality. It is hard to imagine that this stems from the original Arabic source material, then, since all spirits are considered neutral, and natural materials were merely seen as conduits for influencing the planets (Klaassen 2016, 24). A rock is simply a rock, after all, but perhaps a rock with the wrong virtues might yield the wrong results for the necromancer. If he were to accidentally use a rock or other natural material that has “bad” virtues, then that might be associated with evil spirits, which would be dangerous to him. Since all these spirits would originally have been morally grey, it would thus make sense for the necromancer to ascribe his Christian virtues to them so that he could apply them to his rituals without problems.

It might be useful here to briefly touch upon the difference between astrology and astral magic, since the aspects mentioned above might stem from one or the other. *Astral magic* is the act of performing certain rituals to *manipulate* the (spirits of) the planets to make a physical reaction happen on earth, like summoning forth an army of spectral knights (Klaassen 2016, 128), while *astrology* is the act of performing rituals and examining the movements of the planets and the heavens to gain knowledge, such as the location of treasure or things that have happened in the past or that have yet to happen. The excerpt from Royal MS above mentions both of these aspects in some form, with the ‘manipulation of the influence of the planets’ on one hand, and ‘knowledge of all secrets known to men’ and ‘things past, present and to come’ on the other. It could be said that the manuscript thus draws from both *astral magic* and *astrology*, but it I would argue that it could be the case that all of these are achieved through *astral magic*. According to Mesler, angels and planetary spirits were commonly used to reveal secrets and knowledge, so it could very well be the case that the intent is for the necromancer to conjure a planetary spirit through astral magic, which then tells him the secrets that he desires, meaning that there is no *astrology* involved.

Next, the planetary angels (here called the secondary angels) are introduced:

‘Now that we are done with the Vision of the Deity and of 9 orders of angels (Fol. 67v.) now let us begin to treat of the second angels whose nature is such that they do principally serve God and after that man, whom they do naturally love. And they do reign in the spheres of the stars, and they do take upon them a fiery body when they be lent by the commandment of God to man in this world that be cleansed and purified, to company with them and to comfort them [...].’

It is clear that by the secondary angels the planetary angels are meant, since it is said they reign in the spheres of the stars (i.e. the planets). The fact that they reign *in* the planets suggests that these planetary angels are likely based on Arabic magical traditions rather than Hebrew magical traditions, because the notion that planetary spirits reside in the heavenly bodies is quite typically an Arabic one (Saif 2015, 137). What can be observed here, then, is an amalgamation of both Hebraic and Arabic sources, since there is the Arabic aspect of the planetary spirits residing in the planets themselves, and the Hebraic aspect of these angels falling into the hierarchy of all angels. The attitude of the scribe towards these planetary spirits also first becomes apparent through this description. The spirits supposedly have it in their nature to serve God and love man, which makes it seem like they are all around well-meaning and morally good, which is of course interesting, because neither the angels from Hebraic traditions nor the planetary spirits from Arabic traditions have any clear-cut moral status to them. The scribe seems to have attributed this morally good status to these angels despite this. This could be because he considers them all to be angels, which are by Christian standards all morally good, so if the morality of the original spirit was not known to the necromancer, he could have just lumped them in with the other angels that he did know, which are also morally good, and made these morally good as well. This would also have made these spirits much easier to *discern*, since now the necromancer does not have to concern himself with whether or not the spirit he is about to conjure will harm him or not, since all angels are naturally loving to men anyway.

After this introduction of the planetary spirits, the manuscript goes into detail about all the spirits associated with each of the seven planets individually. I will compare and contrast the first two and leave the other five for what they are, since they do not provide anything relevant beyond the first two:

‘Of the spirits that be under the planet Saturn

And of these certain be called *Saturnyans* which be these [Fig. 8]:

- *Bohel*
- *Casziel*
- *Michathon*
- *Datqinel*

The seal of the angels of Saturn is this: [Fig 8a.] and there nature is to cause sadness, anger and hatred, and to (Fol. 68r.) make snow and ice. Their bodies are long and gentle, pale or yellow and there region is the North.

And five demons are under these, namely one king and his four attendants, with which all other demons of Saturn are subjugated. They are these: *Maymon* the king, *Assaibi*, *Albunalich*, *Haibalidech*, *Yasfla*, which demons are subordinate to the Southwest Winds, which are three: *Mextyura*, *Alchibany*, *Alflas*, they may be compelled to serve, or they rest. (Peterson, 2009).<sup>17</sup>

The first planetary spirits treated in this section of the manuscript are the ones that rule over and live in/under Saturn. Note that the header for this section says ‘Of the *spirits* of Saturn’. This strongly suggests that the spirits listed were originally just that: morally ambiguous or neutral spirits which were associated with the planet Saturn. What happens in the subsequent section, however, is that a dichotomy is made between planetary angels and planetary demons. It has been established that the angels are all-good and loving, and the demons are contrasted with the angels here for good reason. While it is not explicitly said that demons are evil entities, the term *demon* does historically have a negative connotation (especially in Christian doctrine) and if the necromancer had not intended to distinguish from the angels in terms of morality, then he probably would have simply written them down as spirits of the air and the winds.

The moral status of the angelic spirits is problematic as well, since these particular angels, who universally have it in their nature to be loving and compassionate, apparently also have it in their nature to cause sadness and anger, which does not sound very compassionate or good-spirited in any way. Now if these are characteristics that these angels simply originally have, then the necromancer would in a way be forced to include them so that he and any other necromancer within his secret circles knew what the conjured spirits would be good for, even if the nature of the spirits goes against his Christian notion that angels are inherently all-good. This could also explain why the demons are included in some iterations of the Sworn Book, since it provides a convenient way to take away the moral ambiguity of the angels. The angels might have some less desirable qualities, but at least they are definitely not wholly-evil demons.

---

<sup>17</sup> The section about the demons is omitted in the English version of the Royal manuscript but is still found in the Latin version of the text. See Peterson. This goes for all seven planets mentioned in the Royal MS.

Compare how the *Saturnyans* are treated next to the *Iovialles*:

‘Of the spirits that be under the planet Jupiter.

Others there be which be *Iovialles* or under Jupiter which are these [Fig. 9]:

- *Satquiel*
- *Raphael*
- *Pahamcoryhel*
- *Alallayel*

The seal of the angels of Jupiter is this [Fig. 9a] and their nature is to give love, hope, gladness and favour of all persons to him that work, [and] to bring forth dews, flowers, herbs and leaves, or to take them away. And there region or abiding is betwixt the East and the South, and their bodies are of a mean stature. The colour of them is like the colour of heaven or like onto crystal.

And four demons are under these, namely one king and his three attendants, with which all other demons of Jupiter are subjugated, and they are *Formione* the king, *Guth*, *Maguth*, and *Guthryn*, which three demons are subject to the North and East winds, which are five: *Harith*, *Iesse*, *Ryon*, *Nesaph*, *Naadob*, they may be compelled to serve, or they rest (Peterson, 2009).’

These spirits of Jupiter are described in the same way as the spirits of Saturn, with a small group of angels residing in and ruling over a planet, and a group of demonic spirits below them. The obvious difference between the *Saturnyans* and the *Iovialles*, is that the *Iovialles* seem to be of a much more morally-good nature than the *Saturnyans*, since where the spirits of Saturn tend to cause hate and sadness, the spirits of Jupiter instead spread love, happiness and flowers, which is nearly the exact opposite. Yet even though these *Iovialles* seem more morally good than the *Saturnyans*, they are still all classified as angels, which are by their very (Christian) definition all morally good.

## Conclusion

Having examined the contents of the two manuscripts, specifically the treatment of the celestial spirits, there are several noteworthy aspects to discuss.

It is apparent that both manuscripts showcase a development of incorporating Arabic and Hebraic source material into already-existing Latin-Christian magical traditions. Sloane 3853 has a clear basis in necromancy in its purest form, which can be seen in the inclusion of ritual preparation, the act of the four-staged conjuration as outlined by Kieckhefer (1997) and the act of making sacrifices to the desired spirit. The experiments listed in Sloane 3853 also require the necromancer to directly invoke the power of God, which is another marker of Latin-Christian magical traditions. The problem with traditional necromantic spirit conjuring was, however, that a necromancer could have had a hard time *discerning* what type of spirit he might conjure. If he were to accidentally summon an evil spirit, it might try to trick, harm or kill him for binding himself to it. To circumvent this potential danger, the necromancer could attempt to conjure spirits which he knew to be unambiguously good, namely angels. The problem with attempting to conjure angels, is that the angels that he would know from his Christian background, were the three archangels Gabriel, Michael and Raphael, which were canonically only loyal to God and would thus not answer to the summons of man (Mesler 2012, 137). This meant that if the necromancer wished to conjure up an angel to do his bidding, he would need to find himself more angels, which he found in Hebraic magical traditions. These magical traditions namely included seven archangels, with four additional ones next to the original three, and according to Hebrew lore, angels could be compelled to serve man if he knew the angels' names. All (arch)angels from Hebrew traditions are named, so if the necromancer does the proper rituals and says the angels' names, then he can reliably conjure what he considers to be wholly good spirits. Sloane 3853 showcases this, as it shows a depiction of these seven archangels, all portrayed in the same way as if to suggest they are all similar or equal to one another. Because they are supposedly all archangels with no additional context given, the implication is that these should all be considered good-natured spirits in the mind of the Christian necromancer, even though these angels are originally morally grey. These angels are then furthermore equated with the seven planets, which is based on the Arabic magical tradition of celestial spirits. These celestial spirits are by their nature morally neutral and act purely on instinct, but the necromancer of Sloane 3853 has equated

them with the morally-good archangels, thereby expanding on the power that these spirits could potentially exert on his command.

In Royal MS a similar pattern can be observed, the first part of which is almost entirely based on Christian magical traditions, but with a slight hint of Hebraic influences in the form of angelic spirits being associated with the seven planets and the days of the week. This small snippet of Hebraic lore has likely been included for the sake of inclusion, since the rest of the section in question pertains to visions of similar things, such as signs of the zodiac and the stars. Then in the subsequent second work of the Sworn Book, the planetary spirits are described and treated in detail, which reveals a lot about the necromancer's attitude towards foreign spirits. The introduction to the second work describes the angels of the planets as loyal servants of God whom naturally love and comfort man. These planetary angels are partly based on the same angels from Hebraic traditions as the ones from Sloane 3853, and partly on celestial spirits from Arabic magical traditions. It is then striking that the necromancer has decided to chalk all of these spirits up as being morally-good angels, while traditionally, the Hebraic angels were very morally grey, and the Arabic celestial spirits were very abstract and morally neutral and/or non-descript. This makes sense from a Christian perspective to make all of these into angels, since angels are by their very definition morally good, which means they are again a very safe source of conjured spirits for the necromancer.

Finally the Sworn Book goes into detail on each of the seven planets and their respective associated spirits, and this reveals most clearly how a necromancer would have incorporated morally-ambiguous spirits into his works. For each planet, the Sworn Book lists a number of spirits that reside in and rule over that planet. These planetary spirits would normally be considered quite abstract and morally grey, but the scribe of the Royal MS has very decidedly divided them into categories of *angels*, which are in his viewpoint wholly good, and *demons*, which are by their nature wholly evil. It is striking that the planetary angels were seemingly all considered to be wholly good, since a number of them seem to have inherent qualities which do not come off as being well-meaning and good, such as causing sadness, hate and war.

Overall, then, it could be concluded that whenever a necromancer would come across new foreign magical material that he wished to include in his experiments, he would take whatever spirits he thought best suited the experiments and practices he already knew, and whenever he encountered a spirit that was morally ambiguous to him, he would categorise it as either a

wholly-good angel, or a wholly-evil demon, which would enabled him to *discern* any spirit he came across when looking to conjure one.

The manuscripts do not reveal how the necromancer made this dichotomy, however, and without access to any of the Hebraic or Arabic source material, it is hard to estimate what the categorisation of the spirits was based on. Mesler (2012) provides some insight into the *discernment* of spirits but goes more into the fact that discernment was a necessity for necromancers rather than explaining how this discernment would work. The only way in which a necromancer could reliably discern a spirit would be through prior knowledge of the spirit's appearance and behaviour, which seems a bit illogical, if the only way to learn more about the nature of a spirit, is by knowing it. Further research into the discernment of spirits and the origins of the celestial spirits and angels might thus shed more light on how necromancers came to the categorisation of these foreign spirits the way they did.

## Works Cited

- Agrippa, Henry Cornelius. "Three Books Of Occult Philosophy." Ed. Joseph Peterson. *Esotericarchives.com*. Esoteric Archives, 2000. Web. 8 February 2019.
- Brennan, Chris. *The Astrology Dictionary*. N.d. Web. 6 June, 2019.
- Fanger, Claire. *Invoking Angels Theurgic Ideas And Practices, Thirteenth To Sixteenth Centuries*. The Pennsylvania State University Press University Park, Pennsylvania. Print. 2012.
- "Liber Juratus Honorii or The Sworne Booke of Honorius." Ed. Joseph Peterson. *Esotericarchives.com*. Esoteric Archives, 2009. Web. June 2019.
- Klaassen, Frank. *The Transformations of Magic: Illicit Learned Magic in the Later Middle Ages and Renaissance*. Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania University Press, 2013. Print.
- Kieckhefer, Richard. *Forbidden Rites: A Necromancer's Manual of the Fifteenth Century*. Pennsylvania State University Press University Park, Pennsylvania, 1997. Print.
- Kieckhefer, Richard. *Magic in The Middle Ages*. Cambridge University Press, 1989. Print.
- Mesler, Katelyn. "The Liber Iuratus Honorii and the Christian Reception of Angel Magic." *Invoking Angels: Theurgic Ideas and Practices, Thirteenth to Sixteenth Centuries*. Ed. Claire Fanger. Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press, 2012. 113-150. Print.
- Muslim Heritage*. The Foundation for Science, Technology and Civilisation, n.d. Web. 13 June, 2019.
- "Of the Arte Goetia." Ed. Joseph Peterson. *Esotericarchives.com*. Esoteric Archives, 1999. Web. June 2019.
- Peterson, Joseph. *Esoteric Archives*. 2009. Web. May-June 2019.
- Saif, Liana. *The Arabic Influences on Early Modern Occult Philosophy*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. Print.





Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig.  
6



Fig. 7

Appendix B: Figures from the Royal MS.



Fig. 8

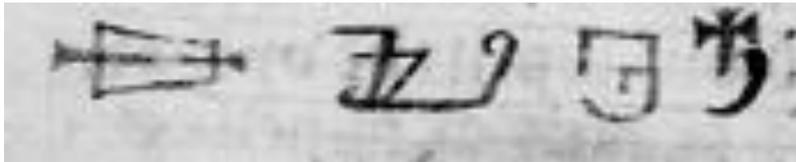


Fig. 8a.



Fig. 9

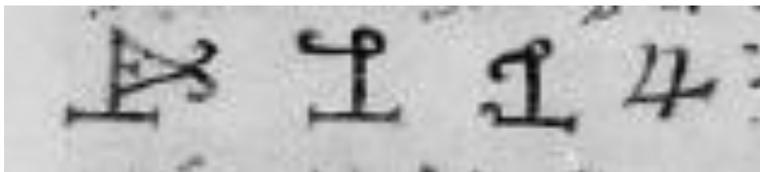


Fig. 9a.



Fig. 10

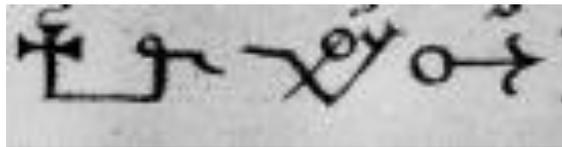


Fig. 10a.



Fig. 11

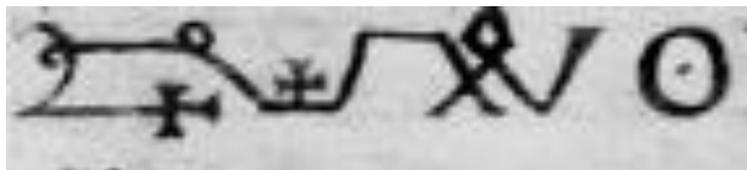


Fig. 11a.



Fig. 12



Fig. 12a.

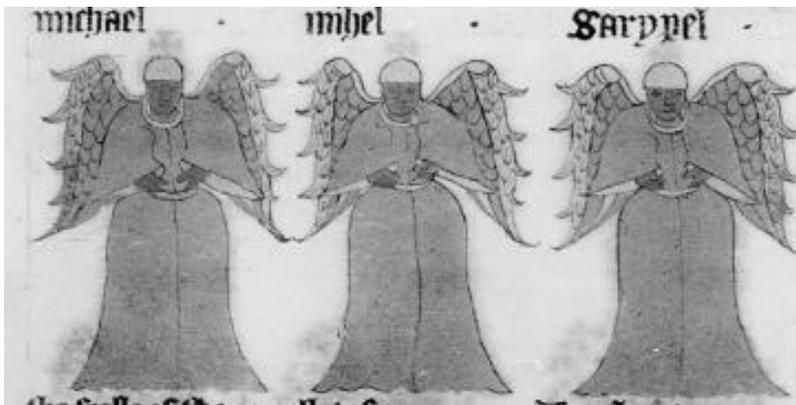


Fig. 13

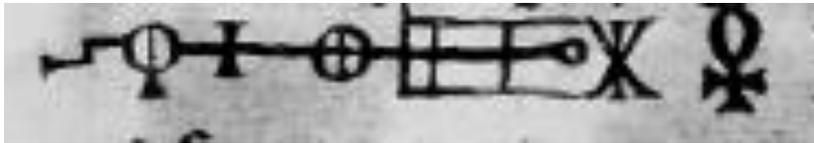


Fig. 13a.



Fig. 14

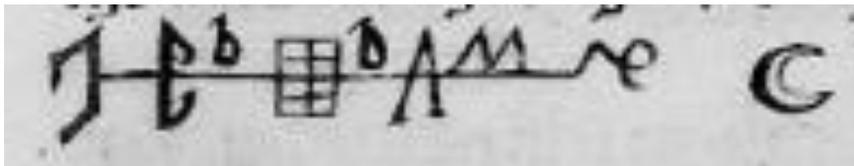


Fig. 14a.

Appendix C: Full editions of manuscript material.

C1: Edited list of Planetary Arch-Angels, taken from London, British Museum, Sloane 3853 Manuscript. Folia 124r – 127r.

[Fig. 1]: *Gabryel*: Moon

[Fig. 2]: *Capciel*: *Saturnus*

[Fig. 3]: *Sachiell or Satquiell*: *Jupiter*

[Fig. 4]: *Samaell or Samuell*: *Mars*

[Fig. 5]: *Michaell*: Sun

[Fig. 6]: *Anaell*: *Venus*

[Fig. 7]: *Raphaell*: *Mercury*

C2: Edited excerpts from London Library, Royal 17 A.X.LII Manuscript.

Fol. 23r.:

The names of the seven angels that have power upon the 7 days in the week and upon the 7 stars<sup>18</sup> [...] which in these chapters be these:

Capziel, Satquiell, Samael, Raphael, Anael/Amael, Michael and Gabriel.

And the power of these is that Capciel is the power of Sabaday [Saturn], Satquiell of Zedet [Jupiter], Samael of Madim [Mars], Raphael of Hamina [Sol/The Sun], Anael of Noga [Venus], Michael of Cocab [Mercury], and Gabryel of Labana [Luna/The Moon].

And every one of these sitteth in his heaven.

Folia 66v- 70r.

(Fol. 66v) Now that we have finished the first treatise of this book, here follows now the second, which like as the first had 6 chapters, of these which we have by the grace of God entreated<sup>19</sup>.

So has this book 27 [chapters] as here follow:

The first of the knowledge of the Heavens, of the knowledge of the angels of every Heaven, of the knowledge of every angel, his will and power, of the knowledge of the seals of every angel, of the knowledge of the superior of (Fol. 67r.) every angel, of the knowledge of the office of every angel, of the Invocation and company of every angel, how to obtain the will of every angel,

---

<sup>18</sup> *The 7 sterres*] ‘The seven stars’, by which are meant the aforementioned seven planets.

<sup>19</sup> *By the grace of God entreated*. ‘Entreated’ means simply ‘treated’ here.

how to obtain all things present, past and to come, to know the planets and stars and their influences, to alter and change the influence of the planets, to change the day into night and the night into day, to know the spirits of the fire and their names, and their superiors there seals and their power and virtue, to know spirits and beasts of the air, to know their name and names and powers of their superiors, to know their seals and their virtues, to know the connections and alteration of the elements and of the bodies made of them, to know all herbs and trees and all beasts upon the Earth and there virtues, to know the nature of man and all the deeds of men that be secret or hidden, to know the spirits of the water and of the beasts and their virtues, their superiors, to know the Earthly and infernal spirits, to see purgatory and hell and to know where souls here are to have this book consecrated.

Here follows the treatise of the nature and office of the second angels<sup>20</sup>.

Now that we are done with the Vision of the Deity and of 9 orders of angels (Fol. 67v.) now let us begin to treat of the second angels whose nature is such that they do principally serve God and after that man, whom they do naturally love.

And they do reign in the spheres of the stars, and they do take upon them a fiery body when they be lent by the commandment of God to man in this world that be cleansed and purified, to company with them and to comfort them. and of them there is 7 sorts whose natures ought to be known, for every one of them has his proper office appointed [to] him, although they may at some time take sure<sup>21</sup> other office.

Of the sprites that be under the planet Saturn

And of these certain be called *Satruynes* which be these [Fig. 8]:

- *Bohel*
- *Casziel*
- *Michathon*
- *Datqinel*.

The seal of the angels of Saturn is this: [Fig 8a.] and there nature is to cause sadness, anger and hatred, and to (Fol. 68r.) make snow and ice. Their bodies are long and gentle, pale or yellow and there region is the North.

---

<sup>20</sup> It is made clear in the first chapter of the Royal MS that in the order (i.e. hierarchy) of Angels, the Archangels are the First Angels, and the angels that are directly below them are the Second Angels (Peterson 2009).

<sup>21</sup> *Surere*. Sure: certain.

And five demons are under these, namely one king and his four attendants, with which all other demons of Saturn are subjugated. They are these: *Maymon* the king, *Assaibi*, *Albunalich*, *Haibalidech*, *Yasfla*, which demons are subordinate to the Southwest Winds, which are three: *Mextyura*, *Alchibany*, *Alflas*, they may be compelled to serve, or they rest. (Peterson, 2009).<sup>22</sup>

Of the spirits that be under the planet Jupiter.

Others there be which be *Iovialles* or under Jupiter which are these [Fig. 9]:

- *Satquiel*
- *Raphael*
- *Pahamcoryhel*
- *Alallayel*

The seal of the angels of Jupiter is this [Fig. 9a] and their nature is to give love, hope, gladness and favour of all persons to him that work, [and] to bring forth dews, flowers, herbs and leaves, or to take them away. And there region or abiding is betwixt the East and the South, and their bodies are of a mean stature. The colour of them is like the colour of heaven or like onto crystal.

And four demons are under these, namely one king and his three attendants, with which all other demons of Jupiter are subjugated, and they are *Formione* the king, *Guth*, *Maguth*, and *Guthryn*, which three demons are subject to the North and East winds, which are five: *Harith*, *Iesse*, *Ryon*, *Nesaph*, *Naadob*, they may be compelled to serve, or they rest (Peterson, 2009).

Of the spirits that be under the planet Mars.

Others there be, which are called *Martyans* which be these (Fol. 69r.) [Fig. 10]:

- *Samahel*
- *Satyhel*
- *Yturahyhel*
- *Amabyhel*

The seal of the angels of Mars is this [Fig. 10a.] and their nature is to cause and stir up war, murder, destruction and mortality of people and of all Earthly things. And their bodies are of a

---

<sup>22</sup> The section about the demons is omitted in the English version of the Royal manuscript but is still found in the Latin version of the text. See Peterson. This goes for all seven planets mentioned in the Royal MS.

mean stature: dry and lean. There colour is red like to burning coals burning red, and there region or abiding is the South.

And four demons are under these, namely one king and his three ministers, to whom all other demons of Mars are subjugated, and they are these: *Iammax* the king, *Carmox*, *Ycanohl*, *Pasfran*, which demons are subject to the East winds, which are these five: *Atraurbiabilis*, *Hyachonaababur*, *Carmehal*, *Innyhal*, *Proathophas*, and they may be compelled to serve, or they rest (Peterson, 2009).

Of the sprites that be under the planet of the Sun.

Others there are under the Sun which are these [Fig. 11]:

- *Raphael*
- *Cashael*
- *Dardyhel*
- *Hanrathaphel*

The seal of the angels of the Sun is this [Fig. 11a.] their nature is to give love and favour and riches to a man and power, also to keep him hail, and to give dews, herbs, flowers and fruits in a moment. Their bodies are great and large, full of all gentleness. Their colours is bright like glass, or as the Sun or gold. And their region is the East.

And four demons are under them, namely one king and three of his ministers, to whom all other demons of the Sun are subjugated, and they are these: *Barthan* the king, *Thaadas*, *Chaudas*, *Ialchal*, and those demons are subject to the North winds, which are four: *Baxhathau*, *Gahathus*, *Caudes*, *Iarabal*, they may be compelled to serve, or they rest' (Peterson, 2009).

Of the spirits that be under planet of Venus.

There be other, which are called *Venereans* which be these [Fig 12]:

- *Hamahel*
- *Raquyel*
- *Salquyel*

The seal of the angela of Venus is this [Fig. 12a.], their nature is to provoke laughs enticements and desires to love women, and to give flowers, and fruits. their bodies are of a mean stature in all pointes, for they be neither light nor great, neither fat nor lean. Their countenance is pleasant, "white like snow" (Peterson 2009). Their region is (Fol. 69v.) betwixt the South and the West.

And there are three demons under them, one king and his two ministers, and all the other demons of Venus are subject to these, and they are: *Sarabocres* the king, *Nassar*, *Cynassa*, which rule the demons of the East and West winds, which are four, namely *Cambores*, *Trachathath*, *Nassar*, and *Naasa*. They may be compelled to serve, or they rest (Peterson, 2009).

Of the spirits that be under the planet of Mercury.

Others there be which be called *Mercuryans* which be these [Fig. 13]:

- *Michael*
- *Mihel*
- *Sarypel*

The seal of the angels of Mercury is this [Fig. 13a.]. Their nature is to subdue themselves and other good spirits to others<sup>23</sup>, they give answers of things present, past and to come, they teach secret deeds which are to be done or what shall chance in this world. They reveal the secrets of all other spirits [and] they can also, if they be commanded, do the same things that others can do. Their form or fashion is movable; clear like glass or the flame of white fire, and they together with the [Moon<sup>24</sup>] do reveal and tell counsels and secrets of all other [spirits]. Their region is betwixt the West and the North.

And there are five demons under them: one king, and his four ministers, to which all other demons of Mercury are subjugated, and they are these: *Habaa* the king, *Hyyci*, *Quyron*, *Zach*, *Eladeb*, which rule the demons of the West and Southwest winds, which are four, namely: *Zobha*, *Drohas*, *Palas*, *Sambas*, they may be compelled to serve, or they rest (Peterson, 2009).

---

<sup>23</sup> *Subdue themselves and other spirits to others*: Make themselves or others invisible.

<sup>24</sup> This symbol  appears here in the manuscript. No names or explanations are given about this symbol, but it resembles one of the *seals* of the moon, so I will therefore assume that the Moon and its spirits are meant here. Compare with Fig. 14a.

(Fol. 70r.) Of the spirits that be under the planet of the Moon.

There be other<sup>25</sup> spirits of the Moon which be these [Fig. 14]:

- *Gabriel*
- *Michael*
- *Samyhel*
- *Arithael*

The seal of the angels of the Moon is this [Fig. 14a.], and their nature is to change thoughts and wills, to prepare journeys [and] to tell words that be spoken to cause rains. Their bodies are long and great, their countenances are whiteish dim like crystal or like ice or a dark cloud, and their region is the West.

And there are four demons under them: a king and his three ministers, and all the other demons of the moon are obedient to those, and placed under them, and they are these: *Harthan*, the king, *Bileth*, *Milalu*, *Abucaba*, which rule the demons of the West winds, which are five: *Hebethel*, *Arnochap*, *Oylol*, *Milau*, *Abuchaba*, they may be compelled to serve, or they rest (Peterson, 2009).

---

<sup>25</sup> *Other*: also.