THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

Rational Magic: Hypothesizing the Occult in Early Modern England with Newberry MS 5017, *The Book of Magical Charms*

"The first step toward wisdom is to distinguish what is false – Lactantius"

By

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A Not So Cunning Lawyer and a Manuscript of Magic

'*Primus Sapientiæ gradus est falsa intelligere.*'[1] The first step toward knowledge is to distinguish what is false. Early Christian author Lactantius coined this idea between 303 and 311 CE in the first book, *The False Religion of the Gods*, of *The Divine Institutes*.[2] He relays this notion in reference to his belief that for one to know the truth about religion, one must be aware of the falsities of others. The goal of the work was to point out the inconsistencies of pagan religion in comparison to the rational nature of Christianity. This phrase pops up in Sir Thomas Browne's *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* over 1300 years later.[3] In 1646 Browne faced a society enveloped in the new age of scientific reason, while simultaneously grappling with the lingering coexistence of superstitious and occult beliefs. The *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* sought to challenge the persistence of magic through an appeal to reason. With figures like Isaac Newton, Robert Boyle, and Francis Bacon dominating conversations of early modern England, it is provocative when a new primary source is uncovered that challenges the narrative of scientific hegemony and highlights the much more realistic dynamism of the age. One such example is that of MS 5017 located at the Newberry Library in Chicago. Written over the course of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Newberry MS 5017 has been called an occult manuscript by those who have had the fortune to see it. Within its crowded pages the words of Lactantius are found twice. This is curious when put into comparison with Sir Thomas Browne's work, as Newberry MS 5017 contains a rather different subject matter; there is a reason that upon its acquisition in 1988 by the Newberry Library, a cataloguer gave this small manuscript its present name: *The Book of Magical Charms*.

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[1] Robert Ashley, 1565-1641, "Book of magical charms: manuscript," Stanton A. Friedberg Collection (Newberry Library); Newberry Library. Manuscript. Case MS 5017. Approximately 1612. 107_o2 & 086_o2. I will be using the paginations from the digital scan of the manuscript for ease of accessibility and referring to the manuscript henceforth as *Book of Magical Charms* in the footnotes. Website.

[2] Lactantius, *The Divine Institutes: Books I-VII*, translated by Sister Mary Francis McDonald, O.P. (Newburgh, New York: Mount Saint Mary-on-the-Hudson, 1964).

[3] Sir Thomas Browne, *Pseudodoxia Epidemica: or, Enquiries into Very many received Tenents And commonly presumed Truths*, trans. by James Eason (University of Chicago). Website.

The contents of Newberry MS 5017 cover a wide range of topics, from charms and medical recipes to angels and witchcraft. These topics are not particularly unique among early modern manuscript miscellany as most that survive contain similar writings, but what does make *The Book of Magical Charms* unique is its known authorship.[4] In *Making Magic in Elizabethan England: Two Early Modern Vernacular Books of Magic*, historian Frank Klaassen understands the author of manuscripts similar to Newberry MS 5017 to have been cunning folk, or at least "more than a simple charmer."[5] Owen Davies, in his *Cunning Folk: Popular Magic in English History*, defined cunning folk as "individuals who straddled the worlds of both learned and low magic" and were considered by many to be professional practitioners of magic.[6] In *Making Magic*, Klaassen uses two anonymous manuscripts of magic, The Antiphoner Notebook and The Boxgrove Manual, to highlight the "maelstrom of forces" personified by the witchcraft trials, the criminalization of magic, the dissolution of the monasteries, and the shift in magical practice that occurred with the introduction of medieval magic literature to print. He argues that these anonymous manuscripts were produced by cunning folk, or the like, and showcase the blending of medieval Catholic and new Protestant ideas on magic that produced England's "distinctive, rich, and lively subculture of magic."[7] There is little to no question on the occupation of the scribes of the notebooks; concluding that because of the diverse contents of the books, the authors likely had professional interests and collected a variety of materials to respond to a wide range of clientage.[8] In another work, *The Magic of Rogues: Necromancers in Early Tudor England*, Klaassen and Sharon Hubbs Wright urge for future analysis of these anonymous magic manuscripts to "assume that the scribes might have been not only active practitioners [of magic] but also regarded

[4] Renae Satterley, "Robert Ashley and the Authorship of Newberry MS 5017, *The Book of Magical Charms*," *Manuscript Studies: A Journal of the Schoenberg Institute for Manuscript Studies* 6, no. 2 (Fall 2021).
[5] Frank Klaassen, *Making Magic in Elizabethan England* (University Park: Penn State University Press), 20.
[6] Owen Davies, *Cunning Folk: Popular Magic in English History* (London & New York: Hambledon and London, 2003).
[7] Klaassen, *Making Magic*, 2.
[8] Klaassen, *Making Magic*, 20.

by their communities as cunning folk."[9] In Newberry MS 5017 I have stumbled across the rare occurrence where the author is known, along with his profession and a number of details about his personal life. The author, Robert Ashley (1565-1641), was a lawyer living in late Elizabethan and early Stuart England and owned a vast library covering topics from world travel, law, business, science, philosophy, and natural magic.[10] He also left behind an autobiography, known as his *Vita* which exists today in a single manuscript copy in the British Library. From what we know of Ashley, which is quite a lot in comparison with what is known of other members of early modern London, he was not a cunning person.

While books of recipes and charms are not uncommon in early modern Europe, in fact, historian Elaine Leong considers early modern England to have been "awash with recipes," Ashley's manuscript contains a number of entries that stray from the usual contents of recipe books.[11] In his *Vita*, Ashley never considers himself to be a cunning person, nor does he ever mention working with the occult arts. The contents of Newberry MS 5027 do not quite make sense then. With Ashley not acting as a cunning man nor being a professed magician, why did he create his *Book of Magical Charms*? As mentioned before, Ashley's library contains a large number of works concerned with the new science. Historian Deborah Harkness explains that "to be in London during the second half of the sixteenth century was to be in a state of heady confusion when it came to natural knowledge and questions of science."[12] Newberry MS 5027 can be used to shed light on those in early modern

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[9] Frank Klaassen and Sharon Hubbs Wright, *The Magic of Rogues: Necromancers in Early Tudor England* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2021), 143.

[10] The author has been identified by Renae Satterley and the identification is a working hypothesis. For this project I am using him as the primary author of the work.

[11] Elaine Leong, *Recipes and Everyday Knowledge: Medicine, Science, and the Household in Early Modern England* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2018), 4.

[12] Deborah Harkness, *The Jewel House: Elizabethan London and the Scientific Revolution* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2007), 10. Also, Harkness, *The Jewel House: Elizabethan London and the Scientific Revolution*, 196: "As Elizabethans read and absorbed the contents of these works, they had to find ways to cope with the overload, and scores of manuscript miscellanies, medical and chemical recipes books, notebooks, and commonplace books that collected edifying sayings were composed by women and men trying to organize their responses to this welter of new knowledge."

England who were trying to make sense of the conflicting voices concerning magic, science, and skepticism.[13] It is easy to think of a linear progression between medieval magic and the scientific age of reason, however there was actually a much higher degree of overlap and interaction that Newberry MS 5017 helps to showcase. While *The Book of Magical Charms* seems to contradict the new scientific method, it, in fact, reinforces it. When taking into account the autobiography and library of the author, Robert Ashley, the manuscript allows me to see it as a text of inquiry. I argue that Ashley was doing the exact thing that the scientists like Francis Bacon were preaching: experimentation. *The Book of Magical Charms* is actually Ashley's pocketbook of experimentation, where he was recording conjuring spells alongside practical medical treatments. If Ashley could produce the effects proscribed in a magical charm or summon an angel, he would effectively be scientifically proving the existence of magic and the occult arts to himself. I am terming this practice rational magic.

I have chosen to call this phenomenon rational magic due to the practical approach that Ashley employed. Through his other works and library, we know Ashley had an interest in Asia which he explored through books and translations.[14] From his library collection we can see that he approached his interest in natural magic and science in the same way. However, instead of being met with information to clarify his confusion about these topics, he found himself within a heated conversation arguing over which was supreme. In the early seventeenth century scientific writers like Francis Bacon, Galileo Galilei, Tycho Brahe, Nicolaus Copernicus, and Johannes Kepler were publishing their advancements of scientific achievement and dismantling the medieval systems of belief.[15] Working

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[13] This argument also included the loud voice of religious change. While not possible to comprehensively fit into the scope of this project, the inclusion of religion would add a fascinating layer to further study. For more on religion, science, and magic see: Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Charles Schribner's Son, 1971), Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) and for more on the connection of religion to medieval science see Seb Falk, *The Light Ages* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2020).
[14] It is unknown if Ashley has other manuscripts containing information on varied topics. Newberry MS 5017 is his only miscellany to have been identified.
[15] David Wootton, *The Invention of Science: A New History of the Scientific Revolution* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2015).

and writing alongside these characters were those who upheld and advocated for the dominance of natural philosophy and magic, such as John Dee, James I of England, and Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa. Within this realm are also those who fought against the existence of the occult in the world, such as Reginald Scot and Samuel Harsnet, using their logic to disprove the occult arts. King James I of England directly attacked the writings of Reginald Scot in the preface of his book on the occult, *Daemonologie*. Prior to James, the Tudors had made necromancy and witchcraft illegal, both recognizing and condemning the practice. Who would not be left confused on who and what to believe?

Scholarship discussing the popular transition away from magic that occurred over the seventeenth century is sorely lacking, and instead modern readers are met with histories concerning the disenchantment of the world that was occurring in the higher echelons of society. Deborah Harkness's *Jewel House: Elizabethan London and the Scientific Revolution* paints the closest picture of how people dealt with the state of confusion early modern England found itself in, yet she describes this society with the intention of showing how their thought processes were to influence and be used by later scientists and the formulation of the Royal Society, the antithesis of the Jewel House.[16] Whereas the people that Harkness brings back to life were conducting experiments with light, magnets, and the heavens, Robert Ashley was testing the varying types of magic. Newberry MS 5017 offers a possibility to see a 'culture *produced by* the popular classes' as opposed to a 'culture *imposed on* the popular classes'.[17] With Newberry MS 5017, there is an opportunity to glimpse the inner workings of the popular and professional classes, not exclusively those who were members of the new scientific class. Due to this lack of scholarship, it is hard to describe what it was that Ashley was doing; rational magic can be used as a descriptor for a process that has previously gone unnoticed or undiscovered.[18] With the only other

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[16] Harkness, *The Jewel House: Elizabethan London and the Scientific Revolution.*
[17] Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller,* trans, by John and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore: The John's Hopkins University Press, 1980), xiii & xv.
[18] Deborah Harkness, in *The Jewel House: Elizabethan London and the Scientific Revolution* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2007), brings to light the popular writers of science and the way that the Royal Society and individuals such as Francis Bacon are not necessarily the best examples of what the ground level of the age of reason was like.

comprehensive study of Newberry MS 5017 having been published in 2021, to identify the script of the author, I have the opportunity to work with a source that has not yet been deeply studied. With this project, I will contribute to the fields of the history of science, the history of magic, the social history of early modern England, and more broadly it will help to rethink the experience between magic and science.

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At 16 x 11 cm, the *Book of Magical Charms* can be classified as pocket-sized. It is bound in modern dark brown cloth over boards and contains 285 leaves of paper with writing in iron-gall ink on 86 of them. There are 8 illustrations in the manuscript and 27 pages contain writing that does not belong to Ashley. These pages are all grouped together and Ashley likely bought them and bound them into his own book or had brought an already bound journal with these pages and worked around them.[19] The manuscript is bound in a tête-bêche binding, meaning that there are two covers, and when either is opened it will reveal left to right text.[20] When Newberry MS 5017 is opened from the side that serves as the current main cover, folios 1 through 39r contain text, folios 39v through 239r are blank (not including a foliation number when one is included), folio 239v contains text, folios 240r through 251v are again blank, and starting after this are the inverted folios. I am of the belief that the opposite cover is meant to be the true front, as its first page would then read the Lactantius maxim, 'the first step toward knowledge is to distinguish what is false', rather than its current front page going directly into content (see fig. 1 & 2). At the current back of the manuscript there is a scrap of medieval manuscript

[19] *Book of Magical Charms*, 108-135. These pages are all of a religious matter and appear to be a prayer of some sort. For the purpose of this paper I will not be analyzing them in connection to the rest of the content. This text comes mainly from the *Enchiridian Leonis Papae*, which was a collection of charms written in the form of a daily meditative protection prayer. Satterley, "Robert Ashley and the Authorship of Newberry MS 5017, *The Book of Magical Charms*," 288.

[20] Tête-bêche, translating to 'head-to-toe' from French, is a form dos-à-dos binding, meaning 'back-to-back' from French. Dos-à-dos has become a blanket term to refer to most books that contain a two-in-one binding. See: Amanda Glassman, "Books in Love: Tête-Bêche and Dos-à-Dos Bindings," Poet's House, last accessed June 16, 2022. Website.

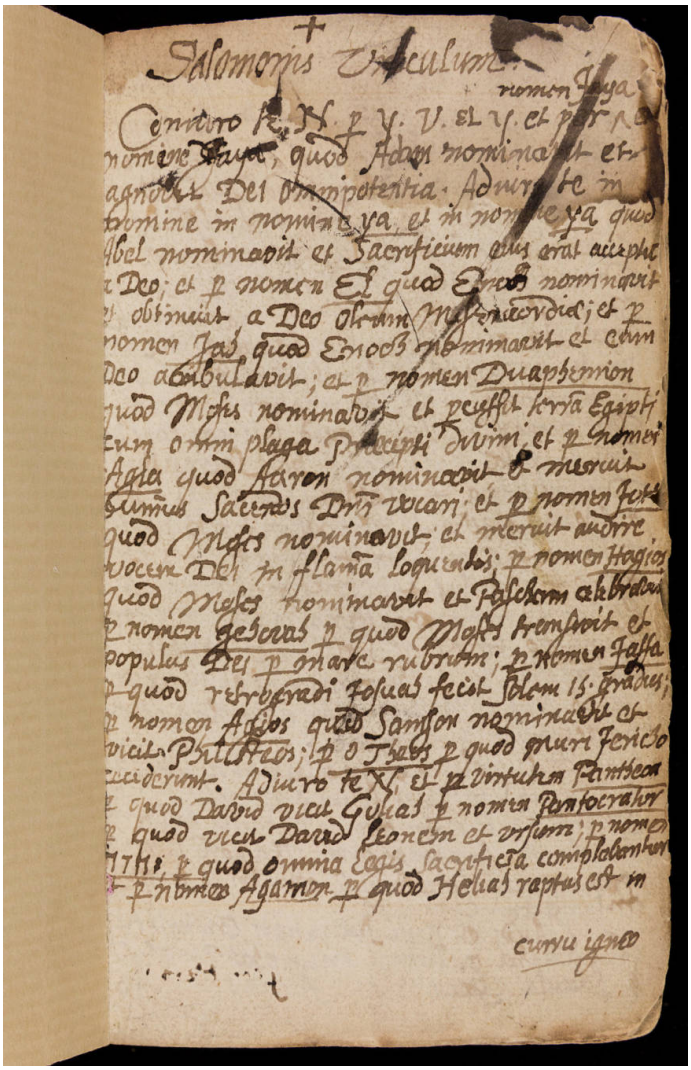

Figure 1. The current front page of Newberry MS 5017. Robert Ashley, Book of Magical Charms, 1600/1699. Iron gall ink on paper, 11 x 16cm. Newberry Library Chicago, Stanton A. Friedberg Collection, VAULT Case MS 5017. Case_ms_5017_005_o2.

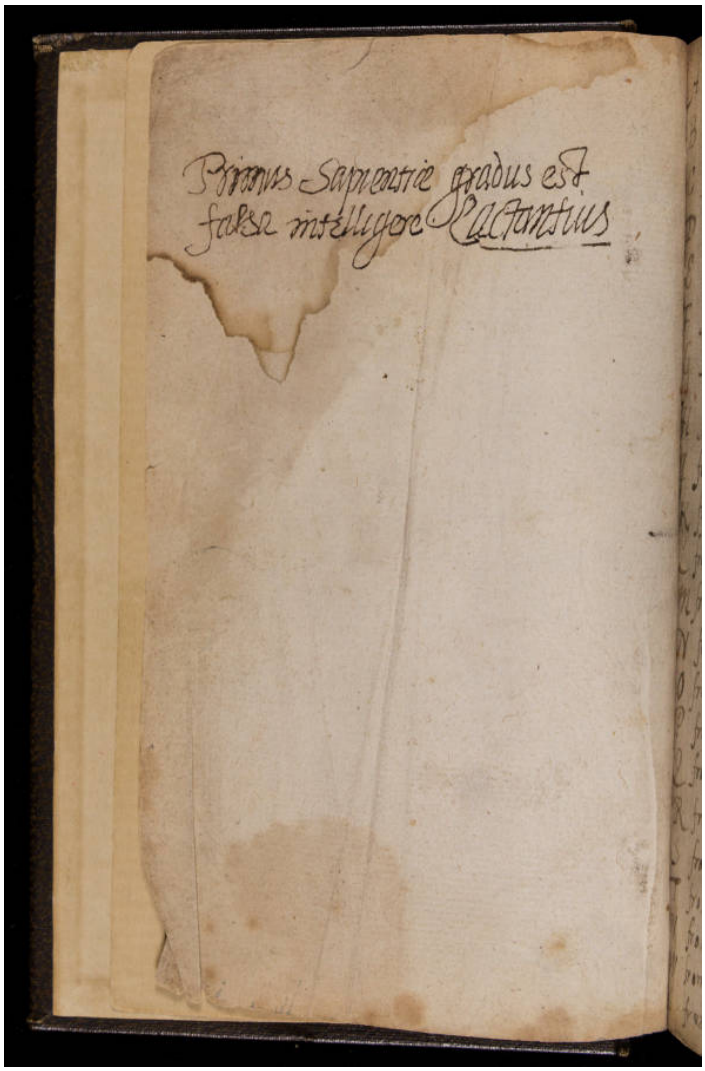

Figure 2. Currently the last page in Newberry MS 5017. Robert Ashley, Book of Magical Charms, 1600/1699. Iron gall ink on paper, 11 x 16cm. Newberry Library Chicago, Stanton A. Friedberg Collection, VAULT Case MS 5017. Case_ms_5017_086_o2.

miscellany that likely belonged to the original binding (see fig. 3).[21] Some of the pages contain watermarks which look to be either a crown or a chalice and grapes. However, they are not clear enough to be useful in discovering the age or provenance of the paper. The foliation in the manuscript is contemporary but contains a number of errors. There is some water damage on the edges of a number of pages, but it is not significant enough to impair the readability of the content. The handwriting in most of the manuscript is very unique; it is different than a uniform and practiced secretary hand, the likes of which can be seen in MS 0102 from the same period located at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign titled *Crafte of conjureynge and howe to rule the ffierye spiritts of ye planetts & make the devyle appearre* (see fig. 4 & 5).[22]

Prior to 2017, when it was digitized, not much could be said of the manuscript other than it was from the seventeenth century, evinced from the newest work cited in it being from 1612, and that it appeared to be a book of spells and magic. However, it was positively known that the manuscript came to the Newberry Library in 1988 as a part of the Stanton A. Friedberg Collection. Friedberg (1908-1997) was a prominent Chicago doctor and medical historian who collected rare medical works. It is unknown how Friedberg came to be in possession of the manuscript, but an undated, unsigned letter was inside of its pages upon its acquisition which can help a little. The letter called it an "Occult manuscript. An interesting common place book containing extracts from writers on magic and necromancy, witchcraft & folklore, in Latin and English … The volume originally belonged to a Richard Grosvenor whose signature is on a blank leaf."[23] This likely referred to Sir Richard Grosvenor,

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[21] *Book of Magical Charms*, 85.

[22] "Crafte of conjureynge and howe to rule the ffierye spiritts of ye planetts & make the devyle appearre," Evetts, Deborah, binder; pre-1650 Manuscript Collection (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Library); University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Rare Book & Manuscript Library. England; approx. 1590. MS 0102.

[23] I found this letter in the physical manuscript file. Not sure how to cite it, but if this goes further we can work on it.

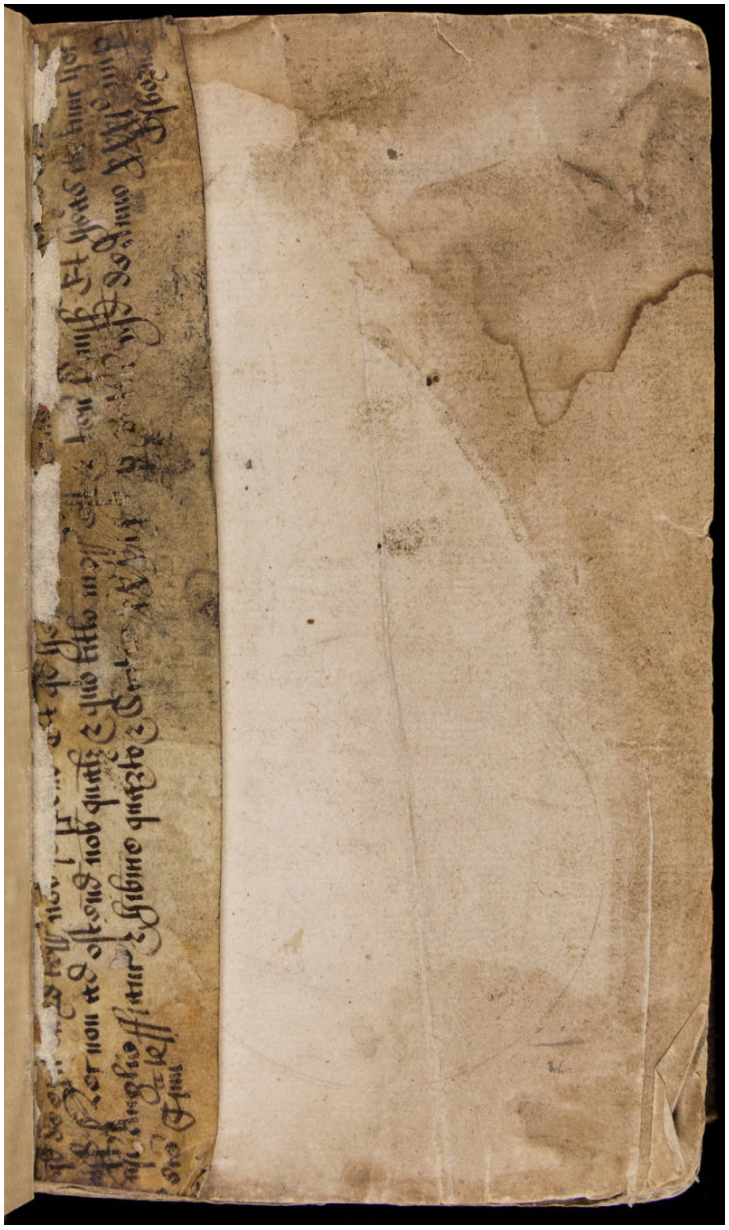

Figure 3. Medieval manuscript scrap, likely the original binding. Robert Ashley, Book of Magical Charms, 1600/1699. Iron gall ink on paper, 11 x 16cm. Newberry Library Chicago, Stanton A. Friedberg Collection, VAULT Case MS 5017. Case_ms_5017_085_o2.

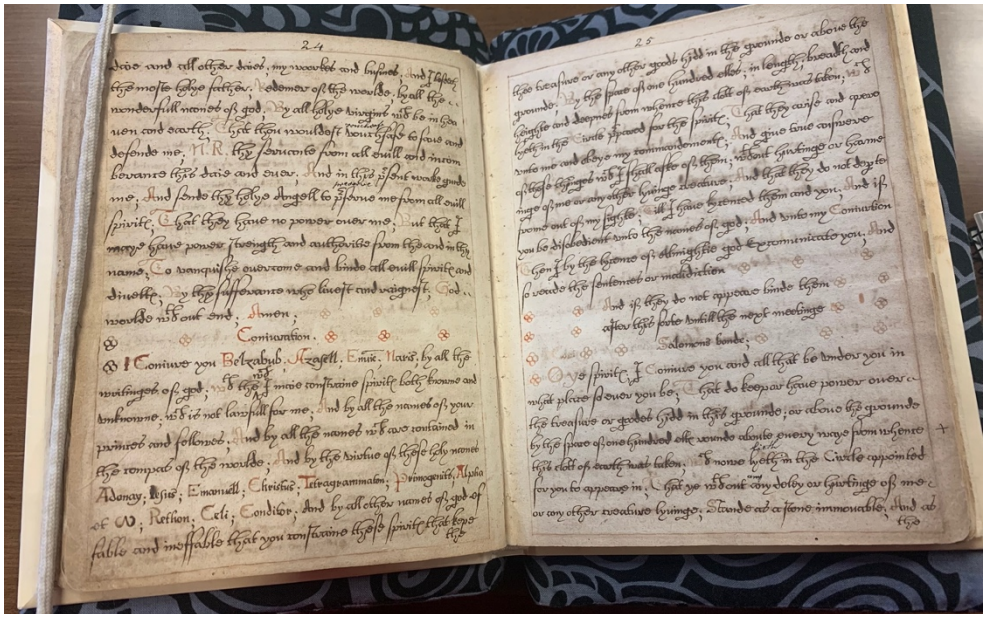

Figure 4. The Elizabethan secretary script. Deborah Evetts (Binder), Crafte of conjureynge and howe to rule the ffierye spiritts of ye planetts & make the devyle appearre, Manuscript, English, ca. 1590. Paper, 190 x 150 mm. bound to 200 x 160 mm. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Library, Pre-1650 Manuscript Collection, 70560589, MS 0102. Photo by author.

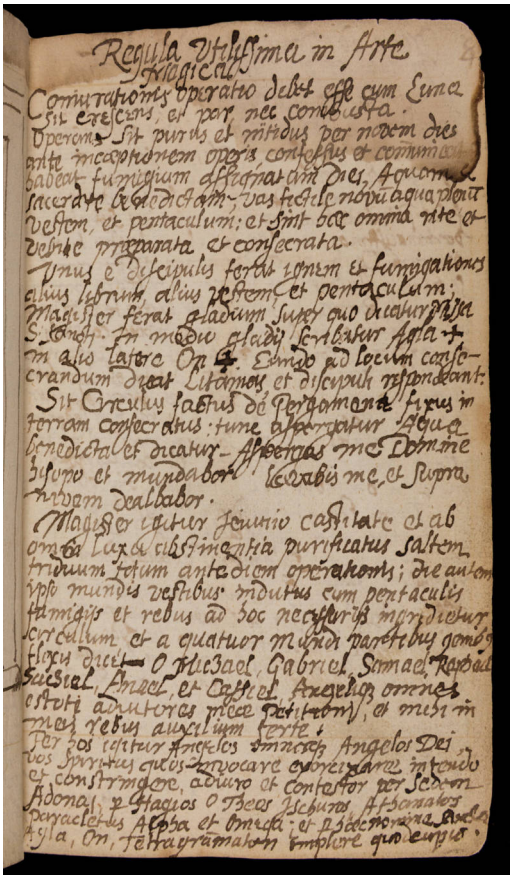

Figure 5. Showing the much more individualistic and distinct handwriting found in Newberry MS 5017. Robert Ashley, Book of Magical Charms, 1600/1699. Iron gall ink on paper, 11 x 16cm. Newberry Library Chicago, Stanton A. Friedberg Collection, VAULT Case MS 5017. Case_ms_5017_013_o2.

1st Baronet (1585-1645), who was a politician and member of the House of Commons between 1621 and 1629.[24] It is known today that Richard Grosvenor did not create this manuscript, however, without further inquiry nothing else can be said about Grosvenor's potential ownership of the manuscript or its journey to Chicago. [25]

Bracketed by copies of *Observationum et curationum medicinalium libri tres* (*Three Books of Medicinal Observations and Treatments*) and *Brvnonis Seidelii liber morborum incurabilium causes* (Bruno Seidel's *Book of Incurable Diseases*) within the Stanton A. Friedberg Collection, *The Book of Magical Charms* is unique. Not just because of its title, but also by virtue of being a manuscript versus being a published book like the rest of the collection.[26] As a manuscript, *The Book of Magical Charms* carries with it the emphasis of intent. The author sat down to write something that was thought to be important for themselves and worth the cost of the paper. Harkness, in *The Jewel House*, tells the story of a London inmate who was a contemporary with Robert Ashley, Clement Draper. Draper compiled a number of notebooks wherein he wrote and recorded about medicine, mining, and chemistry from people who would come visit him in Southwark prison. Harkness emphasizes that what Draper was doing was "an active practice in the early modern period, comparable to constructing a distillation apparatus or molding a pot" and that the "humanist practices of reading and note taking should also be considered among the practical activities oriented toward the acquisition of natural knowledge."[27] A hand-written manuscript, similar to Draper's, was not necessarily meant to be read or even seen by other people. The active mental work required to write and construct the notebooks of natural knowledge that

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[24] Richard Cust, "Grosvenor, Sir Richard, first baronet (1585-1645)," *Oxford University Press* (2004).
[25] Inside of the Sloane Collection at the British Library lives a manuscript, Sloane MS 3235, which was composed by Richard Grosvenor's daughter, Mary. It is described as a 'medical receipt book' and was composed sometime in the mid-seventeenth century. Analysis of this manuscript in connection to Newberry MS 5017 could shed light on whether *The Book of Magical Charms* lived within the Grosvenor household for Mary to have been able to read and copy from.
[26] Of the 322 items, there are 19 manuscripts: 1 is a card catalog, 1 is an autograph collection, 8 of them are notes of some sort, 1 is a doctor's journal, 2 are letters, and 5 are works of some sort from the 19th century.
[27] Harkness, *The Jewel House,* 180 & 182.

Draper created is the same that would have been required of Ashley when he created Newberry MS 5017.

In 2017, the Newberry Library conducted a crowd-sourced transcription project, 'Transcribing Faith', with MS 5017 holding a prominent spot.[28] Through the popularity of this project, Renae Satterley was able to recognize the specific handwriting as belonging to Robert Ashley (1565-1641), founder of the Library at Middle Temple, one of the four inns of court in London, where Satterley now serves as librarian.[29] In order to situate Robert Ashley at the center of this enterprise, we must first be introduced to our author and his life. Like many other men, he faced economic troubles throughout his life, but, unlike others, he amassed a personal library of approximately 3700 volumes which served as the foundational texts for Middle Temple Library.[30]

He attended a number of primary schools and obtained his bachelor's degree from Magdalen Hall in 1584. In the same year he became a fellow of Magdalen College whence he also obtained his master of arts degree in 1587. Shortly thereafter he was admitted to Middle Temple but left due to family issues and dedicated two years of his life to the study of languages, politics, and music. During this era of study, Ashley visited France and published two translations titled *L'Uranie ou Muse Celeste* and *A Comparison of the English and Spanish Nation*. He returned to France in 1591/2 as a part of the English army to fight with the Huguenot king of Navarre against the Catholic House of Guise. In 1594 he was called to the Bar and thenceforth became a lawyer. In this year he also published another

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[28] The manuscript was an overnight success, with articles and blog posts popping up alongside the very popular transcription project: over 300,000 reads between May and October of 2017. The *Chicago Tribune* called the *Book of Magical Charms* "the stuff of nightmares" and mentions a reader, Gary the Wiccan from Kentucky, preferring to call it the 'Book of Shadows,' likening it to the religious text of Wicca, Website. In a call for people to help with the transcription project, Lauren Tousignant of the *New York Post* claims that experts had already discerned that the manuscript was "written by two anonymous witches (probably) in England in the 1600s." Website.

[29] Satterley, "Robert Ashley and the Authorship of Newberry MS 5017, *The Book of Magical Charms*." This claim was further confirmed by the Newbery's resident calligrapher.

[30] Renae Satterley, "To be unto them as the foundation of a library': the Books of Robert Ashley at the Middle Temple," in *The Book Trade in Early Modern England: Practices, Perceptions, Connections*, ed. by John Hinks and Victoria Gardner (New Castle & London: Oak Knoll Press & The British Library, 2013), 61. There may be a link between his debt and his library as many bibliophile's can attest to the addiction of buying books.

translation: Louis Lorey's *Of the Interchangeable Course.* Not much is known about the next few decades of his life, but he most likely was practicing as a lawyer in London and continued working on his translations. In 1617 it is mentioned that Ashley was in The Hague and shortly thereafter he traveled to France and to Spain, where he visited the Escorial Library. In 1626 he contributed to the *Memoriæ honoratissimi domini Francisci* with a poem and in 1633 he published a translation of Cristoforo Borri's *Cochin-China*. In 1637 he finished his last published translation of Virgilio Malvezzi's *David Persecuted.* However, Ashley had a number of unfinished and unpublished translations and writings, including his *On Honour*, his *Vita*, and a partial translation of Miguel de Luna's *Almansor*. Ashley died in 1641.

Born in 1565, Ashley grew up in the England of Elizabeth I and would have heard of her court astrologer and magician, John Dee, and have read from Agrippa's *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*.[31] He most likely grew up in a household that taught the medicinal uses of plants based on their physical appearance and believed that dreams could portend the future, and so was exposed to experimentation in terms of the domestic sphere. He likely read parts of the medieval manual on witchcraft, *Malleus Maleficarum.*[32] He also read William Gilbert's *On the Magnet* from 1600 which was one of the earliest works to make the reader a 'virtual witness' to scientific experimentation.[33] Later in life he would see the beginning of the Stuart monarchy and read James I's textbook for hunting witches, *Daemonologie*, and witness the rising numbers of witchcraft trials in and around London. He would also have heard of Tycho Brahe's supernova in *De nova stella* and read about his refuting all of Aristotelian astronomy. He read Galileo's *Starry Messenger* and witnessed the introduction of the telescope into astronomical studies. Ashley, himself, wrote a poem in praise of Francis Bacon and owned a copy of Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, which argued that witches were fictitious creatures. He also owned multiple

[31] The Honourable Society of the Middle Temple, "Library Manuscript Catalogues." Last accessed on September 10, 2022, Second Seate A Side, 26: *Cor. Agrippi opera Tom, Lugo.*
[32] 12, Second Seate
[33] Wootton, *The Invention of Science: A New History of the Scientific Revolution*, 315 & The Honourable Society of the Middle Temple, "Library Manuscript Catalogues." Last accessed on September 10, 2022, Fourth Seate B Side, 11.

books on alchemy and had a prophetic dream about an alchemical dragon. Fascinated with Agrippa's *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, Ashley may have picked up another of his works, *De vanitate scientiarum et atrium*. Imagine the confusion he must have felt when Agrippa disavowed the occult arts that he had previously upheld as mere superstitions.[34] Magic and science were coexisting in a way that was not to be found in later eras of English history. Less than a century later figures like Sir Hans Sloane were absorbed in a culture of occultism, exemplified by his collecting manuscripts to expose the folly of those who believed in such ways and "to see the madness contained within [them]."[35] Historian Paul Kléber Monod, similarly, argues that it is only after 1688 that "occult thinking was set adrift from natural philosophy and experimental science."[36] With this, Newberry MS 5017 and its known attribution to Robert Ashley, provide an extraordinary glimpse into the thought processes of a professional Londoner when magic and science were just beginning to be split from one another. Magic and science were still a part of the same conversation.

The Library collection he left to Middle Temple is of particular importance when considering what knowledge and ideas Ashley was privy to. While no documentation from Ashley's life exist cataloguing his library, a manuscript catalogue from shortly after his death does survive.[37] Of the nearly 4000 books mentioned in the catalogue, 612 contain Ashley's annotations and handwritings, and can

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[34] Modern scholarship has pointed out that this was more a rhetorical device used by Agrippa to advocate for a restoration of Christian magic, but that is not to say that Ashley would have read it that way. See: Vittoria Perrone Compagni, "'Dispersa Intentio.' Alchemy, Magic and Scepticism in Agrippa," *Early Science and Medicine* 5, no. 2, Alchemy and Hermeticism (2000).

[35] Michael Hunter, *The Decline of Magic: Britain in the Enlightenment* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2020), 126. For more on Sir Hans Sloane see: *From Books to Bezoars: Sir Hans Sloane and his Collections*. Edited by Alison Walker, Arthur MacGregor, and Michael Hunter (London: The British Library, 2012).

[36] Paul Kléber Monod, *Solomon's Secret Arts: The Occult in the Age of Enlightenment* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2013), 16.

[37] The Honourable Society of the Middle Temple, "Library Manuscript Catalogues." Last accessed on September 10, 2022. Website. The executor of Ashley's will, William Cox, was also the first Library Keep from 1642 to 1655. It is unknown whether the manuscript catalogue that exists now is the one composed by Cox, however very few books were collected by the library during the seventeenth century, so it can be assumed that the catalogue is an accurate representation of Ashley's collection. For the rest of the paper I will use "Library Manuscript Catalogues" along with the catalogue number and page in the footnotes.

therefore be directly attributed to his ownership.[38] However, only around 130 books were added to Middle Temple Library in the seventeenth century, so this catalogue can be used as a written collection of Ashley's library.[39] The items in the collection range from sections on 'Morall philosophy and politickes' to 'Mathematicall sciences', with a generous section devoted to "Naturall philosophy medicine & chemistry'.[40] In a history of the inn from 1734, Charles Worsley mentions that the "handsome Library, [was] furnished with many thousand volumes, in all sciences and languages."[41] In addition to his translation projects and work as a lawyer, he left behind his autobiography, known as the *Vita*, which survives in a single manuscript copy as Sloane MS 2131.[42] Though only five pages long, Ashley's *Vita* is crucial to understanding who this bibliophile was. Compiled in 1622 when Ashley was fifty-seven, the *Vita* is chalk full of biographical details, misfortunes in health and theft, trials with debt, familial relations, and accounts of prophetic dreams.[43]

Ashley's training as a lawyer gave him a practical approach to knowledge. Similar to Francis Bacon, Clement Draper, and the other new scientists, Ashley sought to understand his environment. In his will, Ashley says that he had "addicted my selfe to the Generall Study of the great Booke of the World wherein All the glorious works of God are comprehended: for the Attayneing of some knowledge whereof I have not spared my Labour or Expence in procuring the Principall Writings in their severall languages espetially such as had opportunitie to be Acquainted with the most Remote and Unknowne parts."[44] Anne Lawrence-Mathers and Caroline Escober-Vargas, in *Magic and Medieval*

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[38] Satterley, "To be unto them as the foundation of a library': the Books of Robert Ashley at the Middle Temple," 73.
[39] Satterley, "To be unto them as the foundation of a library': the Books of Robert Ashley at the Middle Temple," 71.
[40] "Library Manuscript Catalogues," Third Seate A Side, Fourth Seate B Side, Second Seate A Side.
[41] Charles Worsley, *Master Worsley's Book on the History and Constitution of the Honourable Society of the Middle Temple (1734)*, ed. by Arthur Robert Ingpen, K.C. (London: Printed at the Chiswick Press and Published by the Order of the Masters of the Bench), 107.
[42] The fact that the autobiography lives in the Sloane collection is fascinating by itself, as it is unknown how or why Sloane would have procured it. Did he perhaps known about Newberry MS 5017 but could not collect the pair?
[43] "Sloane MS 2131 Chartaceus, in folio, ff. 24, Sec. XVII; cum 2566 compactus … 2. R. Ashley Vita, ab ipso conscripta. Ff. 16-20. Incipit, 'Miserationes Domini narrabo cum vitae meae rationes enarrabo.'." Western Manuscipts. British Library. 17th century.
[44] Satterley, "Transcription and Translation of Sloane MS. 2131, Robert Ashley's (1565-1641) *Vita*," 30.

Society, described the perfectly positioned person able to practice or learn about magic and the occult as being a learned university graduate who would therefore have access to the necessary equipment. He would be fluent in Latin and have access to a well-stocked library. Knowledge of the law would also be extremely helpful, as it would aid the practitioner if he were to dabble in magic forbade by the law.[45] Robert Ashley is the perfect candidate. In addition, Ashley's legal training would have had a serious influence on the way he interpreted and generated knowledge. He taught himself, as did others in the legal education, how to read, annotate, and cross-reference works.[46] In short, he would have developed a highly advanced way of reasoning. In many of his books, Ashley had the motto '*nulla maior est jactura scienti quam temporis*' inscribed on the title pages. This translates loosely to 'for the wise man, no loss is greater than that of his time."[47] Through this, in conjunction with the Lactantius maxim in Newberry MS 5017, 'the first step toward knowledge is to distinguish what is false', Ashley has presented himself as a man interested in understanding the world. Satterley sees Ashley as doing this through books. However, magic and science were on the brink of no longer being able to coexist peacefully and the books were not enough for Ashley. He used his practically-minded brain and sought to learn what to believe for himself. He was rationalizing magic.

The gradual popular transition from magical to scientific belief in Europe has not been given its fair assessment. Instead we are given what David Wootton presents in *The Invention of Science: A New History of the Scientific Revolution*: an overly simplified comparison of a man from 1600 and another from 1733. Wootton's man from 1600 would have read James I's *Daemonologie* and believed wholeheartedly in witches, werewolves, magicians, unicorns, that a murdered body would bleed in the presence of the murderer, that the shape and color of a plant were clues as to its intended use for man, in alchemy

[45] Lawrence-Mathers, *Magic and Medieval Society,* 44.
[46] Satterley, "To be unto them as the foundation of a library': the Books of Robert Ashley at the Middle Temple," 83.
[47] Satterley, "To be unto them as the foundation of a library': the Books of Robert Ashley at the Middle Temple," 83.

and the pursuit for the elixir, in astrology, and probably owned a couple dozen books.[48] Wootton then shifts to a man in the same social strata and same level of education but in the year 1733. If we take the man from 1600 to be our Robert Ashley, then perhaps this 1733 man would be his great grandson. He would have looked through a telescope and a microscope, he no longer believed in witches, werewolves, magic, alchemy, or astrology, he knew that the shape of plants said nothing about their medical properties, he understood that the earth goes around the sun, his belief in the Bible was no longer contingent upon his belief in miracles, and he owned thousands of books.[49] Throughout the rest of his book, Wootton argues that the Scientific Revolution was a pivotal moment in human development and quantifies this change through a brilliant linguistic interpretation of the period. What he does not do in this endeavor is explain how people's minds were actually changed; how, in only 133 years, the mindset of the average Londoner had so completely shifted.[50] Newberry MS 5017 offers a possible explanation for this phenomenon on the level of the professional class in early modern London.

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The terms occult, natural magic, and necromancy have been thrown around quite a bit thus far and they deserve to be explained. To use our modern definitions of these terms would be committing a grave anachronism when analyzing early modern London. The term occult first originated in the sixteenth century to refer to the hidden or secret powers that informed natural philosophy, which is the medieval study of the natural world and the phenomena connected to it.[51]

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[48] Wootton, *The Invention of Science*, 6-7.
[49] Wootton, *The Invention of Science*, 10-11.
[50] Wootton makes the argument that with the publication of Newton's *Principia* any need for the belief in magic was no longer necessary. The law of gravity necessitated the role of God, so witches and miracles were no longer needed to defend God's reality. Very similar argument to *Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance*, ed. by Brian Vickers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) which argues that science is 'open' and 'progressive' where the occult is 'closed' and 'ignorant of criticism'. But this assessment is not satisfying as it takes for granted a level of cognizant recognition that cannot be assumed.
[51] Anne Lawrence-Mathers and Caroline Escobar-Vargas. *Magic and Medieval Society* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), 3.

Natural philosophy, also referred to as *Occulta philosophia*, or the 'occult sciences', contained the curriculums of astrology, alchemy, and natural magic, among others.[52] Astrology, often used alongside medicine, was arguably the least contentious of the occult arts, but its efficacy became questionable with the rise of modern medicine during the age of reason. Alchemy, also known as the Hermetic philosophy, dates back to the twelfth century in Europe and is best characterized as the effort to transmutate, or change, one substance into another. It was made illegal in England, unless sanctioned by the crown, in case an alchemist was able to affect the most desirable end and make gold from base metals. The third most common occult art is natural magic. In early modern Europe it was understood that there were two main branches of magical practice, those being natural magic and demonic magic, with only natural magic being a branch of natural philosophy. Natural magic contains the literatures of bestiaries, herbals, and lapidaries due to the medicinal nature of the craft. The natural magician was using the secrets of nature, God's handiwork, to help humans and therefore was sanctioned by the Church.

Demonic magic, on the other hand, was a perversion of religion; one that turned away from God and sought the help of demons in human affairs.[53] Witchcraft is considered to be under the umbrella or demonic magic. Often grouped with demonic magic is the practice of necromancy. Necromancy, as we understand it now, is the conjuring of the dead, but in the later medieval and early modern worlds this was slightly different. The necromancers that were known to people of seventeenth century Europe included Circe and the Witch of Endor, and when their stories were interpreted it was assumed that the dead could not be brought back to life.[54] With this, the deceased

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[52] Kocku Von Stuckrad, *Locations of Knowledge in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Esoteric Discourse and Western Identities* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010), 143.
[53] Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 9.
[54] Circe is the sorceress who held Odysseus captive. She practiced a form of magic called *pharmakeia* and was able to transform people's forms, most famously she would change the men who visited her island into pigs. The Witch of Endor is a character in the Book of Samuel in the Christian Old Testament. She is described as a female sorcerer who was visited by Saul and commanded to make contact with the dead Prophet Samuel.

that were brought back were demons who took on the appearance of the dead and pretended to be them.[55] Both demonic magic and necromancy, then, involved the conjuring of and communication with demons in one form or another and the two terms became synonymous.

While these categories, natural magic and necromancy, seem clear on paper, in practice they were very tangled.[56] The numerous examples of midwives and town healers accused of witchcraft or consorting with demons when something goes awry highlights the uncertainty of the bounds of these divisions. When magic was done with evil intent it is referred to as *maleficium*, which is sometimes loosely translated to witchcraft or sorcery.[57] *Maleficium* and its effects, *maleficia*, were almost exclusively linked to demonic magic, so when an individual was blighted by some ill fortune they could accuse people of performing demonic magic. In broad categories, magic that was seen as harmful, both spiritually and physically, included love magic, divinations, and incantations while natural magic included the healing arts.[58] The demarcations that we have now to differentiate these categories were not as compartmentalized in the seventeenth century and few people outside of the sophisticated elite would have been bothered by questions of definition.[59] With the inherent vagueness of these categories, it is reasonable to imagine that some who were practicing what we would call natural magic would be accused of consorting with demons. As this continued to happen the occult sciences, as a

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[55] Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 152.
[56] Lawrence-Mathers, *Magic and Medieval Society,* 59.
[57] There is not a clear English translation for *maleficium* and so I am choosing to use the Latin when referring to this idea of ill-intended magic. For more on the history of this word and its relation to magic see Edward Bever, "The Varieties of Maleficium," in *The Realities of Witchcraft and Popular Magic in Early Modern Europe. Palgrave Historical Studies in Witchcraft and Magic* (Palgrave Macmillan: London, 2008), pp. 5-39 and Michael D. Bailey, "From Sorcery to Witchcraft: Clerical Conceptions of Magic in the Later Middle Ages," *Speculum* 76 (2001), pp. 960-990.
[58] Lawrence-Mathers, *Magic and Medieval Society,* 16. For an interesting example of the tangible remains of love magic see Christiane Andersson, "Harlots and Camp Followers: Swiss Renaissance Drawings of Young Women circa 1520," in *The Youth of Early Modern Women*, ed. by Cohen E.S. & M. Reeves, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), pp. 117-134.
[59] Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages,* 9. Some of those who were bothered with definitions include Giambattista della Porta who "was scrupulous in separating natural magic from the "infamous and unhappie" kind, that had to do with "foul spirits … Inchantments, and wicked Curiousity": that is, with anything supernatural or otherworldly. Natural magic, by contrast, was simply "the dutiful hand-maid" of nature in revealing the secrets of occult things." In Paul Kléber Monod, *Solomon's Secret Arts: The Occult in the Age of Enlightenment* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2013), 4.

whole, were integrated into other forms of necromancy.[60] What developed was that by the time the seventeenth century was approaching, cunning folk and town healers were accused of witchcraft which had been made illegal in England, alchemy was listed in books in the chapter on necromancy, and Catholic miracles were explained as instances of demonic interjection. However, this is not to say that those who believed the occult sciences to be true had disappeared by the seventeenth century. In the introduction to the 1651 English edition of Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa's *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* the translator, J.F., wrote that,

> But this is true, this is sublime, but Occult Philosophy: to understand the mysterious influences of the intellectual world upon the Celestial, and of both upon the Terrestrial; and to know how to dispose, and fit our selves so, as to be capable of receiving those superiour operations, whereby we may be enabled to operate wonderfull things, which indeed seem impossible, or at least unlawfull, when as indeed they may be effected by a natural power, and without either offence to God, or violation of Religion. To defend Kingdoms, to discover the secret counsels or men, to overcome enemies, to redeem captives, to increase riches, to procure the favor of men, to expell diseases, to preserve health, to prolong life, to renew youth, to foretell future events, to see and know things done many miles off, and such like as these, by virtue of superior influences, may seem things incredible; Yet read but the ensuing Treatise, and thou shalt see the possibility thereof confirmed both by reason, and example.[61]

The disagreement and misunderstanding of terms is just as palpable today as it was in the seventeenth century. With a firmer understanding of Ashley, his world, and his place in it, let us move into the contents of our *Book of Magical Charms*.

Health & Wealth

Of the 86 pages in the *Book of Magical Charms* to have handwriting on them, 38 contain what can be considered natural magic. In 1558, Italian scholar Giambattista Della Porta made clear that natural

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[60] William Eamon attributes part of this to religion. "In its attempt to protect the faithful from the superstitions of supernatural magic, the Church condemned all magical activity as heretical. In the heat of the Reformation conflict, the net grew too large. Natural magic was caught up along with popular superstitions, witchcraft, and consort with demons." William Eamon, *Science and the Secrets of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 195.

[61] Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, trans. by J.F. (London: R.W. for Gregory Moule, 1651), image 12 (unnumbered pages).

magic was different from the other type of magic, which is "infamous, and unhappie, because it has to do with foul spirits, and consists of Inchantments and wicked Curiosity."[62] Della Porta here is referring to necromancy or demonic magic, dealing with spirits, demons, and conjuring. Natural magic was, on the whole, an acceptable practice: "all excellent wise men do admit and embrace [it], and worship with great applause … that Magick is nothing else but the survey of the whole course of Nature."[63] Natural magic was a practical way to bring forth the occult properties of nature, properties that were established and made by God. Through this, natural magic was an applause to the glory of God.[64] Humankind was discovering and using the secrets of nature to their own benefit. This is where lapidaries, herbals, bestiaries, and books on astrology fit into the accepted dogma of the medieval and early modern era. Rather than relying on the influence of spirits or demons, books of this sort made sense of the natural world with the intervention of God.[65]

The most common remnants of natural magic to exist today can be found in books of medical recipes. Historian Elaine Leong notes that hundreds of these manuscripts survive in modern libraries and archives and are "brimming with recipes."[66] In the *Book of Magical Charms*, Robert Ashley has recipes ranging from cures for the bloody flux (dysentery) to sunburns. In his analysis of books very similar to that of Newberry MS 5017, Frank Klaassen, arguing that the manuscripts were used by cunning folk, notes that the small size of the book made it portable and therefore easier to use.[67] Using the same assumption as Klaassen, I argue that Robert Ashley was carrying his pocket-sized book with him to conduct his medicinal recipes and to collect new information when it presented itself.

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[62] Philip C. Almond, *England's First Demonologist: Reginald Scot & 'The Discoverie of Witchcraft'* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2011), 134.
[63] Almond, *England's First Demonologist: Reginald Scot & 'The Discoverie of Witchcraft'*, 134.
[64] Almond, *England's First Demonologist: Reginald Scot & 'The Discoverie of Witchcraft'*, 165.
[65] Lawrence-Mathers, *Magic and Medieval Society,* 52-53.
[66] Elaine Leong, *Recipes and Everyday Knowledge: Medicine, Science, and the Household in Early Modern England* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2018), 2.
[67] Klaassen, *Making Magic in Elizabethan England*, 19-20.

The reasoning behind this assumption is due to the correlation between the recipes in the *Book of Magical Charms* and the injuries and maladies we know Robert Ashley to have gone through in his life. In his *Vita,* Ashley mentions a number of bodily afflictions he faced, such as having tertian fever as a child, smallpox twice, a thorn stuck into the pupil of his right eye, damage to his "patella or rotula," surgery to remove a tumor, "a mild disease, namely difficulty in passing urine," a head wound from a dagger fight, a procedure called a "*punctum aureum*" wherein "two French fraudsters … tore open [his] scrotum," and a "malignant humour" in his thighs.[68] Remedies for nearly all of these ailments can be found in Newberry MS 5017. Though there is not a direct recipe for tertian fever or smallpox, Ashley has recipes "For any Ache," "To help the Crampe," "To take away a Tetter [pimple] that it shall not be perceived," "For any pimples in the face," "To bring a Sore to an hed," "To break a Boyle," "for Skabbie hands," "For the Sweating Sickness," "An Ointment for any Ache," two for "A Water to heale a Sore," "An Excelent Water for all old Sores, Ulcers, and Cankers, and especially those that come of the French Poxe," and "A good Remedy for the cold."[69] There is more of a clear connection between his eye injury and Newberry MS 5017. The *Book of Magical Charms* has recipes "To get out a thorn that pricketh" and "for Ache in the Eyes."[70] These recipes are very practical when compared with another recipe for a thorn in the eye from the Antiphoner Notebook in Klaassen's *Making Magic in Elizabethan England*. The *Book of Magical Charms* says to "Take hardlime being Stired on a piece Leather lay it to the place it will help" to help remove a thorn.[71] Whereas the Antiphoner Notebook claims that "In y^{e} worship of y^{e} crowning of our Lord god kneele downe & say 5 pr nr. 5 aveys & a creede & wth ye grace of god yt shall neuer dare the more."[72] The Antiphoner Notebook

[68] Satterley, "Transcription and Translation of Sloane MS. 2131, Robert Ashley's (1565-1641) *Vita*," 17-25.
[69] *Book of Magical Charms*, 52, 23, 44, 46, 48, 53, 56, 58, 60, 40 & 60, 41, and 57.
[70] *Book of Magical Charms*, 43 and 54.
[71] *Book of Magical Charms*, 43.
[72] Klaassen, *Making Magic in Elizabethan England*, 48.

contains what we could call a charm, calling upon the assistance of the divine through prayer and action, rather than a practical recipe like that found in the *Book of Magical Charms*.

The injury to his patella that Ashley sustained could have continued to bother him later in life and he may have wanted to treat it with any one of his five recipes against aches and soreness. For fear of further damage, he also had a recipe "for one that is priched in a Joinet."[73] To deal with both of his ailments against tumors and "humours," Ashley had "A Pultis to dry an humour" and a plaster for stitches, which he would have received after his tumor surgery.[74] For his head wound he has a charm to staunch blood, another for swelling, three for a water to heal a sore, and three more for a bleeding wound.[75] He also has a recipe to make hair grow, a possible side effect of his head wound he wished to correct.[76] Perhaps the most evident example of a desire to ease his pains is in his interest in uroscopy and the healing of kidney- and gallstones. The *Book of Magical Charms* has a recipe "for one that cannot pisse" and another "To make a man or woman pisse."[77] He also has four recipes for medicines for "the Stone."[78] One of them says to

> Take a Bottle of White Wine a Spoonful of fine beaten pepper and 6. eggshells be now layd the better; dry them by the fire or in an Oven, beat them to fine powder and put them with the pepper into a bottle the same being close stopped let som one that is strong tumble and shake them together a quarter of an houre, then hang it up with the Bottome upwards. Or take frankincense, onions, Saffron and fry them. It being eaten is good to remove the Stone and break winde.[79]

Within his library he also owned at least three books on kidneys and their diseases and another eight on uroscopy.[80] Perhaps Ashley had to resort to his gruesome surgical encounter because none of his recipes for his gallstones were effective? This very likely is an example where his experimentation, or

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[73] *Book of Magical Charms*, 54.
[74] *Book of Magical Charms*, 51 and 52.
[75] *Book of Magical Charms*, 61, 47, 40, 41, 60, 23, 42, 55.
[76] *Book of Magical Charms*, 50.
[77] *Book of Magical Charms*, 53 and 57.
[78] *Book of Magical Charms*, 2 on 50, 57, 72.
[79] *Book of Magical Charms*, 50.
[80] Satterley, "Robert Ashley and the Authorship of Newberry MS 5017, *The Book of Magical Charms*," 282.

his rational magic, with natural magic and folk medicine did not work and he had to resort to newer forms of surgery.[81]

Apart from the specific needs that Ashley had, he owned a copy of Albertus Magnus's *Women's Secrets* and the *Flowers of Avicenna*; two of the most popular books on biology, medicine, and health in the early modern era.[82] He also had a number of books that would fit into the genres of bestiaries, herbals, and lapidaries. Some include Albertus Magnus's *Of the Virtues of Herbs, Stones, and Certain Beasts*, as well as his *Book of Minerals*, and Aristotle's *Historia de Animalibus*.[83] Within the *Book of Magical Charms*, Ashley has a section titled "The extraordinarie virtues of certain herbs" and contains passages about a number of different herbs and plants. For cardamom he writes, "The 5. Herb is Cardammum which is hot and a good complexion. It is of a middle height giveth Gladness to him that useth it, bering together Spirits. Eat of this when u makest Invocation or make a fume of it."[84] Herbals and bestiaries were very commonly used in medical diagnoses and treatments, which helps to further emphasize the blurry boundaries between magic and science. From Sloane MS 1047 we have a collection of medical recipes designed for King Henry VIII (c. 1540-1545). This collection reveals that even the king of England relied heavily on herbal, lapidary, and chemical recipes. Unicorn horn, common animals in medieval bestiaries, is a regular ingredient in Henry's medical book. It was believed that unicorn horn could detect and neutralize poison, cure plague and fevers, and act as an elixir for wounds.[85] Unicorn horn was a hard to come by ingredient, often vendors would sell narwhal horns and call them unicorn horns. It is worth noting that of the ingredients in the *Book of Magical Charms*, almost all are easily acquired. Unicorn horn, fern seeds (ferns do not have seeds and due to this many thought it would

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[81] This surgery also sounds very similar to that gone through by Samuel Pepys and both sound particularly nasty. For a further description of this surgery see Samuel Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, edited by Richard Le Galliene (Modern Library, 2001).
[82] "Library Manuscript Catalogues," Second Seate A Side, 46 and Second Seate A Side, 29.
[83] "Library Manuscript Catalogues," Second Seate A Side, 6; Second Seate A Side, 43; Fourth Seate A Side, 8.
[84] *Book of Magical Charms*, 105.
[85] William Jackson, "The use of unicorn horn in medicine," *The Pharmaceutical Journal,* vol. 273 (December 2004), 925.

make someone who acquired them invisible), and other more valuable ingredients are rarely, if ever, mentioned in Newberry MS 5017 further emphasizing that this was a practical, not a theoretical, book.

Another instance wherein Ashley places himself well within the accepted bounds of medicinal knowledge is by his incorporation of the occult science of astrology. Throughout the medieval ages, a concept existed wherein the body of man was a sort of mirror of the universe: as above so below, microcosm of the macrocosm, etc. A prevailing image is that of the zodiac man, where the different zodiac symbols were ascribed to different parts of the human body; Pisces rules the feet, Aquarius the ankles, Capricorn the knees, Sagittarius the thighs, Scorpio the genitals, Libra the hips and buttocks, Virgo the stomach and intestines, Leo the shoulder blades and sides, Cancer the breast, Gemini the arms and shoulders, Taurus the neck, and Aries the head (see fig. 6).[86] These correlations were assumed by medical professionals and prescriptions were often made to happen under a certain moon or sign in order to produce a more desired outcome. Robert Ashley has an entire page dedicated to "Regula" or rules and they are all defined by the symbols of the zodiac.

> Quando ☉ est in ♈, et ☾ similiter, vel est in domo sua tunc bonum est opera per ♂.
> Quando ☉ est in ♉, et ☾ similiter, bonum est operari per ♀.
> Quando ☉ est in ♊, et ☾ similiter, bonum est operari per ☿.
> Quando ☉ est in ♋, et ☾ similiter, bonum est operari per Lunam.
> Quando ☉ est in ♌, et ☾ similiter, bonum est operari per Solem.
> Quando ☉ est in ♍, et ☾ similiter, bonum est operari per ☿.
> Quando ☉ est in ♎, et ☾ similiter, bonum est operari per ♀.
> Quando ☉ est in ♏, et ☾ similiter, bonum est operari per ♂.
> Quando ☉ est in ♐, et ☾ similiter, bonum est operari per ♃.
> Quando ☉ est in ♑, et ☾ similiter, bonum est operari per ♄.
> Quando ☉ est in ♒, et ☾ similiter, bonum est operari per ♄.
> Quando ☉ est in ♓, et ☾ similiter, bonum est operari per ♃.
>
> When the sun is in Aries, and the moon is also, or is in its own house, then it is good to work through Mars. When the sun is in Taurus, and the moon is also, it is good to work through Venus.
> When the sun is in Gemini, and the moon is also, it is good to work through Mercury.

[86] Marcus Manilius, *Astronomicon – Volume 4* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 92.

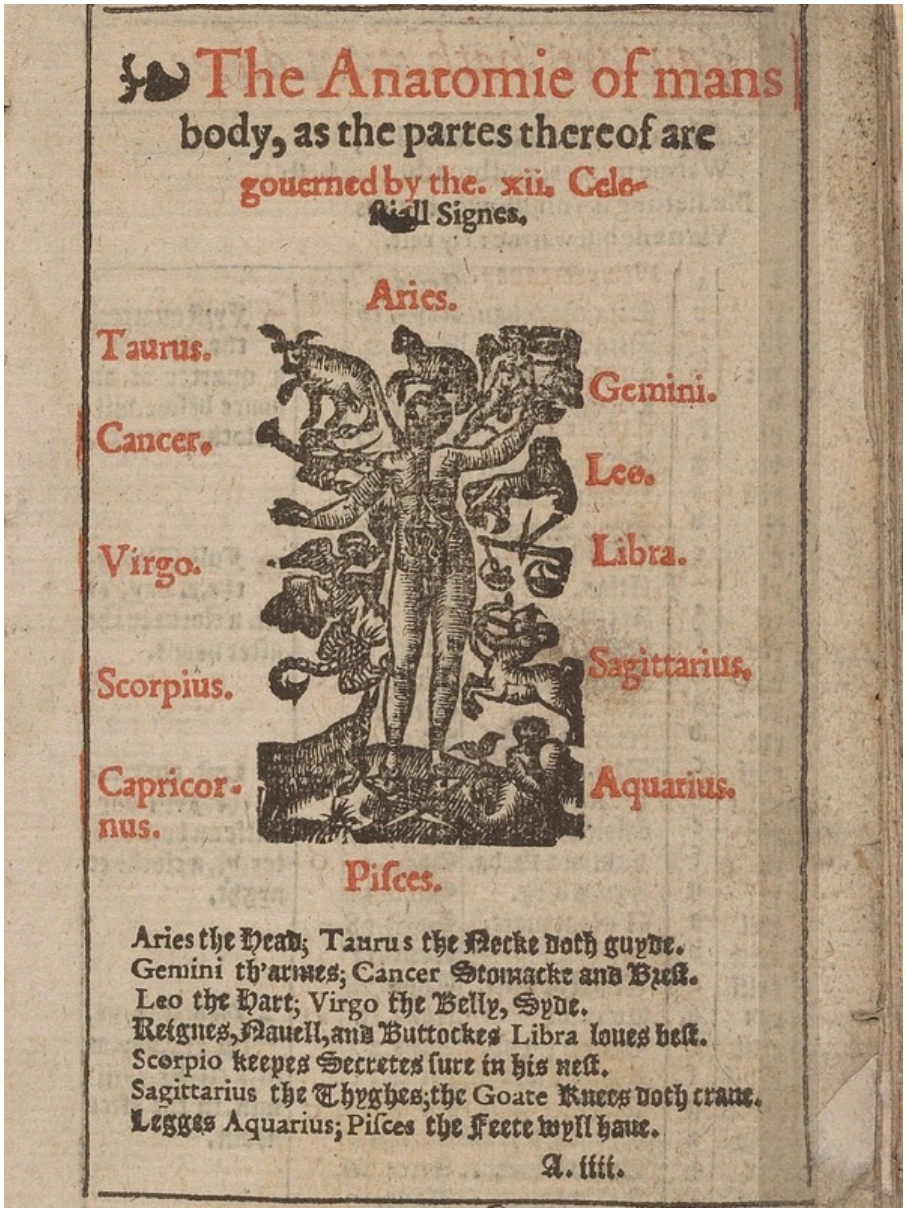

Figure 6. The Zodiac Man. The Anatomie of Mans Body, as the Partes Thereof are Gouerned by the XII. Celestiall Signes. England 1590. Printed within An Almanack and prognostication ... Framed according to lawful art, and referred specially to the medidian and pole artick of the citie of Canterbury but may serue generally without any great errour for all England. Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University, Ayd19 C16 F8, A4 Recto.

> When the sun is in Cancer, and the moon is also, it is good to work through the moon.
> When the sun is in Leo, and the moon is also, it is good to work through the sun.
> When the sun is in Virgo, and the moon is also, it is good to work through Mercury.
> When the sun is in Libra, and the moon is also, it is good to work through Venus.
> When the sun is in Scorpio, and the moon is also, it is good to work through Mars.
> When the sun is in Sagittarius, and the moon is also, it is good to work through Jupiter.
> When the sun is in Capricorn, and the moon is also, it is good to work through Saturn.
> When the sun is in Aquarius, and the moon is also, it is good to work through Saturn.
> When the sun is in Pisces, and the moon is also, is it good to work through Jupiter.[87]

For many physicians it was of paramount importance to understand astrology. Historian Richard Kieckhefer notes that in the medieval medical school at the University of Bologna, a professor was instructed to teach physicians how to gauge the influence of the stars on human bodies and argues that astrology was taught more frequently in medical schools than in any other branch in a medieval university.[88]

In Ashley's day, medical astrology was seen as a legitimate occult science. John Calvin was even a proponent of medical astrology, stating that "'likewise the phisicians doe drawe out of the true Astrologye all the judgement y they have to ordeyne bloode lettings or drinks or pills & other things in due time, Therefore we must needes confesse that there is a certain convenience betywxte the starres or planets and the disposition of a mans body'."[89] The Italian philosopher Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499) published his *Three Books On Life* in 1489, which was a medical treatise based on astrological principles. In it, he argued that things with golden qualities (amber, honey, saffron, lions, people with blonde hair, etc.) were associated with the sun and therefore were repositories of the sun's benevolent influences.[90] Another contemporary of Ashley, Richard Napier (1559-1634) was a well renowned English physician who advocated for and practiced medical astrology. In his comprehensive study of Napier, Ofer Hadass argues that the medical astrology Napier used provided him with a

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[87] *Book of Magical Charms*, 66.
[88] Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 122. For more on medieval medicine see Julie Orlemanski, *Symptomatic Subjects: Bodies, Medicine, and Causation in the Literature of Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019).
[89] John Calvin in Almond, *England's First Demonologist: Reginald Scot & 'The Discoverie of Witchcraft'*, 138-139.
[90] Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 146-7.

simple way of knowing that continued to outperform the "complex and ambiguous method of symptoms and signs on the one hand and the superficial symptomatic medicine on the other."[91] Robert Ashley was aware of medical astrology and understood its basic assumptions, which can be seen in his further pronouncement that "all Experiments hereof must be don in the Increase of ☾. and in the houre and day of ♀. or of ♃: and especially when ☽. in ♉. The 1. 2. And 3. Day of the moone are best."[92] The inclusion of rather basic astrological rules for his recipes belies the fact that Ashley wanted a practical book; he is not trying to fashion himself a cunning person or a doctor like Napier. He wanted enough to conduct his own experiments and using astrological rules was one of the independent variables.

One of the places that Ashley may have learned of natural magic and astrological medicine was through books of secrets. Made popular with the advent of the printing press, these books contained recipes, charms, formulae, and fairly conventional 'experiments'."[93] Allison Kavey, in her comprehensive study of books of secrets, *Books of Secrets: Natural Philosophy in England, 1550-1600*, clarifies that these books made "the manipulation of nature more accessible to a broad variety of people" by taking formerly private knowledge and making them accessible to the public domain.[94] Books of secrets often contained step-by-step instructions on how to effect changes the reader may wish to effect in the world.[95] Practical books, books of secrets were likely one of the first mediums through which the general public was exposed to *scientia experimentalis*, or experimental science.[96] From

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[91] Ofer Hadass, *Medicine, Religion, and Magic in Early Stuart England: Richard Napier's Medical Practice* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2018), 12.
[92] *Book of Magical Charms*, 25.
[93] Klaassen, *Making Magic in Elizabethan England*, 7: "Charms are quite simple and short and based on the conservative bedrock of conventional and everyday religious practices. They employ basic prayers such as the Pater Noster and the Ave Maria, formulae like the Credo, the invocation of saints, divine names, religious historiola, and gestures like the sign of the cross for healing and protection"." William Eamon, "Books of Secrets in Medieval and Early Modern Science," *Sudhoffs Archiv* Bd. 69, H. 1 (1985), 27.
[94] Allison Kavey, *Books of Secrets: Natural Philosophy in England, 1550-1600* (University of Illinois Press, 2010), 158.
[95] Kavey, *Books of Secrets: Natural Philosophy in England, 1550-1600*, 3.
[96] Eamon, "Books of Secrets in Medieval and Early Modern Science," 35-36.

the catalogue at Middle Temple Library, we know Robert Ashley owned a number of books of secrets, including, but not limited to, Giambattista Della Porta's *Magia Naturalis*, the works of Roger Bacon which likely included his *Mirror of Alchemy*, and Jean Bodin's *Theatrum Naturae*.[97] Ashley also likely had access to other books of secrets both in print and through the sharing of materials. Sir Stephen Powle's (1553?-1630) commonplace book had a recipe from Sir Walter Raleigh (1552?-1618) and both of these men were members of Middle Temple. [98] It is important to remember that Robert Ashley was their contemporary and also occupying a room at Middle Temple, so their paths likely crossed.

Another indicator that Robert Ashley was a member in the trade for books of secrets comes in the form of an attribution. In the *Book of Magical* Charms, Ashley has an entry titled "Fryer Bacons Charme against the Toothache." (see fig. 7)[99] Often ascribed to authors like the Old Testament King Solomon, Aristotle, and the thirteenth century friary Roger Bacon, books of secrets made great use of authority in selling their importance. Roger Bacon was especially important in the sixteenth century as he was a figurehead of sorts for men who sought control over the natural world. Roger Bacon (1219/20-1292) is known today to have been a philosopher and Franciscan friar who was one of the earliest to advocate for an empirical approach to understanding nature. His most famous work, *Opus Majus*, contains topics ranging from mathematics, grammar, logic, to natural philosophy. Between 1588 and 1592, Robert Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* hit the Elizabethan stage and told a tale about Bacon and a brass head.[100] This brass head was said to have been crafted by Bacon to answer all of his questions about the natural world and the tale became particularly attractive to natural philosophers using natural magic to do the same thing. The success of the play cemented Roger Bacon as a figure of notoriety and importance and Robert Ashley's ascription of a charm against a toothache

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[97] "Library Manuscript Catalogues," Fourth Seate A Side, 13: *Quisdem Magia Naturalis – 1589* (I know this is Della Porta's because Ashley records it is from Naples and the Naples edition was published in 1589); Fourth Seate A Side, 10: *Baconi Operi*; Fourth Seate A Side, 33: *Bodini Theatrum Naturae.*

[98] Satterley, "Robert Ashley and the Authorship of Newberry MS 5017, *The Book of Magical Charms*," 280.

[99] *Book of Magical Charms,* 21.

[100] Kavey, *Books of Secrets: Natural Philosophy in England, 1550-1600*, 38.

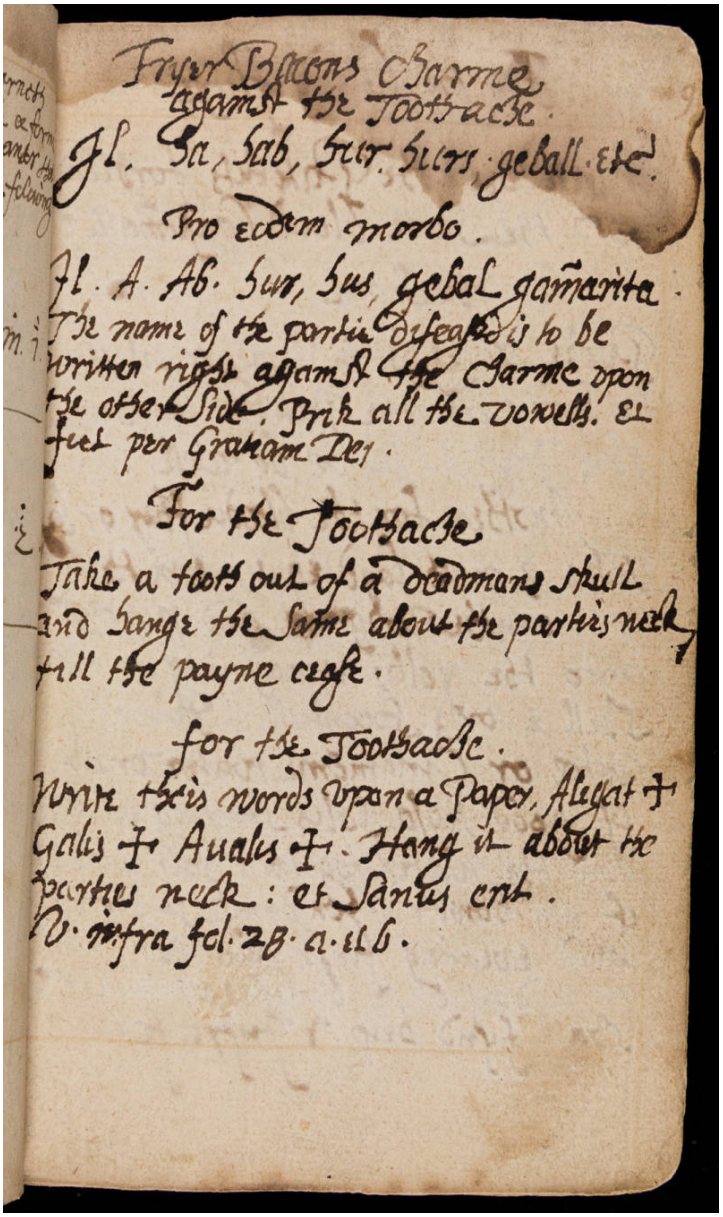
Fryer Bacons Charme
against the Toothache.
Jl. Sa, Sab, Sur. Sus. geball. etc.
Pro eodem morbo.
Jl. A. Ab. Sur, Sus, gebal gamarita.
The name of the partie diseased is to be
written right against the Charme upon
the other Side. Prik all the Vowells. Et
fiet per Graham Dei.
For the Toothache
Take a teeth out of a deadmans skull
and hange the same about the parties neck
till the payne cease.
for the Toothache.
Write this words upon a Paper, Alegat +
Galis + Avalis +. Hang it about the
parties neck: et Sanus erit.
V. infra fol. 28. a. et b.

Figure 7. Showing "Fryer Bacons charme against the Toothache." Robert Ashley, Book of Magical Charms, 1600/1699. Iron gall ink on paper, 11 x 16cm. Newberry Library Chicago, Stanton A. Friedberg Collection, VAULT Case MS 5017. Case_ms_5017_021_o2.

to him demonstrates that Ashley was a creature of his time. The rest of the charm is rather commonplace, with no specific detail connecting it to Roger Bacon. It is fair to evaluate Ashley as a standard, professional Elizabethan who was an active participant in the circulation of natural magical knowledge.

Apart from medicine, from his *Vita* we know that Robert Ashley fancied himself a gambler and found himself in prison twice for debt. Newberry MS 5017 contains two spells to win at dice or tables, two to reveal stolen items, one to find hidden treasure, and another to find a felon (perhaps he felt he was being robbed?).[101] From the catalogue Ashley owned at least five books on usury, three on interest and pawn broking, and two on forms of gambling.[102] Often referred to as legerdemain, these types of charms and recipes were plentiful across early modern England. All of these rather acceptable forms of natural magic being in this book would classify it as an ordinary commonplace book, however, it is the content of a more nefarious nature, and knowing what kind of conflicts and disagreements Ashley was aware of, that bring the presence purpose of these recipes into question.

Epistemon vs. Philomath vs. Francis Bacon

It would be extremely unjust to the *Book of Magical Charms* to leave its analysis here and assign it to the category of a commonplace book. In 1597 James VI of Scotland, and soon to be James I of England, published his tract on witchcraft entitled *Daemonologie: in forme of a dialogue*. This dialogue is between two central characters, those being Philomath and Epistemon. Philomath is skeptical of both natural and demonic magic and Epistemon is a 'scientist', the origin of the word epistemology, who proves to Philomath that demons, necromancy, witches, and the occult do exist.[103] In the preface of *Daemonologie*, James refutes another author by the name of Reginald Scot (1538-1599). Scot wrote the

[101] *Book of Magical Charms*, 32, 26, 27, 45.
[102] Satterley, "Robert Ashley and the Authorship of Newberry MS 5017, *The Book of Magical Charms*," 281.
[103] James I, King of England, 1566-1625. *Daemonologie: in forme of a dialogue: diuided into three books (London, 1603)*. Newberry Library Special Collections. Case B 88 .444.

first comprehensive study of witchcraft in England, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*. Published in 1584, he sought to expose the fallacies of occult and magical beliefs. Reginald Scot was Philomath to James I's Epistemon and the *Book of Magical Charms* is a tangible example of this interaction being played out in a person's brain, in Robert Ashley's brain. Also thrown into this mix were the new scientists; figures like Francis Bacon and Galileo Galilei. Curiously, Robert Ashley owned books by all of these authors, with no seeming preference to one over the other. This section will serve as an outline of the various debates that Ashley was engaging in, though not actively participating in, and how he used the *Book of Magical Charms* to engage with and test the magic that was under attack. Robert Ashley used Francis Bacon's rationality and Reginald Scot's skepticism to put King James's magical beliefs to the test.

We know from Ashley's catalogue that he owned a copy of Reginald Scot, titled "Scots discovery of Witchcraft."[104] In crafting this work, Scot drew heavily on source material from the Continent, a significant number being in Latin. What is ironic with this is that as Scot was attempting to disprove the occult, he was inadvertently introducing bodies of magical knowledge that had heretofore never been seen in England.[105] Many who read Scot would actually read it as a grimoire, or a magical instruction manual, writing down the contents to be used. In the 1655 reprint (only the third reprint since the original, with the second having been in 1651) a new section was added which contained almost exclusively magical formulae entitled "The Discourse on Devils and Spirits." While later publishers would capitalize on the fiscal potential of the *Discoverie*, Scot was solely responsible for the publication of the first edition. In his study on Scot, *England's First Demonologist: Reginald Scot and 'The Discoverie of Witchcraft'*, Philip Almond assumed that with there being no record of the book in the formal index of printed works, the Registers of the Company of Stationers, Scot expected to face

[104] "Library Manuscript Catalogues," Second Seate A Side, 12.
[105] S.F. Davies, "The Reception of Reginald Scot's Discovery of Witchcraft: Witchcraft, Magic, and Radical Religion," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 74, no. 3 (July 2013), 393.

nothing but trouble from any attempt to formally publish it.[106] This is mainly due to the fact that Scot was the first person in England to launch a systematic attack against witchcraft and magical belief. So, why did he do this?

Scot was a staunch Protestant and quoted John Calvin liberally in the *Discoverie*. In aligning himself so strongly with the Protestant movement, Scot followed the belief that magic was a one of the resisting dregs of the Catholic faith in England. He understood magical belief to be "at once popish and dependent on fraud and deception."[107] As a Protestant, Scot believed that the age of miracles had passed, and that God no longer permitted humans to exercise supernatural power.[108] However, this is not to say he did not believe in demons and spirits. Scot was of the opinion that humans could not interact with the supernatural forces nor the work of God; to insinuate that an old woman was able to create a storm or bewitch a person's mind was blasphemous. The crux of the *Discoverie* is Scot's insistence of the incorporeality of spirits: "a *corporall* old woman and a *spirituall* diuell."[109] Since the Devil, demons, and spirits could not have corporeal bodies, they would therefore be unable to interact with humans. So, to Scot, if there could be no interaction between spirits and humans, then witchcraft was an impossibility.[110] However, he truly believed that he was exposing the ridiculousness of witchcraft, writing that "the citing of such absurdities may stand for sufficient confutation therefor."[111]

This was a pipe dream, for the *Discoverie of Witchcraft* was mainly remembered in England for its role in introducing new magical charms and rituals. The accessibility of the book allowed any aspiring cunning person to gain enough knowledge to set up shop.[112] Owen Davies writes that "Scot

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[106] Almond, *England's First Demonologist: Reginald Scot & 'The Discoverie of Witchcraft'*, 5.
[107] Hunter, *The Decline of Magic: Britain in the Enlightenment*, 8.
[108] Brian P. Levack, "The Decline and End of Witchcraft Prosecutions," in *Superstition and Magicin Early Modern Europe: A Reader* edited by Helen Parish (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 359.
[109] Reginald Scot in Davies, "The Reception of Reginald Scot's Discovery of Witchcraft: Witchcraft, Magic, and Radical Religion," 382-3.
[110] Davies, "The Reception of Reginald Scot's Discovery of Witchcraft: Witchcraft, Magic, and Radical Religion," 386
[111] Reginald Scot in Davies, "The Reception of Reginald Scot's Discovery of Witchcraft: Witchcraft, Magic, and Radical Religion," 393.
[112] Almond, *England's First Demonologist: Reginald Scot & 'The Discoverie of Witchcraft'*, 146.

produced what amounted to the first grimoire printed in the English language, and while he did so to prove the worthlessness of its contents he unwittingly ended up democratizing ritual magic rather than undermining it."[113] As early as within 16 years of publication, Scot's *Discoverie* was being used as a sourcebook for magic. Philip Almond points to a manuscript in the Bodleian library, Additional B.1, as being the earliest example and rather cheekily states that just as Scot had stolen his charms from late medieval sources, "this scribe stole them back."[114] Just as Robert Ashley had an interest in the arts of legerdemain, so too did Scot. A generous portion of the *Discoverie* is devoted to discrediting a variety of conjuring tricks and today's modern magicians regard this section as the first systematic book to explain card tricks. In 1612 Samuel Rid's *The Art of Iugling or Legerdemaine* and in 1634 the anonymous *Hocus Pocus Iunior: The Anatomie of Legerdemain* showed up on the market. Both of these were guidebooks for gambling and conjuring tricks and both included unacknowledged and lengthy quotations from Scot.[115] Robert Ashley is also guilty of quoting from *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* with no attribution. On folio 7r and 282r of the *Book of Magical Charms* Ashley has quotations and images from Scot. On folio 7r Ashley has chosen to copy two ritual images with his charm "To Speak with Spiritts" that can be found in Book XV, Chapter VII of the *Discoverie*.[116] On folio 282r he has another two images from Book XV, Chapter VII of the *Discoverie*. The captions of the images read "Who so beareth this sign about him, all spyrits shall doe him Homage" and "He that beareth this signe need feare no foe but feare God only."[117] Ashley strayed slightly in the second quotation, Scot writes that "Who so beareth this sign about him, let him fear no fo, but fear God" (see fig. 8, 9, and 10).[118] These images and formulae are classified as ritual magic and their meaning will be discussed further in the next section,

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113 Owen Davies, *Grimoires: A History of Magic Books* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 70.
114 Almond, *England's First Demonologist: Reginald Scot & 'The Discoverie of Witchcraft'*, 146.
115 Davies, "The Reception of Reginald Scot's Discovery of Witchcraft: Witchcraft, Magic, and Radical Religion," 389.
116 *Book of Magical Charms*, 17 and Reginald Scot, *Scot's discovery of witchcraft: proving the common opinions of witches contracting divels, spirits, or familiars, and their power to kill, torment, and consume the bodies of men, women, and children, or other creatures by diseases or otherwise, their (London, 1651).* Newberry Library Special Collections. Case B 88 .7991, pg. 284.
117 *Book of Magical Charms*, 92.
118 Reginald Scot, *Scot's discovery of witchcraft*, case B 88 .7991, pg. 285.

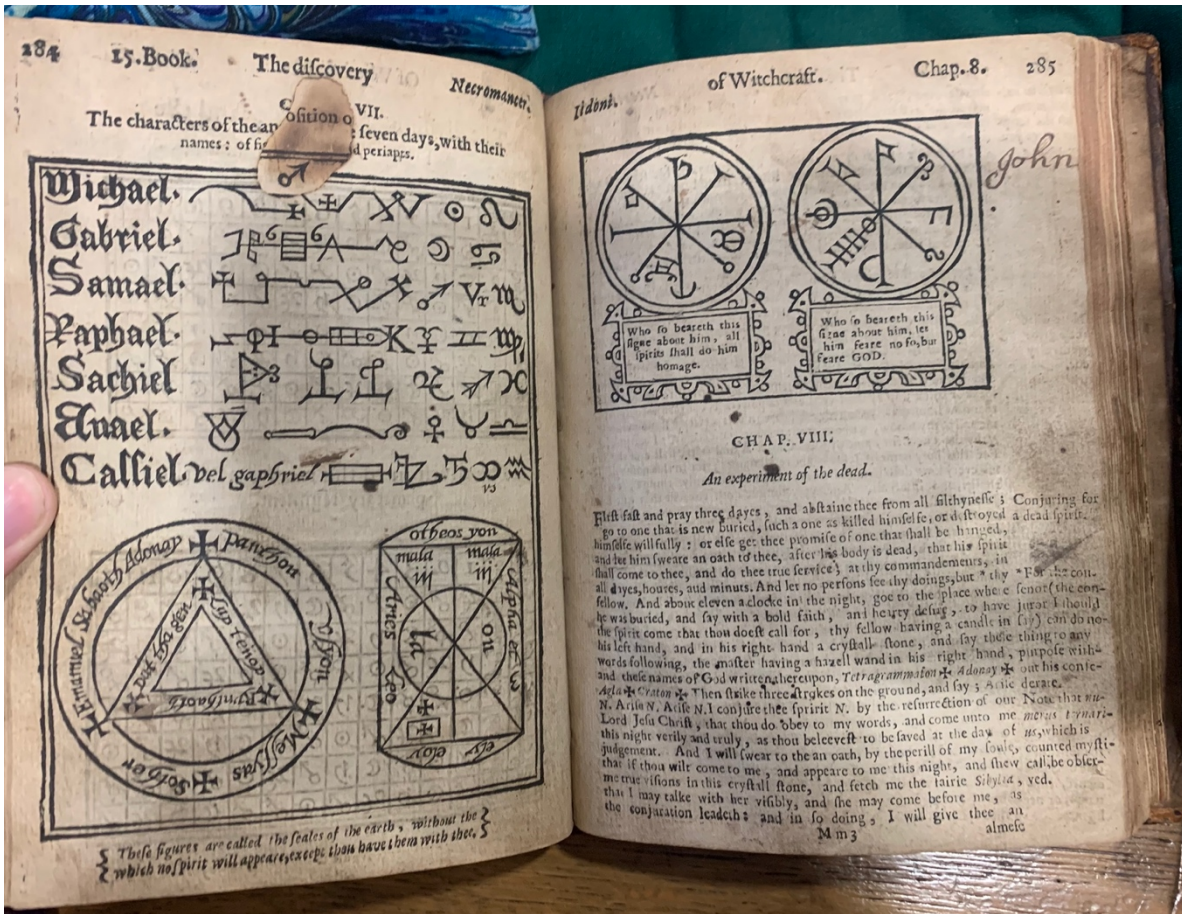

Figure 8. The images that Robert Ashley copied. Scot's discovery of witchcraft: proving the common opinions of witches contracting the divels, spirits, or familiars, and their power to kill, torment, and consume the bodies of men, women, and children, or other creatures by diseases or otherwise, thei..., 1651. Printed by RC and are to be sold by Giles Calvert. Newberry Library Chicago, Special Collections, Case B 88 .7991, pp. 284-285. Photo by author.

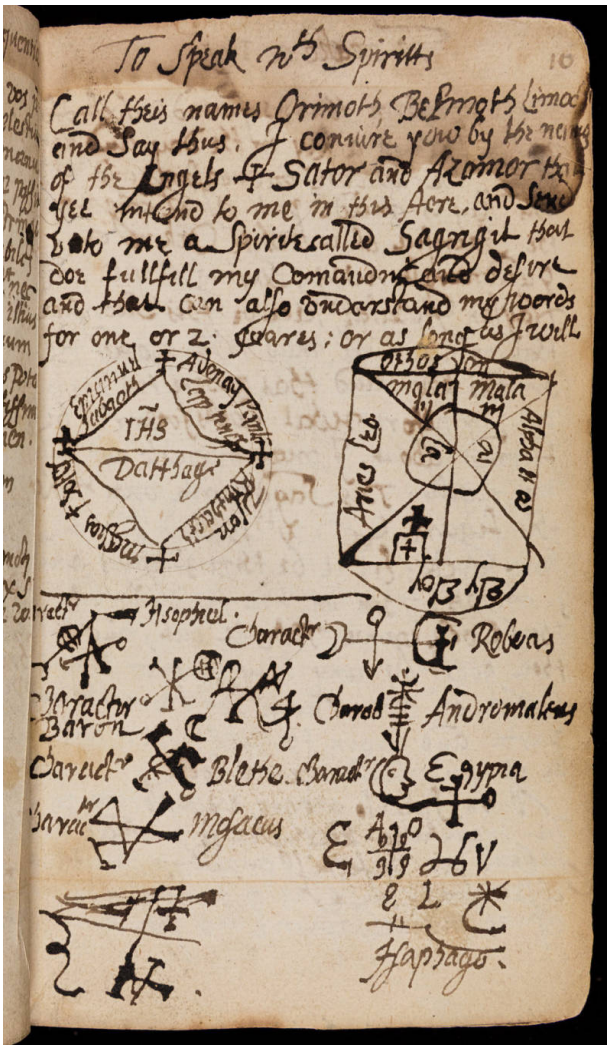

Figure 9. The images that Ashley copied from Scot's Discoverie. Robert Ashley, Book of Magical Charms, 1600/1699. Iron gall ink on paper, 11 x 16cm. Newberry Library Chicago, Stanton A. Friedberg Collection, VAULT Case MS 5017. Case_ms_5017_017_o2.

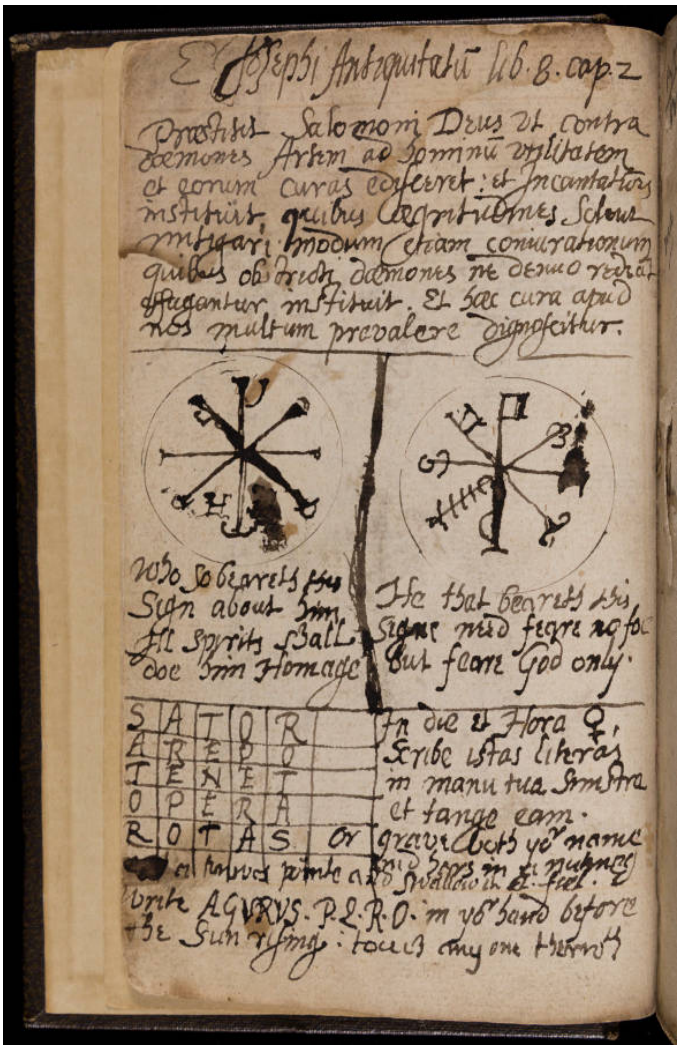

Figure 10. The images that Ashley copied from Scot's Discoverie. Robert Ashley, Book of Magical Charms, 1600/1699. Iron gall ink on paper, 11 x 16cm. Newberry Library Chicago, Stanton A. Friedberg Collection, VAULT Case MS 5017. Case_ms_5017_092_o2.

but their inclusion in Newberry MS 5017 begs the question of what Ashley thought about them. Was he among the population to use the *Discoverie of Witchcraft* as a grimoire or was he a follower of Scot, copying things he found foolish? Or, rather, did he find, possibly for the first time thanks to Scot, a ritual to speak with spirits that was practical enough to test for himself? Or, may he have possibly thought neither, copying down these recipes to figure out if they are foolish or to be trusted for himself?

Ashley was aware that *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* was a little taboo in Protestant England. Scot walked the line of atheism a little too close for some. For others, Scot provided a punching bag to launch their own justifications for the belief in witchcraft and magic. John Cotta, in his *Triall of Witchcraft* (1616) condemned Scot for his conflating of imposters and genuine supernatural interlocutors.[119] From the catalogue we know that Ashley owned a copy of the *Triall of Witchcraft.*[120] Henry Holland, in his *Treatise Against VVitchcraft* (1590) commended Scot to Vulcan and claimed that the *Discoverie* contained "'horrible impieties'." In the *Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft* (1608), which Ashley also owned, William Perkins subversively argued that Scot was a patron of witches by using reason to prove their nonexistence: if witches don't exist, no one will hunt them.[121] Thomas Cooper, author of *The Mystery of Witch-craft* (1626), accused Scot of atheism and blamed him for the rising number of witches despite the religious fervor of the day.[122] Richard Bernard, author of a manual on witch-finding *Gvide to Grand-ivry Men* (1627), and others would use parts of Scot as examples in their own works but criticize the argument of the work as a whole.[123] Historian Eric Pudney recently edited a work entitled *A Defense of Witchcraft Belief: A sixteenth-century response to Reginald Scot's 'Discoverie of Witchcraft'* that contains a highly educated person's, possibly a clergyman, response to the *Discoverie*

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[119] Davies, "The Reception of Reginald Scot's Discovery of Witchcraft: Witchcraft, Magic, and Radical Religion," 384.
[120] "Library Manuscript Catalogues," Second Seate A Side, 12.
[121] "Library Manuscript Catalogues," Second Seate A Side, 45: *A Discourse of Witchcraft.*
[122] Davies, "The Reception of Reginald Scot's Discovery of Witchcraft: Witchcraft, Magic, and Radical Religion," 383.
[123] Davies, "The Reception of Reginald Scot's Discovery of Witchcraft: Witchcraft, Magic, and Radical Religion," 384.

that speaks directly to Scot, referring to him as 'you' throughout.[124] It seems to have been written without the intention of it ever going to print, almost like a response to an advanced reader copy of the *Discoverie*, and it delves deeply into the scriptural authority of witchcraft.[125] With all of these together it would seem that all of England was against Scot. However, he did have likeminded contemporaries, one being Samuel Harsnett, Archbishop of York, who "referred to witches as 'all that lymphatical chimera'."[126] Harsnett and Scot's other advocates did not outnumber his opponents. Perhaps his most staunch rival was no other than James Stuart. James was still just the King of Scotland during Reginald Scot's life, but when James ascended the English throne he made much to defame Scot and his *Discoverie of Witchcraft*.

When Scot was alive and for the first half of Robert Ashley's life, Elizabeth I sat on the throne of England. Elizabeth (1533-1603), with her 'heart and stomach of a king,' developed a great hunger for learning; this extended to the occult sciences. She came to be associated with alchemical iconography, often represented with the important Hermetic pelicans and phoenixes in her portraits (see fig. 11 and 12). Both the pelican and the phoenix have dual meanings, one alchemical and one religious. The pelican is often shown plucking their own breast to feed it to their young and many ascribe Elizabeth's association with the pelican as being symbolic of her acting as the 'mother' of her new Protestant nation.[127] In a more alchemical allegory, the pelican's self-sacrifice is emblematic of the alchemist's self-sacrifice to connect with their inner spiritual self.[128] The phoenix is often seen as a symbol of rebirth and chastity, chastity being one of the main pillars in the Virgin Queen's life.[129] In

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[124] *A Defense of Witchcraft Belief: A sixteenth-century response to Reginald Scot's 'Discoverie of Witchcraft'*, ed. by Eric Pudney (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021), 1 & 6.
[125] *A Defense of Witchcraft Belief: A sixteenth-century response to Reginald Scot's 'Discoverie of Witchcraft'*, 23.
[126] Levack, "The Decline and End of Witchcraft Prosecutions," 350 & Harsnett, S. (1603) *A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures* (London), reprinted in F.W. Brownlow, *Shakespeare, Harsnett and the Devils of Denham* (Newark, 1993))
[127] "The Phoenix and the Pelican: two portraits of Elizabeth I, c.1575," National Portrait Gallery, accessed September 10, 2022. Website.
[128] Adam McLean, "The Birds in Alchemy," *The Hermetic Journal* no. 5 (1979). Website.
[129] National Portrait Gallery, "The Phoenix and the Pelican: two portraits of Elizabeth I, c.1575."

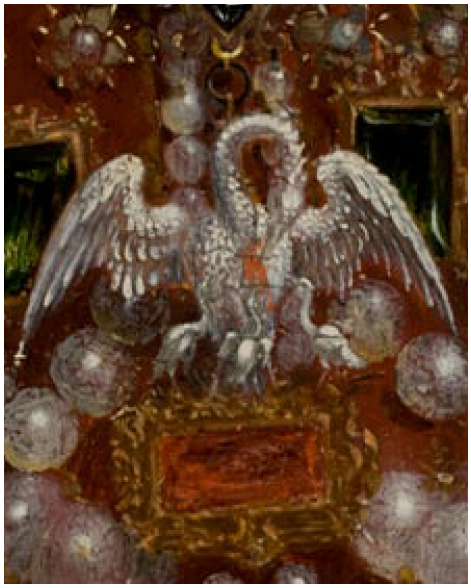

Figure 11. The 'Pelican' portrait, Queen Elizabeth I (1533-1601) associated to Nicholas Hilliard (1547-1619), oil on panel, c.1575. Lent by National Museums Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery, Presented by E. Peter Jones, 1945. On left with detail below.

Figure 12. The 'Phoenix' portrait, Queen Elizabeth I (1533-1601) associated to Nicholas Hilliard (1547-1619), oil on panel, c.1575. National Portrait Gallery 190. On loan to Tate since 1965. On right with detail below.

alchemical iconography, however, phoenixes were meant to depict the development of the soul. The alchemist, at this point, is no longer dependent upon his physical body; "he has in this sense attained the Philosopher's stone, the Spiritual core of his being."[130] It is unknown which of these meanings Elizabeth may have intended, but their double meaning would have been known. In 1594, George Chapman in his poem *The Shadow of Night* compared Elizabeth to an enchantress and made great mention of her 'magic authority'.[131] She was the sometimes employer of John Dee, a mystical figure to much of England due to his notorious angel conversations. For all that she enjoyed and advocated for the occult arts, Elizabeth enacted a Witchcraft Act in 1563. In all actuality, these laws were not often used to prosecute people and very few executions for magical practitioners actually took place.[132] Frank Klaassen notes, though, that just because the laws were not always carried out does not mean that magic practitioners were not afraid of the crown; "although it is not clear *how* this awareness may have affected their behavior, there is no question that it probably did, if only to make them more cautious and to emphasize the antisocial nature of their activities."[133] These law codes were to become harsher and more defined once James took the throne in 1603.

In 1604, only a year after his coronation, James overhauled Elizabeth's 1563 witchcraft statute and erected a new one with far more severe punishments for both witches and magical practitioners.[134] The new stature made it a crime punishable by hanging to:

1. Invoke, consult, covenant with, entertain, feed, or reward any evil spirits for any purpose.
2. Take any dead body, or any part of a dead body, for use in any witchcraft, sorcery, charm, or enchantment.

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[130] McLean, "The Birds in Alchemy."
[131] Francis Young, *Magic in Merlin's Realm: A History of Occult Politics in Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 163.
[132] Klaassen, *Making Magic in Elizabethan England*, 10 & 11.
[133] Klaassen, *Making Magic in Elizabethan England*, 11-12.
[134] Donald Tyson, *The Demonology of King James I: Includes the Original Text of Daemonologie and News from Scotland* (Woodbury: Llewellyn Worldwide, Ltd, 2012), 5.

3. Practice any form of witchcraft, enchantment, charm, or sorcery in which any person killed, destroyed, wasted, consumed, pined, or lamed in the body, or any part of the body.
4. Aid, abet, or counsel others in any of the above acts.[135]

From the *Book of Magical Charms,* Robert Ashley had a number of recipes, formulae, and charms that went against this new statute. Including, but not limited to, needing a tooth from a deadman's skull for a charm for a toothache, having charms to summon spirits, a charm for a felon: "Lay it on the Skin of an egshel, and in 2 hours it will kill the felon," and another for any evil person where it ends by saying that "He seldom or never dieth."[136] James also made it a crime punishable by up to one year in prison if one were to use witchcraft, enchantments, charms, or sorcery to:

1. Locate any treasure of gold or silver in the earth or other hiding place.
2. Locate any lost or stolen goods or things.
3. Intend to provoke any person to unlawful love.
4. Destroy, waste, or impair any chattel or goods of another person.
5. Attempt without success to hurt or destroy any person in the body.[137]

Ashley has charms to break the second, third, and fifth of these statues as well.[138] He has a rather interesting one to have someone fall in love with you: "Pro Amore … take an Apple before it fall from the tree, write on it with the blood of a white pigeon with your knifes point theis 3. Words Lucifer, Sathamas, Raphael. Then Say thus I conjure thee Apple by all the Devills that tempted Adam and Eve in Paradice that what woman soever taste of this Apple she shall greatly be inflamed with Love towards me."[139] Perhaps Ashley's inclusion of recipes and charms that go directly against the

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[135] Tyson, *The Demonology of King James I: Includes the Original Text of Daemonologie and News from Scotland*, 7.
[136] *Book of Magical Charms*, 21, 15, 45, 31.
[137] Tyson, *The Demonology of King James I: Includes the Original Text of Daemonologie and News from Scotland*, 8.
[138] Book of Magical Charms, 26: "to know of stolne things"; 24: "Pro Amore V. fol. 36. Take Valerian an herbe, and put in a glass of Beer or wine and give the same to whom thou wilst Love thee extremely"; 27: "A true Experiment for Treasure hid."
[139] *Book of Magical Charms*, 67.

new statutes denotes the conclusion that James's reign was not as strict as his books and writings made it out to be. Donald Tyson summarizes James's prosecution of witches as more vigorous than Elizabeth's but still not as severe as it could have been had his laws been carried out to their full extent.[140] Regardless of the extent to which James followed through with his laws, he took his role as the protector of England and the faith very seriously.

In his Tolbooth speech of 1591 James recalled his dealings with the North Berwick Witch Trials and tells of how Agnes Sampson told him that the Devil considered him to be his chief opponent; "it was for this reason that Satan hated him and wished to bring about his death. She testified that when the witches asked Satan why he hated the king so much, the Devil replied: 'By reason the king is the greatest enemie hee hath in the world'."[141] It would seem that James took this statement and formed a persona to combat the Devil and his evil. It would have been difficult for James to have turned down the role as the chief adversary of Satan. Throughout his life James continued to develop his knowledge of the supernatural, and he eventually would proclaim himself to have "specialist knowledge that could determine a witch's guilt."[142] While he had very strong convictions about witchcraft, James was very aware that many accusations of witchcraft were fake and prided himself on his ability to parse the truth in these cases; he was not too wholly accepting nor too exonerating.[143] Where James differed from Reginald Scot and most of the English populace was in his conviction that all magic, including natural magic, was the work of the Devil. He warned his readers against the fallacies of Agrippa's *Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy*, which was a collection of grimoires.[144] For James there was no such thing as occult forces that could be used for benevolent means; these 'hidden properties' were either inherent in an object's composition, like in medicine and science, or

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[140] Tyson, *The Demonology of King James I: Includes the Original Text of Daemonologie and News from Scotland*, 10.
[141] Tyson, *The Demonology of King James I: Includes the Original Text of Daemonologie and News from Scotland*, 3-4.
[142] Young, *Magic in Merlin's Realm: A History of Occult Politics in Britain*, 208.
[143] Young, *Magic in Merlin's Realm: A History of Occult Politics in Britain*, 208.
[144] Davies, *Grimoires: A History of Magic Books*, 68.

they came from the power of Satan. [145] James thought alchemy, astrology, and the other occult sciences were either fake or powered by evil forces. With these two opponents at a head in Ashley's rational brain, he needed a way to figure out for himself who to believe. It is into this situation that figures like Francis Bacon and Clement Draper step in and provided Ashley a way to test the occult arts. The scientific method enabled Ashley to rationalize magic.

David Wootton attests that without the printing press there would have been no Scientific Revolution: "What the printing press did, quite simply, was undermine 'the dishonourable tyranny of that Usurper, Authority' and strengthen evidence."[146] The primary voice of the new science during Ashley's life was Francis Bacon. Living almost the same exact years as Ashley, Bacon (1561-1626) advocated for the empirical method and insisted that science should be a collaborative enterprise as opposed to the esotericism that dominated in the medieval period. This concept of secrecy is best displayed by the alchemists and their attributed demise in the seventeenth century due to the new idea that knowledge should be shared; the alchemical tradition was couched in terms of isolation that could no longer stay afloat. Bacon was arguing something completely new here, something that Psychologist A.C. Grayling emphasizes in *The Age of Genius: The Seventeenth Century & The Birth of the Modern Mind.* He reminds us that due to the mundaneness of Bacon's ideas to a modern mind, it is of paramount importance that we remember that what Bacon was doing was revolutionary.[147] Esotericism was quickly becoming the subject of widespread debate and the virtuoso sensibility was seen as harmful to the advancement of knowledge.[148] Bacon wanted constant progress, progress that Wootton sees as beginning with the discovery of America in 1492.[149] The pillars that the classical and medieval systems of beliefs and 'facts' rested on quickly began to crumble and the new science desired answers to these

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[145] Tyson, *The Demonology of King James I: Includes the Original Text of Daemonologie and News from Scotland*, 5.
[146] Wootton, *The Invention of Science*, 305. Wootton's book may be the best I have read on the foundations of the Scientific Revolution and is highly recommended for further information on the topic.
[147] Grayling, *The Age of Genius: The Seventeenth Century & the Birth of the Modern Mind*, 215.
[148] Eamon, *Science and the Secrets of Nature*, 319.
[149] Wootton, *The Invention of Science*, 84.

questions which were now up for debate. Renaissance historian Paolo Rossi argues that Bacon was a direct intellectual descendent of Agrippa due to his understanding of science as a servant of nature; the idea of dominating nature is found in Agrippa in his 'man as magus' idea and seen with Bacon in his insistence of 'dominating nature'.[150]

The earliest and perhaps most important instance of scientific introduction that Ashley had was with William Gilbert's *On the Magnet*.[151] Published in 1600, *On the Magnet* is a curious work as Gilbert (1544-1603) makes the reader a 'virtual witness' to his experiments.[152] Gilbert, in reading about the previous scholarship on his topics and by conducting his own experiments, which the reader is aware of, "can confidently declare that he has made new discoveries."[153] He was doing something very similar to what Galileo would do when he published his *Starry Messenger* (1610) and his *Discourse on Floating Bodies* (1612).[154] Wootton thinks that very few people paid any attention to these works at first, but I believe that Ashley did pay attention.[155] In the *Book of Magical Charms* Ashley uses the word experiment:

> A true Experiment for Treasure hid. or for any thing you would know. Go to the grave of a dead body, and 3. Tymes call him by his proper name. Then put thy hed to the Grave and say I coniure thee calling him by his name by Azazel Asiel which is Lord and hath the bones of dead men in keeping in his power; that thou ask licence of him to com to me this night at the houre of two: and that thou tell me the Truth of any thing that I shall desyre of ask of thee. Then take the earth of the grave at the hed of the dead and put it in a cleane linen cloth and bynd it and lay it under thy bed in thy cap and sleep thereon. And in the night thou shalt dreame: and one shall com to thee and say the truth of all that thou canst demand.[156]

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[150] Rossi in Grayling, *The Age of Genius: The Seventeenth Century & the Birth of the Modern Mind*, 217.
[151] "Library Manuscript Catalogues," Fourth Seate B Side, 11: *Guilbertus de Magneto – London 1600*.
[152] Wootton, *The Invention of Science*, 315.
[153] Wootton, *The Invention of Science*, 330.
[154] "Library Manuscript Catalogues," Fourth Seate B Side, 19: *Sidorouis Nuntius*.
[155] Wootton, *The Invention of Science*, 318: "Gilbert [1600] and Galileo [1612] were developing a new type of science, based upon systematic experimentation. But very few people paid any attention."
[156] *Book of Magical Charms*, 27.

That Ashley uses the word experiment and lays out a very clear and practical (though illegal under the statutes of King James) procedure denotes the idea that Ashley was testing. It is easily replicable and does not require any erroneous ingredients or supplies. This is something that Ashley could have easily done to test its efficacy. Reading about Gilbert's experiments and the way that Ashley would have felt like he was witnessing Gilbert doing them inspired Ashley to perform his own. He was using experimentation, sourced from his books on the new science, to test the occult arts; he used empiricism to rationalize magic.

Another major player that Ashley was likely very aware of was Thomas Harriot. Often juxtaposed as the "atheist" rational man of science, Harriot (1560-1621) is considered by modern historians to be the greatest British mathematical scientist before Newton.[157] A near exact contemporary of Ashley's, Harriot only has one published work from his lifetime, but Robyn Arianrhod, in her comprehensive study of Harriot, acknowledges that he likely circulated his information in manuscripts.[158] Sir Walter Raleigh was Harriot's patron, bringing him to the New World to help with astronomical charts and the stars. We must recall that Raleigh was a member of Middle Temple at the same time as Ashley, meaning that Ashley likely had crossed paths with, or at least heard of, Harriot and his new scientific discoveries. Harriot completed rigorous experiments, repeating them, until he was able to answer the questions of *what* was happening, rather than the older and still savvier question of *why*. Francis Bacon even wrote that he was inspired by Harriot and his experimental approach to nature.[159] Harriot makes little to no mention of his personal beliefs in magic or the occult in his surviving manuscripts and Arianrhod proscribes this to the belief that Harriot was ahead of his time once again in being able to differentiate religion and personal beliefs from science; something

[157] Robyn Arianrhod, *Thomas Harriot: A Life in Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 4 & 3.
[158] Arianrhod, *Thomas Harriot: A Life in Science*, 4.
[159] Arianrhod, *Thomas Harriot: A Life in Science*, 146 & 147.

that his contemporaries, like John Dee, were unable to do but later scientists, like Isaac Newton, insisted upon.

From Robert Ashley's catalogue we know he owned a number of other books on science. Including, but by no means limited to, Johannes Kepler's *The Cosmographic Mystery* (1596), Nicolaus Copernicus's *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres* (1543), Galileo Galilei's *The Assayer* (1623), Johannes Kepler's *Optics* (1604) and *Harmony of the World* (1619), Tycho Brahe's *Astronomiae instauratae progymnasmata* and E*pist. Astr.* (1610), Tommaso Campanella's *Defense of Galileo*, and Francis Bacon's *Natural History* (1517) and *New Organum* (1517).[160] Kepler's *The Cosmographic Mystery* is particularly important as in it he argued that God was a mathematician and that you could see his imprint within the organization of the solar system and within the intricacies of a snowflake. With Kepler explaining the hidden properties of nature with math and attributing it to God, he was writing off the occult sciences.[161] This tension had to have felt obvious to Ashley as he read through these books trying to determine what to believe. Before I can end this discussion of the new science and Ashley's involvement with it, it must be noted that Ashley contributed to a collected work in honor of Francis Bacon after his death in 1626, *Memoriæ honoratissimi domini Francisci, Baronis de Verulamio, vice-comitis Sancti Albani sacrum*.[162] Knowing this about Ashley makes it seem clear that Ashley was a servant of empirical science, a disciple of Francis Bacon, however, as we will see in the next section, Ashley had an apparent interest in necromancy that he was likely testing due to the proximity in physical space and in procedural style to his recipes and formulae of the more acceptable natural magic.

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[160] "Library Manuscript Catalogues," Fourth Seate B Side, 8: *Jo: Keplori Prodomus Cosmographica Dissertationium – [?] 1610;* Fourth Seate B Side, 11*: Copernicus de Revolucōnibus – Basil 1566*; Fourth Seate B Side, 16: *Gallilei Il Saggiatoro – Romo 1623*; Fourth Seate B Side, 10: *Keplori Octico – [?] 1604*; Fourth Seate B Side, 11: *Kepplori Harmonicos Mundi – [?] 1619*; Fourth Seate B Side, 9: *Ticho Brahe Astron instauratae pro Gymnasmata – [?] 1610*; Fourth Seate B Side, 9: *Ticho Brahe Epist. Astr: - [?] 1610*; Satterley, "Book Trade in Early Modern England," 75; Fourth Seate A Side, 10: *Il Naturale History – 1517*; Fourth Seate A Side, 10: *Il novum Organum.*

[161] What Kepler's personal beliefs were is hard to tell. His mother was accused of witchcraft and actually survived her ordeal. For more on this see James A. Connor, *Kepler's Witch: An Astronomer's Discovery of Cosmic Order Amid Religious War, Political Intrigue, and the Heresy Trial of His Mother* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2004).

[162] Satterley, "Transcription and Translation of Sloane MS. 2131, Robert Ashley's (1565-1641) *Vita*," 29.

Experimenting with Angels and Demons

As mentioned before, Robert Ashley owned a copy of perhaps one of the most famous works on the occult arts, Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa's *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*.[163] Agrippa quickly became one of the most notorious and influential writers on the occult arts. Frank Klaassen mentions that no other occult writer was "quoted, extracted, or cross-referenced with such frequency."[164] A number of pseudonymous works popped up attesting to his importance. The most famous of these is Agrippa's *Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy*, translated into English in 1655. Ashley may have owned this book as well, as the catalog only references Agrippa's *Opera*, or works, and Ashley was no stranger to writings in other languages. The catalog further mentions that Ashley acquired this collection from Lugo, not England, however a year is not given so it is unknown if he read the original or the newer English translation. Francis Bacon was no fan of Agrippa: "'Bacon describes Agrippa as a clown who turned everything into a futile joke … if magic, encompassed in a framework of lies, is put to any use, it is only for its novelty or to provoke admiration.'"[165] Similarly, Martín del Rio, a Jesuit theologian, believed the spread of grimoires to be generating implicit diabolical pacts. In his *Disquisitionis Magicae*, del Rio insists that there are two types of these diabolical pacts, the first of which occurs "when someone knowingly and willingly uses those superstitious signs usually employed by magicians, which he gets either from books of from conversations with magicians" and the second when "people who, in good faith, read superstitious books, thinking they are by reputable philosophers and physicians."[166] What is particularly interesting here is that Ashley acquired the writings of both Agrippa and del Rio

[163] "Library Manuscript Catalogues," Second Seate A Side, 26: *Cor. Agrippi opera Tom, Lugo*.
[164] Klaassen, *The Transformations of Magic: Illicit Learned Magic in the Later Middle Ages and Renaissance*, 199.
[165] Grayling, *The Age of Genius: The Seventeenth Century & the Birth of the Modern Mind*, 218; quoted from Rossi, *Francis Bacon: From Magic to Science*, trans. from the Italian by Sacha Rabinovitch (London, 1968).
[166] Martín del Rio in Davies, *Grimoires: A History of Magic Books*, 68.

in Lugo, perhaps on the same trip, and they contain such varied arguments.[167] How did he interpret and digest this varying information?

To juxtapose the orthodox material in much of the *Book of Magical Charms*, Robert Ashley also collected and transcribed a number of magic rituals, conjuring rituals, and things best defined as necromantic. What, then, is ritual magic and how is it different than charms or natural magic? The actual techniques employed in ritual magic are essentially the same as in medical and natural magic, but ritual magic usually served a different purpose or ran the risk of making contact with nefarious demons and evil spirits.[168] Ritual magic was used in two primary ways; to converse with angels and to speak with demons. This calling forth of the supernatural is referred to as conjuring. The practice itself is not malevolent, in the same way that ritual magic doesn't have to be, but the association with necromancy makes conjuring a less than acceptable act.[169] Even though the two disciplines had different intentions, they involved many of the same steps and rituals and therefore many who practiced one also practiced the other. Ashley had rituals to conjure both angels and demons within the Book of Magical Charms, but this does not necessarily mean that he was seeking to summon Beezlebub into his home.

That these materials are contained in the same book and among the same pages as recipes that are well within the accepted bounds of natural magic insinuated that Robert Ashley did not think of them as entirely different. Similar to how James I did not think of natural magic being different from necromantic magic. In his world when all of these ideas were being contested and some systematically proven false, as seen from the last section, for Ashley to have grouped them together without the seeming awareness that they are different, means that he was not trying to create a notebook to refer

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[167] "Library Manuscript Catalogues," Second Seate A Side, 5: *Disquisitionis magicae – Lugo: 1612*.
[168] Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 81.
[169] Another one of the reasons that some alchemists would be accused of demonic magic was in their attempts to conjure help outside of this realm.

back to like Clement Draper. He was instead writing things down that he could test to see if they were true. With medical recipes that he likely directly used (some not working as he had to resort to sub-par doctors) being mere pages from a charm to conjure a demon, it can be assumed that Ashley was conducting many of the recipes in this book. He was reading books by both Reginald Scot and James I and wanted to judge for himself who was right. It is not that he was going with a malevolent intent to conjure a demon, perhaps explaining his lack of care for the statutes of James I, but that he was acting in a scientific way. Similar to early doctors stealing dead bodies for surgery, Robert Ashley was practicing illegal magic to test its efficacy. The hunger for knowledge won out over caution.

Often in the news of the city and juxtaposed to the scientific Harriot was the "conjuring" mathematician-astrologer John Dee.[170] Known today as an alchemist, astrologer, mathematician, and converser with angels, in Ashley's day he was a member of the court system and was notorious for his work as a magician: some say he was the model for Prospero in Shakespeare's *Tempest*.[171] Dee worked for Elizabeth, famously being asked to determine the most auspicious date for her coronation in 1558, and provided her with regular astrological advice, many about her potential suitors.[172] Dee is a very difficult character to understand, as he was very scientifically minded – he was a mathematician and had the job of astrologer to Sir Walter Raleigh before Thomas Harriot – but he also, famously, carried out conversations with angels. Deborah Harkness, in her elucidating study *John Dee's Conversations with Angels: Cabala, Alchemy, and the End of Nature*, sees Dee's angel conversations as an extension of his scientific beliefs. The book of nature that both Roger Bacon and Francis Bacon had tried to understand were the subject of focus for Dee as well: "The angel conversations confirmed Dee's belief that the natural world was analogous to a text. But the Book of Nature was not a reliable text; it was

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[170] Arianrhod, *Thomas Harriot: A Life in Science*, 4.
[171] Christa Knellwolf King, "Prophetic and Political Vision in Shakespeare's Tempest: John Dee as a Model for Prospero," *Zeitsprünge: Forschungem zur Frühen Neuzeit* 16, no. ¾ (2012), 299.
[172] Nicholas Campion, *The Medieval and Modern Worlds: History of Western Astrology, Volume II* (London: Continuum, 2009), 121.

an imperfect, corrupt, and decaying text that could not be read properly. The angels gave Dee the exegetical and restorative tools to read, understand, and rectify the Book of Nature."[173]

Angel magic was rather popular in the medieval period and one of the most famous medieval grimoires, the *Ars Notoria*, contains purely angelic magic.[174] Nearly all commonplace books and magical manuscripts contain angelic names, however not all are of a highly ritualized nature. Ritual magic, as opposed to charms which often included religious elements, was seen as a perversion of Christian worship and often necromancers would invoke angels to help in their causes.[175] The conflation of spirits with angels and demons was common; in the *Book of Magical Charms* Ashley has the copied ritual "To Speak with Spiritts" from Scot and it is not clear if he is invoking an angel or a demon. In *Transformations of Magic*, Frank Klaassen, using other manuscripts of magic, concludes that "angels play a particular role in providing knowledge."[176] In the sixteenth century the *Sworn*, or *Sacred, Book* of Honorius was making its way around Europe, finding a place in John Dee's library. This text contains instructions on how to summon a spirit and receive a beatific vision from it, as well as promising the reader control over all angels, knowledge of science, someone's death, of all things past, present, and future, and of the stars.[177] Similar to the *Book of Magical Charms*, the *Sworn, Book* does not specify if it is conjuring a demon or an angel.

In the *Book of Magical Charms*, Ashley has an entries on how "To have a Spirite in a Glass to tell all," a charm for knowing who a thief is he writes to take green wax and write the names of Jaspar, Melchior, and Balthasar on it and after sleeping on it you will know the thief and what they took, how "To have Counsaile of Angells or of Saints in thy Sleep," an entire page devoted to "The Names of the Angells of the 7. Planets" and the next "with their Characters," angel's images and a

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[173] Deborah E. Harkness, *John Dee's Conversations with Angels: Cabala, Alchemy, and the End of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 3-4.
[174] Klaassen, *The Transformations of Magic: Illicit Learned Magic in the Later Middle Ages and Renaissance*, 147.
[175] Lawrence-Mathers, *Magic and Medieval Society*, 12.
[176] Klaassen, *The Transformations of Magic: Illicit Learned Magic in the Later Middle Ages and Renaissance*, 148.
[177] Lawrence-Mathers, *Magic and Medieval Society,* 78.

tetragrammaton (the most personal and powerful Hebrew name of God and used as an image of power), and the inscription to the image from Scot reading "Who so beareth this Sign about him all spyrits shall doe him Homage."[178] The tetragrammation in the manuscript covers two pages and is flanked by an image of a smaller circle with "+Tetragrammaton" inscribed in it, a staff, a hexagram, with "+ [Christus]" inscribed in the center, and a sword with "+ On. + tetragram[m]aton + + Agla. +. Adonay. +." written around it. The central circle is inscribed with a number of religious names and in the center has "Locus magistri" written, which translates to cite of learning (see fig. 13).[179] These images have not been sourced as to where Ashley copied them from, but the tetragrammaton was a ubiquitous symbol in early modern Europe and came in a variety of forms. That Ashley had these images in the *Book of Magical Charms* demonstrates, once again, that he was knowledgeable of the types of magic present. Just as he had the crudest of rules in astrological medicine, Ashley includes just enough to conduct an angelic conjuring ritual.

All of these entries listed above can be classified as forms or ritual magic. As stated before, ritual magic was frowned upon by the church and seen as illegal to most. This church ridicule comes to fruition because much of the ritual magic tradition is based on the Christian liturgy and framed in Christian terms.[180] If any evil spirits were to be summoned or conjured it would be scandalously couched in religious terms. A number of medieval writers such as Roger Bacon, Albertus Magnus, and Thomas Aquinas all condemned ritual and angel magic. Many found it necessary to "assert that there was no divinity in the 'angles of Solomon's pentagon' and that the 'rings and seals of Solomon' were 'a form of idolatry involving execrable consecrations and detestable invocations and images'."[181] The *Ars Notoria* was an especially prominent book of angelic ritual magic. The earliest known copies are

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[178] *Book of Magical Charms*, 009, 017, "Ut furem cognoscas. Take green wax, and write in it these names following + Jaspar + Melchior. + Balthasar. et pone Sub capite tuo Si rem perdidisti, et in Somno cognoses ubi Sit et quis furatus est." 026, 63, 64 & 65, 90-91, 92

[179] *Book of Magical Charms*, 90-91.

[180] Klaassen, *Making Magic in Elizabethan England*, 3-4.

[181] Lawrence-Mathers, *Magic and Medieval Society*, 42-43.

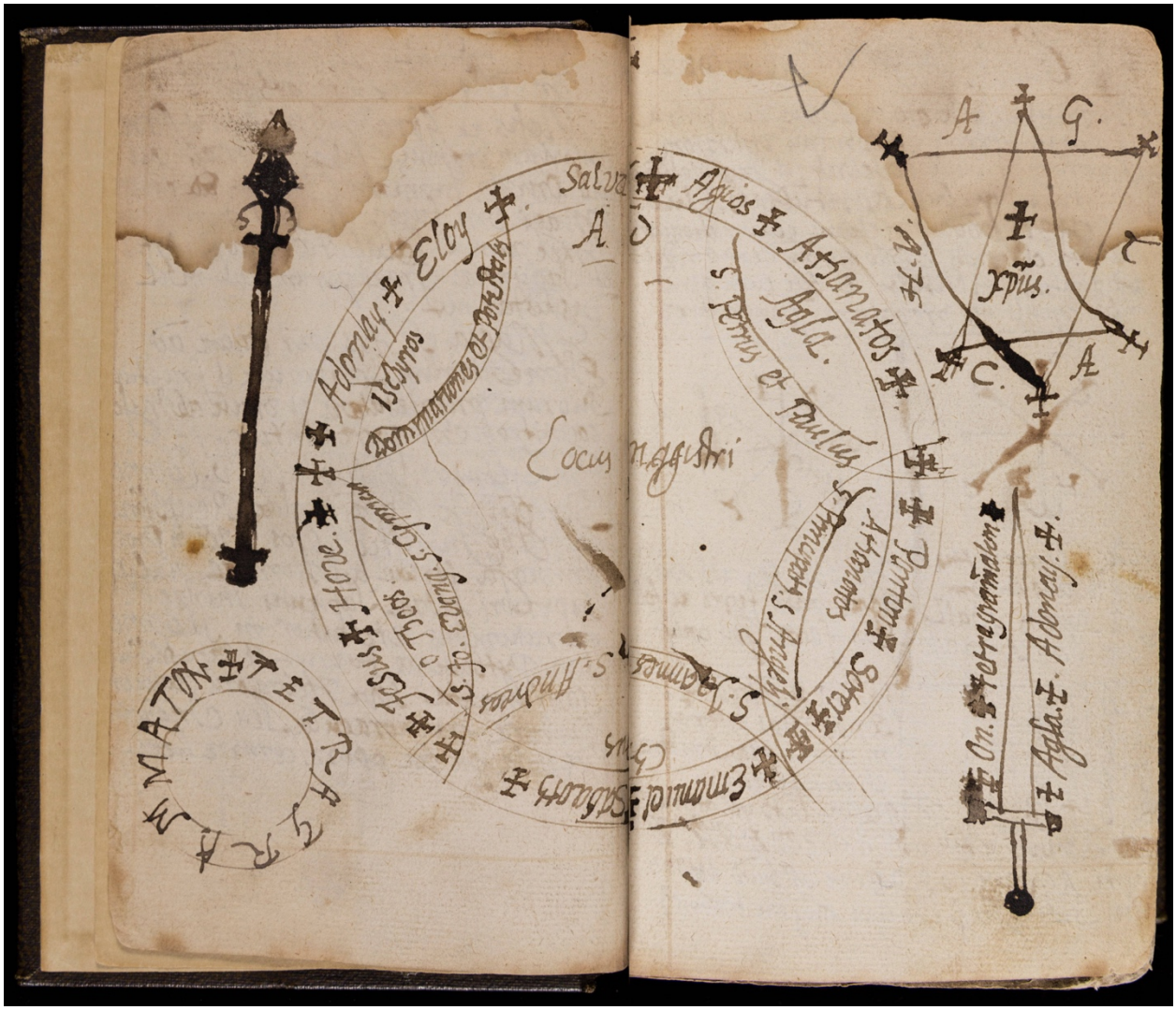

Figure 13. The tetragrammaton within Newberry MS 5017. Robert Ashley, Book of Magical Charms, 1600/1699. Iron gall ink on paper, 11 x 16cm. Newberry Library Chicago, Stanton A. Friedberg Collection, VAULT Case MS 5017. Case_ms_5017_090_o2 & Case_ms_5017_091_o2. Composite photo by author.

from the twelfth-century and the work is attributed to the Biblical King Solomon. It was particularly popular among university students as the work promised the reader complete knowledge of the Liberal Arts.[182] It is very likely that Ashley would have come into contact with the work, either in its primary form or through his classmates. There is no mention of the *Ars Notoria* in his catalog but that by no means negates there being a high possibility that Ashley read from parts of the work or at least encountered it. That he did not own his own copy of the *Ars Notoria* is another crucial piece of evidence that Ashley was not a cunning person; any cunning man worth visiting would be well-acquainted with the *Ars Notoria*. In the *Book of Magical Charms* Ashley also has examples where he is aware of ritual magic of a malevolent nature.

Necromancy, during Ashley's day, was the practice of summoning or conjuring demons. It was highly illegal and punishable by hanging under the statutes of James I and was closely aligned with witchcraft, through their common denominator of *maleficium*. There is a slight difference in intent between ritual magic and necromancy; "ritual magic relies (implicitly or explicitly) upon the agency of spirits … Conjuring, on the other hand, achieved its effects through angelic or demonic intervention, and was therefore spiritually dangerous in and of itself, however benevolent the practitioner's intention."[183] It would not have been understood by nonspecialists and so Ashley's inclusion of necromancy, as we shall see, may have been due to his unawareness of the difference. For most of the population of early modern England there was a persistent fear that the devil was stalking the earth with his demons and evil spirits in an effort to reclaim his earthly realm.[184] Old women who were affected would become witches and those who summoned demons were speeding up their encroachment on the earth. However, this did not stop a number of people and from Frank Klaassen

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[182] Lawrence-Mathers, *Magic and Medieval Society*, 37.
[183] Jennifer M. Rampling, *The Experimental Fire: Inventing English Alchemy, 1300-1700* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2020), 176.
[184] Bruce Janacek, *Alchemical Belief: Occultism in the Religious Culture of Early Modern England* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011), 9.

we know that the Rawlinson collection is primarily devoted to conjuring, so the *Book of Magical Charms* is not particularly unique for this content matter.[185] However, Klaassen notes that it is impossible to know if any of the rituals in the Rawlinson collection were actually conducted, whereas in the *Book of Magical Charms* their practicality and proximity to medicinal recipes implies that Ashley was conducting them, at least to a degree.

In the *Book of Magical Charms* Ashley has three entries that can be explicitly classified as necromancy. They are some of the only in the manuscript to be written either fully in Latin or partially and are located on the pages preceding medicinal recipes. They are as follows:

> Ad capiendum aves. Scribe haec nomina Belsebub Sathan Cerberus in Imagine avis cupis necore[?] et punge eam circa collum puncto cultelli Sic dicende Coniuro vos damones in nomine Patris et filii etc et in nomine sanctorum quatenus pungatis eam avem ad corvel in corde que super hanc domum sedet, cuius acie imaginem ego pupugi hoc libri scriptum: Postea dec Pater Noster et Ave Mar[ia] et Credo in Deum. Imago scribenda est sanguine vespertilionis. Probatum est.[186]

> To catch birds. Write these names: Beezlebub, Satan, Cerberus in the image of the bird you wish to kill and stab it around the neck with the point of a knife saying, 'Thus I conjure you demons in the name of the Father and the Son, and in the name of the saints.' To that extent stab the bird in the heart according to the crow that sits above this house, in whose sight I have pricked the image in this book. Afterwards say the Our Father and the Hail Mary and I believe in God. The image must be written in the blood of a bat. It has been proven.

> Si vis ire invisibilis Fill a lampe full of oyle olive on a Monday before the Sunrise, when the Moon is new: then take a Scrole of virgin parchment and write theis names in it Asariel, Gereth, Rypt, Garvische, Fally, Tsycke, Kerzy, and bynde those names about the Lampe next the glass then take a flintstone and smite and when the Sun goeth down begin to light the Lampe then you must wake all the night or else you must have a fellow to wake wheles you skeep or els it is lost. And thus you most every night til day. Then you must say this Coniuro vos Daemonos ab Oriente Occidente et Meridie et ab Aquilone per Deu ver[um] p[er] Deum vivum per Deum sanctum et per Matrem Domini n[ost]ri Jesu Christi et per Johannem Baptistem, et per ista Dei Nomina + Tetregramaton & c. Then make this upon thy forehead and on thy brest; sayin this every night. Then shall you fynd a Ring of Copper shyning thorough the Lamp as bright as gold that put on yor middle finger, and so longe as it is there you shalbe invisible. But you must not show it to any. It were perilous.[187]

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[185] Klaassen, *The Transformations of Magic: Illicit Learned Magic in the Later Middle Ages and Renaissance*, 136.
[186] *Book of Magical Charms*, 70.
[187] *Book of Magical Charms*, 70-71.

> If you wish to be invisible. Fill a lamp full of olive oil on a Monday before the sunrise, when the moon is new, then take a scroll of virgin parchment and write these names on it Asariel, Gereth, Rypt, Garvische, Fally, Tsycke, Kerzy and bind those names about the lamp next to the glass. Then take a flintstone and strick it and when the sun goes down begin to light the lamp. You must remain awake all night or have someone with you to wake you when you sleep or else all is lost. And this you must do every night until day. Then you must say this, 'I conjure you demons from the East, West, Sourth, and North, by the true God, by the living God, by the holy God, and by the Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ and by John the Baptist and by this name of God + Tetragrammaton, etc. Then make this upon your forehead and on your breast, saying this every night. Then you shall find a ring of copper shining through the lamp as bright as gold that when put on your middle finger, and so long as it is there, you shall be invisible. But you must not show it to anyone. It is perilous.
>
> Aliud Probatum. Take the Water of fewl, goe with it to an anthill. Say this 9 tymes casting some of the Water on the hill, Coniuro te Belzebub nostem Domini nostri Jesu Christi, ut gradeus mihi Lapidum trium colorum per deum ero invisibiles. Et habebus.[188]
>
> Another tested. Take the water of a fowl [?] and go with it to an anthill. Say this 9 times casting some of the water on the hill, I conjure you Beezelbub in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that [with] a stone of three colors I shall be invisible by God. And you will have it.

Despite the non-malevolent nature of these rituals, because they involve the conjuring of demons, they are, in fact, necromancy. However, they are similar to the other more acceptable forms of magic in the *Book of Magical Charms* due to the practicality of the recipes. In the second example above, to become invisible, Ashley would need to procure a lamp, olive oil, parchment, ink, and a flint. With these ingredients, the steps are very clearly laid out: fill the lamp with oil, write on the parchment with the ink, light a fire with the flint, and then then not fall asleep to be gifted a ring to make one invisible. These steps are almost procedural and could be easily replicated, in the way that the scientific method proscribed. The inclusion of demons and angels in all of these rituals is almost of secondary importance. What is more vital is that the chosen rituals are easy to replicate and test; they are able to serve as experiments for Ashley's rational magic.

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[188] *Book of Magical Charms*, 71.

That the language is almost primarily Latin is evocative of ritual magic's connection to Catholicism. The Protestant Church urged that Catholic miracles and the liturgy were actually instances of demonic interjection and with ritual magic continuing to be transcribed in Latin this connection is emphasized. It was very normal for these rituals to contain references to God and Jesus Christ; however ecclesiastical authorities never regarded this practice as legitimate.[189] The stories of necromancers that have survived to this day are understood by historian Richard Kieckhefer to have been a sort of "inverse hagiography" even.[190] The direct conflation of demons with God is a bit challenging to us and likely was to Ashley. There is a high likelihood that he thought he was performing another type of magic ritual that was not intending to do harm. His nonspecialist status would have left him unaware of the subtle differences between ritual magic and necromancy.

With this in mind it is important to note that these recipes are on the page immediately preceding a page on medicinal recipes and charms for toothaches. The nearness of these two very different subjects urges that Ashley did not think of them as rashly different. He wasn't attempting to do anyone harm nor likely to conjure a demon. He was instead testing these necromantic and angelic rituals the same way he was testing his medicinal recipes; he was being systematic and had no care for order or sections in his manuscript like Clement Draper. He was rationalizing angelic and demonic magic the same way he was rationalizing natural magic.

An Alchemical Dragon

With all of this, I argue that Ashley was collecting practical recipes and charms to use as procedures in his experiments and test their efficacy. Due to Robert Ashley's *Vita*, we know that many of the medicinal recipes that he collected had direct use in his life. There is no sense of organization or

[189] Klaassen and Wright, *The Magic of Rogues: Necromancers in Early Tudor England*, 6.
[190] Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 144.

purpose in the ordering of the content in the *Book of Magical Charms*, which negates the possibility of it being used as a draft for some sort of magical exposé. This is especially true when we remember that Ashley was trained as a lawyer and approached many topics in life with a regimented mind. This is not to be found in the *Book of Magical Charms*. Instead, he has a ritual to conjure demons on the page directly preceding a page full of medicinal charms. This physical proximity corroborates my argument that Ashley was not invested in generating the outcomes of many of his entries, but, rather, that he wanted to see if it was possible to produce their potential ends. Robert Ashley collected practical charms, medicinal recipes, angelic rituals, and necromantic conjurings that he could complete on his own. The small size of the books lends to the idea that Ashley was able to leave his small dormitory in Middle Temple and carry it with him in London. Due to the skepticism that Reginald Scot introduced to early modern England, Robert Ashley rationalized the magical belief of James I with the scientific method of Thomas Harriot and Francis Bacon.

With this conclusion reached the next question that is asked is what conclusion did Robert Ashley come to? While there is no obvious answer to this question, Ashley left behind a couple of possible hints that can help point to his personal convictions. The first of these is his prophetic dreams he had and discussed in his *Vita*: "I do not think I should pass over, but rather commit to written memory, the fact that I have often experienced prophetic dreams in my life."[191] That Ashley believed he had prophetic dreams is fascinating and complicates his position as a follower of science; a conclusion which would have been drawn with the knowledge of his authoring a poem to honor the death of Francis Bacon in 1626. In the *Book of Magical Charms,* he has a page dedicated to interpreting dreams and what to do to have your dreams tell you what you wish to know.[192] Many members of the new Protestant Church of England felt that prophetic dreams were a thing of the past, along with

[191] Satterley, "Transcription and Translation of Sloane MS. 2131, Robert Ashley's (1565-1641) *Vita*," 25.
[192] *Book of Magical Charms*, 39.

miracles.[193] There were a few who still believed in the power of prophetic dreams, and Ashley very easily could have been among them. Two of the most popular dream manuals of the sixteenth-century, Thomas Hill's *The Moste Pleasaunte Arte of the Interpretation of Dreames* (1576) and Artemidorus of Ephesus's *The Interpretation of Dreams* (first translated in 1518) defined two different types of dreams; there were those that signified matters to come and those that only signified the present state of affairs.[194] Reginald Scot disagreed with both Hill and Artemidorus, writing that, "as for dreames, whatsoever credit is attributed unto them, proceedeth follie: and they are fooles that trust in them, for whie they have deceived many."[195] He continues to explain his stance on what dreams are then and what they mean:

> Howbeit, physical dreames are natural, and the cause of them dwelleth in the nature of man. For they are the inward actions of the mind in the spirits of the braine, whilest the bodie is occupied with sleepe: for as touching the mind it selfe, it never sleepeth. These dreames varie, according to the difference of humors and vapors. There are also casuall dreames, which (as *Salomon* saith) some throughthe multitude of businesse. For as a looking glasse sheweth the image or figure thereunto opposite: so in dreames, the phantasie & imagination informes the understanding of such things as haunt the outward sense.[196]

There is no way to tell which of these understandings Ashley may have had, but we can analyze the way he moved forward after having his prophetic dreams.

The first dream that Ashley mentions in his *Vita* concerns a woman with a broom; he describes it as follows: "When I was twenty-nine, or a little older, the image of a woman presented itself to me in my dreams. She was a serving-woman, or rather some infernal Fury, who swept my house with a broom, threatened me with horrible evils and then disappeared."[197] Brooms became associated with witchcraft rather early, often used as a symbol of female sexuality and likened to the phallus.[198] By the

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[193] Almond, *England's First Demonologist: Reginald Scot & 'The Discoverie of Witchcraft'*, 139.
[194] Almond, *England's First Demonologist: Reginald Scot & 'The Discoverie of Witchcraft'*, 140.
[195] Reginald Scot, *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, introduced by Hugh Ross Williamson (Arundel: Centaur Press, 1964), 159.
[196] Scot, *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, 160.
[197] Satterley, "Transcription and Translation of Sloane MS. 2131, Robert Ashley's (1565-1641) *Vita*," 25.
[198] For more on the study of the perceptions of witchcraft and witchcraft iconography see James Sharpe "In Search of the English Sabbat: Popular Conceptions of Witches' Meetings in Early Modern England," *Journal of Early Modern Studies*,

sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the image of the witch riding a broom was a ubiquitous symbol. For Ashley to have mentioned that this woman was carrying a broom and threatened with "horrible evils" evokes the idea of *maleficium* and the woman being a witch. If we are to take Ashley's profession of his prophetic dreams to be proof that he believed them to be true, then he likely did fear of witches. In the *Book of Magical Charms,* he has four charms against witchcraft: "To know yf one be bewitched or not," "To torment a Witch," "To withstand Witchcraft and to punish and torment the witch," and "Salomons Girdle against witchcraft and ill tongues."[199] If Ashley did believe in witches and prophetic dreams then he likely did not believe what Reginald Scot was arguing in the *Discoverie*.

To complicate this conclusion is the very last entry in the *Vita*, which is another prophetic dream. He describes his dream as follows: "The Year of Christ 1622 | Twentieth year of King James's reign. When I was fifty-six, after sunrise on 17 July, a day on which the moon was in Aquarius, I saw in a dream a sort of thin figure of a man or a woman who trampled under his or her feet, as if having triumphed over it, a shining gold serpent or a dragon upon which the word Alchymi[a] had been inscribed in extremely beautiful letters."[200] Alchemy has been rarely mentioned in this argument as it never appears in the *Book of Magical Charms*. However, Ashley owned a number of books on alchemy, both defending it and trying to refute it.[201] In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries beliefs in the alchemical arts was at a seeming high; Elizabeth supported court alchemists and Isaac Newton and Robert Boyle were trying to find the elixir of life while helping found the Royal Society. However, the shared quality of the new science advocated by Francis Bacon was destroying the esoteric groundwork

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no. 2 (2013), pp. 161-183; Charles Zika, "Images of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe," in *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America*, edited. By Brian P. Levack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 141-156; and Charles Zika, "Dürer's witch, riding women and moral order," in *Dürer and His Culture*, edited by C. Zika and D. Eichberger (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1998).

[199] *Book of Magical Charms*, 28-30.

[200] Satterley, "Transcription and Translation of Sloane MS. 2131, Robert Ashley's (1565-1641) *Vita*," 27.

[201] "Library Manuscript Catalogues," Second Seate A Side, 17: *Quisdam Alchmimia Triumph & Quisdam defensio alchimia*; Second Seate A Side, 25: *Aurum non Aurum.*

upon which European alchemy had been built.[202] Due to Agrippa's *Three Books on Occult Philosophy*, alchemy lived under the umbrella of natural philosophy and was informed by the occult. It was a way to master nature by discovering the common denominator in nature and to manipulate it to create new things, this process was referred to as transmutation. Famously, the alchemists sought to discover the Philosopher's Stone, which would give its owner eternal youth by curing all ailments and could turn base metals into gold. However, many alchemists had much more humble goals, to transform base metals into other more valuable materials.[203] Reginald Scot saw alchemy as nothing more than a sophisticated form of deception; its practitioners are "'ranke couseners, and consuming cankers to the common wealth, and therefore to be rejected and excommunicated from the fellowship of all learned men'."[204] Scot was not alone in these convictions.

The teacher of Agrippa, Johannes Trithemius (1462-1516) called alchemy a "chaste whore who has many lovers but deludes them all and never falls into the embrace of any. She turns the foolish into madmen, the wealthy into paupers, philosophers into simpletons, and those she has deceived into talkative deceivers, for while they know nothing they profess to know all."[205] Henry VI (1421-1471) was sure to designate that the only lawful alchemists were those who did not use the "Crafte of Necromansye but onely [the] playne science of Philossophie."[206] As time went on more became skeptical of alchemy and its practitioners. In 1557, William Bloomfield, an alchemist himself, published his *Bloomfield's Blossoms* or *The Campe of Philosophy* in which he referred to the ignorant and failed alchemists as 'fools.'[207] Reading just the excerpt of Ashley's dream it would seem that he sees this figure as a mirror of St. George slaying the alchemical dragon (see fig. 14). He seemingly agreed

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[202] Wootton, *The Invention of Science*, 357.
[203] For more on alchemy and alchemical belief in England see Jennifer Rampling *The Experimental Fire: Inventing English Alchemy, 1300-1700*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2020.
[204] Almond, *England's First Demonologist: Reginald Scot & 'The Discoverie of Witchcraft'*, 174.
[205] Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 139.
[206] Rampling, *The Experimental Fire: Inventing English Alchemy, 1300-1700*, 175.
[207] William Bloomfield, "The Campe of Philosophy," in *Theatrum Chemicum Brittanicum* by Elias Ashmole (1652). Website.

Figure 14. Alexander Barclay (1476-1552), Life of Saint George, Woodcut of St George Slaying the Dragon, 1515.

with William Bloomfield and Reginald Scot on the matter of alchemy and had experimentally proved that the new science had triumphed over natural philosophy and necromancy. It seems that Philomath has triumphed over Epistemon. However, there is another way to interpret this dream and its purpose.

Agrippa, in his *De occulta philosophia,* upheld the occult arts and laid out their virtues. However, later in life he published his *De vanitate scientarum*, which was very critical of the occult arts, particularly alchemy. Vittoria Perrone Compagni, in "'Dispersa Intentio.' Alchemy, Magic and Skepticism in Agrippa," argues that this change is due not to a falter in Agrippa's beliefs in alchemy and magic but was rather a rhetorical disavowal based on a new relationship between faith and reason.[208] Where, at first glance, Agrippa seems to be harshly critical of alchemy and the occult, he was, in fact, still a firm believer in alchemy. Just as Agrippa disavowed alchemy and magic in order to seem more acceptable to his peers, how are we to ever know if Ashley did the same? He believed in his prophetic dreams, something that the skeptics like Scot thought to be erroneous. We can never know for sure what Ashley's intent was with his dream of the alchemical dragon, or if he even understood its message: perhaps his subconscious sent him this image to guide him on his experimental exploits? However, we can know that Ashley took steps to try to form on opinion of his own concerning magic.

By collecting a broad range of medicinal recipes, charms, angelic rituals, demonic rituals, and conjuring formulas, Ashley was compiling a sort of field book that he could fit into his pocket and carry with him. He was collecting procedures to conduct as experiments. This process, which I have termed rational magic, was Ashley's way of understanding the varying voices on magic, science, and the skeptics. We do not know what kinds of conclusions Ashley may have come to, if he ever did, but his co-opting of the new scientific method to test the occult philosophies due to the groundbreaking arguments about the falsity of magical belief is a fresh way to understand the relationship between

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[208] Vittoria Perrone Compagni, "'Dispersa Intentio.' Alchemy, Magic and Skepticism in Agrippa," *Early Science and Medicine* 5, no. 2, Alchemy and Hermeticism (2000), 177.

magic and science in early modern England. Newberry MS 5017 showcases the ways that the common Londoner approached the state of confusion that figures like Francis Bacon, Reginald Scot, Agrippa, King James I, and John Dee introduced. Robert Ashley saw the skepticism towards magical belief and used the new empiricism to put those beliefs to the experimental test.

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