

Animals, Demons and Magic in Late Medieval Europe

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As a practical art, medieval magic offered tools to manipulate the cosmos. Approaches to animals and their bodies in magic texts depended on philosophical and religious assumptions, and on social and economic realities. Late medieval orthodoxy held that God created animals for humans to dominate and use for their own ends. This belief derived from an understanding of humans as naturally superior, but as a practical approach it was supported by the fact that animals did not have a central role in Christianity. It was forbidden to worship them or use their bodies in rituals of communication with God, but it was permissible to kill them because they lacked reason. So long as they were not harmful to humans, magic that used animal parts or substances therefore tended to be accepted as licit unless they involved a ritual or mixture that was identified as deviant or unnatural.

Although animals possessed inferior reason and more limited souls than humans, for medieval thinkers manipulating an animal's behaviour was a more complicated matter than manipulating its body.¹ Animals were part of God's good creation, and therefore only God, angels, and special humans such as saints could make animals behave in ways that subverted the natural order. Moreover, after Adam's disobedience in the Garden of Eden, man was punished by the disobedience of the animals which should have been subject to him, so humanity's natural intellectual and spiritual superiority to animals could not always be relied on. To address this challenge many medieval men and women called upon God, the angels and saints to protect and attract useful animals and repel or destroy animals that were harmful to humans or property. Unlike the benefic powers in the medieval cosmos, theologians thought that demons were not permitted to subvert the laws of nature put in place by God, including by actively influencing or harming animals. But this position was slowly undermined over the course of the late Middle Ages as anxiety increased about the demonic threat to Christendom. By the early 15th century the idea that demons could harm and destroy livestock, possess animals and teach their human followers how to transform into animals had become common in witchcraft literature.

1. On philosophical approaches to animals including their rationality and souls see Pieter DE LEEMANS, and Matthew KLEMM, "Animals and Anthropology in Medieval Philosophy", in Brigitte RESL (ed.), *A Cultural History of Animals: The Medieval Age*, Oxford, Bloomsbury, 2009, pp. 153-177.

When God intervened to make animals behave against their natural inclinations, it was usually in order to reveal the holiness and miracle-working abilities of a saint, who might be succoured by wild animals in the wilderness, form affectionate and harmonious relationships with them, or order them to stop terrorizing villagers and their livestock.² The transformation was temporary: the animal went back to its own ways after the need for the miracle was over. When complex magic rituals for invoking angels or conjuring demons were directed at animals, these also tended to focus on the extraordinary control and taming of wild animals. Like the stories of saints taming wild animals, the intention was to show that animals recognised the magical practitioner's extraordinary power and the enhanced spiritual status that accompanied his ability to converse with angels or compel demons to do his bidding.

Medieval magic texts promised great powers over the natural world. Power consisted not only in dominance over animals but also in understanding them, in transforming themselves into animals, and even in creating new animals. This article organises into six categories the variety of approaches to animals in late medieval magic. These categories illuminate medieval thinking about animals from the period of the translation of learned magic texts from Arabic, Jewish and Greco-Roman traditions into Latin in the 12th to 13th centuries to the coalescence of witchcraft mythologies by the end of the 15th century.

RITUALS TO INFLUENCE ANIMALS

Animals were an important part of medieval people's livelihoods, and it is not surprising to find rituals addressing the care and protection of valuable domestic animals.³ God's protection of mankind extended to the resources that kept people alive, and the power of the sacred word, both spoken and written, was harnessed for this use. Charms to protect and heal animals can be found in collections of human remedies and in texts devoted to the care of horses and hunting birds. Some charms functioned whether their object was a human or animal;⁴ others adapt for animals charm motifs that were already in

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2. On saints and animals see for example Dominic ALEXANDER, *Saints and Animals in the Middle Ages*, Woodbridge, Boydell & Brewer, 2008 ; David SALTER, *Holy and Noble Beasts*, Cambridge, Boydell & Brewer, 2001 ; Susan CRANE, *Animal Encounters: Contacts and Concepts in Medieval Britain*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013, chapter 1.
 3. There is little scholarship in this area, but see: Briony AITCHISON, *'For to knowen here sicknesse and to do the lechecraft there fore': Animal Ailments and their Treatment in Late-Medieval England*, PhD Thesis, St Andrews University, 2010, p. 875-892, and William C. JORDAN, "Charms to Ward Off Sheep and Pig Murrain", in Miri RUBIN (ed.), *Medieval Christianity in Practice*, Princeton/Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2009, p. 67-75. I have focused on English manuscripts in this section.
 4. Charms said to work for either man or animal (*home sive animal*) can be found in British Library, MS Royal 12 B XXV, f. 62v (against snake bite) and British Library, MS Sloane 3285, f. 89 against farcy (a

use to cure people. Thus we find the narrative *motifs* of Longinus and Christ in the river Jordan being recommended to staunch bleeding in horses as well as humans; and the ‘Lion of the Tribe of Judah’ motif used to protect hunting birds from danger.⁵ The multipurpose mid-13th century textual amulet, Canterbury Cathedral Library, Additional MS 23, describes two blood staunching charms with powerful characters (*characteres*) and letters (*littere*) that should be inscribed on parchment and given to a patient to wear on his breast.⁶ Sceptical readers were told to try out the charm on a pig by killing it with a knife on which the ritual characters had been inscribed: according to the charm, blood would not flow from the dead pig’s body, thus proving its blood-staunching power. Since the healing power of the charm will only work when it is worn in a becoming (*honeste*) manner, it was probably appropriate only for experimenting on a dead pig, and not for curing a living one.⁷

Like other Christian charms, charms for livestock are likely to have emerged when a particular medical condition or animal corresponded to a culturally charged image, saint or biblical figure.⁸ The Job charm, telling of the Biblical figure’s affliction with nine evil worms (*vermes*), and often including a counting-down ritual to expel the worms one by one, was applied to both equine and human disease. In this case the charm’s versatility reflects Job’s loss of both children and livestock at the hands of the devil.⁹ In other charms, worms are personified as demons of disease. An extraordinary narrative charm for horses who have farcy, festering wounds or worms begins with the archangel Raphael telling Michael that he has previously travelled in the land of worms, and the charmer asks him to

form of glanders in which there is inflammation of the lymph vessels). Although transmission is rare, when this equine disease is passed to humans it can be fatal.

5. See British Library, MS Sloane 2584, f. 103v for Longinus blood-staunching charms. The use of the Lion of Judah charm motif to protect falcons can be found in the hawking treatise in Albertus Magnus’s *De animalibus*, the 12th-century treatise *Dancus Rex* by Gerardus Falconarius, and two treatises in Middle English, *The Booke of Hawkyng after Prince Edward Kyng of Englande* and the “*Kerdeston Hawking Book*”.
6. Canterbury Cathedral, Additional MS 23, col. 1, Don C. SKEMER (ed.), *Binding Words: Textual Amulets in the Middle Ages*, University Park, Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006, p. 286: *si non credis scribe in cultello et occide porcum et sanguis non flue*. The wording is very similar in the second charm in col. 6, p. 296.
7. Canterbury Cathedral, Additional MS 23, col. 1, Don C. SKEMER (ed.), *Binding Words*, ed. cit., p. 286: *Iste littere victoriam habent qui eas honeste deferre poterit*.
8. On the relationship between charms motifs and medical conditions see Lea T. OLSAN, “The Corpus of Charms in the Middle English Leechcraft Remedy Books”, in Jonathan ROPER (ed.), *Charms, Charmers and Charming: International Research on Verbal Magic*, Palgrave, Macmillan, 2009, p. 214-237. For saints commonly invoked in animal cures see Briony AITCHISON, “Holy Cow ! The Miraculous Cures of Animals in Late Medieval England”, *European Review of History: Revue européenne d’histoire*, vol. 16.6, p. 875-892.
9. Job 1: 13-22. See George R. KEISER, *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050-1500: Works of science and information*, New Haven, The Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1998, p. 38-79. for multiple examples and editions of this charm in Middle English. It was also popular in Latin and other medieval vernaculars.

return there again and slay the worms afflicting this particular horse.¹⁰ Domestic animals were considered particularly vulnerable to the nocturnal attacks of demons. A charm against the female ‘night-goblin’ that plagues horses invokes Saint George to find, beat and bind the demon and make her promise not to come in the night.¹¹ In a reversal of the usual application of human charms to domestic animals, by the early modern period this charm for horses had evolved into a charm against human nightmares.¹²

Although some charm motifs and ritual actions were applied to both humans and animals, others express the idea of human difference, superiority and domination. For example, charms to capture, kill or repel snakes use language that reflects their symbolic significance as the enemy of mankind as well as their actual power to cause harm to people and livestock.¹³ Thus a charm for catching snakes addresses the serpent with these words: “Listen and understand me, since it was given to me to have power over you by God Almighty and by Adam and Eve and that curse which you received”.¹⁴ Human domination of animals was also expressed in violent ritual actions such as branding them with hot chapel keys or burning irons to cure or protect them.¹⁵ Two particularly invasive late Middle English remedies for farcy instruct the operator to insert amulets under the horse’s skin, an action that is never found in charms for human illnesses. The instructions in MS British Library, Sloane 962, part of a collection of charms for equine disease, recommend inscribing a thin lead plate with an invocation of Christ and a biblical verse.¹⁶ In the mid-15th century *Boke of Marchalsi* the amulet for farcy is constructed of four crosses made respectively from the root of a red dock, the root of a red nettle, lead and leather, which are

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10. British Library, MS Sloane 962, f. 135, Willy L. BRAEKMAN (ed.), *Of Hawks and Horses: Four Late Middle English Prose Treatises*, Brussels, Omirel, 1986, p. 92.
 11. ‘Seynt Iorge our lady knyghth’, Maxwell Sidney LURIA and Richard L. HOFFMAN (eds.), *Middle English Lyrics*, New York, Norton, 1974, p. 113. See G. R. KEISER, *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English*, *op. cit.*, p. 372-3 for surviving copies.
 12. Jacqueline SIMPSON, “The Nightmare Charm in King Lear”, in J. ROPER (ed.), *Charms, Charmers and Charming*, Houndmills, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, p. 100-107.
 13. The frequency of these charms and recipes is also indicative of the influence of authors from the Greco-Roman and Arabic tradition who were concerned with a wider range of venomous snakes than were likely to be encountered in Western Europe. See Kathleen WALKER-MEIKLE, “Toxicology and Treatment: Medical Authorities and Snake-bite in the Middle Ages”, *Korot*, vol. 22, 2014, p. 85-104.
 14. British Library, MS Royal 12 B XXV, f. 62v-63: *Audi et intellige / quia data est michi potestas super te per deum / omnipotentem et per Adam / et per Euam et illam malediccionem in / qua recepisti*. For the whole charm see Lea T. OLSAN, “Latin Charms in British Library, MS Royal 12. B. XXV”, *Manuscripta*, vol. 33.2, 1989, p. 119-128, p. 121.
 15. A fabric roll of 1503-04 from Ripon Collegiate Church records the burning iron of St Wilfrid that was used on cattle: *Memorials of the Church of S. S. Peter and Wilfrid, Ripon*, Joseph FOWLER (ed.), Durham, Andrews & Co., vol. 3, 1886, p. 167 n. 1. See B. AITCHISON, “Holy Cow”, *art. cit.*, p. 880 for other examples used on dogs and horses.
 16. British Library, MS Sloane 962, f. 135, Willy L. BRAEKMAN (ed.), *Of Hawks and Horses*, *op. cit.*, p. 92, and MS Sloane 2584 (1380-1425), f. 103v.

bound together with thread. While the cross amulet is held in the hand a charm is recited over it. Afterwards the skin of the horse is cut open with a flat iron implement (*sklyse*) above the croup, the amulet is inserted into the horse's body and then the skin flap is sewn back up.¹⁷

The ritual healing or expelling of animals seems to have attracted the negative attention of ecclesiastical authorities particularly when objects were used in conjunction with spoken or written words. Ritual objects were fashioned from vellum, clay, chalk, metal, plants and bread, as well as tree knots and unusual stones.¹⁸ For example, the charm collection in MS Royal 12 V XXV recommends giving pigs pieces of bread inscribed with the Trinitarian formula to cure their sore throats, getting rid of mice using four square pieces of fired or sun-dried clay inscribed with the names of the four evangelists, and luring serpents to you with a lead lamina inscribed with magical characters.¹⁹ Bishop Burchard of Worms' *Corrector* (ca. 1008-12), an early collection of canon law, draws attention to amulets, bindings (*ligaturas*), bread and plants which have had demonic incantations (*diabolica carmina*) said over them and states that performing such practices require two years penance.²⁰ He expresses the anxiety that if people who worked with animals, such as swineherds, ploughmen and hunters (*subulci, bubulci et venatores*) had access to these rituals, they would be tempted to destroy other people's animals as well as cure their own.

The rise in anxiety about malefic magic and demonic activity in the late Middle Ages changed the ways in which popular ritual practices were scrutinised. In the 15th century clerics began attacking these practices with greater vehemence, expressing fears about the scale of the demonic presence in the physical world and the susceptibility of women to demonic influence. But Christian belief in a material creation that was infused by spiritual powers, both demonic and divine, and the significance that was assigned to ritual action, led to disagreements among clerics about which practices should be recommended and which condemned. Some 15th-century authors of tracts on superstition condemned rituals to protect or heal animals while others thought that these should be

17. British Library, MS Harley 6398, ff. 61-62v, Bengt ODENSTEDT (ed.), *The Boke of Marchalsi: A 15th Century Treatise on Horse-Bleeding and Veterinary Medicine*, Thesis, Stockholm University, 1973, p. 31-35.

18. One experiment wets a knot from an ash tree with a horse's blood and uses the knot to make five crosses on the horse's forehead while the name of Christ is invoked. See British Library, MS Sloane 2584, f. 103v and MS Sloane 962, f. 135v. A stone with a hole in it is used to protect horses from the night goblin: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson C 506, f. 297.

19. The experiment to expel mice or rats by writing on clay tablets, chalk or stones is particularly common.

20. *Corrector sive Medicus* 63. The 12th-century *Penitential* of Bartholomew of Exeter repeats Burchard's comments in a summarised form.

accepted as genuine (if sometimes muddled) expressions of lay piety or as legitimate protective practices that could be employed against maleficent witchcraft.²¹

Some ritual magic texts directed at animals were longer and more complex than the charms that we have so far been considering. These texts were able to present a more careful Christianisation of their experiments. The *Liber de quattuor confectionibus*, a hermetic magic text with Arabic origins that circulated in the Latin West from the 13th century, explained how to capture four categories of animals – wolves, wild beasts, birds and reptiles – “so that their spirits incline towards you and their nature is offered to you without hindrance”.²² This text claimed to have been given to Adam by an angel, thus evoking a lost pre-lapsarian world of human and animal harmony, and it recommended that prayers accompany the making of mixtures of animal parts to beguile animals. The first preparation (*confectio*) attracted wolves and was made from a mixture of the blood, fat, gall and brains of a horse, wolf, black cat, raven, vulture, eagle, goat, hen, ass, fox, pig and hare, as well as snakeskin and various plant substances. After drawing the wolf to him, the practitioner gives it the *confectio* to eat. It immediately becomes so docile that he can either kill it or put it on a lead like a dog. In this way the *Liber de quattuor confectionibus* text offers readers a choice between the two most significant goals in medieval magic relating to animals: the protection of human resources (in this case by killing a significant predator) or the spectacle of taming a vicious animal to express the extraordinary status and power of the magician. The orthodoxy of this text was accepted by William of Auvergne, bishop of Paris from 1228-49 and an important theorist of magic, who absolved the text of impiety because he thought that the prayers provided an alternative to the hunt and used the natural persuasive force of words to attract animals.

MAGIC USING ANIMAL BODIES

The *Liber de quattuor confectionibus* belongs to a category of magic texts that described how to manipulate the hidden properties of natural objects. Thinkers like William of Auvergne used the term ‘natural magic’ to distinguish the marvels produced by occult

21. For German authors on each side of this debate see Michael BAILEY, *Fearful Spirits, Reasoned Follies: The Boundaries of Superstition in Late Medieval Europe*, Ithaca/London, Cornell University Press, 2013, p. 169 and 177.

22. *Ut inclinetur tibi spiritus eorum et ingeratur ad te natura eorum absque impedimenta* in Antonella SANNINO, “Ermete mago e alchimista nelle biblioteche di Guglielmo d’Alvernia e Ruggero Bacone”, *Studi Medievali*, vol. 40, 2000, p. 151-209, at p. 182. On the Arabic origins of this text, see also Carmela BAFFIONI, “Un esemplare arabo del *Liber de quattuor confectionibus*,” in Paolo LUCENTINI, Ilaria PARRI, and Vittoria PERRONE COMPAGNI (eds.), *Hermetism from Late Antiquity to Humanism: La tradizione ermetica dal mondo tardo-antico all’umanesimo*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2003, p. 295-313.

properties in nature from the trickery of conjurors and the illusions of demons.²³ The idea of occult properties – properties whose effects were not explained by the complexion or elemental constitution of a natural object, body or substance – had Greco-Roman origins. Natural philosophers like William emphasized, however, that these virtues had been assigned by God. Among the Arabic and Greco-Roman texts translated into Latin in the 12th and 13th centuries were works which described the hidden properties of parts of animals. These texts often brought with them more sophisticated theories than had previously existed to defend their efficacy and licitness. These included cosmological theories of celestial influence, a sophisticated understanding of the placebo effect and an argument using the magnet's ability to attract iron to demonstrate that some unusual properties could be witnessed but were difficult to explain.

Cures deriving from animal parts were often considered a less sophisticated branch of medicine, perhaps more suitable for the poor.²⁴ But there was also an interest in animals with exotic or not manifestly useful bodies because they were thought more likely to contain wondrous properties. Thus, the only magic texts devoted to a single animal circulating in the late Middle Ages focus on the vulture, eagle, snake, lion and badger.²⁵ Animals like the eagle and lion were well known from secular and religious iconography and texts, so the hidden properties of their bodies were interesting to a medieval audience. The fact that exotic animals appear in works of magic and medicine at all, even when it was unlikely that their parts would be accessible to the average reader, shows the importance of the conceptual as well as physical significance of species in medieval culture, and also, perhaps, that magic texts were sometimes read for pleasure and for academic interest rather than with the intention of actually following the recipes.²⁶

23. William of Auvergne uses the terms *magica naturalis* in his *De legibus* (1228-30), chaps. 14 and 25, and *De universo* (1231-36): I. i. II. i1. 43 and 46, and II. iii. 2II. 3iii.21-24. See Antonella SANNINO, “*Nigromantia secundum physicam, nigromantia imaginum: arte et imagine in Guglielmo d’Alvernia*”, in *La magia naturale tra Medioevo e prima età moderna*, a cura di Lorenzo Bianchi e Antonella SANNINO, Florence, Sismel-Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2018, p. 81-130.

24. On the medical tradition see especially, Iolanda VENTURA, “*Medicina, magia e Drekapotheke sull’uso delle sostanze animali nella letteratura farmaceutica tra XII e XV secolo*”, in Agostino PARAVICINI BAGLIANI (ed.), *Terapie e guarigioni. Convegno internazionale (Ariano Irpino, 5-7 ottobre 2008)*, Florence, Edizione Nazionale La Scuola Medica Salernitana, p. 303-362 and ID., “*The Curae ex animalibus in the Medical Literature of the Middle Ages*”, in Baudouin VAN DEN ABEELLEN (ed.), *Bestiaires médiévaux: Nouvelles perspectives sur les manuscrits et les traditions textuelles*, Louvain-la-Neuve, Brepols, 2003, p. 213-248.

25. These texts are the *Epistula de vulture*, the *De corio serpentis*, the *Liber de taxone*, and the *Virtutes aquile*.

26. On the indigenisation of exotic species see Aleks G. PLUSKOWSKI, “*Constructing Exotic Animals and Environments in Late Medieval Britain*”, in Sophie PAGE (ed.), *The Unorthodox Imagination in Late Medieval Britain*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2010, p. 317-352.

The positive cultural associations of the eagle and the lion improved the reception of magic rituals using these animals. Interest in the eagle led to the extraction and separate circulation of the section on this bird in the *Cyranides*, a 12th-century Latin translation of a Greek text on the magical and healing properties of animals, plants and stones. Both the Latin and Middle English versions of the eagle ritual include the rare and touching invocation of the eagle as ‘friend of man’ (*amica hominis*). These words are whispered in its ear after it has been captured and bound, just before it is ritually beheaded and its body dissected and prepared to be a cure for all human infirmities.²⁷ The (largely) positive and indeed regal image of the lion contributed to the popularity of an astrological talisman made of gold or silver and engraved with a lion (the zodiac sign Leo) at a time when the influence of the Sun was considered strong and beneficial.²⁸ In 1301 the Catalan astrologer and physician Arnau de Vilanova treated the kidney stones of Pope Benedict VIII with this talisman, and the pope claimed that it had eased his sufferings.

Although the harnessing of powers in the natural world to cure human ailments was largely accepted even when combined with ritual actions, medieval theologians disapproved of the use of natural objects to influence a person’s emotions, on the grounds that this would either be ineffective or only be successful with the assistance of demons.²⁹ But love and hatred were popular goals of medieval magic: performing a ritual or following a recipe could give emotional release through the enactment of rituals or give hope when social or economic pressures placed obstacles before a relationship. In the margins of a 14th-century copy of the *Cyranides* (British Library, MS Arundel 342) a later annotator draws attention to all the experiments that he thought were useful for love (*ad amorem*), here a flexible category that encompasses seducing a virgin, making the love between two people inviolable and creating harmony between a husband and wife.³⁰

In the *Cyranides* the majority of experiments for love use the body parts of birds, an association that would have felt appropriate to the medieval reader of poetry and romance.³¹ Birds’ hearts or testicles are usually burnt to ashes and dissolved in a drink

27. *Textes latins et vieux français relatifs aux Cyranides*, Louis DELATTE (ed.), Paris, Droz, 1942, p. 142 and Sue EASTMAN SHELDON, “The Eagle: Bird of Magic and Medicine in a Middle English Translation of the *Kyranides*”, *Tulane Studies in English*, vol. 22, 1977, p. 21-22.

28. On the lion talisman see Nicolas WEIL-PAROT, *Les «images astrologiques» au Moyen Âge et à la Renaissance: Spéculations intellectuelles et pratiques magiques (XII^e–XV^e siècle)*, Paris, Honoré Champion, 2002, p. 477-496.

29. For a longer discussion of the parts of natural magic that theologians considered problematic see S. PAGE, *Magic in the Cloister*, University Park, Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013, p. 45-48.

30. London, British Library, MS Arundel 342, 14th century. *Cyranides*, ff. 1r-45r.

31. On birds and love in medieval poetry see Peter DRONKE, *The Medieval Lyric*, Cambridge, D. S. Brewer, 1996 (3rd edition), p. X-XII.

which is given to the object of desire.³² In the case of smaller birds – the wagtail (*cauda tremula*) and swallow (*hirundo*) – the whole living bird including its feathers is immersed in oil, burnt to ashes and then dissolved.³³ Observation of the natural world as well as cultural associations played a part in the choice of ingredients. The animal appearing most often in experiments for love is the crow, a bird that mates for life and exhibits cooperative breeding behaviour; this is noted approvingly in the chapter on this bird in the Christian bestiary, which urges men and women to follow their example.³⁴ An experiment in the *Cyranides* to create love between a man and his wife for the whole of their lives advises that the husband wears the heart of a male crow and the wife the heart of a female crow.³⁵ The *Cyranides*' recipes for love can be found in both medieval medical collections and witchcraft accusations.³⁶ Matteuccia di Francesca, who was tried and executed for witchcraft in Todi in 1428, was accused of practising love magic as well as *maleficia* (harmful magic).³⁷ She was said to have advised a woman from the Castle of Pacciana in Perugia to give the man she loved the burnt ashes of swallows in his food and drink, and to have advised Giovana of the castle of San Martino that she could recover her husband's love by giving him a drink of wine in which the ashes of a swallow had been mixed as well as water in which she had washed her feet.

THE RITUAL CREATING AND KILLING OF ANIMALS

Natural magic was taken to its logical extreme in experiments to create new beings that were slaughtered in order to utilise the extraordinary properties of their bodies. The creation of these new beings was a marvellous extension of simpler and more common recipes to multiply useful species, increase fertility, and manipulate the gender and

32. The birds mentioned in recipes for love are the crow (heart, egg, testicles), ostrich (a stone found in its head), peacock (a stone found in its head), eagle (testicles), vulture (heart), bee-eater (heart), dove (testicles), wag-tail (whole body) and swallow (whole body).

33. *Cyranides*, III, ed. L. DELATTE, *Textes latins, ed. cit.*, p. 171.

34. The 'Second-Family Bestiary', chapter 78.

35. *Ad amorem viri et coniugis suae. Si vir gestaverit cor masculi et uxor cor femine convenient inter se toto tempore vitae suae et hoc miraculum est certum*, ed. L. DELATTE, *Textes latins, ed. cit.*, p. 32.

36. A recipe for using a crow's heart to increase the love and concord between a man and wife is in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 1435 (s. xv^{ex}), a collection of medical academic treatises and recipes, at f. 4.

37. Edition and translation in Domenico MAMMOLI, *The Record of the Trial and Condemnation of a Witch, Matteuccia di Francesco, at Todi, 20 March 1428*, Rome, 1972, p. 28-40 at p. 34. See also the 1404 trial of Jacopo di Francesco, whose love magic experiments used crow brains and the burnt bones of small birds: *The Society of Renaissance Florence. A Documentary Study*, Gene BRUCKER (ed.), New York, Harper, 1971, p. 266-268.

appearance of human and animal offspring.³⁸ The most significant magic text circulating in Medieval Europe that described how to create new beings was the *Liber vaccae* (*Book of the Cow*), a Latin translation of a late 9th-century Arabic magical-chemical work that survives in 18 manuscripts.³⁹ Experiments in this text describe how to manipulate and enhance the capacities of animals by feeding them parts of other animal bodies, starving them, or keeping them in confined spaces. These actions were intended to transform animals like cats, cockerels, and hoopoes that already had strong magical associations into extraordinary specimens with magnified powers. One magical operation involved feeding whale eyes to a rooster until it grew and expanded and its eyes were blazing. The rooster was then fed to a wild black cat, which was decapitated; an eye ointment (*alcool*) made with its blood and gall bladder would enable the practitioner to see spirits.⁴⁰

Some of the key *Liber vaccae* experiments explain how to make new living creatures by extracting the soul of an animal while it is still alive and mixing it with parts of animals bodies and human substances such as semen and blood.⁴¹ The new creations are simply called ‘*illa forma*’ in the text, but appear to have the shape of an animal (*forma animalis*) clothed in human skin (*vestitur cute humana*). The creature to result from one of these experiments is a small cow with a human face and wings.⁴² All the newly created beings are killed and their bodies used to make ointments which are applied to the operator’s eyes, tongue, hands and ears to give him extraordinary powers, such as invulnerability to weapons, or the ability to walk on water or to see and speak to spirits. Like other ritual magic texts that focus on the status and power of the magical practitioner, the *Liber vaccae* also describes an experiment to dominate animals in which the wood of a marvellous tree is used to draw them close and make them bow down before him.⁴³ The proverbially stubborn mule and ass get a special mention in this experiment.

Some medieval magic rituals were intended to undermine the boundaries between animal and human and the living and the dead, an approach that undoubtedly fed anxieties

38. For a discussion of relevant recipes see S. PAGE, *Magic in the Cloister*, *op. cit.*, chapter 2.

39. On this text see especially David PINGREE, “From Hermes to Jābir and the *Book of the Cow*”, in Charles BURNETT and William Francis RYAN (eds.), *Magic and the Classical Tradition*, London, The Warburg Institute, 2006, p. 19-28; ID., “Artificial Demons and Miracles”, in Rika GYSELEN and Pierfrancesco CALLIERI (ed.), *Démons et merveilles d’Orient*, Bures-sur-Yvette, Groupe pour l’Étude de la Civilisation du Moyen-Orient, 2001, p. 109-122; Maaïke VAN DER LUGT, “‘Abominable Mixtures’: The *Liber vaccae* in the Medieval West, or the Dangers and Attractions of Natural Magic”, *Traditio*, vol. 64, 2009, p. 229-277; S. PAGE, *Magic in the Cloister*, *op. cit.*, chapter 3.

40. *Liber vaccae*, bk. 1, experiment 42. This experiment is transcribed by D. PINGREE in “Artificial demons”, *art. cit.*, p. 113-4. My numbering of the experiments follows the structure outlined in S. PAGE, *Magic in the Cloister*, *op. cit.*, p. 51-2.

41. *Liber vaccae*, bk. 1, experiments 1-4 and 27.

42. Experiment 27.

43. Experiment 45.

about malefic magic. In the *Liber vaccae* the ointments made from the ‘bodies’ of the hybridic, impermanent and insubstantial new creations have a destabilising effect on the appearances of others. If a man drinks the blood of the new creation produced by the first experiment he will take on the appearance of a cow or sheep, and if he is anointed with it he will have the likeness of an ape. The creation of new life was closely related to the vivification of the dead in medieval ritual magic, partly because of the medieval belief in and fascination with the supposed spontaneous generation of lower life forms, such as frogs, flies and worms, from rotting flesh.⁴⁴ The *Liber vaccae* experiments to generate new living forms use techniques of hybridisation, spontaneous generation and cannibalism, but the only dead things brought back to life are trees. Another ritual magic text, the *Liber Theysolius*, goes further in its vivification of the dead. This text was appended to the *Liber Razielis* compilation mentioned above, probably at the scriptorium of Alfonso X of Castile.⁴⁵ It describes how to create a familiar spirit that will be under the operator’s power and provide him with knowledge of anything he wants. The spirit can inhabit the body of a human corpse or the body of any bird, beast, reptile, or fish.

Another ritual magic text, the *Liber iuratus* ascribed to Honorius of Thebes, assigns a particular category of angels, the spirits of the earth, to operations for raising apparitions of the dead and for creating animals of the earth. Both of these operations are singled out as being “against the will of God” (*contra Domini voluntatem*) and the author says that he has therefore omitted their instructions.⁴⁶ The spirits of the earth are the most ominous kind of spirit mentioned in this text and are described in hybrid terms that mingles images of animals and corpses: “Their bodies are as wide as they are tall, great and terrifying, their feet are ten digits in length and have talons on them in the mode of serpents [dragons], and they have five faces on their heads ; one is of an owl, another of a lion, the third of a serpent, the fourth of a dead man mourning and wailing, the fifth of a man who is incomprehensible. They bear two tigers on their tails. They hold two dragons in their arms. Their colour is the most black of all inestimable blacknesses”.⁴⁷ Although vivid animal images are used to

44. See M. VAN DER LUGT, *Le Ver, le démon et la Vierge: Les théories médiévales de la génération extraordinaire. Une étude sur les rapports entre théologie, philosophie naturelle et médecine*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 2004.

45. See S. PAGE, “Magic and the Pursuit of Wisdom: The Familiar Spirit in the *Liber Theysolius*”, *La Corónica*, vol. 36 (1), 2007, p. 41-70.

46. *Liber iuratus Honorii*, Opus 4, chapter 134, ed. Gösta HEDEGÅRD, *Liber Iuratus Honorii: A Critical Edition of the Latin Version of the Sworn Book of Honorius*, Stockholm, Almqvist & Wiksell, 2002, p. 142.

47. *Liber iuratus Honorii*, Opus 4, chapter 135, ed. G. HEDEGÅRD, *Liber Iuratus Honorii, ed. cit.*, p. 142-3: *Corpora eorum sunt ita grossa sicut et alta, magna et terribilia, quorum pedes sunt quilibet 10 digitorum, in quibus sunt ungues ad modum serpentum, et habent vultus in capite ; unus est bufonis, alter leonis, tercius serpentis, quartus hominis mortui lugentis et plangentis, quintus hominis incomprehensibilis.*

describe the spirits, it is their overall hybridity that distinguishes them from God's good creation.

In medieval magic texts the ritual killing of animals released power to the operator.⁴⁸ The primary function of the magical sacrifice was to establish communication between the human and supernatural worlds through the intermediary of a victim, which was consecrated and then destroyed in the course of the ceremony. The nature of the ritual sacrifice was adjusted to the spirit with whom the practitioner wished to communicate, according to its place in the hierarchy and its benign or malevolent nature. Two kinds of sacrifice dominate: the dedicatory offering intended to gain the attention and good will of a superior or benign spirit, and the propitiatory offering intended to assuage a malign spirit and divert its aggression onto an animal victim. The first kind of sacrifice is found primarily in magic texts to invoke planetary spirits, and the second in necromantic rituals to summon and control demons.

The *Libro de astromagia*, an astral magic text produced at the court of Alfonso X in the 1280s, has illustrations of the sacrifices made by the magical practitioner to summon spirits of Mercury to speak to him in each of the twelve zodiac signs. In all but one of the rituals the sacrificial animal is a goat whose throat has been cut.⁴⁹ These images do not explain what the practitioner should do, but rather demonstrate the outcome of successful operations: the appearance of a winged spirit before the operator. The illustration in figure 1 shows the different ways in which 'animals,' both celestial and terrestrial, real and artificial, could be part of a magical operation. The god Mercury rides a peacock above the zodiac sign Cancer, commonly depicted as a crab.⁵⁰ The sacrificed goat is depicted with its throat cut between two braziers used for the burning of incense. Next to the practitioner is a horse with military trappings, not a real animal but a red copper image that the practitioner has made as a votive offering for the god. All these uses of animals and their images would have been familiar to medieval readers, who were exposed to astrological iconography in churches and calendars, the killing of animals as part of public civic rituals and the offering of animal votive images to saints.⁵¹

Duos tigrides gerunt in cauda. Tenent in manipus duos dracones. Color eorum nigerrimus omni nigredine inestimabili.

48. See S. PAGE, "Les sacrifices d'animaux dans le *Picatrix* latin et d'autres textes de magie médiévale", in Jean-Patrice BOUDET, Anna CAIOZZO et N. WEIL-PAROT (eds.), *Picatrix entre Orient et Occident*, Paris, Honoré Champion, 2011, p. 187-211.

49. The exception is the sacrifice of a crane when Mercury is in Taurus.

50. *Astromagia*, Bk. 4, ch. 4. *Alfonso X el Sabio, Astromagia: ms. Reg. lat. 1283a*, ed. Alfonso D'AGOSTINO, Naples, Liguori, 1992, p. 277. The image of Mercury riding a peacock probably originates from the *Picatrix*, II, x, 34.

51. On civic rituals see Esther COHEN, "Animals in Medieval Perceptions: The Image of the Ubiquitous Other", in *Animals and Human Society: Changing Perspectives*, Aubrey MANNING and James SERPELL

MAGIC THAT CREATES CORRESPONDENCES BETWEEN HEAVEN AND EARTH

The Aristotelian cosmological model that was adapted by Christian thinkers in the 12th and 13th centuries described transparent celestial spheres, closely nested within one another like the layers of an onion (a popular analogy of the time) moving with continuous circular motions and exerting a powerful influence on the physical world.⁵² Astrologers studied the movements and relative positions of the celestial bodies in order to make predictions about human lives and events on earth. The significance of animals within medieval economies, societies and culture meant that their susceptibility to celestial influences was also of interest to medieval readers, and astrological texts that indicated the parts of the world ruled over by each planet often included lists of animals. Saturn, for example, was particularly associated with pigs and goats, which were used to evoke the planet-god's relationship to melancholic illness and sexual aggression. The pig in this depiction of Saturnian men and women (figure 2) signals the melancholy natures of those born under the influence of this planet, as well as Saturn's rulership over farmers.⁵³ The Capricornian goat became a symbol of diabolical power in witchcraft iconography because of the animal's associations with lust, and its astrological role as a 'house' for Saturn; that is, the part of the zodiac circle in which this planet exercised most power.⁵⁴

Medieval authors were particularly interested in understanding celestial influences on valuable domestic animals. Two distinct iconographical traditions of 'zodiac horses' to assist in equine blood-letting emerged in the late Middle Ages. These adaptations of the popular 'zodiac man' diagram that was used in astrological medicine were part of an attempt by the late medieval authors of equine treatises to establish the prestige and authority of their art by creating parallels with human medicine. The zodiac man diagram indicated the rulership of zodiac signs over parts of the human body and warned the reader not to bleed or perform surgery on any given part when the moon was travelling through the zodiac sign that ruled over it. Zodiac horses replicated the correspondences between

(eds.), London/New York, Routledge, 1994, p. 59-80, especially 65-71, and on animal votive offerings see B. AITCHISON, "Holy Cow!", art. cit., p. 879.

52. See Edward GRANT, *Planets, Stars, and Orbs: The Medieval Cosmos, 1200-1687*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, for a comprehensive discussion of the structure of the Aristotelian cosmos, which is presented in a simplified outline here.

53. Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson D. 1220 (15th century), fol. 25v. The animal – temperament – planet relationships were Mars: choleric, lion; Venus: sanguine, ape; Jupiter: sanguine, falcon; Moon: phlegmatic, sheep; Saturn: melancholy, pig; Mercury: melancholy, dog.

54. On this iconography see Charles ZIKA, *The Appearance of Witchcraft. Print and Visual Culture in Sixteenth-Century Europe*, Milton Park, Routledge, 2007, p. 216-217.

human body parts and zodiac signs closely, with small adaptations suitable to the body of a quadruped: the sign Gemini now rules over legs rather than arms, Aquarius over shins rather than legs, and Pisces over hooves rather than feet.

A more significant difference between the human and equine diagrams is that the latter place more emphasis on non-lunar planetary influences than the zodiac man, presumably because their authors thought that, unlike humans, horses lacked the free will to resist these influences and were therefore more likely to be affected by them. The earliest ‘zodiac horse’ type precedes the treatise *Alius tractatus de morbis naturalibus et accidentalibus, ac signis et curis equorum*, a copiously illustrated Italian text drawing on ancient Greek veterinary authors in a 14th-century compilation of texts relating to equine medicine.⁵⁵ This zodiac horse type assigns a significant place to the sun as the ultimate source of the celestial influences on the horse’s body. In Pierpont Morgan MS M. 735 (figure 3), the solar iconography also evokes the visage of God in a way that suggests he is the ultimate source of the celestial influences in the physical world. A second, later, and probably independent zodiac horse diagram precedes the popular early 15th century treatise on equine medicine by the Valencian noble Manuel Díes. The *Libre de cavalls* gives celestial bodies an even more significant influence over horses. It begins by discussing the nature of the signs and explaining why operating on a body part is dangerous when the Moon is travelling through the corresponding sign.⁵⁶ This zodiac horse diagram places the horse within a circular band on which the names of all the planets are inscribed. The accompanying text recommends that no cures of any kind (not just bleeding or surgery) are undertaken when the zodiac sign has influence over a particular body part.⁵⁷

The celestial realm influenced animals in other ways. Some astral magic texts indicate that celestial ‘animals’ had a power over terrestrial animals that the practitioner could access by timing the operation to channel of a zodiac sign’s influence. For example, the *Picatrix*, an important 10th century Arabic compendium of magic, advises making images for capturing fish when the zodiac sign Pisces is in the ascendant. When the practitioner wants to make scorpions flee or heal their stings, the constellation Leo is useful

55. The first text in this compilation is the *Libro de la Merescalcaria*, composed in Greek by Missere Bonifacio, a physician of Geracchy, and translated into Italian by Antonio Dapera. This zodiac horse type is found in London, British Library, MS Add. 15097 (14th century) at f. 60 and in Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M.735 (early 15th century) at f. 62. The same compilation is found in Naples, Bibl. Gerolamini, MS Cf. 2.7 and Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania, MS Schoenberg 72745 (1450) but I have not been able to establish whether these manuscripts also include the zodiac horse diagram.

56. The *Liber de cavalls* was translated into Spanish and French. For a lengthy but incomplete list of manuscripts see: Lluís CIFUENTES and Carmel FERRAGUD, “El ‘Libre de la Menescalia’ de Manuel Dies: de espejo de caballeros a manual de albéitares”, *Asclepio*, vol. 51.1, 1999, p. 93-127, at n° 18.

57. In this recommendation Dies may be following Laurentius Rufus’s early 14th century, *Livro de la menscalia de li cavalla*, which discusses the influence of the moon travelling through the zodiac signs in the final chapter (183).

because the lion's nature is inimical to the scorpion.⁵⁸ The idea that humans were particularly subject to planetary influence at their time of birth was also applied to animals in order to select those that would be most suitable for magical operations. Guibert of Nogent's 12th-century autobiography tells the story of a sorcerer and cleric who tried to persuade a demon to grant them a magically endless supply of money by offering him a cock that had hatched on Jupiter's day in the month of March.⁵⁹ An experiment for invisibility in a 15th-century German handbook of necromancy requires the practitioner to eviscerate a black cat born in the month of March with a knife made on the day of Venus, then ritually prepare and bury it.⁶⁰ The practitioner's goal is to imitate the black cat's disappearing act (its body dissolves into the dark matter of the earth). He must wait until a plant grows from the ground covering the cat's body and produces seeds. When he consumes these magical seeds he will also be able to become invisible.⁶¹

MAGIC ON THE HUMAN-ANIMAL BOUNDARY

Human transformation into animals, both willingly and because of trickery, was a popular motif in magic texts and medieval literature but usually signalled only a superficial transformation, in which human rationality and identity were retained under a temporary animal appearance. One of the most common genres of magic text in which this motif appears is the lamp experiment, in which an oil lamp was lit using a mixture of oil and natural ingredients to produce marvellous visual effects. The choice of key ingredients, such as animal heads, fat or semen, determined which animal the participants under the lamp's marvellous light would appear to be. Sometimes substances from animals and humans were mixed together in the oil, presumably to further undermine the human-animal

58. *Picatrix: The Latin Version of the Ghāyat al-Hakīm*, I, v, 22, 23 and 25.

59. The story is told in Guibert de Nogent's *De vita sua sive monodiarum*, III, 13. The cock is the best animal to sacrifice to Jupiter in the *Liber de ieiuniis et sacrificiis et suffumigationibus septem stellarum*, MS Florence Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale II III 214, f. 24v and the *De secretis spirituum planetis*, ed. and trans. Juris G. LIDAKA from the copy in Cambridge, University Library Dd. Xi. 45 in "The Book of Angels, Rings, Characters and Images of the Planets: Attributed to Osbern Bokenham", Claire FANGER (ed.), *Conjuring Spirits: Texts and Traditions of Medieval Ritual Magic*, University Park, Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998, p. 46-49.

60. Richard KIECKHEFER, *Forbidden Rites: A Necromancer's Manual of the Fifteenth Century*, University Park, Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998, p. 60-1. The choice of the month of March may be to do with the cat's association with the planet Mars: *Picatrix*: III, vii, 17.

61. A similar experiment is in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 1435, f. 25, but this time using a dead dog: *Si vis esse invisibile: accipe unum canem mortuum et sepelies eum et plantes super eum fabus et unam in ore tuo et sine dubio eris inuisibile*.

boundary.⁶² The second book of the *Liber vaccae* has experiments for marvellous lamps (*lampas mirabilis*) and suffumigations (*fumigationes mirabilis*) to give people the appearance of huge horses and elephants, or any beast depending on the animal fat used, among other tricks with marvellous effects such as turning a house and everyone in it black, green or silver, or filling it with giants, serpents or frogs. Experiments from this book achieved popularity when they were incorporated into a magic text of ca. 1300, the *De mirabilibus mundi*, which achieved wide circulation in print form. They were also known to the author of the witchcraft manual *Malleus maleficarum*.⁶³

Although there was clearly an audience for amusing parlour tricks of this kind, for medieval thinkers the human-animal boundary was firm. Human identification with beasts occurred in medieval secular culture because animals possessed desirable (and undesirable) physical and allegorical qualities: literary werewolves, shapeshifters and berserkers, and personalized heraldic animals may have subverted the boundaries between animal and human, but they did so within relatively safe genres that were usually exploring the question of what it meant to be a human, not asking whether metamorphosis or hybridity was actually possible. It is true that some individual examples seem to cross over into ambiguity, such as when literary werewolves like Bisclavret and Melion, who have sympathetic and rational human identities in spite of their animal appearance, commit acts of animal ferocity that seem contrary to their interior human nature. At the end of *Marie de France's lai* the werewolf Bisclavret bites off the nose of the wife who betrayed him. Even more ruthlessly, after Melion has been trapped in wolf shape by magic, he forms a pack with other wolves and they devastate the land and kill men and women (“Tot le pais ont degasté, Homes et femes ocioient ; Tote la terre destruoient”).⁶⁴ These examples suggest that inhabiting an animal form could provoke violent passions, even if the interior human retained his rationality.

At the end of the Middle Ages the animal-human boundary seemed less secure than it had half a millennium earlier. This is reflected in the way that the transformation of the magician Nectanebus into a dragon is depicted in illustrated Alexander manuscripts. The iconographical history of Alexander is complicated by the numerous Latin and vernacular versions in circulation in Late Medieval Europe. Nevertheless, the *Historia de Preliis*, an 11th-century Latin translation of the Greek *Alexander Romance* by Leo of Naples, and the vernacular Alexander texts that it influenced, present essentially the same narrative, that

62. *Picatrix* III, xi, 129: *Ut appareas in forma cuius volueris animalis*. See also III, ix, 55: *ad apparendum in forma cuiuslibet animalis*.

63. See *Il De mirabilibus mundi tra tradizione magica e filosofia naturale: La fortuna di un testo attribuito ad Alberto Magno tra Medioevo e Rinascimento*, A. SANNINO (ed.), Florence, Sismel/Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2011, and *Malleus maleficarum*, I, q. 10.

64. *Melion* (1190-1204), lines 276-8.

Nectanebus tricked Queen Olympias into having sex with him by telling her that she would be visited at night by the god Ammon, first in the form of a serpent (dragon) then in human shape.⁶⁵ Although dragon and human are clearly distinguished in Nectanebus' prediction of the god's visit, the later seduction narrative is more ambiguous. It tells how Nectanebus used magic to transform into a serpent, entered Olympias' room, climbed onto her bed, kissed her and slept with her. Illustrations from the Old French Prose Alexander (late 13th to mid 15th century manuscripts) depict the dragon flying into the room, but the human Nectanebus in bed with Olympias. However, 15th-century illustrators of two later Alexander texts, the Middle Dutch *Alexander* in *Historienbijbel* II and *Les Faits d'Alexandre*, the French version of Quintus Curtius's *Res gestae Alexandri Magni*, depart from the earlier iconographic tradition and represent Nectanebus as an anthropomorphic dragon.⁶⁶ A particularly vivid example from the copy of *Les Faits d'Alexandre* in British Library, MS Burney 169 (1468-1475) captures the sense of a human identity beneath the dragon exterior (figure 4).

The anthropomorphic dragons were expressive of an age in which the boundaries between human, demon and animal were more fluid. The 15th century saw a turn towards 'realism' in the way that the Sabbath and diabolical witchcraft were discussed in witchcraft literature, that is a shift away from the idea that demons created illusions of flight, metamorphosis and power in the minds of foolish old women to the idea that witches really were able to fly to the Sabbath, transform into animals and inflict serious harm on people and their animals and crops.⁶⁷ In the final part of my article I want to suggest that this increasing belief in the reality of demonic intervention in the physical world and the harmful effects of magic made the human-animal and demon-animal boundaries less stable in the eyes of medieval writers.

In the 13th century, the idea of a witch transforming into an animal in order to do malefic magic is presented as an entertaining marvel, albeit one in which there is a discomfiting bodily continuity between animal and human. The courtier and canon lawyer Gervase of Tilbury recounts a story of witches turning into cats in the third book of his *Otia imperialia* ("Recreations for an Emperor"), which is devoted to marvels. He writes : "We know that some women have been seen and wounded in the form of cats by people keeping a secret watch by night, and the next day they have exhibited wounds and missing

65. For this episode see Pseudo-Callisthenes, *Alpha recension*, I.7 and Leo of Naples, *Historia de Preliis*, book 1, chapters 4-7.

66. On these illustrated Alexander texts and their surviving manuscripts see David J. A. ROSS, *Alexander Historiatus. A Guide to illustrated Alexander Literature*, London, Warburg Institute, 1986 (revised edition), p. 22-3 and 70.

67. On this shift, see especially Martine OSTORERO, *Le diable au sabbat. Littérature démonologique et sorcellerie (1440-1460)*, Florence, Sismel/Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2011.

limbs”.⁶⁸ By the 15th century the power to transform into an animal was no longer an intriguing curiosity but rather an ominous transformation achieved with the help of the devil. The nature and purpose of the transformation varied across Europe. In Central Italy *streghe* were night-flying witches who broke into people’s homes at night to kill children, often taking the form of small animals such as birds, flies or cats to travel across town and enter houses unobserved.⁶⁹ In the mythology of witchcraft emerging in parts of western Switzerland and Lausanne from the 1430s wolves are more significant in the sources, though cases of turning into foxes or cats are also present in the trial records.⁷⁰ One of the earliest sources on witchcraft in this region is the chronicle of Hans Fründ, a scribe in the chancellery of Lucerne and an imperial notary. Fründ reported the discovery of male and female witches (*hexsen*) in 1428-30 in the diocese of Valais who were brought to trial and burnt. He says that the evil spirit had taught many of them how to turn into wolves (*dz sy ze wolffen wurden*), and that when they were in this shape, the witches were themselves convinced that they were wolves and so was everyone who saw them. They ran after sheep, lambs and goats and ate them raw in a wolf form (*in eines wolffes figur*). When they wanted to, they turned back in to men and were just as they had been before.⁷¹

In this account the men and women who believe that they have been turned into wolves temporarily lose a sense of their human identity and behave like a wild predator, hunting and eating raw prey. A few decades after Fründ’s chronicle the Dominican inquisitor Heinrich Kramer explained how demons helped witches temporarily take the appearance (*apparentia*) of animals in his witchcraft manual *Malleus maleficarum*

68. Gervase of Tilbury, *Otia Imperialia*, III, 92, ed. and trans. S. E. BANKS, J. W. BINNS (eds.), *Gervaise of Tilbury: Otia Imperialia, Recreation for an Emperor*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2002, p. 742-43: *Scimus quasdam in forma gattarum a furtive vigilantibus de nocte visas ac vulneratas, in crostino vulnera truncationesque membrorum ostendisse.*

69. Ugolino NICOLINI, “La stregoneria a Perugia e in Umbria nel Medioevo: con i testi di sette processi a Perugia e uno a Bologna”, *Bollettino della Deputazione di storia patria per l’Umbria*, vol. 84, 1987, p. 5-87 ; Richard KIECKHEFER, “Mythologies of Witchcraft in the Fifteenth Century”, *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft*, vol. 1, 2006, p. 88-91 (79-107). Matteuccia di Francesca, tried and executed for witchcraft in Todi in 1428 for practicing magic with the aid of the devil, is said to have turned herself into a fly and ridden a demon in the shape of a goat to travel to houses where she harmed infants: *The Record of the Trial and Condemnation of a Witch*, D. MAMMOLI (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 37-38. For examples of 15th-century accounts of Italian witches turning into cats, or helping the devil assume and act through this appearance, see also Franco MORMANDO, *The Preacher’s Demons. Bernadino of Siena and the Social Underworld of Early Renaissance Italy*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1999, p. 62-67.

70. On the latter, see for example the trial of Catherine Simon in 1459 in Andermatt: *Quellen und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Hexenwahns und der Hexenverfolgung im Mittelalter*, Joseph HANSEN (ed.), Bonn, C. Georgi, 1901, p. 571-575.

71. Johann (Hans) Fründ (ca. 1400-69), ed. in M. OSTORERO, Kathrin Utz TREMP, and A. PARAVICINI BAGLIANI, in collaboration with Catherine CHENE, *L’imaginaire du sabbat: Édition critique des textes les plus anciens (1430 c.-1440 c.)*, Lausanne, Université de Lausanne, 1999, p. 36.

(1486).⁷² Although Kramer thought the transformation was a temporary illusion created by demons manipulating the senses and faculty of the imagination, it did have three physical implications for him. First, demons are described as being able to make bodies out of air (*corpora ex elemento aeris*) rather relying purely on illusions.⁷³ Second, most witchcraft theorists and the authors of necromantic manuals agreed that when demons took the form of flying horses or hybrid creatures the latter were physically substantial enough to transport people long distances through the air. Finally, as Gervase of Tilbury's story suggested, there was thought to be a bodily continuity between animal, demon and human during and after the transformation.

As an example of this Kramer tells how a labourer in the diocese of Strasbourg was chopping firewood when he was attacked by three large and ferocious cats. He managed to protect himself from them with a piece of wood and the sign of the cross.⁷⁴ Immediately after this incident, the labourer was arrested and accused of wounding three honourable women of the town who were now lying immobilised in their sick-beds. In his defence the labourer exclaimed that he had struck creatures not women (*creaturas me percussisse, non mulieres*). Although his account caused astonishment, he was believed and the violent cats were interpreted as the work of the demon (*opus demonis*). Kramer explained that the 'bodily presence' of the women was first changed into the forms of beasts by the art of sorcery.⁷⁵ Then demons in the effigies of the cats (*daemones in effigiis cattorum*) attacked the labourer while the women remained at home, but when the demons were struck, the women sustained these injuries. Boundaries of all kinds are dissolved in this story as demons possess the simulacra (*effigies*) of cats that are in fact the bodily projections of human women with the capacity to inflict physical violence. The women sustained the injuries as a punishment for their pact with the demons which had created a sympathetic link between their bodies and their animal counterparts.

MAGIC ON THE ANIMAL-DEMON BOUNDARY

Demons – by the late Middle Ages firmly in the category of spirits without bodies – were permitted by God to take the form of animals, assume the illusory appearance of animals, and cause someone to believe that they or others had been transformed into

72. *Malleus maleficarum*, I, q. 10, ed. Christopher S. MACKAY, *Malleus Maleficarum*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 323.

73. *Malleus maleficarum*, II, q. 1, ch. 8, ed. C. S. MACKAY, *ed. cit.*, p. 438.

74. *Malleus maleficarum*, II, q. 1, ch. 9.

75. *Malleus maleficarum*, II, q. 1, ch. 9, ed. C. S. MACKAY, *ed. cit.*, p. 444: *earum corporalis presentia prestigioso artificio in bestiales illas formas transmutata fuerit.*

animals. The animal-demon boundary was more porous than the animal-human boundary because the demonic possession of animals had biblical and hagiographical precedents and sometimes served as an explanation for ‘unnaturally’ fierce wolves that attacked livestock and people.⁷⁶ Medieval visual representations of demons were careful to separate demons from real animals, however, since the latter were considered part of God’s good creation. They did this by depicting the demons as monstrous hybrids. Exceptions occur in contexts where a group of reviled humans such as heretics, witches or the damned are deliberately given repellent relationships with their demonic partners. Worshipping cats, giving the devil in the shape of an animal the obscene kiss beneath the tail and being tormented by ‘animals’ in hell subverted appropriate human domination over animals and was thus appropriate to degenerate humans.

Late Medieval witchcraft literature posited a new kind of relationship between humans and demons in which demons gave or taught humans powers beyond their normal capacities and humans acted as the instruments through which demons could have greater impact on the physical world. In a departure from the theological position on the limits of demonic power over animals, 15th-century sources have numerous bewitched animals : mad geese, cows giving blood not milk, and sick cattle, pigs and horses.⁷⁷ The theory was that the devil was permitted by God to test humans in this way, with Job’s suffering of continuous losses often mentioned in this context.

Some boundaries between animals and demons were not transgressed until the following century, however. The depiction of a practitioner of love magic (figure 5) known as *Liebeszauber* (ca. 1470-80, Lower Rhine) is teeming with the tools and symbols of love, including a small dog and a parrot.⁷⁸ Lapdogs were a common feature of the iconography of love, representing male lust and acting as the lovers’ messenger, while parrots also served as messengers and catalysts for love in troubadour poetry and romance, notably in *Le Chevalier du Papegau*.⁷⁹ The animals in this significant painting act as symbols for love and desire,

76. See for example the story of the Gadarene swine, Matthew 8:28-34, in which Jesus expelled demons possessing a man into a herd of swine. Possessed wolves are discussed in the *Malleus maleficarum*, I, q. 110.

77. For examples from trial accusations see R. KIECKHEFER, *European Witch Trials: Their Foundations in Popular and Learned Culture, 1300-1500*, Berkeley/Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1976, especially p. 55. A discussion of the methods by which sorceresses inflicted harm on domestic animals appears in Johannes Nider, *Formicarius* 5.3, pp. 348-9 and the *Preceptorium*, *Preceptum* 1, ch. 11, q. 33 ; Nicolas Eymeric, *Directorium Inquisitorum* (1358), 2.43; and Heinrich Kramer, *Malleus maleficarum*, II, q. 1, chapters 14 and 15.

78. This painting is now in the Museum der Bildenden Künste, Leipzig.

79. See Michael CAMILLE, *The Medieval Art of Love*, London, Lawrence King, 1998, p. 98-102 and Marilyn LAWRENCE, “Comic Functions of the Parrot as Minstrel in *Le Chevalier du Papegau*”, in Keith BUSBY and Roger DALRYMPLE (eds.), *Comedy in Arthurian Literature*, Cambridge, D. S. Brewer, 2003, p. 146-147.

revealing the activities of the witch and the emotions she seeks to direct. In later images of witches, animals are assigned an unnatural power and violence that reflects more interventionist ideas about the activity of demons in the physical world. Striking images depict animal familiars being suckled by witches, and giant cats and snails attacking houses.⁸⁰ Although many readers would have understood these images as representing demons in animal form rather than real animals, by depicting them ambiguously, 16th-century artists undermined the animal and demon boundary in a way that is rare in medieval art.

In conclusion, medieval texts emphasized the usefulness, but also the goodness, of God's creation. Men and women were permitted by God to use animals for their own ends, but control of animals was imperfect because of the disharmony introduced in man's relationship with nature by his disobedience in the Garden of Eden. On the one hand, man's rightful domination could be restored and the usefulness of animals enhanced by calling upon the aid of God and the saints and by the continuous investigation and use of the properties in animals' bodies. On the other, the rupture between man and nature was deepening, and his control over animals decreasing, because demons and witches were working together to destroy human resources and to destabilize the boundaries between animal, human and demon. The place of animals in medieval magic can ultimately be viewed as falling between these two conflicting views of ritual practices. Their status depended on whether they were to be used for good or evil: whether to increase human control over the natural world or destabilize the human relationship with nature.

Sophie Page, *Animals, Demons and Magic in
Late Medieval Europe*, 18/11/2017

80. For images of familiars see *The apprehension and confession of three notorious witches, arreigned and by iustice condemned and executed at Chelmes-Forde* (London, 1589), Francesco Maria GUAZZO, *Compendium Maleficarum*, 1610; a pen and ink drawing of witches with familiars (ca. 1621): London, British Library, Ms Add. 32496, f. 53.