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Some Observations on Jewish Love Magic: The Importance of Cultural Specificity

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Magical practices related to love have been investigated in the context of several cultures and periods.¹ Until recently, Judaism was not among them, although scholarly interest in ancient Jewish magic has been increasing progressively since the mid-20th century.² However, the topic of love magic has been generally ignored, perhaps because it is rarely mentioned in the Rabbinic literature, as opposed to other types of magic, such as the evil eye or medicinal magic.³ Hence, a survey of this branch of magic (which is unique in its aspiration to cause emotional changes and modify another person's feelings) in the context of ancient and medieval Judaism seemed a *desideratum*.⁴ Some observations drawn from my recent dissertation in this area may be of general interest to cultural historians.

Jewish love magic in the period between Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages may be said to encompass three different elements:

- (a) Arousing physical and emotional passion between the members of a couple (actual or potential);
- (b) Separating a pair of lovers (often in favor of a third party);
- (c) Obtaining favor with another person (usually a superior or a judge) or with certain factions of the community.

The data pertaining to Jewish love magic is mostly textual in nature, and may be divided into two major categories: magical recipes and “finished products,” mainly amulets. The former provided instructions for performing magical operations and for manufacturing amulets and other products intended to obtain any of the three aims enumerated above. Unsurprisingly, not many “finished products” of Jewish love magic have survived from the

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periods under discussion. Those that did are almost invariably textual amulets, usually prepared for particular individuals who were named in the texts. Consequently, an examination of practices that did not yield such sustainable products is highly important. What did these other practices entail? Interestingly, it appears that most of them also involved writing.

A very popular writing surface in Jewish love recipes was unbaked clay, in the form of potsherds that had not yet been fired. After being inscribed with a magical formula, often containing angelic names, the shard had to be cast into a burning fire. The rationale behind this ritual was fairly straightforward, and was stated explicitly in the accompanying formula: just as the shard is burned in the flames, so may the victim's heart be set ablaze with love for the performer of the ritual. Although only one such specimen has reached us,⁵ this practice is attested in numerous recipes, both from the oriental Jewish world (the Cairo Genizah depository)⁶ as well as from Europe.

Many other recipes prescribe the use of parchment, often deer skin, as a writing surface, this material being traditionally used for inscribing sacred texts such as Torah scrolls and door-post *mezuzot*. In fact, the Cairo Genizah has preserved several love and favor amulets written on parchment, along with a greater number of paper ones, paper being a much cheaper and more easily available material. Other, less common recipes require writing on eggs or on plant leaves, which obviously did not survive, as well as on cloth or animal bones. It seems that only a few Jewish magical recipes instruct the practitioner simply to recite an incantation,

without including writing or any additional ritual action. A similarly small amount of recipes prescribe solely a manipulation of magical materials or a ritual performance, without adding in any writing or at least reciting of formulae. It follows that one of the main characteristics of Jewish love magic during Late Antiquity and the medieval period was the use of words, mostly written ones. Jewish love magic may definitely be said to be scriptocentric.

An analysis of the contents of these words indicates that the main trait of Jewish magical formulae was the use of analogies and of biblical quotations or allusions. The analogies usually refer to events and protagonists from the Old Testament that relate to love, favor or hate. For instance, Noah, Joseph, Queen Esther or Daniel and his peers are known to have found favor with the Lord and with their fellow humans, and hence appear in recipes and amulets for favor and grace. A popular formula stated: "*And the Lord was with Joseph and showed him favor, so shall there be grace and favor upon X son of Y.*" The first part of the phrase is actually a quotation from Genesis 39:21, referring to Joseph's adventure in the prison of Pharaoh. Other analogies employed biblical couples known for their strong love, and equated them to the pair of contemporary lovers targeted by the magical practice. One amulet requests that the love between two persons be "*as the love of Abraham and Sarah, and as the love of Isaac and Rebecca, and as the love of Jacob and Rachel.*"⁷ The opposite goal, that of separating a pair of lovers, is obtained by using an analogy to Eve and the reviled serpent or to Amnon and Tamar. The use of Old Testament quotations or analogies is not restricted to Jewish

love magic, and can also be found in non-Jewish recipes, occasionally with additions such as "*love (...) as between Mary and John, as between Christ and the Church.*"⁸

Metaphors are also present in Jewish love magic, yet to a lesser extent than biblical analogies. The most frequent ones are related to fire and burning, with the feeling of love equated to a blazing flame which cannot be extinguished and consumes the intended "victim" of the spell. One long amulet adjures the angels to "*burn the heart*" of a man named Mufaḍḍal after a woman named Baḡiḍa, while her own face should be "*lighted in the eyes of Mufaḍḍal like a candle that burns in the house.*"⁹ Other metaphors stem from the animal world, and are used in particular for separation rituals. In these cases, the pair of lovers is likened to pairs of animals famous for their enmity, such as cats and dogs. However, also "animal passion" is present in some texts, such as a recipe demanding that a man comes after a woman "*like a cock after a hen, and like a tomcat after a female cat.*"¹⁰ These textual devices enhance the "poetic" nature of the incantations and more importantly, reinforce their magical goals.

It seems that Jewish love magic displays several distinctive features that distinguish it from contemporary non-Jewish magic. One such feature is the use of "clean" language, as opposed to the harsh erotic terminology prevalent, for instance, in Graeco-Roman love spells. When one compares Jewish love spells from *The Book of Mysteries (Sefer Ha-Razim)*, composed in the first half of the first millennium CE, with contemporary love spells from the Greek magical papyri, the vocabulary contrast is startling.¹¹ Possibly this stems from

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the predilection for euphemisms in other Jewish writings, such as biblical and Talmudic literature; it is a marked contrast to the pervasiveness of overtly erotic language in Graeco-Roman writings.

Another conspicuous feature of Jewish love magic concerns the temporal requirements of its recipes. There is one specific day absent from them: Saturday. There are no instructions to perform magical actions on Saturday, that is, on Shabbat, which is the traditional day of rest in Judaism. Given its identification with Saturn, this day habitually appears in non-Jewish spells designed to sow hatred between lovers or other types of aggressive magic.¹² However, it is almost fully ignored in Jewish magical sources. On the other hand, Friday, a day identified in various traditions with the goddess of love Aphrodite/Venus/Freia, holds an equally important place in the instructions of Jewish magicians. Incidentally, it seems that Saturn's day is missing not only from Jewish love magic, but from ancient Jewish magic as a whole.

In addition to the absence of magical actions to be performed on Saturday, Jewish magical recipes for love generally refrain from prescribing the unorthodox use of non-Kosher substances, such as ingesting blood. Moreover, the materials and rituals that were closely related to the religious aspects of non-Jewish magical traditions are missing from Jewish recipes and amulets. One case in point is the use of the Eucharist, holy oil and baptismal rites, all which were common in Christian love magic, yet absent from the rituals of neighboring Jewish practitioners, who were certainly aware of the use their Christian colleagues made of such

materials. It appears that Jewish practitioners in the field of love magic tended to comply with the institutionalized religious aspects of their tradition.

Practices designed to induce love or to sow discord and separation between lovers are among the earliest known magical rituals. The first written records are Mesopotamian and date from around 2200 BCE, more than four millennia ago.¹³ A chronological and geographical review of love magic shows that patterns evident in the earliest spells continue to prevail over long periods of time and in multiple cultures. Yet the resemblance in magical patterns and motifs did not necessarily stem from inter-cultural relations, but simply from a cross-cultural similarity in the underlying principles of love magic. These concepts, being universal and not segregated to a specific period of time or geographical area, fashioned magical recipes and "finished products" of a similar character. Notwithstanding this, it is clear that various magical practices stemming from diverse cultural traditions *did* differ from one another. Hence, as exemplified in the case of Jewish love magic, these practices correlate to the general cultural trends of each given society, and fairly often also to the institutionalized religious tradition of that society. Consequently, a thorough study of the way in which magical practices are culturally specific may shed new and interesting light on various facets of the examined civilization.

Endnotes

¹ See for example: Robert D. Biggs, *ŠA.ZI.GA. Ancient Mesopotamian Potency Incantations* [Texts from Cuneiform Sources 2] (Locust Valley, NY: J.J. Augustin Publisher, 1967); Richard Kieckhefer, "Erotic Magic in Medieval Europe," in: Joyce E. Salisbury (ed.), *Sex*

in the Middle Ages: A Book of Essays [Garland Medieval Casebooks 3] (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1991), 30-55; Guido Ruggiero, *Binding Passions: Tales of Magic, Marriage and Power at the End of the Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Christopher A. Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); Marvin Meyer and Richard Smith (eds.), *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), chapter 6; Matthew W. Dickie, "Who Practised Love-Magic in Classical Antiquity and in the Late Roman World?," *The Classical Quarterly* 50 (2000): 563-583; David Frankfurter, "The Perils of Love: Magic and Countermagic in Coptic Egypt," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10 (2001): 480-500; Catherine Rider, *Magic and Impotence in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

² For the most recent overview of Jewish magic see Gideon Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

³ The only study wholly devoted to this topic was an article by Yuval Harari, "'For a Woman to Follow You': Love Charms in Ancient Jewish Magic," *Kabbalah* 5 (2000): 247-264 (in Hebrew).

⁴ My PhD dissertation, *Jewish Love Magic: From Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages* (Tel Aviv University, 2008, in Hebrew), was composed under the supervision of Professor Gideon Bohak. I wish to express my gratitude to Professor Bohak for his assistance and most valuable insights throughout this research. My work was facilitated by grants from the following foundations, to which great thanks are due: a scholarship from the research grant of Professor Bohak (Israel Science Foundation) with a matching scholarship from the Tel Aviv University Rector, the Yaniv Fund, the Ignaz Bubis Memorial Scholarship Fund, the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute and the Dov and Gusta Sadan Foundation.

⁵ See Amulet 10 in Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1998), **cont'd on page 4**

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third edition), 84-89.

⁶ The Cairo Genizah is a depository of ca. 200,000 fragments of Jewish texts uncovered in the Ibn Ezra synagogue in Cairo. They range in date from the 9th to the 19th century. The Genizah preserves a variety of manuscripts, such as worn-out sacred literature, personal letters, contracts, poetic and philosophical works, and numerous magical and astrological texts. Such fragments are conserved in several collections around the globe, the major one being at Cambridge University Library.

⁷ Peter Schäfer and Shaul Shaked (eds.), *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza* [Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum 42, 64, 72], 3 volumes (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1994), vol. I, 194.

⁸ Kieckhefer, "Erotic Magic in Medieval

Europe," 42.

⁹ Schäfer and Shaked, *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza*, vol. I, 163-164, fragment Or. 1080.15.81, 1a:112-114.

¹⁰ Schäfer and Shaked, *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza*, vol. I, 59, fragment T-S K 1.37, 2b:9-11.

¹¹ See Bill Rebigier and Peter Schäfer (eds.), *Sefer ha-Razim I und II. Das Buch der Geheimnisse* [Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum 125] (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009); for an English translation of the Hebrew text see Michael A. Morgan, *Sepher Ha-Razim: The Book of the Mysteries* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983); Hans D. Betz (ed.), *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, Including the Demotic Spells* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

¹² See for example a Christian recipe for making a person hateful, to be performed

"in hora Saturni & eius die": Juris G. Lidaka, "The Book of Angels, Rings, Characters and Images of the Planets: Attributed to Osbern Bokenham," in: Claire Fanger (ed.), *Conjuring Spirits: Texts and Traditions of Medieval Ritual Magic* (University Park PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 56-57; see also Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites: A Necromancer's Manual of the Fifteenth Century* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 321-322. For a medieval Islamic recipe aimed at binding the tongues of adversaries, to be performed on Saturday, see Edmond Doutté, *Magie & Religion dans l'Afrique du Nord* (Reprint of the 1909 edition, Paris: J. Maisonneuve & P. Geuthner, 1994), 247.

¹³ Joan Westenholz and Aage Westenholz, "Help for Rejected Suitors: The Old Akkadian Love Incantation MAD V 8," *Orientalia New Series* 46 (1977): 198-219.

Notes and Queries

Theses de magia: A response to the responses

Marco Pasi
University of Amsterdam

I was very glad to find in *SM Newsletter* issue 22 two responses to my *Theses de Magia*, published in issue 20. Perhaps significantly, both responses came from colleagues who work on non-Western religious traditions: Michael Heyes, a specialist in Japanese studies, and Claire Villareal, a Tibetanist. I wish to thank them for their perceptive reading of my text, which has given me quite some food for thought. This, of course, does not mean that I agree with all their comments.

Predictably, they have both focused on my eighth thesis, which stated: "Studying magic in cultures that are not Western means projecting a Western concept on cultures that originally do not possess it." This is a nice coincidence, because lately I have become increasingly interested

in problems that, although not necessarily and specifically related to magic, are nevertheless cognate to the basic problem at issue here.¹

Both of my critics agree with most of the ideas put forward in the other theses. Heyes, however, claims that, on the basis of the "social matrix" (his term) that serves to give magic its specific identity, it should be possible to "isolate" and study "forms of magic" in other contexts than Western culture, for instance in Asia.² This would contradict my eighth thesis. Villareal, on the other hand, expresses concern about the possibility that my eighth thesis would "close the door on comparative scholarship."³

I will begin with a general remark. Both of my critics have focused on the eighth thesis, but perhaps less on the sub-theses accompanying it. I believe that my response to their criticism can be found already there, and particularly in sub-thesis 8.4: "[What has been stated in thesis 8] does not mean, however, that beliefs, ideas, **cont'd on page 5**

Response cont'd

practices and/or behaviors associated with magic in Western culture cannot be compared to similar beliefs, ideas, practices, and/or behaviors in other cultures. But one thing is to compare these different elements, another to assume that they all belong to a single category. Combining these elements together in ways that belong to the Western conceptualization of magic will tell us more about our own culture than about the culture we want to compare it to. This will be, in fact, an act of projection.”⁴

The meaning of this seems clear to me: I certainly do not reject the possibility of cross-cultural comparisons and dialogue. The problem is, comparison of what with what? The idea of using the concept of (or rather the cluster of concepts related to) “magic” seems problematic to me, because “magic” is an extremely complex cultural product, which has been used for centuries in Western culture in order to produce and support polemical discourses. In my view, the question is whether we really need to use that concept in order to understand any aspect of any other culture apart from the Western one. What operational, cognitive gain is supposed to be achieved by applying the concept of “magic” to, say, Japanese or Tibetan cultures? Even without being aware of it, when scholars say “magic” they are using a term that has not lost the traces of old theological accusations of early Christians against “idolaters,” or of Protestants against “Papists”⁵ - a term that has often been used to make a polemical distinction between “religion” and “non-religion.” This is actually at the core of the process through which Western culture has fashioned its specific identity and is the very reason why I insist on the idea that studying the history of magic means studying the history of Western

culture, if not as a whole, then at least in its most fundamental moments. How can we assume that there are similar patterns in cultures that have had a very different historical development, and have created their own “Others” in ways that are very different from the Western ones?

On the other hand, it is quite a different thing to compare specific aspects (“beliefs, ideas, practices, and/or behaviors”) that in a Western context are usually associated with magic, to similar aspects found in other cultures. One example may be a certain kind of personal relationship between a human being and a spiritual entity, or the search for physical immortality. I believe that all the examples that Heyes brings forth in relation to particular Japanese terms fall into this category and do not invalidate the basic assumption of my thesis. I am convinced that comparisons of this kind may yield interesting results that would help understanding better the cultures involved, but this is not the same thing as applying a general concept of “magic” to non-Western cultures.

Furthermore, it should also be noted that, even if I find the application of the concept of magic to non-Western cultures problematic, my eighth thesis does not say that this would be wrong or illegitimate. It just says that it is an act of projection. In its basic formulation, I do not see how this can be really contested, as it cannot be contested that the concept of magic was born and has taken shape in Western culture.⁶ The implication, however, is not that such acts of projection are illegitimate, but rather that we should be aware of their presence in dealing with complex concepts in a cross-cultural context.

But what does it mean to be aware of these acts? It means to have a deep historical awareness of the origins,

functions, and development of a given concept in a given culture. When we know who has used a concept before us and why, we can better decide whether we want to keep on using it and to what purpose. Therefore, my thesis 8 does not even exclude in principle the cross-cultural use of a concept of magic, provided that one makes clear how and why one wants to use it. When it comes to “magic,” this is in my view little more than a theoretical possibility that need not be exploited, but is still a possibility. There may be other cases in which the possibility is indeed taken advantage of with better chances of theoretical success, and this is perhaps what happens with the use of “gnosis” and its derivatives in a Tibetan context, as Villareal shows.

Finally, there is one last aspect that I think should be noted, especially in relation to Heyes’ response. In dealing with the concept of magic in a cross-cultural perspective, one should not forget that even distant cultures have communicated with each other and influenced each other for centuries. When we say that certain Japanese terms are usually translated as “magic” we can perhaps ask ourselves what is the origin of this semantic coincidence. Is it just an abstract analogy based on similarity, or is it the result of mutual historical influences that have penetrated the two cultures? Has Japanese culture ever absorbed from Western culture ideas related to “magic” and turned them into their own? This opens up a whole different problem, whose solution can only be based, again, on sound historical research and whose implications I should rather leave to a further discussion.

Endnotes

¹ In particular, I have been reflecting on the qualification of esotericism as

cont'd on page 7

Dissertation Abstract

Dr. Bernd-Christian Otto,
University of Erfurt

PhD thesis “Magie. Rezeptions- und diskursgeschichtliche Analysen” (“Magic. An analysis of its reception and discourse history”)

My thesis “Magie. Rezeptions- und diskursgeschichtliche Analysen” (submitted at the Institute for Religious Studies, University of Heidelberg, Germany, September 2009) proposes a new methodological strategy in the academic study of “magic.” This new strategy reacts to the ongoing critical debate in religious studies. Especially over the last decades, various scholars emphasized the highly pejorative, ethnocentric and semantically fuzzy notions of the term “magic,” thus suggesting it should be avoided in academic language. The thesis, however, does not opt for discarding the term “magic” within academic discourse altogether, as it has played and still plays an incredibly important role for Western culture and history. Instead, a general *historization and contextualization* of the term is suggested, implying the reconstruction of its conceptual history, its historical semantics and its parasemantic functions. Hence, instead of investigating source material gathered within an essential definition of “magic,” the thesis diachronically analyzed *texts* including the etymon over the last 2500 years – starting with the ancient Greek reception of the Persian priest name *maguš*, ending with today’s popular literature (e.g., *Harry Potter*).

Three main assumptions constituted the methodological and analytical framework and determined the choice of source material. First, the aforementioned problems surrounding the term “magic” as an academic category led me to the conviction

that it should *not* be used as a substantially or essentially delimited term in my analysis. This made it possible to grasp and distinguish the complex historical semantics of the term and, furthermore, to show that these historical semantics underwent significant changes throughout the last 2500 years. Second, to deal with the vast amount of source material, Foucault’s concept of the *founding father of a discourse* (“Diskursbegründer”) was a useful approach to trace back and analyze *significant* texts and authors that influenced the general history of the term “magic,” for example by adding a new denotation or connotation to its semantic field for the first time. Third, a general distinction was drawn between texts/authors that used the term “magic” to refer to *outgroup* or to *ingroup* texts, rituals, persons or beliefs. This division was crucial for the general historical framework of the thesis as it led to the diachronic reconstruction of two fundamentally different historical discourses on “magic” – a *discourse of exclusion* and a *discourse of inclusion*. By separating these two discourses, it was not only possible to create an expedient, overall structure for the selected source material, but also to reconstruct ingroup perspectives of “magicians” (i.e., the *discourse of inclusion*) independently from the often polemical and distorted perspectives of religious elites (the *discourse of exclusion*). Thus, through reconstructing both discourses in separate chapters two very distinct histories were revealed implying highly different implications of the term “magic” itself (discourse of exclusion: usually notions of blasphemy, immorality, ineffectiveness and charlatantry; discourse of inclusion: usually notions of a high religious value and legitimacy, effectiveness and, thus, helpfulness). Finally, the analysis uncovered that even the ingroup perception of “magic” underwent significant onomasiological shifts

throughout the last 2000 years – looking at source material of Late Antiquity (*Papyri Graecae Magicae*), the Early Modern *magia naturalis*-discourse (Marsilio Ficino, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola), and the late 19th/early 20th century (e.g., *Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn*).

To sum up, the new methodological strategy outlined above led me to establish a purely philological and historiographical perspective on “magic” – perceiving it as a *historical term* with a complex and highly diverse conceptual history. New research questions were evoked, especially regarding irritating textual and conceptual gaps in the academic understanding of the *discourse of inclusion*. The proposed strategy is not, however, intended to be substituted for academic approaches that are still working with substantial definitions or reifications of the term “magic”; it rather proposes a methodological amplification, which aims at realizing the much-debated *linguistic turn* in the academic study of “magic.”

The thesis will be published in summer 2011 with De Gruyter (Series “Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten”).

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Response cont'd

“Western,” which is widely used by most scholars working in this field of study. See my “Oriental Kabbalah and the Parting of East and West in the Early Theosophical Society,” in: Boaz Hus, Marco Pasi, and Kocku von Stuckrad (eds.), *Kabbalah and Modernity: Interpretations, Transformations, Adaptations* (Leiden - Boston: Brill, 2010), 152-166. Furthermore, I have also organized a panel on this very theme for the recent IAHR quinquennial congress, which was held in Toronto in August 2010. The title of the panel was “Western esotericism and its boundaries: Between discourses of identity and difference.”

² M. Heyes, “Magic East and West: A Refutation of Pasi’s Eighth Thesis,” *SMN*, 22 (Fall 2009), p. 4.

³ C. Villareal, “...And Gnosis for All,” *ibid.*, p. 6.

⁴ In re-reading my own text I realize that there is a slight problem in it, where I write about Western conceptualizations of magic as telling us more about “our own culture” than about other cultures. This may give the impression that I am addressing only “Western” scholars here, which is not my intention. The important point to be kept in mind is that I am intending the term “projection” in a rather neutral way, to mean any interpretation of cultural material in a framework, or

with conceptual tools, that originally do not belong to the same culture. In the same way, we could imagine that a certain medieval religious movement in the South of France could be understood and described in an Indian context as a form of “Tantra.” An Indian scholar, from his own point of view, may have good reasons to define this movement in such a way, offering a series of elements that would clearly identify it as corresponding to his definition of “Tantra.” Nevertheless, his interpretation would also be an act of projection. Some projections are perhaps more “violent” than others. For instance, I believe that applying “gnosis” to Sanskrit-based material, to which Villareal refers, is not totally illogical, because in fact “gnosis” and “jñana” derive from the same Indo-European root, and may point to similar cultural processes. Besides, “gnosis” has been often used in a positive sense in Western culture, even in mainstream Christianity by some Church Fathers (which is hardly the case with magic). What I call “acts of projection” are an unavoidable element of any cross-cultural work, and are the essence of all translation, be it cultural or linguistic. The unfaithfulness of a projection in describing an alien cultural object is analogous to the approximation of meaning of a word translated into a different language. Obviously, a scholar cannot do without projections or approximations, when he wants to speak of cultures different from his own, but he

can try and be aware of the implications of those projections, by studying the history of the concepts he is using.

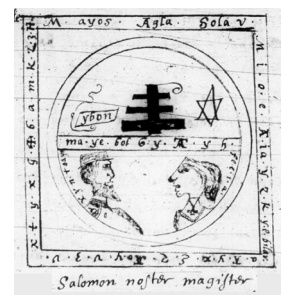
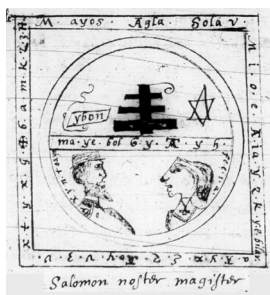
⁵ Again, it should be clear here that by saying generically “a scholar” I am not referring only to “Western” scholars, but to all scholars – independently from their origin or cultural background – who decide to use the term “magic” in their particular field of study. Independently from who uses it and in what context, the term “magic” is of Western origin and will always imply a certain degree of projection if applied to non-Western material.

⁶ Nevertheless, Heyes states that “it remains unclear why studying magic in cultures which are not Western must result in projecting Western concepts onto the culture in questions” (p. 5). I believe that the reason why this point remains unclear to him depends precisely on his unreflective use of the term magic in this very sentence. He seems to take for granted that such a thing as “magic” already exists in other cultures than the Western one, and that it is not the product of an interpretation. This is precisely what anthropologists pretended to do at the end of the 19th century and has been rejected in a broad variety of theoretical discourses about magic ever since. Whether it is worthwhile or not, finding “magic” in other cultures can never be a point of departure, but only the result of a process.

The Societas Magica invites proposals for essays to run in future issues of the newsletter.

We are looking for short essays (1500-2500 words) announcing new developments deriving from research in the study and teaching of magic and its related topics. We would be especially interested to see lead articles on modern magic, or periods other than medieval. We are also looking for smaller pieces for our notes and queries column. News about dissertations in progress or completed, manuscript discoveries, or other such items are all welcomed.

Please contact David Porreca: dporreca@uwaterloo.ca



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Research Opportunity at the University of Manitoba

Frank Klaassen
University of Saskatchewan

The University of Manitoba Special Collections (Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada) holds a substantial set of records relating to the psychic investigations of Dr. T. G. and Lillian Hamilton. The records seem substantial enough to support a dissertation project. I reproduce below an abbreviated description of the fonds from the catalogue. Regrettably, the catalogue provides no information about Lillian Hamilton.

The Special Collections librarian Dr. Shelley Sweeney is eager to have the collection used for research purposes. For a fuller description of the fonds, contact information, and on-line reproductions of some of the photographs, see <http://www.umanitoba.ca/libraries/archives/hamilton.shtml>.

Hamilton Family Fonds (MSS 14, PC 12, TC 70)

Dates: 1919-1986

Biographical Sketch: Dr. T.G. Hamilton was born in Agincourt, Ontario in 1873. In 1883 his family moved west to Saskatchewan and was among the first pioneer families to settle in Saskatoon. After his father died in 1891, his mother moved the family to Winnipeg. He graduated from medical school in 1903, completed his internship at the Winnipeg General Hospital in 1904 and commenced practice in 1905. In 1915 he was president of the Manitoba Medical Association. Hamilton also served on the Public School Board for nine years, one year as chairman, and was elected a member of the provincial legislature 1914-1915. In 1918, soon after his young son's death, he began to experiment with psychic phenomena. His aim was the investigation of paranormal phenomena such as rappings, psychokinesis, ectoplasms, and materializations under scientific conditions that would minimize any possibility of error. Between 1926 and 1935 he presented eighty-six lectures and wrote numerous articles that were published in Canada and abroad. Dr. Hamilton's wife Lillian carried on his paranormal experimentations following his death in 1935.

Scope and Content: The collection is primarily related to Dr. T.G. and Lillian Hamilton's investigations of psychic phenomena spanning the years 1918 to 1945. The subject matter of the records includes rappings, clairvoyance, trance states and trance charts, telekinesis, wax molds, bell-ringing, transcripts and visions, as well as teleplasmic manifestations. The records are in the following various formats: scrapbooks, seance attendance records and registers, affidavits, automatic writings, correspondence, speeches and lectures, newsclippings, journal articles, books, photographs, glass plate negatives and positives, prints, slides, tapes, manuscripts, and promotional materials related to major publications. All positive prints taken from the photographic negatives have been retained with the written records of the experiments which they illustrate. Almost all the glass plate negatives were photographed for archival purposes, and the black and white glossy print collection is also available. A library of related books and journals which accompanied the collection has been separately catalogued and is available.

Richard Kieckhefer Essay Prize

The Richard Kieckhefer Prize was established by the Societas Magica in 2009 to honor Professor Kieckhefer's contributions to the field and his mentoring of younger scholars. It is awarded annually for an unpublished article by a recent PhD (within 2 years of graduation), in any area of the scholarly study of magic, witchcraft, or related fields, judged by the selection committee to be of outstanding quality. In exceptional cases consideration will also be given to graduate student submissions.

The winning entry will be published in the journal *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* and the author will receive a cash prize of \$500. Articles from all academic disciplines are welcome.

Submissions should be in English and approximately 6,000 words in length. Applicants must not have received their PhD earlier than September 2008. The deadline for submissions is January 15, 2011. Please forward an electronic version of the article (.rtf or .docx preferred) with a letter indicating date of past or expected reception of PhD and the granting institution to frank.klaassen@usask.ca.

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