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The Maids, Mother and 'The Other One' of the Discworld

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Magic and the Supernatural

Edited by

Scott E. Hendrix and Timothy J. Shannon

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Preface

Scott E. Hendrix

In March of 2010 *Inter-Disciplinary.Net* brought together scholars from around the world to participate in the 1st Global Conference on Magic and the Supernatural. As the name of the organizing group would suggest, no single disciplinary approach was privileged. Instead, under the guiding hand of Rob Fisher and Stephen Morris as well as the dedicated members of the steering committee, scholars from a variety of disciplinary and geographic perspectives came together in Salzburg, Austria, in order to tackle problems and questions related to magic and the supernatural in what proved to be an immensely fruitful dialogue.

At this point the reader might well ask why such an undertaking would occur. After all, in our modern world have we not moved beyond such things as magic? Do we not have a full and complete understanding of the supernatural? Do we really need to devote the intellectual energies of scholars from across the globe to studying such things? The answers would be no, no, and a definitive yes. Furthermore, as the conference showed, questions about magic and the supernatural are not of merely historical interest. These are not simply artefacts of some past from which we have moved on. Rather, if we are to understand the world in which we live we must give serious thought to the magical and the supernatural, for not only have such beliefs shaped the world in which we live, but they are still very much with us.

It might be best to begin by asking what we mean by the term 'magic.' That would seem to be a simple enough proposition. After all, most of us grew up with stories of spell- casting heroes and villains, from Merlin in the Arthurian legends to Harry Potter and his nemesis Voldemort in J.K. Rowling's beloved tales. It would seem from reading these tales that magic is the force that allows those skilled in its use to alter reality to suit their whims and which sustains mythical creatures such as faeries and unicorns. But is it really that simple?

Consider for a moment the ability to alter reality. How is that different from prayer? As the Polish-born anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski discussed in his classic collection of essays published in 1948 as *Magic, Science, and Religion*, it is decidedly difficult to work out the boundaries between prayer and magic. In both instances an individual attempts to alter reality, calling on forces beyond those of the natural world to effect a change. This is true whether the hoped-for change is to bring a desired object to hand - as in the case of the *accio* charm seen in the Harry Potter novels - or the cure of a sick relative. In every case there is no doubt that the individual hoping to make the change is calling on forces beyond those of the natural world in the hopes of bringing about a real and significant effect.

Many might object that there is a real and substantive difference between prayer and magic, but from an anthropological perspective it is difficult to

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determine precisely what that difference is. Is the difference that an expert is required in the case of magic but not in prayer? That can't be it, as many religions, from Catholicism to Wicca, give a special place to experts and expertise. Perhaps the best answer that can be given is that provided by another anthropologist, Stanley J. Tambiah, who argues that magic involves a command, an attempt to impose a change on the world, while prayer involves a request submitted to a higher power in hopes that the external agent will then bring about the desired change.[1] Perhaps that's it, but then again the invocations of ancient Greeks to their gods and goddesses as well as the spells wrought by modern Wiccans certainly seem to blur the realm between 'magic' and 'prayer.'

In the end, it may be impossible to provide a comprehensive definition of what differentiates prayer from magic, just as it is equally impossible to establish a fully satisfactory answer for what constitutes superstition. After all, one person's superstition is another person's deeply held and important religious belief – or even natural philosophical principle.

For that reason it might be best to focus on the implications and philosophical meanings of magical modes of thinking. This was Brian Feltham's approach in his chapter on 'Magic and Practical Agency.' A philosopher at the University of Reading, he argues that magical practices provide the tools not only to allow us to make sense of the world as it is, but also for transforming our subjective experiences of the world. Juan Pablo Maggioti considered the philosophical implications of magic as well, though from a more historical angle than Feltham's contribution. His chapter on 'Art, love and magic in Marsilio Ficino's *De amore*' considers the way in which the Renaissance philosopher Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499) saw art and magic to be intricately intertwined in their abilities to transform the world.

A historical approach makes sense here, because for most of human history what has been considered magical or superstitious was simply part of the accepted intellectual landscape. Or at least that's what Scott E. Hendrix argues in his study of 'Rational Astrology and Empiricism, From Pico to Galileo.' Furthermore, while modern people have largely marginalized belief in magical practices, understanding magic and those who controlled it was once seen as vitally important by religious authorities in the West, as we see in Vrajabhūmi Vanderheyden's study, 'Between Religion and Magic: Clerics and Common People in the Lier Witch Trials of 1589 and 1603.'

However, what many would consider to be a superstitious belief still holds great importance to a large number of people today, as shown by Orchida Ismail and Lamya Ramadan's study, 'The Jinn: An Equivalent to evil in 20th Century *Arabian Nights and Days*.' These authors show that the Western perceptions of Jinn as comic caricatures and fantastic mythic beings represent a gross misunderstanding of important Islamic religious conceptions.

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The current popular conception of the Jinn is certainly not the first time that modern literature has appropriated important religious ideas and iconography for use – or misuse – in a popular format. According to Natalia Kaloh Vid, in her chapter on 'I am a witch and I like it!': Black Magic and Witchcraft in Mikhail Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita*,' the figure of the witch and black magic has sometimes been reworked in subversive ways in Russian literature. Such reworking of mythic imagery is not limited only to Russia, however, as shown by María Teresa DePaoli in her study of the way the fantastic can be used to critique fascistic regimes in her study, 'Fantasy and Myth in *Pan's Labyrinth*: Analysis of Guillermo del Toro's Symbolic Imagery.'

It's not only writers who find caution to be a virtue when critiquing dangerous regimes such as that of Franciso Franco who make appeals to fantastic imagery; anyone who wants to tap into the deepest imagery of the human mind as Carl Jung might have said can find such an approach to be of use. Martina Rössler examines the ways in which the imagery of the supernatural can used in order to explore questions of maturation and inter-liminal contact for those who sit at the interstices between cultures in her study, 'Coming-of-Age among Sasquatches and Tree Spirits: Supernatural Guides in Eden Robinson's *Monkey Beach*.' And as Jacquelyn Bent and Helen Gavin show in their chapter, 'The Maids, Mother and 'The Other One' of the Discworld,' in addition to their usefulness for exploring deep questions of the human psyche, otherworldly tropes can also be both enduringly popular as well as a great deal of fun. Such has certainly been the case with many forms of modern popular culture, as Margot McGovern argues in her study, 'Popular Necromancy: How *Supernatural* and *True Blood* are Attracting Mass Viewers and Putting them in Touch with the Dark Side of Human Nature.' But even while focusing on fun and amusement, McGovern shows how such television fare can illuminate some of the darker elements of modern American culture.

The belief in magic and the supernatural is not only apparent in literature and popular culture. Eglė Savickaitė analyses the ways in which magical beliefs inform and shape the lives of Lithuanian students, constructed from as well as constructing their identities, functioning much as folk magic has in the lives of common people over the course of many, many centuries. There's no reason why we should find that surprising, for as Eugene Subbotsky argues in his study 'Surviving in the World of the Machines: the Developmental Psychologist's Account of Magical Belief in the Age of Science,' magical beliefs exist within us all, surviving deep within the human subconscious. Although such beliefs are typically neutral or even beneficial in their effects, Uchenna B. Okeja shows in 'Magic in an African Context' that in some settings, such as modern Nigeria, magical beliefs can be set up in opposition to those of science. He argues that the result can be slower development and integration with the modern world.

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In the end, the 1st Global Conference on Magic and the Supernatural held by *Inter-Disciplinary.Net* may have provided few absolute answers. That, however, is a good thing, because once people see an issue as definitively answered, they also see it as definitively closed off to scrutiny. That would be a mistake, for as the breadth of scholarship brought to bear on this subject demonstrates, the issues in question are far too complex to yield simple answers. This conference was highly fruitful though in spite of – or perhaps because of – that lack of definitive answers. The chapters contained in this eBook and the chapters included in the print volume born out of the same conference[2] demonstrate the complexity of the problem while laying the groundwork for critical inquiry in the future.

Notes

[1] S.J. Tambiah, 'Form and Meaning of Magical Acts', *Culture, Thought, and Social Action*, S.J. Tambiah (ed), Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1985, pp. 60-86.
[2] S.E. Hendrix and B. Feltham (eds), *Rational Magic*, Inter-Disciplinary Press, Oxford, 2010.

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PART 1

Philosophy, Religion and Magic

Magic and Practical Agency

Brian Feltham

Abstract

My chapter draws on the ideas from moral philosophy in order to explore the ways in which ethics and practical deliberation have a space for magical ideas and practices.[1] I am interested in the way magical concepts and practices can be used to transform our subjective experience of the world. As practical agents, our capacity to view the world as meaningful, and to act accordingly, is informed by our practices and constituted by our subjective orientation towards the world. The practice of magic carries with it not only the conceptual apparatus for interpreting the world, but also the rituals for transforming our own subjective appreciation of the world. Magic may be able to offer access to a kind of meaning that is not ethical, or at least not easily interpretable on a human scale. The contact with something transcendent and other is often experienced as awe - and it may be exhilarating in a productive way, conducive to well-being; but it can also be experienced as dread, which helps capture something of the peculiar nature of supernatural evil.

Key Words: Ethics, Kierkegaard, Machen, magic, meaning, practical reason, spiritual experience, value.

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1. Introduction

I hereby promise not to use the word 'cyclopean' in this chapter (after this sentence). There is magic in this. Perhaps it is necessary to assume that you take me up on my promise - perhaps the promise doesn't bind unless it is accepted - but otherwise, with mere use of words I have altered the moral landscape. I haven't moved any mountains, but I have just made it wrong for me to use a certain word in this chapter.

This chapter explores the extent to which we can understand features of our practical agency (our capacity to deliberate about how to act) in terms of magical, willed, transformation and also to see how magical practices might be seen to enrich our lives as practical agents. I shall be interested in the ways in which magical practices can alter our situation with respect to values and reasons. To make things interesting (and truer, I think, to ethical discourse) I shall assume at least a modicum of objectivity: that it is possible to be mistaken in our value-beliefs.

My focus is chiefly on ritual magic considered broadly: from a simple act of concentrated will to casting a circle with a group of fellow practitioners. I shall not

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be assuming that magical practices either do or do not involve tapping into any supernatural forces or powers - whatever this might mean.

2. Deontology

I promised not to use a certain word. Whatever is good or bad about using that word - the fact, say, that it is clumsy or obscure - has had no bearing on why it is wrong for me to use it. I made it wrong, with my promise. If it is bad for me to use it (leaving aside the felicity of the word), it is so because of the promise. Where we are concerned exclusively with non-evaluative ethical categories, such as right and wrong, we are concerned with deontological categories; although I shall only consider promises here.

Much of the debate on promises centres on the issue of why we should keep them. One clear answer is that it is bad to break promises, because people come to rely on our keeping promises. Thus, they are harmed or disadvantaged by our breaking them. But this doesn't seem adequate. You (I'm guessing) don't really care if I use the c-word; you may not even trust me, and so won't rely on me anyway. Yet I have a reason to keep my promise. Worse yet, assuming you take me up on my promise, by breaking my promise I shall not only do wrong, I shall wrong you.

By will and word, I change what is right or wrong; while important, there is no deep change here. The change made is derivative and shallow. It is derivative since I only make it the case that it is wrong to use the c-word, I didn't make it the case that it is wrong to break my promises. Whatever is the correct account of promise-keeping, that is something that my promise doesn't create or change. The change I make is shallow because I haven't made any great difference to what is good or bad for us. It may be bad to break promises, but whether I use the c-word or not won't make any significant difference to how well our lives go. And it won't alter the merits of that word in general.

3. Evaluative Change

A broad range of our practical deliberations turn on the idea that some things are good and some things are bad - or perhaps an admixture of the two. A sandwich may be tasty - that's good; but unhealthy - that's bad. Even assuming that value is to some extent objective, it is possible to alter what is good - at least indexically. I may not be able to change whether a painting is good without altering the painting. I can alter whether my viewing of the painting is good by altering myself, by making it good for me. And this is where the magic comes in. It comes in two ways.

The first corresponds to the way in which we could transform our deontological situation. I don't have a special interest in the history of art, thus I have no reason to research it. If I were to develop such an interest, making deepening my understanding of art and its historical development one of my goals, then I would

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have a reason to research it.[2] My goal has altered the value to my viewing (and reading about) art; it is now part of the pursuit and achievement of my goal that I observe a wide range of paintings. The reason is derivative – on the value of art and its study and on the value of achieving our goals – but it is dependent on what my goals are, which is in my control.

The second way of altering what is good for us has a clearer place for explicitly magical practices. Imagine that you have arranged to visit an art gallery this afternoon. If you arrive out of sorts after a troubled morning, you may not be in the mood. But by taking the time to put your troubles aside and open yourself up to the possibilities that the gallery has to offer, you can increase your chances of a rewarding experience.

This is an example of a central principle of chaos magic. You open yourself to patterns and probabilities, looking for ways to nudge them in a particular direction.[3] The method of getting the most out of this experience is to open yourself up to world. This purposeful opening up, a willed alteration of consciousness, is perhaps the essence of the method of ritual magic. While it might be achieved by other means, it can also be encouraged through a magical ritual. On the assumption that magicians understand what they are doing - the psychological, spiritual and magical character of their rituals - we might reasonably expect such rituals to be especially effective.

4. The Teleological Suspension of the Ethical

The title of this subsection is taken from an idea of Kierkegaard's. He recounts the Biblical story of Abraham and Isaac, when God tells Abraham to sacrifice his son, and Abraham obeys - only being stopped by God at the last minute.[4] The story of Abraham is not one of blind obedience, of a man who was 'only following orders', but instead of faith. Faith that while everything will be given up - his son, his conscience, his hopes for the future - nevertheless everything will be restored. His son will be killed and yet live; the future of a chosen people will be stifled at birth, and yet flourish. At any rate, that is how Kierkegaard tells it. For our purposes, what is important is that Abraham's faith has made intelligible a suspension of the ethical. Morality can only condemn Abraham and yet we can recognise that what he did was not simply immoral. It had other meaning as well. A meaning and a value that is not understandable on the ordinary scale of human aims and achievements. The ethical here is suspended for a reason, a purpose or *telos* (hence, a teleological suspension), that is not ethical in kind. Nor is it simply a matter of not being moral in a narrow sense, since many ordinary practical decisions are not obviously moral. Instead, Kierkegaard describes the possibility of a kind of meaning that we can't relate to worldly concerns at all.

This meaningfulness is transcendent, and perhaps it need not be good. At the beginning of Arthur Machen's story 'The White People' two men are discussing evil. Ordinary evil is said to be mundane, even uninteresting. A person committing

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murder for personal gain is pursuing an intelligible good, to attain wealth. But it is only spiritual evil that achieves depth; it transcends petty matters, and, perhaps, an aspect of it transcends morality altogether. One of the men makes his point clearer: 'can't you realize that Evil in its essence is a lonely thing, a passion of the solitary, individual soul?'[5] It is in this respect the equivalent of Kierkegaard's faith. An inner movement, giving meaning to one's actions.

Though not the only form of practice associated with a spiritual dimension to life, magic has certain features that make it especially relevant in this case. First, the thought that the transcendent something that we are after transcends the ethical too - the example of Abraham aside, this is something that we rarely encounter in religion. Second, its significance is to be found in a principally subjective transformation. Whatever other effects people might think magic can achieve, the one with which magicians become most intimately familiar is the way that it changes them. Third, we have the fact that magical practices are a way of achieving a willed change through a deliberate opening of ourselves to new kinds of meaning and significance.

An extreme example of a spiritual dimension in life is the spiritual experience. In Aleister Crowley's *Diary of a Drug Fiend*, its protagonist Sir Peter comments: 'In that state one understands all sorts of nonsense.'[6] This is the key to understanding the most elusive aspect of spiritual experiences, and the suspension of the ethical. The spiritual experience is a break from sense. It is something that, while we are experiencing it, is laden with significance - yet it remains a significance we cannot bring under any of our concepts. As with the Pseudo-Dionysius's negative way of understanding God, perhaps we can understand it only in terms of what it is not.[7] In the first place, we pick various qualities that it can almost, but not quite, be said to have. (Such as: God is good, and is not good - God is not, after all, good in the same way that human beings are good.) Escaping sense in this way, it cannot be articulated - even to oneself - but only experienced.

We can now understand why such experiences must be seen as transcending the ethical. Somehow, spiritual experiences are meaningful for us, yet we cannot conceptualise them. Escaping our concepts, they escape our ethical concepts too. Thus, spirituality in this rarefied form goes beyond good and evil. Whatever meaning they bring to life, it is thus not wholly ethical. Nevertheless, we can still speak of good and evil spirituality, since there will still be some things we can say about what the experience was like at the time, and also about its lasting effects. The experience may have been pleasant or unpleasant: awful and wonderful, or awful and dreadful. Subsequently we may be consoled or encouraged by the experience, or else be disturbed by what we have 'learned'. We may treat others badly as a result of this disturbance. In these ways we can come to think of the experience itself, or what was experienced, as either good or evil.[8] Additionally, while lasting ethical effects may be a banal good/evil in themselves, they may take

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on a flavour of profundity from their association with the transcendent experience itself.

These experiences of spiritual evil and good may expand the range of our sense of meaningfulness in various ways. First, by leading to beliefs in the existence of God or supernatural power. The experience may have been understood as being 'of' the supernatural; or else being put in touch with the transcendent may open us to accepting what might seem incredible. Second, the experience - and perhaps the possibility of repeating it - may give meaning and purpose to our practices. The experience may be a large part of the point of magical practices. Where the spiritual experience is intimately bound up with a magical practice it imbues that practice with spiritual significance. Third, while we may not be able to retain a perfect recollection of the spiritual experience, to access it as we wish through memory, nevertheless it can certainly leave an enduring effect. Our way of seeing the world, of understanding the scope of possibility, of measuring human achievements, can all be altered by a sense of there being something more lying just beyond the more mundane, everyday life. In the case of spiritual evil, this greater meaningfulness may, of course, be far from welcome; but this hardly lessens its significance. A significance which may be so great as to be described as 'cyclopean'.

Notes

[1] The issues dealt with in this chapter are explored in much greater depth in B. Feltham, 'Magic and Practical Agency', *Rational Magic*, S.E. Hendrix and B. Feltham (eds), Inter-Disciplinary Press, Oxford, 2011.

[2] This adapts an idea from J. Raz, *Engaging Reason*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999, p. 64.

[3] J.D. Hawkins, *Understanding Chaos Magic*, Capall Bann Publishing, Chieveley, Berks., 1996, pp. 70-72.

[4] Genesis 22:1-19. S. Kierkegaard, 'Fear and Trembling', *Kierkegaard's Writings, Vol. VI*, H.V. Hong and E.H. Hong (eds), Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1983.

[5] A. Machen 'The White People', *The White People and Other Stories*, S.T. Joshi (ed), Chaosium, Haywood, California, 2003, p. 63.

[6] A. Crowley, *Diary of a Drug Fiend*, Weiser Books, San Francisco, California, 1979, Book I, Ch. 2, p. 24.

[7] Pseudo-Dionysius, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, C. Luibheid (ed), Paulist Press International, Mahwah, New Jersey, 1993.

[8] 'By their fruits you shall know them.' Matthew 7:16.

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Art, Love and Magic in Marsilio Ficino's *De amore*

Juan Pablo Maggiotti

Abstract
Marsilio Ficino establishes in his *Commentary on Plato's Symposium*, better known as *De amore*, a comparison between art and magic, as two similar ways of transforming nature on love's behalf. The comparison rests upon his own conception of love as expressed in the myth of Venus: there's a Heavenly Venus and a Vulgar Venus, both connected to Beauty but in different senses, the first one aiming to contemplate Beauty, the second one to translate it on matter. This interpretation is reflected on Ficino's own conception of art, as an impulse of transforming nature as a consequence of a contemplative connection with Beauty. Hence his conception of magic too, which also pretends to transform matter, by acknowledging natural affinities between things. Our intention here is to examine the connection of art and magic, in the context of Marsilio Ficino's metaphysical and anthropological conception of *love*.

Key Words: Art, beauty, Christianism, contemplation, creation, divinization, Ficino, love, magic, Plato, Plotinus, pseudo Dionysius Areopagite, Renaissance.

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1. Introduction

Marsilio Ficino establishes in his *Commentary on Plato's Symposium*, better known as *De amore*, a comparison between art and magic, as two ways of transforming nature on love's behalf. The comparison rests upon his own conception of love as expressed in the myth of Venus: there's a Heavenly Venus and a Vulgar Venus, both connected to Beauty but in different senses, the first one aiming to contemplate Beauty, the second one to translate it on matter.

Our intention in this paper is to examine this common point between artists and magicians. In a first glimpse, Ficino asserts that they both modify themselves because of love, in what we may call a *subjective* side of their activities, since their effects remain in themselves. Yet they also modify exterior realities because of love, in what we might call a *transitive* perspective. In the conjunction of both angles (subjective and transitive), Ficino is confirming artistic and magic operations as parts of a same amatory movement, with its ultimate origin in God's power.

2. Platonism and Ontological Dynamism in Ficino's Thought

All along the *De amore*, Ficino uses a wide but homogeneous notion of *love*. The most frequent definition is the one that affirms that 'love is the desire of enjoying beauty',[1] which he understands following Plato. Thus, something is said

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beautiful because of its participation from transcendental Beauty, identified at last with other transcendental properties such as Truth and Good.

Nevertheless, the usual Ficinian confidence in the contact with Truth-Good-Beauty as including not only an ascensional and contemplative movement, but also a descending and productive one, doesn't have its roots in a Platonic soil but, at any case, neoplatonic or even Christian. This is quite clear in the topic of the artistic creation, because the Platonic theory of art doesn't fare well with the Platonic theory of Beauty. We strongly believe that Plato needs a great modification and hermeneutical work, if not concerning the ascensional movement to the divine (i.e., contemplation), at least regarding to the descentional and productive movement over the world. This is why Ficino doesn't go to Plato for help, but to Plotinus. To see how Ficino reads Plato from Plotinus, we shall consider now another of his formulas on what is love.

> What is the love of men, you ask? What purpose does it serve? It is the desire for procreation with a beautiful object in order to make eternal life available to mortal things.[2]

This desire of engendering beauty may apply to multiple situations. Ficino accepts here the Plotinian notion of *art* as an imposition of forms onto matter. We refer now to the Plotinian doctrine of an *ontological dynamism* inherent to all that is, according to which everything suffers a double-point tendency: one upwards and another downwards, the first as a return to the origin and the second one as a procession over inferior hypostasis. Both movements are equally necessary and related to the Plotinian notion of *form* as a principle for being and beauty, since contemplation comes out as an ascension to forms, while procession appears as a productive descent of forms into inferior realities. The novelty here is that the downwards movement is a necessary consequence of the ascent, because the perfection of being leads to generation of newer hypostasis.

The circumscription of this doctrine to the subject of artistic creation pushes Ficino to state that contemplation of Beauty generates in the artist the necessity of giving form to inferior realities. This *in-formation* is a participation of the artist's own contemplation of Beauty. The artistic task is then depicted as a moment in the *diffusio boni*, and the artist, as a link in the chain between matter and divine realities.

3. The Myth of Venus in the *De amore*

The Plotinian influx on Ficino is also patent in the Florentine's lecture over the myth of the two Venus. In the Ficinian interpretation, the contemplative and ascensional movement towards the divine belongs to the Heavenly Venus, whilst the productive function over the world is credited to the Vulgar Venus.

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> Each Venus has as her companion a love like herself. For the
> former Venus is entranced by an innate love for understanding
> the Beauty of god. The latter likewise is entranced by her love
> for procreating that same beauty in bodies. The former Venus
> first embraces the splendor of divinity in herself; then she
> transfers it to the second Venus. The latter Venus transfers sparks
> of that splendor into the Matter of the world. Because of the
> presence of these sparks, all of the bodies of the world seem
> beautiful according to the receptivity of their nature.[3]

The Plotinian effort in demonstrating the bond between contemplation and
creation is continued by Ficino's metaphysics and aesthetics, placing Beauty as
cause of every ontological tendency, here to contemplate it, there to create it.

> On both sides [Venuses], therefore, there is a love; there is a
> desire to contemplate beauty, here a desire to propagate it. Each
> love is virtuous and praiseworthy, for each follows a divine
> image.[4]

Ficino uses the myth of Venus as nucleus for his commentary on the
Symposium, but incorporating centuries of neoplatonic tradition to his
hermeneutics, thanks to the doctrine of the ontological dynamism. This doctrine
plays a huge role in Ficino's theory of art since it shows that contemplation and
creation are both equally necessary and simultaneous. Yet it also brings out a
serious problem: even when it's true that every creation is originated in the full
perfection of the realities contemplated by the artist, it is also true that the act of
creation means the imposition of forms onto matter, i.e., the corruption of the
model's original and ideal perfection.[5] The procession of being is hence
simultaneously acknowledged by Plotinus as an effect of Good and origin of evil.

The guide for Ficino at solving this contradiction is the so-called Pseudo
Dionysius the Areopagite, who explains the ontological dynamism from his notion
of *divine extasis*. It is from Dionysius that Ficino positions Love as core of the
ontological dynamism.

4. Love at the Heart of the Cosmos

In the Areopagite, the originally Platonic idea of love as engine and cohesion of
the universe is transformed in a radical way. The Plotinian necessary procession
changes into free-will creation and love becomes a reciprocal relationship between
God and his creatures.[6] Next to Dionysius, Ficino judges that love is the universal
link between creatures only because they're previously affiliated to God by an act
of creation. And because of this, every descent over inferior realities may come out

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as a divinizing act if it's accomplished *at the image and likeness* of the original divine extasis.

The Christian doctrine of the *imago dei* is then introduced in the Ficinian theory of art, where the Vulgar Venus' desire for creation is understood in analogy to the divine creational descent. What is being set up is a theory of art which finds in the theological notion of *creatio* its own base, legitimating the divine function of art not only in its ability for transmitting the divine, but also in the amorous way in which it does it.

In the *De amore* Ficino succeeds in uniting the anthropology of the *micrososmus* with the hermetic *alter deus*, asserting that it's this human ability for binding realities, *through his action*, what makes him most similar to God. If man can tie up superior and inferior realities, in correlation to God, it's only because both are *capable for loving*. It is this double direction of love, pointing simultaneously to God and to the world, what transforms the artist in *copula mundi*, changing the matter, elevating it to the divine through the purification of its inner beauty.

This notion of love as universal link is relevant for us because if art is a divinizing activity for its ability to change the material world, then the same can be said about magic.

5. The Correspondence between Art and Magic

The passages regarding magic in the *De amore* are quite few. Nonetheless, the comparison between art and magic is enough for us to pay it a little attention. The only notion of *magic* brought out in this work appears in VI, 10, when we're told that love is magician.

> But why do we think that Love is a *magician*? Because the whole power of magic consists in love. The work of magic is the attraction of one thing by another because of a certain affinity of nature.[7]

Ficino tells us here that magic is all over where love is, because magic is based on the natural attraction between things. The comparison between artist and magician lays upon the fact that, in order to transform matter, both must discover its implicit possibilities, natural tendencies, affinities. In this sense, when establishing concordancies and respecting the harmony between things, artists and magicians act as some kind of *restorers* for broken or non-harmonic things.

What we believe most useful on this matter, is the motivation that Ficino recognizes in this restoring desire. We're told that «the desire to propagate one's own perfection is a certain type of love»,[8] and that «the same instinct for propagation is infused into all things by that first author [God].»[9] He thinks that «Therefore in both parts of the soul, both in that which belongs to cognition and in

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that by which the body is ruled, there is an innate love of procreation for preserving life eternally.»[10]

It is evident at this point that, for Ficino, love induces to continuous generation, in a definitive proof of the soul's desire for eternity. But this doesn't mean just a proof for the immortality of the soul, it shows up in addition that the lover wants to give eternity to the beloved one.

> Therefore, in order to keep our possessions permanently, by whatever means, we try to reproduce those which pass away. Reproduction is effected through procreation. Hence the instinct for procreation is innate in all things. But since procreation renders mortal things like divine things in continuity, it is certainly a divine gift. Since divine things are beautiful, ugly things are their opposite, but beautiful things are like divine things and have an affinity with them.[11]

When bringing together empathic things, the artist restores and gives them eternity. In doing so, he makes them equal to God and makes himself equal to God, as he's propagating his own perfection to exterior things. It is this divine gift what Ficino remarks as the «true magic» of love, out of which what is multiple becomes one, and what is mortal receives immortality.

Art and magic are two ways of divinization through amorous action over the world, because both restore the harmonies between things, functioning as *copula mundi* and elevating the finite realities to the Creator.

Ficino's magical theory supposes his cosmology, in which everything is interconnected. And it's from these correspondences that magical operations are possible, for they grant that what's going on in one part of the cosmos is passed on to other parts. So the cosmos surfaces as magical because nothing happening anywhere stays isolated from the whole, as previously bond together by a divine creative love.

> But the parts of this world, like the parts of a single animal, all deriving from a single author, are joined to each other by the communion of a single nature. (...) From this common relationship is born a common love; from love, a common attraction. And this is the true magic.[12]

Notes

[1] *De amore* II, 9, p. 58.

[2] *De amore* VI, 11, p. 130.

[3] *De amore* II, 7, pp. 53-54.

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[4] *De amore* II, 7, p. 54.

[5] E. Panofsky, *Idea. Contribución a la historia de la teoría del arte*, Editorial Cátedra, Madrid, 1977, p. 26.

[6] E. Cassirer, *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, Dover Publications, New York, 2000, p. 131.

[7] *De amore* VI, 10, p. 127.

[8] *De amore* III, 2, p. 64.

[9] *De amore* III, 2, p. 64

[10] *De amore* VI, 11, p. 131.

[11] *De amore* VI, 11, p. 130.

[12] *De amore* VI, 10, p. 127.

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The Jinn: An Equivalent to Evil in 20th Century
Arabian Nights and Days

Orchida Ismail and Lamya Ramadan

Abstract
The twentieth-century question surrounding the Jinn does not concern their existence. Indeed, the Jinn are very real according not only to mythology, but also to the Islam religion. The real question is what influence they have on the actions of men. Naguib Mahfouz's adaptation of the ancient classic *Arabian Nights* called *Arabian Nights and Days* recounts the stories of several human interactions with the Jinn. Yet throughout these interactions it is revealed that the Jinn cannot force men to commit certain acts. Instead, men ultimately choose which path to follow. In this sense, the terrible acts that men commit at the behest of the Jinn are always chosen by men, but set in motion by the words of the Jinn.

Key Words: The Jinn, black magic, *Arabian Nights and Days*, Naguib Mahfouz.

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1. Introduction

For a better understanding of the view of the Jinn in the twentieth-century it was relevant to examine a modern reading of the ancient classic *The Arabian Nights* named *Arabian Nights and Days.* Recounted by poet laureate Naguib Mahfouz (1911-2006), the story takes new depths and insights as the story picks up from where the ancient story ends where all the fanciful creatures disappear except for the Jinn. We could easily come to the conclusion that no other supernatural creature is in the story any longer simply because Mahfouz portrays the real world of the city of Shahrayar and Shahrazad.

The Jinn were introduced to western culture through *The Arabian Nights* with the literal translation of *A Thousand and One Nights*. However, for some reason these beings became a caricature comic creature in western culture. As opposed to the western view of Jinn, most literature involving the Jinn in the Middle East is usually disturbing and frightful. How far this creature's presence or belief in its presence affects the lives of people is another story and constitutes the whole point of this chapter.

2. The Nature of the Jinn

The Jinn are creatures who truly exist not only according to mythology but confirmed in religion (Islam). It should also be noted that magic/black magic is attributed to the assistance of the Jinn and that explains a lot about why sometimes magic works perfectly well for some people when they are not imposters. There are even scientific attempts to explain the Jinn.[1]

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   To define and analyse what Jinn is we need to resort to the ultimate resource that explains Jinn and the reason why so many people genuinely believe in their existence: the Quran (the book of Islam believed to be delivered by God Himself). The Jinn are explained to be a species of creatures made of fire in the same way that humans are made of clay and angles from light.[2] They share our universe dwelling in a world parallel to that of humankind. The Arabic word Jinn can be traced to the verb Janna which means to hide or to conceal. Thus they are invisible from man as their description suggests. This invisibility is the lead reason why some people have denied the existence of Jinn.[3]

   The reason why the Jinn are affiliated with the devil is that it is explicitly mentioned that Satan was a Jinni who by disobeying God, has fallen from His mercy. God gives Satan the name devil together with all the Jinn who become his followers in the quest to mislead as many humans to disobey God.[4]

3. Everyday Practices Indicating the Belief in the Influence of Jinn

   People of different social class and education still follow certain behaviours indicating a deep rooted belief in the influence of Jinn. Some of these customs are as simple as not to stare too long in a mirror or never to place a slipper upside down on the ground. Yet more serious taboos are evident. Women are instructed never to spill boiling hot water down the drain. It is believed that Jinn live there and can be provoked to punish whoever is careless enough to do so. Another dwelling place of Jinn is certainly bathrooms, and that explains why it is very serious not to sing or shout or scream in a bathroom. Thousands of stories exist of people being possessed, falling mysteriously ill or even disappearing altogether while doing so in a bathroom.[5]

4. *Arabian Nights and Days*

   Naguib Mahfouz' adaptation of The Arabian Nights starts with Shahrayar's declaration that he spares her life as his wife. We are immediately introduced to the real world of Shahrayar's kingdom. Shahrazad's world is portrayed as a corrupt world where innocent people lose their heads for protesting against the shedding of blood (as a clear indication of contradicting the unjust ruler). We meet various characters both from the upper class and the lower one as they meet every evening in the cafe.

   The Jinn make their first appearance in the form of one of the most familiar of Jinn-human encounters. Sanaan AlGamali, a rich merchant, waking up in the middle of the night, hears a horrifying voice of a Jinn claiming that he had stepped on his head. Of course the act calls for punishment. The Jinni reprimands Sanaan but not just for stepping on his head, but for human's constant trials to enslave Jinn 'to achieve vile objectives.'[6] He then pursues the matter wondering 'have you not satisfied your greed by enslaving the weak among you?'[7]

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As is usually the case, the Jinni offers to spare Sanaan's life on a condition. He orders Sanaan to murder the governor of their quarter. It is amazing to learn that the reason for that request is that the governor has bound the Jinni by a black magic spell and by murdering the governor he will get his freedom. Suddenly the Jinni is grouped with those exploited by the governor. Ironically, he resorts to a human to grant his wish. The merchant Sanaan gives in with a curious phrase: 'I resign myself to my fate.'

The reason why we need to contemplate this statement is that Sanaan was quick to decide that the Jinni is equivalent to fate which is by nature predestined and impossible to change. However, the incidents that follow are obviously Sanaan's choice! At night Sanaan goes out with a head full of sexual fantasies only to rape and kill a ten year old girl. Sanaan calls for the Jinni to rescue him, which he does by using his power to get Sanaan out of the crime scene without anyone seeing him.

The Jinni acuses Sanaan of madness to perform such a crime and that brings to mind the relationship between madness and being possessed by a Jinni. The two words are used interchangeably to replace each other especially that the Arabic word for becoming mad and possessed by a Jinni are the same: 'mass of madness, mass of Jinni.'

The next step is for Sanaan to murder the governor but this time the Jinni refuses to help him. This is again typical of Jinn conduct as they promise one thing but give another: The Jinni answers Sanaan that he shall not anger God. This answer is reminiscent of the devil's answer to sinners going to hell saying it was him who led them astray by stating 'I fear God Lord of the Heavens and the earth.' Sanaan is trialled despite his grotesque story about the Jinni and is beheaded.

Sanaan's transformation is described as a 'recreation of the man's nature.'[8] Now we need to decide whether Jinn change people's natures. The second character to have a Jinni cross his way is Gamasa Al Bulti the chief of police. While Gamasa is fishing, he accidentally frees a Jinni imprisoned in a metal ball at the bottom of the lake. Gamasa's pleads for mercy but for some reason the Jinni wants to grant mercy only to merciful people being the ones who deserve it. He asks Gamasa if he is a God fearing person following His orders while performing his job. Gamasa is revealed as a hypocrite who follows orders regardless and gladly takes his share of the money undeservedly earned by his superiors. Again the Jinni confirms 'No harm afflicts us (Jinn) that does not come from human beings.'[9]

Gamasa is confronted with the truth about himself. The Jinni's accusations reveal to him that he is 'a murderous robber, protector of criminals, torturer of innocent men. He had forgotten God until he had been reminded of Him by the Jinni.'[10] As Gamasa reaches despair he is transformed. Surprisingly, he truly shows signs of repenting his past conduct and comes to a decision to make things right. He lets all the innocent prisoners, even the political adversaries, free. He then goes

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to the governor's headquarters assassinating him while declaring that he (the governor) is the true criminal.

Gamasa's valour poses a striking difference between him and Sanaan as he obviously believes that he redeemed himself for all the wrong that he has done before. Consequently, unlike Sanaan, Gamasa is saved. He is given another chance as the Jinni changes Gamasa into an Ethiopian worker having him witness the execution of a liking of himself.

In the meantime, we meet two more Jinni characters who are portrayed as playful and impious. Ironically though, in their attempt to mess things for humans they achieve the impossible. They bring together the stunningly beautiful Dunyazad, Shahrazad's sister and the exceptionally handsome Nur Al Din, the perfume seller. They set a trap for both bringing them together in a dream like atmosphere making them believe it is their wedding night. Dunyazad wakes up to realize the dream was in fact a reality and is terrified by the consequences.

Things get worse when Dunyazad turns to be pregnant and even her mother cannot believe the possibility that her daughter is innocent. Dunyazad certainly considers suicide but is saved by the insight of Gamasa who advises her to go to Nur Al Din. The two lovers reunite and decide to go to Shahrayar with their story pleading for mercy. Miraculously Shahrayar pardons Dunyazad and Nur Al Din giving them his permission to get married. Thus even the evil Jinn's attempt at meddling with human life works out differently from what they had planned.

5. The Reality behind the Jinn

In the instances that the Jinn are mentioned in the holy Quran, it is clear that they are grouped with humans being subjected towards the same conditions. They are either God fearing choosing the path of righteousness or evil thus condemned to the everlasting curse of hell.[11] They are never portrayed as having any power over humans even though they are supposed to be stronger. They have the power to suggest evil to humans but it is up to the human to do what they propose or not.

Their power falls within the domain of travelling at very high speed, moving very heavy objects, diving in the depths of the seas and lands or soaring in the skies and even space. They are also invisible to humans while they can see us. They can assume the shape of any animal, object or even another human if they please. As for Jinn ability to learn about the future, it has been explicitly denied. Jinn might be good at spying and can know about things happening in different countries and informing their accomplices about it but that is the limit of their power.

6. Conclusion

The idea that Jinn exist is not to be disputed in the Muslim world.[12] Yet their influence is highly overestimated. However when a person performs grave evil or something that we cannot explain occurs, it is certainly easier to attribute it to a

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superhuman force that is much stronger and superior. However, the plain truth has to be that even with the prompt of the Jinn, man has full choice of which path he will take. Evil lurks not in the form of Jinn, but deep in the souls of men.

Depicting some examples from Naguib Mahfouz's adaptation of Arabian Nights, shows typical instances of man/Jinn encounters. His stories of men performing horrible deeds of rape and murder, or women disappearing, or people struck by madness are realistic. Yet Jinn have nothing to do with it. There is always man's contribution of which way to act. It could even be safe to refute that Jinn bring the worst in men in favour of the confirmation that Jinn bring out the reality of men.

Notes

[1] I.B. Sayed, *The Jinn: A Scientific Analysis*, Retrieved on 4th February 2010 from http://www.groups.yahoo.com/groups/truth-zone.

[2] *Holy Quran*, *An English Translation*, Surrah (chapter) Al Hijr, Noor Foundation-International, 1977, pp. 26-27.

[3] Mission Islam, *The World of the Jinn*, Retrieved on 1st January 2010 from http://www.missionislam.com/knowledge/worldjinn.html.

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[5] E.W. Lane, *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, East West Publications, 1936.

[6] Ibid., p.12

[7] Ibid., p.12

[8] Ibid., p. 7

[9] Ibid., p. 34.

[10] Ibid., p. 43

[11] *Holy Quran*, Surrah Al-Jinn, pp. 3-5.

[12] A. El-Zein, *Islam, Arabs and the Intelligent World of the Jinn*. Syracuse University Press, 2009.

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PART 2

Magic and History

Rational Astrology and Empiricism, From Pico to Galileo

Scott E. Hendrix

Abstract

In the modern world 'scientific' is typically equated with 'rational', leading modern intellectuals to portray the emergence of modern science as a process involving the rejection of superstition. Many historians, philosophers of science, and scientists have depicted Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and Galileo Galilei as heralds of scientific rationalism for their 'rejection' of superstition in the form of astrology. [1] However, Pico never broadly opposed astrological theory or practice and Galileo was a working astrologer who rejected neither the concept of celestial influence on earthly events nor the practice of predicting the future through the use of the discipline; the astrologer's model of a mechanistic cosmos functioning with absolute mathematical regularity may have positively influenced Galileo's own developing mechanical philosophy.

Key Words: Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Galileo Galilei, Marsilio Ficino, Albumasar, astrology, scientific rationalism, science, modernity, *Disputations Against Astrological Divination*.

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Does 'modernity' have an individual ontological status or does it only exist in contrast to that which is not modern? Here I focus on a key element of this question: the role of scientific rationalism and its relationship to what we now think of as 'superstition'. The philosophers of science, Boris Castel and Sergio Sismundo have noted that 'what it means to be modern, is thoroughly entwined with science',[2] which has led the terms 'rational' and 'scientific' to become virtual synonyms in our modern world. I focus on two icons of rationality, the fifteenth-century humanist Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and the seventeenth-century scientist Galileo Galilei. Both are viewed as making strides toward a modern sensibility in no small part due to a rejection of irrational superstition, oft-symbolized by their opposition to astrology. I argue that neither rejected astrological divination; in fact adherence to a belief in celestial influence was both wholly rational and in fact may have played a positive role in the development of Galileo's scientific ideas.

First, I should pause to explain what I mean by astrology. The discipline owes its conceptual beginnings to the ancient Babylonians, who by 410 BC were casting horoscopes intended to describe an individual's future.[3] More importantly for Western science, the Greeks appropriated and adapted these ideas for their own ends; Greek and Hellenist natural philosophers from Plato to Ptolemy accepted the idea that the heavens influenced events on Earth.[4] From our twenty-first-century

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perspective Greek and Hellenistic adherence to astrological beliefs might seem odd, but as scholars such as Cecil J. Schneer have noted, 'Greek rationalism' is emphasizes explanations that are both logical and replicable by others trained in Greek philosophy.[5] Astrology as it reached its fullest development in late antiquity in the work of Ptolemy presented a model of the universe in which physical bodies interacted with one another with perfect, mathematically describable consistency. Such a cosmological model required no belief in invisible entities or divine intervention to explain everything from the movements of the planets to the coming to be and passing away of living things on the earth. Indeed, the Ptolemaic model was one in which the entire universe functioned with machine-like regularity.

Eventually the Muslim world appropriated Greek knowledge and Ptolemaic astronomy, developing and adding to these ideas in creative ways. The most important scholar to do so was the ninth-century Persian, Abū Ma'shar al-Balkhī,[6] or Albumasar as he came to be known in the West, who grappled with integrating concepts of celestial influence and predictive astrology with a monotheistic context that at this period still highly valued human free will.[7] Accused by one opponent of 'studying astrology until he became an atheist', Albumasar's developed the position that the heavens incline, but do not compel, human action. Therefore, 'the wise man', meaning one who understood these influences, 'dominates the stars', an idea that both preserved the predictive power of astrology to a large degree as well as the freedom of the human will. This compromise would eventually make astrology acceptable to most Christian intellectuals by the fourteenth century.[8]

Albumasar's contributions to the history of astrology are directly relevant to understanding Pico della Mirandola's approach to the discipline; as a student of Arabic he read the most important contributors to the Arabic intellectual heritage in the original language.[9] Albumasar's negotiated compromise between astrological determinism and human free was quite familiar to Pico, who found this formulation making astrological belief congruent with the concept of free will very useful. His own veneration for human freedom has been enshrined in his justly-famed *Oration on the Dignity of Man,* which proclaims that 'to man it is allowed to be whatever he chooses to be', either akin to an angel through the cultivation of the intellect, or a beast otherwise.[10] Although it is often forgotten, Pico wrote this *Oration* to serve as the preface to his *900* Theses, which came under papal ban in 1486, partly due to the reverence for astrological influence that Pico exhibits throughout the work.[11] Regardless of Pico's lofty prefatory comments about human freedom the papacy viewed his position as one favouring astrological determinism.

Nevertheless, Pico's position was not altogether surprising; it had been centuries since anyone had voiced an outright rejection of the power of the stars. By the time of Pico's writing more than two centuries of tradition supported the notion that the heavens affect human bodies, influencing the soul secondarily through the body's 'pulling and tugging' upon the soul.[12] While in his *900 Theses*

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Pico might have gone too far in his stress upon the role of celestial influence in human life, his belief in the power of the stars to affect humankind was entirely within the mainstream of learned opinion of his day.

Unfortunately, in the last years of his life Pico complicated any discussion of his belief in astrology greatly with the writing and posthumous publication of his *Disputations against Astrological Divination.*[13] The assessment of a great many scholars - including the modern editor of the work, Eugenio Garin - stresses Pico's absolute rejection of divinatory astrology in this text, which is highlighted by those such as Louis Dupré as a significant step on the path toward modernity.[14] Unfortunately such a position does not stand up to a close reading of the text itself, a fact that recent scholarship is beginning to acknowledge.[15]

Turning to the work, it is important to note that when Pico died it was unfinished and unpublished; the scholar's nephew working together with Pico's personal physician edited the version available to us.[16] While this makes interpretation problematic, it is clear that Pico's intent was to critique astrology 'prohibited by law, damned by the prophets, ridiculed by saints, forbidden by popes and sacrosanct synods'.[17] But we must be careful, for he does not intend to lump all astrology together. Rather, Pico defends the concept of celestial influence, stating 'that nothing comes to us from heaven except with light having carried it'.[18] While he lashes out at 'casters of nativities-' meaning those who compose birth charts - as promoting 'the most infectious of all frauds',[19] ultimately Pico is most concerned that astrologers might lead people away from an attentive regard for God.[20]

The context of Pico's *Disputationes* is important, for the work's modern editor, Eugenio Garin, has attempted to establish a direct link between it and the work of a later Italian intellectual - Galileo Galilei. For historians as well as philosophers of science such as Karl Popper and scientists such as Carl Sagan it has long been an article of faith that Galileo was a 'constant adversary of divinatory astrology', to quote Garin.[21] However, the nineteenth-century editor of Galileo's collected works, Antonio Favaro, published an article entitled 'Galileo Astrologo' in 1881, recently translated and included in a special volume on *Galileo's Astrology* released by *Culture and Cosmos* in 2003.[22] Although Favaro suggested that Galileo had lost interest in astrology as he aged, he proves conclusively that Galileo frequently cast horoscopes. This is clear not only in natal charts Galileo cast, such as the one for the Grand Duke Cosimo II of Florence, but also in epistolary discussions of horoscopes in which Galileo discussed the discipline.[23] Yet even today historians attempt to explain away Galileo's astrological pursuits as an activity intended to garner patronage from powerful people such as the Dukes of Florence,[24] quickly pass over it as an activity in which he 'dabbled',[25] or ignore it altogether.[26]

But if we take the time to examine the horoscopes that Galileo cast there can be no doubt that he was completely earnest in his belief in the importance of the

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discipline.[27] In MS. Gal. 81 we find not only horoscopes that could have been intended to garner the support of a patron but also those that Galileo did for himself, his daughters, and twenty as yet to be identified people.[28] Rutkin has devoted some time to analysing the natal charts for Galileo's daughters and for his friend Sagredo, noting the care with which these charts are constructed. These charts are now available on the website of *Skyscript* and, using Galileo's own birth chart as a point of reference, we should not ignore the corrective notes that one finds throughout the chart. On Galileo's horoscope there are mathematical corrections visible under the headings for both Saturn and Mars, as well as on the body of the horoscope itself.[29] If Galileo had cast these horoscopes merely for the purpose of patronage or to earn money, why would he have been so concerned with accuracy? These horoscopes all seem to date to the late 1580s and 1590s but there is nothing to suggest that he changed his mind about the discipline later. Instead, it is just as likely that other concerns simply kept him too busy for such pursuits. In the absence of evidence to the contrary we must assume that Galileo maintained his early interest in astrology throughout his life.

    This point is not merely one of antiquarianism. To repeat an earlier point, astrologer saw the cosmos as an interlinked whole, as distant celestial bodies interacted with one another and the earth in consistent and mathematically describable ways. The Christian version of this system as articulated by medieval natural philosophers placed the beginning of the system of influences with God, but all agreed that he did not ordinarily intervene, allowing the cosmos to function with mechanical precision, as if it were clockwork.[30] This is the astrological system that Galileo inherited, perhaps providing an impetus for the burgeoning mechanical philosophy of the Scientific Revolution. Whether or not that is the case, it is anachronistic to look for a rejection of astrology during this period as a sign of scientific rationalism. After all, for Pico just as for Galileo, belief in astrology, based as it was on the best natural philosophy of their day, *was* rational.

Notes

[1] The issues considered in this chapter are dealt with at considerably greater length in S.E. Hendrix, 'Rational Astrology and Scientific Rationalism in Premodern Europe', *Rational Magic,* S.E. Hendrix and B. Feltham (eds), Inter-Disciplinary Press, Oxford, 2011.

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Between Religion and Magic: Clerics and Common People in the Lier Witch Trials of 1589 and 1603

Vrajabhūmi Vanderheyden

Abstract

Defining concepts as 'religion' and 'magic' and their mutual relationship is – to say the least – challenging. After years of study and debate, it is still a 'hot topic' in different areas of research. Attempts to clearly delineate both notions can be traced back into a distant past. More than 400 years ago, in the Reformation period, the Catholic Church invested a lot of energy to define the boundaries of religious orthodoxy in order to distinguish official praxis from abuse and heresy. In this chapter I will explore whether these official regulations found their way to common people, and if so, how they were interpreted on the level of a local community. I will focus on the actions of local clerics who figure in several witch trials that took place in the small city of Lier in the Spanish Netherlands at the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century. These judicial records bear witness of everyday early modern life, particularly in those aspects that pertain to the 'supernatural'. Against the background of a religious landslide, the featured clergymen made their way through the field of tension between prescribed clerical norms and the reality of daily life in a small community. In doing so, they often crossed the boundaries of what the Church considered proper religious behaviour, performing acts that could be labelled as 'magical'. They did so both on their own initiative and spurred by a significant popular demand. This way, their actions shed light on common conceptions and perceptions of the supernatural in the early modern period and may lead to a better understanding of the border region between religion and magic.

Key Words: Early modern history, religion, magic, witch persecution, priests, cultural mediators.

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1. Introduction

Defining concepts as 'religion' and 'magic' and their mutual relationship is challenging. After years of study and debate, it is still a 'hot topic' in different areas of research. More than 400 years ago, in the Reformation period, the Catholic Church invested great energy to define the boundaries of religious orthodoxy in order to distinguish official praxis from abuse and heresy. The opinion that magical practices were a bigger problem than ever before as well as the reformed dismissal of traditional clerical ritual as 'papal magic' resulted in the Catholic struggle against superstition receiving a renewed fervour. Uniformisation of clerical practices, elaborate regulations and an improved supervision of clerics and

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laypeople alike were the main strategies applied by the Church to enhance its control of the access to the supernatural.[1] Early Modern councils and synods brought forth a many statements concerning credulous actions. In the Spanish Netherlands, for instance, the first provincial council of the archbishopric of Mechelen declared in 1570 that it was superstitious to attempt any goals without using rational means or the help of God or the Church. Sixteen years later, the archbishop of Cambray condemned people who made use of signs, images, signet rings, written prayers or different kinds of conjurations in order to heal or sicken humans and animals.[2] Valuable as they are as historical sources, clerical documents condemning 'popular' gullibility tell us more about churchmen and their religious point of view than about the people performing the practices described.[3]

What happens if we look at superstitious practices from another angle? In this chapter, I will explore five witch trials that took place in the city of Lier and its surroundings in the Spanish Netherlands in 1589 and 1603.[4] The value of witch trials as a source for different fields of historical research can by now be considered generally acknowledged. The testimonials and interrogations that were part of the legal procedure constituted rare occasions in which the stories of mostly illiterate common people were put to writing. Consequently, these documents bear witness of everyday life, particularly in those aspects that pertain to the 'supernatural'. Their court origin shifts away from a religious point of view, yet replaces it with a judicial one, for the content of the trials was to an important degree determined by their legal aim. While recording the oral testimonials, scribes could alter or omit bits of information. Testimonials could be influenced by leading questions, narrative models or by expectations of what the court wanted to hear.[5] Nevertheless, witch trials picture 'magical' practices within a broader frame, thus offering an opportunity to learn about both the motivations of the people involved and the context within which they operated.

Using the Lier witch trials as a main source, I will trace the actions of three clerics that performed practices that were – or could have been – labelled as 'superstitious' by clerical authorities. By exploring the circumstances of their behaviour, I hope to shed light on the borderlines between religion and magic as they were conceived of on the level of a local community.

2. The Healing Activities of Simon Van de Poel: Priests as Cultural Mediators

In 1602 the Lier priest Simon Van de Poel was appealed to by Digne vanden Perre because her best cow suffered from strange fits. Simon exorcised the animal, put consecrated salt in its ear and gave Digne holy water for it to drink, remedies that resulted in its recovery that same day.[6] A few years earlier however, a similar cure had failed to produce any effect at all. At that time, a merchant had asked the priest for advice about his wife, who got ill and bedridden after giving birth to her

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youngest child. Simon's suggested remedy of taking consecrated oil, salt, bread and wine for several days did not alter her condition.[7]

The position of the priest in a community as it was intended by the Church, was one of authority, advisor and confidant. As much as these two examples illustrate this aspect of priestly duty, they also show how the actions of the cleric involved were the result of a request for assistance coming from laypeople. Hence, priests did not only have to deal with the demands of their superiors, they were confronted with considerable popular expectations as well. These demands often contradicted their religious mission but were not easy to disregard.[8] In searching for compromise between religious regulations and the reality of everyday life, priests took up the position of a cultural mediator. This concept indicates persons that make a connection between several cultures, thus channelling the processes of negotiation and appropriation that occur between them.[9]

The role priests had as an intermediary was ambiguous: it was a prerogative to the implementation of the clerical program at a local level, but at the same time it posed a threat to their connection with the Church. The tie between the Church and its clerics was in many cases drowned out by the bond a priest shared with his community. A well-integrated priest could therefore favour the demands of his parishioners over his clerical duty, or, as an Antwerp dean once remarked 'like people, like priest, and vice versa'.[10]

3. The Notorious Reputation of Peeter Gijsbrechts: The Boundaries of Orthodoxy Crossed

The lay requests for clerical assistance that I found in the trials were no random appeals for help but concerned a limited range of problems in which common methods and natural means were found to fail, or where an influence of the supernatural was suspected. More precisely, priests were mainly asked to heal people and animals, and to protect them from future mishaps. Practices of healing and protecting did indeed traditionally belong to the tasks of priests. Blessings, prayer and consecrated substances formed key elements in these rites.[11] As such the exorcising of animals and the administration of consecrated substances can be considered regular priestly duty. But these practices were easily elaborated with more dubious elements. What to think for instance of the fact that Digne's cow was treated to an ear full of consecrated salt?

Yet Simon's actions disappear into nothingness when compared to the activities of Peeter Gijsbrechts, sexton of the village of Westerlo. Although it is not known whether this man was ever ordained, his clerical affiliation obliged him to the same exemplary religious conduct that priests had to commit themselves to. Nonetheless he had successfully built himself a flourishing magical career that carried his fame as supernatural specialist through the entire diocese of Antwerp and beyond. Peeter Gijsbrechts was, for instance, called to help by Lysken Baeck from Lier. This woman had lost several of her children to an unknown disease that brought forth

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suspicions of sorcery. When her remaining son fell ill, she feared for his life as well. Peeter Gijsbrechts was quick to confirm that she indeed dealt with a case of enchantment. Hence a considerable part of his assistance consisted of exposing the culpable witch. To this end he used different techniques. First, he claimed that he would give the sorceress a sign to warn her not to do harm again. Secondly, he told Lysken that the first person she would see when she came out of her house the next morning, would be the culprit, holding candles to sacrifice in church. The next morning Lysken recognised her bosom friend Engelberte Hechts as the suspect described by the sexton. Engelberte's subsequent illness was considered as the 'warning' Peeter Gijsbrechts had spoken of. Still, an additional test was carried out to assure her guilt. Peeter provided a small rag filled with an unknown substance that was to be hidden under the threshold of a house. Next, Engelberte had to be called in. If being the wrongdoer, she would not be able to trespass. But Engelberte did not immediately respond to the call and only came to the house later that day. Because there was no certainty about the rag still being under the doorstep at that time, the test did not offer any clear outcome.[12] Nonetheless, Peeter Gijsbrecht's interference had provided a solid basis for a witchcraft reputation. It brought the friendship between Lysken and Engelberte to a tragic end and would eventually lead to Engelberte's trial in 1603.

Other activities and remedies of the sexton of Westerlo involved the use of cabbalistic signs, small notes that had to be buried on strategic locations, soil from a freshly dug grave and blood of the culpable witch. Such practices can hardly be distinguished from lay magical acts, carried out by cunning folk, charmers and soothsayers. It is no surprise then, that he provoked authorities to react. After his visit to the family of Lysken Baeck, the Lier magistrates forbade him to ever set foot on their territory again. The lord of Westerlo discharged him from his office and commanded the local bailiff to start a judicial investigation. Yet the suspect fled before he could get arrested. Later on, Peeter handed himself over to religious authorities, who forgave him for his misbehaviour under the express condition never to dabble in superstitious practices again. This promise, however, did not keep him from continuing his magical career.[13]

4. Joannes Baptista Massias' Assertiveness: Driving People towards a Witchcraft Diagnosis

The sexton of Westerlo was not the only one challenging the boundaries of orthodoxy. The occupations of Joannes Baptista Massias, an army priest who accompanied the Spanish soldiers residing in Lier, were equally daring. This man spared himself the trouble of waiting for laymen to approach him for help, and addressed people on his own accord. He surprised a girl and her mother by declaring, without any provocation, that the child suffered from a hidden complaint at her leg, which indeed appeared to be true. He claimed the disorder was bestowed upon her a year and a half ago, by eating enchanted apples that she had received

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from neighbours. To counter the enchantment, the girl had to be rubbed with consecrated oil and balm.[14] Jan van Heerle was another person who unsuspectedly came to hear that he was a victim of bewitchment. Joannes told him that sorcery had caused the death of his animals and that this same magic would soon affect him too. Without his interference, he would die within twelve days, he claimed. The person responsible for the enchantment was a woman, who would pass by Jan's house soon after he would have arrived home.[15]

Apart from the dubious practices themselves, there was another aspect in the dealings of figures like Peeter Gijsbrechts and Joannes Baptista Massias that worried clerical authorities. By identifying certain mishaps as the results of enchantments and by occupying themselves with finding the culpable witch, these persons propagated belief in sorcery. This, in turn, encouraged people to perform counter-magical practices and brought about witchcraft accusations. By diagnosing that Digne vanden Perre's cow was enchanted, for instance, Simon Van de Poel prompted her to formulate suspicions towards Engelberte Hechts, who had stroked and admired the animal shortly before. It was in these specific aspects that the post-reformation Church tried to introduce an increased critical attitude. As a consequence, Simon Van de Poel was carpeted by the bishop of Antwerp in the 1590s. Simon had diagnosed the disease of an Antwerp woman as witchcraft, declaring that the culpable witch was an old widow living in the neighbourhood. When the bishop confronted him with his allegation, Simon admitted that he had said so only to give the impression that he was knowing.[16]

In some cases, the interference of clerics like Simon Van de Poel and Joannes Baptista Massias indeed introduced the idea of enchantment. Yet in many other examples a suspicion of magic was already present beforehand. That partly explains why these people turned to priests for help. As experts in the supernatural, they had the right skills to solve a problem that rooted in the supernatural.[17]

5. Conclusion

So far, we have seen how in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, at the background of a religious landslide, local priests made their way through different fields of tensions. The Lier witch trials furnish ample evidence that in doing so, they often trespassed the borders of what the Church considered proper religious behaviour, performing acts that could be labelled as 'magical'. They did so in different degrees, ranging from small elaborations of traditional clerical rituals to highly superstitious practices. The factors that prompted clerics to these infringements were manifold. Personal initiative and an eagerness to be considered as knowing could be at play. But equally important factors were the clerics' mediating position between Church and laypeople, or the close bond with the people they served. The popular expectations that are featured in the witch trials I explored, cover a limited range of situations that were often associated with magic and traditionally were included in priestly duty. Up to 1605 a standardised clerical

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education lacked in the diocese of Antwerp and most priests had learned their job while being apprenticed by their predecessor.[18] This poses the question to what extent some of the priests were knowingly crossing the boundaries of orthodoxy.

The same question applies to the laypeople involved as well. The context of war and a dire need of priests had left a lot of villages, especially in the neighbourhood of Lier, without a priest.[19] The Lier witch trials bear witness of people lacking even a basic knowledge of catholic faith, not knowing the creed or how to make the sign of the cross. In addition, clerical regulations did not always clarify the difference between religion and magic. If I apply the earlier mentioned statement of 1570, which asserts that it was superstitious to try to achieve any goals without using rational means or the help of God or the Church, possibly none of the cases I found in the trials could be considered genuinely superstitious. They all involved religious elements such as consecrated substances, prayer and attending masses, and all of them were performed by clerical dignitaries.

Therefore we can assume that religious communities at a local level had their own ideas about religion that did not necessarily square with the conceptions of orthodoxy at higher clerical levels. Many cases seem to imply that the allegedly superstitious practices performed by priests were framed in a religious context, and unproblematically merged with a sincere Christian lifestyle. As such, they nuance the image of a highly superstitious popular mentality that is presented to us by clerical sources. Defining orthodoxy was not a simple matter of imposing clerical theology on meek laypeople. Instead, it was a complex process of negotiation and appropriation between all parties involved, in which common people played an active part as well.[20] This way, the boundaries of religion and magic were as much negotiated in local everyday religious life as they were on the benches of councils and synods.

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PART 3

Magic and Literature

'I am a witch and I like it!': Black Magic and Witchcraft in Mikhail Bulgakov's Master and Margarita

Natalia Kaloh Vid

Abstract
In this chapter I intend to explore the image of one of the most famous witches in Russian literary tradition, Mikhail Bulgakov's Margarita whose image is characterized by the combination of the dark, the magical and the sensual. As usually, Bulgakov calls attention to his varying from the usual 'protocol' of witchcraft. He does complex things in symbolism in the extended treatment that he gives to the transformation of Margarita and to the famous satanic ball that she hosts. Margarita herself is an ambiguous character – in the same way as Woland is – in terms of good and evil. On the one hand, she is presented as a classic witch in the best traditions of black magic. She rides broomstick, drinks blood, bathes at night in the lake in the company of other witches, is washed in blood and, finally, she hosts Satan's ball. However, several elements in the plot correspond to the similarities between her and the Virgin Mary, as she exhibits mercy, faith and maternal love. The parallel between the witch and the Holy Virgin occurs as one of the most striking in Bulgakov's novel.

Key Words: Bulgakov, witchcraft, Margarita, black magic.

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1. Introduction

Defining the term 'witch' is not an easy task given the negative connotations traditionally associated with the term. Who is a witch? Traditional mainstream media images of witches tell us they are evil, dishonest and dangerous. Witches are labeled as 'devil worshippers' and 'baby killers', possessed by demons or wicked spirits. They fly on brooms and dance naked in the woods. They deceive, make spells and practice black magic. A variety of mainstream media has worked to support these notions as well as develop new ones.

In this chapter, I intend to explore the image of one of the most famous witches in contemporary Russian literature, Mikhail Bulgakov's Margarita. Bulgakov's works are characterized by fundamental ambivalence, as he avoids a strong delineation into the black and white, good and evil, God and Devil. Therefore, while Margarita's image is constructed in the best traditions of black magic, several elements in the plot signify the similarities between her and the Virgin Mary. This parallel between a witch and the Holy Virgin occurs as one of the most striking in Bulgakov's novel. By placing a 'saint witch' in the middle of his narrative, Bulgakov exploded the very essence of Orthodox testament. What were

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his intentions? Who is Margarita? And can we talk about black and white magic or we should consider the fundamental unity of 'good' and 'evil'?

2. *Master and Margarita*: Manuscripts do not Burn

'Master and Margarita' is Bulgakov's last and his most famous work, completed shortly before his death in 1940. Due to the censorship of the time, the novel remained unpublished for more than twenty years. Written in the darkest days of Stalinist Russia, the work was so controversial that it was first published only in 1966 in a literal newspaper *Literaturnaia gazeta* and almost immediately became an important 'underground' literary event in the country behind the iron curtain. The novel's astonishing popularity confirmed one of the most famous aphorisms in the novel: 'Manuscripts don't burn.'

In the novel, Bulgakov uses a narrative technique which has come to be known as **'magical realism'**, incorporating magical elements and illogical scenarios into otherwise realistic or even 'normal' setting.

The novel has a complex plot, woven from three strands that unfold in two different dimensions; there is the time of the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, and there is the time of early Soviet rule in modern Moscow. Intertextuality is one of Bulgakov's fundamental devices, so the text is full of biblical, philosophical, historical and apocryphal allusions. One of the three plots is an apocryphal account of the trial, death and burial of Jesus Christ which takes place in an imagined town called Yershalaim. Another plot is about Satan who visits Moscow to satisfy his curiosity about people's life in Soviet times. Finally, the third plot unfolds in Moscow in the 1930s and concerns the tragic story of the Master, an unnamed writer, and Margarita, his mistress. This part includes the Master's writing of his life work, a novel about Pontius Pilate, which constitutes the plot about Jesus Christ. At the end, both narrative dimensions come together.

Although Bulgakov specified that the Master was the hero of his novel, in many ways Margarita is equally important. Almost the whole second half of the novel focuses on her functions and activities, as she is the one who maintains contact with Satan to be turned into a witch and to host Satan's ball in order to save her lover.

All constructs, figures and characters in Bulgakov's artistic world are ambivalent. The image of Margarita is no exception. Her image is characterized by the combination of the dark, the magical, the sensual, the dark and the holy.

3. I am a Witch and I Like It!

Margarita is immediately identified as a witch by the narrator, who introduces her at the beginning of the second half of the book,

> What more did the woman need? Why did her eyes always glow
> with a strange fire? What else did she want, that witch with a

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very slight squint in one eye, who always decked herself with mimosa every spring? I don't know. Obviously she was right when she said she needed him, the master, instead of a Gothic house, instead of a private garden, instead of money. She was right--she loved him.[1]

In the novel, Margarita is around thirty years old, good-looking, very well situated and married. However, she is not happy. Not until she meets the unanimous Master, a writer, who becomes her lover, her spiritual inspiration and the sense of her life. Described as an ideal spiritual union, their love seems heavenly, bound by eternity. After an unsuccessful attempt to publish his novel on Pontius Pilate, Master mysteriously disappears. Devastated by grief, Margarita receives an unusual offer from one of the Satan's servants. If she makes a pact with the Satan and becomes the host of his famous annual ball, Stan will liberate the Master.[2] Margarita accepts.

Margarita's witchery is both thematically and compositionally central in the second part. Many of the details of her transformation are readily recognized as direct borrowings from witches' Sabbaths. On the other hand, as usually, Bulgakov calls attention to his varying from the standard 'protocol' of witchcraft. What makes Margarita a witch? The most important characteristic is that Margarita is invited by the Satan himself to be the Queen of the Sabbath hold on Walpurgis night, traditionally the most important meeting of witches, performed as a ritual mockery of the Holy Mass, which according to various historic and folklore sources included child-eating and ritual killing of animals, combined with sexual abuse and satanic influences.

Margarita is transformed into witch with a help of a magical device, a cream given to her by one of Woland's servants that she applies on her face and body. This cream is an important item in the process of transformation, a flying ointment prepared from poisonous ingredients. It smells of swamp mud and of marsh and forest, associating to the traditional locales of gathering of witches. In the process of the transformation, Margarita becomes younger and even more beautiful,

> The ointment rubbed in easily and produced an immediate tingling effect. After several rubs Margarita looked into the mirror and dropped the box right on to the watch-glass, which shivered into a web of fine cracks. Margarita shut her eyes, then looked again and burst into hoots of laughter. Her eyebrows that she had so carefully plucked into a fine line had thickened into two regular arcs above her eyes, which had taken on a deeper green colour. The fine vertical furrow between her eyebrows which had first appeared in October when the master disappeared had vanished without trace. Gone too were the yellowish

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> shadows at her temples and two barely detectable sets of crows-
> feet round the corners of her eyes. The skin of her cheeks was
> evenly suffused with pink, her brow had become white and
> smooth and the frizzy, artificial wave in her hair had straightened
> out. A dark, naturally curly-haired woman of twenty, teeth
> bared and laughing uncontrollably, was looking out of the
> mirror at the thirty-year-old Margarita.[3]

The process of transformation includes the change of eye color into green. She feels much stronger and weightless physically, and also quite joyful, the cream frees her from the sorrows and suffering she has endured. She becomes almost hysterically happy, 'Joy surged through every part of her body, and she felt as though bubbles were shooting along every limb. Margarita felt free, free of everything'.[4] For her the transformation brings mostly positive effect.

In what follows, Bulgakov carefully develops many of the details so that they point to the true nature of Margarita's transformation. She is given a broomstick and she enters naked into the world of the night, taking a wild ride over night Moscow. She also uses her new power to take a revenge on Master's enemy, a critic who criticized his novel. So, she flies into his apartment and destroys it, enjoying the ancestral feminine power traditionally associated with the forces of nature, given to her. On her way to Satan's ball, she flies to the marches, where she takes a traditional bath in the lake surrounding by water spirits. There are twenty-five references to the moon in the two chapters which deal with Margarita's transformation into a witch and her journey to a mysterious river on a broomstick, that is, twenty-five references in a total of eighteen pages. The moon is certainly connected with witchcraft.

After it she returns to Moscow as the anointed hostess for Satan's great Spring Ball. Again, Bulgakov follows the tradition, as Margarita remains naked during Satan's route; she is washed in blood before the ceremony; she gets a golden chain with the portrait of poodle (associated with Mephistopheles) and welcomes the darkest celebrities of human history as they pour up from the opened maw of Hell. She is accompanied by a black cat Behemoth, one of Satan's servants.

We should not forget that Bulgakov's mythological view differs significantly from the traditional Christian one. In his prose, Good and Evil coexist almost on equal terms, each performing its natural function in the universe. In this case, the eternal distinction between Good and Evil, black and white magic, witch and saint is not essential because Bulgakov does not believe in this traditional binary opposition. Therefore, black magic in his prose is seen as a part of the universe and a part of the divine plan.

According to Edward Ericson Bulgakov's deviations from the traditional witches' Sabbath and Black Mass are even more striking, 'as he retouches standard demonologies so that nothing occurs on this night which violates the Christian

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symbolism evoked, particularly the symbolism attaching to the character of Margarita'.[5] First, transformed into a witch, Margarita continues functioning as the bearer of maternal compassion in the novel. The impulse of the holy Mary lies in the heart of her witchery, depicted on a spiritual level. Her thrilling metamorphosis does not alert her fundamental concern with the destiny of her lover and her believe in spiritual reality. It has to be noted that Satan himself appears as the agent for dispensing cosmic justice.

The women attending the Sabbath, especially the hostesses, were expected to have sexual intercourse with the devil. However, Margarita is not involved in any kind of sexual harassment or orgies, staying pure and untouched in the Orthodox tradition of Virgin Mary. She also enjoys respect and admiration on the part of Satan himself and his servants which is quite unusual for a normal witch. In fact all the more horrific and degrading aspects of making a pact with the Satan are not present in the novel along with traditional designation of Satan as the incarnation of Evil.[6] To take just several of the examples, the guests of the Satan's ball kisses Margarita's knee instead of kissing Satan's ass as it is prescribed by a traditional Sabbath; Margarita doesn't have to spit on the destroyed holy relics; there are no children or animal sacrifices, etc. Her role keeps her at a far remove from such blasphemous actions. The references to holy Virgin appear constantly during the Satan's ball. The Satan himself calls her 'Madonna'[7] and she wears a crone being associated with the Queen of Heaven. Bulgakov uses numerous allusions to apocryphal texts. Thus, Easter Orthodox tradition envisioned not only Christ but also the Virgin Mary paying a visit to hell and being involved in the harrowing of hell. It is a substance of a popular Orthodox medieval apocryphal text[8] 'The Descent of the Virgin into Hell'[9] – 10th/12th centuries. Her visit occurs between Christ's death and resurrections and she represents divine mercy. Margarita drinks blood at the end of the Ball but the blood turns into the wine, establishing an intertextual reference to the blood of Christ. Margarita also exhibits faith and divine mercy, as she uses the wish granted to her by Satan to save a young woman Frida who strangles her own child. Margarita's power to do good is immeasurably increased by her alliance with the dark prince of the world. Margarita is represented in the novels as 'real, true, eternal love'[10] and this description too is clarified by her symbolic connection to Mary.

Margarita's role as a witch finishes at the end of the Satan's ball. She survives this ordeal without breaking, and for her pains and her integrity she is rewarded. Woland reunites Master and Margarita and restores the Master's novel, burned in a long-ago moment of despair. At the end of the novel Master and Margarita go off in the eternity on symbolic level.

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Notes

[1] M. Bulgakov, *The Master and Margarita*, trans. R. Pevear and L. Volokhonsky, Penguin books, 1997, p. 95.

[2] Bulgakov's works are characterized by numerous intertextual references. By making the pact with the devil the central motif of the plot, Bulgakov constructs an intertextual parallel between Margarita and Faust.

[3] Ibid., p. 229.

[4] Ibid., p. 230.

[5] E. Ericson, *The Apocalyptic Vision of Mikhail Bulgakov's The Master and Margarita*, The Edwin Mellen Press, Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter, 1991, p. 126.

[6] E.K. Beaujoure. 'The Uses of Witches in Fedin and Bulgakov', *Slavic Review*, Vol. 33, 4 1974, p. 702.

[7] Bulgakov, op. cit., p. 289.

[8] The story is unknown in Western church.

[9] S.A. Zenkovsky (ed), 'The Decent of the Virgin into Hell', *Medieval Russia's Epics, Chronicles and Tales*, E.P Dutton & Co, New York, 1974, pp. 153-160.

[10] Bulgakov, op. cit., p. 215.

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Fantasy and Myth in *Pan's Labyrinth*: Analysis of Guillermo del Toro's Symbolic Imagery

María Teresa DePaoli

Abstract

Establishing clear references to Francisco de Goya, Guillermo Del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth* locates the story within the context of the Spanish post-civil-war. Mythical elements play a leading role in the film when the totalitarian system of social control that Francisco Franco's fascist regime established during the post-war period function as the underlying reference in the film's narrative. Ofelia, the child protagonist, enters an uncanny world to escape the horrors of the reality she is forced to face. Playing with the traditional fairy-tale literary formula, del Toro's work not only offers a contemporary creative representation of the state of 'Franquismo.' Instead, the film functions as a cautionary tale that denounces atrocities commonly taking place under totalitarian systems anywhere. In this chapter, I propose the 'Cronus Complex' as a theme through which the symbolism that permeates *Pan's Labyrinth* acquires a universal dimension.

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The myth of Cronus is at the centre of Guillermo del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth* (2007). Del Toro acknowledges that a major inspiration for the creation of the supernatural creatures in the film was painter Francisco de Goya. In fact the scene when the Pale Man bites the fairies in half and gobbles them up is a direct reference to one of Goya's famous 'Saturn devouring his son.' Goya in turn, as Valerian von Loga has pointed out, was likely influenced by the 1636 *Saturn*, a painting by Peter Paul Rubens which describes the same mythological image. However, unlike Rubens', whose focus is on the infant's horrified face, Goya's energetic rendition emphasizes the god's expression, denoting violence, madness, and fear, while devouring his adult child.

Behind Goya's painting and del Toro's monster is the ancient Greek myth of Cronus, the epitome of cruelty. The fear of losing power and control results in the cannibalistic act of Cronus. The god swallowed his children because he feared one of them would overthrow him. In this chapter, I analyse del Toro's film in light of the 'Cronus complex,' an overlooked psychopathological condition, and explain how this motif commands two narratives that bleed into each other as the diegesis unfolds: one at a historical-realism level, and the other at a fantasy-psychological one. Toward this purpose, I will focus on the characters of Ofelia and her evil stepfather, Captain Vidal. Ultimately, Ofelia's dysfunctional family symbolizes Spain as a dislocated nation living under fear and oppression caused by the ruthless

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dictatorship of Francisco Franco. Analysing these two central characters from a psychological perspective allows me to explain the 'Cronus complex' within the symbolism present in the story.

Before the analysis it is necessary to briefly summarize the story of Cronus and its psychological significance. In Greek mythology, Cronus, a Titan, was one of the dozen monstrous children born to Uranus (father-heaven) and Gaia (mother-earth). Both Uranus and Gaia originated from the chaotic origin of things and their children inherited the fury of this genesis. The Titans were enormous in size and strength. Because his children were monsters, Uranus feared them and hid them in the body of his wife, Gaia, as soon as they were born. In a rebellious act, Gaia released her children and asked them to take revenge on their father. But only Cronus, the youngest, responded to his mother's cry for help by castrating his father with a sickle and marrying his sister Rhea. As an oracle prophesied that a son of this union would overthrow him and Cronus became afraid of losing power and control, he swallowed his children as soon as they were born, regardless of their gender. These children were the Olympians. However, Rhea hid her youngest son, Zeus who grew up and defeated his father.

Carl Jung studied the role that myth and archetypes play in the plurality of the psyche. According to Jung, an archetype is a pre-existent or latent pattern of being and behaving, and these patterns are contained in a collective, universal unconscious. Thus the Greek gods and goddesses are archetypal figures because they represent the fundamental structure of a man or a woman's psyche. In a 1984 clinical psychology article, the 'Cronus Complex,' is described not as a murderous tendency per se, since Cronus did not just intend to get rid of his offspring, but as a 'destructive ingestive process which hinders the [child's] capacity to exist separately and autonomously from the parent.'[1] In consuming his child, Cronus aims to make him part of himself, to continue living through him. Jungian Analyst, Jean Shinoda Bolen points out that, since ancient times, the 'Cronus complex' is a tendency through which male oriented cultures have maintained power. This is historically evident in systems such as fascism, one of the most radical mutations of patriarchy.[2]

The action in *Pan's Labyrinth* takes place in just such context, 1944 Spain. The Spanish civil war ended in 1939 with the defeat of the second democratic republic and Francisco Franco taking power as dictator. The post-war period was marked by escalating violence and repression from the Francoist regime, as well as by resistance from antifascist guerrillas who hid in the mountains and were aided by village sympathizers. Fascism is represented in the film by Vidal, Ofelia's stepfather, a vicious captain in Franco's Civil Guard based at a rural military post. He is in charge of eliminating the guerrillas resisting in the mountains. Ofelia is an orphan whose father died in obscure circumstances during the Spanish Civil War. Carmen, her mother, remarried Vidal who controls her. She is constantly sedated and confined to her bedroom during the last weeks of her pregnancy with Vidal's

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child. From the beginning of the story, it is clear that Ofelia does not want to
establish a daughter-father relationship with Vidal. Moreover, it is soon very
obvious that Vidal is also incapable of any type of filial relationship with Ofelia.

To Vidal, his wife is just a kind of human incubator carrying what he is certain
is his 'son;' it is evident that a daughter would be unacceptable. Doctor Ferreiro,
the physician in the military post, tells Vidal that she should have not travelled to
the countryside in that condition of complicated pregnancy, and Vidal answers: 'A
son should be born wherever his father is. That's all.' According to Bolen, a father
who suffers from a 'Cronus complex' insists that his children not differ from him
or deviate from his plans for them: 'if a child cannot think or act independently, he
or she will not be a threat.'[3] Ferreiro asks Vidal how he can be so sure about the
gender of the child to which Vidal replies: 'Don't fuck with me.' In a later scene
Vidal orders Ferreiro in front of his sedated wife: 'If you have to choose…save the
baby. That boy will bear my name and my father's name.' In 'swallowing' or
'consuming' his children's future possibilities, Cronus tries to make them part of
himself. In turn, Vidal needs to continue living through his son.

Vidal is only a symbol of Fascism; an institutionalized lack of choice that can
only be transgressed through civil disobedience. Demanding blind obedience is one
of the most distinctive aspects of someone afflicted with the 'Cronus complex.'
Everything in the film's realistic, or first, level is initially under Vidal's control. He
expects total compliance from everyone around him, including his family whom he
constantly scrutinizes. When he is not obeyed he turns violent and merciless. Del
Toro chose to place the most violent image at the beginning of the film, possibly to
establish Vidal's too real psychopathic, sadistic personality from the outset. In a
dark scene, Vidal crushes a peasant's face with a bottle when the young man
challenges his order to remain silent. He does this in front of the peasant's father
who is in turn shot after speaking up and calling Vidal 'murderer!, son of a bitch!'
Likewise, Vidal kills Doctor Ferreiro for disobeying him in keeping alive a rebel
prisoner so that he could continue his torture session. The victim begs Ferreiro to
kill him and the doctor euthanizes him. When Vidal demands an explanation for
his disobedience, Ferreiro answers: 'Because … to obey - just like that - for
obedience's sake ... that's something only people like you do, Captain.' Vidal
shoots Ferreiro in the back as the physician walks away from him. Vidal, however,
is just a symbolic character who represents a larger-than-life figure. He not only
personifies Franco and his zealot regime, but also any authoritarian system (from
the right or the left) aiming to control and suppress people's rights and freedom.

Indeed, obedience and sacrifice are trademarks of the 'Cronus complex' which
are abundant in a male-oriented society. Bolen points out: 'Greek themes of the
Sky Father being threatened by the birth and/or growth of children, his attempt to
consume them or keep them contained within his limits, and the hostility toward
sons are present in the Bible as well',[4] such as in the story of Abraham and Isaac.
Bolen asserts that a father with a 'Cronus complex' prevents his children from

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growing up to challenge his position or beliefs. He keeps them in the dark, unwilling to expose them to the influence of people, or education, or values that would broaden their experience.[5] Therefore, mirroring the political renegades is the route that Ofelia takes in the story by resisting and disobeying authority figures both in her fantasy and real worlds.

Functioning as synecdoche in del Toro's film, Vidal becomes a metaphor of the 'Cronus complex.' Furthermore, fostering a culture of fear enables a father, or a 'father-figure' such as Franco, to control his people or symbolically speaking, 'his children.' Just as Vidal is the absolute authority of the small rural community where the action takes place, Franco is the 'Titan-monster' controlling the nation. One strategy of social control that was very efficient during the dictatorship, and which is also represented in the film, is the politics of hunger. As in any war, food would always be a powerful weapon in the battle for hearts and minds. In *A Time of Silence: Civil War and the Culture of Repression in Franco's Spain, 1936-1945*, Michael Richards explains how the manipulation of basic needs was part of the Francoist autarchy.

The control and manipulation of food is represented in the film. Vidal imposes the use of rationing cards to the villagers surrounding the military post where he is based. The scene when people are in line, holding their card to get some food is provocative. Vidal makes his subordinates distribute bread while promoting the regime's 'generosity.' With a piece of bread in hand, the civil guard shouts: 'This is our daily bread in Franco's Spain: Kept safe in this mill! The Reds lie because in a united Spain, there is not a single home without fire or bread. This is our daily bread in Franco's Spain' Thus, the dictator is morphed into a kind of god, a giver of life; the bread winner-provider of his country. Indeed a father in charge of the most basic parenting act- feeding his children, adding only that the children would eat if they submit to his will.

In light of the 'Cronus complex,' I would like to return to the Pale Man scene, initially mentioned in this essay, as a multiple level reflection of both Vidal and Francoism. This is, perhaps, the most captivating and cryptic scene in the film because of its symbolic load. Religious and pagan elements mingle with fantasy during the almost seven minutes that Ofelia spends is this underworld. No dialogue is needed; the images speak for themselves. The episode contains all the elements of a nightmare in which Ofelia is confronted with the fear of being consumed by Cronus. At the same time, the Pale man scene also symbolizes and reflects the collective reality of Franco's oppressive regime.

The sumptuous feast display before the Pale man represents exactly the opposite: the food shortage that Spain's fascist regime is enforcing. The food is there but cannot be touched under penalty of death. Unlike the Biblical tale of the tempted Eve, who had everything in the Garden Eden, Ofelia is starving not only for food but also for affection. It is unlikely that Ofelia was properly fed in *Vidal's* household since it is known that Vidal has adopted the rationing card

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practice to one card per family, including his own. In addition, after Ofelia succeeds in the first test with the giant toad, her mother sends her to bed without supper as a punishment for soling her new outfit and arriving late for dinner. Although the spectator does not know Ofelia's thoughts during her second test with the Pale Man in the film proper, when Ofelia sees all the food displayed on the monster's table, del Toro's screenplay emphasizes: 'Ofelia's stomach growls with hunger'[6] (my translation). As much as Ofelia wanted to succeed in the second test, hunger makes her disobey the rules when she decides to eat the grapes. The episode rich, varied symbolism ultimately represents the ineffable terror of being devoured by Cronus.

In conclusion, analysing *Pan's Labyrinth* in light of the 'Cronus complex' and the historical context that surrounds the story, allows for an exploration of a psychological process associated with fascism. In this a film of contrasts, fantasy and innocence clash with reality and cruelty to describe the characters of Ofelia and Vidal respectively. Around these two characters a double narrative develops to represent a larger historical event that left an indelible mark in the collective subconscious of Spain. As the dysfunctional father of the nation, for decades the Franco regime brutally repressed and ostracized the entire country from the rest of the world after the Civil War. By devouring their aspirations and liberties, Franco kept his symbolic children in the dark through the implementation of policies and practices that prevented his people from challenging him. While a work of fiction, del Toro's film serves both as cautionary tale as well as a historical reminder of human atrocities taking place under totalitarian social systems.

Notes

[1] J. Crandall, 'The Cronus Complex', *Clinical Social Work Journal*, Vol. 12, August 1984, p. 110.

[2] J. Bolen, *Gods in Everyman*, Harper and Row, San Francisco, 1989, p. 86.

[3] Ibid., p. 22.

[4] Ibid., p. 32.

[5] Ibid., p. 35.

[6] G. del Toro, *El laberinto del fauno*, Ocho y medio, Madrid, 2006, p. 71.

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PART 4

The Supernatural and Popular Culture

Coming-of-Age among Sasquatches and Tree Spirits: Supernatural Guides in Eden Robinson's *Monkey Beach*

Martina Rössler

Abstract

Eden Robinson, Canadian writer of indigenous descent, explores the formative years of Lisamarie Hill in her debut novel *Monkey Beach* (2000). The protagonist is a resident of a Haisla community on the British Columbian coast and faces numerous challenges as she attempts to discover herself while acting as a border crosser between European-Canadian and indigenous cultures. Aspects of the supernatural manifest themselves early in the novel, and as the narrative progresses it becomes clear that the protagonist has been endowed with the gift (or curse?) of being able to contact the spirit world. Encounters with figures mainly from Haisla lore – ghosts, the 'little man' who acts as the harbinger of death, and the mythical figure of the sasquatch, among others – pose the question whether Lisamarie can accept the supernatural as an integral part of her life in a twentieth-century Canadian community. A deep analysis of these issues reveals the pivotal importance of the supernatural in the process of coming-of-age, as Lisamarie – initially unwillingly – receives support from spirits when having to cope with certain situations. However, Lisamarie's belief in the spirit world and other people's ignorance thereof constitute additional bones of contention in the already strained relationship between Haisla tradition and European-Canadian modernity. The reconciliation of these aspects poses one of the greatest challenges during the protagonist's adolescent years. Robinson's novel investigates the possibility of interweaving supernatural elements into a narrative without the use of a traditional trickster figure. Rather, the supernatural is a fundamental element of everyday life which the protagonist is encouraged to explore. When she acknowledges the Haisla part of her identity she simultaneously accepts the spirits' guidance. Numerous incidents throughout the story confirm the vital importance of Lisamarie's contact with the spirit world with regards to the construction of her identity during her maturation process from a young girl to a responsible adult.

Key Words: *Monkey Beach*, coming-of-age, tree spirits, Sasquatch, ghosts, Haisla.

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1. Introduction

In her coming-of-age narrative *Monkey Beach* Haisla writer Eden Robinson provides a colourful illustration of life in the Native community of Kitamaat which is situated on the British Columbian coast. The protagonist, nineteen-year old Lisamarie Michelle Hill, is of Haisla ancestry and revives the memories of her childhood and adolescence as she and her parents find themselves in a state of

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distress after having heard that Jimmy, their brother and son, is lost at sea. As Lisamarie drifts into a daydream due to her emotional and physical exhaustion, she recalls essential encounters with relatives, friends, spirits, and ghosts. Throughout the novel, the young woman's memories intermingle with the present and future while her mind and body oscillate between the natural and supernatural worlds.

This spiritual aspect weaves itself as a thread through Robinson's novel, and the author thus emphasizes that 'the supernatural and the fantastic constitute another dimension of reality not separable from everyday experience.'[1] Lisamarie, however, does not only have to face spiritual but also cultural challenges. The dual influence of Haisla and Euro-Canadian values, traditions, and ways of life triggers a crisis of identity with which the girl attempts to cope. Lisamarie's quest to find herself is inevitably linked to these cultural dimensions, and the supernatural features in her search for identity as a multi-layered representation of reality. The prominent theme of the novel is thus the coming-of-age narrative and the young woman faces numerous challenges which she often, though not solely, overcomes with the help of her spiritual guides.

2. Ma-ma-oo

Lisamarie regularly witnesses supernatural phenomena: she sees ghosts and perceives other mystical creatures in her surroundings, simultaneously experiencing fear as well as a fascinating feeling of attraction. The protagonist's parents reject their daughter's gift as a mental disease, and Ma-ma-oo, her grandmother, is thus a central figure in Lisamarie's life as she provides direction to the young girl when she does not know how to cope with her supernatural experiences. It is essential to Lisamarie's spiritual, emotional, and psychological development to be instructed by female figures such as Ma-ma-oo, since the strong matriarchal leadership will aid her in accepting her Haisla ancestry.[2] She perceives her grandmother as a powerful figure with great stamina and acknowledges her as a role model with regard to her Haisla heritage.

When Lisamarie timidly confesses at a very young age to her wise relative that she has encountered spirits, the old woman finds her own assumptions confirmed as she had suspected Lisamarie to possess this valued ability. She attempts to explain the privileges and responsibilities which this supernatural gift entails to her apprehensive granddaughter. By fostering Lisamarie's spiritual development, Ma-ma-oo intends to demonstrate to the young protagonist that the ability to talk with ghosts 'amounts to a transgenerational affirmation of an inheritance, thus involving a call to responsibility.'[3] The discovery of Lisamarie's aboriginal heritage and Haisla roots is therefore strongly connected to spirituality and supernatural phenomena. Ma-ma-oo admits to the role of guidance with respect to supernatural creatures, but adds a note of caution, 'Never trust the spirit world too much.'[4] Generally, interacting and conferring with supernatural creatures can be an utterly frustrating experience as the protagonist struggles to interpret and decode the

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ambiguous meanings underlying the spirits' communication. Especially during her childhood years, Lisamarie finds herself unable to fully decipher the messages which the spirits send and laments, 'I wish the dead would just come out and say what they mean instead of being so passive-aggressive about the whole thing.'[5] Although the fear of misinterpreting the spirits' messages and the horror of the resulting consequences (sometimes death) never completely subside, Ma-ma-oo also knows that monsters are not necessarily vile and obnoxious and encourages the protagonist to explore the supernatural world with an open mind.

3. Tree Spirits

Lisamarie begins her 'expedition' into the spiritual world already as a toddler, when she encounters a tree spirit in the guise of 'a little, dark man with bright red hair.'[6] Unsure of how to interpret his apparition at first, Lisamarie slowly unravels the mystery of the little man's appearances and understands his prime significance as the harbinger of misfortune – even death. It is Ma-ma-oo who informs the eleven-year old girl of the tree spirits' significance and Lisamarie eagerly absorbs the information provided to her. From the moment of their first encounter at the death site of a cruelly mistreated and maimed animal, the little man accompanies the girl and later the young woman whenever danger is imminent. It is this appearance prior to the potentially fatal incidents which Lisamarie detests, as she is filled with guilt upon not being able to predict the actual destructive event nor its time or place. Therefore, Lisamarie's encounters with this spirit are most traumatic, as they signify the advent of harm and fatality. Consequently, her 'ability to see and hear beyond the events of daily life is, ironically, both a gift and a curse.'[7] The little man appears prior to Uncle Mick's death, Ma-ma-oo's heart attack, and Lisamarie's rape, and attracts the girl's anger and contempt because she is unable to prevent these incidents.

While Lisamarie is filled with anger at the sudden appearances of the tree spirit, it is not until several years after their first encounter that she discovers the spirit's true purpose:

> He popped into the air behind me. I didn't know he was there
> until he touched my shoulder with a cold, wet hand. When I spun
> around to smack him, he stared at me with wide, sad eyes. Even
> after he disappeared, I could feel where his hand had touched me,
> and I knew he'd been trying to comfort me.[8]

The little man's apparitions are thus endowed with a double meaning and his visits are not necessarily meant to frighten the girl. Rather, the little man intends to offer comfort to a young person who is often isolated and feels estranged from her family and her surroundings through a complex crisis of identity. The little man acts as a companion throughout Lisamarie's childhood and adolescence, and even

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though his intentions remain obscure to the young girl at the beginning, she learns to deal with his presence as time progresses.

4. The B'gwus

Lisamarie's acceptance of supernatural guides and spiritual comfort grows simultaneously with her emotional and psychological maturity. She loathes the appearances of and communication with the little man at the beginning, and, similarly, denies the existence of the mythical figure of the Sasquatch, or b'gwus as he is called in Haisla. Only at the end of her journey toward adulthood does Lisamarie comprehend the Sasquatch's significance for her spiritual development.

Stories of this legendary monster circulate in Euro-Canadian and Haisla cultures, and Lisamarie at first dismisses the creature as fictional, as an extraordinary creation of human fantasy. For entertainment purposes only does she listen to her father's tale of the b'gwus, 'the wild man of the woods.'[9] For her, the story is nothing but a fairy-tale and far removed from the reality of a twentieth-century Canadian community. Her brother Jimmy, on the other hand, '[takes] the story as if it were from the Bible' and strives to encounter the Sasquatch in order to get a snapshot of the monster.[10] He intends to gain money and fame by selling such a photograph to the press. His plans reflect the attractiveness of the b'gwus in popular culture and its appeal to the broader public. The protagonist describes,

> To most people, he is the equivalent of the Loch Ness monster, something silly to bring the tourists in. His image is even used to sell beer, and he is portrayed as a laid-back kind of guy, lounging on mountaintops in patio chairs, cracking open a frosty one. B'gwus is the focus of countless papers, debates and conferences. His Web site is at www.sasquatch.com.[11]

This parody of the role of the Sasquatch in Euro-Canadian cultures underlines its significance within the spiritual world of the Haisla. This mythical figure will signify much more than a tourist attraction to Lisamarie at the end of her adolescence, and the juxtaposition of opposing views on its existence highlights the cultural challenges the main character has to face – and, finally, achieves to overcome.

At first, Lisamarie does not believe in the existence of this 'monster,' but as she accompanies Jimmy into the woods she unexpectedly encounters the b'gwus. The protagonist remembers,

> I turned back and saw him. Just for a moment, just a glimpse of a tall man, covered in brown fur. He gave me a wide, friendly smile, but he had too many teeth and they were all pointed.[12]

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The nine-year old girl is terrified and feels overwhelmed by supernatural phenomena which are – or so she has been taught by her parents – imaginations of the mind and therefore unreal.

Through her process of maturation and with the help of her grandmother, Lisamarie learns to accept the supernatural as a part of her life, and her perception of the b'gwus slowly starts to change as she realizes that the creature leads 'an ambiguous existence on the borders between reality and myth […] still haunting the periphery of awareness.'[13] Her growing belief in this mysterious hybrid figure is mingled with a feeling of sympathy for him as Lisamarie learns from Ma-ma-oo that he came into being after his wife had attempted to murder him in order to be with his brother. However, the wife and her lover had to find out that the man had survived and transformed into the b'gwus, who would later hunt them down and kill them in revenge.[14] This account humanizes the Sasquatch and 'dispels the sense of monsters as 'other'.'[15] Lisamarie learns to regard the b'gwus as a being with very human feelings and acquires an understanding of the importance of mediation between the human and spirit worlds. This tale also introduces the idea of retribution and crime into Lisamarie's social context, themes which play essential roles in Jimmy's plan to avenge his girlfriend's sexual abuse by her uncle.[16] The b'gwus as the 'supernatural agent of retribution' helps Lisamarie understand her younger brother's decision to seek revenge, which ultimately leads to a boating accident and perhaps his death.[17] The creation story of the sasquatch mirrors Jimmy's feeling for revenge and is therefore the key to understanding his ulterior motive.

It is during her late teenage years that Lisamarie sights the b'gwus a second time. Many years have passed since her first encounter with this mythical figure at the age of nine, and her personality has been shaped decisively in the meantime. The young woman is now partly willing to accept the Haisla part of her identity as an integral part of herself, and is fairly determined to embrace her aboriginal heritage. Driving down a winding road from Vancouver to Kitamaat, Lisamarie suddenly sights a Sasquatch scurrying across the street. The matured young woman has come to perceive supernatural creatures as supporters rather than opponents: 'As I drove away, I felt deeply comforted knowing that magical things were still living in the world.'[18] Lisamarie returns to her home community after having undergone a period of depression and misery under intense isolation in Vancouver, where she has indulged in substance abuse. After her return to Kitamaat, Lisamarie is determined to change her life in order to reintegrate into society. The Sasquatch acts as an affirmation of her plans and reinforces her desire to alter her way of life. It is her connection with the spirit world which provides Lisamarie with comfort in addition to the hope and strength to carry on despite the deaths of beloved relatives.

By using a figure such as the Sasquatch 'whose power resides in its ability to mimic humans, Robinson heightens the sense that the characters are constantly

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confronted with (and seduced by) distorted reflections of their own desires and fears.'[19] This observation supports my claim that Lisamarie's emotional, spiritual, and psychological developments are greatly influenced by her encounters with the supernatural, especially due to the spirits' ability to mirror and reflect the young woman's behaviour back at herself. Lisamarie's recognition of herself as a monster enables her to establish links with her Haisla heritage through the comprehension of aboriginal myths, and must therefore be regarded as a crucial breakthrough in her quest for the discovery of her identity.[20]

5. Acceptance

The passages mentioned above are exemplary of Lisamarie's spiritual development which reaches a climax at the end of the novel when she searches for Jimmy and lands with her boat on Monkey Beach. Hoping to find an answer to her brother's fate, she sacrifices her blood to the spirits. As the present, past, and future intermingle, dream and reality merge, and Lisamarie finds herself reunited with deceased family members such as Mick and Ma-ma-oo. Having found her roots in Haisla culture and heritage, she comprehends the interrelationships of the past and present and her emotional maturity is revealed by her understanding of her ancestors' language. The ghosts speak to her and offer her advice. Jimmy's fate remains subject to speculation, but the intensive connection between Lisamarie and the spiritual world manifests itself as the most essential one in her life, which is emphasized during this crucial spiritual encounter. The European model of the 'delusional' or 'immature' mind that is associated with Lisamarie's supernatural contacts is just the opposite of that; she matures through these encounters and finds a way to accept herself as a multi-layered person, which cures her and successfully ends her quest for herself.[21]

Notes

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[6] Ibid., p. 19.
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[8] Robinson, op. cit., p. 132.
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[10] Ibid., p. 9.

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The Maids, Mother and 'The Other One' of the Discworld

Jacquelyn Bent and Helen Gavin

Abstract

Fantasy novelist Terry Pratchett's Discworld is inhabited by a very diverse group of characters ranging from Death and his horse Binky, Cut-Me-Own-Throat-Dibbler, purveyor of the 'pork pie', the Wizard faculty of the Unseen University and an unofficial 'coven' of three witches. 'Because three was the right number for witches…providing they are the right sort of type', according to Nanny Ogg.[1] Magic features prominently on the Discworld; so much so that there are a host of long term side effects the inhabitants of the Discworld have come to expect from being in proximity to this powerful force. Phenomena that to others might seem strange or unusual are typical, even expected on the Discworld. The use of magic, for good or ill, is often a prominent theme in Pratchett's Discworld novels. This chapter focuses on the Pratchett's portrayal of magic as used by resident witches Granny Weatherwax, Nanny Ogg, Magrat Garlick and eventually Agnes Nitt who replaces Magrat when she assumes the title of queen. This will include the role each witch assumes as the Maiden, Mother and Crone, as well as the unique relationship each witch has forged with magic. The witches' use of 'headology', which bears a striking similarity to the magic we know as psychology, will similarly be explored. Finally, the consequences of magic use are discussed.

Key Words: Magic, Discworld, witches, maid, mother, crone, 'the other one', headology.

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1. Magic on the Discworld

The Discworld is a flat, swirling, brightly coloured collection of land and sea travelling through space on the backs of four elephants. Do not worry, the elephants are safe, they are travelling on the back of an astronomical turtle known as the Great A'tuin. Pratchett states 'Magic glues the Discworld together – magic generated by the turning of the world itself, magic wound like silk out of the underlying structure of existence to suture the wounds of reality.'[2] He also points out that there was a time that 'raw magic' controlled the world, and this was a terrible thing, causing the whole framework of reality to tremble.[3] This was before people such as wizards and witches began to 'control' magic. It is now harnessed by 'responsible men and women,' and the problem of raw magic is largely a thing of the past.

Not entirely dissimilar to atomic radiation, 'background magic' leaves behind residuals that have some fairly interesting effects on the land and people of the Disc. For example, roosters sometimes lay eggs while some chickens may lay the same egg three times. Rains of shrimp are not uncommon, trees are upwardly

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mobile and a cow giving birth to a 7 headed snake is considered typical.[4] Magic plays a pivotal role in Discworld affairs; it is a tool of great power, wisdom and strength. The greatest wisdom, however, is knowing when not to use it. Those not heeding the warnings risk being consumed and corrupted by it.

We are about to examine the use of magic from the perspective of the Discworld's most notable witches, Esmeralda 'Granny' Weatherwax, Gytha 'Nanny' Ogg, Magrat Garlick, and Agnes 'Perdita X. Dream' Nitt. Perdita, (or Agnes), is more or less known by this name only during a brief singing career in Ankh Morpork. Magrat has not been witching long enough to develop a nickname, though 'wet hen' would readily come to (Granny's) mind due to her soppy nature and earnest belief in things like 'getting in touch with one's self' and 'folk music.'[5]

One quickly realizes that there is no clear-cut definition of magic on the Discworld. It means many different things. The witches themselves vary on their opinion on what magic is. Essentially, it would seem that what one believes in, including believing in self, influences the outcome that may be achieved with magical workings; this is an invaluable lesson.

2. The Witches of the Ramtops and Witchcraft

The Ramtops are in the crossfire of so much magical energy that many of the Discworld's witches are born and bred in this location simply by being in proximity to so much residual power. Being a witch, however, requires a great deal more than simply being born in a region known for magical side effects. It is a vocation that requires great resilience, intelligence, intestinal fortitude (for the scumble, mostly) and a lack of fear. Another attribute afforded the witches is 'the true witch's ability to be confidently expert on the basis of no experience whatsoever.'[6] According to Granny Weatherwax, being a witch also means bowing to no one, regardless of their position; that would include kings and other 'royalty.'[7] Being a witch requires a great deal of self confidence, nosiness, and being adept at subtle yet effective bullying, when necessary.

Witches are often called upon to right wrongs, such as insuring that the rightful heir, or at least someone the kingdom will accept, is made king, ensuring 'equal rites' for a young girl whose only fault was being born the eighth 'son' of an eighth son and now has wizarding abilities despite being female, fighting vampyres (sic), and changing the course of a story so that rather than inflicting a 'happy ending' on a princess, she has the free will to choose her own path. This is in addition to the more mundane tasks, such as chiropracty, midwifery and preparing an outstanding gumbo that one could also use for scrying purposes.[8]

As explained above, witchcraft is not just the use of magic: it is also knowing when not to use magic. One of the hardest lessons the young witches must come to terms with is the hard work witching entails and lack of 'real magic' that gets used on a day to day basis. Both Garlick and Nitt make similar lamentations about how Nanny and Granny frequently rely upon the superstitions, beliefs and gullibility of

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the local people rather than actually use magic to resolve problems. This does not sit well with Magrat who complains to Nanny Ogg about Granny Weatherwax lack of willingness to use real magic, to which Nanny kindly explains, 'you can't help people with real magic. Not properly…By doing real things you help people.'[9] This is a lesson echoed time and again by the witches, for two very important reasons: there are limits on what magic can be used for, and any magical undertaking has consequences. The more you use magic, the more you will become reliant upon using it. Another consequence is that you can gradually become corrupted by the power of magic. So if you intend to use magic, you best be sure there is no other alternative, and that you are willing to accept any of the consequences for having done so.

As might be expected there is a very serious side to witching. Witches straddle the space between life and death. Pratchett explains there are certain times and circumstances when a witch must make the decisions others are not able or willing to make.[10] There are numerous examples where Granny Weatherwax is required to make decisions about whether or not a mother or child dies, or a murderer is exposed and tried for his crimes, for example.

This is what it means to have the power and the responsibility of being a witch. As Granny explains, 'real witchcraft, the true stuff, out of the blood and the bone and out of the head…it don't allow for mercy.'[11] The witch's role is varied; rewarding, thankless, terrifying, mundane, and trying. For all of these reasons witches are given a healthy level of respect, awe and, in the case of Granny Weatherwax, fear. It therefore seems sensible for us to examine who, or what, these women are.

3. The Witch's Coven: Maid, Mother and 'The Other One'

It would seem that the convention of the Maid, Mother and Crone, is actually a fairly modern construction, the origins of which are both literary and cultural. According to Simpson, 'Cambridge scholar, Jane Ellen Harrison, who decided that all the many goddesses in ancient religions could be tidily sorted out into three aspects of one great Earth Goddess: the Maiden, the Mother and a third she did not name.'[12] Simpson also explains that the Crone was given further morphic resonance by Aleister Crowley in his 1921 novel *Moonchild*,[13] where he both named and attributed to her some nasty aspects. Graves' 1948 poem the 'The White Goddess' balanced out her desire for death and destruction with the hope of reward and renewal.[14]

Pratchett, a great proponent of folklore and satire[15] was also inspired by Shakespeare's witches who meet with Macbeth, as well as the Fates seen in several cultures ranging from the Norns of the Scandinavian countries to the Fates of Greece and Rome. Interestingly, and it is unclear if this is intentional, Nanny, Granny and Magrat/Agnes also seem to correspond to Freud's concept of self. The Id, Ego, and Super Ego. Nanny, whom Pratchett describes as impulsive, shameless

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and libidinous, is all about gratification. She loves food, drink, and a good time and, as such, represents the Id. Magrat/Agnes seem to represent the Ego, as they are the most balanced between drives/desires and are often responsible in their behaviour and actions. While Agnes does have Perdita, her gothic persona, to contend with, she keeps her in check to a great extent. Granny represents the Super Ego; she is rigid and unyielding in her quest to be 'good.' It has been revealed by Pratchett that this is largely due to her natural inclination towards being 'bad.'[16]

According to Nanny Ogg, three witches are ideal because as a unit, they can get up to considerable trouble which is infinitely more fun than getting on one another's nerves, which became a problem when there was only two of them.[17] Aside from this, on the Discworld, three witches represent a timeless tradition the origins of which are unclear. In more contemplative times, Nanny considered the fact that, while she was most definitely 'Mother' material due to her expansive and impressive brood, Granny encompassed all three aspects, Maid (as far as she knew), Crone and, Mother…(rhymes with trucker), especially for anyone so unfortunate to try and cross her.[18] Before Magrat became queen and gave birth to Esmeralda Margaret Note Spelling of Lancre, she was the Maiden, a role eventually claimed by Agnes and her inner thin Goth persona, Perdita.

Each witch excels at magic in her own way. While Granny is expert at 'headology' and anything related to getting into the minds of others, Magrat is adept with herbs and healing. Agnes/Perdita is a bit too novice to determine what precisely she's best at, though she's got great hair, and an uncanny voice that enables her to harmonise with herself. She is of two minds about everything thanks to the presence of Perdita, so she gets twice as much thinking and observing done as others. Nanny Ogg has an uncanny ability to like and be liked by others. She has the capacity to become friends with virtually anyone, gain their confidence and their trust and make it seem as though she had been there all along. Plus she is the maker of scumble and knows the many aphrodisiac purposes of food, including the legendary Carrot and Oyster pie. While this may not seem particularly magical, at least in what we would consider the 'mystical' sense, these attributes are considered magical, nevertheless.

Pratchett explains that the typical witches' sabbat is not often depicted accurately by most artists or writers. There is no naked dancing, as that is patently absurd given the number of environmental hazards, including inclement weather and hedgehogs. While unofficial, it is generally accepted that witches credo is, 'Don't do what you will, do what I say.'[19] This is generally accepted by anyone smart enough to realize that anything a witch has to say is worth listening to, and any advice she offers is worth adhering to. Or else. As Pratchett points out succinctly, 'when people were in serious trouble, they went to a witch. Sometimes, of course, to say, 'Please stop.'[20]

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4. Headology

Headology is universally used by witches as it is infinitely more practical than attempting real feats of magic. In brief, it requires an understanding of how people think, and to be willing to exploit that, including gullibility and superstition. Witches know that, more often than not, people can help themselves better, if given a good 'push', be it mental or literal, in the right direction. Knowing the mind of others well enough to gently navigate their will towards a particular goal is essentially headology. The person wants to get better, and will, if they believe in a witch's abilities, and have the will to overcome whatever it is that is troubling them.

According to Pratchett, there are similarities between headology and psychiatry and psychology. However, Pratchett points out that the witches would have no use for them 'as some arts are too black even for a witch.'[21] Pratchett explains that the fundamental difference between psychiatry and headology is that a psychiatrist would assume a fear of being chased by monsters is due to an overactive imagination and attempt to eradicate the erroneous belief. Granny, of course, knows better, and would provide her client with a chair and a heavy stick.[22]

5. Price for Magical usage and Cackling

To use magic, you have to accept that you are taking it from other places and that there will be a price. Granny Weatherwax understands all too well the use of power, and the price therein. But she also asks, 'if you were worried about the price, then why were you in the shop?'[23] This is why witches are reluctant to use magic unless absolutely necessary. Witches understand the importance of not misusing or abusing magic. If one assumes the responsibility for its use, one must also assume the consequences therein, including the temptations associated with wielding such power, such as cackling. Cackling is a side effect of a witch spending too much time alone, taking on too much responsibility, handling other people's problems and relying heavily on her power. It is the time when a witch begins tottering more and more over the edge, losing her balance, or 'going to the dark' and then a gingerbread cottage and slamming oven doors can feature prominently in the unhinged witch's future.[24]

Magic is potent on the Discworld, but it comes with a price, particularly for those who are extremely adept at using it. A practitioner must not only have a strong belief in the power of magic and what might be achieved with its usage, but must also believe in herself, and her capabilities, for it to be successful. What is perceived magic to be shapes how it is used. She must accept that magic requires balance, skill, cunning, and knowledge that many others cannot bear to live with, and that she must know when not to use magic, and if unsure, it is best not to meddle at all. More often than not, it should not be used. Magic is not a panacea. It is there for when there is no other choice, for when actions necessitate, and the user is willing to accept the consequences without thanks or expectation of reward.

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[7] T. Pratchett, op. cit., p. 85.

[8] T. Pratchett, op. cit., p. 91.

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Popular Necromancy: How *Supernatural* and *True Blood* are Attracting Mass Viewers and Putting them in Touch with the Dark Side of Human Nature

Margot McGovern

Abstract

The supernatural has always proved popular with television audiences, though its role within these serialised narratives has varied greatly. Current trends are favouring the paranormal investigation series—which questions the existence and nature of the spirit realm—and the teen vampire romance—where preternatural characters are primarily used to heighten the tension of the romance. Such narratives have a superficial engagement with the supernatural, using it primarily to thrill viewers. This chapter will examine how two series, CW's *Supernatural* and HBO's *True Blood*, have attracted dedicated fan followings by pitching themselves as a paranormal investigation series and a teen vampire romance respectively. It will then discuss how they have transgressed these narrative structures, using parody and allegory to critically engage with a wider body of popular texts and genres, and act as objectifying mediums through which to view the darker side of American culture.

Key Words: *Supernatural*, *True Blood*, parody, allegory, Gothic, popular culture, fan practices.

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1. Introduction

Many popular television series engage the supernatural to incite terror and heighten dramatic tension; consequently, the thrilling elements of these narratives have attracted mass viewers. Among the most successful of these narrative forms are the paranormal investigation series and the vampire romance.

This chapter will discuss how two series, *Supernatural* and *True Blood*, transgress these genre boundaries using parody and allegory to have viewers engaging with a wider body of popular texts and putting them in touch with the darker side of American culture.

2. *Supernatural* and the Paranormal Investigation

In the paranormal investigation series, the protagonist(s) typically encounter a 'preternatural entity of the week,' which must be researched, and based on that research either killed, exorcised, or vanquished—whichever will prevent its continued interaction with the natural world. These narratives can range from cathartic to horrific in tone, and have been employed in series such as *The X-Files*, *Millennium, Charmed, Mysterious Ways, Medium* and *Reaper*.

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In Season One and many later stand-alone episodes,[1] *Supernatural* also employs this narrative structure with brothers, Sam and Dean Winchester (Jared Padalecki and Jensen Ackles), travelling around small-town America, 'saving people, hunting things.' As creator, Eric Kripke states,

> For us the sell has always been, 'If you want to understand the show, the show is about two guys with chainsaws in their trunk, fighting monsters.'[2]

The series is divided into 'stand-alone' and 'mythology' episodes, with the mythology providing the meta-narrative that links the series' five seasons. While by Season Five, the mythology runs parallel to the 'Book of Revelations,' in Season One it is relatively simple: the boys' father has disappeared while hunting a creature dubbed the Yellow-eyed Demon, and the boys set out on a quest to find their father. This initial chapter in the meta-narrative follows much the same structure as that of the stand-alone episodes, with Sam and Dean learning what they can about the Yellow-eyed Demon in order to track him down. In this way, early episodes of *Supernatural* target paranormal investigation viewers, adhering to the genre's traditional narrative structure: a strategy that has proven hugely successful, with the series attracting a large and active fan base.

3. *True Blood* and the Vampire Romance

Based on Charlaine Harris's *Southern Vampire Mystery* novels, *True Blood* has enjoyed similar success, pitching itself as a vampire romance. Since the release of the Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* saga in 2006, the vampire romance has spiked in popularity, resulting in a smattering of similar series, including Richelle Mead's *Vampire Academy*, Melissa De La Cruz's *Blue Bloods*, P. C. and Kristen Cast's *House of Night*, Claudia Gray's *Evernight*, Alyson Noel's *The Immortals*, Lili St. Crow's *Strange Angels*, and television series, such as *The Vampire Diaries*, flooding the Young Adult market.

These narratives take the traditional romantic love formula and cast the vampire in the role of the hero,[3] using his conflicted and (supposedly) monstrous supernatural nature to heighten romantic tension and, forgive the pun, raise the stakes in his relationship with the heroine.

Though essentially a crime narrative, the romance between vampire, Bill Compton (Stephen Moyer), and telepathic waitress, Sookie Stackhouse (Anna Paquin) has seen *True Blood* branded as '*Twilight* for adults.' It is also through this romantic sub-plot that the series promotes itself, with advertising materials, such as posters, merchandise and the series' official websites[4] largely featuring suggestive images of Bill and Sookie. Consequently, given the vampire romance's current overwhelming popularity, it is not surprising that *True Blood*, in following this

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narrative vein, has also attracted a large fan base, with 5.1 million U.S. viewers tuning in for the Season Two premier.[5]

4. Parody, Pop Culture and the Critical Engaged Viewer

By initially conforming to popular narrative frameworks *Supernatural* and *True Blood* have attracted mass fan bases. However, having established these followings the series have begun to play with generic expectations, using parody to criticise their respective narrative formulas and the popular culture in which they are located.

Taking up where writer/director, Joss Whedon, left off in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*,[6] *Supernatural* episodes, such as 'Monster Movie'[7] and 'Changing Channels,'[8] use parody to engage with popular culture. 'Monster Movie,' filmed in black and white with cheesy sets and a melodramatic score, pays homage to the horror films of the 1930s, with the Winchesters squaring off against a monster movie buff shape shifter who morphs into the characters from his favourite films. The episode replicates many famous shots and scenes from these films, but renders them humorous, with the shape shifter's amateur performance closer to that of a larping[9] fan than the terrifying monster he perceives himself to be.

'Changing Channels' takes a more contemporary approach as Sam and Dean channel surf through various recognisable series types, including *Dr Sexy, MD*, a medio. drama that bears uncanny resemblance to *Grey's Anatomy*; a Japanese torture game show; *Supernatural: the Sitcom*; *NCIS*; and *Night Rider*, with the style of acting and filming altering to fit each genre.

The series similarly criticises the paranormal investigation genre itself. In 'GhostFacers'[10] the Winchesters investigate a haunted house, and discover they have been beaten there by a group of amateur hunters determined to film the haunting for the pilot of their self-funded television series. The episode is largely filmed in steady-cam night vision, and pokes fun at 'reality' paranormal investigation texts, including *The Blair Witch Project*, *Most Haunted*, and *Paranormal Activity*. This criticism is furthered through the brothers doing battle against increasingly hilarious 'monsters-of-the-week,' most notably a giant manic-depressive teddy bear[11] and a demi-god in the guise of Paris Hilton.[12]

The series also turns the humour on the viewers themselves to comment on the fan community and its practices. In 'The Monster at the End of this Book'[13] the Winchesters discover that a prophet has documented their career in a series of pulp fiction novels that have attracted an enthusiastic fan following. In this episode Sam and Dean are mistaken for *Supernatural* larpers and discover *Supernatural*'s own sub-genre of fan slash fiction: Wincest, demonstrating that the series' creative team are not only aware of the *Supernatural* fan base and its practices, but that they want to see that community and the series actively engaging with each other. This is further cemented in 'The Real Ghost Busters'[14] when Sam and Dean inadvertently attend a *Supernatural* larping convention where they are again mistaken for fans

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and fans are seen taking up the roles of 'Sam' and 'Dean.' This is one of the most complex and humorous episodes of the series with the creative team establishing a critical dialogue between the series and its fan community.

In this way *Supernatural* uses parody to critically engage with a wider body of popular texts, the paranormal investigation form, and the fan culture that has grown up around the series.

The use of parody in *True Blood* is subtler, requiring a wider knowledge of both Gothic and romantic vampire narratives. For example, to understand the humour in naming the hero 'Bill,' the viewer must be aware of the more formal Edwards, Armands, Vladimirs, Baltazars, Mariuses, Louis, Lestats, Laurants and Carlisles that inhabit the wider body of vampire narratives. Similarly, the comic melodrama in 'Cold Ground,'[15] where Sookie loses her virginity to Bill, is only realised when juxtaposed against Stoker's Count Dracula clutching the white-clad Mina in a terrible embrace, forcing her to drink from an open wound on his chest,[16] and the absurdity of how this scene has been diluted from a rape allegory to an instance of romantic desire in Meyer's *Eclipse*.[17]

The series also plays on the redundancies of the vampire romance in the post feminist era, with Sookie's assertiveness undermining Bill's attempts to act as the protective lover, his possessive claims of, 'She is mine!' making viewers snigger rather than swoon, when viewed alongside Sookie's displays of independence. Further to this, *True Blood*, challenges the serious approach of other vampire romances to what is essentially a bizarre premise: the blood is just a little too red, and there's far too much of it; the Southern accents have an extra twang, undermining even the most serious pieces of dialogue; the fangs look as though they were purchased from the local costume shop; and the creative team revel in the blatant sexuality of vampire narratives, abandoning any pretence that the characters need plausible reasons to take their clothes off and frequently interrupt the drama with sex scenes akin to soft core pornography.

However, while the series could become overtly comical, creator, Allan Ball, manages to keep these parodic subversions of the vampire romance simmering away just beneath the surface, using the comedy to undermine what are essentially unsettling narratives and to have viewers actively engaging with the genre.

5. Allegory as Necromancer

The use of parody in both *Supernatural* and *True Blood* has viewers critically engaging with these narratives, and in doing so makes them receptive to their allegorical underpinnings. According to Henry Jenkins,

> Many times, fans are drawn to particular programs because they continually raise issues the fans want to discuss…Programs provide tools to think with, resources to facilitate discussions.[18]

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Drawing from this, both *Supernatural* and *True Blood* can be viewed as allegorical texts, employing the supernatural as a kind of necromancer, an objectifying medium that puts viewers in touch with those aspects of themselves and their culture that they typically deny. Though neither could be considered a true Gothic text, in engaging the supernatural in this way they borrow heavily from the American Gothic mode, which is largely built on confrontations between Self and Other, as Gina Wisker states, postcolonial Gothic narratives involve:

> That of Otherising, excluding, and destroying and recognising the rich differences of an Other we construct in order to somehow feel clearer and more secure about our own stable identities, however individual or national.[19]

Supernatural and *True Blood* engage with these aspects of the American Gothic, with the supernatural acting as a perceived Other, and explore the American cultural Self's reaction to that Other.

In *Supernatural*'s meta-narrative Lucifer and his demons represent a foreign threat to the national self, with the pending apocalypse paralleling the War on Terror, as Kripke states,

> We try to draw as many modern day parallels as possible because the demons act in a very terrorist cell model…they're hidden amongst us…They're among the towns in America and they're waiting to wreck as much havoc as possible.[20]

Like real terrorists, the demons are almost impossible to recognise, possessing a mortal host and, therefore, appearing human. As the hunters cannot easily identify the enemy they, like us, begin to treat everyone as suspect.

By substituting terrorists for demons, *Supernatural* provides fans with an objectifying fictional medium through which to view the real life horror of this threat. Moreover, the series uses the apocalyptic allegory to explore the American government's reaction to this threat. Taking George Bush's assertion early on in the War on Terror that 'God is on our side', *Supernatural* has used angels and their fight against Hell to represent the American government's zero-tolerance policy towards terrorism. These angels are amoral, set on their unflinching course to stop Lucifer, committing violent acts in the name of God in order to further their mission. Here *Supernatural* is subverting viewer expectations of how angels should behave and in doing so, asks the viewer to similarly question the actions of the American government, as Dean states: 'There's nothing more dangerous than some A-hole who thinks he's on a holy mission.'[21]

In *True Blood*, these 'real life' parallels are even more blatant. The series uses vampires as allegorical figures to represent minorities within American culture,

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specifically homosexuals and ethnic groups, and in doing so presents an objective view of the negative attitudes and behaviours directed at these minorities. The opening credits—a Gothic montage of disturbing images: people caught in the throes of religious ecstasy, a crazed red neck rocking in a chair, members of the Ku Klux Klan, and signs proclaiming: 'God hates fangs'—clearly establishes the series' concerns with racism, homophobia, and religious evangelism.

Season One documents the vampires' turbulent integration into mainstream society with their struggle to pass the Vampire Rights Amendment reflecting the controversy surrounding the Civil Rights Acts of the 1960s, and the treatment of African Americans during this period. Further to this, the series uses Bill and Sookie's relationship and the town's overwhelming negativity towards this union to address both prejudices against inter-racial relationships and the current struggle in the homosexual community to legalise same-sex marriages.

In Season Two the idea that prejudice towards the vampires has been largely cultivated by religious groups comes to the fore when Jason (Ryan Kwanten), Sookie's not-so-smart brother, joins the Fellowship of the Sun, a church dedicated to the eradication of vampires. The Fellowship run a military style camp where they train their followers to kill vampires in the name of God. The danger of religious extremism is further highlighted through the arrival of Maryann (Michelle Forbes), a handmaid to the Greek god Dionysus, who bewitches the town through a series of bacchanals and instructs them to sacrifice Sookie's employer, Sam Merlotte (Sam Trammell) to Dionysus. Here again the series uses supernatural allegory to bring objectivity to real life situations, with Maryann taking on the role of a cult leader and the hypnotic state of the town's people reflecting the blind devotion of many cult members and demonstrating the senseless ideologies that often form the basis of cult followings.

By using the supernatural and fictional institutions in place of real people and organisations, *True Blood* explicitly addresses issues of prejudice, religious extremism and the senseless persecution of minority groups in American society.

6. Conclusion

While *Supernatural* and *True Blood* have attracted large fan bases by superficially appearing to conform to popular generic expectations, their combined use of parody and allegory sees these series transgress the boundaries that traditionally define these narratives. Through these transgressions, the series critically engage viewers with a wider body of popular texts and offer them an objectifying medium through which to view the dark side of American culture.

Notes

[1] Although these episodes are increasingly integrated with the wider mythology of the series.

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[2] C. Radish, 'Media Blvd Magazine Exclusive: Eric Kripke on *Supernatural*'s New Season', *Media Blvd Magazine*, 31 October, 2007, Available at http://www.win chesterbros.com/index.php?option=com-content&trash=view&id=772Itemid=110.

[3] The sympathetic vampire hero initially being introduced by Anne Rice in the first novel of her 'Vampire Chronicles', *Interview with the Vampire*, 1976.

[4] http://www.hbo.com/trueblood/seas1/ and http://www.hbo.com/trueblood/seas2/.

[5] L. Samaha, '*True Blood*'s Second Season Finds New Veins to Tap', *Vanity Fair*, 22 June 2009, Viewed 30 December 2009, http://www.vanityfair.com/online/oscars/2009/06/true-bloods-second-season-finds-new-veins-to-tap.html.

[6] Also initially pitched as a paranormal investigation series, incorporating innovative and subversive episodes, such as 'Buffy vs. Dracula' (S5:E1) and 'Once More, with Feeling (S6:E7) that transgressed genre boundaries and located the series within a wider body of popular texts.

[7] E. Kripke, *Supernatural*, CW, 2005-present, S4:E5.

[8] Ibid*,* S5:E8.

[9] Live action role-playing.

[10] *Supernatural*, S3:E13.

[11] Ibid, S4:E8.

[12] Ibid, S5:E5.

[13] Ibid, S4:E18.

[14] Ibid, S5:E9.

[15] A. Ball, *True Blood*, HBO, 2008-present, S1:E6.

[16] B. Stoker, *Dracula*, Vintage, London, 2007, pp. 313-314.

[17] S. Meyer, *Eclipse*, Atom, United States, 2007, pp. 449-450.

[18] H. Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture*, Routledge, New York, 1992, p. 83.

[19] G. Wisker,'Postcolonial Gothic', *Teaching the Gothic*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2006, p. 169.

[20] Radish, loc. cit.

[21] *Supernatural*, S4:E7.

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PART 5

The Supernatural and Societies

The Characteristics of Modern Magic: Students' Superstitions

Eglė Savickaitė

Abstract
From old times people tried to attempt to control natural or chance events or to influence the behavior or emotions of others. Folk magic (special practices, rituals, spells) was oriented into the welfare of all society. Talking about modern magic, it seems that it should differ from traditional, folk magic according to its function and utilization in different spheres/activities of life that are common to nowadays urban society. But still the question stays, if traditional or folk magic could be completely distinguished from modern magic and, finally, how do we understand the word 'modern'. This author asserts that modernity cannot be understood as something completely new. There is something behind that. Modern cultural magic elements can be created according to the model of folk magic or those cultural elements can be understood as a continuity of one or several modified different traditions. The object of this chapter is the characteristics of modern magic. The purpose of this chapter is to discover the characteristics of modern magic on the basis of students' superstitions based on research carried out in Lithuania.

Key Words: Modern magic, folk magic, tradition, modernity, students' superstitions.

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While doing a research on students' superstitions in the context of contemporary magic, the concept of tradition is very important. Tradition is often understood as constant, stable, non – changing, archaic category. So, it is mostly linked with some settled point of views, convictions that are orally transmitted from generation to generation. All of this is usually contrasted with something modern, in our case, with modern magical cultural tradition. Naturally arise the question, how do we understand traditional and modern culture? Looking from the perspective of these times, we could name cultural phenomena as modern, but it does not mean that traditional aspect disappears. In every contemporary cultural phenomenon, elements of magic also, we can keep looking for the indications of tradition succession (that is why folk texts are for). Similar comparative researches perfectly disclose the problems of contemporary cultural phenomena. So, as a matter of fact, I would disagree with brave theoretical preposition of D. & Ch. Albas that students magic is mostly invented by those who practice it themselves, and that it is not traditional or socially shared as the preliterate magic is.[1] Is students' magic a unique, newly invented product? If it is, then how does it exist for about hundred years (in other states much longer) among university students and is universal? Modernity does not mean that something new or unique appears

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in this world. Modernity can be perceived as modified tradition succession. So, those innovations, as it looks like from the first glance, are only the reflections of old folk culture and are usually created on the basis of traditional pattern. I would agree with Russian scholar К. Э. Шумов who asserts that a big part of students' superstitions could have appeared among townspeople, because of the collision with specific town space, but scientist also admits that a part of contemporary superstitions, that exist among students, can be formed according to traditional principles that are common to so called old folk communal culture.[2] Moreover, most of superstitions are non- specific, common to other groups of society also.[3] Magic is being practiced, beliefs, superstitions, convictions are being held by children, adults, well educated people who realize themselves in different activities. A big part of gathered superstitions scientists refer to individual/ personal beliefs.[4] So, the existence of superstitions in the students' community can be linked not only with tradition succession, but also with concrete individual creative process that society accepts or does not accept. All these named processes let us understand tradition as contradictory, complicated category to that transmission, succession, changes, and renewal aspects are the main characteristic features.

As the concept of tradition, definition of magic is also complicated, but because of its conceptual relationship with beliefs, superstitions, sorcery, rituals. In many cases mentioned concepts re-cover each other - it is difficult to draw the exact boundaries of each of it. The concepts of superstition and magic are also being identified. Despite of that, title of this chapter represents some kind of hierarchic point of view to the concepts of superstition and magic. I would prefer to understand magic as a broad conception. I accept the perception of magic as an esthetic, performative interaction with the world, as an expression of participating in the social and cosmic life.[5] You will probably ask, why not students' magic? Why students' superstitions? The concept of superstitions is also broad – it can cover beliefs, practices, rituals, omens, different specific behaviors, lucky numbers, clothing, and route. Superstitions as a popular religion, in the context of Christian religion, are talked by N. Belmont.[6] It seems paradoxical when some religious elements in some cases hide themselves under the concept of superstition. For example, when students cross themselves or pray before the exams. This is being practiced not in a sacred space, but in a university. Moreover, sacred time, peculiar time becomes the time of the exam.[7] So, although superstitions do not have its own religious system, they perfectly exist in syncretic conditions with the dominating religion or religions and perfectly fulfill humans' everyday life.

The way of searching, what kind of working definition to choose, was long and difficult starting with the exploratory investigation in 2005 and finishing with the researches carried out in 2006 and 2008 in Lithuania. Main problem I had to deal with – enormous variety of convictions, how to behave, what to do for your exam to be successful. The concept of belief conditionally fitted. It covers not only

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human convictions, standpoints of the world, noticed regularities, but by similar beliefs conditioned actions also. Unexpectedly, appears another problem. During the time of investigation becomes clear that only one fifth of the questioned students sincerely believe to what they have or practice. That testifies about the dominating function related to the game (when foreign students were questioned, these numbers even more decreased).[8] Therefore, the concept of belief falls away, unless it is replaced by a bit different concept of popular belief[9] or half-belief.[10]

Disclosing main concepts of magic, superstition, the characteristics of modern superstition and magic are revealed. So, let's look carefully at the modern patterns, main principles of superstitions, magic and then we will see if my gathered data confirms a big part of it. J. Simpson & S. Roud identified some of the patterns, formulas, basic principles controlling superstition:

> (a)They aim to 'accentuate the positive/eliminate the negative': do this for good luck, avoid that to prevent bad luck. (b) Luck can be influenced, but not completely controlled. (c) Do not transgress category boundaries [...]. (d) To seem too confident about the future is 'tempting fate' and attracts retribution [...]. (e) Some days or times are lucky or (more usually) unlucky; they vary in frequency [...]. (f) Something that begins well (or badly) will probably continue that way. (g) As in magic, things physically linked retain a link even when separated [...]. (h) Evil forces exist and are actively working to harm you [...]. (I) certain things, words, or actions have powerfully negative effects, and must be avoided and counteracted (taboo). (j) Anything sudden, unexpected, or unusual can be seen as an omen, usually of misfortune.[11]

Most of the mentioned principles that control superstition I noticed at the time of systematizing gathered data on students' superstitions. Young people mostly talk about success, luck and seek for it. Some students' answers show that they understand they are not able to control success, luck completely. In contemporary students' community belief in superstitions is usually mixed with the game. One can try to control luck, predict the future, but not necessary successfully. There are no strict boundaries in students' superstitions: something is magical till it brings luck. Otherwise, it is changed by something else.

Students' magic is also analyzed by D. & Ch. Albas. During the research scholars separate two large categories of it: material objects and behavior. These objects are divided into smaller parts that refer to lucky or unlucky, tabooed. Talking about material objects that are referred to luck, they are sub-classified into oldies and oddities, lucky locations and miscellaneous.[12] Mentioned sub-classes are divided into smaller groups such as appearance, books, pen, and food. Appearance

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bloc covers such things as clothing, jewelry, perfume, hair wearing.[13] There exist five different groups of behavior prescribed for luck: secular rituals, religious rituals, grooming, special music and miscellany of behavior directed toward others. Behaviors are prescribed for luck and tabooed, and distributed into directed toward self and directed toward the others. Behaviors that are directed toward self scholars divide into ascetic and aesthetic. Ascetic behaviors are understood as secular and religious rituals and aesthetic – as grooming and special music. Then tabooed behaviors can be directed toward self and toward others also and both of them are divided into secular and religious rituals.[14]

Detailed, but not so schematic typological analysis of gathered data is common to my case of research of students' superstitions. Gathered data was divided into major typological groups: mood/behavior, numbers, nourishment, specific actions practiced before the exam, amulets/talismans, prayers, dreams, buying new things, clothing (colors), holding/non-holding hygiene, and special route. The logic of typological analysis of students' superstitions is similar despite of some magical practices that sometimes are not found in an investigative group. For example, I did not manage to find a superstition that would be related to listening at special music, special hear wearing before, during the exam or the power of the specific perfume. On the other hand, I gathered some superstitions that were not mentioned in D. & Ch. Albas analysis on students' magic. For example, interpreting dreams, trying to guess if your exam will be successful or not. Some students pay attention to the nourishment before their examinations, buy new things, clothes and etch.[15]

Another important step forward is to compare gathered data with folklore texts that were written down between 19th and the first half of the 20th century. After such a comparative study became clear that there are indications that can prove tradition succession in contemporary Lithuanian students' superstitions. For example, some students' superstitions are related to non-hygienic behavior: students do not wash their hair before examinations because they will wash away their knowledge; males do not shave their beards because of the similar reason too. We do have some equivalents in old Lithuanian folk culture too. For example, there were some prohibitions on certain days not to brush your hair, because hens will scratch up the girls' flower-garden; when someone is sick, his or her hair is not allowed to brush, mouth is not allowed to wash for to scare away a personified illness. So, we cannot deny that tradition is being modified, filled up with so called innovations and adapted to the needs of contemporary human, but the alteration does not mean that magical actions and means of performing it became not urgent today or completely lost its previous function. Compared with old folk magic, contemporary students' superstitions are simpler, individual, and free of precise form. Moreover, contemporary superstitions are lacking the significance of words. If earlier several forms of magic were used together (verbal formula, magical action, reiteration of the mentioned actions, words), nowadays students usually apply single forms.[16] Old folk magic was mostly oriented to protection, practical

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success, luck and contemporary human being is mostly interested in a practical side of magic.[17]

At the end, we should answer the question if something has changed when we entered the 21st century. G. Jahoda thought, 'Many of the old beliefs are of course disappearing with the spread of Western education and technology […].'[18] But human being was superstitious and still is. We did not invent something new, unique. Nowadays practiced superstitions are quite similar to those used of old folk because of its creation under traditional pattern. The need to believe in supernatural, feel safe, predict some future events is common to human being. Different kind of sorcery is known and practiced in contemporary world. For example, sorcery related to love, death, air guessing. Mostly remain alive the forms of old folk magic that are urgent to contemporary youth. I could not admit that the subject of marriage or love nowadays became not live. A lot of young girls, even in contemporary world, huddle themselves for if a boy loves her or not, what kind of husband she will have. For example, on Christmas Eve girls draw out papers with written boys' names or zodiac signs on it from under the pillow. Perhaps only the sphere of death became some kind of taboo nowadays. If earlier, for our ancestors, death was understood as a naturally obvious thing, nowadays this theme or such kind of sorcery is not acceptable, people avoid even to talk about that.

Now then the research of contemporary students' superstitions perfectly discloses the characteristics of contemporary or modern magic, testifies about the tradition succession in contemporary urban space, gets into the light the traditional aspects of magic in the modern society.

Notes

[1] D. Albas and C. Albas, 'Modern Magic: The Case of Examinations', *The Sociological Quarterly*, Vol. 30, No. 4, 1989, p. 611.

[2] К. Э Шумов, 'Студенческие традисии', *Современный городской фольклор*, Москва, Российский государственный гуманитарный университет, 2003, pp. 166-167.

[3] Ibid., p. 166.

[4] Ibid., pp. 166/367.

[5] M.N. MacDonald, 'Magic and the Study of Religion', *Religiologiques*, Vol. 11, 1995, p. 152.

[6] N. Belmont, 'Superstition and Popular Religion in Western Societies: The Genres of Folklore', *Folklore: Critical Concepts*, A. Dundes (ed), Vol.3, No. 51, Routledge, London, 2005, p. 163-177.

[7] VMU EM 1195 [The Manuscripts of Vytautas Magnus University Ethnology and Folkloristics Departments].

[8] VDU ER 1195; VDU ER 1394.

[9] Belmont, op. cit., pp. 163-177.

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[10] C. Campbell, 'Half-Belief and the Paradox of Ritual Instrumental Activism: A Theory of Modern Superstition'. *British Journal of Sociology*. Vol. 47 (1), 1996.

[11] J. Simpson and S. Roud, *A Dictionary of English Folklore*. Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 347.

[12] Albas, p. 606.

[13] Albas, pp. 605, 607.

[14] Albas, p. 607.

[15] VMU EM 1195.

[16] E. Savickaitė, 'Studentų prietarai: tradicijos tąsa ir naujovės'. *Tautosakos darbai*, Vol. 35, 2008, p. 161.

[17] Ibid., p.161.

[18] G. Jahoda, *The Psychology of Superstition*, Penguin Books, Middlesex, UK, 1970, p. 12.

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Surviving in the World of the Machines: the Developmental Psychologist's Account of Magical Belief in the Age of Science

Eugene Subbotsky

Abstract

The hypothesis under test was that initially, magical beliefs appear in children is a legitimate, conscious form of beliefs that coexists with the belief in physical causality; in older children and adults, under the pressure from science and religion, magical beliefs do not disappear but go into the domain of the subconscious. Empirical evidence for this hypothesis is summarized, theoretical and practical implications of the existence of hidden magical beliefs in modern western adults are discussed.

Key Words: Magical beliefs, western cultures, science, religion, physical causality.

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1. Problem

Since the time of Galileo (1564–1642), Western civilization has been increasingly falling under the spell of science. Two monotheistic religions dominant in the Western world – Judaism and Christianity – that have been fighting with magic for millennia, have in Science a major ally. So, why are magical beliefs still there? Perhaps, they survive in same way that small mammals survived in the age of dinosaurs: by hiding underground, in the depth of the subconscious.

The hypothesis under test in the series of studies presented in this chapter was therefore as follows:

> Initially, magical beliefs (MBs) appear in children as a legitimate, conscious form of beliefs that coexist with the belief in physical causality; later, under the pressure from science and religion, MBs go into the domain of the subconscious.

If this main hypothesis is true, then the following empirically verifiable effects should be observed:

1. Young and preschool children should endorse MBs to the same extent that they endorse the belief in physical causality, both in their verbal explanations of unusual effects and in their behavioral reactions:

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Rationale: *Children's MBs have not yet experienced the pressure of scientific and religious education, the two forces that confront MBs and exile them into the subconscious.*

2. Being a significant part of preschool and elementary school children's everyday experience, children's magical thinking positively affects their performance on cognitive tasks;

Rationale: *Children's early magical thinking and beliefs receive support from children's social environment, in the form of maintaining children's beliefs in folk magical characters (Santa, Tooth Fairy), the industry of toys and entertainment, books and movies for children. This systematic (and expensive) support can only be justified if children's caretakers (parents, teachers, psychologists) intuitively realize that magical thinking entails benefits for children's cognitive development.*

3. When asked to explain unusual causal effects that assert magic, adults will deny magical explanations of such effects, even if these effects are repeatedly shown to them;

Rationale: *in their explicit judgments, most adults want to be in accord with science and religion.*

4. When confronted with magical intervention in their lives, either in the form of observing magical phenomena or in the form of a sorcerer trying to exert influence with the help of magic, adults will resist such intervention: they will either ignore magical phenomena (cognitive defense) or deny that magical influence had any effect on their lives (emotional defense).

Rationale: *science views magic as a false alternative to science, and religion associates MBs with bad forces (the devil, evil spirits, paganism). This creates in adults the fear of magic and triggers psychological defenses against magical intervention.*

5. When psychological defenses against magical influence are lifted (for example, when denying the possibility of magic

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involves a high cost), rational adults will retreat to magical behavior and explicitly admit that they believe in magic;

Rationale: *in adults beliefs in magic do not disappear but are subconscious. As follows from psychoanalysis, when defenses are overcome, subconscious thoughts and beliefs ascend to the surface of consciousness.*

2. Summary of Empirical Evidence
A. Effect 1: Young Children Believe in Magic

Children aged 4, 5 and 6 years were asked if toy figures of animals can turn into real live ones. Only a few four-year-olds said yes (Fig.1). Yet, when the children saw that a small plastic lion started moving by itself on the table (through the use of magnets), only a few of the children behaved in a rational manner (looked for the mechanism, searched for the wires). The rest of the children either ran away fearing that the lion was coming to life, or applied a magic wand they had been given in order to stop the lion moving.[1]

Harris, Brown, Marriot, Whittal, & Harmer asked children aged 4 and 6 years to pretend that there was a creature (a rabbit or a monster) in an empty box.[2] When left alone, some children behaved as if the pretend creature was really in the box.

B. Effect 2. Children's Magical Thinking Facilitates Their Ability to be Creative at Problem Solving

Children aged 4 and 6 years were divided into experimental and control conditions. In both conditions children were shown fragments from the Harry Potter movie. In the experimental condition, the movie was full of magical effects. In the control condition, the movie showed the same characters, but no magical effects. The children were then tested on identical sets of creativity tests (TCAM and drawing of non-existing objects). Results (Fig. 2) indicated that children in the experimental conditions scored significantly higher than controls on the majority of subsequent creativity tests.[3]

C. Effect 3. Adults Deny Magic Even when Repeatedly Confronted with Events They Cannot Rationally Explain

University undergraduates were subjected to 3 trials in which a postage stamp appeared or disappeared in an apparently empty box after the experimenter cast a magic spell on the box, and one trial when the box stayed empty after the magic spell was not cast.[4]

Altogether, each participant witnessed 4 subsequent events in which a change (or no change) in the empty box was observed as a possible result of casting (or not casting) the magic spell.

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When asked to assess the probability of the explanation that the observed effects were produced by a magic spell, participants' estimates of this probability varied between .065 and .09 (Fig. 3). This confirms the expectation that rational adults consistently deny magical explanations of unusual events even though they are unable to rationally explain these events.

D. Effect 4. When Confronted with Magical Intervention in Their Lives Adults will either Ignore Magical Phenomena (Cognitive Defense) or Deny that Magical Influence had any Effect on Their Lives (Emotional Defense)

In one study, participants were shown a magical effect – an object that participants had put in an empty box disappeared without a trace.[5]

Shortly before this, participants were asked to do a distracter task – to bring the experimenter a toy car from the other corner of the room. The aim of this manipulation was to find out if participants would remember the order of the events incorrectly, by placing the distracter event in between the hiding the object in the box and then finding that the box is empty. By changing the order of the events in their memory, participants would be able to ignore the magical effect and reinterpret it as an ordinary effect (i.e., while the participant looked away in order to bring the toy, the experimenter removed the object out of the box).

And indeed, in the experimental condition 75% of participants wrongly recollected the order of events, against 15% in the control condition in which no magical effect had happened (the object that participants had placed in the box remained in the box). Interestingly, in elementary school children cognitive defense against magic was absent: only 20% of 5-year-olds made the memory error in each of the two conditions, whereas many 8- and 10-year-olds, like adults, recollected the order of events wrongly (Fig.4).

A different type of defense - *emotional defense* - was observed in another study. In one experiment, participants were asked to select a practical task that they would like to improve upon (such as writing essays or speaking foreign languages), and then suggested that they would improve if the experimenter puts a magic spell on them (ibid). In two weeks time, a significantly larger number of participants who have been under the magic spell reported having made no improvements as compared to the control condition in which no magic spell had been put on participants. In another experiment, magical help was given in order to make participants see their chosen dreams during the three nights that followed. Results indicated that, along with seeing their chosen target dreams, participants in the magical suggestion condition reported seeing scary dreams (nightmares) significantly more frequently than in the control condition, in which magical help was not offered (Fig. 5). This shows that even in their subconscious processes, such as dreams, participants experienced the feeling of danger coming from the magical help. This feeling resulted in seeing scary dreams, which devalued the magical help. (Fig. 5).

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E. Effect 5. When Defenses are Overcome, Adults will Explicitly Acknowledge Their Magical Beliefs

One way of overcoming the defenses is to make the denial of magical explanations costly. In order to examine this, university graduates and under-graduates were shown a 'magical effect'—a square plastic card became cut in two places (or badly scratched) in an empty box after a magic spell was cast on the box.[6]

Next, the participants were tested under (a) the low-risk condition, with their driver's licenses being at risk of destruction by a magic spell or (b) the high-risk condition, with participants' own hands as objects at risk of being badly scratched as a result of the magic spell.

In the high-risk condition, 50% of participants prohibited the magical spell, and admitted that they actually believed that the magic spell could have damaged their hands.

In another experiment in which not participants' hands only, but their very lives were at stake, a 100% of educated adults showed behavior consistent with their belief in magic and explicitly admitted their magical beliefs. [7]

3. Theoretical Implications

The traditional view on magical beliefs in people living in Western industrial cultures emerged in the 1st half of the XXth century, in the works on cultural anthropology and developmental psychology.[8] According to this view,

> magical beliefs are the old fashioned mode of thinking that existed in the past centuries, and still exists in young children and a small population of superstitious individuals today.[9]

The results summarized above suggest a new view on magical beliefs in modern industrial cultures. This view proposes that

> modern rational people cannot be divided into those who believe in magic (i.e., superstitious individuals) and those who don't. Rather, everyone is a believer in magic, with individual differences being only in how deep in the subconscious magical beliefs are buried and how strong psychological defenses are. Consciously, an individual can consider himself or herself a completely rational person who is strictly committed to scientific views; subconsciously, the person can still hold the belief in magical causality.

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4. Practical Implications

According to psychoanalysis, subconscious thoughts and beliefs have energy, and this energy can be accessed and released.[10] If the energy of subconscious magical beliefs is accessed, it can be used for enhancing the effectiveness of various practices, such as cognitive functioning and problem solving, commercial advertising, political control, military and political terror, and other.

A. Accessing the Energy of MBs for Improving Cognitive Functioning in Children

In the area of thinking, as Effect 2 has demonstrated, exposing children to a movie with magical content enhanced their ability to solve creative cognitive tasks.[11] In the area of perception, exposing children to a magical movie improved their ability to discriminate fantastical visual displays from realistic ones.[12]

B. Accessing the Energy of MBs for the Purposes of Commercial Advertising

In the study conducted in our lab, adolescents and adults were exposed to a series of TV commercials that either employed or did not employ magical effects. Although the immediate reproduction did not show any differences between magical and non-magical adverts, in the delayed reproduction, adults remembered magical adverts to a significantly better extent than non-magical adverts, and to the same extent as they remembered these adverts immediately after the exposure.[13]

C. Accessing the Energy of MBs for the Purposes of Political Influence

Early forms of political control relied on magical beliefs. For instance, in Egypt the power of the pharaoh took its legitimacy from the mass belief in the pharaoh's divine origins. In the common view today, in modern industrial societies political power is based on rationally controlled electoral processes, and not on magical beliefs. Nevertheless, psychological mechanisms that make many people collaborate with the political power today retain some features of worshiping the gods.[14] In the democratic electoral process today, 'elections are won and lost not primarily on 'the issues' but on the values and emotions of the electorate, including the 'gut feelings''.[15] Subconscious magical beliefs can well be among these 'gut feelings'. A political candidate who is able to access the people's hidden belief in his or her divine magical powers has a lot more chances to win the electorate than those candidates who exclusively rely on the rational argument.

D. Accessing the Energy of MBs for the Purposes of Military and Political Terror

The damage that kamikaze ('divine wind') inflicted to the American fleet in the Battle of Okinawa (April 1945), strongly impacted the U. S. decision to use the atomic bomb in order to end the war. This showed the power of magical beliefs, given that kamikaze were volunteers sacrificing their lives to their divine values, and hoping for the reward in the afterlife. Anthropological research on suicidal terrorism today suggests that at the core of this kind of terrorism are 'sacred

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values' that supersede economic and other material considerations.[16] It would be wrong to reduce the phenomenon of suicidal terrorism to religious belief only, yet the belief in a magical unity with God's will, and the belief in great rewards waiting in the afterlife, undoubtedly make the decision to commit a suicidal act of terror more psychologically acceptable.

Notes

[1] E. Subbotsky, *Magic and the Mind: Mechanisms, Functions and Development of Magical Thinking and Behavior*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2010, ch. 2.

[2] P.L. Harris, E. Brown, C. Marriot, S. Whittal and S. Harmer, 'Monsters, Ghosts and Witches: Testing the Limits of the Fantasy–Reality Distinction in Young Children', *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*, Vol. 9, 1991, pp. 105-123.

[3] E. Subbotsky, C. Hysted and N. Jones, 'Watching Movies with Magical Content Facilitates Creativity in Children', *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, Vol. 111, 2010, pp. 267- 277.

[4] Subbotsky, op. cit., ch. 5.

[5] Ibid., ch. 10.

[6] Ibid., ch. 5.

[7] Ibid., ch. 9.

[8] There is no doubt that magical beliefs are still widely spread in modern developing cultures, such as most traditional cultures of Asia, Africa, Central and South America and the Pacific.

[9] S. Vyse, *Believing in Magic: The Psychology of Superstition*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1997.

[10] S. Freud, *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, Liveright, New York, 1935.

[11] Subbotsky, Hysted and Jones, loc. cit.

[12] E. Subbotsky & E. Slater, 'Children's Discrimination of Fantastic vs Realistic Visual Displays after Watching a Film with Magical Content', *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, Vol. 112, 2011, pp. 603-609.

[13] E. Subbotsky and J. Matthews, 'Magical Thinking and Memory: Distinctiveness Effect for TV Commercials with Magical Content', *Psychological Reports*, Vol. 109, 2011, pp. 1-11.

[14] S. Tambiah, *Magic, Science, Religion and the Scope of Rationality*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 1990.

[15] D. Westen, *The Political Brain: The Role of Emotion in Deciding the Fate of the Nation*, Public Affairs, New York, 1997, p. 423.

[16] S. Atran, R. Axelrod and R. Davis, 'Sacred Barriers to Conflict Resolution', *Science*, Vol. 317, 2007, pp. 1039-1040.

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Appendix

Figure 1. Percent of children who showed their belief in magic in their verbal judgments (verbal) and actual behavior (actual)
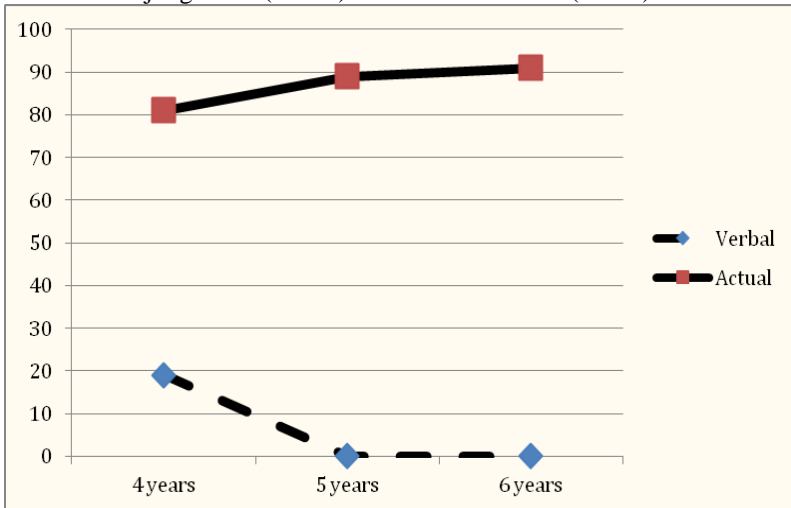

Figure 2. Means of summarized TCAM scores (fluency, originality and imagination) as a function of Condition (magical versus non-magical), and Age (4 versus 6)
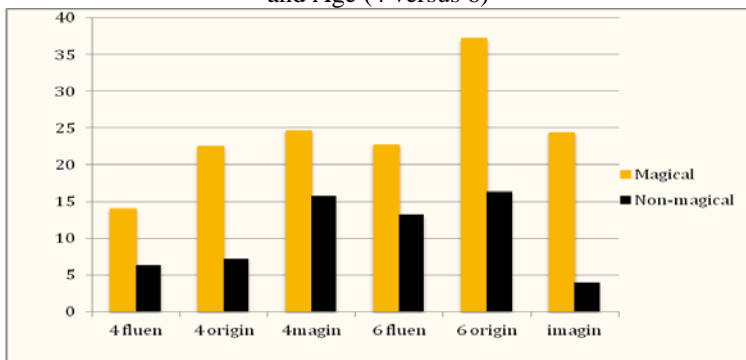
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Figure 3. Percent estimates of the probability that the unusual transformation was caused by the magic spell

Figure 4. Percent of participants who recollected the wrong order of events, as a function of age and condition
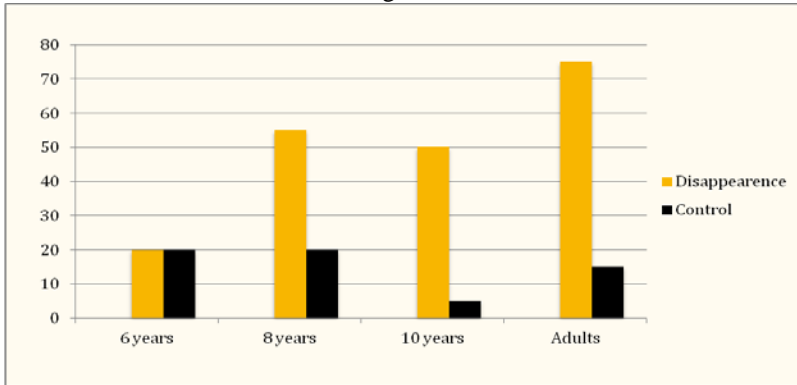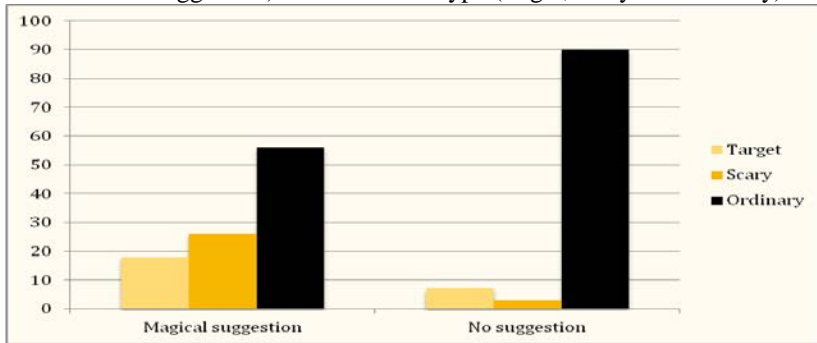
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Magic in an African Context

Uchenna B. Okeja

Abstract

The phenomenon of Magic has been a recurrent decimal in African consciousness.[1] Even the wave of globalization which has made it possible for people within Africa to share in humanity's demystification of this phenomenon has not been able to calm the tempest of belief in and fear of this phenomenon. The extent of the belief manifests itself in forms ranging from media stories (Nigerian home videos for example), stories (in the Newspapers) of magical infliction of injury and cure of same, miracle workers in both churches and other places of worship, placement of curses through some mysterious ways to witch-hunting and execution. Though not new, the belief in this phenomenon has been somewhat on the increase in many parts of Africa in recent years. This seems to be a contradictory reality because economic advancement and education which has visibly touched more parts of Africa today than some decades ago are supposed to lead to demystification of this belief. This paper seeks to do two things: 1) to inquire into the nature of this belief with a view to establishing why certain modes of conceptualisation of the phenomenon do not make sense with the African context 2) to analyze the truth value of this belief with a view to showing what the impacts of this belief is/are on contemporary Africa. The argument of this paper is that the deep seated belief in the phenomenon of magic, though outside the realm of science, since it can neither be rationally (or logically) comprehended nor empirically proven (that is, convincingly demonstrated), has led to dysfunctional political, religious, social and economic symmetry which have bred dire consequences for the African society as a whole.

Key Words: Magic, supernatural, belief, African, religion, dysfunctional.

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1. Conceptual Clarification

The mention of the concept of magic conjures varying associations and feelings in different people. To some, it is just not worth the trouble to subject the intellect in our age and day to the excruciating pain of exploring, let alone, thoroughly investigating such phenomenon because it is just a thing of the pre-modern (or primitive) world. To people with this kind of disposition towards the subject matter, the concept of magic is just a means by which pre-modern (or call them pre-scientific) people explained happenings beyond their knowledge. Besides this disposition to the subject matter, there is another disposition which insists that a critical exploration of the issue of magic is a worthwhile exercise. Within this group, the difference lies in the approach to the exploration. Depending on the

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intellectual bent, different goals and compliance principles are spelt out for the exploration but almost all share the conviction that the western phenomenon should be attributed to a primitive past. Thus, the only way in which the phenomenon can be better understood is to study contemporary manifestations of the phenomenon in modern 'primitive' African societies.[2]

The foregoing proclivity breeds a diversity which, in the final analysis, is united in the imperative of defining exactly what the concept to be explored stands for. The question in this regard is: how is the concept of magic to be defined? The question thus posed seems to envisage a straightforward answer but the complexity involved begins to emerge when one considers the fact that it is impossible to say exactly what happens when a magic is performed (for it would not be magic if what happens is explicitly open to everyone's understanding). The complexity implicit in the definition of the phenomenon under consideration makes it pertinent to proceed by way of descriptive analysis rather than striving to present an exact scientific definition. The foregoing, I suppose, clarifies the cogency of the (descriptive analysis) methodology adopted in dealing with the phenomena here. To proffer a meaning of the concept by means of descriptive analysis, I ask: how is this phenomenon manifested? In other words, what are its patterns of its occurrence in human societies? To answer this question, I would attempt to clarify why some manifestations are described as magic. But in attempting this, I would have to be both particularistic (by making reference to the African context with which I am conversant through upbringing, everyday contact and conscious reflection) and comparative (by making reference to the possible difference of this particularistic conceptual scheme from the dominant western conceptual scheme).

In conventional western usage, magic refers to the attempt to influence nature by supernatural means. In this understanding, one notices a dimension which is of serious importance in any comparative endeavour, namely: the distinction between the natural and the supernatural. Such a distinction seems inappropriate within some (if not all) African conceptual framework.[3] A definition of magic can be gleaned from *An Essay on Magic* edited by Ramsey Dukes. There, magic is defined as

> a technique by which the human mind attempts to operate upon its world. As such it is similar to Art, Religion and Science, but note that the term 'its world' is meant to embrace not only the physical universe but also all phenomena, objective or subjective, which do not respond to direct control.[4]

To show how magic differs from Science, it is contended that the first difference to note between Magic and Science stems from the subjectivity of feeling when compared with logic…. Science recognises an objective body of truth, or at least accepted dogma, and not even the most consistent work will be

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admitted by Scientists unless it has links with this accepted truth.[5] Apart from this, there is a second difference between Magical and Scientific thought which lies in their attitude to causality. The contention of this second point is that a magician has no interest in causality. Succinctly put, a practicing Magician has no interest in the philosophical problems which torment the Scientist.[6]

In African context, the meaning of magic is somewhat complex. This is due, in part, to the fact that there is no direct equivalent of the word magic in this context or, at least, the Igbo context with which I am conversant. This observation seems to be at variance with conventional discourses on the concept of magic in African context, especially as these discourses have come to establish a construal of the African hemisphere of the world as a place full of magic and the magical. As a concept, magic can only be understood within African (Igbo) context by means of interpretation of different phenomena which have direct resemblance to the Western understanding of the concept. Thus, the practice of exorcism, use of charms and potent portions, wearing of amulets, voodoo dolls and invocation of non-physical persons or powers by means of incantations have all come to be regarded as the basic manifestation of magic within African context. Close scrutiny, however, reveals that this kind of conceptualization is problematic. Why, for instance, is incantation an act that is considered a paradigm of magic? One answer that readily suggests itself is that it is an act that seeks to manipulate the physical by invocation of the supernatural. But, if this is true, then it surely should be considered appellation or prayer of a sort and, prayer, surely, is not normally understood as magic. The same also goes for the use of charms, amulets and portions and the practice of exorcism. Mostly, charms and amulets are worn as protective mediums which could attract something good or at least offer protection against evil for those who believe in their ability to offer them such protection. To consider such practices as magic would be as absurd as considering the wearing of medals (of the Blessed Virgin Mary, saints and other holy people) by many Catholics as magic. The basic point is not that the existence of similar practices elsewhere automatically exonerates the African practices just considered from being magic; rather, the contention is that what, in fact, might be considered or has come to be considered by many as magic within the African context is only an integral part of a larger belief system. Those practices are mainly practices within a system of belief which cannot be isolated and interpreted outside the supportive foundations upon which they stand. This, then, seems to be the short-coming of some Western Anthropologists, who, on comparing the African belief system with theirs, declared that the African world is full of superstition and magic.

Does the foregoing mean that there is no manifestation of the phenomenon of magic within the African context? The answer is a resounding no! This no, however, needs a raider. The raider is that, magic, when understood as preternatural rather than supernatural, is ubiquitous in the African context. Now, let me explain what I mean. By making the foregoing claim, I mean that magic within

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the African context, though considered as something that is beyond what is normal or natural is not supernatural. Magic within the African context is simply the influence on events through the use of paranormal (but not supernatural) powers available to human beings. Based on this definition therefore, the practice of divination, or *Afa* (consultation of the oracle for answers whereby cowries are repeatedly thrown and read in most cases) or the activity of rainmakers in Igbo societies, for instance, could be said to be instances of magic. Other practices like the use of charms, portions and amulets stand somewhere between superstition and anachronistic practices in African belief system. To conclude this conceptual sketch within the African context, I would like to point out that a distinction needs to be made between magic in the strict sense and magic loosely understood. The first sense corresponds to preternatural events which are commonly believed by many to be real, though they are inexplicable to the man with *ordinary eyes*, while the second corresponds to mere tricks or abracadabra. In the first sense, magic may be both for positive or negative ends (what has come to be stereotyped as black and white magic respectively; though I reject the black and white categories because they are arbitrary) relying on the principles of cosmic sympathy, coercion, compulsion, contagion and similarity.

2. The Phenomena of Magic in Contemporary Africa

Manifestations of the phenomenon of magic in contemporary Africa is so endemic that one can, without risking any ambivalence, say that it is pathological. In the schools, market place, church, government and other offices, streams, rivers, homes, forests, the floor of the stock exchange market, newspapers, bridges, government houses, state and federal houses of assembly, senate house, football stadium and even at the presidency etc., the feeling, reports or affirmation of the manifestation of these phenomena is commonplace. There is, in short, so much belief, fear and purposeful recourse to the phenomenon of magic in Africa, or at least in the part I am conversant with (Nigeria).

To concretize the foregoing, a little example is apt. The *Sun Newpaper* (in Nigeria)[7] of Novermber 10, 2009, carried a story with the following caption: LASU crisis deepens… VC deputy's offices sealed with charms. The story reads, in part, as follows:

> the crisis in Lagos State University (LASU), Ojo, has continued to stall academic activities in the institution, weeks after the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) called off its four months old strike. Administrative offices and lecture halls have been under lock and key as the university staff stuck to their guns, never to resume work unless the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Lateef Akanni Hussain is removed from office. Our reporter who visited the institution was greeted by the grave silence at the

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administrative unit, where fetish objects, suspected to be charms, where planted at the entrance doors to the offices of the Vice-Chancellor and his deputy. A small earthly ware was kept at the entrance of the V.C.'s office, while the door to the office of his deputy was sealed off with palm leaves, which traditionally signalled danger.

This story in the Newspaper brings out, to a certain extent, the manifestation of, and belief in the phenomenon of magic in contemporary Nigeria. It makes clear the fact that even the most educated Africans (most educated Nigerians in this context) are not exempted from the belief in this phenomenon. The question, however, is: why is it that the phenomenon of magic still persists in contemporary Africa, even with the wave of globalisation and its attendant *modernism*? Why are these practices still commonplace in Africa even with the acquisition of scientific knowledge through education and the acculturation of other *imports* in the realm of culture, life-style, etc.? The answer to the question just posed cannot be one-dimensional; however, I submit that a persistent tide of hybridism is at the heart of the issue, especially hybridism in the sphere of religion. In contemporary African experience, hybridism in the religious sphere has led to a situation where many people view everything in a quasi magical way. By so doing, they preclude the possibility of explaining the events of life in the light of scientific inquiry. This kind of attitude persists because it helps people to evade confrontation with the events of life that they do not like to confront: things are simply put in the hands of one g(G)od or the other from whom miracles are constantly expected. So, instead of a market economy, many African countries now have a praying economy and instead of working assiduously for a democratic and just society, many African countries pray for a miracle to bring this about, that is, praying for a miraculous change to democratic and just society. Instead of employing the tools of dialogue in solving national problems, faith in a certain magical/miraculous change is invoked and the truth of the problem is postponed, sometimes, indefinitely.

The situation just described is the effect of the current hybridism in contemporary African experience. In this process of hybridism – an out-of-context interpretation of practices/elements of traditional African belief system in the quest for compatibility with other *imports*, different kinds of asymmetries arise in the social, political, religious, etc. life of the nation. The dire consequence for the nation accruing from these asymmetries is, amongst many others, confusion and loss of sense of purpose; that is, living the reality of a dysfunctional society.

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Notes

[1] The issues considered in this paper are analysed in far greater depth in U. Okeja, 'An African Context of the Belief in Witchcraft and Magic', *Rational Magic*, S.E. Hendrix and B. Feltham (eds), Inter-Disciplinary Press, Oxford, 2011.

[2] B. Hallen and J.O. Sodipo, *Knowledge, Belief and Witchcraft: Analytic Experiments in African Philosophy*, London, 1986, p. 98.

[3] K. Wiredu, *Cultural Universals and Particulars*, Indianapolis, 1996, p. 57.

[4] R. Dukes (ed), *An Essay on Magic*, London, 2000, p. 1.

[5] Ibid., p. 20.

[6] Ibid., p. 22.

[7] The Sun Newspaper (Nigeria), Available at: http://www.sunnewsonline.com, Viewed on 10.11.2009.

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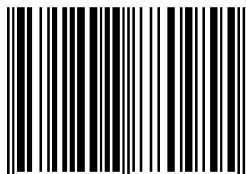Wiredu, K., *Cultural Universals and Particulars*. Indianapolis, 1996.

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