

# Faces of the Heavens: Nature and Astrological Image Magic in Early Modern England



Alexander Cummins

[hiajc@bris.ac.uk](mailto:hiajc@bris.ac.uk)

# Early Modern English Context

- **Agriculture**: election, talismans
- **Propaganda**: news, analysis
- **Medicine**: diagnostics, treatment

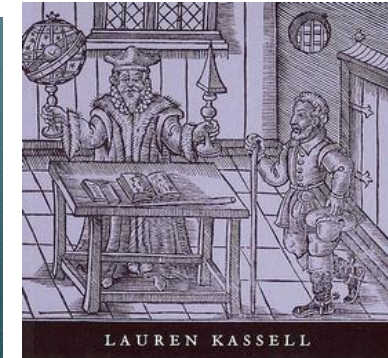
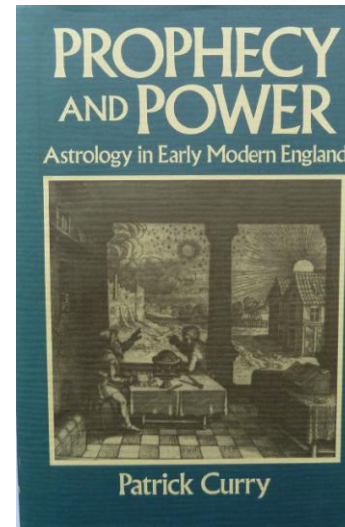
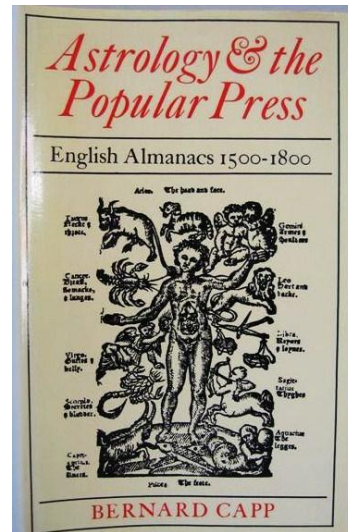
# Historiography

## RELIGION AND THE DECLINE OF MAGIC



'Still weaves its spell over successive generations of readers ... a great historical imagination' *Jonathan Barry*

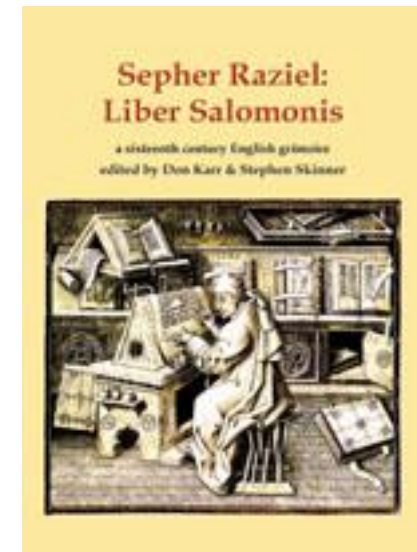
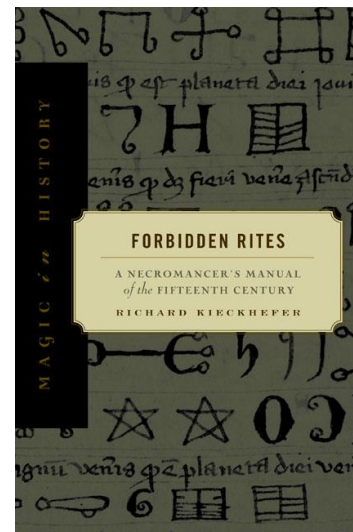
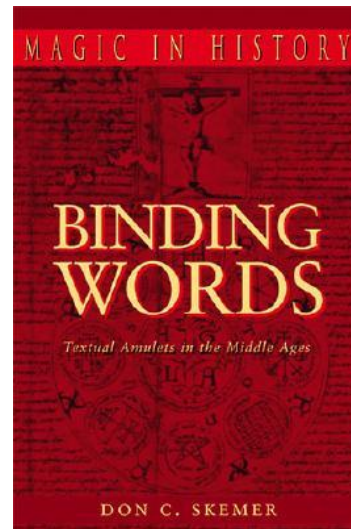
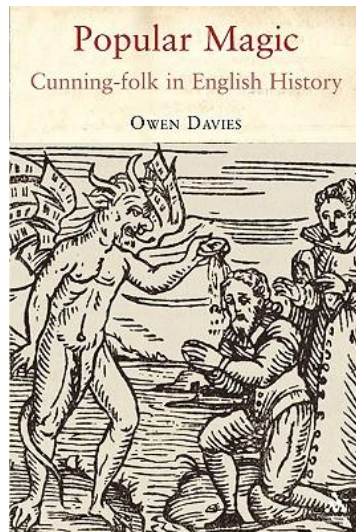
Keith Thomas



## Medicine & Magic in Elizabethan London

SIMON FORMAN: ASTROLOGER, ALCHEMIST, & PHYSICIAN

OXFORD



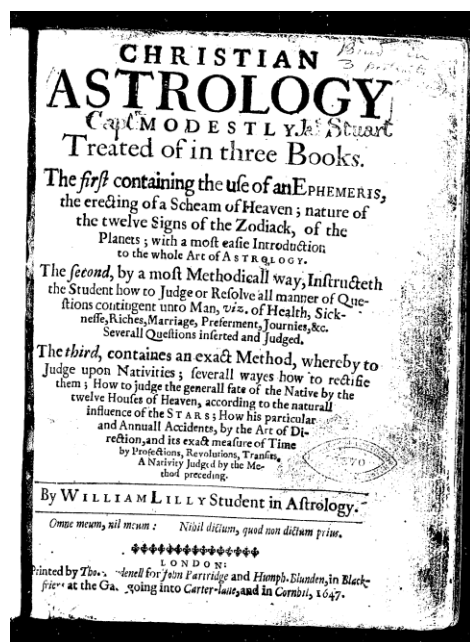
# Astrological Sources

Handbooks

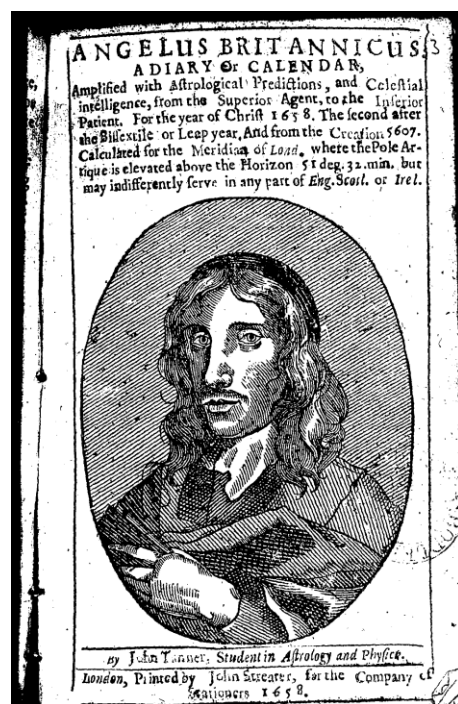
Almanacs

Physick

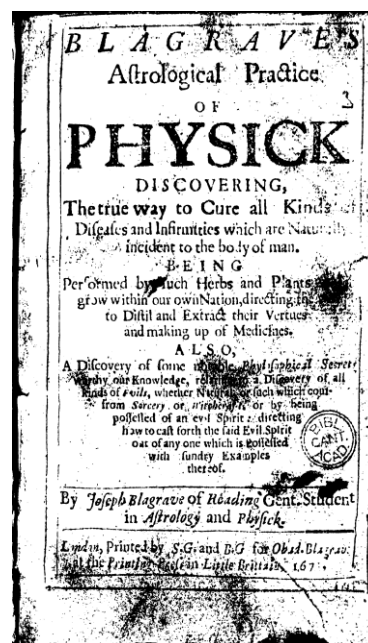
Magic



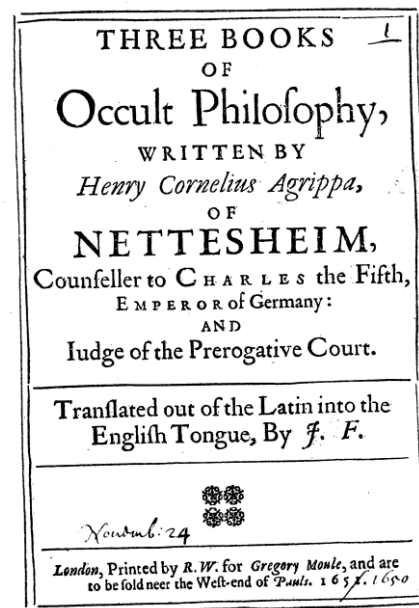
William Lilly, *Christian Astrology* (London, 1647)



John Tanner, *Angelus Britannicus* (London, 1658)



Joseph Blagrave, *Astrological Practice of Physick* ((London, 1671)



Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* (London, 1651)

# Magical Principles

## Organisational

Elements

Planets

Signs

Houses

Mansions

Decans

## Operational

Reflection

Exposure

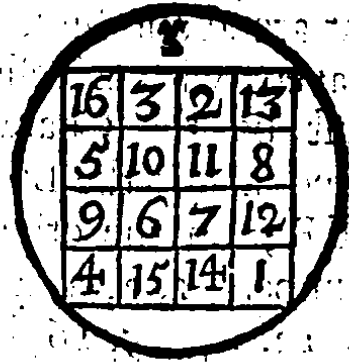
Contagion

Sympathy/Antipathy

Similitude

Names

# Sigils



Israel Hiebner, *Mysterium Sigillorum, Herbarum & Lapidum* (London, 1698), p. 165

*Paracelsus Of The Supreme Mysteries of Nature*, trans. Robert Turner (London, 1655), p. 140



Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, p. 407



# Images



‘It is a certain Remedy to **drive away all Flies** from the Bed where it is hanged.’



‘...for the **increase** of the **fruits of the earth**, and against **poysons**, and infirmities of children... the figure of which was a woman cornuted, riding on a Bull, or a Dragon... or a Crab; and she hath in her right hand a dart...’



‘The first face of Taurus ascendeth... **Harvester** or **Husbandman**, and goeth forth to **sow, plough, build,** people, and divide... **the earth...**’

# How Images Work

- **Virtue** for power source
- **Similitude** for representation
- **Contagion** for deployment
- **Spirits** for conjuring and operating
- **Sympathy/Antipathy** for drawing/warding



# How To Make Images

- **Election** in timing
- **Sympathy** in materials
- **Exposure** in deploying

# Construction: Planetary *Materia*

Saturn – Lead

Jupiter – Tin

Mars - Iron

Sol – Gold

Venus – Copper

Mercury – Alloys

Moon - Silver

# Consecration: Suffumigations

Saturn – Roots

Jupiter – Fruits

Mars - Woods

Sol – Resins

Venus – Flowers

Mercury – Peels & Seeds

Moon - Leaves

# Consecration: Suffumigations

He delighteth in Red colour, or Yellow, fiery and shining *Colour and* like Saffron; and in those Savours which are bitter, sharp and *Savours.* burn the Tongue; of Humours, Choller.

The Hearbs which we attribute to ♂ are such as come neare *Hearbs.* to a rednesse, whose leaves are pointed and sharp, whose taste is costick and burning, love to grow on dry places, are corrosive and penetrating the Flesh and Bones with a most subtile heat: They are as followeth. The Nettle, all manner of Thi-

stles, Rest-harrow or Cammock, Devils-milk or Petty-spurge, the white and red Brambles, the white called vulgarly by the Hearbalists Ranne, Lingwort, Onions, Scammony, Garlick, Mustard-seed, Pepper, Ginger, Leeks, Ditander, Hore-hound, Hemlock, red Sanders, Tamarindes, all Hearbs attracting or drawing choller by Sympathy, Raddish, Castoreum, Arsmart, Assarum, Carduus, Benedictus, Cantharides.

*Trees.*

All Trees which are prickly, as the Thorne, Chesnut.

# Locative Exposure

‘...they that endeavour to procure love, are wont to bury for a certain time the instruments of their art, whether they be rings, images, looking glasses, or any other, to hide them in a stewhouse [brothel], because in that place they will contract some venereal faculty, no otherwise than things that stand in stinking places, become stinking, and those in an aromatical place, become aromatical, and of a sweet savour.’

# Locative Exposure

## Martial

*Places.*

Smiths Shops, Furnaces, Slaughter-houses, places where Bricks or Charcoales are burned, or have been burned, Chimneys, Forges.

## Jovial

*Places.*

He delighteth in or neer Altars of Churches, in publick Conventions, Synods, Convocations, in Places neat, sweet, in Wardrobes, Courts of Justice, Oratorie.



# An Image of Venus

‘They made another Image of *Venus*, the first face of *Taurus* or *Libra* or *Pisces* ascending with *Venus*, the figure of which was a little maide with her hair spread abroad, cloathed in long and white garments, holding a *Laurell*[,] *Apple*, or flowers in her right hand, in her left a Combe. Its reported to make men *pleasant, jocand, strong, chearfull* and to give *beauty*.’

Agrippa, *Three Books*, p. 387

# Laurel...



Solar and Jovial  
Martial  
(Anti-)Saturnine

‘...resisteth Witchcraft  
very potently, as also  
**all the evil** old Saturn  
can do...’

Culpeper, *English Physition*, p. 12

# ...and Apple



Venusian and Jovial

‘...the **sweet** Apples  
as the Pippin and  
Pearmain, help to  
**dissolve Melancholly**  
humors, and to  
procure **Mirth...**’

Culpeper, *English Physition*, p. 5.

# Conclusions

- Representational magic used **similitude**, **sympathy**, and **signature**
- Astrological images require the **use of natural *materia magica***
- Astrology didn't just point to things happening on the earth; **the earth pointed back**

# Thank you



Alexander Cummins

[hiajc@bris.ac.uk](mailto:hiajc@bris.ac.uk)