Magic in the Middle Ages

Magic existed in diverse forms in the middle ages: from simple charms to complex and subversive demonic magic. Its negative characteristics were defined by theologians who sought to isolate undesirable rituals and beliefs, but there were also many who believed that the condemned texts and practices were valuable and compatible with orthodox piety. This course will explore the place of magic in the medieval world and the contradictory responses it evoked, with a particular emphasis on manuscript sources. We will use translations of medieval magical works and microfilm print outs of manuscript images and texts. The aim of the course is not only to deepen students’ historical understanding and further their analytical skills but also to give students interested in planning their own research projects experience in the techniques of reading medieval manuscripts. Students studying Latin, ‘Manuscripts and Documents’, and Palaeography will be given more advanced exercises on the analysis of magic texts in medieval manuscripts. Knowledge or study of these subjects is a useful but not obligatory requirement of the course.

Classes: Thursdays 11-1, room 306, History Dept, UCL.
Assessment: three essays totalling c.12,000 words.

Class Topics: Term 1
1. Introduction and historiography
2. What is magic?
3. Magic sources: texts, images and objects
4. Classical and early Medieval origins
5. Manuscript session at the Wellcome library
6. Arabic image magic and its reception
7. Ritual Magic 1: angels and demons
8. Ritual Magic 2: necromancy and the clerical underworld
9. The common tradition of magic
10. Classification and condemnation
Term 2
11. Sorcery and Witchcraft
12. Natural Magic 1: magic, medicine and marvels
13. Natural Magic 2: magic and science
14. Astrology
15. Manuscript session at the British Library
16. Sex and Gender
17. Politics and Trickery
18. Magic in the Romances
19. Magic in the Sagas
20. General Discussion

Useful Web Pages

Bibliographies
ORB Magic Bibliography: http://faculty.washington.edu/snoegel/jmbtoc.htm
Magic in Ancient Greece: http://www.personal.rdg.ac.uk/~lkpbodrd/magbib/
Jewish Magic Bibliography: http://faculty.washington.edu/snoegel/jmbtoc.htm
Hermes Latinus: http://www.rio.it/dipfp/ATTIVITA_DI_RICERCA/HermesLatinus/index.htm
History of Astrology: http://www.sas.ac.uk/warburg/institute/astrotst1.htm
Medieval Alchemy: http://www.marginalia.co.uk/shared/med_alchemy.php

Magic and Sources
Twilight Grotto http://www.esotericarchives.com/esoteric.htm Ritual magic texts and translations:
the Ars notoria, Liber iuratus, Iamblichus, De mysteriis and a summary of the Picatrix
Esoterica. Electronic Journal: http://www.esoteric.msu.edu/
Societas Magica: http://brindedcow.umd.edu/socmag/ Note especially Manuscripts, Newsletter, Publications
Scans of printed astrological texts with useful notes by David Juste and Charles Burnett
Internet History of Science Sourcebook: ‘Latin Christendom’ mostly links to to the Medieval Sourcebook with a few useful additions on attitudes to science, medicine, physics and technology: http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/science/sciencesbook.html

General
The Online Reference Book for Medieval Studies: http://orb.rhodes.edu/encyclo.html
Note ‘Magic and Witchcraft’, ‘Science and Technology’.
The Labyrinth Guide to Medieval Studies on the Web: http://www.georgetown.edu/labyrinth/
Note ‘Sciences’
The Catholic Encyclopaedia: http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/
The Medieval Bestiary: http://bestiary.ca/index.html
Medieval Paleography: good practice exercises!
Online journal for medieval graduate students: http://www.marginalia.co.uk/
Geoffrey Chaucer Blog: http://houseoffame.blogspot.com/

Web Exhibitions
Traditions of Magic in Late Antiquity. Exhibition at the University of Michigan Library:
http://www.lib.umich.edu/pap/magic/

A Kind of Magic. Talismans, charms and amulets in the British Museum collections:
www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/visit/onlinetours/

Other online sites where you can do a keyword search for ‘magic’ or investigate medieval material culture in general:
http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/compass
http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/collection/index.htm
http://images.vam.ac.uk
http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hm/07/eu/hm07eu.htm

Manuscript Research

The best way to really immerse yourself in the subject of medieval magic is to call up manuscripts in the Wellcome library and British library and explore them for yourself. We will look at microfilm copies of magic texts from the start of the course but it will take a while for you to get a sense of how to approach them. In each term you will have one guided session on manuscripts. In the first (at the Wellcome library) I will discuss a selection of manuscripts with you, in the second (in the BL), you will be assigned particular manuscripts to work on according to your research interests. In your own time, but as early as possible, you should start calling up manuscripts independently. You will find most of them very difficult to read at first, but it will get easier!

Locating Manuscripts

The British library and the Wellcome library have rich collections of manuscripts containing occult texts and keyword search systems in their catalogues which you can use to find interesting manuscripts. My books, Magic in Medieval Manuscripts and Astrology in Medieval Manuscripts, examine a large number of manuscripts in the British library (with clearly indicated shelfmarks) which have illuminations and diagrams relating to occult topics.

A very valuable resource for magical manuscript research is the Societas Magica Catalogue of Manuscripts and Early Printed Books at http://duke.usask.ca/~frk302/MSS/msstoc.htm

This catalogue includes many shelfmarks of medieval manuscripts in the British library and elsewhere in London containing works of ritual magic: eg the Ars notoria, the Liber visionum, the Sworn Book of Honorius, necromantic texts, and image magic. Please note that many of the listed manuscripts have a post 1500 date, and you should be focussing on the pre-1500 ones for the purpose of this course. If there is an edition of the particular magic text you are interested in (check the bibliography below) it is a good idea to order it to read at the table where you are looking at the manuscript/s.

For non-ritual magic texts and items (eg charms and natural magic) ask me for suggestions to locate manuscript shelfmarks but you could begin by looking up keywords in the mss catalogues and going through the indexes of L. Thorndike’s History of Magic and Experimental Science. The article by Frank Klaassen in Claire Fanger, ed., Conjuring Spirits (Pennsylvania, 1998) is also a good introduction to the range of learned magic texts in surviving medieval manuscripts.
Class Bibliographies

General
*Thorndike, L., History of Magic and Experimental Science, 8 vols (New York, 1923-1958)
*Kieckhefer, R., Magic in the Middle Ages (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989)
Boudet, J.-P., Entre science et nigromance : Astrologie, divination et magie dans l’Occident médiéval (XIIe-Xve siècle) (Sorbonne, 2007)
Burnett, C. Magic and Divination in the Middle Ages (Aldershot: Variorum, 1996)
Fournier, P.F., Magie et Sorcellerie. Essai historique accompagné de documents concernant la Magie et la Sorcellerie en Auverne (Ipomée, 1979)
Cardini, F., Magia, Stregoneria, Supersitizioni nell’Occidente Medievale (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1979)
2. What is Magic?

Discussion
How can we define magic? What is the relationship between religion, magic and science? What are the most important questions for historians of medieval magic?

Reading: Kieckhefer, ‘The Specific Rationality’. The introductions to Fanger, Conjuring Spirits and Kieckhefer, Magic in the Middle Ages and Forbidden Rites are also useful.

Reading
De Martino, E., Il Mondo Magico (Torino, repr. 1986)

3. Magic Sources: Texts, Images and Objects

Discussion
What kinds of sources survive for medieval magic (texts, diagrams, images, objects)? What are their advantages and limitations? How can we reconstruct what dosent survive?

Class: Choose an object/objects which has been classified ‘magical’ (from any period or culture) at the British Museum. Bring a description of the object to the class and suggest reasons for/against this classification. The British Museum online website can give you some initial guidance:
http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/compass/

Reading: Savage-Smith and Gilcrest. Merrifield or Jones

Bibliography (an additional bibliography for diagrams will be given out in the class)
*Merrifield, R., The Archaeology of Ritual and Magic (London, 1987), esp chs. 5 and 6

*Gilcrest, R., ‘Magic for the dead? The archaeology of ‘magic’ in later medieval burials’, Medieval Archaeology (forthcoming)


Kieckhefer, R., Forbidden Rites (Pennsylvania, 1998) necromatic diagrams and objects.

Skemer, D., Binding Words: Textual amulets (University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 2006)

Evans, J., Magical Jewels (Oxford, 1922)


Hanegraaff, W. J.; Faivre, A.; Broek, R., Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 2 volumes. See the entry under magical instruments
4. The Origins of Late Medieval Magic

Discussion
Think about the relationship between Christianity, paganism, superstition, folklore and magic in the early middle ages. How were magic and belief/unbelief linked in early medieval pastoral literature? What is Valerie Flint’s argument for ‘the rise of magic’?

Reading: Filotas (section on magic) or McNeil & Garner, Flint and Vickers

Classical
Iamblichus, Theurgia, see trans. at http://www.esotericarchives.com/esoteric.htm
Pliny, Naturalis Historia, ed. and trans. H. Rackham, W. H. S. Jones and D. E. Eichholz
(Cambridge, Mass./London, 1980), 10 vols

Early Medieval
*Murray, A., ‘Missionaries and Magic in Dark-Age Europe’, Past and Present 136 (1992), 186-205. JSTOR
Filotas, B., Pagan survivals, superstitions and popular cultures in early medieval pastoral literature (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2005)
6. Arabic Image Magic and its Reception

Discussion
What is Arabic image magic? Is it better described as a genre of astrology or ritual magic? Why were translators interested in it and what kind of reception did it receive in the West? What is hermetic magic and hermetism?

Reading: Pingree, ‘Learned Magic’, Speculum Astronomiae, ch. 11, Book of Angels or Liber lunae

Primary Sources
Liber lunae http://www.esoteric.msu.edu/Liber/LiberLunae.html (a transcription of an English early modern copy of the text)

Arabic Image Magic

Reception in the West
Burnett, C., Magic and Divination in the Middle Ages (Aldershot: Variorum, 1996)
__, ‘Late Antique and Medieval Latin Translations of Greek Texts on Astrology and Magic’ in The Occult Sciences in Byzantium (Geneva, 2007)
Perrone Compagni, V., ‘Studiosus incantationibus: Adelardo di Bath, Ermete e Thabit’ in Giornale critico della filosofia italiana, 80/1 (2001), pp. 36-61
P. Lucentini and V. Perrone Compagni, *I testi e i codici di Ermete nel Medioevo* (Florence: Polistampa, 2001)

__, and V. Perrone Compagni, *I testi e i codici di Ermete nel Medioevo* (Florence: Polistampa, 2001)

__, P., I. Parri and V. Perrone Compagni, eds, *Hermetism from late antiquity to humanism* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), esp. articles by Perrone Compagni, Page, Lang, Weill-Parot


Copenhaver, B. P., ‘Scholastic Philosophy and Renaissance Magic in the *De vita* of Marsilio Ficino’ *Renaissance Quarterly* 37 (1984), pp. 523-554
7 Ritual Magic 1: Angels and Demons

Discussion
What is ritual magic? How and why do they incorporate orthodox Christian ritual forms and sensibilities? How did Jewish magic influence Christian texts? What is the role of spirits in these texts? On what grounds do you think they were condemned?

Reading: choose one of the primary sources below and a relevant chapter/article – e.g. in Fanger, ed., on the Ars notoria, Liber iuratus or Liber visionum or Veenstra on the Almandal, or Page (ask for handout) on the Liber Razielis etc

Primary Sources
http://www.esotericarchives.com: translations of the Ars notoria, Liber Iuratus or Sworn Book of Honorius, the Ars Almadel

Secondary Sources
Kieckhefer, R., Magic in the Middle Ages (Cambridge, 1989)
Moreau J., Turpin J.-Cl [Éd.], La Magie (Montpellier, 2000), esp. Boudet, Weill-Parot and Veronese and see also the Anges et Magie volume cited above.
Barnay, S., ‘La Mariophanie au regard de Jean de Morigny: magie ou miracle de la vision mariale?’ in Miracles, prodiges et merveilles au moyen âge (Paris, 1995), pp. 173-190

Jewish Magic
Schäfer, P., ‘Jewish Magic Literature in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages’, Journal of Jewish Studies 41, pp. 75-91
Tractenberg, J., Jewish Magic and Superstition (New York, 1939; 1970)
Swartz, M. D., ‘Scribal Magic and its Rhetoric: formal Patterns in Medieval Hebrew and Aramaic Incantation Texts from the Cairo Genizah’ Harvard Theological Review 83:2 (1990), 163-80

Byzantine Magic
Greenfield, R.P.H., Traditions of Belief in Late Byzantine Demonology (Amsterdam, 1988), esp. chapter 6 on magic
Magdalino, P. and M. Mavroudi, eds., The Occult Sciences in Byzantium (Geneva, 2007)
Discussion

What is necromancy? Who belonged to the ‘Clerical underworld’? How could necromancers conceive of their activities as holy? On what grounds was necromancy condemned? Does the literary stereotype of the necromancer bear any relation to the evidence of magic texts?

Reading: Lydgate’s personification of Necromancy. Kieckhefer, Magic in the Middle Ages, ch. 7, Forbidden Rites, Holy and Unholy and handout of sources

Primary Sources

Secondary Sources
Cohn, N., Europe’s inner demons (1993, rev.ed.)
*Kieckhefer, R., Magic in the Middle Ages (Cambridge, 1989), ch. 7
*—, Forbidden Rites (Pennsylvania, 1998)
9. The Common Tradition of Magic

Discussion
In what sense (if any) are popular prayers, charms, amulets etc magic? Who used them and how? How can we classify late medieval rituals which do not seem to have Christian roots? What is the relationship between magic, superstition and popular religion? (please come to the class with a definition of ‘superstition’). What is the relationship between magic and popular piety?

Reading: Choose a selection of the primary sources to read and either Van Engen, Kieckhefer and Thomas, ch. 2, Duffy, chs 6, 8

Primary Sources
* Anglo-Saxon charms: http://www2.hawaii.edu/%7Ekjolly/unc.htm
Cockayne, O., Leechdoms, Wortcunning and Starcraft of early England (Rolls Series, London, 1864-6), vols 2 and 3

Secondary
* Bozóky, Edina, "From matter of devotion to amulets," Medieval Folklore, 3 (1994), 91-107
  __, Charmes et prières apotropaiques (Turnhout, Brepols, 2003)
  __, ‘Amulet Rolls and Female Devotion in the Late Middle Ages’, Scriptorium 55 (2001)
  __, Binding Words: Textual Amulets in the Middle Ages (University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 2006)
Bühler, Curt F., ‘Prayers and charms in certain Middle English scrolls’, Speculum 39 (1964), 270-78 JSTOR
Hole, C., ‘Some Instances of Image-Magic in Great Britain’, in V. Newall, ed., The Witch Figure (London: Routledge, 1973)

**Magic, Superstition, Popular Religion**


*Kieckhefer, R., Magic in the Middle Ages, ch. 4


Harmening, D., Superstitio. Überheferungs- und theoriegeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur kirchlich-theologischen Aberglaubensliteratur des Mittelalters (Berlin, 1979)
10. Classification and Condemnation of Magic and Superstition

**Discussion**
Who categorised and condemned medieval magic? How did condemnations of magic change over time (s.xii-s.xv)? What were the specific contexts of condemnation? What was the relationship between magic and heresy? How does the B. Latini image classify nigromancy?

**Reading**: The 1277 and 1398 condemnations, Peters, *The Magician, Witch and Law* (chs 4 and 6) or *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe* (chs 3-4)

**Condemnation of Learned Magic** (see also Arabic image magic)
Thomas Aquinas *Summa Contra Gentiles*, II, 104-106

**Authority and Deviance**
*Peters, E., The Magician, the Witch and the Law* (Univ. of Pensylvannia Press, 1978), ch. 3
Barber, M., *The Trial of the Templars* (Cambridge, 1978)
11. Sorcery and Witchcraft

**Discussion**

What was sorcery? Who were its practitioners? How did it differ from learned magic and witchcraft? What was the role of gender in its condemnation? What were the medieval roots of witchcraft?


**Primary Sources**

Bernard of Gui on Sorcery (c.1323) and Bernadino of Siena on Witchcraft and Superstition (1427) in J. Shinners, ed., *Medieval Popular Religion* (Peterborough, 1997), 242-5 and 457-9
A contemporary narrative of the proceedings against Dame Alice Kyteler (1843), ed., T. Wright.

**Secondary**

*__, ‘From Sorcery to Witchcraft: Clerical Conceptions of Magic in the Later Middle Ages’, *Speculum* 76, 4 (2001). JSTOR
Cohn, N., *Europe's Inner Demons* (1993.)
Discussion
What are ‘occult’ properties and what was their place in medieval magic and the understanding of natural objects and processes? What is natural magic and how does it relate to ideas about the natural world (and what is unnatural), marvels, and the powers of spirits?. What is the relationship between magic and medicine?

Reading: S. Page, ‘Good Creation and Demonic Illusions: the Medieval Universe of Creatures’ in A Cultural History of Animals (Berg, 2007), vol. 2, ch. 1

Class: Research one of the following for the class using starred works (think about its properties, its influence on ideas of nature, its use in medicine and magic etc): Basilisk, Mandrake, Hoopoe (See also Kieckhefer, Forbidden Rites), Crystal, Torpedo Fish, Vulture, Eagle. See also The Medieval Bestiary: http://bestiary.ca/index.html

Primary Sources (see also MacKinney and Riddle below)
Riddle, J. M., Marbode of Rennes (1035-1128): De Lapidibus (Weisbaden, 1977) crystal

Secondary Sources
*Page, S., Magic in Medieval Manuscripts (London: British Library, 2004), ch. 2 (natural magic)

JSTOR torpedo fish
Ventura, I., ‘The Curae ex animalibus in the Medical Literature of the Middle Ages’ in Bestiaires médiévaux. (Louvain: Brepols, 2003), pp. 213-248
Mcvaugh, M. R., ‘Incantations in Late Medieval Surgery’ in G. Marchetti, O. Rignani, V. Sorge, eds, Ratio et Superstition (Louvain, 2003), pp. 319-345
*Evans, J., Magical Jewels (Oxford, 1922) crystal
___, and M. S. Serjeantson, English Medieval Lapidaries (Oxford University Press, 1933).
Sheldon, S. E., ‘The eagle: bird of magic and medicine in a Middle English translation of the Kyranides’ in Tulane Studies in English, 22 (1977), pp. 1-20 eagle


13. Natural Magic 2: Magic and Science

Discussion
What was the relationship between magic and science? (esp thinking about areas of distinction and overlap), between magic, marvels and miracles? What scientific explanations were proposed in the Middle Ages to explain how magic worked? Are the terms ‘experiment’ (experimenta) and ‘experience’ (experientia) relevant to magic? What is the relationship between secret, recipe and experiment?

Reading: Pingree on the Liber vacce, and (relevant parts of) one of the primary sources

Primary Sources
Thomas Aquinas, De occultis operibus naturae, trans. J. B. McAllister (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1939)
Nicole Oresme, Tractatus de configurationibus qualitatum et motuum, Part II, ed. and trans. M. Clagett, Nicole Oresme and the medieval geometry of qualities and motions. (Madison/Milwaukee/London, 1968), chapters on magic
*Gerald of Wales, The History and Topography of Ireland, part II and commentary by Robert Bartlett, Gerald of Wales, 1146-1223 (Oxford, 1982), pp. 157-169

Secondary

JSTOR
__, ‘Scholastic Philosophy and Renaissance Magic in the De vita of Marsilio Ficino’ Renaissance Quarterly 37 (1984), pp. 523-554
Goulding, R., ‘Real, apparent and illusory necromancy: Lamp experiments and Historical perceptions of Experimental knowledge’, http://brindedcow.umd.edu/socmap/
Walker Bynum, C., Metamorphosis and Identity (New York: Zone Books, 2001)
Thorndike, L., ‘Imagination and magic’ in Mélanges Eugène Tisserant, 7 (Vatican City: Biblioteca Vaticana, 1964), 353-8
14. Astrology

Discussion
What did the medieval practice of astrology involve? How does astrology fit into medieval ideas about celestial influence? How acceptable was it to the Church? Who were its practitioners, what were their goals, who were their clients? Think about the differences between astrology at court and university and as practiced by physicians (e.g. Richard Trewythian). What is the relationship between astrology and magic?

Class reading: intro to Carey or Smoller, Page to get a sense of the basics of astrology, as we will be analysing horoscopes in the class

Primary Sources
*Astrological predictions for 1186 from Roger of Hoveden’s Chronica Majora (photocopy supplied)
John of Salisbury, Frivolities of Courtiers and Footprints of Philosophers, trans. of selections, J. B. Pike, bk1, chs. 9-11, pp. 39-44. A critique of astrology

Secondary Sources
*Page, S., Astrology in Medieval Manuscripts (London, 2002)
Carey, H., Courting Disaster (London, 1992)
*Tester, S.J., A History of Western Astrology (Woodbridge, 1987) – a good introduction
Rawcliffe, C., Medicine and Society in Later Medieval England (Stroud, 1999), pp. 82-93
North, J., Horoscopes and History (1986) – very technical but some useful historical examples
—, Chaucer’s Universe (1988)
Bühler, C.F. ‘Astrological prognostications’ Modern Language Notes (1941), pp. 351-355
16 Sex and Gender

Discussion
What are the links between sex, magic and gender? Did this area of magic attract specialist medieval practitioners? What examples of magical operations from the texts we have examined relate to these areas? What are the attributes of the female practitioner of love magic in the image above? How do they compare to descriptions of Celestina (Fernando de Rojas)?

Class: Discussion of Frank Klaassen’s article, excerpts from Celestina and Manuscript Reports.

Magic and Sex
Primary Sources: See Sorcery and Witchcraft, individual magic texts and romances, esp. Cligés and Tristan
Kieckhefer, R., ‘Erotic Magic in Medieval Europe’ in J. Salisbury, Sex in the Middle Ages (New York/London, 1991), pp. 30-55 and see experiments on this theme in Forbidden Rites
Rider, C., Magic and Impotence (2006)

Women, Demons and Possession
Caciola, N., Discerning Spirits: Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003),
Discussion
What kinds of magic and magical practitioners were linked to Court intrigues? What was the court demi-monde and why were magic practitioners found in it? How should illusion and trickery be situated within the category of magic? What is the relationship between stage illusions, parlour tricks and necromantic illusions? Is ludificationes a useful category?

Primary Sources

Politics and Sorcery
___, ‘The Case Against Edward IV’s Marriage and Offspring’ (Aldershot vol. as above)
Veenstra, J., Magic and Divination at the Courts of Burgundy and France (Leiden, 1997)

Illusions and Trickery See also class 13 bibliography
Kieckhefer, R., Forbidden Rites (Pennsylvania, 1998): chapter on necromantic illusions
Goulding, R., ‘Real, apparent and illusory necromancy: Lamp experiments and Historical perceptions of Experimental knowledge’, Newsletter 16: http://brindedcow.umd.edu/socmag/
Lindsay, J., The Troubadours and Their World (London: Muller, 1986)
Eamon, W., ‘Technology as magic in the Late Middle Ages’, Janus 70 (1983), pp. 171-212
Fanger, C., ed., Conjuring Spirits (Pennsylvania, 1998), ch. by J. Friedman (on Secreta phil.)
Volkmann, K., The Oldest Deception: Cups and Balls (Minneapolis: Jones, 1956)
18. Magic in the Sagas

Discussion
What is the terminology for magic in the sagas? What are the dynamics between the human and spiritual worlds? How do Christian authors approach magic in a pagan setting, and what is the difference between representations of magic in the more ‘realistic’ sagas and the more fantastical viking romances? Who are the practitioners and how does society view them? What are the instruments and goals of magical practice? What is the role of the natural world, especially animals? How does magic fit into the world view of the sagas?

Reading: Selections given and choose one of the magical episodes in Icelandic sagas.

Primary Sources
Snorri Sturluson, Edda, trans. A. Faulkes (Everyman, 1987)
Hrólfr’s Saga Kraka, in The Saga of King Hrolf kraki, trans. J. Byock (Penguin, 1998), esp. ch. 33: raising the dead for battle

Secondary Sources
__, ‘Six Icelandic magicians after the time of Sæmundr Fróði’, Arv: Nordic Yearbook of Folklore 52 (1996), 49-61
Ellis, H., The Road to Hel: A Study in the Conception of the Dead in Old Norse Literature (Greenwood, 1998)

Some good magical episodes in Icelandic sagas (with thanks to Ralph for suggestions)

Sagas set in Iceland
3) Bárðar saga Snjófellssáss (trans. Ralph O’Connor in Icelandic Histories and Romances, Tempus, Stroud, 2002), chapters 7 (troll causes magical storm & summons Thor), 13-16 (comparisons between Christian and pagan magic against a symbol of heathen evil set in a distant Arctic realm)

**Sagas set in legendary times and/or distant places**

1) *Bósa saga ok Herrauðs* (trans. Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards in *Seven Viking Romances*, Penguin Classics, 1985) – the whole thing is underpinned by magic, but see esp. chapters 5, 12 and 14

2) *Hjálmþés saga ok Ólvés* (trans. Ralph O’Connor in *Icelandic Histories and Romances*, Tempus, Stroud, 2002), chapters 6 (heroes turned into chickens), 8 (spell and counter-spell), 11 (shamanistic battle-scene at sea)


4) *Stjörnu-Odda draumr* (trans. Ralph O’Connor in *Icelandic Histories and Romances*, Tempus, Stroud, 2002), chapter 9 (tomboy princess turns into troll with wolf’s head)
19. Magic in the Romances

Discussion:

In what situations is magic most likely to occur in the Medieval romances? How does it work? Look for examples of magical objects, words, symbols and potions, people with magical powers, enchantments, ritual, magical places, the forest and illusory castles. How does magic in literature relate to the practical magic texts and non-romance representations of male and female magicians we have examined? What is the relationship between Christian, magical and pagan (non-Christian) elements? Is the grail a magical object? Do fairies replace demons as less controversial otherworldly figures linked to magic in these texts? Compare with magic and magicians in the Icelandic Sagas.

Reading: Selections given and choose one romance from the list below

Primary Sources

1. Chrétien de Troyes (Everyman, Arthurian Romances, trans D.D.R. Owen): Cligés: Thessala and the magic potion (Everyman, pp.132-7), shirt (p.108); Yvain: the magic ring (Everyman, p.316) and the magic spring (pp. 286-7); Perceval: the clerical expert and the magic bed (Everyman, pp. 472-77)
3. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: the green knight and the magical skills of his wife, the pentangle, the girdle.
7. Chaucer, The Squire’s Tale and The Franklin’s Tale

Medieval Romances (see also bibliography on courts, esp Peters)

Cooper, H., ‘Magic that does not work’, Medievalia et Humanistica, n.s., 7 (1976), 131-46
Easter, D. B., A Study of the Magic Elements of the Romans d’Aventure and the Romans Bretons (Baltimore: Furst, 1906)
Sweeney, M., Magic in Medieval Romance (2000)
Spargo, J., Virgil the Necromancer: Studies in Virgilian Legends (Cambridge, 1934)