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Mantic Alphabets in Late Medieval England, Early Modern Europe, and Modern America: The Reception and Afterlife of a Medieval Form of Dream Divination

Abstract: This article follows upon my earlier study and edition of three mantic alphabets in late medieval English, in *Anglia* 132/3 (2014: 473–505). Mantic alphabets are a late medieval form of dream divination that was known throughout the Latin West but that vanished completely in the early modern period. Like other medieval types of the mantic arts, this kind of oneiromancy made a quick transition into print in the late fifteenth century; yet it was soon affected negatively by a growing suspicion against dream interpretation during the sixteenth-century religious reforms, and by changing perspectives on dream theory and dream divination on the part of early printers and humanists. Central to the present study are four English mantic alphabets, one from the end of the medieval period, and three from the modern age. The first mantic alphabet is a hitherto unpublished fifteenth-century English text witness in Oxford, Balliol College, MS 329. This text sheds new light on the transmission of mantic alphabets in late medieval England, and on the reception of medieval dream divination in early modern Europe. With the help of a number of texts from continental Europe and an excursion into the early print history of dream divination, the Balliol text is situated in its early modern setting, which sometimes proved hostile to medieval forms of oneiromancy. The other English mantic alphabets were discovered in a series of related American popular divination manuals that used dream divination as a basis for selecting lucky lottery numbers. Unattested since early modernity, the American alphabets show some significant differences in comparison to the medieval texts, not least in their use in selecting lucky numbers.

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Introduction

A medieval person who had had a dream and would like to know what the future had in store could turn to several forms of dream divination. The best-known of these, the alphabetical dream book, arrives at an answer by interpreting the subject of the dream. Another form of oneiromancy, the mantic alphabet, predicts the future after a letter selected randomly was looked up in a key that links each letter of the alphabet to a prediction. Their origins shrouded in mystery, mantic alphabets are first attested in twelfth-century manuscripts from England and Germany, and in the centuries following they are encountered in growing numbers in manuscripts and eventually also in early printed books. Table 1 sheds light on the transmission of mantic alphabets, testifying to increasing numbers of texts in manuscripts from twelfth- to fifteenth-century Europe, and to a rapid transmission into print.[1]

Table 1: Distribution of mantic alphabets in manuscripts and printed books from Europe and the United States[2]

	manuscripts	printed books
twelfth century	3	–
thirteenth century	7	–
fourteenth century	12	–
fifteenth century	39	16
sixteenth century	13	3
seventeenth century	1	0
eighteenth century	0	0
nineteenth century	0	1
twentieth century	0	2

Many forms of practical science display steadily rising numbers of text witnesses into the early modern period, with the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries marking the height of textual transmission of the practical sciences in many European cultures, particularly the *artes medicinae* and *artes magicae*. As far as mantic

1 For a more general survey of the transmission of dream divination at large in medieval and early modern Europe, see Chardonnens forthcoming.

2 These numbers are based on surviving text witnesses, and in the case of the modern printed texts, which are from the United States exclusively, on my own collection, and Weiss 1944a and 1944b.

alphabets are concerned, however, this particular form of dream divination was on its way out by the sixteenth century, with manuscript transmission reduced to a third of what it was in the fifteenth century. The seventeenth century, finally, features only a single text witness. The transmission in print displays a similar development, with sixteen incunable editions against three sixteenth-century prints (all from continental European printers), not counting the three modern American texts. A sharp decline like this suggests that a widely transmitted medieval form of dream divination met with serious adversity in early modern Europe. By studying the post-medieval reception and afterlife of mantic alphabets, it becomes evident that several factors converged in the sixteenth century that contributed to a suspicion of, and a rejection of medieval forms of dream divination on the part of religious reformers, printers, and humanist scholars.

Four new English mantic alphabets are here presented to complement the three texts studied and edited in *Anglia* 132/3 (2014: 473–505). Largely illegible in the fifteenth-century manuscript Oxford, Balliol College, MS 329, the first text is one of the last English mantic alphabets to ever appear in manuscript form. This text can now barely be deciphered even with modern technology because it was so thoroughly censored by a disgruntled sixteenth-century reader. The present reconstruction of the manuscript text brings to light some significant differences in comparison to the other English mantic alphabets. Located in a series of related modern popular divination manuals from the United States, the second set of texts are the first English mantic alphabets to ever appear in printed form. Mantic alphabets were printed in Latin and a number of continental European vernaculars between 1475 and 1537, but by the time that English printers discovered dream divination in the 1550s, mantic alphabets had already cleared the scene. There are no connections, then, between the late medieval English mantic alphabets and their modern American counterparts. The medieval text is one of the last of its kind, and the modern texts seem to be spontaneous rediscoveries of a long-lost and essentially medieval form of dream divination, but with a twist. Not only predicting the future by means of letters of the alphabet after having had a dream, the modern texts also provide a set of lucky lottery numbers to be used in the policy playing system.

The first section of this article continues the analysis of the medieval English text witnesses in the previous article by editing and studying the mantic alphabet from the Balliol manuscript. The second section situates the reception of the Balliol text and a number of similarly mutilated continental texts in the context of European religious reforms. The third and fourth sections study the transmission of medieval forms of dream divination in early printed books to showcase the negative effects of a growing attention for dream theory on the part of early printers, and a preference for Greek thematic dream books on the part of humanist scholars. The final two sections trace the transmission of dream divination in

early modern and modern British and American sources, with special attention to the first English mantic alphabets to appear in print.

The Mantic Alphabet in Oxford, Balliol College, MS 329

At the time of researching my previous article on the other medieval English mantic alphabets, I was aware of a fourth English text in Oxford, Balliol College, MS 329, fol. 79^{v}. This text, however, is impossible to read in normal light, because it has been erased almost entirely by an early modern reader. Images taken under ultra-violet light revealed that the text differed from the three others, and that the censor may have acted on religious motives, thus warranting separate treatment of the Balliol text in light of post-medieval responses to medieval dream divination. The text's early modern censorship will form the basis for the next section, the present section being an edition and study of the medieval text.

Oxford, Balliol College, MS 329 is a fifteenth-century English miscellany written by several scribes. The manuscript's main contents are four long texts in English: a herbal (fols. 1^{r}–35^{v}), a medical remedy book (fols. 36^{r}–79^{r}), John Lydgate and Benedict Burgh's *Secrets of Old Philosophers* (fols. 80^{r}–126^{r}) and Lydgate's *The Fall of Princes* (fols. 127^{r}–171^{v}).[3] The *Secrets*, Lydgate's translation of the *Secretum secretorum*, offers a *terminus post quem* for the manuscript. Since the translation was unfinished at the time of Lydgate's death in about 1451 and was subsequently completed by Benedict Burgh, the manuscript postdates the early 1450s. Shorter texts in English and Latin appear within and between the long texts, and at the end of the manuscript, mostly in the hands of the scribes who contributed to the long texts. Following the remedy book, the scribe responsible for the first three long texts copied a mantic alphabet (Fig. 1).

Folio 79^{v} of Balliol College 329 was purposely damaged to such an extent that only the line endings are now legible. In order to bring out the text more clearly, Figure 1 is a composite of images taken in normal light and under ultra-violet light. Even so, the text can only be reconstructed with great difficulty. The restored text is as follows:[4]

3 Mynors 1963: 339–340, Ogilvie-Thomson 1991: 7–8.

4 All quotations in this article are taken directly from the manuscripts and early prints, but for convenience facsimiles and editions are referred to where available. Source orthography is retained. Punctuation and capitalisation are modernised. Abbreviations are expanded silently. Otiose strokes have been ignored. Conjectural or partial readings are in square brackets. Translations are my own.

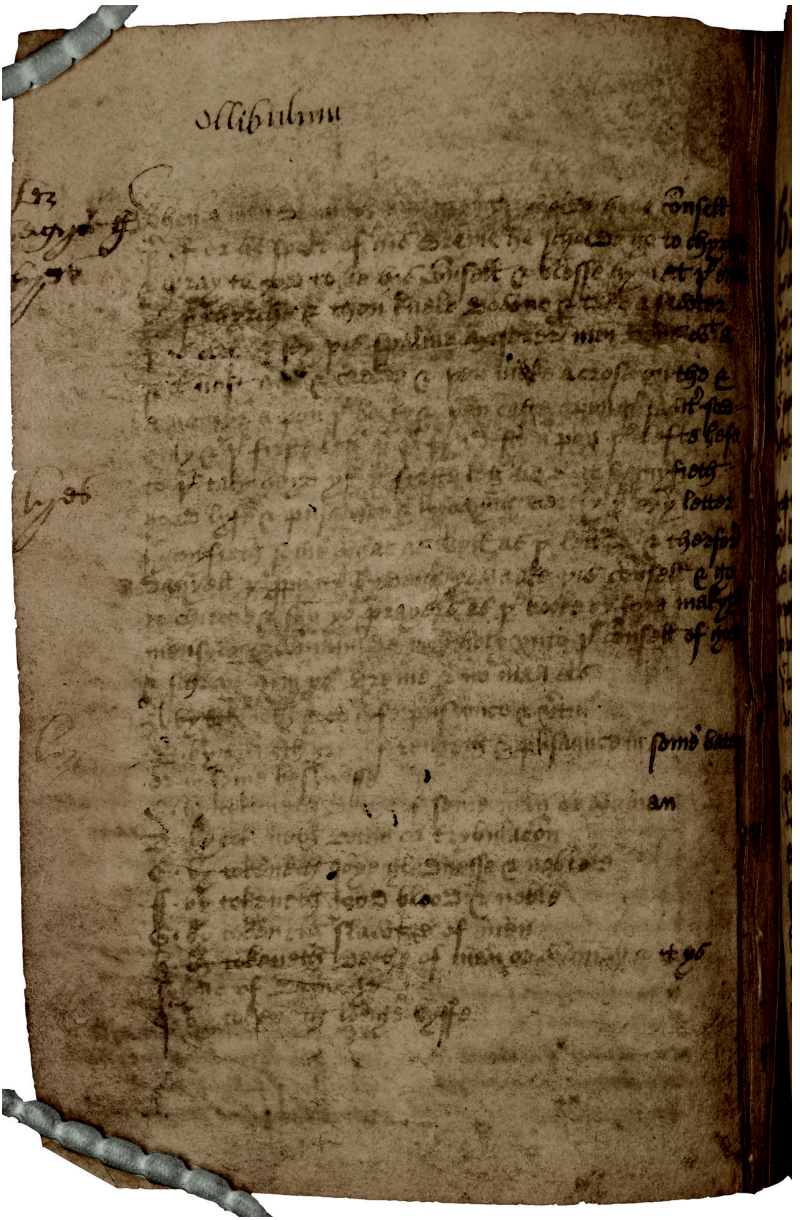

Figure 1: Oxford, Balliol College, MS 329, fol. 79^{v}. Reproduced by kind permission of the Master and Fellows of Balliol College, Oxford. Post-processed composite image, courtesy of Femke Prinsen

When a man dremyth enythyng [and wolde] haue counsell þerof. Er he spek of his dreme he scholde go to chyrche and pray to god to be his counsell and blesse hym at þe entre of þe
3 chyrche, and then knele downe and take a sawter þat is close and sey þis spalme [*sic*]: miserere mei deus, with a pater noster, ave, and crede. And þen make a crose on the and anothyr apon þe bok. And þan caste open þe sawter sodenly, and þe first letter þat þu
6 fyndest apon þe lefte lefe, to þat taken go ye. Yf the firste letter be A, it sygnyfieth good lyfe and pusaunce. And knowyng certeyn þat every letter sygnyfieth somewhat as well as þe letter. And therfore Danyell þe prophete bydeth you take þis counsell, and go to chirche and
9 sey your prayers as þe booke byfore makyth mensyon, and [co.....ulde] you holy vnto þe counsell of god, and schreve him your dreme and no man els.
A bytokeneth good lyfe, pusaunce, and vertus.
12 B bytokeneth gret [fre...eth], and pusaunce in some batayl or in some besinesse.
C bytokeneth dethe of some man or woman.
D bytokeneth dethe or trybulacioun.
15 E bytokeneth ioye, gladnesse, and noblese.
F bytokeneth good blood and noble.
G bytokeneth slawtre of men.
18 H bytokeneth dethe of man or woman, and it ys sygne of damage.
I bytokeneth longe lyffe.

Following the letter *I*, the last three lines on the page are illegible even under ultra-violet light, and the next few leaves are excised, so the alphabet key is now incomplete. Even so, the restored text brings to light a mantic alphabet that unambiguously belongs to the British group of text recensions, but that constitutes a unique recension in its own right. Comparison of the Balliol text with the entire corpus of mantic alphabets, and in particular with the English texts in Cambridge, Trinity College, O. 1. 13, Manchester, John Rylands University Library, Lat. 228, Oxford, All Souls College, MS 81, and their British analogues,[5] reveals that the Balliol text shares a number of generic and British features but also deviates in significant ways.

Some of the ritual directions are stock features of mantic alphabets in general, such as the instructions to "go to chyrche" (l. 2), to use "a sawter" (l. 3), to recite psalms and prayers (ll. 3–4), and that "þe first letter þat þu fyndest apon þe lefte lefe" (ll. 5–6) should be looked up in the alphabet key. To "knele downe" (l. 3), on the other hand, is required by some other British texts, but it is not a feature commonly found outside the British Isles. Yet within the British recensions, there is

5 See Chardonnens 2014. In addition to the Balliol text, I have found two further medieval English mantic alphabets in the fifteenth-century medical miscellany London, British Library, Sloane 963, fols. 13^{v} and 55^{v}. Consisting of prefaces without alphabet keys, these two texts are identical to the one in Cambridge, Trinity College, O. 1. 13. The text on the four humours preceding the Cambridge text, furthermore, is identical to that preceding the mantic alphabet in Sloane 963, fol. 13^{v}, which makes it likely that the two manuscripts are somehow related.

no agreement as to the precise location for genuflection, which varies from "byfore þe crosse" and "deuaunt le auter" to "in ecclesia".[6] The Balliol text seems to suggest that one should kneel down upon entering the church (ll. 2–3), which is not recorded by any other text witness. To give another example, the instruction to "make a crose" (l. 4), another rare feature, is also found in three other British texts, but where the cross is to be applied varies from "vpon þi margyn abouyn" and "sus le lyuere" to "super spalterium [*sic*] clausum".[7] The Balliol text, on the other hand, stipulates two crosses: one "on the and anothyr apon þe bok" (ll. 4–5). A handful of mantic alphabets from continental Europe similarly refer to making a cross on the book, but they refrain from stipulating crossing oneself. The instruction to commit to God's counsel (ll. 9–10), finally, is present in the English Manchester alphabet and several Latin texts from England and the continent, but the order to tell God "your dreme and no man els" (l. 10) is unique to the Balliol text. Other unique features of the Balliol text are the example provided in lines 6–7 of the preface, and the observation "þat every letter sygnyfieth somewhat as well as þe letter" (ll. 7–8).

What sets the Balliol text apart from all other text witnesses is the unique attribution to "Danyell þe prophete" (l. 8). The Old Testament patriarch Joseph is usually credited with composing the mantic alphabet while in captivity in Egypt, which is why mantic alphabets are sometimes called *Somniale Ioseph*.[8] In contrast to texts from the main continental hub of transmission, consisting of Southern Germany, Western Austria, Switzerland, and Northern Italy, mantic alphabets from the British Isles are mostly unattributed or have unusual attributions that are unattested in continental European texts. Some British texts ascribe the authorship of the mantic alphabet to philosophers,[9] or to Aristotle,[10] but the attribution to Daniel is attested nowhere else. The composer of the Balliol text must have felt the need to link an anonymous text on dream divination to the prophet Daniel, who was seen as the most famous dream diviner in the medieval period, after all.[11]

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6 Manchester, John Rylands University Library, Lat. 228, fol. 60^{r}, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby 86, fol. 48^{r} (facsimile Tschann and Parkes 1996, ed. Hunt 2007: 44–45, Chardonnens 2011: 112–114): 'before the altar', and London, British Library, Cotton Cleopatra B. ix, fol. 24$^{r–v}$ (ed. Chardonnens 2012: 230–231): 'in church', respectively.

7 Cambridge, Trinity College, O. 1. 13, fol. 23^{r}, London, British Library, Additional 15236, fol. 169^{r} (ed. Chardonnens 2011: 112–114): 'on the book', and Cambridge, Trinity College, O. 8. 21, fol. 150$^{r–v}$ (ed. Förster 1936: 236–237): 'on the closed psalter', respectively.

8 See Chardonnens 2014: 476, 481–482.

9 London, British Library, Harley 1008, fol. 44^{r}, Oxford, All Souls College, MS 81, fol. 186^{v} and fols. 211^{v}–212^{r}.

10 Aberystwyth, Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru, Llanstephan 88, pp. 49 and 51 (ed. Förster 1936: 235–236).

11 See DiTommaso 2005: 247–254.

As far as the alphabet key is concerned, the Balliol text resembles a recension attested more frequently in the British Isles. Discussed in detail in my previous *Anglia* article, this recension is represented by three close analogues: Manchester, John Rylands University Library, Lat. 228, fol. 60^{r} (English), Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 405, p. 17 (Anglo-Norman),[12] and London, British Library, Royal 7. D. xxv, fol. 75^{v} (Latin).[13] A comparison between the alphabet keys of the Balliol and Manchester texts attests to these similarities:

	Oxford, Balliol College, MS 329, fol. 79^{v}	Manchester, John Rylands University Library, Lat. 228, fol. 60^{r}
A	good lyfe, pusaunce, and vertus	gode life and faire mi3t
B	gret [fre...eth], and pusaunce in some batayl or in some besinesse	gret pouste owre men and men3e
C	dethe of some man or woman	husbondys deth
D	dethe or trybulacioun	grete trouble or perile of deth
E	bytokeneth ioye, gladnesse, and noblese	ioye and mikell gladnes
F	good blood and noble	goode blode spilt
G	slawtre of men	manys slaghter
H	dethe of man or woman, and it ys sygne of damage	deth of woman slayne
I	longe lyffe	gode lyfe outher religioun

The correspondences between the Balliol text and its analogues set this specific recension apart from the other English recension, in Oxford, All Souls College, MS 81, fol. 186^{v}. The prediction "slawtre of men" for the letter *G*, for instance, corresponds to the Manchester reading "manys slaghter" rather than to the All Souls College reading "dethe of thye ffrend". The "good blood and noble" (*F*) of the Balliol text resembles the Manchester reading "goode blode spilt" ("nobilem sanguinem" in the Latin analogue), not the All Souls College reading "tribulacioun of sowllis". At the same time, however, the Balliol text differs from its analogues. The adjective *longe* instead of *gode* (*I*), for instance, is altogether unattested elsewhere. The conjoined phrases "or in some besinesse" (*B*), "and noblese" (*E*) and "and it ys sygne of damage" (*H*), furthermore, are solely encountered in the Balliol text.

12 Ed. Chardonnens 2011: 112–114.

13 Ed. Chardonnens 2013: 342. A fourth analogue, though considerably less close, is in London, British Library, Harley 3902, fol. 28^{rb} (Latin).

The combined testimony of the preface and the alphabet key would suggest that the mantic alphabet in Balliol College 329 is a unique text that is somehow related to other British mantic alphabets but nevertheless maintains a strong individual identity. The alphabet key shares some features with the recension represented by the Manchester alphabet, but the composer may have modified the predictions so that they cover more ground than the Manchester recension does. The preface similarly displays the generic features of mantic alphabets (e.g., prayers, the consultation of a book), specific elements that identify it as British (e.g., an attribution to someone other than Joseph), and features that make the Balliol text unique (e.g., Daniel's putative authorship). What makes this text truly stand out, however, is its reception in the early modern period.

The Reception of Mantic Alphabets in Early Modern Europe: Religious Responses to Dream Divination

Dream divination had been under religious scrutiny for a very long time, but matters came to a head in the early modern period in the struggle between the various Christian denominations. One of the most obvious indications of change is the drastically lower number of text witnesses, and an unambiguous sign of religious responses to dream divination can be established by looking at the reception of surviving texts. Though it can only be guessed at how many early printed dream divination manuals must have been destroyed for conflicting with religious doctrine, manuscript transmission provides a good insight into the reception of oneiromancy. It is harder to get rid of an entire manuscript for containing a few pages of dream divination, after all, than it is to throw away a printed book entirely or largely devoted to this topic. Most extant text witnesses show no reader responses at all, but I have identified several manuscripts that shed light on the reception of dream divination in general, and mantic alphabets in particular in the early modern period.[14]

14 I focus here on censorship, which I have only found in manuscripts. It should be noted that early printed dream books sometimes contain comments that shed light on their actual use by early modern dreamers and dream diviners, who added comments in the margins. See, for instance, *Ego sum Daniel propheta* [...] ([Trent: Albrecht Kunne, ca. 1475]; GW 7905; copy Jena, Thüringer Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek, 4 Bud.Var.67(7)), *Interpretationes somniorum Danielis prophete* [...] ([Delft: Jacob Jacobszoon van der Meer or Christiaen Snellaert, 1489x1491]; GW 7929; copy London, Middle Temple Library, L (1)), *Interpretationes somniorum Danielis prophete* [...] ([Cologne: Heinrich Quentell, ca. 1490]; GW 7930; copy Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek, Cultg. 364^{md}), and

In order to introduce the effects of early modern religious responses to dream divination, it is perhaps instructive to present the Balliol text in its current state (Fig. 2).

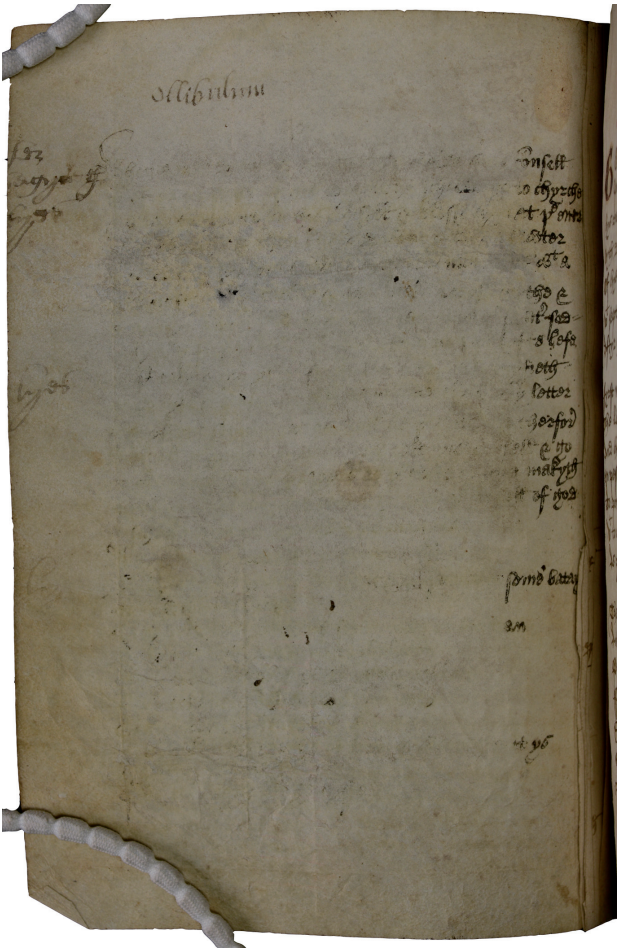

Figure 2: Oxford, Balliol College, MS 329, fol. 79^{v}. Reproduced by kind permission of the Master and Fellows of Balliol College, Oxford

Questi son gli insonij che quando lhomo se insonia de uedere la sua Reuolutione (Milan: Giovanni Angelo Scinzenzeler [1504]; EDIT16 CNCE 54484; copy London, British Library, C.62.b.8). See also Önnerfors 1960: 157–158. A fascinating and intensively used early modern composite miscellany of handwritten texts, incunables, and post-incunables on dream theory and dream divination is Augsburg, Staats- und Stadtbibliothek, 4^{o} Cod 180, entitled *sompniarium*.

Figure 2 shows that the text on folio 79^{v} is almost completely erased, and that five leaves were excised after folio 79. Whoever did these things must have objected to the mantic alphabet, which may have been followed by other texts that did not sit well with the reader either. The reason why the mantic alphabet was censored becomes clear upon examining the outer margin. To the left of the text, a sixteenth-century hand wrote something that is cropped and hard to decipher out of context ("for segyes g"?), but underneath this at regular intervals he wrote the word "lyes". To call a mantic alphabet a lie is thoroughly perplexing because it may refer to putative flaws in the working mechanism of divination, or to a strained relationship between divination and religious doctrine. A reader objecting to the working mechanism of the text could have been just as happy to mutilate the text as a reader objecting to it on religious grounds, so either or both grounds may have motivated the early modern reader to act accordingly. That said, religious doctrine informed any debate on the practical worth of divination in the Middle Ages and early modernity, so the underlying motivation may have been primarily religious. The censor may have been a Catholic who wanted to avoid being accused of practising superstitions, for instance, or he may have sided with reformed denunciations of oneiromancy. Whatever may have been the case, "confessional rivalry turned the major European faiths into competing vehicles for the expression of religious zeal", and Britain was no exception.[15] Representing Familist views on the illusory nature of witchcraft, for instance, Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584) has a chapter "against interpretors of dreames", in which the author criticised dream divination and concluded: "in mine opinion, it is time vainelie emploied, to studie about the interpretation of dreames".[16] Though Scot takes a rational approach by urging people not to study dream divination in the first place, rather than condemning the practice outright, others may have acted more vehemently along the lines of those erasing all references to the popes and Thomas Becket in their books after Henry VIII's proclamations to this effect in 1535 and 1538,[17] one of them being the sixteenth-century reader of Balliol College 329.

Denunciation of oneiromancy was already built into the Old Testament, which condemns those who practise divination and observe dreams, "omnia enim haec abominatur Dominus" (Deut. 18:12).[18] One of the underlying reasons may have been that "the auditory form of prophecy increasingly eclipsed dream interpretation as a legitimate mode of divine access" in the first millennium BC,[19] but the Latin West,

15 Clark 2002: 116.
16 Scot 1584: 180.
17 See Duffy 2005: 379–477, *id.* 2006: 147–170.
18 Gryson and Weber 1994: 260: 'for the Lord abhors all these things'.
19 Noegel 2001: 59.

which did not share the cultural sensibilities that gave rise to the friction between different forms of divination among the Israelites, incorporated Biblical injunctions against the mantic arts into secular law and canon law wholesale.[20] Taking its cue from the writings of Augustine of Hippo, the twelfth-century *Decretum Gratiani*, for instance, lists oneiromancy among prognostication, necromancy, augury, and other forms of divination, and states that "qui adtendunt somnialia scripta, et falso in Danielis nomine intitulata, [...] sciant, se fidem Christianam et baptismum preuaricasse, et paganum, et apostatam, id est retro abeuntem et Dei inimicum, iram Dei grauiter in eternum incurrisse".[21] Here, oneiromancy and other mantic arts were deemed a deliberate and perilous departure from God's guidance, which could only be remedied by abjuration and penance. The *Decretum Gratiani* was not alone in denouncing oneiromancy. Medieval dream divination existed in a tense dynamics that Jean-Claude Schmitt called "the liminality and centrality of dreams", in which the act of dreaming laid bare "the basic limits of ecclesiastical power, showing it incapable of controlling all the arcana of individual religious experience".[22] It is all the more remarkable, therefore, that an incunable edition of a dream divination manual was bound together with a leaf containing a handwritten copy of the complete chapter from the *Decretum Gratiani* condemning divination, and a further fifteen folios with mantic texts, medical excerpts, and charms in various hands.[23]

Whereas dream divination seems to have been under suspicion in the Middle Ages for its false attribution to Biblical authorities such as Daniel and Joseph and, in the case of mantic alphabets, the unauthorised use of lot casting with the help of the Bible, sixteenth-century responses, such as Martin Luther's, focused on its lack of conformity with Biblical revelations. In connection with Luther's critical attitude to revelatory dreams that were not directly and completely based on Biblical precedent, Kelly Bulkeley argued that he "denounced the revelation-seeking incubation practices of certain Christian contemplatives [...], and he advocated the exact opposite practice of praying against any dreams at all. Never was the line separating Christian faith from the dreaming imagination more sharply drawn".[24] Indeed, Luther's comments on Joseph's capacity to interpret dreams (Gen. 40–41)

20 See Harmening 1979: 105–108, Kruger 1992: 11–13, Semeraro: 2002: 37–72.

21 Richter and Friedberg 1879–1881: I, 1045–1046 (pars 2, causa 26, questio 7, cap. 16): 'those who pay attention to dream books, written and falsely entitled with the name of Daniel, [...] let them know that they transgress against the Christian faith and baptism, and, pagan and apostate, that is, going back and hostile to God, they gravely incur the anger of God'.

22 J.-C. Schmitt 1999: 275.

23 See *Danielis. somniorum expositoris veridici* ([Strasbourg: Heinrich Eggestein, ca. 1478]; GW 7909; copy Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, 4 Inc.s.a. 612; facsimile MD).

24 Bulkeley 2008: 186.

leave no room for doubt: "Ideo nihil moror visiones et somnia, et quanquam videntur significantia, tamen contemno, et sum contentus certo sensu et fide scripturae sanctae".[25] He seems to have been of the opinion that if dreams did not exactly replicate Biblical revelations, they were to be rejected.

Dreams were also to be mistrusted because it was sometimes thought impossible to tell true from false dreams, and prophetic from normal dreams. In a sermon on Gen. 40, Luther inveighed against oneiromancy on the grounds that God explicitly instructed mankind not to interpret dreams (Lev. 19:26), arguing that human beings are incapable of establishing the origin of dreams. The mock certainty derived from oneiromancy was deceptive, therefore, since dreams may also be demonically inspired, an argument that was already voiced by the Church Fathers. If God wanted us to know the meaning of dreams, Luther opined, He would reveal it to us; "darůmb las trewme trewme bleiben, wenn sie Gott nicht ausleget".[26] If Protestant reformers agitated in no unclear terms against dream divination, this critical attitude will probably have led their followers to denounce it as well, particularly oneiromancy attributed to such Biblical authorities as Daniel or Joseph rather than to the Greek dream diviners rediscovered by the humanists. That said, Catholics wanted to distance themselves from claims that they practised superstitions; so they too rejected oneiromancy.[27]

The mantic alphabet in Balliol College 329 seems to have fallen into the hands of someone who may have rejected dream divination on religious grounds, and it is the sole British example discovered so far. That this person was not alone in denouncing oneiromancy is corroborated by manuscripts from continental Europe. Several alphabetical dream books, for instance, have been censored for the same reason. One text from the fifteenth century was crossed out by a later reader, and another was censored in the sixteenth century with the comment "sunt superstitiosa deliramenta",[28] in a hand that Alf Önnerfors described as "vermutlich die eines kleingläubigen Humanisten des 16. Jahrhunderts".[29] An alphabeti-

25 Luther 1883–2009: XLIV, 387: 'therefore I do not care at all about visions and dreams; and although they seem to have significance, I still despise them, and I am content with the assured meaning and fidelity of Holy Scripture'.

26 Luther 1883–2009: XXIV, 643: 'let dreams be dreams, therefore, when God does not interpret them'. See also Gantet 2007 and 2010: 84–86, Tuczay 2012: 275.

27 See, for instance, book 2 of the Jesuit Benedict Pereira's *Adversus fallaces et superstitiosas artes, Id est, De magia, de observatione somniorum, &, De Diuinatione Astrologica. Libri tres* (Ingolstadt: David Sartorius, 1591; VD16 P 1362; facsimile MD). See also Gantet 2010: 73–76, Thomas 1971: 25–77.

28 Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 7349, fols. 45^{v}–48^{r}, and St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 304, pp. 5–31: 'these are superstitious delusions'.

29 Önnerfors 1960: 151: 'probably that of a narrow-minded humanist of the sixteenth century'.

cal dream book in the fifteenth-century manuscript Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cgm 270, finally, was cut out, and what was left of the text was crossed out and provided with the comments “ist als erstuncken vnd erlogen vnd wider das erst gepot gotz” (fol. 215^{v}), and “ist erlogen ding vnd wider got vnd vesten glauben” (fol. 216^{r}).[30] The same manuscript has a mantic alphabet censored in similar terms (Fig. 3).

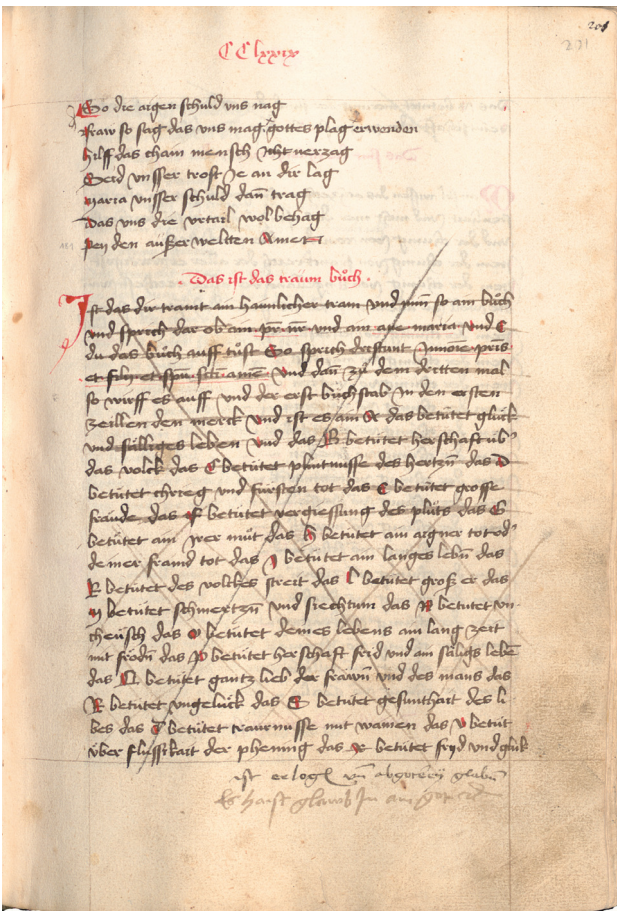

Figure 3: Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cgm 270, fol. 201^{r}. Reproduced by kind permission of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München

30 ‘This is all a stinking lie and against God’s First Commandment’. ‘This is a lie and against God and firm belief’.

The mantic alphabet could not be cut out because the leaf contained other texts to be preserved; so it was crossed out and denounced as follows: "ist erlogen vnd abgoterey glaben", and "es haist glawb in ain got".[31] Composed in Augsburg, this composite manuscript miscellany from ca. 1464 contains a large number of literary poems by local authors, and three mantic texts, to wit the alphabetical dream book, the mantic alphabet, and a copy of the *Sortes Sanctorum* (fol. 186^{v}), a form of lot casting by dice.[32] In the sixteenth century, one of the subsequent owners took offence to some of the poems and all of the mantic contents. Not willing to sacrifice the entire manuscript, he censored individual texts. Some of the poems may have been too profane for the later owner's liking; so they were excised or crossed out. The text on the *Sortes Sanctorum* was almost entirely excised. Yet it is only in the case of the two oneiromantic texts that the owner added denunciations that betrayed his religious proclivities. Since dream divination had become highly suspect doctrinally, older arguments, such as the idea that it was a form of idolatry that went against the First Commandment, became current again in both Protestant and Catholic circles.[33] Similarly, the argument that dream divination was deceptive was voiced frequently and repeatedly from both Protestant and Catholic pulpits, and this must have left its mark on sixteenth-century audiences.

Another type of response is in evidence in yet another South German manuscript. Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 25005 is a late fifteenth-century miscellany that does not deal with the mantic arts primarily, but that has a mantic alphabet on the penultimate folio (Fig. 4).[34] The user of this manuscript was a more successful censor than the owner of Cgm 270, who left the text completely legible. In Clm 25005, on the other hand, the user meticulously erased precisely those four lines of text that contain the directions on how to perform the mantic procedure, right after the introductory phrase "et si habueris secretum somnium et pregnans".[35] Without being instructed that one should open a psalter at random, retrieve a letter at random, and look up this letter in the alphabet key provided, any subsequent reader would be at a loss what to do once he had had a meaningful dream. The censor gave no explicit grounds that could shed light on his motives, but it stands to reason that he objected to the nature of the mantic procedure specifically. Though lot casting by means of the Bible was used by prominent clergy and even led directly to the conversion of Augustine of Hippo, it had been under suspicion from the late antique period onwards, mainly because clerical control

31 'This is a lie and an idolatrous belief'. 'It is decreed, believe in one God'.
32 Schneider 1970: 189–208.
33 See Gantet 2010: 74, 85.
34 Halm and Meyer 1881: 156.
35 'And if you have had a secret dream, pregnant with meaning'.

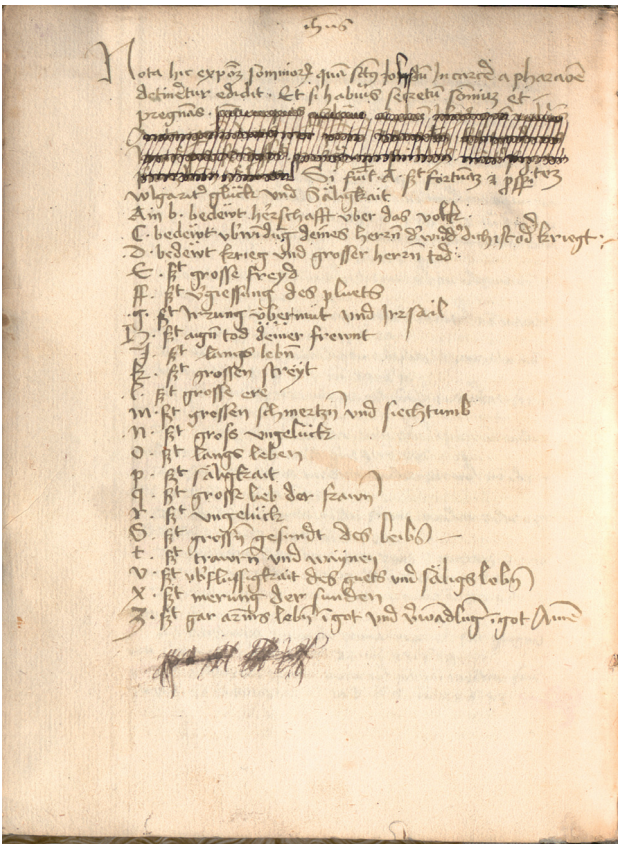

Figure 4: Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 25005, fol. 80^{v}. Reproduced by kind permission of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München

of lot casting could easily be circumvented by anyone with access to a Bible.[36] The user of the mantic alphabet in Clm 25005, therefore, probably disapproved of the use of the psalter in the mantic procedure specifically, not to the practice of dream divination in general. Critical attitudes towards lot casting by means of the Bible are already attested in mantic alphabets that instruct the reader to use any other book rather than a psalter, for instance,[37] but instead of adapting the text to this effect, the user chose to censor it.

36 See Elukin 1993, Harmening 1979: 193–201, Klingshirn 2002, J.-C. Schmitt 1999, Schreiner 2004.

37 See Chardonnens 2013: 351–353.

In an attempt to correct his own work, Johannes Wirsing of Heilsbronn Abbey provides us with the final example (Fig. 5).

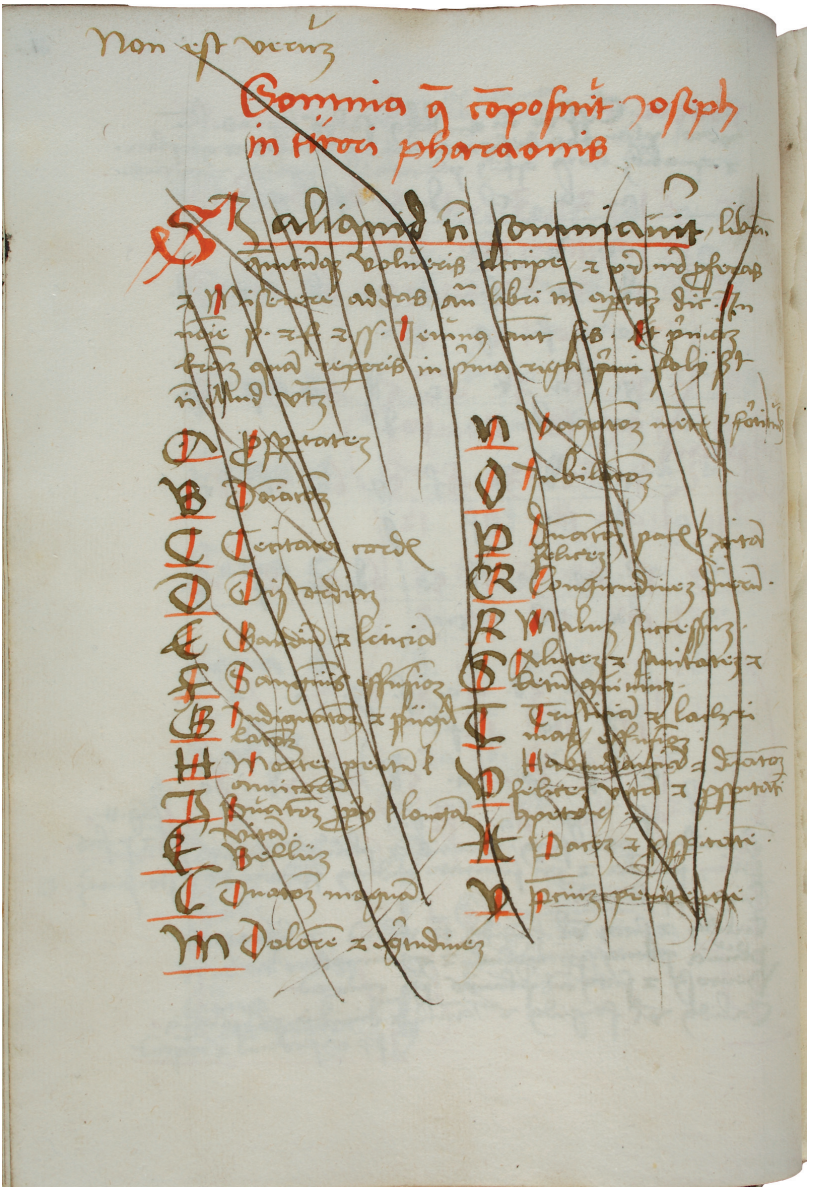

Figure 5: Erlangen, Universitätsbibliothek Erlangen-Nürnberg, MS 475, fol. 51^{v}. Reproduced by kind permission of the Universitätsbibliothek Erlangen-Nürnberg

Erlangen 475 is a *directorium usuale* of the Franconian Abbey of Heilsbronn, produced by Johannes Wirsing in 1516, when he was cantor at the abbey.[38] During his abbacy in the last four years of his life (1548–1552), Wirsing restored Heilsbronn to Cistercian rule (nominally at least) after its lapse into Protestantism;[39] so he must have been acutely aware of the accusations of superstitious practices that were being used by both religious factions. While most of Erlangen 475 is given over to the *directorium usuale* (fols. 52^{r}–184^{v}), the first part of the manuscript contains miscellaneous items, such as a calendar, astrological rules for bloodletting, a text on the four complexions, and, directly preceding the *directorium*, a mantic alphabet. At some point, Wirsing returned to the mantic alphabet and wrote "non est verum" in the top margin, the hand of the main text and the comment being identical. Wirsing's comment is equally ambiguous as the "lyes" of the Balliol text, because it either means that he thought the mantic alphabet did not work properly, or that it was not true in a doctrinal sense, but lacking further evidence, the two views cannot be clearly distinguished. That Wirsing might have regarded the mantic alphabet to be a vain superstition is of course the more attractive option, particularly in view of the fact that the text is crossed out. Yet whoever crossed it out made sure that the text remained legible.

The reception of oneiromancy in manuscripts suggests that the sixteenth-century religious reforms led to changing attitudes on the value of dreams, and though both Protestants and Catholics alike distanced themselves from oneiromancy, Protestant reformers like Martin Luther inveighed most strongly against dream interpretation, particularly against interpretations that could not be shown to derive directly from God or that had no exact Biblical precedent. The cases advanced here bear witness to the reception of dream divination in Europe in a period of far-reaching religious changes. These alphabetical dream books and mantic alphabets were crossed out, erased, cut out and censored by readers who responded negatively to dream divination and lot casting. In Erlangen 475, the person who copied a mantic alphabet returned to it at a later date and denounced it, but the texts in Balliol College 329, Cgm 270 and Clm 25005 were copied in the medieval period and censored by later early modern users who had had no hand in producing the host manuscripts. Judging from the comments that sometimes accompany the censored texts, it is more than likely that these destructive acts were religiously motivated.

38 Fischer 1936: 61–62.

39 Muck 1879–1880: I, 427–450.

Dream Divination in Early Modern Continental Europe: Print Culture

Mantic alphabets made their way into print as early as the publication of the first printed dream divination manuals in about 1475.[40] Named *Somniale Danielis* after the alphabetical dream books that formed the main contents, these dream divination manuals initially consisted of slim volumes of eight, ten, or twelve leaves that contained between 375 and 500 dream interpretations arranged alphabetically. Too brief to be published on their own, mantic alphabets would sometimes fill the final page of such printed *Somniale Danielis*. Sixteen out of forty-two early printed dream divination manuals preserve mantic alphabets, mostly in Latin. Despite the relatively large number of incunables, the publication of dream divination manuals experienced a sharp drop after 1500. Of the thirty editions published in the first half of the sixteenth century, only three contain mantic alphabets, the last text dating to 1537. The sharp decline in the transmission of mantic alphabets in early modernity was in part probably caused by external factors that operated on the settings of dream divination. Though early dream divination manuals were printed in continental Europe exclusively, their disappearance by the mid-sixteenth century will have affected the then emerging market for dream divination in Britain discussed below.

Sixteenth-century printers were prone to recontextualise alphabetical dream books by removing them from a specifically oneiromantic setting and embedding them in the context of dream theory, without also transferring mantic alphabets to this new context. Dream theory covered ideas on the origins and types of dreams, the physiological causes of dreams and their usefulness for medical diagnosis, and explanations of significant dreams from world history. A case in point is *Eyn newes Traum Büchlein*, published around 1535 by the Strasbourg printer Jakob Cammerlander.[41] Subtitled *Von allerhandt Treumen, auß heidnischen vnd Gőtlichen geschrifften, warhafftige, lustige vnd fabulische historien, sampt Daniels des Propheten außlegung vber die Treum Nebucadnezars des kůnigs zů Babilonien. Dan. ij. iiij. vij. viij. Eyn Summarium des traums Scipionis auß dem vj.*

40 For inventories of oneiromantic incunables and post-incunables, see Cooper 1990b, Hélin 1925, Klebs 1938: 114–117, and EDIT16, FB, GW, and VD16.

41 Cammerlander published several editions of this oneiric miscellany in the 1530s and 1540s (see VD16 N 1335 and VD16 ZV 21831). The edition designated VD16 N 1335 actually consists of two discrete printings; compare Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, H: N 97.4° Helmst. (18) ([ca. 1535]; facsimile WDB) and Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Res/4 Phys.m. 114,2 ([ca. 1538]; facsimile MD).

Bůch Ciceronis vom Gemeinen Nutz,[42] Cammerlander's "new dream booklet" covers meaningful dreams taken from Valerius Maximus' *Factorum et dictorum memorabilium libri nouem*, Marcus Antonius Coccius Sabellicus' *Exemplorum libri decem*, the Bible, and Giovanni Boccaccio's *Il decamerone* (fols. 1^{r}–23^{v}).[43] After these dreams based on classical, Biblical, and humanist sources, an alphabetical dream book follows (fols. 23^{v}–32^{r}), which is in turn followed by a summary of Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* (fols. 32^{v}–35^{v}). Cammerlander made a conscious choice to publish a new type of book on dreams, in which dream divination was subservient to dream theory. In fact, the alphabetical dream book is not mentioned at all in the title, nor is it listed in the table of contents, which is otherwise complete. Cammerlander may have been tapping into a new market with his vernacular publication, addressing a readership that was more interested in reading about famous cases of meaningful dreams than in dream divination *per se*.

Jakob Cammerlander was not the first to recontextualise oneiromancy. The earliest attempts at finding a new context for dream divination date from the turn of the sixteenth century. In the dream divination manual probably published by Johannes Winterburger shortly after 1500,[44] the alphabetical dream book is both preceded and followed by observations on the physiological causes of dreams and their import, not by other forms of dream divination as in the incunable editions. So-called somatic dream theories became popular in the late Middle Ages to tell significant dreams from false dreams (which had been a long-standing doctrinal concern anyway), and to use the contents of dreams in diagnostic medicine. Theories on the physiology of dreaming were known in medieval times too, but they were rarely transmitted alongside oneiromantic works in manuscripts,[45] and not at all in incunables. Instead of publishing alphabetical dream books together with other oneiromantic texts, however, many printers of post-incunables would opt to publish alphabetical dream books in the context of dream

42 'A new dream book about all kinds of dreams from pagan and Christian sources, true, humorous, and fabulous histories, including the prophet Daniel's interpretation of the dreams of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia in Dan. 2, 4, 7, 8. With a summary of the *Somnium Scipionis* from the sixth book of Cicero's *De re publica*'.

43 This selection of sources is no coincidence, because Cammerlander published vernacular editions of Valerius Maximus, Sabellicus, and Boccaccio around the same time; see his *Valeriuß Maximus von Gschichten der Rőmer vnd aussers Volcks, Perser, Medier, Griechen, Aphern, Flemming vnd Teutschen* [...] (Strasbourg: 1533; VD16 V 153; facsimile MD), *Exempelbůch Marci Anthonii Sabellici von wunderbarlichen Geschichten* [...] (Strasbourg: 1535; VD16 S 39; facsimile MD), and *Centum Nouella Iohannis Boccacij. Hundert neuwer historien* [...] (Strasbourg: 1535; VD16 B 5821; facsimile MD).

44 *Somnia Danielis* (Vienna: Johannes Winterburger [after 1500?]; GW 7937; facsimile MD).

45 See Chardonnens forthcoming.

theory. Eighteen out of thirty alphabetical dream books printed in the first half of the sixteenth century are situated in the context of dream theory, and only three of these include mantic alphabets.

There is a marked contrast, in short, between incunables and post-incunables dealing with dreams. The former were hospitable to other forms of dream divination alongside alphabetical dream books, whereas the latter increasingly focused on the essentially non-mantic setting of dream theory. In some cases dream theory and dream divination were successfully integrated, as in Jakob Cammerlander's *Eyn newes Traum Büchlein*, or the French court physician Jehan Thibault's *La phisionomie des songes et visions fantastiques*,[46] but sometimes the dream theory was just a thin veneer to give oneiromancy a sense of validity. In nine editions with titles along the lines of *Außlegung des propheten Daniel*, mainly by South German printers,[47] the theory that was supposed to legitimate dream divination occupies a single page preceding the alphabetical dream book, indicating that oneiromancy was still the primary focus in these vernacular prints. That said, the shift from dream divination to dream theory in the early modern period meant that shorter forms of oneiromancy that did not deal with symbolic dreams, such as mantic alphabets, lost a viable context of transmission, but so did alphabetical dream books themselves eventually.

That printed mantic alphabets had died out by 1537 is, therefore, not a total surprise. The last Italian post-incunable to feature a mantic alphabet (ca. 1504) relied on incunable editions in the Italian vernacular.[48] The last German publications to incorporate mantic alphabets date from 1535 and 1537.[49] These publications recontextualised the oneiromantic texts by embedding them in excerpts from Michael Scotus' *De physiognomia*. Despite the new setting for alphabetical dream books, however, by about 1550 even these forms of oneiromancy had vanished from the repertoire of print by continental publishers.

46 Jehan Thibault, *La phisionomie des songes et visions fantastiques* [...] (Lyon: Jacques Moderne [1532x1554]; FB 49256). On Thibault, see Cooper 1990a.

47 See VD16 ZV 923, 925–929, 19888, 28736, and Augsburg, Staats- und Stadtbibliothek, Rar. 82#1 (not listed in VD16, but probably a later edition of ZV 929).

48 *Questi son gli insonij che quando lhomo se insonia de uedere la sua Reuolutione* (Milan: Giovanni Angelo Scinzenzeler [1504]; EDIT16 CNCE 54484).

49 *Die außlegung der Tråum Danielis des Propheten, der da ist gewesen bey den tagen Nabuchodonosor eins Künigs Babylonie. Auch mit etlich Vogel geschrey, durch Mayster Michaelem Scotum von der Natur der Vögel* ([Augsburg: Heinrich Steiner], 1535; VD16 ZV 22619; facsimile MD), *Die außlegung der Treüme Danielis des Propheten* [...] ([Augsburg: Heinrich Steiner], 1537; VD16 ZV 930; facsimile WDB).

Dream Divination in Early Modern Continental Europe: Learned Culture

Concomitant with the displacement of medieval forms of dream divination by dream theory in the sixteenth century, humanist scholars displayed a renewed interest in Greek oneirocritica. Late medieval attempts to make Greek thematic dream books accessible in the Latin West had proven ineffective. In Constantinople in the 1160s, Pascalis Romanus composed the *Liber thesauri occulti*, the first part of which treats of physiological dream theory. The second and third parts constitute a thematic dream book that is silently lifted from the Greek oneirocritica of Artemidorus and Achmet ben Sirin.[50] The *Liber thesauri occulti* is attested in a handful of manuscripts from the twelfth to the fourteenth century, with an abbreviated translation into German by Hans Lobenzweig in the fifteenth century.[51] Already employed by Pascalis Romanus, the thematic oneirocriticon of Achmet ben Sirin was translated into Latin by Leo Tuscus in Constantinople in the 1170s.[52] The Latin text survives in nine manuscripts from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries, with translations into French, German, and Italian.[53]

For texts that had become available in the Latin West around the same time as mantic alphabets, the Greek thematic oneirocritica of Achmet and Artemidorus (initially by way of the *Liber thesauri occulti*) were moderate successes at best, until the early modern period, that is. The oneirocriticon of Achmet proved popular mainly in Italy, where it appeared in four vernacular editions between 1525 and 1551.[54] These editions made use of the Latin translation by Leo Tuscus, translated into Italian by the humanist Paride da Ceresara (Patrizio Tricassso). Also in Italy, a thematic dream book that seems to have relied on the oneirocriticon of Achmet, with an extensive introduction on dream theory, appeared in the

50 See Collin-Roset 1963, *id*. 1969, Ricklin 1998: 307–322.

51 See W. Schmitt 1966, Speckenbach 1995.

52 See Berriot 1989, Lamoreaux 2002: 140–154, Mavroudi 2002, Oberhelman 1991.

53 To the manuscripts listed by Berriot (1989: 51) may be added: Latin: Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, Ricc. 859, London, British Library, Harley 4025, Marburg, Universitätsbibliothek, Mscr. 27, Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, T 81 sup., Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 4094, Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 5221 (facsimile DL), and Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 87.7 Aug. 2°; German: Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 3059.

54 *Expositione de gli insomnii secondo la interpretatione de Indy, Persy, & Egyptii. Tradute de greco in latino. Per Leone Toschano. Et al presente date in luce per il Tricasso Mantuano* (Venice: Helisabetta de Rusconi, 1525; EDIT16 CNCE 29979). Subsequent editions are EDIT16 CNCE 18444, 18445, and 40443.

early sixteenth century under the title *Somnia Salomonis Regis*,[55] while the Italian Girolamo Cardano published his dream theoretical *Somniorum Synesiorum* in Basel in the mid-sixteenth century.[56] The Ὀνειροκριτικών βιβλία πέντε, the oneirocriticon of Artemidorus in the original Greek, was published together with Synesius' Περὶ ἐνυπνίων (*De insomniis*) with the Aldine Press founded by the Venetian humanist scholar Aldus Manutius in 1518.[57] A Latin translation of the oneirocriticon of Artemidorus by the humanist Janus Cornarius was published in 1539.[58] Vernacular translations quickly followed, into German by the humanist Walther Hermann Ryff (1540), and into Italian (1542) and French (1546).[59]

It is conspicuous that so many prominent humanists were involved in the print transmission of Greek oneirocritica. The Greek editions and Latin translations were arguably designed to satisfy a humanist interest in Greek thematic oneirocritica,[60] which may have been considered more ancient, more authoritative sources on dream divination than the medieval Latinate alphabetical dream books attributed to Daniel – though the latter also go back to Greek sources. It may not be a coincidence, in this light, that the Greek edition of Artemidorus included Synesius' Περὶ ἐνυπνίων, which was a *locus classicus* for the theory behind revelatory dreams, and which shed light on, for instance, oneiromantic practices in the Old Testament.[61] The vernacular editions of Greek oneirocritica may have addressed a wider audience than just humanists, though printers such as Sébastien Gryphe and Jean de Tournes, who marketed a number of editions of

55 *Somnia Salomonis Regis Filii Dauid* (Venice: Giovanni Battista Sessa, 1501; EDIT16 CNCE 75768). Another edition was published by the Venetian printers Melchior Sessa and Petrus de Ravanis in 1516 (EDIT16 CNCE 53881; facsimile MD).

56 *Somniorum Synesiorum omnis generis insomnia explicantes, Libri IIII* (Basel: Heinrich Petri [1562]; VD16 C 929; facsimile e-rara). On Cardano's work, see Browne 1979; Rupprecht 1993.

57 Ἀρτεμιδώρου Ὀνειροκριτικῶν βιβλία πέντε. Περὶ ἐνυπνίων Συνεσίου ὡς Λέλουσιν. *Artemidori De somniorum interpretatione Libri Quinque. De insomniis, quod Synesii Cuiusdam nomine circumfertur* (Venice: Aldus, 1518; EDIT16 CNCE 3212; facsimile MD).

58 *Artemidori Daldiani philosophi excellentissimi, De somniorum interpretatione, Libri Quinque* [...] (Basel: Hieronymus Froben, 1539; VD16 A 3825; facsimile e-rara).

59 *Warhafftige gewisse vnd vnbetrügliche vnderweisung wie alle Trǒum Erscheinungen vnnd Nǎchtliche gesicht* [...] *erklǎrt vnnd außgelegt werden sollen* [...] (Strasbourg: Balthasar Beck, 1540; VD16 ZV 789; facsimile MD), *Artemidoro Daldiano philosofo eccellentissimo Dell'interpretatione de sogni* [...] (Venice: Gabriele Giolito de' Ferrari, 1542; EDIT16 CNCE 3213), *Artemidori Daldiani philosophi excellentissimi, De somniorum interpretatione libri quinque* [...] (Lyon: Sébastien Gryphe, 1546; FB 54905).

60 See Gantet 2010: 73–83; Thorndike 1923–1958: VI, 475–484.

61 Synesius' work had already appeared as *De insomniis* in the humanist Marsilio Ficino's Latin translation with the Aldine Press in 1497, in the anthology *Index eorum, quæ hoc in libro habentur* [...] (Venice: Aldus Manutius, 1497; GW M 11750; facsimile e-rara).

Artemidorus in the vernacular, were humanist scholars in their own right. In any case, the decade following the publication of Cornarius' Latin translation of the oneirocriticon of Artemidorus saw no less than eight editions in Latin and the vernaculars, and the USTC reveals that a further 30 editions appeared before the end of the sixteenth century. By the end of the century, Fédéric Morel had published the oneirocriticon of Astrampsychos in Greek and Latin,[62] and a collective edition of four Greek oneirocritica with Latin translations was published by the classical scholar Nicolas Rigault in 1603.[63]

The history of printed dream divination, which is a continental European phenomenon in its early stages, illustrates that the transmission of mantic alphabets was to a large extent linked to that of alphabetical dream books. When printers from Southern Germany, Western Austria, Switzerland, and Northern Italy (the main hub of distribution of mantic alphabets) started publishing alphabetical dream books in the late fifteenth century, they were quick to include mantic alphabets. In the course of the sixteenth century, however, dream theory became an almost necessary context for alphabetical dream books, at the cost of mantic alphabets. At the same time, Greek oneirocritica were being rediscovered by humanists, and this seems to have displaced medieval forms of dream divination. With the loss of a suitable context, mantic alphabets vanished completely from the printed record in the early modern period.

The Transmission of Dream Divination in Early Modern and Modern British and American Sources

The very last mantic alphabets to appear in manuscript form are two texts in Welsh, in Aberystwyth, Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru, Llanstephan 55, pp. 263–264, copied by the Welsh grammarian John David Rhys in Angelsey in 1579, and Llanstephan 88, pp. 49 and 51, copied by the lawyer and manuscript collector John Jones in Flintshire in 1604.[64] Both Rhys and Jones were interested in preserving medieval Welsh sources for antiquarian reasons, and it is likely that they copied these vernacular mantic alphabets from medieval sources.[65] Mantic alpha-

62 Ἀστραμψυχου Ὀνειροκριτικα, κατ' ἀλφαβητον. *Astrampsychi versus somniorum interpretes* (Paris: Fédéric Morel, 1597; FB 54964).

63 Nicolas Rigault, *Artemidori Daldiani & Achmetis Sereimi F. Oneirocritica. Astrampsychi et Nicephori versus etiam Oneirocritici* (Paris: Marcus Orry, 1603; facsimile e-rara).

64 Evans 1898–1910: II, 549–553, and 561–562, respectively. See also Förster 1936.

65 See Förster 1936: 243, n. 28.

bets in Britain had already died out in insular French in the fourteenth century, in English in the fifteenth, and in insular Latin in the sixteenth. For whatever reason, a British or English-language market for printed dream divination was slow to emerge, and when it did, it differed substantially from that of continental Europe. These differences had consequences for the transmission of mantic alphabets in print, to such an extent that I have been able to identify just three printed English mantic alphabets so far, in a series of related modern publications from the United States.

There are no incunable or post-incunable dream divination manuals printed in Britain, and the first printed publications only emerged in the second half of the sixteenth century. At this time, printed alphabetical dream books were fragmentarily transmitted in Britain and set in the context of divination or dream theory. Texts published in this way were both very rare and hardly ever attributed to Daniel, an exception being *Here begynneth the Dreames of Daniell* from the 1550s.[66] Subtitled *The Exposycions of the .xij. Sygnes, deuyded by the .xii. Monthes of the yeare. And also the Destenyes both of man and woman borne in eache Monthe of the yere*, this publication is devoted to a range of mantic practices, and the highly abbreviated alphabetical dream book occupies a mere six out of forty-eight pages. The dream books published by Thomas Hill in the 1560s and 1570s (and singled out for ridicule by Reginald Scot) combined dream theory and cases of dream interpretation with "certain briefe Dreames gathered out of the Pamphlettes of the wyse Salomon holye Ioseph, and Daniell the Prophet, with others now newlye added".[67] Reminiscent of Cammerlander's *Eyn newes Traum Büchlein*, Hill's *The moste pleasaunte Arte of the Interpretacion of Dreames* focused on dream theory rather than dream divination, even though the title would suggest it to be the other way around. Neither *The Dreames of Daniell* nor Hill's publications include any other form of oneiromancy than alphabetical dream books.

In seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Britain, the thematic oneirocriticon of Artemidorus was frequently published as an independent text, whereas the older alphabetical dream books were integrated into fortune tellers that covered a wide range of mantic arts. The first undisputed English-language publication of

66 *Here begynneth the Dreames of Daniell. With the Exposycions of the .xij. Sygnes, deuyded by the .xii. Monthes of the yeare. And also the Destenyes both of man and woman borne in eache Monthe of the yere. Very necesairye to be knowen*, sig. A 2^{r}–4^{v} (London: Robert Wyer [1556]; facsimile EEBO).
67 Thomas Hill, *The moste pleasaunte Arte of the Interpretacion of Dreames, whereunto is annexed sundry Problemes with apte aunsweares neare agreeing to the matter, and very rare examples, not the like extant in the English tongue*, sig. N 6^{v} (London: Thomas Marsh, 1576; facsimile EEBO). On Hill's *Interpretacion of Dreames* and the *Little treatise of the interpretation of dreams, fathered on Joseph* (London: William Copland, 1567) ascribed to Hill, see Holland 1999.

Artemidorus dates from 1606, and the oneirocriticon was frequently reprinted,[68] even in Welsh.[69] In contrast to continental practice, alphabetical dream books continued to be printed, but as before not as independent publications. The new setting for alphabetical dream books were fortune tellers, which were published piecemeal in the second half of the seventeenth century, but later in ever increasing numbers. Fortune tellers treat many mantic practices in a single book, including popular astrology, geomancy, chiromancy, physiognomy, metoposcopy, moleomancy, and prognostication. Needless to say, oneiromancy found a hospitable setting in such mantic compendia. *The True Fortune-Teller* from 1686, for instance, deals with all mantic practices outlined just now, and has several chapters on dreams, including one on "Dreams and their Observations or Interpretations, according to the good or bad accidents that frequently befall man-kind".[70] Likewise, *The Compleat Book of Knowledge* from 1698 has a chapter entitled "The Wisdom of the Ancients, in the Interpretation of Dreams: Collected Alphabetically out of Approved Authors".[71] A final example is *Aristotle's Legacy*, from ca. 1699, which has a chapter on "Dreams, as they tend to good or bad fortune, with their interpretations".[72] The alphabetical dream books in these publications have in common that they are anonymous, and they are invariably embedded in a larger mantic context.

From the very end of the eighteenth century onwards, independently published alphabetical dream books reappeared, and they have not been out of print since. The comeback of alphabetical dream books took place all over Europe, Russia, and the United States.[73] These alphabetical dream books are either anonymous or composed by pseudo-authorities, and enlighten a popular audience

68 *The Iudgement, or exposition of Dreames, Written by Artimodorus, an Auntient and famous Author, first in Greeke, then Translated into Latin, After into French, and now into English* (London: William Jones, 1606). Thorndike (1923–1958: VI, 476) counted twenty-four English editions of Artemidorus up to 1740. An English translation of the oneirocriticon of Artemidorus from 1563 is reported by Gantet (2010: 77), but I have been unable to identify this book. Holland (1999: 129, n. 10) identified an English Artemidorus putatively printed in 1558 or 1559.

69 *Gwir ddeongliad breuddwydion* ([Shrewsbury: Thomas Jones, 1698]; facsimile EEBO).

70 *The True Fortune-Teller, or, Guide to Knowledge. Discovering the whole Art of Chyromancy, Physiognomy, Metoposcopy, and Astrology* [...], sig. F 4^{v}–10^{v} (London: printed for John Harris, 1686; facsimile EEBO).

71 *The Compleat Book of Knowledge: Treating of the Wisdom of the Antients* [...], 77–97 (London: W. Onley, 1698; facsimile EEBO).

72 *Aristotle's Legacy: or, His Golden Cabinet of Secret Opened* [...], 14–16 (London: printed for J. Blare [1699]; facsimile EEBO).

73 For the transmission of Russian dream divination, see Wigzell 1998: 17–30. A study of modern dream divination in Europe and the United States is sadly lacking, but see Long 2001, Weiss 1944a and 1944b.

with occult knowledge of a putatively ancient, exotic, or even divine origin.[74] The attribution to Daniel, though, was lost permanently. Many alphabetical dream books were published for an audience that was sincerely interested in interpreting the meaning of their dreams. At a more mundane level, however, modern dream books sometimes served a double purpose in that they were integrated in pamphlets that marketed patent medicine or other merchandise, particularly in the United States.[75] Alternatively, they link dreams to lucky numbers for the policy playing system.[76] Also known as the numbers game, the policy system is a type of lottery that originated in seventeenth- or eighteenth-century Europe, and that is still popular nowadays in Italy and the United States. It entails betting small amounts of money on combinations of lucky numbers in daily lotteries. In an attempt to establish the winning numbers methodically, external aids were resorted to, such as dreams, personal names, and dates, which corresponded to lucky numbers.

The Rediscovery of Mantic Alphabets in Modern American Policy Playing Guides

Some policy playing guides contain lists of lucky numbers for dreams only, but others hold lists of all kinds of things linked to lucky numbers, including the letters of the alphabet. Yet such alphabetical lists do not constitute mantic alphabets that can compare to their medieval counterparts. *Prof. De Herbert's Success Dream Book*, p. 169 (1928), for instance, features a list in which the letter *A* stands for 387, *B* for 532, *C* for 765, etc., *Prof. Konje's Lucky Star Dream Book*, p. 192 (1931), also printed by the New York publisher G. Parris, has 541 for *A*, 982 for *B*, 693 for *C*, etc. These examples demonstrate that the mantic use of the letters of the alphabet in these divination manuals is different from that in medieval mantic alphabets. This does not mean, however, that there are no modern printed

74 See, for instance, *Madame Juno's Gypsy Queen Dream Book and Fortune Teller* (undated), Margarete Ward's *Gong Hee Fot Choy Dream Book* (1940), and *Raphael's Book of Dreams* (1886).

75 See, for instance, *Dr. Chase's Dream Book* (undated), *Dr. D. Jayne's Dream Book and Fortune Teller* (1932), *Dr. Kilmer's Swamp-Root Almanac* (1923), and *Dr. Morse's Indian Root Pills Dream Book* (undated), *The Yankee Dream Book, Compliments of Heydt Bakery* (1902).

76 See, for instance, *Carlotta de Barsy's Great Dream Book with Lucky Numbers* (1899), *Genuine Afro Dream Book: The Right Numbers from Dreams* (1939), *Gypsy Witch Dream Book and Policy Players Guide* (1902), *King Tut Dream Book: Policy Player and Fortune Teller* (1931), and *Solid Gold Dream Book* (1933). See also Davies 2009: 144, Grottanelli 1999.

mantic alphabets. I have identified three related American publications that have genuine mantic alphabets, which are also used for predicting lucky numbers.

Policy playing once being popular among the black population of the United States, one of the oldest policy playing guides published for this market is *Aunt Sally's Policy Players' Dream Book and Wheel of Fortune*, first printed in 1889 by Henry J. Wehman of New York. Depicting a black woman (Aunt Sally) on the front cover, this policy playing guide is still available in print today. It contains several dream books with lucky numbers, a reprint of an older geomantic oracle called *Napoleon's Book of Fate*, and miscellaneous lists of items corresponding to lucky numbers. Entitled "Alphabet Letters", one of these lists is as follows (p. 116):

> To dream of the letters of the alphabet signifies an exalted position in society. Herewith is appended the signification of each, with their numbers:
> *A.*–Denotes ambition. 1, 5, 40.
> *B.*–Denotes beauty. 2, 8, 29.
> *C.*–Charity to all. 3, 9, 46.
> *D.*–Dangerous companions. 4, 8, 16.
> *E.*–You must endeavor to become popular. 5, 22, 25.
> *F.*–Faithfulness in love. 5, 9, 16.
> *G.*–Gentility. 9, 40, 57.
> *H.*–Denotes honesty. 9, 47, 69.
> *I.*–Augurs ill to the dreamer. 5, 9, 17.
> *J.*–Joy and gladness. 7, 19, 57.
> *K.*–Denotes maliciousness. 38, 46, 63.
> *L.*–Love and honor. 27, 38, 69.
> *M.*–Mercy and truth. 7, 16, 31.
> *N.*–Denotes integrity. 27, 73, 72.
> *O.*–Denotes enterprise. 19, 21, 56.
> *P.*–Prepare for misfortune. 3, 20, 28.
> *Q.*–Denotes quarrels. 1, 12, 60.
> *R.*–Ruin and disgrace. 16, 28, 43.
> *S.*–High standing in society. 19, 38, 57.
> *T.*–Truth and honor. 60, 69, 75.
> *U.*–Denotes that you are very useful. 11, 14, 39.
> *V.*–Vexation and crosses in love. 10, 15, 44.
> *W.*–Denotes increase of riches. 15, 26, 69.
> *X.*–Shows a stubborn disposition. 6, 13, 43.
> *Y.*–Loss of friends. 1, 8, 25.
> *Z.*–Hasty news. 3, 19, 27.

Basing itself closely on *Aunt Sally's Policy Players' Dream Book*, the publisher I. & M. Ottenheimer of Baltimore produced a divination manual entitled *Old Aunt Dinah's Policy Player's Sure Guide to Lucky Dreams and Lucky Numbers* (undated, 1910s?). The debt to Wehman's publication is apparent upon comparing the

contents of the two policy playing guides, including a list headed "Letters" on pages 112–113, which has an identical alphabet key, preceded by this preface: "To dream of the letters of the alphabet signifies a high position in society. 26, 31, 58. Below a correct list and their signification; also, their numbers attached". Dated to 1886 but more likely hailing from the 1920s based on its appearance, I. & M. Ottenheimer published another divination manual entitled *The Japanese Fate Book, Or Wheel of Gold: A Complete Interpreter of Dreams, Having also Attached to Every Dream Its Fortunate Numbers*. This publication probably targeted a more general audience than just black communities, judging by the appeal to an exotic Japanese origin rather than the traditional wisdom of the black Aunt Sally and Aunt Dinah depicted on the front cover of their respective guides. In any case, the contents of *The Japanese Fate Book* are remarkably similar to the *Aunt Sally's Policy Players' Dream Book* and *Old Aunt Dinah's Policy Player's Sure Guide to Lucky Dreams*, even including a list headed "Letters" on pages 118–119, with the same alphabet key as the others, and this preface: "To dream of letters signifies to the dreamer a high position in society. 26. 31. 58. Below you will find a correct list of them and what they denote; also, their numbers attached".

The three mantic alphabets introduced above are the only ones to appear in print after 1537, and the first ever English-language texts in print. They have a number of things in common with the medieval mantic alphabets discussed here. Some of the interpretations, for instance, are similar to those of older mantic alphabets, though they are linked to different letters. Modern "Gentility" (*G*), for instance, resembles medieval "nobilitatem" (*F*),[77] modern "joy and gladness" (*J*) medieval "ioye and mikell gladnes" (*E*),[78] modern "quarrels" (*Q*) medieval "stryfe" (*K*),[79] modern "enterprise" (*O*) medieval "besinesse" (*B*),[80] and modern "increase of riches" (*W*) medieval "augmentis pecunie" (*X*).[81] There is no single medieval mantic alphabet in existence, however, that has more than a few readings in common with the text in the policy playing guides. There are, moreover, some telling differences between the modern mantic alphabets and their medieval counterparts. The letters, for instance, are not to be retrieved through bibliomancy, but through their appearance in dreams (l. 1); so the modern text is purely oneiromantic rather than a combined form of oneiromancy and bibliomancy. The mantic application in the modern text also serves an additional, lottery function

77 Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Hamilton 390, fol. 26^{v} (facsimile DS; ed. Tobler 1883: 86).

78 Manchester, John Rylands University Library, Lat. 228, fol. 60^{r}.

79 *Ibid*.

80 Oxford, Balliol College, MS 329, fol. 79^{v}.

81 Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 7349, fol. 45^{v}.

unknown before (l. 2). The most significant difference, though, is that the modern mantic alphabets are almost entirely acrostic (*A* stands for "ambition", *B* for "beauty", *C* for "charity", etc.), except for the letters *K, N, O, W* (but "wealth" is implied with the phrase "increase of riches"), *X, Y*, and *Z*.

A key feature of mantic alphabets is that they are essentially non-acrostic, but I have argued elsewhere that mantic alphabets developed out of acrostic abecedaries in early post-Conquest England in light of correspondences between the Old English alphabet prognostic, Anglo-Saxon religious acrostics, and mantic alphabets.[82] If this is indeed the case, mantic alphabets may have come full circle with the publication of the policy playing guides. On a final note, pending further research into modern dream divination, it is unknown whether the anonymous makers of the modern divination manuals were inspired by medieval oneiromantic practices, or whether they simply reinvented the mantic alphabet because they saw an opportunity for yet another list of things that could be converted to lucky numbers.

Conclusion

By printing mantic alphabets, the nineteenth- and twentieth-century publishers of policy playing guides single-handedly undid what religious reforms, printers and humanists had accomplished in the sixteenth century. This was probably not due to a conscious effort on the part of these modern publishers to introduce a medieval form of oneiromancy anew. Instead, the re-emergence of mantic alphabets is most likely a by-product of the urge to supply as many lists of lucky numbers as possible, though it is telling that the composer of *Aunt Sally's Policy Players' Dream Book* did not simply list the lucky numbers against the letters of the alphabet, as the maker of *Prof. De Herbert's Success Dream Book* had done. Early modern printers and humanists probably did not make any conscious effort either to make medieval forms of dream divination obsolete, but a survey of the printing history suggests that the first half of the sixteenth century was a period of great change for dream divination and dream theory. While all kinds of ideas relating to the origins, causes, and types of dreams were given free rein in early modern printed books, medieval forms of oneiromancy were being transmitted in dwindling numbers. They were eventually unable to withstand the competition offered by the Greek oneirocritica published and studied by humanist scholars. The manuscript evidence demonstrates that dream divination was under close scrutiny by parties on both sides of the religious reforms. It is therefore no surprise that

82 See Chardonnens 2012 and 2013: 344–347.

mantic alphabets and other forms of dream divination suffered at the hands of disgruntled Christian readers, a case in point being the English text in Balliol College 329 and the texts mangled by continental European readers. From our perspective the English mantic alphabets in the fifteenth-century manuscript Balliol College 329 and the modern policy playing guides are worlds and even cultures apart, but "the wonder is not that older systems of divination should have lasted so long, but that we should now feel it possible to do without them".[83] It is hoped that mantic alphabets and other lost forms of dream divination will emerge once more in a future that leans less towards scientism than the present does.[84]

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83 Thomas 1971: 660.

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