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Women, Men, and Love Magic in Late Medieval English Pastoral Manuals

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Toward the end of their notorious discussion of why women were more likely to be witches than men, the authors of the *Malleus Maleficarum* described how magic could be used to affect love and sex by “diverting the minds of men to irregular love” and “impeding the procreative force.” Not surprisingly, given the subject matter of the chapter, the people they described as most likely to do this were women, especially women who were engaged in illicit sexual relationships: “those who are more inflamed with the purpose of satisfying their base lustings, like adulteresses, female fornicators and the concubines of powerful men.”¹

Recent studies have suggested that the *Malleus* was not alone in associating magic connected with love and sex with women. Historians working on ecclesiastical writing in particular argue that many medieval churchmen viewed erotic magic as a female activity, as indeed they did some other kinds of magic.² Research based on other evidence often presents a similar picture. Thus, Richard Kieckhefer has pointed out that “a disproportionate number of the people tried for use of erotic magic were women,” and this is true of the fifteenth-century trial records from Lausanne and Lucerne studied by Susanna Burghartz.³ More recently Corinne Saunders and Laine E. Doggett have argued that it is usually women who use magic for erotic purposes in medieval English and French literature.⁴ Studies of the inquisition and witch trial records surviving from the early modern period make many of the same points in more detail: women were more likely to be put on trial for using love magic than men; knowledge about love and sex magic was transmitted through female networks; and the women most likely to be tried were those involved in illicit relationships, notably prostitutes.⁵

This is not to say men were never believed to do magic for purposes related to love and sex, and many of the scholars mentioned above also discuss cases in which men were accused. A few have gone further and identified certain regions in which men were more likely be suspected than women, as David Gentilcore has for southern Italy and Kevin Robbins for western France.⁶ Studies of medieval and early modern magical texts have also shown that it was men who used these works for erotic purposes, which is not surprising, since men were more likely than women to have access to these books.⁷ Nevertheless, these exceptions tend to be associated with particular contexts and circumstances. Despite the *Malleus*’s misogyny, therefore, it has often seemed that its presentation of love magic as a primarily female activity, associated especially with illicit sexuality, reflected more widespread

attitudes in medieval and early modern culture. However, a closer examination of the medieval evidence suggests that love magic was not always associated so strongly with women or with illicit relationships, even by the churchmen whose views of magic are often presented as especially gendered. This paper will reexamine the gendering of love magic in one particular kind of late medieval ecclesiastical writing: pastoral manuals, which were written to teach priests how to preach, hear confessions, and generally conduct the pastoral care of the laity.⁸

Works on pastoral care were written throughout the Middle Ages, but they began to be produced in large numbers in the period following the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, as part of a wider program of religious reform. These post-1215 manuals took many different forms. Some were long treatises known as *summas*, which summarized the canon law and theology relating to pastoral care. It seems likely that these were read mainly by well-educated clergy who had access to libraries, such as students in cathedral schools or friars studying in the schools of their orders; some parish priests did own them, especially in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but many others may not have had the money to buy a long textbook or the education to read one.⁹ Alongside the *summas*, there were also shorter, simpler works that listed questions for a priest to ask in confession, and these are more likely to have circulated among large numbers of parish priests and friars and to have influenced how they went about hearing confessions. In addition to priests' manuals and guides to confession, there were also a variety of aids to preaching, including collections of *exempla*, short moral stories that preachers could use to liven up sermons.¹⁰ When they criticized the sins that pervaded medieval society, many of these pastoral works discussed magic and a significant minority of them mentioned one or more forms of love magic. Often they drew their comments from earlier sources, but some writers also described practices that they claimed were current in the world around them.

This late medieval pastoral writing has received comparatively little attention from historians of love magic, although studies of the period before 1100 have used sermons and penitentials (lists of suggested penances for sins) to look at this and other forms of magic.¹¹ Heide Dienst and Karin Baumann have discussed the presentation of love magic in some late medieval German pastoral treatises and sermons as part of wider studies of magic in these sources,¹² but texts from other parts of Europe remain largely unexplored. Nevertheless, these pastoral works are important sources that offer an interesting contrast to the better known fifteenth-century treatises on witchcraft such as the *Malleus Maleficarum* or Johannes Nider's *Formicarius*. First, unlike witchcraft treatises, they were written throughout the late Middle Ages, across much of western Europe. They therefore enable us to assess the views of a wider range of medieval churchmen than the more geographically and chronologically restricted treatises on witchcraft. Second, in contrast to some witchcraft treatises, the authors of pastoral works were not seeking to present a radical view of magic but rather to set out what they believed most priests should know. They are therefore more likely to summarize views held by the majority of educated clergy.

This is especially true of pastoral works that were copied widely over several centuries. Written in Latin, the international language of the church, and carried and copied by the orders of friars, some pastoral manuals achieved a very wide circulation indeed. For

example, the *Summa on the Vices and Virtues* written in the 1230s by Guillaume Peyraut (or Peraldus), a Dominican friar based in Lyons, and the *Summa for Confessors*, written by the German Dominican John of Freiburg in the 1290s, both survive in well over a hundred manuscripts, which are widely dispersed across Europe. Moreover, they continued to be copied into the fifteenth century and were printed in the early modern period.¹³ The canon law they drew on, particularly in regard to magic as a cause of sexual impotence, was also common to the whole medieval western church. Thus, although individual pastoral works vary in format and origin, important aspects of their teachings were shared over a long period of time.¹⁴ However, despite these similarities, pastoral manuals also reflected to some extent the contexts in which their authors lived and worked. Peter Biller has suggested that their discussions of marriage may reflect differing regional marriage patterns and customs. Thus, manuals from northern Europe tend to say more about the church's involvement in the marriage ceremony than their southern counterparts, while manuals from southern Europe, written in regions where women often married very young, are more interested in discussing the minimum age for marriage.¹⁵ There are also some pastoral works that seem to describe very local concerns and practices: for example, a manual by the early-fourteenth-century German Franciscan friar Rudolf (surviving in only one manuscript) describes in great detail various forms of love magic that Rudolf claims women in his region use to secure happy and fertile marriages.¹⁶ The most common pastoral works do, therefore, set out attitudes to love magic that were probably widely held by educated churchmen across Europe in the later Middle Ages, but these were subject to local variations, which means it is helpful to focus on the manuals of a particular region.

This paper will focus on the pastoral manuals that were written in England between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, but it will also bring in material from some of the most influential continental works that circulated in England and shaped the attitudes of educated clergy there. It will also bring in some material from *exempla*. *Exempla* were written to entertain as well as educate, and collections of them include several colorful stories about love magic and its practitioners. The *exempla* tend to offer dramatic descriptions of love magic and for this reason they may not describe practices that were common. Nevertheless, they were written by and for the same audience as the more sober treatises on confession and preaching; and indeed some of these treatises include *exempla* as part of their text. The *exempla* therefore help to shed light on clerical stereotypes relating to love magic and the people who used it.

Pastoral manuals and *exempla* describe the use of magic for a variety of purposes connected to love, sex, and reproduction. Most often they discuss the use of magic to arouse love or sexual desire between two people, or to impede it by causing hatred or sexual impotence. Much more rarely they discuss the use of magic to achieve other related goals, such as to predict the identity of a future spouse or to help or impede the conception of a child.¹⁷ This paper will focus on the forms of magic that are designed directly to arouse or impede love and/or sexual desire, which are the most commonly mentioned. How far did English pastoral writers, and the texts they were reading, associate these forms of magic with women, or with illicit relationships?

As well as exploring how far late-medieval English pastoral writers associated love magic with women, the paper will also ask how far they presented men and women as performing the same types of love magic. This question has been prompted by two studies that suggest that in some periods, men and women were believed to perform love magic for significantly different purposes. The more detailed of these is a book by Christopher Faraone about love magic in ancient Greece. Here Faraone argues that ancient Greek men performed what he calls *er s*-magic. This was meant to induce uncontrollable sexual desire, in order to seduce a woman away from her existing spouse or family. The second type of love magic Faraone terms *philia*-magic. This was designed to induce feelings of affection, which might include a sexual component but did not only aim at provoking desire. Faraone argues that this was usually done by women, either wives or mistresses, to protect their existing relationship with a man. There were exceptions to this pattern, but Faraone suggests that even these exceptions reinforce the gendered nature of love magic overall. Thus, the few men who were portrayed as using *philia*-magic found themselves in similar situations to wives: socially inferior and dependent on the favor of a powerful man. Conversely, the women who were portrayed in literature as performing *er s*-magic were often prostitutes and were described by the sources in terms similar to those used to discuss men: as aggressive, autonomous, and free to indulge their passions.¹⁸ In response to Faraone's book, some specialists on ancient magic have questioned whether the situation was really so clear cut. Thus, Matthew Dickie emphasizes that both sexes performed love magic and questions how marked the distinction between *philia*- and *er s*-magic was.¹⁹ There are also various ways in which the two categories overlapped in practice. For example, magic that aimed to seduce a person might also involve breaking up their relationships with existing sexual partners, something that, as we will see, is also evident in the Middle Ages.²⁰ Alternatively, the same person might under different circumstances seek to seduce a person or to preserve the relationship they already had, as Faraone argues for ancient Greek prostitutes, who are depicted as using magic both to seduce new clients and to keep the love of current ones.²¹ Nevertheless, other specialists on ancient magic argue that even if the real situation was more complicated, Faraone's model is useful and explains some aspects of the evidence well.²²

More recently, Stephen Mitchell's book on magic in the medieval Nordic world has also sought to distinguish between men's and women's love magic, although Mitchell devotes less space to the issue than does Faraone. Mitchell distinguishes not between magic to seduce and magic to produce affection, but between magic to seduce and magic to break up a relationship. He argues that magic that aimed to arouse sexual desire or seduce others into sex was mainly viewed as a male activity, directed at women (although sagas do include a few examples of women using it). By contrast, magic that aimed to prevent sex or break up a relationship was generally associated with women, both in literary sources and in the small number of surviving trial records.²³

These studies suggest that it is worth asking new questions about the gendering of love magic in medieval England, and also in other societies and periods. Did the pastoral manuals that were written and read by English churchmen associate men and women with different kinds of love magic, and if so, do their views correspond with Mitchell or Faraone's findings? This is not easy to answer because most pastoral writers only commented on love

magic briefly, mentioning perhaps one practitioner or practice. Nevertheless, when a range of pastoral manuals are examined, they do allow us to draw some conclusions about churchmen's views of love magic. For a significant group of pastoral writers, love magic does not seem to have been strongly gendered at all. However, other writers did associate love magic with one sex or the other. When they did so, they tended to associate some forms of love magic with women and others with men; and some forms of magic were thought to be used within marriage while others were used outside it. Pastoral manuals therefore offer an additional perspective on the gendering of love magic in the Middle Ages, which does not always corroborate the trial records, witchcraft manuals and literature which focus mainly on women's love magic.

NON-GENDER-SPECIFIC LOVE MAGIC

A significant number of later medieval treatises on confession and pastoral care that mentioned love magic did not specify whether they expected men or women to do it. (This was far less common in *exempla*, which generally explained who had done the magic as part of the stories they told.) Latin phrases such as “If someone ...” (*Si quis*), “If [the penitent] has done ...” (*Si fecerit*) or “Have you done ...” (*Fecisti*) could refer either to male penitents or to men and women collectively. This non-gender-specific phrasing was not new: some earlier penitentials, notably those from early medieval Ireland, included “gender-neutral” questions about love magic,²⁴ but it remained current in the later medieval manuals. One of several short treatises on confession composed by Robert Grosseteste, bishop of Lincoln (d. 1253), included under the questions that priests should ask about the sin of lust, “Have you performed magic [*sortilegia ... excercuisti*] or incantations for things of this sort?”²⁵ Authors of longer pastoral manuals sometimes used similar phrases. The *Oculus Sacerdotis* (*Priest's Eye*), a long priest's manual that was written in the 1320s by the English priest and canon lawyer William of Pagula and circulated well in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, asked under the sin of lust “If [the penitent] has done conjurations or other magic or put faith in things of this sort.”²⁶ The phrasing of these questions could apply equally to male or female penitents.

The works of Robert Grosseteste and William of Pagula do not seem to have reached a wide readership outside England, but this gender-neutral phrasing was not purely an English phenomenon, and similar phrases can also be found in works that reached a Europe-wide readership. For example, the *Somme le Roi*, a vernacular guide to confession written in 1279–80 by the Dominican friar Laurent, confessor to King Philip III of France, used the word “those” [*ceus*] to describe people who used magic to make married couples hate each other or unable to have sex, and to make unmarried people fall in love.²⁷ The *Somme le Roi* influenced many later pastoral works and was translated into several vernacular languages, including more than once into English: its fourteenth- and fifteenth-century English translators preserved its neutral phrasing.²⁸

Sometimes pastoral writers did not specify who the practitioner of love magic was because their discussions were focused on other issues. This was especially true when they discussed magic that caused impotence. Short confession treatises rarely mentioned this use of magic, but longer pastoral manuals discussed it routinely in their sections on marriage law, because

impotence was a ground for annulling a marriage and special rules applied if it was caused by magic.²⁹ In this context, many writers were primarily interested in explaining the annulment rules, so they focused on issues such as the differences between magical and natural impotence and the laws regarding proof and remarriage, rather than on who was supposed to have caused the impotence or why (although there were a few exceptions, which will be discussed below). Thus two of the most widely circulated thirteenth-century *summas* did not mention who might do impotence magic: the *Summa on Marriage* written by the Catalan Dominican friar Raymond of Peñafort in the 1230s, and the *Summa for Confessors* of John of Freiburg, written in the 1290s. Both of these works focused instead on the annulment rules.³⁰ Moreover, neither Raymond nor John discussed love magic in their separate sections on other forms of magic (which in Raymond's case appeared in his earlier *Summa on Penance*, to which the *Summa on Marriage* was appended).³¹ In the works of these two influential writers, then, there was no suggestion that any form of love magic was predominantly done by women; or, indeed, by men.

The writers quoted so far were simply unspecific about whether men or women did love magic, but the author of one short, anonymous thirteenth-century treatise on confession went further and used language that actively encompassed both genders. This work survives in two manuscripts, both from thirteenth-century England. One of the two manuscripts was probably owned by the Dominican friars, but it seems likely that the treatise was also written with the lower secular clergy in mind.³² Its anonymous author included among the questions that priests could ask penitents about magic, "If [the penitent] has cast hate or enmities between some people, or arranged for it to be cast, or has ever put something in anyone's food or drink in order to bind him or her [*ipsum vel ipsam*] to illicit love."³³ The author's emphasis that the victim could be of either sex implies that the person doing the magic could, too. This author was unusual in stating so clearly that both men and women did love magic and he does not seem to have influenced later writers. However, the much better known treatises of Raymond of Peñafort, John of Freiburg, William of Pagula, and Laurent (both in the original French and in the English translations) meant that depictions of love magic that were not gender specific were in wide circulation among medieval churchmen in both England and continental Europe. This perspective sets these sources apart from both Faraone and Mitchell's models, and suggests that gender was not always central to how medieval churchmen thought about love magic.

LOVE MAGIC BY MEN

This gender-neutral strand of pastoral writing on love magic is important because it is found in several of the most widely circulated and most influential treatises. Nevertheless, many English pastoral manuals said more about the people who performed love magic or asked others to perform it on their behalf, and when they did so a surprising number of them singled out men. Some of these writers drew their comments from much earlier penitentials. For example, a treatise on confession by William de Montibus, a theologian and teacher based at Lincoln Cathedral who died in 1212, quoted a passage from the penitentials that prescribed penances for various people who did love magic: "Item, someone who has been a magician [*maleficus*] for love, if [he] destroys no one and is a layman, let him do penance for half a year. If [he is] a cleric, one year. If a deacon, for three years.... If a priest, five

years.” The first part of the passage, beginning with “who” (*qui*), could refer to men alone or to both men and women, but the references to clerics, deacons, and priests are specifically male.³⁴

Several other thirteenth-century writers discussed men’s love magic in their own words, rather than copying earlier texts. John of Kent, a priest who (like many early-thirteenth-century pastoral writers) had been educated in Paris and wrote a treatise on confession shortly after 1215, told priests to ask penitents whether they had used magic [*sortilegium*] “either before marriage in order to have someone as your wife or know who you will have [a rare reference to love divination], or after marriage.”³⁵ The reference to getting wives assumes the penitent is male. Another short treatise on confession that was circulated to parish priests in the diocese of Worcester by Bishop Walter de Cantilupe in 1240 (and was recirculated in the diocese of Exeter by Bishop Peter Quinel in 1287) listed among those who resorted to magic “wretches” who sacrificed to demons “for the sake of women with whom they have fallen foolishly in love.”³⁶

In later centuries, too, several pastoral writers continued to assume that men were the primary users of magic to arouse love or sexual desire. The fourteenth-century pastoral writer and historian, Ranulph Higden, commented in a discussion of the power of demons that God might permit “certain fools to subvert women to love by certain unfortunate songs. Nor should this be wondered at: since this is possible for a man by means of persuasions made to the woman, how much more can demons who have been permitted to do this procure such things?” He even went so far as to say that if demons could always do this, “no beautiful woman would remain incorrupt.”³⁷ Much of Higden’s discussion of demons was taken from the works of the thirteenth-century theologian William of Auvergne,³⁸ but he still thought these points worth making in a manual for priests. In practice, his long, complex treatise may have been too demanding and expensive for many readers, but a work aimed more directly at parish priests made a similar point more briefly. John Mirk, who around 1400 wrote a rhymed set of instructions for parish priests in English, included male love magic in his list of questions to ask in confession: “Hast 3ow made any sorcery / To gete wymmen to lyge hem by?”³⁹

Exempla also told stories about men who did love magic and some of these stories were widely copied. One of the best known was the legend of the early Christian saint, Cyprian, who before his conversion to Christianity was believed to have been a magician. The *Golden Legend*, a hugely popular thirteenth-century collection of saints’ lives written partly to provide material for preaching, told how Cyprian was employed by another man to procure for him the love of a virtuous virgin named Justina. He invoked demons for this purpose, but Justina was able to resist their temptations by making the sign of the cross, and when Cyprian saw this he renounced magic and converted to Christianity.⁴⁰ By the early fourteenth century this story was being told in a pastoral manual written in English verse by the Augustinian canon Robert Mannyng.⁴¹ Stories of men who called up demons to bring them women could also be set in the contemporary world, and several circulated in thirteenth-century Paris.⁴² However, the forms of love magic that the *exempla* depict are relatively limited. The men of the *exempla* use learned magic, of the kind found in late medieval magical texts: they invoke demons and sometimes also employ other techniques

found in magical texts such as drawing magic circles. These activities would only have been accessible to the educated and were therefore minority activities, but because they were dramatic they were well suited to stories that were written to entertain as well as instruct an audience. In the priests' manuals and confession treatises, by contrast, the techniques are not described in such detail and there is less suggestion that love magic was the province of a small number of educated men.

In both the *exempla* and the pastoral manuals, it seems that the goal of the men's magic is generally to initiate a sexual relationship rather than to strengthen an existing one. Phrases such as magic to "subvert women to love," to get women "to lyge hem by" and magic "to have someone as a wife" suggest this, and the point is clearest in the *exempla* in which magicians ask demons to arouse desire in a woman or bring the woman to them. Thus men are presented as doing what Faraone terms *er s*-magic, and what Mitchell calls seduction magic—as both of these historians also found in their own material. Only John of Kent's brief reference to magic "after marriage" might point to Faraone's *philia*-magic. However, pastoral manuals and *exempla* also show that under the umbrella of magic to seduce, churchmen could imagine men aiming at a range of goals, from provoking sexual desire, which seems to be short-term in the *exempla*, to marriage in John of Kent. Medieval English churchmen could therefore imagine men using love magic, and using it for relatively diverse purposes; but not for every possible goal. As we will see, their view of women's love magic was different in important ways.

LOVE MAGIC BY WOMEN

For medieval English pastoral writers (and some continental ones), then, love magic was by no means solely a female activity, and a significant number either did not discuss gender at all or assumed that its primary users were men. Nevertheless, there remained an important strand of pastoral writing that associated love magic with women. Some of these descriptions of women's love magic are quite broad and could cover a variety of goals. For example, Thomas of Chobham, an administrator from the diocese of Salisbury who wrote a pastoral manual shortly after 1215 that circulated widely in England, quoted a much earlier description of women who claimed to do magic to cause love or hate: "It should be asked if there is some woman who says that by some bewitchments [*maleficia*] or by incantations she can change people's minds, for example [saying] that she converts them from love to hate or from hate to love."⁴³ Another broad description of women's love magic comes from Guillaume Peyraut's influential *Summa on the Vices*, written in the 1230s. In a list of superstitious remedies that he claimed were used by women, Peyraut included "those things which some women are accustomed to give men to inflame them with love for them."⁴⁴ In these two passages it is not clear exactly who these women were or why they were using love magic. Thomas of Chobham's description of creating love where hatred existed before perhaps suggests Faraone's *er s*-magic, used to seduce a man with whom the woman was not currently in a sexual relationship, but the description of changes of mind "from love to hate or from hate to love" could simply be a way of referring to love magic's dramatic effects on people's minds. Peyraut's comments about "inflaming" a man to love could likewise encompass a wide range of scenarios, including seduction and the increase of love or sexual passion in an existing relationship. Readers of these broad comments could

therefore imagine a range of women using love magic and read into them their own ideas about the women's motives.

However, many pastoral writers were more specific about which women used love magic and why. Most often they depicted women using Faraone's *philia*-magic: acting to ensure the love and fidelity of their husbands. The idea that women might use love magic on their own husbands went back to the early Middle Ages, when penitentials suggested penances for women who fed various prohibited substances to their husbands so they would love them more. Bernadette Filotas has suggested a specific early medieval context for these prohibitions, arguing that love magic may have been used especially by wives in informal or temporary marriages, whose positions were dependent on the continued goodwill of their husbands.⁴⁵ Several later English pastoral writers copied these older passages. In particular, the graphic descriptions of wives' love magic that originated in an eleventh-century canon law collection, the *Decretum* of Burchard of Worms, reappeared in a handful of thirteenth-century confession treatises. Thus, William de Montibus suggested a penance "if some woman has given either a fish which has died in her vagina, or bread which was made on her buttocks with blood, or menstrual blood to her husband to eat or drink so that his love will be more inflamed"—a list of practices that originated with Burchard.⁴⁶ A treatise on penance written after 1234 by an otherwise unidentified Master Serlo, which also drew on Burchard, likewise condemned women who fed menstrual blood to their husbands so the husbands would love them more.⁴⁷ These detailed descriptions of wives' love magic are highly gender specific, associated with female practitioners and with women's bodies or bodily substances. We do not find equivalent descriptions of husbands' love magic, with the single exception of John of Kent's brief reference to men using magic "after marriage."

After the thirteenth century detailed descriptions of wives' love magic such as these become rarer. They may therefore be survivals from the early medieval context described by Filotas, copied by a few thirteenth-century writers who used earlier sources but gradually dropped because they did not reflect current concerns. Nevertheless, the idea that women might do magic to provoke love or sexual desire in husbands did not drop out of pastoral writing altogether. A short, anonymous list of questions to ask in confession, in English, copied in the fifteenth century by John Gysborn, a canon of the Premonstratensian monastery in Coverham, included among the sins that might be committed by women: "Haue yowe gyffune any drynke vnto your husbände to make hyme lystyar [my emendation: MS reads lysts ar] to occupye wt yowe?" The author did not call this magic but the intention seems to be similar to the earlier condemnations of women's love magic. Tellingly, he did not include any questions about love magic in a separate list of questions for single women.⁴⁸

Exempla also occasionally told stories about wives who attempted love magic within marriage, and one in particular was known in late medieval England. It goes back to a mid-thirteenth-century *exemplum* collection compiled by the Dominican friar Etienne de Bourbon, but it can also be found in a fifteenth-century sermon copied in England. In this story the devil enlisted an old woman to provoke discord between a happily married couple. Part of the old woman's plan involved convincing the wife that the husband was having an affair and then offering to help her regain his affection by magical means. The wife was told to cut off four hairs from her husband's beard while he slept: in Etienne's version she was to

burn them and place the ashes in the husband's food but the English version does not give this detail. Meanwhile the old woman told the husband that his wife was planning to kill him in his sleep. In Etienne's version of the story the old woman's deception was exposed before any harm was done, but the English version substituted a much darker ending, in which the husband saw his wife approaching him with a knife, assumed she was attacking him, and killed her.⁴⁹ Like the *exempla* depicting men who invoked demons to bring them women, this story is dramatic and does not necessarily reflect practices that pastoral writers expected their readers to encounter often, but it takes for granted the idea that a woman might seek to regain her husband's love by magical means. Moreover, stories such as this one about the use of magic within marriage do not seem to be told about men. Despite their dramatic character, then, stories such as this work to reinforce and dramatize the briefer references to wives' love magic in pastoral manuals, promoting similar stereotypes of women's love magic.

In addition to focusing on women's use of magic within marriage, a few medieval English pastoral writers also associated the use of magic to reduce sexual desire or cause impotence with women. As we have seen, when most pastoral writers discussed this topic they focused on marriage law without discussing magical practitioners. However, a few did mention the practitioners of impotence magic and invariably they mentioned women. Master Serlo, who had quoted Burchard of Worms's description of wifely love magic, also quoted from Burchard a passage that condemned women who made their lovers impotent so they could not have sex with their new wives.⁵⁰ Thomas of Chobham also claimed to have heard of a case in Paris in which a man was made impotent by his ex-girlfriend.⁵¹ The comments of these few writers are in keeping with similar comments made occasionally in canon law and theology treatises, which stated that women were most likely to do impotence magic, and with the few known court cases, in which the accused were almost always women.⁵² They also correspond with the Norse evidence discussed by Mitchell. In addition to this, these comments are also consistent with what many of the same pastoral writers said about women's tendency to use magic within existing sexual relationships. Serlo, quoting Burchard, underlined that the women who used impotence magic were acting to prevent their former lover from marrying another woman, because "the woman loves the fornicator so much."⁵³ In these cases, impotence magic can be seen as a specialized form of magic performed to maintain an existing relationship, since it aims to sustain one relationship by breaking up or preventing others, a pattern also found in other periods.⁵⁴ If so, it is not surprising that like the forms of magic that aimed to preserve existing relationships, pastoral writers associated impotence magic with women.

Not every reference to women using impotence magic fits this pattern. Pastoral writers do not always say that the women who made their former lovers impotent were acting to preserve their own relationships with them. Thomas of Chobham does not say so explicitly, and it is possible he viewed the impotence spell not as an attempt to regain a former lover but as motivated by malice or revenge. Another pastoral writer suggested a different context altogether. John de Burgh, a chancellor of Cambridge University who revised William of Pagula's *Oculus Sacerdotis* in 1384, mentioned (in a passage not drawn from William but taken from an earlier work of canon law) that a wife might herself use impotence magic on

her husband. If so, he argued, she could not seek to have the marriage annulled, since the husband's problem was her own fault.⁵⁵ John does not specify why a woman might do this, but his linking of the scenario with the annulment rules suggests he may have viewed it as a way for a woman to get out of an unwanted marriage. His comment reminds us that pastoral writers' depictions of love magic cannot always easily be categorized, or linked to particular scenarios. Nevertheless, English pastoral writers seem to have depicted women most often as using Faraone's *philia*-magic, for love within marriage; or, less often, using magic to cause impotence, which may have been aimed at a similar purpose of strengthening one relationship by preventing others.

CONCLUSION: PASTORAL WRITERS AND THE GENDERING OF LOVE MAGIC

The pastoral manuals and *exempla* that were written and read in medieval England therefore offer a relatively diverse view of love magic and its practitioners. Depending on which writer one reads, both men and women appear using love magic for a range of goals relating to sex and marriage. In addition to this, we also find a significant number of pastoral manuals in which the gender of the person doing love magic is not specified and seems to be secondary to other issues, such as the annulment rules relating to impotence. Most of these images of love magic have their roots in the early medieval period. As we have seen, early medieval penitentials sometimes used non-gender-specific phrasing when discussing love magic, but they can also be found discussing men who acted as *malefici* for love and women who used magic on their husbands, made former lovers impotent, or less specifically tried to turn people's minds from hate to love and vice versa. Behind this diversity, however, a larger pattern is visible. Men are most commonly mentioned as using magic to seduce women, while women are most often depicted as using magic on their own husbands or making men impotent, perhaps in the hope of preserving their own relationship with them.

It is difficult to know how far these stereotypes reflect social realities in medieval England because very few accusations of love magic were recorded in the church courts, which were responsible for prosecuting magic. However, it is possible to identify men who were accused of using magic to seduce women into sexual relationships. For example William Netherstrete, chaplain of Fulbourn near Cambridge, was accused in 1377 in the court of the bishop of Ely of doing magic to make Katherine, wife of Henry Molle, commit adultery with him, a charge he denied.⁵⁶ Only one case is known of someone who was accused of using magic within marriage, but in this case the accused was a woman. Joan Squyer was accused in the Canterbury diocesan courts of washing her husband's shirt in holy water to make him "humble and obedient to her will"—and advising her neighbor to do the same.⁵⁷ In many cases, however, the records are too brief to allow us to know the exact context. Thus, in London in 1482, Johanna Beverley and two other women were accused of using magic to ensure that Robert Stanton and another gentleman from Gray's Inn loved Johanna and only her and would commit adultery with her; while in 1527 Margaret Williamson was reported for using a love potion.⁵⁸ In these cases there is not enough information to contextualize the women as using either seduction or *philia*-magic. The church court records therefore do not go conclusively against the pattern suggested by the English pastoral manuals, but they are

too few in number and too brief to generalize safely about whether magic to seduce was primarily viewed as a male activity, or to know how close pastoral writers were to more widespread beliefs.

The models suggested by Faraone and Mitchell are therefore helpful and point to some possible long-term continuities in the gendering of love magic. Even if it is hard to know how many cases fitted these patterns in practice, they do point to stereotypes that existed among many pastoral writers. They do not fit everything in the pastoral manuals and we should not expect them to, but they point to issues that are worth exploring in more detail in individual cases and contexts. However, as well as the continuities (or possible continuities) there are also differences. In particular, pastoral manuals suggest that gender was not always as central to medieval ecclesiastical views of love magic as many studies have suggested, and that a significant number of writers preferred to focus on other issues.

Studies of love magic in other periods also suggest that more could be done with the question of regional variation. Many of the strands visible in English pastoral writing can also be seen in texts that circulated in other parts of Europe, but it would be interesting to examine whether pastoral manuals' comments about love magic can be linked to a wider context of marriage patterns and customs, as Peter Biller has done with some other aspects of pastoral writing on marriage. The demographic evidence from medieval England is scanty and hard to interpret, but compared with southern Europe, it seems that couples in the later fourteenth and fifteenth centuries—in urban areas at least—often married comparatively late; that both men and women exercised a relatively high degree of influence over their choice of marriage partner; and that in towns single women had a relatively large amount of freedom to socialize with men. (Whether a similar situation existed in earlier centuries is much debated.)⁵⁹ In this context it is worth asking whether churchmen were more able to envisage men using magic to seduce a woman or persuade her to marry them than perhaps they were in other regions, where the women themselves may have had less opportunity to influence their choice of marriage partner. Conversely, it would also be interesting if other regional studies uncovered material that is close to the English evidence, which would suggest that clerical stereotypes of love magic existed in relative isolation from regional marriage practices. Given the problematic nature of the demographic evidence, any attempt to link the pastoral manuals to broader marriage patterns must remain tentative, but these issues are worth exploring in more detail.

What can be stated less tentatively is that when the authors of the *Malleus* came to write about love magic, it was not inevitable that they singled out women in illicit relationships as the main perpetrators. Earlier pastoral writing was more diverse, both in England and in works such as the *summas* of Raymond of Peñafort, John of Freiburg, and the *exempla* that circulated in continental Europe (and that the authors of *Malleus*, as Dominican friars, are likely to have encountered). In pastoral writing, both genders are depicted as using love magic (although some writers do associate it with women), and women are depicted as using it within as well as outside marriage. Even men, who are generally depicted as using magic to seduce, were sometimes thought to be seeking a relationship that would be made licit through marriage. When they chose to focus not on this diversity but on women, the authors of the *Malleus* may have been influenced by trials in which women were predominantly

accused of love magic and selected evidence from earlier written sources, which seemed to confirm or explain this. This would fit several recent studies that have suggested that the *Malleus* and other fifteenth-century witchcraft writers drew their view that women were especially prone to witchcraft from their observation of trials, rather than simply from a tradition of misogyny taken from earlier written sources.⁶⁰

It is possible that pastoral manuals, by contrast, were influenced by a wider range of beliefs than those that resulted in formal accusations. It seems likely, for example, that women in illicit relationships who were deemed to have transgressed social norms were more likely to be taken to court for using love magic (and so were more likely to attract the notice of witchcraft writers), but this does not mean they were the only people believed to do it. Ecclesiastical views of love magic therefore remained diverse and complex into the fifteenth century. An important strand of pastoral writing did associate love magic primarily with women, and studies of court cases and romance literature suggest that this view was shared more widely in medieval society. However, many churchmen remained willing to imagine a more varied cross section of the population doing love magic, and acknowledged that both men and women might do so for a broader range of purposes than the *Malleus* suggested.

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