

*Picatrix: A Medieval Treatise on Astral Magic.* David Pingree.

Trans. Dan Attrell and David Porreca. *Magic in History*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2019. xii + 372 pp. \$39.95.

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Scholars outside the rich discipline of medieval and Renaissance magic may have heard tell of some of the bizarre magical ingredients used to ensure the success of such mundane tasks as attracting a lover, winning friends and influencing people, or just getting rid of flies. Gazelle brains, crow's blood, and the soporific effects of opium mixed with ear wax are in fact mentioned in this new and long-awaited scholarly translation of the *Picatrix*, a complete guide to ritual astral magic. Originally composed in Arabic (titled *Ghāyat al-Ḥakīm* or *The Goal of the Sage*) in the tenth century by Maslama bin Qāsim al-Qurṭubī, this modern English translation is of the Latin critical edition published by David Pingree in 1986.

In their introduction, translators Dan Attrell and David Porreca thoroughly explain the theoretical underpinnings of the text and the cosmological framework of the *Picatrix*. Successful performance of the rituals in the *Picatrix* require the magician to be in alignment with the planetary powers and the energies they radiate down to Earth. The magician must first rigorously study the cosmic creation to obtain the wisdom necessary to perform magic. Through God's will, the magician communes with the planetary spirits and uses their powerful forces. The translators assert that the *Picatrix* is not black magic; there is nothing on conjuring dead spirits. Rather, the translators explain how magical sympathies work via rituals involving the supplication of planetary spirits and their powers. A useful table organizes various kinds of magical practices and the frequency of their mention in the text into categories such as interpersonal relations, power, acquiring knowledge/skills, etc. The reader must be wary, however, of the conclusions drawn from this very brief study about readership of the text, which is based solely on topics covered in the text rather than actual readership practices gleaned from manuscripts.

The translators are transparent in their efforts to render the Latin text into modern English; they admit that translation is very much an act of interpretation, and so readers should not expect literalism. Their goal is to “combine scholarly rigor and ease of accessibility” (31), and for the most part the translation succeeds. There are a few points which demanded more attention and consistency. For example, the Latin term *facies* is most often translated into English as *decan*, and it refers to the tripart division of each zodiacal sign. The translators sometimes use *decan* and other times use *face*. Similarly, with several other astrological terms, the translators have opted for a translation that is different from modern standard usage. Examples are the translation of *signa communia* as “common signs” rather than the modern standard “cardinal signs,” and *signa mobilia* as “mobile signs” rather than the modern “mutable signs” (77). There was also an error here in the footnotes, which may have resulted from confusion in the Latin text, about the other “mobile signs” (Aries and Capricorn are mentioned in

the text) being Cancer and Libra, and the “common signs” referring to Gemini, Virgo, Sagittarius, and Pisces. In fact, these are reversed. The mobile/mutable signs are Gemini, Virgo, Sagittarius, and Pisces.

The footnotes are very helpful from the standpoint of translation, less so for historical details. Attrell and Porreca have closely referenced previous editions and translations of the text, including the 1962 German edition published by Ritter and Plessner; the 2003 French translation published by Bakhouché, Fauquier, and Pérez-Jean; Paolo Rossi’s 1999 Italian study; and even the English translation by Greer and Warnock. The latter has been the standard English translation for several years and was published for the use of contemporary magical practitioners rather than scholars and is thus lacking in scholarly rigor. For historical context, the translators depend quite heavily on a few articles written by David Pingree and Liana Saif. The notes identify and explain some of the more obvious textual references, such as the “First Teacher” being Aristotle, but leave several other references to the reader’s imagination: the story of Caraphzebiz, supposedly the first individual to discover magic (152), Tintinz the Greek (152), Hermes’s work *Hedeytoz* (203), and the mysterious substance “calicarat” (230–32). There’s less sleuthing than one might expect, but one can only spend so much time tracking down obscure references. For readers concerned with the nitty-gritty details, a page of errata was also published.

While the translators mention their specific target as students and scholars of the history of science and magic, their rendition of this complex magical text is highly accessible and has much broader appeal, especially to those inclined to tales of the weird. Turning oneself into the form of an animal, becoming invisible, teleporting, or even inducing so much laughter as to cause death, are all within the realm of magical possibilities within the *Picatrix*. However, for the particularly ambitious, the authors caution against experimentation with illicit substances or dangerous plants. Instead, perhaps, the modern text is best read to inform and entertain, rather than as an operation manual.

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*Rhetorik als Komplementäretik: Georg Greflinger’s “Ethica Complementoria” 1643. Text und Untersuchung.* Joachim Knappe.

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Georg Greflinger’s *Ethica Complementoria* marks a transition in early modern rhetoric handbooks in Germany from a humanist theory of text production to a more comprehensive theory of conduct and behavior rooted in socially appropriate communication