The Little Book of Black Venus
and the Three-Fold Transformation
of Hermetic Astrology

by Teresa Burns

The Consecrated Little Book of Black Venus, attributed to John Dee, presents us with a curious puzzle in the history of magical manuscripts. It instructs the reader how to perform the “Horn of Venus,” which at first seems a lengthy but straightforward rite in the tradition of Henry Cornelius Agrippa. “Dee” tells us that this “Horn” might be used for “lifting hidden treasures, for Navigating, Trade, war, and other ways likewise where the Spirit can be of service to you;” and instructs the reader, repeatedly, to make all preparations on the day and hours of Venus, and to perform the rite itself only during these hours. We might suspect this “Horn” describes a not-so-veiled tantric working, also appropriate to the days and hours of Venus. But then why write the book on Saturday, which would seem a quite inauspicious day for most of these activities?

The rite’s final section advises the reader to make sure that any treasure or coins brought by the Spirits be emptied into a new perfumed, consecrated container. Yet in England after 1563, a person caught even attempting something like sending goetic spirits to fetch coins would face life-threatening consequences: using magic to discover hidden treasure was against the law. A first conviction got the treasure hunter a year’s imprisonment and four trips to the pillory, and a second one meant death. In the late 1570s, John Dee had already asked the Lord Treasurer, William Cecil, for an exemption to this rule, and was turned down.

Moreover, the Consecrated Little Book of Black Venus sounds nothing like any of Dee’s other works and lacks his usual heavy Christian tone. It lacks the stern valuing of scholarship we see when we read the frontispiece of the Hieroglyphic Monad: “QUI NON INTELLIGIT, AUT TACEAT, AUT DISCAT” (“He who does not understand, should either be silent or learn.”) In the “Horn of Venus,” in the eight lines that follow “John Dee’s” greeting, the writer almost seems to tell us not to worry about understanding magic at all, because it’s too hard, so “we sound a Horn for you, Beloved Reader!” Is “Dee” telling the reader to not worry, just follow directions?

One might be tempted to stop right now and dismiss the book as nothing more than an opportunistic forgery which tells us little about Dee or his magic circle. Yet the name Tuba Veneris, the Horn or Trumpet of Venus, seems echoed in a work mentioned by none other than Edward Kelly, “The Sounding of the Trumpet.” Kelly makes repeated reference to “The Sounding of the Trumpet” in his treatise “The Stone of the Philosophers,” which Kelly reportedly wrote for the Holy Roman Emperor while in prison, years after Dee had returned to England. Furthermore, John Dee’s Five Books of Mystery contain repeated references to the Archangel Anael, who Dee considered the ruling Archangel of the Age, and who the “Horn of Venus” calls upon in its closing.

Handwritten copies of the Consecrated Little Book of Black Venus appear in different places on the continent from the early 1600s as late as 1794. Several of the figures on the Seal of Venus appear in a 1614 manuscript by Johann Baptista Großchedel and are engraved in 1620 by Johannes Theodorus de Bry and retitled Magical Calendar. De Bry, the “Palatine publisher” whose house also put out the beautifully illustrated works of Robert Fludd and Michael Maier, is made much of by Frances Yates in her classic The Rosicrucian Enlightenment. The Magical Calendar comes out in 1620, just after Fludd and Maier. In short, at least some of the images in the Consecrated Little Book of Black Venus spring from an underground tradition often traced back to Dee, one slowly returning to light these past few years as more and more connections have been made between different Rosicrucian writers and Dee’s Hieroglyphic
Similarly, other images appearing in the *Consecrated Little Book of Black Venus*, particularly the glyphs on the Seal of Venus, appear in the *Heptameron*, or *Magical Elements*, attributed to Peter de Abano (1250-1316) and translated into English by Robert Turner in 1655.\(^{[10]}\) The same glyphs appear in “Dr. Rudd’s” “Nine Great Celestial Keys or Angelical Invocations” as part of the Seal of Anael,\(^{[11]}\) two others with the discussion of the Olympic Spirit of Venus (Haggith) and a third with the discussion of the Olympic Spirit of Mercury (Ophiel).\(^{[12]}\) It appears with a group of manuscripts that Adam McLean refers to as “The Treatises of Dr. Rudd,” likely Thomas Rudd, who published an edition of Dee’s *Preface* to Euclid in 1651. This group of manuscripts copied by Peter Smart in 1714 was bundled with another work attributed to Dee, the *Rosie Crucian* secrets, which Vincent Bridges links to the recently published manuscripts rediscovered in Manchester, the Byrom Collection, which had been in the possession of a family related to Dee by marriage.\(^{[13]}\)

If those aren’t enough tantalizing connections to fragmented traditions, the mystery in the manuscript itself swirls around the Black Venus to whom it is consecrated. One wonders if the “Horn of Venus” could be part of the same tradition catalogued by Ean Begg in *The Cult of the Black Virgin*.\(^{[15]}\) Begg argues that the Black Virgin cult “seems to point in the direction of two alternatives in particular. One, the alternative church of Mary Magdalene, James, Zacchaeus, Gnosticism, Cathars, Templars, and alchemists . . . [which] contains much of the wisdom of the old religions as well as certain new phenomena that reached consciousness in the twelfth century, such as the Holy Grail and courtly love.” Secondly, the dark Mary may stand for a “heretical Judaism” where Christian and Jew are one.\(^{[16]}\)

In *The Hebrew Goddess*, Rafael Patai notes that the Matronit, the fourth being of the Kabbalistic tetrad which corresponds to some extent with the Gnostic *aeons*, in popular terms shares many characteristics with ancient love and war goddesses from Inanna and Ishtar to Venus, Diana, and Aphrodite.\(^{[17]}\) In Gnostic writings, she also parallels many of the medieval representations of Mary: “Mary, like the Matronit, was considered to have taken over the royal, governing, and controlling functions of God to the extent that her sovereignty actually eclipsed that of God."\(^{[18]}\) But while the Virgin Mary’s purity and chastity are interwoven, the Matronit, as she becomes the “Matronit-Shekhina, the medieval Kabbalistic Goddess figure,” remains, like the ancient love goddesses, both pure and sexualized. She is the reflection of the “dark” energies of Binah giving form to the universe, expressed as the reflection of the Sephira Binah in the path of Tau, uniting Yesod to Malkuth. To non-Kabbalists, She is most easily conceptualized as a dark Goddess.

The most intense concentration of Black Madonnas are in the south of France, springing from the same cultural well as the first Arthurian stories of the Magic Horn\(^{[19]}\) in the Old French *Lai du Cor*, as well as the primary text of the Kabbalah, the *Bahir*.\(^{[20]}\) Could our Black Venus be a survival of that 12th century syncretic tradition? If so, finding texts will be even more difficult than piecing together the later Rosicrucian stream, since the last likely public surfacing, among the 13th century Cathar Perfecti, was very literally burned out of existence in what many consider the first genocide of modern times. If it exists at all in Dee’s time, its members survive by appearing to be something else.

The “Black Venus” on the different frontispieces of the *Little Book* certainly *appears* to be something else: for one thing, they’re never dark, much less black. But more to the point, as Phil Legard points out,\(^ {21}\) Venus as described by “Dee” in this manuscript is a talismanic image, not a pagan goddess. Certainly, it is important to look at *Consecrated Little Book of Black Venus* first as practical magic, and understand it within the Solomonic tradition, before leaping to other readings. But might it not be easy for a Kabbalist and a Solomonic magician to conflate the two, remembering especially the bride of Solomon in “Song of Songs” 1:5, who even in the King James version is “black, but comely, Ó ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the
tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon?"

If we want to speculate about the *Black Venus*’s connection to both John Dee and a more feminized and sexualized underground tradition, we need to analyze it in terms of Dee’s own magical system, to the degree that we can understand that system. If John Dee were teaching students “Negromancia” (as this manuscript implies) in the Solomonic tradition (as this rite is), then that means we should be able to explain both in terms of Dee’s *Hieroglyphic Monad* and the conception of Hermetic astrology and sacred geometry contained therein.

This writer thinks that is possible, and the implications extremely significant: it would seem we have at last found a manuscript that fuses the “high magic” of male Renaissance scholars, artists, magicians, and proto-Rosicrucians like Dee and his circle with the so-called “witch cult,” described by Margaret Murry in her controversial book *The Witch Cult in Western Europe*, but perhaps now better thought of as an amalgamation of indigenous followers of the “old religion,” heretical Christians, Jews, Moslems, gypsies, and mystics of various spiritual traditions for whom hiding has become a way of life.

The “dark art” practiced by some of these “cultists” was alchemy, of a “school” typified by the writings of Maria the Jewess, Comarius, Hermes, and Cleopatra. The iconography of their “dark goddess,” be She Mary, Venus, Diana, or Aphrodite, connects almost seamlessly to the tradition to Isis and the absorption of those Isean symbols into a heretical tradition that existed for hundreds of years under the thinnest of Christian veneers before being forced underground. If that is the tradition “Dee” is drawing upon, then the “bad Latin” of the title (“LIBELLUS VENERI NIGRO SACER, which grammatically should be *nigrae* instead of *nigro*”) is an inside nod to the tradition where “Nigromancia” or “Negromancia,” the dark art, does not use “dark” pejoratively but as a reference to the art of the black land (Egypt, Al’Khem), or alchemy.

Though it may not seem apparent at first, this would also mean we’ve finally found the key to understanding what the Dees, Kellys, and their followers and benefactors were trying to accomplish in Trebona. While astrology, alchemy, Kabbalah, and *hieros gamos* rituals don’t always or even often intersect with each other, in Dee’s Monadic universe the overlap is total. *The Consecrated Little Book of Black Venus*, even if it is not by Dee but one of his students, affords us the chance to piece together the parts of this cosmology which have been most often censored, and speculate about what the Dees and Kellys may have been trying to accomplish in their much-snickered-at but little understood spouse-sharing pact in Trebona.

I don’t presume to be able to turn that key in one article, or even two, but hope to at least set out the outlines of what “The Horn of Venus” may have been trying to accomplish and what groups it would have been associated with.

Let’s start by looking at the opening four lines in their Latin original:

Est VENUS a Superis mihi datum nomen in Astris
Incola mox Stygius dum TUBA cantat adest
Subditus En Dæmon SIGNI virtute gemiscit
Euge! animi mactus victor ab hoste redis.

Readers who enjoy scanning Latin poetry may agree this sounds a bit strained, the word choice awkward, pronoun references ambiguous, and includes a key word (*mox*, English “soon”) whose placement depends totally upon understanding the esoteric context. In the final line, which we translated as “Well done! As the victor, infused with glory, you return from the enemy,” the “you” can refer to either the reader, or Venus, or both. Let’s stop a moment and think about why “John Dee” puts these lines into the working, and for that
matter, why the working itself is in Latin, when it was becoming more and more common to write in the speaker’s native language, be it English, French, German, or Italian.[27]

Latin is the language of most alchemical texts. Beyond that, it affords this writer a way of safely conveying very “packed” concepts impossible to communicate in English, because by pun and allusion one could, in Latin, convey ideas that had become heretical. Latin *daemon*, for instance, could retain the meaning brought in from ancient Greek mythology, of a divinity, genius, or tutelary deity; or of a supernatural being which serves as an intermediary between gods and humans. In Renaissance English, “demon” already meant mainly an evil spirit, and by extension the gods and goddesses of the older “demonic” religions. If one still believes in those old religions, one might prefer *daemon*.

**Venus, Mars, and the Tree of Life**

Nowhere is the poet’s ability to convey complex ideas via what seems awkward poetry more evident than in the choice of *tuba* instead of *cornu*. *Tuba* usually refers to the straight bronze war-trumpet of the ancient Romans. Here’s how this “trumpet” appears in French version of the Key of Solomon:[28]

![French version of the Key of Solomon]

“*Elohim Gibor, Dieu des Armées*” (Elohim Gibor, Lord of Armies) reminds us of the familiar Kabbalistic associations with the Sephira Geburah or Severity, including its attribution to Mars. The energies associated with the reflection of the sphere of Mars onto the path of Peh - often called Victory (Netzach) over Splendor (Hod) - might give one pause if we consider what a large-scale working involving the Kabbalistic path of Peh might entail. In Tarot decks then and now this path is usually shown as the “Blasted Tower.” The path of Peh, the lowest of the reciprocal paths on the Tree, is often described as “Victory over Splendor,” the alchemical transformation where the energies of Mercury (Hod), propelled by those of Mars (the path of Peh) act upon Venus (the Sephira Netzach). That seems alluded to in the straight Roman war trumpet pictured above.

Now, let’s look at our curved “Horn of Venus:”

![Curved Horn of Venus]

This Horn looks more like a *cornu*, the curved horn of the “cornucopia” or horn of plenty. The engravings on the left Horn are the similar to some of those on the Seal of Venus, except for second long glyph, which
as we’ll see later is a glyph for Anael. The right Horn has the Seals of the six spirits. If we count one for the symbols associated with Venus (on the left) plus the six spirits, we have seven, the number usually associated with Venus and the number of planets in Renaissance astrology. In contrast to the blast up the tree announced by the French Trumpet, the energy runs through our “Horn of Venus” the other way, as a lightning flash bringing “above” to “below”: Venus (Netzach) gives motive or force through Mars (path of Peh) to Mercury (Hod.) Imagine an influx of artistic inspiration and knowledge of what form to put it in, and you’ll have the idea. The last line of the poem also implies that after we have sounded the Horn and brought down the energy, we’ll be able to again connect “below” with “above:” “Well done! As the victor, infused with glory, you [Venus, or the magician/ alchemist, having invoked the energies of Venus] return [ascend] from the enemy.” So why doesn’t “Dee” just say cornu? “Dee” likely muddies his Latin and uses tuba rather than cornu so his Horn clearly refers to the Tree of Life in multiple traditions. Tuba stressed on the first syllable sounds like tubah in the Koran, which may come from the Aramaic word for “beatitude” (tuba) or the Hebrew word for prosperity (tobah), basically implying a state of having good things flow into one’s life and being happy. The tuba-tree, to Moslem and especially Sufi poets, refers to a tree growing in Paradise where the Simorgh bird (often translated into English as “Phoenix” ) nests. In writers like Hafiz, we find the recurrent image of the soul as a bird resting on the tuba tree, descending into material existence again, and then returning to the tree to find peace before descending again. By choosing tuba instead of cornu, “Dee” provides a governing image instructing an informed reader to understand the “Horn of Venus” in terms of Kabbalah and suggesting that this same governing image could bring peace to three warring traditions.

We also notice that the drawing of this Horn looks perspectivally challenged. If it is two sides of the same horn, they can’t be shown side-by-side pointing in the same direction, as they are in the line drawings in this manuscript. Might this be a “wink” to an informed reader, to not take the rendering of Venus too literally, either?

This Horn of Venus suggests the shofar horns of the Hebrew Bible and Talmud. The shofar, traditionally made of a ram’s horn, is sounded to announce the New Moon and feasts, and as per Leviticus 23:24, announces Rosh Hashanah, the first day of the seventh month of Tishri and traditionally the beginning of the Jewish New Year. More than any other Jewish holiday, Rosh Hashanah is thought of as a Day of Judgment.

The horn as a shofar also resonates against the odd Latin phrasing Scopusque Libelli which comes right after “John Dee’s” greeting, in the line translated as “It is not our intention or the goal of our little book to write about the different Negromantic Arts, their definitions, subdivisions, methods or even their various practices of which Views and Books many have already written about.” We’ve translated “Scopusque Libelli” as “Views and Books.” English scope comes from the Latin scopus, which usually means a goal, view, or target. It comes into Latin from ancient Greek, a language Dee knew well - just as he would know the ancient Greek skopus in Biblical texts carried a built-in allusion to Mount Scopus in the Holy Land, famed for its strategic view of Jerusalem.

Finally, we get to the opening verse’s last line, “Incola mox Stygius dum TUBA cantat adest,” translated as “Soon to be a Stygian Sojourner, she appears when the Horn sounds.” Stygius refers to the underworld and puns on stiga or “witch,” and suggests that Venus, or the energies associated with Venus, will go underground until this working is undertaken. It also directs us to an ancient astrological understanding of “night,” when the Sun was conceived as going “underground” or “through the underworld,” to be reborn the next day. In a sense, because of its smaller orbit, Venus viewed from Earth seems to follow the Sun, or Kephera (the Sun at night) through the underworld: Venus appears in the sky as the evening star, then fades behind the Sun, reappears as the morning star, disappears as the Sun brightens, disappears as it reaches occultation, then reappears once more as the evening star. “Soon to be a Stygian Sojourner” - soon to disappear into the “underworld” behind the Sun - makes more sense than putting mox with the independent
clause ("She soon appears when the Horn sounds") because that makes it sound as if the Horn of Venus could speed the planet’s journey. Yet in terms of regular astrology, the line remains problematic even without \textit{mox}: if we associate the Horn with Mars, we can’t say Venus appears because of Mars.

However, if we turn to Dee’s \textit{Hieroglyphic Monad}, the answer becomes clearer. As Vincent Bridges has noted, the Monad may be the most “brilliantly simple” explanation ever written on sacred geometry.\[29\] Theorems XII-XV show the geometries of different planets on the Tree of Life. Let’s look briefly at Theorem XV:

![Diagram of The Hieroglyphic Monad and Theorem XV](image)

“We suggest, therefore, that Philosophers should consider the action of the Sun and the Moon upon the Earth. They will notice that when the light of the Sun enters Aries, then the Moon, when she enters the next sign, that is to say Taurus, receives a new dignity in the light and is exalted in that sign in respect of her natural virtues. The Ancients explained this proximity of the luminaries - the most remarkable of all - by a certain mystic sign under the name of the Bull. It is very certain that it is this exaltation of the Moon to which in their treatises the astronomers from the most ancient times bear witness. This mystery can be understood only by those who have become the Absolute Pontiffs of the Mysteries. For the same reason they have said that Taurus is the house of Venus - that is to say, of conjugal love, chaste and prolific, for nature rejoices in nature, as the great Ostanes concealed in his most secret mysteries. These exaltations are acquired by the Sun, because he himself, after having undergone many eclipses of his light, received the force of Mars, and is said to be exalted in this same house of Mars which is our Ram (Aries).

“This most secret mystery is clearly and perfectly shown in our Monad by the hieroglyphic figure of Taurus, which is here represented, and by that of Mars, which we have indicated in Theorem XII and Theorem XIII by the Sun joined to a straight line towards the sign of Aries.

“In this theory another Kabbalistic analysis of our Monad offers itself, because the true and ingenious explanation is this: the exaltations of the Moon and of the Sun are made by means of the science of the Elements.”\[30\]

The horns of Taurus remind us of the horns of Pan, and contain the glyphs for both Sun and Moon, and so suggest \textit{a hieros gamos} near the top of the Tree. If one looks at the Taurean glyph in the Monad and projects it onto the Tree of Life, centering the dot on Tiphareth, the Sun/Son's circle encompasses all of the Sephiroth but the three Supernals and Malkuth and correlates to the Zauir Anpin, "the Son of the concealed Father," the Logos or Heavenly Man, Adam Kadmon. The horns spring from the non-Sephira, Daath, and go up to Aima and Abba Elohim. This image, looked at strictly from the perspective of Kabbalah, becomes a glyph of the fall and the redemption. Taurus, an Earth sign ruled by Venus and perhaps the most sensual sign of the Zodiac, is exalted high on the Tree. Its placement shows the conjugal union of Aima and Abba Elohim, the Supernal Father and Mother whose horns spring from Da’ath. This union manifests the circle, Zauir Anpin, the Son that encompasses all the Sephira below the Supernals except Malkuth. Via the action shown by this glyph, the conjugal union of the Supernals reflected in the Son, the Universe (Malkuth)
To hook back once more to our line from the poem, “Soon to be a Stygian Sojourner, she [Venus] appears when the Horn sounds” now makes sense because we’re no longer talking about yearly astrology, but Hermetic astrology. Hermetic astrology[32] concerns itself much more with the astrology of longer Ages and how the precession of different planets through the Zodiac might be used to predict events in those Ages and by implication may concern itself with the alchemical transformation of that age. Venus appears when the Horn sounds because she rules the Horn, which is now not Mars but Taurus in a particularly relevant theorem in Dee’s *Monad*. Note the resonance to both the signs of Aries, the ram whose horn makes the Jewish *shofar*, and the Taurean bull horn required for this working.

Further, Dee believed the time he lived in was the “Age of Venus,” and its principle ruler was the Archangel “Anael,” the “Olympic Spirit” called upon to consecrate the *Book of Black Venus*. The “Horn of Venus,” the working governed by and consecrated to Anael, sounds, and Venus appears, suggesting both the Age and the familiar projection of Venus onto the Tree of Life as a symbol encompassing all ten Sephiroth.

Before moving on, we might also look at two possible reasons why this work was (allegedly) written on June 4, 1580, a Saturday. Recall that that the cult of the “Black Virgin” may among other things express how a non-Kabbalist would conceptualize the Sephira Binah. Binah is the Sphere of Saturn (ruling Saturday), and the reflection of the Sphere of Saturn rules the path of Tau, the path of manifestation from Yesod to Malkuth. Saturday also is the seventh day of the Jewish week, the Sabbath.

**Dee and Fears of the Apocalypse**

Many in the late 1570s worried about a very different kind of Saturnian manifestation. Europe and Britain were rife with apocalyptic astrological predictions, many of which turned around the 1583 Saturn/Jupiter conjunction in Pisces, and the return of the conjunctive cycle of these two planets to the so-called “Fiery Trigon,” starting in May 1584 with a mass conjunction in Aries of Saturn, Jupiter, and every visible “planet” except for the Sun. As Aston describes in her article “The Fiery Trigon Conjunction: an Elizabethan Astrological Prediction,” this conjunction marked the end of very long cycle: “as the astrologers emphasized, there were only six parallels in the history of the world,” and only one since the birth of Christ. They assigned these conjunctions to the times of Enoch, Noah, Moses, the ten tribes of Israel, the Roman Empire at Christ’s birth, and empire of Charlemagne.[33] Benjamin Woolley notes that “Ptolomy himself had shown that each conjunction within a trigon was associated with a particular part of the world, and the occurrence within the coming sign of Aries he linked with Britain and Germany.”[34]

Recall our earlier discussion of Theorem XV of Dee’s *Monad* and the exalting of sensual Venus/Taurus over combative Mars/Aries. If the “Horn of Venus” is in any way connected to these larger predictions and to Dee, we start to see the outlines of how it may be an attempt to replace the manifestation of Martial energies with Venusian ones.

June 4, 1580 may not be the date the *Consecrated Little Book of Black Venus* was written on, but its appearance on the manuscript is certainly not random. In 1580, the calendar was so far behind that the summer solstice, rather than falling on June 21 or 22, would be at least ten days before. Thus the writer appears to be writing on a Saturday a few days before the solstice, the day in which one might conceive the Sun/Son as being “enthroned” for the next year, and the golden energy of Tiphareth at its peak. The year 1580 also marks a clear shift in Dee’s focus and in the iconography of Elizabeth’s court.

Elizabeth I’s reliance on Dee for advice, astrological and otherwise, is well known. He picked January 15, 1559 as an auspicious date for her coronation; in 1564 he presented her with his *Hieroglyphic Monad* and later said she was a “sacred witness” of its secrets;[35] and, according to his *Compendious Rehearsal*, he
was asked to explain the appearance of what we now call the 1577 comet in Cassiopeia. In fact, this comet was only the most famous of a series of unexplained objects in the sky that sent astronomers scurrying for explanations. In one of the more famous sets of calculations, Tycho Brahe determined the comet was in the sphere of Venus, and like many other astronomers, suggested it heralded “warfare, pestilence, and extremes of heat and cold,” as well as “changes in religion.”

In April 1580, an earthquake shook London. When the Crown commissioned a report that same year on the possible uses of “mirrors and glasses,” the two leading figures named were Dee and his protégée, Thomas Digges. Yet Dee’s suggestions for a “British Empire” and his role as an advisor to explorers searching for a Northwest Passage seem to collapse this same year. In 1580 then 1583, Elizabeth came to Dee for a different sort of advice: about whether or not to marry the Duke of Anjou. Dee’s comments about the Duke’s prospects - “biothanatos” - seemed to presage Anjou’s death the next year.

From 1580 on, as it became more and more clear that Elizabeth would never marry (and that the zealous Protestants in England would not stand for her marrying a Catholic), the exoteric Moon/Venus Cult of the Virgin Queen takes off in earnest. The public cult of a “white Virgin,” which portrayed the Queen as Astraea, Eliza Triumphans, Diana, or Venus-Virgo, makes a major iconographic shift from years before, and some have even argued that Elizabeth’s famous 1559 speech declaring she would never marry “except to her kingdom” was reverse engineered after 1580. But the images of Elizabeth as Diana, Cynthia, or any of a variety of other syntheses of Moon/Venusian Goddesses of Love and War, and Protectresses of Virginity, could not dissolve the religious conflicts across the country nor calm the expectation of war.

Several astrological tracts in England predicted the end of the world, most notably those of Richard Harvey and Robert Tanner. Tanner announced that the conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter “doeth marvelously agree with the famous prophesie of Elias, & many other places of scriptures, of the latter dayes of the worlds destruction to be neere at hande, & that the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to judgement, will not be long.” Both in England and on the continent, 1588 was pegged as the most likely date of the end of the world.

We don’t know what John Dee’s predictions were. From 1580 on, his focus shifted away from optics, mathematics, geography, and advising the Crown to searching for a stronger magical lever. December 22, 1581, he tries via his scryer Barnabus Saul to reach Anael/Añaël, he reaches “ANNAEL.” Just three months later he and Edward Kelley began their angelic workings. In the very first working, when “Annael” appears, Dee writes that this is the spirit or intelligence governing the whole world.

Dee and Kelly’s workings continued until the end of 1588, the date so many sages had announced was the end of the world. It was one of the most triumphant year of Elizabeth’s reign, the defeat of Spain’s “Invincible Armada.” The Dees and Kelllys finished their magickal project and parted company in Trebona. The Dees returned to England in poverty; Sir Edward Kelley, who reportedly had demonstrated how to turn lead into gold, was for a few short years the alchemical star of the continent.

While his disenchantment with Kelly is well known, Dee’s diary entries from 1588 suggest that he believed whatever it was they were doing had succeeded. What were they doing, and does the “Horn of Venus” connect to this in any way?

Even scratching the surface of an answer will of necessity take us through a longer discussion of Hermetic astrology and sacred geometry. First, let’s see what other writers have had to say about the *Consecrated Little Book of Black Venus*.

**Previous analyses of the *Consecrated Little Book of Black Venus***

Most works on John Dee never mention this work at all. One of the first references is a footnote in Gerald
Suster’s book John Dee, where Suster considers this one of Dee’s later writings but mistranscribes the title as “Tuba Veneris (c. 1600) Libellus Veneri negro Dee.”[44] Until recently, the one and only analysis of Consecrated Little Book of Black Venus was Jörg M. Meier’s excellent Das Büchlein der Venus (“Libellus Veneris Negro Sacer”): eine magische Handschrift des 16. Jhrs, which Nancy Turner and I found almost indispensable in making our own translation. Meier compares several versions, the earliest being London’s Warburg Institute Ms. FBH 51, then provides a detailed commentary on the text and drawings. He also locates two versions of a text by Joseph Anton Herpentil, Indegriff der übernatürlichen magie[45] that use many “barbarous names” similar to those in the fourth chapter of “Horn of Venus;” and another, der Magia Ordinis Kornreutheri, that uses one of them. Finally, Meier analyzes the ritual structure of the “Horn of Venus” compared to that of five other manuscripts (including the three just mentioned), and finds some similarities.[46] A detailed discussion of Meier’s study is beyond the scope of this article, though I’ve included some of his conclusions in Appendix II.

Meier, like this writer, doubts that the writer was John Dee and that the date of composition was 1580. Yet as pseudoepigraphy goes, he finds it a very unusual case: the oldest copy, the Warburg manuscript, seems written in Dee’s lifetime, and enough of the details match those of John Dee’s life and work that the author may well have known Dee. Meier notes that a “counterfeiter” rarely ties himself to a name for no reason, and speculates that Dee could have had some type of invocation similar to this one.[47]

The motives for writing this ritual and putting Dee’s name on it, Meier argues, will more likely be found on the continent from 1583 – 1589 rather than in England. Meier thinks the best hypothesis is that the Consecrated Little Book of Black Venus originated on the European continent, specifically in a German-speaking country, and was perhaps written by someone who knew Dee well and wished to take advantage of his reputation.[48] When “Dee” tells his readers that “all evil Dæmons still have the names and Signs that were given to them by the Great Creator, and therefore it is necessary to call and force them by using the same means by which we can also call the good Angels, as I have shown and taught in other places,” it seems to allude to his famous angelic workings with Edward Kelley and perhaps to teaching those who witnessed similar workings, even though these were supposed to be strictly angelic rather than goetic workings. The types of calls used seem to come from 1585 or 1586.[49]

Although this writer disagrees, Meier believes that Dee’s "Actions with Spirits" were fundamentally incompatible with the type of magic used in Consecrated Little Book of Black Venus, despite the writer’s knowledge of much of Dee’s magic, including the special role played by Anael in Dee’s cosmology. Rather than trying to hurt Dee, Meier suggests the writer may have just wanted to make a profit. In any case, while Meier does not want to say the manuscript absolutely had to be written during Dee’s six-year stay on the continent, that seems to him the most likely hypothesis.[50]

The handwriting of the Warburg manuscript almost certainly isn’t Dee’s, and, based on the style of lettering used, its very unpolished penmanship appears to be poor German calligraphy rather than poor English calligraphy.[51] Yet somehow this manuscript made its way back to England. Recall that the earliest copy of the Magical Calendar, whose sigils for Anael appear almost identical to some of the images on the Seal of Venus, also appears in England.[52] So even after Meier’s excellent analysis, we’re still back to the same mystery and same questions: how is this text connected to Dee’s circle and perhaps to early Rosicrucianism (if it is), and how does Dee’s circle connect to the mystery traditions surrounding the “Cult of the Black Virgin” (if it does)?

Several writers, Meier among them, have tried to analyze the Consecrated Little Book of Black Venus as a piece of cryptography, but to no avail.[53]

The only other analysis this writer is aware of was one started by Phil Legard back in 2001 and posted as a
newsgroup discussion question. When I contacted him earlier this year, I learned he’d expanded that analysis quite a bit, and he graciously offered to let me add it as an appendix to this article.\textsuperscript{[54]} Like Meier, he places the work within the tradition of the Key of Solomon and Agrippa, but notes the uniqueness of the Black Venus. He provides a very clear survey of different magical elements in the text,\textsuperscript{[55]} so rather than recovering the same ground, I’ll return to our earlier discussion of the Age of Venus and Hermetic astrology.

The Age of Venus, the Olympic Spirit Anael, and the Platonic Great Year

As noted earlier, Hermetic astrology tends to concern itself much more with the astrology of longer Ages and how the precession of different planets through the zodiac might be used to predict events in those Ages. To calculate where we are in this precessional cycle, one observes the position of the sun’s plane - the ecliptic - on the equinox and notes where the ecliptic plane intersects the plane of the celestial equator. Each year, this location moves slightly westward, and takes about 25,920 years to return to the same location.

One precessional cycle is often called one Platonic Great Year, or one Perfect Year, alluding to a famous passage in Plato’s Timaeus. In this dialog, mainly one between Socrates and Critias then Socrates and Timaeus, Timaeus describes how the world soul is composed of four elements, how the Creator formed from that soul a perfect body, and how that “mixture” or “compound” was then divided into parts according to various ratios, then the parts bent into circles, so that, being composed of a perfect Creator, the harmonic intervals of these circles become the moving image of God. In section 38 of Timaeus, we’re told that the Sun, Moon, and five other “wandering stars” - the planets - were made to preserve the numbers of time. Recall that Dee is often studied as a neoplatonist and would without doubt know this passage and its focus on the seven planets as a way of dividing time.

Timaeus never mentions the zodiac, nor does he tells us that this means that one Great Sidereal or “Platonic” Year of the zodiac takes almost 26,000 years, nor that this breaks into twelve astrological ages of about 2160 years, each age corresponding to 30 degrees of precession, nor does he calculate further that it takes 72 years to precess one degree. Timaeus assures us that the cycles can be calculated and at some point come into a grand conjunction, but he never says how. The assumption made by many Hermeticists is that the most learned people knew, and this knowledge had been handed down from ancient Egypt.

Certainly, Plato is far from the only ancient writer to allude to what we might now call the “Great Year.” Godefroid de Callataï’s Annus Platonicus. A study of world cycles in Greek, Latin and Arabic sources (1996) catalogues ancient writers who seem to rely on some sort of “Great Year” doctrine. His Greek and Roman list includes Plato, Aristotle, the cult of Pythagorus, Lucretius, Cicero, Varro, Seneca, Tacitus, Plutarch, Vitruvius, Ptolemy, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Macrobius, among others. He also describes the refinements made to these systems as they were written about by later Arab scholars.

Different Hermetic writers divide the precessional cycle into different ages using many different systems, and by the Renaissance, what may have been a very precise system to ancient Egyptians had degenerated to the point that even the smaller solar year calendars were out of whack; we can safely assume that systems dividing the larger cycles also did not agree. While some writers, notably Robert Powell in Hermetic Astrology (1987), argue that at least one Renaissance astronomer (Tycho Brahe) was using a system almost identical to that of ancient Egypt, most do not.

Perhaps we can reverse engineer a better explanation by looking at Dee’s system of ages and where it came from. Trithemius, whose Steganographia was greatly prized by Dee, divided time into seven Angelic Ages and based on his system we’d conclude Dee was living in the Age of the Moon, ruled by Gabriel.

The Arbatel of Magic, published in Basel in 1575, similarly divides the time into seven ages, and tells us each age is 490 years, corresponds to a particular planet, and is ruled by an Olympic Spirit associated with
that planet. Dr. Rudd’s “Nine Keys” will combine both, and the copyist (Peter Smart?) says: “Every Olympic Power rules 490 years . . . Then began Och [Olympic Spirit of the Sun] and continued until the year 1410, and thenceforth Haggith [Olympic Spirit of Venus] ruleth until the year 1900.”[56] The writer of The Consecrated Little Book of Black Venus, like Dee, seems to have substituted the more familiar Solomonic Archangels, so now the “Olympic Spirit” associated with the Age of Venus is Anael, who Dee considers the governing Archangel of the Age of Venus.

Given the frequency of Venusian sevens and multiples of sevens in Dee’s Five Books of Mystery, one might wonder where the 490 years/age calculation comes from. If we take the 25,920 year precessional Great Year and divide it by 490, we’d calculate:

\[
\frac{25,920 \text{ (one Great Year)}}{490} = \text{approximately 52, yielding 52 490-year “weeks” in a Great Year.}
\]

Curiously, if one looks at texts Dee supposedly had no access to – Qumranic texts including Jubilees, the Melchizedek document, the Testament of Levi, the Ethiopic Enoch, and four of the “Pseudo-Moses Texts,” – one will find a similar dating system. Roger Beckwith’s recent detailed analysis of these texts[57] concludes that the frequent use of 49 year intervals in sacred Jewish historical texts, including the ritual of Jubilee years, were all based on Daniel’s prophecy (Dan 9:24-27) of 70 “weeks,” where one “week” = seven years. Within this system, which Beckwith finds consistently throughout the above texts, 70 “weeks” = 490 years = 10 Jubilees, so one Jubilee = 49 years.

Such dating systems are almost always associated with either a messiah or an apocalypse or both. . . whether the writers are Hellenistic Jews from 2,000 years ago, like Josephus or Demetrius the Chronographer, or Renaissance physicist/alchemy/astrologer Sir Isaac Newton writing about the prophecies of Daniel. Newton, like some contemporary apocalyptic Christians, wanted to use the same formula to predict the second coming.

Recall our timeline from the earlier section on “Dee and Fears of the Apocalypse.” Apocalyptic predictions focus mainly on the very years Dee is on the continent, with 1588 the most-likely-predicted date for the world to end and / or the Messiah to return. We can assume that much of what Dee believed he could not put into his writing, just as we must assume he read many texts we have no record of. We can also assume, as a scholar of ancient Greek, he understood the Greek meaning of apokalepsis as an “unveiling” of what has been hidden rather than the end of the world. We can further assume that, as a Kabbalist, he understood the Sun/Son/Tiphareth/Sacrificed God as the ascension of consciousness rather than one Son returning as Messiah. In this way, the “gold” of Tiphareth, the purification of one’s own personal energies so one may bring in the energy of the cosmos and literally make “above” like below and “within” like “without,” becomes at least one of the “treasures” of the working.[58]

Such an interpretation jibes with the understanding of alchemy C.H. Josten derived from Dee’s Hieroglyphic Monad, who notes that part of the Monad suggests that “the subject which is to be transmuted in the process symbolized by the monad is the artist, or magus, himself, and that it is his soul which, in a mystical sense, has to be separated from its body: When the terrestrial centre of the monad (which centre may here well mean the human body) has been united in a perpetual marriage to a certain supernal influence of solar and lunar quality, the monad can no longer ‘be fed or watered on its native soil’, and he who fed it will himself undergo a metamorphosis as a result of which he will henceforth only rarely be beheld by mortal eye.” Yet Josten also notes that “in Dee’s view, the chances of alchemical success in the external world are diminishing as that world, by progressing in time, descends into spiritually darker ages, and that any palpable success in the transmutation of metals may, if at all, be hoped for only after the successful completion of a most unusual and dangerous work.”[59]

This writer suggests that the “unusual and dangerous work” Dee and his circle start attempting in 1580, and
continue from 1583-1588 on the continent, is the transmutation of an Age, to perform what Kabbalists might call a cosmic restoration of the Sephiroth via Tikkun haolom (the repair and restoration of the world). Bridges argues that the three-fold transmutation of some alchemical works is 1) the inner transformation of the body’s energies, 2) the external transmutation of using those energies to effect physical states, and 3) the transmutation of time itself, “from the darkness of the Iron Age to the Splendour of the Golden Age.” Exploring how that might be done will soon return us to the Black Venus at the center of the work.

The Archangel Anael and Alchemy
Let’s compare the Seal of Venus from the Consecrated Little Book of Black Venus to those in three other manuscripts. Here’s our Seal:

And the Seals of Anael from Peter de Abano’s Heptameron, which is the same one reproduced by Dr. Rudd in his “Nine Great Celestial Keys of Angelic Invocation”:

A quick look suggests that all of these are in our Seal except for the long drawing in the lower center. In addition, the upper glyph in each hexagon likely refers to the signs - Taurus on the left and Libra on the right - ruled by Venus, and may also refer to their geomantic attribution, since the remaining three figures on the left seem drawn from geomancy: in the center, Conjunctio, associated with Mercury, Earth, and Virgo; to its left, Amissio, associated with Venus, Earth, and Taurus; and Puella, associated with Venus, Air, and Libra. This matches Legard’s analysis in Appendix I and the attributions in Dr. Rudd’s “Nine Great Celestial Keys,” though he calls the glyphs for Venus “Kedemel Hasmodel” and “Kedemel Zuriel” instead of Amissio and Puella. These glyphs also have alchemical correspondences, while the final glyph on the right hexagon may refer to connections between different parts of the kamea or magic square of Venus.

Parts of each of these glyphs also appear in the six Calls for the spirits. We’ll return to these in the separate study of on sacred geometry.

The lower middle glyph in de Abano’s and Rudd’s Seal of Anael matches one of the engravings on the Horn. In fact, if we take that drawing from the “Horn of Venus” and put it next to one of the drawings from the Seal, it matches almost exactly to of the Seals of Anael from a third work, Großchedel’s Magickal Calendar.

From the Horn and Seal in the Consecrated Little Book of Black Venus:
It takes little imagination to see direct sexual reference in these sigils - one of the glyphs for Anael actually looks similar to the Egyptian hieroglyph for phallus. In fact the whole rite may be considered a metaphoric *hieros gamos* ritual attempting to replace one type of interaction between the energies of Venus and Mercury on the path of Peh with another, as described earlier, and an exaltation of the marriage of the Sun and Moon in Taurus to a place high on the Tree. But it is also a basic Kabbalistic understanding that cogitating over an energy transformation is not the same thing as embodying something and bringing it into manifestation. Dee’s diary entries showing Venus conjunct Mercury presumably meant he’d had sex with his wife and they had embodied those energies, not that one or both of them had a mental understanding of it. It would seem that whatever needs to be done in this working to make these transformations take place is only here if you already know what it is.

Similarly, the working’s reference to a Day of Judgment is also there only if you already know to look for it, and remember the Horn of plenty is also a *shofar* horn, associated with Rosh Hashanah and a Day of Judgment, as is the Archangel Anael in part of the *Key of Solomon* book one chapter six (“and by the name ANAEL, and in the name ANAEL, by which God will cast down the mountains and fill up the valleys, so that the surface of the earth shall be level in all parts”). Mathers’ translation of this part of the *Key of Solomon* may well be why he assigned Anael to Tarot Trump 20, the Last Judgment. Looking at the Last Judgment/Apocalypse as removing the veil so all may be seen is a more initiatory understanding. . . again, one a reader recognizes it if he or she already knows.

If this working’s intent and expected treasure is no less than the alchemical transformation of the Age of Venus, then most of what the magician/alchemist need do to effect that change seems missing. The Treasure of conjugal love and the pleasure of enlightenment through that kind of love would be part of the three-fold transformation, but likely for safety’s sake is left off-stage. We’re still left with the question: who was doing this working?

**English and Continental Familists, or “The Family of Love”**

Many writers have suggested Dee’s likely involvement with the “Family of Love,” a fellowship started by Hendrik Niclaes in 1540 that by 1580 was present in the Netherlands, Germany, France, England and Spain. Frances Yates says, “we know that the Family of Love was a secret society, which undoubtedly had a real existence and organization, growing out of the situation in the Netherlands in the late 16th century. We know many people were members of this sect or society, which allowed its members to belong ostensibly to any religious denomination whilst secretly maintaining their affiliation with the Family.”

Many of Dee’s associates outside of England were Familists: Antwerp printer Christopher Plantin (who published the works of Niclaes), mapmaker Abraham Ortelius, the Birkmanns, booksellers from Cologne who had a store in London. Others likely were, and knew others who were or likely were. Take Johannes Theodorus de Bry as a starting point, the publisher who put out the *Magical Calendar* whose images closely match some in the “Horn of Venus.” De Bry had close ties to Niclaes’s publisher Plantin, both of whom had ties to the Frankfurt printer Wechel, who reprinted Dee’s *Hieroglyphic Monad* in 1591, provided Giordano Bruno with a place to stay, and published some of Bruno’s more interested geometric drawings. Or consider the Polish prince Albert Laski, who arrived in London in 1583 at about the same time as Bruno and left with the Dees and Kellys not long after: one of his relatives, Johannes a Lasko, lived in Emden, a
town which “had become the center of Familism ever since the movement’s founder, Hendrik Niclaes, settled there.”

The English “Family of Love” was not nearly so cosmopolitan as its continental counterparts, and John Dee may have been one of, if not the only, English scholar who could have easily moved back and forth between Antwerp and London Familists. We don’t know much about the actual beliefs of the “Family of Love” because they tended to dissemble when questioned, but their quest for “Perfectability” and illumination echoes that of the “Perfecti” from three centuries past, just as the name seems to hearken back to Eleanor of Aquitaine’s “Court of Love.”

Familists believed in interpreting Biblical passages - including the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus - mystically and allegorically rather than literally, believed in a mystical transformation of the flesh, and believed in the “mutual incorporation or implanting of God and human, to the point where an effective unity was achieved.”

By the 1560s, a second generation of Familists was growing up “in the Service of the Love,” and children may have been “nourished up” by being sent to live with other Familist households. Marsh, in *The Family of Love in English Society 1550-1630*, traces the fellowship’s practice of marrying within the group, and notes the “prominent involvement of women within the Family. There must have been difficulties finding available partners, but these were minimized by an impressive readiness on the part of members, particularly female members, to depart the villages or towns in which they had lived. . . to enter spiritually suitable relationships.” What seems like rather large age difference between spouses to us seemed unremarkable to them. When the spouse of a Familist died, the widow or widower usually remarried as soon as possible.

John Dee’s marriages followed that pattern. We know little of his first two wives, except that after each one died, it was not long until he remarried. His third wife, Jane Fromond, from Cheam, aged 22 years to Dee’s 50, was from a family that appeared to be of the “old religion.” (If not, the Fromonds seemed to know an unusual amount about raising exotic plants: one of the earliest known lists of herbs “necessary for a garden,” including a few imported from hundreds of miles away and a garnish called “Cresse of Boleyn,” was compiled for Thomas Fromond, likely Jane’s grandfather.) Especially for women of the so-called “witch cult,” the Family provided as safe and tolerant a society as could be found in Elizabethan England, and like Dee himself sought an all-encompassing theology.

No one—except perhaps those of us reading over the Consecrated Little Book of Black Venus—knows anything about what the “Family of Love”’s secret practices were. Thomas Middleton, in his play *The Family of Love* (1604) satirizes the fellowship as a closed society of free-love hypocrites busily going to “the Family” for exercises and giving each other secret signs. A 1641 satire of Family meetings described them being held in the Surrey woods and consisting of “obscene readings from Virgil, exaltations of Cupid, communal meals, and, of course, sex.” By that time, the Family of Love had been effectively driven out of England. But in the first ten years of Elizabeth I’s reign, the time she appeared to rely on Dee most for advice, they lived in relative peace.

In fact, Elizabeth’s court and in particular her Yeoman of the Guard seemed populated by members of the Family of Love. By the end of the 1570s, Familists at court may have included the Keeper of the Royal Armoury at East Greenwich, one or both of the Yeomen of the Jewel House, five of the Yeomen of the Guard, and one of the Gentlemen Pensioners. The Yeomen of the Guard, in particular, controlled access to the Queen, and in exchange, she “fed them, clothed them, lodged them, and paid them.” To the increasing numbers of zealous Protestants, the daily close relationship between Elizabeth and her Family of Love Yeomen must have been “galling in the extreme.”
Added to this, two of her suitors had Familist associations: Erik XIV of Sweden had *chanson* books for Elizabeth bound by Christopher Plantin, the Antwerp Familist printer, and when Elizabeth resumed marriage negotiations with the Duke of Anjou in 1579, she may have known, through Dee, that several members of the Duke’s entourage had close ties to the Family of Love on the continent. Many historians believe the high treason charges against Edmund Campion and other Jesuits in 1580-81 were fueled by Protestant conservatives to incite paranoia, especially in light of the Queen signing a “marriage treaty” with Anjou in 1581.

Now we can add another dimension to the *Consecrated Little Book of Black Venus*’s alleged date of 1580. For the Family of Love in England, 1580 was the year the crackdown began, connected however strangely to Elizabeth’s unpopular courtship of the Duke of Anjou and the easy access some men in the Family of Love had to the Queen herself. Marsh argues that “the criticism of the Family was to a certain extent something rather like displaced, even subconscious criticism of Elizabeth,” especially a fear that she might share the views of her Yeomen. What if her philosopher and advisor John Dee was also a member of the “Family of Love”? Like some of her Yeomen, he was soon to be gone.

The 1580 date seems reversed engineered to point to this crackdown. If the *Consecrated Little Book of Black Venus* in any way draws upon Familist rituals done through 1580, these rituals obviously were not bringing about the religious tolerance the Family of Love might have wanted. Also, as we’ve noted, the oldest manuscript likely dates to about 1600, not 1580, and the calligraphy is German, not English. Someone other than Dee likely copied it, and brought it back. Who? Perhaps some of the other English visitors to the castle in Trebona: Edward Dyer, Thomas Kelley, or one of the Garland brothers? Part of this picture must be missing, just as part of the ritual seems missing, as if it were written as a tease for someone who already knows what he or she is looking at.

Take a leap for a moment, and consider this hypothesis: what if the “Horn of Venus” embodies some remnant of a much older ritual, hearkening back to the 12th century synthesis of heretical Christianity, Kabbalah, Sufism, and indigenous Goddess religions that we talked about in the opening of this article? If such rites still existed three centuries later, they very likely had degenerated over time. If one reads over some of the “barbarous names,” they sound like nothing so much as names filtered through a Semitic language (be it Arabic or some other) that aren’t Semitic in origin.

Suppose some version of a rite like the “Horn of Venus” was received by Dee sometime after he wrote the *Hieroglyphic Monad* but before 1580. Perhaps he might have tried to explain it to a few Family of Love friends . . . but many of the allusions, especially those involving the Kabbalah, Sufism or the Monad, likely wouldn’t be understood by most English Familists, and writing down a lengthy explanation would be heretical in the extreme.

Most English Familists would likely be at a loss at how to go about bringing back whatever had been lost, but Dee had connections to learned individuals on the European continent far beyond most of his countrymen. Might he not do what many Kabbalists did from the 12th century on, and try to improve the system by applying his knowledge of sacred correspondences in Hebrew? We can find many, many examples of Kabbalists correcting other writers “mistakes” in Hebrew based on their different understanding of Kabbalah.

As the Dees and Kellys journeyed on the continent from 1583-1589, their main contacts likely were continental Familists. But their travels took them to cities with large Jewish populations, and its inconceivable that John Dee, the “Christian Kabbalist,” would not have met with them. Most who study his life assume, for instance, that Dee met with Rabbi Judah Loew, the Kabbalist who created a Golem to defend Prague’s Jewish quarter, even though there’s no record of it.

Let’s hypothesize that Dee and Kelly encountered the teachings of Rabbi Isaac Luria, whose practical
Kabbala was explicitly tantric and focused on the idea that a chosen few people could literally heal the world. Though conventional wisdom says that Luria’s teachings would not yet have traveled from the Galilean city of Safed, where he died in 1572 at only 38 years of age, to northern Europe, we know oral teachings can travel faster than printed ones, and in my next article I’ll suggest several possible routes of transmission.

The Black Venus in our working will become the Shekinah when Lurianic Kabbalism is superimposed over the rite; the alchemical intent the same as a Lurianic Kabbalist’s focus on tiqqun, metempsychoses and redemption. Lawrence Fine, in his excellent survey *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos: Isaac Luria and his Kabbalistic Fellowship*, points out that much of this *tiqqun* is focused on the “theological and theurgical” implications of sexual relations” including “rigorous concern for the day and hour during which relations should take place, and the direction in which a couple should lie” as well as a multitude of other concerns which can be mapped out in terms of sacred geometry.

If we look at *The Consecrated Little Book of Black Venus* through the lens of Lurianic Kabbalah, as we’ll do next issue, we’ll have a pretty good idea of what has been left out and why: but we’ll also have a rite that would likely not have taken this form until 1585 or 1586, the years Meier mentions in his analysis. This writer thinks we can pinpoint exactly why it was brought back to England and connect it directly to Dee’s magical work in the final years of his life. The conclusions may surprise you!

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Notes

[1] For an excellent synopsis of planetary attributions and characteristics of magickal hours and days in grimoires ranging from the Key of Solomon the King to Agrippa’s Three Books of Occult Philosophy, see Leitch, especially chapter five, “Magical Timing.” For discussion of magical hours relation specifically to terrestrial astronomy, see Skinner, pp.240-241.

[2] June 4 1580 falls on Saturday on the Julian calendar. Catholic states in Europe switched to the Gregorian calendar in 1582, and Protestant countries followed over next 170 years, with Britain changing last, in 1752. John Dee’s attempt to reform the English calendar in 1583 met with little success.


[6] For information on different documents, see Meier’s detailed comparison.


[8] See further discussion in Phil Legard’s appendix to this article. De Bry’s engravings of Großchedel’s work have been republished, translated, and explicated by Adam McLean in his Magical Calendar.


[15] Begg talks about this tradition in many places, but focuses on Europe and particularly France and Spain.

[16] Begg, pp.145-146. Of course, this writer must add that, from a Jewish perspective, the religions were always one: it was the heretical Christians who broke things off by turning a rabbi into a divinity. For further discussion of iconography, see all of chapter 5, “The Symbolic Meaning of the Black Virgin.”


[21] See Appendix I.


[23] As many have pointed out since, Murray’s argument makes more sense if one assumes the so-called “witch cult” at times fused with and at times hid within different heretical Christian movements, just as Jewish marranos and conversos were often suspected of continuing their Jewish practices after converting to Christianity, and just as “papists” in England during Dee’s time were constantly under suspicion of remaining Catholic in a Protestant country. Within “Protestant” England, different Protestant movements like the “Family of Love” were also considered heretical.

[24] Taylor, p.114. This survey of Greek alchemy makes no effort to distinguish between genuine authors and false attribution. A text which presents itself as authored by “Isis,” therefore, he lists as being by Isis.

[25] For a detailed discussion, see Witt, *Isis in the Ancient World*, especially chapter XX, which looks at Isis as “The Great Forerunner” of Mary and discusses the well-known phenomenon of Mary assuming the attributes of local “pagan” divinities. It also presents iconographic parallels between Egyptian and Christian motifs, such as Isis/Horus resembling Mary/Jesus or Horus/St. George killing a serpent/dragon.

[26] If the original writer of the Consecrated Little Book of Black Venus intends “Negromancia” to refer to alchemy, that inside meaning seems by the time the 1794 author of the Gedtrucker text recopies it, and changes the word to “necromancia.” See Meier, pp.21, 22, 30.

[27] Of course, this assumes that the speaker spoke the language of the groups in power. Minority languages were generally outlawed, and the Tudor’s “Welsh revival” did not include reviving the right of people to conduct business and legal matters in Welsh.


[29] Bridge’s guide to the *Monas Hieroglyphica* theorems is included as Appendix II.


[31] Thank you to Alan Moore for this explanation.

[32] For one of many extended explanations of the difference, see Powell,


[34] Wooley, p.141.

[35] Ibid, pp.73-74.


[38] Wooley, pp.132-143.


[41] Tanner, qtd. in Aston, p.168.

[42] Aston, pp.177-179; Christianson, p.130.


[45] Meier, pp.84-85. Herpentil’s work is collected by Scheible, 1846. Of note, Schieble’s other interests judging by his book titles seem to be the *Six and Seventh Book of Moses* (1849) and *Dr. Johann Faust* (1846).


[48] Meier, p.144-145. See Appendix III for German text.

[49] Dee’s angelic workings with Kelley began in 1582. While Dee may have called angelic spirits before this, we have no record of it.

[50] Meier, p.144-145. See Appendix III for German text.

[51] Darlene, the artist who recreated the color frontispiece for our translation, says the Warburg manuscript shows a writer who was definitely not a skilled calligrapher. The letters reflect the German style, but poorly.

[52] Carlos Gilly identified the manuscript the *Magical Calendar* was based on to be British Library manuscript Harley 3420.

[53] As Legard mentions in Appendix I, and Peterson in his on-line introduction to *Tuba Veneris*, part of the impetus behind this is Dee’s well-known interest in codes and cryptography. Also, Voynich manuscript researchers often theorize that this incomprehensible manuscript attributed to Roger Bacon may have been in Dee and Kelley’s possession, and they could have sold it to Holy Roman Emporer Rudlf II of Bohemia. Given Meier’s thesis that the “Horn of Venus may have originated in the same place at the same time, looking for Trithemian or other ciphers in it seems logical.”

[54] See Appendix I.

[55] See Appendix I.


[58] Compare this Treasure” to that of another work of “Nigromancy,” attributed to Roger Bacon, who Dee felt was the ideal philosopher: “Here beginneth the practice of Nigromancy—or the Black Art—which is the convocation and extrication of the Spirits wheresoever they may be; and in verity to gather them like fellows to thyself as thou would sheaves of wheat, that by these means you may obtain the ‘Thesaurus Spiritum’—or treasure of spirits. By this Art is scarcely anything completed unless it is newly set apart, at once made venerable, mighty, and occult. Thus the secret work before [my] discovery was widely known by the populace of ancient Alexandria, by which I, Fra. Robert Lombard, a brother minor of the Fransican Order together with Fra. Roger Bacon through many years of study of that place fell upon it.”


[60] For a detailed discussion in terms of Lurianic Kabbalism, see Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos: Isaac Luria and his Kabbalistic Fellowship*.


[67] Hamilton.


[69] Ibid, pp. 146-147.

[70] Harvey.


[72] Ibid, p. 117.

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