

English Magick

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FOR A novel about the return of English magic, *Jonathan Strange and Mr Norrell* is quite sparing with direct quotes from actual spells of magic. Only perhaps two or three such quotations are given in the entire 800-page book. Clarke's 'spells' have a poetic form that is simple, sturdy, and elegant, in a way that avoids the kitsch and spook common to popular magical depictions (with their sing-song rhymes); and she makes use of a rich allusionary vocabulary that seems to stretch all through Western history and mythology.

From page 351 of the novel, where it is ostensibly quoted from Ormskirk's *Revelations of Thirty-Six Other Worlds*.

Place the moon at his eyes

Place the moon at his eyes and her whiteness shall devour the false sights the deceiver has placed there.

Place a swarm of bees at his ears. Bees love truth and will destroy the deceiver's lies.

Place salt in his mouth lest the deceiver attempt to delight him with the taste of honey, or disgust him with the taste of ashes.

Nail his hand with an iron nail so that he shall not raise it to do the deceiver's bidding.

Place his heart in a secret place so that all his desires shall be his own and the deceiver shall find no hold there.

Memorandum. The colour red may be found beneficial.

Excerpted from p. 626 of the novel, where it is effected by the gentleman with the thistle-down hair.

Lost Hope

The great hall was filled with a flock of birds. In the blink of an eye they were there; in the blink of an eye they were gone.

The great hall was full of spinning leaves. Winter-dry and brown they were, turning in a wind that had come out of nowhere. In the blink of an eye they were there; in the blink of an eye they were gone.

The great hall was full of rain—not a rain of water, a rain of blood. In the blink of an eye it was there; in the blink of an eye it was gone.