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Abstract

This thesis seeks to examine the cultural activity and discourse of the logics of medieval clerical magical secrecy and investigate how these covert logics become textualized in the *Sworn Book of Honorius*. In order to perform this examination of medieval clerical magical secrecy, this thesis extends the methodologies of engaging with medieval secrecy that Karma Lochrie establishes in her *Covert Operations: The Medieval Uses of Secrecy*. I primarily draw from two aspects of her methodological work: the focus on the dynamics of secrecy as opposed to the secret itself, and the attention to the relationship between magical knowledge and power.

Dynamics of Secrecy in *The Sworn Book of Honorius*

by

Connor Feliu

B.A., Le Moyne College, 2020

Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Religion.

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Introduction

Dynamics of Secrecy in *The Sworn Book of Honorius*

This thesis seeks to examine the “cultural activity and discourse”¹ of the logics of medieval clerical magical secrecy and investigate how these covert logics become textualized in the *Sworn Book of Honorius*. In order to perform this examination of medieval clerical magical secrecy, this thesis extends the methodologies of engaging with medieval secrecy that Karma Lochrie establishes in her *Covert Operations: The Medieval Uses of Secrecy*. I primarily draw from two aspects of her methodological work: the focus on the dynamics of secrecy as opposed to the secret itself, and the attention to the relationship between magical knowledge and power.

In *Covert Operations*, Lochrie defines a secret as something concealed, a reality beneath appearances that is only known to a select group of initiated people.² However, the very production and circulation of a secret upends its own truthfulness (after all, if the secret is reality, how can it also be excluded from the everyday observer?). Lochrie points out that oftentimes the secret proves to be a fiction, a reality created by the play between two actors.³ She takes interest in the notion that a secret is created out of the play between two actors (a notion that she borrows from Michel de Certeau). Out of this notion that secrets are always the product of at least two people interacting, Lochrie argues that secrets “are always located in particular social contexts,” including the context of

¹ Karma Lochrie, *Covert Operations: the Medieval Operations of Secrecy*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999) 4.

² Lochrie, *Covert Operations*, 97.

³ Lochrie, *Covert Operations*, 97.

medievalism and the Middle Ages, though it may not always seem particularly social.”⁴ In order to explore the ways in which secrets are created and legitimized in their own distinct cultural contexts, Lochrie transitions the reader away from thinking about the secret itself and instead offers an examination of secrecy, the “intentional concealment that structures social and power relationships.”⁵ Because of the questionable nature of the truth of most secrets, Lochrie argues that the concealed secret at the heart of secrecy is of little scholarly value. Lochrie offers the language of covert operations to reframe secrecy as the term covert operations “nearly always alludes somewhat mysteriously to intentionally concealed activities. I use the well-known phrase to emphasize operations rather than the object of secrecy.”⁶ She states that:

the trick of secrecy is to call our attention to the supposed secret as the locus of truth, rather than the operations that make them appear to be truths and the social relationships that are negotiated through them. The secrets always distract us, too, from the power relations that surround and give them meaning... it is not through the secrets themselves but through the operations of concealment that we can begin to understand contemporary strategies of concealment and the social networks they organize.⁷

For Lochrie, secrecy proves to be an immensely fruitful area of study as the examination of various technologies of concealment allows for an analysis of the structures of power that emerge from secrecy discourse.⁸ In other words, secrecy functions within

⁴ Lochrie, *Covert Operations*, 4.

⁵ Lochrie, *Covert Operations*, 6.

⁶ Lochrie, *Covert Operations*, 4.

⁷ Lochrie, *Covert Operations*, 4.

⁸ Lochrie, *Covert Operations*, 5.

discourses. Secrecy structures the identity and subjectivity of its interlocutors through its structuring of power relations.⁹

Karma Lochrie explores these in discourse surrounding confession, gossip, medical science, medieval law, and sodomy, but an area in which she does not examine covert operations is medieval magical practices. This thesis seeks to answer the question of what a Lochrie reading of secret magical practices would be if she had been able to add yet another chapter to her book. The reason for adding magic stems from an incongruity within the larger field of medievalist studies and the more niche subgenre of medieval magical studies, which does not often receive interest from scholars outside of the field of medieval magical studies. By employing the medievalist literary theories of a scholar like Karma Lochrie to magical texts I hope to contribute to, and in some ways encourage, the further explorations of magical texts through more theoretical and literary means. In particular I hope to contribute an emphasis to the ways in which magical texts produce systems of knowledge and power.

Medieval magical practices prove a fertile ground (especially medieval clerical magic) for the study of covert operations as it involves a unique interlocution with other systems of power and aids in the creation of a secret identity so to speak. It is for this reason I plan to extend Lochrie's methodologies of examining the power structures latent in magical secrecy along the same lines of Lochrie's examination of other modes of secret discourse.

⁹ Lochrie, *Covert Operations*, 1-2.

The first chapter draws “upon a variety of theoretical and historical sources to construct a framework for understanding the operations of secrecy and the ideologies they enable and support.”¹⁰ In order to construct the covert operations of secrecy employed by the “clerical underground”¹¹ as well as the ideologies that these operations of secrecy produce, this thesis first requires a construction of the operations of secrecy that clerical magicians engaged in. Therefore, I will first illustrate the qualities of the clerical magician amidst their historical contexts. Next, I will illustrate the profound need for secrecy that clerical magicians require by examining the anti-magic polemics that medieval clergy members engage in. I will conclude with an examination of the knowledge and power that these anti-magical policies produce.

The second section of this thesis employs the *Sworn Book of Honorius* as a case study “not so much as a way of illustrating how these covert operations map perfectly onto a text, but as a way of trying it out and complicating it.”¹² To begin, I will introduce the *Sworn Book*, giving a history of its compilation as well as an explanation of its structure and contents. I will give particular focus to the prologue, as that section of the book most explicitly articulates the practices of secrecy that surround it. This will naturally lead into an examination of the particular ways the *Sworn Book* demands to be handled and the relationality between the people who surround the book. By performing a close reading of the prologue, I will see how a text upholds, resists, and changes the operations of

¹⁰ Karma Lochrie, *Covert Operations*, 4.

¹¹ Richard Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites: A Necromancer's Manual of the Fifteenth Century*, (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University, 1998), 24.

¹² Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites*, 4.

concealment employed by clerical magicians. In particular I will examine how the *Sworn Book* relies on a core secret as a mechanism to institute the dynamics of secrecy that produce knowledge - this secret being a magical ritual to obtain the beatific vision.

In the third chapter I will examine the prologue and oath section of the *Sworn Book*. By exploring the prologue, I hope to further emphasize the danger that the clerical-magician purportedly faces in order to legitimize the knowledge and power relations within the text. I will then focus on the oath section, in which I move oath by oath breaking down how each oath aids in the production of knowledge and subsequently how these modes of knowledges produce power either between the clerical magician and the outer world that seeks to persecute the magician (at least according to the magician but bears historical fact), or reinforce and define the power relationality between the master magician and their disciples.

I will conclude with a summary of all three chapters as well as suggest further areas of study to continue the constellation of concealment and magical practices in the Late Middle Ages.

Chapter I

Karma Lochrie states that secrecy “functions within and alongside cultural discourses and of that which operates negatively and often invisibly to exclude, oppress, and control some knowledge, some peoples, and some discourses over others.”¹³ Clerical magicians are no different, like any holders of a secret, they operate within larger knowledge systems relating to and stemming from existing religious, social, and scientific institutions. Through an introduction to the broad category of clerical magicians we might better come to understand how clerical magicians positions themselves in relationship to existing knowledge-power structures and in doing so prime ourselves for an examination into these structures.

A clerical magician in the most basic sense of the term is a member of the Catholic clergy who practices magic. In the medieval period, the term cleric holds a more expansive definition than the modern consensus of a priest, monk, or deacon. The medieval category of “cleric” refers to any man or boy who receives a tonsure (a demarcation in some manner for religious work, often through a specific hair style) or otherwise serves at a monastery in lower stations such as porter.¹⁴ The term even expands at times to include students in university life, as the universities of Western Europe often fell under religious control. In order to study at them, many students would become at least partially ordained, becoming able to give mass or even (surprisingly often) perform exorcisms.¹⁵ While the identity of the cleric has a degree of fluidity in the medieval period, clerical magicians share a desire to

¹³ Karma Lochrie, *Covert Operations*, 4.

¹⁴ Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic*, 153.

¹⁵ Kieckhefer, *Magic*, 153.

legitimize their position within a Church that demands orthodoxy. The understanding that clerical magicians need to situate themselves in the knowledge traditions of the Church will greatly inform the specific types of magical practices they enact.

Much like the term cleric, the term magician, denoting a practitioner of magic, holds a more expansive category in the medieval period. Magic in the medieval period proves to be a nebulous category that resists mapping onto contemporary understandings thereof. In the introduction to the *Sacred and the Sinister*, a book styled as an intentional continuation of the methods and theories of Richard Kieckhefer, David Collins mirrors Kieckhefer and argues for the “impossibility of isolating [medieval] magic as a perspective on the world and the powers afoot in it.”¹⁶ Instead, Collins echoes Kieckhefer, insisting that magic in the Middle Ages is a “a perspective that - in different ways, changing over time and different across cultures and demographic strata - was best understood in conjunction with the religious and with the scientific.”¹⁷ In addition to the need to locate magic within its cultural boundaries, to perform an analysis of a clerical magician’s secrecy in vein of Lochrie’s readings of secrecy as a production of hidden knowledge, and instead of power derived from having said knowledge, one must also understand how magic functions as a practice of knowledge that informs the gaining or manipulating power. Ostensibly, medieval magic can be understood as revolving around the ability to know the hidden properties of materials, or having access to otherwise hidden knowledges about the

¹⁶ David J. Collins S.J., “Introduction: Flirting between Heaven and Hell,” in *The Sacred and the Sinister: Studies in Medieval Religion and Magic*, edited by David J. Collins, S.J. (Pennsylvania: State University Press, 2019), 7.

¹⁷ Collins, “Introduction,” 7.

orderings of the universe, which can be manipulated in a way that produces a change in material and spiritual world around the magician.

For instance, in the medieval period doctors are required to learn astrology to best predict what kinds of treatments to give patients and the best time to harvest plants and herbs to make them more effective.¹⁸ Holy water is often called for as an ingredient in medicinal practices, often used to bless herbs to increase their efficacy and often done in combination with other prayers¹⁹ While these are only two examples of a rich and complex system of magic, medicine, and religion, both instances illustrate how an operator deploys knowledge about the occult or hidden properties utilizing a ceremonial framework to produce a change in the material world surrounding the magician, in effect an enactment of power.

While various members of medieval society practice or employ someone to practice magic, from peasants to kings,²⁰ clerics prove privy to certain forms of magic to which other members of medieval society don't have ready access. Clerical magicians incorporate rituals of giving mass and utilizing Sacramental objects as a means of altering the world around them. This dependence on specific forms of liturgy as a means of enacting power over the ordered universe illustrates a certain type of ceremonial magic that differentiates itself from other more scientific magical practices. Additionally, clerical magicians concerned themselves greatly with the practices of necromancy/goetia—engagement with the spirits of the dead or with demons—and theurgy—magic centered around angelic or

¹⁸ Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic*, 67.

¹⁹ Kieckhefer, *Magic*, 68.

²⁰ Kieckhefer, *Magic*, 56.

otherwise celestial spirits.²¹ Both rely on knowledge systems that inform them about spirits and allow them to manipulate them.

Although the practices of engaging with demonic or infernal spirits might seem akin to working in league with the spirits, the way that clerical magicians frame this engagement with infernal spirits reaffirms rather than rejects Catholic orthodoxy. For instance, in the *Ars Notoria* and *Liber incantationum, exorcismorum et fascinationum variarum*, two rather contentious works of magic that often face condemnation in the Late Medieval period (but nevertheless remain some of the most popular books of magic from the era), the methods of performing any spirit workings relies on the deployment of the saints and the Virgin Mary as well as the name of Jesus and various names of God (the most common being the *Tetragrammaton*) as a means of subjugating the spirits through the legitimacy that Jesus grants the clerical magician (according to a ceremonial-magician reading of the Gospel Matthew 10:1) in order to maintain control over the spirits.²² When working within a necromantic tradition, the clerical magician seems to depend on the sacred ordained character of the clergy in order to safely subjugate and maintain power over the infernal aspects of their work.²³

Clerical magical practices also explicitly engage with systems of knowledge production. Using the *Ars Notoria* again as an example, one aim that the operation of the

²¹ Claire Fanger, *Rewriting Magic: An Exegesis of the Visionary Autobiography of a Fourteenth-Century French Monk*. (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2015.) 117.

²² Richard Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites: A Necromancer's Manual of the Fifteenth Century*, (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University, 1998), 138.

²³ Claire Fanger, *Rewriting Magic: An Exegesis of the Visionary Autobiography of a Fourteenth-Century French Monk*. (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2015.) 117.

text provides is the production of an eidetic memory, which would aid the clerical magician in the accumulation and mastery of the liberal arts.²⁴ The focus on learning is not much a focus on magic for magic's sake, but the unique goals of clerics and how they aim to achieve them through the utilization of ceremonial magic. Effectively, magic as a knowledge system proves to be a means to an end; that end being the power to effect the work around them. This emphasis on the goal of mastery of the liberal arts ties into a grander cosmological scheme. For any cleric, and especially for clerical magicians, the mastery of the liberal arts functions as an initial phase of a path to God. Fanger states that "all devotional acts are also acts of learning as much as acts of homage: the aim of both was reform of the whole self... in conformity with God."²⁵

While magical practices are ubiquitous in the medieval period, that does not exclude them from persecution. There is a material need for the clerical magician to conceal their magical practices, so by examining the reasons for this material need we might begin to understand the need for secrecy and better understand how secrecy is made worthwhile later in the paper. The increase of anti-magical polemics produced by the Catholic Church began in part under the papacy of Pope Clement V. While his main targets of persecution are the Berhards and the Beguine, organizations of lay people living in semi-monastic communities, he tangentially targets clerical magicians. During the Council of Vienne (1311-1312), he issues statements officially condemning the practices of attempting to

²⁴ Fanger, *Rewriting Magic*, 38, 111-112.

²⁵ Claire Fanger, *Rewriting Magic*, 48.

seek union with God and or spiritual perfection by one's own means, including the means of ceremonial magic.²⁶

While the proclamations against the Berhards and the Beguines only tangentially affect the clerical magician through the explicit condemnation of ceremonial magic practices in relation to the perfection of the human condition, the rise of persecution of non-normative religious practices begin to encroach further and further into the clerical magician's realm of work. This increase of threats against the clerical magician begins in earnest under Pope John XXII, whose papacy marks an incorporation of concerns of sorcery and clerical magic at the highest ecclesiastical levels into the general milieu of anxieties that are swirling around the accused Free Spirit movements of the previous pope.²⁷ In response to the growing atmosphere of anxiety that pervades Western Europe, in 1320 William, cardinal of Santa Sabina acting under the pope, issues a letter to the inquisitors in Toulouse and Carcassonne in Southern France demanding they root out and deal with magicians and anyone else who is "engaged in demonic invocation" or otherwise consorts with spirits in order to carry out acts of magic;²⁸ An issue that would certainly go headed by inquisitors and other members of authority in the moment.

²⁶ Katelyn Mesler. "The Liber Iuratus Honorii and the Christian Reception of Angelic Magic," in *Invoking Angels: Theurgic Ideas and Practices, Thirteenth to Sixteenth Centuries*, edited by Claire Fanger (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University, 2012) 117.

²⁷ Michael D. Bailey, "From Sorcery to Witchcraft: Clerical Conceptions of Magic in the Later Middle Ages." *Speculum* 76, no. 4 (2001): 966.

²⁸ Bailey, "From Sorcery to Witchcraft," 966.

Six years later, Pope John XXII releases the *Super Illius Specula* (1326), the Papal bull officially banning all magical practices on threat of excommunication, including the conjuring of spirits and working with non-demonic spirits such as angels.²⁹ He states that

there are many Christians in name only, who have turned away from the light of truth... for they sacrifice to demons and adore them, they make or cause to be made images, rings, mirrors, phials or anything whatsoever in which demons can be ensnared by magic. From them they seek and receive responses, and ask for help in fulfilling their depraved desires.³⁰

The employments of images and rings, and mirrors are both ubiquitously common since they are common objects, but they also seem to target clerical magicians in particular. While demons might be rhetorical devices, as previously stated the clerical magician often engages explicitly in the infernal arts, albeit in a way that resists the narrative being established in the bull. Regardless, as Michael D. Bailey argues in “From Sorcery to Witchcraft: Clerical conceptions of Magic in the Middle Ages,” this section seems to be targeting specific traditions of necromantic practices favored by clerical magicians.³¹

Another clue that this bull targets clerical magicians specifically appears towards the end of the proclamation. John XXII prohibits the keeping of books or writings that make study of these demonic arts. As previously mentioned, the owning of books, and the ability to read, suggests a level of learning; effectively, this bull does not just target “folk” practices, but rather makes a clear effort to go after specific types of learned magics that circulate within certain echelons, both publicly and privately, of the clerical level. He

²⁹ Walsh, *The Popes and Science*, 168.

³⁰ Derek Hill. “Appendix B: Super Illius Specula (1326).” in *Inquisition in the Fourteenth Century: The Manuals of Bernard Gui and Nicholas Eymerich*, (Boydell & Brewer, 2019.), 230.

³¹ Michael D. Bailey, “From Sorcery to Witchcraft,” 967.

instructs all owners of these kind of books to “destroy and burn them and every part thereof absolutely and completely.”³²

The bull continues by declaring that even the teaching and learning of these arts is prohibited (to say nothing of actually practicing them). The resulting sentence is excommunication. John XXII states that, if found practicing or owning magical materials,

a case shall be brought before their competent judges for the imposition of each and every punishment which heretics merit by law... [owning books] otherwise, we decree that they automatically incur the sentence of excommunication and that, when the evidence is established, a case leading to other greater penalties shall be taken against those who disregard this edict.³³

The threats of these “other greater penalties” ring true. While the greater persecution of both legitimate and fictitious magical practitioners wouldn’t occur until the early medieval period marked by the publication of the *Malleus Maleficarum*, that did not mean that the issue to Toulouse and Carcassonne and the *Super Illius Specula* fell on deaf or unwilling ears.³⁴ One of the most iconic cases of clerical magical persecutions occurs in 1323 France, three years after the Bishop William wrote to the French inquisition, telling them to be on heightened alert against magical practitioners.

John of Morigny is a monk who, in his early life, studied the magical text known as the *Ars Notoria*, only to later reject it as a demonic entity and instead begin to compile his own key to knowledge in the text the *Liber florum*, complete with visions from the Virgin Mary. While he never claims and actively refuses the mantle of magician (going so far as to

³² Hill, “Appendix B,” 233.

³³ Hill, “Appendix B,” 233.

³⁴ Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic*, 194, 197.

accuse his rivals, who accused his *Liber florum* of resembling necromancy, of being like barking dogs),³⁵ we can see the repercussions of being labeled a clerical magician. In Gratian, four charges are leveled against John that eventually lead to more serious consequences. The most relevant example to this discussion of anti-magical polemics and the dangers of someone even not identifying as a clerical magician but practicing acts that could be read as clerical magic occurs in the second charge from the *Decretum*. John's *Liber florum* is accused of being a book that purports an idolatrous worship of the Virgin Mary and contains certain "pacts of significations, both agreed upon and confederated, for consultation."³⁶ What is interesting is that this accusation is not that of active intentional involvement with spirits, as we have seen in more explicitly necromantic practices, but rather the accusation of making a tacit contract, or entering a relationality with evil spirits solely because John is unable to discern that the spirits are from an infernal source. Despite John's rebuttals that his work is orthodox, and that if he is striking pacts his pacts are with God and God alone,³⁷ hostility to his work only increases. According to the *Grandes chroniques de France*, in 1323 John's *Liber florum* is "justly condemned in Paris as false and evil, against Christian faith, and condemned to be burned and put in the fire."³⁸

While John of Morigny's books and reputation went up in flames, by all accounts he is left unharmed bodily. However, threats of material and bodily harm loom over the clerical magician, as there are accounts of exceptional physical violence suffered by clerical

³⁵ Fanger, *Rewriting Magic*, 88-9.

³⁶ Fanger, *Rewriting Magic*, 139.

³⁷ Claire Fanger, *Rewriting Magic*, 140.

³⁸ Translation provided by Bailey, "Magic, Mysticism, and Heresy," 62.

magicians. The fourteenth century Florentine monk John of Vallombrosa, who, when found to have an interest in magical books (although how magical books ended up in the monastery is kept vague), is thrown in a dungeon for several years, leaving him broken and barely able to walk.³⁹ In addition, on the 19th of September, 1398, the University of Paris issues a list of twenty eight articles condemning the practice of magic. Only weeks after this condemnation the magician Jean de Bar was executed after confessing to practicing magic and holding pro-magic beliefs.⁴⁰ Out of the destruction of key books to the practice of clerical magic and the increasing threats of physical violence John XXII represents in his papacy, one can begin to see how the concealment of magical texts and practices increasingly became a necessity for clerical magicians.

While it might seem that the persecution of clerical magicians serves to dissuade some potential or current practitioners, the need for secrecy legitimizes the worldview of the clerical magician. Karma Lochrie cites Michel de Certeau in her description of secrecy as a play between two actors. According to Lochrie, he “describes secrecy as a “web of tactics” that is woven around the secret.”⁴¹ She goes on to quote the following from de Certeau, which I find particularly relevant here.

Secrecy is not only the state of a thing that escapes from or reveals itself to knowledge. It designates a play between actors. It circumscribes a terrain of strategic relations between the one trying to discover the secret and the one keeping it, or between the one who is supposed to know it and the one who is assumed not to know it.⁴²

³⁹ Kieckhefer, *Magic*, 155.

⁴⁰ Page, *Magic*, 127.

⁴¹ Lochrie, *Covert*, 93.

⁴² Michel de Certeau, *The Mystic Fable*, as rendered in Lochrie, *Covert Operations*, 93.

The secrecy that Lochrie draws from de Certeau concerns itself not so much with an individual's secret so much as how the act of secrecy concert itself in a "social network."⁴³ In the interplay of secrecy between two actors as de Certeau describes, one actor (the Church) constantly attempts to discover the secret of the other actor (the clerical magician). Lochrie states that it is this play between actors that legitimizes and gives credence to a secret. Effectively, by creating two groups—those in the know and those outside the know—secrecy endows the holder of the secret with power. Magic becomes a powerful commodity because it must be kept secret in a play between two actors.

However, the secrecy encroaching clerical magical practices likewise loses its value if it fails to be transmitted. This practice of at least partial revelation and most importantly transmission is critical to the play of secrecy between actors. Elliot Wolfson illustrates the necessity of revelations and transmission of knowledge in magical traditions in his "Occultation of the Feminine and the Body of Secrecy in Medieval Kabbalah" where he states:

a secret presupposes the concomitant transmission and withholding on the part of the one in possession of the secret. If I possess a secret and transmit it to no one, the secret has no relevance. By the same token, if I readily divulge that secret without discretion, the secrecy of that secret is rendered ineffectual. What empowers me as the keeper of a secret is not only that I transmit it to some and not to others but that in the very transmission, I maintain the secret by holding back in my advancing for-ward. from that vantage point, therefore, the secret is a secret only to the extent that it is concealed in its disclosure, but it may be concealed in its disclosure only if it is disclosed in its concealment.⁴⁴

⁴³ Lochrie, *Covert Operations*, 93.

⁴⁴ Wolfson, *Poetic Thinking*, 40

This complex play of revelation and concealment, disclosure and transmission are crucial to the propagation of knowledge for the clerical magician. These magicians employ techniques of concealment in order to control the transmission of magic, as the rapid dissemination of the practice threatens both the magician and the structures of power they work within.⁴⁵ Clerical magicians restrict access to magical secrecy through a heavy dependence on manuscript traditions and a culture of master-disciple relationships.

Clerical magicians rely heavily on manuscript traditions in order to record and transmit magical practices. The majority of magical texts from the Late Medieval Period employ Latin as the language of magic, and while a variety of scholars in the Late Medieval period engage in either written or spoken Latin, the employment of Latin in magical texts illustrate at least a proximity to the clergy.⁴⁶ In addition, clerical magic often employs ceremonial sigilic work, which requires working off of preestablished imagery, limiting the possibility for clerical magic to be a solely oral tradition. This dependency on written magical practices mirrors clerical employments of psalters and scripture as an explicitly written place of sacred knowledge.

Another aspect of the manuscript tradition that serves to both justify the need for secrecy and increase the value of the secret that the magical texts contain is the attributed authorship a majority of magical texts contain. Many late medieval magical texts either attribute their authorship to ancient biblical figures such as Adam or Moses, the most

⁴⁵ Wolfson, *Poetic Thinking*, 40.

⁴⁶ Michael D. Bailey, "From Sorcery to Witchcraft: Clerical Conceptions of Magic in the Later Middle Ages." *Speculum* 76, no. 4 (2001): 966.

popular biblical figure for such attributions being King Solomon, or else to great bygone medieval thinkers such as Saint Albert.

The establishment of a genealogy of knowledge is nothing new for medieval texts; in fact, a hallmark of medieval texts is that they explicitly depend on past names as a means of legitimizing their knowledge. Lochrie points out that oftentimes texts that contain knowledge that might either be suspect or of dubious origins are attributed to past great thinkers like Aristotle in order to legitimize the knowledge claims within.⁴⁷ As A.J. Minnes establishes in his first chapter of *Medieval Theories of Authorship Scholastic: Literary Attitudes in the Latter Middle Ages*, “to be old was to be good; the best writers were the more ancient. The converse often seems to have been true: if a work was good, its medieval readers were disposed to think that it was old.”⁴⁸ Therefore a medieval author might pass their own work off as the writing of a past thinker, or if they discovered a text with knowledge they found worthwhile they might add a prologue to tie it in some way to an authoritative voice. Likewise, magical texts couch themselves in discourses of authorship. Magical texts offer the reader a lineage in order to prove themselves to be good and worthy of study, often, as with most medieval books of knowledge, through the employment of prologues and introductory framing tools.

While manuscript traditions provide access to a wealth of knowledge, in order to gain access to the manuscript traditions, a clerical magician first has to acquire a text, and

⁴⁷ Karma Lochrie, *Covert Operations*, 127.

⁴⁸ Alastair Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*, (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 10. For more on legitimacy of authorship in relationship to more explicit literal roles see Chapter 3.

in doing so participate in a transmission of knowledge. Kieckhefer rejects the notion of a wide scale organization of clerical magicians, stating “the members of this company [clerical underworld of magical practitioners] were no doubt linked by similar purpose more than by any formal or lasting bonds, and certainly there is no evidence that they were organized as a group.”⁴⁹ However, he does suggest that enclaves of relationality do occur amongst clerical magicians as a means of transmitting knowledge, often in the form of master student relationships.

An interesting anecdote about the failures of forming these bonds occur in the writings of John of Salisbury in his *Policraticus*. John tells of himself as a boy learning Latin from a priest using the psalms as a study text.⁵⁰ However, the priest has an interest in more than just the psalms and attempts to recruit John and an unnamed older student in the art of divination. Kieckhefer states that “after certain preliminary ‘magical rites’ and the requisite anointing, the priest uttered names ‘which by the horror they inspired, seemed to me, child though I was, to belong to demons.’ The other pupil declared that he saw certain ‘misty figures,’ but John himself saw nothing of the sort and was thus ruled unqualified for this art.”⁵¹ Interestingly enough, this is likely not a fabrication; the *Munich Handbook* contains the same ritual and is tentatively dated to around when John of Salisbury would have been studying.⁵²

⁴⁹ Kieckhefer, *Magic*, 155-156.

⁵⁰ Kieckhefer, *Magic*, 151.

⁵¹ Kieckhefer, *Magic*, 151.

⁵² Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites*.

But this admittedly failed attempt at relationality illustrates the ways in which clerical circles utilize secret relationality in order to transmit magic while attempting to keep it concealed. One rather interesting reason that Kieckhefer offers as to why instances of clerical engagement with magic are so high during the Middle Ages centers around the majority of clerics involved in some way with a monastery or who spent time in a monastery—especially a monastery that remains lax in their rules of surveillance—effectively this laxness gives monks *carte blanche* to perform whatever magical rights they desire away from the prying eyes of church authorities and in relative privacy (though, as we see with the aforementioned case of John of Vallombrosa, even lax monasteries have the potentiality of danger).⁵³

While a master-disciple relationship does not prove to be too uncommon in the Late Medieval Period, and in fact oftentimes these relationships are central to the transmission of knowledge-based practices or trades, this relationship structure is central to engagement in secrecy traditions. As Wolfson states, there is always a need for continued concealment, a way to keep the passion alive in the relationship. But built into this structure of relationality is always a power dynamic, the master's revelation legitimizes his knowledge, and its acceptance further proves its own truthfulness.

The lax surveillance in certain monasteries also allows for master-disciple relationships to flourish, since, when away from watchful eyes, their practices can be carried out in secret. For the disciple, their being taught a secret tradition brings them into a world of higher stakes; they participate in something larger than themselves, and in turn

⁵³ Kieckhefer, *Magic*, 155-156.

are granted an ability to both exercise and bring themselves closer to God. After all, since liberal education is seen as a process in which one can become closer to God, the Master becomes a guide, but in his own knowledge becomes Godlike to the student as a result. Furthermore, there is always the possibility of the disciple becoming a master, a position to strive for and then the cycle is repeated, through the passing down of tradition one is brought back up into textual traditions, a promise of elevated and privileged status in the clerical underground.

Chapter II

In order to examine how clerical magicians practice secrecy in more contextual terms, this chapter focuses on the *Sworn Book of Honorius* and its core secret, a magical operation for obtaining the beatific vision.

The *Liber Juratus Honorii*, the *Sworn Book of Honorius*, hereafter the *Sworn Book*, is a handbook of ceremonial magic dated to be from between the mid thirteenth to early fourteenth centuries. Scholars debate on the exact dating for the *Sworn Book*. Robert Mathiesen suggests that since the Archbishop William Auvergne makes reference to a “sworn book” in his *De legibus* during his leadership in Paris (1228-1249), the *Sworn Book* can be confidently dated to the late thirteenth century.⁵⁴ However, Richard Kieckhefer suggests the circulation date of the *Sworn Book* occurs later, in the early part of the fourteenth century, as that era marks a higher influence of Jewish and Muslim magic on Christian magic, and according to Kieckhefer the *Sworn Book* indebts itself greatly to Jewish and Muslim sources. In addition, Kieckhefer argues that the fictionalized historical events in the *Sworn Book*'s prologue better reflect events that occur in the early fourteenth century.⁵⁵

While the *Sworn Book* alleges to contain operations more common in the medieval magical landscape like creating thunder and illusions, finding hidden treasure, and invoking celestial or infernal powers,⁵⁶ in reality all extant versions of the text contain only

⁵⁴ Mathiesen. "A Thirteenth-century Ritual" 148.

⁵⁵ Kieckhefer, "The Devil's Contemplatives," 257.

⁵⁶ Honorius, *The Sworn Book of Honorius: Liber Juratus Honorii*. (Lake Worth: Ibis Press, 2016). 57, 59, 197, 199.

two magical operations. The second tells of the construction of various magic circles as a means to evoke celestial spirits, a common medieval clerical magical practice. The primary operation and secret with which the *Sworn Book* concerns itself is a ritual for obtaining the *visione divina*, the divine/beatific vision.⁵⁷ The beatific vision is “a vision of God Almighty in His Glory, during which the viewer can (one presumes) even participate to some extent in God’s omniscience.”⁵⁸ Through the performance of the rituals contained in the *Sworn Book*, the clerical magician obtains the beatific vision and (one presumes) gains access to divine knowledge that otherwise remains inaccessible to non-magicians. But divine knowledge by no means allows itself to be easily accessed. According to the *Sworn Book*, only a clerical magician with great discipline, physical and spiritual purity, and orthodox Christian beliefs can even endeavor to undertake the rituals contained in the *Sworn Book*.⁵⁹

The exact length of time the operation requires to be carried out is up for debate within the current field of magical studies. On the shorter side of the argument, Robert Mathiesen argues that the beatific vision operation within the *Sworn Book* requires twenty-eight days, with twenty of those days required for the purification of the magician and the following eight reserved for the enactment of the operation proper.⁶⁰ Frank Klassen argues that the operation takes place over the course of seventy-two days following a three day period of obtaining permission not included in the numbering of the operation proper.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Honorius, *The Sworn Book*, 60.

⁵⁸ Mathiesen, “A Thirteenth Century Ritual,” 150.

⁵⁹ Honorius, *The Sworn Book*, 193.

⁶⁰ Mathiesen, “A Thirteenth Century Ritual,” 151.

⁶¹ Frank Klassen. *The Transformations of Magic : Illicit Learned Magic in the Later Middle Ages and Renaissance*. (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013). 103-104.

Upon my own reading of the current editions of the *Sworn Book* I side with Klassen, in addition the numbering of seventy-two days makes sense in conjunction with how much focus the *Sworn Book* gives to the Shem HaMephorash, the seventy two letter name of God borrowed from Kabbalistic practices, which tracks with a symbolic recreation of the name of God in order to see the face of God.

Regardless of the discrepancies in the length of the operation, even conservatively low estimates of its duration mark the complexity of the operation and highlight how difficult a lengthy process like the ritual is to conceal from the watchful eyes of those who might wish to root out and expose the clerical magician. In order to illustrate the labor the operation of the *Sworn Book* requires, I will further describe the operation. The order of operations is as follows: first, the constructing of a magic seal, then obtaining divine permission to undertake the operation, and then the seventy-two-day operation proper.

A central aspect to enacting the operation to obtain a beatific vision from the *Sworn Book* is the construction of a seal that contains various divine names. While no extant image of the seal remains (only the instructions for how to construct it), a variety of scholars and even some practicing occultists have attempted to reconstruct the seal that the *Sworn Book* calls for.⁶² The magician must write the seal using the blood of a mole, turtle dove, hoopoe, a bat, or a combination of any of these bloods on virgin parchment made from a calf, foal, or deer.⁶³ Then, the magician must consecrate the seal in order for it to become functioning.

⁶² The most up to date depiction of the seal containing the name of God can be found adorning the cover of Joseph Peterson's translation of the *Sworn Book*.

⁶³ The text does not give any indication as to why these animals are chosen, perhaps a cross referencing with medieval bestiaries would produce an informed reading of these practices that is beyond the purview of this project.

To do so, the magician suffumigates the written seal with a complex combination of herbs, incense, and minerals,⁶⁴ while saying various prayers over the seal and leaving it outside at night under clear skies (no rain, probably on a practical level to prevent the ink from running). He must only perform this “with devotion not cunningly.”⁶⁵ The result is a handheld seal that must be handled wearing gloves made without whitening chalk, and otherwise previously unworn, to perform the operation of obtaining the beatific vision.⁶⁶

In order to begin the permission stage and the operation proper, the magician must live according to set purity standards, refusing contact or proximity with women and sick or wicked men, leading a clean life, always wearing clean clothes, and avoiding idleness.⁶⁷ In addition, chastity and the power of the mind over the body are heavily emphasized.⁶⁸

Like the *Ars Notoria* the clerical magician needs to seek divine permission before he can carry out the operation proper.⁶⁹ Starting after the seal has been constructed on a Friday, after receiving confession, the magician recites a series of prayers are to be said a combination of orthodox standard prayers (examples being the hail Mary, hail holy queen⁷⁰ and the creed⁷¹) and prayers containing esoteric and occult names of God and the angels. Select prayers are to be said in the early morning, before morning twilight, and before

⁶⁴ Amber, musk, aloe, white and red labdanum, mastic, frankincense, pearls, and incense. 75.

⁶⁵ Honorius, *Sworn Book*, 77.

⁶⁶ Honorius, *Sworn Book*, 77.

⁶⁷ Honorius, *Sworn Book*, 79.

⁶⁸ Honorius, *Sworn Book*. 125.

⁶⁹ Klaassen, *The Transformations of Magic*, 103.

⁷⁰ Honorius, *Sworn Book*, 81.

⁷¹ Honorius, *Sworn Book*. 87.

beginning the day's works. On Sunday night, the magician will receive a vision in a dream to reveal if the magician is permitted to proceed with the operations⁷² If they receive a rejection they must reconsider and attempt the operation at a different date.

If granted permission, the magician must proceed by saying select and lengthy sets of prayers around various times of monastic prayer (Matins, Terence, etc.) over a set of thirty-two days. During this time, he must continually be aware of the threat of sin, and if he does sin, he is to confess immediately and make the proper penance; the operator is also supposed to fast every day during the operation, and if he is unable to do so he ought to fast for at least every other day and abstain from all forms of dead matter (flesh) every seven days (probably on a Friday).⁷³

The operator must go to mass every day, and have a series of daily prayers said by a cautious and faithful priest who is aware of the intent of operations and uses various parts of the *Sworn Book's* prayers in the liturgy, including a mass of the holy spirit where the operator suffumigation the altar and says prayers to the saints of the church and or personal saints.⁷⁴ The priest should petition God for the success of the operator during the consecration of the Eucharist, and the operator should receive that Eucharist during mass.⁷⁵ Following these thirty two days are a secondary set of twenty days where additional purifications are performed.

⁷² Honorius, *Sworn Book*, 125.

⁷³ Honorius, *Sworn Book*, 131.

⁷⁴ Honorius, *Sworn Book*, 131.

⁷⁵ Honorius, *Sworn Book*, 133.

After the completion of the second purification the operator must further separate themselves “in a place where access can be restricted, where people do not frequent”⁷⁶ and each day further say another set of prayers. One key aspect to this prayer is a recitation and meditation/explanation of the esoteric divine names of God. This specific prayer is intended to be recited while kneeling, three times a day, morning, noon, and night. These names of God bestow a sense of magical knowledge into the nature of God that would otherwise be inaccessible to even clerics.

The last day of the ritual is to take place on a Thursday in the morning at the same prayers are said, and afterwards, a bed of hay is to be made, “on top of which ashes which [he] should make from clean from the dregs, and around the bed, should be written the one hundred names of God.”⁷⁷ The magician is to then wash himself with spring water as he recites a prayer,⁷⁸ then putting on a sackcloth and black garments he recites another series of prayers focusing on additional divine names. Then he sleeps, speaking to no one after he recites the prayers, and “he will see the heavenly palace, and the greatness of his glory, the orders of angels and the multitude of the holy spirit”;⁷⁹ while in this state, the soul travels to heaven and the body is sustained by angelic food.⁸⁰ An interesting warning is that if the operator is in a state of mortal sin he must immediately go to confession, because if he completes the operation and looks upon at God in a state of mortal sin he will go insane.

⁷⁶ Honorius, *Sworn Book*, 173.

⁷⁷ Honorius, *Sworn Book*, 183.

⁷⁸ Honorius, *Sworn Book*, 185.

⁷⁹ Honorius, *Sworn Book*, 193.

⁸⁰ Honorius, *Sworn Book*, 195.

One reason that the *Sworn Book* is so desirable is that it places the clerical magician in a genealogy of magical greatness. While this topic will be discussed further in the analysis of the prologue of the *Sworn Book*, it is important to note that the *Sworn Book* frames itself as a compilation of the greatest magical texts, placing the best of several books of magic in the hands of the practitioner. This composition of knowledge is greatly desirable for the performance of magical rituals. By having a book that claims access to the greatest magical texts of the world, the magician who reads it in theory does not need to go out and search for other books of magic to supplement their knowledge. Beyond the convenience factor of the *Sworn Book* being comparable to a medieval magician's cheat sheet, access to all important magical information at once also produces a measure of safety. As illustrated in the life of John of Morigny and other active members of public magical or semi-magical circles, there are dangers connected to seeking out magical knowledge. By having a singular book that contains all relevant magical knowledge the clerical magician does not have to worry about being caught seeking out other books of magic.

One of the most significant forms of knowledge accessible to the magician in the *Sworn Book* is the knowledge of their own salvation. In the medieval world, especially that of the medieval clergy, the topic of salvation proves to be a difficult category to navigate as by its very nature salvation is both never fully insured but also constantly promised. In the *Sworn Book* the ambiguity of salvation can be negated through the practice of the text. In addition, the *Sworn Book* offers knowledge of how to gain mastery over all knowledge, ensure salvation, and release a soul from purgatory early as it uses the same operation for the beatific vision but swaps all petitions for the face of God with assurance of salvation.

However, the greatest ritual the *Sworn Book* contains is, of course, the ritual for obtaining the beatific vision. This operation is so desirable in part because of the kinds of knowledge it would bestow, and the subsequent power that a clerical magician can gain from the practice. This ritual is so desirable for the outcome as it would provide an access to knowledge otherwise unattainable to even the most educated clerics: face to face knowledge of God. Furthermore, the ritual provides a knowledge of the ordered universe through seeing the face of God since through that knowledge one would also in theory know the structure of the cosmos, as the cosmos are a reflection of the divine.⁸¹ Through the subsequent mastery of liberal arts and beyond the clerical magician is both able to work within the orthodox power structure of the Catholic Church while still being able to profit off of nonorthodox claims, the *Sworn Book* promises a wealth of knowledge to the clerical magician. The knowledge of the divine that the clerical magician earns through the operation in the *Sworn Book* also provides a legitimization of both the book and the practices. It also was understood to grant the clerical magician and their practices an air of legitimacy against the critics who were seen as their persecutors.

The text itself is concerned with magicians going into the operation of obtaining the beatific vision for the right reasons. The *Sworn Book* states that to undergo the operation to obtain the beatific vision one must undergo the process “with devotion, not cunning.”⁸² While cunning is an ambiguous category that is never defined in the *Sworn Book*, there seems to be a sense of prohibition of undergoing the operation out of selfish desires for

⁸¹ Romans 1:20.

⁸² Honorius, *Sworn Book*, 75.

obtaining knowledge for personal or material gain. The concern for magicians going into the operation for ill gains, and the need to warn against practices like this, helps to illustrate the various reasoning a clerical magician might desire to undergo the ritual and what gains they could expect to get out it. The illicit or forbidden motivations of undergoing the ritual tend to center around a desire for earthly things. Clerical magic often concerns itself with obtaining physical comforts, and even the *Sworn Book* offers a separate ritual to summon spirits and compel them to alter the world around them or give them knowledge as to how to procure earthly desires such as treasure or the affection of women. While the *Sworn Book* seems to deem planetary and infernal spirits as acceptable to manipulate magically, the *Sworn Book* forbids engagement with the divine in the same manner. Rather than illicit earthly gains, the *Sworn Book* expects the clerical magician to engage in the operation to obtain the beatific vision on the grounds of obtaining not just the liberal arts or knowledge of earthly things, but knowledge of the divine. Divine knowledge, the certainty of the truths of God and heaven, become the worthwhile pursuit of the clerical magician.

The divine knowledge gained from the *Sworn Book* proves to be a powerful tool for the clerical magician. They have access to powers unable to be accessed by standard clergy, in addition they have dominion over all things on earth and the infernal spirits which haunt the earth and threaten humanity in the medieval mindset. The ending passage of the *Sworn Book* gives a length summary to all the powers that the clerical magician can hope to enjoy through the employment of the operations within the book, stating:

Here ends the book concerning the life of the rational soul, which is called... the *Sworn Book*... with which one is able to see God face to face, while still

alive... able to be saved and without doubt led into eternal life... Hell and Purgatory can be seen without dying... whereby all creatures can be subjugated except for the nine orders of angels... all knowledge can be obtained.... One with the weakest substance is able to subdue and subjugate those with the strongest substances... which is the greatest jewel of all the jewels given by the Lord, other than the sacraments.... Therefore, this book is rightly called sacred...⁸³

The list of powers granted to the clerical magician greatly exceeds that of the standard cleric. While the belief that they hold more power than a cleric does increase their own currency of power, it also proves to create the clerical magician as a threat to the clerical authorities as since clerics occupy a position mediating between the human and the divine, the clerical magician threatens the status of the cleric.

Access, or a claim to access, to the beatific vision proves to be the most contentious and threatening aspect of the *Sworn Book* in the context of the larger medieval landscape. The beatific vision is not necessarily perceived as unattainable in this lifetime; if one switches focus to medieval mystical literature, a good deal of medieval Christian mystics claim to have seen the face of God, even going so far as to claim that they participate within God/became indistinguishable from God. While some mystics are also persecuted as heretics, others are celebrated and become saints. But that does not mean that their relationship with God is viewed without contention during their life. What marks the mystic and magician as different is that the mystic frames themselves as receiving visions from God. They do not claim to actively seek after experiences of God, but receive visions whether the mystic wants them or not. Indeed, there is certainly a tradition of framing the reception of the beatific vision as an unasked for or unwanted event. The most evident case

⁸³ Honorius, *Sworn Book*, 299, 301.

being in the thirteenth century where Douceline of Digne would actively try to resist going into her visionary states.⁸⁴ As mysticism itself is looked at more critically during this era and examined for attempts to see God through fasting, flogging, and bodily mortification, all things clerical magicians already do. The clerical magician articulates the beatific vision as something to be actively worked towards. They abandon the language of the mystic and demarcate the boundaries of activity and passivity. This contentious category means that the distinct boundaries must be drawn, and the clerical magician falls on the poor end of these boundaries.

This can also be seen in the crackdown of Free Spirit movement during the wider concerns for clerical authority in the face of rising descent under the papacy of Clement V, who, as mentioned previously, at the Council of Vienne (1311-1312) condemned the practices of attempting to obtain the beatific vision during one's own lifetime by one's own means, including the means of ceremonial magic.⁸⁵ In addition, the aforementioned Pope John XXII took incredible issue with magical attempts to obtain the beatific vision. Between the years 1331 and 1334 he began to preach that the beatific vision could only be received after the final judgment.⁸⁶ Interestingly enough, this position would in turn be deemed heretical. On his death bed John XXII retracted his preaching on the matter, and the whole messy doctrinal debate was finalized two years later in Pope Benedict's *Benedictus Deus*

⁸⁴ Casteen, "Rape and Rapture: Violence, Ambiguity, and Raptus in Medieval Thought," in *The Sacred and the Sinister: Studies in Medieval Religion and Magic*, edited by David J. Collins, SJ (Pennsylvania: State University Press, 2019), 94.

⁸⁵ Mesler, "The Liber Iuratus," 116.

⁸⁶ Mesler, "The Liber Iuratus," 116.

(1336) which put forward the seemingly common opinion that the elect will experience the beatific vision immediately after death.⁸⁷

The Sworn Book attempts to deal with the critique of the attempt to receive the beatific vision by addressing it in its own pages, stating:

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The attempt to legitimize the active pursuit for the beatific vision is, interestingly enough, also concerned with proving the mechanics of such an act are possible. The beatific vision can also be read as threatening the hierarchies of the church. This is aided by the fact that one of the first groups persecuted in the rise against clerical magical practices are the beguines and other accused of the “free spirit movement” in a time where the church is seeking to legitimize its place as an intermediary force between the divine and the commonplace man. This is especially evident considering the rise in proto-protestant movements that directly attacked the clerical hierarchies like the (in)famous Lollards. From the perspective of the church, any suggestion as to a different order of authority threatens the standing of the clerical authority.

In discussing secrecy in the medieval period, and in particular the secrecy of gossip, Lochrie argues that the “covert operations required to designate gossip as a secret are at least as important as the secret these operations keep.”⁸⁹ This logic of secrecy can be applied to all fixations on secrets. To state this another way, the significance and power

⁸⁷ Mesler, “The Liber Iuratus,” 116.

⁸⁸ Honorius, *Sworn Book*, 193.

⁸⁹ Lochrie, *Covert Operations*, 94.

that the secret has (the more knowledge that the secret imparts on the hearer), the more powerful that knowledge/secret is assumed to be. The secret therefore requires more care of secrecy than a more mundane secret. The more significant the secret is made out to be, the more important it is to conceal it. The secret is proportional to the amount of secrecy surrounding it.

If secrecy is proportional to the secret contained, then the ability to see God is indeed of the most significant quality of secrets as it provides one of the most significant revelations, whether improperly or properly revealed. The *Sworn Book* certainly frames itself as vessel where the clerical magician can find information for magical secrecy as we have seen and will see in the prologue. This is further illustrated by the need to have only the faithful navigate it; despite explicit persecution from the leaders of the religious tradition in which it is situated, the practices entailed in the *Sworn Book* necessitate interaction with and even require alliances with clerical members in order to produce an ontological and epistemological worldview that both legitimizes orthodoxy while adding a slightly different world view.

This problem generates a need for the practice of secrecy in order to protect the knowledge and power in the *Sworn Book* which amplifies by both the persecution of magical practitioners and the increasing suspicion towards those attempting by their own means to obtain the beatific vision. However, the specific techniques of secrecy that the *Sworn Book* produces are located rather specifically in the prologue produces and it is the prologue of the *Sworn Book* that will now be investigated.

Chapter III

The prologue of the *Sworn Book* opens on a “time when evil spirits had convened, intending to invoke demons into the hearts of men, thinking it possible to use human frailty to... overcome the whole world order by force.”⁹⁰ In order to topple the “rightful” order of the world, demons plant the “seeds of hypocrisy” in the minds of clerical higher ups, even acquiring the ear of the Pope himself. The demonically influenced Pope and clergy congregate and publish falsehoods against the practitioners of magic, banning magic and sentencing any discovered magician to excommunication or even death. Knowing the animosity of the Pope was going to issue in a time of great persecution of magicians, eighty-nine of the greatest magicians convene a general council of masters. The council tasks a magician named Honorius, son of Euclid, master of Thebes, along with divine aid from the angel Horohel, with compiling the *Sworn Book* from seven unnamed books of magic. In order to ensure the protection of the *Sworn Book* and its contents, the magicians at the council establish a series of nine oaths of secrecy that any initiate into the magical practices of the *Sworn Book* must swear to gain access to the secrets the book contains.

The prologue suggests a retelling of events similar to either the Council of Vienne under the papacy of Clement V (1311-1312), where Clement V prohibits attempts to obtain the beatific vision by active means, or the issuing of the *Super Illius Specula* (1326), the manifesto from Pope John XXII against magical practices writ large. Both events directly impact the manner by which clerical magicians operate, especially those who participate in operations related to the obtaining of the beatific vision. The refusal to actually name a

⁹⁰ Honorius, *The Sworn Book*, 49

pope responsible for the issuing in of anti-magical attitude obscures the exact historical moment the *Sworn Book* began to enter circulation. But in another sense, the temporal uncertainty of the prologue and refusal to name the pope help the prologue to signify other aspects of the reality of life as a clerical magician. Thus, the exact identity of the pope does not matter as much in an analysis of the secrecy elements of the *Sworn Book*. Instead, this thesis reads these popes as an amalgamation of both popes as well as university leaders, and other powerful actors who might work against the aims of the clerical magician, as a symbolic shorthand for the rising anti-magical sentiment coming from the papal seat and beyond.

While the identity of the pope does not explicitly matter in an examination of the prologue as a mechanism of legitimizing the necessity of secrecy, it does matter what the pope is doing. The pope threatens any magician caught with excommunication and even death. Though these are grave threats, the *Sworn Book* refuses to frame the class of magicians (who in its own narrative are more powerful than the pope) as needing to rise up and combat this injustice through arguments, debate, and most obviously the use of magic against the papacy. Instead, the prologue reiterates the need for secrecy and concealment by emphasizing submission to the papacy while practicing in secret. The prologue suggests secrecy as almost a moral obligation because the other option, overturning the papacy, and imposing the magician's will on the clergy, would make magicians no better than the evil spirits who convince the pope that magic should be persecuted.

With a seeming refusal to entertain the possibility of papal usurpation by means of magic, the prologue turns to secrecy and the desire of safety for the clerical magician becomes a priority. The prologue presents the spiritual danger of excommunication and the physical danger of death as the two primary dangers that necessitate the covert operation of magical secrecy. Excommunication presents a spiritual violence that proves to be remarkably limiting to the clerical magician. Within the magical systems presented in the *Sworn Book*, the book demands that the magical operator be in good standing with the Catholic Church and not in a state of mortal sin in order to perform magical operations. Excommunication (even under unfair or unjust means) would in effect prohibit the magical practitioner from performing operations, including attempts to obtain beatific vision. Excommunication would also prevent clerical magicians from interacting with priests in a way as to receive the clerical support needed to perform the beatific vision operation. In addition to the threat of excommunication, the narrative retelling of the rise in anti-magical papal concerns happening around the beginning of the fourteenth century, the *Sworn Book* utilizes the very real possibility of physical violence to contextualize the material in a secret tradition.

In order to prevent the persecution, spiritual, and physical violence that can be inflicted on the clerical magician, the *Sworn Book* contains a set of oaths. These oaths do more than solely enforce secrecy; as with all mechanisms of concealment and secrecy, they also reflect the manner in which secrecy is utilized as a means to produce knowledge and in a legitimate way gain power from the knowledge that the magician gains. These oaths will be presented with interpretations interspersed between each oath in order to explore the

mechanism of secrecy and how they inform the construction of knowledge and how they grant power to the clerical magician.

Oath One - Nobody should be given this book [the Sworn Book], unless the master is at the point of death

The First Oath of the *Sworn Book* establishes a continual theme present in the first few oaths, that is, the restriction of access to knowledge through a reliance on a material culture of secrecy, particularly through the hiding of magical texts. The restriction of access to magical texts is not a technique of secrecy unique to the practitioners of the magic within the *Sworn Book*. In her *Magic in the Cloister*, Sophie Page explores the various means by which clerical magicians hide books away from the eyes of those who might seek to persecute magicians. For instance, Richard of Fournival has a library at Amiens that contained a private room for *tractatus secreti* (secret books).⁹¹ He intentionally catalogs his books in such a way that magical texts are left uncatalogued, absent as a means of being able to avoid detection if his catalogs are seized by authorities. In addition, he has a hidden room where he houses all his uncatalogued magical books to which only he is allowed entry.⁹² Page also points out that according to several late thirteenth-century sources, works of ceremonial magic are covertly circulated in the university culture of Paris, possibly keeping them moving as a way to prevent discovery.⁹³ The monastery of St. Augustine, a central location to Page's research, provided one of the most interesting covert manners of concealing "illicit" books of clerical magic within plain sight, in the monastic

⁹¹ Page, *Magic in the Cloister*, 10.

⁹² Page, *Magic in the Cloister*, 129.

⁹³ Page, *Magic in the Cloister*, 10.

library. Page makes note that magical texts were dispersed throughout the library, and the very fact that they were integrated in a monastic library, granted them a permission of existence that allowed them to be overlooked in ways that were not privileged to private textual collections.⁹⁴

The restriction of knowledge that the *Sworn Book* and other magical textual practices engage in frame access to magical knowledge within the book's access is critical to secrecy as it produces a knowledge that is commodifiable. The rarer the knowledge, the more powerful it becomes. It does this through the restriction of the very materiality of the book. The *Sworn Book* establishes a particular need for secrecy through the concern that the oaths carry surrounding the material presence of the book itself. Oath One limits the ownership of the book to the master and the master only. The *Sworn Book* demands that it not be loaned out or checked out; instead the book must be in the master's own possession at all times. This creates a very real material locus of power, since knowledge is such a powerful and worthwhile commodity, the fact that it cannot leave the master's side fuses the master and the book together in a dispensary of knowledge and power. This also gives the master a very specific type of power, the power of knowledge distribution. The power of whether or not to disseminate knowledge is a legitimate form of power as it both legitimizes the status of the magician, and instills a power dynamic between the disciple and the master. Out of desire to access more knowledge, the disciple must obey the master in all things, as will become more apparent as the oaths are further elaborated.

⁹⁴ Page, *Magic in the Cloister*, 129.

Oath Two - And that he should prove himself no more than three [copies]

Oath Two furthers this concern of the material dissemination of the *Sworn Book* stating that only three copies can be made per individual owner. This limits the degree to which the knowledge contained within the book can be disseminated. It limits the amount of possible revelations and possible masters, also the difficulties and expenses that are involved with a production of such a book and the secret labor needed are enough to make the books a commodity that needs to be shared. It further reifies the power that the magician has in the distribution of knowledge.

Oath Three - And that it will be given to no woman, nor to a man unless he is mature, and most upright and faithful, both of which should be assessed by observing his mannerism throughout an entire year

Oath three works to create the dynamics of exclusion that secrecy depends upon. One aspect that makes the *Sworn Book* unique in the genre of magical texts is how explicit exclusion of others acts as a means of legitimizing the value of the commodity that it offers. The *Sworn Book* presents three particular identities as worthy of exclusion: non-Christians, women, and immature men. The *Sworn Book* offers up further explanation as to why these three categories deserve to be excluded from working within magical traditions. The *Sworn Book* establishes a cosmological and ontological status of the human soul, arguing that all souls are created by God when God created angels. It is for this reason that humans are able to perform operations to obtain the beatific vision, as since humans and angels share a time and rank of origin, they are as the text states “able to truly look at the most high Majesty face to face while alive and to praise God along with them [the angels].”⁹⁵ However, not all

⁹⁵ Honorius, *Sworn Book*, 63.

souls are able to do so, and this gives a reason for excluding the three categories from the knowledge of practicing these rituals.

The *Sworn Book* accuses “pagans” (Muslims)⁹⁶ of not practicing magic properly because they do not bind the spirits they invoke, and stating that because Muslims adhere to a “false faith, their works are invalid.”⁹⁷ The *Sworn Book* invalidates the knowledge of Muslim magicians, stating that since they do not bind the spirits, their magical systems are not based on real (Christian) knowledge. Therefore, because Muslims do not have access to true knowledge, they cannot truly access magical power. This invalidation of non-Christian modes of knowledge proves pivotal to the legitimization of the Christian clerical magician.

In a different vein, according to the *Sworn Book*, Jews are unable to work towards obtaining the beatific vision “because with the arrival of Christ they have lost the gift (of magic).”⁹⁸ Furthermore, since they have not received baptism, they are unable to obtain the beatific vision since one has to be baptized in order to get into heaven in the first place.⁹⁹ The *Sworn Book* does hold a slightly more contentious view of the legitimacy of Jewish magic that since the Jews honor God, but in an “improper manner,” they are able to compel spirits “but because the Jews are marked not with the sign of the Lord, namely of the cross and of the faith, the spirits are unwilling to answer them truly.”¹⁰⁰ Therefore, they are

⁹⁶ By the time of the *Sworn Book*'s publication and circulation Europe has become almost entirely Christianized, pagan became more and more a derogatory term for Muslims.

⁹⁷ Honorius, *Sworn Book*, 63.

⁹⁸ Honorius, *Sworn Book*, 63.

⁹⁹ Nor can they be stationed in heaven participate in the heavenly vision because they have not been baptized as the book attributes to the Lord, “whomever has been baptized will not be condemned a possible illusion” a possible allusion to Mark 16:16 he who believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he who believes not shall be condemned.

¹⁰⁰ Honorius, *Sworn Book*, 63.

unable to work perfectly with angels “nor will their invocations be effective, unless they put their faith in Christ.”¹⁰¹This is interesting as it suggests that at one time Jewish magics had a legitimate connection to God and were at one point a legitimate means of magic. The fact Christ becomes the validator factor in magic suggests that Christian magicians can appropriate them and make them valid again by bringing it into a Christian system.

The reasoning for exclusions of non-Christian practitioners from the secrets within the *Sworn Book* can be read as going beyond the need for theological purity. The *Sworn Book* demands the covert operation of secrecy to extend to conceal the *Sworn Book* from non-Christians as means to occlude the knowledge that the *Sworn Book* borrows, or rather appropriates, magical practices and traditions from non-Christian traditions. As Kieckhefer establishes in his “The Devil's contemplatives: The Liber iuratus, the Liber visionum, and Christian appropriation of Jewish Occultism,” the *Sworn Book* shares considerable similarities with other existent Jewish magical practices. In the *Sworn Book* a central aspect of the ritual contains a specific practice of going into a dream in order to receive knowledge as to whether or not they are worthy to continue on with the ritual.¹⁰² This dream vision found popularity more in Jewish magical practices than Christian counterparts.

Lastly, the *Sworn Book* in chapter XCVIII uses the notion of seeing the heavenly palace, imagery primarily found in Hekaloth literature and Merkabah mysticism. The heavy reliance on Jewish magical practices while excluding actual Jewish interlocutors displays the ways that Christians began to appropriate Jewish magical practices alongside the rising

¹⁰¹ Honorius, *Sworn Book*, 63.

¹⁰² Kieckhefer, “The Devils Contemplatives,” 257.

of anti-Semitic rhetoric happening across Europe.¹⁰³ This as it legitimizes the Christian narrative of the *Sworn Book* while obscuring the Jewish contributions to the text. By claiming an ontological superiority clerical magicians are able to co-opt and appropriate Jewish and Muslim magical practices without the need of a pluralist identity. In effect, through the employment of a secret practice they are able to couch their identity in an orthodox Christianity as a means of establishing a “normative” orthodox positionality. This legitimizes the contentious identity of the magician and possibly permits it to be in places where orthodoxy allegedly reigns supreme—places like the monastery and the university.

In addition, some are also excluded from being brought into the secrecy tradition that envelopes the *Sworn Book* and clerical magical practices. The *Sworn Book* states that a magical practitioner “must separate himself from women, and from seeing them for as Solomon said: “it is safer to dwell with a she-bear and a lion in its den than to abide with a wicked woman.”¹⁰⁴ Aside from further locating the text in homogeneously male communities like monasteries or University areas, the book serves to engage women as a silent actor in the play of secrecy. By keeping the books secret from women, the separation serves to normalize the clerical magician’s place in a gendered hierarchy. Concerns over chastity had marked the clerical body as ambiguous and the added dangers of magical practices. Through the exclusion of women, they are able to conceptually right themselves on top of a fixed hierarchy.

¹⁰³ Kieckhefer, “The Devils Contemplatives,” 256.

¹⁰⁴ Honorius, *Sworn Book*, 77, 79.

The most ambiguous mode of concealment is in the prohibition of revealing the book to immature men. The *Sworn Book* does not give a picture of what an immature man looks like, but only of a worthy man, stating that he must lead a clean life in both physical cleanliness and spiritual holiness.¹⁰⁵ These traits of physical and spiritual cleanliness create a body who becomes a worthwhile object of monitoring and pursuit.

Oath Four - And that otherwise it [the Sworn Book] should not be destroyed, but returned to him [the master] or his successors

&

Oath Five - And that, if no one sufficient is found to whom the book might be given, that the master must bind his executors with the strongest oaths to bury it in his tomb, or he himself while living should bury it in some clean and honorable place, and not reveal the place under any circumstances

Oath Four and Five content themselves with the same themes of knowledge production and power creation, therefore instead of dividing them into separate sections I choose to read them together. In Oath Four there is a demand for purity which suggests that the actual location of the book that the magician can hide it in must be non-defiling, further limiting the places of secrecy. In the traditions of secrecy that the *Sworn Book* inhabits, the secrecy surrounding a material object as a locus of knowledge and power is a critical one for the clerical magician. The book itself, if discovered, offers material proof offers a place of danger, as it functions as material proof through which the clerical magician could face persecution. This provides a unique concern about the focus of rooting out and destroying magical texts specifically that arises out of the papacy of John XXII. This again heightens the danger that the *Sworn Book* poses; by not allowing the text to become

¹⁰⁵ Honorius, *Sworn Book*, 79.

an oral tradition, by demanding the continuation of a textual tradition, the magician leaves open the possibility of exposure, but it also creates a materiality of knowledge.

But the materiality of knowledge provides an anxiety about the destruction of the texts through the revelation would issue in a world where magical texts no longer exist, thus preventing the magic from being accessed. This reiteration of violence serves to keep the clerical magician in a state of secrecy by stressing the very real dangers that the magician faces. But it also uses those dangers as a means to legitimize the knowledge contained within the *Sworn Book*. To quote Lochrie, "the protection of knowledge... is only one of the functions that secrecy serves... Perhaps most importantly, the elaborate secrecy of the master in the know functions to ensure the value of the capital of his knowledge, rendering it esoteric, dangerous, and desirable."¹⁰⁶ The *Sworn Book* legitimizes the knowledge in its contents through the utilization of the need for the contents of the book must be kept secret at all costs. The act of keeping one's identity hidden therefore serves to function as a means to legitimize the importance of books knowledge, as well as the clerical magician who possesses it, through an employment of the dangers of what happens when the magician is found out.

In addition, the book displays a material concern for sacred names that prohibit the destruction of magical texts containing the name of God and instead demand that the books must be buried. This further highlights the influence of Jewish magical traditions on a nominally orthodox Christian text.

¹⁰⁶ Lochrie, *Covert Operations*, 95.

Oath Six - And if the master has a need for some students, or otherwise wishes to test them, that they promise they will not fear to suffer death, if necessary, for the sake of his teachings

In the first chapter I drew on Kieckhefer's argument that there was no organization of clerical magicians on a wide scale and that the "members of this company [clerical underworld of magical practitioners] were no doubt linked by similar purpose more than by any formal or lasting bonds, and certainly there is no evidence that they were organized as a group."¹⁰⁷ However, the *Sworn Book's* oaths seem to aid in the refutation of Kieckhefer's argument. The *Sworn Book* exhibits a relationality that does not view the transmission of magic solely as a transactional relationship where they were linked by their similar pursuits. Instead, Oath Six marks the first in a series of oaths that give a unique insight into the relationality experienced between the clerical magicians. It also produces a knowledge of expected trust; secrecy implicitly demands the trust of both people "in" on the secret.

Oath Seven - And that he will not investigate the teachings or doings of their master, nor will he reveal to anyone that his master knows of such [magic] things, nor will he allow the circumstances for declaring it.

Oath Seven continues the demand for exclusion and fearlessness that Oath Six initiates, Oath Seven creates system of trust, the student is unable to investigate the teachings of their master. In effect, they are unable to read ahead in the textbook. They are completely subordinated to the master. If they wish to gain knowledge they can only obey. This relationship produces a complicated tension, a double knowledge between what the master knows and the student thinking they know what the master knows (or rather, they can conceptualize the possible knowledge the master has yet to depart). From the student's

¹⁰⁷ Kieckhefer, *Magic*, 155-156.

perspective the knowledge of the master retains a sense of boundlessness, the ambiguity of withheld knowledge allows for the knowledge the master has to be magnified, there becomes a place of darkness that the student needs to penetrate through obedience. The withholding of knowledge and thus speculation on or concerning the knowledge produces a power dynamic where in order to obtain the knowledge the student must obey the master, not prying into knowledge but obeying the boundaries set. The ability for the master to continually exert these boundaries and maintain them without encroachment, or the power to reprimand the encroachment offers a power status.

Oath Eight - And as a father binds his sons, so the master will bind his disciples in harmony and love, so that each will bear the suffering of the others, nor will one reveal the secrets of another, but they will be faithful, harmonious, and in agreement.

There is an intimacy here that seems to be neglected in some other readings of magical practices. Oath Eight suggests a different side to secrecy, and perhaps it is unique to the *Sworn Book*, but secrecy in effect can be lonely. The binding of love institutes a culture of intimacy and tenderness, but it also reveals another dimension of secrecy; the real possibility of creating communities. But these communities of secrecy are themselves built off of and even necessitate a series of exclusions in order to uphold or create spaces in which love can be experienced. Love creates obligations, it goes further than Oath Six to swear loyalty unto the point of death, but instead one must swear loyalty unto the point of love.

Oath Nine - With the ninth he will swear on receiving the oath that he will pass on all of the proceedings in turn, and for this reason we call this the Sworn Book.

Karma Lochrie states that:

The obligation to conceal is in fact proportional to the obligation to reveal... By swearing the reader and Alexander to secrecy, Aristotle further binds us to him even though he remains apart from us. He creates that "social network" described by de Certeau mainly by exclusion of the unworthy (indignos) , but also by the insidership he constructs. If secrets produce fictions and even lies in the course of their disclosure. Secrecy as an activity produces a rhetorical intimacy between those who desire to know and those who agree (and refuse at the same time) to deliver on that desire.¹⁰⁸

In the Ninth Oath this especially comes to the fore. The Ninth Oath opens up the discourse of transmission. Oath Nine's demand that the magician pass on their knowledge, and the obligation to do so perpetuates the secret nature of the *Sworn Book* and ensures the continuation of a lineage framed as continuing unbroken from biblical times and will continue in perpetuity if the oaths are all followed. In a very real sense, the knowledge that the *Sworn Book* contains is too important to risk losing, instead transmission becomes a necessary aspect of the knowledge production within the text.

¹⁰⁸ Lochrie, *Covert Operations*, 104.

Conclusion

To conclude this thesis, a recap of the findings of this work is in order. The First section explores the ways in which, illustrating the ways in which knowledge is obtained by the medical clerical magician and subsequently how these forms of knowledge aid in the production of a specific kind of social power. Within the subsequent chapter and the introduction of the *Sworn Book*, this chapter comes to the realization of the more specific means by which manuscript traditions influence magical practice as well as introduce the *Sworn Book* to the reader. The last chapter of this thesis concludes with an examination of the oaths, which further explores the manner in which knowledge production within the *sworn Book* and posits the relationship of power.

Another text that bears especial focus is the *Ars Notoria*. Although it does not focus on the obtaining of the beatific vision like the *Sworn Book*, it does contain a magical operation for obtaining an identic memory and obtaining mastery over the liberal arts. Through further examination of magical texts, scholars interested in the constellation of secrecy, magic, and medieval systems of power and knowledge, can better reconstruct the mechanisms of knowledge and power that clerical magicians seem to rely on in order to produce a system of magical practices.

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