



Forbidden Rites: A Necromancer's Manual of the Fifteenth Century (Magic in History)

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Preserved in the Bavarian State Library in Munich is a manuscript that few scholars have noticed and that no one in modern times has treated with the seriousness it deserves. *Forbidden Rites* consists of an edition of this medieval Latin text with a full commentary, including detailed analysis of the text and its contents, discussion of the historical context, translation of representative sections of the text, and comparison with other necromantic texts of the late Middle Ages. Like many medieval texts for the use of magicians, it is a miscellany rather than a systematic treatise. It is exceptional, however, in the scope and variety of its contents - prayers and conjurations, rituals of sympathetic magic, procedures involving astral magic, a catalogue of spirits, lengthy ceremonies for consecrating a book of magic, and other materials.

Forbidden Rites: A Necromancer's Manual of the Fifteenth Century (Magic in History) Details

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From Reader Review **Forbidden Rites: A Necromancer's Manual of the Fifteenth Century (Magic in History)** for online ebook

Phil says

Superb discussion of a Medieval ritual magic manuscript. Sets the historical scene and influences very nicely, with a full annotated transcription of the manuscript in the appendix. Destined to be a classic if not already!

Brian says

Kieckhefer's *Forbidden Rites* presents a typological analysis of the means and ends of late Medieval *nigromantia*, 'necromancy', which is to say magic facilitated by the agency of spirits. Taking as his primary object of analysis the instructions for magical operations collected in manuscript Clm 849 of the Bavarian State Library, Kieckhefer divides the contents according to immediate function: illusory apparitions, psychological manipulation, or divination. The categorization is somewhat arbitrary, with many of the operations plausibly corresponding to more than one type or none of the above, but it does at least provide a sufficient framework for discussing the unsystematic mass of material in some depth. The two concluding chapters of the book's analytical part then discuss the structural characteristics of the verbal conjurations employed to interact with spirits, and the nature and identities ascribed to the spirits themselves.

Overall, this work is a very good introduction to the field of Medieval religio-magical beliefs and practices, and specifically those which pertained to a certain literate, often clerical, stratum of society. The second part of the volume, an annotated transcription of the Latin text of Clm 849, makes this an excellent resource for in-depth research as well.

Jo says

Forbidden Rites is a necromancer's manual written in the 15th century and here, Kieckhefer presents an academic study of the text. He explores the rise in literacy amongst the masses in medieval Europe which led to the knowledge of 'forbidden' and heretical teachings. Dry and stuffy lecturing and unfortunately the manuscript is not translated from it's original Latin so, alas, I shall never learn how to conjure a horse.(Postscript. Hmm, looking at other people's reviews it would appear that they found an edition with a translation!)

Luke Crocker says

An excellent scholarly work

This was an excellent scholarly work on a topic that is easy to make very subjective. The author managed to avoid presenting his personal opinion as to the practice, or practicality of witchcraft or its variant.

Though this does not provide a full translation of the original work (it does include a full transcription with many foot notes), the partial translations provided in the authors discourses are both solidly translated from its Latin source, and very well and thoroughly analyzed and presented in a coherent and organized presentation.

I'm frankly considering getting a hard copy of this book for the old bookshelf.

Though I personally do oppose the idea of necromancy and nigromancy being one and the same, that there's my own subjectivity, and I'm no scholar on the subject, just a practitioner.

Bill Wallace says

I had Dr. Kieckhefer for Medieval History classes back in college days and he was a terrific teacher, with an eye for the strange side of history. I was not surprised to find him authoring this amusing and scholarly analysis of a 15th Century compendium of necromantic lore. A guide to one of the seminal surviving texts, presumably compiled by someone who believed it to be a workbook, the manual here is equal parts folklore, myth, inverted Catholicism, and arcane ritual from sources we can only guess it. The author approaches it as intrinsically interesting, but also as a guide to the mindset of its era, both for people summoning demons and those concerned with burning the summoners. There are dozens of little details in this that a modern horror writer might learn from, if one wants to avoid the cliches of the genre. I was especially taken with the -- to me at least -- unknown role of the lowly hoopoe in demonic commerce and the rituals that involved polishing a fingernail as a scrying instrument. Even if the mage couldn't afford a mirror, here's a window into the other world. Mostly this is an intriguing sampler of things almost lost to time, entertaining as one of the good doctor's lectures and, who knows? Maybe useful if one has a hoopoe to spend.

Beluosus says

Nihil melius dicit "te amo" quam necromantia.

Donum mihi emit Mel, librum Forbidden Rites Richardi Keickhefer. Pars libri prima de magia medii aevi tractat, et praecipue de libro necromantiae (Codice Latino Monacense 849 e Bayerische Staatsbibliothek) ; pars secunda est codex ipse. Incantationes carminibus classicis non aequant ; multa inest iteratio et perpauca loca pulchritudine ulla appropinquant. Sed gaudium erat lectio et simplex, tamen orthographia est insolita et mutabilis. Hunc die duo perlegi.

Tales libros enim in loco Harii Potter lego.
