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Towards an Occult Didacticism: Ambivalent Magic in *Exemplo XI* and *XLV* of the *Conde Lucanor*

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...Cum sint utrique ritibus fallacibus daemonum obstricti sub nominibus angelorum
...Wherefore each of these categories is obstructed by erroneous rites belonging to demons masquerading
under the guise of angels (Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, X.9)

With these words, Augustine sweepingly condemns all practices of the occult, simultaneously defining the Church's later doctrine and setting the stage for philosophers, theologians, and lawmakers throughout Western Europe for the remainder of Christendom. Although the official Church follows in the footsteps of Augustine in his denunciation of the occult, influential figures throughout the Middle Ages have distanced themselves from these teachings. Illustrative of these dichotomous opinions are the writings of two of the most authoritative personages in Medieval Iberia, Alfonso X (1221-1284)—tolerant of some forms of magic—, and Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), who, following Augustine, decries all forms of the occult. Scholarship has demonstrated the significant influence of both the Dominicans, the order to which Aquinas pertains, and Alfonso X on the life and work of Don Juan Manuel (1282-1348), the subject of this study. Recent work on the *Conde Lucanor* (*CL*) has homed in on the topic of Manuel's didacticism.¹ While much has been written about the didactic ideology of the *CL*, relatively little has discussed what role Manuel's representation of the occult, a central topic in five tales in the collection, plays in the author's overarching moralizing message.² This work addresses Manuel's doctrine on the occult in "Exemplo XLV" of the *CL*, in which the author offers his version of a commonplace medieval tale: the diabolical pact.³ As a point of entry for discussing the occult in the *CL*, most critics have analyzed "Exemplo XI"—the *deán de Santiago*. Despite the theory that this tale alone reveals a coherent—if not always reasonable—teaching on the topic, through an analysis of both "Exemplo XI" and "Exemplo XLV," I argue that Manuel's teachings around the occult are variable and ambiguous, thus reflecting the intrinsic ambiguity of the occult itself throughout the Middle Ages.⁴ On a more theoretical note, many have suggested that a helpful method of revealing meaning in the text of the *CL* is to investigate the collection through Don Juan Manuel's own philosophical and

¹ Grabowska, for example writes extensively on this theme, holding that the "final cause" of the book is "the edification of his reading audience" (67). Sotelo adds that "toda su obra tiene como denominador común el didacticismo, y esto se nos muestra" (23) and that "Don Juan Manuel concibe y escribe [*el Conde Lucanor*] con una misión específica: su vocación de escritor es fundamentalmente didáctica" (38). Menéndez Pidal also views didacticism as central to Manuel's work (63-83). See also Ayerbe Chaux (XVI-XVII).

² In chronological order, *exempla* XI, XX, XL, XLII, and XLV address this issue.

³ Textual analogues to this tale exist in Gonzalo de Berceo's *Milagros* (Berceo 748-911), in Alfonso X's *Cantigas* (Cantiga III), in Juan Ruiz's *Libro de buen amor* (1454-1484), and in various Latin collections which Sotelo has pointed out (265-66). Tracing the story back to its roots, Gerli holds that it was originally written in Greek and translated into Latin in the eighth century (1985, 195).

⁴ See Diz (1985), Gerli (2021), and Ayerbe-Chaux (239-246) for these more structuralist interpretations of the *CL*.

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theological dispositions.⁵ This work relies on this mode of interpretation without shying away from modern critical methods.

In his most direct treatment of the question of the occult, Manuel begins “Exemplo XLV” with the protagonist wandering “en su cabo, solo, por un monte, muy triste e cuidando muy fieramente,” having lost all his riches he previously possessed (Manuel 1997, 266). Two foundational texts of the Middle Ages are recalled here: Christ’s temptation in the desert and Dante’s *Divina commedia*, both of which offer useful alternative texts to the present one.⁶ In each of these three narratives, the protagonist finds himself alone in an alien land and accosted by a supernatural threat. The devil confronts Christ and Manuel’s protagonist, whereas three monstrous animals approach the character Dante while he wonders “per una selva oscura” (Dante, I.I). Moreover, all protagonists have reached a point of crisis. To use the language of the period, Fortune has deserted them, leaving lost and destitute (Boethius, II.1), and so, they find themselves susceptible to external direction.⁷ Luckily for the character Dante, Virgil comes to his rescue, guiding him through the perils of Hell and into Paradise. Neither Christ nor Manuel’s protagonist, however, are so fortunate. The devil appears to both and offers an escape from suffering. Christ divinely resists the three temptations, but Manuel’s protagonist is interested by the prospect of returning to his former wealth.

Don Martín (the alias used by the devil) tells the protagonist that he will ensure that any door the protagonist attempts to enter and rob will always open for him (Manuel 1997, 267). If this were not enough, Don Martín also promises that if the thief ever finds himself in any particularly difficult conflict, he will come to his aid and free him (Manuel 1997, 268). The protagonist falls for the get-rich-quick scheme, handing over his soul in exchange.⁸ He steals, amasses wealth, gets incarcerated, and calls on don Martín to help him. He arrives, sets the thief free, and then, the cycle repeats. As one might expect with the devil, though, the plan goes astray. When the thief is caught for the fifth time, Don Martín has had enough and betrays him. Instead of bribing the judge with money to free the protagonist, he hands him a bag full of rope. The judge interprets this as a sign of Divine Providence confirming the thief’s death sentence by the noose.

As with most tales in the *Conde Lucanor*, the frame question of the *exemplum* plays a fundamental role in the interpretation of the individual story.⁹ In “Exemplo XLV,” the count starts by asking Patronio for general advice on the practice of the occult:

⁵ Gerli, for one, suggests this in a recent article: “...raras veces se ha sondeado el contenido de los *exempla* de *El Conde Lucanor* desde la perspectiva de la historia cultural o la de las ideas; menos aun, cómo se conecta con el ambiente social, científico y filosófico del siglo XIV en Europa” (2021, 380). Cossío Olavide adds, “To understand the didacticism of Juan Manuel’s works it is often necessary to read them in the context of his life, a task that does not obscure their overarching Christian didactic message” (247). Related to the sociological and ideological context of the *Conde Lucanor* is the issue of how Don Juan Manuel’s life relates to his work. Cossío Olavide and others warn against reading too much of Manuel’s biography into his writings (226); but nonetheless, Deyermond confirms that one should at the very least consider the biographical importance of Manuel in his own work: “el elemento autobiográfico es tan obvio en varias obras (incluso se proclama explícitamente en algunas) que una lectura que lo pase por alto resultaría gravemente defectuosa” (2001, 226).

⁶ The temptation of Christ features in all three synoptic Gospels, Mathew 4:1-11, Luke 4:1-13, Mark 1:12-13.

⁷ See also Manrique’s *Coplas a la muerte*, especially stanzas X-XI.

⁸ The author never makes clear if the protagonist trades his soul knowingly or not.

⁹ For more on the function of the frame story, see Harlan G. Sturm, who sustains that the frame allows the reader to interpret how he or she should associate with the story (7-8).

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Patronio, un omne me dize que sabe muchas maneras, también de agüeros commo de otras cosas, en cómo podré saber las cosas que son por venir e cómo podré fazer muchas arterías con que podré aprovechar mucho mi fazienda, pero en aquellas cosas tengo que non se puede escusar de aver y' pecado. E por la fiança que de vos he, ruégovos que me consejedes lo que faga en esto. (Manuel 1997, 266)

Superficially the count inquires, “Should I use magic and fortunetelling for my own economic advantage?” But on a deeper level, the count begs an epistemological question. Is it a sin to use “agüeros” and “otras cosas” in order arrive at *knowledge* of the future? Luckily for the reader, Patronio offers an unadorned answer to the count’s question in his reflection at the end of the tale, thereby exposing the obvious moral associated with the text. After telling the count to observe that everyone who practices occult magic—“los agoreros o sorteros o adivinos, o que fazen cerceos o encantamientos e destas cosas qualesquier” (Manuel 1997, 270)—all meet unseemly ends, he emphasizes the lesson once more:

E vos, señor conde Lucanor, si bien queredes fazer vuestra fazienda paral cuerpo e paral alma, fiat derechamente en Dios e ponet en ‘l toda vuestra esperança e vos ayudatvos quanto pudierdes, e Dios aydarvos ha. E non creades nin fiedes en agüeros, nin en otro devaneo, ca cierto sed que de los pecados del mundo, el que a Dios más pesa e en que omne mayor tuerto e mayor desconosçimiento faze a Dios, es en catar agüero e estas tales cosas. (Manuel 1997, 270)

Patronio’s opinion is unambiguous. Stay away from all kinds of magic: be it consulting omens, enchantments, fortunetelling, or any (*qualesquier*) such vanity. Without a doubt, says Patronio, they are sins and must be avoided.¹⁰

As a response to the epistemological nature of the count’s question, Patronio offers a philosophical response—using occult means to arrive at knowledge will, in reality, lead to *mayor* “desconosçimiento... a Dios,” not to the *buen entendimiento* and *el saber* that Manuel esteems so highly.¹¹ Patronio, along with Augustine and Aquinas, does not deny that occult magic works; the plot of the story relies on the premise that it does. For these characters, magic can lead to true knowledge, and it possesses physical and metaphysical power in the world (Larson, 28). For Patronio, however, the objective of arriving at knowledge fails to justify illicit means employed to attain that knowledge. Regarding this same question, Aquinas concurs: “It is a good thing to acquire knowledge, but it is not good to acquire it by undue means, and it is to this end that the magic art tends” (II.II.96.I). Patronio, based on a similar conclusion, thus illustrates the difference between the quest for wisdom (*el saber*) and the search for worldly knowledge. *El saber* leads to a greater knowledge of God (*conosçimiento a Dios*); worldly knowledge sought through illicit means, on the other hand, leads to sin and death, just like it does for the thief of the present tale.¹²

Patronio’s tale, however, functions as a *non-sequitur* to the count’s question. Count Lucanor asks Patronio an esoteric question: is it licit to use “agüeros” and other such practices to

¹⁰ Ayerbe-Chaux remarks that Manuel’s version of the story is the only one in which the moral focus is the condemnation of fortunetelling (13). Somewhat contradictorily, the same scholar also holds that “la condenación de la superchería es el marco didáctico del ejemplo” (Ayerbe-Chaux, 13).

¹¹ Ian Macpherson sums up Manuel’s regard for *entendimiento* best: “It could be said that the whole of *El Conde Lucanor* is about *entendimiento*, in that the Count comes to Patronio at the beginning of each chapter with a problem which Patronio, the man of *grant entendimiento*, clarifies and illustrates for him, teaching him the art of understanding the people and things around him. The entire book is designed as a compilation of practical wisdom” (34). Sotelo (39) and Grabowska (38) also address this concern.

¹² Gerli points out that this dichotomy between worldly knowledge and Godly wisdom as the moral crux of “Exemplo XI” (2021).

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arrive at future knowledge? Patronio responds with his rendition of the Faust myth. A pact with the devil is not, by any stretch, fortunetelling or omen-reading; Patronio includes neither in his narration. According to Peter Foreshaw, the use of magic to gain knowledge would qualify as what Augustine calls theurgic or angelic magic, and the latter—the diabolical pact—would be considered a completely separate class, goetian magic, sorcery, and would be “potentially far more subversive” (42-43). The motive for Patronio’s *non-sequitur*, then, must be brought into question. My suggestion is that Patronio jumps occult categories in order to offer a panoramic condemnation of any practice of the occult—benevolent charms, fortunetelling, alchemy, or selling one’s soul to the devil. Patronio’s vague and wide-sweeping language in his reflection at the end of the story communicates as much. Once, he advises the count against reading agüeros and “*estas tales cosas*,” and then he also decries “*encantamientos e destas cosas qualesquier*” (Manuel 1997, 270, my emphasis). Patronio thus changes the scope of Count Lucanor’s paradigm to teach what he desires to teach—that any form of the occult whatsoever is evil and illicit.

Being a close friend of the Dominican Order, Don Juan Manuel demonstrates his skill as a catechist, transmitting religious dogma through the *exemplum*. As Lida de Malkiel points out, Manuel affirms his affection for the Dominicans multiple times (156-159), which Deyermond also takes note of, numbering Manuel’s devotion to the Dominican Order as one of the two most important details of his biography (1973, 241). For the sake of emphasis, I include two excerpts that underscore Manuel’s devotion to the Dominicans:

Esta orden de los pedricadores fizo sancto Domingo de Caleruega, et bien creed que como quier que muchas órdenes ha y en el mundo muy buenas et muy sanctas, que segund yo tengo que lo es esta mas que otra orden . . . Et por todas estas razones dichas et por otras muchas bondades que ha en esta dicha orden que aquel mio entendimiento non alcanza de contar nin de las entender nin de las saber todas, tengo que ésta es la orden et la regla et la religión del mundo más aparejada para se salvar en ella los que la bien mantuvieren. (Manuel 1952, 365-367)

This is taken from a work that multiple critics have called “truly Dominican” in nature (García-Serrano, 159; Ruiz 2014, 21). Again, addressing himself to his son in his *Libro infindo*, Manuel writes,

Otrosí vos mando et vos consejo que siruades et amedes mucho á las iglesias et á las órdenes et á los prelados, señaladamente la orden de fraires predicadores, ca . . . cierto seed que son muy leales et muy católicos, et muy letrados, et en orden et estado muy seguro. (Manuel 1952, 266)

Scholars have also asserted that Manuel positively used Dominican sources as inspiration for the *CL* and that the Dominicans encouraged him to write (García-Serrano, 153).

As perhaps the most influential of all Dominican’s, Thomas Aquinas’s opinions serves as a useful representative of the order’s teachings. In affirmation of Manuel’s ties to Aquinas, Lida de Malkiel uses Aquinas’s writings to analyze Manuel’s works (161-194), along with Gerli (2021). On the occult, Aquinas notes the following, following Augustine:

The magic art is both unlawful and futile. It is unlawful, because the means it employs for acquiring knowledge have not in themselves the power to cause science, consisting as they do in gazing certain shapes, and muttering certain strange words, and so forth. Wherefore this art does not make use of these things as causes, but as signs; not however as signs instituted by God, as are the sacramental signs. It follows, therefore, that they are empty signs... Wherefore the magic art is to be absolutely repudiated and avoided by Christian, even as other arts of vain and noxious superstition... (Aquinas, II-II:96:1)

It's unsurprising that Don Juan Manuel—a close friend of the Dominican's—would teach the doctrine of Aquinas and Augustine through him. Furthermore, these two theologians were not alone in their censure of the occult; as Foreshaw and Newman indicate, the Dominican order condemned alchemy early on, in 1272, 1287, 1289, and 1323 (Newman, 439; Foreshaw, 44). Moreover, other ecclesial institutions were frowning on the occult: by 1312 “all members of the Franciscan order were forbidden to possess occult books of any kind, or to engage in alchemy, necromancy, or the invocation of demons, or face the consequences of prison or excommunication” (Foreshaw, 44). A papal bull was also issued in 1317 that banned the practice of alchemy (Page, 30; Foreshaw, 44). Overwhelmingly Rome and her representatives were disapproving of—if not outright censuring—the use of the occult. These teachings integrate well with Patronio's reflections that any sort of occult practice is a grave offense. After all, Patronio, “personaje marcado por atributos especiales (interioridad, centralidad, verdad),” (Diz 1985, 282), concludes the tale by sermonizing on the danger of these arts: “...parad mientes a todos los agoreros o sorteros o adivinos, o que fazen cercos *o encantamientos e destas cosas qualesquier, e veredes que siempre ovieron malos acabmientos*” (Manuel 1997, 270, my emphasis). All who practice any form of these arts end badly; Patronio makes sure to emphasize this.

As Diz reminds us, however, the *CL* forms a structure, and in interpreting each individual tale, other tales should be considered: “Importa recordar tambien que el relato individual, al integrarse en la obra de cada uno de los dos escritores, pasa a formar parte de un sistema y por eso recibe de las otras obras que forman ese sistema, ecos y reverberaciones diferentes” (Diz 1985, 282). Taking into account “Exemplo XI,” the occult paradigm in the *CL* begins to take on a more ambiguous form. Perhaps being the most excellent and complex of all the tales in the *CL*, “Exemplo XI” has also witnessed the most scholarly attention. Almost all scholars are in agreement that the sorcerer, don Yllán is the moral exemplar in the story, whereas the deán de Santiago is the selfish antagonist. This theory seems logical, as the basic story is that the deán de Santiago hears talk of (“oyó dezir”) the great wisdom in the dark arts that the grand maestro de Toledo possess, and wanting to learn from him “aquella sciencia” (Manuel 1997, 119), he departs to Toledo—a city famous “como sede de la nigromancia” (Sotelo, 118). The occult context of the tale truly begins with this pilgrimage (or anti-pilgrimage) to the magical city of Toledo, which Waxman denotes as being home to one of the three most renowned medieval schools of magic (325-26). Arriving at don Yllán's—el “maestro's”—house in Toledo, the necromancer starts by saying that he won't hear anything about why he's there until they have eaten lunch, signaling his virtue from the start, by means of his hospitality, a classical and Christian virtue.¹³ After eating together, don Yllán listens to the deán's reasons for coming, warning him that “omnes que grant estado tienen...olbidan mucho aína lo que otrie a fecho por ellos,” which foreshadows the deán's betrayal (Manuel 1997, 120). The deán, blinded by his ambition—a common thematic thread in stories on the occult—hastily promises that he would never do such a thing and that he “nunca faría sinon lo que él [don Yllán] mandasse” (Manuel 1997, 120). Don Yllán says that this sort of magic can only be done “en lugar mucho apartado,” and so lures the deán into his trap (Manuel 1997, 120). Before they descend the stone staircase under the river Tajo, don Yllán is sure to tell his servant to start grilling a few partridges for dinner, which function as a sign that magic is beginning (Diz 1985, 284-85). According to Diz, “las perdices podían evocar la figura de Satán, alguna clase de saber prohibido y una frustrada relación de maestro y discípulo” (1985, 285). But

¹³ See Riddle for a profound treatment of hospitality in early Christianity; for more on the importance of hospitality in antiquity see Heffernan.

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the partridges only operate as porters to this magical realm: the descent through the stone staircase represents the true entrance into otherworldly undertakings, as Larson denotes:

Este literal y simbólico descenso al mundo metafórico de los muertos es uno de los muchos que encontramos en la retórica de los mitos y las leyendas. Como tantos héroes de antaño, Gilgamés, Teseo, Psique, Orfeo, Ulises, Eneas, el Deán de Santiago ha entrado en el salón subterráneo del mago... (30)

In this preternatural chamber, mysterious men begin to arrive, bearing messages for the deán over a period of a few days. After about a week, he finds out that they have elected him as archbishop of Santiago. A certain amount of time—“un tiempo”—later the archbishop receives the news that he’s been promoted to archbishop of Tolosa and that he may appoint whomever he wishes to the seat of the archbishop of Santiago (Manuel 1997, 120). Here, don Yllán begins testing the archbishop in earnest, and asks him to promote his son to the now vacant bishopric of Santiago in order to fulfill his promise, to which the archbishop responds with the excuse that must give it to his uncle. A similar pattern follows as the deán receives promotion to Cardinal and then to pope. Because of don Yllán’s persistence in testing the deán de Santiago, critics have viewed don Yllán as a divine figure who tirelessly attempts instruct the deán in the ways of gratitude, basing their theses partially upon previous versions of the tale that explicitly connect the sorcerer to God (Diz 1985, 283; Ayerbe-Chaux, 239-246). This argument seems to hold up to a careful reading of the text. The maestro-discípulo relationship between el deán and don Yllán, combined with the potential meal (the partridge dinner) and the realized meal (lunch) evokes Christian imagery of the last supper, connecting don Yllán symbolically to Christ. Moreover, the sorcerer himself goes three times—a symbolically divine number for Christianity—to the deán, reminding him of his promise: first, when the deán is appointed as bishop (Manuel 1997, 121), second when he is appointed as cardinal (Manuel 1997, 122), and third when he is elected as pope. The tripartite betrayal displays don Yllán’s selfless determination to call the deán to conversion, while, at the same recalling Peter’s betrayal of Christ during the Passion Narrative and further tighten the figurative bond between himself and Christ. But try as he might, don Yllán in his godlike altruism cannot force repentance on the deán, so he ends the enchantment, awakens the deán and sends him on his way without supper.

The vice of ingratitude, though evident throughout the narrative, reaches its culmination at the moment when the deán—now pope—threatens don Yllán with imprisonment for necromancy, a practice which he had unscrupulously intended to employ to gain power:

Deste aquexamiento se quexó mucho el Papa e començol a maltraer diziéndol que si más le affincasse, quell faría echar en una cárçel, que era ereje e encantador, que bien sabía que non avía otra vida nin otro offiçio en Toledo, do él moraba, sinon bivar por aquella arte de nigromañia. (Manuel 1997, 123)

The deán’s hypocrisy is cast fully into the light: “Se ha descubierto, es un mentiroso ingrato y debe buscar la puerta de salida cuanto antes,” as Larson puts it (33). As Patronio’s didactic tale, this is the lesson on which he focuses the narrative (Larson, 33), and it is also the moral he chooses to draw at the end of the tale:

E vos, señor conde Lucanor, pues veedes que tanto fazedes por aquel omne que vos demanda ayuda e non vos da ende mejores gracias, tengo que non avedes por qué trabajar nin aventurarvos mucho por llegarlo a logar que vos dé tal galardón commo el deán dio a don Yllán. (Manuel 1997, 124-25)

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Problematically, Patronio implies that the deán should have conceded don Yllán influence in the Church hierarchy—not doing so is, above all, what ends the spell and causes don Yllán to send him on his way without dinner and with “tan grand...vergüença” (Manuel 1997, 123). This detail exhibits necromancy “como si el...fuera lo más normal del mundo” (Larson, 28), and thereby insinuates the permissibility of the art. Gerli supports this hypothesis, maintaining that the occult is licit for Manuel as long as one’s intentions are benevolent, and Diz holds a similar belief (Gerli 2021, 387; Diz 1985, 281-291).

Furthermore, Alfonso X, the uncle of Don Juan Manuel, asserts nearly the same opinion as this tale suggests. The influence of Alfonso X in the written work of Don Juan Manuel is significant, which Sotelo notes, naming him “fiel continuador de la obra de su tío Alfonso el Sabio” (23), despite the fact that they never met (Giménez Soler, 207). As Pattison observes (242), Manuel, in his *Cronica Abreviada* (which Manuel calls “Compendio de la Chronica General del Rey Don Alfonso”) identifies himself strongly with the Alphonsine tradition, writing (Manuel 1958, 1):

Por que don Johan su sobrino sse pago mucho desta su obra e por la saber mejor por que muchas razones non podria faser tal obra commo el rey fizo ni el su entendimiento non abondaua a a retener todas las estorias que son en las dichas cronicas por ende fizo poner en este libro en pocas razones todos los grandes fechos que se y contienen. (Manuel 1958, 39)

Although in a different genre than the *CL*, Manuel’s assertion of the *entendimiento* and scholarly aptitude of his uncle speaks for itself—the nephew of the renowned king knows and admires Alfonso’s work. In his *Siete Partidas*, Alfonso X at first seems to side with Aquinas and Augustine, condemning *adevinos* and necromancers, a fact which Navarro has pointed out (21). Addressing *adevinos* he writes, “queremos aquí decir otrosi destos que son muy dañosos á la tierra...” (Alfonso, III.VII), and on negromancers, he adds, “...los homes que se trabajan á facer esto viene muy grant daño a la tierra et señaladamente á los que creen et les demandan alguna cosa en esta razón...” (Alfonso, III.VII.II). Notably, however, he then legitimizes some practices of the occult:

Pero los que ficiesen encantamientos ó otras cosas con buena entencion, asi como para sacar demonios de los cuerpos de los homes, ó para deslegar á los que fuesen marido et muger que no pudiesen convenir en otro, ó para desatar nube que echase granizo ó...por alguna otra cosa provechosa semejante destas, non debe haber pena, ante decimos que deben recibir gualardon por ello. (Alfonso 1807, III.VII.III)

Perhaps the indefinite nature of Alfonso’s teachings confused Manuel; for, although the learned king condemns some forms of magic, he approves and encourages well-intentioned enchantments and “*otras cosas*.” Manuel could have reasonably interpreted benevolent necromancy as part of this equation. This theory, however, problematizes Manuel’s teaching. Is the occult inherently evil, as Aquinas and Augustine hold, or does the intention of the practitioner play a role in the morality of the act?

If Manuel agrees with Augustine that demons operate and assist in both goetian and theurgic magic—“vel magian vel detestabiliori nomine goetian vel honorabili theurgian vocant”—then this leaves the author little room for agreeing with Alfonso X (Augustine, X.9).¹⁴ While either intellectual would denounce the diabolical pact of “Exemplo XLV,” the goodwill of

¹⁴ Trans: “either magic, whether they call it by the detestable name ‘goetian’ or more honorable theurgy...” (my translation).

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don Yllán might justify the use of necromancy for Alfonso; for the Dominicans, this would amount to nothing. Thorndike explains the theological motivations for this teaching:

Magic they regarded as evil not merely because it was employed to injure men and to take away from them liberty of action, but because it employed the services of spirits who were hostile to God. Any dealings with such spirits, whether the evil sorcerer's bewitching or the benevolent physician's charms or the Neo-Platonist's effort at soul satisfaction, were magic. (64)

Any magic for mainstream Dominican thought would qualify as demonic, and, as such, to be avoided at all costs.

One solution to this quandary is that Manuel's opinion on the occult—as manifested in the *CL*—is ambivalent. In “Exemplo XLV,” the author offers a comprehensive condemnation of the occult, but in “Exemplo XI,” he seems to validate its use provided certain conditions be met. Does Don Juan Manuel remain loyal to his uncle, or will he side with the dogmatic theologians of the day? This is my central question, and my argument is that the morals from these two stories are incompatible. This interpretation should not seem surprising. After all, his secular patron (Alfonso X) and his religious guides (the Dominicans) seem to lead him in separate directions. Could the tugging in two desperate directions have left him in philosophical limbo—indecisive and uncertain? It certainly seems the case.

The ambivalence of Manuel towards the occult forms an analogous structure to its contemporaneous society, mirroring the ambivalence throughout the Middle Ages regarding the intersection of Church and State. The Dominicans (representing religious authority), for their part, fought for worldly power by associating themselves with the highly influential Manuel, and “the material advantages that the preachers obtained from Don Juan could only matched by those they got from the royal family” (García-Serrano, 155). As with many ecclesiastical entities during the medieval times, the Dominicans “were highly influential mediators who played a decisive role in internal and external political affairs” (García-Serrano, 155). Alfonso X (representing the state of Castile), on the other hand, attempted to regulate not just temporal matters, but spiritual as well in his *Siete partidas*. Clearly, these are microcosmic examples of a prevalent reality in the Middle Ages: Church and State shared influence in secular and spiritual proceedings, thereby creating an uncertainty when these two powers came into conflict. The ideological dissonance among Manuel's *exempla* simply echoes this same ambiguity.

Rhetorically, Manuel's text reflects the same ambivalence with which its critics have interpreted the work itself. Where some critics hold that Manuel does not intend to imbue his work with orthodox religiosity (Gerli 2021, 378; Gómez Redondo, 829), others have held that the *CL* possesses an “overarching Christian message” (Cossío Olavide, 5), and still others emphasize the dogmatic influence that the Dominican order had on the count (Lida de Malkiel, 155-194; García-Serrano, 2020, 151-162). Where some interpret the author as a typical misogynistic ruler of his times (Ruiz 2014, 623), others view some of Manuel's writing as progressive for his thoughts on women's rights (Keller, 46). But with a work that invites the metaphor of man as reader of the text which is reality, this strikes the ear as fitting (Diz 1984, 2-3). Manuel did not create a text without its own equivocations and ambiguities because these matters are inherent to the human condition. To create a transparent text without enigma would be to write an inhuman narrative, neither relevant to himself nor his readers.

With a coherent framework of the occult didacticism of the *Conde Lucanor* failing to emerge from these two *exempla*, it has nonetheless been demonstrated that Manuel's tales interact with each other and should be interpreted within the context of the work as a whole to

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extract meaning from individual *exempla*. Although such an analysis has exposed loose strings within the fabric of the work, likely, in the loose strings themselves the value of the *Conde Lucanor* is found.

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