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WICKED DREAMS, TEARY EYES, AND SALTY NOSES: ELVISH PATHOLOGIES AND FOLKLORIC EXORCISMS FROM MEDIEVAL GERMANIC EUROPE

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Abstract: Medieval sources preserve a significant number of verbal remedies against elves and comparable beings. Similarly, a substantial number of manuscripts include references to pathologies named after elvish entities. The argument presented here explores the multivalent relationships between folkloric afflictions and performative texts that claim to expel folkloric characters. Specifically, this article concentrates on unpacking the various interpretative implications of elf exorcisms, and it refers to several newly discovered medieval sources. The most significant conclusion it presents is that the lexicon that past individuals used to designate elvish pathologies emerged from complicated linguistic and literary processes and that the variability of symptoms and conditions for which texts *contra elphos* were used seems to have been inspired in part by the fact that people did not always conceptualise the behaviour of elves in the same way. The argument also considers the views of medieval individuals who commented on contemporary beliefs regarding folkloric illnesses and ailments, as well as some sources that shed light on the relationship between popular beliefs and Christian worldviews.

Key words: elves, exorcisms, medieval charms, folklore, manuscripts, disease names.

INTRODUCTION

Elves are popular subjects among medievalists. Karen Louise Jolly and Alaric Hall have done much to enrich our understanding of Old English and Old Norse elves (Jolly 1996, 1998; Hall 2004, 2006a, b, 2007a), and Richard Firth Green has recently presented an extensive study of elves and fairies in Middle English literature (2016). Equally, James Wade has explored the literary and

narratological resonances of elvish entities in his book *Fairies in Medieval Romance*, while Diane Purkiss has described the way in which similar characters feature in Early Modern sources (2011; 2007). In addition, there are presently two bundles available in print that offer a broad range of perspectives on the various cultural manifestations of "the good folk". Peter Narvaez compiled the first of these volumes in 1991; Simon Young and Ceri Houlbrook edited and published the second in 2017. Finally, it is worth noting that elves and associated beings have also been discussed in languages other than English. The most prominent studies are Laurence Harf-Lancer's *Les Fées au Moyen Âge* (1984) and Claude Lecouteux's *Les Nains et les Elfes au Moyen Âge* (1988). Additional useful publications are Catharina Raudvere's *Föreställningar om Maran i Nordisk Folktro* (1993), Evgen Tarantul's *Elfen, Zwerge und Riesen* (2001), and Stamatios Zochios' *Le Cauchemar Mythique* (2006).

Despite the evident scholarly interest in elves, some Latin and German exorcisms which mention such otherworldly entities have remained underexplored. These incantatory texts have survived in a variety of different formats. The specimens that have been handed down to us in manuscripts most frequently constitute smaller entries in more extensive collections of religious, medical, and magical writings. For the most part, such texts appear to have functioned as referential transcripts.[1] However, elf exorcisms also survive on medieval parchment strips and lead tablets.[2] These were not drafted for referential purposes; rather, they were at one time written down and deposited in order to execute exorcistic performances. The most significant feature which sets all these texts apart from other exorcisms is that they include some variant of the phrase "Conjuro vos, elves".

This article hopes to redress in part the current imbalance in the state of research concerning elves and the various verbal cures associated with them, and it accordingly explores the meaning and interrelation of a number of elf exorcisms from medieval Europe. Focusing specifically on Latin and German material from present-day Germany and England, it provides an insight into the ways in which charms *contra elphos* were transcribed and transmitted during the Middle Ages. In addition, it sheds light on how the folkloric attitude towards infection and contamination that we encounter in some medieval elf exorcisms engages with contemporary notions about the possible causes of sickness, impairment, and disability.

The following argument includes a number of references to newly discovered elf exorcisms, but it does not focus explicitly on these documents. Instead, it considers the new material alongside a range of related verbal remedies and other contemporary sources. It thus hopes to offer a vista of how stories about elves may have contributed to popular notions concerning the aetiology of spe-

cific forms of adversity. In the same way, the following discussion deliberates how the interaction between beliefs about the causes of some forms of hardship and interpretative ambiguities related to the folkloric designations of symptoms and illnesses may have encouraged the proliferation of stories about malignant elvish entities.

We begin our investigation in Gotland, sometime before the year 1683. It is at this time that Brigitte, a woman from "een Bondegård i Bro sokn, kallad Stora Aby" (a farm in the district of Bro called Stora Aby), appears to have attempted to cure her cows from certain lactation issues. In order to improve the physical condition of her cattle, she seems to have used the following text:

> Conjuro vos Ellvos et Ellvas et omnia Cætera genera vestra Cujuscunq. Status vel Conditionis estis, omnes incantatores et incantatrices et omnes Dœmones per Deum Patrem + per Deum Filium + per Deum Spiritum Sanctum […] ut non noceatis huic famulæ Dej […] in vaccis aut lacticinis […] (Spegel 1901: 178).
>
> I conjure you, *Ellvos* and *Ellvas*, and all other kinds of you, of whatever status or condition you are, all enchanters and enchantresses and all demons, by God the Father +, by God the Son +, by God the Holy Spirit, not to harm the cows or dairy of this servant of God.

We know of Brigitte's dairy dilemma because Haquin Spegel (1645-1714), a Swedish clergyman and historiographer, transcribed her "breef" sometime before 1683 and appended it to his work *Rudera Gothlandica* (Gotlandic vestiges). Spegel's decision to preserve the text was not motivated by his ambition to provide an edifying ethnographical insight into the efficiency of local veterinary practices. Rather, it appears he reproduced the document in the hope that it could help to convey the backward customs of the rural population (Spegel 1901: 53).

In spite of the slightly patronising intentions of its first editor, the Gotlandic lactation charm is noteworthy as a historical source because it rehearses some linguistic formulae that also appear elsewhere in the written record. A ninth-century prayer book from Anglo-Saxon England contains an exorcism that includes the line "adiuro te satanae diabulus *aelfae*" (British Library, Royal 2 A XX, fol. 45^{b})[3]; Sloane MS 962, a medical miscellany from fourteenth- or fifteenth-century England, contains a text that runs "Coniuro uos elues et omnia genera demonum nocturna siue diuturna" (fols. 9^{v}-10^{r}, edited in Kieckhefer 1998: 153); and a parchment strip from Ingleby Arncliffe written in a hand from the early thirteenth century documents an exorcism that uses the phrase "Coniuro nos [sic] elphes & demones & omnia genera fantasmatis" (for full text and plates, see

Wordsworth 1903: 402-403). Equally, Uppsala C 222 (c. 1200-1300) preserves a text with the line "adiuro elphos elphorum" (fol. 97^{v}, edited in Gjerløw 1960: 21) and Clm 849, a German vernacular manuscript from the fifteenth century, features a document that runs as follows:

> daz mentsche daz mit der krangheide befallen ist, daz sall dem jhenen mit syme nagkenden libe uff syme nagketen beyne siczin eyne gude wile; wan dan daz geschehin ist, so sall der gsonde mentsche dem krangkin mentschin mit synere czongen fharen ubir sin naßen: smagkit dan dy naße gesalczen, so sint es dy elbe. […] man saill es also besweren: […] By dem heilgen Pater Noster, by dem heilgen Ave Maria unde by dem heilgen glouben, […] da by beswere ich uch, alp unde elbynnen […] (Schönbach 1893: 43).
>
> One shall place the naked body of the person who is suffering from the illness on one's bare legs for a good while [the text specifies in an earlier section that the designated person can be the patient's mother, father, wife, or husband]. When this has happened, the healthy person shall go over the sick person's nose with his tongue. If the nose tastes salty, then it is the elves. One can charm the condition as follows: by the holy Pater Noster, by the holy Ave Maria, and by the holy faith, by these I charm you, *alp* and *elbynnen*.

Brigitte's text is thus not just a quixotic textual artefact, commemorative of a woman's struggle to improve the welfare of the cattle placed under her care; it also bears testimony to a long-lasting and widespread interest in a particular register of therapeutic language. In a medieval context, this register is most closely associated with Christian exorcisms. It merits considering, however, that official liturgical manuals such as the Roman-Germanic Pontifical (10th cent.) do not prescribe texts against elves. Medieval incantations that do seek to banish such beings using exorcistic phraseology can, therefore, best be understood as unofficial responses to an official tradition (Young 2016: 83; Kieckhefer 1998: 147). Such an observation is further supported by the fact that vernacular charms and other more popular incantatory texts from a broad range of periods occasionally employ analogous linguistic constructions in order to drive out similarly designated folkloric pests. In consequence, most medieval elf exorcisms appear to provide evidence for a "dual transference" between traditional folklore and Christian rituals; they attest to specific processes of "textualisation" that assisted in the continuous renegotiation of official and unofficial attitudes towards common beliefs and practices (Jolly 1996: 116).

ELVES AS DISEASE DEMONS

Some scholars have preferred to associate elves mostly with ailments such as "shot", fever, or epilepsy (see, for example, Simek 2011: 40; Dalgarno 1892: Kittredge 1929: 133-134; Davidson 1956, McGowan 2009). However, if we take a closer look at the historical record, we notice that both medieval and post-medieval sources associate elvish entities with a broad range of different symptoms and conditions (Závoti 2013; Thun 1969; Hall 2005a, b, 2007a). We have already observed that the Gotlandic incantation's *raison d'être* is to prevent lactation problems in cattle, while the fifteenth-century German text from Clm 849 associates an "alp unde elbynnen" with a condition characterised by a salty nose. Similarly, a fifteenth-century English manuscript contains a text with the formula "Coniuro vos demones et latrones, elphos et morbum caducum" (Sloane MS 2584, fols. 73^{v}-74^{r}) and a Middle Dutch manuscript from the same period links *aluen* to speech impairments. In a recipe for "Hoemen een mensche sijn tale benemen sal" (how one can rob a person of his speech), we come across the advice to make a powder out of "saet van cenien ende sauelboem" (seed of senna and the savin juniper). As the text explains, it is "daer mede dat die aluen benemen dat die lieden niet en spreken" (with these that the *aluen* prevent people from speaking) (Braekman 1987: 283).

Meanwhile, the lexicons of various Germanic vernaculars include terms that either denote or appear to denote elf-inflicted ailments. Anglo-Saxon leechbooks contain expressions in the order of *ælfcynn, ælfsiden, ælfsogoþa*, *wæterælfadl*, and *ylfa gescot* (for a discussion and references, see Hall 2004: 106-131); Middle English sources add *elve-inome*, *elf-iblowe*, *elfe y-take*, *elf cake*, and *elve bleine* (Blake 1972: 106-107; Way 1853: 138; Norri 1992: 261). Equally, a thirteenth-century annotation in a German manuscript glosses the illness "malus malannus" with "alpe", while an incantation from a century later associates an *alb* with noxious respiratory assaults (Steinmeyer and Sievers 1895: 664; Schulz 2000b: 153). Middle Dutch uses the terms *alf bedrogen*, *alfsgedroch*, and *alfsgedwas* to describe forms of delusion and demonic possession; later sources in the same language include the idiomatic phrases "van den alf geleed zijn" (being misled by the *alf*) and "rijt jou den elft?" (is the *elft* riding you?), whereas modern English has the saying "to be away with the fairies" to convey a closely related idea (van Veerdeghem 1899: 37b; Verwijs and Verdam 2018; Coetsem 1949; Oudemans 1857: 83). Finally, some Germanic expressions also reference folkloric entities in order to offer an aetiological context for non-bodily symptoms. In 1563, for instance, William Fulke ridiculed a folk etymology concerning fairy rings, "those round circles, which are seen in many fieldes", when he declared "that ignoraunt people affirme [them] to be the rynges of the fayries danses"

(69). The association between elves and naturally occurring ring growths dates back to at least the twelfth century, as is attested by the Middle English word *elferingewort*, which describes a circle of daisies (Hunt 1989: 87).

The terminology outlined above evokes an alluring and multiplex range of perspectives concerning the pestilential behaviour of elves. Old English sources occasionally associate the concept *ælf* with the general disease term *adl*, but they also combine it with more specific conditions such as *siden*, *gescot*, and *sogoþa* (Hall 2007a: 96-156). Subsequent terms in additional Germanic languages increasingly appear to confirm the impression that elves were widely believed to be malignant anthropomorphic agents that could inflict various forms of impairment through the use of foul breath, trampling feet, and oppressive bodyweight. The later medieval and post-medieval disease names, moreover, characterise elves as illusionists and pranksters, and the developments in the names for elf diseases, therefore, appear to accord well with developments in contemporaneous narrative traditions regarding the supposed behaviour of these supernatural characters. In Middle High German romances, for instance, we frequently encounter rhymes along the lines of "daz ist harte wunderlich / Ich wene die elber trigēt mich" (that is very strange / I believe the *elber* are deceiving me) (Frommann 1837: 9). Likewise, some sources from medieval England comment on the habit of elves to mislead and misdirect people: the *Fasciculus Morum*, a Franciscan preacher manual from the early fourteenth century, associates them with "fantasmata", and the A version of Robert of Gloucester's *Chronicle* (c. 1260–1300) opines that they are "wightes" that can adopt the "forme" of both men and women whenever they please (Wenzel 1989: 579; Wright 1887: 196). The former work also draws on what appears to be contemporary fairy lore to characterise what "in nostro vulgari dicitur *elves*" as otherworldly abductors. According to the author of the *Fasciculus Morum*, there are some who believe "quod tales possunt tam homines quam mulieres in alias naturas transformare et secum ducere apud *eluenlond*" (that these [entities] can change both men and women into other beings and carry them with them to *elvenlond*) (Wenzel 1989: 579; also see Saunders 2010).

Given the close association between delusions and dreams, as well as the partially synonymic relationship between the Latin term *incubus* and the Middle High German term *alp*, it is perhaps not surprising that a recipe book from Heidelberg includes "ein segen fur den alp" (which uses the phrase "Adiuro vos Elphos + Et Elphos") in a section dedicated to sleep disorders (Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg, Cod. Pal. germ. 271 [c. 1526-1544], fol. 229^{r}; also see Blöcker-Walter 1985; MacLehose 2013; Riviere and Wallace 2013).[4] Nevertheless, despite the apparent overlap between certain medieval disease names that

reference elves and selected medieval narratives about the behaviour of such beings, there are also several interpretative difficulties that prevent us from concluding that the elf exorcisms that survive from the medieval period were transcribed and composed to assist in the remedying of specific elf diseases.

To start with, the pathological descriptions that accompany ailments named after elves in medieval leechbooks are frequently counterintuitive. The Anglo-Saxon medical work that lists a remedy against *wæterælfadl*, for example, does not describe this condition as an illness caused by water-*ælfenne* (a term which does appear elsewhere in the Old English written record, as a gloss for *hamadryades*) (Hall 2007a: 78-79, 87). Instead, it appears to treat the term *wæterælfadl* as a cutaneous subcategory of *ælfadl* and it thus relates that "Gif mon biþ on *wæterælfadle*, þonne beoþ him þa handnæglas wonne and þa eagan tearige and wile locian niþer" (if someone suffers from *wæterælfadl*, the nails of his hands will be wan and the eyes teary, and the person will look down). The relevant entry recommends two incantations, both of which "mon mæg singan on wunde" (one may sing on the wound), as well as a herbal recipe, but it includes no unambiguous references to corrupting animate influences (Hall 2007a: 106-107; cf. Schneider 1969: 295). Correspondingly, the Middle English words *elfe y-take* and *elve-inome* are in the contexts in which they survive not, as speakers of modern English may expect, characterised as conditions whereby patients are abducted "apud *eluenlond*". In a footnote of the 1843 edition of the *Promptorium Parvulorum*, an English-Latin dictionary that was completed around 1440, we read that a "curious medical MS. of XVth cent. in the possession of Sir Thomas Phillipps" contains a remedy "For a chylde that ys elfe y-take, and may not broke hys mete, that hys mouthe ys donne" (Way: 138). In the same way, a treatise on the fall in the Vernon Manuscript, which dates to around 1400, relates that "Yf eny mon is elve-inome other elf-iblowe, he hit hath of the angelus that fellen out of hevene" (Blake 1972: 106-107). Accordingly, it is evident that *elfe y-take* and *elve-inome* do not denote a process of otherworldly abduction, but one of pathological contagion. The expression "taken" has been used in English to denote "diseased" or "afflicted" since at least 1387, as demonstrated by such phrases as "he was i-take with sikenesse and deyde" (Lumby and Babington 1876: 157), and because we most frequently encounter the word as a descriptor for non-folkloric symptoms it is probable that terms such as *elfe y-take* and *elve-inomen* have their roots in contemporary medical idioms rather than contemporary folklore (also see Green 2016: 133).

A closely related problem concerning the nature of elf ailments is that it is not always possible to determine the extent to which diseases named after folkloric and demonic entities constitute fossilised expressions (Doyle 2008: 117). In modern English, the term nightmare is mostly used to describe a bad dream,

even though the lexeme *mare* looks back to an Indo-European term that once appears to have denoted an encumbering disease demon (Höfler 1900; Riegler 1935a; Riegler 1935b; Siefken 1935; Roscher 1900; Hall 2007b; Raudvere 1993; Forsblom 1927; Zochios 2006). Modern variants of the lexical root feature in several languages besides English, but the geographic spread and persistent oral currency of these variants are not serviceable statistics for estimating whether beliefs associated with the root's historical meanings have survived to the present day (for area studies related to mare beliefs, see Zochios 2006; Kunze 1977; Raudvere 1993, 1995).

To gain a clearer insight into the various ways in which language change can influence the popular etymological (mis)understanding of a disease term, we may briefly deliberate Johann Heinrich Füssli's (1741-1825) oil canvas called *The Nightmare*. This painting from 1781 portrays a woman who suffers from sleep paralysis and it includes representations of two demonic agents that German speakers at the time commonly associated with this condition (Moffitt 2002: 178; Schneck 1969). The first is a horse, the second a chest-riding monster. Yet, eighteenth-century folk belief did not necessarily link both these figures to bad dreams because established literary traditions characterised both equids and encumbering demons as nocturnal pests. Instead, it appears the phonological resemblance between the words for, respectively, a female horse (*Mähre*) and an oppressive evil spirit (*Mahr*) was apparent enough to encourage an alteration in the latter creature's narrative tradition (for additional etymological considerations, see Stewart 2002: 282; Frayling and Warner 2006: 11; Davies 2003: 183-184; cf. Feingold 1982, 54-55; for more general studies, see Gordon 2015; Schneck 1969; Sharpless and Doghramji 2015a; Cox 2015; Milne 2017).

Moreover, we should be careful not to dichotomise disease vocabulary into fossilised and non-fossilised groups automatically, as such a routine misleadingly presupposes that the rationale for naming a specific condition after a supernatural entity needs to be governed by the conviction that the being in question genuinely exists. While such a line of reasoning is not improbable as far as some historical disease terminology is concerned, it is helpful to consider that using a popular story to describe an illness does not necessitate believing in the factuality of that story. For example, when the French psychiatrist Benjamin Logre (1883-1963) coined the term "Elpenor's syndrome" to refer to deranged, hung-over behaviour, he did not do so because he believed the Homeric narrative wherein Elpenor falls to his death after a night of heavy drinking was based on historical events. Instead, he believed the reference to the *Odyssey* was appropriate because it could help to convey the nature of the pathology he was researching, as well as its associated hazards. The term Elpenor syndrome is thus an analogical expression that derives from traditional

knowledge, rather than traditional beliefs (Olry and Haines 2006). We cannot exclude the possibility that the popularity and currency of some of the elvish disease vocabulary we find in medieval sources were sustained in part by the tacit understanding that fictional narratives about folkloric disease demons appropriately captured the symptoms of specific real-life conditions.

In order to make sense of the shifting and multivalent relationships between medieval elves, ailments, and exorcisms, it is beneficial to acknowledge that fossilisation constitutes a gradual, negotiable, and reversible socio-linguistic process. Speakers of the same speaker community can use identical folklorically-inspired expressions in identical contexts and still disagree about their precise meanings, connotations, and etymologies. A medieval anecdote about the extent to which separate sections of society can differ in their views about the nature of illnesses named after demons appears in the writings of Bernard of Gordon (fl. 1270–1330). This professor of medicine, who taught at the university of Montpellier at the turn of the fourteenth century, wrote the following synthesis of *au courant* opinions about a medical condition he called "incubus" but which most modern physicians would probably recognise as sleep paralysis:[5]

> Incubus est phantasma in somnis, corpus comprimens et aggrauans, motum et loquelam perturbans. Incubus nomen est daemonis et ideo volunt aliqui quod quando ille incubus directe est supra corpus humanum et potissime quando iacet dormitque resupinus ratione corruptae influentiae, aggrauat corpus, ita quod videtur patienti quod suffocetur. Et si aduenit pueris lactantibus, frequenter suffocantur, quia tantam corruptionem sustinere non possunt, et est opinio theologorum. Vulgares autem dicunt quod est aliqua vetula calcans et comprimens corpora, et hoc nihil est. Medici autem melius opinantur.
>
> Incubus is an apparition that presses on the body and weighs it down during sleep, disturbing both movement and speech. Incubus is the name of a demon and that is why some people think that when the incubus is directly above the human body—especially when a person lies on his back—he presses the body down by his corrupting influence, to such an extent that the patient thinks he is going to suffocate. When this happens to babies, they often do suffocate, because they cannot bear so great a corruption. Such is the opinion of the theologians. But the common people believe that the incubus is an old woman who tramples on and presses down the body. This is nonsense. The physicians have a better opinion (Gordonensis 1617: 269; translation based on van der Lugt 2001: 176).

As Bernard explains, *theologi*, *vulgares*, and *medici* disagree about the aetiology of the symptoms that the term "incubus" designates, and one of the reasons for this controversy is that the condition shares its name with that of a demon. The cited section thus suggests that people tend to interpret the etymology of disease terminology so that it accords with their preconceived convictions regarding the way the world operates. Bernard oversimplifies the socio-linguistic situation of his day when he subdivides people's primary belief systems into three distinct categories—folk knowledge, theology, and medical science—but he appears to be accurate in his observation that a divergence in cosmological views encourages disagreement concerning the aetiology of the same phenomena.

The premise that governs Bernard of Gordon's explanation of various incubus interpretations is that medical conditions that are named after characters from popular folklore are narratologically productive: the fact that concepts such as "incubus" and "elf" are simultaneously interlocked with religious, folkloric, and medical discourses not only complicates their interpretation, it also encourages their re-interpretation. The English Wakefield Play conventionally called the *Second Shepherd's Pageant* (c. 1500) provides an illustrative example of how medieval authors could use the hermeneutic plasticity of demonic diseases to add literary dimensions to their work. The performance constitutes a humoristic spoof of the biblical Adoration narrative and describes a situation whereby three shepherds discover that their treacherous companion's newborn baby—to which they have generously decided to bring gifts—is in actuality one of their own sheep, dressed up as a human child and placed inside a cradle. The thieves responsible, who are husband and wife, give various excuses as to why their offspring looks so ovine: one of the shepherds affirms that "I know hym by the eere marke / that is a good tokyn", but Mak, the husband, retorts "I tell you, syrs, hark! / hys noyse was brokyn" (ll. 611-12 in Cawley).

The situation soon turns sour, and the wife decides to step in when one of the shepherds concludes that "This is a fals wark" and that his companion should "Gett wepyn" (ll. 614-15). In need of a *deus ex machina*, she resorts to elvish lore in order to explain why her child has such a "long snowte" under "the clowtt" (ll. 584-85):

> He was takyn with an elfe,
> I saw it myself;
> When the clok stroke twelf
> Was he forshapyn (ll. 616-619).

We observed earlier that "takyn with an elfe" etymologically means "sick with elvish symptoms", rather than "kidnapped" or "transformed" by an elf. Yet, the double meaning of the participle "takyn" appears not to have been wasted on

the author of the *Second Shepherd's Pageant*, as the section cited above seems to exploit the term's folkloric and medical implications. On the one hand, the passage employs the participle to denote a physical condition, utilising it to contextualise a mother's personal statement regarding the transformation of her child into a "forshapyn" sheep. On the other, it recalls contemporaneous lore that characterises elves as abductors, changelings, and, to recall the *Fasciculus Morum*, entities that "possunt tam homines quam mulieres in alias naturas transformare" (can transform both men and women into other beings). The pertinence of the latter observation is underscored by the fact that the plot of the play revolves around disguising a sheep as a human baby (also see Green 2016: 133; 2017: 394).

The multivalence of the word "takyn" also helps to explain why elves and elf diseases are predisposed to engage in what Cyril Edwards has described as "lexical and conceptual shape-shifting" (2004: 115). In essence, elvish entities feature in a great number of medieval narratives, with their precise predispositions and attributes differing from time to time and place to place (Goodrich 2015). At the same time, numerous historical sources typify elves as both pestilential and liminal, and for this reason they consider them as either analogous to or synonymous with figures that demonstrate the same characteristics. Thus, an eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon inscription on the flyleaf of Oxford, Bodleian Library, Auct. F. 3. 6 advises to write words such as "thebal guttatim" on three wafers "wið þone dworh" (against the *dworh*) (fol. ii^{r}). A German annotation from roughly a century later, meanwhile, lists a nigh-identical verbal sequence (Thebal Gut Gutani) as a remedy "contra alpes" (against *alpes*) (Clm 536, fol. 89^{v}; also see Tille 1895).[6] In the same way, *Leechbook III*, a ninth- or tenth-century medical manuscript from England, offers a description of a condition that it identifies as "ælfsogoþa" but for which it prescribes a verbal remedy that expels "omnem impetum *castalidum*" (every attack of the *castalides*) (see remedy 62 in Olds 1984); an Anglo-Norman medical manual from the thirteenth century labels an exorcism that begins "Conjuro vos, elves" as a text "Pur faies" (Cambridge, Trinity College, 0.1.20, fol. 10^{r}, edited in Hunt 1997: 224-225); and a contemporaneous German fabliau records a conversation wherein a student tells his companion that the latter's strange behaviour is due to the fact that "dich hat geriten der mar, ein elbisches âs" (you have been ridden by the *mar*, an *elbisch* spirit) (quoted in Grimm and Grimm 1826: lvi). Scribal intentions to vernacularise foreign terms certainly account for some of the variations in the terminology of demonic diseases related here. Yet, a widespread conviction among medieval individuals that entities from different cultural and narratological traditions could be superficially different while having the same fundamental characteristics also appears to have contributed considerably to

the nomenclatural flexibility (for a more elaborate synthesis of geographical terminological differences, see Goodrich 2015).

Post-medieval sources provide more extensive examples of how the same bodily symptoms could be attributed to entities with different names. For instance, when asked the question "Wie nennt man das Alpdrücken" (how do we call the nightmare), twentieth-century Germans from the Rhineland answered *Mahrreiten*, *Mahrdrücken*, *Todsmahr, Mahr, Druckmännchen*, *Druckmäuschen*, *Heimchen, Heimelmaus*, *Himpermäuschen*, *Timpermäuschen*, *Himpermännchen*, *Timpermännchen,* and so on (Müller et al. 1928-1971: 747; Cox 1989/1990: 61). Likewise, the term for a fairy ring, which we observed was *elferinge* in Middle English, is *Hexenring* or *Feenring* in German, while French uses the phrases *rond de sorcière* or *cercle des fées* (here also see Brøndegaard 1968). The implication that comes forth from some of these lexical variations is that the same beings could not only be conceptualised as the cause of various problems, the same problems could also be attributed to various analogous characters. The appropriateness of the analogy appears to have depended mostly on the time and the place, as well as on the cosmological views, the folkloric traditions, and the linguistic knowledge of the implicated speaker communities.

The inherent narratological productivity of ailments named after elves and the propensity of folkloric beings to engage in lexical and conceptual shape-shifting are not only interesting from a linguistic perspective. It also helps us to understand the structure and stylistic choices of some medieval elf charms and exorcisms. The Anglo-Saxon Metrical Charm *Wið Færstice* makes the claim that "þis ðe to bote esa gescotes, ðis ðe to bote ylfa gescotes / ðis ðe to bote hægtessan gescotes" (This [works] for you as a remedy for the *gescot* of *ese*, this [works] for you as a remedy for the *gescot* of *ælfe*, this [works] for you as a remedy for the *gescot* of *hægtessan*) (ll. 23-24, edited in Dobbie 1942), while an English document from the first half of the fourteenth century runs "coniuro uos fauni […] et strige et elfes" (I conjure you *fauni* and *strige* and *elfes*) (Harley MS 273, fol. 213^{v}).[7] In order to acquire a greater understanding of how and why elves engage in such nebulous semantic relationships with other supernatural characters, it is useful to take a closer look at a vernacular text commonly called the *Münchner Nachtsegen*. This fourteenth-century German charm is composed of a long list of rhyming exorcistic motifs and seeks to dissuade a complete host of ill-willed entities from perpetrating various forms of mischief:

> alb vnde elbelin
> ir sult nich leng*er* bliben hin
> albes svestir vn*d* vatir

ir sult zu varen obir de*m* gatir
albes mutir trute vn*d* mar
ir sult uz zu de*n* virste vare*n*
[…]
alb mit diner crummen nasen
ich vorbithe dir aneblasen
ich vorbite dir alb ruche
cruchen vn*d* anehucchen
albes kind*er* ir withelin
lazet vwer tastin noch m*ir* sin
vn*d* du clage mutir
gedenke min zu gute
herbrote vn*d* herbrant
vart uz in eyn andir lant
du vngetruwe molken stellen
du salt minir tur vor velen
daz binir vn*d* daz vuz spor
[…]
du salt mich nich beruren (ll: 23-47, edited in Schulz 2000b).

Alb and *elbelin*,
you shall not stay around for any longer;
alb's sister and father,
you will go out over the fence;
alb's mother, *trute*, and *mar*,
you will go out by the roof-ridge.
. . .
Alb with your crooked nose,
I forbid you to blow [on me];
I forbid you, *alb*, to smell,
to creep, and to breathe on me.
Alb's children, you little wights,
cease your groping after me.
And you, *clage mutir*,
think of my wellbeing;
herbrote and *herbrant*,
go to a different land;
you, treacherous *molken stellen*,
you will pass by my door;

the *binir* and the *vuz spor*,
. . .
you will not touch me.

One of the first things we notice about the text, aside from the fact that it uses the phrase "alb vnde elbelin", is that it catalogues a prodigious number of noxious characters. In a fairly systematic manner, the document first addresses a specific pest and then exiles it to a remote location. The charm explicitly corroborates the liminality of the disease demons it hopes to banish by associating these with archetypal border zones. An *alb*'s father and sister should go out over the fence; an *alb*'s mother, a *trute*, and a *mar* should disappear via the ridge of the roof; a *herbrote* and a *herbrant* should go to a different land; and a female milk thief—here we may remember Brigitte's Gotlandic exorcism—should stay away from the front door.

The text also illustrates the propensity for disease names to generate new narrative content. In Middle High German, the words *herbrote* and *herbrant* are designations for a *hordeolum* or stye, an inflamed swelling on the edge of an eyelid (Schulz 2000b: 131-143). In the context of the *Nachtsegen*, however, we encounter them as animate disease agents who should depart for "eyn andir lant". It thus appears two similar words for the same ailment have here been envisioned as the appellations of conscious pathogenic beings. The fact that the German charm characterises the terms *herbrote* and *herbrant* as a pair of evil-minded lexical twins suggests that it views these dermatological conditions as comparable to verifiable disease demons such as mares and elves.

Finally, we can see conceptual and lexical shapeshifting at work in the way the *Münchner Nachtsegen* describes the conduct and company of the elvish family it means to exorcise. The *alb*'s mother is grouped together with a "trute vn*d* mar", while the *alb*'s children are told to "lazet vwer tastin" and, therefore, deemed capable of the same behaviour as the conditions *binir* and *vuz spor*, which are mentioned a few lines later (for a possible explication of these terms, see Lessiak 1911: 157-158). Consequently, it is the pluralistic relationship between cause and effect, disease agent and symptom, etymology and aetiology, which helps to explain why the elf exorcisms under discussion treat such wide-ranging bodily and non-bodily problems and reference such extensive communities of supernatural beings. In a world where the same entity can cause different symptoms, different entities can cause the same symptoms, and words for symptoms and entities are prone to contaminate one another's meaning and produce new narratives in the process, one can only counteract harmful influences if one is willing to adopt an inclusive and comprehensive curative strategy.

TRANSMISSION AND PERFORMANCE

It is difficult to determine how representative the *Münchner Nachtsegen* or Brigitte's "breef" are as manifestations of the multifaceted incantatory culture that we presume to have existed throughout the medieval and early modern period. Nevertheless, the written- and the material record do provide clues about a few of the transmission patterns that we may associate with exorcistic formulae against elves. Haquin Spegel furnished his edition of Brigitte's document with the comment that it that it was "funnit" (Spegel 1901: 178), which suggests that the text he re-edited was a performative incantation rather than a referential transcript. Likewise, a parchment strip from England and a number of lead amulets from Germany and Scandinavia suggest that some medieval individuals believed the powerful words of elf exorcisms could be activated by writing them down.[8]

Transcribing rather than vocalising verbal formulae had the additional advantage that texts could be deposited in ritually significant objects or locations. Thus, the slip of parchment from Ingelby Arncliffe that was mentioned earlier was found in "an enamelled crucifix of great age (now unhappily lost to sight)", while a lead strip from Romdrup —which adjures "eluos uel eluas aut demones" not to harm "huic famulo dei nicholao in oculis nec in capite" (this servant of God, Nicholas, in the eyes or in the head"—was retrieved from the altar of a church (Wordsworth 1903: 401; Simek 2011: 28-29). The artefact, which was found wrapped around three small parcels of relics, appears to have been placed in the altar intentionally sometime after the construction of the building (c. 1200). Finally, the Halberstadt tablet—a lead amulet dated to 1141 that conjures an "Alber" to stop troubling an individual called "TADO"—was retrieved from the grave of a young child (Siebrecht 1989; Simek 2011: 30-31). While "TADO" might be the name of the infant, it is more probable that it is the name of an individual who believed a child's grave was an appropriate place to deposit exorcisms (Düwel 2001: 237-239; also see Gilchrist 2008: 125-128).[9]

The manuscript Uppsala C 222 offers an evocative explanation for the interrelation between the textual and material sources. On the verso side of folio 97, alongside yet another exorcism, we read "contra elphos hoc in plumbo scribe" (Gjerløw 1960: 21). It seems reasonable to assume, therefore, that some of the exorcisms that researchers have found in medieval buildings, cemeteries, and artefacts were transcribed using templates from manuscripts (Simek 2011: 31-33; also see Spegel 1901: 53).[10] At the same time, however, some of the texts that we encounter in manuscripts may initially have been copied from performative documents. For example, the template preserved in Uppsala D 600 seems to have been based on an exorcism that was once used to protect a certain Bernard

from demonic influences. The preservation of Bernard's name in the template appears to have been the result of a scribal oversight, as the manuscript uses the letter N (an abbreviation for "nomen") to indicate all other instances where the user should supply a personal name (Ohrt 1921: 68). Finally, it merits taking into consideration that Sloane MS 963 labels an elf exorcism as a "carmen" (fol. 15^{r}), while the German text from Clm 849 equally appears to advocate an oral recitation in order to drive out an "*alp* unde *elbynnen*".

We acquire additional insights into the performative dimensions of elf incantations from a passage in the *Miller's Tale* (c. 1380-1390), where Chaucer appears to employ the multiplex associations of elvish entities to reinforce the satirical and ironic qualities of his fabliau. In the relevant section, we read how John, a senior carpenter with a younger, promiscuous wife, enacts an incantatory "nyght-spel" against "elves" and "every wikked wight" (ll. 3479-3484, edited in Benson, Robinson, and Cannon 2008). He does so because he wishes to alleviate the supposedly delusional symptoms of Nicholas, a scholar living at his residence. The narrative's humour derives in part from John's failure to realise that his resident is actually planning "with this yonge wyf to rage and pleye" (l. 3273).

Chaucer's use of elvish lore is pertinent here for several reasons: it assists in underscoring the carpenter's gullibility and ignorance (cf. "He knew nat Catoun, for his wit was rude [l. 3227]); it helps to describe the extent to which John believes Nicholas is "away with the fairies"; and it helps to articulate a particular subtextual conceit that serves to reinforce the work's structural irony. Chaucer sporadically identifies elves with nocturnal, erotic pests such as incubi throughout the *Canterbury Tales*, and it is, therefore, comical that the ritual John decides to enact is supposed to rid domiciles of entities that have a proclivity for deception and sexual assault (for Chaucerian perspectives on incubi and elves, see Hall 2006b; Green 2003; Burrow 1995; Heiden 1994; Kiessling 1972; Petrina 1994). As it happens, John does not place a curse on non-existent folkloric entities by casting his "nyght-spel"; instead, he achieves precisely the opposite effect, placing a proverbial blessing on an elaborate ruse that his own tenant has devised to cuckold him (also see Thoms 1878).

It is evident that Chaucer's description of John's ritual is governed by a literary ambition, and the specific words the carpenter uses to "crouche" Nicholas from evil spirits (Jhesu Crist and Seinte Benedight / Blesse this hous from every wikked wight [ll. 3483-84]) convey an overarching interest in rhyme and prosody as much as they communicate an interest in contemporary charm practices. Nevertheless, Chaucer does seem to have provided us with a glimpse of the possible rituals that we may imagine to have been performed alongside some

of the surviving anti-elf texts. After attempting to bring Nicholas to his senses by seizing him "by the sholdres mightily", shaking him, and crying "spitously", John proceeds to say his charm "anon-rightes / On foure halves of the hous aboute / And on the thresshold of the dore withoute" (ll. 3480-82).

The idea of safeguarding specific spaces from pests and demonic influences through the performance of apotropaic rituals at corners and entrances appears frequently in the medieval record, and it is possible, therefore, that the just-discussed section from the *Miller's Tale* provides a minor insight into the way in which some medieval individuals performed charms against elves (also see Giraldo 1957). In the Anglo-Saxon Metrical Charm *For Unfruitful Land* (11th cent.) we encounter a fertility ritual "wið ealra feonda gehwæne" (against each and every enemy) (l. 61, edited in Dobbie 1942) that involves the deposition of crosses on "feower healfa þæs landes" (four sides of the land) (l. 4), and a thirteenth-century charm "ab omnibus muribus et ratonibus et ab omnibus malis" (against all rats and mice and against all calamities) advises the placement of sanctified stones in the corners of infested barns (Storms 1948: 182). Similarly, Cyril Edwards relates that in British folk belief "Elves, witches, and devils were feared as intruders, threshold-crossers", and he gives several examples of practices on which recent generations of Welsh and English people relied to deter such unwanted infiltrators (Edwards 2004: 115).

In addition, the manner in which specific manuscripts merge textual and non-textual elf remedies suggests some individuals believed that verbal remedies against elves and other demonic entities could or should be recited in tandem with the wearing of amulets or the enactment of rituals. MS Rawlinson C. 506 (c. 1445-1475) from the Bodleian Library thus gives a remedy "ffor the nyȝthe-mare" that involves three steps: the performer needs to find a piece of flint "þat hath an hole thorow of hys owen growyng" and hang it either "ouer þe stabill dore, or ell ouer horse"; he or she should write out a "charme" that describes how St. George slays "þat fowle wyȝth"; and afterwards the finished "bylle" should be hung "in þe hors' mane" (Robbins 1952: 61). Likewise, an Anglo-Saxon text "Wið ælfadle" (against ælf-disease) does not only prescribe the concoction of a herbal remedy and the recital of specific masses; it also includes the instruction to "Gang on þunres æfen, þonne sunne on setle sie" (go out on Thursday evening, when the sun is setting) and to locate a spot where elecampane (elf-dock) is growing. After finding such a site, the performer needs to intone several popular prayers, stick a knife into the herb, and not speak to anyone before returning to the same place the next morning (for the full ritual, see Storms 1948: 222-225). Consequently, there is some reason to assume that medieval incantations that claim to work *contra elphos* should be associated with a multi-dimensional transmission climate; it is likely that if we wish to

understand how elf charms and exorcisms were communicated and performed during the Middle Ages we should account for the possibility that textual and non-textual apotropaic strategies were frequently executed alongside one another and that such a practice may have exerted an influence on the diffusion and the format of the surviving material.

RELIGIOUS MENTALITIES

Having accounted for some of the socio-linguistic complexities, as well as some of the problems related to transmission, it is now serviceable to consider how elf charms engaged with contemporaneous religious mentalities. In the opening stages of the *Wife of Bath's Tale* (c. 1390), Geoffrey Chaucer describes the relationship between elves and the Christian faith as follows:

> In th'olde dayes of Kyng Arthour,
> Of which that Britons speken greet honour,
> Al was this land fulfild of fayerye.
> The elf-queene, with hir joly compaignye,
> Daunced ful ofte in many a grene mede.
> This was the olde opinion, as I rede;
> I speke of manye hundred yeres ago.
> But now kan no man se none elves mo,
> For now the grete charitee and prayeres
> Of lymytours and othere hooly freres,
> That serchen every lond and every streem,
> As thikke as motes in the sonne-beem,
> Blessynge halles, chambres, kichenes, boures,
> Citees, burghes, castels, hye toures,
> Thropes, bernes, shipnes, dayeryes —
> This maketh that ther ben no fayeryes.
> For ther as wont to walken was an elf
> Ther walketh now the lymytour hymself
> In undermeles and in morwenynges,
> And seyth his matyns and his hooly thynges
> As he gooth in his lymytacioun (ll. 857-877, edited in Benson, Robinson, and Cannon 2008).

There are no more elves in contemporary Britain, the Wife of Bath explains, because "lymytours and othere hooly freres" have long since staked out the area and decontaminated it with devout behaviour. Elves and fairies are defenceless

against "hooly thynges" such as "grete charitee", "prayeres", and "matyns", and this has caused that presently "kan no man se none elves mo".

Just as the "nyght-spel" passage in the *Miller's Tale*, the introduction to the *Wife of Bath's Tale* does not offer us an unambiguous insight into medieval English elf-beliefs. Intriguingly, the Wife of Bath openly confesses that her knowledge is not predicated on her personal experience, but on an "olde opinion" that she has encountered in a book somewhere. More significantly, however, her decision to rehearse a number of popular folkloric themes appears to have been inspired by an ulterior motive: she compares the Arthurian realm of "th'olde dayes" to the Christianised here and now not to comment on the disenchanted state of her personal surroundings, but because she means to take a sideswipe at her fellow traveller, the Friar.[11] As she explains, the earliest officers of the church did not purge ancient Britain of its lecherous demons for religious reasons. Rather, they sought to exorcise the libidinous "elf-queene, with hir joly compaignye", because this afforded them the opportunity to occupy the traditional living spaces of these folkloric molesters themselves and to claim a monopoly on sexual harassment in the process. The Wife is quick to eliminate further doubts about the intended meaning of her anecdote when she concludes with the idea that "In every bussh or under every tree / Ther is noon oother incubus but he" (ll. 879-880; also see Kiessling 1972; Taitt 1975; Yamamoto 1994; Petrina 1994; Heiden 1994).

The Wife of Bath's idiosyncratic perspective on ghostbusting clergymen aside, it is clear from the state in which some elf exorcisms have survived that these documents were not unanimously considered "hooly thynges". A fifteenth-century specimen in Sloane MS 2584 (fols. 73^{v}-74^{r}) presently has a big cross through it, and the elf exorcism that was added to an empty space in MS Uppsala D 600 (fol. 149^{r}) was also at one point stricken through by a (presumably) dismayed reader. Because some medieval authors condemn believing in elves as heretical, it is possible that acts of bookish vandalism are demonstrative of religiously motivated attempts to purge texts of unnecessary vernacular superstitions (Green 2016: 42-75).

Complicatedly, exorcised elves do make an appearance in the works of authors that demonstrate a greater interest in exploring appropriate forms of piety than Chaucer in the *Wife of Bath's Tale*. In a Middle Dutch translation of Lutgard's *Vita*, we hear about "ene nonne die metten viant beseten was ende ene andre die die alf bedrogen hadde" (a nun, who was possessed by a devil, and another who had *alf* delusion) (van Veerdeghem 1899: 37). The same text also provides some lexicographical information about the dualism that governs phrases such as "elvos et elvas":

[…] het en ware mensche nit
Die hem so wonderlic gelit
Te hare wert, mar een viant
En drogenere ende een triwant, –
Een van din valschen losengiren
Die hen bi wilen plegen kiren
In menschen vormen ende sijn
In didsche, na din wane mijn,
Genoemet alve ende oc elvinnen,
Na din dat si hen doen bekinnen
Din lieden ende laten schowen
In manne vormen ende in vrowen;
Want daer si mannes wise toegen
Ende om der vrowen lachter poegen,
Daer sijn si alue; mar daer si
Din mannen willen comen bi,
Daer sijnt eluinnen [. . .] (ll. 3647-3663, van Veerdeghem 1899).

It was not a human being
who led himself so strangely
towards her, but a fiend,
an imposter, and a trickster;
one of those false double-dealers
who occasionally turn themselves
into human forms, and who are
in Dutch, I believe,
called *alve* and also *elvinnen*,
since they make themselves known
to people and present themselves
in male and female forms;
because when they show themselves in the form of a man
and try to bring women to shame,
that is when they are *alue*, but when they
wish to disgrace men,
that is when they are *eluinnen*.

Thomas of Cantimpré's (1201-1272) *Vita Lutgardis Virgine*, of which *Het Leven van Sinte Lutgart* is an adaptation, does not mention elves, but incubi, and it is thus evident that "[i]n didsche" the words "alve" and "elvinnen" were regarded as appropriate designations for specific Latinate demons (see Henschenius et al.

1867: 198). Indubitably, Christianity and local folkloric beliefs were not instantaneously and universally compatible. It nevertheless appears as if occasionally the potential religious controversy could be reduced when disease demons such as mares and elves were rationalised as vernacular misnomers for evil spirits that occupied a safer position within an "official" Christian worldview. In this instance, the ability of elves to perform feats of lexical and conceptual shapeshifting could again be used to smooth over definitional discrepancies. As a Middle Dutch work explains: "Cobboude, nickers, aluen, maren […] dit sien duuelen alle / Die ons gherne brochten te valle" (*Cobboude*, *nickers*, *aluen, maren*–these are all devils / who wish to make us fall from grace) (ll. 719-724, Jansen-Sieben 1968).

CONCLUSION

The discussion offered above leaves us with an interpretative inconsistency: elf exorcisms utilise religious symbols and phraseology, and some sources show that the performance of devout behaviour was considered an appropriate method for foiling the potentially demonic and pathogenic conspiracies of folkloric nuisances. Yet, some of the surviving texts that adjure elves or other beings were at one point vandalised or defaced. Charms that claim to work *contra elphos* thus evoke a diverse spectrum of interrelated folkloric and religious beliefs. Specifically, they attest to a formulaically consistent, yet socioculturally malleable incantatory culture.

It is clear that past individuals disagreed about whether elves or similar beings existed, and it is equally evident that people had diverse and wide-ranging beliefs about how the activity of folkloric characters related to bouts of illness and misfortune. Correspondingly, the historical record offers conflicting opinions about whether elf-like entities and the conditions that they supposedly spread should be treated seriously or not. Still, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that at least some medieval and post-medieval individuals viewed charms against elves as appropriate media for engaging with life's most immediate and intimate problems. Some believed elf exorcisms could facilitate such macabre activities as establishing some form of connection with recently deceased children, while others merely saw them as useful documents for treating bodily or even bovine infirmities.

NOTES

[1] For manuscripts containing Latin exorcisms against elves, see British Library, Royal 2 A XX, fol. 45^{b} (9th cent.) (Storms 1948: 294); MS Uppsala C 222, fol. 97^{v} (c. 1200-1300) (Gjerløw 1960: 21); MS Uppsala D 600, fol. 149^{r} (15th cent.) (Ohrt 1921: 68); Linköpings Stiftsbibliothek M. 5, fols. 179^{v}-180^{r} (16th cent.?) (Klemming 1883-1886: 394-395); British Library, Sloane MS 962, fols. 9^{v}-10^{r} (14th-15th cent.) (Kieckhefer 1998: 153); British Library, Sloane MS 963, fols 15^{r}– 16^{v} (15th cent.); British Library, Sloane MS 2584, fols. 73^{v}-74^{r} (14th cent.) (partly edited in Olsan 1992: 133); Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg, Cod. Pal. germ. 271, fol. 229^{r} (c. 1526-1544); Cambridge, Trinity College, 0.1.20, fol. 10^{r} (Hunt 1997: 224-225); British Library, MS Harley 273, fol. 213^{v} (c. 1300-1349); Bodleian MS Douce 84, fol. vi^{v} (15th cent.); Haquin Spegel, *Rudera Gothlandica* (1683) (Spegel 1901: 178). For examples of texts in other genres that utilise exorcistic techniques and phrases to combat elves, see München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 849, fols. 131^{r}-132^{r} (15th cent.?) (Schönbach 1893: 43); München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 7021, fol. 160^{v} (15th cent.); München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 536, fol. 89^{v} (c. 1143-1147). For references to additional sources, one may consult (Ohrt 1927-1942; Matthiessen 1967: 149-166; Linderholm 1917-1943: 49-50, 64; Schulz 2000a: 69; Hall 2007a).

[2] Most elf exorcisms preserved on lead tablets have been collected and edited by Rudolf Simek (2011). A parchment strip from medieval England has been edited and translated by Christopher Wordsworth (1903).

[3] The interpretation of the phrase form the Royal Prayerbook is fraught with grammatical difficulties. Alaric Hall has offered the following argument:

> Here, then, we have the word *aelfae* which, in the absence of any likely Latin, Greek or Hebrew identification, must be a Latinised form of *ælf*. *Aelfae* is integral to the text and unrelated to the tenth-century Old English glosses in the manuscript. *Diabolus* here is surely a vocative, and satanae a genitive. But it is not immediately clear whether *aelfae* is intended as a common noun in apposition to *Satanae* ('I conjure you, devil of Satan, of an *ælf*'), or whether it is a vernacular synonym for *Satanae* ('I conjure you, devil of the *ælf* Satan')" (2007a: 72).

Meanwhile, Rudolf Simek has contended that

> neither the actual reading nor the (possible) grammatical construction […] is as straightforward as it may have looked to Hall: firstly, in the manuscript the endings are now hardly distinguishable at all, and secondly, […] the form *aepistulam* in the following line shows that *-ae* need not be the genitive, but in all likelihood stands for the vocative, which is to be expected in all these formulae, even if neither spelling nor grammar is quite correct here (as *Satan* is undeclinable, and *diabolus* is certainly not the correct vocative) (2011: 43).

[4] Also see Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg, Cod. Pal. germ. 271, fol. 229^{r} (c. 1526-1544); Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg, Cod. Pal. germ. 275, fol. 23^{r} (c. 1575); Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg, Cod. Pal. germ. 259, fol. 184^{v} (c. 1576/1580); and British Library, MS Harley 218, fol. 147^{v}, which includes a remedy that should protect "a woman in childbede from aluys 7 wyckud dremes". I wish to thank Katherine Hindley for bringing the last of these references to my attention.

[5] For medical studies on sleep paralysis and its various cultural interpretations, see Jarcho 1980, Liddon 1967, Pearce 1993, Stores 1998, Lang 2001, Davies 2003, Cheyne 2003, Spoormaker, Schredl, and van den Bout 2006, Shelley 2011, MacLehose 2013, Gordon 2015, Sharpless and Doghramji 2015a, b, Cox 2015.

[6] I wish to thank László Sándor Chardonnens for offering his assistance with the interpretation of this passage.

[7] I wish to extend my gratitude to Katherine Hindley, who has brought this reference to my attention.

[8] The medieval written record contains numerous other texts that specifically advise a scribal performance for exorcising folkloric conditions. One example can be found in a remedy for *dweorh* that is included in the Old English leechbook *Lacnunga* (10th-11th cent). In a prose section that prefaces the incantation it is advised that

> þæt galdor þæt her æfter cweð man sceal singan, ærest on þæt wynstre eare, þænne on þæt swiðre eare, þænne [b]ufan þæs mannes moldan. And ga þænne an mædenman to and ho hit on his sweoran (Storms 1948: 166-167).
>
> The incantation, which is written hereafter, must be sung, first into the left ear, then into the right ear, then above the crown of the man's head. And then let a virgin go to him and hang it on his neck.

[9] I would like to thank Jaqueline Borsje for sharing her views with me concerning the possible interpretations of TADO's lead tablet.

[10] For manuscripts containing elf exorcisms see note 1; for editions of tablets and parchment strips, see note 2.

[11] I wish to extend my gratitude to Richard North for offering his guidance in the interpretation of this section of the *Canterbury Tales.*

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