

CONCORD AND CO-OPERATION DESPITE CONFLICTS AND CATASTROPHES

In early autumn 2023, the Finnish organizing team for the 2024 Conference of the ISFNR Committee on Charms, Charmers, and Charming sat down and started to plan the upcoming event. Our first task was to find an inspiring theme that would gather charm scholars in Helsinki. The global COVID-19 pandemic had not happened too long ago, different wars and armed conflicts were affecting many people's lives around the world, and the revolution of artificial intelligence as well as alarming news concerning the global environment and climate change cast shadows on the future. Hence came the name of our conference, "Conflicts and Catastrophes", as an honest and straightforward way of expressing the issues that were on our minds.

The conference was held in June 2024 in Helsinki, Finland. We got a lot of excellent and interesting paper submissions, and the conference ended up comprising 21 papers. During the three days of the event, invited scholars considered conflicts, catastrophes, and charms in multiple ways: charms in relation to technology, politics, environment, diseases and healing, malefic spirits, interpersonal relationships, and social conflicts. Despite its ominous name, the conference was a success, and the scholarly input was considerably high.

As organizers, we were extremely happy to be able to use the Great Hall of the Finnish Literature Society as the conference venue. Many Finnish folklorists and other charms scholars have cooperated with the Society and especially studied the archive materials deposited to the house. We were so lucky that the Society's representatives offered the international conference participants a tour to these tremendous archives, which comprise, for instance, thousands of Kalevala-metric incantation poems, as well as narratives and recollections about sages, witches, and cunning men in 19th-century Finland, Karelia, and Ingria.

We had the privilege of organizing a reception at the beautiful book gallery Laterna Magica, whose atmosphere exhales history, mysteries and magic—not least because of the bedrock cellar floor that was formed during the last Ice Age 11 thousand years ago. In addition, we got the chance to enjoy a warm summer evening at sea, as the conference dinner was held on a ferry cruising around Helsinki archipelago. On the last day of the conference, PhD Karolina Kouvola hosted a walking tour to seek the restless spirits that have been told to inhabit various places in the Helsinki city center. The stories we heard during the tour made the warm summer evening feel chilly at times. Luckily (or unluckily?), no ghosts were actually seen during the walk.

We discussed the possibility of publishing a thematic issue of *Incantatio* focusing on the papers presented in Helsinki already during the conference. If the name “Conflicts and Catastrophes” was not a bad omen for the actual event, let us say that its meanings have become clearer during the publication process—although we were fortunate enough to be spared actual conflicts. Therefore, this issue does not comprise only articles based on papers presented in Helsinki, but you can find a few additional publications.

Haralampos Passalis’ article “Production and reproduction of words of power in our modern digital era. The case study of the healing prayer to Saint Jude Thaddeus” is based on the paper presented in Helsinki. Through an analysis of the often marginalized figure of Saint Jude Thaddeus in contemporary Greece, Passalis examines the significant question of dichotomies between prayer and charm, official and unofficial, thus laying also groundwork for potential comparative study scenarios.

Eleonora Cianci’s article “Against wind and storm: A medieval German charm” was also presented in Helsinki. Cianci discusses the crucial question of vernacular practices in relationship with institutional texts. By analyzing a medieval German weather charm, she shows the negotiations between vernacular ritual speech and institutionalized Christian practices.

Stephen Miller’s article “6 or 7 note books full of charms’ – The Sophia Morrison collection of Manx folk charms” is a great addition to this thematic issue. Miller presents a corpus of seventy charms recorded by folklorist Sophia Morrison (1859–1917) in both Manx and English during the turn of century. Also attached is an appendix including a letter by Morris and discussing the Manx charm types.

Nicholas M. Wolf writes about an Irish charm and nineteenth-century folklore collections of J. J. Lyons. Lyons was a Philadelphia-based Irish

speaker, who recorded a charm against the evil eye from an Irish-born woman before the turn of the century. Wolf connects the work of Lyons to the Gaelic Revival movement and shows how the collector can be approached as a ‘proto-folklorist’, who recorded also the names and background information of his informants.

In his article, Frog introduces the concepts of *linguaging* and *irruption* and examines their relevance to charm studies. Building a case-study around an eleventh-century Latin text of fever healing, he shows how the concepts with their background in linguistics can be adapted to the study of genre and register in folklore studies.

In 2023 and 2024, the academic publishing house Indrik released two collections of charms:

Charms from Archival Sources (18th Century – First Third of the 20th Century), Vol. 1, compiled by Tatiana A. Agapkina (2023); Vol. 2, compiled by Alexandra B. Ippolitova and Andrey L. Toporkov (2024). A review of the two volumes is presented by Mare Kõiva.

Finally, the reader can enjoy Monica Bercovici-Ratoiu’s conference report of the ISFNR Committee on Charms, Charmers and Charming Conference “Syncretic Elements in the Process of Charming”, held 24–26 September in Bucharest, Romania. Yet another interesting and successful event!

The editors navigated between catastrophes—more than conflicts—and managed to cooperate to offer the readers of *Incantatio* a special issue. We wish you pleasant and inspiring moments with the articles presented here, and hope you will find charms against all conflicts and catastrophes that may occur to you.

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