https://doi.org/10.7592/Incantatio2025_13_Cianci

AGAINST WIND AND STORM: A MEDIEVAL GERMAN CHARM

Eleonora Cianci

Università 'G. d'Annunzio' Chieti-Pescara, Italy
eleonora.cianci@unich.it

Abstract: This article presents a fifteenth-century German weather charm preserved in Munich, BSB Clm 26693. Entitled *Contra auram et tempestatem*, the text is a vernacular adjuration intended to avert wind and storm. Drawing on John 18:3–6, the charm transforms Christ's verbal power ("I am he") into an operative formula for calming the elements. By comparing related Latin and German materials, the study situates *Contra auram et tempestatem* at the intersection of ecclesiastical benediction and vernacular ritual speech, showing how medieval practitioners negotiated orthodoxy, efficacy, and linguistic adaptation within the broader continuum of Christian apotropaic tradition.

Keywords Medieval German charms, Contra auram et tempestatem, ste weter ste, John 18: 3–6, Clm 26693

INTRODUCTION: RITUAL SPEECH AND THE CONTROL OF WEATHER

Contra auram et tempestatem is a fifteenth-century German charm to be performed to prevent hostile atmospheric forces. Throughout history, people have sought to influence, or at least predict, meteorological events to safeguard agricultural production and community survival. Antiquity offers abundant evidence of deities, rituals, amulets, and charms intended to protect humans, livestock, and crops from natural disasters. Comparable protective medieval formulas directed against meteorological or environmental perils, such as hail, and other natural calamities, are discussed in a broader Germanic perspective by Chiara Benati (2017), who situates such textual charms within the general category of apo-

tropaic and defensive rituals. The association of divine or demonic agency with thunder and lightning persisted across both pre-Christian and Christian traditions. Thunder-gods were gradually replaced by Christian saints endowed with meteorological power, ensuring a degree of continuity in ritual responses to atmospheric threats. Indeed, attempts to influence the weather positively and to protect the harvest through ritual acts did not disappear with Christianisation; on the contrary, they were reinforced by the authority of the Scriptures, in which the Creator is said to give rain and fertile soil, but also to bring biblical flood (*diluvium*), droughts, and famines. This theological premise furnished the framework upon which many medieval protection charms were composed and transmitted. (Lohmann 1960: 112–115). Gerrit J. Schenk (2010: 50–65) has further illuminated the complex interpretative models through which natural calamities were perceived in medieval Europe. Natural disasters were understood simultaneously as divine punishment (*Iudicium Dei*) and as manifestations of demonic agency, prompting both theological reflection and ritual reaction. Within this framework, apotropaic practices, such as bell-ringing, blessings, written charms, and processions, functioned as communal strategies to restore cosmic order. Schenk emphasises the Church's ambivalence: while condemning *maleficium* and magical weather-making, it authorised liturgical exorcisms such as the *Preces ad repellandam tempestatem*, thus integrating elements of older magical traditions into Christian ritual (*Rituale Romanum*, Titulus IX).[1] However, according to Adolf Franz, patristic and scholastic writers consistently interpreted meteorological events as expressions of divine order rather than chaos. He cites Thomas Aquinas's teaching that disturbances of the air, winds, and lightning occurred by divine permission, reaffirming the idea that weather phenomena were morally and theologically intelligible (Franz 1909 II: 27). This perspective situates medieval weather charms within a theology of natural obedience rather than in what contemporary ecclesiastical discourse classified as *superstitio*—practices deemed theologically improper or unauthorised: ritual speech aimed to restore creation's ordained harmony rather than to defy it.[2]

The charm examined here is a fifteenth-century Bavarian text written in Early New High German and intended to avert an approaching storm. This study aims to reassess *Contra auram et tempestatem* as a case study for understanding how fifteenth-century German charms negotiate the relationship between liturgical tradition, vernacular ritual practice, and textual adaptation. More specifically, this analysis addresses three interrelated questions: (1) how this charm integrates

Latin and German within a single performative structure, and what this bilingual texture reveals about late-medieval devotional culture; (2) how its adjurative syntax, *historiola*, and ritual directives align with or diverge from earlier German and Latin charm traditions; (3) what the final *probatum est* clause contributes to our understanding of the reception, validation, and practical use of charms in monastic contexts. By foregrounding these aspects, the study aims to clarify the charm's position within the *continuum* that links ecclesiastical benedictions, vernacular magic, and the lived experience of protective ritual.

Although embedded in a learned Christian milieu and interlaced with liturgical cues, it is neither a blessing nor a prayer in the narrow sense, but an apotropaic verbal remedy, an 'incantation' in the technical sense of the German *Segenforschung*.[3] Franz traces how ecclesiastical authorities oscillated between condemnation and toleration of weather rituals, distinguishing between harmful superstition and pious invocation. From Agobard of Lyon to Burchard of Worms, such texts reveal an effort to correct misuse while preserving legitimate protective practice. This nuanced stance explains why charms and blessings "against storm and hail" persisted in clerical milieus: they were not heretical survivals but adapted expressions of orthodox prayer (Franz 1909 II: 29–33).

It is hardly surprising that Christian liturgy also offered ritual responses to the human desire for control over the weather. Both the Old and the New Testament depict God as the source of disasters that could be averted or mitigated by the faithful through the positive power of prayer and blessing. The Gospels themselves describe Christ's control over the elements, for instance, in Mt. 8, 24–26:

> *24 et ecce motus magnus factus est in mari, ita ut navicula operiretur fluctibus: ipse vero dormiebat. 25 Et accesserunt ad eum discipuli ejus, et suscitaverunt eum, dicentes: Domine, salva nos: perimus. 26 Et dicit eis Jesus: Quid timidi estis, modicae fidei? Tunc surgens imperavit ventis, et mari, et facta est tranquillitas magna.*
>
> 24 A windstorm arose on the sea, so great that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. 25 And they went and woke him up, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" 26 And he said to them, "Why are you afraid, you of little faith?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a dead calm.

And in Mt. 14, 30–32:

> *30 Videns vero ventum validum, timuit: et cum coepisset mergi, clamavit dicens: Domine, salvum me fac. 31 Et continuo Jesus extendens manum, apprehendit eum: et ait illi: Modicae fidei, quare dubitasti? 32 Et cum ascendissent in naviculam, cessavit ventus.*
>
> 30 But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" 31 Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" 32 When they got into the boat, the wind ceased.

The Gospel episodes above present Christ's authority over the elements in strictly theological terms, without mentioning demonic intervention. In medieval interpretation, however, these biblical narratives were read alongside patristic and scholastic teachings that located demons in the *aer*, the unstable middle region of the cosmos. As a result, storms were widely believed to be caused or manipulated by demons; consequently, the same means used against demonic forces—such as the Cross, prayers, and holy water—were also deployed in fighting bad weather.

TEXT, TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS OF *CONTRA AURAM ET TEMPESTATEM*

Contra auram et tempestatem survives as a unique manuscript witness (*codex unicus*), yet its structure and motifs reveal affinities with three well-established charm traditions: the blood-staunching formulas (Latin and German), the *adiuro te* exorcisms, and the dialogic *historiolae* in which episodes from Christ's life are re-enacted to achieve immediate protective effect. Despite these connections, the text has received almost no scholarly attention, apart from Anton Schönbach's provisional transcript published in 1893. The present study builds upon a previous preliminary discussion and edition of the text (Cianci 2011).

The charm is written on the inner back flyleaf of Munich, *Bayerische Staatsbibliothek*, Clm 26693, a large-format paper miscellany (c. 350 × 210 mm) originating from the Augustinian convent at Regensburg and dated 1463. The catalogue description in Halm and Meyer (1969: 203–204) is minimal; direct examination confirms its provenance, large format, and mixed Latin-German content.[4]

The manuscript consists of 395 leaves, with discontinuous foliation and several missing quires. The same principal hand is responsible for most of the contents. The pastedown leaf carrying the charm is glued directly to the wooden board and contains only this text, copied at the top of the outer column.

A contemporary table of contents on f. 2r, supplemented by a later index on the front flyleaf, lists a range of theological, canonical, and pastoral texts in Latin. Among them are works by Nicolaus of Dinkelsbühl (1360–1433), Anselm (*Elucidarius*), Thomas Aquinas (*Casus missae*; *Summa fidei*), the provincial synodal statutes of Salzburg (1419), and a collection of *Sermones per annum* with extensive marginal additions. Later folios include German annotations and two schematic drawings (ff. 344r-v). The charm, identified in the index as *Contra auram et tempestatem,* is copied in the same late Gothic cursive used throughout much of the manuscript, although here, like other German *marginalia*, the scribal *ductus* (i.e. the characteristic movement and direction of the writing hand) appears less disciplined. Indeed, abbreviations occur frequently, particularly in Latin words, while the graphemic and orthographic habits correspond to mid-fifteenth-century documentary south-eastern German hand with features approaching a later medieval *Bastarda* (Cianci 2011: 262–264).

1	**Contra Auram et Tempestatem**	**Against wind and storm**
2	Ste weter, ste,	Stand still, storm, stop,
3	als dy Juden stönden da sy unsern lieben Herren wolten viechenn.	as when the Jews stopped when they wanted to persecute our beloved Lord.
4	Zu den sprach Ihesus: “Wen suecht ir? ”- “Wir suechen Jhesu*m* Nazarenu*m*”. Do sprach Jhesus: “Ich pins”.	To them, Jesus spoke: “Whom are you seeking?”.”We are looking for Jesus of Nazareth”. “Then Jesus said: “I am he”.
5	Do fielen sy nider zurügkch.	So they fell down backwards.
6	Also peut ich dir [w]eter	So I command you, storm,
7	in d*er* krafft dyser wardt, dy Ihesus selbert gered hat,	by the power of this word that Jesus Himself pronounced,
8	das du zurugk valst und dy zesträst und cherst an dÿ end und stat, da du chainem menschen schaden pringen magst.	that you fall back and scatter and return til the end and to a place where you cannot cause harm to anybody.
9	Das peut ich dir.	This I order you.
10	In dem nam*en* ‹des› Vaters, ‹des› Sunus und des heyligen Geist. Amen.	In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.
11	Dic trinies. P*ost* hoc q*uin*que P*ater* Nos*ter* et q*uin*que Ave Maria.	Say it three times, and afterwards (say) five Pater Noster and five Ave Maria.
12	Probatus est p*er* d*omin*um Frideric*um* q*uia* cessit aura.	Approved by Lord Fridericus because the storm ceased.

Line 1. *Contra auram et tempestatem*: the two Latin nouns are not synonymous but complementary. *Aura*, originally meaning "breath" or "breeze", in medieval Latin often signifies the movement of air as a spiritual or demonic medium. In fact, *aura* in late medieval ritual vocabulary meant a rising atmospheric disturbance. Scriptural usage relates *aura* with divine presence, yet the same word can also denote invisible atmospheric forces believed to be stirred by demons (Franz 1909 II: 89–90). *Tempestas*, by contrast, designates the manifest storm, encompassing wind, rain, thunder, and hail, and frequently carries the theological connotation of divine punishment (Schenk 2010: 52–54). The pairing, therefore, expresses a desire to convey both the unseen "airly" agitation and its visible, destructive consequence. In medieval natural philosophy, the *aer* was regarded as an unstable and mediating element, a liminal sphere where the forces of fire and water contended.[5] As Franz observes, this cosmological conception provided the theoretical basis for liturgical and magical practices aiming at restoring balance within the elements (Franz 1909 II: 19–22). In the German text, however, this duality is collapsed into a single term, *weter*[6] (ENHG *wëter, wëder*, *beter*, OHG *uuetar*), used for any meteorological disturbance, from wind and rain to tempest or hail. As Monica Blöcker observes, popular *Wetterzauber* did not differentiate between specific atmospheric causes: "das Wetter" was addressed as a single hostile power, sometimes personified or demonic (Blöcker 1981: 128–131). The vernacular simplification probably mirrors this worldview. For the charm's performer, naming *weter* unified both the physical and spiritual dimensions of the threat. Theologically, this reflects what Schenk (2010: 50–65) calls the "dual model" of medieval meteorology, in which the *aer* is the dwelling place of demons and the source of *tempestates*. The German term thus fuses *aura* and *tempestas* into one operative category, embodying the pragmatic aim of the charm: to command and neutralise the totality of hostile weather through the performative power of the word.

Line 2. *Ste weter, ste:* this charm employs two distinct sets of performative actions. The initial set revolves around the imperative "stop, stand still", ENHG *stande (stân, stên), stuont, gestanden* (svb) "stand still, stop", wherein the performer directly commands the storm to cease its activity. Many formulas directly address the evil as conscious forces to be commanded, and this linguistic personification confirms that this charm participates in the same adjurative idiom of speech-as-control over the elements (Franz 1909 II: 75–76, 80–81, 84–85, 93–94, 100–101). This methodology also bears resemblance to older German charms, par-

ticularly evident in the *Blutsegen* tradition, where analogous directives are issued to halt blood flow. Such formulations commonly intersect with the *Flum Jordan* motif:

> **Strassburger Blood charm, 11th c.**
>
> *to uerstont taz plŏt. uerstande tiz plŏt, stant plŏt, stant plŏt fasto.*
>
> As the blood stopped, cease you, blood, stop blood, stop fast.
>
> [Cianci 2004: 129–132]

> **Bern, Burgerbibliothek, cod. 803 (Moulins rolle): 678–681, *Ad sanguinem stagnandum,* 12th c.**
>
> *Sanguis iste nec currat, ita tu sanguis sta, sicut flumen Iordanis stetit.*
>
> Let this blood not flow, thus you, blood, stop, just as the River Jordan stood still.
>
> [Cianci 2004: 258]

> **Erfurt, Universitätsbibliothek, CA 8° 062b, f. 8r, *Ad restringendum sanguinem,* 12th c.**
>
> *Stant bluot, stant bluot, stant hir inne, duorc des heiligen Cristes willen.*
>
> Stop, blood, stop here inside, through Jesus's holy will.
>
> [Cianci 2004: 113]

> **Bamberg, Stadtbibliothek, Msc. Med. 6, f. 139rb (13th c.)**
>
> *So verstant du bluod sose Iordanis aha verstunt.*
>
> Thus, you, blood, stop, just as the River Jordan stood still.
>
> [Cianci 2004: 112–132].

Line 3. *Als dy Juden stönden da sy unsern lieben Herren wolten viechenn*: the verb *viechenn* is here intended as *vêhen* (wvb) "hate, attack, persecute", instead of Anton Schönbach reading as *vâhen, vân* (vb) "catch, capture, arrest" (Schönbach 1893: 45–46).

Lines 3–5. *Als dy Juden stönden da sy unsern lieben Herren wolten viechenn. Zu den sprach Ihesus: "Wen suecht ir? "- "Wir suechen Jhesum Nazarenum". Do sprach Jhesus: "Ich pins". Do fielen sy nider zurügkch*. As expected, the verbs in the *historiola* appear in the past tense, a typical feature of medieval charms whose narrative frames often derive from Gospel or hagiographic episodes. The dialogue between Jesus and the

Jews reproduces almost verbatim a dialogue from the *Gospel of John*, set immediately before Christ's arrest.

> *3. Iudas ergo, cum accepisset cohortem et a pontificibus et pharisaeis ministros, venit illuc cum lanternis et facibus et armis. 4. Iesus itaque sciens omnia, quae ventura erant super eum, processit et dicit eis: "Quem quaeritis?" 5. Responderunt ei: "Iesum Nazarenum". Dicit eis: "Ego sum!" Stabat autem et Iudas, qui tradebat eum, cum ipsis. 6. Ut ergo dixit eis: "Ego sum!", abierunt retrorsum et ceciderunt in terram.*
>
> [Vulgata, John 18, 3–6]

> 3. So, Judas came to the garden, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons. 4. Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, "Who is it you want?" 5. "Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "I am he," Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.) 6. When Jesus said, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground.

The passage describes Judas Iscariot leading a company of soldiers and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees to arrest Jesus. Their presence, whether Roman troops or temple guards, highlights the official character of the action. The declaration used by Jesus, "I am he", causes the group to draw back and fall to the ground (ENHG *vallen, viel, gefallen (vb) + nider + ze rücke* "fall, fall down"), affirming His authority and fulfilling His earlier statement that He would lay down His life of His own accord (John 10:18).

Lines 6–9. *Also peut ich dir weter in der krafft dyser wardt, dy Ihesus selbert gered hat, das du zurugk valst und dy zesträst und cherst an dÿ end und stat, da du chainem menschen schaden pringen magst. Das peut ich dir*: as already noted in line 2 (*Ste weter, ste*), this charm employs two distinct sets of performative actions. The second modality of this charm thus employs the imperative of "order," directed toward the malevolent force. In this section, one expects verbs in the imperative or optative mood, revealing the direct voice of the performer. In fact, the verbs are typically in the first person and addressed to the "patient" or to the evil being confronted, in this case, the storm. The initial expression in line 2 creates a coherent bridge from the first command through the narrative frame and into lines 6-9, where the order

is repeated: *"So, I order you, storm"* (ENHG *biten* (vb) "order, request, command") *that you fall back and scatter* (ENHG *zerströuwen* (vb) "dissolve, destroy") *and turn away* (ENHG *keren an* (vb) "turn around, go away") *to a place where you can cause harm to no living being.* The command is strengthened by the formula in line 7, *"by the power of this word that Jesus Himself pronounced"* (ENHG *kraft* "power"), where the performer explicitly grounds the efficacy of his words in Christ's own authority. This culminates in line 9 with the emphatic statement "*I order you this*". Comparable verbal structures appear in Old High German charms against worms:

> **Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Cod. nov. acq. lat. 229, ff. 9v–10r, *Contra uermem edentem*, 12th c.**
>
> *Ih gebiude dir, wurm.*
>
> I order you, worm.
>
> [Cianci 2004: 88–90]

> **Innsbruck, Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. med. 652, ff. 77v– 78r, *Quem vermis mordet*, 12th c.**
>
> *Wurm ich gebiute dir bi Gotes worten et Sancti Iob.*
>
> Worm, I order you, by God's words and by Saint Job.
>
> [Cianci 2004: 103–105]

Lines 10–11. *In dem namen des Vaters, des Sunus und des heyligen Geist. Amen. Dic trinies. Post hoc quinque Pater Noster et quinque Ave Maria*: these lines introduce several paratextual elements. Although the text does not indicate bodily movement or other proxemic actions, it may have been accompanied by the gesture of the sign of the Cross. The sign of the Cross was regarded as the most powerful defence against both visible and invisible dangers, in fact, as Franz pointed out, priests raised the Cross toward the clouds while pronouncing the *Wettersegen*, imitating saints who confronted thunderclouds with the crucifix. The Trinitarian formula provides the liturgical intonation shared by ecclesiastical and vernacular rites. Its presence underscores the charm's orthodoxy: the adjuration operates *in nomine Trinitatis*, the exact phrase that anchors formal benedictions *ad repellendam tempestatem* (Franz II: 51–52, 74–77, 93–94). Moreover, this invocation is expressed in German, a significant detail, as in older German charms all invocations, prayers, and instructions are usually rendered in Latin.

The second paratextual feature concerns repetition: the formula (or perhaps only the invocation) is to be spoken three times. Repetition, threefold for completeness, fivefold for the wounds of Christ, unites mechanical iteration with penitential prayer. The closing Latin prescriptions serve as practical instructions for performing the charm, reinforcing its ritual framework rather than addressing the audience. The paratextual instruction reflects the devotional framework and situates the charm within the late-medieval practical devotion rather than in a magical register (Franz II: 53–55, 76, 79, 85, 95–96).

Line 12. *Probatus est per dominum Fridericum quia cessit aura*: this closing remark is not unusual in later texts of the fifteenth century, yet it has no clear precedent in earlier German charms. It can be read as a form of *feedback* on the charm's effectiveness: an annotation intended for the performer rather than a formula meant to be spoken. In this sense, it adds a meta-textual dimension that addresses what may be called the *third stage* (after the production and the transmission), in the life of the handwritten text: its reception. In certain charms, such marginal or closing notes record either the expected outcome or an undesirable one. Statements directed to the practitioner may also be viewed as perlocutionary acts, concerned with the consequences of performing the charm. Some confirm the success of the remedy, while others function as admonitions or explicit *caveats*. Indeed, deviation from the prescribed wording or ritual procedure was often believed to nullify its efficacy (Cianci 2024: 34–37).

Comparable examples occur in older medieval German charms:

> **Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Cod. nov. acq. lat. 229, f. 9v, *Contra caducum morbum*, 12th c.**
>
> *Et mox videbis infirmum surgere sanum.*
>
> And soon you will see the sick rise up healthy.
>
> [Cianci 2024b: 44]

> **Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Cod. nov. acq. lat. 356, f. 69v, *Ad uermen, qui in caballo est*, 12th c.**
>
> *Qui caballus ad currentem aquam non bibat, nec in ulla aqua balneatur nec ullus dorso eius insideat, sed liber ab omni onere pascatur, donec omnis uermis moriatur.*
>
> *(...) Qui canem hoc medicamine iuuerit, deinceps non poterit ulli animali subuenire.*

> The horse should not drink from running water, nor bathe in any water, nor carry any burden on its back, but it is allowed to graze freely until all worms die.
>
> (...) Whoever aids a dog with this remedy will no longer be able to help any animal thereafter.
>
> [Cianci 2024b: 46]

München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm. 23374, f. 16v, *Dri guot prouder*, 13th c.

tuo nith mer, wan als hie gescriben si.

Do not repeat what is written here anymore.

[Cianci 2024b: 43]

The *probatum est* formula, common in recipe and benediction manuscripts, records empirical validation (Franz II: 100–101). Its inclusion demonstrates that the charm was performed and observed to be effective, converting textual tradition into lived ritual practice.

The linguistic texture of *Contra auram et tempestatem* reflects a long-established pattern in the transmission of German verbal charms, in which Latin and the vernacular operate side by side within the same ritual unit. Manuscript evidence from the tenth century onward consistently shows Latin used for titles, rubrics, and liturgical cues—*Ad sanguinem stagnandum*, *Contra vermem*, *Dic hoc ter*, *Post hoc quinque Pater Noster*—while operative sections, adjurative commands, and *historiolae* tend to shift into German. This bilingual configuration, already outlined by Franz and Ohrt, is strongly characteristic of the devotional-medical miscellanies that transmit many of the German *Segenssprüche*.

The present charm fits squarely into this tradition, and its linguistic structure resonates with observations I have developed in two earlier studies explicitly devoted to this issue. In *Tipologie e funzioni del titolo negli incantesimi tedeschi medievali* (Cianci 2024a), I examined the persistent use of Latin titles in German charms and argued that rubric language performs classificatory and legitimising functions even when the operative text is vernacular. In a complementary study, *Direttive per la corretta esecuzione degli incantesimi tedeschi medievali* (Cianci 2024b), I analysed the coexistence of Latin prescriptive formulas with German performative speech, showing how bilingual composition is not incidental but embedded in the ritual logic of these texts.

By the fifteenth century, this interaction between the two languages had evolved further. Latin retained its authority in scriptural quotations

and ritual instructions, yet vernacularisation increasingly affected core invocations. The German Trinitarian formula in Clm 26693, *In dem namen des Vaters, des Sunus und des heyligen Geist*, parallels developments visible in other *Segen*, where Gospel readings remain Latin, but the protective blessing itself is commonly expressed in German. *Contra auram et tempestatem* thus embodies a mature phase of this bilingual tradition, in which linguistic choice conveys both hierarchical authority and practical immediacy.

A comparable dynamic governs the closing formula *Probatus est per dominum Fridericum quia cessit aura*. Such semi-formulaic repertoire was widely attested in late-medieval medical manuscripts indicating that experiential confirmation could be linked to named practitioners or witnesses. In this respect, the mention of *dominus Fridericus* in Clm 26693 aligns with known patterns rather than diverging from them. Such clauses serve a dual function: they assert the charm's efficacy and simultaneously root it within the lived devotional environment of the community that transmitted it. Their presence highlights the charm's proximity to late-medieval *experimenta* and benedictional collections, where linguistic hybridity and claims of practical success coexist within a shared textual environment.

CONCLUSION: THE POWER OF RESTORING ORDER

Contra auram et tempestatem thus appears as a vernacular condensation of the canonical weather blessing, aligning the spoken command *Ste weter* with Christ's own authoritative word in John 18:6. Its theological background, syntax, and ritual logic all conform to the *continuum* from a long theological and ritual evolution, from early *Benedictiones ad fulgura* to the fifteenth-century *Wettersegen*[7] (Franz II: 49–104). It combines the *historiola* of Christ's arrest with the adjurative syntax of charms, showing the permeability between learned liturgy and popular performance.

The analysis conducted here has shown that *Contra auram et tempestatem* stands at a productive intersection between learned liturgical models and vernacular adjuration. The charm's bilingual composition, its reliance on the Johannine *historiola*, and its use of performative imperatives reveal a carefully calibrated structure that adapts authoritative Christian speech to the pragmatic needs of weather protection. Examined through the lens of its research questions, the charm illustrates how fifteenth-century practitioners managed the coexistence of Latin

ritual heritage and an increasingly vernacular devotional environment. Moreover, the closing validation *Probatus est per dominum Fridericum* highlights the social afterlife of such texts: a stage in which efficacy becomes a matter not only of formula but of recorded experience and communal trust. In this sense, the *Contra auram et tempestatem* is more than a peripheral survival of weather magic, but a witness to the ongoing medieval conviction that the divine word, when uttered in faith, could restore order to creation.

NOTES

[1] Medieval *ordo* books distinguish between preventive and emergency rites against storms. For example, the aforementioned *Preces ad repellandam tempestatem* was accompanied by Psalm 147 and liturgical petitions, and it affirmed divine sovereignty over the elements (see *Rituale Romanum* IX). The ordinary rite opened with the Gospel of St John or an invocation to all the saints, while the so-called "emergency rite" was usually associated with the ringing of bells, which, accompanied by the inscription *"A fulgure et tempestate libera nos, Domine"*, were believed to disperse demonic forces through sound. These gestures, these liturgical and popular actions intended to avert storm damage, far from magical, were seen as concrete extensions of the Church's intercessory power. Such rites exemplify the same performative logic that underlies vernacular adjurations like *Contra auram et tempestatem*: a spoken act meant to re-establish cosmic and moral order through words of command and blessing (Franz 1909 II: 37–40, HwdA 9: 508, Weger and Hölzl 2007: 49–51).

[2] It was also widely believed that specific individuals could negatively influence the weather, a conviction reflected in many legal prohibitions and inquisitorial proceedings. The figure of the *tempestarius* reappears in early medieval sources as one accused of conjuring storms, while later manuals such as the *Malleus Maleficarum* promoted by Pope Innocent VIII (1432–1492) intensified this accusation by equating weather manipulation with demonic witchcraft. The resulting persecution culminated in increasingly severe penalties for alleged witches, accused above all of raising hail or storms (Weger-Hölzl 2007: 44–47). As Monica Blöcker has shown, medieval *Wetterzauber* was not primarily maleficent but apotropaic: rather than causing harm, it sought to avert damage from hail or tempest. Her analysis of early medieval sources demonstrates how ecclesiastical prohibitions, such as those against the *tempestarii*, the "storm-makers" condemned in penitentials and Carolingian capitularies, coexisted with popular protective rites. The same tension between dogmatic prohibition and popular resilience continued well into the later Middle Ages. (Blöcker 1981: 128–131).

[3] In German folklore and liturgical culture, scholars distinguish *Wettersegen* "weather blessing" from *Wetterzauber* "weather magic", though the boundaries between the two remain fluid. Moreover, amuletic *Wettersegen*, plaques containing relics and spiral inscriptions, represent a form of popular devotional syncretism and were widespread especially in rural Bavaria and the Alpine regions (Brauneck 1979; Kürzeder 2005; Kürzeder and Schulz 1998).

[4] A more detailed analysis of its content and script is provided in Cianci 2011: 259–264.

[5] Franz notes that the medieval imagination perceived the *aer caliginosus* "dark air" as the locus of atmospheric disturbance, a notion that shaped both learned meteorology and the composition of protective blessings (Franz 1909 II: 24).

[6] In the manuscript there is also the Bavarian variant: *beter* (More details on palaeographic and linguistic features of this charm can be found in Cianci 2011: 269–270).

[7] Franz records the growing ecclesiastical reaction against exuberant or superstitious weather formulas, culminating in the simplified ritual models of Würzburg (1482), Augsburg (1487), and Passau (1490), which retained only Gospel readings and a few prayers. Despite bans from both Church and state, vernacular *Wettersegen* continued to circulate in Bavaria into the early seventeenth century (Franz 1909 II: 63–66).

REFERENCES

Benati, Chiara. 2017. À la guerre comme à guerre but with caution. Protection Charms in Medieval Europe. *Brathair: Journal of Celtic and Germanic Studies* 17 (1): 155–191.

Blöcker, Monica. 1981. Wetterzauber. *Francia* 9: 117–131.

Brauneck, Manfred. 1979. *Religiöse Volkskunst*. Köln: DuMont.

Cianci, Eleonora. 2004. *Incantesimi e benedizioni nella letteratura tedesca medievale (IX–XIII sec.)*. Göppingen: Kümmerle.

Cianci, Eleonora. 2011. 'Contra auram et tempestatem'. Edizione e analisi di un incantesimo bavarese del XV sec. In *Il tedesco superiore. Tradizione scritta e varietà parlate*, a cura di Elisabetta Fazzini. Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso: 257–276.

Cianci, Eleonora. 2024a. Tipologie e funzioni del titolo negli incantesimi tedeschi medievali. In *Rappresentazioni e linguaggi della magia*, a cura di Eleonora Cianci. Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso: 11–23.

Cianci, Eleonora. 2024b. Direttive per la corretta esecuzione degli incantesimi tedeschi medievali. In *Rappresentazioni e linguaggi della magia*, a cura di Eleonora Cianci. Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso: 25–47.

Franz, Adolf. 1909. *Die kirchlichen Benediktionen im Mittelalter*. Vol. II, Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder.

Halm, Karl Felix, and Meyer, Wilhelm. 1969 (first published 1881). *Catalogus codicum latinorum Bibliothecae Regiae Monacensis,* II/IV. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

HwdA. Bächtold-Stäubli, Hanns. 2000 (first published 1927–1942). *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens*. 10 vols. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter.

Kürzeder, Christoph. 2005. *Als die Dinge heilig waren.* Regensburg: Schnell und Steiner.

Kürzeder, Christoph, and Andrea Schulz. 1998. Der Wettersegen. *Freundeskreisblätter* 37: 166–188.

Lohmann, Theodor. 1960. Petrus und der Wettergott. *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 12, Nr. 2: 112–136.

Ohrt, Ferdinand. 1927. Beiträge zur Segenforschung. *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 37: 1–9.

Ohrt, Ferdinand. 1929. Fluchtafel und Wettersegen. *Folklore Fellows Communications* 86: 3–16.

Rituale Romanum Pauli V. 1614. *Titulus IX. De Processione tempore tempestatis.* Romae: Typis Vaticanis.

Digital facsimile at: https://www.liturgia.it/content/ritrom.pdf
Roper, Jonathan. 2003. Towards a Poetics, Rhetorics and Proxemics of Verbal Charms. *Folklore* 24: 7–49.
Schenk, Gerrit J. 2010. Dis-astri. Modelli interpretativi delle calamità naturali dal Medioevo al Rinascimento. In *Le calamità ambientali nel tardo medioevo europeo: realtà, percezioni, reazioni. Atti del XII convegno del Centro di Studi sulla civiltà del tardo Medioevo S. Miniato, 31 maggio – 2 giugno 2008,* a cura di Michael Matheus et. al. Firenze: University Press: 23–76.
Schönbach, Anton E. 1873. Segen aus Grazer Handschriften. *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum* 18: 79.
Schönbach, Anton E. 1893. Eine Auslese altdeutscher Segensformeln. In *Analecta Graeciensia, Festschrift zur 42. Versammlung deutscher Philologen und Schulmänner in Wien 1893 von Professore der K.K. Karl Franzen Universität Graz*. Graz: Verlagsbuchhandlung Styria: 25–50.
Weger, Siegfried, and Hölzl, Reinhard. 2007. *Geheimnisvolles Tirol*. Innsbruck: Loewenzahn.

BIO

Eleonora Cianci is Associate Professor of Germanic Philology at the University "G. d'Annunzio" Chieti–Pescara (Italy). Her research focuses on medieval German charms, with special attention to their transmission in monastic manuscript culture between the ninth and fifteenth centuries. She is a member of the ISFNR Committee on Charms, Charmers and Charming, and serves on the editorial board of *Incantatio*. Her recent work explores the intersections between liturgy and vernacular ritual, as well as the interplay between Latin and German in early medieval textual practices.