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Charms, Charmers and Charming

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INTRODUCTION

This journal issue comprises several parts and presents various studies on the theme of activities in charming and related fields. It includes five research articles, an interview and reports on books and conferences. It is largely based on and thematically framed by the conference "The Canonical and Non-Canonical in Charming Texts and Practices", held at the National Library of Latvia in Riga on 6–9 September 2022. The conference was organised by the Archives of Latvian Folklore (a structural unit of the Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art at the University of Latvia) and the ISFNR Committee on Charms, Charmers and Charming; it aimed to reveal various canonical and non-canonical values in texts and practices through personal, social, political and even economic relationships and contexts. However, it also contains articles not presented at the conference as well as an interview with a researcher studying charming; such interviews are becoming a tradition for *Incantatio*.

Historically, the texts and performance of charms have been influenced by official religion, conventional medicine and the political position of the state at different times while being channelled through the individual interpretations of users and performers embedded in traditions, which have a regional and local linguistic and cultural character. Simultaneously, they have a transnational nature, evidenced by the migration of societies and knowledge in the past and present. The charming tradition stands equally on two pillars – religion and medicine – each with its own path of development that has shaped and enriched vernacular charming practices.

Previous centuries have been highly stratifying, dividing societies into high and low culture as well as divisions based on social status, language, and right and wrong practices, thus impacting popular culture and traditions. On the one hand, canons are framed in theoretical frameworks, which in turn are rooted in a particular time and cultural context, while folk traditions, which are not canonical but involve inevitable deviation from the canon or variation, take their cues from the

canon as a culturally superior form and tend to follow it. In folk traditions, the canon of religion or practices and remedies of conventional medicine adapted by the folk have been simplified and modified. In usage by the folk, past forms are preserved for a longer time, whereas changes and developments in conventional medicine and official religion are more rapid (Lielbārdis 2024: 255–256). This leads to a mutual imbalance between academic knowledge, science or canon and tradition, both in the past and the present day.

This clash has been based on the values of different cultures, religions, ethnic groups, and even economic considerations. At the same time, the antagonism between these values has enriched tradition, whether it manifests itself as the opposition between the official religion and the folk (Yoder 1974; Thomas 1971) or vernacular religion (Primiano 1995), permitted and forbidden medicine, folk medical systems (Santino 1985: 153), or proper and "wrong" texts and practices, among others, taking into account individual religious experience and interpretation (Bowman and Valk 2014: 4). Priests, monks and educated doctors have fought for the right to heal the people; church canons, prayers and the cult of saints have influenced folk religion; the development of conventional medicine has changed vernacular traditions; and local conditions have determined the regional peculiarities of the official religion and conventional medicine.

This issue of the journal does not fully reflect the diversity of the conference's theme and presentations, but the published articles do provide insights into the subject. Among these are Laura Jiga Iliescu's article "The Tale of the God as a Prayer, a Charm, a Fairytale: Considerations and Multiple Generic Appurtenances" and Daiva Vaitkevičienė's article "Verbal Charm vs. Prayer: An Emic Approach to the Lithuanian Terminology". Both authors focus on the use of the terms 'charm' and 'prayer' concerning the content, context and functionality of a text, using sources and analysing material from Romanian and Lithuanian folklore, respectively.

The third article to reflect on the conference is Jonathan Roper's "Chugg's Charms: Authenticity, Typicality and Sources", in which the author addresses the question of the authenticity of charms collected in Devon, England in the early twentieth century. The article reflects the work of a detective to highlight questions related to the reliability of orally-collected data and text rendition in literature.

Although not presented at the conference, the historical and contemporary comparison of folk beliefs is touched on in Reet Hiiemäe's paper

"Verbal Magic in Contemporary Women's Narratives about Nightmare Experiences in Estonia", which analyses narratives about nightmares from a woman's perspective. This publication fits Hiiemäe's research interests in contemporary spirituality and folk beliefs in modern Estonia (Hiiemäe 2017; 2019).

Eva Toulouze's article "Stability and Change in the Udmurt Kuris'kon Prayers" also addresses the terminology and use of prayer in the Udmurt religion in Bashkortostan. This article is a follow-up to a study published in the previous issue of *Incantatio* on the texts and ways in which the Udmurts address their gods (Toulouze 2023). Both articles reveal Toulouze's deep interest in and knowledge of the Finno-Ugric peoples and their fates, languages and cultures in the modern Russian Federation, and also on the subject of Russia's war in Ukraine.

The research articles are followed by an interview with Emanuela Timotin, the chair of the Committee on Charms, Charmers and Charming. This interview, conducted by Jonathan Roper, follows other conversations in previous issues of *Incantatio* with key figures and researchers in charm studies, and Timotin is undoubtedly one such figure. The interview covers her personal experience, her interest in the charm genre, and research challenges.

Two book reviews follow the interview. The first is by charm researcher Lea Olsen on *The Language of Magic*, edited by Eleonora Cianci and Nicholas Wolf (Cianci, Wolf 2022). The second is provided by the researcher of Latvian charms and Soviet folklore Toms Ķencis, on the study *Latvian Charms: Texts, Traditions, Contexts* (Lielbārdis 2024), which is in Latvian but has an extensive introduction and conclusion in English.

This issue of *Incantatio* concludes with a look at conferences. The first report is by Jonathan Roper on the Committee on Charms, Charmers and Charming annual conference "The Materiality and Performance of Charms", held from 29 August to 1 September 2023 in Singapore. Eleonora Cianci has an overview of the Committee on Charms, Charmers and Charming 16th annual conference "Conflicts and Catastrophes", which took place on 12–15 June 2024 in Helsinki, Finland. Swedish charm researcher Alessandra Mastrangelo reports on "The Magical Turn? Room for Nordic Doctoral Students" symposium, which was held on 11–12 April 2024 in Uppsala, Sweden, and is considered essential for charm research, which is a part of folklore studies.

In preparing this issue, I express my gratitude to Committee on Charms, Charmers and Charming chair Emanuela Timotin and vice-

chair Jonathan Roper for their advice, and a special thanks to Estonian charms researcher Mare Kõiva for her support and management of *Incantatio*. I also thank the authors of all the articles and reviews for their qualitative research and kind communication during the compilation of the issue. And a heartfelt thank you to the reviewers, who play an essential role in maintaining the quality of research publications yet remain largely unknown, in the shadows of the authors. My work as editor of this issue was supported by the basic budgeted subprogramme 05.04.00, "The Krišjānis Barons Cabinet of Folksongs" of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia.

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THE *TALE OF GOD* AS A PRAYER, A CHARM, A FAIRYTALE. CONSIDERATIONS ON A MULTIPLE GENERIC APPURTENANCE.

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Abstract: The goal of this article is to epistemologically discuss the couple "folk prayer" and "charm" in the specific case of the narrative incantations whose main protagonist is a holy figure. In this regard, I have chosen a certain structure known among Romanians as "The Tale of God", "The Mother of God prayer" or "The Mother of God charm", which agglutinates episodes from Virgin Mary cycle of apocrypha legends together with images that depict scenes of divination and bibliomancy performed in a consecrated but uncommon space (e.g., a church with nine altars). The text also presents structural and functional similarities with the "Dream of the Mother of God", especially as respects the Passions disclosure and the formalized ending demands for ritual delivering the 'story' under certain conditions of time, space and performance.

In the beginning, the analysis focuses on those aspects that predispose this prayer to embed references to charming incantations and practices, as well. Then, based on ethnographic references, the discussion goes towards the process of putting the 'prayer' in practice within a story telling event which, at its turn, is assigned with devotional purposes and magic finalities.

In the end, emic terms of 'faith' and 'emotion' are taken into consideration as pertinent parameters to (self)evaluating of faith, sacred communication and expectations that go beyond both theological and ethnological etic distinctions.

Keywords: folk prayer, narrative charm, fairytale, storytelling, Mother of God, Romanian folklore

The Holy Mary's presence in Christian incantations is not uncommon: either her name occurs in the final wording formula (*The charm is from me, the cure / remedy is from Mother of God*[1]), or she appears as a character directly involved in the very curative performance (she teaches the charmer – sometime even indicating her/his concrete name in the *real* life; she performs by herself the action of washing/purifying the victim of the pathogen agents), the entire charming act is placed by the very people who use it and trust in its efficiency under Mother of God protection and benefic power. In the meantime, her strong worship and presence in prayers contaminates these charms with religious meanings.

Among the Romanian corpus of narrative charms especially performed for curative and for beauty purposes, a well-represented category consists in structures that analogically describe a victim as walking on a path, then being attacked by evil agents who disturb his/her state of healthy or of beauty, then crying and lamenting, then being heard by the Mother of God who descend from the heaven and restores the situation and the human being equilibrium. But in this article, I have chosen to explore a contrasting image, that depicts Mother of God herself as a walking figure who, at her turn, deeply laments on her path, where she encounters different characters that, depending on how they behave, benefit from her blessing and protection, or, on the contrary, become victims of her vindictive authority. The scenery is specific to a narrative structure known among Romanians as "The Tale of God/Christ" (*Povestea lui Dumnezeu*), "The Tale of the Mother of God", "The prayer of the Mother of God" (*Rugăciunea Maicii Domnului*) or "The incantation of the Mother of God" (*Descântecul Maicii Domnului*). The narrative, whose major event is represented by Jesus's Passions, iterates the almost universal theme of the mother in search of her lost child.

My analysis is based on a corpus of 48 Romanian oral variants recorded all over the country dominantly from rural milieu. Their majority comes from the period between the end of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, whereas a few of them have been recorded at the beginning of the 21st century, when its circulation already decreased (I myself recorded a fragment in 2016 from a village woman, 67 years old, Orthodox Christian confession[2]). Having a strong religious subject, it was difficult to be recorded during the atheistic communist regime, so the poor presence of *Tale of God* in anthologies and folk archives during the second half of the 20th century is not representative for its circulation in genuine contexts. Thirty-three of the variants are long versified texts (around 400 lines), while those in prose still contain

versified fragments. Stylistic and lexical elements of its first part (the text's composition will be detailed below) suggest clerical and scholarly influences.

•

Unlike the canonical Gospels, among which John explicitly suggests Mary's presence at the feet of the Calvary cross – "Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!" (John, 19:25–26) –, the text I deal with here actuates an apocryphal tradition according to which she wasn't there and that she only *post factum* learned about the Passions from the witnesses she met on her wandering journey or from those who, at their turn, heard what happened.

Within these frames, the *Tale of God* agglutinates and recontextualized medieval hagiographies and folk legends of Virgin Mary: during her journey, she blessed the blacksmith because the nails he made for Jesus crucifixion were light and thin[3]; she cursed the carpenter because the cross made by him was heavy; she encountered and blessed the frog who wasn't aware about the Passion event, but, once learning about it from Mother of God, solaced her and made her laugh; some variants narrates her encounter with the male lark, the single bird who can tell about her son; she blessed the willow (because the willow felt compassion for Mary's sorrow) and cursed the walnut, or other trees; her tears turned to basil or to holy myrrh or to golden apple or to bees, the field turned green while she stepped. Her journey is marked by grief and Mother of God is hypostatized as a mourner, "crying and sobbing, / Scratching her white face, / Unbraiding her blonde hair" (Marian 2003: 123). Some variants recount that, full of despair, she intended to commit suicide, but the entire nature opposed to this attempt (she climbed a peak in order to pierce her heart, but the mountain melted to wax and then harden to gold/stone; she wanted to drown herself into de sea, but the water split). At the end of the journey, she reaches Pilate's court – some variants speak about Jerusalem or Jordan River –, where she "kicked the gate with her left foot / and the gate turned close / She kicked the gate with her right foot / and the gate opened". Here she found Jesus on the cross, and they have a dialogue which presents stylistic and lexical similarities with the dialogue embedded by another apocrypha

whose written and oral circulation was (and still is) vivid, namely the Dream of Mother of God: Mary asks why He agreed to be crucified and Christ confessed His sacrifice was on behalf of the humankind. Eight variants contain the peculiar detail that when seeing Holy Mary, Jesus laughed and divulged that they are in the heaven: in other words, not only spiritually, but also corporeally she entered God's kingdom, an idea in concordance with the "centuries-old belief that Mary is in heaven, which is why people can pray to her. She is the intercessor, who prays for people and mediates for them to God" (Vuola 2019: 28).

By and large, variants of this legend are known among South-East Christian people. The vitality of the Tale of the Mother of God in searching her son among Romanians until the first part of the 20th century was remarkable.

For a better introduction in the issues the article will debate, allow me to reproduce one variant in the left colon of the table below, and also to point to other versions – transcribed with italics in the middle and on the right colons –, so as to catch more details provided by the integral corpus of texts.

There was a big man	There went Holy Great Mary
And he took a big axe	
And went to the big forest/And cut a big wood	
And made a big monastery.	With nine doors/With nine altars.
In the smallest altar/There is sitting the Holy Small Mary,	
In the biggest altar/There is sitting the Holy Big Mary.	
And she reads/And continuously reads,	
And she can read and see all the sons in the world	
Except her son/The God's son,	
She can't read/And see.	
Realizing that she cannot read him	

<table>
<tr><td>And that she cannot see him</td><td rowspan="2">But she couldn't see her son/And God's./ She couldn't see/The Lord of the sky/ And of the earth,/But she saw John,/ Saint John,/The God's godfather/And asked him:
– John/Saint John!/Haven't you see,/ Haven't you heard/About your godson,/ About my son,/And God's,/ The lord of the heaven/And of the hearth?/ Because as much I was looking for him/I didn't see him anywhere.
– To see, I didn't see him/to hear,/I heard that/The Jews,/The pagans/Caught him/ And tortured him/And then crucified him/ At Pilate's gate/On a big fir cross.
When Mother of God heard this (…)/She turned deeply grieved/And went away crying/Lamenting,/Wringing her hands,/ Scratching her white face/With flowing tears from black eyes/Sighing heartily,/ Walking on the path,/Looking for our Lord Christ (Marian 2003: 207)</td></tr>
<tr><td>She went/On a high and sharp mountain</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">As sharp as the blade of a knife/All crying and lamenting,</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">With tears flowing from black eyes/ Scratching her white face,</td></tr>
<tr><td>Unbraiding yellow hair,/Looking for her son.</td><td>While she went on the field/With a walking stick in her hand,/The meadows turned green,/The birds started singing,/Her tears/were gushing out on the ground/And turned to golden apples (Marian 2003: 157).</td></tr>
<tr><td>And she walked/Until the sun went down.</td><td>And she reached the Final Stone,/To end her life,/To no live any longer./But as the Stone realized what she wanted/It suddenly melted like the wax/And then hardened like the ice (the gold)/And she couldn't kill herself.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">And while she was walking/She met a famous carpenter</td></tr>
</table>

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">[Here are the three encounters with the carpenter, the ironsmith and the frog. The Calvary is described through their dialogue.]</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">And she kept walking</td></tr>
<tr><td>Until she reached the Jordan's gate</td><td>The Pilate's gate (Marian 2003: 153)

The city of Jerusalem (Marian 2003: 186)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">And she kicked the gate with her left foot/and the gate didn't open.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">She kicked the gate with her right foot/and the gate opened.</td></tr>
<tr><td>And as she entered/She saw her son</td><td>[As she entered] The holy Lord won/And resurrected. And he laughed:
–Neither fairy bird/Or earthly human's soul/Entered here,/But you, my beloved Mother,/I see you came by yourself,/ With your soul,/With your body (Marian 2003:192).</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Tormented and crucified.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">And she asked:</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">– Oh, my son,/My beloved son!/Why did you let yourself be caught</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">By the pagans</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Who tortured you/And crucified you?</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">– Oh, my mother,/My beloved!</td></tr>
<tr><td>I did let myself be tortured</td><td rowspan="4">Since they tortured me/And crucified me,/The springs spring up/The meadows grass,/The mothers take care of their children,/The cows take care of the calves,/ The sheep take care of the lambs (Marian 2003:153).</td></tr>
<tr><td>Neither for me,/Or for you</td></tr>
<tr><td>But I did let myself be tortured</td></tr>
<tr><td>For the entire world (...). (Marian 2003:138)[4]</td></tr>
</table>

> The text is composed by two parts: the above quoted narrative is joined by a final formula: "And the one who listened / And learned / These words / And will say them / In the evening at the bedtime / And in the morning at the weak-up time, / Each week, / Each month, / Each half a year / And each year, / I will take that one / By the right hand / And will lead him(her) / On the right path / To bright houses, / To settled tables / To lit torches / To full glasses / Where the right ones rest.
>
> But the one who know them / And won't say them / In the evening at the bedtime / And in the morning at the weak-up time, / washing his(her) face / Each week, / Each month, / Each half a year / And each year, / I will take that one / By the left hand / And will take him(her) / On the crooked path / To unlit houses / To cleared tables / And to extinguished torches, / To empty glasses / To the hell of cold / Where the worm never sleep. / There will he(she) live / There will he(she) live forever." (Marian 2003: 120)[5]

The story may be contextualized in lineages with the Byzantine medieval Virgin Mary's Weeping Songs, "a lengthy non-ecclesiastical medieval rhymed poem possible of scholarly origin" (Karpodini-Dimitriadi 1977), and with the medieval group of Passions Plays, at their turn related to the Greek Gesta Pilati B, composed "not later than the 5th century. Here, already, are many of the principal features of the latter lamentations: John announces to Mary the seizure of Christ; they sat out with the other Marys to go to him; Mary laments and calls upon the people to join on her grief; she sees Christ on the cross and begs to be allowed to die with him; she addresses the cross, entreating it to bow down so that she can embrace Christ; Jews drive the mourners away; Mary laments that she cannot see Christ's face again, and asks women to weep with her" (Brooks 1901: 415). Except John announcing Virgin Mary about Christ's seizure, other episodes are not included into the Romanian variants of the story, which depict Mary as walking alone. Secondly, *The Tale of God* doesn't contain any lament, but depicts Mother of God in the stereotyped posture of the women when they ritually lament in real funeral contexts: she is "howling in pain / crying and roaring / tearing yellow hair / with the tears down to the ground / with the voice up to the sky."

At the epic level, similarities between the Romanian *Tale of God* and the ancient myth of Demeter and Persefone, as narrated within the Homeric hymns, probably delivered among Romanian and Balkans

areas through Byzantine channels, have been underlined by Andrei Timotin, who also suggests they interfered with local oral traditions (Timotin 1999: 91–92): Kora's abduction in the inferno vs. Jesus's crucifixion and descent to the hell; Demeter's despair and her wondering searching vs. Mary's despair and wondering searching; the encounter with a hilarious character, who makes both mothers to laugh; the two mothers found their child. To the already identified narrative similarities, there can be added the image of the turning green meadow as Mother of God is walking on it and contaminates it with her numinous power.

Even if of interests, the filiations of the Romanian narrative about Mother of God (or a *mother*) searching her lost son within the European and larger Christian tradition exceeds the topic of the present article, whose interest goes to another issue, namely the multiple generic appurtenance of the *Tale of God,* whose composition, images, formulas, and ritualized performances endowed it with incantation features that points both to folk prayer's and to charm's markers. The first goal is to underline them, one by one.

TEXTUAL OCCURENCES

First of all, there can be identified small verbal images and formulas shared by distinct genres, so that the occurrence of such structure in a text that dominantly belongs to a certain genre induces to the respective text, at least evocatively, features and functions conventionally assigned to the other genres in which that verbal structure can be contextualized. In this regard, we may speak about inter-generic intertextuality that affects the *Tale of God* meanings. Here are two examples:

1) *There was a big man / With a big axe / Who entered the big forest / And cut a big wood*. The same incipit, whose presence is almost general for the versified version of the *Tale of God,* is common to some therapeutic (e. g. for erysipelas, epilepsy) and protective incantations, such this one recorded in Moldavia (a region where *Mother of God in searching her son* was well attested): "There went a big man / To the big forest / With a big axe / To cut a big wood / To make a big plow"[6] (Gorovei 1990: 257). The charm continues with a different narrative scenario, but the shared opening words induces mutual interferences concerning the generic appurtenance of the two texts: the very charm is enhanced by those who say and by those who listen to it with the numinous power of *Tale of God* and the authority of its characters, on

the one hand, and the *Tale of God* is drawn in the charming category performed for therapeutic reasons.

2) *And he made a big church / With nine doors, / With nine altars*. Similar shrine is described by Romanian Christmas ritual songs (Ro. *colinde*) as the sacred space for foundation the Christian age marked by the very presence of the Mother of God. "A monastery with nine altars / With the doors facing the sea [...] / Who sings the holy mass / In the biggest altar? / There sings a God and a Lord. / But who listens to? / There is the Holy Mother / With an infant son in her arms"[7] (Viciu 1913: 54). There is to add that, indeed, short versions of the *Tale of God* were sung on Christmas Eve.

RITUAL SIMILARITIES: DIVINATION READING

Secondly, the *Tale of God* contains sequences that allude to extra-textual rituals which, considering their effectiveness, resonate with the magic sphere, but that are part of the vernacular corpus of religious practices, as well.

The oldest representation of Virgin Mary spinning in the Temple when Angel came to announce her that she was chosen to become Christ's mother (5th century) was gradually replace, starting with the 13th century, in Western Europe with that of reading Mary, while the Easter Christianity preserved and used both models[8].

As a high priestess and as the "mother of the Christian church, a familiar idea within the orthodox Christianity" (Ispas 1998: 117) who officiates a religious service inside the consecrated space of an unusual church with nine doors and nine altars (probable rooted in the figurative image of the Holy of the Holiest Temple; see Kateusz 2020: 24). Virgin Mary is depicted in Romanian Christmas ritual songs: "There is a white monastery / With nine altars. / Who sings the holy mass? / There is the holy Mother the one who sings it"[9] (Viciu 1913: 39). We can suppose that here she is singing by the Gospel book. Yet, the reading event, as it is presented in the *Tale of God*, is not a liturgical mass but a divination one:

> *And she reads* / *She continuously reads* /And she can read and see all the sons in the world, / Only one of them, / Only her son / And God's / She can't read / And see.

According to another variant in which the ritual preparations are more obvious,

> Holy Immaculate Mother / Woke up in the morning, / Washed her white face / Combed her yellow hair, / Worshiped God, / Entered the monastery / Took the book in her hands / And searched in the book / Searched around, / To see her son / And God's. / And she saw all the bugs / And all the insects, / But she didn't see anyone from the humankind, / Except John, / Saint John, / God's godfather. / And when she saw him, / She recognized him. (Marian 2003: 121)

Through ritual preparations and ceaseless ("She read/and keeps reading"[10]), almost ecstatic reading, Mary aims to access other spaces and times than the ones where the concrete reading process takes place. In some variants she manages to see St. John, as the agent who makes her aware about the event the son she was looking for already went through, while in other variants she fails in seeing either John or Jesus, so she has to undertake her concrete journey.

Still, Mother of God owns clairvoyant abilities mediated by ritual reading, as she is described in a group of charms, where her vigilance goes towards the evil spirits:

> „Against all diseases
> Big Ustur[11] and Immaculate Mother / On a high mountain. / She seeks in the book, / She seeks around / She seeks all around, / For where should see / Nine evil spirits, / With nine little bad dogs, / Nine she-wolves / With nine bad wolves. / Mother of God shouted / Loudly: / You, don't spoil him, / Don't sting him, / Don't stab him, / But take all the twinges, / All the stabs / And take them away / To the Galar hill [...]"[12] (Recorded in North Moldavia, Romania; Gorovei 1990: 250).

Combined effects of intertextuality and ritual similarity between the *Tale…* and those performed in extra-textual contexts reinforce intergenres fluidity. For example, a therapeutic incantation whose incipit mentions the famous *anargyroi* physicians Cosmas and Damian, consists in a reiteration of the *Tale of God* opening formula – here explicitly designated as a charm – and of its divination fragment:

> The big counting:
> Amen, Amen, / Cosmas of amen[13]. / The healers of God. / The Holy Mother's charm […]

> There went a big man, / With a big axe, / In a big forest, / With nine windows [sic!] / With nine little windows, / With nine gratings, / With nine little gratings, / With nine doors, / With nine altars, / With nine little altars.
>
> Holy Mary / The mother of God came / And entered the church, / Set on a golden chair, / Set at a golden table, / Found a big golden book, / Found a middle golden book, / Found a small golden book. / Mother of God sought in the golden books, / And found all the saints, / In which part of the world they were. / She only didn't find / Her and our son.
>
> And she went away, / Crying and sighing / As the water sources cry. / She went on the way, / and where she stepped / The field turned green.[14] (Gorovei 1990: 286–287)

The episode of Passions is missing from this charm, while the emphasis is on the curative water directly related with the Mother of God power to purify and to fertilize the earth, an image that through analogy aims to restore the healthy state and the patient's vitality.

The textual topos of divination is articulated with the very divination function assigned to the text's wording, which may be defined as a *performancy* event (Jiga Iliescu 2022: 153): "The words of this variant [recorded in the Western Romania, LJ. I.] are recited at the bed of a moribund by someone who knows them by heart. If the reciter stumbles or mistakes, then it is believed that the patient will die; but if he/she recites fluently, then it is believed that the patient will recover" (Marian 2003: 259).

CLOSING FORMULA, PERFORMANCE AND MORE GENERIC CONVERGENCES

The presence of the closing formula brings the *Tale of God* closer to the category named by Zsuzsanna Erdélyi "archaic prayers" (apud Kapalo 2011: 85–86), where the term "archaic" is justified by their origin in the apocryphal religious literature of medieval Europe. Disclaimed by official hierarchy of the Church (because of their apocryphal origin and also because of their magic, mechanistic manipulation potential expresses by the benefits to be gained by the simple reciting/copying the story), yet more or less avowed by local priests until modern times, they were involved in devotional practices as part of vernacular religiosity. Mostly autonomous units deeply involved in creating what Haralam-

pos Passalis identified as the fluid space between the narrative and the performative context (Passalis 2011: 49), the "junctional passage connecting the text with the processes of its reiterations and actuation (Jiga Iliescu 2020: 145), closing formulas demand for the text's performance (Jiga Iliescu 2020).

At the rhetorical level, neither the narrative part of the texts or the formulas contain verbal structures that express „pleading, begging or requesting" (Kapalo 2011:91) directly addressed to a divine authority, as it happen in consecrated prayer. Consequently, none personal request is explicitly made. Instead, closing formulas assert good or negative consequences conditioned by the compliance or, on the contrary, the non-compliance with the demand to perform the text.

In comparison with other texts in this category – among Romanian *The Legend of the Sunday, The Dream of the Mother of God* are the most known –, whose closing formulas are cumulative and open, and can migrate from a text to another especially because the benefits are almost the same (remission of sins, protection against enemies, diseases and calamities, the alleviation of suffering or final salvation, etc.), irrespective of the content of the very text they are attached to, in the case of *The Tale of God* the closing formula is unique and it strictly refers to the psychopomp role assigned to Mother of God/of Jesus, a role which is mediated – and conditioned – by the ritual performance of telling the story under given circumstances of purity and of time.

The next step of my investigation aims to get a closer understanding of a possible intrinsic connection between the two parts of the Mother of God's prayer/incantation. We remember that

> [T]*he one who says the story* / *will be taken by the Mother of God* / *On the right path* / *To the laid tables* / *with lighting candles,* / *with filled glasses,* etc.
>
> On the contrary, [*T*]*he one who won't say the story* / *I* [Mother of God or Christ] *will take her* [or him] / *By the left hand* / *And will lead him* [or her] / *On the crooked path* / *To unlit houses* / *To cleared tables* / *And to extinguished torches,* / *To empty glasses,* etc.

Within the Romanian corpus of funerary ritual songs (all performed by women) the one entitled *Of the Journey*[15] guides the individual traveller soul to the *good* realm, which is described through similar formalized verbal images – "laid tables, / lighting candles, / filled glasses" – as a space of light and communication through commensality. This coinci-

dence contaminates the very *Tale of God* with funerary meanings and restates the psychopomp role assigned to Mother of God. In this regard it is relevant to underline the interesting correspondence between the women who sing and lament within the frames of the burial ritual, the same women who word or maybe sing the *Tale of Mother of God,* and the mourning posture of Mother of God herself, at her turn a traveller from mundane to numinous, mythic register of the world, like the soul of the deceased is. We remember those variants in which she is depicted in the heaven together with his found Son. Hence, being able to move between worlds, the psychopomp role of Mother of God – who paradigmatically embody all lamenter women – is justified and, not the least, the connection between the narrative part and the closing formula of the *Tale....* is made. Speaking about Orthodox Karelian tradition of Mother of God's peregrination to find Christ, Lotte Tarkka mentioned a similar situation: "The search by the Virgin for her child is the only example in the epic tradition of an active journey by a woman to the otherworld" (Tarkka 1994: 279, apud Vuola 2019: 149).

SAYING THE TALE OF GOD

Among Romanians, the *Tale of God* did not circulate in written form, either as medieval manuscripts or as later printed editions (at least according to my knowledge), as happened with the *Legend of the Sunday* (first attestation in the 16th century) and the *Dream of the Mother of God* (attested in the 18th century)[16]. Neither the demands for copying the text as a guarantee for its promises, or for keeping the written artifact as an amulet is included in its final part. The request is to *say* the story, either in solitude or for an audience. And to *say* the *Tale of God* supposes to word its final formula, as well hence to reinforce its efficiency. However, not all the reasons for ritually telling the story are expressed by the closing part, but there have been recorded local developments that, indirectly, enrich the meanings of the very story. For example, "people from Maramureș believe that the shepherd who will say this tale each evening and each morning, since the sheep mate until they deliver, among his lambs there will be a fairy one, who will step all the time in front of the sheep. It is to be underlined that the fairy lamb will be known only by the shepherd who said *the prayer* (sic!), namely The Tale of the Immaculate Mother. That lamb will reveal to the shepherd all dangers the sheep will be exposed to during that year and many other important things it will reveal to him, but only at

the crowing time of the Christmas and Easter nights, when the sky is open" [17] (Marian 2003: 267). A similar tradition was recorded in South East Romania, Brăila region: "if someone continuously says the Tale of God for 40 days, each evening, one of his sheep will deliver two golden lambs" (Bîrlea, 1981: 140).

Some variants of the *Tale of God* explicitly express the preponderance (but not the exclusiveness) of women as story tellers:

> "Holy Mother (…) gave them an advice, / That anyone who will tell her story, / Especially the women, / Will be well rewarded, / Will be saved from many evil, / And their children will be lucky / If they will mention the Holy Mother / Each evening at the sleep / Each morning at the waking up / She will take their right hand / Concerning the maternity status shared by Mother of God and a woman who tells the story" etc. (Marian 2003: 267). In the same respect of maternity shared with Mother of God, telling the *Tale…* creates the premises of a miraculous birth: "The woman who will say this tale with all her heart, so that it will be accepted, will have a fairy child." (Marian 2003: 267)

Coming back to the demand of *saying* the *Tale of God*, the generic continuity between prayer (which is not addressed to Mother of God) and charm, the text as such claims to introduce into discussion a third genre of folk narratives, namely the fairytale, whose performance is (more precisely it *was*) charged, at its turn, with numinous power and ritual efficiency. In concordance with the method used hitherto, which interweaves verbal and functional levels, I will explore the formulaic components of the *Tale...* that point to its performance conventions and functions.

For example, a variant recorded in East Romania, Moldavia region, begins with an invocation that placed the entire performance of the *Tale...* under same benefic power of the spoken fairytale: "Story, story / Fairytale in the heaven, / Fairytale on the earth / Gold and pearl are flowing. / There was a big man / with a big axe, etc." (Marian 2003: 206). Furthermore, this incipit plays similar function with the opening formulas of the fairytales, namely to make the listeners aware they will enter within special coordinates of time and space actuated by the story telling event.

In some variants of the *Tale of God* there are inserted similar median formulas with those used during the oral performance of fairytales: "The story has much more words ahead / as it is wonderfully recites. /

God comes to us, / sits on the threshold / and listen to it with love"[18] (Marian 2003: 159, 144).

To mention God as one of the listeners, places the entire audience under His authority, and indirectly expresses the devotional component of telling the story, which thus gets a prayer like status. In fact, the above quoted words are consonant with a larger belief according to which "God is present in every house where people recite tales" (Ciubotaru, Ciubotaru 2018: 8). Although it is not precisely clear what kind of "tales" are to be shared, the belief resonates with those relating to fairytales[19] performances. "There was a habit when I was a boy. They said that you have to recite three tales, because they hold their hands and run around the sheepfold you are in, and no evil spirit can enter there, and you can sleep safely. This is what they believed. [...] They say that it is very good to recite long, complete stories in the evening, because it is as if you say a prayer. With that story God surrounds the house three time and no unclean thing can enter" (Bîrlea 1981: 140). The spoken tale gets material corporeality that barrier the space where the story is worded. Similar apotropaic power activated through the performance of the *Tale of God*, is strengthened by the very words with which some of its variants begin: "The story of the stories / Stays against the evil spirits / with iron teeth [...] / There is a house / A beautiful house / But it is not a house, / It is a fort, / [...]/ But who is sitting in the fort? / the Holy Mother is sitting / With a white book / In her right hand / etc."[20] (Marian 2003: 195).

In other words, while orally sharing a fairytale works as a devotional and apotropaic act, telling the *Tale of God* works as saying a fairytale.

Telling stories have also been assigned with the role to mediate relations between the world of the living and the world of the dead: "It is the same to pay a sermon at the church in behalf of the dead, or to recite a tale" (Bîrlea 1981: 140). Consequently, the efforts made by the storyteller to recite and to travel for giving tales – "to go to visit people for telling them stories is like offering alms" – is rewarded in terms of salvation: "God forgives the sins of those who tell stories" (Ciubotaru, Ciubotaru 2018: 9). Such beliefs give additional reasons to the closing formula of the *Tale of God* itself: "this story was told by my aunt Marghioala P. Furtună [...] She says it each morning and each evening at the end of her prayers. She also says it to the women[21] in the village" (Pamfile 1914: 15) with the hope her name will be mentioned in the prayers of those who learned the *Tale*... from her. The psychopomp role assigned to Mother of God through the closing formula of the *Tal*e... is

in resonance with the meanings of saying it as alms. Therefore, no matter how it is entitled, the *Tale of God*, the *Prayer of the Mother of God* or the *Incantation of the Mother of God*, this text entered the praying context of vernacular religion practices.

•

For a deeper understanding the role and the impact the *Tale of God* might has had over those who said it and who listened to it, the lived experience incorporated by the performance event might of importance. To tell and to listen to *this* story firstly means to feel sorrow on Christ's torments and to suffer together with Mother of God, as a proof of personal faith and, when women are the actants, as a manifestation of maternal love. It also means to reiterate and to testify the own belief in the truth delivered by the mythic story of Passion, Crucifixion and Resurrection, being it delivered by canonical or non-canonical sources. Not least, it might incorporate the unworded hope to enter the realm of light and to be blessed by Mother of God as the willow, the carpenter, the frog and all merciful characters of the story have been blessed.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on its textual and functional features, the *Tale of God* is anchored at the confluence of three genres: folk ("archaic") prayers, charming incantations, and (fairy) tales. The shared goal for redemption and the aspiration for final salvation (and for getting an oracular lamb or a miraculous child, as well), together with the central figure of the wanderer Mary, predispose to such junctions, that reveal aspects of a folk Marian theology in which Mother of God, the one who entered the heaven in body and soul, is by herself a figure of liminality.

The analyses undertaken in this article revealed a hybrid, interstitial space filled by verbal structure which, under specific textual and ritual performances and functions, are susceptible to multiple genre appurtenance.

NOTES

[1] Ro. Descântecul de la mine/.Leacul de la Maica Domnului.

[2] Metadata concerning the social provenience, education, age, religious affiliation of the informants are only sporadically mentioned in the 19th century- first years of the 20th century

anthologies I consulted. The gender of the informants can be deduced from the informants' names, and it is dominantly feminine.

[3] In the Greek tradition, a similar legend is included in the Lament of Virgin Mary, with the difference that here the blacksmith is cursed because he forged the nails for the Cross (Beaton, 1980, 142).

[4] Ro.

Era odată un om mare	S-o luat Sântă Măria Mare
Și a luat un topor mare	
Și a mers la pădurea mare/ Și a tăiat un lemn mare	
Și a făcut o mănăstire mare.	
În altarul cel mai mic/ Șade Sfântă Măria Mică,/	
În altarul cel mai mare/ Șade Sântă Măria Mare.	
Și cetește/ Procetește,	
Pe toți fiii adeverește	
Numai pe unul, fiul său,/ Pe fiul lui Dumnezeu,	
Nu-l poate ceti/ Și adeveri.	
Văzând ea că nu-l cetește	
Și că nu-l adeverește	Dar ea pe fiul său/Și al lui Dumnezeu,/Domnul cerului/Și al pământului,/Nu l-o văzut,/Ci o văzut pe Ion/Sânt Ion/Năнașul lui Dumnezeu/Și a fiului său,/ Și l-a întrebat: – Ioane,/Sânt Ioane!/N-ai văzut,/N-ai auzit/De finul tău,/De fiul meu/Și al lui Dumnezeu?/ Domnul cerului/Și al pământului./Că eu oricât l-am cătat,/ Nicăieri nu l-am aflat. – De văzut nu l-am văzut/De auzit/Am auzit/Că jidovii/Păgânii/L-au prins și l-au chinuit/Și apoi l-au răstignit/Lângă poarta lui Pilat/Pe o cruce mare de brad./Maica Domnului (…)/Cum l-o auzit,/Tare s-o scârbit/Și s-o luat/Și-o plecat/Hăulind/Dăulind,/ Mânele frângând,/Fața alba zgâriind/Din ochi negri lăcrimând,/De la inimă oftând,/Pe cărare mergând,/ Pe Domnul Christos cătând.
S-a luat și s-a pornit/ Pe un deal mare ascuțit,	
Ca o smice de cuțit,/ Tot plângând și tânguind	
Din ochi negri lăcrimând/ Fața alba zgâriind	
Și păr galben despletind,/ Pe fiul său căutând.	Și pe câmp ea cum mergea,/Toiag în mâni sprijinea/ Fânațele înverzea,/ Păsările glăsuia,/Lacrimile-o năpădea/Șuroiu pe jos curgea,/mere de aur să făcea.

Și s-a dus și s-a tot dus/ Pân ce soarele a apus	Și a ajuns/La Piatra izbăvească,/Viața ca să își sfârșească,/Mai mult să nu mai trăiască./Iară Piatra izbăvească,/Cum a văzut ce voiește/Și de ce se pregătește./Pe loc s-a topit ca ceara/Și mi s-a sleit ca ghiața (aurul),/nu-și putu face seama
Și mergând s-a întâlnit/ Cu un meșter de lemn vestit	
[Urmează cele trei întâlniri, cu meșterul de lemn, cu fierarul și cu broasca]	
Și s-o dus și s-o tot dus	
Până ce la urmă a ajuns/La poarta lui Iordan	Până la Pilat din Pont Din târgul Rusalimului
Și a dat cu piciorul stâng/Și nu i s-o deschis poarta	
Și a dat cu piriocul drept,/Și îndată s-a deschis poarta	
Și ea înuntru cum a intrat,/De fiul său a și dat	[înăuntru cum a intrat] Domnul sfânt a învins/Și înviind a râs:-Pasăre măiastră/Pe aici n-o ajuns,/Nici suflet de om pământean/Aici n-o pătruns,/Dar tu, Maica mea iubită,/Văd că singură ai venit,/Cu sufletul tău./Și cu trupul tău.
Chinuit/Și răstignit.	
Și de dânsul cum a dat,/Deauna a și întrebat:	
- O fiule,/Iubitule!/ Da cum de te-ai dat,/Cum te-ai lăsat	
De te-au prins cânii/Păgânii/ Și te-au chinuit/Și te-au răstignit?	
- O, maica mea,/Iubita mea!/ Eu nu m-am dat,/Nu m-am lăsat	
Nici pentru mine,/Nici pentru tine	Dar de când m-au chinut/Și de când m-au răstignit,/ Izvoarele izvorăsc,/Câmpurile otăvesc,/(…),/Mamele de prunci grijesc,/Vacile caută de viței/Și oile caută de miei
Ci eu m-am dat/Și m-am lăsat	
Pentru toată lumea (…).	

[5] Ro. Și cine o stat/De o ascultat/ Și o învățat/Aceste cuvinte/Și le va zice/Sara culcându-se/Dimineața sculându-se/ La săptămână,/La lună/ La jumătate de an/Și la un an/ Pe acela/L-oi lua/De mâna dreaptă/ Și l-oi duce/ Pe cărarea dreaptă/La case/Luminoase/ La mese întinse/ La făclii aprinse/ La pahare pline/ La cuvinte bune/ Unde se odihnesc drepții./ Dar cine le-a știi/ Și nu le va zice/ Sara culcându-se,/ Dimineața sculându-se/ Și pe obraz spălându-se,/ La săptămână,/La lună/Și la un an/ Pe Acela/L-oi lua/De mâna stângă/ Și l-oi duce/Pe cărarea strâmbă/ La case/Întunecoase,/ La mese neîntinse/ Și la făclii stinse/ La pahare deșerte/La tartar de frig/ Unde viermele nu doarme,/ Acolo în veci să trăiască,/ Acolo să vecuiască.

[6] Ro. Plecat-a un om mare/La pădurea mare/Cu toporul mare,/Să facă plug mare.

[7] Ro. Mănăstire cu nouă altare/Cu ușile spre mare/ (...)./La altarul cel mai mare/Slujba sfântă cine-o cântă?/ Cântă-un zău și-un Dumnezeu./Dar de ascultat cine-o ascultă?/Dar ascultă Maica Sfântă/C-un fiuț micuț pe brațe.

[8] Badalanova Geller 2004: 217.

[9] Ro. Colo-n șesul cel frumos/Este o dalbă mănăstire/Cu 9 altare/Slujba sfântă cine-o cântă?/Cânt-o, cântă/ Maica sfântă.

[10] Ro. Și citește/Procitește

[11] The word ustur may come from usturime, meaning 'sting'.

[12] Ro. De toate bolile: Ustur mare și Maica Precista/Pe-un jij de deal,/Cată-n carte,/Cată-n parte/Cată-n toate părțile,/Unde a vedea/Nouă strigoaice/Cu nouă ținci răi (...).

[13] Here the word amin is an alteration of the name Damian.

[14] Ro. Amin, amin,/Cosma de amin;/Vracii Domnului,/Descântecu Sfintei Mării (...)/

O plecat un om mare,/Cu săcure mare,/Într-o pădure mare,/Cu nouă ferești,/Cu nouă ferestuici,/Cu nouă zăbrele,/Cu nouă zăbreluici,/Cu nouă uși,/Cu nouă ușițe,.Cu nouă altare,/Cu nouă altărele;/Sfânta Măria/Maica Domnului sosia,/Și în biserică se băga,/Pe scaun de aur ședea,/La masă de aur se așeza,/Carte mare de aur găsea,/Carte mijlocie de aur găsea,/Carte mică de aur găsea,/Maica Domnului în cărțile de aur căuta,/Și toți sfinții Domnului găsea,/Care în ce parte de pământ era./Numai de drag fiul ei/Și al nostru nu-l găsea,/Și ea pleca,/Plângea/Și suspina/Cum plâng izvoarele de apă;/Pornie,/Unde pășea/Câmpu-nverzea.

[15] Ro. Al Drumului.

[16] This doesn't mean it was never handwritten, at the minimum for mnemonic purposes (in rural milieu, the domestic practice of writing started only in the second half of the 19th century).

[17] This ritual of the fairy lamb is related with a Christmas song, The old dearest mother and with the ballad The Ewe, well spread among Romanian, which iterate the same theme of an old wondering mother searching for his son: lamenting, she asks all people she encounters about him. In the ballad, a shepherd was previously notified by his oracular ewe that he will be murdered or sacrificed by his comrades; he accepted. The interesting topic of the correlation between these songs and the Tale of Christ deserve an autonomous study.

[18] Ro. Ca cuvântul din poveste, /că înainte mult mai este/și frumos ne povestește,/Dumnezeu la noi sosește/și se pune jos pe prag/și ascultă cu mult drag.

[19] There is to be mentioned that Romanian word for fairy tale is basm, from sl. Basnu = invention, fabulation. This is the etic term, created and used mostly by folklorists in order to designate narratives coagulated around the convention of fantasy and fantastic. In emic parlance, it is only sporadically used; insider story tellers simple say "story".

[20] Ro. Povestea poveștilor/Șede în calea strâgelor/Cu măsele de oțele/Cu dinții de ciișele./Este-o casă/Prea frumoasă/Dară nu-i casă,/Că-i cetate/Cu ferestile ziuate,/Cu ușile ferecate./Da în cetate cine șede?Maica sfântă/Cu carte albă/În mâna dreaptă".

[21] It is to be noted, again, the women preponderance as performers of the Tale of God.

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VERBAL CHARM *VS.* PRAYER: AN EMIC APPROACH TO THE LITHUANIAN TERMINOLOGY

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Abstract: In 20th-century folkloristics, it was commonly held that prayer was a religious phenomenon, while verbal charms were associated with magic. However, this dichotomy formed by scholars is often not accurate or useful in practical terms when attempting to differentiate between these genres. In Lithuania, verbal charms and prayers form a common text corpus, and the *emic* terms *užkalbėjimas* "verbal charm" and *malda* "prayer" do not align with the *etic* system of folklore classification, which categorizes them as separate genres. In an emic perspective the Lithuanian word *malda* encompasses a broad category of texts, which includes prayers, verbal charms, and any other texts intended to establish communication with non-human entities such as gods, plants, animals, etc. This category also includes Christian prayers. The article reveals that in Lithuania the relationship between a prayer and a verbal charm is not binary (religion vs. magic), but complementary: *malda* is the text of the charm, while *užkalbėjimas* is a charming ritual that involves both the text and the process of its recitation, complemented by ritual actions and performed by a qualified person (a charmer).

Keywords: Lithuanian folkloristics, emic terminology, folklore genre, verbal charm, prayer, Lithuanian gods

INTRODUCTION

While scholars of verbal charms define them as a separate genre of oral literature and distinguish them from prayers, there is no consensus on the criteria for such differentiation. The term "magic" is often used

to define charms, but it is itself vaguely defined. Moreover, magic is often viewed in opposition to religion, with the latter being considered superior. As James Kapaló argues, the field of religious studies has established a tradition of viewing magic as a manipulative practice intended to fulfil practical needs, while religion is understood as a merging with the spiritual world that fulfils universal transcendental needs (Kapaló 2011: 88). Adopting the tradition of linking verbal charms with the world of magic, and prayers with religion, only further complicates the situation, as it encourages researchers of charms to view verbal charms with Christian content as prayers, while treating other verbal charms as magic (Fisher 2016: 138).

The search for universal models can sometimes lead to a dead end, which is why scholars today emphasize the importance of evaluating the local tradition and the terms derived from it (Kapaló 2011). Since the 1950s and 1960s, when the linguist Kenneth Pike (1954) introduced the theoretical concepts of *emic* and *etic*, and Alan Dundes (1962) and Dan Ben-Amos (1969) began discussing folklore genres from this perspective, the study of emic terminology in the field of verbal charms remains an underexplored domain. In 2011, Haralampos Passalis emphasized the need for "creating a European database that would mainly include the folk terminology of different types of verbal magic with an English translation", which "could facilitate and enable a comparative study and the holistic examination of the phenomenon of verbal magic" (Passalis 2011: 33). In his research, Pasalis discusses the difficulties of terminological categorisation of verbal charms, and, on the basis of Greek emic terms, gives an example of what the entries in such a database might look like (Passalis 2011: 39–41). However, this ambitious project still remains only as a set of theoretical guidelines. The root of the problem lies in the fact that in different countries the investigation of emic terminology is in different stages. Dispite good examples of investigation of emic terminology in the manuscript tradition (Olsan 2013: 149–155; Timotin 2013: 242–243; Timotin 2015: 13–18), in many other cases a lot of preparatory work is required.

In this article I will employ an emic approach to examine the Lithuanian terms of verbal charm and prayer, which have not received enough scholarly attention, even though establishing their relationship is essential for understanding what was considered a verbal charm in Lithuania.

The history of research into prayer and verbal charm as separate genres in Lithuania is not lengthy. Although the term *užkalbėjimas*

(from Lith. *kalbėti* "to speak") is now commonly used by Lithuanian folklorists to refer to verbal charms, it was only established as the name of a distinct folklore genre in the mid-20th century, following the publication of significant collections of verbal charms by Pranė Stukėnaitė-Decikienė (1941) and Jonas Balys (1951). The term became firmly established only in the 1960s, when the paremiologist Kazys Grigas defined verbal charms as a separate genre and published a large assortment of them in the academic publication *Lithuanian folklore* (Grigas 1968). In previous minor publications, the texts of verbal charms were titled in various ways and usually reflected either the different names of verbal charms used in the vernacular or the attitude of the collectors of folklore, e.g., they were called *burtai* "spells" (Wolter 1901a, 1901b; Augstkalns 1937), *prietarai* "superstitions" (Niemi, Sabaliauskas 1912: 338), *kėrai* "enchantments" (Krėvė-Mickevičius 1926). It is important to note that verbal charms were often referred to as *maldos* "prayers"; Jurgis Elisonas, a collector of folklore who published a large number of verbal charms against snake bite in the 1930s, provided several examples of such emic terminology, e.g., *malda nuo gyvatės* įkirtimo "a prayer against snake bite", *buriamoji maldelė, kalbama nuo gyvatės* įkandimo "a spell-prayer, said against snake bite", *malda nuo piktosios* "a prayer against the evil one", and so on (Elisonas 1931: 91–92). Around the same time, Finnish folklorist Viljo Johannes Mansikka, who collected verbal charms in Lithuania, published them in a study *Litauische Zaubersprüche* with an elaborate introduction in German (Mansikka 1929). He also mentioned the variety of terms used to describe verbal charms. According to Mansikka, there was no common title for the texts he published, because people referred to them using various terms – *užkalbėjimai* "verbal charms", *užžadėjimai* "verbal charms", *maldos "prayers"* or just žodžiai "words" (Mansikka 1929: 29). Still, Mansikka did not seem to be interested in the differences between the terms he recorded. Only in 1941 did the ethnographer Pranė Stukėnaitė-Decikienė who begin to talk about the relationship between verbal charms and prayers (Stukėnaitė-Decikienė 1941: 122–123). The word *malda* "prayer", as a term of folkloristics, was first introduced by Jonas Balys; in the system of folklore genres he employed this term to refer to texts that addressed the Lithuanian gods, such as the Goddess of Fire Gabija, the Earth Goddess Žemyna, the New Moon, and the Sun (Balys 1951). According to Balys, through such prayers, "a person expresses goodwill towards a deity, greets and honours it, offers it an offering, and in return, as is usual in relationships between people and

gods, requests and expects to receive from them that which is necessary for people, such as prosperity, good health, and beauty" (Balys 1951: 10). Balys was later followed by Grigas, who also published prayers to Lithuanian gods along with verbal charms, but he placed them in a separate chapter titled "Mythical beings" (Grigas 1968: 913–915). In Lithuanian folkloristics, the genre called *maldo*s "prayers" or *maldelės* "little prayers" (a term that came into use of folkloristics in the second half of the twentieth century), is first and foremost regarded as a legacy of the old Lithuanian religion, while Christian prayers, unlike in other European countries, have not yet gained the attention of folklorists.

Folklorists have long noticed that some verbal charms bear a striking resemblance to Lithuanian prayers to the gods. There is a specific attitude of the speaker and stylistic peculiarities that connect them; according to Stukėnaitė-Decikienė (Stukėnaitė-Decikienė 1941: 123), "frequently the charmer addresses the culprit of the illness itself, and, in order to placate it, strives not to offend it and fondly calls it 'little bird', 'sweet bee', 'flower', 'bright star', 'gold', 'silver', 'little earth' and so on". Grigas, who shared the same opinion, emphasized that "some charms are characterized by an abundance of terms of endearment [...] The influence is exerted through kindness, a quiet and gentle speaking tone, while also repeating the demand in an imperative manner" (Grigas 1968: 72). In 2022, when researching the connection of such verbal charms with prayers to the ancient Lithuanian gods, I defined such kind of charms as *soft* (Vaitkevičienė 2022). After conducting a detailed analysis, I discovered that prayers to the gods and soft charms share the same structural components: they both feature direct address, exaltation of the addressee, formulas for inviting the gods and making them offerings, good wishes for the addressee, and, lastly, requests for help or fortune. The investigation revealed that verbal charms and prayers to the gods constitute a common corpus that cannot be divided into two separate genres, as a part of it – soft charms – occupy an intermediary position, functioning as both prayers and verbal charms. The analytical or ethic perspective does not provide tools to classify them correctly within the system of folklore genres used in the field of folkloristics. This raises the question of what the relationship is between verbal charms and prayers from an emic perspective and what differences, if any, are marked by these terms. The answer to this question requires a thorough investigation into the terms used by people and the circumstances of their use.

I have used a variety of ethnographic, folkloric and linguistic sources for the research of Lithuanian emic terminology. First of all, ethnographic and folklore data of the 20th century from the Archive of Lithuanian Folklore, most of which in 2008 was published in the book *Lithuanian Verbal Healing Charms*, compiled by the author of the article (see LU). It was handwritten material from different folklore collectors, with very few audio recordings. The archival sources are expanded by publications from the late 19th to the 20th century and by the author's field research material collected between 2003 and 2020 (audio and video recordings). The lexicographical material was also of great importance for the research. *The Dictionary of the Lithuanian Language* (LKŽe), which contains a wealth of examples from the living language of the twentieth century, as well as from 16th- and 19th-century dictionaries and religious literature, provides a valuable source of information on the emic terminology of verbal charms.

UŽKALBĖJIMAS AND ITS VARIATIONS

There are several emic terms to designate verbal charms in Lithuania. The term *užkalbėjimas* "a verbal charm", chosen by folklorists, is formed by adding the prefix *už-* to the word *kalbėjimas* "speaking". The prefix *už-* usually means the direction of action behind or on top of something (LKŽe: už-). Adding the prefix *už-* to the verb *kalbėti* "to speak" links the action to the object being spoken about – a disease being charmed, a person, or a part of the body being treated (cf. *užkalbėti rožę* "to charm erysipelas", *užkalbėti dantį* "to charm tooth", etc.). However, there are more prefixed variants in vernacular usage, created by using prefixes *at-, nu-, ap- (atkalbėjimas, nukalbėjimas, apkalbėjimas*) or even without a prefix *(kalbėjimas).* All of these words can refer to charming both as a process (the act of reciting a charm) and as a text of a verbal charm. The corresponding prefixed nouns refer to a charmer who may be called *kalbėtojas, užkalbėtojas, atkalbėtojas, nukalbėtojas*, or *apkalbėtojas* (LU: 370, 397, 415, 490, LKŽe: *apkalbėtojas*).

The word *užkalbėjimas* and its variations are prevalent throughout Lithuania, particularly in the eastern part of the country where charms have survived for a long time; folklore collectors have documented more of them here than in other regions. Still, the oldest records that mention charms are from East Prussia which had a large Lithuanian population before World War II; this territory is also called Lithuania Minor. The word *užkalbėjimas* was mentioned in the *Decree to the Churches*

of Tilsit County in 1578 (BRMŠ 2: 230), and the verb *užkalbėti* "to charm" was used by Lutheran priest Simonas Vaišnoras in 1600 in his Lithuanian translation of the work *Articulus sive Locus de Sacramentis Veteris et Novi Testamenti* by Aegidius Hunnius (BRMŠ 3: 372). It can also be found in later sources, such as Jacob Brodowskÿ's dictionary *Lexicon Germanico-Litvanicvm et Litvanico-Germanicvm* (circa 1740), cf. *uʒkalbėti Pucʒka* "Beſprechen das Gewehr" (BRMŠ 4: 21).

Another emic term used to describe the act of charming is žadėti "to charm"; from this word, the nouns žadėjimas "verbal charm; charming" and žadėtojas "charmer" are derived. These words can be used with the same prefixes *už-, at-, nu-, ap-*, as in the previous case, e.g., *užžadėti, užžadėjimas, užžadėtojas* (see LKŽe: žadėti, žadėjimas, žadėtojas). The verb žadėti is related with the word žadas which once had meanings that are now almost forgotten: "voice, ability to speak", "breathing", "consciousness" (LKŽe: žadas). Yet the word žadėti has several other meanings: "to make a promise", "to intend to do something", "to announce future actions" and even "to fate". Therefore, žadėjimas refers to a form of speaking that is directed towards achieving future results. Lithuanian words įžadėti "to give a vow, to swear", *apžadas* "a vow to make a religious offering as a token of gratitude for recovery from an illness" are derived from the same verb.

The word žadėjimas is also attested in old Lithuanian writings. In a mid-17th century manuscript Lithuanian-German dictionary called *Lexicon Lithuanicum,* we can find the words *uʒʒadeti* "beſchwehren"*, apʒadeti, uʒʒadeti* "beſprechen", *uʒʒadetojas* "Beſchwehrer" (BRMŠ 3: 76). A manuscript dictionary of Friedrich Prätorius called *Clavis Germanico-Lithvana* (written circa 1680) includes the words ʒadeti and Ʒadetojis (BRMŠ 3: 98). The words žadėti*, apžadėti, užžadėti, užžadėtojas, apžadėtojas* have been included in later Lithuanian dictionaries compiled by Jacob Brodowskÿ, Friederich Wilhelm Haack (1730), Krause (the first half of the 18th century), Philipp Ruhig (1747), Christian Gottlieb Mielcke (1800), Georg Nesselmann (1853), Friedrich Kurschat (1870, 1884) (BRMŠ 4: 21, 35, 43, 81–82; Nesselmann 1851: 536; Kurschat 1870: 218, 221; LKŽe: žadėti, žadėtojas). In the 1760s–1770s, the word *užkalbėjimas* made its appearance in literature, as seen in the epic poem *Metai* ("The Seasons") by Kristijonas Donelaitis from Lithuania Minor. In a vividly painted scene, women with healing ointments attempt to heal a peasant named Dočys, and when one of them "stood right beside the bed to say a charm" (žadėt *pas patalą stojos)*,

the patient, who "dreaded old wives' sorcery", stood up from his bed and drove the women away (Donelaitis 2013: 114)[1].

Although old dictionaries attest the word žadėjimas only in Lithuania Minor, ethnographic data show that the verb žadėti and its prefix forms and derivatives are widely known in the south-western part of Lithuania and are particularly common in east Lithuania where they are still in use today (LU; LKŽe: žadėti, žadėjimas, žadėtojas). However, the term žadėjimas is not known in parts of Lithuanian territory such as central and north Lithuania and Samogitia. Here, another word was used to refer to verbal charms – *vardyti* "to charm", while the charmer was called *vardininkas*, and the process of charming and the text of a charm were referred to as *vardijimas*. This makes it the third important term used to designate verbal charms. Its forms vary considerably, as is the case with the previous terms. The *Dictionary of the Lithuanian Language* (LKŽe) offers a great variety of words that are formed by adding prefixes *ap-, at-, nu-, į-, pa-, pra-, už-* to the verbs *vardyti, vardijimas, vardininkas,* or by changing suffixes (e.g., *vardininkas* / *vardytojas* / *varduotojas)*. These terms are attested in old dictionaries of Lithuanian language as well. From the end of the 17th century, we have evidence of the words *wardyti, užwardyti, wardytojis* (*Clavis Germanico-Lithvana*, BRMŠ 3: 93), and in the first half of the 18th century the word *wardininkas* "Seegen Sprecher" was included in the so-called Krause's dictionary (BRMŠ 4: 37). The *Christian Catholic Catechism*, published in 1770, includes a didactic warning that a sin is committed by Ʒyniai *ir viſſi wardininkai bey tie* ʒmones*, kurrie pas juos eina* "sorcerers and charmers and the people who visit them" (BRMŠ 4: 148). Therefore *vardijimas* "charming; a verbal charm", is another ancient word that existed alongside other terms such as žadėjimas and *užkalbėjima*s.

The origin of the word *vardyti* is undoubtedly linked to the word *vardas,* which in contemporary Lithuanian means "the name of a person, object, or species", but once had a broader meaning of "a word", as in the Latvian language, where *vārds* means "a word, name, speaking". Similarly, Old Prussian *wīrds* meant "word" (LKŽe: vardas; LLVV: *vārds*; Mažiulis 1997: 245). These Baltic words are derived from the Proto-Indo-European root **u̯er-* "to speak", and have many equivalents in related languages, cf. Gothic *waúrd*, German *wort*, English *word*, Latin *verbum*. In certain Indo-European languages, this word acquired particular meanings that denote magical or ritualistic speech, e.g. Hittite *hu(wa)rt-* "a swear, a curse", Old Indian v*ratá* "a vow, an oath", Old Prussian *wertemmai* "we swear", Old Slavic *rota* "an oath", *vračĭ* "a

wizard, sorcerer, warlock" (Karulis 1992: 487; Puhvel 1991: 433–437). In Latvian, as in Lithuanian, words derived from this root are used to describe verbal charms, e.g., Latv. *vārdi* "verbal charms", *uguns vārdi* "a verbal charm against fire", *vārdot* "to charm", *vārdotājs* "a charmer", *vārdošana* "the act of charming" (LLVV: *vārds, vārdot,* etc.). It can be noted that some of these Latvian words are almost identical to their Lithuanian counterparts, cf. Lith. *varduoti* "to charm", *varduotojas* "a charmer". Therefore, this term is shared by both Lithuanians and Latvians.

Comparing the various names for verbal charms reveals differences in their geographic distribution. The word *vardijimas* is shared by both Lithuanians and Latvians, while žadėjimas and *užkalbėjimas* were only used within the Lithuanian context. The word *vardijimas* was more commonly used in the western and northern regions of Lithuania, while žadėjimas was more prevalent in the eastern and southern areas. The term *užkalbėjimas* has been documented in various regions, although it is very rare in Samogitia. The widespread use of the latter term could be due to the fact that folklorists popularized it in the 20th century.

MALDA

As already mentioned above, sometimes people use the word *malda* "prayer" (or the diminutive form *maldelė)* to refer to verbal charms. Although in Lithuanian, this word is also a church term that designates canonical Christian prayers, people use it to refer to verbal charms that have no Christian names or Biblical content, e.g.:

> Ancient people knew a *malda* for when a snake bit, such as this:
>
> *Oi tu kirmel, gelaž,* šaltavuodeg*, kad* įleidai *[nuodus] margai karvei, prašo [prašau] atlaisti!*
>
> (Oh, you worm, metal, cold-tailed thing, you have let your [poison] into a mottled cow, please take it out!)[2] (LU: 203)

The informant refers to a verbal charm that is addressed to a snake as *malda*, even though the text does not include any Christian content. Furthermore, *malda* may even refer to a harmful charm. A folk-story, documented by Lithuanian writer Gabrielė Petkevičaitė-Bitė in 1904, tells that

> In Paežeriai (a village located in the Šeduva parish, near Tolstoy's manor of the same name), there was a herdswoman who knew a certain *maldelė*. Whenever she said the *maldelė* to an animal, the animal would collapse. Afterwards she said another *maldelė* and the animal would immediately rise again. (BsTB 12: 114)

The use of the word *malda* in a similar context can also be observed in other folklore genres. The fairy tale ATU 675 "The Lazy Boy" tells the story of a marvellous pike that grants wishes; when the fisherman had to overcome the king's army, he recited the following *maldelė*: "In the name of the Lord God, at the command of the pike, let the entire army turn into goats and gnaw off those osiers"[3] (SlŠLP: 375).

The word *malda* was also used to refer to prayers to the ancient Lithuanian gods; these oral texts survived for a long time after the conversion to Christianity in Lithuania. An outstanding example are the short prayers to the goddess of fire called Gabija or Gabieta, recited in the morning while starting a fire and in the evening when the live coals were raked up to be used to reignite the fire the following day. Folklore collectors documented abundant numbers of such prayers in the 1920s and 1930s, and even in the 1970s, they were still found in the Samogitia region. There is no doubt that people referred to them using the same word as for Christian prayers, as evidenced by the following examples:

> Švinta *Gabieta, užkaupta gulieta, užkurta* žibieta. *Kaip numirsma, uždek mums* žvakelę*, pasiremti lazdele ir eiti namučio.*
>
> (Saint Gabieta, you lie down when raked up, and you glow when lit. When we die, light a candle for us, so we may go home leaning on a staff.)
>
> Informant Zosė Buivydienė, aged 50, from the village of Vytogala in the Upyna area, documented in 1974. Her mother, who was descended from Varniai, used to recite this prayer as the very first prayer *(malda)* in the morning, even before saying the Lord's Prayer[4]. (Lovčikas 2010: 20)

> When the fire is started, the following prayer *(maldelė)* is recited:
>
> Švinta *Gabija,* švinta *Gabieta, neik iš* šitas *vietas, būk un* šitas *vietas.*

> (Saint Gabija, Saint Gabieta, do not leave this place, stay in this place.)[5] (Balys 1951: 46)
>
> *Gabieta, užguobta mygok, atguobta* žibiek.
>
> (Saint Gabieta, sleep, when raked up, glow, when spread out.)[6]
>
> This is how people prayed *(melsdavosi)* when the fire was put out in the evening. (Lovčikas 2010: 21)

People did not distinguish such prayers from Christian ones in terms of terminology. However, sometimes these prayers were Christianized by replacing the name of the goddess Gabija with the Christian protectress against fire Saint Agatha, or even both names were mentioned together, for instance, "Gabija, Agatha, glow, when kindled, sleep, when covered" (Balys 1951: 49).

The texts that addressed the other ancient gods (the New Moon, the God of Thunder Perkūnas, the Goddess Žemyna) were also called prayers (Balys 1951: 53–54). Besides, people used the words *malda* or *maldelė* to refer to texts by which they addressed plants or animals to request or to wish something. For instance, a prominent folklore informant from Varėna district Ieva Turonienė used to recite a particular prayer when going to pick mushrooms:

> One needs to learn to recite a prayer *(maldelė)* so that you will always find mushrooms. He [my brother – D.V.] taught me to pluck a mushroom, spit on it, and say:
>
> *Grybuli, būk laimingas, kad rastau daug – ir brolius, ir seseris, ir visą giminę.*
>
> (Mushroom, be happy so that I find a lot of you, your brothers, sisters, and the whole family)[7]. (Turonienė 2019: 68)

Given such a broad context for the use of *malda*, it becomes clear that its meaning is much broader than that of other emic terms – *užkalbėjimas*, žadėjimas, or *vardijimas*. Today it is difficult to say if this word had this broad a meaning for a long time, although we know that Lithuanian words *malda* "prayer", *melsti* "to pray, to request", *maldyti* "to request" come from the same root as the Old Slavic *moliti*, Polish *modlić się* (<**modliti* "to pray; to make a vow by offering a sacrifice"[8]). Linguists have proposed several different versions regarding the origin of these words, two of which are relevant to mention. According to Émile Benveniste's version, which was later followed by other Indo-European

language researchers, these words are linked to Hittite *mald-, maltāi* "to recite prayers, to make a vow, to swear", Armenian *małtʿem* "I pray, I call upon", Old English *meldan* "to address", from which we may reconstruct Indo-European **meld(th)* "to say ritualistic words while addressing a deity" (Benveniste 1932: 133). According to another version proposed by Lithuanian linguist Kazimieras Būga, and later developed by Balticists Ernst Fraenkel and Vytautas Mažiulis, Lith. *malda* "a prayer"*, melsti* "to request, to pray" and Prussian *maddla* "a prayer", *madlit* "to request, to supplicate" originate from Proto-Balto-Slavic root **meld-* "to soften", the meaning of which was broadened to "*to try to soften (incline) someone for someone's benefit" > "to request, to pray" (Mažiulis 1996: 95–96, 100–101). Lithuanian lexicographical sources of the 16th–19th centuries attest that the word *malda* meant not only "prayer" but also "request". This meaning can also be found in fairy tales that were written down in the late 19th century to the early 20th century and published by Jonas Basanavičius (Ambrazas 1980: 67). The verb *melsti* has retained both the meanings "to request" and "to pray" even until the present day. Linguist Saulius Ambrazas suggests that the now extinct meaning of "request" for the word *malda* "is, apparently, the primary one, which laid the foundation for the later meaning of 'addressing supernatural beings; the text of such address'" (Ambrazas 1980: 67). Also consider *maldauti* "to request meekly", "to pray", "to say a prayer" and *maldyti* "to request earnestly, to supplicate", "to placate" (LKŽe: *maldauti, maldyti*).

However, Benveniste's hypothesis that Lithuanian *malda* is inherited from Indo-European religious vocabulary is also worth considering. It is possible that the meaning evolved in the opposite direction, from the sacred to the profane: from *melsti* "pray, request something from gods" to "request, supplicate", likewise from *maldyti* "appease the gods" to "soften, placate" (see LKŽe: *melsti, maldyti*).

It should be noted that the Lithuanian dictionary also provides another meaning for the word *maldyti*: "to enchant, to charm". However, it is unclear how widely this meaning was used, as only one example is provided: "You could hear her charming (*ka maldo)*, having made a cross sign over a cow's horns" (LKŽe: *maldyti*)[9].

Finally, it is worth discussing the word *maldininkas*, which in contemporary Lithuanian means "a visitor of a place of worship or of sacred places" but had more diverse meanings in the past. Matthäus Prätorius, writing in German in the 17th century, used this Lithuanian word to refer to priests of the old religion who were still present on the border of

East Prussia and Samogitia at the time, and who were invited by Prussian Lithuanians to conduct family and village community ceremonies including prayers, offerings, and ritualistic drinking with libations to the gods. According to Prätorius, *maldininkai* engaged in a variety of activities beyond prayers and offerings, including, for instance, healing, charming, stopping bleeding, predicting future based on foam, beeswax, or bird flights, locating stolen or lost items, predicting a baby's destiny and so on (Pretorijus 2006: 409, 411, 435,495, 533, 657). It should be emphasised that these individuals, unlike the charmers documented in ethnographic studies, were not solely concerned with healing or divining, but also played a vital role in leading community and family ceremonies. Hence the word *maldininkas*, similarly to the word *malda*, once had a considerably broader meaning which encompassed priests, charmers, and simply devout people.

WHEN A PRAYER BECOMES A VERBAL CHARM

Inasmuch as the word *malda* had a more general sense than *užkalbėjimas* and its synonyms žadėjimas and *vardijimas*, any verbal charm could have been referred to as *malda*. On the contrary, not all prayers were considered verbal charms, hence it should be investigated in what cases it might have happened.

Firstly, we should examine which prayers are not referred to as *užkalbėjimai*. Understandably, in the first place these are canonical Christian prayers. Yet prayers to the old Lithuanian gods were also not referred to as verbal charms. Informants referred to texts which addressed Gabija, Žemyna or Perkūnas only as *maldos, maldelės* or žodžiai "words" but they were not called verbal charms once (see Balys 1951: 46–49, 53–54). The situation with prayers to the New Moon is more diverse. I will examine two types of these prayers, published in the book *Lithuanian Verbal Healing Charms* (LU). The first of them, "New Moon, a full turn for you, for me my health" (LU: 226–268) can be illustrated by the following text:

> Say this when you see a new moon:
>
> *Jaunas jaunikaitis,*
> *Dieva karalaitis,*
> *Tau auksa karūna,*
> *Man sveikata.*

(A youthful youth,
God's prince,
A gold crown for you,
For me my health.)[10]
(LU: 226)

An abundance of such texts was documented in Lithuania; in the book *Lithuanian Verbal Healing Charms* (LU) even 169 variants are presented. An inquiry into the terms adopted by informants and folklore collectors to denote these texts is worth exploring. 38 variants are called *malda* (out of which, the diminutive *maldelė* is used in 20 cases), 5 are called žodžiai, and only one is called *užkalbėjimas:*

A verbal charm *(užkalbėjimas)* for all sorts of diseases and to clot blood in a wound

Mėnuo, Mėnuo, Mėnulėli,
Dungaus šviesus *Dievaitėli!*
Duok jam ratų, man sveikatų,
Duok jam pilnystį – man Perkūno karalystį!

(Moon, Moon, Moon,
Bright God of the heavens!
Give him a full turn, me vigour,
Make him full – and give me Perkūnas' kingdom!)

Most of the people in my village know this prayer *(maldą)* and believe that it will help them. The person telling the story says that he has seen many times how after someone said the prayer *(maldelę)* blood ceased flowing from their wound. Having seen many facts like that, they say: "You must believe." (LU: 758)[11]

The latter case is an exception because there is no data indicating that this prayer was used by anyone else to stop bleeding; moreover, given that the Moon is greeted only when it is seen as a new moon for the first time, it may not have been applicable in specific situations. Edvardas Vaikšnoras, descended from the village Šeimatis (Utena region), who delivered the text, calls it a prayer *(maldelė)*. According to Aleksandras Urbonas, the teacher who documented the text, the narrator of the

charm had personally witnessed the successful recitation of *maldelė* on numerous occasions, where it had effectively stopped bleeding from wounds. It is possible that the folklore collector may have conflated two separate elements, namely a prayer to the New Moon and a story about a verbal charm to stop bleeding. It should be noted that none of the 169 variants includes the verb *užkalbėti* "to charm". This suggests that this particular type was not considered a verbal charm in the local tradition.

An investigation into the other prayer, "New Moon, shine on my body" (LU: 307–324), which consists of 61 variants, reveals a slightly different situation. With this prayer, the Moon was requested to shine on and cleanse the body (and sometimes the soul) in the same way it shines on the heavens and the earth, e.g.:

> *Jaunas Mėnulaiti,*
> *Dangaus karalaiti,*
> *Koks tu esi* čystas*:*
> *Apčystijai dangų ir* žemę*,*
> *Apčystik ir mane jauną (seną).*
>
> (New Moon,
> King of the heavens,
> You are so clean:
> You have cleansed the heavens and the earth,
> Cleanse me, a young (old) one, too.)[12] (LU: 313)

When they saw a new moon for the first time, people said:

> *Jauno Mėno, seno Tėvo,*
> *Apčystyk kūną ir kraujų mano!*
>
> (New Moon, old Father,
> Cleanse my body and my blood!)
>
> And if that person had any wounds or warts, he took some soil and rubbed them with it. Ancient people had various enchantments [13]. (LU: 317)

Unlike the previous case, this prayer was said not only to request health in general, but also when a person sought to heal themselves. Out of

the 61 variants, 25 identify a specific goal. Typically, the goal is to heal skin illnesses (warts, herpes, spots, scabs), occasionally – toothache.

The informants more frequently refer to these texts as *malda* (5 cases) than *užkalbėjimas* (1 case). One variant uses the verb *užkalbėti*:

> I myself only know how to charm (užkalbėti) warts. You need to say:
> Mėnuli, mėnuli,
> Tu iščystini dangų ir žemę,
> Iščystink ir mano kūną.
> (Moon, moon,
> You cleanse the heavens and the earth,
> Cleanse my body too.) Then take a pinch of soil and throw it behind yourself three times with a backward hand [14]. (LU: 316)

Since collectors of folklore often face the challenge of how to label such texts, one of them even used both terms *užkalbėjimas-maldelė* to refer to the prayer to the New Moon and added that his informant "recited this charm-prayer alongside religious prayers whenever she saw a new moon in the sky" (LU: 312).

The text under discussion can be considered as a transitional text from prayer to verbal charm: a prayer to the New Moon gradually takes on the features of a healing charm for skin illnesses. However, the fact that this text may and even should be recited not by a charmer but by a sick person himself, addressing the Moon directly without an intermediary, prevents it from being considered a regular verbal charm. Half of the written texts are therefore nothing more than prayers, in which people address the god of the New Moon, honouring him and seeking his blessings, e.g.:

> – Did you do anything when you saw a new moon?
> – Yes, we did. We used to say:
>
> *Jaunas Mėnulaicis,*
> *Dangaus karalaicis,*
> *Apčystinai dangų ir* žamį*,*
> *Apčystyk mano griešnų kūnų.*
>
> (Young Moon,
> King of the heavens,

You have cleansed the heavens and the earth,

Cleanse my sinful body too.)

We used to say it like that whenever we saw a new moon.

– Why did you say it like that?

– Because it was a prayer *(maldelė)*. It was like a prayer (*maldelė*). When you left your house and saw the New Moon, you would put your hands together and recite this prayer. […] When you finished this prayer, it seemed like you have fulfilled your obligation to the Moon until the next month, and you felt happier [15]. (LU: 318)

The text "New Moon, shine on my body" is a relevant example that illustrates how a prayer text can become more similar to a healing charm, although it does not fully become a regular charm due to the need to maintain a personal relationship with the deity.

Finally, it is time to examine the texts that are indisputably regarded as verbal charms, but people may call them prayers. What distinctions do people make between them, apart from the fact that *užkalbėjimas* is a narrower term than *malda*? Let us examine the verbal charms that were documented by Antanas Šerėnas[16], an organist and composer, in 1937 in his native village of Linkmenys (Ignalina region) and were recited to him by likely close relatives Jonas Šerėnas (aged 53) and Uršulė Šerėnienė (aged 49). The collector used the questionnaire from *A Folklore Collector's Handbook* (TVR), published in 1936, which provides the word *nukalbėjimas* "verbal charm", but the word *malda* "prayer" is not included in the questionnaire (TRV: 49). In the folk medicine material collected by Šerėnas, 5 verbal healing charms are found (for snake bite, erysipelas, *grižas* (swollen joints), *gumbas* (problems with digestion and the genitals), and rabid dog bite. Three of the documented charms incorporate both terms relevant to this investigation, namely *malda* and *užkalbėjimas*. We shall examine a verbal charm for snake bite:

There exists a verbal charm (*užkalbėjimas)* for snake bite. When an animal is bitten by a snake, it is necessary to wash it with St. Agatha's water and give it for the animal to drink, after which the animal will no longer swell. Then you have to charm (*užkalbėt*i). These are the words of this prayer (*malda)*. At first, ask what colour the animal is, and then say:

> Šalta *geležis! (3x9=27)* Šaltu *geležiu prikišk ir vėl atitrauk! (3x9=27.) Gyvatė kirto juodą gyvulį, bet Dievo Motina sako, kad gyvatės kirtimas nieko nemačys!*
>
> (Cold metal! (3x9=27) Push your cold metal and pull it away! (3x9=27). A snake bit a black animal, but Mother of God says that the snake bite will not work!) (And repeat those sentences again 3x9=27.)
>
> You must charm *(užkalbinėti)* when standing in the wind and the animal must be outside of the stable[17]. (LU: 201)

The term *užkalbėjimas* begins the description, yet the text of the verbal charm is referred to as *malda*. A similar situation can be observed in another text documented by Šerėnas. The collector (and, presumably, his informants) referred to the verbal charm for erysipelas as *malda*; however, they used the word *užkalbėjimas* to emphasize that the entire charming process consisted of 3, 6, 9, or 12 repetitions:

> People say that one can charm erysipelas, warts, and teeth. When the foot swells, or the hand or other place begins to itch, that is erysipelas. The wound should then be dressed with male hemp and sprinkled with rye flour, and the area should not be washed with water. And then you have to charm *(užkalbėti)*. Here is the way of charming *(užkalbėjimo būdas)*.
>
> You have to make the sign of the cross and say three times, "In the name of God the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen". And the sick person is told to say 5 *poteriai* [the daily Catholic prayers as Pater Noster – D.V.] at the wounds of the Lord Jesus. And the charmer says a prayer *(maldą)*:
>
> Ėjo *Viešpats Jezus Kristus per* žvyrių*, per* žemę*, per vandenį. Nešė rankoje 3 rožes: viena plyšo, antra prapuolė. Duok, Viešpatie Jezau Kristau, kad* šito*[ji] trečia rožė prapultų.* Šventas *Mykolai arkangelai,* šv. *Jonai Krikštytojau, visi* šv. *apaštalai:* šventas *Petrai ir Povilai, keturi evangelistai, devyni chorai angelų ir Tu, Marija, Motina Sopulingoji, melsk Viešpatį Jezų Kristų, kad jis pagydytų* šitų *rožę! Todėl,* šventas *Mykolai arkangelai,* šv. *Jonai Krikštytojau, visi* šv. *apaštalai,* šv. *Petrai ir Povilai, keturi evangelistai, devyni chorai angelų ir Tu, Marija, Motina Sopulingoji, melskis už jo sveikatą (arba jos)!*

> The Lord Jesus Christ walked on the gravel, on the earth, on the water. He carried 3 roses in his hand: one flower was broken, another had disappeared. Grant, Lord Jesus Christ, that this third rose may perish. Saint Michael the Archangel, St. John the Baptist, all the Holy Apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul, the four Evangelists, the nine choirs of angels, and you, Mary, Mother of Sorrows, pray to the Lord Jesus Christ to heal this rose! Therefore, Saint Michael the Archangel, St. John the Baptist, all the Holy Apostles, St. Peter and Paul, the four Evangelists, the nine choirs of angels, and you, Mary, Mother of Sorrows, pray *(melskis)* for his (or her) health!
>
> This must be done in detail. If the illness was new, it was enough to charm *(užkalbėti)* three times, if it was older, then six or nine times. Twelve times was the entire charming *(visas užkalbėjimas)*. The time of charming *(užkalbėjimo laikas)* is the rising and setting of the sun[18]. (LU: 370)

In the third case, Šerėnas used the term prayer (*maldelė)* to refer to the palindrome SOTOR. However, he began the description with the word *užkalbėjimas*, the meaning of which encompasses the process of writing down the formula:

> There is a way of charming (*užkalbėjimas)* for a rabid dog. You have to write down a certain prayer (*maldelė)* on a card and then give it to the dog to eat. These are the words of that prayer (*maldelė)*:
>
> Sotor
> Opero
> tenet
> Orepo
> Rotas
>
> This prayer (*maldelė)*, when written down, must be fed to the dog in the morning, at noon, and in the evening, and continue for the entire week until the dog recovers[19]. (LU: 564–565)

Here the word *užkalbėjimas* does not refer to the text of a verbal charm but indicates charming as a process, an integral part of which is writing the prayer down on a card.

A close look at the texts published in the book *Lithuanian Verbal Healing Charms* (LU) reveals that in a number of cases the word *užkalbėjimas* is used to refer to the process of charming, while the texts themselves tend to be called prayers. Consider the following examples:

> Prayer *(maldelė)* against snake
>
> Žeme žemybe*, dangaus aukštybe! Motina mūsų, pykčių karaliene! Buvai piktybė ir nueik piktybe!*
>
> Lowness of the earth, highness of the heavens! Our mother, queen of anger, you have been an angry thing, go away an angry thing!
>
> You must charm *(užkalbėti)* outside. Before and after charming (*užkalbėjimas)* you have to cross yourself three times. The prayer *(maldelė)* is to be recited three times. Recorded around 1930[20]. (LU: 219)

> Snake bite
>
> Ancient people knew *a prayer (malda)* for when a snake bit, such as this:
>
> *Oi tu kirmel, gelaž,* šaltavuodeg*, kad* įleidai *[nuodus] margai karvei, prašo [prašau] atlaisti!*
>
> Oh you worm, metal, cold-tailed thing, you have let your [poison] into a mottled cow, please take it out!
>
> If the animal is mottled, then [say] "mottled", if it is black, then say "black" according to its colour. If a person is bitten, say "a fair-haired person", and if a horse is bitten, you must mention the colour of the animal. Moreover, if a pregnant snake has bitten, the number of charmers *(kalbėtojai)* must be equal to the possible number of the snake's offspring. However, if you have killed the snake, the charming *(kalbėjimas)* will not work because there is no one to address.
>
> Recorded by Ratkus-Ratkevičius around 1920 in Papilė, Akmenė region[21]. (LU: 203)

The texts recorded in the 1920s and the 1930s attest that *malda* was the common name of a verbal charm's text, whereas *užkalbėjimas* encompassed the process of its recitation. The same trend is observed

in the fieldwork data collected in the early 21st century. The informants usually refer to verbal charms as prayers, but they use the words *užkalbėti* or žadėti to describe the act of reciting the charm, e.g., "I know how to charm (žadinėt*)* against snake but I am not able to do it myself. You need to recite the prayer (*maldelė)* and the Hail Mary three times in one breath"[22]. It becomes particularly noticeable during longer conversations with the charmers. In 2010, in the Lithuanian village of Girios in Gervėčiai area, Belarus (situated approximately 60 km from Lithuanian border and approximately 80 km from Vilnius) I had a conversation with a woman (aged 76), who charms for erysipelas, fright, swollen joints, and "for wind" (i.e., illness caused by wind)[23]. During one and a half hour, she used the word *malda* in the meaning "the text of a verbal charm" even 21 times, e.g.:

> "these are such prayers *(maldos)* that are used for charming *(užkalba)*";
>
> "there are prayers *(maldos)* specifically for these illnesses";
>
> "that is a special prayer *(malda)*, not *poteriai* [= the daily Catholic prayers said in the morning and evening, usually the Our Father, the Hail Mary, Glory be, and Apostles Creed; *poteriai* < Polish *pacierz* < Latin *Pater noster – D.V.*], but a special prayer *(malda)*";
>
> "there are such words *(*žodžiai*)*, they are not the Hail Mary, there are such prayers *(maldos)*";
>
> "Janiula, I will teach you to charm *(kalbėcie)* for erysipelas. When I die, you will mention my prayers *(maldelas)*, the ones I taught you";
>
> "she [a charmer – D. V.] left me her prayers *(maldas).*"[24]

Meanwhile, the word *užkalbėjimas* "verbal charm" was not used in her narration once. Even though she mentioned the word *kalbėjimai* a couple of times, it meant not the text but the action – recitation of a verbal charm. In the conversation, the word *kalbėjimai* surfaced for the first time when the charmer mused about men who do not wish to engage in charming for illnesses ("they have no time for charming (*kalbėjimus)*, they would rather drink, not charm *(kalbėcie)*!"), and for the second time, when she emphasized that she heals not with herbs but by charming ("I do not know any herbs to be used for healing, I only help by charming (*kalbėjimais)* for erysipelas and wind [...]")[25]

When talking about charming as a process, the charmer used the verbs *užkalbėti* (14 times) and *kalbėt*i (26 times). In Gervėčiai area, this verb is frequently used without the prefix *už-,* e.g., "I know how to charm (*kalbėcie)*", "only the ones who are born first and last, the youngest one, should charm (*kalbėcie)*", etc.

The conversation with the charmer from Gervėčiai area confirms that the word *malda* is used to refer to the text of a verbal charm, whereas the words *(už)kalbėjimas* and *(už)kalbėti* first and foremost refer to the process of charming. The Lithuanian terms *užkalbėjimas,* žadėjimas*, vardijimas* are made from these verbs by adding the suffix *-imas*, which can mean both an action and the result of an action, however, the first meaning is more prevalent in spoken Lithuanian. This tendency brings attention to the importance of recitation of a verbal charm. It should be noted that in Lithuania charms are recited in a particular way – holding one's breath. Before reciting the charm, the charmer breathes in and recites the text while holding their breath, and after finishing the charm, exhales in the direction of the sick person or an object that will be later used for healing (see LU: 89–90). Moreover, text repetitions, divided in certain series (e.g., 3 x 3, 3 x 9) are of great importance. Having fulfilled the specific requirements of charming, even such texts which are never called *užkalbėjimas,* žadėjimas*,* or *vardijimas*, e.g., canonical Christian prayers, may become a verbal charm. In Lithuania, the prayer Hail Mary is quite often added to verbal charms, however, sometimes it can be used as a verbal charm on its own, without any other formulas, if it is recited in the same way as a verbal charm, e.g.:

> Erysipelas is healed in this way: at sunset and at sunrise, (the charmer) uncovers the wound and recites Hail Mary three times without exhaling. After finishing the recitation, he exhales into the wound, and the "sacred air" blows away the pain and charms it.[26] (LU: 605)

> Charm against evil eyes
>
> Eyes may harm both big and small. Then you need to make the sign of the cross and [recite] Hail Mary three times without exhaling over some salt. Then dissolve the salt in water and wash yourself with it.[27] (LU: 592)

> How to make *mikcius* (a knotted thread for a sprained foot)

> Take a linen thread and tie knots on it, necessarily while sitting on a threshold. When making each knot, hold your breath and recite the Hail Mary, and after finishing making the knots, say Amen. Tie knots using the thumbs and fourth fingers of both hands.[28] (LU: 604)

Although charmers do not refer to the prayer Hail Mary as a verbal charm, the specific process of its recitation and fulfilment of additional requirements typical to charming can turn the prayer into one. In addition to holding one's breath, another distinctive way to recite the prayer is to recite it in reverse order, e.g.:

> For a snake bite, you have to recite the Hail Mary in reverse order, as follows:
>
> Amen death our of hour the at and now sinners us for pray God of Mother Mary Holy Jesus womb thy of fruit the is blessed and women amongst thou art blessed thee with is Lord the grace of full Mary Hail.
>
> This was taught to me by my grandmother. (LU: 596)[29]

> When uncharmed *(neažkalbėta)*, erysipelas *(rožė)* gets angry and spreads. It is charmed *(ažkalba)* by reciting the Hail Mary backwards and by sprinkling it with rye flour. The charming *(kalbėte)* must take place at sunrise or at sunset. (LU: 607)[30]

When a canonical prayer is recited in a specific way, other requirements associated with verbal charms are also imposed on its recitation (e.g., specific time and surroundings). The reciting person must in their turn be a qualified charmer who has taken over the charming practice directly from another charmer and fulfils certain innate conditions (is the first or the last child in the family, etc.), otherwise their prayer will be ineffective:

> My father's father and my mother knew a charming prayer (*užkalbėjimo maldą)* for erysipelas, but my mother could not pass it down to us. I was the second daughter, and it could only be passed down to the firstborn or youngest child, but my youngest sister was only twelve years old when mother died. Later, as we sorted through documents, we found the charming prayer *(užkalbėjimo maldą)*. The charming *(užkalbėjimas)* took place early in the morning, so we were able to see people coming to

> our mother to have it performed *(užkalbėti)*. The instructions said to perform it "early in the morning, at sunrise, or late in the evening, at sunset, at this specific time. You need to make the sign of the cross, breath in, and recite the Hail Mary without exhaling. Repeat this three times."
>
> But we could not use it, neither me nor my younger sister. We only knew about this charm *(užkalbėjimą)*, but it was not passed down to us. (LU: 606)[31]

When narrating the story about her mother, the informant used the words *užkalbėjimas* and *malda* alongside each other: "my mother knew a charming prayer *(užkalbėjimo maldą)* for erysipelas", "we found the charming prayer *(užkalbėjimo maldą)*". However, she makes a clear distinction in the meaning of these words: the Hail Mary is the prayer, whereas the charm is the thing that was not passed down to her, therefore, the charming cannot be performed. Verbal charm is much more than a prayer: it encompasses a specific process of recitation, ritual actions and charmer's qualification, which is acquired in traditionally established way. The text of a verbal charm is only one component, which in Lithuania was called *malda*, the same term used for religious prayers addressed to Christian saints, old gods, or non-human beings. Yet, in order for *malda* to affect reality as a charm, additional components that are unique to it are required.

CONCLUSIONS

The conducted investigation revealed four emic Lithuanian terms used to refer to verbal charms: *užkalbėjimas, užžadėjimas, užvardijimas*, and *malda*. The first three words have several morphological forms each, which can be formed by adding prefixes such as *už-, nu-, at-, ap-*, or can be used without any prefixes. These three terms should be considered as synonyms that are unevenly distributed throughout different regions of Lithuania. The word *užvardijimas* was used in northern and western Lithuania, while žadėjimas was more common in eastern and southern regions; both terms were also used in Lithuania Minor. Meanwhile, the word *užkalbėjimas* is known throughout Lithuania but is rare in western Lithuania (Samogitia); similar to the first two words, it was known in Lithuania Minor. All three words have verbs that denote the action of charming *(užkalbėti,* žadėti*, vardinti)*, as well as nouns that denote charmers *(užkalbėtojas,* žadėtojas*, vardininkas)*, which are derived

from the same root. The words *varduoti* "to charm" and *varduotojas* "a charmer" exhibit similarities with Latvian *vārdot* "to charm" and *vārdotājs "a charmer"* in terms of lexicon and semantics; this suggests the possibility of an ancient common term or an expression of substrate from extinct Baltic languages (possibly Curonian or Semigallian).

The word *malda* "prayer", which frequently refers to verbal charms in Lithuanian emic terminology, differs from the three previously discussed terms. This word encompasses a broad category of prayers that includes not only verbal charms, but also any texts intended to communicate with non-human beings (gods, plants, or animals). This category also encompasses canonical and non-canonical Christian prayers. Therefore, the word *malda*, which is considered by some linguists to be a common Indo-European heritage and by others to be a heritage of Proto-Balto-Slavic language, is not a specific term used to define verbal charms. It denotes verbal charm only as a text, while the specific terms *užkalbėjimas,* žadėjimas*,* and *vardijimas* also encompass the meaning of charming as a process.

From an emic perspective, the relationship between prayer and verbal charm in Lithuania differs from the binary opposition *religion* vs. *magic* formulated by scholars. Lithuanian terms are connected by a complementary relationship, rather than a binary one: *malda* is the text, and *užkalbėjimas* is first and foremost the process consisting of reciting the text according to specific rules, complemented by ritual actions, and performed by a qualified person (a charmer). Only when recited according to the standards of the charming tradition, a prayer can become a verbal charm. Therefore, Lithuanian emic terminology does not distinguish between prayers and verbal charms as two distinct genres of oral literature; instead, their difference lies not in the textual, but in the performative level.

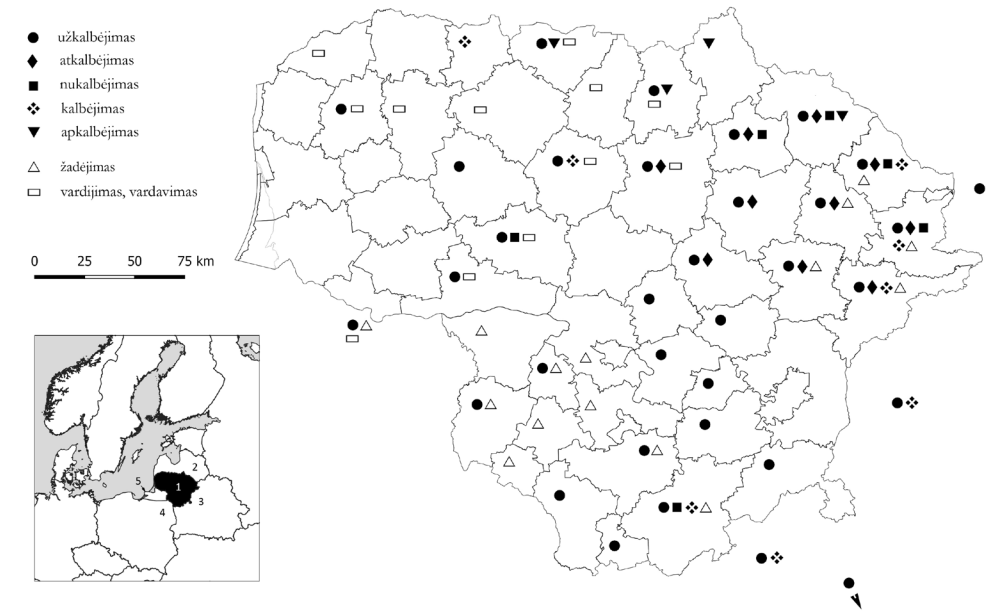

Figure 1. Distribution of Lithuanian emic terms for verbal charms in Lithuania (1), Belarus (Lithuanian-inhabited territories) (3) and former Lithuania Minor (now Kaliningrad region, Russia) (5). Number 2 indicates Latvia, 4 – Poland.

ABBREVIATIONS

ATU – Uther, Hans-Jörg 2004. *The Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography*, part I: Animal Tales, Tales of Magic, Religious Tales, and Realistic Tales, with an Introduction; part II: Tales of the Stupid Ogre, Anecdotes and Jokes, and Formula Tales; part III: Appendices, FF Communications, No. 284–286.

BRMŠ – *Baltų religijos ir mitologijos* šaltiniai, t. 2: *XVI amžius*; t. 3: *XVII amžius;* t. 4: *XVIII amžius* [Sources of the Baltic Religion and Mythology, Vol. 2: 16th century; Vol. 3: 17th century; Vol. 4: 18th century]. Sudarė Norbertas Vėlius. Vilnius: Mokslo ir enciklopedijų leidybos institutas, 2001–2005.

BsTB – *Jono Basanavičiaus tautosakos biblioteka, t. 12: Juodoji knyga* [The Jonas Basanavičius Folklore Library. The Black Book]. Surinko Jonas Basanavičius. Sudarė Kostas Aleksynas. Parengė Kostas Aleksynas, Leonardas Sauka. Įvadą ir paaiškinimus parašė Leonardas Sauka. Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas, 2004.

LKŽe – *Lietuvių kalbos* žodynas (t. I–XX, 1941–2002). *Elektroninis variantas (2005)* [The Dictionary of the Lithuanian language (vol. *(t. I–XX, 1941–2002)*). Electronic version (2005)]. Redaktorių kolegija: Gertrūda Naktinienė (vyriausioji redaktorė), Jonas Paulauskas, Ritutė Petrokienė, Vytautas Vitkauskas, Jolanta Zabarskaitė, available online: www.lkz.lt. (In the quotations, dictionary entries are referenced).

LLVV – *Latviešu literārās valodas vārdnīca* [Latvian Literary Language Dictionary]. Rīga: Zinātne, 1972–1996. available online: http://www.tezaurs.lv/llvv/ [viewed 2023-02-15].

LTR – Lithuanian Folklore Archives at the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore, manuscripts.

LTRF – Lithuanian Folklore Archives, sound recordings.

LU – *Lietuvių užkalbėjimai: gydymo formulės* = *Lithuanian Verbal Healing Charms*, sudarė, parengė ir įvadą parašė Daiva Vaitkevičienė = compiled, edited and introduction by Daiva Vaitkevičienė, Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas, 2008.

SlŠLP – Šiaurės *Lietuvos pasakos* [Fairy Tales of Northern Lithuania]. *S*urinko Matas Slančiauskas, parengė Norbertas Vėlius ir Adelė Seselskytė. Vilnius: 1974.

TRV – *Tautosakos rinkėjo vadovas* [A Folklore Collector's Handbook]. Kaunas: Lietuvių tautosakos archyvas, 1936.

NOTES

[1] „ Pimė, jo moteriškė, su kitoms moteriškėms / Džiaugės ir Dočiuką su gatavais tepalėliais / Mostyt tuo ir jo žaizdas aptvert susirinko; / Bet Pakulienė jį žadėt pas patalą stojos. / Štai Dočys tuojaus, tepalų smarkumą suuodęs / Ir žynavimo bobiško baisumą pajutęs, / Su sykiu nei koks Perkūns iš patalo šoko / Ir, iš papykio nusitvėręs didelį strampą, / Bobas su visokiais bobiškais tepalėliais / Iš stubos prismirdytos tuo išmušė lauka". („His wife, Pimė, the other women too, / Were overjoyed and eager to apply / Their special ointments and to dress his wounds. / Pakulis' wife stood right beside the bed / To say a charm. Dočys though, who could smell / The herbs and dreaded old wives' sorcery, 765 Leapt out of bed just like a thunderbolt / And, grabbing in his wrath a heavy stick, / That instant drove the wives with all their gear / Out of the stinking room into the street".) (Donelaitis 2013: 104–105; Donelaitis 1985: 114, translation by Peter Tempest).

[2] „Senovės žmonis, kad įkųsdava, tai jie mokedavo tokių maldų, kaip antai: „Oi tu kirmel, gelaž, šaltavuodeg, kad įleidai [nuodus] margai karvei, prašo [prašau] atlaisti!". Jei margas gyvulys, tai [sakyti] margam, jei juodas, tai juodam (taip sakyti valug plauko)".

[3] „[Jis] tuoj pakalbėjęs savo maldelą: 'Par pono dievo vardą, par lydeko įsakymą kad tas visas vaiskas į ožius pavirstų ir tuos karklus nugriaužtų' ".

[4] „Švinta Gabieta, užkaupta gulieta, užkurta žibieta. Kaip numirsma, uždek mums žvakelę, pasiremti lazdele ir eiti namučio". Pateikėja Zosė Buivydienė, 50 m., gyv. Vytogalos k., Upynos apyl., užrašyta 1974 m. Jos motina, kilusi nuo Varnių, sakydavusi, kad tai pati pirmoji malda rytmetį, ją reikia sukalbėti dar prieš „Tėve mūsų".

[5] „Kuriant ugnį, kalbama tokia maldelė: 'Švinta Gabija, švinta Gabieta, neik iš šitas vietas, būk un šitas vietas'".

[6] „ 'Gabieta, užguobta mygok, atguobta žibiek'. Taip melsdavosi užgesinant ugnį vakare. Pateikėja Kazė Petkienė, 80 m. iš Obelyno k. (kilusi iš Laukuvos), užrašyta 1985 m."

[7] „[R]eikia maldelį išmokc kalbėc, tai visada rasi [grybų]. Jis [mano brolis – D. V.] mane mokino: kai išlupsi grybą, tai paspjaudyk ant jo ir pasakyk: 'Grybuli, būk laimingas, kad rastau daug – ir brolius, ir seseris, ir visą giminę' ".

[8] Cf. the word maldyti at Vilnius University Lithuanian Etymological Dictionary database. Website: https://etimologija.baltnexus.lt/?w=maldyti [accessed 2 January 2022].

[9] „Liuob i girdės, ka maldo, kryžių sudėjus an karvės ragų".

[10] „Kai pamatai jauną mėnesį, kalbėk: ‘Jaunas jaunikaitis, Dieva karalaitis, tau auksa karūna, man sveikata’ “.

[11] „Užkalbėjimas nuo visokių ligų ir suturėjimui kraujo iš žaizdos. ‘Mėnuo, Mėnuo, Mėnulėli, dungaus šviesus Dievaitėli Duok jam ratų, man sveikatų, duok jam pilnystį – man Perkūno karalystį!’ Šią maldą mano tėviškėj daugumas gaspadorių moka ir tiki, kad padeda. Pasakotojas daug kartų yra matęs, kad sukalba maldelę, ir kraujas nustoja iš žaizdos bėgti. Tokių faktų daug matęs, todėl sako: ‘Reikia tikėt!’ “ LU: 252.

[12] „Jaunas Mėnulaiti,Dangaus karalaiti,

Koks tu esi čystas:

Apčystijai dangų ir žemę,

Apčystik ir mane jauną (seną)“.

[13] „Kai pirmą kartą jauną mėnulį, būdavo, pamatys, tai sako: ‘Jauno Mėno, seno Tėvo, Apčystyk kūną ir kraujų mano!’ Ir jei žaizdos kokios ar karpos, paima žemės, patrina. Senoviniai žmonės tai visokius varažbitus turėdavo“.

[14] „Karpas tik pati moku užkalbėti. Sakyti: ‘Mėnuli, mėnuli, tu iščystini dangų ir žemę, iščystink ir mano kūną’“. Po to reikia triskart paimt ir mest žemės per save atbula ranka“.

[15] „[Kai pamato jauną mėnulį, ar nieko nedarydavo?] Darydavom. Sako: ‘Jaunas Mėnulaicis, dangaus karalaicis, apčystinai dangų ir žamį, apčystyk mano griešnų kūnų’. Tai šitaip kałbėjo, kap jaunų mėnulukų užmatai. [Dėl ko taip kalbėdavo?] Va tep ka maldelė jau cia buvo. Tep ka maldelė. Išaini ant kiemo ir matai jau jaunų mėnulaicį, ir rankas jau sudedzi, ir tadu šitų maldelį kalbi. <...> Nu, jau atkalbi tu šitų maldelį, ir, kap rodos, atlinki jau tį tam jau, mėnuliui, pareigas iki kito mėnesio pradziai, jaucies jau laimingesnė“.

[16] The materials documented by Šerėnas are archived in a collection that was compiled by Stasys Biziulevičius (LTR 1253).

[17] „Nuo gyvatės įkirtimo yra užkalbėjimas. Kai gyvulį įkanda gyvatė, tai reikia šv. Agotos vandeniu apiprausti ir duoti gerti, tai daugiau nekels gyvulio. Ir tada reikia užkalbėti. Štai tos maldos žodžiai. Pirmiau pasiklausti, kokio plauko gyvulys, ir kalbėti: ‘Šalta geležis! (3x9=27) Šaltu geležiu prikišk ir vėl atitrauk! (3x9=27.) Gyvatė kirto juodą gyvulį, bet Dievo Motina sako, kad gyvatės kirtimas nieko nemačys!’ (Ir vėl tuos sakinius kartoti 3x9=27). Užkalbinėti reikia ant vėjo, kad būtų gyvulys išvestas iš tvarto“.

[18] „Žmonės kalba, kad galima užkalbėti rožė, votis ir dantis, kai kada koja sutinsta arba rankų ar kitų vietų ir pradeda niežti – tada būna rožė. Tuomet tą vietą reikia aprišti kanapių plaiskaniais ir apibarstyti ruginiais miltais ir tuomet nereikia tą vietą vandeniu plauti. Ir tuomet reikia užkalbėti. Štai vieno užkalbėjimo būdas. Reikia peržegnoti triskart sakydamas „Vardan Dievo Tėvo, ir Sūnaus, ir Dvasios Šventosios, amen“. O tam ligoniui liepiama kalbėti 5 poterius prie Viešpaties Jezaus žaizdų. O tas užkalbėtojas po to žegnojimo kalba maldą: ‘Ėjo Viešpats Jezus Kristus per žvyrių, per žemę, per vandenį. Nešė rankoje 3 rožes: viena plyšo, antra prapuolė. Duok, Viešpatie Jezau Kristau, kad šito[ji] trečia rožė prapultų. Šventas Mykolai arkangelai, šv. Jonai Krikštytojau, visi šv. apaštalai: šventas Petrai ir Povilai, keturi evangelistai, devyni chorai angelų ir Tu, Marija, Motina Sopulingoji, melsk Viešpatį Jezų Kristų, kad jis pagydytų šitų rožę! Todėl, šventas Mykolai arkangelai, šv. Jonai Krikštytojau, visi šv. apaštalai, šv. Petrai ir Povilai, keturi evangelistai, devyni chorai angelų ir Tu, Marija, Motina Sopulingoji, melskis už jo sveikatą (arba jos)!’

Taip reikia smulkiai atlikti, kad dar tik šviežiai, tai užtenka trijų kartų užkalbėt, o jei jau seniau, tai šešiskart ar devyniskart. O dvylikakart – tai jau visas užkalbėjimas. Kalbėjimo laikas – saulės tekėjimas ir nusileidimas”.

[19] „Nuo pasiutusio šunio yra užkalbėjimas. Reikia nurašyti tokia maldelė ant kortelės ir tada tas lapelis reikia duoti suėsti. Štai tos maldelės žodžiai:

Sotor

Opero

tenet

Orepo

rotas

Šią maldelę reikia išrašius supenėt šuniui, duoti rytais, pietumis ir vakarais, taip per visą savaitę, kol pasveiks".

[20] „Maldelė nuo gyvatės. 'Žeme žemybe, dangaus aukštybe! Motina mūsų, pykčių karaliene, buvai piktybė ir nueik piktybe!' Užkalbėti reikia ore. Prieš ir po užkalbėjimo tris kartus persižegnoti. Maldelė kalbama tris kartus. Užrašyta apie 1930 m."

[21] „Gyvatės gėlimas. Senovės žmonis, kad įkųsdava, tai jie mokedavo tokių maldų, kaip antai: 'Oi tu kirmel, gelaž, šaltavuodeg, kad įleidai margai karvei, prašo [prašau] atlaisti!'

Jei margas gyvulys, tai margam, jei juodas, tai juodam taip sakyti valug plauko. Jei žmogus, tam žmogui geltonplaukiui, o jei arkliui, tai teip sakyt, koks gyvulio yr plauks, tai tep ir kalbėti. Toliau, jei įkando vaikinga, tai reikia surinkti tiek kalbėtojų, kiek galėjo būt jai vaikų. Teip jei užmušei, tai kalbėjims nenumačis, bo nebėr kam beprašyti.

Užrašė Ratkus-Ratkevičius apie 1920 m. Papilė, Akmenės r. sav."

[22] „Aš moku žadinėt no gyvatės, bet aš negaliu – raikia nekvėpavus iškalbėt to maldelė, i „Sveika, Marija" tris kartus". Told by a woman, aged 87, from the village of Vosiūnai in Adutiškis eldership, Švenčionys region. Documented by Daiva Vaitkevičienė in 2010. LTRF cd 437.

[23] The audio recording LTRF cd 740.

[24] „Čia jau yr maldos tokios ir užkalba"; „specialiai nuo tų ligų yr maldos"; „ten malda jau, ne poteriai, ten jau malda";

„tokie jau žodžiai yra, tį jau nė ,,Sveika, Marija", tį maldos tokios"; ,,Janiula, aš tav išmokysiu nuo rožės kalbėcie. Kap aš pamirsiu, taip koc mano maldelas minėsi, kų aš tau išmokiau"; „ana jau man paliko tas savo maldas".

[25] „Į kalbėjimus jiem nėr laiko, [geriau] kad išgercie, ne kalbėcie!"; „žolių nė kokių nežinau, nuo ko kokių žolių gydzycis, nu va tai kalbėjimais nuo rožės ir nuo vėjo..."

[26] „Nuo rožės šitaip gydo: saulei tekant ir leidžiantis atidengia (burtininkas) žeizdą ir kalba tris „Sveika, Marija" neatsidusdamas. Sukalbėjįs atsidūsta ir tuo oru pučia žeizdą – ir „šventu oru" nupučia skaudėjimą, užkalba".

[27] „Užkalbėjimas nuo akių. Akys ir dideliam, ir mažam iškadija. Tadu reikia persižegnoti ir [kalbėti] triskart „Sveika, Marija" neatsidusus an druskos. Tadu druska vandenin ir apsipraust".

[28] „Kaip daryti mikcių. Paimti lininį siūlą ir rišti mazgelius, būtinai sėdint ant slenksčio. Kiekvieną mazgą rišant sulaikius kvapą kalbėti „Sveika, Marija", o baigus rišti – „Amen". Rišti abiejų rankų nykščiais ir bevardžiais pirštais".

[29] „Nuo gyvatės įkirtimo reikia kalbėti sveikamariją atbulai, būtent: 'Amen mirties mūsų valandoje ir dabar griešnus mus už melskis Motina Dievo Marija Švinta Jezus iščius vaisius Tava pagirtas ir moterų tarp Tu pagirta pilnoji malonės Marija Sveika'. Taip mane mokė mano senelė".

[30] „Neažkalbėta rože ažpyksta ir plečias. Ažkalba kalbėdami atažagariai „Sveika, Marija" ir barsta ruginiais miltais. Kalbėte reikia saulai tekant ar leidžiantis".

[31] „Tėtės tėvelis ir mano mama žinojo rožės užkalbėjimo maldą, tačiau mums negalėjo perduoti jos. Aš buvau antroji dukra, o galima perduoti pirmagimei arba pagrandukui, tačiau jaunėlė teturėjo tik dvylika metų, kai mirė mama. Vėliau mes, tvarkydami dokumentus, atradome užkalbėjimo maldą. Užkalbėjimas vykdavo anksti ryte, tai mes matydavome, kai atvažiuodavo pas mamą žmonės užkalbėti. Ten ir buvo taip parašyta: 'Anksti ryte saulei tekant arba vėlai vakare, kai saulė tik leidžiasi, šituo laiku. Reikia persižegnoti, įkvėpti oro ir vienu įkvėpimu sukalbėti „Sveika, Marija". Ir taip padaryti tris kartus.'

Bet mes negalėjome juo naudotis – nei aš, nei jaunoji sesuo. Tik žinojome šitą užkalbėjimą, bet jis yra neperduotas."

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BIO

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VERBAL MAGIC IN CONTEMPORARY WOMEN'S NARRATIVES ABOUT NIGHTMARE EXPERIENCES IN ESTONIA

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Abstract: The focus of this article is on the contemporary use of verbal magic in situations interpreted in personal experience narratives as nightmare (old hag) attacks whereby the emphasis is on women's perspective. First, the author gives a general overview of the outputs of protective verbal magic in contemporary Estonian material to situate more specific verbal magic used for warding off the supernatural attacker during the nightmare experiences. The author concludes that the topic of nightmare attacks as well as verbal magic against them is still relevant in modern folklore. Although elaborated long charms are rare, contemporary verbal magic against nightmare in general is even more heterogenous as in older tradition. Expectably, new international trends of verbal magic have influenced contemporary tradition but some key elements from older tradition are still present, combined with protective objects and rituals from older folklore as well as diverse new sources.

Keywords: contemporary beliefs and practices, nightmare, personal experience narratives, verbal magic

INTRODUCTION

This article is about the contemporary use of verbal magic in situations interpreted as nightmare (old hag) attacks with the focus on personal experience narratives narrated by women. Verbal magic as any magic

is apt to evolving and adapting to changing circumstances, therefore *the aim of this article is to analyse the dynamics of its contemporary use, viewed on the backdrop of the more general contemporary techniques of protective verbal magic and parallels with nightmare descriptions from older Estonian narrative tradition in order to find out to what extent is verbal magic against nightmare attacks still used and how present-day international trends in the spiritual-religious milieu have influenced such outputs*.

The term "verbal magic" is understood in this article as the use of words, phrases and formula with the purpose of protecting oneself magically against a frightening situation and/or supernatural being – thus greatly overlapping with the definition of 'word magic', proposed by Merriam-Webster dictionary as "magic involving the use of words in a manner determined by a belief that the very act of uttering a word summons or directly affects the person or thing that the word refers to." However, verbal magic is usually embedded into a larger context of magic and ritual which causes specific terminological and defining challenges (cf., Tambiah 1985: 60, Tsonkova 2015: 7). Verbal magic used against nightmare in Estonian older tradition can be characterized by a syncretic use of Christian prayers and magic charms and incantations whereas in contemporary tradition various international loans from spiritual and self-help teachings have been further picked up, such as mantras or affirmations that may additionally contain elements from positive psychology and thus not always include a clear magical component. Thus, genre classification and terminology can be even more blurred than before (cf., Fisher 2016). Sometimes an allegedly traditional element of verbal magic can come even from pop culture, for example Harry Potter spells, whose protective use among pupils was reported in Estonian school-lore documented in 2018 (Hiiemäe 2020: 87–88).

Verbal magic in the context of protective magic has a long history and a universal character (cf., Roper 2009: xiv) whereby the border between curative and apotropaic verbal magic may be fuzzy (cf. similar observation by Tsonkova 2015: 77). Thousands of texts involving verbal magic for various protective purposes, including against nightmare, have been documented in Estonia in the 19th and early 20th century (to a lesser extent also later in the 20th century).

Belief narratives about protective verbal magic in general and for warding off nightmare in particular are also prevalent in contemporary sources, including internet forums and media narratives, with collec-

tions of authentic traditional folklore published by folklorists likely contributing to the spread of this information. For instance, in some internet forum discussions on nightmare experiences, there were direct references to topical books (e.g., Eisen's popular book that was first published in 1922 and re-published as an internet version in 2002). Yet in children's folklore, the topic of verbal magic against nightmare was not much highlighted. Although there were several dozen self-reported descriptions of nightmare attacks in the School-lore 2018 material, verbal magic was mentioned only once (in the form of reading a prayer).

MATERIAL AND METHODS

As source material for this article served contemporary folklore texts (mainly personal experience narratives narrated by women, to a lesser extent also by teenaged schoolgirls) from around the past decade. Although the material came from various sources and age groups, the common denominator of the selected sample was that these were narratives related to encounters interpreted as nightmare (old hag) attacks. For the sub-chapter about the role of verbal magic in the context of contemporary protective magic in general, the material collected for a book about women's rituals (Hiiemäe, Kõiva 2022) was additionally used. Topical folklore from older tradition was reviewed as reference (ca. 500 texts from Estonian Folklore Archives from 19th to early 20th century) to find out about continuities of tradition. As there were no significant regional differences detected, the article does not elaborate about regional aspects.

The contemporary material came from responses to the fears' rubric of the School-lore 2018 questionnaire (3717 respondents in total, with the abbreviation KP) where respondents shared mainly their own experiences or related stories from their family members, threads from internet forums discussing nightmare experiences from 2012–2024, and student interviews about protective rituals from 2017–2023 (ca. with 300 persons predominately belonging to the interviewers' circle of friends and relatives, sometimes accompanied by the interviewers' comments about their own experiences, with the abbreviation VPK). Although internet forum posts are mostly anonymous, the gender of the writer was nevertheless often identifiable (e.g., in cases when the person referred in the course of the discussion to herself as mother or woman or as having experienced a pregnancy). Keyword search was used for finding topical narratives. However, the search for traditional

terms does not always give results because in contemporary material non-traditional terms can be used for describing nightmare experiences or protection against them, inspired by some newer tradition (e.g. the term "protective songs" (*kaitselaulud*) came up that is non-existent in older material), therefore frontal reading of the material was partly also used. In addition to methods from folkloristics (e.g., qualitative content and motif analysis, context and discourse analysis, historical comparisons) this analysis got inspiration from approaches from medical anthropology and social psychology.

An attempt was made to analyze responses to nightmare experiences from a genderized viewpoint to discern how gender can influence the content of such experiences and the ways people narrate, interpret and react to them. Previous research has established that women retrospectively report more about nightmares (here meaning in general terrifying dreams that awaken the sleeper) than males (cf. a scoping review by Schredl, Reinhard 2011) whereby this difference has been attributed to socialization factors by means of which females experience more negative affect and have associated nightmares (Kelly & Daughtry 2021: 131). My empirical research has shown that female respondents tend to write or narrate about their perceived supernatural experiences more in-depth and be more open to interviewing, women are also more active in sharing their nightmare experiences in the discussions of women's and family internet forums, thus the focus in this article is also on women's narratives. By the reluctance of sharing nightmare experiences by male respondents, the discrepancy with the stereotypic self-identification of men that prescribes being in control may also play a role, for example Levin & Nielsen (2007: 482) found in their study that women are more open in reporting negative experiences and also tend to report more emotionally-laden memories. In some analyzed nightmare personal experience narratives that were narrated by men, they noteworthily tended to position themselves as being able to have or gain control. However, women's narrations expressed more often feeling vulnerable and scared in relation to the old hag experience.

VERBAL MAGIC IN THE CONTEXT OF CONTEMPORARY PROTECTIVE MAGIC

Contemporary methods of protective magic are remarkably heterogeneous, interweaving elements from both older traditions and newer religious currents whereby keeping special protective objects (such as

semiprecious stones or figures of protective angels) at home or wearing them are often the main component of a ritual. Elaborated traditional curative and protective charms can be mainly found in the repertoire of practitioners of alternative medicine and esoteric teachings; in other spheres a steady narrowing of the stock of traditional verbal magic can be observed (cf., Kõiva 1995: 226). As a new form of verbal magic, mantras and chants of protection, often learned in camps or workshops of esoteric teachings, are worth noting as their use was also reported in narratives about nightmare attacks.

Statistically, there are few people of Christian affiliation in Estonia (among native Estonians only 11 percent Lutherans and 3 percent Russian Orthodox according to 2021 census), but one of the most common traditional protective texts is still the Lord's Prayer. In several narratives the narrator directly mentioned not being a Christian (e.g., in EFITA, VPK, N7, woman, 30, 2022), but having a belief already in the family tradition that the Lord's Prayer would protect in a difficult situation. Around a tenth of the texts from the VPK and KP material sets referred to verbal magic but in a number of cases only a general hint to "praying" or "saying protective words" was mentioned, like in the following example that combines a rather modern-sounding ritual with "words": "To get rid of problems at home, I take an orange, say the words and throw it into running water, it's good if you can do it from a bridge" (EFITA, VPK, N4, woman, age range 60–65, 2020).

In the modern teachings of positive psychology and esotericism, there is a strong suggestion that in order for a wish to come true, it must be said out loud (examples about respective teachings and books in Estonia can be found in Alkeemia 2018, Nafousi 2022), and such an understanding is also reflected in the contemporary vernacular material, for example:

> My mother also believes in the power of words and thinks that if you really want something very much, you have to say it out loud. Then this wish will come true. She always reminds me of this before exams. (EFITA, VPK, N5, woman, 25, 2021)

In the context of nightmare attacks, this reasoning pairs with the traditional understanding that the name of the person plaguing a sleeper as nightmare, or charms warding off nightmare must be spoken out loud.

The topic of energy vampires is unknown in older folklore, but frequent in the new material examined for this article, so verbal magic was also represented to parry such situations, like in the following example:

> I am a relatively sensitive person myself and I can recognize an energy vampire. I prefer to stay away from them, I don't use any techniques to protect myself. If at all, then with words in my mind: "Everything that you use to harm me comes back in a circle." (EFITA, VPK, N9, woman, 60, 2022)

Explanations related to sucking energy or attacking on energy level come up also in relation to nightmare attacks.

Similarly, special words were used in relation to places that were perceived as dangerous, for example one woman narrated that place-related horror stories from others make her feel eery and she feels that there can be a connection with place energy, thus when coming into such a place she starts quietly repeating mantras, such as "My energy belongs to me" or "I'm light and love." The same narrator also mentioned that as child she used to read the Lord's Prayer in such places because her mother had told her that it helps (EFITA, VPK, N20, woman, 25, 2023). Another woman said that she is afraid of attics of old houses because of a strange experience from her childhood, therefore when she really needs to go to such a place, she always carries a torch, a protective bracelet and repeats the words "Everything is well and I'm protected" (EFITA, VPK, N18, woman, 21, 2023). There was also a woman who was afraid of closed rooms and had special verbal means for feeling better:

> My mother (49 years old) is afraid of small, closed spaces. She doesn't know how this feeling arose or where it comes from, but it started when she was a couple of years old. She has thought that maybe it could come from a past life. In order to escape from such unpleasant feelings in closed spaces, she chants mantras and other protective songs that protect and support her. When she is near people with whom it is uncomfortable to be with, chanting protection songs also helps, even if they are sung only quietly. (EFITA, VPK, N18, woman, 21, 2023)

On the other hand, similarly to the older tradition, the connection with the ancestors is still perceived important, and some of the narratives mentioned one's deceased parent or grandparent as one's guardian angel and the habit to thank them regularly either in thought or loudly for granting further protection (e.g., EFITA, VPK, N12, woman, 77, 2022). For example, in one case a woman narrated how her mother told her the following words when she was preparing for her third driving test after two unsuccessful attempts: "Grandma is with you and helps you to

pass the test", after which she was able to pass the test (EFITA, VPK, N21, woman, 46, 2023).

Thus, contemporary verbal magic is usually short, pragmatic and functional and doesn't presume a strong sacral or religious dimension. As protective magic along its verbal outputs against evil supernatural beings is nowadays a much more private matter, dialogic incantations (Kõiva 2007) and other collective forms of verbal magic didn't occur in the examined material.

VERBAL MAGIC IN CONTEMPORARY WOMEN'S PERSONAL EXPERIENCE NARRATIVES ABOUT NIGHTMARE EXPERIENCE

The supernatural experiences that are in modern personal experience narratives most often associated with physical pain and discomfort are exposures that are interpreted as nightmare attacks. The descriptions of heavy bodily sensations related to such experiences have remained similar over time, being characterized by the impression of wakefulness, a strong feeling of intrusion or pressure, inability to move, breathing difficulties and intense fear, sometimes also sensations of pain (Adler 2011: 37, Hiiemäe 2018: 292). Dániel Bárth (2024) has noted that especially in the case of illnesses, the needs of healing are constantly activated regardless of historical periods, and believers seek immediate, direct, and effective solutions within the current dominant religious field. The same applies to frightening and painful experiences – such as situations comprehended as nightmare attacks. The nightmare experience has many cross-cultural patterns (cf., Hufford 1989, Adler 2011: 8ff, Milne 2017), having been documented from various places through history along with protective rituals but there has been not much analysis of verbal magic used against it in contemporary settings.

Examples of long and artfully elaborated charm texts for preventing or stopping the unpleasant experience have been documented from various European folklore traditions, such as the following text from German origin:

> I lay me here to sleep;
> No night-mare shall plague me,
> Until they swim all the waters
> That flow upon the earth,

> And count all the stars
> That appear in the firmament!
> Thus help me God Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen! (Kuhn 1859: 191; see more examples in Milne 2017)

In Estonian older tradition, comparable long verbal magic texts are rare but below is still one longer example:

> Against nightmare. Take three crusts of rye bread and make three five-pointed stars on every crust with chalk and read these words three times on each crust: "The world may still help me to hear his [probably Christ's] words. Maybe others threaten me, I despise this voice – it doesn't last forever. (ERA II 202, 95 (41) < Pärnu < Kihnu, 1938)

In the following, some main categories of contemporary verbal magic against nightmare are presented.

1. THE LORD'S PRAYER AND OTHER PHRASES WITH CHRISTIAN CONTENT

One of the most frequently suggested remedies is reading prayers from Christian tradition. Some authors have tried to differ between magic charms and prayers, arguing that prayers can be characterized by a religious relationship between the one who says them and the addressee of the prayer (e.g., Vaitkevičienė 2008: 68). In the modern material, using a prayer often doesn't presuppose any active religious background or commitment, thus being used in the function of a magic charm or sometimes even rather simply as a technical aid cited mechanically when wanting to end an unpleasant situation. In contemporary use, there is also not much attention paid to the Christian content; reading prayers for protection is rather triggered by the association that they possess some intrinsic protective or sacral power. Thus, it is oftentimes described rather as a mechanical or technical procedure where believing seems of secondary importance (Hiiemäe 2018: 308).

As in older folklore (cf., Eisen 1922/2002), the Lord's Prayer is mentioned most frequently in contemporary narratives or sometimes even only the spelling of the name Jesus Christ is considered sufficient. In older texts also formula like "Oh God" (e.g., ERA II 188, 410/1 (48) < Tallinn < Noarootsi, 1938) or "In the name of father, son and the holy

spirit" occur. In the older tradition, the use of the Lord's Prayer could obtain magical additions, for example: "But if a nightmare comes, the Lord's Prayer must be read backwards and the big toe of the left foot moved" (ERA I 3, 411 (24) < Kirbla, 1930) but the method of backwards-reading didn't come up in the contemporary material – for a person who has no close connection with the prayer tradition, even reading the Lord's prayer in normal way may be difficult. Next example reveals that the experiencer who shares her story on a women's forum needs to find the prayer text first and then tries to memorize it. A woman from older generation – in this case mother – is the source of respective information, telling her about the protective power of the Lord's Prayer and the bible. It is noteworthy that according to this personal experience narrative, the attacks of the nightmare continued despite of reading the prayer and keeping the bible close. Nevertheless, the experiences concludes that the ritual still helped to some extent:

> Well, the best things always happen to me – tonight the nightmare visited me again, this time it wasn't as scary as the last one, but still, damn it, who hates me so much? My mother also gave me a bible under my pillow because it should help. In the evening before going to bed I even looked up the Lord's Prayer and read it, trying to memorize it, but still it happened :S As you know, the bible was supposed to keep it away, but interestingly, still the thing got close to me, but it wasn't that strong as before, I think the bible somewhat helped, because it seemed like it [the nightmare] attempted to come but it didn't turn out the best – this is already still something :-S. (N2, naistekas.delfi.ee/foorum, 2010)

In contemporary women's accounts, the grandmother is most often mentioned as the source of traditional protective magic. In several personal experience narratives about nightmare experience, there is a clear hint to the intergenerational transmission of knowledge, such as: "I have been taught since I was a child that the Lord's Prayer protects me in such situations and I still use it" (EFITA, VPK, N16, woman 35, 2023). In the next example, a woman describes the nightmare experience of a good female friend as gradually intensifying: it is first perceived as the sensation of air moving, then as shuffling footsteps nearing, and finally as a heavy weight falling on her. The narrative culminates with a solution and again contains a reference that the protective tools were learned from grandmother:

> In a frenzy of fear, the thought came to her that grandmother had once said that with nightmare one should read the Lord's Prayer. She, however, could not move or even make a peep, the weight bore down on her stomach and chest with tremendous force, until she was out of breath. With effort she only managed to think "Amen" and suddenly the heaviness was gone. There was no one in the room, the door was still closed, she was all sweaty either from fear or from great effort. (EFITA, VPK, M1, middle-aged woman, 2018)

While in older magical protection rituals, the word "amen" is often the word that sums up and closes a magical act, then in the above case it also proves effective separately.

As already mentioned above in the context of general contemporary protective magic, in some personal experience narratives related to warding off the nightmare, it was not clear what the prayer was and how lengthily it was read, as in the following example:

> Once when I had some nightmare-like things, I used prayer beads, reading the prayer every night, twisting the beads between my fingers. For some reason I believe in them because I got rid of my nightmares by using them. (KP, ID32, girl, 16, 2018)

Interesting is the use of the protective words "The blood of Jesus" in the next example where these words are combined with turning to angels for help. Communication with protective angels is extremely popular in contemporary Western spirituality trends (cf., Draper & Baker 2011, Arnold & Walter 2017) but the theological meaning of the blood of Jesus only seldom comes to fore as teachings focusing on love and freedom from fear and suffering are preferred:

> I myself have quite a lot of experiences where angels have helped me. One story is about nightmares. I have been tormented by nightmares all my life. It's very scary. Some creature just comes and occupies your body and scares you. At this stage you cannot speak or move. You can only think. And once I tried calling angels in my mind and it worked. In a second, this creature was gone. I also know that if you say "the blood of Jesus" in your mind, this creature also should disappear immediately. (EFITA, VPK, N2, woman, age range 20–30, 2018)

2. NEGOTIATIONS AND REQUESTS DIRECTED TO THE NIGHTMARE

In the contemporary religious landscape, several traditional supernatural notions have become obscure as the old concepts and meanings are no longer in active use. For example, when asked about rituals in connection with nightmare, a woman told the narrative below that provides a personal experience story that mentions "old souls" – a term unknown in older folklore and usually used with a different meaning in contemporary spiritual traditions where it usually refers to someone who has reincarnated already many times and thus has much empathy and spiritual understanding. However, the behavior of the described "old souls" has certain overlaps with the activities usually attributed to the nightmare (disturbing during sleep). Similarly novel is the described conversation – which I consider here also verbal magic – with these supernatural beings:

> When I go to sleep in a place where it is said that old souls still move, I sometimes feel a different energy in the air. I've been taught that if you ask them in your thoughts (or loudly) that they would help you to have a deep sleep and accept your presence, they won't bother you and would let you sleep peacefully. I have used this ritual sometimes. (EFITA, VPK, N3, woman, 44, 2020)

In the next example text, traditional narrative motives related to nightmare and house spirit become intermingled. A new motif is "making peace" – a rather well-known element in contemporary esoteric healing traditions (an example of a respective teaching can be found in Alkeemia 2024). The narrative contains negotiations that are somewhat similar to the ones described in the previous example text, but they are accompanied by offering food and drink that resembles already a more classical reconciliation ritual:

> When I moved to a city apartment, someone already lived there. I think it was a house spirit or a house old man or whoever. Anyway, he was such a furry – I saw him once through an accidental side-glance and my daughter felt his presence as well. It was a cat-like creature, and for example, when you were sleeping, you suddenly felt him come to the top of your body. I was completely afraid, and once I saw him then through a

> side-glance, but immediately he seemed to vanish into thin air. Then I talked to him – I was taught how I should talk, because I nevertheless had broken into that home as a stranger. I talked and made peace with him and put him food and drink for the night. After that, there has been no cognitive contact with him. But if some other person stays with us, sometimes he can still play tricks. For example, he turns on the TV – then you have to talk to him again that everything is fine. He seems to know who is good and who is bad. (EFITA, VPK, N17, woman, 45, 2023)

In older folklore, no such friendly dialogue takes place, as forceful intervention was considered justified in the case of confronting an aggressive and demonic being. A well-known form of defence was recognizing the person who came in the shape of nightmare and calling out his or her name, sometimes accompanied by shouting harsh vulgar words directed to this person (as for example in ERA II 37, 611 (5) < Jõhvi, 1931). According to traditional belief narratives, it was also useful to directly command the person who was suspected to be the nightmare to stop plaguing (e.g., ERA II 167, 139 (3) < Koeru, 1937, cf. the same motive in Eisen 1922/2002, and in international context Milne 2017: 100). In contemporary material, only some texts in a specific forum of paranormal topics (para-web.com) contained instructions to use swearwords or just short commands like "Enough!" or "Stop!" against nightmare.

3. TALKING TO ENERGIES AND OTHER APPROACHES RELATED TO NEW AGE TEACHINGS

In contemporary New Age teachings, the concept of "energy" has a significant role, believed to be a mediator between natural and supernatural realms and building a relationship between an individual and the environment (Kivari 2012: 49). Several elements of the nightly attacker in the next example text are described similarly as in traditional nightmare attack narratives (e.g., a personified intrusionover which the sleeper has no control and thus experiences fear), but rather surprisingly the attacker is soon interpreted as the personified influenza energy. The experiencer calls Archangel Michael and uses prayers but in the content of these verbal utterances the term "energy" comes up again, thus being in line with the modern spiritual traditions:

> I have the story of a friend. Many years ago, while going to sleep one night, she felt that someone wanted to enter her, it was like

> some sort of energy scratching and signaling that it was coming for something. When she went to sleep, she felt fear and called Archangel Michael to help and prayed that if this energy was not needed, he would take it away, and in a minute the bad feeling was gone. And the next day she still was curious enough to get to know what energy it was, and on a neutral surface, without fear, they met, so-to-say. It turned out that it was an influenza and she had encountered the energy body of this influenza, so-to-say. (EFITA, VPK, N11, woman 50, 2022)

Another example similarly involves a reference to Archangel Michael in a popular Estonian women's forum where a woman asks for advice to help her mother who has been plagued by nightmare. As mentioned above, angels are well visible in the general Estonian spiritual milieu and ways of communicating for receiving help and protection are learned from heterogenous, mainly non-Christian sources (cf. Uibu 2012: 70). One protective ritual suggested in the forum combines several traditions: the use of water blessed in a Christian church, using salt that is well-known in traditional folk magic, feng shui techniques and a verbal part that contains elements from modern spiritual teachings, for example the concept "negativity" that never occurs in a traditional prayer:

> Bring blessed water from the church or sanctify the water yourself with salt. Take a candle (you can also bring it from the church) and holy water and start consecrating the home from the front door in a clockwise direction (stand facing the front door, then you will understand the direction) and sprinkle holy water in each corner and say the words that you have prepared for yourself, for example: "With this holy water I cleanse my home of all negativity". But do it soulfully and alone and in a moment when there is no one at home to disturb, or no excessive noise. You can also draw some feng-shui protective sign or the Michael's sword on the home door. (user N1, naistekas.delfi.ee/foorum, 2009)

Thus, availability of various information currents related to spirituality and magic brings along novel combinations of protective elements that are also reflected in innovative outputs of verbal magic.

4. UNIQUE AND ELABORATED MODERN INCANTATIONS

A couple of internet forum posts presented unique incantation texts. For example, a woman who suffered of nightmare attacks claimed that the incantation "Eosite aolite sal! Eosite aolite sal!" suddenly just came into her mind out of nowhere and after repeating it, although not knowing the meaning of these words, the nightmare attacks stopped (naistekas.delfi.ee/foorum, kasutaja: S.E., 2012). Magic words whose meaning is not clear can quite often be found in older folklore, but self-created incantations are rare, because the effect of an incantation was usually namely associated with its traditionality as a proof of its efficacy (cf., Hiiemäe 2018: 308, Kõiva, Kuperjanov 2023).

The following ritual that contains also verbal parts is again unique (especially the "fire boys" as addressees of the ritual) and was suggested against nightmare in an internet forum for paranormal topics:

> You can also meditate. Place burning candles around you. Sit in the middle. Take a suitable meditation position. Close your eyes. Ask the fire-boys to help you clean yourself. Imagine that you draw a "flame" from these lights closer and closer. It should be light yellow. Now move with this "flame" from the top of your head to the tips of your toes. Until it succeeds. If during meditation you suddenly smell an unpleasant smell, it means that one of the bad guys has been burned. When you finish meditating, thank the fire-boys for their help. You can also ask the sun and the moon for help. (K1, para-web.org, 2015)

Some motives (e.g., cleaning with an imagined flame) in this ritual can be found in translated New Age books containing various rituals for energetic cleansing – however, none of these elements (besides fire as a universal protective element) do occur in older folklore.

CONCLUSIONS

While the belief in many supernatural beings (e.g. the plague spirit) has receded and the verbal magic associated with them has also disappeared from the living tradition, the nightmare (or old hag) experiences continue as a physically perceived sensation even today. Intense experiences interpreted as nightmare attacks presuppose and trigger active narrative reasoning and a readiness for experimenting with various

available methods of regaining one's wellbeing and safety, looking into the multitude of resources available in the society. Popular media offers representations of medical sleep paralysis but also murderous nocturnal spirits – both of them function to introduce cultural and biological frameworks to terrified and confused experiencers (cf., Adler 2011: 134). The ways of verbal magic have even diversified, combining elements of both old traditions and the heterogeneous modern international religious knowledge whereby in the contemporary material, verbal magic related to nightmare attacks was reported mainly by females. This may be partly explained by the fact that women perceive nightmare experiences as more frightening and are therefore more eager to try out ways of protection, including protection through verbal magic. At the same time women are also more familiar with self-help methods available in the spiritual milieu as the majority of present-day vernacular belief forms and spiritual teachings attract particularly women (Utriainen & Salmesvuori 2014). At the same time, verbal magic in the examined material was often rather fragmentary; there was also certain blurriness regarding the understandings related to various supernatural beings. It may be assumed that the confusion of beliefs is partly due to the fact that among the respondents there was a considerable number of younger women, whose connection with the older tradition is weaker and openness to new spiritual teachings is greater. However, the blurring is also due to a more general disruption in traditional knowledge and the wide visibility of new forms of spirituality.

Belief in efficacy of a protective ritual, prayers and charms are related to the authority of the source from where they stem – here, grandmothers as providers of information on self-protection rituals seem to be equally important as contemporary spiritual teachings or leaders in the vernacular conception whereby references to protective wisdom learned from grandmothers were undoubtedly more common in women's than in men's stories. Intergenerational transmission in family has first and foremost helped to preserve key elements from the older verbal magic tradition (such as using the Lord's Prayer as a means of protection).

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ARCHIVAL SOURCES

ERA – folklore collection of Estonian Folklore Archives, Estonian Literary Museum
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BIO

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CHUGG'S CHARMS: AUTHENTICITY, TYPICALITY, AND SOURCES

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Abstract: This contribution describes the collection and contents of a set of charms from early twentieth century Devon, and takes that as a stepping stone toward questions about the reliability of the orally-collected data many charms scholars rely on.

Keywords: Devon, England, Henry Williamson, source criticism, verbal charms

In this brief piece, I wish to describe a set of charms collected in early twentieth century England from one 'Jimmie Chugg', and then make some remarks about the nature of our data as charms scholars. But there is first a variety of things that need explaining. The first of these is the identity of the man who saw these charm texts into print, Henry Williamson (1895–1977). Williamson was a Londoner, who moved, following his traumatic experiences as a soldier in the First World War, to the country. To be precise, he ended up in the village of Georgeham in Devon in the south-west of the country. During his time there, he wrote the classic work, *Tarka the Otter* (1927), as well as various other works of fiction. Shortly after he left the village to try farming in the east of England, he wrote two books which describe life in Georgeham and some of the local personalities, *The Village Book* (1930) and *The Labouring Life* (1932). He subsequently rewrote and rearranged these books, and republished them in 1945 as *Life in a Devon Village* and *Tales from a Devon Village*.

There is much more that could be said about Williamson (his fascist period, his return to Devon, his novel sequence *The Chronicles of Ancient Sunlight*) and details might be sought after in various memoirs,

studies and biographies, such as Lamplugh (1991), Sewell (1980), and Williamson (1995), and the publications of the Henry Williamson Society. But his relevance for *Incantatio* is as a recorder of charm texts and a describer of a charmer. Given Williamson was a novelist, can we trust his description of charms and charming in Georgeham? To answer this question, we need to look at the relevant chapters in the two books, namely 'Scriddicks' in *The Village Book* and 'On Scandal, Gossip, Hypocrisy or Self-Deception, Roguery, and Senescence' in *Life in a Devon Village*. In both of these chapters, he mentions 'Jimmy Chugg', "a harmless old fellow who lived alone in his cottage" (1930: 259). He found out about this man from the local doctor, who having failed to cure a local woman's warts, had sent his patient to him, who succeeded in curing them (in the latter account, the woman is described as the daughter of "General Dashel" (1945: 106)). But no 'Jimmy Chugg' seems to exist in the relevant census data. In his country writings, Williamson typically gave local people (relatively transparent) pseudonyms, so the local pub landlord Charlie Ovey became 'Charlie Taylor', Billy Geen became 'Billy Goldsworth', Revvy Gammon became 'Revvy Carter'; and the village of Georgeham itself became 'Ham' (for more on this practice, see Stokes 1985 and Lewis 1995). Working on this basis, we might deduce that perhaps the charmer's real first name, Jimmy, was used, while his surname (which was indeed a local surname) was changed, in which case the charmer may have been Jimmy Gammon, the father of Revvy Gammon. But Williamson on occasion used less transparent pseudonyms, such as 'Mr. Furze' for Jacob Thorne or 'Colonel Ponde'for Admiral Biggs, so this hypothesis is far from being the only possibility.

In any event, Williamson provides us with a few details about the charmer. He describes him as having "a serene and quiet temperament" (1930: 263) and Jimmy's belief that he could not take money in exchange for his charming, but that he might receive payment in kind "if you really want it" (263). Writing in 1930, Williamson remarks that he would now have no opportunity to see him what he and the doctor had been invited to witness, Chugg staunching blood at a pig-killing "without going near the animal" (263), as Chugg was now dead. (In a way, staunching blood at a pig-killing would be an odd thing to do, unless it was pure showmanship, as it would negatively affect the quality of the meat.) Throughout his description, Williamson does not use the word 'charmer', instead referring to him as a 'white witch', possibly in order to contrast him with a witch in a nearby village also mentioned in these chapters, whom he terms a 'black witch' (264).

So much for the charmer, what about his charms? The title of the chapter in his 1930 account is 'Scriddicks'. The *Devonshire Dialect Dictionary* (Dearson 2023) defines the word in the singular, *s.v.* 'scriddick', as "a tiny morsel; ... a shred", and sure enough the chapter does have a bitty character. It is only a few pages in length, and mostly consists of the texts of the charms. In the 1930 account, it is not clear where Williamson discovered the texts, although there is the suggestive remark that he is giving them with "the authentic spelling" (260). In the latter account, he expands this: "I got a copy of the white witch's incantations, with the authentic spelling", showing he had a written source for all of them, except one. The excpetion is a wart charm, which he learnt orally from the village doctor (i.e. Jimmy Chugg > General Dashel's daughter > the village doctor > Henry Williamson): "Figseye! Figseye!! Figseye!!!", which the doctor can only hypothesize may be "a corruption of *pig's eye*" (1945: 106).

While the description of the charmer varies somewhat between the two accounts, the words of the charm-texts found in both *The Village Book* (259–263) and *Life in a Devon Village* (206–208) are the same, although some of the charms in the first book are not found in the second book, namely, a text for ringworm, a charm (actually two charms that he prints as one) for an eye condition, and a charm for a wound made by thorns, and, finally, three words used to cure warts. Why Williamson chose to leave these texts out of his later book is not clear, but we can speculate: the second thorn charm may have been dropped because he already has one thorn-charm in the material; the two eye charms are confusing when printed as a single text, as he does, so better to drop them altogether; the words for warts may not have been included because in this arrangement of the materials they have already been given (from the mouth of the doctor), and also we might speculate they were not found in the written source Williamson drew on.

If we take the earlier, fuller record as our basis, we can see that all of Chugg's charms are healing charms. They treat flesh wounds from thorns (2 examples), sprains (2 examples), eye problems (3 examples), ringworm, bleeding, snakebite, and a cow's udders. How typical is such a repertoire? The presence of the final veterinary text is unusual, and having three charms for eye ailments, but no charms for toothache or burns is also unusual at this time and place. Nevertheless, Chugg's repertoire is, on the whole, typical of English charmers in recent centuries. This is our first warrant for the authenticity of the texts Williamson gives us. We can, for example, compare his repertoire from early twen-

tieth-century south-western England with that of the celebrated Clun charmer in late nineteenth-century central-western England, which was also collected in written form ("a small manuscript book", Morgan 1895: 202–4), rather than orally. The ailments the latter charmed were sprains, wounds, blood flow, toothache, burns, and ague, and he also knew a love divination charm. In his known repertoire of eight charms, there are representatives of the following charm-types: **Bone to bone**, **Neque doluit neque tumuit**, **Flum Jordan**, **Super Petram**, **Out Fire in Frost**, and **Crux Christi**.

If we look at the charm-types in Chugg's material, we find two examples of **Bone to bone** (one for a person, one for a horse), two of **Neque doluit neque tumuit**, and one of **Flum Jordan**, so approximately half of the Georgeham charmer's texts are identifiable as representatives of charm-types as against three-quarters of the Clun charmer's. I list Chugg's charms in the appendix to this piece.

AUTHENTICITY

In the dedication of the work Williamson says his book is fiction. It is:

> an imaginative work which should not be read as the history of any particular village, and certainly not of any man or woman. Even the 'I' and the 'zur' and the 'Mr. Williamson' of certain pages, such as those describing the quarrel between the fictitious Zeale brothers, are but devices of storytelling (1930: 9).

Such a claim is worth notice, as other country writers often made the opposite claim: that what they wrote was true. For example, W.D. Parish wrote "I have also endeavoured to illustrate the use of the words by specimens of conversation, most of which are taken from the life verbatim" (1874: 9). However, Parish's illustrative quotations, where every dialect word begins unfailingly with the same letter, cannot possibly be verbatim – under the guise of fidelity he is producing little fictions. Williamson's claim may also not be what it seems. The 'Zeale Brothers' may be fictitious, in the sense that the individuals referred to were not brothers nor surnamed 'Zeale', but a fight does seem to have to taken between two friends which this incident is based on, and the people involved bore the same first names as the people in the book (see again the articles by Stokes and by Lewis). There were no doubt reasons of tact for not giving everyone's true name in print, especially when you

have chapters headed 'On Scandal, Gossip, Hypocrisy or Self-Deception, Roguery, and Senescence'. But Williamson may protest too much, like Parish but in the opposite direction – he is presenting truth under the guise of fiction.

But what is most important for charms scholars are not the incidents of village life, but the charm-texts. Williamson seems far more interested in the figure of the charmer than in the texts themselves (which he doesn't unpack or comment upon at all). Perhaps his own lack of interest in the texts, and a suspicion he may have had that his readers might feel the same way, is the reason he removes some of them from his presentation in the latter book. But a lack of interest in the texts might be a positive sign regarding their authenticity – in other words, if they had been something he was interested in, then we might have more grounds to suspect 'improvements' or sensationalization. For, while Williamson uses terms such as 'white witch' and 'incantation', which are almost certainly not locally-used terms, the charm-texts he presents do resemble charms found in the broader geographical region at and before the period they were recorded in terms of vocabulary and register, with some minor differences. For me, this mix of similarities with and differences from the existing corpus bespeaks the texts' authenticity. It is also worth noting that they also address a set of diseases typically dealt with by charms in England at this period (with the aforementioned exception of eye ailments). The charm-types are typical of the place and period. And finally, the mixture of charms and prayers reflects vernacular practice do, as does the frequent occurrence of the *In Nomine*-formula (and of *Amen*) at the end of the texts.

Thus, while there remain some unanswered questions we should still like answers to – who was the charmer? where did the charmer learn the charms and did he have more than one source? how exactly did Williamson get hold of the texts? are the originals still in his surviving papers at Exeter or Brigham Young universities? what did his "slight editing" change? – in my judgement these are highly likely to be authentic texts. Indeed, Williamson, best remembered as a writer of fiction, seems to have achieved a remarkable feat not matched by any twentieth century folklorist in England – namely, the documentation of the texts of a dozen healing charms from a single individual. But perhaps such a feat was not so remarkable after all, and could have been replicated again and again by the folklorists of that era had they been more numerous, more determined, and better connected with humble rural life.

AFTERWORD

I would now like to raise some broader questions about the nature of our data as charms scholars. This article has discussed charm-texts copied from a charmer's written notes. What Williamson did in copying them is analogous to what researchers of medieval or classical charms do – namely, to rely on manuscripts in the absence of informants. But, coming into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, scholars have typically gained access to charm-texts by oral communication with charmers. Why should we trust such orally-derived texts? Especially when we consider there are many expressions in late modern Europe of the understanding that if you tell a charm to another, you lose the power to use it. Indeed, in the very same chapter, Williamson mentions a 'seventh son' who cures warts: "I asked him if he could cure warts, and he said, Yes, he could. 'Would he tell me how he did it?' He was sorry, he was not allowed to tell" (1930: 263). In other words, why should we suppose that a charmer would simply tell a researcher all his secrets and thus forgo a valuable source of power and status?

Firstly, when we have texts, how do we know that the texts are complete and correct? Might there not have been numerous cases where some lines of a charm have been *withheld*? Or where some of the words have been *changed* by the informant? By doing so, the charmer will have been able to both satisfy the fieldworker's requests and protect his own interests. Secondly, might there not have been involuntary changes made by the charmer, given that the texts are typically gathered in an 'interview'-like conversation rather than in the heat-of-the-moment observation of a *performance* of a charm? The kind of details I am thinking of here include all sorts of repetition, added or dropped words, even improvisations, and this hypothesis is applicable to medieval (and other) manuscripts too. Thirdly, we need always to consider the possibility of *clumsy fieldwork*, cases where researchers have been given but have not gotten every word. There is more clumsy fieldwork than fieldworkers admit, and this is especially likely to be the case with lay fieldworkers, e.g. people doing one-off fieldwork, a category which includes enthusiastic amateurs and also students or schoolchildren roped in to provide ethnographic data. All in all, I suggest we need to think more about the nature of our research material, its potential unreliability, more than we have done to date.

As charm scholars focused on the data we may be aware that there have been deliberate falsifications by researchers (in the manner of

Kreutwald in nineteenth century Estonia or Sakharov in nineteenth century Russia and no doubt many other cases elsewhere) and as well as cases of incompetent data collection. But I want to emphasize here that there must also be numerous cases where charmers simply choose not to give the game away entirely. During the composition of this article, I discussed such themes with my colleague, Ülo Valk, who commented that his experience of fieldwork in India held similar: his informants would never perform the *full* mantra for a researcher. When we examine our own data, we should be alive to the possibility that, when dealing material collected from a living tradition still believed in, orally-derived texts, for all their apparent attractiveness as a source, may not always make for the best record, and that we may encounter in them data that has been partially withheld or subtly altered.

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APPENDIX

I reprint the charms here from Williamson (1930: 260–262), without his bracketed comments, but with my own linguistic comments and

additions in square brackets. I have further added punctuation, and also relineated the texts to show rhymes, but I have not altered the spellings or the capitalization. The titles given here are those found in Williamson (and thus perhaps those in his written source), except for the second eye treatment which is untitled and printed together as part of the first eye charm. If they reflect Chugg's own usage, then he is using a variety of traditional terms for his texts: 'charm' and 'blessing', as well as the time-honoured usage 'For ...' (something found already in the Middle English period). Neither of the two prayers contain 'For' in their titles.

Sometimes the very same word is spelt differently in different charms (compare *thin* and *thine*, or *fleash* and *flesh*, or *read* and *red*, or *perl* and *pearl*, or *preak*[*ing*] and *prick*[*ed*], or *sincue* and *sinney*). This variable spelling may reflect Chugg's semi-literary or it may indicate that he had multiple sources for his texts, and the choice of spelling reflects those sources.

I have not commented on the poetics or semantics of the charms themselves here, but have done so in an earlier publication (Roper 2021).

FOR WHITE SWELLING [*A SWELLING WITHOUT REDNESS*]

As our Blessed Lord can cure all manar of des-eases, of a white ill thing, a red ill thing, a black ill thing, a rotted ill thing, an haking [*aching*] ill thing, a cold clapping [*throbbing*] ill thing, a hot preaking [*pricking*], a bizzing [*stinging?*] ill thing, a sticking ill thing, let all drop from thy face, thy head, thy fleash unto the earth in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Amen.

A CHARM FOR RINGWORMS

Pray God bless thy flesh and save bone and destroy the ringworm that are thereon. If the Lord please to remove them, in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost Amen.

BLESSING FOR HURDEN HILL [*UDDERS' ILLNESS*]

Good Lord, keep this cow from evil, for thine is the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory, for ever and ever, Amen.

FOR SPRAIN

Christ Himself rode over a bridge. The horse spronge [*moved suddenly*]. He onlight [*dismounted*] his joints. He wrestled His sinney [*sinew*] to sinney, vain [*vein*] to vain.

Pray God to deliver thee out of this pain.

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Amen.

(The text would make more sense if the opening was understood thus:

Christ Himself rode over a bridge. The horse spronge [*moved suddenly*]. He [*Christ*] onlight [*dismounted*]. His [*the horse's*] joints He [*Christ*] wrestled[,] His sinney [*sinew*] to sinney, vain [*vein*] to vain.)

FOR PEARL [*CATARACT*]

The son of Arthless had a pearl upon his eye, and he prayed unto the Lord Jesus Christ that pearl might fall from his eye, so I pray it may fall from thine eye to the earth. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Amen.

[second text for eyes]

Our Lord Jesus Christ, bless the eye of Mary Ann, if it be a black kenning [*cloudy spot on the cornea*], a white kenning, a red kenning, stinging, aching, pricking, or stabbing, let it fall from thy eye, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Amen.

FOR A BLACKTHORN

Our loving Christ's blood was sprinkled among thorns. If the Lord please, the thorn may not fuster [*fester*] nor prick nor rot, but that it may be whole again.

If the Lord please. Amen.

FOR A KENNING [*CLOUDY SPOT ON THE CORNEA*]

If this shall be a Kenning or perl [*cataract*]. If it be white, read [*red*], or black, if the Lord be pleased to ease the pain and save the sight of A. B. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Amen.

FOR LONGCRIPPLE TING [*FOR SNAKE BITE*]

Our Bless Virgin Mary Sot [*sat*] and Soad [*sewed*]
her Bless[ed] babe sot [*sat*] and Plead [*played*]
their [*there*] Came a Ting [biting] worm [snake] out of eldern [*elder*] wood
He ting [*bit*] our Bless Savour by the foot
his Blader Blew and never bruk [*broke*]
so shall A. B. Break
– A. B. – Tong Ting and Ring Ting in
In the name of the Father
Expel thy Ting [*venom*].

BLESSING FOR STRAIN [*SPRAIN*]

As Christ was riding over Crosby bridge A. B. his leg he took and blessed it, and said these words, bones to bones and sincues [*sinews*] to sincues, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Amen.

FOR A WHITETHORN [WOUND]

As our Blessd Lord and Saviour His flesh was pricked with thorns he did not canker nor rust no more neather [*neither*] shant thin[e] A. B. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Amen.

STENTEN [*STAUNCHING*] **BLOOD**

As our Bless Lord and Saviour went down into the river Jordan to be baptised and the water was vile [*wild*] and hard,
our Lord Jesus was mild and good
he laid his hand and it stood so,
and so shall thy Issue of thy blood
A. B.
In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Amen.

BIO

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STABILITY AND CHANGE IN THE UDMURT *KURIS'KON* PRAYERS

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Abstract: In Udmurt prayers, the texts have been slow to change in the last century. Although data are not complete, and we have only fractions of data about their evolution after the Revolution and during Soviet times, we know enough to understand that changes were introduced scarcely. In the last decades, especially in the two last decades, many changes have been introduced and the rhythm is increasing. This is the question this paper endeavours to explore, on the basis of a corpus gathered in Bashkortostan, region where the Udmurt ethnic religious practice is still very much alive and even thriving in the second decade of the 21st century.

Keywords: Udmurt prayers, stability, change, war, Udmurtness

The question of sacred texts and their status for Udmurt addresses to their deities has been tackled briefly in a previous article in this same journal (Toulouze, Vladykina 2023: 34–35), as has the more general context of their utterings. Let me now dwell on a particular question in detail and use fresh examples to illustrate this issue, i.e., the question of stability and change throughout history, at least as far as we have documents to rely upon.

Just as a reminder about the general context, in the areas encompassing the north-western districts of Bashkortostan and the Kuyeda district in Perm' kray, there is an Udmurt community (Toulouze, Anisimov 2021) characterised by the contemporary practice of their ancient agrarian cult, which in some villages has never been discontinued. This agrarian cult, thoroughly connected to the agricultural calendar, relies on the existence of sacrificial priests (Toulouze, Niglas 2017, 2021), who ask, with cattle blood sacrifices, for the propitiatory interference of the deities on behalf of the community. Who the addressees of this

cult are is a question that will be debated in another framework, that of the evolution of Udmurt religious thinking from polytheism towards monotheism, which deserves a particular approach. Here I wish to concentrate on the texts of the addresses and reflect on their level of sacredness and of untouchability.

There is very little literature about these texts. The most developed comments before the particular research of our team[1] come from the leading scholar in Udmurt religion, Vladimir Vladykin (1994): unlike our study, which mainly analyses contemporary texts from one peripheral group, he relies only on texts collected in the 19th century, mainly in northern Udmurtia (Gavrilov 1880; Pervukhin 1888). Vladykin concentrates on structure analysis (Vladykin 1994: 106, 107, 297), and dedicates close attention to the artistic style of the texts (Vladykin 1994: 107, 297–298). Moreover, he presents the Udmurt prayer from the semantic point of view as an illustration of the Udmurt's ideal world (Vladykin 1994: 298–299, 310–211). One aspect, however, that differs from today's prayers, and which is emphasised by Vladykin, is Udmurt loyalty to the state (Vladykin 1994: 305, 306) is the Udmurt request for the ability to pay their taxes. Today this kind of requirement is not present, and there is no mention of the state in prayers. Except in what we shall present at the end of this article, in two prayers about the present war.

Very little has otherwise been written. Most of what we can read about prayers is in ethnomusicological texts. The only data we have from the Soviet period are texts collected by linguists at the beginning of the 1970s. They have been thoroughly commented on by ethnomusicologist Margarita Khrushcheva (2001), who focused on their musical performance as she had access not only to the texts but also to the recordings. But in general, the Soviet period both discouraged religious activities and research on this topic. It is thus, with these few exceptions, a blank period, in which religious practice was not discontinued and was even preserved in some villages, but with a half clandestine status so that generally the elder generations guaranteed transmission. However, this situation changed at the end of the 1980s, when local Udmurt leaders encouraged the revitalisation of their particular form of religious tradition and the collapse of the Soviet Union opened up the religious market.

Today, there are community rituals in almost all the villages, which have their own sacrificial priests (some quite youngish), their own sacred places and their own sacred texts. Here, we focus on this last aspect.

THE PLACE-CENTRED CHARACTER OF THE UDMURT 'RELIGION'

One of the characteristics of these addresses, as well as of folk creation in general, is its variability. Orality allows flexibility, as written culture does not. The Abrahamic religions that shape our religious landscape are all religions of the book. They all rely on sacred scriptures, which allow them to have a fixed dogma, encompassed by the book. This is the main gap between religions of the rite and religions of the book. It is not by happenstance that some Udmurt prayers very directly said "we have no book or Qu'ran" (Sadikov Toulouze 2023: 133). These are actually very recent texts (since 2019). However, the idea is also not so precisely defined in older texts (such as the Qu'ran), but with the reference to a book, using both Russian and Tatar words (*knigamy-kitapmy övöl:* "we have no book (RUS) nor book (TAT)" (Sadikov, Toulouze 2023: 74)). This was in a text from 1926, collected in the Kuyeda district of Perm' kray, so we may assert that this was part of a tradition. The other examples we find in our corpus[2] are in texts collected since 2013, in the Tatyshly district of Bashkortostan. But in almost all texts, both old and new, there is the idea, expressed by the sacrificial priest, that he is not sure of his text: "Either I say the end at the beginning, or the beginning and the end". However, the deity (deities) knows what he intends to say, and they will forgive him. I give no precise reference for this sentence, because it is uttered towards the end of practically all the prayers.

So, these prayers are not fixed, as dogma is not fixed. This characteristic of Udmurt religious practice disturbs some of the more educated Udmurts. The influence of Abrahamic religions – here, both Christianity and, most of all, Islam – is perceived in an evolutionistic perspective: the book is a progress, the absence of book marks a primitive religion, not to be taken seriously. The next step should be to transform the Udmurt religion and to make it into "a proper religion". This is what some prominent Udmurts declared to our research team in 2014, when they sought our support for this project. These were civil servants with high positions in the Tatyshly district administration, who were not particularly connected with the local religious practice but who were sufficiently informed of its features to desire to transform them. They were surprised to find that the scholars were less than appreciative of their endeavours and expressed a respect they did not feel themselves for Udmurt practice as it was. Clearly this project has so far remained a project (Toulouze, Vallikivi 2021).

It is also difficult to imagine how their idea could be implemented in a context in which each sacrificial priest relies on his local traditions: things are made, rules are followed as the ancestors, as the elder had them established, and they differ from place to place. The texts themselves are usually inherited from elder priests, as well as the rules for the ceremonies, both of which vary. Indeed, the transmission was disturbed by the Soviet ideological fight against religion, which was not enough to destroy the practice, but was able to disrupt its smooth functioning. Probably this flexibility was what allowed this practice to resist and to adapt.

The institution of the sacrificial priest is one of those points of stability which guaranteed the maintenance of the cult. The sacrificial priests relied on themselves to ensure the permanence of their task: they chose which priest would follow them and did not depend on any other institution. Some other parts of the cult were also both stable and flexible to make it through difficult times, such as sacred places, which could be moved and changed provided the proper ritual was followed (Sadikov, Toulouze 2024). What about the texts?

STABILITY AND CHANGE IN TEXTS

Here also, the Abrahamic religions are a model in that they have more or less fixed texts for their prayers – more or less, the less being for Protestants, who emphasise spontaneous communication with God, spontaneousness supposedly being a guarantee of sincerity. But even the Protestants rely on the Lord's Prayer, the text of which is fixed.

Probably this understanding, which is dominant around us, explains the feeling of many sacrificial priests that the texts they have received from elder priests are sacred and untouchable. I have often mentioned how in June 2015, during a break in a ceremony, a sacrificial priest, Evgeniy Adullin, asked my opinion: were they allowed to update the text of the prayer with the concerns of today? (Toulouze, Vladykina 2023: 34).

When reflecting on this question and looking for answers in past practice, I cannot omit to note that changes have indeed occurred. Only we have no explicit information about them, and we ignore when they took place and how quickly after the events that triggered them. This ignorance is due to the gap that the Soviet period caused both in research and practice. As nobody investigated the religious field between 1926 and 1980, we have no fieldwork information at all about religious practice, and very few texts on which to rely. So we may identify big

changes connected with societal transformations, but we do not know at what moment exactly they were introduced.

FROM TSARIST TO SOVIET RUSSIA

Some wishes in older prayers are so characteristic that we do not expect them after the Revolution changed the power relations of the whole country. Two words characterise this period: let us see the occurrences of the word for Tsar in Udmurt, *eksej*, and the word *kazna*, meaning state financing. They reveal interesting phenomena.

In general, tsar is mentioned in connection with taxes. The Udmurt ask for help to be able to pay their taxes. Only in one case is military service "to the tsar" mentioned (Pervukhin 1888: 36). The oldest mention[3] of the tsar we have in our documentation is from Munkácsy, who recorded it in Mozhga village (Ufa governorate, Birsk Uyezd), now in Yanaul district.

Будзин эксейлы выт тырыны дьэрдэм сёт!	To pay tribute to the Great Tsar, give [us] yourself help!

(Sadikov, Toulouze 2023: 17 (recorded in 1885; published in 1887))

The second mention is very similar to the first: it was recorded by Munkácsy, but now much later, in Esztergom, where he interrogated war prisoners, among whom some were Udmurts.

Будзын эксейёслы быт тырон дыръя ачид ӟэрдэм сёт, Иммэре, Кылчинэ!	At the time of paying tribute to the Great tsar, give [us] help yourself my Inmar Kylchin!

(Sadikov, Toulouze 2023: 137 (1916))

Texts recorded by Munkácsy are interesting as his informants were ordinary peasants, not sacrificial priests, and they prayed in their yard every Friday. Thus, his samples are not exceptional, although they are exceptionally precious because the practice of praying on Fridays in every household is one soon condemned to disappear. And as in the Soviet period fieldwork and research on religion were not welcome, the practice just disappeared at some time, but we ignore the details.

Only in one text, published in 1888, is the tsar mentioned by name:

Дзэчъ Государьлы Александръ Александровичълы казна тырымонъ меда сетозъ,	To our good Tsar Aleksandr Aleksandrovich, let him give what we must pay to the state.

(Pervukhin 1888: 23)

In the late decades of the Soviet period, three Udmurt linguists, Mikhail Atamanov, Valey Kel'makov and Rif Nasibuliin, collected dialect samples. Among these, there were prayers. All of which worked at the beginning of the 1970s.

These are the mentions of the tsar in the samples collected by them, despite the fact that for half a century there hadn't been a tsar in Russia. Yet in these prayers the tsar is ever present: let the praying person's children be good children to the tsar.

Та вордэм нылпи шудбуро луыса, эксейлы ӟеч нылпи мед луозы, элез мед ӟеч утьыны быгатозы.	So that these children being healthy and happy, would be good children to the tsar and would be able to well defend the country.

(Sadikov, Toulouze 2023: 32 (1971)), text recorded by Mikhail Atamanov, Prayer for Bydzh'ynnal, Kalmiyary, Kuyeda district.

Badǯ'ịm eksejmi kunil gu tịrịmon berekette śotịsa ulịsaled ke, muso kịlč'ine, täńi.	Бадзым эксеймы[лы] куныл гу тырымон берекетдэ сётыса улысалэд ке, Мусо Кылчинэ, тэни.	To fill the armpit of our great tsar, would you give us your wealth, my dear Kylchin, there!

(Sadikov, Toulouze 2023: 80 (1970)), text recorded by Rif Nasibullin.

Бӱдӟин эксэйёсмылэсь куспазы татулыкъёссэ тон ачид возьматыса улысалэд ке, Ӟумня сяськае, ӟугыт Иммаре-Кылчинэ, тэни.	Would you [live] showing yourself harmony among our great tsars, my flower from Yum'ya, my bright Inmar Kylchin, there.
Бӱдӟин mentionэй ки улын кызмэт карись, ветлӥсь нылпиосмылэсь синазь сайкытлык, пыдазь весяклык, ӟыр сазьлыкӟоссэс тон ачид сётыса улысалэд ке, Ӟумня сяськае, ӟугыт Иммаре-Кылчинэ, тэни.	Would you [live] giving yourself to our children, who serve and walk under the hand of the great tsar clearness in front of their eyes, clear awareness, smoothness in front of their feet, my flower from Yum'ya, my bright Inmar Kylchin, there.

(Sadikov, Toulouze 2023: 46 (1971)), Valey Kel'makov, Prayer for Bydzh'innal in the Kuala.

In all three cases the tsar is mentioned in a more abstract way than in the cases before, when the connection was with the taxes paid to the state, personified by the emperor. Her the tsar is the abstract person of an absent father, or of a mythical character whose armpit is supposed

to hide lots and lots of wealth, a representative of all power. I should mention in addition the interesting fact of the plural in the first of the last examples, which refers in general to the leaders of all nations.

So let me notice that while in all other prayers of our corpus, collected in the 1990s, mention of the tsar has disappeared, in the earliest records it is still present, and even after fifty years of Soviet power. This reveals how slow adaptation can be.

The last mentions in our corpus come later, in the second decade of the 21st century. The second appears in a prayer, which has been uttered by priest Anatoli Galikhanov at his village's ceremony, in Altayevo, Burayevo district. The priest has clearly been inspired by the first, which is in the text of a prayer for the Elen vös' ceremony. Here both the first and the second fragment are represented. This ceremony had died out presumably in the 1920s and had been revitalised in 2008 (Sadikov 2010). This was, and is still, the ceremony for all the Eastern Udmurt, where representatives of all the districts gather. This particular prayer was uttered in 1993, and the text transmitted to Ranus Sadikov by an elder lady, who had it from Sharifgali Yalalov, both sacrificial priest and local historian. Ranus Sadikov was able to photograph the original text in 2018, but it had been transmitted much earlier. The prayer for Elen vös' is divided into different sections, with different addressees: the first is to Mother Son (sacrifice a goose), the second to the great tsar (also a goose), the third to the universal god (a horse the colour of butter), the fourth to the angel of the clan (a red cow), the fifth to the angel of the livestock (a white ewe) and the sixth to the angel of the earth (a black ewe) (Sadikov, Toulouze 2023: 137–138).

In Galikhanov's own prayers, which are abundantly represented in our corpus, the word tsar does not appear. However, he relied on these texts, which had been transmitted to him by his predecessors at the beginning of his function as sacrificial priest. This explains why we find here long disappeared notions, although clearly the origin of the texts is quite old.

Бытын кун эксэйёс мед сётозы ӟеч, эркын, каньыл, тупаса улон калыкелы.	Let all the tsars of the country give welfare, freedom, lightness, peace to my people.

Милям эксеймы тынад косэмедъя, эрикедъя мед лэсьтоз вал музъем вылын но инмын кадь ик эрык.	Our tsar, by your order, will make your freedom on all the earth, as well as in the heavens.

(Sadikov, Toulouze 2023: 137 (2018))

The revolution ended the tsar's power. There followed long years of Soviet power, characterised – among other things – by deep changes in the organisation of agricultural work.

THE TIME OF THE KOLKHOZ

How deep a trace did the Soviet period leave on the texts of the prayers? I tried to follow up by looking for the word kolkhoz in different texts.

Actually, we find a very small number of mentions, altogether three, of kolkhozes within the texts of *kuris'kon*.

Милям колхозмылы узырмыны[4],	[Give] that our kolkhoz becomes rich[4],
Милям тӧромылы, Робертлы,	To our leader, Robert,
Вань ужасьёслы	To all the workers,
Тазалык сёт, Инмаре!	Give health, my Inmar!

(Sadikov, Toulouze 2023: 85), Asavka, first published in 1992.

Таза мед луозы озьы ик колхоз пудоёсмы но.	Let also our livestock from the kolkhoz be healthy.

(Sadikov, Toulouze 2023: 92, 68), Bol'shetuganeyevo Published in 2006 & 2011.

Колхозник понна ми люкаськыса, со ӟечъёсыз малпаса, куриськиськом	Gathering, with good thoughts, we pray for the kolkhoz workers.

(Sadikov, Toulouze 2023: 52), Vil'gurt, published in 2005.

Clearly the kolkhoz is mentioned as an everyday notion. What is curious, is that at the time when the first mention appears, the kolkhozes are already a phenomenon of the past. But of course, in the texts we have from the Soviet period – exactly three from the 1970s – no mention of the dominant structure is made (but the sample is very limited indeed), while when some mentions are done, the kolkhozes no longer officially exist. But as my fieldwork experience since 2013 reveals, the habits did not disappear, and still today people call the successor enterprises, the cooperatives, kolkhozes informally. So, we see here a significant chronological shift: actually, not only are the prayers slow to change, but also the ordinary language used by the people, which is a phenomenon noticed in different countries.

AND TODAY, WHAT NEW CHANGES ARE REQUIRED?

The last thirty years have brought many changes in the people's lives. And the question of maintaining the texts as they are or changing them has been a concern for the sacrificial priests, as I mentioned in the in-

troduction. Indeed, while many priests reflected and did not dare, one of them directly took the initiative himself. Altayevo's priest, Anatoliy Galikhanov, started like all other priests by reading texts and learning them by heart (AFW, Altayevo, June 2016). This allowed him to learn the language and he started creating new prayers and developing the previous ones. Galikhanov is also a poet, and he exploited these talents in the creation of new prayers. As he is the head of the sacrificial priest's association and is the sacrificial priest of one of the villages that host Elen vös'[4], his prayers are uttered every year in front of all the other sacrificial priests, which encouraged many of them to bring on needed changes, and even to rely on Galikhanov's texts to copy the changes they wished to introduce, under the authority of an elder.

This is the reason why in 2019, one group of Tatyshly sacrificial priests met and decided to change their common text. Let us have a look at the innovations they have made. Some of them are merely stylistic, and here I leave them unattended. Others, on the contrary, are most significant, and illustrate the changes in the people's lives. Let us have a look at the new prayer with the most significant changes (Sadikov Toulouze 2023: 130–133).

TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGES

Бусыысь итыме ворттон дыръя, пар машинаосын ворттымон берекетъёстэ сётыса мын вал.	When the time comes to transport the harvest to the threshing floor, please give your wealth of (having) a couple of cars.

(Sadikov, Toulouze 2023: 132)

CHANGES IN WISHES

There are two main categories of wish: positive and negative – give and protect.

In the positive register a few innovations: the demands for happiness, health, wealth, good weather are the backbone of the *kuris'kon.* But in general what is requested has not changed in this category.

Among the new wishes for the animals, one had been forgotten before:

Тулыс одйген поттыса, сйзьыл доре пыртыку кыкен-куинен доре пыртымон берекетъёстэ сётыса мын вал.	Going alone in spring, when entering home in autumn, please give us the abundance of having them by two or three going back.

(Sadikov, Toulouze 2023: 131)

So that livestock would come back from time outdoors pregnant in order to ensure the reproduction.

However, plagues have developed: requests for protection against diseases and insects are traditional. Now the list has increased: in addition to ordinary diseases, there are evil diseases, and here clearly these changes that preceded COVID were most welcome, when COVID came. A serious concern is drug addiction. This problem did not exist before, but now, at school, the children face this problem regularly.

Чер-чуръёслэсь, нымы-кибыослэсь, алама висёнъёслэсь, наркоманилэсь ачид сакласа мын вал	From illnesses and diseases, maggots and worms, evil illnesses, drug addiction go on yourself protecting [us].

(Sadikov, Toulouze 2023: 130)

Some requests in this spirit are also more poetically expressed:

Гуртъёсы пырись через-чурез, тузонэз сяин, лысвуэз сяин, кыдёке, нюлэс сьӧры пазьгыса лэзь.	Throw away the illnesses and diseases that enter the villages, like dust, like dew, disintegrate them far away, behind the forest.

(Sadikov, Toulouze 2023: 132)

Another plague against which protection is sought is innocent people being put in jail. This is a very common experience, especially for young people going to work in big towns, where they are framed for example for drug selling without protection or family to help them. Corruption infects both Russian justice and jails, so the request in prayers is justified.

But there are more requests for protection.

Сюрес вылын мынон-ветлон дыръя, бэлэ-казалэсь, алама сюреслэсь но авариослэсь утыса мын вал, мусо Инмаре-Кылчинэ.	When it is time to go on the road, please protect us from troubles and grief, from evil roads, from accidents, my dear Inmar Kylchin.

(Sadikov, Toulouze 2023: 131)

Roads are typically bad in the Russia countryside, and accidents happen often. So this has been added.

Protection is also required against war. Probably in 2019 the sacrificial priests started to be afraid of warfare and they express this not abundantly, but clearly.

Шаермес тӥрен-пуртэн, пыӵал тӥрлыкен ожмаськонлэсь уть.	Protect our country from war with an axe and a knife, from fire weapons.

(Sadikov, Toulouze 2023: 132)

Protection is also required against other kinds of enemy, but this is nothing new: protection against both evil spirits and evil people, and against witchcraft, which is still today a structuring element in Udmurt village life:

«Сиё-юо» шуисьёслэсь азвесь кенерен котыртыса утьыса ул, Инмаре-Кылчинэ.	Protect us from those who say "I'll eat you", "I'll drink you" encircling us with a silver fence, my Inmar Kylchin.

(Sadikov, Toulouze 2023: 132)

The request itself is not new, but it is beautifully phrased in this sentence. What is canonical, is the expression "I'll eat you", "I'll drink you", "I'll take you". But the development is reminiscent of Anatoliy Galikhanov's poetry.

ABOUT CHILDREN

Other parts are entirely new, for example parts concerning the behaviour of children. In other, older, texts, the word children is used differently: the sacrificial priests asked for protection for the children (while usually the term 'children' is used for the people themselves, presented as the god's children):

Ти - но, Инмарэ, Кылдысинэ, Квазьэ, энъ аналтэ пинальес-мэ, энъ куштыкоосты!	You, Inmar, Kyldysin, Kuaz', do not reject our children, do not abandon them!

(Pervukhin 1888: 37)

Later, the sacrificial priests wished for the house to be full of children.

Корка тыр ныл пийэн, гид тыр пудо-животэн	With the house full of children, the stables full of lifestock,
Улымон бур шуттэ ачит с'от вал тӓн'и	Please give us yourself the good happiness to live, there,

(Nanyady 1970; Sadikov, Toulouze 2023: 75)

Now, the same wish is expressed:

Ныпиосмы корка тыр мед луозы, соослы шуддэ-бурдэ, азинлыктэ, тазалыктэ, сабырлыктэ, байлыктэ, визьдэ сётыса мын.	Let our house be full of children, please [go] giving them, giving them your happiness, your success, your health, your calm, your richness and your intelligence.

(Sadikov, Toulouze 2023: 132)

However, in the new prayer, the wishes continue:

Ныпиосмы мед кылзиськозы анай-атайёссылэсь, дано мед карозы пересьёсыз, мед утёзы удмуртлыкмес.	Let our children listen to their mother and father, let them respect the elder, let them protect our Udmurtness.

(Sadikov, Toulouze 2023: 132)

The wish for obedience from children is a new one, and probably dictated by the reality of life. The Udmurt family has been traditionally united and until the last decades no generation gap was to be felt. However, in last years, the children have not always been keen to pursue the way of life led by their elders and aspire to live in towns or simply look in other places for work. The conflicts within the families have become a concern, and parents do not know how to solve these quarrels. Undoubtedly the gap has even been deepened in the last two years.

Another interesting demand is the following:

Ноку медаз адзе соос ултйямез, бадзым Инмаре-Кылчинэ.	Let them never see humiliation, my great Inmar Kylchin.

(Sadikov, Toulouze 2023: 132)

Here is expressed the old experience of a minority people: the humiliation which the Udmurt very much wish to avoid for their children. Humiliation because of their nationality, because of their language, because of their accent – children have had this experience at school for decades. It was the case certainly also in previous times, but society as a whole except under the guise of the Udmurt community was absent in older prayers. Now, very discreetly, Galikhanov has brought it into

the kuris'kon, and does not hesitate to remind people that the Udmurt are an oppressed community!

UDMURTNESS

This is a very important theme in the innovations introduced in 2019 in Tatyshly district, indeed, before the ethnic aspect was totally ignored in Udmurt prayers. One may assume that the reason is that earlier there was no need. All the attendants were Udmurts, and the mere fact of their attendance revealed that Udmurtness was fit and healthy. But in the last decades, Udmurtness is not to be taken for granted. In recent years parents have ceased to speak their language to their children, even in this region. Often, going to live in town means de facto Russification. So today, Udmurt sacrificial priests feel the need to ask the deities to support them also in this field.

Firstly, at the beginning of the prayer, when announcing that the people have gathered, now they give details: "your Udmurt people".

Тани вань удмурт калыкеныд огкылсинмысь луыса,	There, with all your Udmurt people being unanimous,

(Sadikov, Toulouze 2023: 130)

So, not only the village people, but also explicitly Udmurts, presented as a people (*kalyk*, in Udmurt) and this is repeated throughout the prayer:

Тани вань удмурт калыкеныд огкылсинмысь луыса, одйг анайлэн-атайлэн нылъёсыз-пиосыз кадь луыса, тынад азяд шыдэн-нянен йыбырттйсько.	There with all your Udmurt people, being unanimous, being like daughters and sons of one mother and one father, I bend in front of you with soup and bread.

(Sadikov, Toulouze 2023: 132)

And then, later, towards the end, the request for welfare is definitely directed towards the Udmurt, which was not formerly specified.

Вань удмурт калыклы ӟечлыктэ, ваньбурдэ сёт, шудо улондэ вай, Инмаре-Кылчинэ.	Give all the Udmurt people your welfare and your wealth, your happy life, my Inmar Kylchin.

(Sadikov, Toulouze 2023: 132)

An important and surprising sentence asks for good reputation so that the "glory" of the Udmurt would be spread all around the world. Indeed, the Udmurt are considered a "small" people, and they are not talked of in the world. But now the Udmurt request that they be known, and in the positive way.

Дунне вылэ удмуртъёслэн ӟеч данзы мед вӧлмоз.	Let the glory of the Udmurt spread in the world.

(Sadikov, Toulouze 2023: 132)

This is clearly one of Galikhanov's innovations. We find this sentence in his texts uttered by him already in 2009, in a local ceremony:

Удмурт калыкед инмын жуась кизилиос мында мед луоз.	Let the Udmurt people become as many as the stars that twinkle in the sky.

(Sadikov, Toulouze 2023: 62)

Later, in the autumn ceremony 2022, he makes a development, with a small change in formulation, by wishing for the multiplication of the Udmurt:

Удмурт калыкед инмын жуась кизилиос мында мед луоз.	Let the Udmurt people become as many as the stars that twinkle in the sky.
Дунне вылэ данзы гинэ мед вӧлмоз.	Let only their good reputation spread in the world.

(Sadikov, Toulouze 2023: 39)

Or, the same year, in a text for his village ceremony shared in the social media platform Vkontakte*:*

Удмурт калыкед инмын жуась кизилиос мында мед луоз.	Let the Udmurt people become as many as the stars that twinkle in the sky.
Дунне вылэ данзы гинэ мед вӧлмоз.	Let only their glory spread in the world.

(Sadikov, Toulouze 2023: 105)

While sacrificial priests were able to discover this sentence in Elen vös' from 2013:

Дунне вылэ удморт калыклэн даныз гынэ мед тэ вӧлмоз,	Let in the world only glory spread about the Udmurt people,

(Sadikov, Toulouze 2023: 140, 141)

And the main wish was for the community itself, and its children:

Нылпиосмы мед кылзиськозы анай-атайёссылэсь, дано мед карозы пересьёсыз, мед утёзы удмуртлыкмес.	Let out children listen to their mother and father, let them respect the elder, let them protect our Udmurtness.
Ноку медаз адзе соос ултйямез, бадзым Инмаре-Кылчинэ.	Let them never see humiliation, my great Inmar Kylchin.
Удмурт калык медаз ышты сюлэмо лякыт сямзэ.	Let the Udmurt people never loose it sweet modest customs
Медаз чигы солэн чиданэз.	Let its patience never end.
Губырмем тыбырзэ шонертыны мед быгатоз.	Let it be able to straighten its back.
Жадёнэз тодытэк, шумпотыса мед ужалоз, кутскем удыссэ пумозяз мед вуттоз вал, Инмаре-Кылчинэ.	Ignoring fatigue, let it work in joy, let it bring to end what it started, my Inmar Kylchin.

(Sadikov, Toulouze 2023:132)

This is also a development loaned from a Galikhanov's prayer in 2018, which is in our corpus without having been published anywhere. The only differences are adjectives both defining the Udmurt customs (quiet and modest vs sweet and modest) and the conclusion about work: in one prayer insisting on achieving work started, in Galkhanov's text, that the usefulness of their work is perceived.

Ноку но медаз адзе соос ултйямез, Бадзын Инмаре, тани!	Let them never see humiliation, my great Inmar, there!
Удмурт калык медаз ышты шыпыт, лякыт сямзэ.	Let the Udmurt people never lose their quiet, modest character.
Медаз чигы солэн чиданэз.	Let their patience never break.
Жадёнэз тодытэк, шумпотыса мед ужалоз, ужезлэсь файдазэ мед адзоз.	Ignoring fatigue, let them work in joy, let them see the usefulness of their work.

(From A. Galikhanov's prayer notebook, collected by R. Sadikov, 2018)

So, we see here, how the head sacrificial priest has influenced all of his colleagues and has been convincing in all his innovations.

This version of the general prayer was supposed to last long. But things changed in Russia in 2023.

CHANGES INDUCED BY THE WAR

Indeed, war and peace have been important topics in Russia since WWII. It was a central item in the Soviet Union's propaganda, following its population trauma. The Soviet Union asserted a solid demonstrative pacifist stand, both in external and internal politics. Indeed, this declarative standpoint was contradicted by a militaristic spirit widespread in practice. There has been in the population, both in the Soviet Union and subsequent Russia, a generalised fear of war, which certainly explains the taboo on the word at the beginning of the Ukrainian war.

This generalised fear is also reflected in Udmurt prayers, where one of the requests has long been to avoid conflict and armed quarrels. Depending on the prayer, the wish concerns the whole world or their region:

Дунне вылэ лек вакытъёс, амала югдуръёс, ож тӥрлыкен жугиськонъёс кутскемен-пурӟемен куриськом ми Тонэ,	We do pray to You, with in the world the start of increasingly bad times, bad situations, warfare with weapons,

(Sadikov, Toulouze 2023: 38)

Most examples, all of them by Galikhanov, concern the region where the Udmurt live. We have an example in a 2009 prayer by Galikhanov:

Ноку но медаз лу ми палан музъемлы талашонъёс, ож тӥрлыкен жугиськонъёс.	Let there never be conflict for land in our region, warfare with weapons.

(Sadikov, Toulouze 2023: 62)

In yet another formulation:

Шаермес тӥрен-пуртэн, пыӵал тӥрлыкен ожмаськонлэсь уть.	Protect our country from warfare with weapons and knives, with fire weapons.

(Sadikov, Toulouze 2023: 60)

THE GENERAL PRAYER

With the war in Ukraine, with mobilisation, with news of casualties and dead bodies being sent back, which is becoming a very ordinary experience for many families, the slightly formal wish inserted in previously used prayers became terrifyingly topical.

A typical development is that special prayers have been composed for soldiers, the example we have being from Nizhnebaltachevo in 2022, at the time of the October 28th mobilisation. The sacrificial priest Evgeniy Adullin called it "Prayer dedicated to soldiers". In this prayer the general request is reduced to the very minimum.

Аслад яратыса сётэм-вордэм бэндэосыдлы шуддэ-бурдэ, кузь гумыръёстэ, тазалыктэ но визьдэ сётыса мын вал, соосыз ачид утьыса ул вал, Мусо Инмаре Кылчинэ, тани.	To your creatures you have yourself given and bred with love please [go] giving them your happiness and welfare, your long century, your health and your intelligence, please [live] protecting them, my dear Inmar Kylchin.

(Sadikov, Toulouze 2023: 155–156)

All the other parts of the prayer are dedicated to the soldiers.

The introduction does not change from ordinary prayers except for specifying that the ceremony is dedicated to soldiers. What is not ordinary, is the introduction and the emphasis that the request is a "very great one":

Лек югдур кылдэмен, жугиськон вырӟемен, пурӟемен,	An evil situation having arisen, a conflict having moved, having risen,
Йыбырттйськом ми Тыныд туж бадӟым куронэн, Бадӟым Инмаре Кылчинэ.	We bend to you, with a very great request, my great Inmar Kylchin.

(Sadikov, Toulouze 2023: 155)

This shows how seriously the Udmurt take this ceremony: the description of the time and the context, and the "great request". These words are not at all common in prayers, and this is the only occurrence in all of our corpus.

The first "great request" is protection and guidance for the soldiers. This occupies the first part of the prayer.

Утьы тон милесьтым ныпиосмес, юнматы соослэсь кужымзэс-сӥльвирзэс,	Shield our children, strengthen their force, their energy,

(Sadikov, Toulouze 2023: 155)

The dangers are the bulk of this enumeration:

Утьы тон соосыз дышмонлэсь-тушмонлэсь,	Shield them from the enemy, from the foe,

Кырыж сюреслэсь, ултйясь ужъёслэсь,	from twisted paths, from humiliating tasks,
Вузаськись муртъёслэсь, пленэ сюремлэсь.	From traitorous people, from falling prisoner.
Андан кенерен котыртыса уть соосыз,	Shield them surrounding them with a steel fence
Лобись пулялэсь, пуштылйсь снарядлэсь, тыллэсь но пуртлэсь, вир кисьтонлэсь, малпамтэ шорысь огшоры быронлэсь.	From flying bullets, from exploding projectiles, fire and knives, from bloodshed, from an ordinary unexpected death.

(Sadikov, Toulouze 2023: 155)

The means for the protection is a steel fence. The fence is the metaphor for protection against sorcerers or evil spirits – but usually, for Anatoliy Galikhanov, it is a silver fence (for example, Sadikov, Toulouze 2023: 25). Silver is known to have powers against supernatural evil forces[5]. But steel is stronger when facing physical threats.

The dangers are both physical and moral. The physical perils are the enemy of course, in general. But also, bad fate: bloodshed, being taken prisoner, and death; but also flying bullets, exploding projectiles, fire, knives. There are also moral dangers: twisted paths, humiliating tasks, and people – traitorous people.

And the guidance is also very important, both physically and morally

Утьы тон милесьтым ныльпиосмес, юнматы соослэсь кужымзэс-сйльвирзэс,	Shield our children, strengthen their force, their energy,
Возьматы соослы шонерзэ сюрестэ.	Show them the right path,

(Sadikov, Toulouze 2023: 155)

In the second part of this prayer, the focus is the family of the soldier, with the prayer asking the deities to give close family strength and patience. Everything the priest usually asks for the general population, he now asks for them: lightness in work, happiness. What is usually asked in general, is now asked for the period in which they wait for their soldiers:

Гид тыр пудоен, азбар тыр тылобурдоен, чечыен-муэн, жӧк выл тыр сиёнэн-юонэн, тыр нянен нылпиосыз возьманы шуддэ сётыса ул вал, Бадзым Инмаре Кылчинэ. Оминь!	Please [live] giving your happiness to wait for their children with a stable full of animals, a yard full of birds, on the table full food and drinks, full bread, my great Inmar Kylchin. Amen!

(Sadikov, Toulouze 2023: 156)

The prayer finishes with a general wish, not only for the Udmurt soldiers, but for the whole world:

Вакчи дыр куспын мед быроз ни вал калыккуспо вир кисьтон, малпамтэ шорысь быron.	In a short time, let the international bloodshed finish, the unexpected deaths.
Мед дугдоз ни вал каргам война, Мусо Инмаре Кылчинэ.	Let this damned war stop, my dear Inmar Kylchin.

(Sadikov, Toulouze 2023: 156)

Here, the word used is the Russian word for war, which has an Udmurt equivalent, but is more frequently used. Another interesting point is about how this war is characterised: first it is international, recognising thus the independent character of Ukraine, but more relevant even is the word "damned, which does not appear in any of the other prayers of our corpus, revealing the strength of the protest – and the strength of the emotion expressed by the sacrificial priest.

Finally, some other general wishes: that the Udmurt boys will remain Udmurt and perform well as such, and that the world would be a peaceful place, without troubling sounds and with sunshine.

Удмурт пиослэн данзы мед вӧлмоз вал быдэс шаере, медаз ыштэ вал соос удмуртлыксэс, дано мед карозы анай-атайёссэс но пересьёсыз.	Let the glory of the Udmurt boys spread across the whole country, let them not loose their Udmurtness, let them honour their mothers and fathers and the elders.
Быдэс дунне вылын мед луоз вал эрико но шудбуро улон,	Please, let freedom and happy life be in the whole world.
мед пиштоз вал котьку но шундыед, медаз ышы со тузон но ӵын сьӧры,	Let your sun always shine, let it not disappear behind dust and smoke,

медаз кылйське ни вал пуштылэм но ыбылйськем куараос, Бадзым, Мусо Инмаре Кылчинэ.	Let the sounds of explosions and shooting not be heard, my great and dear Inmar Kylchin.

(Sadikov, Toulouze 2023: 156)

What strikes us as remarkable, is the concern for the whole world, while Udmurt religious practice is not universalist nor has any pretension to be. But at some moments, also in other prayers, the priest expresses concern for the whole world. Here it is particularly insistent. In previous prayers, we had this example from 2008:

Дунне вылэ сёт вань калык куспын эрыкен, тупаса улон, ог-огдэ гажаса-валаса улон.	Give in the world between all the peoples a free life, in peace, mutual respect and understanding.

(Sadikov, Toulouze 2023: 59)

Or, from a brochure self-published by Galikhanov in 2011,

Вӧлмыты дунне вылэ ог огдэ гажан, огедлы огед юрттон амал гинэ.	Spread over the world only respect for one another, reciprocal help.

Or, to quote another sacrificial priest, Anatoliy Nasipullin, from Kachak, from a prayer uttered in 2018 for Elen vös'.

Озьы ик быдэс дунне вылын но калыкъёс куспын тупаса улон мед луоз, жугиськон-война медаз пуроме.	Likewise, let in the whole world the peoples live in peace, without conflict or wars.

(From Anatoliy Nasipullin's prayer notebook, collected by Ranus Sadikov, 2018)

Or the very simple phrase form a *kuala* prayer uttered in the 1990s in Aribash

Дунне вылын татулык мед луоз.	Пусть мир во всем мире будет.	Let peace be in the world.

(Sadikov, Toulouze 2023: 47)

This last prayer was particularly addressed to the soldiers. It is the first case of such a prayer that we have in our corpus.

In the general prayer, the one that is the model for the others about which we have already spoken and which had been amended some years earlier, changed again because of the war. In a ceremony performed in Tatyshly district, on a site by the road to Kyzyl-Yar, in December 2023, the sacrificial priests have added a part directly concerning the war.

The inspiration for it is clear: it is the last commented prayer by Anatoliy Galikhanov that was posted by the author on Vkontakte.

Yet, the local priests had added some sentences to it that are not to be found in Galikhanov's text, and, on the contrary, some parts were not reproduced.

The demands for protection are exactly the same, as shown above, with the priests' addition of "mines" to the explosive projectiles when asking for protection behind a steel fence.

The final wishes have been omitted as well as the most poetic expressions: the list of four sentences above, as well as the previous two sentences, are not in this version. But there is a very important addition:

Кивалтисьёслы визь-ноддэ сётыса мын вал, Инмаре Кылчинэ, мед валалозы вал ог-огзэс,	Please [go] giving to the leaders your wisdom, my Inmar Kylchin, let them understand one another,
мед дугдытозы ни вал вир кисьтонэз, калыккуспо войнаез, огшоры ог-огзэс быдтонэз.	Please let them finish the bloodshed, the international war, the mutual deaths.

(Videorecording during a ceremony in December 2023)

There is in addition, this wish that God would act on the leaders, both to avoid chaos and to finish the war. It is not clearly said, but it suggests that the responsibility is on the leaders. It also suggests that they have lost their wisdom, for the first sentence asks for God to give them his own wisdom. While in the previous text Galikhanov asked God to finish the war, the bloodshed etc., here it is a request directly to the leaders. Which leaders are not specified, so where there is doubt the responsibility can be shifted to the enemy's leaders, although we understand implicitly that the leaders concerned are first of all the leaders of one's own country. Here not only is the war explicitly mentioned using the Russian word, but it is qualified as "international", which at least suggests that Ukraine is not seen as an internal, but as an external enemy. However, this may be wishful thinking, and the war they speak of might be the war against the 'collective West'.

CONCLUSION

The ongoing war, which is producing more and more victims also among the Russian soldiers, has triggered swift innovation in the Udmurt religion.

We have noticed that the earlier changes, induced by the radical changes in the public life of the state, were slow to be introduced, until the first decade of the 21st century.

Clearly the texts are no longer felt to be so sacred that the priests are afraid to touch them. They have certainly been inspired by Anatoli Galikhanov, the most creative priest. Galikhanov is Altayevo's priest and also the chairman of the Association of sacrificial priests. This ensures that he has high status, but it is even more important that he has acquired his authority mainly through his own activity as a sacrificial priest. His example was certainly what defeated the other priests' scruples about changing something in a sacred text.

The tense political situation at the beginning of the third decade of the 21st century induced further changes – we shall be ready to record even more changes in the years to come.

NOTES

[1] An international research team gathered for French IUF grant 2017–2023, Interdisciplinary Research on an Animist Minority in European Russia, the Eastern Udmurt: Rituals, Customs and Community Involvement Today.

[2] The corpus on which this article is built upon has been collected by a research team, more precisely by Ranus Sadikov and Eva Toulouze and was published in Udmurt in 2023. It gathers all the known prayers of the Eastern Udmurt, either published or existing in archives, and finally those collected by our research team over 10 years, both by photographing the papers from which the sacrificial priests read and by recording the prayers within the ceremonies.

[3] As far as we know. Some texts from Pervukhin, while published one year later, may have been collected earlier.

[4] Elen vös' is a ceremony which used before the Revolution to gather all Eastern Udmurt. It was held every year in three alternating villages, Altayevo and Staryy Varyash in Bashkortostan, and Kirga in the Perm kray. It faded away during the Soviet times and was revitalized in 2008. Our team has attended it several times in the last decade (Sadikov 2010).

[5] Silver is a metaphor used in different ways in the prayers: silver are the teeth of the sacrificed animal, silver are the grains of cultivated cereals, and silver is the gods' water.

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A DEGREE OF INTERTEXTUALITY: AN INTERVIEW WITH EMANUELA TIMOTIN

Jonathan Roper

In the third in our series of interviews with charms scholars about their scholarly lives, we present an interview with Emanuela Timotin, the new Chair of the ISFNR Committee on Charms, Charmers and Charming. The interview was conducted remotely in February 2024, then subsequently by email.

When did you first become aware that there was such a genre as verbal charms?

I was a student and it was the first year at the Faculty of Letters at the University of Bucharest. One of the courses in the first semester of the first year was Folklore. At that time (1995), it was considered an important discipline in Romania, meaning that students could study Folklore at the Faculty of Letters as a main discipline for one year. And I did so, two hours each week. And I read various Romanian folkloric texts, and I discovered charms at that time. There was an important tradition of Romanian folklore studies, especially carols and ballads had been studied thoroughly, so I learnt a lot about carols and ballads, and also folktales. But later, when I was about to finish my B.A. years, I realized that most of the professors who studied the history of the Romanian language, also studied charms, because this genre was considered very interesting from a linguistic point of view.

Who were the professors who studied charms?

The professor, who eventually supervised my Ph.D, was Grigore Brâncuş. His professor, Alexandru Rosetti, wrote a short book called *The Language of Romanian Charms* (1975), and another important professor of Romanian language and literature in the first decades of the twentieth century, Ovid Densusianu, also wrote three major studies called *The Language of Charms* (1930–1934). So I came across charms in my study of folklore and of the history of the Romanian language, and these charms, collected by folklorists, which I came to know better and better, they are really beautiful. Some of them are accessible to a wider audience, e.g. the Romanian love charms, thanks to the efforts of Sanda Golopenția, who has translated many of them into English. They are beautiful texts with specific features, and everyone who likes folklore can, I think, enjoy reading them.

So the charm texts you studied in folklore classes were mostly nineteenth and twentieth century texts?

Absolutely. And after I graduated from the University, I had the opportunity to work at the Institute of Linguistics of the Romanian Academy, immediately after graduation. I went to the Department of Philology, and there I discovered Romanian manuscripts with texts written between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries — there are no medieval Romanian texts, so these texts preserved in manuscripts are the oldest texts that have survived to this day. And while I was studying apocryphal texts for my research at the Institute [1], I thought I might look for some charms too. This is how I decided to work on Romanian manuscript charms, and this is how my most important researches on charms appeared. It was a choice that grew out of various moments in my life. I still think it is a wonderful genre, and even today I discover a new charm here and there when I open a new manuscript.

What kind of manuscripts are they — household books, church books?

It depends. If I consider them chronologically, first they were church books, so charms were first written in the margins of church books; later, they were texts intended for use in the church[2]. And after that, in the

eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century, they were written in household books or in barbers' books or such like [3].

Surgeon-barbers?

Yes. There is at least one mention of 'surgeon-barbers'.

So you completed your doctorate on charms when? And what was the title of it?

I did a Ph.D in Bucharest, with the title *The Language of Romanian Charms*. It was very much in the line of research previously done by Densusianu and Rosetti [4]. I also did a Ph.D in France, on several Romanian charm-types that appear in manuscripts, because I thought France was a better place to study charms. There I met professors like Claude Lecouteux (Paris IV – Sorbonne) and Philippe Walter (University Stendhal – Grenoble 3), who were involved in the study of charms and of practices of charming. It was a very good place for me [5].

So, you are a 'double doctor'?

Yes, I am a double doctor. I finished my first Ph.D in 2007, and the second in 2009. In those days, people could complete their Ph.Ds over a long periods, not like today.

When did you first hear about the existence of a Committee studying charms?

My professor in Paris sent me a Call for Papers, forwarded to him by *É*va P*ó*cs, about the conference held in P*é*cs in 2007. I sent in an abstract, which was accepted [6]. I was not aware that it was such a large group — I was not even aware that there were so many people who were interested in charm studies. To my great surprise, there were a lot of people there whose research I had already read, so I was very happy when I realized what was going on there.

And then you went to the Athens Congress [2009] ***and the Moscow Conference*** [2011] ***...***

And to the Bucharest conference [2010]!

Indeed! What was the experience of organizing that like?

It was interesting, because I work in the Institute of Linguistics, and of course since charms are considered as a genre of folklore and there are not so many specialists in folklore in the Institute, it was obvious that it had to be organized jointly between my institute and the Institute of Folklore of the Romanian Academy. I was a junior researcher at the time. Fortunately, the former director of my institute, Marius Sala, who was then vice-president of the Romanian Academy, had been a student of Alexandru Rosetti who had written about charms. Mr. Sala had vivid memories of Rosetti's interest in charms and when he heard of my intention to organise an international conference on charms in Bucharest, he became enthusiastic and said to me: 'Go ahead, go to the Institute of Folklore, and talk to the director, Sabina Ispas'. The director of the Institute of Folklore was already a member of the Romanian Academy then. It was a very *vivid* experience. And I think it was a nice conference.

I think so too.

I was very happy that we were able to welcome so many colleagues, and that it had its own specific touch. I think it was very nice all in all and that each place where such conferences have been held, has had its specific touch.

Yes, I remember in Bucharest there were individualised presents for the guest speakers.

Yes, the director of the Institute of Folklore and I really wanted to do this, and we thought about what would be suitable for each participant. It was very nice for us, and we hope for you too.

Would you say that what you do with charms is in the same line as what people like Rosetti did or a departure?

No, it's not at all in the same line, because manuscript charms are not at all the same as charms from oral tradition [7]. Most, though not all, of them are in many respects closer to prayers or to exorcisms and these features are not typically found in charms of oral tradition. There are other, linguistic, features which aroused Rosetti's and Densusianu's interest in charms, and these were definitely not my main concern. [8] So, it's a new corpus of charms, the corpus which I eventually gathered, because it was a hidden corpus when I started my research on charms, and one studied with a different methodology because the texts themselves were different.

But how would you contrast from French and your Romanian Ph.Ds ideologically?
Or would you equate them, perhaps?

First of all, my Romanian Ph.D drew on texts which had not been known to Romanian scholars, and I was not necessarily interested in charm-types. I was interested in the connection of the charms with the Romanian language, because the meanings of the texts themselves are often difficult to grasp. Moreover, some texts have no parallels in the oral tradition, so they are, if I may say, *hapax*. I had to introduce them and to present them properly to a Romanian audience. On the contrary, in my French Ph.D, I was interested in charm-types and in problems of variation in charms. I would say that in my French Ph.D, I dared to raise problems that might have been more difficult to raise in a Romanian Ph.D, because standard Romanian scholarship used to contend that charms do not change — because if they must work, they cannot change. And when you read a manuscript charm-type, you see variation, and I had to enquire whether this variation was meaningful. In my French Ph.D, one of the main goals was to show that this variation was often meaningful, and to try to understand the reasons for this variation, which could be numerous.

It was interesting when you said that the academics thought that the charms do not vary, as this is also the folk account — the people claim that the charms don't vary.

Yes, and this is strange, and it struck me most as a Ph.D student. On the one hand, they say that charms contain many lexical innovations, and on the other hand, they say that charms do not vary. I wondered whether they change or do they stay the same.

So, since you completed your doctorate, you've been working at the Institute. How free are you to undertake charms research there?

Charms have never been a main topic of research at my Institute. Of course, I can always work on charms. I would say that, thanks to my research, charms are an important part of the Romanian literature which is being read today. My colleague at the University of Bucharest who teaches Old Romanian literature has a class dedicated to charms. I think it is a step forward. It is a literary genre that can now be read by students and colleagues working in academia.

How much are your addressees and authorities the folklorists working with charms, like, for instance, Laura Jiga Iliescu?

I have met and spoken with many colleagues who are folklorists. We have all, of course, noticed this barrier between manuscript charms and charms of oral tradition. And we are all trying to learn more and more from each other. I think for each of us, looking at both manuscripts and oral tradition gives us a broader perception. I would say that this manuscript tradition was initially seen as a bit bizarre, because it is so close to prayers and apocryphal narratives [9], but after some time it was gradually accepted.

So, as well as the contrast between those working with oral and those with manuscript sources, there is also, it seems to me, in the fellowship of charms scholars there is quite a big divide between people who work with classical and medieval material and then people who work with folkloric material, which is similar to, but not 100% the same as, the divide you've been mentioning. But as your material isn't classical or medieval, how do you position yourself within this dichotomy?

Many charms I have edited follow a Slavonic and Greek pattern [10]. And it's interesting that the more they follow this pattern, the closer they are to prayers in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Later, if these charm-types survive, this very religious appearance disappears somewhat. In a sense, then, these charms are relics of South-East European *medieval* literature. But what is remarkable is that in many regards something new is emerging. For example, a charm meant to heal the evil eye affecting silkworms appears in the late eighteenth century, because by then there were more and more households were involved in that cottage industry, and silkworms were being bred at home. And if you read about the history of this industry in Romania, there are charms and beliefs about the souls of silkworms [11], etc. So, sometimes these charm-types mirror the changes in Romanian society in terms of social history. Or sometimes they are highly regional; for example, a charm meant to find hidden treasures, used somewhere in Transylvania, contains a significant number of liturgical fragments borrowed from the Catholic liturgy. So, given the richness of the material I studied, I had to put aside the dichotomies mentioned because they were not helpful in my research. In many respects, Romanian manuscript charms are based on medieval south-eastern European literature; at the same time, an important group of texts had very precise references to regional realities.

So, you don't position yourself one side of this apparent divide at all?

No, not at all. I wouldn't have become interested in manuscript charms unless I had known about charms of oral tradition. The connections are obvious, and they have to be seen as a whole tradition. Sometimes it would be a pity not to see Romanian manuscript verbal charms in their relations with other literary genres. It is a degree of intertextuality that shows that these charms were not a marginal literary genre in

the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The people who used them were also aware of other literary genres which were less hidden or less secret than charms were.

So it's part of that web?

Yes.

In the years since completing your doctorates, which articles in charms studies are you most proud of?

It's always the last one! This last article now in print on the role of the Archangel Michael in the Romanian charm tradition — I gave a talk on it in our online seminar series [12] — is a study in which I succeed, I think, in showing how close charms can be to other genres and how the practice of charming can be connected with other practices. It is also an article in which I discuss an icon, whose theme is derived from a narrative that was also used as a charm. This article also gave me the opportunity to show how charms were considered to be effective at the personal level, at the family level, or, at the community level. So, in many ways, this article on the Archangel Michael is my favourite article on charms now.

So that mention of the online seminar series is a good link to asking you about this innovation of online seminars which you in your new role as Chair of the Committee (since our meeting in Riga in 2022) introduced. And I wonder if you could say something about your hopes and fears and vision for the Committee as you lead it?

The Committee has, in my opinion, two very important directions — the annual meetings, which give researchers working on charms the opportunity to meet and talk, and the journal *Incantatio*. Both are important to our scholarly community. It's important to ensure that new persons who join this field want to come to the conferences, want to publish in *Incantatio*, which means a constant effort on the part of the members of the Committee. But I also think that these online seminars (started in October 2022) are a good innovation. It would be good if thety continued, although it seems that the interest in them has its ups and downs.

We need more volunteer speakers.

Absolutely. And I further think it would be very good if there were a conference or a series of seminars on charm-types. From my point of view, it would be good to know what is new in charm typology in the years since your book [*English Verbal Charms,* 2005] was published. Can we identify more charm-types? Are they pan-European? Are they south-eastern European or eastern European? How local are they? This conference or seminar series on charm-types would show how research in charm-types has advanced in recent years.

Recently I have also worked on apocryphal and liturgical texts, which were transmitted orally, and I have become more and more interested in the connections between the practice of charming and other practices which involve the oral utterance of apocryphal texts, in verse or prose [13]. So, I favour events with specific themes, and I am very glad that the conference in Helsinki has such a specific theme [namely, Conflicts and Catastrophes]. I feel it would be excellent if we could clarify how research in charm studies has progressed in recent years. We have had this string of conferences and issues of *Incantatio*, etc., let us now assess what they tell us. This might lead to a boost in confidence and in interest.

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REVIEW OF THE LANGUAGE OF MAGIC, EDITED BY ELEONORA CIANCI AND NICHOLAS WOLF.

E. Cianci – N. Wolf (cur.), The Language of Magic – Milano, LED, 2022
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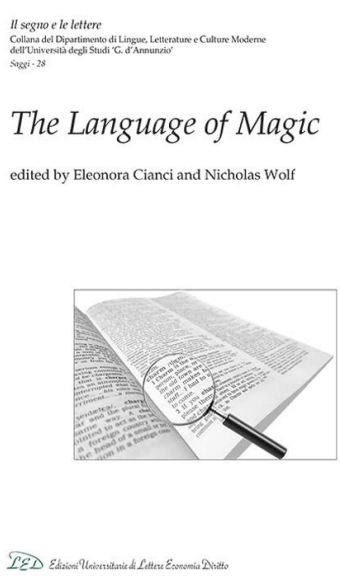

The essays in this thought-provoking collection arise from the proceedings of the Conference on The Language of Magic, held in in Pescara, Italy, in May 2019, organized by the Charms, Charmers, Charming Committee of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research.

While the book's chapters have been arranged in alphabetical order by author, in this review, I have grouped essays according to common themes and approaches to the broad topic of the "language of magic."

The special register of "the language of magic" can be analyzed from the perspective of "ordinary language." That is, charms and rituals occur within the circumstances of people's lives lived within particular time-periods. Social status, gender, and performance practices of specific eras shape the rituals. Both the customary attitudes and beliefs of those involved in these performances, as well as very specific occasions of sickness or misfortune drawn from daily life are open to exploration by charms scholars.

For example, Ilona Tuomi's study of two early medieval Irish charms for urinary disease focuses on the manuscript contexts of the charms, seeking contemporary understandings of causality and responses to the medical condition through the words of the charms. Similarly, Nicholas Wolf's study of eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Irish charms aims at capturing the attitudes toward maladies and verbal cures by close readings of the vocabulary of the texts. It illustrates vernacular

attitudes toward medical crises and foregrounds the 'action words', the words conveying illocutionary force, that charmers relied on to combat such evils as farcy, bleeding, and the dangers of childbirth.

Three essays by Giancristofaro, Golubeva and Kupriyanova, and Koiva, respectively, draw attention to the confluences of the ordinary language of daily life and the language of magic and magic rituals. Lia Giancristofaro describes local, vernacular performances of magic to dispel the evil eye, collected in the Abruzzo region of Italy during two periods, 1965–1970 and 2008–2020. From these domestic rituals of women at the kitchen table, she draws out the social and gender issues embedded in the practice and transmission of the rite, as well as the local triggers, such as financial loss, an accident, a quarrel, a break-up, or a failed exam. Lubov' Golubeva and Sofia Kupriyanova study the vernacular negotiations and secret language around childbirth under the care of the mother-in-law, mid-wives, and elderly women, contrasted to the professional practices and language of doctors. Also focusing on ordinary language, Mare Koiva illustrates how verbal substitutions, mainly complimentary euphemisms and insulting dysphemisms populate Estonian incantations aimed at the control of cockroaches, grasshoppers, ladybugs and bees, on the one hand, and ravens and wolves, on the other.

Turning from the language of the lived world to the poetic, two essays by Veselova and Lombardi argue that oral traditional poetry, such as the *bylina* epics and the Old Norse poetic sagas, contain magic rituals and language similar to that of vernacular charmers. Inna Veselova's essay shows women's magic as a means of empowerment within the male dominant society of the *bylina* texts, that is, oral traditional epics, which were still being performed and last recorded in the 1980s. Veselova isolates the magical practices of women within these traditional poems and finds parallels with strategic use of magic by village women, practices identified in fieldwork in Northern Russia. Maria Cristina Lombardi's essay teases out the links between the magical language in the Old Norse poetic sagas and two medieval runic objects, the Bergen stick charm to name a thief and a copper amulet to ward off an evil spirit in order to heal a fever caused by a wound.

Four essays by Iliomäki, Fadeyeva, Cianci, and Harlan-Haughey analyse the ritual performances of magical language in specific cultural circumstances. Henni Iliomäki introduces the *tietäjä,* a 'knower', a seer within Finnish-Karelian society. The authority and power of the performer acquires potency by construction of 'a ritual ego' that comes

between the common world and the other world. This is accomplished by association with metaphorical powers of birds of prey, otherworldly arrows and armour. Once empowered by metaphorical language giving access to the otherworld, the charmer is able to subjugate its harmful agents. In her essay, Liudmiller Fadeyeva identifies motifs in East-Slavic charms that allude to Christian icons. For example, the Virgin spinning threads on the icon of the annunciation, symbolically making a body, is translated in charms to the red threads identified with strings of blood and therefore function to staunch bleeding. Or the icon of the beheading of St. John the Baptist gives rise to charms that evoke the image of the head on a platter in charms against pain and blood from a wound.

Eleonora Cianci examines the manuscripts containing Old High German charms through the lens of monastic liturgical practices and manuscript making. Specifically, she argues on the evidence of neums written over the words of three charms in two twelfth-century manuscripts that the charms were sung in the manner of liturgical chant. As far as I know, no one has claimed to find musical notation for charms before; such an observation and interpretation is a significant contribution to debates about early performance of charms within monastic, liturgical contexts. Sarah Harlan-Haughey's essay reveals a continuum of language—from peasant charming and blaspheming to liturgical song—within the medieval *Second Shepherd's play*. In fact, it connects the liturgical world of a play performed within a church environment with the low business of sheep-stealing, in which charms and curses function on a continuum with angelic liturgical songs of praise of the newborn Christ. She demonstrates the medieval playwright's integration of peasant charming into the comprehensive Latin liturgical celebration of the Incarnation.

Two papers in this collection raise fundamental questions regarding the traditional genres. First, Andrei Toporkov's contribution asks us to think about what constitutes a legitimate oral tradition. By showing how historical publications have sometimes falsified folklore traditions, he demonstrates the importance of relying on accurate accounts and primary sources on which to build constructs of traditional folklore. It prompts us to take seriously the implications of supposed -emic descriptions and the -etic perspectives in which data is brought back to life by and for scholars. Tuomi, whose essay on early Irish charms I have already mentioned, is highly sensitive to the presentation of her texts in publications by other scholars and explains the implications

of errors in printed editions. As Toporkov argues, the cultural picture changes when we systematically question our sources, identify falsified or false records and note their proliferation, however unwittingly that might have happened.

Another fundamental question is raised both in Laura Iliescu's essay and in Barbara Hiller's contributions. How do we best explain oral and written charms within the same tradition? Iliescu offers a nuanced consideration of the traditional performance and transmission of the *Dream of the Mother God,* a written prayer-text, a vision, that takes the form of an encounter charm. Performances are grounded in writing, reading or reciting the narrative by memory. She illustrates how the act of writing, and the talismanic power of the written or even printed text, circulated in the manner of an oral tradition; and how traces of orality are detectable within the examples of the written text, despite the fact that it did not circulate in a purely oral form. This is an important point.

Part of the creativity of living oral traditions is the osmotic absorption of new ideas and technologies. Writing is one of those technologies that becomes part of the genre of charms very early; it appears on ancient amulets. Iliescu's account of the transmission of the *Dream* text illustrates the ebb and flow of written and oral (reading out loud) performances. We see the varied life and post-modern afterlife of this one text. From these studies we understand that written texts may belong to and follow the same patterns of transmission as oral texts. It is probably time for the apparent opposition of written vs. oral to be rethought and reframed.

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A DEEP INSIGHT INTO LATVIAN CHARMS

A review of **Aigars Lielbārdis** *Latviešu buramvārdi. Teksti, tradīcijas, konteksti* [**Latvian charms. Texts, traditions, contexts**]. Rīga: LU Literatūras, folkloras un mākslas institūts, 2024. 264 pages

Aigars Lielbārdis' most recent book provides a deep insight into Latvian charming tradition from three simultaneous points of view: texts and magical images of charms, persons of charmers, and the performance of charms. A well-thought-out combination of methods and theories has helped to reveal the values and different contexts of the tradition, maintaining both the continuity of the research and offering a new discourse for future analysis of the topic. Lielbārdis employs a classical approach, drawing primarily on the contextual methodology and performance theory from American folklorist Richard Bauman, alongside the intertextual framework, replete with its complex lexicon, from French narratologist Gérard Genette. These approaches are adeptly applied: intertextual analysis enriches the understanding of charm texts; the contextual method elucidates the social environment and practitioners of the tradition; and performance theory is crucial for documenting and interpreting contemporary charm use. As concludes the author himself:

> This study provides conceptual answers in defining the genre of Latvian charms, explains and confirms the rootedness of the charm tradition in the cultural and linguistic environment, and links the text to its users in contemporary society, with particular emphasis on the role and influence of the charmer in the functioning of the charm genre. (p. 259)

Well, but what a reader not familiar with the Latvian language and not feeling adventurous with the latest machine-translation tools would

gain from this volume? The short answer: quite a lot. First, there is a 27-page long English summary that presents the contents of the book and provides insight into the subject matter. Second, a comprehensive list of sources and literature covers almost everything that has been published on Latvian charms since 1873. Last but not least, the book includes thirteen illustrations ranging from a manuscript page of an Early Modern protocol of witch trials to contemporary data visualizations of charm distribution.

Moreover, all of the above is provided by the world-leading expert of Latvian charms. The research behind this volume has been presented in local and international academic forums and also partially published in peer-reviewed research journals. A significant part of this work consists of Liebārdis' unpublished doctoral thesis *The Tradition of Latvian Charms*, defended at the University of Latvia in 2012. As a lead researcher at the Archives of Latvian Folklore, the author has not only direct access to 56,000 Latvian charm text variations stored there but also the knowledge that has allowed him to develop a cutting-edge digital catalogue of the same texts. His been present and presenting at most of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research (ISFNR) committee of Charms, Charmers and Charming meetings, organizing one in Riga in 2022 too. Besides multiple stand-alone articles (including in *Incantatio*) and book chapters on the subject matter, this is his sixth book.

Overall, the book consists of three parts. The first part provides a historical overview of the study of the charm tradition in Latvian folkloristics, an analysis of the cultural and historical context and conditions shaping the charm tradition, and also the theoretical and methodological background of the research. Historical overview allows a glance into Latvian charm studies across distinct historical periods such as Tsarist Russia (1869–1917), the interwar period, the time of Soviet occupation, and from 1991 to the present day. The most important works and authors are discussed in detail. For the cultural context, the author has chosen to characterize three facets: meaning, institutions, and commutative systems. In other words, these are the historical, economic, religious, and other conditions that determined the development of the Latvian tradition of charms and their geographical distribution as well as their content and form. In addition, the main charming situations are listed, and the author provides an overview of public knowledge and beliefs concerning the activities of charmers, healers, and sorcerers. Folklore collecting "campaigns" and their influence on the corpus of Latvian charms are also assessed.

The second part examines the corpus of Latvian charms, which historically have been formed by two traditions – written and oral. This division is based on the different origins, variations, and dissemination of the charms as well as the content and form of the texts. The geographical distribution of Latvian charm texts generally falls within the area of present-day Latvia. One of the basic criteria, along with the physical area of the tradition, is the use of text in Latvian, although the texts do include formulas in German and Latin, such as combinations of letters and palindromes. Lielbārdis adeptly traces the influence of pan-European and Slavic charm types on the Latvian corpus, pinpointing the Jesuit Order's role in their integration. Special attention is given to the *Debesu grāmatas* (Books of Heaven or Heavenly Letters), primarily written charms influenced by the mid-18th-century activities of the Herrnhut brethren in northern Latvia.

Lielbārdis establishes a clear formal distinction between Latvian charms and other folklore genres, based on textual structure and formal characteristics, categorizing charms into three groups: poetry, prose, and graphic representations. This leads to a nuanced cross-genre analysis where charms' plots and personae are compared with those in folksongs, tales, and legends—an ambitious scholarly endeavour, as previous studies typically categorized Latvian charms by function rather than narrative content.

The third part is dedicated to contemporary charming practices. Based on the author's field research data since 2005, it focuses on charmers as a social group. Lielbārdis here shares his witnessing of contemporary charming by three female practitioners. Two situations of performance are related to healing, two to harming, and, three documented several times over a longer period – related to a calendar custom (so-called "tying up the hawk" to protect household birds from the predator) that takes place before dawn on a Good Friday. The latter is represented also in Lielbārdis ethnographic documentary, released in 2010. The part contains not only a description of the charmers' performances but also a detailed description and analysis of the charmers' interpretations of their actions. In the characterization of each informant and her activities, attention is focused on her personality, the acquisition of the knowledge required for charming and influences on this knowledge, self-positioning or self-identification, and the relationships of the specific performance to the tradition.

In conclusion, Lielbārdis new book provides an excellent overview of both the corpus of Latvian charms and research of those charms,

in addition to testifying to the living practice of the tradition. Most importantly, it anchors the charm genre and its national variations in a broader milieu of vernacular culture which is represented both by traditions and by varied other folklore genres like Latvian folksongs, beliefs, folktales and legends. Historically, the volume bridges previous, written textual research with present-day fieldwork and new methods of digital humanities the author is helping to develop in research of magic and charms. If this has caught your interest you may also like to check out Lielbārdis previous book on the most important historical Latvian charm corpora – *Collection 15O Charms*. This title is fully bilingual, Latvian and English, published by LU LFMI in 2020.

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CONFERENCE REPORT ON 'THE MATERIALITY AND PERFORMANCE OF CHARMS', SINGAPORE, 29TH AUGUST – 1ST SEPTEMBER, 2023

In a departure from previous practice, the 2023 conference of the Committee was held for in Asia. To be precise, it was held at the Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, organised by Katherine Hindley. The chosen themes were 'materiality and performance', which the conference organiser hoped might encourage papers exploring "how written charms are made and how spoken charms are performed". The event was held in hybrid format, a continuation of practices developed during the recent pandemic, and this allowed those who could not make it to Singapore to speak and to listen. Roughly half of the speakers appeared online. There was a similar near fifty-fifty division observable in speaker-novelty: encouragingly, nine of the nineteen speakers were speaking at the series of charms conferences for the first time.

Following an unofficial social gathering on the Monday evening, the conference proper opened on August 29th with a session on 'Theories of Healing in Europe and Asia', which was followed by one on 'The Performance of Charms'. On the Wednesday, there were sessions on 'Charms and Christianity', 'Performance and Taboo', and the first session on 'Materials and Objects'. On Thursday, the final day of papers, there was the second session on 'Materials and Objects', before the closing session on 'Charms in the 21st Century'.

There was a wide variety of interesting papers during these sessions. Speaking purely personally, four presentations linger particularly in my memory, so, albeit perhaps unfairly, I shall focus on them in this report. The first of these was Faizah Zakaria's talk on 'Healing the Lovesick in the Malay World'. Islamic healing books current in the Malay-speaking area, such as the *Kitab Tib* and the *Bustan As-Salatin*, would always have, alongside their descriptions of how to cure physical ailments, a

few remarks on how to deal with love sickness. Indeed, being thwarted in love was equated with being afflicted with a disease. The relevant charms here were to be read three times without taking a breath.

The second paper that caught my attention was delivered remotely by Daiva Vaitkevičiėne and was entitled 'Rites and Jokes: The Healing Practices of the Charmer Šimas Augulis'. The Augulis of the title, who died in 1934, was the focus for many traditional stories, and the speaker examined how well those stories might fit with what the ethnographic record tells us about charmers. The general answer was, Not very well. For instance, in the second half of the twentieth century, charmers were generally very religious, whereas Augulis did not go to church. There were also anecdotes about him which foregrounded his use of mockery and threats. For example, a twelve year-old boy who had never spoken was locked inside a house by Augulis. He also pretended to be very angry, and began sharpening a knife. The horrified child began to speak!

Another memorable remote presentation was that given by Ilona Tuomi: 'With these ingredients in one's pocket, one can do whatever!'. Drawing on the 9 files of folklore collected in Savo by the Finnish schoolteacher, Otto Räsänen, the presentation focused on a local charmer nicknamed 'Vulpes'. Like other charmers, he used readily-available everyday objects in his practice, a bear's claw and a large nail stolen from the local church – what made these objects magical was their being charged with energy. Apparently many charmers and traditional healers in this area bore nicknames, such as 'Ruotsi', the smith. This raises the question as to whether charmer are more nicknameable than other categories of person in traditional societies. The final presentation I should like to recall here was delivered in person by Mordy Miller, and was titled 'The Materiality and Performance of Hebrew-written Charms from Israel against COVID-19'. It discussed a charm based on existing texts written by a Kabbalist and intended for widespread distribution in Israel against Covid.

One of the most notable aspects of the conference was the excursions. On the Tuesday morning, there was a visit to the Poh Teong Tian Temple, where we learnt about local divination practices. On the morning of the Thursday, there was a curator-led tour at the Asian Civilisations Museum. And on the Friday, following the close of the conference proper, there was an excursion that took in various urban temples, and which, following a pause for lunch at a hawkers' centre, concluded in a visit to the island of Ubin, where, amongst other attractions, numerous monkeys were spotted. And all in all, it can be said that the first

conference of the Charms, Charmers and Charming committee to be held in Asia was a success.

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ISFNR COMMITTEE ON *CHARMS, CHARMERS, AND CHARMING* 16th ANNUAL CONFERENCE: JUNE 12th–15th, 2024 HELSINKI "CONFLICTS AND CATASTROPHES"

The 16th annual Conference organized by the ISFNR Committee on *Charms, Charmers, and Charming* is an important event in folklore studies and cultural anthropology. This year, it was hosted in Helsinki by the Folklore Studies Department of the University of Helsinki and the Finnish Literature Society. The *Conference* received financial support from the Kalevala Society and the "Materiality, Verbal Art, Mythic Knowledge and the Lived Environment" (ASME) project. After four years of online and blended meetings, the 2024 "ChaChaCha Conference" eventually brought physically together researchers and scholars from fourteen different nations to discuss and share their findings on the use of rituals, charms, and traditional practices in coping with conflicts and catastrophes. The papers presented at the *Conference* revealed a rich variety of research focusing on conflicts and catastrophes and the various ways societies cope with them. Several key research themes emerge, including the role of rituals, charms, and traditional practices in crisis management.

A group of Indian scholars offered one significant thread of the *Conference*. These studies emphasize the vital role of traditional knowledge and cultural practices in contemporary Indian society, demonstrating their adaptability and significance in addressing modern conflicts and environmental challenges. Through rigorous fieldwork and anthropological insight, these researchers have provided a deeper understanding of how Indian culture continues to evolve and respond to crises.

Mir Masudul Hoque (Aligarh Muslim University, India), "Singing to the Trees: Baul's Revival of Barsha Mangal to Cope with Environmental Crises," focused on the Bauls' revival of the Barsha Mangal festival in Bengal. His research examines the socio-cultural significance of this celebration, honouring the monsoon's agricultural importance and its revitalization to raise awareness about environmental challenges through rituals, cultural performances, and tree planting. Hoque traced its historical roots, Rabindranath Tagore's contributions, and the Bauls' contemporary reinterpretation of the festival in response to current environmental crises.

Karuna Kanta Kakati (Anundoram Borooah Institute of Language, India), "Beliefs and superstitions associated with the terrestrial spirits of Assam," explored the beliefs and superstitions surrounding ghosts and evil spirits in Assam, India, where diverse ethnic, religious, and linguistic groups coexist. Her work shed light on how local narratives and superstitions reflect and address societal fears and uncertainties during times of conflict. Kakati discussed selected narratives from various localities in Assam, emphasizing the persistence of traditional beliefs in contemporary society.

Shantanu Chakraborty and Kishore Kumar Bhattacharjee (Gauhati University, Guwahati, India), "Traditional Herbal Medicine Practices of the Himalayan: A Case Study of the Nomadic Sellers," investigated conventional herbal medicine practices among the nomadic Bhagoriya community in India. This community is known for its intergenerational dedication to herbal medicine, travelling across the country to sell Himalayan remedies. The researchers documented and analyzed the Bhagoriya's medicinal plant knowledge, harvesting techniques, and cultural significance. They gathered qualitative and quantitative data using ethnographic interviews, participant observation, and ethnobotanical surveys. The study also explored the socio-economic dynamics of the herbal medicine trade, highlighting the nomadic community's role in preserving traditional healing practices and cultural heritage.

Nidhi Mathur (Kurukshetra University, India), "Kedarnath: A Personification of Charms in Indian Society," analyzed the emotional and theological responses to the Kedarnath floods. Her study focused on how disasters challenge religious beliefs and prompt the reuse and invention of charms to cope with the ensuing crises. Although she could not be at the *Conference* in person, only via video, Mathur's paper

examined floods as sites of emotional crisis, questioning theology and discussing the transmission and circulation of charms during crises. She explored how old charms were reused and new ones invented in response to the disaster.

The following four research papers exemplify the importance of contemporary rituals and coping mechanisms across different cultures and religions. Each scholar, blending ethnographic fieldwork and anthropological knowledge, investigates how traditional practices have adapted to address modern crises. These studies share a common focus on the evolution and revitalization of rituals to maintain harmony, identity, and resilience in the face of environmental, social, and technological challenges.

Lili Di Puppo (Aleksanteri Institute, Finland), "Preserving the harmony between humans and the environment by caring for Muslim saints in Russia's Urals," highlighted the concept of an animate landscape through the experiences of Sufi Muslims and volunteers caring for sacred sites in Bashkortostan, located on the Western slopes of the Southern Ural Mountains. She contributed a new perspective on human-nature relationships by drawing from Muslim ontologies, exploring how the Sufi tradition's "open heart" and "heart-knowledge" facilitated an experience of oneness with the animate landscape. She examined how the graves of Muslim saints communicated messages to the living, preserving the world's existence.

Lisa Donovan (Liverpool John Moores University, UK), "Speaking to the New Gods." Donovan, an artist and PhD candidate, delved into the interplay between technology and magic. Her examination revealed that new rituals and quasi-religious processes could assist humans in navigating their relationship with sophisticated technologies during crises. Donovan's work included embedding Large Language Model prompts within songs for choir performances, blending traditional and contemporary practices. This innovative approach aimed to express a nuanced human identity in interactions with technology.

Fionnán Mac Gabhann (Indiana University, USA), "An Irish Priest's Charming Amid Conflict," illustrated the role of a traditional Irish priest in navigating conflicts between vernacular healing traditions and the institutional beliefs of the Catholic Church, emphasizing the use of charms to manage personal and communal crises. Mac Gabhann illustrated how Father Éamonn Ó Confhaola, a retired

priest, healer, and vernacular historian from the Connemara Gaeltacht in Ireland, believed in the efficacy of charms, contrasting with Post-Tridentine Catholic Church teachings. Mac Gabhann's talk highlighted Fr. Éamonn's role in preserving his community's healing traditions.

Mare Kõiva (Estonian Literary Museum, Estonia), "Do online incantations resemble previous texts?" explored the evolution of Estonian incantations, comparing traditional texts used during crises such as pandemics, wars, and accidents and the texts employed in contemporary rituals. Her research showed that modern incantations have adapted to address contemporary needs while incorporating elements of traditional rituals. Drawing on Tambiah's framework, which defines ritual as structured and sequenced words and actions with varying degrees of formality, stereotypy, and redundancy, she examined how new charms have been created in Estonia since the 1980s Nature and Earth Believers movement. These texts and their accompanying rituals conveyed equality between different beings and spheres, balancing with elements from various religions and integrating techniques such as meditation, incantation, singing, and movement.

These studies collectively underscore the dynamic nature of cultural practices and their critical role in helping communities cope with modern-day challenges. Through meticulous research and fieldwork, the authors provide valuable insights into how ancient traditions are being reinterpreted and revitalized to maintain cultural heritage and address contemporary crises.

The following three papers collectively centre on preserving and reinterpreting traditional cultural practices amid political and ideological challenges. Each study illustrates how modern political ideologies—be it Soviet anti-religion policies, Soviet assimilation efforts in Latvia, or the struggles encountered by Irish immigrants in America—have profoundly impacted the conservation, reinterpretation, and dissemination of these cultural traditions.

Karina Lukin (University of Helsinki, Finland), "Conflicting regimes of openness and prohibition in a 1928 shamanic song," focused on contextualizing Yadne's shamanic text within the ideological climate of the time. The Soviet Union under Stalin was marked by an intense anti-religious ideology, viewing traditional practices like shamanism sceptically. Lukin's research explored the tension between the scholarly interest in preserving Indigenous knowledge and the state's efforts to suppress religious expression, highlighting the challenges

researchers and Indigenous communities face in navigating these opposing forces.

Aigars Lielbārdis (University of Latvia, Latvia), "Revitalization of healing traditions as part of the Latvian folk revival," sheds light on the revitalization of healing traditions within the context of the Latvian folk revival. The 1980s marked a socio-political transformation in Latvia, known as the Atmoda (Awakening), paralleling the Soviet Union's Perestroika. During this time, the reconstruction of Latvia's political and economic system was underway. Lielbārdis emphasizes how the Awakening provided the backdrop for Latvia's eventual independence, regained in 1991. Central to this era was the folk revival movement, initiated in 1978. Its primary focus was the rediscovery of national cultural heritage and traditional practices, countering the Soviet ideology that normalized social activities and stage culture. Healing traditions, preserved for centuries, became a focal point. These practices, shielded from foreign influences, were integral to the movement. Lielbārdis meticulously analyses their revitalization during the 1980s and early 1990s, considering historical context, socio-political processes, and the movement's ideological basis.

Nicholas Wolf (New York University, USA), "Irish Charms in Transatlantic Print, 1800-1920," presented a study on Irish charms in transatlantic print from 1800 to 1920. Wolf utilized recently digitized resources, including the Irish American newspaper "An Gaodhal" and the Royal Irish Academy's "Corpas na Gaeilge", to uncover examples of Irish-language charms. One such charm, discovered by Pennsylvania-based folklorist J. J Lyons in 1890 and originating from Donegal, was published in *An Gaodhal*. The study highlighted conflicts inherent in publishing charm texts in the modern era, where they were removed from their original contexts and presented in newspapers or books. Wolf discussed how nineteenth- and twentieth-century Irish-language publishing contexts influenced the dissemination and interpretation of charm texts. He argued that despite being extracted from their traditional oral contexts, charms continued to be valued within the broader framework of Irish folk customs, perpetuated by the global Irish diaspora through publications like "An Gaodhal", which catered to Irish American readerships.

These four papers collectively investigate the significant influence of the Church in shaping the narratives and perceptions of supernatural

entities—saints, angels, and malefic agents—in folklore and religious traditions. Emphasizing the Church's role in the demonization and sanctification processes, the studies explore how figures like the Devil, angels like Saint Michael, and saints like Judas Thaddeus are depicted and evolved over time. By examining the interplay between religious authority and cultural narratives, these papers highlight the enduring impact of ecclesiastical influence on folklore, spiritual beliefs, and the portrayal of good versus evil across different societies and historical periods.

Emanuela Timotin (Institute of Linguistics of the Romanian Academy, Romania), "A Stereotyped Enemy: Describing Malefic Agents in Romanian Charms," examined the portrayal of malefic agents in Romanian charms. These agents were depicted with a range of harmful abilities, such as inflicting diseases, causing harm to individuals, families, communities, or cattle, and inciting strong emotions like love and anger. Despite their varied roles, their depiction in oral tradition charms was quite stereotyped. Conversely, charms from 17th to 19th-century manuscripts depicted these agents with more distinct features. Timotin aimed to identify the primary rhetorical devices used to describe malefic agents and to analyze their presence in Romanian charms from the 17th to the 20th century. She sought to determine the consistency of these devices across different periods and charm types. The Church played a crucial role in shaping the perception of these malefic agents, often associating them with the Devil to reinforce their malevolence. This association helped maintain a consistent image of the agents as embodiments of evil. Timotin's analysis provided insights into the evolution of Romanian charm traditions and the changing perceptions of malefic agents over the centuries.

Daiva Vaitkevičiene (Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore, Lithuania), "Wise men or sorcerers? The demonization of charmers in Lithuanian legends," discussed the categorization of individuals with supernatural abilities in Lithuanian folklore, as initially outlined by folklorist Norbert Vėlius in 1977. Vaitkevičiene discussed Vėlius' typology, which includes witches, wizards, charmers, and others, highlighting overlaps and distinctions among these groups. Drawing from historical sources from the 16th to 18th centuries, including church documents and witch trial records, she examined how priests and priestesses of ancient Lithuanian religion, once regarded as wise helpers, were stigmatized as sorcerers and witches by the Christian Church. This process of demonization, influenced by ecclesiastical per-

spectives, reshaped legends and terminology, increasingly associating charmers and similar figures with malevolent forces.

Edina Eszenyi (HEI Pegaso International, Malta), "Shifting Hagiographies: St. Michael the Archangel in Supplication and Exorcism Formulas," explored the historical and socio-cultural evolution of Saint Michael's image within the Catholic Church. The study focused on how the Church shaped the Archangel's attributes, influenced by various Popes. Pope Francis' 2018 endorsement of the supplication for Saint Michael's protection stemmed from a tradition initiated by Pope Leo XIII in response to a vision. Initially part of the 'Leonine Prayers' from 1886, this supplication addressed threats to the Holy See. Over time, different prayers emerged, reflecting Saint Michael's evolving role from protector to warrior in times of spiritual and political turmoil. Eszenyi's presentation underscored the Church's role in defining Saint Michael's attributes through these prayers and exorcism formulas.

Haralampos Passalis (Department of Medieval Lexicography in Thessaloniki, Greece) "Production and Reproduction of Religious Legends and Words of Power in Our Modern, Globalized, and Digitized Era: The Case of the Healing Prayer to Saint Judas Thaddeus," explored the evolving veneration of Saint Judas Thaddeus, initially linked to Judas Iscariot but later rehabilitated through religious legends. These legends transformed Thaddeus into a highly venerated apostle known as the «patron saint of impossible causes». Passalis analyzed a specific prayer dedicated to Thaddeus, examining its structure and performative context to highlight distinctions between charm and prayer and official versus non-official practices. He traced the dissemination and adaptation of Thaddeus's veneration in modern Greece, illustrating its global influence and proposing future international research opportunities. This study revealed the dynamic adaptability of religious legends in contemporary society.

The following papers delve into diverse aspects of charm studies across different cultural and temporal contexts, employing various methodologies rooted in historical analysis and textual interpretation. These studies highlight charm research's interdisciplinary nature, combining historical inquiry, linguistic and philological analysis, and literature interpretation to deepen our understanding of charms' roles in past societies.

Karolina Kouvola (University of Oulu, Finland) "Healing of a mental health crisis."

Kouvola discussed *modersjukan*, also known as "mother illness", a condition characterized by anxiety or depression within the charm tradition of Swedish-speaking Finland in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The presentation examined both vernacular and biomedical diagnostics of *modersjukan*, as described in charms and textual records from that period. It was noted that despite its name, *modersjukan* could affect both men and women and was often attributed to sorrow, hard work, or misfortunes. The analysis, which utilized written sources and a linguistic method, focused on healing these illnesses with *dyra ord* "precious words" and explored their cultural context, highlighting how the understanding of mental illnesses evolved into the early 20th century and influenced the collection of charms.

Katherine Hindley (Nanyang Technological University, Singapore) "How to Win Friends and Influence People: Interpersonal Charms in Medieval England."

Hindley discussed how, while most surviving medieval charms were intended to cure injuries or wounds, some aimed to influence personal relationships. Her presentation provided an overview of English charms designed to manage interactions between people, ranging from protection against false witnesses to love, legal success, and ensuring favour from a lord. Hindley examined the language of these charms to explore how they utilized interpersonal relationships to coax or compel favourable outcomes. She highlighted the evolution of charms in manuscripts from different periods, such as London BL MS Sloane 475 (11th century), Cotton Titus D XXVII (11th-12th century), and Digby 86 (13th century). These examples demonstrated how an old charm against theft transformed into a means of protecting people and their social status.

Eleonora Cianci (University of Chieti-Pescara, Italy) "Medieval German charms against wind and storms." The discussion focused on the 15th-century German text *Contra auram et tempestatem*, which specifically aims to ward off potential storms. Deities from Greco-Roman and Germanic mythology are often linked to meteorological phenomena like lightning and thunder. The Old and New Testaments depict God using floods, droughts, and famines as punishment, countered by blessings and prayers. Thus, Christian liturgy includes responses for weather control. This charm is found in a single manuscript (Munich, clm. 26693) and traces its origins to biblical episodes. This text includes a near-verbatim dialogue from the Gospel of John and uses a typical

Blutsegen formula to repel storms. Blessings and prayers against bad weather, relying on faith, entered Christian liturgy in the Middle Ages and continue today.

Fiorella Di Fonte (University of Chieti-Pescara, Italy), "Outsider antagonism and cursing dynamics in Old Norse Sagas." The author examined how Old Norse sagas establish conflicts through interactions with characters considered outsiders, who are individuals from different communities, cultures, or social groups within the narrative context. Conflicts were shown to intensify when these outsiders were magicians using magic for hostile purposes. The presentation highlighted how the representation of cursers transformed and worsened over time in Norse prose literature. Early sagas from the 13th century depicted the curser as a sorcerer whose magical competence enjoyed social credit. In contrast, later sagas from the 14th to 15th centuries increasingly portrayed the curser as an outsider, often aligning with female Sami characters or supernatural beings such as giants or trolls. This shift highlights the increasing otherness associated with magical practitioners and their practices.

The last two papers in our report contribute to the interdisciplinary field of charm studies, each offering unique insights into the methodologies and theoretical frameworks used to understand these cultural phenomena. Together, these studies expand our understanding of charms as cultural artefacts, demonstrating innovative approaches to methodological inquiry and theoretical analysis within the field of folklore and cultural studies. They offer complementary perspectives on the study of charms, exploring their temporal and cultural dimensions while addressing the scholarly complexities inherent in their interpretation and classifications.

Frog (Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, Finland), "Temporal Ideologies and Positioning: Charming Encounters and Outcomes," explored beliefs about time in Finno-Karelian and Germanic charms. He introduced «fractal recursivity» to analyze healing rituals, showing how rituals mirrored larger cosmological conflicts. Frog examined *historiolae* using past events in present rituals, discussing how performers positioned themselves relative to these events and addressed banishments and bindings. He highlighted disjunctions between the temporal ideologies of performers and researchers, tracing

traditional models back to ancient practices and emphasizing ritual continuity across time and cultures.

Davor Nikolić (University of Zagreb, Croatia) "Where There is Strife, there is Pride: Conflicts among Scholars of Charms." This paper, a team effort with Evelina Rudan and Josipa Tomašić Jurić, explored conflicts among scholars studying verbal charms. Nikolić focused on methodological approaches, highlighting conflicts between the practice of charms and academic interpretations, particularly discrepancies between emic (insider) and etic (outsider) perspectives. He discussed the complexity of classifying charms, debates about influences on charm structures, and the interplay between magical and religious beliefs, providing theoretical insights and a comparative perspective.

All the papers, conducted using various research methodologies, underscore the importance of integrating traditional knowledge, cultural practices, and innovative approaches to cope with conflicts and catastrophes. By examining various cultural, religious, and technological responses, the studies contribute to a broader understanding of how societies navigate and mitigate the impact of crises. The 2024 Helsinki *Conference* was a unique platform for sharing and discussing research. The lively debates and insightful questions that followed each presentation underscored the *Conference* importance, fostering a collaborative and intellectually stimulating environment. These interactions highlighted the diversity of approaches and perspectives within the field, revealing common themes and concerns across cultural and geographical boundaries. The dynamic exchange pushed the boundaries of existing knowledge and identified new research avenues, emphasizing the need for interdisciplinary studies that bridge cultural practices and technological advancements. Questions raised after each presentation underscored the complexities of studying rituals and charms, highlighting the importance of preserving intangible cultural heritage while navigating modern challenges.

Leisure activities and cultural moments offered by our marvellous Finnish hosts significantly enriched the *Conference*. Snacks and drinks at the *Laterna Magica* bookshop provided an intimate and charming setting for informal discussions amidst a treasure trove of literary works. The conference dinner on the *Royal Line Dinner Cruise* offered a stunning maritime experience, cruising through Helsinki's picturesque archipelago. This delightful evening of fine dining and scenic views facilitated relaxed networking and deepened professional connections.

Additionally, the visit to the *Finnish Literature Society Archives* was a highlight, offering insights into Finland's rich folklore heritage and the meticulous preservation of its cultural history. These convivial and cultural moments were essential in creating a memorable conference experience.

A vital aspect of the *Conference* was the Committee meeting, where it was decided that the next one would be held in Bucharest in 2025. We look forward to being together again and extend our heartfelt thanks to the organizers for their outstanding efforts in making this event so remarkable.

Eleonora Cianci

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"THE MAGICAL TURN? ROOM FOR NORDIC DOCTORAL STUDENTS" SYMPOSIUM (UPPSALA, APRIL 11–12, 2024)

Interest in folk beliefs, narrative and ritual practices in relation to magic and the supranormal is greater today than it has been for a very long time. In academia, too, research on the subject seems to be enjoying a renaissance. In Sweden and the Nordic countries there are a number of doctoral projects dedicated to the topic of magic in which young researchers approach folkloric archive collections with new theoretical starting points, methodological approaches and questions. The aim of the symposium "The magical turn?", held on 11-12 April 2024 in Uppsala (Sweden), was to bring together young researchers who, in their ongoing dissertations, approach the subject of magic from different perspectives and are activating the research field and the collections from new and different perspectives and to create space for the exchange of scientific knowledge.

The symposium was organized by the Royal Gustavus Adolphus Academy for Swedish Folk Culture and in collaboration with the Department of Ethnology at Stockholm University, the Nordic Museum and the Institute for Language and Folklore. It lasted two days and was held in the hospitable atmosphere of the Royal Gustavus Adolphus Academy for Swedish Folk Culture, in the historic city of Uppsala. The speakers were seven young researchers coming from different scholarly backgrounds such as folklore studies, human ecology, linguistics and philology, religion studies, ethnology, museum studies and history from universities from Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Italy who, in their ongoing dissertations, have activated the research field and archive collections from new and different perspectives. The following issues were discussed at the symposium: the relationship between magic and religion; magic and its social functions; the reception of museum objects

and the role of collectors in categorizing magic; magic as a political tool for rewriting histories; charms in oral and manuscript traditions; the contribution of the Church and clerics to the diffusion of charms in Scandinavia; the possibility of systematizing national charms corpora and of the charm-indexes elaboration.

The first day of the symposium was opened by the organizers Fredrik Skott (Institute for Language and Folklore, Gustavus Adolphus Royal Academy for Swedish Folk Culture), Lotten Gustafsson Reinius (Nordic Museum and Stockholm University) and Ebba Vikdahl (Stockholm University), and took the form of two sessions dedicated to two main topics. The first session was dedicated to the theme of magic in relation to its relationship with places, objects and artefacts believed to be connected to the supernatural. John Björkman, PhD student in Nordic Folklore Studies at Åbo Akademi University, presented a paper entitled "Folktroplatsers kulturella geografi i sydvästra Finland" (Cultural geography of folklore sites in south-west Finland). In his research on folklore sites linked to the supernatural in south-west Finland, he investigates whether certain natural landscapes, cited in folklore as terrifying and supernatural, conceal older forms of sacredness.

Ebba Vikdhal, PhD student in Ethnology at Stockholm University presented a paper entitled "Konstruktioner av ett magiskt förflutet i Nordiska museets folktrosamlingar" (Constructions of a magical past in the Nordic Museum's folklore collections), focused on the Nordic Museum's collection of and knowledge about magical objects and artifacts. In her research she investigates how these artefacts – by being incorporated into the museum – are reloaded into cultural heritage and what this in turn can tell us about the view of magic during the time in question.

The second session was dedicated to the relation between magic and religion in relation to books of magic and verbal charms in Scandinavia. The first paper presented by Mette Moesgaard Andersen, PhD student in Religious Studies at School of Culture and Society (Aarhus University) focused on Danish Black art books and their reception history. In her presentation entitled "Danske sortebøgers receptionshistorie og dennes påvirkning på empiri indsamling- og udvælgelse" (The reception history of Danish black books and its impact on empirical collection and selection"), she discussed how these writings has been received over time and how this affected the collection and categorization in Denmark.

Finally, Alessandra Mastrangelo, PhD student in Literary, Linguistic and Comparative Studies at University of Naples L'Orientale presented

her ongoing research on the manuscript and oral tradition of Swedish healing charms, with a paper entitled "Botformler och magiska läsningar: Verbal magi i det förmoderna och tidigmoderna Sverige" (Healing charms and magical texts: Verbal magic in pre-modern and early modern Sweden). Based on a selection of manuscripts dated to 1650–1850 and folklore material, she examines how Swedish verbal charms are presented and transmitted. Among the various issues discussed were how the authors adapted and modified healing texts that were common throughout Europe, the collection results and the evidence of the database, and the importance of making this material accessible to an international audience for international comparison. Finally, she discussed possible future research developments, such as the elaboration of a motif index for the Swedish charm corpus.

The day ended with a refreshments and recollection by the speakers and the audience followed by a dinner in Uppsala's Old Town.

The second day of the symposium opened with a session dedicated to the relationship between folk beliefs, artefacts and narratives about the supernatural and how these influence each other. Kristian Aarup, Phd student at Copenhagen University presented his research on folk beliefs about everyday objects in 18th and 19th century Danish peasant culture with a paper entitled "Trosforestillinger forbundet til den præindustrielle danske bondes hverdagsgenstande" (Beliefs associated with the everyday objects of the pre-industrial Danish peasantry). In his project he explores the relationship between folklore and everyday life and its practices in the Danish pre-industrial commoner society in both a material and immaterial sense. His paper focused on the everyday folk beliefs of the Danish pre-industrial peasant society and how these beliefs have been expressed in practice.

Sanna Händén-Svensson, Phd student in Human Ecology at Lund University presented her research on the Swedish *Storsjöodjur* (the monster of Lake Storsjön), with a paper entitled "Väsen, djur, kryptid. Varför är Storsjöodjuret så svårt att ta på allvar?" (Creatures, animals, cryptids. Why is the Storsjöodjur so hard to take seriously?) The *Storsjöodjur* is a phenomenon that originates in Jämtland folklore and was first mentioned in writing as early as 1635. The aim of her thesis is to examine the view of nature that underlies some of the conceptions of cryptids and asks the question whether stories of cryptid sightings can be seen as a (re-)enchanting force.

Finally, Adriana Aurelius, PhD in Museum studies at Umeå University presented a paper entitled "Trolldom, avgudadyrkan eller folk-

tradition?" (Witchcraft, idolatry or folk tradition?). She presented her research on the Sámi artefacts *seitar* found in museums and the role that the sources used by museum collectors played on the perception of these artefacts. Critical questions were discussed about what the older sources say about *seitar*, what they do not say, and where that knowledge may have gone.

The symposium was closed with a brilliant and stimulating summarizing talk given by the commentators Egil Asprem (Religious Studies, Stockholm University) and Blanka Henriksson (Folklore Studies, Åbo University) on the main issues and themes that emerged during the two-day symposium, as well as on further research and on plans for future scholarly meetings.

The symposium provided an opportunity for young researchers to present their research, address various issues related to their research topics, as well as to establish new contacts and broaden their study horizons. Crucial was the comparison during the symposium with international scholars moving along similar lines of research. The importance of interdisciplinary approaches and collaborations in the study of magic has been emphasized.

As a speaker, I would like to thank all the organizers and organizations that made this symposium possible. It is hoped that this will be the beginning of further collaborations and meetings around the interest and study of magic and its many manifestations, forms and functions, both in Scandinavia and internationally.

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