

Incantatio

An International Journal on
Charms, Charmers and Charming

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the first issue of *Incantatio*. This peer-reviewed journal is the natural outcome of the recent upsurge in charms studies, as illustrated, for example, by the activities of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research's Committee on Charms, Charmers, and Charming (<http://www.isfnr.org>). It is intended that *Incantatio* will be a lively forum for charms studies from a wide variety of traditions and scholarly approaches rather in the manner that *Proverbium* fulfills this role in paremological studies. Some of the range we hope to cover will be indicated by the contents of this our first issue, where we have articles on both medieval and (near-)contemporary charms, both European and North American material, and both close readings and theoretical interventions. Alongside such articles, we intend to published reports of conferences (or conference sessions) and reviews of books which touch on charms, charmers and charming.

The general editor of *Incantatio* is Mare Kõiva (mare@folklore.ee), who is also editor of the *Electronic Journal of Folklore* (<http://www.folklore.ee/folklore>). In addition, each issue will have a guest editor. For this first issue this role is being played by Jonathan Roper. We look forward to informative and productive developments in charms studies appearing the pages of *Incantatio*.

Mare Kõiva and Jonathan Roper

SECRECY AND RITUAL RESTRICTIONS ON VERBAL CHARMS TRANSMISSION IN GREEK TRADITIONAL CULTURE

Haralampos Passalis

The paper focuses on the ritual restrictions and taboos surrounding verbal charms transmission in Greek traditional culture. These restrictions and taboos which are closely connected with a strategy of secrecy based on the widespread belief that revealing the verbal part of charm renders the ritual ineffective, aim at protecting the transmission of verbal part which is considered as the main part of the ritual performance. Moreover, they can cast light on issues as the social status of performer, the owned status of magic, the problem of collecting charms in fieldwork, and even on the way of performance (the verbal part has to be recited in such a manner so that it is not heard). Special attention is given to how this strategy of secrecy affects the construction of the verbal part by way permitting transformations, innovations substitutions, omissions, even texts which lack logical coherence without disturbing the efficacy of the rituals themselves.

Key words: Greek traditional culture, performative context, restrictions, secrecy, taboos, transmission, verbal charms

Restrictions and taboos, secrecy and access conditions as well as the right to transmit hidden or so-called secret forms of knowledge are all deeply rooted in the history of numerous cultural, religious and political systems and are connected with notions of ownership, control, power, empowerment, status and prestige. It is not, of course, accidental that the restrictions imposed on the transmission of such knowledge remain crucial factors in the practice of magic; for magic has been traditionally steeped in secrecy, restrictions and taboos.¹ “Secret words supposedly open the doors to hidden treasures and remedy manifold ills; they are passed from magician to magician, like possessions, and competing practitioners contest the power of their hidden wares” (Luhrmann 1989: 131). Rules and regulations on the transmission of the secret knowledge “elevates the value of the thing concealed. That which is hidden grows desirable and seems powerful, and magicians exploit this tendency to give their magic significance” (ibid. 161). Witchcraft and magic consist of knowledge, and knowl-

edge entails power. Those in possession of secret knowledge exercise power over others precisely because of this knowledge (Middleton 1987: 38). However, as Huson (1970: 27) argues “power shared is power lost”.

Usually, there is a form of ritual behavior, which is closely connected with specific rites of initiation and framed by restriction and taboos in order for the information and knowledge of magic to be transmitted from the current owner to the next. Moreover, the system of orally transmitted secret knowledge in traditional rural culture is extremely interesting. However, except for only a few cases (Kōiva 1996: 41–46), little attention has otherwise been paid to it by the majority of ethnographers,² whose research are mainly focused on examining the morphological types and form of verbal charms,³ without taking into account that secrecy and restrictions in their transmission are closely related, on the one hand, with the social status of the performer and the function of magic in a specific cultural context, and, on the other, with the multiform diversity of the secret text transcribed on fieldwork.

The present article, based on ethnographic data collected by Greek ethnographers, focuses on the dynamic of restrictions, secrecy and taboos mainly associated with the transmission, but also with the performance and practice of verbal charms in traditional, rural, Greek culture. In the first part of this paper we will examine the restrictions and taboos as regards the transmission of the verbal component of the charm, whereas in the second part we will be concerned with the performative context of its transmission. The last part will address the question of how the whole system of restricted transmission and performance – aiming mainly at preserving the secret character of the text – affects the text itself as it is closely connected with such issues as the transformation of the verbal part of the charm.

RESTRICTION AND TABOOS ON TRANSMISSION OF THE GREEK VERBAL CHARMS

If we examine closely the transmission system of verbal charms, we see that restrictions and taboos surrounding their transmission apply mainly to the verbal part of the charm. The whole ritual, the objects used as well as its accompanying movements and ritualistic gestures, are familiar to those attending it, still a crucial part of it remains undisclosed to the uninitiated. It is worth mentioning some characteristic ethnographic testimony: “I did know how the charmer did all that, but the words of the charm I didn’t know ... Without the words the cure was impossible” (Γιαννοπούλου 1951: 264). Thus,

lack of knowledge of the specific words of the charm, render the whole ritual ineffective. In traditional Greek society the verbal part of charms is called *arigmata* (“αργήματα”) which means words which cannot be told or which must not be told and cannot be disclosed (Στέλλας 2004: 17). The verbal part of the charm, which constitutes the basic ingredient of the magic recipe, needs to be kept secret.⁴ This insistence on the preservation of the apocryphal nature of the charm is explicit and categorical and it constitutes an integral part of the mythical system of the transmission and performance of the charms.

The difficulty of collecting and recording these texts is well known and it is due to the widespread belief that when a charm is openly disclosed it loses both its magic and therapeutic qualities.⁵ Charm collectors have repeatedly pointed out the hesitation, reticence and reluctance on the part of charm possessors to disclose what they know when they are asked to do so (Ταταράκης 1872: 332; Ημελλος 1962: 176; Αικατερινίδης 1957–58: 587; Κορρές 1966: 105–06), for it is believed that when the owner of the charm transmits the verbal part to someone else, he/she loses his/her power of healing. For this reason, verbal charms can only be transmitted shortly before the death of the previous owner (Νικολαΐδης 1979: 32). This fact is further corroborated by a number of ethnographic recordings: “She would never disclose the charm for it would not work then. When she felt death approaching or grew too old to use the charm effectively, she would teach it to her daughter or to whoever else she thought appropriate” (Σαράντη-Σταμούλη 1951: 233–34), “It was impossible to get her to tell the charm to me, no matter how I pleaded with her, but only on her deathbed, shortly before she breathed her last” (Γιαννοπούλου 1951: 264).

This part of the charm, its crucial kernel, is not easily accessible and in some cases its improper transmission can also be dangerous: “He/she who transmits it to someone else must be advanced in years and only after his own death can the charm be used for a good purpose. This charm should never be used when the person who has transmitted it is still alive, because he/she can be harmed” (Ασβεστή 1962: 206), “If they disclose it, they will die after a year has passed on the exact day and time when they disclosed it” (Κουκουλές 1908: 143–44). It is worth mentioning also the case of one female charmer who refused to share the secret text of a charm against ants because, as she believed, “the moment she breathes her last all the ants will gather around to feast on her body” (Παπαδάκη 1938: 524).

So restrictions are imposed on its proper transmission. These restrictions are mainly connected with the following basic factors: kinship and age, gender and time of transmission.

Authority of the elderly and kinship

In folk Greek society ownership of verbal charms is closely linked with the authority of the elderly. Charms are transmitted through a network of relations of kinship following a strictly hierarchical system of initiation. Thus, the relation between master and disciple is analogous to the relation between a senior member of the family – who usually retains control of secret knowledge – and a junior one. In that frame, the incantation is seen as a commodity that could be possessed and transmitted by dint of hereditary rights only: “The following incantation is transmitted only through the family line” (Ασβεστή 1962: 206), and “many inherit the art of exorcism from their own parents” (Μαντζουράνης 1924: 131), “those, moreover, who use such means and methods are usually elderly men, particularly elderly women who have learned them from their ancestors” (Αθανασόπουλος 1929–32: 578).

Transmission occurring exclusively between family members is not of course restrictive and inviolable. There is frequent reference concerning transmission to non-relatives: when the charmer felt her death approaching or when she realized that she was too old to use the charm effectively, she would pass it on either to her daughter or to anyone else she thought appropriate (Σαράντη-Σταμούλη 1951: 233–34). In those cases, the candidates were to be sought within the owner’s immediate circle of friends. The following ethnographic testimony from Zakynthos is a characteristic instance of a female charmer’s anxiety with no offspring to transmit the know-how to a friend: “Oh my dearest friend, I have been so anxious to see you this year and I couldn’t wait to see you coming ... I have been bound by oath not to disclose these to anyone else as long as I live, except when I feel my end approaching. Then, I shall let my faithful, dear friend to know. Oh how I wish I had a daughter to leave her behind in my mother’s place and mine!” (Γιαννοπούλου 1951: 263).

Gender

Widespread in many and different region of the rural Greek culture is the well-known restriction which concerns the gender of the next legitimate charm performer. Usually, men should transmit the verbal part of the charm to women and vice versa (Ρήγας 1968: 153; Κυριαζής 1926: 65; Παπαδόπουλος 1964: 238; Κορρές 1966: 105; Παπαθανάση-Μουσιοπούλου 1982: 40; Χρυσάνθης 1988: 117). Characteristic are the following ethnographic testimonies: “...the mother told her son just before she died that this particular charm can only be passed on from a female to a male or from a male to a female” (Ασβεστή 1962: 206), «My

charm ... can heal the evil eye, because my late aunt picked it up in secret from my late godfather” (Κοσμάτος 1910–11: 187), “The charm works only when it is passed on from a male to a female person and vice versa, for otherwise it won’t cure those ill and ailing” (Πάγκαλος 1983: 359), “It is not to be deemed valid when it is transmitted by a man to another man or by a woman to another woman” (Πάγκαλος 1983: 373).

It is also worth noting another ethnographer’s testimony according to which in transmitting the charm to the ethnographer himself, the male charmer points out that its transmission is not to be effective because the prescribed set of rules regarding its transference from a male to female and vice-versa are transgressed. He records: “while the charmer dictating the charm to me so I could write it down, he went like ‘look, it would be much better if I were to dictate it to a woman rather than to you. Then you could have learned it from her yourself’, he said; and he had just transmitted it to me that very moment! But he seemed to simply disregard or ignore that” (Στέλλας 2004: 16).

In certain cases, the ethnographic transference of charms via the male-to-female or female-to-male line of transmission additionally defines some characteristic qualities of the next charm owner: “Their secret charms were passed on from women to unmarried young boys or to mothers’ first-born sons and subsequently from them to females of every age. Under no circumstances would they transgress the rules” (Στέλλας 2004: 15).

There are, of course, cases in which the transmission of the charm occurs between people of the same sex, but these cases concern mainly a charm transmission from mother to daughter (Σαράντη-Σταμούλη 1951: 233–34; Φραγκάκι 1978: 111, note 111) or from one woman to another, her bride (Παπαθανάση-Μουσιοπούλου 1982: 40, 47), or a friend of hers (Γιαννοπούλου 1951: 263).

As far as the male to male transmission line is concerned we have to say that we have come across only few cases where the transmission occurs between father and son (Κυπριανός 1968: 200–201), – an issue which needs further investigation and which can cast light on the relation between gender and performers of rituals in Greek traditional society – and one testimony in which the charm has been passed on from the grandfather to the grandson (Παρχαρίδης 1979: 404).

Temporal parameters

A number of temporal parameters should be taken into consideration in the transmission of charms if the latter are to remain effective. The most appropriate days for the effective transmission of charms are days which are con-

nected with the folk religious system (Μερσανού-Βοσσαγάρη 1989: 321–22; Ρήγας 1968: 153). The sacred knowledge is transmitted by the current owner to next heir practitioner in a church with and during the time of holy mysteries or even on Christmas night (Μερσανού-Βοσσαγάρη 1989: 321–22). Traditionally sacred days such as Good Friday and Maundy Thursday, namely “the days of Easter” (Λουκατος 1992: 102) are thought to secure the effective transmission of mystical texts. Charms “are transmitted ... while the twelve Gospels are being read in church, because in accordance with folk belief it was while Jesus Christ was on the cross of his martyrdom that he delivered the charm which would be used to cure the sick” (Παπαθανάση-Μουσιοπούλου 1982: 47).

THE PERFORMATIVE CONTEXT OF TRANSMISSION

In traditional Greek society verbal charms constitute, in effect, a system of traditional ‘archive’ or a body of knowledge based mainly on oral speech and exchange stored in human memory and transmitted mainly by word of mouth from one charmer to the next. This method of oral transmission of charms is further corroborated by numerous ethnographic accounts: “This charm is transmitted by word of mouth” (Πάγκαλος 1983: 373), “A man would learn the charm by hearing it from a woman and a woman from a man” (Φασατάκης 1991: 109). Equally characteristic, moreover, is certain information coming from the island of Limnos, according to which magic knowledge can be effectively transmitted only after the charmer has imparted it to its next owner and practitioner in repetitious fashion. He/he has to repeat it to the next owner many times, until the new owner has “digested” it. He/she will then have to open the new owner’s mouth and he will blow in the air or spit three times (Μέγας 1941–42: 78).

According to the mythical system of verbal charm transmission, secret and sacred knowledge is passed down by word of mouth through the Virgin Mary, the saints or the angels: “This charm was said by the Holy Virgin when she was being stalked by the wicked king Herod, because our Lady dreaded the evil eye, for it could affect our lord Christ” (Κοσμάτος 1910–11: 187), “Charms are said to have also been transmitted by word of mouth by Angels and they have cured all ailments” (Σαράντη-Σταμούλη 1951: 223). Moreover, in that type of narrative charm with a “historiola”, where a mythical event of encounter is described, the sacred person (Christ) is described as transmitting the verbal part orally to the saints (Κυριακίδης 1917: 611; Φραγκάκι 1978: 191; Πάγκαλος 1983: 372).

The oral transmission and actual practice of charms constitutes a differentiating factor between those belonging to the oral folk tradition and to those of the so-called learned tradition of magic, which is inherited in written form mainly found in ancient books of witchcraft, and which comprises archaistic elements, specific words of power and apocryphal magic symbols.⁶ Charms of the learned tradition, to be sure, continue to exist and to be practiced alongside their orally transmitted counterparts within the framework of the traditional Greek culture, but they are to be placed outside the body of folk literature, since they do not meet the criteria of orality. Those charms belonging to the learned tradition are transmitted in written form and their practice is based mainly on reading or writing the secret part rather than on a memorized reproduction of it (Πασσαλής 2000: 39–41). Things, however, can be somewhat complicated when it comes to investigating societies which employ both systems of communicative technology (oral and written), for it often happens that we see an interacting feedback at work between the two traditions. Furthermore, in some cases, the next charm owner needs to write down the verbal part in order to memorize it or the charmer transmits the verbal charm in written form (Παπαδόπουλος 1975: 170) when the restrictions of sacred days are not transgressed even in written form (*ibid.* 40, 47). Also, it is often the case that oral charms are recorded in magician's books, which are specially kept for that purpose and which contain both scholarly and oral charms. According to Roper (1998: 64), and, I think we have to agree with him, "In recent times much transmission has involved such methods and a term such oral-and-written transmission is a more accurate description of this process than an abstract use of oral transmission".

Transmission, however, in the Greek region occurs mainly in the form of a specific ritual process in private context of performance predicated upon the interception of the charm, a strategy which secures its further successful practice by the next charmer without annulling its effectiveness when it is also performed by the current owner. According to ethnographic data, "If the charm is to be of any value, if it is to be powerful and effective, it has to be transmitted ... not through the process of teaching it to one another, but rather through stealing it" (Κοσμάτος 1910–11: 187) and the healing properties of the ritual can be preserved "only when it is intercepted by a person of the opposite sex" (Κορρές 1966: 105–06).

What does stealing the verbal part of the charm mean in this context? We might say that this is essentially the only case where a charm performer transgresses the law of secrecy as well as the restrictions on the charm's performance in whispering fashion by spelling out the charm aloud, so as to facilitate the process of transmission and reception of its secret text (Στέλλας 2004: 17).

The practitioner of the charm spells it out loud enough and in such a way, so as for the next owner to hear it clearly and retain it in memory (Σαράντη-Σταμούλη 1937: 353). Characteristic, and illuminating testimonies illustrate this exact manner of transmission: “As she was spelling out the charm loud and clear the very moment she was performing it, the other woman, who was standing nearby listening, would pick it up and could subsequently perform it herself successfully and from then on both charmers were successful in the task when they performed it” (Σαράντη-Σταμούλη 1951: 233–34)

RESTRICTIONS ON TRANSMISSION AND PERFORMANCE AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE TEXT

From what has been said so far it becomes obvious that knowledge of the verbal component of a charm is considered to be the most fundamental parameter for the effective and successful performance of the entire ritual process. One would expect, then, that its verbal component constitutes an invariable formula which is transmitted whole and unchangeable from one generation to the next and whose deviation from its traditional form would consequently result in annulling its effectiveness⁷. It's worth noting that Sebeok & Ingemann in their essay in Cheremis verbal charms point out that “The effectiveness of a charm depends on its literal citation, since any departure from its precisely set mechanism may render the magic wholly ineffective” (Sebeok & Ingemann 1956: 280). Webster in his study on *La Magie dans les sociétés primitives* reaches a similar conclusion claiming that “L'incantation doit être retenue ad verbum; toute altération, abréviation interdite ou forme indue de récitation passe pour diminuer ou paralyser son pouvoir” (Webster 1952 : 101). It's worth mentioning also the case of Malinowsky (1954: 68) who from anthropological point of view claims that the verbal magic in the civilisation of Trobriand consists of unchangeable formulas which are transmitted from one generation to another without any kind of alteration since even the slightest deviation from its original form results in annulling its effectiveness

If, however, we examine the transcribed Greek verbal charms closely, what we actually find out is that no written text is totally similar to another and that there are as numerous versions of its text as there are charmers who use it (Στέλλας 2004: 456). It is well known and it has been repeatedly pointed out by various ethnographers and collectors of charms that such variability is not to be encountered only when the same charms are used for similar purposes in the same region by different practitioners (Roper 1998), but also in cases of the performance of the same charm by the same practitioner in a different time

(Foley-Kerewsky 1978: 908). According to Roper (1998: 51) “this phenomenon, observed especially in longer charms, arises because non-literate charmers, even when they were particular concerned with producing a verbatim repetition of longish charms, possessed no failsafe way of telling if they had produced a verbatim repetition or not”.

A great part of these alterations is due to the fact that as a genre verbal charms belong to the oral folk tradition and are consequently liable to the changes and modifications dictated by their very mode of orality (Astakhova 1964: 266, 271; Roper 2003: 8–22).⁸ When these genres are examined under the prism of their oral composition, we are presented with texts which cannot, but present a certain degree of variation, since the main characteristic of oral folk production is that of multi-form diversity. Every single performance, then, of a text constitutes a unique, a different version, which means that the actual moment of its performance coincides with the moment of its creation (Lord 1964: 101).⁹

Charms are closely related to folksong, riddles and children’s rhymes as well as to tongue-twisters, folk verse narratives and myths and should thus be examined as part of the so-called folk literary creation¹⁰. There are, however, certain specific features which greatly differentiate charms from the above mentioned folk genres and which greatly affect the variety and the extent of their transformation. These special features, which are connected mainly with the communicative and performative context of their transmission and performance as well as with the restrictions accompanying it,¹¹ seem to be responsible not only for “smallest adaptation or replacement... in the text... in order to adjust it to another person or disease” (Kōiva 1995: 226) or for the process of “ecotypification” (“adaptation...to conform to local prejudices, ecology, to feature local heroes, use local dialect” Roper 1998: 53) but also for expansion, omission and replacement of larger parts and sections and finally for those cases in which the intelligibility of the text is affected because the flow of speech lacks meaningful sequence and logical coherence. It is worth noting that the latter forms in Greek verbal charms are far from rare.¹² The considerable number and variety of latter forms show, on the one hand, that the exact linguistic realization of the text is not to be considered an inviolable rule, and, on the other, that the recitation of such charms occurs in a mechanical fashion and its fragmentary and elliptical form does not affect its ritual efficacy.

Commenting on the communicative aspect of folkloric phenomena, Sebeok (1974: 37) emphasizes the existence of a narrator or singer who addresses himself/herself to an audience while reciting a text, which if it is to be effective, requires a set of contextual link commonly shared by both parties as it also requires a physical and psychological backdrop that facilitates their mu-

tual communication. This communicative context can be considered as part and parcel of the theoretical model of any communicative act which requires the presence of a sender/transmitter who undertakes the task of codification based on certain parameters such as a message, a common code for both the transmitter and the receiver and, finally, a proper channel of communication that will render their communication possible.

In examining the performative context of charms we come up with a basic differentiation in terms of their communicative context in relation to other forms of folklore creation. This differentiation has to do with a specific restriction, which concerns the recitation of the charm whose transmission is steeped in secrecy¹³. This kind of charms has to be performed in such a way so that it couldn't be heard. To this effect, the ethnographic data which describe the performance of the ritual are quite illuminating: "You must, then ... whisper it so as not to be heard" (Γιαννοπούλου 1951: 267), "you also say these words silently" (Δεληγιάννης 1938: 57), "whispering charms through his teeth so he couldn't be heard" (Πετράκη 1964: 46), "they were uttering secret words silently with only their lip slightly moving and you could tell they were actually saying something" (Παρχαρίδης 1979: 484), "they were whispering the words through their teeth, so the patient could not hear them" (Στέλλας 2004: 15–16).

Those who participate in the ritual performance hear a continuous flow of elliptic, unintelligible speech. The acoustic reception of these texts during the performance is characterized by such idiolect terms as "pattalala" and "ktsakefala" (i.e. elliptic incomplete and weird) (Στέλλας 2004: 16–17), since in accordance with ethnographic testimonies this particular manner of recitation kept the secret content/core of charms hidden from the others (Στέλλας 2004: 17).

Contrary to other forms of oral folk literature the effective performance of the charm does not, indeed, depend on its notional and meaningful reception by those participating in the performance of the ritual act. Beyond any communicative deviation and pathology that could be detected by an external observer of the ritualistic act – something which has been adequately dealt with by scholars (Tambiah 1968: 179) – the transmitter/sender functions simultaneously as a/an receiver/auditor of the charm (figure No1). Since charms are whispered or silently recited, in order for their text to remain inaudible, the performer/practitioner is virtually the only one who is in a position to confirm their precise linguistic realization when these are performed for the first time. This fact, which leaves no margin for external censorship, positions an external observer in a position from which he/she is unable to assess the verbatim reproduction and coherence of a given charm and it furthermore renders the magic speech vulnerable to all sorts of alterations and variations.

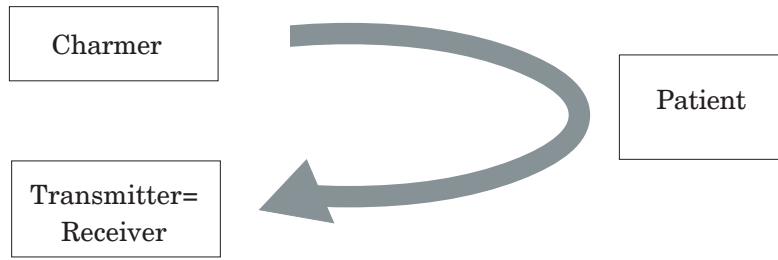


Figure 1. Performative context of ritual.

The only occasion of the charm being heard by the participants is when the receiver also happens to be the future heir-practitioner of it (figure No 2). However, even in this case, the receiver is unable to verify the faithful reproduction of the charm, since this is the first time she/he ever hears it being spelled out.

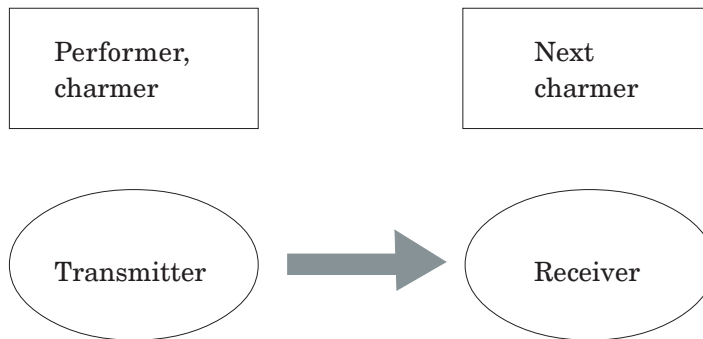


Figure 2. Performative context of transmission

In examining, also, the communicative framework and performative context of their transmission, we realize that the conditions under which charms are transmitted are far from ideal, and thus, not conducive to a faithful reproduction of their text. We have also seen the parameters and proper context for their legitimate transmission, in that the next practitioner should hear and pick them up while they are being whispered by the current user. The charm is recited only once, but should nonetheless be memorized by the next user:

charms should be intercepted, rather than openly transmitted and legitimately acquired. It is, thus, not unlikely that while the transmission is under way, parts of it are omitted, words become corrupt and meanings are inevitably altered with the final, transformed text ultimately becoming unintelligible. This is so not only because the performer's memory cannot possibly retain a rather extensive text, but also because of the incomplete and thus inaccurate audition of the text which passes from one user to the next modified, altered, inaccurate and incomplete. Also, the fact that we are dealing with a genre that delights in the use of unintelligible verbal expressions renders such a lack of intelligibility reasonable and by extension acceptable to any given observer of the ritual.

CONCLUSIONS

Restrictions and taboos, secret transmission and performance of mystical knowledge exclude the possibility of any kind of censorship. Thus, the performer, having complete control over the authenticity and distribution of verbal part, may improvise and make his/her own decisions as of the order or the segment omission of the charms themselves or even add segments from other incantations he/she may know "without necessarily being aware of this" (Roper 1998: 61). Conviction that the older member has successfully performed the ritual process coupled with a belief in the efficacy of the charm in other situations ensure the continuity of the lineage in power and legitimize any innovation initiated in or omissions from in the text.

The way knowledge is acquired and performed affects not only the way one feels about it, but also its structure and mode of practice. The fact that one person knows the secret code while the other is excluded from it is significant, for secrecy is structured around this very relation between those who know and those who do not¹⁴. However, the power of the ritual is not so much determined by the concealed knowledge it entails, as by the power invested in it by a number of restrictions and taboos, since restrictions and taboos as well as the rule of limited or non-communication are all about control. Rules and regulations imposed on transmission and performance offer such control by securing the rights of those who have access to the secret knowledge as well as by confirming their authority and preventing uncontrolled distribution of knowledge. Moreover, they affect the construction of the verbal part by way permitting transformations, substitutions, omissions, even texts which lack logical coherence without disturbing the efficacy of the rituals themselves.

NOTES

- ¹ For the notion and function of secrecy, restrictions and taboos in terms of the dissemination of knowledge in aboriginal societies see Morphy 1991, Keen 1994 and Kaima 2000. For the connection of secrecy with certain social groupings, such as the so-called secret societies or with social processes like rites of initiation see Middleton 1987: 25–43. For the political function of concealment of information see Simmel 1950 and Tefft 1980.
- ² Cf Kōiva 1996: 2/18 (www.folklore.ee/folklore/vol2/docdoc.htm) “Folklorists prefer to collect their spells in the purest form possible, i.e. as concrete texts. Such texts of magical spells appear without any commentaries or annotations and thus seem out of context; quite often, there is no specific reference to the circumstances under which they were presented. Occasional descriptions of transmission, belonging to the general background of philosophy and world outlook, have never become subjects of inquiry or recording”. See also Herjulfsdotter 2009: 57–58.
- ³ For a detailed analysis of relevant studies see Πασσαλής 2000: 23–28, 123–145.
- ⁴ Open/free transmission or free distribution (see Kōiva 1996: 2/18) of verbal charms in traditional Greek society concerns mostly the cases where the patient has to perform the ritual himself/herself, or, the cases of collective rituals, where the performers are more than one. These occur either when the charm is transmitted to a specific patient in order to recite it himself, (as in the case of love spells) or when both the patient and the charmer have to perform it in the form of a discourse shared between them or when the charm has to be performed by more than one performers endowed with specific qualities (e.g. seven/nine virgins). All the above cases are not included in the present study since they are characterized by different modes of transmission and performance.
- ⁵ It should be mentioned, of course, that there are other reasons – besides the expected loss of the charm’s efficacy – which discourage the disclosure of the texts. Some of these have to do with the material gains and exchanges the performer receives (Πασσαλής 2000: 114), the fear of his/her becoming the “laughing stock of others” (Ημελλος 1962: 176) as well as with the fact that recourse to such acts is considered to be ethically reprehensible as well as contrary to the tenets of the Christian religion (Πασσαλής 2000: 120).
- ⁶ The learned tradition, which has come down to us through magic-medicinal manuscripts, includes those texts, which have their origin in the systematic astrological and demonic magic. In this category are also included certain texts containing a number of incomprehensible words or words of foreign origin, lists of both sacred and non-sacred names as well as meaningless strings of words or letters, numbers, magic symbols and geometrical patterns. The performance of these texts relies either on their being read aloud or on their recording (Goody 1983: xvi). In the latter case, the magic qualities of the texts are transmitted into the very object upon which they are inscribed. Texts of the ecclesiastical tradition and canon, such as the Gospels (the New and the Old Testament), prayers, blessings, exorcisms, hymns, psalms, extracts from liturgical books, saints’ lives etc. are also used as magic recordings (Gaster 1900: 139; Olsan 1992: 120). These texts possess the power to protect from harmful influences and for this reason they are often used in the making of amulets.

Their basic characteristic has to do with fragmentation and lack of coherent reasoning, since there is no rule requiring the existence of the whole written text, and, quite often their recording is restricted only to certain magic symbols, letters and patterns.

⁷ Evans-Pritchard (1967: 5), who conducted a comparative study of the magic speech of the Zande and that of the Trobriand, reached a number of different conclusions, though. According to Evans-Pritchard, the performers can change the words depending on the purpose these are intended to serve. Moreover, it is possible for different performers to add to the already existing body of words various details. The essential part in the case of Zande is not the verbal, but the non-verbal part/component, that is, the medicines to which the performers address their speech (Evans-Pritchard 1977: 449). Consequently, the power and value of magic acts relies primarily on the very objects themselves, for without them magic is unsuccessful (*ibid.* 451).

⁸ Cf. "It should be mentioned that all folk production in which the creative aspect is intrinsically connected with the performance component have one specific feature in common: they are generally performed not on the basis of written texts (manuscripts, printed material or notes), but by memory... Naturally, such performances entail unconscious or conscious alterations" (Bogatyrev 1969: 229).

⁹ Cf. "Composition in Performance" (Finnegan 1988: 88–89).

¹⁰ For the relation between charms with the genre(s) of oral folk production see Sébillot 1913: 66; Klagstand 1958: 142; Conrad 1989: 438 n. 15.

¹¹ The need to include a number of performative factors in the process of examining folk phenomena is emphasized by many contemporary researchers in the field. These factors, in combination with the study of the textual form, are useful in terms of understanding the genre of charms in its totality and contribute significantly in differentiating it from other folk genres. Abrahams (1976: 197–98) maintains that any given folk genre needs to be examined on the basis of three different structural levels: a) the structure of its materials b) its dramatic structure and c) the structure of its context. The structure of its content, in particular, refers to the types of relationships that emerge among those participating in the communicative process. Jansen's (1957: 110–118) criteria of examination and classification of folk genres have to do with the factors of their performance. He thus makes a distinction between two poles in the process of communication, namely, performance and participation. These factors stand in reverse relation with each other in every folk genre. The degree of the ability to perform the charm is in any case affected by the intrinsic requirements of the very form itself, by the function of expression in any particular case and, eventually, by the social expectations of the speaker. The forms, which are characterized by a low rate of performative ability, are those requiring a higher rate of participation, such as group/chorus singing without an audience; and vice versa, that is, forms characterized by a high rate of performative ability require a low rate of participation. Charms are to be included in the latter category. See Ben-Amos 1976: xxxviii–xxxix.

¹² An important factor, which is responsible for corruptions and alterations and which should be taken into serious consideration, relates to the circumstances under which the material is selected and recorded. In the majority of cases, to be sure, the recordings are random and do not occur under the most favourable conditions. Conse-

quently, we are not in a position to know what the possible differences would be between the recording we possess and other recordings of the same charm by the same practitioner in different moments of time, since such external factors as the emotional and/or psychological state of the performer can bring about alterations in the rendition of the charms. One more factor that needs to be examined relates to where and how accurately the recording has been conducted by a given collector and this is because the time of data collection is particularly important in the analysis of folk themes which are no longer in use. It makes sense to suppose, then, that if the recording is a recent one and has occurred within a community where the functionality of the genre has started to wane, the alterations will be greater or more extensive. The lifting of the restrictions and cancellation of taboos in the transmission process are usually connected with “the failing prestige of traditional medicine” (Kōiva 1996: 6/18) in rural cultures and with the invasion of new alternative systems of healing. Typical are the cases described by ethnographers where the charms are transmitted to them by inheritors who are no longer interested in traditional healing practices and who do not put into practice the knowledge they have acquired (Ημελλος 1962: 176), because they have no faith in it and do not trust it any more (Παρχαρίδης 1979: 484).

¹³ We are excluding here those charms whose performance is based on a loud recitation. See also n. 4.

¹⁴ According to Simmel (1950: 331) and from a sociological point of view what is essential is not the secret itself but, rather, ownership of the secret. The differentiating factor is to be traced between those who have knowledge of and control over the secret and those who do not. Thus, secrecy becomes both the crucial factor and one of the main magic ingredients of the whole ritual.

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PRACTICAL TEXTS IN DIFFICULT SITUATIONS: BULGARIAN MEDIEVAL CHARMS AS APOCRYPHA AND *FACHLITERATUR*

Svetlana Tsonkova

The objects of this article are medieval Bulgarian charms, written in Old Church Slavonic language and preserved in manuscripts. The article is focused on two issues. Firstly, it deals with the charms as specialized texts, as a specific kind of *Fachliteratur*, with important practical function in coping daily life challenges and problems. The main purpose of these charms was to meet and solve the crucial quotidian issues, like health problems, provision of good luck and protection against evil forces. Secondly, the article refers to the position of the charms among the canonical Orthodox Christian texts. This position is examined in the context of practicality and of the historical changes in the society. This is also a question of the relations between the content of the charms and the content of the other texts from the same manuscript. In this respect the medieval Bulgarian charms are an interesting phenomenon, as they intermingle among canonical Orthodox Christian books, as service books and books of needs.

Key words: apocrypha, apotropaic magic, daily life, medieval Bulgarian charms, medieval *Fachliteratur*, oral and written transmission of charms, practical magic

1. INTRODUCTION

The apocrypha are one of the most important phenomena of the Middle Ages. They provide a different perspective and a valuable insight to the mentality of the period. The Late Medieval Bulgarian apocrypha are not an exception. According to the prominent Bulgarian scholar Donka Petkanova, they give a picture of “an extraordinary world, where extraordinary events take place with the participation of extraordinary characters” (Диневков 1985: 86). On the other hand, the content of the apocrypha in many respects refer to ordinary down-to-earth quotidian human issues. The Late Medieval Bulgarian charms represent an excellent example in this respect too.

In the present paper, these charms are examined in terms of their relation with other texts and of their position in the manuscripts. I shall focus on two issues. Firstly, my paper deals with the charms as specialized texts. Secondly, I shall refer to the position of the charms among the canonical Orthodox Christian texts. I am especially interested in the relations between the content of the charms and the content of the other texts from the same manuscript. This is related with the question of the composition and the context of existence of the manuscripts, containing the charms. This is also a question of historical context and practicality.

2. THE SOURCE MATERIAL

The source materials for this article are group of Late Medieval Bulgarian charms written in Old Church Slavonic language. These are short texts, quite many in number,¹ with a rather heterogeneous content and form. They have extra-liturgical purpose and usually refer to a specific ritual and use of magical objects. The charms are preserved in manuscripts, dated between fourteenth and seventeenth century. The majority of these manuscripts are Orthodox Christian religious books: priest's service books (*служебници*) and books of occasional prayers (*требници*). The charms however can be also often found in miscellanies (*сборници*) and healing books (*лековници*).

Concerning the terminology, some scholars call these texts *apocryphal prayers* or *false prayers* (Петканова 1999: 40; Алмазов 1901: 221–340; Яцимирский 1913: 1–102, 16–126), while other researchers propose a differentiation between *canonical prayer*, *quasi-canonical prayer*, *apocryphal prayer*, *charm with functions of a prayer* and *magical charm*.² In my opinion, two issues must be kept in mind here. Firstly, there is no distinction between the texts in the manuscripts themselves. Usually the charms are preserved between other, completely canonical texts, without any notes or comments concerning the canonical or non-canonical character of the charms. Therefore, the later artificial division and classification of the texts is a rather problematic issue.

Secondly, finding a clear and non misleading Bulgarian and English terminology for designating the medieval Bulgarian charms is very much needed. These texts belong to a mixed genre. They have very specific features in terms of their intermediate position between religious prayer and magical charm, between sacred and prohibited, between popular religion and literature. The term “apocryphal” (as used in both Bulgarian and English) is rather problematic when applied to charms. On the other hand, the terms “prayer” and “prayer-

type” can be used within certain limits and accompanied with additional definitions, like for example “non-canonical” and “amuletic”.

Therefore, the discussion on the terminology of these texts is definitely a rather urgent scholarly task in general. As much as it requires an extensive detailed research and thus belongs to the future, it is out of the scope of this paper. These texts belong to the category of charms, as it was convincingly established by Ferdinand Ohrt (Ohrt 1936: 49–58). Therefore, I will further in the paper use the term “charm” together with the more general “text”.³

The origin of the charms is quite ancient and difficult to identify. According to the Bulgarian scholar Maria Schnitter, they are the product of a combination of folkloric magical texts and Christian texts (ШНИТЕР 2001: 49). Thus, their development followed a long ancient tradition with deep roots in the pagan magical practices. On the other side, scholars like Donka Petkanova emphasize Byzantine influences (ПЕТКАНОВА 1999: 40)⁴. According to them the Bulgarian magical texts, discussed here, have very close parallels in Byzantine non canonical prayers of the same content and function (Maguire 1995: 1–8 and 155–178). Other scholars suggest the South Slavic texts evolved as the result of complex influence of numerous Classical Greek and Roman, Byzantine, Jewish and Islamic elements (Ryan 1999: 9–30)⁵.

3. MAGICAL AND PRACTICAL IN THE NETWORK OF *FACHLITERATUR*

In terms of content, the Late Medieval Bulgarian charms are focused exclusively on practical matters of daily life, namely health, provision of good luck and protection against evil powers. These texts belong to a clearly-defined branch of verbal magic, namely the practical, positive and apotropaic one. Additionally, this is an area dominated by powerful supernatural benevolent or malevolent agents and their activities. These superior powers, however, are closely connected to the ordinary quotidian human experience. They influence heavily the daily life. Saints, demons, angels, perpetrator of illnesses, etc, cause and solve quotidian problems. It is a quotidian event to interact with these powers, to communicate with or against them. This continuous communication process involves texts, but also ordinary daily live objects or purposely created amulets.

In terms of interrelation and interaction, the practical aspect of magic provides a special example. It is a complex network, where the communication with the supernatural and the solution of daily life issues are interwoven. It is

a multisided phenomenon, a full-blown action, with one important characteristic: the magical aspect of the texts is in fact a rather practical aspect. These two aspects are neither separated, nor opposed to each other. On the contrary, they work together and they are depending on each other. Within the frame of this complex quotidian magical network, verbal charms, daily life objects and magical amulets function together as tools in the magical practice. They are all part of the daily life experience.

The Bulgarian charms are texts and as such they belong to a specific branch of literature. Along with the magical content, the charms provide important concrete instructions and directions. Thus they give practical guidance how to cope with supernatural interference and impact on human daily life. Therefore these texts can be included among the specialized “technical” literature. But how they stand among this specialized literature? First of all, it is needed to present the main features of this literature. I designate it with the German term *Fachliteratur*, as it is well-defined, understandable and widely accepted.⁶

The *Fachliteratur* is a non-fiction literature, which records, preserves and transmits information about experience of various kinds. More precisely, it presents specialized knowledge in different categories of science, arts, crafts and other activities (Haage & Wegner 2007: passim). Basically, the *Fachliteratur* contains and transmits theoretical and practical know-how (usually essential one) in a certain field. It provides the guidance needed for successful completion of an activity: it gives theoretical knowledge; it provides instructions, directions, advices and tips; it shares practical experience, skills and knacks; it also gives reference information and data. Handbooks, manuals, guides, “how-to-do-it” books, instruction books, specialized reference books – they all belong to the *Fachliteratur*. Providing a well-balanced combination between theory and practice, the *Fachliteratur* is a focal point of synthesized practical knowledge and experience.

The medieval *Fachliteratur* covers numerous fields: the *Septem Artes Liberales*, various crafts, human and veterinarian medicine, hunting and fishing, agriculture, fighting, cooking, medicine preparation, alcohol making, cheating, etc. (Haage & Wegner 2007: 14–20). The texts, dedicated to *Artes Magicae*, belong to the category of *Fachliteratur* too. Here we can list books about conjuration of demons, various kinds of divination and prognostication, necromancy, astrology, preparation of amulets and talismans, etc. (Haage & Wegner 2007: 266–82).

As we move further on towards the category of verbal magic, we can see that charms can be regarded as *Fachliteratur* too.⁷ These texts provide information and instructions for coping with supernatural powers and their impact on human life. The content is dealing with the Other World, and its impact and

relations with the human world. At the same time, the final aim of the charms is related to that of a manual, a guide or a handbook. Verbal magic has its place in the *Fachliteratur*, as it provides the guidance needed for successful competition of a practice, namely of the interaction with the supernatural.

Can the Bulgarian charms and prayers be regarded as specialists' texts? Can the manuscripts containing these texts be regarded as specialists' books? In my opinion, the term *Fachliteratur* is applicable towards the Bulgarian source material. The reasons for this are the following.

Firstly, because of the character of the manuscripts, containing the texts. As it was shown above, Bulgarian medieval charms can be found in different books: Orthodox prayer and service books, miscellanies, healing books (Петканова 1999: 40). Despite the differences, all these volumes have one thing in common: they belong to specialized "technical" literature. The healing books (*лековници*) present the clearest example for *Fachliteratur*. They give specialized knowledge about human and animal health, provide recipes and advices, and give information on the curative qualities of different plants and substances. Further on, the priest's service books (*службници*) and books of occasional prayers (*требници*) are another example. They belong to the liturgical books of the Orthodox Church. At the same time, their purpose is very practical too: to be handbooks for the priests and to guide them in their liturgical activities. And finally, the miscellanies (*сборници*) with their mixed and varied content offer pieces of different information, including charms.

Secondly, because of the purpose of the charms themselves. As it was mentioned before, these texts are powerful magical tools in the interaction with the supernatural. The verbal magic presented in the Bulgarian Late Medieval material is aimed at helping, curing, protecting and preventing. Therefore, the examined charms are also powerful technical instruments in the coping with the Outer World and its negative influence. This is even more visible, if we look at the well defined circle of daily-life issues, which dominates the content of the charms. The health-related issues hold the top position among the topics, being the main theme of the charms. Health of humans and animals is probably the most important aspect of human life. Its protection and improvement is among the most crucial needs. Therefore, a number of texts is dealing with health protection and recovering.

The health issue is closely related with the broader topic of protection against malevolent supernatural powers. This group of charms includes the protection against personified illnesses and perpetrators of illnesses, but also against forces of nature, elemental powers, demons and the Devil himself. And finally, we encounter charms dedicated to the provision of good luck during journeys or at the court of law.

The grouping of the charms according to their functions is a result of scholarly examination of the material. The purpose of this systematization is to outline the roles, fulfilled by the charms and to present the patterns in the charms' content. There is, however, an important fact to be remembered: the medieval Bulgarian charms are scattered in many manuscripts. Therefore, the categorization of the largest possible number of the charms and the full examination of their functions requires a long detailed research. The following four examples are only a sample of medieval Bulgarian manuscripts, containing charms.

Example I

The first one is the fourteenth century *Zaikovski Trebnik* No 960 (Book of Occasional Prayer) from *Mount Athos*, written in Bulgarian redaction of Old Church Slavonic language.⁸ The book is kept in the National Library "St. Cyril and Method" in Sofia and contains the following parts: excerpts of liturgical texts; canonical prayers, which are to be read at different occasions: baptism, marriage, confession, vigil; charms for protection of the wine, for blessing of the animal to be butchered, the salt, the flour, the food vessels, the vine grapes, the newly build house, for protection against rabid dog or wolf, and for curing constipation.

Example II

The second example is the fifteenth-sixteenth century *Sbornik* No 308 (Miscellany) written in Serbian redaction of Old Church Slavonic language.⁹ The book is kept in the National Library "St. Cyril and Method" in Sofia and contains the following parts: list of orthographic rules, excerpts of liturgical texts, two recipes for blue and for black ink, excerpt of biblical text about king Solomon, excerpt of the life of St. George, excerpt of the life of St. Alexis, six canonical prayers for a new-born child, one canonical prayer for purifying a food vessel, texts of monastic oaths, prognostication text on the basis of the body trembling, prognostication text on the basis of the new moon, prognostication text on the basis of the Christmas day, two prognostication texts on the basis of the thunder, prognostication text on the basis of the day in which a person got ill, a line of letters to be written on bread and then eaten, five charms: for good luck in fishing and when meeting with superiors, for stanching blood, against harmful rain, against the illness-demon.

Example III

The third example is the seventeenth century *Sbornik* No 273 (Miscellany), written in Serbian redaction of Old Church Slavonic language.¹⁰ The book is kept in the National Library “St. Cyril and Method” in Sofia and contains the following parts: a praise of the Holy Cross; a list of seventy-two names of God, protecting the person who wears them against every evil; list of seventy-two names of the Mother of God; a list of the names of the archangels; a list of the names of John the Baptist; a list of the names of the apostles; a list of the names of the holy martyrs; the first chapters of the Four Gospels; thirty-nine charms: against unclean evil powers, against witches, whirlwind and storm in the day and in the night, against the devil, against evil people, against evil arrows flying in the day and in the night, against thunder, against pain, against the illness-demon, against plague, against vampires, against wolf attacks on the domestic animals, against bandits, against parasites in the grain and the fruits, for protection of the vineyard, the fields and the barns, for a good luck in traveling, at war and at the court of law, for a good luck during a meeting with the king and the boyars; and finally, the twelve seals of King Solomon helping in battle, in the court of law, in traveling, in trade, and protecting against magic, witches, arrows, sword, wind, storm, illness of the head, evil meeting, vampires and female hatred.

Example IV

The fourth example is *Trebnik* (book of occasional prayers) No 622, a seventeenth-century manuscript kept in the National Library “St. Cyril and Method” in Sofia.¹¹ The manuscript is in fact a miscellany, containing various texts in a Serbian redaction of Old Church Slavonic language. These texts are: the Akathist hymn dedicated to the Mother of God; fifty-three prayers which are to be read or pronounced at various occasions: celebration of church feasts, birth giving, baptism, marriage, confession, harvest, for curing different illnesses, when building and blessing a new house, when making a new well, for purifying food vessels, for protection against different illnesses, twelve charms for protection against *nezhit* (a supernatural perpetrator of illness), charms for protection against the Devil; charms for exorcising the Devil; blessings for good health; commemorative lists of people.

4. CANONICAL AND APOCRYPHAL IN THE NETWORK OF PRACTICAL MAGIC

As it can be seen in the examples, the Bulgarian Late Medieval charms are preserved between other texts (usually prayers or liturgical texts), which are completely canonical. Further more, there are no notes or comments concerning the canonical or non-canonical character of the charms or the prayers. Especially in the case of the miscellanies, we encounter a varied mixture of texts, corresponding to the requirements the Church and texts, deviating significantly from the norms established by the church authorities.

All these texts, however, work together in the network of practical magic. The canonical and non-canonical are connected in a constant interaction. The final aim of this interaction is to cope successfully with urgent daily life problems. Most probably, the charms stand together with canonical texts exactly because of this functional relation. They both operate in the same sphere of apotropaic positive magic. Their proven efficacy is of primary importance. Being helpful in difficult situations: that is the most valuable characteristic of both charms and prayers. This is also probably the reason to be preserved together in manuscripts.

At the same time, the charms are tools in the field of practical activity. They guide and instruct towards the successful interaction with the supernatural agents. Thus, the charms are not only magical texts, but also representatives of specialized literature. Further on, not only the separate texts, but the manuscripts themselves appear as practical instruments: a mixture between apocryphal and canonical, pieces of *Fachliteratur* inseparably connected with daily life and its constant challenges.

In terms of further research: currently I work on the historical contextualization of the manuscripts containing charms. Created during and after the Ottoman invasion on the Balkans (a period of weakening and destruction of Bulgarian Orthodox Church authorities), these books reflect both the lack of normative religious sanctions and the attempts of the local Christian priests to cope with the daily life needs and problems of their congregation.

It is important also to take into consideration the fact that almost all of the miscellanies are created and copied in monastic environment. Did the members of the clergy recognize the canonical or non-canonical character of the texts? And if so, why did they copy a text despite its non-canonical status? Did they deliberately write down and preserve unofficial and apocryphal texts, only because of their efficiency in daily life practice? What is the broader historical and cultural context of the religious books, containing both canonical and non-

canonical texts? Previous Bulgarian scholarship touches some aspects of this problem, but still many more questions are to be answered.

Another necessary direction for future research is to examine the Late Medieval Bulgarian charms in comparison with later Bulgarian folklore material. Such an interdisciplinary research will provide us with a much broader picture in terms of daily life usage, practicality and effectiveness. It will probably also give answers of questions concerning the interaction between oral and written. If we regard “magic as a crossroads, as a crossing-point” (Graf 1997: 1–19 and Kieckhefer 2000: 1–3 and 44–45) between different cultures, but also a complex network of different relationships, interactions, conflicts and forms of perception and transmission of motives and patterns within a certain society in a certain period, it is important to examine and understand how the Bulgarian source material relates to the same (or similar) sources from other Slavic territories as well as to sources from wider geographical and cultural contexts (Kieckhefer 2000: 2).

NOTES

- ¹ Up to my knowledge, there is no calculation of the exact number of the South Slavic *apocryphal prayers*. For example, Мария Шнитер [Maria Schnitter] in her book *Молитва и магия* [Prayer and Magic] analyses twenty five of these texts. Probably, the South Slavic texts altogether are several hundreds. (Шнитер 2001: passim)
- ² (Шнитер 2001: 50–59). The book is an examination of a series of apocryphal prayers, including ones against *nezhit*, in terms of philological and stylistic peculiarities of the texts. The author also deals with the ways of transmission and with the reasons for the survival of non-canonical texts.
- ³ For a detailed discussion on the terminological issues and also on the problem of including or excluding texts in the category of “prohibited” during the Bulgarian Middle Ages: (Шнитер 2001: 50–69)
- ⁴ In the article on apocryphal prayers the author also further bibliographic references.
- ⁵ The focus of the author is mainly on Russian texts, but he also discusses questions concerning Slavic tradition in general.
- ⁶ Up to this moment the term *Fachliteratur* has never been used in connection with the Bulgarian sources. This term, however, accurately describes the nature of the Bulgarian charms.
- ⁷ For example, the Merseburg charms are among the first texts in every research book on practical magic, but at the same time they are the first ones listed in scholarly pieces on *Fachliteratur* (Haage & Wegner 2007: 295–7)
- ⁸ The manuscript is described in (Ционев 1923: 114–115).

⁹ The manuscript is described in (Цонев 1910: 252–254)

¹⁰ The manuscript is described in (Цонев 1910: 174–175)

¹¹ The manuscript is described in (Цонев 1923: 133–134)

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IMMATERIA MEDICA: CHARMERS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES IN NEWFOUNDLAND

Martin Lovelace

This paper offers a typology of charmers in Newfoundland, Canada. The ability to charm may be transmitted, often cross-sex, or may be ascribed by the community and adopted as a role by an individual who falls into the recognized categories of being a posthumous child, or a woman who marries a man who shares her own family name. Seventh sons and priests are ascribed the widest range of healing competency and are at the apex of a conceptual pyramid of power. Material is drawn from fieldwork conducted in 2010 and a review of holdings on charming contained in MUNFLA, the Memorial University Folklore and Language Archive. It is argued that it may be premature to conclude that charmers have lost their healing and social roles in Newfoundland communities and that in the case of wart charming, and blood stopping, the tradition continues.

Key words: Ascribed healing roles, charming, folklore archives and appraisal of sources, Newfoundland, scarcity of verbal charms.

In 1994 the medical historian John Crellin declared that in contemporary Newfoundland “charmners have lost their health-care, as well as their social and community roles” (Crellin 1994: 111). He drew his evidence mainly by reading in the hundreds of student folklore collections in the Folklore and Language Archive of Memorial University (MUNFLA) which describe charming. These records begin in 1962 when the folklorists Herbert and Violetta Halpert started to encourage students to record folklore in their home communities as part of course work for degrees in English and, after 1968, in Folklore. The archive now holds thousands of collections on all aspects of folklore and folklife from almost every community in Newfoundland and Labrador. These sources, in manuscript and audio-recordings, have advantages and drawbacks: they can be naive, in that a student may not have known enough about the tradition to know what to ask, yet they often have the virtue of easy familiarity with the people being interviewed, who were often relatives or neighbours. This too can be problematic in that tacit, taken for granted, knowledge may not be made explicit for us—the readers over the shoulders of these students making their first attempts at ethnography. They were also generally in their teens or

twenties, often the first of their family to attend university, and very conscious of being part of a vast movement of modernization in which the old ways of life in rural Newfoundland seemed about to be swept away. They may, therefore have been more likely to describe charming as disappearing. As in all archival sources there are biases and sub-texts. They reflect what was and what was not talked about in class, and over time they reflect the academic fashions of their professors, some of whom emphasized change over continuity, but despite all these *caveats* the archival material shows that Newfoundland has had a very strong and widespread tradition of healing by means of charms. The discussion in this paper derives from my own reading of just over a hundred MUNFLA accessions, deposited in the Archive between 1963 and 1989. These vary greatly in length and detail, ranging from responses to questionnaires, paragraph-length accounts on eight by ten inch Folklore Survey cards, and longer term papers which often give the writer's personal experience with charmers and charming. Not too much should be made of the apparent "gap" in the rate of accessioning of new materials on charming between 1989 and 2010. Like all archives, MUNFLA has a backlog of cataloguing and, for a variety of reasons unconnected with the state of any particular folk tradition in Newfoundland, there has been a general decline in the amount of field-recorded material deposited in MUNFLA over the past twenty years. My review of archival sources was supplemented with interviews with three charmers which I conducted in February and June 2010, in two being accompanied by Barbara Rieti, whose own research and writing has shown so much about supernatural belief and narrative in Newfoundland (Rieti 1991, 2008).

The published folkloristic literature on charming in Newfoundland is remarkably scant. Beyond the medical historian John K. Crellin's treatment of charming among other forms of folk medicine in *Home Medicine: The Newfoundland Experience* (1994), and George Patterson's "Notes" on aspects of Newfoundland folklore appearing in *The Journal of American Folklore* in 1895, there is only the 1972 case-study by Michael Owen Jones of a Newfoundland seventh son which appeared as *Why Faith Healing?* There are scattered references to charming in other published sources, most interestingly in doctors' reminiscences of their outport work, in which attitudes toward charming range from patronizing (Wilfred Grenfell, in Kerr 1959) to open minded (Noel Murphy in his 2003 memoir), but a full account of charmers and their communities in Newfoundland remains to be written.

NEWFOUNDLAND'S HISTORY AND ECONOMY—A ROUGH AND PARTIAL SKETCH

Newfoundland was England's most accidental and neglected North American colony. Visited by Vikings in the eleventh century, then by Basques, French, Spanish, Portuguese and English fishermen from the fifteenth century, the island was only effectively settled by English and Irish men and women recruited into the cod fishery by English West Country merchants in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Newfoundland became a province of Canada in 1949. At first it had been useful to England as a "great ship" moored near the Grand Banks in the Atlantic ocean which teemed with cod; it was a shoreline where fish could be salted and dried before being brought back to Europe. Settlement occurred sporadically, as crews were left to guard fishing premises against aboriginal people scavenging for iron nails and other artifacts, or to better hold a harbour against rival English fishers. These crews were recruited from the agricultural poor of south-west England and south-east Ireland, Protestant and Catholic respectively. In the eighteenth and nineteenth century, and even up to the Resettlement scheme of the 1960s, most Newfoundlanders lived in small communities (500 to 1000 people) scattered along thousands of miles of indented rocky coastline, the better to prosecute the cod fishery from small boats. Government services were few and reluctantly given; literacy was consequently low and health-care was poor, and often beyond the means of many families. Religious denominations treated Newfoundland as a site for missionary work; it was not until 1998 that the Newfoundland government allowed purely secular publicly-funded schools to appear when they abolished the separate Catholic, Protestant, and Pentecostal school systems which had allowed religious functionaries to hold sway over the appointment of teachers and aspects of the curriculum. Under the Resettlement plan, part of that omnipresent 1960s sense of modernization, the smallest most difficult to access communities were abandoned and their populations were persuaded, bribed, and coerced by the provincial government into moving to larger towns connected to the developing road system. In the early 1990s the fishery for cod collapsed, causing many younger families to leave the province; a moratorium on fishing for cod remains in place. Today rural Newfoundland continues to depopulate, as people move to the capital region on the Avalon peninsula to take part in the sudden prosperity delivered by offshore oil.

The resulting society in the outports of Newfoundland in the first half of the twentieth century—the period covered by the archive reports—was one in which a small upper class—merchants, clergy, the doctor, if any, and perhaps

teachers—sat like a thin skin on the surface of a deeper pool in which everyone else considered themselves approximately socially equal. While there were antipathies between sections of larger communities, and *blason populaire* rhymes and phrases played up religious and social divisions, the publicly stated ethos was egalitarian. This sense among the “ordinary” people of the community that they had their own values, their own ways of doing things that were independent of anything being done among their community’s elite, may have helped charming to continue long past its apparent decline in the home countries of Newfoundland’s settlers. Most communities had several charmers, some specializing more than others, and everyone in the village knew who they were and visited them freely, confident they would not be turned away, and that payment, thanks, and even the request for help in some traditions were not to be offered. In 1995 Barbara Rieti and I visited a charmer in Belleoram, in Fortune Bay on Newfoundland’s South Coast, who opened a kitchen drawer and gave us a handful of knotted string charms. He evidently kept these ready for all visitors. The informality of the charmer/patient relationship, and the absence of any financial obligation, were important in outport Newfoundland until the 1950s, or later, in that the organization of the fishery ensured that very little hard cash circulated in village economies. This cash-less economic system is well described in Herbert Halpert and J. D.A. Widdowson, *Folktales of Newfoundland*, p. 819:

Most Newfoundlanders fished for a living from late spring through to the fall when the ice brought fishing to a halt. The local merchant extended credit for fishing gear, clothing, and staple foods, and bought the “made” [i.e. salted] fish back from the fishermen. Little cash ever changed hands. Most of what the fishermen earned went to pay back the credit that had been extended. Each family had a garden or gardens to grow hay for the draught animals, and vegetables, like potatoes and turnips. Many families kept pigs. They bottled berries and vegetables, and sometimes meat. Meat and fish would also be salted or smoked. Hardy vegetables were carefully covered over and stored underground in the outdoor “cellar.” Other staples, such as flour and molasses, were purchased from the local merchant in the fall.

Despite the absence of money, it is hard to believe that *nothing* was given in return, especially as archival reports tell of blood stoppers being woken from their sleep to give an urgent charm to staunch a deadly flow of blood. Rural society in Newfoundland remains a finely calibrated system of favours given and repaid. Some way of giving compensation for charming would easily disappear within the myriad acts of assistance, like help with getting firewood, car

repairs, or sharing meat from a hunting trip, which continue in Newfoundland life to the present.

A TYPOLOGY OF CHARMERS

The most powerful category of charmer in Newfoundland was a *seventh son*: such individuals were believed to be able to cure the widest range of ailments attempted by any charmers, including warts, toothache, earache, eczema and other skin diseases, as well as setting bones and stopping blood. Almost every account of a seventh son in Newfoundland includes testimony to his ability to cause an earthworm to curl up, lie still, or die in one of his hands; in this hand lies the healing power. Most seventh sons seem to have laid their hands on their patients as part of the cure, even if they also spoke words, unintelligibly, or gave a charm in written form to be worn by the sufferer. There is one detailed description and analysis of a seventh son and his community by the American folklorist Michael Owen Jones in *Why Faith Healing?* (1972). This man had an exceptionally charismatic presence, attested to also by the English folklorist John Widdowson who visited him in 1964:

this Uncle Joe was a man who impressed me particularly because I expected a man who had healing powers to be somewhat of a braggart and extroverted perhaps. . . . he was . . . tall, gaunt, and about six feet three with a shock of white hair and extremely full of some sort of inner strength. Extremely impressive to the skeptic. (MUNFLA: Widdowson field report, 64–8, tape C24)

But Uncle Joe said very little, refusing to be recorded or photographed, though he used his wife as an intermediary, allowing her to tell stories testifying to his cures. There was an edge of danger about him too, however, and Widdowson recorded a story of his refusal to accept a bottle of whisky from two patients; he threatened they would “turn white and die like worms” (as worms did in his hand) if they persisted with offering the gift. Michael Owen Jones heard that he also “worked the Black Heart,” a term used in Newfoundland for aggressive magic performed by men (Rieti 2008: 62–70), and that he enjoyed his ambivalent reputation. He was well known over a long period, and probably over a wide area. While reading MUNFLA files on charming in June 2010 I mentioned my topic to another researcher, who by coincidence had grown up in this seventh son’s community; as a twelve-year old boy he had visited him for toothache around 1943. His father had told him “Go up and see Uncle Joe,” which is a very typical way of approaching a charmer in Newfoundland: a par-

ent takes, or if the child is older, sends the child to visit the charmer. I asked him if he had felt any apprehension, and he said he did; he was worried that he didn't believe strongly enough. There was no question of payment; it had to be free. The refusal of any reward for an act of charming is a point made by almost all Newfoundland charmors, often vociferously; even to suggest it is to risk being insulting. Uncle Joe may have changed his mind on this matter, however, since Widdowson also says that Joe's wife "collected any money or other handsones which were given." By 1964, and continuing when Michael Owen Jones visited him in 1968–9, Joe seems to have had something equivalent to a doctor's practice, with numerous patients calling on him. Widdowson notes: "While we were there he touched several people who came in, including a small child which had been covered with eczema and only had a small patch of it left." (MUNFLA: Widdowson field report, 64–8, tape C24). This ambivalent reputation for being able to work harm as well as healing parallels the roles of nineteenth century English cunning folk (Atkinson 1907: 108).

The large size of Newfoundland families, that was common until recently, made the occurrence of seventh sons, and daughters, less rare than in more developed countries. Widely reported is the idea that such individuals were natural doctors, and would make the best kind of orthodox medical practitioners too.

Two other categories of charmors in Newfoundland appeared in far greater numbers, however, though here too their exceptional prominence in Newfoundland must owe something to the particular combination of high mortality rates and small population size. The two commonest named conditions for being a charmer in Newfoundland are: to be a *posthumous child*, someone "who never saw" his or her father; and to be a *woman who married a man of the same surname as her own*. In both cases the question of occupational choice so cogently raised by Michael Owen Jones also arises. Not all seventh sons become healers, and probably even greater numbers of posthumous children and women who did not "change their name" on marriage did not elect to take on the role that many in their communities may have expected them to. It was common for children to rub their warty hands in the clothing of a posthumous child, thereby tapping in to the healing power which the community had begun to ascribe to this oblivious child who would have been surprised and perhaps angry to know he or she was being used in this way. Whether communities pressured individuals with these qualifications into becoming charmors is impossible to determine from the MUNFLA records; it is simply not a question that student collectors asked. When I asked it, in February 2010, of a woman who married a man of the same surname as her own, and who began to prac-

tice as a charmer of warts shortly after her marriage, she said that the events were not related.

Beyond those charmers with an ascribed status are others who inherited the ability from a relative, or were specifically given the knowledge by another charmer. MUNFLA reports frequently mention the idea that a man must give the charm to a woman, and a woman to a man, in order for it to remain effective when passed on, though when a charm is transmitted within a family, including by in-laws, the cross-sex principle is not inevitable. There may not even be a specific act of transmission. One female charmer, whom I interviewed in June 2010, began to charm in the mid-1970s after the death of a beloved grandmother, who seems to have been her role model. Her grandmother had been a fisherman's wife in the Bonavista Bay outport of Greenspond and was "quiet, petite, and mild-mannered" as was the woman telling me this. She is a research assistant in Memorial University's stroke research laboratory and she occasionally charms warts, rubbing them with something biodegradable as well as counting them and making the equivalent number of crosses with chalk at the back of a wood stove or chimney pipe, where they can not easily be seen, and telling the patient to forget about them. There was also something else she did, in the act of charming, which she would not tell me about, and which was perhaps related to her own thought process. Charming makes her feel she is continuing something from her grandmother. She is not a conventionally religious person: "I believe in goodness," she said, and she stated her cynicism of organized religion. Neither of the two other charmers I interviewed in 2010 (one Roman Catholic and one Anglican) described herself as more religious than the average. While MUNFLA reports include a few which describe this or that charmer as an "outstanding Christian of the community," Newfoundland charmers do not seem to have been more religious than their patients.

Beyond those who might have identified themselves as charmers were those, probably mostly women, who used transference cures as effective, simple ways to rid their children, or anyone else, of warts. Take a snail, rub the slimy underside on the wart, pin the nail to a wooden post, and when the snail has withered to nothing the warts will have gone. Success brought these individuals a local reputation, and other neighbourhood children would present themselves in expectation of cure. Whether or not 83 year-old Hilda E., who told us in June 2010 how she had used this method on her daughter and grand-daughter, considered it qualitatively different from her other cures, such as rubbing goose grease into the chest for a severe cold, is not easy to say. Magical healing blends seamlessly into the continuum of household medicines, the majority of which were administered by women. It would be interesting to know if Hannah

March, known as “The Doctor” in the outport of New Perlican, Trinity Bay, in the early 1900s, used charms in addition to the herbal remedies she gathered from the surrounding forest. Everyone is said to have resorted to her, there being no available medically-qualified doctor, or perhaps none that anyone could afford. Women provided the foundation for folk medicine in rural Newfoundland, especially as housewives, mothers and grandmothers, not all of whom charmed. Above them, in an imaginary pyramid, were the more specialized charmers, male and female, generally cautious not to attempt to charm any condition which they did not recognize as lying within their particular charm’s competence. At the apex of the pyramid were the seventh sons, who attempted to cure the widest range of illnesses, some of whom—as discussed above—had an aura of danger about them because of their rumoured access to the black arts.

Paralleling seventh sons in their healing abilities and atmosphere of supernatural danger were certain Roman Catholic priests. “The priest, by the power and will of God, could cure,” said an informant from the exclusively Catholic island of St. Brendan’s, Bonavista Bay (MUNFLA: 65–1, ms. 08). Narratives of healing by priests replicate those about acts of charming; first the clerical finger:

He put his finger inside [my father’s] mouth and touched the boil. He [the priest] hadn’t gone through the door one minute when the boil broke. The infection cured in no time. (MUNFLA: 79–358, ms. 37)

Now the charmer’s thumb:

He [the charmer] was on his way home from the wharf where he had been cleaning his fish. I had heard people say he was able to charm pains so I ran out to test him. I showed him which tooth it was, and he shoved his big dirty thumb in my mouth and placed it on the painful tooth. He told me to go into the house and it would be all right. Before I reached the house, the pain was gone, and I have never had a pain in this tooth since. (MUNFLA: FLCQ 69/70, #9)

Each story stresses the instantaneous effect of the healer’s touch, and testifies to the cure’s success. Prediction of cure is a common structural element in narratives of healing and it seems obvious that the narratives created a receptive frame of mind in those who sought healing from either priests or charmers. Several archival accounts show priests’ cures preferred over doctors’ medicines, and many tell of charmers succeeding where doctors have failed.

To return to John Crellin’s assertion that by 1994 charmers in Newfoundland had largely been abandoned by their communities as a health resource:

yes, in general, orthodox medicine is now preferred and is available to everyone under Canada's universal health care system, though the long distances rural patients must travel to obtain treatment still imposes costs. In the cases of the three charmers interviewed in 2010, all of whom lived within 100 km of St. John's, the provincial capital, Hilda, the eldest, has not "put away" a wart for anyone over the last twenty years. She has effectively ceased to practice as a charmer. The second, Shirley, is of the post-modernization generation, university-educated and working at the highest level of orthodox medicine in a research laboratory. Nevertheless she is very interested in complementary forms of health care, which is where she suggested charming might take on further life. In both cases their community might be described as family, friends and colleagues (Shirley charmed warts from the child of a doctor she works with). Her practice is current, but infrequent. The third charmer, Bride, a widow aged 63, when interviewed in February 2010 was confidently predicting that once the local swimming pool opened for the summer her phone would be ringing frequently with requests to charm the plantar warts which children would inevitably pick up. In her case there is a definite continuity of relationship between charmer and community, adapted to modernity. She said that the local health clinic also refers wart sufferers to her.

While wart charming is continuing I have not been able to meet any charmers who stop blood or cure toothache. Bride told me of a man in a nearby community to her own who charms blood but she did not want me to try to contact him as she said he would know that she was the one who had told me about him. Likewise an undergraduate in my Newfoundland Folklore course in Winter 2010 had offered to introduce me to a male relative in the Trinity Bay area who charmed blood, but she eventually told me that she could not arrange it, which I take to reflect a refusal by him. Why am I excluded? Is it because with my university affiliation and non-practical interest I am manifestly not within the charmer's community? If I had slashed my wrist in Bride's kitchen, would a blood-stopper have been called on the phone? Being too cautious to attempt this "induced natural context," in order to gain proof, I will simply assert that blood-stopping does continue.

Why are so few texts available of verbal or written charms in the Newfoundland archival collections on charming? I found fewer than ten, two being Biblical verses: John 9: 32–34, "And a soldier with a sword pierced his side and forthwith came out blood and water," cited in two accounts of blood-stopping; and Ezekiel 16: 6 (as rendered in a questionnaire response): "And when I passed by and saw thee polluted in thine own, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live; Yea, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, in thy blood

live” (MUNFLA, Q 69/70, A3, p.15). An apocryphal narrative was used as part of a cure for a child’s “fits”:

In Bethlehem Jesus was born,
John baptized him in the river,
As he baptized him the waters stood still,
In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit
I order this child’s fits to cease. (MUNFLA, Q 70A-35, p.2)

Despite the depth of religious faith suggested by the content of these verbal charms, it would be wise to make no assumptions about the extent to which Newfoundland charmers were religious: Louisa Torraville, born in 1887 and recorded by a folklore student in 1978, said that the charmers she had known on Fogo Island, off the north-east coast of Newfoundland, were “not very religious,” they were “ordinary people, not bad people . . . do no bad to anybody, just ordinary people.” They were “old, kinda ignorant people, not with the learning they got today” MUNFLA: 70–346, ms. 41–42).

One possible reason for the absence of any historical record of verbal and written charms in Newfoundland is simply that unlike Europe, where antiquarians compiled large collections of verbal charms, there were few antiquarian scholars in nineteenth century Newfoundland interested to record such things. One exception was Judge Bennett of Harbour Grace who, in the 1890s, told the visiting Nova Scotian folklorist George Patterson a version of the *super petram* charm for toothache which he had probably found locally (Patterson 1895: 287). A similar version was recorded in 1972:

St. Peter sat on a marble stone
Our Saviour passed him by alone
“What ails thee, Peter?”
“Master, I am troubled with the toothache.”
“Arise, Peter, and follow me.” (MUNFLA 72–90, ms. p.11)

It is not to be taken for granted that those Newfoundland charmers who wrote out charms for their patients, sometimes to be worn in a cloth bag about the neck, were writing out full texts; some MUNFLA reports state that merely the word “charm” was written and enclosed, or the word “toothache” was written on paper and plugged into a tree. Sometimes written charms were scribbled over to preserve their secrecy. Archival accounts typically stress that verbal charms were not intended to be understood by patients: “it sounded something like a prayer in Latin,” reported one woman, recalling her visit to a seventh son in the 1950s.

The scarcity of charm texts may also be due to the conviction with which charmers held the belief that these words must be kept secret. It may be that—contrary to the impression that belief in charming was declining in the 1970s—charms were considered too valuable as a health resource to be jeopardized by telling them to some callow twenty year-old with a university exercise to complete. The fact that non-healing charms, such as the prayer to St. Anthony for the finding of lost objects, or the White Paternoster, for protection during sleep, can easily be recorded in contemporary Newfoundland suggests that it was their users' insistence on secrecy that doomed the verbal and written texts of healing charms to disappearance. They have either not been passed on, dying with their possessors, or they have been transmitted to people who continue to maintain the traditions of secrecy, though perhaps using them less and less often as their communities fragment through out-migration.

I have offered some evidence that charming in Newfoundland is still a living tradition, at least in the case of warts and perhaps also in blood-stopping. Many questions remain for further research, however. Where charming continues can it be seen as resistance to authority, as the narrative motif of the "charmer succeeding where doctors have failed" may suggest? Would a trust in charming indicate a preference for local solutions? Is it an expression of that self-reliance on which many rural Newfoundlanders pride themselves? Is it simply a more elegant and effective treatment for a few conditions, especially warts, than physicians' remedies? Much more extensive and determined fieldwork will be necessary, but that should go without saying, for surely it should take at least as much fieldwork to pronounce a tradition dead, as it does to show that it is living?

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THE THREE GOOD BROTHERS CHARM: SOME HISTORICAL POINTS

Lea Olsan

The charm for wounds beginning “Three good brothers were going/walking” has been documented in written and spoken sources in various languages across the European continent from the medieval period. Ferdinand Ohrt's article in the *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens* contained many examples of the formula from Northern European manuscript sources. There remain many more examples to be assembled from English manuscripts and from other cultural traditions. This paper (including the Appendices) does not attempt to offer a comprehensive collection of Three Good Brothers charms. Rather, it seeks to understand and interpret selected instances of the charm's appearance from the evidence of selected manuscript contexts. The phrase ‘Historical Points’ in the title of this paper signals my attempt to elucidate the cultural contexts for the use of this wound charm at specific moments during, before and after its popularity in the manuscript culture of the medieval period.

Key words: *Tres boni fratres*, *Longinus*, *Neque doluit neque tumuit*, encounter charm, Christ as healer.

The charm for wounds beginning “Three good brothers were going/walking” has been documented in written and spoken sources in various languages across the European continent from the medieval period. Ferdinand Ohrt's article in the *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens* contained many examples of the formula from Northern European manuscript sources. There remain many more examples to be assembled from English manuscripts and from other cultural traditions. This paper (including the Appendices) does not attempt to offer a comprehensive collection of Three Good Brothers charms. Rather, it seeks to understand and interpret selected instances of the charm's appearance from the evidence of selected manuscript contexts. The phrase ‘Historical Points’ in the title of this paper signals my attempt to elucidate the cultural contexts for the use of this wound charm at specific moments during, before and after its popularity in the manuscript culture of the medieval period.

Fortunately, recent scholarship by specialists and new examination of original papyrus and manuscript sources make possible more precise understandings of the cultural contexts, that is to say, the different communities for which the charm was written down. My six historical points are discussed in six sections

and embrace the following themes: the text and character of an early Byzantine example, the charm's instructions and embedded motifs, identity of the three brothers, its use among doctors, its dispersion in vernacular texts and languages, and its associations with witchcraft.

First, it is useful to note that the charm typically exhibits the following structure:

1. Title or heading designating its use for wounds
2. Opening narrative describing an encounter between the three brothers and Christ
3. Dialogue consisting of a question from Christ and answer from the brothers
4. Instructions for a cure consisting of the application of oil and wool and the recitation of a charm

A stipulation against secrecy and taking a reward for the cure often occurs between parts 3 and 4. In part 4, the charm may be a Longinus motif beginning 'Longinus/Longeus, the soldier/Hebrew pierced the side of the Lord with a spear' or a conjuration of multiple wounds formula, 'just as Christ's wounds . . . so may this wound'. Both the Longinus motif and the wounds conjuration incorporate the motif of 'uncorrupted wounds', as discussed below.

1. A CHRISTIAN NARRATIVE CURE IN A PAPYRUS FROM OXYRHYNCHUS

My first historical point for the 'three brothers charm' is a Greek text that marks an early stage of the type of charm represented by the three brothers formula, which Ohrt labelled 'Begegnung' or 'encounter charms' (Ohrt 1936: 49). Some men meet Christ in a deserted place and ask him for a cure for the sick. This brief text occurs with four others on a fragment of papyrus belonging to the Oxyrhynchus collection from Egypt and dates to the 5th or 6th century AD. This narrative and the other four short texts on the fragment are all meant for healing purposes. The Greek text has recently been newly edited by Roberta Mazza and reads in translation:

Some men of ours met [or some men met us] / in the wilderness and said to the Lord: Jesu, what cure (*tharapia*) is there for the sick? And He said to them, 'Oil of olives I gave/ and I designated myrrh for those who have acted in the name of the Father and the Holy Spirit and the Son. (Mazza 2007: 440, my translation)

Significantly, neither the number three nor the word “brothers” occurs in this charm, although it contains a dialogue and a cure involving oil of olives plus myrrh.¹ The charm belongs to an on-going narrative in which the encounter between the Lord and the men seeking a cure is described by an observer. It appears that the speaker is a disciple who was walking with Christ and witnessed the encounter with the strangers or, on the other hand, who himself recognized the people who met Christ in the lonely place as fellow Christians or disciples. This narrative does not employ instructions or the performative language of charms, but tells a short story in the form of an *exemplum*.

The next short narrative in the papyrus is also an encounter charm: Angels of the Lord went up to middle heaven seeking an eye cure, and the Lord, meeting them, asks what they seek, and they answer that they want to receive a strong and powerful medicine. All the pieces on the papyrus, are medical remedies. According to Mazza, this Oxyrhynchus fragment is a private, informal personal record written by someone literate in Greek, probably for personal use. Each of the two narrative cures are preceded by small chi-rho symbols. The community in which it circulated was probably Christian because the charm cure is said to be appropriate only for those who have faith and the text preserves an early alternative form of the Trinitarian formula. This cure establishes the 5th or 6th century circulation of a formula in which Christ conducts a dialogue with healers and directs them to use specific ingredients to treat believers in the Christian faith. Evidently, the words of the narrative itself constitute the effective form the cure at the same time raising an expectation that oil and myrrh are medicines. This dialogue suggests that the appellation ‘brothers’ in Three Good Brothers charm originally designated ‘brothers’ in the sense of friends and followers who knew Christ.

2. THE REQUIRED INCANTATION: *LONGINUS AND WOUND* *MOTIFS*

In the medieval Three Good Brothers charm, Christ instructs the Good Brothers to apply oil with wool and then speak certain words over the wound. The recitation usually consists of a Longinus charm with enumeration of Christ’s wounds or a direct appeal to the five wounds of Christ. The Longinus/Longeus motif incorporates the uncorrupted wounds motif. An early 12th century version of the charm reads,

In nomine patris et / f. et [s]. s. Tres boni fratres / per unam uiam ambulab/
ant et obuiauit eis dominus / noster iesus christus et interrogauit / eos
dicens Tres boni fratres / quo itis et dixunt Domine nos / imus ad montem

oliueti / colliegere he[r]bis plagac / ionis et percussio[n]is. Dixit / eis dominus noster iesus christus: Tres boni fratres [error MS: quo itis underlined for deletion] uenite post me et iurate / mihi per crucifixum et per lac beate marie . ut n' in ascondito dicatis ne merca. . . . accipiatis sed ascendite ad montem oliueti et accipite olium oliue et la. . . .ouis et mittae ad plagam et dicite: **Sicut dicit heb. . . . Longinus lanceam fixit in latere domini nostr[i] iesu christi nec diu sanguinet** [above ulnus] ranclauit nec tumuit nec tempestatem ar[d]oris habuit. Sic nec diu sanguinet ne ranclat nec tempestatem ardoris habeat wlnus istud. In nomine . p . et f et s. . . .² (Munich, Clm MS 19440, p. 282; my transcription from access online.)

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Three good brothers were walking one way and Our Lord Jesus Christ met them and asked them, saying: 'Three good brothers, where are you going?' And they said: 'Lord, we are going to the Mount of Olives to collect herbs [to cure] wounds and blows'. Our Lord Jesus Christ said to them: Three good brothers, follow me and swear to me by the crucifixion and the milk of the Blessed Maria that you will not speak [it] secretly or accept money, but ascent to the Mount of Olives and take oil of olives and [wool] of a ewe and put it to the wound and say: 'In the same way, he says: 'The heb[rew] Longinus fixed a lance in the side of our Lord Jesus Christ and not long did it bleed or rankle or swell or become inflamed. So may the wound of this person no longer bleed or rankle or become inflamed. In the name of the father and the son and the holy spirit. (Munich, BSB, Clm 19440, p. 282. Appendix I, 1.)

An alternative late medieval motif focuses on the five wounds of Christ with little or no mention of Longinus, as in the following charm from the second half of the 15th century,

et coniuertis vulnus per virtutem quinque plagas iesu christi et per virtutem mamillarum beate uirginis de quibus lactatus est iesus quod non amplius doleat nec putrestat nec cicatriscet plusquam fecerunt vulnera domini nostri iesu christi quando suspensus fuit in cruce. .

. . . and conjure the wound through the power of the five wounds of Jesus Christ and through the power of the breasts of the blessed Virgin from which Jesus was nursed that [the wound] may not ache nor putrify nor form a scar any more than did the wounds of our lord Jesus Christ when he was hung on the cross. . . . (Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, Kk.VI.33, f.5r. Appendix I, 15.)

In the Biblical account in John 19.34, the soldier who pierces Christ's side is unnamed. The verse reads, "but one of the soldiers pierced his side with a lance and immediately there flowed out blood and water".³ This account of blood and water flowing out of the Christ's wound gives rise to medieval charms to cure wounds or to stop bleeding. The typical formula in English manuscripts begins, "Longinus miles latus domini nostri + Iesu Christi lancea perforavit et continuo exiuit sanguis et aqua in redempcionem nostram. Adiuro te sanguis. . . ." That is, "Longinus the soldier pierced the side of our lord Jesu Christ with a lance and there flowed out continuously blood and water in our redemption. I adjure you blood . . ." (Appendix I, 17, see Section 5). However, this Longinus motif, focussing on the flow of blood and water from the wound, is not used within the Three Good Brothers formulae. The name Longinus first appears by name from the fourth century in the apocryphal *Book of Nicodemus*, also known as the *Acts of Pilate* (Gounelle 2008). The language in a report attributed to Annias and Caiaphas corresponds to that opening the charms, "Longinus the soldier pieced his side with a spear".⁴

The Longinus motif embedded in the Three Good Brothers charm begins with Longinus piercing Christ's side and is followed by an iteration of wound symptoms. The motif expanding Christ's wounds that healed instantly, referred to as the "uncorrupted wounds" or *Neque doluit neque tumuit*, flourished early in the vernacular traditions (Roper 2005; Smallwood 1992; Braekman 1997; Ebermann 1903 et al.). This motif is one of the most continuously sustained features in the Three Good Brothers charms. The incantation specifies the symptoms to be averted. Table 1 shows the variations in the symptoms that are enumerated within 15 representative charms dating from the 12th through the 15th centuries.

Symptoms are limited to six major ones—bleeding, festering (rankling or ulcerating), swelling, becoming inflamed, hurting (aching, throbbing) rotting (putrifying, decaying). Despite the difficulty presented by different languages, it is evident that no fixed pattern of enumeration or of the number of symptoms dominates the medieval tradition. The incantation builds on the structure, "Just as . . . so also . . ." Just as these named symptoms did not happen in Christ's wounds so also they will not develop in the patient's wounds. It is tempting to say that the enumeration of the wound symptoms medicalizes the charm by heightening the attention to the detailed characteristics of the wound. (They can be seen to describe the progress of a lesion toward serious infection.) In a single charm the named symptoms may be mentioned twice, sometimes with one symptom omitted or added within the formula (e.g., Appendix I,12). Over the long term, the enumeration of wound symptoms would have been affected by their reception in oral performance by churchmen, healers of

Century	Source	bleed	fester / rankle	swell	inflamm	hurt/ ache	putrify/ make pus/rot	make a worm or drop	scar or fistula
12th Latin	Munich, CIm 19440	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-
13th Latin	Camb Corpus 441	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-
13th Latin	Gilbert the Englishman	+	+	-	-	+	+	-	-
Latin	John of Gaddesden	-	+	-	-	+	+	+	-
14th Dutch	Yperman d. 1330	+	+	+ zeer	-	+ ver- techede	-	-	-
14th Latin	Scellinck	-	+	-	-	+	+	-	-
15th	Fayreford	-	-	-		+	+		+
14th	John of Grenborough	-	-	-	-	+	+	+	+
14th Danish	App. 9	+ sweet	-	+	-	+ verkthe	+	-	-
15th English	App. 10	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	-
13th/14th German	Munich, CIm 23374	-	+ enfueft	+	+	-	+	-	?
13th AN French	App. 12	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-
15th Greek	Venice, San Marco 408	-	+	-	+	-	-	-	-
15th Latin	Camb. UL Kk.6.33	-	-	-	-	+	+	-	+
Latin	ME Remedy books	+	+	-	-	+	+	+	+

Table 1. Occurrence of Various Wound Corruptions

various kinds and lay persons. In the 13th century, this wound charm was deliberately adopted by some learned medical teachers and practitioners, as discussed in section 4.

3. WHO ARE THE THREE BROTHERS?

In a charm, found in a church gospel book from Dalby, a church and monastery in Scania, Denmark, dating from the 14th century (Appendix I, 9), the three brothers have the names Ylinus, Cosmas, and Damian. Cosmas and Damian are twin brother physician saints of third-century Syrian origin, whose relics were translated first to Constantinople and later to Rome and the Cathedral at Munich. In 1400 a shrine was created to preserve their heads. Since they did not take money for healing, they are among the saints known by the Greek epithet ‘anargyrontoi’ or ‘the unmercenary’. Their legend supplies them with brothers, who were also physicians, but none of those have a name like Ylinus, who is not easy to identify.⁵ But Cosmas and Damian often appear in Greek charms with Pantaleon, another physician saint who took no rewards. The three occur in a Three Good Brothers charm in a 15th-century Bucharest manuscript and are depicted together in an oil panel originally painted in Cologne in 1455 by the Master of the Vision of St. John.⁶ Haralampos Passalis reports that similar charms collected from Greek oral sources recorded in the early 20th century name Cosmas, Damian, Panteleimon or alternatively St. George, St. John, and St. Panteleimon.⁷

Very likely the stipulation that the healers must swear not to use the charm in secret nor take money or any reward for it derives from the association of the Three Brothers with the ‘unmercenary’ physicians in the eastern Christian tradition. The requirement is sometimes dropped by physicians practicing medicine for fees in north western Europe (See Section 4).

An English charm from the 15th century begins “Augustinus. Ihesu. Iohannes. Thre goode breþren went ouer þe londe and ihesu mete w^t hem’ etc.” Although this late vernacular version shows that this recorder of the charm venerated Augustinus the saint, Jesus, and John the evangelist as “three good brothers”, the charm was probably not recited with these names, for we have many other examples from fifteenth-century England, none of which incorporate names for the healers. The recorder of this written charm takes the opportunity to write down names for the brothers, making the text more concrete. Even if these figures were not taken up by the wider English tradition, Augustine, Jesus, and John reinforce the strong sense of the Christianity of this charm echoing distantly the *Oxyrhynchus Papyrus*, where “brothers” in

the narrative indicate members of Christ's community of companions. Thus, the 14th century Danish reference to the physician saints, who were famous for their charitable cures may explain the charm's extraordinary stipulation that the healers must not speak it secretly or receive any money for it. The healers, who began as friends of Christ and brothers to Christians then latterly saints, become associated with the legends of the saintly brother physicians, venerated in eastern Mediterranean and the whole breadth of Europe. Christ's requirement in the charm that the cure be enacted freely and openly is likely to be a remnant of the identification of the three good brothers with the 'anargyrontoi'.

4. EARLY HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHARM

The German Three Good Brothers charm that Ohrt and others thought dated to the 12th century dates to the the 13th and 14th century according to the most recent description of Munich, BSB, Clm 23374 (Appendix I, 11) by the Bavarian State Library⁸. What had seemed to be a unique early, vernacular example can now be seen to belong to the era when the charm emerged all across Western Europe This Munich MS version of the Three Good Brothers was written into the book by one of several contributors to a collection of rituals and prayers inserted after sermon materials based on scriptural texts. The prayers invoke protection in the language of devotion to the cross. The Three Good Brothers has been added by a notably rough hand at the top, left column on a new page; the same hand continues in the second column with formulae consisting of letters or characters. Some of the added exorcisms exploit the use of divine names and angels' names, more or less outside the mainstream of public liturgical prayers and blessings. However, the vernacular Three Brothers charm contains the very same elements as its contemporary Latin versions — opening dialogue, the command to swear by the cross and Mary's milk not to take money, the instructions to use olive oil and sheep's wool and to recite the Longinus formula with the uncorrupted wounds. Here, the charm was evidently received as a religious text into an intensely religious, if at this point idiosyncratic, collection.

During the same period the charm was appropriated by medical practitioners. It achieved a certain cachet among a few well reputed physicians. Perhaps its enumeration of wound symptoms and its unique claim to have been given to physicians by Christ himself gave it some appeal to certain northern doctors. Gilbert the Englishman, writing his compilation of medicine for teaching purposes in France in the middle of the 13th century (McVaugh 2009) added

the charm into his section on the treatment for serious head wounds, despite the fact that he did not generally approve of verbal cures (McVaugh 2003: 330–1; Olsan 2003: 351, 360). He labels it an empirical cure and a charm (*carmen*).

Empericum carmen. Tres boni fratres per uiam ibant et obuiauuit eis dominus noster iesus christus et dixit eis. tres boni fratres quo it is? Unus ait. Imus ad montem oliueti colligendo herbas percussionis et plagacionis. et dicit dominus noster iesus christus. uenite post me tres boni fratres et iurate michi per crucifixionem domini et per lac mulieris uirginis ne in abscondito dicatis nec mercedem inde accipiatis. et accipite lanam succidam ouis et oleum oliuarum et ponite in plagis et dicite **sicut longius ebreus cum lancea** in latere domini nostri ihu. x. percussit nec sanguinauit nec ranclauit nec doluit nec putredinem fecit: nec faciat plaga ista quam carmo?/f 45r in nomine patris et f. et s.s. amen. ter dicite pater noster. .

Three good brothers were going along the path, and our Lord Jesus Christ met them and said to them: “Three good brothers, where are you going?” One said: “We are going to mount Olivet to collect herbs for blows and wounds.” And our Lord Jesus Christ said: “Follow me, three good brothers, and swear to me by the crucifixion and the milk of the lady virgin that you will not speak it secretly or accept rewards for it. And take wool from near the teat of a ewe (lanam succidam) and oil of olives and place it on the wounds and say: “Just as the Hebrew Longius struck the side of our Lord Jesus Christ and [the wound] did not bleed or rankle or ache or make pus, so may not this wound which I charm. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit Amen. Say three Our Fathers. (Appendix I, 3)

Gilbert’s prescription of *lana succida* is a special medical usage subsequently recommended by the English physician, John of Gaddesden, whose medical compendium, *Rosa medicine*, appeared early in the 14th century. John of Gaddesden makes the charm his own by two changes: When Christ speaks to the three brothers, he tells them explicitly to put aside their quest for herbs (“I conjure you, three good brothers, that you set aside the herbs and take oil of olives and black wool, saying: . . .”, Appendix I, 4). Moreover, John of Gaddesden moves instructions not to take any reward for the charm outside of the charm formula proper, saying simply, (“May you not take a reward for it, but do it in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” Appendix I, 4) It is John Arderne, a surgeon and practitioner of the late 14th century who precisely defines *lana succida* in medical terms. It is wool taken from near the teat of a ewe, an effective treatment of apostemes (that is pus-filled sores). Such wool was use-

ful because it contained more natural greases. The added adjective “black” (nigram, Appendix I, 8; blake, Appendix I, 10) indicates that this wool should be in its natural state, unwashed or “dirty”.⁹ The notion of unwashed wool (“leine ke unkes ne fust lavee”) occurs in the 12th –century Anglo-Norman French version (Appendix I, 12), likely reflecting even earlier medical useage. Among later surgeons who recommended this charm for wounds are the famous Flemish surgeons Jan Yperman and Thomas Scellinck, who echo Gilbert’s directions about the wool (Appendix I, 5 and 6). Both Yperman and Scellinck express doubts about the efficacy of the verbal incantation in contrast to their faith in the wool and oil treatment (Braekman 1997: 175–177). In this way, the Three Good Brothers achieved a limited status in learned medical circles in northwestern Europe, while it never seemed to lose its credibility as a wound cure among the poor or for the poor.

Thomas Fayreford, a 15th-century medical practitioner who traveled in the southwest of England and whose patients came from all classes, except the highest aristocracy (Jones 1998: 163–4), notes that the Three Good Brothers is proven to work on the wounds of the poor. Fayreford employed charms without qualms. His version varies from the more learned version because he says simply to use the wool of a ewe (*bidentis*) and he omits the caveat about not taking money or keeping it secret, presumably because he made his living from practicing medicine, rather than teaching it. His assertion that the charm is proven to work among the poor may be his reinterpretation of the directions to Christian charity. Fayreford’s version also drops references to Longinus, which may have seemed old fashioned to him, and offers a poetic closing formula exploiting word play on the causes of the wounds:

... **sicut christus fu[i]t fixius clave et lancea** sic christus fu[i]t punctus clave et lancea. et sicut christus fu[i]t lanceatus clave et lancea et ritu sic fu[i]t sanatus ab ipsa punctura fixura. clavatura lanceatura per venerabilem nomen domini nostri jesu christi. sic sanetur verissime vulnus istud. fiat fiat fiat. Amen.

... *Just as Christ was fixed with a nail and a lance, so Christ was pierced with a nail and a lance, and just as Christ was lanced with a nail and a lance and a rite, so he was healed from being pierced and fixed and nailed and lanced. Through the venerable name of our lord Jesus Christ, so may this wound be most truly healed. Let it be done, let it be done, let it be done. Amen.* (Appendix I, 7)

On the other hand, John of Grenborough (that is, Grandborough in E. Warwickshire), who says he served as the man who looked after the infirmary (*infirmarius*) for thirty years, was attached to an ecclesiastical community.

This brother John first acquired a copy of Gilbert's book, then compiled his own treatments and remedies to supplement it. He wrote the charm into his own medical book (McIntosh 1986, I:114; Hunt 1990: 33–34). His Three Brothers charm (Appendix I, 8) resembles Gilbert's. Yet his wound treatments, which are presented as one unit, are explicitly religious, being attributed to Christ 'who is true salvation and medicine'.¹⁰ The Three Brothers charm belongs to a set of surgical instructions for extraction of a spear point or arrow head. It is continuous with follow-up care for the wound.¹¹ The surgeon speaks a Longinus formula to accompany the extraction of the spear point with two pairs of fingers (*duobus digitis dualibus*), then he invokes the Holy Wounds ("And through the Holy Wounds may there be to you blessed medicine"); next he recites the three brothers charm over the wound and additionally a long "I conjure you wound by the 5 wounds" ending in Holy names of God. John's intervening medical notes say that the 'two fingers together' with which he makes the sign of the cross and grasps the iron point are the 'medicinal fingers' by which he seems to identify the gesture of blessing with the surgical action.¹² Moreover, he adds that this medicine (meaning the spoken formulae and the application of the wool and oil) is most effective for new wounds if another medicine has not already been applied. His version of the charm stands as the most devout use of the Three Good Brothers charm within an explicitly medical and surgical environment.

5. FIFTEENTH TO NINETEENTH CENTURIES: *VERNACULAR MEDICINE*

Vernacular medicine in 15th-century England served practical purposes and could be self-administered. The Three Good Brothers charm appeared in Middle English collections of medical remedies for English readers along with a few other Latin charms that appealed to saints like Apollonia for toothache and Longinus for bleeding. The remedy book formula (Appendix I, 13) follows 13th- and 14th-century versions designating the use of 'black' wool, 'cut from below'. The form preserved in at least 9 related Middle English remedy books contains the Longinus wound motif. (Olsan 2009: 226).

In England, as elsewhere, several different charm motifs begin with Longinus's wounding of Christ. The English remedy books mentioned above that include the Three Good Brothers also contain two independent Longinus charms in Latin—although not all the charms in these books are in Latin. Both staunch bleeding of one kind or another and both employ Longinus mo-

tifs to staunch bleeding that combine Longinus with the river Jordan, are translated below:

1. A charm for þe bloody flix/flux [f. 33r]

In nomine + patris + +? filii + spiritus sanctus. Amen. Stabat + Iesus contra flumum Jordanis et posuit pedem suum et dixit, Sta, aqua per deum te coniuro. Longinus miles latus domini nostri Iesu + Christi perforauit et continuo exiuit sanguis et aqua, sanguis redempcionis et aqua baptismatis. In nomine patris, restet sanguis. In nomine filii, cesset sanguis. In nomine spiritus sancti non exeat sanguinis gutta ab hoc famulo dei N. sicut credimus quod sancta Maria vera mater est et verum infantem genuit christum, sic retineant vene que plene sunt sanguine. Sic restet sanguis sicut restabat Iordanis quum christus in ea baptizatus fuit. In nomine patris etc.

A charm for the bloody flux. In the name of the + Father + Son + and Holy Spirit. Amen. Jesus was standing at the river Jordan and he put in his foot and said: Stay, I conjure you water through God. Longinus the soldier pierced the side of our Lord Jesus + Christ and immediately blood and water flowed out, the blood of redemption and the water of baptism. In the name of the Father, may the blood rest. In the name of the Son, may the blood cease. In the name of the Holy Spirit, may not a drop of blood go out of this servant of God, (named here). Just as we believe that holy Mary is the true mother and gave birth to the true infant Christ, so may the veins that are full of blood retain it. Thus may the blood stand still as the Jordan stood still when Christ was baptised in it. In the name of the Father, etc. (Appendix I, 16)

2. A charm for to staunche blod.

Longinus miles latus domini nostri + Iesu Christi lancea perforauit et continuo exiuit sanguis et aqua in redempcionem nostram. Adiuro te sanguis per ipsum + Christum per latus eius per sanguinem eius + sta + sta + sta. +

Christus et Iohannes descenderunt in flumen iordanis. aqua obstipuit et stetit, sic faciat sanguis istius corporis. [f. 35v] In + Christi nomine et sancti Iohannis baptiste amen. Et dica ter pater noster et ter Aue Maria.

A charm to staunch blood.

Longinus the soldier pierced the side of our lord + Jesus Christ with a lance and immediately blood and water flowed out in our redemption. I adjure you blood through + Christ himself, through His side, through His blood: + Stay + Stay + Stay. +

Christ and John went down into the river Jordan. The water stopped and stood still, so may the blood of this body. In + the name of Christ and Saint John the Baptist. Amen. And say three Our Fathers and three Hail Marys. (Appendix I, 17)

In medieval England other Longinus motifs used independently to staunch bleeding appear in French, English and Latin (Hunt 1990: 93–94). Longinus motifs to staunch bleeding have been well documented in German (Schultz 2003: 90–93; Ebermann 1903: 42–52). In Greek, Longinus’s name disappears except in old charms.¹³ Longinus appears in Czech charms (Агапкина 2010: 368–370). In Latvia the motif of a soldier or soldiers wounding Christ and water pouring out appears for staunching blood, but without naming Longinus.¹⁴ In medieval England, although Longinus charms to staunch bleeding are sometimes called for in the treatment of wounds, the particular motifs contained within the Three Good Brothers charm remain distinct from other ones, because it focuses on wound symptoms and Christ’s wounds, rather than flowing blood.

As Thomas Smallwood (2009: 93) explains, “It was only with the advent of English as the first language of the literate and socially privileged that the written record of Middle English charms rapidly expands.” He adds that from the last third of the 14th century, “when compendia of practical medicine were at last written chiefly in English that much of the translation and re-working of established charm-formula took place.” Late medieval English versions of the Three Good Brothers display significant new variations. For example, a wound charm which Smallwood (2009: 94, 99) found in 23 manuscripts translates into English rhyming couplets the conjuration (*Coniuro te wlnus*) employed in Latin Three Good Brothers charms like John of Grenborough’s (Appendix I, 8). This conjuration in English begins “I conjure the wound blive/By the virtue of the wounds five”.¹⁵ Robert Thornton, a collector of romances, religious works and a remedy book, records a Three Good Brothers charm in rhymed verses against a worm.¹⁶ Missing from this picture are the Middle English and Early Modern redactions of the charm that circulated among the less literate population of English speakers, although English vernacular versions can be found in the manuscripts (e.g., Appendix I, 10).

Vernacularisation of the charm from Latin or Greek occurs across Europe. It occurs in Latin with Irish directions for application in a 15th/16th century manuscript (Best 1952: 27–28). In a 19th century Irish revision, the three brothers respond that they are seeking gold on Mt. Olivet (Wilde 1887: 2:80). Andrey Toporkov reports that the Three Good Brothers charm does not appear in the East Slavic charm traditions; while it does occur in Czech, Polish, Ukrainian

and Byelorussian charm traditions.¹⁷ In a Greek charm probably from Crete, it is recorded in a 15th century manuscript in Bucharest, but the three good brothers encounter Mary instead of Christ.¹⁸ A recent 20th-century Greek version collected from oral sources retains a few traditional features, while discarding others (Appendix I, 19)¹⁹. Toms Kencis has found no Three Good Brothers charms in the Latvian archives although there are many charms featuring three men, probably derived from associations with the Trinity.²⁰ Jonathan Roper estimates that there are about 10 Estonian Three Brothers variants.²¹ Daiva Vaitkevičienė's recent publication of 1,716 Lithuanian charms yields no Three Good Brothers' charms and no Longinus charms.

The Three Good Brothers charm belongs to the medieval Christian charm traditions. In the 15th century, the Three Brothers Charm is situated among other charms for bleeding and wounds which feature Longinus or the conjuration of the five wounds of Christ. The Flum Jordan charms utilise a different Longinus formula from that in the Three Good Brothers charms. Charms that conjure the five wounds are closely related to the formula appearing in some Three Brothers charms except that stand-alone 'I conjure the wound' charms favour the vernacular. English translations of the Three Good Brothers seem to be rare. Robert Thornton's rhymed version barely qualifies since he sees it as a worm charm and it has been interpreted as for toothache, even though it is a rather delightful rendition of the Three Good Brothers. This story of dilution and diversion fits the evidence from other charm traditions, which we know about from 19th and 20th century field work. The Three Good Brothers and Longinus seem to be primarily medieval phenomena, confined to Christian cultures and traditions of charity. At the end of the medieval period, in fact, the charm was loudly condemned, as we see in section 6.

6. THE CHARM AS THE DEVIL'S WORK

In August 1427, the Franciscan friar Bernardino was preaching against the sin of pride in the Campo in Siena. Bernardino was to become the head of his order and most famous for his promotion of the veneration of the holy name of Jesus, represented by IHS in art, an abbreviation common in late medieval charms.

Here is part of what he said to the crowds gathered in the Campo:

Oh you who have used the three good brothers, what a great evil you do.
O you who have used the charm for broken bones, to you, and to him or
her who says that she is bewitched, and who makes you believe she is—

all these I say, take heed! For the first to feel the strokes from God's scourges will be those who have trusted in these enchantments and followed them; and next vengeance will overtake those who have not brought them to justice. (Kors and Peters 2001: 135)

Bernardino argues in another sermon that the Three Brothers charm leads its users from a foolish practice built on a lie to a demonic sacrifice in which the devil is clearly present in the oil and wool and in the secret remedy, meaning the incantation.²² By this inflammatory preaching that those who work incantations must be condemned and punished as agents of the devil, Bernardino had succeeded in instigating the burning of women charmers in 1424 (Kors and Peters 2001:133). In England as early as the second quarter of the 14th century, the Dominican John Bromyard (d. 1352) warned against old, poor, and untaught women who recommended amulets, retrieved lost objects or loves or health, and provided incantations. In his manual for preachers he names them *carminatrices* and saw them as diabolically inspired (Rider 2007).²³

Meanwhile among English book owners, Protestant religious reforms after 1536 led people to remove Catholic Latin charms and charms relying on saints from books of remedies. Three Good Brothers disappears along with others. In one remedy book originally copied between 1450 and 1500, some owner obscured all the lines except for its distinct title: 'Here ys a charme for woundes with oyle and wolle'²⁴ The censors of these medical remedy books excised or covered up only the charms. The Three Good Brothers charm suffers various forms of erasure or strike-through, although they had been intentionally included a few decades previously.²⁵

CONCLUSIONS

Taking the long view of the charm's story, we know that the Three Good Brothers circulated first in Latin in literate Christian clerical communities. The original encounter formula probably emerged as a narrative for healing in the earliest Christian centuries, since we find it among the Christian remedies in the Greek papyrus. Its authority over the centuries consistently derives from its attribution as directly and personally conveyed by Christ to healers seeking medical cures. In the full-blown medieval Three Good Brothers found in monastic manuscripts in the twelfth-century, the contrast between the goal of the healers who are abroad seeking herbs and Christ's redirection of them to a different kind of cure altogether, foregrounds the significance of the cure as a Christian act that cannot be sold or preserved as a secret.

In the 13th century, the charm appealed to a few academically inclined physicians, perhaps because it dramatises an encounter between the healers and Christ, seeming to authorise Christian physicians in contrast to commonplace empirical practitioners who relied on herbal cures or animal ligatures. Most high profile physicians and surgeons expressed reluctance to include charms in their learned books because they preferred more rational and theoretical approaches to medicine. (McVaugh 2003). Ordinarily, they employed charms that belonged to their small circle of professionals, not the church or the peasants. The circulation of the Three Good Brothers charm in manuscripts of Gilbert the Englishman's *Compendium medicine* raised its status in formal Latin medicine.

In the 15th century the Three Good Brothers becomes a favourite remedy in much more commonplace vernacular medical remedy books. It appears in these English books still written in Latin, reflecting the religious piety of the time. But the charm also circulates widely in vernacular languages. Its popularity in Italy called it to the attention of the reforming preacher Bernardino of Siena in the 15th century, who condemned its use as diabolical and its users as witches. In the 16th century in England it, along with other charms, came under censorship by religious reformers, both Catholic and Protestant. Then, the three good brothers who acquired a cure from Christ along with charms mentioning the ancient legendary saint Longinus began to disappear from the manuscripts—but I daresay not from the lips of the people.

In this last regard, I offer one final suggestion concerning the charm in England. Jonathan Roper's database of charms in the English language includes a charm recorded in the 19th-century in southwest England that begins "There was three brothers come from the North West going to the South to kill and to cure" (Appendix I, 20). Certain features of the charm echo, albeit very distantly, the Three Good Brothers charm—*besides* the mention of 'three brothers': (1) The brothers are traveling. (2) The charm is meant to cure a string of skin diseases which make sores. (The general medieval understanding of wounds often covered 'sores'.) Finally, (3) According to the collector, the accompanying procedure included dipping bits of cloth into cream and applying them to the inflamed area. It sounds as if the wound treatment, which forms part of the medieval charms where Christ commands the healers to take oil and wool and place it over the wound, has simply moved out of the dialogue and that the olive oil and wool have, as Roper notes, been transformed into local ingredients. Given the fluidity of variations possible in orally transmitted formulae and the long time-span available for such transformations, which we saw in section 5 were already occurring in English manuscript texts of the 15th cen-

ture, the Devonshire Three Brothers charm has a good claim to belong to the tradition of the medieval Three Good Brothers wound-charm.

APPENDIX I. CHARM TEXTS²⁶

This Appendix contains the texts of the charms mentioned in the paper. Numbers 16 and 17 do not belong to the Three Good Brothers group, but rather illustrate two independent variants that include Longinus, both Flum Jordan types.

1. 11th/12th century manuscript contains various lists of useful information and glosses. The charm is added in blank space at the end of a list of glosses.

In nomine patris et / f. et [s]. s. Tres boni fratres / per unam uiam ambulab/
ant et obuiauit eis dominus / noster iesus christus et interrogauit / eos dicens Tres
boni fratres / quo itis et dixit Domine nos / imus ad montem oliueti / colligere he[r]bis
plagac / ionis et percussio[n]is. Dixit / eis dominus noster iesus christus: Tres boni fratres
[error MS: quo itis underlined for deletion] uenite post me et iurate / mihi per
crucifixum et per lac beate marie . ut n' in ascondito dicatis ne merca. . . . accipiatis
sed ascendite ad montem oliueti et accipite olium oliue et la. . . .ouis et mittae ad
plagam et dicite: **Sicut dicit heb. . . . Longinus lanceam fixit in latere domini nostr[is]**
iesu christi nec diu sanguinet [above ulnus] ranclauit nec tumuit nec tempestatem
ar[d]oris habuit. Sic nec diu sanguinet ne ranclet nec tempestatem ardoris habeat
wlnus istud. In nomine . p . et f et s. . . .²⁷ (Munich, Clm MS 19440, p. 282; my transcrip-
tion from access online at [http://daten.digitale-sammlungen.de/~db/0003/bsb00036881/
images/ .](http://daten.digitale-sammlungen.de/~db/0003/bsb00036881/images/))

2. English manuscript associated with Richard, Bishop of Chichester. Charm is added in 13th c.

In nomine patris et filii et spiritus sancti Amen. Tres boni fratres vniam uiam
ambulauerunt et obuiauit eis dominus noster Iesus christus. Qui dixit eis: quo itis tres
boni fratres? Qui dixerunt: Imus ad montem oliueti qui? rere herbas percussio[n]is
plagaconis sanaconis et doloris. et? dixit eis dominus noster Iesus christus: Venite post
me et iurate in per crucifixum ut non in abscondito dicatis nec mercedem inde capiatis
sed ite ad montem oliueti et accipite lanam ovis succernam [for succidam?] et oleum et
ponite ad plagam dicentes: **Sicut Longinus latus domini nostri iesu christi lancea
perforauit? nec diu sanguinauit nec ranclauit diu putruit nec trumuit nec doluit nec
ardorem habuit Ita nec plaga ista diu sanguineat nec ranclet nec putrescat nec tumeat
nec doleat? nec ardorem habent et ter dicatur hic benedictio: In nomine patris et filii et
spiritus sancti amen. et in fine? ?libet bened' dicatur pater noster et Aue maria.** (Cam-
bridge, Corpus Christi College 441, p. 578; my transcription)

3. Gilbert the Englishman, *Compendium medicine*, composed the middle of the 13th c. in France. Empericum carmen.

Tres boni fratres per uiam ibant et obuiauit eis dominus noster iesus christus et
dixit eis. tres boni fratres quo itis? Unus ait. Imus ad montem oliueti colligendo
herbas percussio[n]is et plagaconis. et dicit dominus noster iesus christus. uenite post
me tres boni fratres et iurate michi per crucifixionem domini et per lac mulieris uirginis
ne in abscondito dicatis nec mercedem inde accipiatis. et accipite lanam succidam ouis
et oleum oliuarum et ponite in plagis et dicite **sicut longius ebreus cum lancea** in
latere domini nostri ihu. x. percussit nec sanguinauit nec ranclauit nec doluit nec

putredinem fecit: nec faciat plaga ista quam carmo?/f 45r in nomine patris et f. et s.s. amen. ter dicite pater noster. . (New Haven, Yale, Cushing Whitney MS 19, fol. 44vb MS ca. 1300; my transcription)

4. John of Gaddesden's *Rosa medicine (or Rosa anglica)* compiled 1st quarter of the 14th c.

Ad sanandum vulnera primo dicatur istud carmen. Tres boni fratres iverunt ad montem Oliveti ad colligendum herbas et obviaverunt domino nostro Jesu Christo qui dixit eis "Quo itis?" Tres boni fratres qui respondentes dixerunt "Ad montem Oliveti ad colligendum herbas ad sanandum vulnera". Et ait illis Jesus "Conjuro vos, tres boni fratres, quod herbas dimittatis et oleum de oliva et lanam nigram sumatis dicentes "**Conjuro te, vulnus**, per vulnus Christi preciosum a Longeo milite perforatum, quod neque ranclescebat neque putrescebat nec vermem generabat nec dolorem amplius sentiebat sic nec tu ranclescas, neque putrescas, nec vermem generes, nec dolorem inde sentias per virtutem olei et lane. In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti, Amen." Nec inde mercedem capiatis, sed in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti id faciatis. (London, British Library, Additional 33996, fol. 149v; printed in Hunt 1990: 29)

5. Flemish surgeon, Jan Yperman, (died about 1330) *Cyrgurgie* followed Gilbert's. He gives the following vernacular translation followed by the Latin version.

Een segening voer alle wonden olt ende nye, in wat leeden sy liggen ende doeter niet toe dan wollen met eycke ende olij van oliven. Drie goede broeders gingen over wech, [d]ie welcke ontmoeten onsen heere Jesum Christum, ende hy seid tot henlieden: 'Drie goede broeders, waer gady?' Die eene antwoorde: 'Wie gaen ten bergen van Oliveten leesen cruyden den ghewonden met te gheneesen'. Ende ons heer Jesus Christus antwoorde henlieden: Coempt acter my, drie goede broeders, ende sweert my by den gecruystden heer ende by den melck swijffs ende maget dat ghy niet sult seggen dese woorden stillekine noch loen daeraff ontfaen. Ende neept wolle met der yeke vanden scape ende doetse in oly ende legtse op den wonde. Gelovet vry et secht:

Also Longinus den hebreusche met den speets staech onsen heere Jesum Christum den wel[ken niet] bloede noch dravonck[elde] noc zeer was noch vertechede, so [oock] moet dese wonde + In den nae[me des] Vaders, des Soens, ende des [heylighen Gheestes]. Drie pater noster ende drie av[e Maria .ter] hec repete. (Braekman 1997: 176–77)

6. Flemish, Thomas Scellinck, *Boeck van Surgien Tirlemont/Tienen* (1343):

Een coniuurati die herde ghemein is om wonden te genesen.

Tres boni fratres obviaverunt domino et cominus noster Jhesus Christus interrogavit et dixit: Tres boni fratres, quo itis? 'Domine, nos ymus ad montem Oliveti ad col[l]igendum [h]arbos placacionis doloris et sanacionis'. Ende dominus noster Jhesus Christus dixit eis: 'Ite et ponatis supra vulnere lanam succidam madefactum in olio olivarum et dicatis hanc coniuuracionem':

Sicut vulnera domini nostri in cruce pendentis non putruerunt nect doluerunt nec racielaverunt, sic vulnus istud nec putruat nect doleat nec ransulet sed dominus noster ab omni malo accidente custodiat et defendat. In nomine Patris + et Filij + et Spiritus sancti + Amen. (Braekman 1997: 175)

7. English physician, Thomas Fayreford 15th c.

Empiricum bonum expertum in vulneribus pauperum. Ibant tres boni fratres ad montem oliveti bonas quirentes omnia vulnera sanantes. obviaverunt domino nostro Jesu christo. quo tenditis tres boni fratres? domine ad montem oliveti bonas herbas quirentes omnia vulnera sanantes. revertimini, inquit, tres boni fratres et accipite

olium olive et lanam bidentis et **coniurate vulnus per virtutem .5. plagarum domini nostri jesu christi quod neque vulnus doleat neque putrescat neque cicatriscat plus quam fecerunt vulnera domini nostri jesu christi. quando suspensus fu[i]t in cruce. sed ita munde sanet aprofundo sicut fecerunt vulnera domini nostri jesu christi. In nomine patris etc. et dic ter pater noster et ave maria. et magister dicas istud sequens: sicut christus fu[i]t fixius clave et lancea sic christus fu[i]t punctus clave et lancea. et sicut christus fu[i]t lanceatus clave et lancea et ritu sic fu[i]t sanatus ab ipsa punctura fixura. clavatura lanceatura per venerabilem nomen domini nostri jesu christi. sic sanetur verissime vulnus istud. fiat fiat fiat. Amen.** (London, British Library, MS Harley 2558 fol.64v; my transcription)

8. John of Grenborough (Grandborough, E. Warwickshire). 14th c., the infirmarer at St. Mary's Coventry²⁸

IBANT TRES BONI FRATRES AD montem oliueti bonas herbas querentes et omnia wlnera sanantes et obuiauuerunt domino nostro Jesu christo: quo ibitis tres boni fratres? domine ibimus ad colligendum bonas herbas querentes et omnia wlnera sanantes. reuertimini tres boni fratres et accipite olium oliue et succidam lanam et nigram et ponite super plagas et dicatis: JN NOMINE PATRIS et FILII et SPIRITUS SANCTI Amen. **CONIURO te wlnus per .v. wlnera domini nostri Jesu Christi et per mamillas ex quibus lactatus est Jesus quidem ut non doleas neque putrescas neque cicatrescas plus quam fecerunt wlnera domini nostri Jesu christi quando suspensus erat in cruce sic ita munde sanes a profundo sicut fecerunt wlnera domini nostri Jesu christi. In nomine patris et filii etc. Sicut plage domini nostri Jesu christi non putruerunt nec rancierunt nec cancrerunt nec vermes fecerunt ita wlnus istud non doleat, nec putrescat nec ranclescat non cancrescat nec fetrescat nec vermes faciat sed ad sanitatem perueniat** Messias + Sother + Emanuel + Sabaot + Adonay +. Jn nomine patris et filii etc.

Jsta medicina valet nouiter wlneris si prius super wlnus dictis fuerit et emplastrum appositis quod si per[?] prius apposite ferint alie medicine non habent tantam virtutem. stringit sanguinem et delet ache[sic] et sanat wlnera. (London, British Library MS Royal 12. G. IV, f. 178); my transcription.

9. Danish. 14th c.

Ylinus Cosmas z Damianus gingae thre gothe bröther aat een vegh. Möthe them var herraes Jesus Christus: Hwart welii thre gothe bröther? Wi vellya ganga teel byærg oliuetj, sancka thæ saluæ ther man skal saar meth helæ oc vnder meth lækhæ. Tha sagthe war herra Jesus Christus: Gar meth mykh thre gothe bröther oc swær a guz doth oc Marie myælk, aat ij skuly thessæ oor æy löna oc æy löön fore taka, oc taka boma ellær fara vl oc signa the vnder aller saar meth, hwat the ær ellær huggen æller stvngen, sligthen eller br öthen: Swa æræ the signat sum the vnder ther:

Longinus gyorthe Jesu Christo ynnan siin sitha, ther æy sweet oc æy verkthe oc æy rotnathe oc æy bulnathe, ynnan nauuf father, soon oc then helyand . . . (Ohrst 1917 no. 1125 (145b)).

10. English. 15th c.

Se ihesu and propter plagas de tribus fratribus.
Augustinus. Ihesu. Iohannes.

Thre goode breþren went ouer þe londe and ihesu mete w^t hem and seyde: breþren wheþer wolle ge gon? lorde we wendeþ to þe mount of Oliuet to gadar herbes to hele wonddis and oþer soris. comeþ w^t me and y schal gow teche. Take oyle of oliue tre and blake wolle and do þe wolle in þe oyle and lay it to þi wonde and say þ^s charme þer-ouer: **righte as longius þrillide þe seyde of god** and þ^t wonde ne blede not longe ne rotide not ne oke nogt ne swellede ne festarde nought rygtht so þ^s wonde ne blede he nought ne

fesster he nougt ne ake he nougt ne swelle he not ne rote he not in þe name of þe fader + and þe sonne + and of þe holy gost + amen. and say þ^s charme þris and .v. pater noster and .v. auys in þe whorchipe of þe v woundis of oure lorde. (British Library, Sloane MS 3160, ff. 133–134; Sheldon 1978, no. 32; here as printed in Roper 2005: 127)

11. German. Re-dated 13th/14th centuries.

Indem namen des uater [. . .] Dri güt prüder giengen æinen wech. da bechom in unser herre ih'c cpc. und sprach: wanne uart ir dri güt prüder? Herre, wir uarn zæinem perge und sūchen æin chrūt des gewaltes, daz iz güt si zaller slath wnden si si geslagen oder gestochen oder swa uon si si. do sprach unser herre ih'c xt: chomet zū [v] mir ir dri güt prüder und swert mir bi dem cruce gūten. und bi der milch der maide sanct Marien daz irz enhelt noch long enphahet und uart hinz zo dem mont oliuet und nemt ole des olepūmes und scapwolle. und leget die uber die wndin und sprechet also:

De iud longinus der unsern herren ih'm xpm stæch in die siten mit dem sper. dazen eiter nith. noch gewan hitze. noch gewan hitze noch enswar noch enblütet zeuil. noch enfuelt also to disiu wnde [. . .] Sprich den segen dristunt und also manigen pater noster und tū nith mer. Wan als thie gescriben si. (München, BSB, Clm 23374, f. 16v; my transcription from online access <http://daten.digital-sammlungen.de/~db/bsb00007207/images/> [image 36]; cf. Schulz: 68)

12. Anglo-Norman French. 13th century.

Treis bons freres estoient ke aloient al mont d'Olivet por coillir herbes bones a plaie et a garison. Et ancontrent Nostre Seignor Jesu Crist et Nostre Seignor lor demanda: , Treis bons freres, ou alez vous? Et il responderent: Al mont d'Olivet por coiller herbes de plaie et de garson. Et Nostre Sire dit a eus Venez o mai et me grantez [f.23va] en bone fei ke vous nel dies a nul home ne a femme ne aprendrez. Pernez oile d'olive et leine ke unkes ne fust lavee et metez sor la plaie. **Quaunt Longius l'ebreu aficha la launce** en le coste Nostre Seignor Jesu Crist, cele plaie ne seigna, ele n'emfla point, ele ne puiot mie, ele ne doloit mie, ele ne rancla mie. Ausi ceste plaie ne seine mes, ne'emfle point, ne pue mie, ne doile mie, ne rancle point, ne eschaufe mie. En le nun del Pier, et nun del Fiz, el nun del Seint esprit, Pater Noster treis fois.

(Cambridge, Trinity College, MS 0.1.2, f.23rb; printed Hunt 1990: 72.)

13. Latin Charm in English Remedy Books (15th c.)

A charm for woundes with oyle 7 wolle.

Tres boni fratres per viam ambulabant et obuiabat eis iesus quibus dixit, tres boni fratres quo itis? domine, nos imus ad montem oliueti ad [f. 61v] colligendum herbas salucionis sanitatis & integratatis. tres boni fratres uenite post me et iurate mihi per lac beate virginis marie quod non abscondetis neque in abscondito dicetis neque lucrum accipietis et ite ad montem oliueti et accipite lanam nigram succisam et oleum oliue. postea sic dicendo: **sicut longinus miles** latus domini nostri + iesu + christi lancea perforauit et illa plaga non diu doluit neque putridauit neque fistulauit neque ranclauit, neque sanguinauit neque guttam fecit + sic plaga ista per uirtutem illius uirtutem illius plage non diu doleat + neque diu putridet + fistulet + neque ranclat + neque sanguinet neque guttam faciat sed ita sana fiat [f.62r] & munda sicut fuit vulnus quod fecit longinus in latem domini nostri + iesu christi quando pendeat in cruce. In nomine patris etc. (Cambridge University Lib. MS 9308 f. 61r)

14. Greek (15th c.)

Useful for a wound and every cut.

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. As the three good brothers were going peacefully, quietly, and unimpeded to the mount of Olives in order to find herbs beneficial for every cut and for every blow and for every disease and every infirmity, our lord Jesus Christ encountered them and said to them, "Where are you going three good brothers so peacefully, quietly and unimpeded? And they responded, "My Lord, we are going to the mount of Olives in order to find herbs that are beneficial to every cut and to every wound and to every sickness." And He said to them, "Swear on the true and life-giving cross and on the holy mother of God that you will not accept any gifts or say it secretly, and I will reveal it to you." And they swore on the true and life-giving cross and on the holy mother of God that "we will not accept any gifts nor speak it secretly." And he said to them, "Come to the mount of Olives and take the produce of the olive [oil] and wool of a ewe-lamb and say, "**As Longinus, the centurion, pierced our Lord** Jesus Christ and He did not become inflamed or ulcerate or make a wound, so may the wound of this servant of God (named) not ulcerate or become inflamed, but may it be healed and and be healthy. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and ever amen. (Venice, San Marco MS 408, f. 147) Legrand 1881:25, translated into English.²⁹

15. Latin, 2nd half of 15th c. A charme for alle manner woundes.

Ibant tres boni fratres ad montem oliueti bonas herbas querentes omnia uulnera sanantes. obiauerunt domino nostro Iesu Christo qui dixit eis. quo tenditis tres boni fratres? domine ad montem oliueti bonas herbas querentes omnia vulnera sanates. reuertimini tres boni fratres et coniuretis vulnus per virtutem quinque plagas iesu christi et per virtutem mamillarum beate uirginis de quibus lactatus est iesus quod non amplius doleat nec putrestat nec cicatriscet plusquam fecerunt vulnera domini nostri iesu christi quando suspensus fuit in cruce. Set iste munde sanata putredine. In nomini patris et filij et spiritus sancti. Amen. And sey this charme thre daies ouer þe wounde blissyng with wolle and oyles. And afterward put hit to the wounds til it be hole. (Cambridge, Cambridge University Library MS Kk.6.33, f. 5r)

16. Jordan + Longinus. 15th century English vernacular remedy books.

A charm for þe bloody flix/flux
[f. 33r] In nomine + patris + +? filii + spiritus sanctus. Amen.
Stabat + Iesus contra flumum Jordanis et posuit pedem
suum et dixit, Sta, aqua per deum te coniuro. Longinus miles latus
domini nostri Iesu + Christi perforauit et continuo exiuit sanguis et aqua,
sanguis redempcionis et aqua baptismatis. In nomine patris, restet sanguis.
In nomine filii, cesset sanguis. In nomine spiritus sancti non exeat sanguinis
gutta ab hoc famulo dei N. sicut credimus quod sancta Maria vera mater est et
verum infantem genuit christum, sic retineant vene que plene sunt sanguine. Sic restet
sanguis sicut restabat Iordanis quum christus in ea baptizatus fuit. In nomine patris
etc. (Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, Additional MS 9308, ff. 32v-33r, Olsan
2009)

17. Longinus + Jordan (Christ and John). 15th c. English vernacular remedy books.

A charm for to staunche blod.
Longinus miles latus domini nostri + Iesu Christi lancea perforauit et continuo
exiuit
sanguis et aqua in redempcionem nostram. Adiuro te sanguis per ipsum + Christum
per latus eius per sanguinem eius + sta + sta + sta.

+ Christus et Iohannes descenderunt in flumen iordanis. aqua obstipuit et stetit, sic faciat sanguis istius corporis.[f. 35v] In + Christi nomine et sancti Iohannis baptiste amen. Et dica ter pater noster et ter Ave Maria. (Ibid. f.35r)

18. Robert Thornton's copy of the charm in rhymed Middle English, 1430–1450.

Thre gude breþer are ye
Gud gatis gange ye
Haly thynges seke ye
He says: will ye tell me?
he sais: Blissede, Lorde, mot ye be
It may neuer getyne be
Lorde, bot your willis be.
Settis doune appone *your* knee
Gretly athe suere ye me
By Mary Modir mylke so fre
There es no mane þat euer hase nede
Ye schall hym charme *and* aske no mede
And here sall I lere it the:
As þe Iewis wondide me
þay wende to wonde ne fra þe grounde
I helyd my selfe bathe hale *and* sounde.
Ga to þe cragge of Olyuete
Take oyle de bayes þat es so swete
And thris abowte this worme ye strayke.
This bethe þe worme þat schotte noghte
Ne kankire noghte, ne falowe noghte
And als clere hale fra þe grounde,
Als Jesu dide *with* his faire wondis
þe ffadir *and* þe sone *and* þe haly gaste
And goddis forbott þou wikkyde worme
þat euer þou make any risynge³⁰ or any sugorne,
Bot away mote þou wende
To þe erthe *and* þe stane.

(adapted³¹ from Horstmann 1999 reprt.: 375; Brewer and Owen 1977, f. 176r)

19. Greek, early 20th c. oral sources.

Saint George, and saint John and saint Panteleimon were going to Jerusalem in order to ask for, to learn the charm of iron, of stone, of bone and of wood. And our Lord Jesus met them in the road.

–Saint George and Saint John and Saint Panteleimon were are you going?

–Our Lord Jesus, you know the secrets, but you don't know the obvious.

–We were going to Jerusalem in order to ask for, to learn the charm of iron, of stone, of bone and of wood.

–Come back and I will teach it [the charm] to you, to not say it secretly, and without being paid and begged for.

As the Jew Zacharias speared our Lord Christ with the knife at the right side and he didn't make inflammation, not pus, he wasn't worsened, so the head (or any other part) of ... [name of afflicted person] may not make inflammation, not pus, not be worsened ... (Πάγκαλος 1983, 372–73, Translation by H. Passalis)

20. Devonshire, England, 19th c.

There was three brothers come from the North West going to the South, to kill and to cure N

for Ringworm—Wild Titters—Burn-gout—Itching gout—Smarting gout—Water gout—chicken pox—St. Tanterous Fire—Girdleing or whatever it may be, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen. (In the accompanying procedure, the charmer hung a hawthorn branch on the wall under which the patient sat. She took bits of cloth and dipped them into raw cream and applied them to the inflamed area.) (Davies 1996: 24–25; Roper 2005: 129)

APPENDIX II. COMPARATIVE STRUCTURE

This Appendix groups similar verbal structures for 1. Opening words, 2. Instructions, and 3. Required Incantation within Three Good Brother Charms discussed in this paper. Charms are identified by their number in Appendix I. Openings display two versions a longer and shorter reduced form, “Three brothers were going to the Mount of Olives.” The Instructions typically begin, ‘Come after me’, and specify oil, wool, and speaking specified words. Ten of the 18 charms include the requirement not to say the charm in secret or to take any money for it within the narrative. Phrases describing the wool vary according to individual interpretations by scribes. The required incantation begins “Longinus . . . pierced the side . . . with his spear” followed by “the uncorrupted wounds motif. The alternative incantation conjures the wound by the five wounds of Christ, also incorporating the “uncorrupted wounds.” This motif is analysed in Section 2, Table 1.

Numbers, however, are deceptive because the list of charms is representative, not complete, and it is dominated by material found in English manuscripts. For example, the charm listed once as Gilbert the Englishman’s (3) will occur in all complete manuscript copies of his work. Similarly, the 15th-century remedy book charm (13) appears in at least 10 manuscripts.

1. Opening words:

Tres boni fratres / per unam uiam ambulab/ant et obuiauuit eis dominus (1)

Tres boni fratres vnam uiam ambulauerunt et obuiauuit eis dominus (2)

Tres boni fratres per uiam ambulabant et obuabat eis iesus (13)

Tres boni fratres per uiam ibant et obuiauuit eis dominus (3)

(Ylinus Cosmas z Damianus.) *gingae thre gothe bröther aat een vegh. Möthe them var herra* (9)

Thre goode brepren went ouer þe londe and ihesu mete w^t hem (10)

Drie goede broeders gingen over wech, [d]ie welcke ontmoeten onsen heere Jesum Christum (5)

Dri gût prûder giengen æinen wech. da bechom in unser herre ih’c (11)

Tres boni fratres obuiaverunt domino (6)

Treis bons freres estoient ke aloient al mont d’Olivet (12)

Tres boni fratres iverunt ad montem Oliveti (4)

Ibant tres boni fratres ad montem oliueti (7)

IBANT TRES BONI FRATRES AD montem oliueti (8)

As the three good brothers were going peacefully, quietly, and unimpeded to the mount of Olives (14)

Ibant tres boni fratres ad montem oliueti (15)

Thre gude breþer are ye / Gud gatis gange ye (18)

There was three brothers come from the North West going to the South (20)

Saint George, and saint John and saint Panteleimon were going to Jerusalem (19)

2. The Lord's instructions to the three good brothers:

a. including oath against secrecy and accepting a fee

uenite post me et iurate / mihi per crucifixum et per lac beate marie . ut n' in abscondito dicatis ne merca. . . . accipiatis sed ascendite ad montem oliueti et accipite olium oliue et la. . . .ouis et mittae ad plagam et dicite (1)

uenite post me tres boni fratres et iurate michi per crucifixionem domini et per lac mulieris uirginis ne in abscondito dicatis nec mercedem inde accipiatis.. et accipite lanam succidam ouis et oleum oliuarum et ponite in plagis et dicite (3)

Venez o mai et me grantez [f.23va] en bone fei ke vous nel dies a nul home ne a femme ne aprendrez. Pernez oile d'olive et leine ke unkes ne fust lavee et metez sor la plaie. (12)

Venite post me et Iurate in per crucifixum ut non in abscondito dicatis nec mercedem inde capiatis sed ite ad montem oliueti et accipite lanam ovis sucernam [for succidam?] et oleum et ponite ad plagam dicentes (2)

uenite post me et iurate mihi per lac beate virginis marie quod non abscondetis neque in abscondito dicetis neque lucrum accipietis et ite ad montem oliueti et accipite lanam nigram succisam et oleum oliue. postea sic dicendo (13)

chomet zû [v] mir ir dri gût prûder und swert mir bi dem cruce gûten. und bi der milch der maide sanct Marien daz irz enhelt noch long enphahet und uart hinz zû dem mont oliuet und nemt ole des olepo'mes und scapwolle. und leget die uber die wndin und sprechet also (11)

Come back and I will teach it [the charm] to you, to not say it secretly, and without being paid and begged for. (19)

Coempt acter my, drie goede broeders, ende sweert my by den gecruystden heer ende by den melck swijffs ende maget dat ghy niet sult seggen dese woorden stillekine noch loen daeraff ontfaen. Ende neept wolle met der yeke vanden scape ende doetse in oly ende legtse op den wonde. Gelovet vry et secht (5)

Gar meth mykh thre gothe bröther oc swær a guz doth oc Marie myælk, aat ij skuly thessæ oor æy löna oc æy löön fore taka, oc taka boma ellær fara vl oc signa the vnder aller saar meth, hwat the ær ellær huggen æller stvngen, sligthen eller br öthen: Swa æræ the signat sum the vnder ther (9)

Swear on the true and life-giving cross and on the holy mother of God that you will not accept any gifts or say it secretly, and I will reveal it to you.” And they swore on the true and life-giving cross and on the holy mother of God that “we will not accept any gifts nor speak it secretly.” And he said to them,: Come to the mount of Olives and take the produce of the olive [oil] and wool of a ewe-lamb and say (14)

b. Oath omitted or moved as an instruction outside the charm

reuertimini tres boni fratres *et* accipite olium oliue *et* succidam lanam *et* nigram *et* ponite super plagas *et* dicatis (8)

Conjuro vos, tres boni fratres, quod herbas dimittatis et oleum de oliva et lanam nigram sumatis dicentes . . . Nec inde mercedem capiatis, sed in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti id faciatis. (4)

comeþ w^t me and y schal gow teche. Take oyle of oliue tre and blake wolle and do þe wolle in þe oyle and lay it to þi wonde and say þ^s charme þer-ouer (10)

Ite et ponatis supra vulnere lanam succidam madefactum in olio olivarum et dicatis hanc coniuracionem’ (6)

accipite olium olive *et* lanam bidentis *et* coniurate vulnus (7)

reuertimini tres boni fratres *et* coniuretis vulnus (15)

Settis doune appone *your* knee
Gretly athe suere ye me
By Mary Modir mylke so fre
There es no mane þat euer hase nede
Ye schall hym charme *and* aske no mede
And here sall I lere it the (18)

3. Required Incantation:

a. Longinus

heb. . . . Longinus lanceam fixit in latere domini nostr[i] iesu christi (1)

Sicut Longinus latus domini nostri iesu christi lancea perforauit (2)

sicut longius ebreus cum lancea in latere domini nostri ihu. x. percussit (3)

Also Longinus den hebreusche met den speets staech onsen heere Jesum (5)

Quaunt Longius l’ebreu aficha la launce en le coste Nostre Seignor Jesu Crist, cele plaie ne (12)

De iud longinus der unsern herren ih’m xpm staech in die siten mit dem sper. (11)

Longinus gyorthe Jesu Christo ynnan siin sitha (9)

righte as longius þrillide þe seyde of god and þ^t wonde ne (10)

sicut longinus miles latus domini nostri + iesu + christi lancea perforauit (13)

As Longinus, the centurion, pierced our Lord Jesus Christ (14)

As the Jew Zacharias speared our lord Christ with the knife at the right side (19)

As þe Iewis wondide me / þay wende to wonde ne fra þe grounde / I helyd my selfe bathe hale *and* sounde, . . . (18)

b. 5 wounds of Christ

Conjuro te, vulnus, per vulnus Christi preciosum a Longeo milite perforatum (4)

Sicut vulnera domini nostri in cruce pendentis non putruerunt (6)

coniurate vulnus per virtutem .5. plagarum domini nostri jesu christi quod (7)

coniuretis vulnus per virtutem quinque plagas iesu Christi christi et per virtutem mamillarum (15)

CONIURO te wlnus per .v. wlnera domini nostri Jesu Christi *et per mamillas ex quibus lactatus est Jesus quidem* ut (8)

NOTES

¹ Previously, editors found a blank space before the word ‘men’ or ‘people’ (*andres*) where the number three might have fit, but that seems unwarranted.

² Elipses indicate illegibility where the line runs into the gutter in the manuscript.

³ *sed unus militum lancea latus eius aperuit et continuo exivit sanguis et aqua.*

⁴ *New Testament Apocrypha* 1966 XVI, p 513. This apocryphal gospel was originally written in Greek, but was translated into several vernacular including Polish.

⁵ Ohrt suggested that Ylinus is Elidas or Elinus or Helinus/Elias. St. Elias was Egyptian who in 494 became patriarch of Jerusalem and attended the synod of Sidon in 512. He was exiled to Aila on the Red Sea and died there in 513.

⁶ Now in Madrid and online at http://www.museothyssen.org/en/thyssen/ficha_obra/72, last accessed 20Dec.2010

⁷ Email 18 December 2010, Μανολάκος, Γεώργιος Δ 1915, “Επωδαί και κατάδεσμοί [Charms and defixiones], Λαογραφία, Ε’, τευχ. β: 609–615.

⁸ Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Katalog. Text online <http://daten.digitaler-sammlungen.de/~db/bsb00007207/images/index.html>

⁹ The Middle English translation of Ardern reads, “Lana succida is wolle þat groweth atyux þe legge[s] of ane eye about þe udder, ful of swet, no[g]t y-wasshe” Power 1910: 12.

- ¹⁰ ‘*Domine deus omnipotens saluator et liberator noster qui es vera salus et medicina*’ begins the first prayer before extracting the iron point or arrow, British Library, Royal 12.G.IV, f. 177vb.
- ¹¹ The Italian surgeon Teodorico Borgognoni records a ritual including the formula: “Nicodemus drew out the nails from our Lord’s hands and feet, and let this arrow be drawn out.” in the mid-13th c. (McVaugh 2003: 320–1).
- ¹² ‘*Nota quod digiti dualis dicuntur duo digit qui vocantur medicinalis*’ Ibid. f. 178ra.
- ¹³ H. Passalis email 18 December 2010, for example, Μανούσακας 1965: 62.
- ¹⁴ Toms Kencis reports 46 blood staunching charms from the Latvian Archives in 5 variants featuring a soldier or soldiers causing Christ’s stab wound from which water flows out, but not the blood. (Email 31 October 2010).
- ¹⁵ In one group of remedy books, it follows immediately after the Latin Three Good Brothers charm and is titled, “A charm for a wound in English” thus providing an easily remembered vernacular alternative to the Three Good Brothers charm. (Olsan 2009: 221).
- ¹⁶ Lincoln Cathedral MS 91, fol. 176r. Although this version has been designated a charm for toothache, it is probably better identified as a charm against the worm associated with wound infections, as found in Appendix, 6,8).
- ¹⁷ Email from Andrey Toporkov, 12 November 2010 citing Агапкина (2010: 361–363).
- ¹⁸ “Three brothers, good brothers, Kosmas, Damianus and saint Panteleimon were going to wild mountains to find herbs in order to heal the wound of ... [name of the afflicted person]. There, the virgin Mary met them and asked them: Where, three brothers, good brothers are going? We said, my lady Mary, you shouldn’t ask, but since you asked, we will tell you. We were going to wild mountains to find herbs to heal the wound of ... [name of the afflicted person]. I adjure, I conjure you in the name of the [living] God...” Μανούσακας 1965, 62; translation by H. Passalis.
- ¹⁹ H. Passalis email 18 December 2010.
- ²⁰ Based on charms of the type, “Three men went across the high hill. First one was God the Father, second one was God the Son a third – Holy Spirit”. Email from Toms Kencis, 31 Oct. 2010.
- ²¹ Email 17 November 2010 and see Roper 2009: 177. For related Estonian incantations, see Kõiva 2007: 16.
- ²² “*Contra vulnera incantant, dicentes, Tres boni fratres, etc. quod quidem non tantum mendacium, sed ridiculum manifeste apparet: tunc ibi diabolus, cui sacrificium adhibetur, partim manifestum propter oleum et lanam, partim occultum remedium praestat.*” [They chant against wounds, saying, Three good brothers, etc. which indeed appears manifestly to be not so much a lie, but foolishness: then the devil, for whom it provides a sacrifice, is present partly on account of the oil and wool, partly [on account of] the secret remedy.] (Bernardino 1745: 38–43).
- ²³ Are these women what Chaucer had in mind when he spoke of ‘charmeresses’?

- ²⁴ BL Sloane 374, f. 46v–47r.
- ²⁵ No thorough study of how the censorship of charms in manuscripts fits into the larger picture of censorship in early modern England has been carried out. For preliminary observations on a few manuscripts, see Olsan 2011.
- ²⁶ I have set in bold type the opening of the incantation required within the Three Brothers Charm.
- ²⁷ Elipses indicate illegibility where the line runs into the gutter in the manuscript.
- ²⁸ McIntosh, Samuels, Benskin (1986) I: 114.
- ²⁹ I sincerely thank Haralampos Passalis for giving me notice of this charm and for his help with the English translation. Any errors here are my own.
- ³⁰ Horstmann reads ‘ristying’, but I do not see the ‘t’ in the facsimile.
- ³¹ I have substituted y’s for MS yogh’s represented in Horstmann, written *and* for Horstmann’s &, and altered his punctuation and capitalisation.

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Cambridge, Cambridge University Library MS Kk.6.33
Cambridge, Cambridge University Library Additional 9308
Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 441
Cambridge, Trinity College, MS 0.1.2
Lincoln, Lincoln Cathedral MS 91
London, British Library, Additional 33996
London, British Library, Harley 2558
London, British Library, Royal 12.G.IV
London, British Library, Sloane 374
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Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 19440
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GENRE AND AUTHORITY IN THE SCHOLARLY CONSTRUCTION OF CHARM AND PRAYER: A VIEW FROM THE MARGINS

James A. Kapaló

This paper presents a critique and some theoretical reflections on the relationship between the genres of charm and prayer in folklore and religious scholarship. I draw special attention to the construction of the liminal genre of ‘archaic prayer’ in Hungarian scholarship and its relationship to magic and the ‘charm’ genre as elucidated in the work of ethnographers Éva Pócs, Zsuzsanna Erdélyi and Irén Lovász amongst others. It is commonly recognised that scholarly distinctions between genres cut across *emic* categories and insider knowledge structures. Drawing on the work of Pierre Bourdieu, this paper critiques the discourse on archaic prayer in relation to the dichotomy between magic and religion and the emic/etic distinction through a focus on power/knowledge relations and the politics of language in the religious field.

Key words: Bourdieu, charms, folklore, folk prayer, genre, folk religion

INTRODUCTION

I would like to open this paper with a reminder of the often repeated call that on the question of genre we should listen to the native, to the emic perspective. Numerous commentators on charms, incantations and prayers have insisted that in the consciousness of the ‘folk’ the inseparability of these verbal acts is the natural state of affairs. Scholarly distinctions between genres, however, clearly cut across emic categories and insider knowledge structures. The common deployment of the emic axiom requires serious scrutiny if we are to approach an understanding of the nature of the limitations that our current disciplinary horizons (here I refer to folklore scholarship and to the academic study of religion, the two fields with which I am most familiar) place on charm scholarship. Paramount in this exercise would be the identification of the forms of knowledge and discourse upon which recourse to ‘the perspective of the folk’ are built and a recognition of the historical power relations and politics of culture that feed the folkloristic endeavour, especially in relation to ‘folk religious’ phenomena.

Taking a lead from Judith Butler's exploration of the Foucauldian mode of 'critique,' not as judgement or "fault-finding" but as 'practice' (Butler 2002), in what follows, I hope to demonstrate that an excursion to the limits or the margins of our object of study can open up new pluralist perspectives on the epistemological 'crisis point' in charm scholarship identified by Agapkina and Toporkov (2011) and taken up elsewhere in this volume by Passalis (2010). The emphasis is therefore not on determining correct and incorrect, good or bad, right or wrong ways of viewing, categorising or delimiting charms, but on a mode of 'critique' that might reveal aspects of the framework within which charm scholarship operates.

Referring to Adorno, Butler highlights that in order "for critique to operate as part of praxis [...] is for it to apprehend the ways in which categories are themselves instituted, how the field of knowledge is ordered, and how what it suppresses returns, as it were, as its own constitutive occlusion" (Butler 2002: 2). The reappearance of the repressed to disturb and unsettle what appear to be the most solid constructs is of course one of the central insights of Jacques Derrida's work. The form of praxis advocated here must operate against a framework of institutional knowledge that systematically and cumulatively reinforces epistemological positions that preclude the possibility of thinking and ordering knowledge in any other way (Butler 2002: 4). Moreover, the very means by which we epistemologically ground our knowledge, which is invariably centripetal in focus, seeking to relate phenomena to a perceived model core or nexus, producing objects of occlusion the subsequent characterisation of which as 'other' masks the very process of ordering by which they take on their identity. An analysis of the process of production of cultural categories therefore offers us an important insight into how objects come to 'stand outside of' generic categories and how ideological positions are masked by this process. How this functions with regard to the genres of charm and prayer, caught between the fields of magic and religion, forms the overarching context for the critique that follows. Folklorists, social theorists, religionists and theologians have in the past constructed the genres of 'charm' and 'prayer' as diametrical opposites, subjecting them to processes of inclusion and exclusion, suppression and institution, prohibition and prescription.

Integral to the praxis of critique is the identification and assumption of perspectives from which one can gain some distance from normative standpoints and 'naturalized' states of affairs in order to apprehend 'from the margins' what it is that 'returns' as constitutive of our constructs. In some sense therefore, this can be regarded as a critical or emancipatory hermeneutic that engages in the desubjugation of the occluded and masked constituent. However, the aim is not to establish a new ordering but simply expose the limits of

the reigning structures in order that possible futures, which are beyond the means of the critique to regulate, may emerge and, as Butler puts it, “so critique will be that perspective on established and ordering ways of knowing which is not immediately assimilated into that ordering function” (Butler 2002: 5).

The margins, verge or edge is a place of creativity where structures, habits and normative procedures, the prudence of the centre (de Roest 2010: 253), open a gap for reflection and new potential.¹ The critique that follows takes a marginal perspective on two levels. Firstly, it takes as its empirical object the category of ‘archaic prayer,’ which is located on the messy liminal territory where the category/field of magic and the category/field of religion meet. In dealing with phenomena that appear peripheral and ambiguous ‘commonsense’ approaches to categories and genre often prove deficient. The essentializing and centralizing tendencies of academic disciplines and fields routinely ensure that core organising principles are applied to phenomena that, from the given central perspective of a particular field, with its particular assumptions about the constitutive dimensions of the object of study, appear ambiguous and indeterminate. As Amy Shuman has indicated in relation to Feminist approaches to folklore, the approaches to and systems of classifying texts that have focused on generic boundaries “usually tell us more about the edges and crossovers than they do about the centers” (Shuman 1993: 71). This centralizing tendency has the effect of cementing as peripheral the status of objects apprehended as ‘like’ but not ‘like’ enough, similar but not the same, related but somehow tainted, deficient, corrupted or distorted.

In charm scholarship we encounter at least three principal knowledge-producing fields (i.e. fields that determine what is important and useful to know about charms); national or ethno-linguistic based folklore scholarship, religious institutions and elites, and sociological/anthropological theory, each of which contributes radically divergent viewpoints to the discourse. Each claims to be the knowledge-holder of the essential core truths in relation to the object of study with the legitimacy to structure and categorise. Critiquing some of the central assertions of scholarship on charm and prayer from the perspective of Pierre Bourdieu’s model of the religious field may appear to be a partisan move, siding with social theory over philological or theological standpoints. However, the intent is not to promote a Bourdieuan perspective but to indicate instances where knowledge has been structured selectively by a narrow set of criteria that results in the exclusion of certain viewpoints. Irén Lovász (1993, 2002) first introduced Bourdieu’s analysis of the structure of the religious field into the discourse on Hungarian ‘archaic prayer.’ In the final paragraphs of this paper I attempt to draw further and more wide-ranging conclusions with

regard to the categories of magic and religion from the application of Bourdieuan theory. In this sense, the critique is directed from the margins of the established dominant discourses within charm scholarship.

In contemporary scholarship genre is conceptualised in a number of different ways. On the most basic level, genre has functioned, and continues to function, to order and systematise folkloric data in publications. This mirrors the ‘espionage’ and objectification of genres in the field that takes place at the collecting stage (Ben-Amos 1981a: xi). There is no space here to rehearse the history of the concept of genre in folkloristics, which continues to shift and multiply as theoretical perspectives in folklore scholarship evolve, but regardless of how folklore genres are viewed, whether that be as permanent or evolving, universal or ethno-specific modes of communication, functional categories or evolutionary forms, in their scholarly construction, they represent exclusive analytical categories that posit generic boundaries.² This is not to say that these categories do not arise in response to discrete modes of communication that exist in the ‘lore of peoples’ (Ben-Amos 1981a: xxxii). However, they are all concerned with problems of referentiality, “with finding a set of referents for genre” in order to establish an ordering principle (Shuman 1993; 77). Whilst it is important to recognise the changing multidimensional nature of scholarly concepts of genre that seek to pay attention to the complexity of the phenomena they classify, we still need to take particular account of the way scholars “utilize the distribution of power, knowledge and authority” in the classification of genres (Shuman 1993: 77). This is especially the case with regard to past scholarly activities that continue to shape the field within which we operate today. The specific case of genre construction discussed below is particularly instructive as it illuminates the modes of deployment of power, knowledge and authority in relation to the existing genres of charm and prayer whilst also situating the new genre in relation to the broader categories of magic and religion.

THE CONTOURS OF THE GENRE OF ‘ARCHAIC PRAYER’ IN HUNGARIAN FOLKLORE SCHOLARSHIP

I draw my examples from the discourse in Hungarian folklore scholarship on a particular category of prayer that has only relatively recently received official recognition as a folklore genre. ‘Archaic apocryphal folk prayer’, as the genre was initially known (‘apocryphal’ was later dropped from the title), was defined as a genre in 1970 thanks to the work of ethnographer Zsuzsanna Erdélyi. Examples of this kind of prayer had appeared in earlier studies of religious

folklore in Eastern Europe (see Веселовский 1876, Kálmány 1891, Marian 1904 and Бессонов 1970). In these collections they had been included alongside the established genres of religious legends, hymns, carols and incantations and were subjected to the same kind of textual analysis. Scattered examples and references appear in earlier Hungarian scholarship but it was not until 1968, when Erdélyi began her systematic collection and study of what at the time was a virtually unknown oral tradition, can we really speak of the establishment or the ‘institutionalisation’ of the genre of ‘archaic apocryphal prayer’ in Hungary. She presented her findings to the Hungarian Academy, which accepted her definition of the new genre on February 11th 1970 (Erdélyi 1999: 18). Similar forms of prayer exist in many other languages and religious cultures in the region and across the rest of Europe. However, only in Hungarian scholarship has this genre received unequivocal official recognition and incorporation within the institutional folklore ‘canon.’ This genre of archaic prayer has generated a large and expanding body of collections as well as a number of analytical studies and essays (Erdélyi 1976, 1999, 2001, Tánczos 1995, 1999a, 1999b, 2000, Lovász 1993, 2002, Harangozó 1992, 1998, 2001, 2004, Takács 2001 amongst others) very little of which is available in other languages.³

Today, there is a recognition that the establishment of a distinct discipline of folklore demanded, as part of the process of legitimation, the construction of genres and that genres are therefore the product of moves by scholars attempting to shore up their ‘share of the market’ (Harris 1995: 510). Genre is central to the whole folkloristic endeavour. In a similar vein, in order for the Study of Religions, or the History of Religions as it is more often called in the US, to legitimate its claim to disciplinary status scholars engaged in the institutionalization of a discourse on religion as a *sui generis* category (see in particular McCutcheon 1997 and Fitzgerald 2000). Both of these moves have implications for the subsequent appropriation and positioning of charms, incantations and prayers as objects of study within the academic disciplinary framework. Religions scholars focused on the centrality of the uniqueness of the religious experience as the principle marker of a religious field whilst folklorists occupied territory inhabited by orality, tradition and the peasantry.

Harris, reflecting on the legacy of the centrality of ‘genre’ in folkloristics points to the recent (writing in 1995) realization that “genre is a continuous site of contestation; with the acceptance of merging, blurring, and overlapping categories of classification, folklore scholars have changed the questions they ask about the urge to classify” (Harris 1995: 510). It is important to highlight these reflections as they inform not only our understanding of the ‘urge to classify’ in regard to the genre of archaic prayer in 1970s Hungary (and the subsequent discourse on its relationship to the categories of magic and reli-

gion) but also the context of this publication as, in some senses, the foundational institutional platform for scholarship on Charms, Charmers and Charming.

The form of prayer under discussion here was ascribed the labels ‘archaic’ and ‘apocryphal’ for a number of reasons. The term ‘archaic’ is applied in the light of numerous elements that appear in the prayers that, according to Erdélyi, have their origins in the popular devotional literature from the 13th to the 15th century. The Marian laments, passion plays, Marian prayers and meditations on the Passion of Christ in the literature of medieval Christianity, much of which was also a vehicle for the emerging national ‘vulgar’ literatures of the period, left their mark on the prayer texts that are found in the oral traditions of many European peoples (Erdélyi 1999: 12). The spirituality that evolved due to the influence of Saint Francis of Assisi and others gradually enveloped the whole of Europe.⁴ The modes of devotional practice characteristic of this period, which centred on atonement through the inner experience of the Passion of Christ and profound suffering of the Virgin Mary at the loss of her son, waned in later centuries giving them the character of ‘archaisms’ in relation to more recent forms of prayer. These ‘archaic’ elements, from the perspective of the Church, came to be considered obsolete and redundant.

Alongside these so-called ‘archaic’ elements some of the most popular and enduring images from the apocryphal literature of the Middle Ages also appear in these prayers, notably Marian ‘dream’ and ‘search’ motifs, the ‘Holy Grail’ and symbolism of the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden as the Cross of Christ (Harangozó 2004: 19). The interweaving of diverse elements from various historical strata and devotional traditions when subjected to purely ‘textual’ interpretations has had the effect of ‘confusing’ the folklorist with regard to their original ‘function’. In addition, the process of ‘folklorisation’ in oral transmission, has rendered this form of prayer “theologically and liturgically absurd” in the eyes of many commentators (Erdélyi 1999: 33). Also, the move from a literary form to oral performance and transmission underscores the associations drawn in medieval Catholic heresiology between heresy and the *illitatus* (Biller 1994: 3–9). These factors each contribute to the attribution of this form of prayer’s second appellation of ‘apocryphal.’

In addition, scholars also employ the term ‘folk prayer,’ or *népi ima* in Hungarian, which has the effect of aligning the tradition more closely to the field of folklore, oral tradition and the domain of the folklorist. Recourse to the orality of a genre is of course one of the principle means by which folklorists authenticate and assert their hold on classification and categorization of their objects of study (Harris 1995: 513). Harangozó, in describing the character of the genre, adds that “[Their] origin stretches back into the depths of time, the imagery as

far back as the time before written record, when traditions were reliant on a purely oral culture” (Harangozó 2004: 18).

Designating such prayers as ‘folk’ manifestations can have a dual effect of both ‘denigrating’ a suspect manifestation of popular religion in relation to true religious phenomena (the ecclesiastical perspective), or off ‘elevating’ this same manifestation to the status of symbolic representation of the genius of the ethnos or nation (the romantic nationalist perspective). Erdélyi expresses the relationship between these diverse dimensions of the genre of archaic prayer by starting with their origin in the wellspring in oral tradition.

It [archaic prayer] appears as the inheritance of the oral traditional culture feeding of the historical past, a special spiritual reserve, which reveals the largely unexplored territory of folk spirituality and consciousness. (Erdélyi 1999: 13)

Harangozó goes even further when he explicitly links archaic folk prayer to a Hungarian worldview and mentality, claiming for the genre a peculiar significance for Hungarian national culture.

Whilst being the most recently discovered, [folk] prayer is also the deepest branch of our folk culture. [...] Familiarity with prayers, and the analysis of their actions and symbolic world is indispensable for gaining an understanding of traditional Hungarian mentality, worldview and spirituality. (Harangozó 2004: 13–14)

The genre of archaic prayer is thus firmly placed within the realm of folklore and of Hungarian national culture. The canonization of the genre within the field of folklore has the effect of deemphasizing the universal pan-European dimension of this form of prayer as a manifestation of Christian culture.

THE STRUCTURE OF ARCHAIC PRAYER

Despite the incredible diversity in terms of imagery and setting, Hungarian archaic folk prayers are generally comprised of three central building blocks identified by Erdélyi (1999: 35).

1. Generally the opening is lyrical and evocative in character and includes the appearance of a divine agent and/or messenger. The character(s) are often located within a sacred landscape or interior. The opening images and symbolism may presage aspects of the narrative that follows.

2. The central section of the prayer, according to Erdélyi, is comprised of some reference to or aspect of the Passion of Christ. This ‘epic-dramatic’ com-

ponent of the prayers, which in the Hungarian material most often comprises of a Passion scene, in other traditions may take other forms such as Jesus' baptism in the river Jordan by John the Baptist or the suffering of the Virgin Mary at the loss of her son, or the miracle of the Resurrection. These scenes are considered to increase the experiential and emotional power of the prayers through the connection to the central dramas and transformative events of the Christian narrative.

3. The closing formula determines the precise spiritual, material or corporeal benefit to be gained by reciting the prayer. These formulas express the conditions under which clemency, the remission of sins, the alleviation of suffering or salvation can be earned. They also confer on the text authority and authenticity through the direct association of the words with a divine agent and his/her heavenly messenger.

This three-way division is not always present in precisely this form but as a general rule the presence of the closing formula indicates an overall structure of this kind and can be considered the *sui generis* marker of the genre (Erdélyi 2001: 15). The following examples illustrate this three-way construction outlined above. Both examples were collected by the author, the first is a Csángó-Hungarian prayer from the eastern Romanian province of Moldavia, the second was collected amongst the Gagauz of the Republic of Moldova.

Hond ülöre Krisztus Urunk,	<i>[At home] Christ our Lord,</i>
siralmas kertedbe,	<i>In your lamentable garden,</i>
siralmas székedbe,	<i>On your lamentable throne,</i>
térgyig vérbe,	<i>Up to your knees in blood,</i>
könyökig könyvedbe,	<i>Up to your ankles in tears.</i>
arany hajad leeresztvel,	<i>Your golden hair flowing down,</i>
s a szent lelked megőrülvel,	<i>and your Holy soul driven mad.</i>
s úgy imádkozol,	<i>Oh, how you pray,</i>
s úgy imádkozol!	<i>Oh, how you pray!</i>
Hogyne imádkójjak	<i>How could I not pray</i>
ha ki vajok írval az atyám	<i>If I am given over from my Father's</i>
keziből,	<i>hand,</i>
S bé vajok írval a zsidók	<i>And delivered into the hands of the</i>
kezikbe!	<i>Jews!</i>
Három napig idézzenek,	<i>For three days they question me,</i>
harmadnapra megfogjanak,	<i>On the third day they lay hands on me,</i>
nagy Kálvária hegyre	<i>They take me to the great hill of Calvary,</i>
kivigyenek,	

nagy keresztre felfeszítsenek!	<i>They crucify me on a big cross!</i>
két lábam egy vas szeget verrenek,	<i>They hammer an iron nail into my feet,</i>
két kezem két vas szeget verrenek,	<i>They hammer two nails into my hands,</i>
fejembe egy tövis koronát üssenek,	<i>Onto my head they push a crown of thorns,</i>
véremet, epémet, fekete földvel megittassák!	<i>With my blood, with my liver, They libate the black earth!</i>
Elmenj magad jó ángyelionkám, Szent Lukács, el híreszd ezt a keresztényeknek!	<i>Go my good angel, Saint Luke, And announce this to the Christians!</i>
Aki elmondja este lefektibe, reggel felköltibe, én nem küldöm sem az arcangyalaimot, sem az apostolimot, hanem én magam mejek, s kivátom a legküssebb ujjacsckáját a bünből, mindörökké Ámen.	<i>Whoever says [this prayer] at bedtime, In the morning when rising, I will not send my archangels, Nor my apostles, But I myself will go And save him from sin even down to his little finger, Forever and ever, Amen.</i>

(Imre György, born 1919, village of Călugăreni/Kalugarén, Bacău county, Romania, recorded on 28th Sept. 1993)

Padişah giti Irusalimä Allahın evinä, Pristolda duva etti Ayöz Angeli Düşünä geldi Isus Hristozu Zetledilär kruçeya gerdilär Ayaklarna ellernä enser Koydular, Kanını akttılar Ama zänetmedilär, Ayoz Angel Altın çaşkaya tutu Aksın ama zän olmasın. Bu molitva kim bilirsaydi ateştän yanmaycek, Sudanda bulmaycek veçnika Dcanı pak kurtulmuş olacek	<i>The Lord went Jerusalem, To God's house. On the altar the Holy Angel prayed, A vision of Jesus Christ appeared They tortured him, crucified him, In his ankles and knees nails were put, They shed his blood, But is wasn't wasted. The Holy Angel placed a golden cup, That it could flow and yet not be wasted. Whoever would know this prayer, Will not be burned by fire, And in water will never be drowned, His soul will be clean and free,</i>
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Hem Saabi Isus Hristos	<i>And our Lord Jesus Christ,</i>
Allahın Oolu Ad[...] beni	<i>The Son of God [...] my</i>
Günahkeri.	<i>Sins.</i>
Amin.	<i>Amen.</i>

(Kristova Evdokiya Feodorovna, born 1930, village of Avdarma, *Unitatea Teritorială Autonomia Găgăuzia* (The Gagauz Autonomous Region), Republic of Moldova, recorded on 11th February 2006)

THE 'MAGICO-RELIGIOUS' CHARACTER OF ARCHAIC PRAYER

Folklorist Irén Lovász suggests that this form of archaic folk prayer described and classified by Hungarian scholarship should be regarded as 'magical prayer' and indeed much of the literature speaks of them as 'mixed' or 'syncretic' in character (Lovász 2001: 44). Such a conclusion is derived from both textual readings, Tánzcso (1999a: 253) for example refers to the primacy of "magical coercive motifs" over those that are based on petition or supplication, as well as contextual ones. Erdélyi refers to the fact that in "folk consciousness" healing incantations, archaic and canonical prayers are not parcelled into separate categories but are employed in 'real life' situations as and when required regardless of the function that we read from the text (Erdélyi 1999: 798–800). However, as Tánzcso states, both text and context also demonstrate that alongside any concrete goals this tradition is also "embedded in the universal, long-term religious perspective" of the Christian believer (Tánzcso 1999a: 252). This tendency to equate the practical existential concerns with 'magic' and the 'folk consciousness' and universal transcendental concerns with 'religion' sets up a polarity in the cosmological 'order' that reinforces the principal metanarratives of scholarly discourse on magic and religion. There is no need to rehearse these issues in any detail here, but regardless of whether we take Frazerian, Malinowskian or Durkheimian approach, magic is always associated with practical ends by means of manipulation and command, whilst religion is considered to be based on a more genuine 'communion' with the spirit world and aims for higher 'valuable' ends (Malinowski 1984: 87–90).

In relation to charms, Éva Pócs (whose work Lovász draws on in her analysis of archaic prayer) justifies the use of the term 'magico-religious' by equating the term 'magic' to all attempts to influence something or reach a particular goal directly by the use of an incantation; she terms this the 'magic relationship.' Where the text of the charm refers to a third party intermediary in order to achieve the desired influence she describes it as a 'religious relation-

ship'. The term 'magico-religious relationship' Pócs reserves for those occasions when the charm 'refers' to a third party whilst also acting to influence directly (through the use of the charm) the given situation. Pócs points out: "Religion fought using the weapons of magic, and magic too placed in its armoury tools with a similar function to those of religion" (Pócs 2002: 176). The term 'magico-religious' is therefore used to describe a very particular set of relationships that seem to combine two apparently distinct spheres of action (Pócs 1986: 705–706).

Although this can be viewed as a useful starting point from the perspective of charm scholarship, the reliance on the propositional content of charms in this way masks the political dimension of the establishment of these categorical distinctions. The contributions of Hungarian scholars cited above seem to point to a set of common sense distinctions that are reinforced by the various scholarly fields identified above. Theologians, folklorists and social anthropologists all broadly agree that these represent some of the key polarities that distinguish 'charm as magic' from 'prayer as religion.' An examination of the relationship between the 'religious' dimension and the 'magical' dimension of the liminal genre of archaic prayer gives us a peculiarly instructive window on this particular problem of genre and classification. The implications of reading tensions between 'coersion' and 'petition' or between the 'concrete existential' and the 'universal and transcendent' in order to distinguish between genres and sub-genres only become apparent when attention is drawn to two important factors. Firstly, the particular problems attached to emic-etic distinctions in the field of folklore and secondly, the problem of power relations between agents in the religious field.

THE PROBLEM OF THE EMIC AND ETIC DISTINCTION

The term archaic prayer is of course an etic term that Hungarian folklorists have applied to a phenomena on the basis of certain distinguishing characteristics. The emic/etic distinction was first elaborated by Kenneth Pike (1967). Etic approaches are inherently classificatory, they seek to devise systems, genres, types and units that structure phenomena in such a way that they can be readily and logically analysed and compared (Dundes 1962: 101). In the field of folklore this begins with the construction of genre and progresses through ever smaller independently identifiable component motifs and units. An emic approach, on the other hand, aims at the interpretation of data in harmony with the perspective of the insider, respecting the explicit categories of the 'other.' This approach is both structural and contextual, thus: "emic units within

this theory are not absolutes in a vacuum, but rather are points in a system, and these points are defined relative to the system” (Dundes 1962: 101). This also highlights another key feature of emic categories; that is that they are transmitted through lived experience and practice rather than through explicit communication and a command of rules (Jardine 2004: 262). These two distinct standpoints from which we can describe human action have clear implications on the object of study, offering us an important perspective on the dichotomy between magic and religion in the discourse of Hungarian archaic prayer.

The particularity of explanations based on emic categories and systems, according to what Ben-Amos refers to as the ‘ethnic system of genres,’ generally are only applicable and valid for one religion, culture or language (Ben-Amos 1981b: 226). However, the construction of ‘folklore’ genres within the various European states and regions have attempted to produce categories that encompass only those emic patterns, categories and units that fit the contours of an etic national ideological system and are useful in propagating such a system. That is to say, processes, on the level of national and political discourse, overwrite local knowledge formations; that is, their meanings become subservient to an etic controlling paradigm. In the case of archaic prayer, located in the liminal space between the ‘folk’ and ‘religion’, this process is twofold as not only the actors working within the national ideological paradigm but also the agents of ecclesial institutions attempt to objectify, classify and control through the promotion of analytical categories that reinforce the etic controlling paradigm. In the case of Christian Churches, I refer of course to the doctrinal and theological perspectives enshrined in dogmas and canon law and transmitted and enforced by clerical hierarchies.

A dialogical relationship exists between the etic categories, in this case ‘archaic prayer,’ determined by various scholarly, ideological or ecclesial agendas, and the emic categories or native genres that distress them and ultimately render them unfit for purpose. Hungarian scholars have pointed to the problem that in the lived experience of the ‘folk’ ‘archaic prayer’ has no meaning or relevance as a category of text or mode of action (Erdélyi 1999: 798–800). The construction of the genre of archaic prayer therefore constitutes an appropriation of emic phenomena into an etic paradigm, that of national folklore scholarship. Scholarship portrays ‘archaic prayer’ as a normative ideal category of folklorists, and therefore by extension also of the ‘folk,’ when clearly emic categories do not agree with this ideal construction. In addition, folklore scholars have yet to appreciate the role they play in the construction of knowledge within the religious field (as opposed to the field of folklore scholarship)

and the political dimension of categorizations that assimilate theological and ideological standpoints unreflexively.

ARCHAIC PRAYER AS A SITE OF LINGUISTIC STRUGGLE

Lovász (2001: 42–53) has analysed Hungarian archaic prayer from a performance perspective using speech-act theory and draws attention to an important distinction. According to Searle’s typology of speech acts, prayers, curses, blessings and incantations all meet certain requirements of Searle’s first category of ‘request’. In the case of archaic prayers an important aspect of requesting is absent – they lack a direct appeal or address to the divine agent. This might appear in the vocative, for example: ‘Hail Mary’ or ‘Oh, sweet Jesus.’ In addition, they also lack a direct appeal such as might appear in the form: ‘free me’, ‘help me’ or ‘let us follow.’ In Lovász’s analysis, the presence of the closing formula, outlined above, and the absence of the pleading, begging or requesting typical of other forms of prayer distinguishes archaic prayer as a discrete category. In place of an appeal there appears what Zsuzsanna Erdélyi refers to as the ‘causal-logical relationship’, which is based on the exact external fulfilment of certain conditions in order to secure a desired result. Prayers based on this kind of premise appear to have been widespread in medieval Europe. Keith Thomas cites an example from the *Enchiridion* of Salisbury Cathedral in England that is strikingly similar in form and tone to the examples above: “Whoever sayeth this prayer following in the worship of God and St Rock shall not die of the pestilence by the grace of God.” He suggests that it was the medieval Church that “weakened the fundamental distinction between prayer and charm by introducing into prayer a form of ‘mechanistic manipulation’ that is proper to magic” (Thomas 1991: 46–47). Erdélyi also discovered numerous historical literary precedents dating back to the 13th century for the kind of ‘logical construction’ that not only works automatically or mechanistically in the way Thomas describes but also connects the recitation, identification, and emotional or psychological experience of the Passion of Christ and/or the sorrow of the Virgin Mary with the closing formula in the generation or attainment of grace and merit for the person praying (Erdélyi 2001: 50). In this sense, not only the coercive tendencies of archaic prayers but also the experiential dimension of the Passion of Christ comes to be considered ‘magical in character’:

The ethnographic literature has had much to say about the fact that the secret of the particular power of the ‘Friday’ prayers in which the Pas-

sion of Christ is recounted is magical in character seeing that every form of *imitatio Christi* – for example performing the stations of the cross, self-flagellation and in our case the verbal evocation and reliving of the Passion – has a coercive effect: the person praying receives grace before God. (Tánczos 1999a: 255)

The devotional exercise of sharing in the suffering of Christ and the Virgin Mary, which was seen as a valid component of the path to personal salvation from at least the end of the 13th century, is expressed in a concrete and causal form in these closing formulas. Not only that, the recitation of the prayers is connected to this-worldly as well as other-worldly benefits. In the examples given above we see assurances against death from drowning and fire as well as forgiveness of sins. Other prayers promise amongst other things immediate transferal to the heavenly realm upon death or foreknowledge of the hour of death.⁵ Scholars of the genre, as well as clerics that have commented on this form of prayer, perceive a tension between the this-worldly material relating to existential concerns and those connected with the transcendental other-worldly concerns of the next life. Tánczos considers that “the concretization of the goal of the prayer often brings about a transformation of the relationship with the divinity in that the concrete this-worldly aims first appear in the form of a supplication or petition only to take on more coercive magical characteristics later in their development” (Tánczos 1999a: 252). This kind of appraisal, which reinforces the kind of radical separation between the two diametrical opposites labelled magic and religion, also has its roots in socio-economic conditions as we shall see below.

Attitudes toward appropriate relations with the divine expressed by folklore scholars also mirror clerical attitudes towards archaic prayer. As Erdélyi (2001: 46) explains, the clergy are commissioned to defend certain truths and their own position within the economy of salvation.

In the interests of impartiality we should state that the opposition of the church was just. Priests that were ordained to protect the purity of the faith out of necessity could attack certain component elements [of the prayers] mainly on the grounds of the ‘truths’ expressed in the closing formulas; in the Church’s terms these are indeed truly unsanctionable prayers, which profess some kind of self-absolution: the forgiveness of sins without priest and without sacrament.

Therefore, not only are these prayers considered to be counter to church teaching in relation to personal salvation, they also undermine the role of the clergy as mediator with the divine realm.

In this regard, it is important to note that the words of the prayers are very frequently ascribed directly to holy messengers and the divine realm, and in some cases God himself. This is the case both with the narrative accounts of the Passion that are introduced and recounted in the words of variously: Mary, a holy angel, one of the saints, or Jesus himself, and the closing formulas, which are again introduced by one of these holy personages, often the same divine agent to whom the Passion narrative was recounted (Tánczos 2000: 297) and are then reiterated as originating with God or Jesus Christ himself. This characteristic of the prayers is clearly present in the Romanian closing formula below and the Hungarian Moldavian-Csángó example that follows it (already reproduced in full above):

Dumnezeu din gură, așa ziceau	<i>The Lord with his mouth, says thus</i>
Cine știe, cine spune astea	<i>Whoever knows, whoever says these</i>
trei cuvintele	<i>three little words,</i>
Aseară când culcă	<i>In the evening when retiring</i>
și dimineață când sculă	<i>and in the morning when rising,</i>
Luați sufletelul și duce și-l	<i>Take his soul and bear it</i>
în sânul lui Avraam	<i>To the bosom of Abraham,</i>
Pe loc odihneală, pe scaun de	<i>To the place of rest, to the throne of</i>
ceară	<i>wax.</i>
Amin	<i>Amen.</i>

(Hacioglu (Arabauci) Zina Georgievna, village of Vinogradovka (*Kurçu*), Odessa Oblast, Ukraine, recorded on 5th June 2006)

Aki elmondja este lefektibe,	<i>Whoever says [this prayer] at bedtime,</i>
regvel felkötibe,	<i>In the morning when rising,</i>
én nem küldöm sem az	<i>I [Jesus Christ] will not send my</i>
arcangyalaimot,	<i>archangels</i>
sem az apostolimot,	<i>Nor my apostles,</i>
hanem én magam mejek,	<i>But I myself will go</i>
s kivátom a legküssebb	<i>And save him from sin even down to</i>
ujjacsáját a bűnből,	<i>his little finger,</i>
mindörökké Ámen.	<i>Forever and ever, Amen.</i>

This way of framing ‘archaic’ prayers gives them a distinctive ‘immanent’ and ‘unmediated’ quality that reinforces their authority as a direct source of blessing, protection and salvation. The closing formula speaks ‘above the text’, on a level Lovász refers to as ‘metacommunicative,’ in the sense that it communicates the terms and conditions of the text itself. This ability of the text to

speak above the text is due to the quality of agency inherent in language, the ability of the text to speak from beyond the speaker.

As Pierre Bourdieu states “authority comes to language from outside” and it is through the involvement or participation in the “authority of the institution” that invests words with their ‘performative’ power (Bourdieu 1994: 109). In other words, the force represented or manifested within the words of the speech act resides outside the text. In the case of the authorised speech of religious institutions this process is clearly observable. This is how it comes to pass that petition, invocation, supplication, dedication, intercession, benediction and confession constitute the legitimate modes of interaction with the divine, as these are determined by the texts of religious institutions, the instruments of clerical monopoly of relations with the divine realm. The ability of archaic prayer, however, to alter ontological reality and structure cosmological and social relations has its source, not in the religious institution, but in the correlation between the divine ‘word’ or ‘instruction’ that is embedded in the ‘text.’ That is to say, in the agency of language that has the ability to speak from above the text. In the case of archaic prayer, language is used to subvert or undermine the authority of the religious institution.

Pierre Bourdieu’s explanation of the emergence and *modus operandi* of the religious field, which builds on Weber’s typology of religious actors, describes it as a struggle between the body of priests, who seek to monopolize the means of salvation by maintaining control of secret religious knowledge, and those excluded from secret religious knowledge, the laity.

The opposition between the holders of the monopoly on the management of the priests and the laity [...] is at the heart of the opposition between the sacred and the profane and, correlatively, between legitimate manipulation (religion) and profane and profanatory manipulation (magic or sorcery) of the sacred, whether it is a question of objective profanation (i.e., of magic and sorcery as a dominated religion) or of intentional profanation (i.e., of magic as an antireligion or an inverted religion) (Bourdieu 1991: 12).

In this way, certain practices become associated in the symbolic system with legitimate action and others, often categorised as magic or superstition, are suppressed. The mechanics of the religious field therefore are responsible for determining objects excluded from this monopoly. Charms and suspect forms of prayer, become profane, illegitimate, dangerous and sinful. The power to categorize and condemn accumulates religious capital in the hands of the priestly elite. The ‘mediated’ aspects of religious practice controlled by the clerical hierarchy take on the character of legitimate religious action and ‘unmediated’

relations with the divine, are labelled as coercion and supplication (Lovász 1993: 74–75).

Significantly, the pragmatic character of archaic prayer, the concrete this-worldly goals and coercive techniques, according to Bourdieu, therefore merely reflect the genuine concerns and ‘spiritual arsenal’ of the disadvantaged or impoverished social classes who occupy a “dominated position in the relations of material and symbolic power” (Bourdieu 1991: 12). That is to say, the association of concrete or specific goals and coercion and manipulation of spiritual powers with magic is the by-product of a social and economic system that divests large portions of the population of symbolic power. The survival of archaic prayer represents a “resistance, that is, the expression of a refusal to allow oneself to be deprived of the instruments of religious production” (Bourdieu 1991: 12).

In this way, the authority invested in the religious language of institutions has determined the structure of scholarly discourse on archaic prayer. Prayer and charm, following the logic of Bourdieu’s argument, are Christian constructs in so far as they emerged out of the struggle for power and monopoly of access to religious capital within a particular European socio-economic context. The use of language by non-clerical agents (the ‘folk’), in the form of archaic prayer and charms, that can be seen to represent a struggle to maintain a relationship to the means of production of religious capital (access the religious elite seeks to divest them of) are excluded from the religious field through their association with magic. The categories and genres produced by ecclesial, folklore and religionist discourses, out of the perceived liminality of what can be termed the ‘folk religious’ field (Passalis 2010), are the continuing site of this linguistic struggle. In the form they take as objectified genres of folklore scholarship, archaic prayers and charms represent the repressed, yet constitutive, dimension returning to disturb the categorical constructs of ‘religion’ and ‘prayer’.

CONCLUSION

The literature on charms and archaic prayer in Hungarian is extensive. I have only been able to draw on limited examples in outlining the emergence, contours and character of the genre as they are elucidated in Hungarian scholarship. The critique I have presented, as indicated in the introduction, is intended to offer a view from the margins of both disciplinary and categorical boundaries. The principle observation I make here is that the tendency to equate practical existential concerns with ‘magic’ and the ‘folk consciousness’

and universal transcendental concerns with 'religion' sets up dichotomies in the cosmological 'order' that are constructed and reinforced by the authority of scholarly discourse.

In relation to the discourse on archaic prayer, the process of genre formation represents a site of struggle that emerged out of the imperative within folkloristics to 'shore-up' territory within the academic field. This was achieved by simultaneously embracing the genre as a reflection of the genius of the 'folk' (distinct in terms of nation, ethnos and language) whilst assimilating ecclesiastical discourses on the nature of the distinction between charm and prayer and magic and religion.

At the same time, recourse to the emic/etic distinction within the discourse on archaic prayer has the effect of masking the process by which emic categories and phenomena are overwritten by meanings proper to an etic controlling paradigm (national folklore scholarship) that perpetuates the representation of the genre as liminal and peripheral. Locating it at the margins is perhaps one means of preventing the genre potentially disrupting the 'impervious' categories at the core of the competing fields of folklore scholarship and the academic study of religion. I am not calling here for scholars to abandon etic categories in favour of a sole recourse to native taxonomies or ethnic genres. Rather, I simply seek to draw attention to the fact that scholarly reference to and recourse to emic categories constitutes in itself a manifestation of the agency of scholarly actors and as such contributes to the construction of the 'folk religious field' by scholarly actors. The 'espionage' and objectification of folk religious phenomena, the identification of ethnic taxonomies or native genres, the construction of ideal types and universal categories all actualise the objects of 'folk religion' in scholarly discourse.

The 'moves' outlined above may appear to reflect a process of natural ordering, a useful and convenient way of categorising phenomena that allows us to map and correlate our data. Indeed, the construction of the genre of 'archaic prayer' is demonstrably based on distinctive features and structural patterns. However, it is the conceptual ordering of the genre in relation to the categories of magic and religion and charm and prayer that delimits and determines considerably the scope and perspective of our 'interpretive possibilities' (Shevzov 2003: 59). The categories that we ourselves institute through various legitimating moves (such as the establishment of this journal) determine how the field of knowledge is ordered. Irén Lovász, in first pointing to the saliency of Pierre Bourdieu's work on the structure of the religious field in relation to archaic prayer – in particular the processes by which acts of exclusion within the religious system are responsible for the production and construction of suppressed categories of magic and charm – has opened up a new and poten-

tially rich conceptual resource for scholarship on the social study charms and charming. Bourdieu's representation of religion as a monopolistic system of symbolic domination, competitive and economic in its framing and terminology, has received mixed reception in religions scholarship. However, on the level of both discourse analysis on genre within charm scholarship and in regard to micro-discourse analysis of the speech acts of charmers, Bourdieuan social thought, through its appreciation of the significance of the power, agency and authority of language, carries in my view considerable analytical leverage.

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NOTES

¹ I am indebted to Henk de Roest for these insights regarding the creative potential of the margins.

² For an overview of the state of folklore scholarship on genre up to the 1980s see Ben-Amos 1981a.

³ The Transylvanian Hungarian scholar Vilmos Táncoz has compiled a bibliography of works on Hungarian archaic prayer and closely related areas that exceeds twenty pages. Of these, only a couple have appeared in other languages most notably 'The Manifestations of 'szent' in Traditional Prayers of Moldavia and Gyimes' (Tancoz 1999) and 'Gli strati arcaici della poesia religiosa popolare ungherese' (Erdélyi 1998). Dömötör Tekla also dedicates a couple of pages to discussing folk prayers in *Hungarian Folk Beliefs*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 216–221.

⁴ The route and mode of transmission of this particular expression of spirituality between Catholic West and Orthodox East has been the source of some debate. Most scholarship dealing with this issue has centred on the dissemination of the apocryphal legend The Dream of the Mother of God. Various theories have sought to explain the widespread nature of this tradition through reference to the wandering *Flagelanti*, the penitent brotherhoods of the 13th century and the later *Laudesi* confraternities of the 13th-14th century. For a brief summary of these debates see Orosz (1992).

⁵ It is interesting to note at this point that the popularity of closing formulas of this kind appears to coincide with the new emphasis on and the increase in significance in popular religious practice of the doctrine purgatory that came in the 14th century (See Eliade 1975: 207).

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BOOK REVIEW

A SUCCESSFUL AND FRUITFUL MODEL – A LITHUANIAN CHARMS COLLECTION AS A CONTRIBUTION TO THE RESEARCH OF VERBAL MAGIC

(Review of the book Daiva Vaitkevičienė, ed., *Lietuvių užkalbėjimai: gydymo formulės / Lithuanian Verbal Healing Charms*, Vilnius: Lietuvių Literatūros ir Tautosakos Institutas, 2008, 919 pp., ISBN 978-9955-698-94-4)

It is an honour and joy for me to share my thoughts on the collection of Lithuanian charms made by Daiva Vaitkevičienė. The first time I heard of this work was at the conference *Charms, Charmers and Charming* in 2010 in Bucharest. Then in Tartu in 2011, I had the opportunity to read the volume and to use it during my own research on Bulgarian medieval and early modern charms.

The book has eight chapters: 'Foreword' (in Lithuanian), 'Lietuvių užkalbėjimai' (in Lithuanian), 'Lithuanian Verbal Charms' (in English), 'Gydomieji užkalbėjimai' (in Lithuanian), 'The Corpus of Lithuanian Charm-Types' (in English), five indexes (of charm-types, of illnesses and situations, of informants, of collectors and geographical, all in Lithuanian), a glossary (in Lithuanian), and a list of abbreviations. The chapters 'Lietuvių užkalbėjimai' and 'Lithuanian Verbal Charms' discuss theoretical, methodological and historical aspects of Lithuanian charms. The two parts 'Gydomieji užkalbėjimai' and 'The Corpus of Lithuanian Charm-Types' are subdivided in ten sub-chapters, according to narrative function: 'Separation and Connection', 'Expulsion', 'Transmission and Reciprocation', 'Purification', 'Destruction', 'Locomotion and Cessation', 'Designation', 'Manuscription', 'Redemption' and 'Canonic Prayers'. The Lithuanian 'Gydomieji užkalbėjimai' section also contains a sub-chapter with Polish charms and a sub-chapter with Russian charms. The book contains also thirty-two black-and-white photographs of informants, collectors, and manuscripts. The texts of the charms are accompanied by detailed additional information referring to explanations and directions of the performance, the primary sources of the charms, the name of its recorder, the age and dwelling place of the charmer, and information on its scholarly publication.

The volume has only one disadvantage, namely that not all of the charms in the collection are translated in English. This is indeed a pity, especially in the case of charm No 374 (recorded in 1939), addressing the new moon and the kingdom of Perkūnas. The editor herself points out the uniqueness and signifi-

cance of this charm, but the lack of English translation impedes access to such a precious piece of verbal magic. Therefore an English translation of this important text (and of all the other untranslated charms in the book) would make render collection even more valuable. Here I would like to thank to my Lithuanian colleague Lina Sokolovaitė, who was so kind as to help me in overcoming the language barrier.

Undoubtedly, *Lietuvių užkalbėjimai: gydymo formulės / Lithuanian Verbal Healing Charms* is a very important book in our field, both thematically and methodologically. It represents an excellent model, in terms of both content and its organization. The book is a proper extensive corpus, offering a significant amount of charms. In this way, the charms are not only exemplary, but also representative for a whole tradition, with all its special features and nuances. At the same time, *Lietuvių užkalbėjimai: gydymo formulės / Lithuanian Verbal Healing Charms* positions the Lithuanian tradition among the other traditions of charms and charming. Being a solid extensive corpus, the book thereby encourages the contextualization and the comparison between different traditions. It also provides starting point for an interdisciplinary research in the fields of philology, ethnography, folklore, anthropology and popular religion. And finally, the bilingual form of the book helps a much broader audience to access charms from a vernacular tradition and to appreciate its uniqueness.

In conclusion, the book of Daiva Vaitkevičienė is an important collection to be studied, a useful tool to be applied, and an excellent model to be followed.

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A NEW GENERATION STUDY ON LITHUANIAN INCANTATIONS

Vaitkevičienė, Daiva (ed.) 2008: *Lietuvių užkalbėjimai: Gydyimo formulės – Lithuanian Verbal Healing Charms*. Vilnius: Lietuvių Literatūros ir tautosakos institutas. 919 p.

In early 20th century, before World War Two, a number of detailed and bulky in-depth studies on incantations, including a systematised corpus of texts, were published (F. Ohrt, K. Krohn, K. Straubergs). There were publications on incantations of the Netherlands, Romania, as well as representative studies with text samples of ancient Greek, Anglo-Saxon etc. traditions, not to mention the first typological indexes (V. J. Mansikka). Analyses concerning the typology of incantations were based on the wider pan-European comparison material and allowed to make generalisations about the innate characteristics of incantations. Many of the typologies and conceptions presented then are still valid – for example the ones on Russian incantations.

Undoubtedly, that proliferation of large incantation compendiums was carried by the same enthusiasm, vigour and passion which underlay the initiatives to compile national indexes of legends with the stated aim of then compiling a unified catalogue; or the projects to cartographically map religious and ethnographic phenomena, which turned out to be complicated tasks requiring enormous amount of work.

The 21st century saw the coming of a new generation of religion and incantation researchers. Daiva Vaitkevičienė's book was published on the crest of a new research wave.

It would be incorrect to say that research had stopped at a European or global scale or that no text publications were coming out at all. They were. In Russian, studies with innovative theoretical approaches and collections of source material were published. In English as well, significant studies were being published. However, incantations were shadowed by other genres. An enlivening of the research field is in part supported by the general spotlight on medieval sources and studies, the growing number of deciphered monuments of old cultures and in-depth analyses of their texts. Accordingly, the evolution of incantations, a genre thousands of years old, is now much better traceable, more likely to be correctly reconstructed than ever before, and we have actual documentation about its recent changes.

Daiva Vaitkevičienė's book is a bilingual academic publication, expanded from the CD published in 2005. The research history overview is presented both in Lithuanian and English. Otherwise, D. Vaitkevičienė's study is in many respects similar to E. Velmezova's publication of Czech incantations published

in Russia, where the monograph on Czech traditions is in Russian and only the text corpus is bilingual.

Lithuanian incantations are now accessible to those not fluent in Lithuanian, or Baltic languages in general. Still, only the so-called title texts have been translated into English, and plus some samples to demonstrate variability, not all texts. This presentation of only type title texts and some examples of subtypes is well in accordance with the wider academic tradition used even in monolingual publications which present very bulky text corpora. The book includes all texts from both earlier manuscripts as well as texts published in print. It is a pleasant surprise to see that the corpus includes incantations in Russian and Polish collected from the Lithuanian area, giving a good insight into the old generalisation that charmers spoke foreign languages and if necessary, also used incantations in foreign languages.

The monograph features a general theoretical framework and a typology of the texts based on their narrativity. Similar systems, inspired by V. Propp and other narrative researchers, have also been tried before, for example on Georgian and Russian incantations, but never on a text corpus of this magnitude. This analytic approach helps us comprehend structures that incantations are made up of, highlighting the more popular constructions. Vaitkevičienė differentiates 11 narrative functions: *separation*, *connection*, *expulsion*, *transmission*, *reciprocation*, *purification*, *destruction*, *locomotion*, *cessation*, *designation*, *redemption*. Other, separate categories contain written incantations and canonical prayers applied as incantations. The statistical supplements give a clear picture of how much are the different functions found in incantations. For example, only 8% of the texts are based on the function *separation*.

The monograph presents a detailed overview of terminology, hazy border areas between shepherd incantations and songs, incantations and prayers, incantations and divination formulae, etc. genres. The book describes the large-scale and productive collection work conducted after V. J. Mansikka's fieldwork collecting and the opportunities presented by continuation of collection work. The detailed overview of collection history also includes the history of publishing and research. For the international and interdisciplinary researcher, the parts that discuss examples of presentation, the structure of presentation, the normative system regulating the time, place and presentation manner, but also relations with neighbours' traditions and reciprocal loans, are invaluable. A bold claim is made for the pre-Christian origin of some formulae. The conclusion that incantations in Latin are very rare in Lithuanian tradition, and that the written tradition represents only a very recent segment of the whole, are most interesting to contemplate.

Every study is done within a framework. Daiva Vaitkevičienė's bulky study is in several respects unique in this regard. V. J. Mansikka's "Lithauische Zaubersprüche" (1928) presented a small portion of Lithuanian incantations to the international body of researchers. D. Vaitkevičienė's book widens the number of texts several dozen times over, making the unique cultural phenomenon with Catholic background better perceivable by way of her analyses, the systematic approach and bilingually presented texts. Hopefully, we will see more such new-generation publications.

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SNAKE BITE CHARMS FROM SWEDEN

Bengt af Klintberg and Ritwa Herjulfsdotter, *Jungfru Maria gick i gräset: Trollformler mot ormbett*. Ellerströms: Stockholm 2010. 88 pp.

This little book is an extra product of Ritwa Herjulfsdotter's doctoral thesis from 2008, *Jungfru Maria möter ormen: Om formlers tolkning*. There she examined charms against snake bites, and in particular the large group among them with a connection with Virgin Mary.

This new book is somewhat different. It is not a scientific work, even if it opens with an informative but popular introduction written by Ritwa Herjulfsdotter in collaboration with Bengt af Klintberg. But most of the book consists of 50 examples of such charms. The book is tastefully designed as a collection of poems. The 50 spells are presented as poems on one page each, and there are also 11 full page illustrations in colour by the artist Agneta Flock. The texts themselves are normalized to modern Swedish orthography. Each charm is followed by short information about the place and year of recording, and in many cases there are also explanations of old-fashioned or dialectal words. It is clear that it is primarily an edition for the general public. But the fact that both editors are academic scholars is clearly seen by a concluding appendix, in which all the charms are commented upon. This part gives full information about the source of the charm, and references to both

published and unpublished collections. In many cases supplementary information on the text is given, as well as references to scientific studies. This means that the book is nevertheless still useful to researchers.

The oldest charm in the collection is recorded in 1737 in connection with a lawsuit. Most of the recordings, however, are made by folklorists in the 19th and 20th centuries, one of them as late as in 1978.

The charms sometimes consist only of rhyming words, more or less nonsense, and of curses of the snake, but most of the charms in the book begin with a little story that creates a dramatic scene. Often it is Jesus and St. Peter who are out walking when the snake goes to attack, bites, but is defeated by the holy men. But in most cases, the Virgin Mary is the protagonist, whether in Jesus' company or alone. It is a very Swedish setting that is portrayed in the charms. The Biblical characters walk around among the birches, oaks and pines. Virgin Mary protects the farmer's cow by spanking her keys on the snake. Details from everyday peasant life of 19th century Sweden are amalgamated in a natural way with characters, events and elements from Biblical tradition. It is certainly this that has fascinated the publishers, and this combination has also inspired the naive pictures of the illustrator.

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CONFERENCE REPORT

CHARMS, CHARMERS AND CHARMING. INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE AT THE ROMANIAN ACADEMY (BUCHAREST, JUNE, 24–25, 2010)

The international conference *Charms, Charmers and Charming*, organised by the ISFNR Committee on Charms, Charmers and Charming and by two institutes of the Romanian Academy (the Institute of Linguistics “Iorgu Iordan – Al. Rosetti” and the Institute of Ethnography and Folklore “Constantin Brăiloiu”), followed on from a series of conferences held in London (2003, 2005), Pécs (2007), Tartu (2008) and Athens (2009). By organizing this conference, the two Romanian institutes above mentioned wanted to pay homage to the Romanian folklorists and philologists, such as Sim. Fl. Marian, A. Gorovei, O. Densusianu, Al. Rosetti, who made significant contributions in the study of charms, charm-ers and charming, and to reiterate the intention to carry on this research tradition. Their efforts seem to have been fruitful, judging upon the important number of participants, which came from numerous countries (Canada, England, Estonia, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Romania, Russia, and USA).

The first day of the conference, held in the headquarters of the Romanian Academy, took the form of four sessions. Tatyana A. Mikhailova (Russia) and Larissa Naiditch (Israel) discussed on the language and the structure of charms, in the papers entitled respectively “On the Function of Name in Oral and Written Charm’s Tradition” and “Enumerations and Repetitions in German Charms”.

The second section, “Powerful Words, Powerful Figures. Antiquity and Middle Ages”, united four papers: “How Chameleonic Can a Demon Be? Lix Tetrax from Ephesia Grammata to The Testament of Solomon” (Ștefan Colceriu, Romania), “Les charmes de Byzance : quelle parole pour la figure du mage ? (VIIIe – fin du XIe siècle)” (Stéphanie Vlavianos-Tomaszyk, France), “The ‘Three Good Brothers’ Charm: Some Historical Points” (Lea T. Olsan, UK), “Multilingual Charms from Western Europe” (Jacqueline Borsje, Netherlands).

The relation between charms and rites was discussed by Éva Pócs (Hungary, “Hungarian Rite-Based Charms: the Relation between Rite and Text”), Sanda Golopenția (USA, “Flying Fatemen”); Daiva Vaitkevičienė (Lithuania, “Saying the Words in a Breath: the Charm Technique in Lithuania”); Sabina Ispas (Romania, “The Wordless ‘Charm’. *Căluș*”).

Three sections of the conference were dedicated to the relation between charms and other literary genres. One concerned the connections between charms and tales and it gathered three papers: “Charms in Tales” (Jonathan Roper, Estonia); “Boundaries of the Latvian Magical Spell Genre: Similarities in Fairy Tales and Folk Legends” (Aigars Lielbardis, Latvia); “The One Who Handles the Book” (Laura Jiga Iliescu, Romania).

The second day of the conference, hosted by the Institute of Ethnography and Folklore “Constantin Brăiloiu”, began with two sections dedicated to the relation between charms and apocrypha. Two papers focused on the **Flum Jordan** charm type: “**Flum Jordan** et le rite baptismal dans les charmes roumains” (Ioana Repciuc, Romania); “Latvian Types of *Flum Jordan* Charm” (Toms Ķencis, Latvia). Four other papers were presented by William F. Ryan (UK, “Ivan the Terrible’s Malady and a Charm to Cure It”); Mare Kõiva (Estonia, “Code Switching in Incantations”); Svetlana Tsonkova (Hungary, “Practical Texts in Practical Situations? Bulgarian Medieval Charms as Apocrypha”); Emanuela Timotin (Romania, “Reshuffled Structures and Wandering Motifs. The Apocryphal Writing *The Legend of Saint Sisinnios* in Romanian Manuscript Charms (18th – 19th Centuries)”).

The use of charms, the presence of charmers and the phenomenon of charming in South-Eastern Europe represented recurrent themes during the conference. Bogdan Neagota (Romania), James A. Kapalo (Ireland), Haralampos Passalis (Greece) and Cătălina Vătăşescu (Romania) focused on such topics in a specific section and they presented the papers entitled respectively “Ecstatic Illnesses and Magical Therapies in Contemporary Rural Romania: *Căderea între Milostive, Căderea Rusaliilor, Căderea / Luatul din Căluş*”; “Authority, Narrative and Performance in Charm and Prayer”; “Genres and Categories of Verbal Magic: towards a Holistic Approach”; “Termes albanais pour ‘incantation’”.

Several papers focused on the use of charms and the presence of charmers in specific communities: “The Quest for Fertility: Triggers and Opponents in a Balanced Story” (Ileana Benga, Romania); “Immaterial Medicine: Charmers and their Communities in Newfoundland” (Martin Lovelace, Canada); “Harmful Magic in a Transylvanian Village (Cluj County, Romania)” (Tünde Komáromi, Romania); “Love and Fate Charms” (Antoaneta Olteanu, Romania). The problem of digitalizing charms was approached by Vladimir Klyaus (Russia), in his paper entitled “Multimedia Videolibrary of Incantation”.

An important part in the success of the conference was the screening of films at the Institute of Ethnography and Folklore, which took place at the end of the first day of the conference. The evening ended with a Wine Reception sponsored by the Folklore Society.

After the conference, most of the participants took part in a trip outside Bucharest, to Sinaia, where they could visit the Sinaia Monastery and the Peleş Castle, and to Bran, where they visited the Bran Castle, more famous worldwide as ‘Dracula’s Castle’.

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