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Charms, Charmers and Charming:
Innovation and Tradition

Abstracts Booklet



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Magic and Social Roles in the Contemporary Russian Village
Svetlana Adonyeva

As is well known, in Russian folk belief there exist two types of magic: white (healing) and black (causing harm). I describe how black and white magic function within the economy of symbolic capital in the post-Soviet Russian village. Focusing upon the intersection between reputation (given by the community) and identity (chosen by the person herself), I argue that magic is not so much a matter of belief, as it has been depicted by ethnographers, but a matter of social network and discourse. I examine the life stories of women who were known as witches, showing that these were women who achieved hallmarks of success as measured from outside the village. They had power, and it seemed to others within the village that there must be an explanation for this power. The explanation draws upon traditional notions of power as related to 'forces' existing in this world and the 'other world'. While most of these presumed witches have nothing to do with magic and may not even react to their reputations, other women, knowing and acknowledging their reputations, turn themselves into tricksters who use their reputation to attain a more powerful position.

Love Charms in the Slovenian Cultural Context Nowadays

Saša Babič

Love was always one of most wanted emotions through time as it meant acceptance and tenderness. Therefore people, stereotypically mostly women, tried to gain love also with magic: amulets and rituals; even moreso historically when marriages were mostly arranged by economic and social status in the Slovenian cultural area. Therefore it is surprising

that we cannot find any written traditional love charms in the archive of the Slovenian institute of Ethnology, though there are some described rituals. On the other hand, nowadays we can find many internet sites with so called *love spells* in the Slovenian language accompanied by some content explanations and also alleged historical explanations. I will provide an overview of Slovenian love spells which appear nowadays as a magic receipt for love on the Internet. I will analyze their structure and content, comparing them to traditional forms, and providing content explanations within the specific cultural context.

The study of medieval Irish magic and a Dutch contribution (1850 – 1950)

Jacqueline Borsje

This paper discusses the importance of medieval Irish 'magic'. Two types of study were done between circa 1850 and 1950. Firstly, various European scholars edited and translated so-called magical texts from the manuscripts and thus made them available for study. Secondly, Dutch scholars in particular did research into the concept of magic as an essential part of the Celtic worldview. After a brief survey of the publication of Irish magical texts, the paper will describe the Dutch contribution. This contribution will be put in the context of contemporary views from historians of religion.

Tattoos as Talismans: Magic in the Flesh

Jenny Butler

Rather than getting a tattoo for purely aesthetic reasons, many people today get tattoos as charms to ward off evil or to attract good fortune. Tattoos in the form of designs or words can be a material expression of a spiritual worldview and indeed the act of getting inked is a transformative experience for some and a rite of passage for others. An individual's tattoos can hold a depth of meaning related to the person's life experiences; a specific tattoo in remembrance of a lost loved one and its permanence on the skin merges the symbolic into the physicality of the self. A new practice is to mix the ashes of a cremated loved one into the tattoo ink so that the relative or friend becomes one with the tangible self of the tattooed person. In this way, the tattoo brings to mind the relative or friend and is considered a spiritual connection in that the person is literally and figuratively "with us". Others utilise tattoos as enduring protective or auspicious amulets inscribed on the skin and these sigils range from runes to symbols found in grimoires and other esoteric texts. This paper explores the connections between spirituality and tattooing, with a focus on the use of tattoos as charms, by consulting tattoo artists and tattooed people in Ireland and abroad through ethnographic interviews and online communications.

Charms in Medieval Irish Tales: Tradition, Adaptation, Invention

John Carey

Besides the small but important corpus of charms that are preserved as such in Irish manuscripts from the ninth century onward, charms and magical utterances also figure in narrative. Whether such speeches were believed to have actual efficacy, or were simply used to embellish works of deliberate fiction, is an obvious but not necessarily answerable question. Charms in tales are also of interest simply as texts: with respect to form, imagery and potential sources, among other aspects. This talk will consider a range of examples, seeking to give an impression of the range of material that is available for study.

Tradition and Innovation in the transmission of Medieval German charms

Eleonora Cianci

Old High German charms consist of about forty-five texts transmitted by thirty-two manuscripts from the 9th to the 12th century. Middle High German charms are *probably* hundreds of texts, each one transmitted by many copies, from

the 13th to the 15th century. As a matter of fact, Old High German charms are almost always transmitted by a single manuscript, while each one of the Middle High German charms has dozens of variants: actually, it is not yet possible to say exactly how many extant texts and manuscripts we have, since there are not enough studies on Middle High German charms. In this paper I focus on tradition and innovation in the manuscript transcription from the oldest to the newer charms. The oldest charms are not only scattered in *codices unici*, they are indeed written in the margins or in the blank parts of the manuscripts. On the contrary, the Middle High German charms are written in the manuscripts in a regular way. The study of those innovations in the manuscript transmission should help to improve the understanding of the way those charms were conceived, perceived and, eventually performed.

Charms and the Divining Rod: Tradition and Innovation in Magic and Pseudo-Science, 15th to 21st Centuries

Johannes Dillinger

The paper investigates the tension between charms and the use of the divining rod in the context of treasure hunting. The rise of treasure hunting as a typical element of popular magic in the 15th century coincided with the beginnings of dowsing. Treasure hunters did not rely on the divining rod exclusively, they also used a variety of charms addressing fairies, ghosts, demons, and angels. Communication with the spirit world and the charms and incantations to establish and structure this communication remained a vital part of treasure hunting throughout the early modern period. In contrast to that, miners who used the divining rod treated it more like a technical instrument in a modern sense. It hardly needed any additional spells or charms to work. With the success of mining as a motor of technical and economical innovation, the divining rod enjoyed a breath-taking career. In the 18th century, it had become the divinatory object par excellence that could be used to find virtually anything. The 19th century witnessed the breakdown of the traditional magico-religious treasure hunt. Instead of trying to talk to the spirit world in order to find treasures, treasure hunters became interested in historical narratives that provided clues which helped to discover hidden or lost objects. The magic was turned into history; the communication of the charm into the interpretation of a source. Even though dowsing was eliminated from professional mining, it managed to survive. The very fact that dowsing was largely non-communicative - it was even claimed that the ability to dowse depended entirely on the individual, inner and non-transferable qualities of the dowser - seemed to be the key to its continuing success. As the divining rod could be used without the support of charms and incantations, it found its place in an area of pseudo-Enlightened fringe science and fringe medicine that still flourishes. Only in recent years, the new interest in spirituality combined dowsing and the use of incantations again.

A Fragment of John Lysaght

Joseph J. Flahive

This paper explores a manuscript fragment in my personal possession, recovered from the lining of a book's spine. One side bears a charm for the cure of toothache. I have identified the hand of this fragment as the mid-nineteenth-century Clare scribe John Lysaght (Seán Mac Giolla Iasachta, or as he sometimes signed Shagun Ó Gouliachta). The reverse of the slip, in another, unidentified hand, contains an epitaph *ceangal* in *amhrán* meter, commemorating – but not praising – two unnamed individuals. Although it is unique, the incantation for toothache has a textual relationship with *super Petram* charms, a European tradition of invocations to Jesus for a cure that recall an apocryphal anecdote in which he cures Peter; charms of this type are well-represented in Irish-language adaptations. In this case, however, the cure is achieved by an otherwise unknown Easa Baine. Replacement of Peter with various Irish saints is not unknown in other versions, which are similarly adapted. A charm of the same type in RIA MS 23 O 35 invokes Colm Cille, and another in 12 E 20 invokes Patrick. The Petrine original is also well-attested, and an Irish tri-lingual version (English, Irish, and Latin) in RIA 23 L 40, along with a number of other charms, in the hand of the same John Lysaght.

Narrative Charms in Ireland's National Folklore Collection: The Case of the Second Merseburg Charm

Barbara Hillers

Ireland's National Folklore Collection at University College Dublin holds thousands of traditional charms, including over a thousand healing charms, collected by the Irish Folklore Commission (and its successor, the Department of Irish Folklore) during the twentieth century. This paper offers a brief survey of the narrative charms attested in Irish folk tradition, most of which are well-known international charms found throughout Europe, and a case study of one charm in particular, the so-called Second Merseburg Charm in Gaelic tradition. Since Jacob Grimm's 1842 publication of the Old High German charm from the monastic library of Merseburg, the charm's antiquity and extensive distribution from Scandinavia to India has been well-documented, beginning with Kuhn's discovery of an ancient Sanskrit analogue to Christiansen's monograph of the northern and western European versions, and more recently, Hungarian and Slavic-language versions. Numerous versions from Scotland and Ireland, including an early attestation in medieval Irish literature attest to the charm's presence in Gaelic tradition from an early period: the Old Irish saga *Cath Maige Tuiread* ('The Battle of Moytura') incorporates the charm's only other attestation in European medieval literature, roughly co-eval with the Merseburg charm. In *Cath Maige Tuiread* the charm's characteristic formula "Joint to joint and sinew to sinew" is put in the mouth of the pagan Irish god of healing. Our study of the modern variants of the charm from Ireland and Scotland, Scandinavia and continental Europe enables us to reconstruct the oral-traditional background to the two medieval literary attestations from Germany and Ireland. The study of the modern Gaelic variants in particular can give us invaluable clues about the medieval versions and can answer questions about the charm's migration and dissemination in Europe, highlighting the significance of this rich ethnographic material for our understanding of the age and distribution of many of our international narrative charms.

Text Over Time: The Power of the Written Word in England from the Anglo-Saxons to 1350

Katherine Hindley

The fourteenth-century surgeon John Arderne famously recommended that a charm to cure cramp be written in Greek letters, 'that it might not be understood of the people'. His emphasis on keeping the words of the charm secret points to the previously understudied intersection between the perceived power of the written word and increasing literacy in medieval England. My paper explores the use of the written word for healing and protection in England from the Anglo-Saxon period to the mid-fourteenth century, paying particular attention to the circumstances in which text was thought to have power, the texts that were thought to have power, and the interaction between the text and the patient. I draw on a database of more than three hundred charm texts in English manuscripts, examining not only textual amulets but also text intended to be eaten, dissolved into water, or used to make crosses on the patient's body. I will argue that as literacy rose, the perceived power of written versus spoken words increased.

What to Say While Using Dust From the Saints' Eyes: A Romanian Case

Laura Jiga Iliescu

The walls of a church are characterised by a certain ambiguity (neither inside, nor outside the consecrated space), which predispose them to be used as material support for a complex of gestures that are often placed on the border area between permission and interdiction. The state of the walls in a certain moment bears witness to the former practices a certain religious grouping was involved in. The study is framed by the large category of gestures which

mutilate the body of a saint's figurative representation, taking into consideration a specific charm that consists in carving the mural holy faces painted in the church porch and, further, in taking the resulting powdered masonry in order to re-valorize it within a second, non-canonic context of popular religiosity (charms for love and marriage, charms for blinding people etc. The faces/eyes of the saints were damaged for profane reasons and often as part of interdenominational tensions, but this situation will have a secondary dilation as far as the scope of my paper will allow). These hidden rituals whose traces remained visibly preserved in the fresco texture, work as a memory insight considering the belief in the supernatural power of the saint's eyes (fasten both on the visible and on the invisible reality) and in the metonymical relation between eye and body integrality, as well. I'll investigate the dynamic of the religious structure articulated on the interrelated coordinates of 1) the symbolic tradition of the eye's numinous power (which include the tearful icons) 2) the legendary narratives created around these fresco images, 3) the possible charms still attached to them, and 4) the role of the painting restoration process as a memory for passing on the charms. As working sites, I will consider some specific churches in Romania.

Flum Jordan in Finnish Charms

Henni Ilomäki

The motif Flum Jordan is copiously varied in western Finnish bloodstopping charms.

The basic motif is usually described shortly:

Seisoi Jortanin virtakin	Also the river Jordan stood still
silloin kuin Kristus kastettiin	when Christ was baptized

Jordan may also stop during Christ's cruxifixion or because the Jewish people needed to cross it when returning from Egypt. On the other hand, the Red Sea or some local rapids may also stand still, and even other biblical episodes may be employed.

Kun seisoo punanen meri	Like the red sea stood still
sillon kun Jesus ristittiin,	when Jesus was baptized
Kaikkivaltias kastettiin,	the Almighty was baptized
Jumalan nimi annettiin!	God's name was given!
Tyry veri, seisoo veri,	Calm down blood, stand still blood
niinkun Jortaniin meri,	like did the sea of Jordan
josta Jesus yli meni,	that Christ walked over

The motif does not exist in Karelian bloodstopping charms in Kalevala-meter. However, Karelian charmers boasted that they could stop a river or other waters.

Charm Indices or Digital Databases? What is the Future of the Comparative Studies of Charms?

Emese Ilyefalvi

The lack of a common international charm index is a frequently encountered issue in the comparative studies of charms. Anybody undertaking a comparative textual folkloristic research on charms is suffering from its absence. In recent years only a few scholars have dealt with this question, mainly those who published national charm collections and tried to put the materials in order and contextualize them. (Roper 2004; Vaitkevičienė 2008, Agapkina-Toporkov 2013, Pócs 2014). Some theoretical suggestions for an international index have been already proposed, but none has been actually applied. Meanwhile in the frame of digital folkloristics, online charm databases are in preparation (e.g. Estonian, Medieval Irish and Dutch, Russian, Latvian, Hungarian etc.). A good scientific database holds many advantages: keeping thousands or millions of texts in order; making searches much faster; revealing relationships and connections which were undetectable by manual research because of the enormous quantity of the material etc. In my paper, I will briefly summarize folklore databases that publish folklore texts in online form: focusing on the genres and also the solutions. I will also discuss the connection of the folklore indices and folklore databases. My question is the following one: can databases replace indices? Do we need indices for comparative studies in the age of digital databases? What can we use from the classical golden age of folkloristics, from the age of making indices? Then I will come to the main point of my presentation, the complex and elaborate problem of transplanting charms into an online database. Finally I will introduce the plans for, and the already completed parts of, the upcoming Hungarian charm database.

Latvian Types of Flum Jordan Charm

Toms Ķencis

Preliminary research has already shown a few basic types (with and without the baptism of Christ) of the charm in Latvian blood-stunt charms and interesting variations of this charm all across the corpora of Latvian verbal charms that reaches beyond 50,000 recorded entities. Together there are more than three hundred records of charms containing the motif of Jordan in the Latvian language. While presenting the case, I would like to briefly discuss Latvian variations in comparison with the ones in neighboring languages and countries. Although almost all Latvian charms were recorded in last two centuries, the inclusion of the rich variety of *Flum Jordan* charm could help the in pan-European mapping of this charm-type.

Semiotic Features of Charming Texts for Birth (On the Material of French, English and Russian Charms)

Elena Krivenko

Every change in the position of the person is followed by the interaction of secular and sacred traditions. This demands regulations and solemnity so that the society will not have difficulty and will not suffer damage. Every ceremony has the objective to provide a person with the passage from one state to another. The rites and the charms for birth are preventive and tend to be predictive. This paper deals with charms for relieving birth in French, British and Russian cultures. The rites of passage by A. van Gennep, magic and religions by B. Malinovsky, research in etymology and semantics of Toporov V. are taken as the theoretical basis for the paper. The author pays special attention to the rituals connected with birth in French, British and Russian popular cultures. The texts of charms for birth are studied from the point of view of semiotic binary oppositions as follows: left-right, within-without, alive-dead, skies-earth, life-death. The vocabulary and lexical items are examined (the world, the numbers, the locus), the use of Christian terms are analysed to draw conclusions about similarities and differences in the conceptual notions in charms and links of the charms' language with other codes of traditional popular cultures.

Saints "That Loved Cursing": The Case of Mediaeval Irish Hagiography

Ksenia Kudenko

In pre-Christian Ireland, curse or satire used to be an important social phenomenon, which regulated relations between a poet and his patron. However, according to extant literary sources, after the Christianisation of the country, satire continued to play an important role, satirising poets being augmented by cursing saints. It has been noted that the mediaeval Irish hagiography was generally included into the tradition of secular literature, so that *Heldensagen*, "heroic sagas", gave birth to *Heiligensagen*, "sagas about saints", which were moulded upon their example. The same statement could be applied to the survival of satire in Lives of Irish saints: while fashioning their *vitae*, Irish hagiographers drew heavily on patterns which already existed in native secular tales. The aim of the present discussion is to show which elements of native satire (Old Irish *aér*) were inherited by curses of saints (Old Irish *mallacht*). These include both imagery and formal composition of incantations as well as ritual performance of a curse (e.g. manipulation with stones, fasting etc.). However, the phenomenon of cursing priests and saints is not a unique Irish feature and typological parallels from other European traditions, especially the Icelandic one, will also be demonstrated.

The May Morning Hare

Shane Lehane

The transformation of old women in to hares for the purpose of butter-stealing on May Morning is a long-established component of Irish folk belief. The female shape-shifting charmer was considered most potent at this crucial pinnacle in the yearly farming cycle. This paper explores different environmental and psychological concerns of May Day and the specific natural history and biology of the hare in Ireland to elucidate the reasoning behind the many complex deep-rooted associations.

Seeking Voices and Finding Meaning: An Analysis of Portuguese Verbal Divination

José Vieira Leitão

Among the numerous charms and incantations collected by late 19th and early 20th century Portuguese folklorists and ethnographers such as José Leite de Vasconcelos and Teófilo Braga, one can find a small number which are meant to be used in verbal divination. These procedures, at times referred to as '*andar às vozes*' (seeking voices), while being words

of power in themselves, are effectively meant to find and attribute power and significance to whatever random words or sounds are heard immediately after their recitation. Besides their unusual character and obvious immediate interest, the analysis of charms such as these also challenges the linear conception of charm performance (as something originating from a performer and directed to a subject or target). Instead of this linear process, what these suggest is something more akin to a circular and discontinuous process in which the charm is originally directed at a saint or celestial power and then an answer is returned in the form of a response from a random passer-by (as a temporary and circumstantial representative of the same saint/celestial power). While the study of folk charms is currently a growing field of research, the analysis of such 'out-of-the-box' examples may prove to be fundamental for future attempts of defining the very concept of a charm from an academic standpoint.

Village Poet as a Charmer: the Functional Similarity of the Two Powerful Figures in the Russian Village

Ekaterina Mamaeva

My research is dedicated to the contemporary practice in Russian peasant society – individual poetry, which is very popular all over the country. During the fieldwork in the Russian North my colleagues and I noticed that for the last 10 years there have been a great amount of poems, which have certain authors. Some of these poems are similar to classical Russian poems, some to different folklore genres such as limericks and traditional lyric songs. But the thing that impressed me more and about which I would like to talk is the status of the author of these poems. I can compare it with the status and the power of the charmer. If a person represents his/her poems to the audience and has a reputation of a good master and family man/woman, he/she automatically receives a great power and possibilities. The author becomes an authority in the village, which provides an opportunity to solve different social and psychological problems of the ordinary locals.

Meeting with a Charmer: Social Reputation, Interaction, Folklore (a Case Study of the Folklore-Anthropology Fieldwork of the St. Petersburg State University)

Julia Marinicheva

In the expeditions to the Russian North we often meet locals who have a charmer's status in the society. In my report I'm going to talk about interactional experience between folklorists and charmers during the course of fieldwork. This experience is composed of direct meetings, interviews, local's narratives about their interactions with neighboring charmers. So in this case the charmer's status is closely connected with the social reputation of its holder. Coming to a village we are always perceived as aliens and we have to be incorporated into the society among others by the charmer's recognition of us and by our interactions with them. And, on the one hand, these interactions are based on our (folklorists') rules and behavioral standards but on the other by our acceptance or non-acceptance the locals' attitude to the particular charmer.

Old Wine in New Bottles: Towards the Genesis and Genre of the Amrae Choluim Chille Introductory Stanza

Tatyana Mikhailova

As seems to be generally accepted, the poem *Amra Choluim Chille* is the oldest dateable poem in Irish, written soon after the death of the Saint in 597. But as generally accepted also, the *Prologue* or 'Introductory Prayer' to the elegy is later, and it differs in language and metric and stands apart from the *Amra* itself. It is notable also that the content of the Introductory Prayer has no direct connections with the text of the *Amra*. In his analysis of the language and style of IP Dr. J. Bisagni found the influence of the Psalms. In my paper I'll follow his ideas and I will try to make a next 'step': I could suppose the IP text represents an old Irish monastic *lorica* (protective prayer) and it was attached to the corpus of the *Amra* during the arrangement of the 'canonic' version of the elegy in the Middle Irish period. The comparison with other examples of Latin and vernacular *lorica* will be made, and the meaning and the use of the word *anacol* in Old and Middle Irish will be analysed as well as the tradition ascribing supernatural protective power to the *Amra* itself.

Updating a Charm, or Why They Still Work?! Tradition and Innovation in Texts and Use of Charms in Modern Urban Society

Tatyana Mihailova

My paper is devoted to the problem of the use of oral charms in modern societies, in particular their individual and occasional performances by people not belonging to the so called 'traditional folk culture'. I will not analyse the phenomenon of the popularity of 'professional charmers' in modern urban society and I will not touch on the causes and the circumstances which induce people to address them. My special interest is directed at situations of using a charm by so called 'non-believing' individuals. Of course, the material of my investigation deals only with successful cases of the charms' uses. So, I have to answer the questions:

1. Why did A decide to use a charm?
2. Where did A find the text of this charm?
3. Why did he/she 'diagnose' the text to be a 'real' charm?
4. Did he/she understand the text of the charm? Did he/she find any strange words or letters in the charm?
5. Did A add some text elements to the charm?
6. Did A perform the ritual 'convoy' of the charm? Or did he/she invent his/her own 'ritual'?

As I suppose, questions 3 and 4 represent the most important clues for understanding the nature of the charm in general, and its distinctions from spells, on one hand, and protective prayers, on the other. A charm-user finds himself (and has always found) in a contradictory or conflict situation: he needs to understand the matter and the meaning of the text of his charm, but at the same time the text must not be too close to his own common language. The introducing of archaisms and of foreign formulas can fulfill his aim, but, as I suppose, the problem is more difficult and its solution does not lie on the surface of charming-practice. Some striking 'cases' (with anonymous subjects) will be described during my presentation and some diachronic comparisons (with Greek, Old Irish, Latin, Anglo-Saxon and other magic traditions) made, as well as an attempt being made to give a psychological explanation of the phenomenon.

Figurations of the Body in the Visual Culture of Dreams, Charms and Popular Beliefs

Louise S. Milne

Many healing charms, spells and curses use lists of body parts as part of their magical rhetoric. This paper first examines the semiotics of such iterations, using examples from late antiquity to the early modern period; then presents comparative visual evidence from medical illustration in medieval and early modern books and from Renaissance art; finally discussing how the ruling metaphor of the body as a set of parts can be seen as expressing a tenacious aspect of

a pre-industrial or magical world view, wherein the sleeping, ill or otherwise endangered body is understood as connected to the otherworld.

Towards a New Approach of Finnish-Karelian Charms:

From an Archaeology of Paganism to the Concept of Popular Christianity

Aleksi Moine

Dealing with the extensive archival material on Finnish charms implies that one must also deal with the traditions that have oriented the collecting of charms (and folk poetry in a wider sense) and the scholarship written on the topic. One of the ideas motivating the collecting has been an attempt to legitimate Finland's place as a nation in Europe by finding its national roots, focusing on archaic patterns, Finnish mythology, and history. This has often led scholars to understand charms in opposition to Christianity, and to distinguish between “pagan” and “Christian” motifs and figures in charms. However, in the past two decades, there has been an important shift in the scholarship, which now focuses more on the questions of performance and on the contextualisation of folk poetry. The clear distinction between pagan and Christian themes is a scholarly construction (on its application to other cultures, see Gay 2009) that does not help in gaining an understanding of the practice of incantations. Thus, my aim in this paper is to adopt, as much as possible, an emic point of view and to show how, in this context, the charms collected in orthodox Karelia are to be understood as Christian practices. Indeed, Christianity defines the world view of Karelians, at least as it is expressed in the collected charms, as the articulation of such concepts as “popular” and “official” Christianity (see Stark 1996), which is more helpful than those of “pagan” and “Christian” practices.

The *Flum Jordan* charm in Ireland in the 20th and 21st centuries

Bairbre Ní Fhloinn

The paper will present an overview of this well-known blood-stopping charm in Ireland, drawing partly on the work of previous scholars of the subject, especially the post-graduate research carried out by Maebhe Ní Bhroin in the archives of the National Folklore Collection in University College Dublin. The charm was and is a relatively common one in Irish popular tradition, as in other parts of Europe, with examples occurring in many parts of the country and in the two principal languages in use at vernacular level, i.e., Irish and English. The charm will be discussed in the context of other blood-stopping charms and practices (botanical, entomological, ritual etc.) found in Ireland, as one of several strategies which might be employed in time of need. Variations in Irish versions of the *Flum Jordan* charm will be examined, in order to see if any distinctive patterns can be discerned. The paper will also briefly examine possible reasons for the continuing vibrancy of the charm in recent and contemporary Irish life, and will explore the notion that the survival of such charms into the present is an indication that the charms (in common with other examples and instances of lay cures and folk medicine) appear to meet a need in modern society which conventional/official medicine fails to address. The paper concludes that lessons might thus be learned from a functional analysis of charms and related practices.

*A Hidden Pot of Charm Scholarship:
The History of Critical Reflection on Charms in Croatian Folkloristics*
Davor Nikolić

There is a long history of recorded verbal charms in Croatian culture before the official institutionalization of ethnology and folkloristics: from the medieval Glagolitic codices and manuscripts up to texts recorded during Croatian National Revival in the 19th century. The first scholarly reflections on the subject come from the second part of the 19th century, when the great ethnographic collections were made. Charms were regularly incorporated into the sections concerning folk beliefs and superstitions while scholars themselves were influenced by the ideas of the Enlightenment. The landmark publication in Croatian ethnology and folkloristics was *Questionnaire for Collecting and Studying Material on Folk Life* (1897) by Antun Radić. From that point onward it is possible to trace changes in the scholarly approaches to the subject of charms, charmers and charming. The first decades of the 20th century saw increased interest in publicizing material from the old manuscripts and the methodology was dominated by the textual and philological criticism. In the second half of the 20th century charms were recognized as one of the rhetorical genres, along with counting-out rhymes, tongue-twisters, curses, blessings and toasts. This important innovation opened the way for many different methodological approaches: from rhetorical criticism and stylistics to pragmatics. Classical folkloristic approaches continued to be fruitful, especially in the research of folk prayer as a genre which incorporated most of the traditional charm motifs and strategies. Besides offering historical review this paper will show how Croatian folklorists were influenced by the contemporary research on charms in Europe and the United States. Although the reversed influence was not achieved, the current charm scholars could benefit from the insights into the relatively rich tradition of Croatian research on charms, charmers and charming.

Cahill's Blood

Deirdre Nuttall

Mr Cahill from Gaignamanagh, Co. Kilkenny is himself a sort of charm; the inheritor and owner of "Cahill's Blood", which is said to cure shingles. This painful and debilitating condition is not life-threatening, but it is extremely unpleasant, and it is difficult to treat effectively even with modern medicine. Sufferers with shingles from all over the south east of Ireland flock to Mr Cahill's front room where he treats their condition by anointing the affected parts of their skin with blood removed from his own body. He is said to be an extremely effective healer, and news of his abilities continues to spread by word of mouth. Based on interviews with Mr Cahill, supplemented with archival and published material, this paper explores the nature of the treatment, the healer's own views of it, and how he mediates his understanding of his traditional practice with what he knows of modern medicine.

The Hope of the Cailleach: Towards a Hermeneutics of Folklore

Stiofán Ó Cadhla

Charming Cattle: The Cattle Theft Charms of Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 41

Patricia O Connor

This paper will explore a genre of Anglo-Saxon literary culture that continues to excite scholarly attention; the Old English Charms. I intend to focus on the Old English charms that were written into the margins of an early eleventh century manuscript witness of the *Old English Bede*, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 41 (CCCC41), specifically analysing charms that deal with the theft of cattle and discussing their relationship to the principal text. The Old English charms have traditionally been perceived as being closely aligned with pagan practices. This perception is most apparent in previous scholarship on CCCC41, which determined that the manuscript's marginal charms are of no apparent relevance to the *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. The objective of my paper is to respond to this traditional perception through a reassessment of the relationship between the Cattle Theft charms and the text they are copied alongside; drawing attention to the Christian content of the Cattle Theft charms that has hitherto been

overlooked, and demonstrating how these Christian elements reconcile the charms to the passages of the *Old English Bede* they accompany. This codicological reassessment seeks to present through a particular case study a new interpretation of the Old English charms. The intention of including the Cattle Theft charms into my reading of the *Old English Bede* is to offer significant insights into the function of these Cattle Theft charms within Anglo-Saxon society and more importantly to develop our understanding of how these charms were perceived and circulated within a particular early medieval community.

“An Leabhar Eoin”: Verbal Charm and Literary Device

Gearóid Ó Cruallaich

Writing on the Hand in Ink: A Late Medieval Innovation in English Fever Charms

Lea T. Olsan

This paper explores a transformation in the technology of charming for fevers. In addition to spoken charms, writing or pricking wafers constituted a ritual therapy for fevers in medieval England. Writing on the parts of the body in blood, for example, had been known since the eleventh century. Writing on edible media--apples, cheese, etc.--are among the oldest known means of delivering charms for healing the body, and washing and drinking a liquid containing words written on an object also occurs early. Yet fever charms to be written in ink on the hand seem to be rare and two instances so far discovered seem to be fifteenth-century innovations. It seems worth asking how and why this might have come about. Are these self-consciously ‘learned’ turns on traditional technologies? Is this new emphasis on writing in ink meant to convey a modern approach to a traditional healing therapy? The manuscript contexts lend some credence to the latter possibility. Or has ink long been implicated as the medium in the rituals for fever charms, but simply never made the object of attention? In charm traditions, what does writing mean? Is it separable from signing when encountered outside textual amulets? To keep the paper within the limits of time, the focus will remain on the tradition of medieval fever charms in England, including a short explanation of the medieval conception of fevers as it related to the charm tradition.

Inversion of Roles in Greek Narrative Incantations:

Sacred Figures as Agents of Affliction

Haralampos Passalis

The structure of folk religious systems is mainly based on symbolic bipolar antithetical patterns, where supernatural figures, benevolent and malevolent anthropomorphic forces, occupy one of the two poles. The relationship observed between the figures and the function undertaken by them is usually stable. A benevolent agent’s main function is to contribute in maintaining the social order or restoring a disorder caused by and attributed to the action of figures belonging to the opposite pole. The inversion, however, of the terms of this equation, i.e. benevolent agents acting as malevolent ones and vice versa, though rare, is permitted and allowed in special cases under specific conditions. The paper examines a case of such an inversion registered in Modern Greek narrative incantations, where holy figures take on the narrative role of the villain factor and appear to contribute towards a challenging disorder. In which category of incantations does this inversion appear? Which are the holy figures who undertake the role of villain factor? In what ways is the malevolent action of holy figures manifested and what is the outcome? Why is this inversion allowed and how is it explained? These are some of the key issues which the paper proposes to address as well as to interpret.

Charmers on the Folk Practice of Charming in Serbia

Sonja Petrović

The focus of this paper will be an examination of charming as a social and cultural practice. The report is based on material from field research in different parts of Serbia during the last decade. Depending on the degree of 'tabooization' or desacralization of the magical text in the particular ethno-cultural environment, the field interviews covered written records of charms and spells, the performance of rituals, their content, or the context in which the charming took place. In cases where charming was the topic of conversation, the description of ritual practice intertwines with the life story of the charmer (i.e. conjurer, folk healer) who explains, for instance, how she learned her craft, the illnesses she can cure, to whom she intends to pass on her knowledge etc. Conversations about charming are seen as a specific aspect of communication and psychological transfer with clients on the one hand, and field researchers on the other. In presenting themselves to the researchers, the charmers described how they perceived their occupation and role in society, the significance of healing by folk medicine and the future of such work. Their attitude towards standard medicine is interesting: some charmers feel superior in relation to regular physicians, while others see them as colleagues, each complementing the work of the other; there is a clear division of labour and awareness of which illnesses fall within the domain of the charmers and which are dealt with by official medicine. Although from the standpoint of official institutions, the church and official culture, charmers are marginalized (some have been forbidden to practice, some have been condemned and persecuted within their family or extended community), they find satisfaction in successful healing and distance themselves from soothsayers and sorcerers who practise black magic. Therefore charmers perceive their role as being very important and fear that charming will become lost in the modern world. The paper also re-examines how the researcher's questions influence the construction of the interviewee's discourse in a folkloristic field interview.

Charms for averting demons in Hungarian practice

Éva Pócs

The practice of the Hungarians contains a whole range of charms for dispelling demons – collectors have been able to document sporadic instances of some of them in villages even in the recent past within the living practice of certain healers and magicians or from surviving written recipes. Some of this practice shows close connections with the texts and gestures of exorcism rites against the devil and the malevolent dead used by the Church in previous centuries. These include charms used to expel sickness demons or the possessing dead which penetrate the body. Another group of spells is related to church benedictions used by the Christian priesthood to bless homes, plough-lands or vineyards and to purify them of demons. These include spells which aim to dispel storm demons and dragons. A third group is closely tied in with the priestly, monastic healing practice of the Middle Ages and the early modern period, but has also been known in contemporary times through the orally transmitted practice of village healers. These texts include the spells used against *witches* and *nightmares* which are known all over south-eastern Europe and are related to the Judeo-Christian Lilith-Gello charms (these belong to the family of *Begegnungssegen*); as well as charms which contain a *historiola* and feature impersonated diseases (such as *szentantaltüze* which refers to *erysipelas* and translates as 'St. Anthony's fire.'). The fourth group of anti-demon charms is known only from the rural practice of the orally transmitted tradition, such as rites which serve to avert or disarm *witches* and *nightmares*, as well as the fairies known by the name of *szépasszony* ('beautiful woman'). In my paper I present these texts in the context of their use, origin and their European parallels. I mainly seek to answer the questions: what kind of demon world is revealed by examining the

various textual groups? Where do these demons originate from? Which is the stratum of users whose culture contains these spells? And, are they a part of the popular religion of the Hungarians or merely motifs of the fictional textual world of charms?

Luck In Your Trash Bin: Practices Of Discarding Textual Amulets (From Heavenly Letters To Chain E-Mails)

Daria Radchenko

Disposing of a piece of paper with a textual apotropaics might be even more problematic than storing or sharing it. A perfect example is a type of amulet labeled “heavenly letters”/ “luck letters”/“chain letters”. Such a letter is often framed by its owners as a sacred/magic artifact which can act and produce non-beneficial effect on its own, without any human agency: one does not necessarily need to read or otherwise handle a luck letter to receive *bad* luck, while to receive *good* luck certain actions must be undertaken. Most often bad luck or a curse is threatened for those who ignore or neglect a luck letter, and some of the later examples of this genre define at length different punishments for those who tear it or throw it away (in Russian chain letters, the former USSR leader Khrushchev is claimed to have been overthrown as a result of throwing a letter into the toilet). Finding themselves in this situation, people turn to contemporary traditions of discarding sacred or malign artifacts: to burn it with certain precaution or empty the trash bin on their PCs immediately after deleting a chain e-mail. However, people often choose an intermediate strategy of giving a letter away, openly to a specialist (a local priest or a collector of curiosities or a folklorist) or discreetly passing it to a neighbor. The latter case is considered a malign magical activity. The intertwine between a luck letter as an autonomous force with a potential negative effect, “lay” senders and receivers and “specialists”, are all bound together with the problem of discarding a magical object and it forms a complex and dynamic network of actors. The presented paper will discuss how media development has changed the practices of handling luck letters (in particular, getting rid of them) in Russia since 19th century to the present day.

Flum Jordan in the Germanic-speaking parts of Europe

Johnathan Roper

The charm type Flum Jordan is evidenced in Germanic-speaking parts of Europe from the late medieval period till the twentieth century. This paper surveys the forms variants took in these parts of north-western Europe during these centuries.

Intersections of Charming and Divination in 21st Century Canada

Kari Sawden

The presence of charms in divination has been well established in archives, folk collections (Bennett 1992, Creighton 1968, Ritchie 1965, Buckley 2000), and our own memories of plucked petals and chanted incantations to reveal a potential true love. Rooted in the desire to uncover hidden knowledge, divination’s boundaries continually blend with those of magic and charming. And while studies frequently relegate divination to rural or vernacular customs of the past (Drury 1986) or to cultures outside of North America (Bascom 1980, Loewe 1994) it remains a vibrant part of Canadian society, as does charming (Lovelace 2011). The traditions that dominate contemporary, particularly urban, divination in Canada (tarot, astrology, and palm reading) are not always overt examples of charming. However, they reveal the ways in which this tradition has become interwoven and transformed within the lives of those who undertake them. Drawing upon my work with divination practitioners in Canada, I will explore the ways in which they adapt and enact charming. Specifically, I will focus on two key points of intersection: a) spoken words before or during the act that are used to protect the participant(s) and/or elicit information, and b) the tools themselves, which become charms through the divinatory process. By focusing on contemporary charming through the lens of divination, I will challenge the assumed disconnection of these practices from the lived experiences of Canadians in the 21st century and demonstrate that they continue to be an enduring part of individual and communal traditions.

“Threefold Stories, Threefold Charms”: Becquer’s Poetic Ethnography of Witchcraft

María Tausiet

One of the most compelling literary expressions of all time – and one in which the meeting of the traditional and the new is key – is the magic charm. Striking examples of such formulae are to be found in three of the tales included by the Spanish writer G. A. Bécquer in his *Cartas desde mi celda* (Letters from my cell, 1864). Taking a real-life contemporary event as his starting-point – the brutal death at the hands of the villagers of Trasmoz (Zaragoza) of an old woman accused of witchcraft – he weaves three separate but interconnected stories. Straddling the fields of literature and anthropology, history and fable, the poet is revealed as an astute ethnographer as he examines the basis of the powers attributed to witches in two medieval legends. The central character in the first, which unfolds in Islamic Spain, is a necromancer who obtains the power he longs for by studying books of magic. The second, set in the period after the Christian Re-conquest, tells the story of a pretty young woman, a “Cinderella in reverse”, who gets the husband of her dreams thanks to the help not of a fairy godmother but of a cunning sorceress. The spells at the heart of these tales represent three classic reasons for invoking magic: to protect oneself from enemies, to gain power and wealth, and to win love, or at least to subjugate another’s will. The mutual influence of historical charms, which we know about primarily through judicial documents, and literary spells is further proof of the permeability between popular and learned culture. Bécquer, an ardent admirer of Shakespeare, was greatly influenced by Macbeth, and for both poets, despite the enormous power of words, witchcraft was first and foremost, ‘a deed without a name’.

The Dagda's Spell in Tochmarc Emire

Marie-Luise Theuerkauf

One of the many fascinating parts which make up *Tochmarc Emire*, the Middle Irish tale of how Cú Chulainn finds a wife, is the passage of the lovers' first encounter. Cú Chulainn describes the roads he has taken to Emer's home and in doing so, employs allusive kennings for placenames so that only Emer can understand him. Much of the material in this section seems to be taken from the *Dindšenchas* or ‘lore of eminent places’. Cú Chulainn later explains these allusions to his charioteer. One of his explanations concerns the origin of the placename *Mag Muirthemne*—a place to which Cú Chulainn himself has strong connections. Muirthemne Plain (Co. Louth) was covered by the sea after the Flood and a dreadful sea creature, named *muirselche*, dwelt in it until the day the Dagda, the head of the Túatha Dé Danann, comes to the sea and banishes the creature by means of a spell. The significance of this section within *Tochmarc Emire*, its connection to the *dindšenchas*, and the possible antiquity of the spell itself will be discussed in this paper.

When Saints Become Malefic: The Case of Romanian Charms

Emanuela Timotin

According to some Romanian charms, diseases can be produced not only by malefic figures, but by saints, too. This paper inventories the charms which comprise this motif, identifies the usually benevolent characters which acquire malefic features in these charms and explains the reasons for their conversion.

What Makes the Use of Charms and Amulets so Constant and Enduring Throughout the Centuries?

Eleni Tsatou

Greco-Roman time is characterised by uncertainty and intense insecurity. People of that era used to wear magic amulets and charms. These objects were manufactured with special care and were targeted to influence positively the surroundings of the people who wear them, whether by healing or bringing good luck and success in love, or by preventing evil, in other words to shape a desirable future for the people who used them. By choosing to wear a specific amulet and charm, depending on the occasion, people in the Greco-Roman era appear to have created a specific plan of thought which defined their way of action. The psychological and cognitive changes that happen in the brain of those people through the use of the amulets lead them to create a perception of reality, adopt a certain viewpoint in order to feel emotions that give them the potential to develop certain behaviors so that they can successfully respond to the demands of their everyday life. This paper targets the substantial understanding of the spiritual mechanisms that lead to the use of these small, magical objects, but also the study of numerous findings on amulets that we have at hand in order to comprehend the way that the images, the phrases and the symbols influence the thought and behavior of ancient people. The understanding of this specific religious behavior of the people of the Greco-Roman era will help us reexamine the points of view relating to the use of 'irrational' religious behaviors not only in antiquity but also in our own time.

Agrippa's Trip - A Case Study in Cultural Processing

Svetlana Tsonkova

This paper deals with a Bulgarian verbal charm against water retention, coming from an Old Church Slavonic manuscript from the end of the sixteenth century, and aiming at curing horses. In many respects, the text is nothing exceptional among the other medieval Bulgarian charms against water retention. However, it has a unique feature – the name Agrippa, repeated twice in the beginning of the text. This name does not appear anywhere else in the medieval and early modern Bulgarian source material, and it has not been discussed or analysed in the secondary literature either. Here, I shall present the results of my case study of this charm and its peculiar feature. On the one hand, my presentation will discuss the multiple connections of the text with other Bulgarian charms. On the other hand, I shall analyse the intricate relations between the Bulgarian example and a Coptic parallel. The focus of my study is on the mechanisms of cultural processing. They are manifested through interpretation and reinterpretation, but also through possible misinterpretation and oblivion. What most probably started as corruption of the text and its historiola, resulted as innovation in the use of a supernatural helper. Thus, the case of the Bulgarian water retention charm clearly demonstrates the continuity and complex interplay between traditions.

The Good, the Bad and the Blind - The Role Reversals of the Supernatural Shepherds

Svetlana Tsonkova

My talk will be about the blind shepherds – a group of mysterious positive figures from a seventeenth-century Bulgarian verbal charm against the *nezhit* (personified headache). First, I shall discuss their role as positive supernatural helpers. Then, I shall place the shepherds against the background of selected historical parallels. Finally, I shall present another curative Bulgarian verbal charm, where the disabled shepherds are negative supernatural characters. My focus is on the specific type of occupation and on the specific type of physical disability (blindness). I shall analyze the role of members of this particular occupation as well as analysing disability in the role reversals of the shepherds in verbal charms.