

VERBAL CHARMS AND NARRATIVE GENRES

A three-day international conference, 8–10 December 2017, Friday–Sunday

Hungarian Academy of Sciences
Research Centre for the Humanities

ABSTRACTS

List of participants

Organized by:

International Society for Folk Narrative Research – *Committee on Charms, Charmers and Charming*
and *Belief Narrative Network Committee*

“East–West” Research Group – Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Research Centre for the
Humanities, Institute of Ethnology

Babič, Saša

Charms and localities: how locations in charms are described

In the narrative part of charms there are many place descriptions, either of where the narrative is happening, or of places where the malevolent force is intended for or sent to. In this paper I will focus on these place-descriptions in Slovenian charms as parts of the narrative: what places are named, how places are described, what adjectives are used for those descriptions, which places occur most often. The analysis of places in charms will show us how people pictured themselves in the course of events in narratives of charms.

Bjartmarsdóttir, Hrefna S.

The relationship between trolls (giants) and humans in Icelandic folklore: How humans are charmed by trolls

My talk is based on Icelandic folklore regarding trolls (giants) and the relationship between trolls and humans, regarding charms. The main sources are Icelandic folktales collected in the latter half of the 19th century and in the first decades of 20th century. Other sources are interviews which are preserved in the archives of The Institute of Árni Magnússon in Icelandic Studies and Icelandic medieval sources.

Icelandic trolls are heathen creatures; they have the appearance of humans but are much bigger and stronger. Often they are described as stupid creatures, cruel, greedy and often as cannibals. But on the other hand trolls can have some good qualities, such as being wise, skilled in magic and prophecy and very loyal and helpful to men when needed. In the event of any wrongdoings by men towards them, they become very angry and revengeful. On the other hand, they are very thankful if treated in a good way, being helpful and loyal ever after. The trolls' charm toward men can therefore be twofold, both good and bad, depending on how they are treated by men.

Borsje, Jacqueline

Saints, narratives, and powerful texts

There is an intricate interconnectedness between narratives and powerful texts. The powerful text may consist of a narrative (*historiola* or narrative charm); the powerful text may refer to a *historiola*/narrative charm or to a narrative in general; and the powerful text may be part of a narrative or a narrative tradition. This paper will investigate the last form, focussing on narrative traditions about saints. I will discuss several case studies of powerful texts that are part of a narrative from the medieval Irish literary corpus, and in some cases we can demonstrate that they were later inserted into the narrative tradition. The paper deals with the invisibility concept; various relevant powerful texts and related narrative motifs will be analysed, mainly in relationship with three (or four) Irish saints: Patrick (fifth century), Columcille (sixth century), and Moling (seventh century); Saint Brigit (sixth century) will be shown to appear in these traditions too. The male saints need to escape from royal ambushes and pursuing warriors, and for this aim they take recourse to powerful texts that bring about their invisibility. The spread of this motif across various hagiographic traditions will be traced, and an analysis will be made of how the powerful texts fit within their narrative contexts. Finally, the Irish material will be shown to belong to a larger context of possible predecessors from the Mediterranean areas and the Near East, where we find similar formulae, patterns, and concepts that may be categorized as literal sources, sources of general inspiration, or independent parallel phenomena.

Cosma, Valer Simion

The use of Saint Basil's prayer in the final decades of nineteenth-century Transylvania. A case study

The Christian Churches provide their ministers and believers with a complex set of prayers, rituals, and practices, intended to solve the various problems that an individual, family, or community may encounter in everyday life. An analysis of these services in their social and cultural contexts reveals fundamental aspects of religious life, as well as their role in explaining and dealing with issues such as diseases, marriage, thefts, and other woes. This paper aims to discuss the use of Saint Basil's Prayer in dealing with a wide range of problems that can be encountered by a believer. I will focus on the case of a Greek Catholic priest from Blaj (Transylvania) Monastery, who kept a diary about his liturgical activity in the final decades of nineteenth century. In the first part of my paper, I intend to examine his records, in order to reveal which were the most required and recommended prayers and rituals, which were the most frequent situations and problems that required Saint Basil's Prayer, and which were the most frequent combinations of rituals, prayers, and practices either required by the believers, or recommended by the priest himself. Based on the conclusions drawn in the first part, I will discuss the relation between Saint Basil's Prayer and the complex set of charms and maledictions that, according to folk beliefs and Church tradition, could harm people in various ways and degrees – from a simple disease, or misfortune, to demonic possession and death.

Dallos, Edina

***Albasty*. A female demon of the Turkic peoples**

Albasty is one of the most common, malevolent beings among the Turkic peoples from the Altay Mountains via the Caucasus up to the Volga River. Furthermore this name and notion is also well-known among some neighbouring Iranic and Finno-Ugrian ethnicities.

Albasty is primarily associated with childbirth, as a dangerous demon to the mother and the new-born baby. At the same time we have a great deal of data on *Albasty* as a tracer demon with long breasts and long dishevelled hair. Due to her widespread presence, *Albasty* has been mixed up with many other malevolent beings. So *Albasty* sporadically appears as a female forest demon who initiates sexual relations with people, or a stable-demon who overworks the horses.

This paper focuses on Turkic data from the Volga-region (Chuvashes, Tartars, Bashkirs) and the Eurasian Steppe (Kazaks, Kirgizes, Nogays), and drawing upon the many incantation texts, memorates and legends about *Albasty* collected in the second part of the nineteenth and first part of the twentieth century.

A number of different areas can be identified on the bases of verbal charms and folk belief narratives. For example, on the Steppe, *Albasty* was first and foremost a puerperal demon. As such, specialists (*kuiču*) tried to keep away or oust the demon at birth, a practice which continued until the middle of the twentieth century. Many legends and memorates have been recorded about the healing process and about the process of being a healer. In the Volga region the epic texts or narratives are comparatively rarer, although there do exist certain verbal incantations against *Albasty*.

de Blécourt, Willem

Flying charms. A charm compiler and a folklorist compared

In his *Nederlandse Incantatieliteratuur* (Dutch incantation texts; Gent 1964), Jozef van Haver collected twenty-five charms, purportedly used by witches to enable their flights. Ten of these charms

were from Flanders and fifteen from the Netherlands. In his comments he remarked that naturally these charms primarily occurred in legends. Yet he did not think it was his task to provide these legend texts nor to discuss the flying charms on the basis of them. He was, of course, unable to include legends which were only collected after he had finished his inventory. The actual number of relevant legends is therefore slightly larger.

It is hard to imagine flying charms in any other than a narrative context as concrete ritual acts would at least refer to the application of ointment. Although Van Haver's collection contains some examples of witches smearing themselves, it is debatable whether this was a performed or merely a narrative feature. (On the witches' ointment see the contribution by Michael Ostling, 'Babyfat and Belladonna', in the coming issue of *Magic, Ritual & Witchcraft*, vol. 11; cf. Lindow 1978: 170 on claustrophobia).

Most (if not all) of the legends can be grouped under the type SIN 511, the failed flight with the witches. SIN is a reference to the 1943 Dutch 'folktale' catalogue by J.R.W. Sinninghe (FFC 132), in which 10 Dutch failed flight texts were brought together. The number 511 corresponds with the Thompson motif G242.7: 'Mistakes made by person traveling with witches' (primarily Baughman 1966), as well as the fabulate ML 3045 'Following the Witch' (Christiansen 1958). The destination of this flight is the witches' sabbat, often held in a wine cellar (at least in the Dutch language texts).

The two compilations, by Van Haver and Sinninghe are not completely similar and demand a comparison, at least as regards the texts from the Netherlands. This may throw some light on the differences between an approach concentrated on charms and one which regards legends as central. On the other hand, the comparison may merely reveal different personal opinions. Both researchers were more or less operating on their own without much intercollegial discussion and comparing them, one may argue, only brings out their ideosyncracies. Van Haver, for instance, did not categorise Frisian tales as 'Dutch' whereas Sinninghe did. Sinninghe, in his turn, did not incorporate feeble examples of spells without a supporting legend. Van Haver did notice the incorrectly pronounced spell which forms the core of the narrative, but he also did not attach much importance to it.

Broader conclusions may be reached, however, when the Flemish texts collected by Van Haver are incorporated into the much larger corpus of the SIN 511 Flemish stories collected in the second half of the twentieth century, to which Van Haver did not have access. These altogether 90 legend texts enable the researcher to firmly delineate the main variants of the legend type. These can be used to indicate the narrative perimeters of the flight formula; in general they served to teach as well as to amuse. Another approach would be to look at the historical development of the legend; then the inclusion of the charm primarily appears as a fairly recent narrative device.

The charms discussed here are of course special in the sense that they mainly appear within a narrative and seem to have no existence as a genuine act. Yet the question remains as to why researchers of charms have hardly paid any attention to them.

Dorđević Belić, Smiljana

Stories of successful healing as belief narratives

The paper offers a summary review of the author's experience in field research of charms in the domain of traditional medicine, in different parts of Serbia. The author particularly aims to analyse stories of successful healing, recorded in interviews with interlocutors who practice different forms of traditional treatment. These stories are parts of the autobiographical narratives. Therefore, the author first discusses them in this context, with emphasis on the analysis of their social function: the legitimization of traditional magical knowledge bearers' positions and verification of the effectiveness of their practice. On the other hand, stories of successful healing are close to the belief narratives (especially demonological legends). Genres are similar in rhetorical strategies (authentication formulae, negotiations on truth), the system of (verbal) taboos, thematisations of relations between the real and the supernatural. In the end, the author compares the composition and motifs of such stories

with one type of incantations, where the patient meets the Virgin Mary, who sends them to healer to be cured and discusses their possible magical function.

Džekčioriūtė-Medeišienė, Vita

Child-threatening mythical creatures in traditional Lithuanian culture: Between real and constructed threats of the mythical world

This presentation examines representatives of the mythical world that pose a threat to infants and small children in traditional Lithuanian culture. The presentation uses data on child-raising practices and beliefs in rural communities of Lithuania at the end of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century.

The first part of the presentation focuses on mythical creatures or mythologised persons that were perceived by adults as threatening children. Such creatures, called *laumės* in Lithuanian, can be related to fairies. It was believed that they stole babies and swapped them with their own. This theme of stealing children is present in one third of all legends where *laumės* are mentioned. Mythologised persons often belonged to sociocultural outsiders (charmers, beggars, and foreigners) that had an evil eye and could harm a child by inflicting diseases or psychophysical disorders on him. Data reveal certain practices of diagnosing and treating such disorders.

The second part of the presentation focuses on the representatives of the mythical world, used by adults to frighten children in order to shape their appropriate behaviour and protect them from dangerous places. More specifically, adults used short expressions that contained everyday warnings of danger with a mythical worldview perspective. Also, longer narratives such as legends were sometimes used. Lithuanian has about one hundred and thirty names for such frightening subjects. They can be divided into three groups: sociocultural outsiders (beggars, foreigners and sorcerers), some mythologised animals (dogs, wolves, foxes, frogs, etc.) and mythical creatures (*laumė*, *baubas*, *maumas*, etc.). Children were told that these fearsome subjects could take them away, eat them or cause other types of destruction amounting to death.

Child threatening mythical creatures in the traditional Lithuanian culture reveal their dual aspect: on the one hand, some are perceived as causing a real threat to infants and small children while, on the other hand, some can be regarded as a means of shaping children's appropriate social behaviour.

Fraaije, Karel

Contra elphos hoc in plumbo scribe: Elf amulets and exorcisms from medieval Germanic Europe

In 1683 Haquin Spegel published an excerpt from a “note found at a farm in the [Gotlandic] Bro district called Stora Åby”. This document, written in Latin, appears to record the efforts of a certain Brigitte to rid her cattle of an elvish lactation problem: “coniuro vos ellvos ... ut non non noceatis huic famulae, Biritteae Clementis Aaby, in vacis aut lacticiniis ipsius”. Five centuries earlier and several hundred miles to the south, an eight-year-old child was interred with a lead amulet featuring similar phrases: “adiuro te alber... ad illum nocere non possis”. A fourteenth-century manuscript, presently in the University Library of Uppsala but originally from northern Germany, offers clues about the relationship between these and other similarly worded documents. Alongside yet another exorcism, we find a marginal annotation offering the following suggestion: “contra elphos hoc in plumbo scribe”.

In my paper, I examine the textual and material tradition of the medieval elf-exorcisms outlined above. Elf charms and elf-related illnesses have received significant critical attention over the last two decades, particularly in the form of Alaric Hall's *Elves in Anglo-Saxon England* (2007), Karen Louise

Jolly's *Elf-Charms in Context* (1996) and Richard Firth Green's *Elf Queens and Holy Friars: Fairy Beliefs and the Medieval Church* (2016). Shorter contributions include Joseph McGowan's *Elves, Elf-shot, and Epilepsy* (2009), Rudolf Simek's *Elves and Exorcism* (2011) and Susan Závoti's *Blame it on the Elves: Perception of Illness in Anglo-Saxon England* (2013).

Yet, the incantatory tradition outlined above has remained underexplored: most published attestations are difficult to access and remain scattered in a number of obscure works; some texts have not been satisfactorily edited at all. This paper is an attempt to redress this situation by presenting a collection of all of the presently published elf-exorcisms as well as a discussion of how these and other texts were used, transmitted and, as several expurgated specimens suggest, policed. I thus mean to contribute to the ongoing debate about the nature of medieval elves and their respective treatments as well as to the larger academic enquiry into what folkloric exorcisms can tell us about medieval medicine and (popular) religious discourse. It is my hope that a clearer insight into the genre briefly presented here will lead to a more informed continuation of that debate.

Gusarova, Ekaterina

The St. Sisinnios legend in Ethiopian charms: Interconnection with his life

The St. Sisinnios legend is very popular in Ethiopian tradition. It exists in the form of texts in the Ge'ez language, written on magic scrolls among other texts of both magic and religious character. These scrolls have a protecting function. St. Sisinnios is venerated by the Ethiopian Church. There are two versions of his life. The shorter one takes up part of the Synaxarion. The longer one is included in a corpus of hagiographical compilations entitled *The Lives of the Martyrs*. There is a notable interconnection between the legend in the amulets and the religious texts. Different elements of the saint's life passed into legend, some of them remaining unchanged, while others transformed. Analysis of these interconnections constitutes the base of the present research.

Hindley, Katherine

Three Good Brothers at The Siege of Jerusalem: A charm in literary context

The *Three Good Brothers* charm typically includes a narrative of its own origin, while its efficacious words require the practitioner to affirm his or her belief in the Christian story of the crucifixion. In the fourteenth century, these belief narratives were co-opted by the author of the poem *The Siege of Jerusalem*. The poet makes two references to charms, one of which, I suggest, is a clear allusion to the *Three Good Brothers* charm. Once this allusion is understood, the function of the charms in the poem becomes clear. I argue that the poet exploits the charm narrative to create a distinction between Christian and non-Christian healing practices. Furthermore, he uses the imagined oral performance of the charm to emphasise the unity of the Christian community both within the poem itself and between the poem and its audience. By examining this charm through its use in a literary text, I reveal the power of the charm's narrative to act beyond the charm itself.

Ilyefalvi, Emese

Discourses and practices of verbal magic in Hungarian early modern witch trials

In the early modern period, there was an uncertain and shaky boundary between various forms of bewitchment and healing by words (e.g. charms, prayers, blessings, curses, threats and swearing). This lack of clarity impacted on both the identification and evaluation of these texts, resulting in the failure of the majority of 20th century scholarly attempts at delineating various categories. Besides, anthropological research has also emphasised that viewed from an emic perspective there is often no essential difference between prayers and charms and artificial generic differentiations appear fairly insignificant from the perspective of use. In the early modern period, however, it could be a matter of life and death whether a doubtful act of prayer or charm was seen as belonging to one category or the other, and verbal magic often played a central role in witness statements. The importance of verbal magic is also evident from the practice of minute-keepers. In Hungarian cases, when recording the goings-on, the minute-keepers used various methods of highlighting the texts of various charms, threats or curses, for instance they would use a far more accurate citation and many instances of direct quoting or would keep the text in the original vernacular language despite the surrounding Latin context. In view of the jurisdictional situation, account also needs to be taken of the fact that creating stories of verbal magic proved to be the easiest technique for bringing a charge of witchcraft against anyone, as it was impossible to prove the use of a magic charm (in early modern legal practice witness statements were viewed as sufficient evidence). Therefore in witness statements we find innumerable references to verbal magic, but far fewer actual charm texts. The legal discourse used in the courts also induced the different speakers in witchcraft trials to evaluate and discuss various forms of verbal magic.

This paper offers a comprehensive and complex analysis of witness statements made in witchcraft trials of early modern Hungary in order to present the utterances made by witnesses and accused individuals in connection with verbal magic. I focus on the various micro-contexts and practices of charms, on individual vernacular interpretations and on the kind of strategic use which was created by the court setting.

Janeček, Petr

Social functions of Czech legends about child-stealing demons: from informative "Warnesagen" to educational "Kinderschreck"

Narratives about baby-stealing or baby-harming demons, usually called "*divé ženy*" ("*wild women*"), belong to the best documented demonological legends on the territory of the Czech Lands. The presentation outlines the main characteristics of these narratives, building mostly on the recently completed "*Catalogue of Czech Demonological Legends*" (Luffer 2014), demonstrating their connections to several *Märchen* tale types as well as to historical means of traditional protection against demonic attacks of this kind. Special emphasis will be put on the interpretation of social and cultural functions of this cultural complex which, regardless of its popularity in traditional folk culture, surprisingly did not attract much attention from Czech folklorists. Specifically, the secondary pedagogical function of these narratives will be investigated, including the use of demonic characters of this kind as *kinderschrecks*. This cultural practice remains popular even in contemporary Czech society, mostly because it enables adults to creatively connect traditional narratives to current social reality and adapt them even to the most current moral scares, including fear of Gypsies in pre-war Czechoslovakia, the human organ-stealing moral panic of the late 1980s, the Killer Clowns scare of late 2016 and issues connected with the contemporary European refugee crisis.

Jiga Iliescu, Laura

St Elijah and the fairies

St Elijah, despite being a central figure in Romanian folklore, is not generally regarded as a helping saint and for this reason is rarely asked to intercede in times of need, the only exception being when communities engage in collective prayer for rain. St Elijah's narrative collection is very large in size and is still being added to. Unexpectedly, I uncovered a therapeutic charm in which St Elijah plays the main role, a role that sees him being invoked in order to fight with the fairies. This paper contextualises this charm with those (non-charming) narratives that assert St. Elijah's involvement in meteorology and mythic cosmology.

Ķencis, Toms

The cosmic theft

Almost one thousand recorded Latvian charms against thieves and theft provide rich material for analysis of genre interconnections between verbal charms, belief narratives and apocryphal legends. While *historiola* on three thieves is the central focus of my attention, various means and corresponding motifs of binding leads to extended analysis in both directions of vernacular Christianity and general logic of magic actions. A separate group of motifs of somewhat inverted *imitatio Christi* allows for the highlighting of invocative ideas on the general background of evangelic legacy. Charms against thieves are unique within the Latvian material due to their double form of binding and releasing formulas. The latter is also related to particular belief narratives: such charms have a continuation after the charming action.

Kerekes, Zsuzsa

Verbal charms and charmers in the Japanese origin myth

This study examines how the ancient Japanese might have thought about the power of words — a concept called *kotodama* in Japanese. Clues to their thinking can be found in the verbal charms appearing in the *Kojiki*, the oldest Japanese chronicle dating from 712. The *Kojiki* is a collection of myths concerning the birth of gods, the creation of the Japanese islands and the origin of imperial lineage.

The paper begins by categorising the possible charmers, outlining three distinct types of character present in these myths: god, human and emperor — the latter is a descendant of gods according to ancient belief. Could all of them exploit the power of words or does the act of charming require superhuman abilities?

This is followed by an analysis of the various forms of charms which appear in the *Kojiki*. Revealingly, examples of verbal charms which require certain tools to keep on working their magic are uncovered, as well as a particularly interesting phenomenon: charms (or curses) hidden and spoken in names of people.

When it comes to charms, Japan is mostly known for protective amulets rather than incantations or curses. This research aims to present a small piece of this little-known world: the world of verbal charms in Japanese belief narratives.

Khanna, Rikita

Epistles and charms

The walls of a historically well-known fort in the vicinity of Delhi: Firoz Shah Kotla Fort resounds with the belief narratives of the supernatural figures of the Djinnns. Djinnns are not divine figures but are the messengers who are closest to the divine in the domain of Muslim folklore. These messengers of the divine are believed to reside in this fort. Every week, on Thursday especially, verbal incantations are performed by the believers to invoke and revere the Djinnns. However, the other days of the week the believers communicate and evoke the Djinnns by writing letters that are like pleas, which they place in the different corners of the fort to convey their demands, wishes, aspirations, predicaments, sorrows and to seek a solution on their behalf from God.

I intend to analyse in my paper the transformation of these charms via the content of the letters, and to place the observance of this belief practice as a counter to the dominant and inflexible belief practices comprising the Muslim religion, while examining the idea that the supernatural could be evoked not only by a skilled and practiced mediator but also by an individual and at an individual level.

Kōiva, Mare

The colour gamma of incantations

The paper reviews the use of chromatic and non-chromatic colours in incantations, as well as the role colour plays in determining the state of a person's health.

Incantations have brought to us some of the older, outmoded names of colours and healing practices. Colours in incantation texts have their own significance in relaying symbolic meanings (e.g. the black world and the water world with their black denizens as a symbolic fight with illness and death). Symbolic meaning is important in delivering the core message of an incantation. A colour could denote an incantation actor's high or low position and the corresponding capability to provide help, but colour names used in texts could represent flattering or promotion in position. However, colours are not named in all incantation genres; the presentation will provide a statistical overview of occurrence.

The second part of the presentation will concentrate on the colours of the body and bodily organs as they have been used as indicators of illness and the state of the organs. Charmers' descriptions are found in vernacular medicine and belief account records and narratives, as well as in incantation manuscripts. Widespread vernacular diagnosis has persisted in other genre corpora, e.g. phraseology.

Leach, Katherine

Narrative healing charms in medieval and early modern Wales

Charms and charming in medieval and early modern Wales is a topic about which relatively little has been said. Although there are only a handful of extant Welsh manuscripts which feature charms from before about 1500, much remains to be discovered about these texts and their implications especially for healing in late medieval and early modern Wales. Most of the medieval healing charms consist of *Flum Jordan* and *Longinus* charm types for stopping blood, but I have also discovered two *Three Good Brothers Charms*.

In this paper, I will examine several of the Welsh narrative charms to demonstrate their continuity from the late 14th up to the 17th century, and their consistency within the context of greater European charming traditions. Many of the Welsh charm types are found in vernacular recipe books of England and the Continent, and I will consider the interplay between the charms the texts in which they are found, in order to consider the ways in which these texts might have been used in practical application

for healing. Furthermore, I am eager to unveil a 16th century charm against scrofula that I have recently discovered, and that is unlike anything in the Welsh material uncovered so far.

Lielbārdis, Aigars

The Devil in Latvian charms and related genres

The Devil is one of the common characters in Latvian folklore. In the charm corpus it is not frequently mentioned directly, but parallels are discoverable in comparison with other folklore genres, such as folk-tales and belief legends. Thus supplementing the material extracted from one genre with that from other, the context and the field of semantics become more extended and explained, frequently also emphasising the relation between seemingly hidden associative concepts. Internal coherence of folklore material manifested by images, symbols and values explains the usage within the particular genres for the purpose of adding nuances and emphasis for some detail or aspect.

Most folklore narratives and charms can be traced to international roots and influences, which become localised in Latvian tradition. Multi-layered notions of the Devil (pre-Christian, Biblical) reveal Devil distinctions in the contexture of folkloric genres and influences within the context of Latvian culture.

Macpherson, Annabel Marie

A new perspective on the English witch-hunts, demonology and the ‘cunning folk’

The English witch hunts, between 1542 and 1736, resulted in the publication of some of the greatest contemporary discourses on charmers. Whether as treatise on the justification of witchcraft prosecutions, guides to jurymen, or refutations of the validity of charges, these documents sought to influence accusers, judges and lawmakers. This paper offers a new perspective: that three interconnected discourses shaped witchcraft accusations, that of the prosecution of all ‘magical’ practices, that of the merit in study of charming, and that of the defense of traditional charmers. Works such as the *Daemonology* of King James I created a narrative for explaining misfortune that advocated for the prosecution of all charmers and participants of outwardly non-Christian folkloric activities as a deterrent against evil. The academic study of divination, magical or occult practices created a discourse stressing the merits of scientific scholarship that defended its students against accusations of witchcraft. A third narrative is found within the witchcraft accusations, that of benevolent traditional charmers such as wise-men and women protecting their communities against malevolent witchcraft. This paper demonstrates the value of this new perspective in creating a more nuanced interpretation of English witchcraft accusations, in both the secular and ecclesiastical courts, based on beliefs around charming and witchcraft.

Markus Takeshita, Kinga

Charms and magic objects in the Iranian national epic

Since the last century, valuable studies on Iranian folk beliefs have been published, such as the *Neyrangestan* by Sadeq Hedayat (Tehran, 1934), the *Croyances et coutumes persanes* by H. Masse (Paris, 1938), *The Wild Rue* by B. A. Donaldson (London, 1938) and the *Az khesht ta khesht* (From birth to grave) by M. Katira’i (Tehran, 1969). Numerous folktale collections and a monumental undertaking of publishing Persian folktale texts with pertinent data and variants under the title of *Farhang-e afsaneha-ye mardom-e Iran* (A Dictionary of Iranian Folktales) by A. Darvishian and R. Khandan Mahabadi appeared in the last decades.

In this paper I will deal with the concepts of magic (*jadu, afsun*) and enchantment (*tilism*, that also means talisman) in the *Shahname*, the national epic of Ferdousi (940-1020, C.E.), which is a rich depository of the traditions of ancient Iran. Instruments of healing and wonder are owned by the saintly king Key Khosrou who ruled before the coming of the prophet Zoroaster (Zardusht). Stories about magical spinning (the Haftvad episode, connected with the rise of the Sasanians) and the evil eye (in the time of the king Khosrou Nushin-ravan) also appear. The name of God is usually pronounced before practicing magic. Examples from other medieval Persian narratives (the *Vis o Ramin* by Gorgani, the *Eskandarnama* of Nezami) and from folktales will also be used to broaden the perspective of the paper.

Moine, Aleks

Word power and questions of performance in *Skírnismál*: the incorporation of a verbal charm in a narrative poem

Skírnismál, “The Lay of Skírnir”, tells of the journey of Skírnir to woo Gerðr for his master Freyr. An interesting feature of this narrative poem in form of a dialogue is the curse cast on Gerðr by the protagonist. I undertake in this paper a close reading of that curse through the lens of speech act theory. By studying the various discursive strategies used by Skírnir to make the giantess obey his will (or that of his master), I would like to question the relationship between the charm and the poem in which it is enclosed. The notion of performance is essential in our understanding of Eddic poetry, and this narrative poem contains elements that speak for a sort of theatrical performance. What would it mean, therefore, to perform a charm in the context of theatre? Is the charm still charged with the power of uttered words? An answer to this question could be found in the relation between orality and literacy in the onstage use of a stick on which to carve runes. A parallel to Skírnir’s curse has, indeed, been found on a rune stick in Bergen, Norway, which could suggest that the completion of charms in the Old Norse culture evolved around writing. Writing and speaking were thus two complementary aspects of the power of words, intertwined in the performance of the narrative poem.

Mosia, Bela

Petrified serpent legends and charms of petrification in Georgia

Petrification is the process whereby a character may be turned to stone. Petrification stories are used to explain the origin of prehistoric monuments. In our work we focus on unique legends of petrified serpents in Georgia and show samples of geographical areas where the legends and their plots take place and the unique landscape with its snake’s figure is preserved. The legend is dedicated to the water guardian snake and also to the ancient myth of Amirani who was chained to a rock where a snake tried to kill him, but Saint George cursed the snake, petrifying it and rescuing Amirani from being bitten by the snake. The diversity of understanding of the serpent’s genesis and function and character makes them unique. At the same time we will discuss the charms of petrification in Georgia, which are rare texts accompanied by actions. Special charms are used to petrify snakes for a while, after which they are released. Their petrification was necessary for safety and peace, but was never used to kill the serpents. Having found some plots of petrification in fiction, we discuss the influence of some legends of petrification on Georgian literature.

Nikolić, Davor

A curse is dislodged by a curse: Triangulation of charm, curse and legends about saints

A curse is often seen as the origin of the evil inflicted upon a person or an animal. Verbal charm can therefore be seen as the countermeasure to a curse, a remedy for evil, but surprisingly or not, a curse is often found in verbal charms as a strategy or a formula of exorcism (cf. Golopentia 2004; Ilomäki 2009; Pócs 2004; 2009; Tsiklauri and Hunt 2009). In the fashion of "taking the hair of the dog that bit you" (or in its Croatian variant: *klin se klinom izbija* ("a wedge is dislodged by a wedge")), an antidote (verbal charm) uses the same verbal strategy as the cause of the disease. If the poetic word in verbal charms is a remedy (Kekez 1996), then it can treat something inflicted by the word itself. Etymology helps us somewhat in understanding the nature of oral rhetorical genres: *urok* (the concept best described as the evil eye) is derived from the verb *reći* (to say), which means that one word is countered by another using some poetic elements of the initial word used maliciously.

One of the reasons for this somewhat homeopathic procedure is the fact that cursing is essentially a human activity. By using curses in verbal identification of the evil entity (*urok*) a charmer treats that entity as equal to or weaker than the human, i.e. him/herself. The presence of the curse confirms that the procedure of identification through anthropomorphization (giving names, finding the origin of the evil entity or the very fact of direct addressing) is completed and that the expelling sequence can follow.

Legends about saints are seen in this research as a source of authority for this practice. The concept of divine or holy authority in verbal charms is a well-studied topic, and this research will try to contribute by analysing curses used as verbal exorcism in legends about saints (both in prose and in verse) recorded in the Croatian language from the Middle Ages onwards. The analysed corpus will be compared with verbal charms using the curse as a formula of exorcism.

Olsan, Lea T.

The worms in the Worm Charms

Job sitting in the ashes or on a dunghill crying for relief from biting worms constitutes a well-known medieval charm in English, German, and Latin to destroy worms in men and cattle. The sufferer in the narrative may vary. Charms from medieval England assign the worms to St. George, St. Peter, and others who suffer from, or 'have' worms but don't sit in the ashes. In some charms the worms are numbered and counting them down is the narrative means of destroying them. In others, the worms maintain attributes of colour. In one charm, St Peter has three worms: 'the white did bite the flesh free/ the red did suck the blood fast/ the black did gnaw the bone at last.' Anton Kuhn pointed out in 1864 that this theme of coloured worms appears in charms for worms in the Atharva-veda, where we find, 'the variegated worm, the four-eyed, the speckled, and the white' and more. In this paper I propose to take a comparative view of the worms in the worm charms over time and region (to the extent possible), in order to identify the comparative aspects in worms – the malady and the vexation – in the narrative and declamatory incantations against worms.

Palleiro, Maria Ines

Charms and wands in 'John the Lazy': performative charms in the Argentinean folk narrative

Wands of virtue appear in the Argentinean folk narrative as useful devices used by the hero to achieve his dreams. In this presentation, I deal with the formulaic use of a magic charm in the Argentinean folktale, "John the Lazy" (ATU 675), collected in fieldwork. This charm deals with an invocation to

the “Wand of virtue” given to the hero through God’s mercy, whose proper use shows the performative force of language. Using the correct charm and waving his wand, the Argentinean folk hero manages to marry the princess and to live without working. The tension between the absence of effort and the need to work is solved in this tale in a world of dream, in which the real effort is to learn how to use the correct words in the right situation. Social beliefs in the supernatural are expressed in this tale, in which the wand is a gift from God that allows the hero to avoid struggle. But the main gift is actually the knowledge of language, which permits the hero to make an accurate usage of formulaic discourse, structured in the charm in an epigrammatic way. I propose a metapragmatic consideration of this charm, which deals with “speech about speech in speech about action” (Urban 1989).

In the Argentinean context in which I collected this folktale, the hero is the young son of a rural peasant family, poor and struggling, like the narrator and his audience. Paradisiac motifs appear in this tale, reframed in the narrative plot that expresses the force of believing in the supernatural, not only to solve the problems of everyday life but also to realise the most incredible dreams. The lazy poor boy who marries the princess thanks to the force of these dreams shows how language is the key both to repairing social gaps and to restoring collective order.

Passalis, Haralampos

Etiology of a disorder (dis-ease) and restoration of order (therapy). A case of a Greek belief narrative connected with charms against abdominal diseases

Although belief narratives and charms are considered two different genres of oral folk creation, with different modes of transmission, performance and function, they are both in a constant dialectical relationship, yielding mutual feedback. One of the main forms of this interactive relationship concerns the etiology of a dis-ease (construction of a dis-order, i.e. belief narratives) and its therapeutic treatment (restoration of order, i.e. charms). This relationship between the cause of diseases and their treatment is reflected clearly in a Christian content belief narrative closely associated with incantations used to heal abdominal diseases. A fundamental figure embodying this belief narrative – registered in many different areas of Greece – is that of the monk, or even Christ himself, who, often disguised as a beggar, is hosted by a family. Violations of both religious norms associated with fasting and social ethics connected with the accepted behaviour towards a guest have as a result the manifestation of an abdominal disease, which eventually the monk or Christ treats using an incantation. The article shows that the parallel examination of legends and charms, where possible, is necessary as it can give useful information not only on the ways by which the charm text is produced and reproduced, but also on the position and status of the genre in the context of a wider folk religious system. Furthermore, it could contribute to the understanding of the charm text, which without the knowledge of the belief narrative is often incomprehensible if not nonsensical.

Popović Nikolić, Danijela

Man against demon: interconnections between incantations and belief narratives

The present paper examines the relationship between incantations and belief narratives, two types of oral genres based on human contact with supernatural beings. The contact testifies to a dangerous disruption of the boundary between the human and the demonic worlds, and about intensive efforts to consolidate it so that the participants find themselves again in a space that belongs to them. For this purpose, various verbal and nonverbal means are used in belief narratives (gestures, the use of certain objects and plants, sending sound or light signals, carrying out different activities – such as going backwards, placing a cap over the forehead, etc.). Incantations, on the other hand, because they are an

inseparable part of vernacular magical practices, have at their basis verbal communication between themselves and impure forces.

The paper will analyse the following aspects of interconnection between these oral genres: 1) the display of a genre in a genre – the presence of incantations in belief narratives about dispersing hailstorm clouds and similar narratives; 2) the types of verbal communication with the supernatural being in belief narratives (swearing, curse, command, reproach), and their equivalents in incantations; 3) various motifs about protection from demons (counting the uncountable, soiling in excrement; thorns, fire, metal, brooms, etc.). The consideration of shared elements in the genres that preserve the relationship with the mythological narrative will include elements of the ceremonial context in which incantations are performed. We argue that some of these elements appear in belief narratives as well and that they undergo a transformation there.

Pop-Curşeu, Ioan

Witches, children and demons: baby theft in horror movies

This paper will try to investigate the beliefs related to the theft of babies by witches as a narrative strategy used in horror movies. By approaching this topic, I will try to explore a field almost ignored by scholars. On one hand, the anthropological and historical research on the abduction of babies by witches is remarkable, as is the analysis of literary texts inspired by it. On the other hand, the cinema is an important missing piece of the puzzle, although one can find in horror films extraordinary ideas and narrative situations related to the theft of babies stealing by witches. I will analyse some classical or lesser-known situations, as follow: the stolen baby as an ingredient for witches' potions; the replacement of a "normal" baby with the Antichrist or with a child conceived by a witch after a sexual intercourse with the Devil; the use of children's dead bodies in magical rituals and the verbal practices associated with this use etc. Neither will I ignore the role of the charms and verbal incantations in all the examples taken into account in my paper. Here are some examples: *Håxan* by Benjamin Christensen (1922); *The Devil Rides Out* by Terence Fisher (1968); *Rosemary's Baby* by Roman Polanski (1968); *La Endemoniada. El poder de la las tinieblas* by Amando de Ossorio (1975); *Art of the Devil (Khon Len Khong)*, I, by Thanit Jitnukul (2004)...

Pócs, Éva

Variants of the other world in belief narratives and verbal charms

In my paper I explore motifs of the other world (other worlds, their inhabitants, ways of getting to the other world) in various types of Hungarian charms (primarily certain Hungarian versions of the *Begegnungssegen/Encounter Charm*), in vision narratives recorded in the Middle Ages and in the early modern period (e.g. accounts by holy seers 'transported' to heaven, and by witches and their victims who had participated at Witches' Sabbaths), as well as in modern-age memorates relating dream and vision narratives.

The material I examine is deliberately heterogeneous, since my principal goal is to compare the various motifs of other worlds as they appear in different genres, in texts of divergent speech situations, and in accounts uttered on the different levels of narrative transmission. My main questions are the following. What are the general, common, 'archetypical' images and symbols of the other world that appear in every genre, function and speech situation (such as the other world as a cold, infertile, 'raw' no-man's-land; the other world as the duality of a bright, light 'up above' type place and a dark, black, 'down below' place type; reaching the other world by a path, a tunnel, a bridge, a ladder, through obstacles; reaching the other world 'in the soul'; being 'transported', i.e. reaching it through the soul exiting the body – i.e. ecstasy – and reaching it in the bodily sense, through symbolic

moments such as being lost, misguided or going round in circles)? Which are the motifs, sometimes accidental in their appearance, associated with other worlds and access to other worlds related to various genres, functions and narrative situations? As far as my material allows, I shall also examine the kind of changes in content which the evolution of functions and speech situations induces in the case of each genre; e.g. how the spiritual other worlds of *memorates* which directly reflect dream and vision experiences metamorphose into concrete earthly other worlds in the narrative genres which become distanced from the original experience e.g. in the *historiolas* of charms.

Racénaitė, Radvilė

Mythical Beings of Fate, Illness, and Death in Lithuanian Folk-belief Legends

People have always felt the urge to understand the surrounding world. Analysis of the Lithuanian folklore texts, folk beliefs and customs reveals endeavours to interpret the quality of existence (i.e. happy life vs. misfortune, wealth vs. poverty) as results of fate. There is a notion clearly asserting that such significant compounds of existence as the length of life, the nature of marriage or the circumstances of death have been predestined in advance at the moment of birth by mythical beings, and therefore are hardly to be changed, if ever. Thus, human life, including its most significant stages, used to be perceived not as belonging merely to the human plane, but also to the sacred one. That is why the philosophic conception of the inevitability of the human fate used to prevail, along with the naturally deferential attitude towards life and death of every human.

A question of the number of beings associated with fate, illness, and death in Lithuanian mythology is worth special attention. In folktales and in the majority of folk-belief legends providing one with the identity of the encountered mythical being, the Fates appear as three women, whereas both personified Death and Illness are pictured as a single woman. This is probably the most typical form in Lithuanian mythology. Nevertheless, in some folk-belief legends the latter might appear as a group of three Deaths or three Maidens of the Plague. They are moreover referred to in plural form in Lithuanian verbal charms, as well as in phraseology, e.g. in figurative comparisons and expletives. In this case such forms may be used to enhance the suggestiveness of the comparison and the expected impact of the curse or the charm.

Radulović, Nemanja

Dreifrauensagen in Serbian Folk Tradition

Legends about the three Fates ordaining the destiny of a new-born child are frequent in Serbian (and South Slavic) material. They appear most often in ATU 934, but also in the introductory part of some tales (930, 930A, 931). In the present paper we will endeavour to provide an overview of the legends and tale types about them, relying on published sources (collections and journals) and ethnographic material kept in the folklore collection of the Serbian Academy – some 200 available texts. While systematization was offered by R. W. Brednich in his famous 1964 monograph, the amount of material calls for re-systematisation. We will therefore a) try to provide a classification of narratives about the three Fates and b) show that the gap between tales and legends is blurred when it comes to three Fates narratives. The later obviously stems from the place of the three Fates in folk belief.

Roper, Jonathan

Charms Editions: Principles and Practice

How best to textualize oral forms? How best to categorize oral forms that, at one and the same time, vary and have precedents? I hope to present some possible answers to these questions by a survey of the ways various editors have worked with the transcriptions of charms during the past century. On route, topics such as text and context, the nature of types, the reliability of transcriptions will also be touched upon.

Rudan, Evelina

The narrative productivity of belief narratives about *moras* and the practice of charming against *moras*

The *mora* (*mornica*) (Germ. *Mahr*) and her variants are one of the narratively most productive characters of belief narratives in Croatian regions. The paper will discuss which terms must be satisfied for a belief narrative character to be considered narratively productive and how the character of the *mora* satisfies these terms. The research will also try to show the correlation of the high narrative productivity of the *mora* character and the verbal charms used against her. The question arises whether verbal charms against *moras* are as equally part of the active narrative repertoire as the belief narratives about the *mora*, considering the fact that in most cases these charms are not part of 'secret knowledge'. If so, what is the reason for one genre (belief narratives) having such narrative productivity in contrast with other (verbal) charms? Finally, is it possible for verbal charms against *moras* to exist independently of belief narratives about *moras*? The research will include the following levels: the comparison of belief narratives about *moras* and verbal charms on the level of genre (prose/verse, composition, protagonists, e.g. St Thomas appearing as a character in verbal charms against *moras*, but never in any known belief narrative in the area of research), on the level of records from previous periods (comparison of research interest for verbal charm and belief narrative) and on the level of contemporary field research in the 21st century.

Rusinova, Irina and Shkuratok, Iuliia

The story motifs of learning verbal charms in Russian belief narratives of Perm Krai

Verbal charms play a big role in Slavonic magical practices. This paper exposes belief narratives where the main instrument of the charmer's influence is shown through sacral texts. The story motif, in itself the core of this narrative, is based on act of transference of verbal magical knowledge from a charmer to a neophyte. These motifs are identified as a rite via a set of actions among participants: The charmer leads the neophyte to a bathhouse; the initiate must then make contact with the Devil in zoomorphic form by passing through a fiery door (usually depicted as a dog's jaw), and/or by reading from a book called "Black magic". The charmer transfers his knowledge through acts of speech or by handing a written sacral text to the initiate. The charmer dies, and if he hasn't succeeded in transferring his knowledge to the initiate, dies in agonizing pain.

Solovyeva, Anna

Fear, superstition, and bargaining: Two Old Norse curses which were never fulfilled

Old Norse-Icelandic literature creates a portrait of a culture in which skill with words was given a place of honour. Those who knew their way with words had power over humans as well as non-human characters of myth, legend and saga. The question to be addressed in the present paper is whether the very belief in the power of words – and specifically of versified charms – could give a clever magician or witch a chance to bend someone to their will with the mere threat of a curse. The two cases in point are the Eddic poem *Skírnismál*, in which the servant of Freyr makes the giant maiden Gerðr yield to the god's sexual desire by threatening her with a powerful curse, and the versified curse *Buslubæn*, found in the legendary *Bósa saga ok Herrauðs*, where the witch Busla bullies king Hringr into sparing the life of the saga's main characters. The curses uttered by Skírnir and Busla are similar in many ways. Both involve threats to the social, private, physical, and mental life of their objects. Both culminate in runic inscriptions which can seal the curse or avert it. Both rely upon the most fundamental human fears – and upon the knowledge on the part of their victims of the tradition about magic and curses. But, most importantly, neither of the two curses is ever fulfilled; moreover, it is not in the best interests of Skírnir or Busla to actually fulfil their threats. Focusing on these two cases, I will discuss how charms or curses could be used without actually charming or cursing anyone.

Spät, Eszter

Commoners do not pray – or do they? Healing prayers among the Yezidis of Sinjar

The statement that Yezidi commoners do not say or know prayers is often quoted among researchers of this small ethno-religious group of the Middle East. As early as the nineteenth century, missionaries noted with dismay how “Yezidis do not pray”, an observation at least partially supported by modern-day fieldworkers. As the latter have pointed out, knowledge of religious texts in this oral society is limited to a few religious specialists and members of the priestly castes. The most important texts, the *qewls* or Yezidi “hymns”, are memorized only by a select few who can then perform them on religious occasions. However, there is also a genre known as *dua* (Ar. prayer). Paradoxically, many of the texts referred to as “prayers” do not constitute part of formal religious performances; rather, they are connected with healing activities. While in some Yezidi territories it is mostly members of the priestly castes who are familiar with such prayers, in the traditional Sinjar region these orally transmitted prayers, or charms, have until recently been a part of common lore. Some “commoners” still use them to heal sickness or ward off evil, though the knowledge and use of such charms is said to have been steadily disappearing in the past decades due to the gradual modernisation of society. At the same time, however, there is a growing interest in healing charms among young Yezidi people with school education. The value of such texts for them is not so much in their healing abilities, but rather in the fact that they form part of a disappearing oral heritage. The collecting and writing down of various healing charms have thus become a part of the ongoing scripturalisation of Yezidi oral tradition.

Stampoulou, Ilektra

The mundane magic of “The Lazy Spinner”

“He who chops wood for reels shall die.
She who winds yarn shall be ruined all her life.”

This is the one and only example of a fabricated, non-magical verbal charm in Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's “The Lazy Spinner”. In this tale, the unindustrious, procrastinating spouse who dislikes

winding yarn makes up this ominous verbal structure, which she then whispers to her husband, hidden in the forest, in order to impede him from bringing her wood for a reel which would of course mean that she would have to start winding. I intend to analyse this example in the broader narrative of Grimms' fairy tales, as a unique instance of a fabricated, inherently unfunctional (at least in terms of magic) "charm", one which serves only a practical, ordinary, mundane purpose. Rather than evoking the supernatural, these two made-up phrases aim at "saving" their creator, not from spells or dark forces, but from a simple, tedious assignment, and in this they do indeed serve their purpose. This particular instance therefore proves to be rather important, perhaps for the whole fairy-tale genre. Maintaining and taking advantage of the superstition and the current belief of the time, it simultaneously deconstructs it by producing a meaning different from its initial purpose, yet an effect which is pertinent and suitable. Hence, this "magic" is interestingly present since it is phrased and enacted, yet at the same time absent since it is false, a make-belief, in what could philosophically be analysed as a deconstructionist a-poria; a logical perplexity, a point where the narrative might be undermining its own rhetorical foundations, questioning traditional assumptions of the genre.

Timotin, Emanuela

The apocryphal legend of Saint Sisinnios in the oral tradition of Romanian charms

The Legend of Saint Sisinnios has enjoyed great popularity in Romanian tradition. Many Romanian manuscripts written between the end of the 16th century and the middle of the 19th century contain the narrative of the feminine demon with her protean aspect and multiple names who attacks new-born babies, their mothers or pregnant women. Since the middle of the 19th century, this narrative has been frequently printed.

The relation between this apocryphal writing and Romanian charms has been only partially studied: recent research has described how the narrative about the feminine demon influenced these manuscript charms.

This paper focuses on the Romanian charms of oral tradition, collected since the second half of the 19th century, and inquires to what extent they were also influenced by the ancient narrative. First, I identify those charms which resemble the narrative about the feminine demon through their function, plot and characters. Secondly, I discuss the charms which present the feminine demon as *Samca* and *Avestita* (the most frequent names of the demon in the manuscript tradition), and I question whether her presence goes along with the preservation of her specific attributes and of the apocryphal frame. Finally, I examine other charms, which seem to conflate the ancient narrative about the feminine demon and other traditional narratives.

Toporkov, Andrey

Wondrous dressing with celestial bodies in Russian charms and lyrical poetry

The article considers the motif of dressing with celestial bodies, known in Russian, Belarusian and Ukrainian charms as well as in charms and apocryphal prayers of the Southern Slavs. The motif is found in charms produced to influence authority and judges in military, pastoral, hunting, wedding and other charms. The motif includes several main components: the wonderful dressing itself (by light, the sun, the moon, stars, dawn, clouds, sky, thunder and lightning); the likening of a man to the sun and light, and his voice to thunder; the acquisition of wonderful properties (beauty, courage, the ability to cause fear) and even self-deification; a journey to the mythical world (to heaven, the clouds, Sun, Mount Zion); manipulation with celestial bodies. In Russian charms there are descriptions of how a person washes themselves with dew, wipe away the dawn, the sun, light, the Virgin's vestment, dresses in celestial bodies or clouds, is covered with the sky, goes through the sun, the moon, the dawn and the stars; snatches the clouds; enters the sun or a thundercloud; takes a moon in their hand, places the sun into their eyes; leaves the earth for the heavenly spheres. At the same time they become a person of a

giant proportions, so that the celestial bodies appear inside of them. The individual becomes sunlike or godlike, recalling the righteous sun of Christ and the formidable Thunderer-Sabaoth. Accordingly, people visited by the person rejoice as they would at the rising sun or the risen Christ. They admire that person and lose the gift of speech. In other texts, people become afraid of the thunderous voice and supernatural power of the person who is incanting the charm.

The motif of wondrous dressing has parallels in fairy tales and spiritual verses. It occurs in the poems of a number of Russian poets who borrowed it from the oral tradition.

Tóth, Anna Judit

Saint Sisinnios and other rider saints and gods in Late Antiquity

Leo Allatius, an ecclesiastical writer in the 17th century, published two longer narrative texts from amulets used against the demon Gylou, who attacked new-born babies and their mothers. According to these texts Saint Sisinnios and his brother hid their sister in a tower with her baby, but the demon stole the child. The two saints give chase after the demon, and after a long pursuit forced her to give back their sister's child and to reveal her names, which could save other women's children as well. The figure of this demon can be traced back literally to antediluvian ages, as far as the Akkadian Lamastu. Regarding the amazing history of the demon, it is hardly surprising that research has always focused on the demon and not the rider who defeats her – his person and name are less constant than the character of the demon. In my paper I deal with the problem of the origins of the rider. In the Roman imperial age rider gods became extremely popular in many independent, local variations, the Thracian and the Coptic rider being the most famous, but we know of a Danubian rider and a similar figure in Roman Gaul, as well as the most traditional form of the rider gods, the Greek Dioscuri. In my paper I examine the connection between the riders and the child-stealing demon, and whether they coevolved or if the sudden popularity of the rider gods was a result of the spread in the belief in Gylou and her relatives.

Tsonkova, Svetlana

Power genre – the dialogues in Bulgarian verbal magic

Medieval and early modern Bulgarian verbal charms abound with dialogues. Supernatural figures, illness-perpetrators, personified forces of nature and human agents are constantly talking to each other. While predominantly Eastern Orthodox Christian in most of their features, these dialogues also display characteristics from other traditions. Firstly, the Christian motives, narratives and characters are often re-interpreted in the framework of apocryphal and heretic ideas. The dualistic Bogomil dialogue tradition has a prominent influence in this respect. Secondly, the dialogues carry traces from their origins, coming from more ancient, pre-Christian belief-systems. In addition, the dialogues often form the central constructive element of the charms. They are the main communicative and operative field of the charms' characters and, even more importantly, the main instrument of power. The dialogues also refer to or remind us of biblical narratives, belief narratives, saint legends and myths. In this respect, the dialogues are not simply conversations, but complex structures, processing various narratives into information-packed texts. This paper will present a systematisation of the dialogues in Bulgarian verbal magic. It will also outline the next steps of research which the author plans to undertake in the near future.

Wolf, Nicholas

Native and nonnative saints in nineteenth-century Irish-language charm historiola

The international character of charm types has resulted in a tendency toward the deployment of supplications to a shared set of saints and religious figures — at least in charms rooted in western Christian nations. Common among these shared personnel in charm historiola are well-known figures like Saint Peter and Mary. An overview analysis of the existing corpus of surviving Irish-language charm texts that I provided at last year’s international committee meeting in Cork, Ireland, confirmed that indeed, Irish charms often follow this same pattern. Nevertheless, this reliance on shared saints is not an inevitable situation. Early Irish charm texts cited native Irish saints, and even the pre-Christian deities that later Church regimes sought to replace. Eye-healing charms dedicated to a strongly native Irish saint, Columcille, also persisted into the 1800s.

Placing this balance between native and nonnative saints into the larger historical context, this paper will examine the trends in popular saints in Ireland that scholars have unearthed, notably the transition from intensely local native saints to select island-wide saints by the early modern period, followed by pressure to elevate a handful of internationally recognized religious figures and only a select few Irish saints (Columcille and Patrick) that accompanied the so-called “devotional revolution” in the nineteenth century. It will then investigate the degree to which Irish charm texts mirrored this transition from native to nonnative saints in their nineteenth-century manifestations.

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