

**Abstracts from ISFNR 2013 (Vilnius) Committee for Charms, Charmers and Charming meeting:**

**Charms In Practice, Charms On Paper**

**Ploughing through Cotton Caligula A VII: Establishing Connections between the *Heliand* and the *Æcerbot* through Incantation**

*Ciaran Arthur*

This paper is about the Anglo-Saxon incantation to be found in MS London, BL, Cotton Caligula A vii. This eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon manuscript contains the C version of the *Heliand* and the *Æcerbot* charm and has received little attention. Its texts have never been discussed together but, when read against each other, the *Heliand* and the *Æcerbot* reveal interesting aspects of incantation and the power of words in Anglo-Saxon England. Despite their differences, these two texts have many similarities which may be understood in terms of incantation and words of power. I will compare the literary features of these very different texts to develop an understanding of Caligula A vii as a whole. From this I hope to draw interesting conclusions about our modern approach to Old English charms in their manuscript contexts.

**Charms in Slovenian Culture**

*Saša Babič*

There is only a small number of 'existing to be used' charms in contemporary Slovenia – charms seem have become a not very widely known relict in Slovenian culture. Nevertheless, there are some healing charms preserved and even published in Ivan Grafenauer's and Milan Dolenc's researches. The most well-known charms in Slovenia are charms for snakebite, sprain, toothache, cramp, fever and red rash. In those charms are obvious German influences, though some charms still show Slavic roots. The great importance shown also in charms is folk Christian belief in Slovenian folklore: in two-part charms there is always a legend from the Bible. Charms are a genre that has not been studied in Slovenian researches as intensively as other traditional genres, such as narratives. We will present the main charm types and characteristics in Slovenian culture area and show the remains of Slavic charms and the German culture and healing influences on the Slovenian charms.

## **The German manuscript tradition of the *Three good Brothers* charm and its development in European Middle Ages.**

*Eleonora Cianci*

The German version of the so called *Three Good Brothers* charm is transmitted by more than twenty manuscripts dating from the 13th to the 17th century, but its "original" (Latin?) version is probably much older. The corpus shows an interesting pattern of motifs-display as well as linguistic and graphematic variations. This charm has been defined "*Sammelsegen*" because it collects and arranges different motifs, such as: three brothers encounter Jesus, the Longinus formula, *neque doluit neque tumuit* formula, the oath by Mary's milk, etc. Some of those motifs have been also used in other charms to cure wounds, to staunch bleeding or against other illnesses. Different than the older German charms (9th-12th century), which were almost always transmitted at the end or in hidden parts of the manuscripts, often 'emarginated' from the page layout, the *Three Good Brothers* charm is usually transcribed together with other healing remedies in manuscripts containing medical treatises, for instance the German *Macer* and the *Bartolomäus*. The charm has been transcribed also in other medieval languages such as Latin, English, Italian, etc. An investigation and comparison of the rich German manuscript tradition of the text as well as the analysis of its linguistic features will show how this charm was deeply rooted in European medieval culture and if and how it used to be performed.

## **Healing charms and obscenity in the Hungarian witchcraft trials**

*Emese Ilyefalvi*

So far, there were found relatively few incantations that are either Hungarian or Latin (being in a Hungarian context) and that are from the 15th century to the 19th century. Therefore, we have even less information about their real use, about how and in what situations they were used. Witchcraft trials are our almost only source. It is quite obvious from the observations that there are huge differences between written texts (codices, recipe books, etc.) and "folk" incantations, charms that were transmitted in the oral tradition. In my presentation, I try to give a general overview about incantations, explaining when and in what situations they were used and what were their consequences, based on the examination of all the witchcraft trials published in Hungary. I also aim to collect and explain healing charms. It is noteworthy, that there is one quite typical form of text which occurs most often, even if its occurrence is relatively small, compared to a corpus of thousands of pages. These texts can be divided into two parts: there are texts that include negation only and texts which include negation together with words referring to faeces (which are swearwords), e. g. "dog shits, nothing at all, he's going to heal." What role does faeces have? Why

does it appear in the healing charms? In the second half of the presentation, I examine the relation of swearing (obscenity), threatening and incantation, with reference to the European practice.

**“She read me a prayer and I read it back to her.” Miraculous Literacy, the Mother of God and the “Reading” of Charms amongst the Gagauz**

*James Kapalo*

This paper explores the polyvalent and gendered nature of the relationship between literacy, the practice of charming and the figure of the Mother of God amongst Gagauz women. The dream narratives of Gagauz women, through the intervention of the Mother of God, interweave the miraculous acquisition of literacy, the gift of healing powers and the transmission of charm texts. In these dream and vision narratives, the terms *düş* – the dream/vision/prayer – and *okumaa* – reading/charming/healing – carry a highly nuanced semantic load. In this paper I will illustrate a tripartite set of relations which emerge from dream narratives, in which the ability to remember is facilitated by the ability to read and the ability to read is associated with the ability to charm/heal and the ability to read/charm/heal is the miraculous gift of the Mother of God, the custodian of healing text/s. This research, which is based on interviews with 11 Gagauz healers conducted between 2005 and 2011 in villages in the Gagauz Autonomous Region in Moldova, establishes the link between gender identity, strategies of empowerment and the practice of charming.

**A Comparative Study of Greek and Gagauz Healing Rituals against “fright”**

*James Kapalo and Haralampos Passalis*

Sudden and intense fright or terror, and the various forms of post-traumatic stress disorder that may follow such a shock or trauma, constitutes an important object of anthropological research, especially in Latin America (*susto*, *espanto*, *miedo*). Testimonies of this disorder have also been recorded in many areas of Europe, in particular south-eastern Europe. This study, comparative in its approach, is based on ethnographic data gathered, on the one hand, from Greek populations living mainly in areas of Eastern Thrace, Pontus and Cyprus, and, on the other from Gagauz, Turkish speaking Orthodox Christians, in Moldova. The paper discusses and underlines the symptoms, etiology and the ways/methods of treating this disorder. The aim of this paper is to explore those folk healing strategies which are based on a combination of empirical and symbolic systems of ritual action and verbal speech acts. Divination, which often forms an important dimension of the healing system associated with “fright,” will also be discussed here.

## **St. Peter's routes in Latvia**

*Toms Kencis*

*Super petram* is an encounter narrative charm against toothaches. The main motif consists of Christ encountering St. Peter, who complains about aching teeth. Christ says certain formulae and thus heals St. Peter. The charm type is widespread among European nations in multiple variations. In Latvian corpora of verbal charms versions of *Super petram* are encountered equally within collections of toothache and stomach-ache related charms. Even more, the healing ritual sometimes includes Christ giving St. Peter a particular herb, named after the latter. This herb is correspondingly used in folk medicine beyond "pure charming" practices. Aim of this presentation is to give a footing for broader comparative analysis of given charm type, including unique Latvian material in the analytic perspective.

## **'This child here won't shed tears of dreadful fright, 'cause he's not caught by Devil's might'. Change and Stability of Charms against Fright disease: a Hungarian perspective**

*Judit Kis-Halas*

This paper presents the initial stages and the planned further developments of research on Hungarian curative charms against fright-illness. Based on a rich and interesting database of healing and curative folk beliefs, rituals and texts, the research aims at exploring the charms and the charming rituals from the perspective of medical anthropology. The analysis is focused on the phenomenon of fright-illness (*ijedtség*) and its verbal magical treatment, on the bases of emic perception. While this research will develop and progress, the current article gives a general introduction to the Hungarian terminology on fright-illness in comparison to similar culture-bound syndromes in Central Europe, and also introduces the most prominent of the charms in Hungarian, together with English translation.

## **New forms and strategies of feminine magic**

*Evgeniya Litvin and Anna Kozlova*

The report analyzes several types of modern invocation texts found in the Russian-speaking internet that do not have direct equivalent in the earlier, non electronic, collections. Among others there are texts helping to lose weight, to increase breast size or penis size, etc. In other words, they belong to the sphere of problems, which are usually solved by dieting or plastic surgery. However,

their place among the other magical texts is not well defined: sometimes they can be found in the group of “beauty spells”, sometimes among the “health spells”.

Our aim is, on one hand, to understand how such texts are produced, what their structure is and which parts of the earlier texts are used as a basis for them. The latter is important because the images that are used both in the plots and in methodological guidelines for them in many cases seem quite traditional. For example, excess weight is compared with the fat of a pig, chest with puff pastry, texts should be read when there is the increasing or decreasing phase of the moon etc.

On the other hand, we examine how the authors of texts represent themselves, what is the audience of the sites where these spells can be found and what are the possible reactions and debates.

Probably the most interesting part is the existence of such a text in a public space when the use of a spell loses its traditional intimate character and demands almost no help from a specialist. On the contrary, the text can be modified, commented on, or supplemented with new details by any person and becomes a feature on women’s internet forums side-by-side with culinary recipes and make-up advice.

### **Oral and written tradition of Latvian incantations**

*Aigars Lielbārdis*

The oral and written tradition of Latvian incantations met at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries. The inheritance of the written incantations (handwritten, too) was possible due to widespread literacy in the Latvian community. This prerequisite developed in the second part of the 18th century in the areas of Herrnhuter parishes in Vidzeme. The written tradition of the region is associated with different collections and text summaries of incantations, including the spread of “Books of Heaven”/ “chain letters” in handwriting.

Although until the second part of the 18th century the incantation could be inherited mostly orally, it cannot be excluded that the texts could also be translated from other languages, e.g. German or Latin. This opinion is substantiated by the cultural and historical context, because monks of different religious orders (Cisterians, Dominicans, Franciscans, etc.) started their activities in the turn of the 11th and 12th centuries (Jesuits appeared in the second part of the 16th century) in the territory of Latvia.

### **Secret Knowledge of Hidden Books of Magic: Narrativity and Materiality Recycled in Family Lore, Disciplinary History, Local History and Novels**

*Åsa Ljungström*

In this contribution I link the early 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> history of Swedish Folklore Studies to the family lore of three generations of Gasslanders (1680-1833), among them two Reverends of Sandvik parish, and a doctor known as 'the wizard', another clergyman Palmgren of the 1900 century, a set of characters from the tradition of local historians around 1900, the novels (1975-1986) of a local writer, and the family lore of Sandvik manor, including that of portraits. The overarching perspective is the control of knowledge, even secret knowledge or lost, manifested in the master narrative of black books of magic. When missing, even the vacuum may be acknowledged as belonging to the context, so conceptualized as part of materiality pointing to relations of actors, artefacts, technology of network theory (ANT, Law 2004; Damsholt 1999). The frustration of the missing book and its content make people tell, remember available narratives, reconstructing others, tellable or untellable (Shuman 2006).

The research material is a manuscript of magical and rational prescriptions, compared to two handwritten bound books from Sandvik manor, in turn compared to handwritten notations kept in the family Bible raising questions of who wrote what and why? For antiquarian or religious reasons or practical use curing cattle and human beings? Three probable writers may each have their motivations. A selection of the two bound books was published in 1918 from a copy since they disappeared in the 1870s. One was found in 1924, the other in 1991. The art of magic is still being recycled in contemporary folklore. The research allows revisiting collections of early folklore studies rendering new pieces of information. It brings back into circulation the works of the predecessors in fields that seemed to be completed, closed to problem approaches of today.

### **Protective and harmful charms of native people in Kamchatka: tradition, practice, and transmission**

*Yukari Nagayama*

The Alutor are indigenous minority people of Kamchatka in Eastern Siberia. They have two different kinds of charms ("*ivianvu*" and "*uivalu*") which have been practiced during the Soviet period and are still practiced now. Since most of Soviet and Russian anthropological studies concentrated on material culture, Alutor charms were neither described in detail nor researched by ethnologists. In this presentation, I will give an overview of Alutor charms and report how people practice and transmit these charms in modern society.

Alutor charms are divided into two different categories: protective "*ivianvu*" and harmful charms "*uivalu*". Protective charms are used for healing ills or injuries, stabilizing mental conditions, resolving family problems etc. Harmful charms can bring misfortune or illness or even death to people. In some cases, people use for both type of charms wooden idols "*kalaku*" which are regarded as guardian spirits. Protective charms are varied in styles according to their level of force and effect.

Healing charms are considered most forceful and they are not just single phrases but whole narrative texts. There are many charm-stories about the Creator "*Kutkyniaku*" or animals which talk as human beings as in folktales. Other "ordinary" charms are phrases which consist of several words.

Despite anti-religious and atheistic propaganda during the Soviet period, native people preserved, practiced and are still practicing their traditional charms. I will describe how an Alutor woman had recovered from her physical injuries and mental problems, and also introduce how this woman learned these charms. Although the Alutor have no professional shamans, charms are a shared knowledge only among a limited group of people. People who knew charms were always admired and expected to help villagers. Protective charms can be passed to any community member, while harmful charms are often passed only to close relatives (e.g. from mother to daughter(s)).

### **Dialogue in German Charms**

Larissa Naiditch

The paper deals with texts of German charms from different periods containing dialogues, i.e. elements of theatre performance, - *Zwiegesprächssegen*). The narrative part of the charm being considered here begins with the historiola where the motif of meeting (*Begegnung*) is used; it can be the meeting between 1) the healer (Jesus Christ, a saint, etc.) and the harming character (the personification of disease, a demon) or 2) the healer and the suffering person. Then the direct speech in the form of a dialogue follows: the healer puts questions concerning the harm. In the former subgroup of texts he asks about the plans of the harming person, e.g.: "Where are you going?" The answers of the demon are straightforward and frank: he /she plans to inflict pain, harm, disease, etc. The last cue of such a dialogue is a command of the healer containing a prohibitive formula as a performative speech act. Thus the harm in this type of historiola is prevented by sending the demon away. In the latter subgroup of charms the question of the healer is directed to the suffering person of the historiola, and is about the cause of the trouble, e.g.: "Why are you so sad?" The healer instructs him how to get rid of the trouble. Thus the charmer becomes an actor performing two roles, whereby the actor-character relationship can be investigated. The dialogue in the charm has textual similarity with that in fairy tales; the form of dialogue is typical of many genres of folklore. Example:

"Christus ging auf einen hohen Berg, / Er begegnete dem Geschoß./ Geschoß, wo gehst du hin? / Ich gehe den Menschen die Knochen ausbrechen, / Das Blut aussaugen. / Geschoß, ich verbiete es dir, / Gehe wo die Glocken klingen / Und die Evangelien singen! / Im Namen +++".

## **Charming Elements in Croatian Folk Prayers**

*Davor Nikolić and Josipa Tomašić*

Charms have seldom been analyzed as a specific rhetorical genre of Croatian oral tradition. Relatively significant attention has been given to the practice of charming but there is still no classification of the Croatian verbal charms either in terms of their structure or their function. The general view of European charms from the Middle Ages onwards is that they can not be treated separately from vernacular Christian tradition and this provides the basis for tracing charming elements in oral genres close to Christian spirituality. In the Croatian oral tradition folk prayers represent a specific genre which is still productive in performance (especially in the southern regions of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina). One of the largest collections of Croatian folk prayers is the one compiled by the friar Jerolim Šetka (1231 records made by three independent collectors in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century) and this collection served as a corpus for this research.

Charming elements in folk prayers were recognized through the following features: spatial markings, syntactic parallelisms, phrasal repetition, etymological figures, evocation of God and saints, use of nonsense words and numbers with a symbolic meaning. The marking of space by means of verbal expression is found to be the most frequent charming element in Croatian folk prayers. This marking is often signified with syntactic parallelisms and etymological figures. This provides the basic scheme (formula) which is (in slight variations) found in most of the analyzed examples.

## **From Literary Text to Performative Ritual**

*Lea Olsan*

This paper will explore the question: what have Christian charms to do with Latin poets? It begins by looking at instances of literary borrowing in medieval, particularly Anglo-Saxon, charms. The phenomenon of the transformation of literary text to performative ritual, while it has been observed in non-Christian charming traditions, has rarely been studied. In the context of medieval Christianity, the phenomenon raises a number of questions. For example, how can the transition of a reading text to a ritual performance be accounted for? What gives the words of an epic poem the power to heal or help? Are its inherent poetic qualities of speakable meter, alliteration, diction and theme (semantic motif), on the one hand, or its singability, memorability or repeatability, on the other hand, contributing factors to its appropriation as a charm? Is it enough to say that because the poetic lines put to use as charms tend to be aligned with Christian benedictions, hymns, and psalmody in their manuscript contexts, the poetry thereby assimilates the powers to heal traditionally attributed to these liturgical genres? Do the origins and distribution of a poetic text have

something to do with its capacity to become a healing ritual? Are there underlying links between reading, blessing, praying, and charming? Ultimately, this topic concerns the nature of charming itself because it seeks to triangulate the sources of the power of words.

## **From Written to Oral Tradition: Survival and Transformation of St. Sisinnius Prayer in Oral Greek Charms**

*Haralampos Passalis*

The Sisinnius prayer or Gylou story, partly prayer partly exorcism, is an ambiguous, crucially interesting narrative enjoying intercultural as well as diachronic distribution. The text, which refers to the harmful influence and restraint – through the sacred intervention of Saints or an Angel – of a female demon bearing different names (Lilith, Gyllo, Werzelya, veshtitsa/aveshtitsa e.t.c., depending on the particular ethnic culture from which it has emerged) has drawn substantial attention by researchers on an international scale. In the Greek tradition, in which this female demon is known as Gyllo, Gyloy, Yello or Yalou, there have been recordings of more than thirty versions of the text, which span over a time period between the 15th up to the early 20th century and are geographically located in various parts of Greece. These texts, which have been used within the framework of a folk religious context as a means of protection for newborn babies and their mothers, are part of the written historical tradition. What is, however, the effect of this particular story on the oral tradition of charms, on that particular group of charms which are orally transmitted and performed? What forms has it assumed and which particular elements of the written tradition have been transmitted, incorporated, transformed, modified or omitted from which particular types of charms in the process? The present study aspires to contribute further into exploring the well-known myth, on the one hand, and, on the other, to offer additional insight into the interaction between the written and oral tradition of charms in view of the fact that the Gylou story is particularly susceptible to those interpretational studies which focus on the crucial processes of incorporation and transformation of the written tradition in the field of oral Greek charms.

## **Two Significant Charms Archives Compared and Contrasted**

*Jonathan Roper*

This presentation will relate the history of, and describe the nature and significance of, two of the most important charms archives in Europe: that in Copenhagen assembled by Ferdinand Ohrt (1873-1938) and that in Dresden founded by Adolf Spamer (1883-1953). The collections have much in common. Firstly, they were established by lone great scholars in the Golden Age of charms studies,

who lacked followers. A corollary of this is that both collections, being 'closed' to new accessions, did not take on a life of their own. Secondly, they also can be seen as stand-alone archives of a genre, not integrated into other folklore collections (as say the charms collections in the folklore archives in Helsinki, Tartu, Riga and Vilnius are). And finally, they are in a way 'meta-archives' – many of their records being of charms that are kept (or first recorded) in archives elsewhere. And yet, as this presentation will discuss, they also differ in quite far-reaching ways, not the least of which is that while Spamer's collection is confined to German-language material, Ohrt's is extraordinarily broad in its linguistic and cultural coverage.

### **Chupsa Moithemba: Tradition of Charming Among the Meiteis of Manipur**

*Rajketan Singh Chirom*

The practice of charming is actively discussed tradition among the Meiteis of Manipur. *Chupsa Moithemba* is a ritual performance involving charm which has been a living tradition over the past thousands of year in Manipur. It is also known as *Chupsaba*. The charm used in this ritual is a sacred narrative called *Numit Kappa*. The story of *Numit Kappa* is chanted as charm in *Chupsa Moithemba*. It is performed to prevent the recurrence of a misfortune in a family or clan, usually unnatural death, fatal serious misfortunes which could have resulted in death, or a big misfortune for the land as a whole like invasion by a foreign country, attack by wild beasts, etc. *Chupsaba* is performed by a *maiba* (witch doctor). To perform such a ritual one has, by tradition, to take the permission of the *maiba loisang* (the *maiba* office) at the palace and the *maiba* who has to perform the ritual will also be appointed by the same office.

There is a strong belief that if the charm is not chanted correctly, a bad spell could overflow onto the family, clan and even to the practitioner himself also. The family which has performed this ritual requires strictly maintaining a taboo called *Yelhen*. For which, the family may choose a vegetable or a meat that ever after they will avoid eating. Only the members of the affected family are required to accord by the *Chupsaba*. The paper, based on field work carried out in several villages of Manipur, will discuss the ramifications of *Chupsa Moithemba* and attention will be drawn as to how the charms are existed in ritual performances of vernacular religions.

### **Writing Powerful Words. Codicological Features and Transmission of the Romanian Manuscript Charms**

*Emanuela Timotin*

The present research focuses on the Romanian charms meant to heal a certain disease and analyses the codicological features of the manuscripts where they are preserved. The analysis is based on a corpus of manuscripts which were written between the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and were compiled in different periods and in various Romanian regions, by persons coming from various social milieus. The study intends to grasp to what extent the codicological features of the manuscripts disclose the profile of the users of charms, tries to reveal the attitude of the scribes toward the texts they would write down, debates on the 'marginality' of the charm genre, and inquires whether the graphic particularities of charms can be significant for understanding the circumstances under which the scribes acquired them (through oral performance or written transmission).

### **The First verse of St John's Gospel in Magic of Christian People**

*Andrey Toporkov*

The prologue of the Gospel according to St. John, and especially its first verse were widely used in folk magic both in Western and Eastern Christianity. For example, the Russians used the first verse of the Gospel according to St. John as a remedy from fever, from a snake bite, and from epilepsy. It was written on Communion bread, on crusts of bread or cloves of garlic, which were eaten after that with some rituals; sometimes the words were written on a piece of paper, which should then be burnt. The ashes had to be drunk with water. In records we can find information about magical practices with the first verse of the Gospel according to St. John known to the eastern, southern and western Slavs, Copts, the British, Germans and other nations. Similar magical practices can be traced from the early Middle Ages up to the nineteenth century.

### **Usage, Interaction, Status: Medieval and Early Modern Bulgarian Verbal Charms on Paper and in Practice**

*Svetlana Tsankova*

Medieval and early modern Bulgarian verbal charms come to us as texts written in manuscripts and on amulets. These writings, however, not only represent a certain moment of the charms' existence, captured on a material support, but the written forms of the charms can be seen as a part of living charming practices and rituals. Situated in a complex cultural context, these written forms are also central objects of long and multisided processes of reception and transmission. Processes, which constantly cross and re-define the borderline between the oral and the written.

The focus of my paper is on the different roles of the written texts, to be seen in a variety of contexts of existence, practices and transmission. More specifically, my interest is in the practical usages and applications of the written charms. They are key elements of the charming practice and of the verbal magical ritual; they are also important part of the amuletic tradition, transforming pieces of lead into powerful apotropaic devices; and finally, they are representative forms of popular religion and apocryphal tradition, which is persistent and vivid all through the medieval and early modern period. Therefore, the charms on paper and the charms in practice can be explored not in opposition, but as two related aspects in a continuous interaction.

### **“This is sung every day about your head against headache”: Parchment, Praxis and Performance of Charms in Early Medieval Ireland**

*Ilona Tuomi*

St. Gall MS 1395, a collection of fragments from various periods, includes a page of Irish origin and apparently ninth-century date, containing four healing charms known as St. Gall Incantations, each followed by instructions concerning their ritual performance. A close study of this single vellum folio examining the characteristics of the text, scribal practices and the cultural setting in which the document was compiled, provides a basis for theorizing about Old Irish magical practices and their multidimensional performative context. By highlighting the investigation of the liaison between the words of the charm and the associated ritual, an attempt will be made to elucidate how the textual register of the manuscript translated into physical performance. Accordingly, questions of *mise-en-page* performance and the manuscript as a material amulet are addressed in order to understand the written environment of magical language as well as the practices of charming in early medieval Ireland.

### **Charming as a social practice in the Lithuanian community in Belarus**

*Daiva Vaitkevičienė*

The paper presents a survey carried out in 2010-2012 among the Lithuanian community in Gervėčiai parish on the Western border of Belarus. Its main aim is to reveal charming practice as a social phenomenon and examine the set of relationships among charmers in the area. Two different kinds of relations are significant: connections between a charmer and his apprentice, and relationships among the practicing charmers. A charmer obeys some rules while transmitting his or her charms. Firstly, the charm must only be passed on to the first born or the last born in a family. Secondly, a charmer usually attempts to keep the healing practice in his family and reveal it only to

his close relative; most often this person is chosen from the charmer's family members. But a charmer is not obliged to transmit charms to kin; not only consanguinity but also matrimonial relations are significant as well. Alongside the typical transmission from mother to daughter, another widely spread pattern is observed, whereby the mother-in-law teaches her daughter-in-law. The place of residence is important in this case as well: usually the daughter-in-law lives in the same house or at least in the same village as the mother-in-law. Two different levels of knowledge were observed among charmers. During the fieldwork, respondents remembered prominent charmers who could heal many different diseases. Healers of this category were able to help their patients combining different modes of healing practice, a large repertoire of healing formulas and various herbal and animal medicines. Unfortunately, nowadays representatives of this category of charmers have disappeared. Another group of charmers is comprised of people who know a few specific formulas and can only heal some special diseases. In the middle of the 20th century almost every other family had its own charmer among the family members. Specialized charmers kept their verbal formulas in secret but they used each other's healing services.

### **Irish Scribal Culture as a Purveyor of Charm Texts, 1700-1850**

*Nicholas Wolf*

Unlike some folklorists of the mid-twentieth century, Douglas Hyde, the Gaelic-language scholar and prodigious collector of Irish popular culture, made little distinction in his *Religious Songs of Connaught* (1906) between charms and the many prayers, religious songs, and spiritual poems he encountered in the west of Ireland in the late nineteenth century. But while Hyde was ahead of his time in recognizing the mutability of boundaries between charms and prayers, he was less transparent about the divide between oral and written cultures in his charm collecting. Noting that “few, indeed, of these things [his collected materials] have ever been put upon paper until now,” (p. ix) Hyde repeatedly emphasized the oral sources of his religious material, obscuring the robust written sources that best preserved Irish charms of the eighteenth and nineteenth century in both the English and Irish languages.

What are those written sources, and what do they tell us about the practice of charming in a deeply bilingual environment: rural Ireland between 1700 and 1850? The paper proposed for this symposium will examine a number of those written sources in both Irish and English, consisting of the many manuscripts by rural scribes (often, teachers, farmers, and artisans) that mixed charms with secular poetry, catechisms, prayers, and medical material. Two contentions in particular will be addressed. First, the apparent insistence of scribes on recording charms in their original language—even when all remaining material in these manuscripts had been presented in Irish (at times requiring translation). The second object of the paper will be to reiterate findings by other experts in

the field of charms regarding the continued participation of learned culture (in this case, teacher-scribes, doctors, botanists, and scholars) in charming, a phenomenon reaffirmed by the centrality of literacy in enabling charms to circulate.