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ABSTRACTS

CONCETTA GILIBERTO

‘Incantesimi e rituali magici nelle tradizioni germaniche medievali: una introduzione’, *Filologia Germanica – Germanic Philology* Supplemento 2 (2021), pp. vii-xix.

CHIARA BENATI

‘Crittografia magica: l’esempio di un inedito incantesimo d’amore tedesco del XV secolo’, *Filologia Germanica – Germanic Philology* Supplemento 2 (2021), pp. 1-20.

In the German language area, the manuscript tradition of charms is often characterized by the wish to conceal these texts either during their writing or at a later stage. Even though some cases of censorship or cryptography of charms can also be identified earlier, this habit becomes more common from the end of the fifteenth century onwards, after the Church’s clampdown against heresy and superstition. In this article the up-to-now inedited love charm in München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cgm 351, f. 154r, is discussed within the framework of German love magic, paying particular attention to the peculiar form of cryptography it features, which is based on the use of Greek characters to transcribe German or Latin words.

LAURA BRUNO

‘The Engelberg charm: a new interpretation’, *Filologia Germanica – Germanic Philology* Supplemento 2 (2021), pp. 21-42.

In 1873 Karl Bartsch published a narrative incantation from a twelfth-century manuscript from Engelberg (Switzerland); here three angels encounter seven demons of illness on Mount Sinai on their way to harming the beneficiary of the charm, said “servant of God .N.”, and dissuade them from completing their task. The peculiarity of this medical charm is that, while the text of the incantation is in Latin, the names of six out of the seven demons appear in Old High German: *Nessia*, *Nagedo*, *Stchedo*, *Troppho*, *Crampho*, *Gigihte*; the last name, *Paralisis*, is the only one in Latin. Although the relevant literature often dismisses these names as terms for worms, rheumatism, and gout, it is my contention that they all conceptualize the same neurological condition, i.e., epilepsy, and that they can be analyzed as symptoms and different designations thereof. The present article analyzes these demon names and the harmful actions they intend to perform on the beneficiary of the charm in order to support this hypothesis; furthermore, the antiquity of the Engelberg charm will also be discussed on the basis of the formal similarities in the phonology of such names and those of six/seven demons appearing in a series of Coptic texts.

CARLA DEL ZOTTO

‘Dalla lorica all’elmo: aspetti del sincretismo religioso negli incantesimi di protezione anglosassoni e islandesi’, *Filologia Germanica – Germanic Philology* Supplemento 2 (2021), pp. 43-68.

This article focuses on the evolution of magical formulas and rituals in the Germanic Middle Ages after Christianization. Both in the Old English and the Nordic tradition, we recognize a hybrid character of many spells due to the presence of Christian elements or peculiar formulas derived from different languages: Irish, Latin, Hebrew. In particular, among charms for personal defence

from diseases and enemies, or against thefts and shipwrecks, we may find hybrid reformulations of Christian prayers on the model of the *Lorica* of Laidcenn in early medieval England as well as in Iceland. Furthermore, we may observe that the so-called “helm of terror” – which recalls the mythological *ægishjálmr* quoted in *Fáfnismál* – becomes very popular in Iceland as a powerful talisman. Alongside other very elaborated magical letters named *galdrastafir*, this symbol originated from runes and was used to avert calamity. Through existing documentation preserved in Eddic lays, Old English texts, runic inscriptions and Icelandic grimoires, this article aims at reconstructing the religious hybridization in incantatory formulas and magic amulets under the influence of the new faith and Mediterranean magic.

CONCETTA GILIBERTO

‘Incantesimi in inglese antico contro un *dweorg*’, *Filologia Germanica – Germanic Philology* Supplemento 2 (2021), pp. 69-100.

The word *dweorg* with the meaning ‘dwarf’ was certainly available in Anglo-Saxon England, as attested to by the earliest glossaries, such as those of Épinal and Erfurt, where it is used to render the Latin *nanus* and *pumilio*. OE *dweorg* also occurs in a group of five charms and medical recipes, where it seems to designate an ailment, characterised by a strong and sudden onset of fever. Particularly, in the remedies contained in the *Medicina de quadrupedibus* and in the *Peri didaxeon* – both translations of Latin medical treatises – OE *dweorg* means ‘fever’. In the Old English period, the semantic value of the term shifted, ending up to denote the pathological condition itself. More specifically, in the *Peri didaxeon*, *dweorg* is used to refer to an asthmatic condition, manifested by heat in the chest and tremor, whereas in the verse charm *Wið dweorh* of the *Lacnunga* the word is used in reference to a supernatural creature, capable of exerting a negative influence on human beings, generating a state of disease. The texts in question thus show an evolution from the prescription (and representation) of an etiological therapy, that is, aimed at combating the cause of the disease, to a more advanced, or at least more pragmatic, symptomatic therapy. In the following centuries, the use of OE *fefer*, *fefor* (whence English *fever*) would prevail to indicate ‘fever’ both as a disease or symptom. In parallel, OE *dweorg* lost the meaning of ‘fever’, to maintain only that of ‘dwarf’, analogously to what happens for other Germanic languages.

MARIA CRISTINA LOMBARDI

‘The Colic leaf: an Icelandic charm and amulet’, *Filologia Germanica – Germanic Philology* Supplemento 2 (2021), pp. 101-119.

Runic amulets were used all over Scandinavia during the Middle Ages in order to prevent or cure illnesses as well as discover thieves or murderers and sometimes ward off evil forces looming over human beings. After Christianity had come to Scandinavia, runic amulets, very common in pagan times, continued to be carved and hung around the neck or other parts of the body according to the type of negative influence one was affected by. Colic leaves appeared in Iceland as parchment layers used for the same purpose. They contained texts, written in the Latin alphabet, showing a mixture of pagan and Christian elements. Our paper aims to show the dependence of these kinds of pendants on runic amulet practice by analysing the only extant Icelandic Colic leaf, ms. Lbs fragm. 14, preserved in the National University Library of Iceland, in Reykjavík.

ROSELLA TINABURRI

‘*Se ðe ðas woruld gesceop*: l’immagine del Dio cristiano nell’*Æcerbot* anglosassone’, *Filologia Germanica – Germanic Philology* Supplemento 2 (2021), pp. 121-139.

The Old English corpus of texts related to magic is extremely varied according to the heterogeneous performative contexts involved as well as the specific structure of the works considered. Although significant, allusions to pagan deities can be considered sporadic in the tradition of Anglo-Saxon spells, while invocations, orations, songs or supplications to God, Christ and the Saints are very frequent. The *Æcerbot* is one of the most complete magical-ritual texts available to us: beyond the extensive hybridization of Germanic and Christian elements generously investigated by critics in past and recent times, it contains remarkable references to the Lord and other characters mentioned together with Him. God is defined as powerful, eternal, holy king, protector of heaven and creator of the world: *se alwalda, ece drihten, heofonrices weard, se ðe ðas woruld gesceop*, just to mention the most relevant terms. This essay aims at investigating those expressions, epithets and *formulae* used in the spell to define God in comparison to similar ones extant in the Anglo-Saxon poetic repertoire, with a particular focus on those related to the representation of the Lord as maker and originator of all the creatures of the world as well as of humankind.

LETIZIA VEZZOSI

'I Sette dormienti: evoluzione della *historiola contra insomniam* in *vox magica*', *Filologia Germanica – Germanic Philology* Supplemento 2 (2021), pp. 141-171.

The legend of the Seven Sleepers is one of the most frequent semantic motifs in magical-healing remedies for sleep disorders in the English medieval tradition. The occurrence of the episode is attested in different forms, which range from a short narrative (*historiola*), followed by analogical enunciations/ constructions meant to obtain the desired effect, to the simple enunciation of the theme (semantic sequence) up to the single succession of the names of the protagonists (*vox magica*). Such differences are usually considered to be variations with no consequences on the conceptualization of the magic ritual. On the contrary, they are not devoid of meaning, in that they clearly appear to be the outcome of different targets, by addressing a variety of disorders ranging from insomnia to various ailments and generic perils. This essay will analyze the formal evolution of the semantic motif within the English charms, which employ of the legend of the Seven Sleepers, in terms of echo and formulaic language, showing the different strategies implemented in the different kind of narrative.