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Book of Abstracts

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‘The magical past, the term *forneskja* and the Christianization of Iceland in 13th and 14th century history writing’, *Filologia germanica – Germanic Philology 13 (2021)*, pp. 1-21.

In 13th and 14th century Icelandic historiography the Christianization of Iceland and Scandinavia around the millennium of 1000 seems to have been of paramount interest. Thus, most historical narratives from the period (such as the *Íslendingasögur* and *Konungasögur*) are partly concerned with this period of upheaval, which is often depicted as a giant leap into a new era with the pagan religions consequently becoming symbolic for the past itself. This very interest is a testament to the pivotal importance of the pagan past in defining the Nordic Christian self. At the same time, with the gradual institutionalisation of Christianity from ca. 1000 to the end of the 13th century, other religious practices get equated with magic, which is often termed *forneskja* ‘oldness’, a word that appears in several medieval Icelandic prose narratives. In this study, this term is explored in detail along with its relationship to other terminology that it is often linked to in the narratives (e.g. *fjölkyngi*, *hindurvitni*, *heiðni*, and *galdrar*). The equation between the past and paganism, and the last decades of pagan worship in Iceland in particular, have held a powerful attraction for historians several centuries after this great shift to the more unified behavioural system of Christianity. An important issue to consider is whether the significant social changes of the 13th and 14th century lead to an idea of that Christianization constituted an absolute break with the past and its ways. This is an elusive issue but a careful textual examination of the 13th and 14th century historical sources may shed light on it, thus helping to determine how the past, the pagan religions and magic were intertwined in the mind of the historiographers of that era.

JASMINE BRIA

‘Le pratiche divinatorie nelle *Meraviglie d’Oriente*: la figura dei *donestri*’, *Filologia germanica – Germanic Philology 13 (2021)*, pp. 23-43.

In the literary space of Old English documentation, the treatise known as *Wonders of the East* deals with the representations of everything that Anglo-Saxon society perceived as completely foreign, the Other posited in the Elsewhere. Within these descriptions the dimension of magic seems to enter in a marginal but significant way. In particular, besides the inserted fragment depicting the two sorcerers of the apocryphal Old Testament, Jamnes and Mambres, the hybrid race known as *donestre* is represented as a people of soothsayers. Their main feature is, effectively, the ability to guess the language of the people who visit them in order to better communicate, learn their trust and eventually killing them by eating them. The divinatory power, used for evil purposes, adds to the deceptive and anthropophagic nature of the *donestre* and it becomes a further determining element of monstrosity. This essay aims to investigate how the treatise establishes an association between these semi-human creatures, located beyond the edge of the known world, and the practitioners of magical arts, positioned on the fringes of the Anglo-Saxon community, while identifying the ways in which magic can be used as a characterizing element in the marginalization of the Other.

DONATA BULOTTA

‘Le formule magiche medio inglesi del XV secolo tra convenzionalità e innovazione’, *Filologia germanica – Germanic Philology 13 (2021)*, pp. 45-70.

The precariousness of the health situation in England from the 14th century onwards led to the use of any curative means, whether scientific, religious or ritual-magical. In this context, healing charms were seen as accessible and practicable methods. They were often added to medical prescriptions and herbal remedies in medical or pseudo-pharmacological compilations, as they were considered an alternative form of therapy equally valid in the treatment of ailments. Many charms created during this period were a mixture of magic, religion and folklore, but some received new cultural stimulus, by incorporating original elements and symbolism from Arabic, Greek and Hebrew magical texts introduced to the island. This work will focus on a selection of 15th century healing *charms*. The analysis aims to demonstrate that the principles of the new occult and esoteric doctrines, circulating in the intellectual and cultural centers of the island, influenced the

magical healing ritual. The study of pseudo-Solomonic texts, although strongly censored by the Church, however contributed to the creation of new textual amulets, which were used in addition to the pre-existing charms so becoming a further alternative medium in the therapeutic procedure.

CLAUDIO CATALDI

‘The verse forms of the Old English “metrical” charms’, *Filologia germanica – Germanic Philology* 13 (2021), pp. 71-90.

This essay takes into account the metre of the so-called *metrical charms*, arguing that these charms are characterised by a number of prosodic elements such as free alliterative verses, recurring repetition and some occasional rhyme. These features mark a difference between the “metrical” charms and standard Old English verse. On the other hand, this prosodic mixture anticipates that which is to be found in post-Conquest early Middle English poetry, where alliterative verse, rhythmical prose and rhyme are employed. The prosody of early Middle English poetry was described as “rhythmical alliteration” by Norman F. Blake in 1969. In my view, the “metrical” charms might therefore be re-labelled as *rhythmical charms*. Interestingly, Middle English verse charms, for their part, will generally adopt the rhyming couplet as their verse form.

ELEONORA CIANCI

‘Problemi di edizione dei più antichi incantesimi tedeschi’, *Filologia germanica – Germanic Philology* 13 (2021), pp. 91-112.

The oldest German charms: issues on textual criticism. Medieval German charms show two sets of problems when dealing with textual criticism: on the one hand, the issue of the charm as a *genre* and, on the other hand, the complexity of the manuscript transmission. Each critical edition should indeed fit a proper method, which may vary according to the textual *genre*, the historical period, and the transmission features to get as closer as possible to the original text, even when very little is known about its existence. This paper investigates all the known German charms of the 9th and 10th century: they happen to share important features, such as a manuscript transmission based on *codex unicus*, the marginal position of the text on the page and in the manuscript itself, the rare paratextual elements and the relationship between Latin and German language within the text. In this period, all charms are deeply rooted in a monastic environment and were not perceived as “magic” since they were written in the same books containing other Christian texts. Indeed, all these features change again if we consider the charms of the following centuries, and then the author of a critical edition must pay attention to other problems, such as, for example, a manuscript tradition based on many variant versions of the same text and also based on increasing contamination of different motifs merging in similar texts.

GIUSEPPE D. DE BONIS

‘Emittente, destinatario ed esecutore nei testi di carattere magico in inglese antico’, *Filologia germanica – Germanic Philology* 13 (2021), pp. 113-131.

Old English magical texts are an integral part of speech acts aimed at healing people or repairing any kind of damage. They involve a sender (the sorcerer/expert healer), an addressee (a disease or a patient) and a performer. Sometimes the sender is the performer of the magical acts, but, on other occasions, sender and performer are two different participants in the same magical act. Indeed, imperative verb forms, such as Old English *writ*, *cweð*, *sing*, *gang swīgende*, imply the presence of a sorcerer/magician addressing a performer with directives and instructions in order to provide patients with some help and face a disease or a negative situation. Moreover, the performer can sometimes become a new sender with his own addressee(s). The present paper aims to highlight the relationships among the participants in magical speech acts in Old English magical texts and to show how this can contribute to identify the various magical text genres.

DANIELA FRUSCIONE

‘La magia nelle *leges*. Questioni strutturali’, *Filologia germanica – Germanic Philology* 13 (2021), pp. 133-154.

Beginning in the sixth century the Germanic peoples who established kingdoms in the western parts of the old Roman Empire enacted several law codes. The codes, composed in Latin, were partly influenced by Roman law. The early medieval decrees tell us what was prohibited and what was designated as magic, disclosing some magic practices like divination, storm rising, the use of ligatures and *veneficium*. However, the decrees do not always indicate the context of the forbidden acts.

The article does not focus on the practice of magic but rather on the concerns of the authorities as to the provisions on magic contained in the laws. It will be shown that in the *leges* that were basically designed to assure both the wholeness or physical integrity of the person, and the safety of property, the use of magic is not punished as a religious offence, but rather for its destabilizing aspect regarding the social, political and economic order. The lawgiver's priority is not simply the material damage caused by magic practices, but also the damage caused by false witchcraft accusations, which can ruin the reputation of a woman and of her family group. Finally, the Romano-Germanic laws show that, beyond the damage caused to its subjects, the king feels offended by magic as an antagonistic instrument of power and social control. Thus, from early medieval laws, it is possible to observe the formal expression of areas through which public concerns over the practice of magic operated.

OMAR KHALAF

'Encyclopaedic preservation or performative act? The translation of Latin charms in the Old English *Medicina de quadrupedibus*', *Filologia germanica – Germanic Philology* 13 (2021), pp. 155-170.

The Old English translation of the *Medicina de quadrupedibus* belongs to the corpus of early medieval English *materia medica*. This small treatise brings together remedies for various diseases taken from parts of animals, often to be applied along with uttering a series of charms. Traditionally deemed as devoid of the originality that characterizes genuinely insular works of the same type as the *Lacnunga* and Bald's *Læceboc*, *Medicina de quadrupedibus* has not aroused particular interest among critics of early English medical lore, nor have the charms contained in it been object of close investigations. Nevertheless, the translation of these charms from Latin raises important linguistic and stylistic questions with regard to their reception and potential use. In this article I argue that the linguistic and rhythmic elements introduced in the Old English versions are recognizable as typically oral-formulaic and, consequently, suggest a rewriting based on their possible oral performance.

MARIA CRISTINA LOMBARDI

'Magic and precious stones in the Old Swedish *Eufemiavis Hertig Fredrik av Normandie*', *Filologia germanica – Germanic Philology* 13 (2021), pp. 171-195.

This paper focuses on *Hertig Fredrik av Normandie* – one of the so-called *Eufemiavisorna*, three anonymous Old Swedish poems (*Herr Ivan*, *Flores och Blanzeflor* and *Hertig Fredrik av Normandie*) – and concentrates on a number of episodes where magic plays a significant role in the development of the narrative, in the aim of analyzing the kind of magic and why it is used in the text as well as to what extent it contributes to shape and spread the new idea of an aristocracy. Translated into Swedish from three continental European romances for Queen Eufemia of Norway at the beginning of the 14th century, *Eufemiavisorna* were designed to establish a common solid ideological background between Norway and Sweden by transmitting the new continental courtly ideas and norms to the Swedish court. Later, further translated into Old Danish, under the Kalmar Union, they seem to have served the same purpose extended to Denmark, contributing to reinforce the political relationships among the three kingdoms.

In particular, their influence on the idea of natural magic expressed in some passages of *Hertig Fredrik av Normandie* – spread with encyclopedic writings, specifically lapidaries, which had reached Scandinavia between the 11th and 13th century – will be highlighted.

I also intend to investigate whether magic could be regarded as an instrument for justifying the royal authority and defending the social order proceeding from it.

Finally, correspondences and differences with similar magic-related circumstances, objects and performers occurring in Old Norse texts, will be discussed in order to show how elements of the ancient Scandinavian heritage (familiar to aristocratic audiences) changed, acquiring new aspects, values and meanings aimed at making nobles avoid conflicts and comply with royal demands of political stability.

STEPHEN A. MITCHELL

Magic in Old Norse-Icelandic literature: a typology of modes', *Filologia germanica – Germanic Philology* 13 (2021), pp. 197-224.

Magic often plays a significant role in medieval European narratives, where it can be used in a variety of ways, including as a literary tool. In this essay, I briefly consider magic as a narrative device and propose a typology of modes of presentation (*general, detailed, and explicit*), and argue that Old Norse-Icelandic literature appears to engage in an especially wide array of narrative presentations of magic, particularly when contrasted with comparable materials from elsewhere in northern Europe.

CARLA RIVIELLO

'Circe's magic: from Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae* to the Old English and Old High German versions', *Filologia germanica – Germanic Philology* 13 (2021), pp. 225-272.

In the Old English and Old High German versions of *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, Circe's character (co-protagonist with Ulysses in Book IV, Metre 3) substantially reflects the description Boethius gave of her. According to Boethius, the sorceress was not particularly powerful as she had no influence over the minds of her victims. Analysing the translation strategies adopted, we can see how, in both cases, despite a declared unfamiliarity with magic, the representation modalities reveal an otherwise obvious familiarity with its procedures. And yet, the different cultural-historical contexts in which the two translations were carried out, and the different demands and purposes under the impulse of which they were promoted and brought to life, define a different approach to the re-writing of the myth. On the one hand, if devaluing the power of magic was a manifest political need at King Alfred's court, on the other, in the conventual school of Saint Gall, the stigmatisation of magic made way for the educational necessity of translating Boethius' work in order to explain its complexity with precise and perspicuous lexical choices.

CLAUDIA ROSENZWEIG

'Elye ha-novi and the vampire in Old Yiddish (and Judeo-Italian). A *historiola* and its history', *Filologia germanica – Germanic Philology* 13 (2021), pp. 253-278.

There are a number of Yiddish manuscripts – some also with Hebrew or Judeo-Italian – and printed books that evince the existence of magical practices among Ashkenazi Jews in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern period. In this paper, I wish to present the development of a particular *historiola* attested in Yiddish from the 15th-16th centuries. The narrative, in which Elijah the Prophet adjures a vampire not to harm a human being, has parallels both in ancient traditions of magic, attested notably in Aramaic and Greek, and in Medieval European culture, and has a broad tradition in the Jewish world, in collections of recipes, in prayer books and in material culture. In this paper, I wish to present some extant examples of this *historiola* in Yiddish and Judeo-Italian in their different contexts, such as collections of charms and medicaments, and books of prayers.

VERIO SANTORO

'There is no magic in the Old Saxon *Heliand*', *Filologia germanica – Germanic Philology* 13 (2021), pp. 270-306.

Although the Old Saxon poem has been thoroughly investigated for two centuries now, the issue of the possible traces of pre-Christian Germanic magical traditions within it has not been sufficiently investigated. The only study specifically devoted to the (alleged) magical elements in *Heliand* belongs to G.R. Murphy (1991), whose opinions are in line with the studies already undertaken by the Lutheran theologian A.F.C. Vilmar in 1845, a few years after the publication of J.A. Schmeller's *editio princeps* (1830). According to Vilmar, the Old Saxon poem was "das Christentum im deutschen gewande, eingekleidet in die poesie und die sitte eines edlen deutschen stammes". The purpose of this work is to subject to a careful textual analysis the six passages of the *Heliand* in which, according to the American scholar – who emphasizes the characteristics of what has now long been a misunderstood, stereotyped and obsolete idea of "Germanism" –

Christ's acting as a sorcerer would be obvious; it will be shown, on the contrary, that the image of Christ resulting from the poem is far removed from that of a sorcerer.

MICHAEL SCHULTE

„Magie in den älteren und jüngeren Runeninschriften? – Zum Status magischer Konzepte in der Runologie“, *Filologia germanica – Germanic Philology* 13 (2021), pp. 307-327.

To what extent can individual runic inscriptions or inscription groups of the older and younger period be classified as „magical“ or „profane“? The present article scrutinizes Elmer Antonsen's anti-magical approach to the older runic inscriptions and offers a more nuanced view, which rejects the basic assumption that inscriptions are solely profane, devoid of sacred and/or magical functions. Magical inscriptions are defined in this paper as those runic artefacts which deliberately exert influence on higher or lower powers, such as gods, helping spirits or evil spirits. Methodologically, three examples of the older and younger runic inscriptions are selected, which combine several functional elements that can be interpreted as magical: the Kylver stone (KJ 1), the Vedslet sandstone amulet (DR 57), and the gravestone of Gørlev (DR 239). This last has at least three such functional elements: a *fupark* inscription, a grave formula, and the so-called *thistle-mistle* formula. This article addresses not only the allegedly magical functions of the *fupark* as a whole, but also the magical use of individual runes and runic names; compare the ideographic use of positively charged runes such as ᚗ (= **jāra* n. ‚year, good harvest‘) and ƿ (= **fehu* n. ‚cattle, wealth‘). On the basis of these case studies, the question of rune magic in the North will be further pursued.

LETIZIA VEZZOSI

„Code-switching in Middle English healing charms“, *Filologia germanica – Germanic Philology* 13 (2021), pp. 329-357.

Medieval discursive healing charms share a lot of features with medical recipes, in that both charms and recipes generally have the same organizational structure, entail “rituals”, have an oral and a written component, use foreign words, prayers and formulas, and both aim to cure diseases or to prevent perils. However, intuitively, charms do not coincide with recipes. The present paper intends to analyse the use of foreign words in Middle English healing charms, in particular, whether language shift involves simple nouns or verbs, or verbal or noun phrases or whether they coincide with clause units, in which external structural component of the charm it occurs and what functional role(s) language shift plays. The study will mainly concentrate on Latin shift and show that some generalisations about code-switching in Middle English healing charms are possible, and significant for their categorization as a separate text-type from medical remedies. In fact, unlike medical remedies, code switching in healing charms occurs as formulaic language and in ritual formulas, which are those two features that place them closer to prayers.