

## INTRODUCTION

The seventh issue of *Incantatio* continues the publication of research papers presented at the 9th conference of the Charms, Charmers and Charming Committee of the ISFNR, which was held at University College Cork (May 6th-7th, 2016), that began in our sixth issue, but it also contains additional research articles as well as reviews of important recent charms studies.

The first four articles in this issue deal with the written tradition and transmission of medieval English and German charms, with special attention being paid to manuscript contexts. In the first paper, Lea Olsan reviews the types of charms employed in order to relieve fevers in medieval England from the Anglo-Saxon period to the end of the fifteenth century, and turns an especial focus upon practical rituals (the method of writing sacred words on the hand with ink for consumption in a liquid potion) for healing fevers that involve inscribing and consuming communion hosts.

Patricia O' Connor focuses on the Anglo-Saxon Bee Charm, a charm which accompanies a passage from Chapter XVII of Book III of the Old English *Bede*. Her critical reconsideration of the Bee Charm within its immediate manuscript context contributes to our understanding both of the function of this type of charms within Anglo-Saxon society, especially of how these charms were perceived and circulated within late Anglo-Saxon England.

Continuing the theme of Anglo-Saxon charms, Katherine Hindley systematically approaches the techniques of charming found in England after the Norman Conquest. More specifically she deals with the sudden striking increase in the proportion of charms using written words and explores this post-Conquest change by examining examples preserved in manuscripts written or owned in England from the Anglo-Saxon period to 1350.

A medieval German love charm, the *Pervinca* love charm, is thoroughly examined by Eleonora Cianci. Her article is the first attempt to make the complete unedited 15<sup>th</sup> century German text available to researchers. The author does not only provide the transcription from the manuscript and translation into English, but also a brief description of its content as part of her holistic approach to the text.

The next two papers focus on the ethnographic context of charm practices. Sonja Petrović investigates how charming practices continue to be transmitted,

valued and questioned in contemporary Serbia, work based on field material and scholarly literature. Taking into account the constant motifs in the narrative accounts of charmers concerning not only their practice, receiving, passing on and protecting magical knowledge, but also their relation towards patients and official medicine, she sheds light on the social, cultural and symbolic roles of traditional charmers.

Laura Jiga Iliescu investigates a very interesting religious practice of hidden rituals, whose traces are preserved in the Christian churches' frescoes from the Romanian Orthodox space, which is represented by the act of voluntarily scratching the eyes of the saints painted on the wall. The paper systematizes the few references concerning this ritual entirety as well as seeking information about the relations established between the official dogma and the religious practices as actuated in the case of the icon and the saint's figure in the nineteenth century Romania.

Last but not least, Davor Nikolić and Josipa Tomašić offer an overview of critical reflections on charms in Croatian folkloristics and related disciplines, such as literary theory and history, and paleoslavistics. By highlighting the most important steps in the institutionalization of folklore research in Croatia, the authors cast light on the status of verbal charms both in the process of field research and the scholarly sphere.

I wish to express my gratitude to all the authors who have contributed with their papers to the successful completion of this issue. I am also immensely grateful to Jonathan Roper for all his kind advice and support in editing the journal, as well as to the anonymous reviewers of the journal for their suggestions and comments. Thanks to their cooperation, *Incantatio* remains a serious scholarly journal and a fascinatingly broad view on charm studies.

Haralampos Passalis, guest editor