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Swa breðel seo, swa þystel – fiat tamquam pulviß ante faciem venti: Threat of Retribution for Thieves in the Germanic Tradition

Abstract: In this study the up to now almost completely unknown High German charm against theft in Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm. 27105, fol. 107b is edited for the first time and discussed in the context of the theft charms containing a curse and threat of retribution for the criminals. In this respect, the fifteenth-century High German text, in which the threat for the thief is committed to the words of Psalm 35 (Vulgate 34) and thus given a new, fully-orthodox form, can be considered a late representative of a long-lasting tradition attested from the eleventh century onward, e.g. in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 41, p. 206 and in the runic inscription on the copper scale box found in Sigtuna in 1911.

Defense of property – whether cattle or other goods – was a central concern in Medieval and Early Modern Germanic societies, which, along with criminal law, developed a wide palette of charms and rituals involving supernatural help against theft. These can, according to their purpose, be divided into three groups: 1. those aimed at preventing theft from taking place; 2. those aimed at stopping the thief's escape and recovering the stolen property; and 3. those aimed at identifying and – in some cases – punishing the responsible of the crime.[1]

A particular category of charms, which includes texts belonging to the first two of the above-mentioned groups, is based on the deterrent power of threat of retribution for the thieves, usually in the form of a curse, and will be dealt with in this study on the basis of three Germanic exemplary texts highlighting its diachronic evolution through the centuries.

1. The Old English Charm in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 41, p. 206

The most famous example of a Germanic formula aimed at deterring potential thieves by foreshadowing their fate is constituted by the final part of the Old English cattle-theft charm preserved in the eleventh-century manuscript Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 41 on p. 206 (Storms 15), in which the thief is cursed to wither and perish and be consumed as wood by fire and to become as fragile as a thistle (*Eall he weornige swa fyre wudu weornie, / swa breðel seo, swa þystel*):

> Ne forstolen, ne forholen nanuht þæs ðe ic age,
> þe ma ðe mihte Herod urne drihten.

Ic geþohte Sancte Eadelanan
and ic geþohte Crist on rode ahangen.
Swa ic þence ðis feoh to findanne, næs to oþfeorganne,
and to witanne, næs to oðwyrceanne,
and to lufianne, næs to oðlædanne.
Garmund, Godes ðegen,
find þæt feoh and fere þæt feoh,
and hafa þæt feoh and heald þæt feoh,
and fere ham þæt feoh,
þæt ne næfre næbbe landes þæt hit oðlæde,
ne foldan þæt he hit oðferie,
ne husa þæt he hit oðhealde.
Gif hyt hwa gedo, ne gedige hit him næfre.
Binnan þrym nihtum cunne ic his mihta,
his mægen and his mundcræftas.
Eall he weornige swa fyre wudu weornie,
swa breðel seo, swa þystel,
se ðe þis feoh oðfergean þence
oððe ðis orf oðehtian ðence. Amen.

["May nothing I own be stolen or concealed,
any more than Herod could [steal or conceal] our Lord.
I thought of St. Helena,
and I thought of Christ hung on the cross.
So I think I shall find these cattle and they shall not go away far,
and I shall know where they are, and they shall not get lost,
and I shall love them, and they shall not be led away.
Garmund, servant of God,
find those cattle and bring back those cattle,
have those cattle and keep those cattle,
and bring home those cattle,
that he never has a piece of land to lead them to,
nor a district to carry them to,
nor buildings to confine them in.
If anybody should do so, may it never come off successfully for him.
Within three days I shall know his might,
his force and his protecting powers.
May he quite perish, as wood is consumed by fire,
may he be as fragile as a thistle,
he who plans to drive away these cattle,
or to carry off these goods. Amen."][2]

As pointed out by Hollis,[3] this charm has been only superficially Christianized through the insertion of biblical and Christian references (Herod's attempt to conceal Christ's birth, Christ's crucifixion, Saint Helena's legendary retrieval of the Cross) and of the final *amen* since the speaking first person is not really begging for divine help, but is rather arrogating to himself the power to change the world around him and, in case of missing animals, to avert the possibility of theft. Apart from the rather problematic character of Garmund,[4] who is exhorted to find, keep, hold, and bring back the missing cattle and who represents the only external agent in the text, in fact the property owner

is the one in control thanks to the performative power of the words constituting the charm.[5]

This position of power of the shepherd or herdsman is particularly evident in the final part of the charm, in which he curses the potential thief with withering and fragility. These are the result of a magical modification of the surrounding environment, which will become completely hostile to the fugitive and will provide no refuge for him and no hiding place for his booty (*þæt ne næfre næbbe landes þæt hit oðlæde, ne foldan þæt he hit oðferie, ne husa þæt he hit oðhealde.*)

2. *The Runic Inscription on a Copper-scale Box Found in Sigtuna, Sweden in 1911*

Certainly more ferocious and impressive is the foreshadowing of the potential thief's fate contained in the final part of the piece of poetry inscribed in runes on a copper-scale box found in Sigtuna in Sweden in 1911 (eleventh century):

ᛏᛁᛆᚱᚠᛦ × ᚠᛁᚤᛏᚠ × ᛋᛁᚤᛋᛘᚢᛏᚤ × ᛣᚾᛏᛁ × ᛋᚴᛏᚠᛏᛌ × ᚦᛁᛋ-- × ᛁ----------
ᛣᛏᛁ × ᛁᛂᚾᛁᚱᚤᚾᛏᛦ × ᚠᛏᚦᛁ × ᚱᚢᛏᛆᚱ × ᚦᛁᛋᛆᚱ
ᚠᚢᛣᛚ × ᚢᛏᛚᚡᛆ × ᛋᛚᛂᛁᛏ × ᚠᛏᚠᛏᚾ × ᚠᛣᛏᚠᚢᚤ × ᛣᛏᛣᛋᛏᚾ-ᛏ

Diafʀ fækk af semskum manni skālaʀ þess[ar] ī […l]andi.
En Værmundr fādi rūnaʀ þessaʀ.
Fugl vælva slæit falvan: fann gauk ā nās au[k]a.

["Djarf got these scales in …land from a Samish (or perhaps Semgallian) man. And Vermund carved these runes. The bird ripped apart the pale robber; one saw how the corpse-cuckoo (i.e. raven) swelled."][6]

The image of the bloated carrion-bird tearing apart the body of the thief can, in fact, be interpreted as a form of deterrent for anyone ever considering taking the copper box. In this respect, this runic inscription can be inserted in the long-lasting tradition of texts written to prevent the theft of specific objects, most notably books,[7] which are – usually in joking form – still attested in modern times.[8]

3. *The German Charm in Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek,*
Clm. 27105, fol. 107b

A much later and almost completely unknown[9] threat of retribution for thieves is transmitted in a fifteenth-century Latin-German miscellaneous manuscript preserved in Munich (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm. 27105, fol. 107b).[10] The peculiarity of this text, which is edited here for the first time,[11] is represented by the biblical and, as such, completely orthodox form given to this threat:

Vom Diebstal

Gee von stundan ee das es ubernacht hint*er*
ainem altare od*er* auf ainem wegschaid und sprich:
'Er ist fur die thur hinaus nit ferir und nahent

bey[12] dem hauß auf ain wegschaid gang*en* und d*er*
wint und ich sein bey im gestanden. das sprich
ich auf meinen ayd *etc.*'
vnd ker dich geg*en* aufgang der sunne*n* und sprich
den verß: 'fiat via illoru*m* tenebre *et* lubricum
et angel*us* dom*ini* p*er*sequ*en*s eos vel eum'.
dan*n* sprich j pater nost*er*, j aue maria.
Dann ker dich geg*en* mittag und sprich: 'Quo*niam* gratis
absconderunt in interitu*m* laquei sui sup*er*uacue ex pro=
braueru*n*t anima*m* meam.' j pat*er* nost*er*, j aue maria.
Dann ker dich <niunde>[13] stond, sprich:
'veniat ille laquens quem ignorat et captio
quam abscondit app*r*ehendit et laque*us* cadat in
ipso.'
Dann ker dich geg*en* mitt*er*nacht und sprich den
verß: 'fiat tamq*uam* puluiß ante facie*m* venti et an=
gel*us* do*mi*ni p*er*sequens eos vel eum.' j pater noster, j
aue maria. vnd gee vord*er* haim. so mues der
dieb das bring*en*, das hab ich geseh*en*.
It*em* wen du den beste*n* verste*n* verß gesproch*en*
hast, so sprich das creutz *Christi* von Orient vord*er*:
'bring den dieb der das .N. gestol*en* hat.' das
thů zu allen vier vers*en*.

[About theft

Go immediately, before the end of the day behind an altar or to a crossroad and say: 'He has gone out of the door, not far and near the house to a crossroad. The wind and I have been by him. I say that on my oath, etc.' Then turn toward the sunrise and pronounce this verse: Fiat via illorum tenebre et lubricum et angelus domini persequens eos vel eum.' Then recite a Pater noster and an Ave Maria. Then turn toward midday and say: 'Quoniam gratis absconderunt in interitum laquei sui superuacue ex probauerunt animam meam.' A Pater Noster, an Ave Maria. Then turn toward the ninth hour and say: 'Veniat ille laquens quem ignorat et captio quam abscondit apprehendit et laqueus cadat in ipso.' Then turn toward midnight and pronounce the verse: 'Fiat tamquam puluis ante faciem venti et angelus domini persequens eos vel eum.' A Pater Noster, an Ave Maria. And go home. In this way, the thief will bring it back, I have seen it. Moreover, when you have pronounced the best verses, then address the Cross of Christ from the East and say: 'Bring here the thief who has stolen the .N.' Repeat this after each of the four verses.]

The text describes a two-staged ritual, which has to be performed in the immediacy of the crime or – at least – within the same day, aimed at recovering the stolen goods. The first stage of the ritual consists in going behind an altar or to a crossroad and pronouncing a formula, possibly in order to understand, in which direction the thief has gone with the booty, once he has left the house which he has robbed (*Er ist fur die thur hinaus nit ferir und nahent bey dem hauß*…).

The second stage of the ritual can further be divided into four phases, in which a specific formula has to be pronounced facing the four points of the compass, which are identified with the name of the corresponding time of the day or position of the sun in the sky.[14] In its essential traits, this second part of the ritual strongly resembles

those described in other texts aimed at retrieving the stolen property or at bringing the thief back to the crime scene, such as, for example, the Old English cattle-theft charms transmitted in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 41, p. 206 (Storms 13)[15] and London, British Library, Harley MS 585, fol. 180b (Storms 14)[16] or the fourteenth-century High German charm in Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm. 373, fol. 9v,[17] in which the four corners of the world are addressed invoking the Cross, the ultimate symbol of the triumph of divine truth over the concealments of the wicked,[18] in order to recover the stolen animals or goods. At a quadruple invocation to the Holy Cross hints, in an abbreviated form, the final part of the charm in Munich, Clm. 27105, according to which the performer should add to each of the previously listed verses a supplication to the Cross begging it to bring back the thief (*Item wen du den besten versten verß gesprochen hast, so sprich das creutz Christi von Orient vorder: 'bring den dieb der das .N. gestolen hat.' das thG zu allen vier versen*.)

The actual formula, the quadripartite Latin *incantatio*, which has to be pronounced facing the four corners of the world, on the other hand, has no parallel in the Germanic tradition of charms for thieves. Nevertheless, its text has an authoritative antecedent in Psalms 35 (Vulgate 34), 5–8, which are quoted almost literally, with the anticipation of verse 8 as first part of the formula that has to be pronounced facing east:

Munich, BSB, Clm. 27105	Biblia Sacra Vulgata, Psalm 34
fiat via illorum tenebre et lubricum et angelus domini persequens eos vel eum	fiant tamquam pulvis ante faciem venti et angelus Domini coartans eos
Quoniam gratis absconderunt in interitum laquei sui superuacue ex probrauerunt animam meam.	fiat via illorum tenebrae et lubricum et angelus Domini persequens eos
veniat ille laquens quem ignorat et captio quam abscondit apprehendit et laqueus cadat in ipso.	quoniam gratis absconderunt mihi interitum laquei sui supervacue exprobaverunt animam meam
fiat tamquam puluiß ante faciem venti et angelus domini persequens eos vel eum	veniat illi laqueus quem ignorat et captio quam abscondit conprehendat eum et in laqueo cadat in ispo

("Let them be like chaff before the wind,
With the angel of the Lord driving them on.
Let their way be dark and slippery.
With the angel of the Lord pursuing them.
For without cause they dug a pit for my soul.
Let destruction come upon him unawares,
And let the net which he hid catch himself;")

The biblical text, in which David appeals to God against the enemies that hated and persecuted him prophesizing their ruin and destruction, becomes here the curse cast by the owner of the stolen property onto the thief. The long-lived motif of threat of retribution for thieves is, in this way, given a new, completely Christian shape and adapted to the religious sensitivity of the scribe who added it to Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm. 27105 and of his time.

If, on the one hand, the eleventh-century runemaster who carved a piece of poetry onto the Sigtuna copper-box in order to prevent its theft did not show any form of inhibition in using the runic alphabet – the Germanic heathen writing *par excellence* – to convey his frightening message and, on the other, the almost contemporary Anglo-Saxon scribe of Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS. 41 (or of its antigraph) already felt the need of modifying the cattle-theft charm with the Christian nuance given by biblical references and by the final *amen*, the scribe of the German manuscript (or of its antigraph) goes a step further in this process of Christianization of the curse on thieves. Not only, in fact, does he combine the threat of retribution with the repeated invocation to the Holy Cross and with the recitation of canonical prayers, but he also translates into biblical terms the menace of physical destruction addressed to the criminal(s). In this respect, the Early Modern German charm appears to be the product of a time – the fifteenth century[19] – in which people began[20] to be more attentive to the possible implications of their written words, since these could be adduced as evidence to send them to the stake. The ancient, violent and punitive core of many theft-charms is hidden in plain sight and made unassailable for the Inquisition and for any other reader who could object to its orthodoxy (how could a biblical quotation not be considered orthodox?), as to witness that at the beginning of the Modern Age a certain degree of resentment of the victims toward those who had robbed them was as natural as it had been during the Middle Ages and long before that, before Germanic peoples were Christianized.

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Endnotes

1   On this, see also Chiara Benati, "Painted Eyes, Magical Sieves and Carved Runes: Charms for Catching and Punishing Thieves in the Medieval and Early Modern Germanic Tradition," *Magic and Magicians in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Time. The Occult in Pre-Modern Sciences, Medicine, Literature, Religion, and Astrology*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, 20. Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2017, 149–218.
2   G. Storms, *Anglo-Saxon Magic*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1948, 209–11.
3   Stephanie Hollis, "Old English 'Cattle-Theft Charms': Manuscript Context and Social Uses," *Anglia: Zeitschrift für englische Philologie* 115 (1997): 139–64, here 142–43.
4   Patrick Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature in Western England, 600–800*. Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon History, 3. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, 301, suggests—mainly on phonological evidence—that Garmund could be the Welsh saint Garmon (Germanus). Nevertheless, his role seems to indicate a conflation with a pagan entity. See also Karl Schneider, „Die strophischen Strukturen und heidnisch-religiösen Elemente der ae. Zauberspruchgruppe 'wið þeofðe'," *Festschrift zum 75. Geburtstag von Theodor*

Spira, ed. Helmut Viebrock and Willi Erzgräber. Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1961, 38–56; here 41–45, according to whom Garmund should be identified with the Old Norse god Freyr.

5   On this, see also Lea Olsan, "The Inscription of Charms in Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts," *Oral Tradition* 14 (1999): 401–19; here 406.

6   Mindy MacLeod and Bernard Mees, *Runic Amulets and Magic Objects*. Woodbridge and Rochester, NY: Boydell and Brewer, 2006, 226–28, and Otto von Friesen, „Runinskrifterna på en koppardosa, funnen i Sigtuna augusti 1911," *Fornvännen. Journal of Swedish Antiquarian Research* 7 (1912): 6–19. See also Benati, „Painted Eyes" (see note 1), 160–61.

7   See, for example, the Latin poem in the colophon of the second book of Bald's *Leechbook* (ninth century): „Bald habet hunc librum cild quem conscribere iussit; / Hic precor assidue cunctis in nomine Christi. / Quod nullus tollat hunc librum perfidus a me. / Nec vi nec furto nec quodam famine falso. Cur? Quia nulla mihi tam cara est optima gaza. / Quam cari libri quos Christi gratia comit." *Leechdom, wortcunning and starcraft of Early England. Being a collection of documents, for the most part never before printed, illustrating the history of science in this country before the Norman Conquest*. Vol. 2, ed. Rev. Oswald Cockayne. London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, and Green, 1865, 298 ("Bald owns this book, which he ordered Cild to write. Here I earnestly pray all men, in the name of Christ, that no treacherous person take this book from me, neither by force, nor by theft, nor by any false talk. Why? Because the best treasure is not so dear to me as my dear books, which the grace of Christ attends"), MacLeod and Mees, *Runic Amulets* (see note 6), 228.

8   See, for example, the Swedish rhymes „Den som denne boken stjäl, honom går det aldrig väl" (The one who steals this book will never be fine), „Den som denna boken tager, han blir hvarken fet eller mager" (The one who steals this book will not be thick or thin) and „Den som denna boken nappar, han skall stå på helvetets trappa med röd rock och blanka knappar" (The one who grabs this book will stand on the stairs of Hell in a red coat with white buttons). See also von Friesen, „Runinskrifterna," 15.

9   A diplomatic transcription of the text of the charm is inserted in Anton Schönbach's manuscript collection of charms and blessings preserved in the University Library in Gießen as part of the legacy of Hugo Hepding (vol. 35, nr. 974), which is available in digital form at http://digisam. ub.uni-giessen.de/diglit/nl-hepding-bd-35/0697?sid=4f4413105ab2a01c907d5b0cc37d20fd [last accessed on Aug. 20, 2017], and, consequently, in the *Corpus der Segen und Beschwörungsformeln* in Dresden, thanks to which I was able to locate it.

10 For a description of the manuscript, see Karl Halm and Wilhelm Meyer, *Catalogus codicum latinorum biliothecae regiae monacensis secundum Andreae Schmelleri indices*. Vol. 2, Part 4. Munich: Sumptibus bibliothecae regiae, 1881, 244.

11 In the following, the Early Modern German charm is edited diplomatically, keeping editorial interventions to a minimum and making them always recognizable as such: original spelling is reproduced faithfully, even when it diverges from common usage; abbreviations are expanded and marked in italics; punctuation, which is not present in the manuscript, has been inserted in the edition, while the original distribution of capital letters is maintained; editorial conjectures in case of missing or unreadable words are marked by single guillemets < > and further explained in a footnote.

12 On the left margin, a large brace begins here and ends seven lines later in correspondence with the words *Dann ker dich gegen mitternacht*. This connects this part of text to the abbreviation for the word *Psalmus* and to the number *xxxiij*.

13 Two words have been deleted here, one crossed out and one erased. The conjectural insertion of the numeral *niunde* before the word *stond* (hour) appears motivated by the context and, specifically, by the need of reconstructing the logical and textual symmetry with the preceding and following phases of the ritual, in which the points of the compass are

indicated by reference to the corresponding time (*mittag*, *mitternacht*) or position of the sun in the sky (*aufgang der sunnen*). Therefore, the missing term(s) had to indicate the west by referring to the time of the day when the sun sets, hence the choice of the numeral *niunde*.

14   The use of the temporal indicators in rituals to bring back the thief is still attested in modern times, as witnessed by a popular tradition recorded among the peasants in Pomerania: „Das Kreuz geschlagen: 'Wiederkehre der Dieb vor Aufgang der Sonne mit dem gestohlenen Gut.' Vaterunser sprechen, das Kreuz schlagen: 'Wiederkehre der Dieb vor Mittag mit dem gestohlene Gut.' Vaterunser sprechen, das Kreuz schlagen: 'Wiederkehre der Dieb [vor Untergang der Sonne] mit dem gestohlenen Gut.' Vaterunser sprechen: 'Das Kreuz Christi ward verborgen, ward wiedergefunden durch die Sankt Hellmann. – Also wahr muss der Dieb wiederkehren und sich wiederfinden mit dem gestohlenen Gut.'" (Make the sign of the Cross: 'May the thief come back with the booty before the sunrise.' Recite the Lord's Prayer, make the sign of the Cross: 'May the thief come back with the booty before noon.' Recite the Lord's Prayer, make the sign of the Cross: 'May the thief come back with the booty before the sunset.' Recite the Lord's Prayer: 'Christ's Cross was hidden and was recovered by Sankt Hellmann. In the same way must the thief come back and be retrieved with the booty.')

15   Storms, *Anglo-Saxon Magic*, 206–07: „Ðis man sceal cwedan donne his ceapa hwilcne man forstolenne. Cwyð ær he ænyg oþer word cweðe: / Bethlem hattæ seo burh ðe Crist om geboren wes. / Seo is gemærsod ofer ealne middangeard. / Swa ðeos dæd wyrþe for mannum mære. / Per crucem Christi. / And gebide þe þonne þriwa east and cweð þriwa: / + Christi ab oriente reducat. / And in west and cweð: / Crux Christi ab occidente reducat. / And in suð and cweð þriwa: / Crux Christi a meridie reducat. / And in norð and cweð: / Crux Christi abscondita est et inventa est. / Judeas Crist ahengon, gelidon him dæda þa wyrstan. / Hælon þæt ni forhelan ne mihton. / Swa næfre ðeos dæd forholen ne wyrþe. / Per crucem Christi." ("This must be sung by the man who has been robbed of some of his goods. He must say before he speaks any other word: Bethlehem is the name of the town where Christ was born. It is well known throughout the whole world. So may this act become known among men. By the cross of Christ. And worship then three times to the east and say three times: The cross of Christ will bring it back from the east. And towards the west and say: The cross of Christ will bring it back from the west. And towards the south and say three times: The cross of Christ will bring it back from the south. And towards the north and say: The cross of Christ was hidden and it is found. The Jews hanged Christ, they treated Him in a most evil way. So may this deed never be concealed. By the cross of Christ.")

16   Storms, *Anglo-Saxon Magic* (see note 2), 208–09: „Þonne þe mon ærest secge þæt þin ceap sy losod, þonne cweð þu ærest ær þu elles hwæt cweþe: / Bæðleem hatte seo buruh þe Crist on acænned wæs. / Seo is gemærsod geond ealne middangeard. / Swa þyos dæd for monnum mære gewurþe, / þurh þa haligan Cristes rode. Amen. / Gebide þe þonne þriwa east and cweð þonne þriwa: / Crux Christi ab oriente reducað. / Gebide þe þonne þriwa west and cweð þonne þriwa: / Crux Christi ab occidente reducat. / Gebide þe þonne þriwa suð and cweð þriwa: / Crux Christi ab austro reducat. / Gebide þonne þriwa norð and cweð þriwa: / Crux Christi ab aquilone reducað. / Crux Christi abscondita est et inventa est./ Judeas Crist ahengon, dydon dæda þa wyrrestan. / Hælon þæt hy forhelan ne mihtan. / Swa þeos dæd nænige þinga ferholen ne wurþe, / þurh þa haligan Cristes rode. Amen." ("As soon as somebody tells you that your goods are lost, then you must say first of all, before you say anything else: Bethlehem is the name of the town where Christ was born. It is well known throughout the whole world. So may this deed be known among men, through the holy cross of Christ. Amen. Then worship three times towards the east and say three times: The cross of Christ will bring it back from the east. Then worship three times towards the

west and say three times: The cross of Christ will bring it back from the west. Then worship three times towards the south and say three times: The cross of Christ will bring it back from the south. Then worship three times towards the north and say three times: The cross of Christ will bring it back from the north. The cross of Christ was hidden and it is found. The Jews hanged Christ, they treated Him in a most evil way. They concealed what they could not keep hidden. So may this deed be concealed in no way, through the holy cross of Christ. Amen.")

17   Verena Holzmann, *„Ich beswer dich wurm vnd wyrmin…"* *Formen und Typen altdeutscher Zaubersprüche und Segen*. Wiener Arbeiten zur germanischen Altertumskunde und Philologie, 36. Bern, Berlin, et al.: Peter Lang, 2001, 145–46: „*Ad fugitivum. peda inpeda. prepeda. conpeda. prepedias Inpedias. Conpedias* / Chvm wider in daz hvs / da du bist gegangen uz / daz heilige cruce bringe dich von sundert wider. / daz heilige crvce bringe dich von nodert wider. / daz heilige crvce bringe dich von wester wider. / daz helige crvce bringe dich von oster wider. / daz heilige crvce wart von sand elenen fvnden / also mvostv mir werden fvnden / vnd widerchomen / nv chvm wider min diep. / oder min chneht od swaz mir verstoln si / durh den svozzen wech den der heilig crist gie / do er daz crvce ane sah. / Ich beswer erde vnd mere / bi dem vater vnd bi dem svn vnt dem heiligen geiste / daz si mir in bringen wider." (For the fugitive. *peda inpeda. prepeda. conpeda. prepedias Inpedias. Conpedias*. Come back into the house you have left. May the Holy Cross bring you back from the South. May the Holy Cross bring you back from the North. May the Holy Cross bring you back from the West. May the Holy Cross bring you back from the East. The Holy Cross was found by Saint Helena, in the same way you must be found and come back to me, come back, my thief! Or my servant or anything that has been stolen to me on the same sweet track which the holy Christ travelled when he looked at the Cross. I enchant earth and sea in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit so that they bring him back to me.)

18   See also Thomas D. Hill, "The Theme of the Cosmological Cross in Two Old English Theft Charms," *Notes and Queries* NS 25 (1978): 488–90. The reason why the Cross was traditionally attributed the property of being helpful to locate missing objects has to be sought in its own history and in the fact that, according to the legend, it had been hidden and recovered by Saint Helena. See also Claude Lecouteux, *Dictionnaire des Formules magiques*. Paris: Édition Imago, 2014, 15. According to Storms, *Anglo-Saxon Magic* (see note 2), 213–14, however, this ritual is only apparently Christian and preserves traces of old heathen worship practices toward the Mother Earth, as witnessed by the fifteenth-century Middle Dutch charm in Gent, Universiteitsbibliotheek 697, fol. 27v, whose prescription of pronouncing the invocation while lying on the earth in the form of a cross he interprets as an acknowledgement of the Earth's power and, at the same time, a means to absorb part of that power. On this see also Benati, "Painted Eyes" (see note 1), 175–76.

19   The fifteenth-century tendency to „hide" charms and other non-orthodox texts from medical collections and *Hausbücher* has been highlighted by Britta-Juliane Kruse, „Zensierter Zauber: getilgte magische und mantische Texte in einer Berliner Handschrift," *Scrinium Berolinense. Tilo Brandis zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. P. J. Bliembach, H. Nickel, R. Schipke, G. Staccioli. Beiträge aus der Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, 10. Berlin: Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, 2000, 383–97, here 393–94. See also Eleonora Cianci, „Emarginati o clandestini: modalità di annotazione degli incantesimi nei manoscritti medievali di area tedesca," *I Germani e la scrittura. Atti del XXXIII Convegno dell'Associazione Italiana di Filologia Germanica (Pescara 7–9 giugno 2006)*, ed. Elisabetta Fazzini, Eleonora Cianci. Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2007, 5–67, here 57 and Oswald von Zingerle, „Segen und Heilmittel in einer Wolfsthurner Handschrift des XV. Jahrhunderts," *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Volkskunde* 1 (1891), 172–77 and 315–24, here 177.

20 The clampdown against heresy in the German language area is represented, at the end of the fifteenth century, by the papal bull *Summis desiderantes affectibus* issued in 1484 by Pope Innocent VIII. Among other things, this bull condemned as *maleficia* any act aimed at harming other people or their animals: „ipsosque homines, mulieres, iumenta, pecora, pecudes et animalia diris tam intrinsecis quam extrincesis doloribus et tormentis afficere et excruciare". Francisco Gaude, *Bullarum diplomatum et privilegiorum sanctorum romanorum pontificum taurinensis editio*. Vol. 5. Turin: Franco et Henrico Dalmazzo, 1860, 297.