

MASTER THESIS LETTERKUNDE

SHOOTS AND ADDERS

The Changing Reception of Anglo-Saxon Charms, as Evidenced by
Multiple Translations of the Nine Herbs Charm



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Titel van het document:

Shoots and Adders: The Changing Reception of Anglo-Saxon charms, as Evidenced by Multiple Translations of the *Nine Herbs Charm*

Datum van indiening: 14-06-2024

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Abstract

The *Nine Herbs Charm* is an old English charm perhaps best known for its depiction of the Germanic deity Woden. The charm, intended as a remedy and consisting of an incantation and preparations for a salve, contains both pagan and Christian elements, which has caused the text to be studied through a scope focused on mostly one of these elements. Editors of the *Nine Herbs Charm* have often presented the text as either an example of native pagan magic or culture, or aimed to highlight the medical benefits of the listed ingredients. This study aims to determine how the reception of this charm has changed since its first publication to generate a greater understanding of how perceptions of texts such as charms are formed and influenced. Comparing editions of the *Nine Herbs Charm* published over the past two centuries, each different translation of the charm appears indicative of the editor's aims and shows a continued tendency to value only a specific aspect of the charm, disregarding all other and therefore also the charm as a whole. The argument here is that the changes between the editions of the *Nine Herbs Charm* reflect the larger cultural narratives in which the editions were constructed, which influence considerations of medicine and magic and therefore the reception of the charm, as the editor either adheres to this dominant narrative or attempts to counter it. Understanding the current narrative is essential in moving forward in the field of charm studies and could provide greater insight into the medical knowledge and traditions of the early Anglo-Saxons.

Keywords: *Nine Herbs Charm*, Anglo-Saxon, charms, *Lacnunga*, narratives, reception, medicine, magic, paganism, remedies, Old English.

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Acknowledgement

I would like to take this opportunity to thank first and foremost my supervisor Dr László Sándor Chardonnens for his invaluable feedback, guidance and patience during this research. His knowledge and insight helped me make my thesis possible.

A debt of gratitude is also owed to Drs Monique Tangelder, whose continual support and passionate motivation always proved vital.

I would also like to thank my friends and family for their faith and patience during this process. Their continuous support and understanding drove and inspired me throughout this research.

Finally, I would like to thank Woden, for once more giving me the strength and protection during this research. His wisdom gave me the guidance needed to complete this thesis.

List of Abbreviations

| Abbreviation | Definition |
|--------------|----------------------------------|
| Ca | Cameron's translation |
| C | Cockayne's translation |
| G&S | Grattan and Singer's translation |
| P | Pettit's translation |
| S | Storms' translation |

Introduction

Of the entire corpus of Anglo-Saxon literature, few texts have endured such considerable interest and contrasting receptions as the Anglo-Saxon metrical charms. The Anglo-Saxon period, starting in the fifth century A.D. and ending in 1066 with the Battle of Hastings, produced a number of texts, some of which survive today, preserved in manuscripts. These were compiled by scribes after the conversion of the early medieval Germanic tribes from an oral pagan culture to a Christian society, often copying from much older sources. As these texts were compiled during a period of cultural transition, different handwritings from scribes demonstrate a varying degree of influence from both pagan and Christian culture. This amalgamated culture of the Anglo-Saxon scribes is illustrated in the charms found in Old English manuscripts. An Old English charm can be understood as a set of words, believed to have an effect on the outside world, usually to protect, heal, or cure a disease, through the use of herbs, rites and specific incantations. Although considered remedies, their magical and religious nature has kept these texts out of the scope of medical science for most of history. The literary scholar meanwhile has rarely paid any attention to charms, focusing instead on other Old English texts, such as the epic poem *Beowulf*. This has caused the Old English charm to be studied less extensively by scholars, and those who did often did so with preconceived notions and a perceiving these texts through limited scopes, evident in their translations and the reception of charms throughout the past two centuries.

The Anglo-Saxon charms have long been perceived as predominantly magical for their reliance on chants and herbs, before experiencing a considerable reassessment of their medical nature and properties of the ingredients in the latter part of the previous century. And while modern scholars continue to explore charms through this medical scope, much about why these charms were perceived as either magical or medical remains unanswered. The attraction of

Anglo-Saxon charms lies for the most part in their dichotomous essence, both magical and medical, as much attention has been given to their amalgamation of Christian elements with earlier Germanic pagan culture. Often written in the vernacular as opposed to the more common Latin, charms were studied as examples of pagan Germanic culture prior to the conversion of these tribes to Christianity, as Godfrid Storms argues in his 1948 edition, *Anglo-Saxon Magic*, “charm formulas are the oldest relics of Anglo-Saxon and Germanic literature.”¹ Following the focus on the native pagan elements and the magical perception of charms, scholarly interest shifted towards the medical potential of charms and voiced criticism of the earlier perspective, as M.L. Cameron, in his 1993 work *Anglo-Saxon Medicine and Magic*, noted that, “a chief literary source of supposed pagan Teutonic beliefs was to be found in charms, and as most of the surviving charms are in medical texts, these texts were searched for them to the neglect of their other elements.”² As the charms themselves continue to be valued for the insight they provide into the culture of the Germanic tribes of Northern Europe and their medical tradition, the reception of these charms similarly illustrates the changing perception of magic and the influence of dominant societal and cultural narratives.

Although most modern scholars have noted the dominant narrative of Anglo-Saxon charm study and the perceived notions on these texts, it is less obvious how such perceptions are formed and influenced by cultural environments. To shed more light on this development, it would prove useful to compare several translations of such charms and identify the evident influence it indicates, as well as the larger context of the editions in which the translations are found. While many charms might be suitable and a comparative analysis of a number of charms would likely yield even more insight, it would also far exceed the scope of this research. This thesis will largely focus on a single charm, namely the remedy now commonly known as the *Nine Herbs Charm*. The charm is found in a collection of medical remedies and blessings, likely

¹ Godfrid Storms, *Anglo-Saxon Magic*, (Nijmegen, Centrale Drukkerij N.V., 1948), 11.

² M. L. Cameron, “Anglo-Saxon Medicine and Magic.” *Anglo-Saxon England* 17 (1988): 192.

dating to the late-tenth to the mid-eleventh century A.D.³ which was named the *Lacnunga* by its first editor. A relatively long charm, *the Nine Herbs Charm* is likely to render more evidence than some of the shorter charms. More importantly, it is one of the most studied Anglo-Saxon charms, as it features many inherently Germanic characteristics, such as the presence of the Germanic god Woden and the importance of certain numbers such as nine, three and thirty, all of which are common in Germanic pagan culture. In the incantation, the powers of the individual herbs are attested and a confrontation between Woden and a serpent is described. As one of the most recognizable metrical charms, a great number of translations of *Nine Herbs Charm* are available. While it seems unlikely to add any valuable contribution to the in-depth textual analysis of the charm, what remains lacking is an insight into what influences editors to perceive this charm as either a magical or medical text. This thesis will approach this problem through a detailed comparative analysis of four translations of the *Nine Herbs Charm*, each indicative of a strong reception of the Old English text during different periods. The first of these, presented by Rev. Thomas Oswald Cockayne in his 1864 edition *Leechdoms, Wortcunning, and Starcraft of Early England*, marks the first publication of these texts in English, as well as the perception of charms and the Anglo-Saxons in Victorian England. Second is the translation by Godfried Storms from his 1948 edition, *Anglo-Saxon Magic*, in which the editor emphasises the magical nature of the charm and displays a changing conception of magic in the twentieth century. Following Storms is the translation by J.H.G. Grattan and Charles Singer in their 1952 edition *Anglo-Saxon Magic and Medicine*, which seems to follow in the footsteps in their predecessor Cockayne from the previous century. Lastly is the translation of the charm by M.L. Cameron. While his 1993 book, *Anglo-Saxon Medicine and Magic*, is not a full edition of the charms like the other three, his translation signals an

³ Edward Pettit, *Anglo-Saxon remedies, charms, and prayers from British Library Ms Harley 585: the Lacnunga*, vol 1. (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2001), xxvii.

important turn within Anglo-Saxon scholarship and the medical scope through which charms are reassessed.

While most of these editors comment on previous editions and many other scholars note the change which developed within the field, few go beyond a surface level observation. In his 2005 work, *English Verbal Charms*, Jonathan Roper presents a detailed history of charm studies up to that point, though gives no further clarification for the different perceptions. Similarly, Cameron notes that, due to the often-corrupt state of the charms, they are hard to interpret and have, “consequently been edited and commented on in numerous attempts to elucidate them,”⁴ yet fails to elucidate the dominant narrative to which previous editors adhered. The aim of this research therefore lies not in displaying the transition that occurred within the field of Anglo-Saxon scholarship, but rather to denote what caused such changes in the reception of Anglo-Saxon charms, evidenced by their editions and translations of the *Nine Herbs Charm*. In analysing editions of the charm, the common translation used and with which others are compared is Edward Pettit’s 2001 edition of the *Nine Herbs Charm* for the most part, as it provides a most modern, accepted translation, although in some instances reference will be made to entries in Clark Hall’s, *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*. The aim of this is not to contradict older and more modern translations with the intention of highlighting inaccuracies or errors of previous editors, but rather to indicate how the differences in translation illustrate the effects of an editor’s reception of a text on their translation of said text. Analysing the translations of the *Nine Herbs Charm*, indicative of the then-contemporary cultural narratives, it becomes apparent that the dominant considerations of magic and medicine evolved mostly perpendicular to the larger changes that occurred in the Western world over the past 150 years, allowing for a greater understanding and perhaps create a more nuanced perception of Anglo-

⁴ M. L. Cameron, *Anglo-Saxon Medicine*. of *Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 140.

Saxon charms. The reception evident in the different editions of the *Nine Herbs Charm* hints at a strong influence of larger narratives and cultural changes which led to more restricted views of charms as being either magical or medical, or evidence of pagan Germanic religion, in which charms were dissected in search for either element, subsequently altering the presentation of the charm as an example of early Anglo-Saxon medical tradition.

1. Cockayne's *Leechdoms* and Victorian England

The study of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts provides us with most of our knowledge of their medical knowledge and practises, most notably their use of charms. Considering the age of the manuscripts, which date back to the early medieval period, these texts would only be translated into English and published to the public fairly late. It was not until the nineteenth century that some of the most important manuscripts, Royal 12 D XVII and Harley 585, were first adapted and translated into a written edition by Rev. Thomas Oswald Cockayne. His edition, *Leechdoms, Wortcunning, and Starcraft of Early England (Leechdoms)* is a collection of various medical texts, charms and remedies from different manuscripts. Following the publication of his edition, charms started to emerge individually in English publications, although it would still take until the next century for new editions and translations to be published. At first, Cockayne's edition was received with praise, with physician Joseph Frank Payne commenting on the, "very great services rendered by the learned editor, Mr. Cockayne,"⁵ during his 1903 lecture. Cockayne's *Leechdoms* would however be viewed more critically over time as the field Anglo-Saxon medicine, which he pioneered, grew and the perspective on both the medical and magical nature of the charms changed. Cockayne's perspective on the manuscripts he edited seems to still pertain to ideas of the romantic movement of the previous century, as Cockayne presents an edition in which he attempts to keep as close as possible to his source material to provide insight into the traditions of the Anglo-Saxons. His edition of the *Nine Herbs Charm*, which he considered to be two separate remedies and simply numbered as recipes 45. and 46., exemplifies Cockayne's attitude towards the medical traditions of the Germanic tribes. While his *Leechdoms* was the first English edition of the early medieval

⁵ Joseph Frank Payne, *The Fitz-Patrick Lectures For 1903: English Medicine in The Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1904), 35.

manuscripts containing the charm, Cockayne appears to consider such texts less as sources of medical science to be analysed and further studied, instead treating the charm from a perspective of the Anglo-Saxons as admirable though scientifically lacking, likely motivated by nineteenth-century Western cultural environment.

1.1 Cockayne as an Editor and Translator

Analysing the editions and the *Nine Herbs Charm* as it is featured in the third volume of his *Leechdoms*, one of the most striking aspects for readers is the peculiar format Cockayne has given his work. In an apparent effort to remain as close to his source as possible, Cockayne presents the original Old English text in the Old English Latin alphabet, making the original transcribed texts harder to read and to decipher meaning from his translations. The layout of the edition lacks many key features of later editions, such as line numbers or titles for the different charms, which Cockayne simply refers to as ‘recipes.’ Even more, none of these appear to be arranged in a logical fashion, but are simply listed. In the case of the *Nine Herbs Charm*, Cockayne apparently even opted to split what has since been considered to be one charm into two separate recipes, removing the first part, the incantation, from the description of the preparation and application of the salve. What this suggests is that the editor, believing there to be little practical uses to the texts, paid little attention to the intended use of the charm, but rather on the illustration of the translated lines. Noting the format of the early editions, historian Jonathan Roper in his 2004 edition on charms, states how, “the emphasis was on the sheer existence of such fascinating items, and little thought was given to their arrangement.”⁶ Evidently, the primary aim of nineteenth-century editors was to present these charms as examples of the fantastic practices of the Anglo-Saxons and little attention was given to a practical presentation of the different texts for further study.

⁶ Jonathan Roper, “Topologising English Charms” in *Charms and Charming*, ed. Jonathan Roper (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 128.

What strikes readers of Cockayne's edition perhaps first, compared to other contemporary texts, is that Cockayne translated the charms into English rather than Latin, which was more common practice at the time. Translating the Anglo-Saxon charms directly to English, which only glosses some Latin, suggests a historical value from Cockayne to present the texts in the most appropriate way, as the manuscripts themselves were written in the vernacular Old English, instead of the more usual Latin. His translated lines also often appear quaint, as the editor seems to focus on keeping the modern English translation as similar to the original Old English as possible and altering only little in its structure. Moreover, he gives little insight into his choices of translation in the footnotes, which are often short and explain very little of his procedures. Although this lack of exposition was not uncommon among scholars of the period, the translations are what provide the most insight into the editor's perspective, as Cockayne appears to be more concerned with directly translating, than actually editing the texts. This also indicates his reception of the texts, as it seems to suggest that there was great value in keeping as close as possible to the original Anglo-Saxon source, the texts of the noble but unlearned invaders of Britain, whom the editor presents as a counterpart to the medical science of the ancient Greeks and Romans.

As these Mediterranean medical sciences were held in high regard during Cockayne's time, his choice to present the Old English translations in English rather than Latin could then indicate that Cockayne purposefully marked the pagan Anglo-Saxon remedies as different from the ancient Greek and Roman texts. More recently, Anne Van Arsdall also commented on Cockayne's use of language in his translation of charms, arguing that he, "cloaked them in antiquated prose and interpreted them as curiosities from the past."⁷ This observation by Van Arsdall not only illustrates the modern scope through which past editions are reviewed, it also highlights the possible purpose of the language, which she also identifies as being a then-

⁷ Anne Van Arsdall, "Reading Medieval Medical Texts with an Open Mind." In *Textual Healing: Essays on Medieval and Early Modern Medicine*, ed. Elizabeth Lane Furdell (Boston: Brill, 2005), 9-10.

contemporary style called ‘Wardour English’, rather than the editor’s own invention. This style, featuring words such as ‘thou’ and ‘thee’, as well as archaic word endings like as *-est* in “withstoodest” (l.21 C) and *-eth* in “standeth” (l.27 C), gives Cockayne’s English translation an antiquated, almost arcane sense. Additionally, Cockayne appears to use these archaic translations to remain as close to the source as possible. In the opening lines attesting the different herbs, he translates *wyrta* as ‘worts’ (l. 6C), rather than the more common ‘herbs’ (l.3 P). Similarly, Cockayne identifies the charm’s antagonistic creature as different animals, based on the Old English word used to refer to the same creature, translating *wyrm* as ‘worm’ (l.61C), then *næ(d)dran* as ‘nadder’ (l. 65C) and ‘adders’ (l. 99C), rather than translating all as ‘snake’, which has since been the more common translation. While this may first appear as evidence of a lack of skill on Cockayne’s part, it seems unlikely the editor was unaware that the Old English word *wyrm* was used to refer to almost any serpentine creature.⁸ This is evidenced by his translation of the word *onflyge*, which refers to infectious diseases often spreading through the air. Cockayne translates the word as ‘flying vile things’, but clarifies in a footnote how the word refers to infections, proving that the editor is aware the different translations but chooses to alter as little as possible, indicating the editor’s focus on form over meaning.

Besides the translation of words, the structure of the lines is adhered to strongly by Cockayne, following the Old English sentence structure in his English translation as much as possible. This is evident in his translation of the line attesting the herb *Stīðe*, as he translates the Old English line *Stīðe hēo hātte* as ‘Stiff hight she also’ (l.31C), adhering more to the original word order, compared to a modern translation of the line as ‘it is called Stīðe’ (l.16 P). In his adherence to structure, Cockayne even seems to take note of the traditions of Anglo-Saxon poetry in his translation of the metrical charm. Alliteration is a key feature within Anglo-Saxon poetry, stemming from the oral tradition of storytelling prior to their conversion to Christianity

⁸ *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, ed. J.R. Clark Hall, 4th ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960), s.v. “wyrm.”

and a literate society. It is therefore noteworthy that some of his translations, while perhaps strange, do ensure the lines stay alliterative. One example would be the lines describing the herb *Wegbrāde*, waybread, and all it has endured. Cockayne's translated lines indicate the adherence to form over meaning, as he translates the lines *ofer ðy bryde bryo- / dedon, ofer þy fearras fnaerdon* as 'over thee brides bridalled / Over thee bulls breathed' (l.19-20 C). The use of 'bridalled' and 'breathed', as opposed to the modern 'trampled' and 'snorted' (l.10 P), might appear as questionable choices by the editor, yet they also preserve the alliterative quality of the lines, which is lost in more modern translations, signalling a great attention of detail by Cockayne, at least on the characteristically Anglo-Saxon elements of the lines.

Evidently then, Cockayne's translations of the *Nine Herbs Charm* reveal a strong focus on presenting the Anglo-Saxon charm as close to the original source as possible. His use of archaic English language suggests a keen interest in Old English charms and texts by Cockayne and his contemporaries, although not for any practical reason. Van Arsdall made similar comments on his language use and they made the medieval texts, "sound absurd, like archaic and arcane literary curiosities"⁹ This use of the language is not limited to the translations of the charms, and is even evident in the edition's title, illustrating Cockayne's perception and intended presentation of the Anglo-Saxon medical charms. 'Leechdoms' comes from 'leech', from the Old English *læce*, referring to the medical practitioner. The word 'Wortcunning' is a lexical blend of *wort*, an archaic term for a plant used as a remedy, and *cunning* to produce a term suggesting a knowledge of ancient herbal remedies. 'Starcraft' meanwhile refers to the art that the editor wholly discredits as superstition. Naming his edition using these terms suggests the editor's reception of charms as practical, if based in superstition. Noting the role of Anglo-Saxon charms in the period, Van Arsdall illustrates the context in which these texts were placed within the scholarly world, as she says that, "because medieval remedies and treatment were

⁹ Arsdall, "Reading," 12

considered worthless from a medical standpoint, scholars (most of them folklorists and linguists) plumbed them for other material, such as superstitions, charms, word formation, folklore motifs, herbal lore and the like, and this influenced the way they were interpreted. They were simply not considered to be serious or useful in the context of medical practice.”¹⁰ Van Arsdall’s observation also points out how Cockayne’s edition and translations are part of a larger narrative tradition rather than an individual sentiment and likely a product of the changing academic fields of linguistics and philology. Earlier, Curt F. Buhler also noted the favoured style of nineteenth-century editors of English texts, “so that one finds (on the one hand) such disturbing forms as "yyne," "yis" and "yem" for pyne, pis and pem, while (on the other hand) scribal mistakes were silently emended, giving a very imperfect picture of the original.”¹¹ Noting that both the language as well as the editorial style, Buhler then implies a shared sentiment, expressed through this favoured contemporary style, likely motivated by changing dominant narratives, as discussed at the end of this chapter. This can be evidenced when analysing other editions and similar works of Cockayne’s period. In the preface of the seventh edition of his *Anglo-Saxon Reader*, Henry Sweet explains a similar method of presenting the Old English texts, in which he altered little and states how the accents of the manuscripts, “are faithfully kept.”¹² Sweet’s *Reader* was first published in 1876, roughly the same period as Cockayne’s edition, and features only two charms, neither of which the *Nine Herbs Charm*. From the preface, it appears Sweet shares the same ambition as Cockayne of preserving the manuscript text as much as possible. This further indicates that rather than a personal impression of Cockayne, the matter of presenting the old texts stem from the environmental academic tradition. As with the notes by Sweet, Cockayne’s *Leechdoms* and its translations of

¹⁰ Arsdall, “Reading,” 9.

¹¹ Curt F. Buhler, “Prayers and Charms in Certain Middle English Scrolls,” *Speculum*, Vol. 39, no. 2.(April 1964): 272.

¹² Henry Sweet, *Anglo-Saxon Reader: In Prose and Verse with Grammar, Metre, Notes and Glossary*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894), ix.

the charms indicate a new desire to read the Anglo-Saxon texts in the modern vernacular rather than Latin and create a closer connection between the Old English works and the nineteenth-century English reader interested in these texts.

1.2 Medical Charms

Although sometimes curiously presented and translated in an attempt to reflect as much of the source as possible, Cockayne edition also indicates his perceptive of charms as medical texts, even if they are from an unlearned folklore. The editor presents the ‘recipes’ not as solely magical chants or incantations, nor does his translation indicate that he considers them as solely such texts. He does seem to look at the practices with doubt, often calling these charms ‘superstitions’, intended to reassure the patient. Interestingly, Cockayne does emphasise the physiological aspects of charms, as he states how dread of death and wakeful anxiety are “unfriendly to recovery from disease.”¹³ Discussing the possible effects of charms, Cockayne states how charms, “act on the mind of the person charmed.”¹⁴ Linking religion and charms, Cockayne notes how prayers would be a natural part of these medical practises, and defends the traditions of the Germanic peoples as he argues, “the scornful reader, in good health, not toss his head on high at the so-called superstition of the simple Saxon, but consider rather how audacious an infidel that man, in those ages, would have seemed, who had refused to pray in the received manner for the restoration of his health.”¹⁵ Important here is not only Cockayne’s medical perspective of charms which he, although sceptically, nevertheless approaches through a medical scope, but also that the editor seemingly links the religious aspects of the charm with its medical nature. This is striking as almost all his successors in their analyses of charms tend to focus so completely on a single perspective of the charm, they discredit or disregard any

¹³ Oswald Cockayne, “Preface.” In *Leechdoms, Wortcunning and Starcraft of Early England, Volume I*, (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, and Green, 1864), XI.

¹⁴ Cockayne, “Preface Vol I,” XXXII.

¹⁵ Cockayne, “Preface Vol I,” XXVIII.

other elements which combined form the charm, as discussed in the following chapters.

Another instance of Cockayne critical, medical scope as an editor is when he notes on possible errors of the original manuscript scribe. Noting the omission of the south in the charm's incantation and summary of the cardinal directions, Cockayne concludes this to probably be an error and includes the fourth direction in his translation of the lines. Similarly, he notes the possible miscopying of the word *alde*. Although Cockayne provides fairly little insight into his editorial procedures in the sparse number of footnotes, the case of *alde* stands out, as he suggests perhaps to correct the entry to *adle* 'disease'¹⁶, once again suggesting how Cockayne kept his mind on the medical aspects of the charms in his translations. In his 1927 article, J.H.G. Grattan notes that, "Cockayne, with his mind still on poisons and diseases, altered to *adle*, and his alteration has provoked no criticism."¹⁷ Grattan's observation shows how in the several decades following Cockayne's *Leechdoms*, discussion on certain translations or transcriptions persist. More importantly, it shows how the perception of the texts changed following Cockayne's publication, as he is discredited for being concerned with actual medical ailments such as poisons and diseases by Grattan. Evidently, Cockayne perceived the charms as more medical in nature than his early successors, without disregarding the religious or magic elements of the charm, even if it is from a less learned culture whose medical practices relied more on chants than science.

1.3 Anglo-Saxon Medical Philosophy

In the preface of the first volume, Cockayne presents the history of medical science in Britain, in which both his knowledge of Ancient Greek and Roman medical science as well as his perspective on the traditions of the Germanic tribes become apparent. In the opening

¹⁶ *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, ed. J.R. Clark Hall, 4th ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960), s.v. "adl."

¹⁷ J.H.G. Grattan, "Three Anglo-Saxon Charms from the "Lacnunga"" *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (January, 1927): 4.

sentence of the preface, Cockayne already forges a comparison between the Anglo-Saxons of medieval England and the Ancient Greeks and Romans when he mentions the “medical philosophy”¹⁸ of the Anglo-Saxons, who would then come into contact with the “system of Latin sciences.”¹⁹ The editor however does not seem to discredit the Anglo-Saxons in favour of the Greeks and Romans, instead emphasising the more romantic spirit of the former, as evidenced by his description of their medicine as ‘philosophy.’ Instead of the medical skills and knowledge of surgical tools of the Greeks and Romans, Anglo-Saxons medicine centred more on herbs and charms, as well as the role of prayer. In fact, the editor praises the Germanic people for their knowledge of the “practical part of botany”²⁰, although does seem to still consider charms to be of the “arts of magic”²¹, explaining how these practices can be traced back to Biblical times and older. Evidently then, while he does not consider the charms and methods of the Anglo-Saxons to be scientific, Cockayne does not wholly discredit them, instead admiring the ‘simple Saxon’, their knowledge of the natural world and their spirit, even if they ‘were unable to learn the actual science.’

The contrast Cockayne forges between Germanic and Mediterranean medicine can also be identified in his translation of the *Nine Herbs Charm*. In his translation of the lines describing the creation of the herbs in the heavens as remedies, Cockayne translates the phrase *eallum to bote* as ‘Pancacea’ (l. 78 C), whereas a more literal, modern translation reads ‘remedy for all’ (l.40 P). His use of the supposed remedy that could cure all wounds named after the Greek goddess is striking in this translation of a Germanic text. Its presence in the text feels marked, and could suggest an attempt by Cockayne to emphasise how the Germanic tribes based some of their medicine on ancient sources, even if they failed to completely understand them. This argument has since been shared by many scholars, such as Anne van Arsdall, who stated that

¹⁸ Cockayne, “Preface Vol I,” IX.

¹⁹ Ibid., XI.

²⁰ Ibid., XI.

²¹ Ibid., XX.

Anglo-Saxon medical works drew, “from an older Continental Latin origin.”²² While the term ‘Pancacea’ had been used more negatively by the nineteenth century, it could be Cockayne used it in his translation to mark the ancient origins of the Germanic traditions and how these differ from Greco-Roman sciences.

Similar to his contrast between Germanic medicine and Greek and Roman science, Cockayne also emphasises the opposing religious elements, pagan and Christian, in the charm. Placing the ‘wild mythology’ of the Germanic people within a Christian scope, he argues how these different divine entities are in fact but aspects of the Christian God, such as Woden, whom he dubs, “a corrupted likeness of the Supreme Intelligence.”²³ Woden’s role in the incantation bears similarities to the Christ figure, ‘Holy in the heavens, when he hung’ (l.38. P), while at the same time emanating elements of the pagan traditions of the Anglo-Saxons prior to their conversion to Christianity. Analysing the Anglo-Saxon conversion to Christianity, William A. Chaney notes on the interesting case of the *Nine-herbs Charm* as Woden “masters the magic runes of wisdom by hanging on his Cosmic Tree, so Christ creates the magic herbs as He hung on His Tree, the Cross”²⁴ Although the role of Woden as a magician is debatable, as is the attention to the magical aspects of the charm, which saw an increase in the following century, Chaney’s observation illustrates the positions that Woden and Christ have in the text and how the Christian elements stand out against the pagan traditions still present in the charm. This is most evident in Cockayne’s edition in his reading of *ea rinnende*, near the end of the incantation. Cockayne translates these words as ‘Him’ (l.98 C), and while an exact accurate reading and translation is still debated, the modern translation ‘running water’ (l.59 P) appears far less marked than a reference to the Christian god, as the speaker of the incantation boasts to

²² Arsdall, “Reading,” 9.

²³ Oswald Cockayne, “Preface.” In *Leechdoms, Wortcunning and Starcraft of Early England, Volume III*, (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, and Green, 1866), VIII.

²⁴ William A. Chaney, “Paganism to Christianity in Anglo-Saxon England.” *The Harvard Theological Review* 53, no. 3 (1960): 202.

alone know *ea rinnende*, as well as the ‘the nine snakes behold it’ (1.60 P). This reading of the words *ea rinnende* indicates the strong, Christian perspective of Cockayne, with which he views and presents the Anglo-Saxon charm, in which the pagan elements are stressed. The editor seems to emphasise how the medical traditions of the Anglo-Saxons were largely centred around their own folklore and mythology rather than the system of science of the Ancient Greeks and Romans. His edition and translation suggest a distinct image of the Anglo-Saxons, whom Cockayne dubs the “warrior inhabitants of our country” and “triumphant barbarians”²⁵, suggesting a perspective of them as heroic, though unlearned people whose ‘medical philosophy’ differed from the Latin science, a view bearing similarities to the concept of the *noble savage* within nineteenth-century Romanticism.

1.4 Victorian England and the Romantic Noble Savage

Cockayne’s edition was published in the mid-nineteenth century, a period in England known as the Victorian era, which strongly influenced Cockayne’s perception of the *Nine Herbs Charm*. The societal conflicts of the period, as well as lasting remnants of older movements all appear to be evident in his translation of the charm and signal a considerable influence of environmental narratives on the editor’s reception of the text. This period of British history was one of major scientific learning, in which science became an important tool to classify the entire world. This would explain the stressed comparison between the charms of the Anglo-Saxons and the medical knowledge of the Ancient Greeks and Romans, as this origin of science was held in high regard in this new scientific age. It was therefore important to distinguish charms, which were until then not considered medical practises, but rather magical, or at least religious, pagan practices. This new scientific evolution meanwhile also clashed with the religious society of Victorian England. As historian Robert Tombs notes, “Victorian England was a very

²⁵ Cockayne, “Preface Vol I,” XXVII.

religious society,”²⁶ Christian circles reacted by distancing themselves from the changes of progress. Bernard Lightman explains that, “in Britain, throughout the nineteenth century the older, established intellectual elite, who defended the interests of the aristocracy and the Anglican Church, fought to preserve their social and intellectual position.”²⁷ This conflict would have likely influenced Cockayne within his clerical sphere. Furthermore, the edition also appears correspond with what Bernard Lightman describes as a, “clerical, gentlemanly, donnish culture of Anglican Cambridge, imbued with the spirit of natural theology,”²⁸ as Cockayne’s insertion of the Christian God in his reading of *ea rinnende* ‘running water’ (1.59 P) as ‘Him’ (1.98 C) suggests a theological preference in his interpretation. It was also during this period that the notion and perspective of culture, both national but also international, changed for the English people. This new value of culture could be a driving force for the importance Cockayne gives to the classical sources, since ancient culture held a prominent place among the social narrative of the period. Analysing this change in cultural perspective, Tombs observes that, “England was seen as a leader of European civilisation, and in areas such as economics and politics, clearly pre-eminent. Elsewhere, the superiority of others was accepted: in general culture and the arts, the French; in art and music, the Germans and Italians; in philosophy and scholarship, the Germans; and in almost everything, the Ancient Greeks.”²⁹ Not only does this observation coincide with the high regard of the Ancient Greeks (and Romans) present in Cockayne’s edition, the position of German scholarship also indicates how Cockayne and English charms studies built on the existing German scholarly tradition, which saw its peak during the Romantic movement. These strong societal values and perceptions would have likely motivated Cockayne’s observations for his edition.

Cockayne’s *Leechdoms* came in the wake of the growing interest in their medieval

²⁶ Robert Tombs, *The English and their History*. (Bungay: Clays Ltd., 2015), 459.

²⁷ Bernard Lightman, “Victorian Sciences and Religions: Discordant Harmonies.” *Osiris* 16 (2001): 346.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 347.

²⁹ Tombs, *The English and their History*, 587.

ancestors in England and the rest of Europe during the Romantic period. Cockayne's perspective of the Anglo-Saxons, depicting them as unlearned warriors with strong botanical knowledge and good spirits, resembles some of the strong attitudes of the Romantic movement, which ended several decades before this publication. Nevertheless, the admiration of these medieval people, their strong bond with nature and their free spirit all coincide with Romantic values, which were characterised by the glorification of the medieval period and its people. It is therefore in this period the first pioneering works on subjects such as charms are produced, as Roper states that, "the fundamental work of collecting charms in Europe, during the age of national romanticism and after, was a necessary precondition for the development of any typology of charms."³⁰ Building on this work, other publications in the latter half of the nineteenth century, such as Richard Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, based on a Germanic epic poem which was only rediscovered in the eighteenth century, Henry Sweet's *Anglo-Saxon Reader* and the first dictionary of Old English in 1838 by Bosworth further signal the interest in the Germanic medieval folklore further illustrate this influence. More specifically, Cockayne's perspective coincides with the notion of the 'noble savage'. Usually attributed to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, one of the forerunners of the Romantic movement, the concept of the noble savage refers to one who is free from civilization, unlearned but innately good. Dorothy Rounds in her overview of the classic noble savage argues for the figure as, "an expression of the innate longing of the individual, intensified or diminished according to the economic, social and political conditions of his environment, for a happy and carefree existence."³¹ Clearly then, the interest in the noble savage is connected to the social environment, which changed with the increase of modernisation. Romantic sentiments of past glory and people living in harmony with nature were only strengthened as urbanisation increased. Although the Romantic movement declined during the nineteenth century as a result of the rise of Realism and a new,

³⁰ Roper, "Typologising", 129.

³¹ Dorothy Rounds, "The Noble Savage." *The Classical Outlook* 38, no. 6 (1961): 65.

dominant societal narrative and perception, it continued to have an influence on Victorian England long after. This cultural relationship between England and the continent likely also influenced their conception of the Anglo-Saxons. One explanation for the later fascination with the Anglo-Saxons as noble savages is given by Silke Stroh, who states that, “at first, at least within Britain, this was focused on the Celts. The Anglo-Saxons were Germanic, close to the Goths and still too inherently English. A German was new on the throne, these were not the savages they were looking for, not in the (second half of the) eighteenth century at least.”³² Stroh’s observation suggests that British society first looked at the Celts as ‘noble savages’, which explains why Cockayne presents this perspective of the Anglo-Saxons and their traditions in the second half of the nineteenth century, long after the height of the Romantic period. Stroh also explains how the success of modernization paved the way for the interest in the noble savages. Once they were no longer a threat to society, they became a curiosity. Stroh’s observations coincide with Cockayne’s presentation of the Anglo-Saxons. These Germanic people were legendary figures of the past, shrouded in mystery, and what Cockayne presents in his edition then are their pagan medical traditions, based on their *wortcunning*.

Cockayne, although laying the groundwork for many scholars and students of Old English and Anglo-Saxon medicine, seems to have been focused less on creating a critical edition of the manuscripts and was more concerned with presenting an etymologically similar translation which accentuates the magical nature of the medicinal practises of the noble but unlearned Germanic people. However, what is noteworthy is how in his perception of the charm, he is able to consider its religious and even magical nature, while observing the text through a medical scope. This view of charms as medical practises of botanical knowledge was seemingly motivated by the changing attitudes towards culture and history in the mid-

³² Silke Stroh, “The Reemergence of the Primitive Other?: Noble Savagery and the Romantic Age.” In *Gaelic Scotland in the Colonial Imagination: Anglophone Writing from 1600 to 1900*, (Northwestern University Press, 2017), 117.

nineteenth century. The scientific advancement of Victorian society saw a stark contrast emerging between the traditional view of science and medicine of the Ancient Greeks and Romans on one side, and the curious medicinal practices of the Anglo-Saxon charms on the other side.

2. Storms, Magic and the Early Twentieth Century.

Following the publication of Oswald Cockayne's *Leechdoms* in the 1860's it would take until the start of the next century for a new edition of the many Anglo-Saxon charms to be published in English. Although his three-volume edition was praised and paved the way for other scholars of Anglo-Saxon medicine, it did not spark any new English editions of the charms. Apart from minor notes and remarks, it appears his *Leechdoms* was generally accepted and no need was felt for a new edition. Only during the next century, in the changing, modern society of Western Europe, does the reception of Anglo-Saxon charms and culture appear to change and is the need for a new edition voiced more strongly. Published in 1948, Godfried Storms's *Anglo-Saxon Magic* follows Cockayne's *Leechdoms* as a complete edition of charms, expanding on its need and the new methods of the twentieth century. The edition by Storms demonstrates the lasting influence of the nineteenth-century scholars, focusing on Germanic mythology and tradition, as well as displaying the modern rationality in his attitude towards the practice of magic within Anglo-Saxon medicine. What is more, his translation of the Nine Herbs Charm signals the growing influence of dominant narratives on the editor's scope, as Storms meticulously dissects the text, separating the Christian influence from the Germanic pagan elements he almost solely focuses on.

2.1 Payne and Grendon

In the eight decades between Cockayne's *Leechdoms* and the publication of Storms' *Anglo-Saxon Magic*, only a handful of publications were made on the Anglo-Saxon metrical charms. One of the most important of these were lectures given by Joseph F. Payne in 1903, published the following year as *English Medicine in the Anglo-Saxon Times*. Payne, a physician and historian of medicine, delivered these lectures before the Royal College of Physicians, in

which he discusses Anglo-Saxon medicine and charms from an unsurprisingly medical perspective. While Payne comments on Cockayne's edition, he limits himself to noting specific minor errors in or suggesting alterations on Cockayne's edition and arguments, for the most part praising his work. In his lectures Payne touches upon portions of the *Nine Herbs Charm*, presenting the text "with a few trifling alterations to make it more intelligible."³³ As Payne states how the charm displays a, "traditional popular knowledge of herbs, with further acquisitions derived from classical medicine and from magic,"³⁴ it becomes evident that the perception of charms had seemingly changed little during the decades between Cockayne's edition and Payne's lectures. Remarking the form of Cockayne's edition, Payne presents a method of classification of the various charms, which he keeps relatively straightforward, separating the forms of medicine between scientific and "magical medicine."³⁵ The distinction between types of medicine highlights the apparent perception of different forms of medicine being of varying importance. This is further evidenced when Payne discusses the history of Anglo-Saxon medicine during the time of King Alfred, as he distinguishes medicinal methods in a way similar to Cockayne, stating that at the time, "it was not till long after this that any serious and learned medical literature, as distinguished from popular medicine, was written in English."³⁶ Noting on their medical literature, written in their vernacular, he considers this proof that, "the Anglo-Saxons possessed high intelligence and activity of mind; though not necessarily that they possessed deep learning."³⁷ Plainly, the perception on the Anglo-Saxon traditions changed very little between Cockayne's *Leechdoms* and Payne's lectures, as Roper notes that, "fundamentally his discussion is no advance on Cockayne's."³⁸ However, the lectures do demonstrate the dominant narrative which lasted from the nineteenth into the twentieth

³³ Payne, *English Medicine*, 138.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 141.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 141.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 33.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 33.

³⁸ Jonathan Roper, *English Verbal Charms*, (Helsinki: Vammalan Kirjapaino Oy, 2005), 31.

century in which charms, sceptically, were still studied from a medical perspective.

Published five years after Payne's publication, Felix Grendon's extensive *The Anglo-Saxon Charms* follows Cockayne's *Leechdoms* as the next English collection of the Anglo-Saxon charms and signals a change in the perception of the Anglo-Saxon charms. Published in *The Journal of American Folklore*, Grendon's work illustrates the influence of the growing field of anthropology on the reception of charms. In his introduction, Grendon provides an extensive overview of the history of the charms and their religious origins, as well as an overlook of their publication, which he concludes by saying that, "since Cockayne's quaint but somewhat inaccurate and periphrastic renderings of the spells, no translation of any considerable body of the charms has been published."³⁹ Commenting on Cockayne's translations and edition, Grendon notes the alternative translations made by his predecessor, as well as his unusual choice of form and provides his own suggested translations for the charms. Although he notes the need for a new edition and the many adjustments he made to the older texts, his translations still strongly resemble Cockayne's initial edition of the charms. The translations made by Grendon are presented in a more modernised script for the Old English transcription, improving the accessibility and usefulness of the edition greatly, and Storms later notes that Grendon's translations "are nearly always an improvement on those by Cockayne."⁴⁰ Discussing the history of charms, Grendon seems very keen to demonstrate their Greek and Roman influences as much as possible, signalling a lasting high regard in which the ancient sciences sources are kept, while also displaying the influence of anthropology. However, what is most striking about Grendon's edition is the emphasis placed on the view of charms as magical, often referring to the charms as spells and conjurations. Grendon argues that the effect of the spell relies on the patient's superstitious belief that it does, stating how, "the efficacy of many of the charms depends upon a real or supposed association of ideas between the rite

³⁹ Felix Grendon, "The Anglo-Saxon Charms." *The Journal of American Folklore* 22, no. 84 (1909): 109.

⁴⁰ Storms, *Magic*, 128.

performed or spell recited, on the one hand, and the object sought for, on the other.”⁴¹ This view on the usefulness of charms suggests little to no reliance on the medical properties of the herbs and ingredients, and while Grendon dubs Payne’s work, “valuable for its information about folk medicine, and for its interpretations of some of the obscure Old English names of plants and diseases that are mentioned in the conjurations”⁴², he seemingly holds little further value in the medical aspects of the charms, save the insight provided into folk medicine. The rising field of anthropology evidenced by Grendon seemingly signals a new perspective on charms, which veers away from the Romantic, medical scope and towards one focused on the religious, magical elements of charms.

In his edition, Grendon divides the charms based on their different characteristics, which he already stated was severely lacking, all of which are magical. As with Payne, this suggests a new, more pragmatic approach towards charms, although Grendon’s classification of the charms gives no sense of the texts actually having some medical value, instead noting on the, “numerous superstitious uses of mugwort.”⁴³ While Grendon never discredits the functionality of the charms, he perceives their function as being more focussed on the mind and less as a medical remedy, further signalling his focus on the magical properties of charms and, what he dubs, “Old English leech-sorcerers.”⁴⁴ Although Grendon argues that Payne’s classification was, “hardly satisfactory”⁴⁵, Storms notes how, “with a few changes, Grendon took over Payne’s classification.”⁴⁶ Historian Karen Louise Jolly too notes on Grendon’s classification in her work on Anglo-Saxon religion, as she observes that, “the organisation of his edition of charms according to five types of magic likewise uses modern categories of how magic works,

⁴¹ Grendon, *Charms*, 119.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 109.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 226.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 133.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 109.

⁴⁶ Storms, *Magic*, 127.

subtly altering how the charms are read.”⁴⁷ Evidently, Grendon’s perception of the charms as magical influenced his edition, which also highlights the increased importance given to a more practical and available presentation of the texts.

Despite being published only a few years apart, the works of Payne and Grendon demonstrate the changing reception of the Anglo-Saxon charms leading up to Storms’ edition, as well as the influence of the scholarly fields from which they operated. Payne’s scope of the charms, stemming from his own medical background, observes charms as superstitious and ritualistic traditions, but nevertheless as forms of medicine. This reception is strikingly different from subsequent works, which depict charms as elements of pagan traditions in which magic and medicine are intrinsically linked, while almost only observed as inherently religious or magical texts. What is interesting is that Payne does seem to comment on this change within the scholarly society of Anglo-Saxon studies, as he argues that the, “magical element, to which much importance has been attached, forms really only a very small part of Anglo-Saxon medical literature,”⁴⁸ which could denote that Payne was aware of the influence of the magical aspects of the charms, which clashed with the older view he shared with Cockayne. While Grendon aimed to present his edition as an improvement on the earlier work with a greater focus on linguistic and literary criticism, his edition also demonstrates the modern conception of magic, stemming from this anthropological background, as well as the increasingly limited scope with which editors view charms.

2.2 Anglo-Saxon Magic

Although Grendon’s edition signals a shifting perspective within Anglo-Saxon medicine, it would still take nearly 40 years for the next English edition to be published. Godfrid Storms’ aptly titled *Anglo-Saxon Magic* continued this movement, as the edition and

⁴⁷ Karen Lousie Jolly, *Popular Religion in Late Saxon England: Elf Charms in Context* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 100.

⁴⁸ Payne, *English Medicine*, 114.

translations demonstrate the influence of the growing scientific advancements of the previous century, as well as the new conception of rationality. Storms notes how Cockayne's version is still the only full translation thus far and similarly states that no significant edition has been published. His edition, which was published six decades after Cockayne's *Leechdoms*, not only provides many needed editorial changes to layout and numbering, but also focused more on the Germanic origins and purpose of the charms, which were translated less conservatively and more with an eye for meaning. Storms' *Anglo-Saxon Magic* and his translation of the *Nine Herbs Charm* signify the shifting focus towards the religious, pagan elements and purpose of the charms and the intrinsic connection between medicine and magic.

Although still very influenced by the previous works, Storms also exemplifies a difference that occurred in the twentieth century, where the influence of the Romantic ideals and the values of Victorian society were fading. While he focuses heavily on the magical aspects, Storms' edition shows little of the perspective of these pagan rituals being superstitious rites which stand in stark contrast to the sciences of the Ancient Greeks and the advancements of the modern age. While Storms does not disregard the influence of the ancients on Anglo-Saxon traditions, as he opens his introduction by describing how the Anglo-Saxons borrowed from the ancients, he mainly asserts the role of magic as an important and inevitable part of human civilization. In the introductory chapters of his edition, Storms voices his aims to explain the role magic has played in almost all early human civilizations and, while he does narrow the term, he seems less focused on closely defining magic. Rather, he seems to attempt at dispersing some of the older notions on magic, such as animism, and illustrate the notion that, "magic as a general idea is among the oldest conceptions of mankind and if we wish to understand it, we must first understand the way of thinking of primitive man."⁴⁹ As his focus on the primitive man bears resemblance to the Romantic perspective of the nineteenth century, the apparent need

⁴⁹ Storms, *Magic* 35.

Storms expresses to better understand the concept of magic similarly signals new, more modern conceptions. While Cockayne in his preface deals mostly with the history of the collected texts, Storms' preface contains a critical, linguistic analysis of the text, signalling the increased field of historical linguistics since the publication by Cockayne. Storms also appears to be more keen on the manuscripts in which the various charms are found, noting the difference the scribes must have had between the *Leechbook* and the *Lacnunga*, concluding that, "the *Leechbook* may be characterised as the handbook of the Anglo-Saxon medical man, the *Lacnunga* may be characterised as the handbook of the Anglo-Saxon medicine-man."⁵⁰ What is important about this distinction is how it demonstrates that Storms does not regard all Anglo-Saxon medical practice to be magical in nature, but is very specific about the charms in the *Lacnunga*, being more magical than medicinal, mostly due to their pagan Germanic origin.

2.3 Storms as an Editor

Analysing the layout of his edition, Storms made considerable changes in the way he presents the charms compared to Cockayne, as his edition features more elements of a modern edition. Storms already notes on the division Cockayne made in listing the charms, or rather lack thereof, and expresses the need for a new edition, as apart from rudimentary numbering, "any other internal and external arrangement is lacking."⁵¹ In his *Anglo-Saxon Magic*, Storms presents the original Anglo-Saxon texts in a more legible modern Latin script, featuring extensive notes which not only explain the translation choices made but also delve deeper into the discussions on the specific charms. Notable in his translation of the charm is how Storms appears less bound to sentence structuring and preservation of form. Where Cockayne preserved the alliterative lines of the charms, often at the expense of semantics, Storms argues that consistent alliteration is only found in two charms, and therefore adherence is not

⁵⁰ Ibid., 24.

⁵¹ Ibid., 17.

necessary. For instance, in the second stanza of the *Nine Herbs Charm*, Storms translates the line attesting the herb ‘plantain’ *ofer ðȳ cræte curran* as ‘over you chariots creaked’ (1.9 S), whereas Pettit in his modern translation adhered to the alliteration, translating the line as ‘Over you carts creaked’ (1.9 P). The simple change in translations is extraordinary, as the two words, ‘carts’ and ‘chariots’, are semantically similar, yet Storms chooses to omit the repeating /k/ sound in his translation. In his translation of another charm, *Against a Dwarf*, he expands on his translations for that charm and not adhering to alliteration, arguing that, “the incantatory formula consists of twelve lines and only a few show some irregular alliteration, so that all efforts at reconstruction based on the absence or presence of alliteration must be rejected.”⁵² Storms evidently makes no attempt at altering his translation for the sake of alliteration, insisting that it is therefore not of such importance to the charm that it needs to be preserved and more attention should be paid to its purpose and meaning. Stating that his primary was not, “to publish the texts but to analyse and, possibly, explain them”⁵³, the meaning of the charm is more important than the form, contrasting Cockayne’s editorial priorities.

Another striking example of Storms’ focus on meaning rather than form is found in his translation of the various herbs attested to in the *Nine Herbs Charm*. While what exact herbs the original text referred to was still debated at that point, Storms chooses to translate them in his certainty, yet often fails to give any motivation for these translations. He translates the herb *Wegbrāde* as ‘Plantain’ (1.7 S) and *mægde* as ‘Camomile’ (1.23 S), whereas modern editions are more careful in naming the different herbs, even those we can now safely identify, as Pettit translates *Wegbrāde* as ‘Way-broad’ (1.7 P), although he identifies the herb as ‘greater plantain’ in brackets, and leaves *mægde* untranslated in his translation, only offering ‘Camomile’ as a possible meaning. Two decades later, Wilfrid Bonser in his book too notes that Storms is,

⁵² Ibid., 169.

⁵³ Ibid., 26.

“much less cautious”⁵⁴ in his attempt to name all the different herbs in the *Nine Herbs Charm*. He gives little reason for the translations, which Bonser also remarks, as he states that, “in his notes he does not refer to this displacement, or to his own conception of the names of the nine herbs.”⁵⁵ Evidently, the shared sentiment of his predecessors to preserve a text’s form changed and shifted towards a focus on meaning and intent.

A more prominent change Storms made to his translation of the *Nine Herbs Charm* is the charm’s line ordering. He notes his motivations for the change, saying how most editors agree on the displacement of certain lines, although none have actually shifted them, and that he placed the passage describing Woden after the enumeration of the nine herbs. Possibly more focused on logical function of the charm and its narrative, he shifts the lines so the nine herbs are first all named before it is described how ‘Woden took nine glory-twigs’ (1.43 S), which, as he states, “is a reference to the nine herbs.”⁵⁶ This further supports the idea that Storms focused more on the magical function of the charms, rather than a preservation of an old text, as his predecessors did. His restructuring of the charm demonstrates the editor’s focus on highlighting the charm’s story of how the nine herbs became magical cures, as he argues that, “the narration of this event repeats the achievement and makes the poison ineffective in the present case: Just as the poison was destroyed by Woden, so it will be destroyed here.”⁵⁷ Storms in his translation ensures the narrative of the charm is logical in its purpose, which while intended as a remedy, is presented as only magical.

2.4 Germanic and Christian Influences

This emphasis on the role of the pagan figure as a magician also demonstrates another aspect of Storms’ edition, namely his focus on separating the early pagan magical elements

⁵⁴ Wilfrid Bonser, *The Medical Background of Anglo-Saxon England: a study in History, Psychology and Folklore* (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 1963), 335.

⁵⁵ Bonser, *Background*, 338.

⁵⁶ Storms, *Magic*, 191.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 55.

from the, “influence of Christian religion.”⁵⁸ In the introduction, Storms quickly presents the connection between the Anglo-Saxon charms and the old magical charms described in the various Old Norse sagas. Storms considers the connection between the sagas of heroes and magic and the Anglo-Saxon charms important in the understanding of the Germanic pagan traditions, as they, “provide more than vague references or exceptional and short texts.”⁵⁹ Here, the editor stresses the value of the pagan Germanic culture and his focus on elements in the charm which illustrate this culture without Christian influences. In his presentation of charms, he explains how he orders them and starts with, “those that may be regarded as of true Germanic origin, free from classical or Christian influences.”⁶⁰ One of the most striking examples of the editor’s need to highlight the difference between the Germanic charm and the other influences is in his translation of the two figures in the *Nine Herbs Charm*. In his translation of the charm, Storms appears to exemplify the Germanic origins of the charm and the obvious Christian influence added, focussing on the contrast between the hanging ‘wise Lord’ (l.37 P) and Woden, who in the Germanic mythology hangs from the World Tree. As he translates the line *hālig on heofonu(m), pā hē hongode* as ‘holy in heaven as He hung [on the cross]’ (l.38 S), he adds the line in brackets, calling attention to the Christian figure as opposed to the rest of the Germanic elements of the charm, illustrating the Storms’ perspective of the charm and how it, “shows but superficial Christianisation.”⁶¹ This translation showcases the editor’s aim to demonstrate the charm’s Germanic pagan origins and dissect from it those elements which to him seem to hold most value.

In his focus on all Christian influences in the charms, Storms also changed Cockayne’s queer translation of *ēa rinnende* as ‘Him’ (l.98 C), which Storms read as ‘running stream’ (l.59 S). This change is not just linguistically relevant, as running water also holds significant

⁵⁸ Ibid., 6.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 5.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 129.

⁶¹ Ibid., 81.

importance within Germanic folklore. This was already noted by Grendon as of the ‘minor Superstitious practices’ he observed from a perspective of folklore and anthropology, stating that, “each brook, river, and stream was supposedly haunted by a spirit, who might be helpful or harmful, and must be flattered and propitiated by sacrificial offerings.”⁶² However, Grendon links the importance of such waters to the role of holy water within Christianity, suggesting that, “the employment of holy water by the Church appears to be a continuation of an ancient rite.”⁶³ Storms, however, in his attempts to remove all Christian influences from the Germanic charm, argues that, “the magician proceeds to state that he himself is not without power either. He alone has knowledge of a running stream of which the snakes are afraid.”⁶⁴ Similar is his reading of the line *wið fēondes hond ond wið frēabregde*, which attest the power of the herb ‘Wergulu’. Storms translates the line as ‘against the hand of a fiend and against mighty devices’ (1.32. S), whereas a modern translation reads as ‘Against the hand of the Enemy [*i.e.*, Satan] and against severe seizure’ (1.43 P). In his translation, Storms refers not to a Christian devil-like figure, instead presenting the danger as an evil creature, not specifically referring to a Christian spirit. While the second part of the line is still obscure and Pettit in the modern translation indicates his doubts regarding his own interpretation as ‘against severe seizure’, it is nevertheless striking that Storms perceives the line as referring to more magical dangers against which the herb ‘Wergulu’ protects the patient, rather than more medical dangers in Pettit’s interpretation. Similarly, he translates an earlier line attesting the same herb, *ondan āttres*, as ‘a vexation to poison’ (1.29 S). The use of ‘vexation’ seems marked, especially compared to more modern readings of the word as ‘cure’ (1.29 P), as it moves translation further from the medical perspective by omitting a more medical description of the herb’s effect.

It is important to note, however, that Storms in his focus on the religious elements does

⁶² Grendon, *Charms*, 120.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 144.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 195.

not discredit the use of charms as remedies, nor does he deny the relation that magic has to medicine, as he states that, “the main sources of our knowledge of magic in Anglo-Saxon times are medical manuscripts.”⁶⁵ In his scope, though, he observes medical manuscripts as examples of pagan magic, presenting the charm as an example of a tradition of medicine largely based on magical elements and rituals, intrinsic to early human society. While he expresses his difficulty in precisely defining magic, his edition illustrates a difference between his perception and that of his predecessors, who often dubbed the elements of ‘superstitions’. The charms in his edition are magic, as in his edition he presents the art as almost-all-encompassing, stating how, “magic may be performed by means of actions, words, looks and objects; it may be performed by a man, a spirit or a god; it may serve a good or bad purpose; it may be active or passive.”⁶⁶ As for charms being magical, Storms argues that the Anglo-Saxons must have used magic, as, “the existence of magic in Anglo-Saxon England can be inferred in general, from the fact that not a single people has been discovered that does not use magic in some form or other.”⁶⁷ Magic, it seems, is power and knowledge, which operates along lines that cannot be followed through the physical senses, but made sense to those who were part of the ritual, as Storm opts that, “curing a patient by magic or by natural means is one and the same thing in the mind of a witch-doctor; he cures a sick man and there is the end of it.”⁶⁸ Elements of the ritual, the naming, the incantation, the preparation, are all vital, which is evidenced by his translation of the charm and his restructuring of the lines and importance given to the role of Woden in the narrative.

The translations of the Nine Herbs Charm in *Anglo-Saxon Magic* suggest that, while portraying the function of the charm as medical, i.e., curing the patient, the magical elements of the charms, the knowledge of the words spoken, are the source of healing power. In his translation of the charm, Storms, like Cockayne, inserted the south after its omission in the

⁶⁵ Ibid., 12.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 32.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 107.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 36.

original MS. in lines 55-56. Blaming the technical inability of the Christian scribe, Storms insists on the importance of the mentioning of the south, as it otherwise, “presents the patient with a serious gap in his defensive armour.”⁶⁹ As Storms presents the charms, words are evidently a vital part of the remedy and crucial in the healing of the patient. Garner also notes the magical scope of Storms, as she writes that Storms, “attributes the ‘magic power of iron’ and its vital role in Anglo-Saxon remedies to its relative scarcity and to connections with mythic smiths such as Wayland rather than considering any additional medical properties iron might have had.”⁷⁰ Garner, writing from a more modern, medical perspective discussed later, notes how Storms fails to note the medical potential of certain elements of the charms. While Storms considers magic as innate human practise and medicine, “pre-eminently a magical science,”⁷¹ his edition and translations suggest a focus on the religious and magical aspects which neglects the medical potential of the charm’s ingredients and treatment.

2.5 Modern Magic

The few editions published in the decades following Cockayne’s *Leechdoms* demonstrate two important aspects of the reception of the Anglo-Saxon metrical charms during the early twentieth century. The first is the apparent lack of need for a new edition of the charms following Cockayne’s edition, as it wouldn’t be until Grendon that another collection of translated charms was published in English. This suggests that for a long time the consensus was that Cockayne’s *Leechdoms* served as an appropriate translation and representation of the charms, with only small remarks needed. The second is the focus on the relevance given to the charms as examples of Germanic pagan culture rather than medical in the reception of the charms. While the nineteenth-century perspective was keen to focus on the origins of what was

⁶⁹ Ibid., 192.

⁷⁰ Lori Ann Garner, “Anglo-Saxon Charms in Performance,” *Oral Tradition*, Volume 19, Issue 1 (March 2004): 27.

⁷¹ Storms, *Magic*, 39.

then considered ‘superstitions’, Storm’s edition marks a stark transition towards the functional use of charms, in which he dissects the various religious elements from the charm to highlight the original, pagan Germanic origins. While his focus on the pagan Germanic elements demonstrates the lasting influence of the dominant view from the previous century, the conceptions of magic and rationality in his edition simultaneously signal a changing reception of charms in the twentieth century, in which they were no longer observed as medical texts.

The decades between Cockayne’s *Leechdoms* and the following editions suggest that Cockayne’s edition, for a long time, emanated within the scholarly field the then-contemporary perception of the Anglo-Saxon charms. This nineteenth-century European perspective of scholars seems to be mostly dominated by a focus on the Germanic origins of the texts and the traditions of their ancestors. German scholars in particular paid close attention to Old English and charms, which comes from the fact that the Germanic tradition of the metrical charm is best preserved in Old English texts, as Stephen O. Glosecki notes that, “while most early Northwest European charms reach us in Old English manuscripts, a few survive in Old High German and Old Saxon, and there are inklings of charms here and there in Old Norse.”⁷² The German interest of the period is also noted by both Payne and Grendon. Payne, in his lectures, observes how Old English for a long time and still at that time, was, “the object of so much interest and such keen study on the part of continental and especially German scholars.”⁷³ Of similar interest is Payne’s remarks on the Anglo-Saxon corpus as a form of English ancestry and source of nationalism, as he states that, “our branch of the Germanic stock was the first to produce a true national literature.”⁷⁴ This further indicates that the interest in Germanic origins were motivated or at least associated with a lasting search for national history and ancient ancestors. Similarly, Grendon in his work mentions the long tradition of German interest in charms and Germanic

⁷² Glosecki, Stephen O. “Stranded Narrative: Myth, Metaphor and the Metrical Charm” In *Myth in Early northwest Europe*, ed. Stephen O. Glosecki (Tempe: ACMR Press, 2007), 47.

⁷³ Payne, *English Medicine*, 31.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 29.

mythology, most notably the work of Jacob Grimm, whom he calls, “a pioneer in charm criticism.”⁷⁵ Evidently, the lasting influence of the nineteenth-century interest in Germanic folklore and the view of Anglo-Saxon charms as sublime examples halted the need for a new edition of these charms.

Although illustrating the modern conceptions of magic and charms as pagan practices, Storms’s *Anglo-Saxon Magic* still displays the persisting effects of its predecessors, both in its methods and perspectives. In their 2005 article, *A reassessment of the efficacy of Anglo-Saxon medicine*, Brennessel et al. observe this older perspective of the early twentieth century in their new approach towards charms. Referring to Storms, among other scholars, they state how for them, “the most common mode of inquiry seemed to be to look down upon our cultural forebears.”⁷⁶ Though the edition marks a change, and Storms voices his need for a new edition based in part on the organisation of Cockayne’s, modern analyses do note how his edition still pertained to the older tradition. On his organisation of the charms, Jolly remarks how Storms chose to organise them based on their original Germanic elements, in contrast to the classical, Christian elements which Storms argues were imposed later, and how this marks the continuity of magic against the influence of Christianity. This motivation in the organisation of the charms by Storms further signals the remnants of his predecessors, as Jolly states how this approach is, “the result of the nineteenth-century romantic view that sought the pure, Germanic roots of Anglo-Saxon culture by dissecting texts dating from a later period. This view values origins more highly than the texts we possess and ignores what these texts tell us about the time in which they were produced.”⁷⁷ Jolly, in her turn-of-the-century perspective of Storms, places the edition among the older, traditional scholars and, while she does note Storms’ work and role in examining the roots of Anglo-Saxon charm medicine, nonetheless regards the edition as, “the

⁷⁵ Grendon, *Charms*, 106.

⁷⁶ Barbara Brennessel, Michael D. C. Drout, and Robyn Gravel, “A Reassessment of the Efficacy of Anglo-Saxon Medicine.” *Anglo-Saxon England* 34 (2005): 183–84.

⁷⁷ Jolly, *Popular*, 100.

product of the nineteenth-century desire for origins and the bias of a modern rationality.”⁷⁸ This rationality Jolly refers to is also likely the origin of the new interest in magical scholarly research, which followed the rise of fields like anthropology, psychology and sociology during the twentieth century. Evidently, the edition marks a turning point within the reception of charms, as society, especially Western Europe, slowly became less captivated by the Romantic ideals of Germanic mythology of the previous century and, influenced by modernity, forged a new outlook on the magical traditions.

The emphasis Storms places on magic in his edition, while an example of the more modern scholarship of the twentieth century, has been regarded by his successors as still being founded in the old traditions of the previous century, yet close analysis seems to suggest otherwise. The fascination with the study of magic first emerged during this period in Europe, when the Church defined magic as pagan vestiges and, as Owen Davies explains, “the nineteenth-century anthropologists developed the seductive notion that many of the magical practises of the European peasantry were survivals, cultural fossils, of prehistoric religions.”⁷⁹ As Davies observes, the growing concern with magic practises from scholars in Europe culminated from the eagerness to discover more of their Germanic origin and was linked to religion. This conjunction of magic and religious heritage could explain the deep-rooted insistence on the Germanic origins of the charms by early twentieth century editors. More recent scholars, such as Lisa M.C. Weston, have noted the significance given, as she argues these editors and their contemporaries, “in search of Anglo-Saxon paganism, prefer to evaluate the metrical charms in terms of the Germanic origin, as opposed to classical or Christian influences.”⁸⁰ Evidence of this preference can be found in many European publications of the period. In his notes on Cockayne’s edition from 1934, German scholar Ferdinand Holthausen

⁷⁸ Ibid., 141.

⁷⁹ Owen Davies, *Magic: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University press: 2012), 9.

⁸⁰ L.M.C. Weston, “The Language of Magic in Two Old English Metrical Charms,” in *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, Vol. 86, No. 2 (1985): 176.

refers to the *wyrm* creature in the *Nine Herbs Charm* as a “dragon,”⁸¹ translating the creature not as ‘serpent’ or ‘worm’ but insisting on the more mythological meaning of *wyrm*. Similarly, he suggests a translation of *cwēne*, meaning ‘women’⁸² as “Hexen oder Walküren”⁸³, witches or Valkyries. Ulrika Wolf-Knuts observes a similar development, stating that, “by the beginning of the twentieth century, the prevailing view in folklore studies was that folklore itself was something finite and threatened, and needing to be saved from total destruction in the industrialising nation by being recorded on paper.”⁸⁴ Although Wolf-Knuts is describing the political and societal context from a Swedish perspective and scenario, the observation still emanates with Storms’ edition of the charms, demonstrating the larger narrative which dominated the society and likely motivated Storm in his edition, in which the need for clear origins was high.

Analysing the translation of the *Nine Herbs Charm* as well as prior editions from a modern perspective, more recent scholars have noted how the custom of defining charms based on beliefs of magic and superstitions hindered the better understanding of Anglo-Saxon medical practises. Jolly, in her argument for the importance of charms as an insight into late Anglo-Saxon popular practice and their amalgamated culture, discerns how they have suffered from this dominating interest, resulting in charm remedies being defined as magical. She notes the strong influence, as well as the need for what he dubs a ‘cure’, proposing to, “place the texts that contain charms in their own cultural contexts, specifically early medieval views of medicine, the use of liturgy, and the surviving ideas of Germanic folklore.”⁸⁵ While Jolly’s proposition to consider the charms in their own cultural context indicates a value to

⁸¹ F. Holthausen, “Die Altenglischen Neunkrautersegen”, in *Englische Studien*, LXIX (1934), 182.

⁸² *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, ed. J.R. Clark Hall, 4th ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960), s.v. “cwene.”

⁸³ Holthausen, “Altenglischen,” 182.

⁸⁴ Ulrika Wolf-Knuts, “Swedish Finn Incantations: Valter W. Forsblom on Charms and Charming” In *Charms and Charming*, ed. Jonathan Roper (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 192.

⁸⁵ Jolly, *Popular*, 97.

understanding the reception of charms, the extent of this fails to incorporate the larger context and the societal narratives, limiting the reception as an important influence. Most importantly, Jolly argues that the understanding of what defines charms and how to analyse these texts by scholars like Grendon and Storms was that it halted the understanding of their medical knowledge. It becomes clear then that Storms was more concerned with looking for a Germanic context to place these charms in, rather than observing in what context they appear, as Jolly concludes that, “the predominant mistake hindering a clear understanding of what a charm was in the Anglo-Saxon period is the tendency to take out of the original medical manuscript that part that seems most odd or unmedical and set it aside with all the other similarly curious bits and study them together.”⁸⁶ While this does demonstrate the modern influences Storms has had on his edition, as he and Grendon consider magic based on modern knowledge, this simultaneously halts the possibility for a more medical consideration of the charms, which would not fully erupt until the late twentieth century with the edition by Cameron.

The long period between Cockayne’s edition and Godfried Storms’s *Anglo-Saxon Magic* indicates the strong perception of charms and Anglo-Saxon traditions among European scholars. Evidently feeling little need for a new edition, the scholarly world limited itself to individual notations and remarks. Even Grendon’s translations, while an improvement in terms of organisation and layout, seemingly emanate some of the same sentiment as his nineteenth-century predecessors, also signal the growing influence of anthropology on charm studies. The edition and translations by Storms however, while still heavily influenced by the dominance of Germanic interest and the need for a greater understanding and preservation of Germanic mythology, illustrate the modern rationality towards magic. The new focus of magic appears to stem from social changes in western Europe during the twentieth century, as well as the persistent interest in the lost traditions of pagan ancestors. Storms’ edition displays how the

⁸⁶ Ibid., 98.

attitude towards pagan traditions changed. Rather than superstitions, these were now studied as examples of magic, which Storms introduces as an innate aspect of early human civilization, whereas his predecessors considered these texts more valuable for their preservation of Germanic folklore. Within this new reception, however, the editor appears to no longer view the charm as both religious and medical, but rather a magical text in a medical document, to be dissected for its Germanic magical elements. The edition by Storms, coming from both the apparent necessity for a new edition as well as a need for an insight into the development of magic, demonstrates the modern reception of the Anglo-Saxon charms, which, while from a modern perspective, are considered less medical during the early twentieth century, but rather evidence of the religious nature of Anglo-Saxon medicine.

3. Grattan and Singer and Post-War Europe.

Following the publication of Storms and his *Anglo-Saxon Magic*, the edition by J.H.G. Grattan and Charles Singer, published in 1952, saw a surprising return to an older notion of the early Germanic people living in England. A combined effort, where Grattan acted as editor and Singer as critic, the edition, named *Anglo-Saxon Magic and Medicine*, while predated by Storms' 1948 publication, was a work mostly compiled over a longer time and representative of an earlier cultural narrative perspective. Although it was published in the early 1950's, the sentiment of the edition harkens back to earlier perspectives of Germanic peoples, seemingly more reminiscent of late Victorian attitudes, describing the Anglo-Saxons as unlearned people relying on magical practises for medicine, compared to Greco-Roman medical science. The subject of their study, as they state in the introduction, was the mix between Greco-Roman science and the 'native' Teutonic material. Describing the period as, "the darkest part of the dark age,"⁸⁷ their view of charms opposed magic and science and, despite the title of the edition, gives little indication of the charms in the *Lacnunga* having any medical value. While the editors' magical scope of the text led later scholars to group the edition with Storms's *Anglo-Saxon Magic*, its demonstration of lasting nineteenth-century ideology and assumption of the unlearned and superstitious nature of the Anglo-Saxon scribe and 'leech' seem to mirror the larger societal narrative that followed the end of World War II in Western Europe.

3.1 Anglo-Saxon Scribes and 'Leeches'

At first glance, the edition by Grattan and Singer, and subsequently their translation of the *Nine Herbs Charm*, presents a perspective very reminiscent of the nineteenth-century editions of Anglo-Saxon medicine as unlearned and ignorant forms of magic superstition. In the introduction to their edition, Grattan and Singer open with the characterisation of "Barbarian

⁸⁷ J.H.G. Grattan and Charles Singer, *Anglo-Saxon Magic and Medicine: illustrated specially from the semi-pagan text 'Lacnunga.'* (London: Oxford Univeristy Press, 1953): 16

Magico-Medicine”⁸⁸, which they eagerly compare to the “higher Mediterranean cultures”⁸⁹ and their scientific medical knowledge. Their outlook on these different cultures then seems very similar to that of Cockayne and his nineteenth-century *Leechdoms* edition, whom Grattan and Singer also name as, “one of the fathers of Anglo-Saxon scholarship”⁹⁰ in the preface, although it also appears that they do not share their predecessor’s praise of the wisdom and botanical knowledge of the Anglo-Saxons.

Examining their translation of the *Nine Herbs Charm* in their edition, what perhaps strikes the reader first is the text’s form. The language used by Grattan and Singer in their translation of the charm appears archaic, using words like ‘thou’ and ‘thy’ and old-fashioned word endings such as ‘-eth’ in ‘fareth’ (l.13 G&S), a translation of *fēreð*, which Pettit since translated as ‘travels’ (l.13). These translations make the language reminiscent of Cockayne and his ‘Wardour English’, resulting in a translation dripped in antiquated prose and overtly marked. Another instance of such language is evident in the lines attesting the herb ‘plantain and all it has ‘withstood.’ Grattan and Singer translate the line *eallum þū þon wiðstōde 7 wiðstunedest*, as ‘all didst thou then withstand and dost confound’ (l.11 G&S), whereas modern editions simply translate the line as ‘you withstood and crashed against all then’ (l.11 P). It can be assumed that, much like Cockayne, they aimed to keep the translations close to original Old English and refrain from as much alteration as possible, choosing translations which refrain from altering the structure of the lines and translating words more based on form. Similarly, they translate *onflyge* as ‘onflight’ instead of the more modern ‘flying disease’, when even Cockayne translated it as ‘flying vile things’, as it was understood that the word was used to refer to infectious diseases, which were believed to travel through the air. The resulting form of the charm in the edition is more akin to those published in the nineteenth century than those

⁸⁸ Grattan and Singer, *Magic and Medicine*, 3.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, vii.

published by their contemporaries. Besides Cockayne, Grattan and Singer base much of their publication on their own early notes as well as the *Bibliothek Der Angelsächsischen Poesie* by Christian Wilhem Michael Grein and Richard Paul Wülcker, published in the late nineteenth century. The distinct presence of these older sources' influence further suggests that although published in the middle of the twentieth century, the editors still viewed Anglo-Saxon scholarship from an outdated perspective, reemerging in European society after World War II.

One of the most evident examples of Grattan and Singer's attitude towards the Anglo-Saxons in their edition is their presentation of the *Nine Herbs Charm*. Although Cockayne already separated what is now considered to be one charm into two entries, separating the incantation from the preparation, Grattan and Singer divide the incantation into three separate entries, named the *Pagan Lay of the Nine Herbs*, *Lay of the Nine Twigs of Woden* and *Lay of the Nine Magic Blasts*. The little motivation the editors give for why they, "have not one charm but three"⁹¹, is that they believe the scribe has assimilated the plants in the *Lay of the Nine herbs* or confused them with the *Nine Twigs of Woden*, as well as the assumption of the ineptitude of the scribe or magician. Recognizing that the lays are all part of one ritual, they also translate the line *Sing þæt galdor* in the preparation as 'sing the charm' (1.69 G&S). The *galdor* or charm in this context is the incantation that precedes it, which Grattan and Singer split into two lays. Their translation of *þæt* as 'the' instead of 'this' when referring to the incantation could suggest they were still unsure of the exact form of the charm and therefore hesitant to refer back to a specific charm. Grattan and Singer nevertheless seem all too eager to assume the shortcomings of Anglo-Saxon scholarship, while simultaneously insinuating that these charms had little practical benefit, as they were blindly copied out of order by the scribe. A similar case of their curious editorial procedures is their omission of the line *wið fēondes hond 7 [w]ið frēab[r]egde*, which attest the power of the herb 'Wergulu' and which Pettit translates as 'Against the hand

⁹¹ Ibid., 150.

of the Enemy and against severe seizure' (1.43 P), in their translation. While Pettit in the modern translation voices some doubts on the exact translation of the last word, Grattan and Singer instead cut the line entirely from their translation, only explaining in a footnote that the line is "obviously corrupt"⁹² and that Cockayne had already suggested omitting it. The influence of their degrading attitude on their editorial decisions has since been remarked by scholars, such as Van Arsdall, who also notes "the erroneous division"⁹³ of the charm, as well as Pettit, who in particular commented on the generally intrusive nature of their editorial approach, calling their edition "too often speculative and misleading."⁹⁴ Evidently, the incompetence with which Grattan and Singer credited the scientifically-lacking Anglo-Saxon scribes was enough evidence for the editors in their edition of the *Nine Herbs Charm*.

In their extensive pleading on the lack of skill of the Anglo-Saxon scribe, it becomes apparent that Grattan and Singer's perception does not coincide with Cockayne's view of the Germanic people as 'noble savages,' as they also disregard the medical practices of the Anglo-Saxon practitioner, whom they consistently refer to as a 'leech'. While Cockayne too notes the lack of scientific expertise compared to the ancients in his *Leechdoms*, his edition also demonstrates the editor's admiration for the wisdom of the Anglo-Saxons and their knowledge of the natural world. Grattan and Singer, however, seem to insist that much of the texts was only copied from classic sources without any evidence of the Anglo-Saxons understanding what they wrote down, blindly copying the images of plants and translating plant names in their charms. From this same perspective the editors also view the leech performing using the charms, discrediting these as early forms of medical science. While they do not reject all Anglo-Saxon scholarship, praising the science of Anglo-Saxon scholars like the Venerable Bede, the editors state how, "the mental status of the Anglo-Saxon leech was far below such men."⁹⁵ The

⁹² Ibid., 154

⁹³ Arsdall, *Reading*, xl.

⁹⁴ Pettit, *Remedies*, xl

⁹⁵ Grattan and Singer, *Magic and Medicine*, 92.

scope through which they perceived the practice of the leech could therefore have also affected their translation of the *Nine Herbs Charm*, such as with the lines where Woden strikes the snake. As Grattan and Singer did not perceive the charm through a medical scope, they translated the lines as a narrative of events, translating *ða genam Woden VIII wuldortānas* as ‘then took Woden nine twigs of glory’ (1.32 G&S), while in Pettit’s modern edition the line is translated as ‘Because Woden took nine glorious twigs’ (1.32 P). This narrative is one of cause and effect: *because* Woden smote the snake with the nine twigs (herbs), the snake bit no one and was then flown apart. The translation of the line, which changes the narrative of the charm, although small, signals the editor’s perception of the charms and demonstrates its effect on the edition. Reviewing the early work of Singer, Van Arsdall also notes his position, as she states that he, “viewed medieval medicine as debased, barbarous, superstitious, the final stage in a degeneration of classical medical concepts at the hands of ignorant medieval leeches who could not understand the texts that they were reading, who, in fact, blindly copied medical texts for their libraries. Singer never explains why they do this.”⁹⁶ Not only does the observation by Van Arsdall indicate that Singer already in his earlier work wholly discredited the work of both Anglo-Saxon scribe and leech, it also demonstrates the questionable methods of the editor, which he continued in his joint work with Grattan.

As both editors and translators, Grattan and Singer seem to have been heavily influenced by their nineteenth-century predecessors. Basing much of their work on Cockayne and his contemporaries, their edition continues to portray the Anglo-Saxon traditions as primitive and lesser compared to the ancients. Their strong view of the Anglo-Saxons also appears to act as much of the basis for their editorial decisions, as scholars such as Van Arsdall and Pettitt have noted how they provide very little further explanation. As the focus of their edition lay primarily on the ‘native Teutonic materials’, the editors seemingly disregarded the Anglo-Saxon medical

⁹⁶ Arsdall, *Reading*, 13.

practises as folk-elements to be valued and studied for their historical insight. This suggests that while published after Grendon's edition, the editors were affected little by the rising anthropological perspective of the early twentieth century, while simultaneously shedding the perception of the 'noble savage' from the previous century.

3.2 Native Teutonic Magic

Deeming the charms as evidence of superstition rather than early medical science, it appears that Grattan and Singer treated the *Nine Herbs Charm* mostly as an example of the 'native Teutonic magic' they were interested in. Therefore, the charm is presented less as a medical tool, but more as a relic of magical superstition. Analysing the charm reveals a great deal of detail given by the editors to the dissection of the different cultural elements, both pagan and Christian. Although perceiving the texts mostly from a magical perspective and as an example of chiefly pagan magic, the perspective of the editors on the role of magic within people's medical traditions differs greatly from what is demonstrated in the translation of the *Nine Herbs Charm* by Storms in his *Anglo-Saxon Magic*, published only four years prior.

Analysing the charm as an example of native Teutonic magic, Grattan and Singer discern many elements within the charm, both native and intrusive, which they contribute to the ineptitude of the Anglo-Saxon scribe. Elements of both classic and pagan origin, such as words of power, were preserved in these charms and through these texts continued in use, even when they, as they state, "had disintegrated into unintelligible gibberish,"⁹⁷ of which the entire *Lacnunga* manuscript, "presents many examples."⁹⁸ In their perception of Anglo-Saxon scribes as unlearned and uneducated, Grattan and Singer suggest that the preservation of these elements is because of this copying of the scribes, which the editors ungraciously refer to as "monastic stupidity."⁹⁹ Observing the presence of pagan spells and figures from Norse mythology in the

⁹⁷ Grattan and Singer, *Magic and Medicine*, 11.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 16.

charms, Grattan and Singer conclude that the scribes, while most likely working in Christian monasteries, must have not recognized the Germanic pagan elements, or else they would not have copied the pagan elements in their new texts. As these charms were therefore copied and compiled with, as Grattan and Singer describe, “blank misunderstanding,”¹⁰⁰ the manuscript and the included charms were spared from invasion of Christian elements of the scribe. Within the *Lacnunga*, the *Nine Herbs Charm* seems of particular interest to the editors as it features three of the four characteristics for what they dub ‘native Teutonic magic’ or ‘Pagan magic’: (1) the *flying venoms*; (2) the *evil nines*; (3) the *worm* as the cause of disease. The fourth, the power of *elves*, is the only one missing in the charm. Although giving little evidence or explanation for the determination of these characteristics, Grattan and Singer consider the charm featuring three of the four characteristics as evidence of the charm being an example of pagan magic, which they assume was brought to England either by the original Germanic settlers or by later Scandinavian interaction. In their characterisation of charms, the editors give no indication of medical properties or nature and, as noted by Van Arsdall, instead focused on the magic and superstition, as she remarks that, “Singer cites no sources at all to justify his identification of a myriad magical elements from cultures and languages worldwide in the Anglo-Saxon work *Lacnunga*, and he applies the same lack of proof to identify in the work uniquely pagan Teutonic ideas about the causes for disease.”¹⁰¹ Valuing the text most for its remnants of unaltered pagan elements, the editors characterise these elements based on little given evidence, similar to their editorial procedures of the charm’s form.

The focus on distinguishing the native pagan from the Christian is marked by the editors, most notably in the second part of the *Nine Herbs Charm*, which they named *Lay of the Nine Twigs of Woden*. In their translation, they explain how the non-pagan elements, such as the Christian figure who hung in the heavens and the seven worlds, are in fact marked in the

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 16.

¹⁰¹ Arsdall, *Reading*, 14.

otherwise pagan lay. In footnotes, they point out how the two herbs associated with the hanging Christian figure are the only two from Latin origin, and that the notion of seven worlds, related to seven planets, is “an intrusive idea in a Northern Pagan setting.”¹⁰² The reason for the intrusive Christian elements Grattan and Singer once again attribute to the scribe, as in the introduction they explain how, “of understanding of the nature of the Christian religion he exhibits no trace, and at times he treats Christ on a par with Woden and Thor. He even confuses them.”¹⁰³ At other instances however, it looks as if the editors assumed Christian intrusion, which they emphasised with their translation. One example of this is found in their translation of *lāþan*, ‘evil She’ (1.6 G&S) and *lāðan*, ‘evil thing’ (1.13 G&S), which the herbs are supposed to ward off and have since been more commonly translated as ‘loathsome one.’ The addition of the concept of evil is of interest, as Grattan and Singer emphasise how Germanic tribes usually attribute ailments to elves who harm the body with their shots in charms, seemingly less concerned with morality and any good or evil alignment. Therefore, the naming of the entity as ‘evil’ hints at a more Christian nature, more in common with demonic possession, of which Grattan and Singer state that, “Northern paganism had not reached that mental level.”¹⁰⁴ It could therefore be assumed that the editors purposefully translated both instances as such, to differentiate the entity in the pagan lay. By marking the Christian elements in the *Nine Herbs Charm*, Grattan and Singer further identify the pagan elements of the charm, which, as Roper summarises in his work, *English Verbal Charms*, is the main contribution of their commentary as Grattan and Singer suggest that the *Nine Herbs Charm*, along with some other charms, “truly represent the old Germanic form of magic.”¹⁰⁵ While giving little evidence for their characteristics of pagan elements, the translation of the charm does demonstrate the perception of Grattan and Singer of the charm as inherently pagan and Germanic, at times marked by the

¹⁰² Grattan and Singer, *Magic and Medicine*, 155.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹⁰⁵ Roper, *Verbal*, 32.

influence of the Christian scribe.

This demonstration of the inherently pagan, or ‘native Teutonic’ characteristics in the *Nine Herbs Charm* leaves little doubt that the editors viewed the charms as examples of magical practises. However, their edition also signals a new approach towards the source material, as their edition is one of the first to actively analyse the different handwritings and identify scribes, studying a single scribe rather than an entire volume or collection of texts. Interestingly, in their approach, Grattan and Singer aim to illustrate these native elements by dissecting them from the Christian elements inserted into the texts by the scribe, who copied the text with, as they state, “blank misunderstanding,”¹⁰⁶ yet they never explain how elements from a copied text can be considered evidence of the native culture. The Anglo-Saxons had already converted to Christianity, in a period of assimilation and cultural convergence which was of little interest to scholars of the early twentieth century, who were more focused on dissecting the texts for different cultural elements. The translation by Grattan and Singer further demonstrates the habit of scholars to forge a cultural hierarchy in their approach of the source, in which one element is favoured to such an extent it narrows an editor’s scope of the text as a whole.

While Grattan and Singer do make a distinction between the different kinds of magic medicine and consider charms to be among these, they appear not to view charms as early medical practises, but rather magical acts the Anglo-Saxon leech relied on in absence of scientific knowledge. This lack of knowledge is then what Grattan and Singer conclude to be the nature of magic use. Rather than perceiving magic as a practical aspect of human nature and medicine, they instead suggest it to be evidence of an unlearned culture, relying not on scientific knowledge but on superstition. This reliance of magic by the leech can also be detected in their edition of the charm. Referring to the practitioner as the ‘magician’, it suggests that the superstitious elements of the leech’ practises outweighed the medical aspect in their value of

¹⁰⁶ Grattan and Singer, *Magic and Medicine*, 16.

Anglo-Saxon medicine as an early science. Similarly, the boasting of the magician that he ‘alone know[s] the running streams’ (1.59 G&S) the editors state, “is found among all peoples and is well-nigh a psychological necessity”¹⁰⁷ The reliance of the leech on magical rituals is suggested by Grattan and Singer to be partially due to the role of the leech. Observing the mention of pagan figures in the charms as only natural, they conclude that, “it is not very surprising to find mention of them in *Lacnunga*, for then as now it was the business of the leech to treat his patients, not to search out the nature of his remedies.”¹⁰⁸ Not only is this statement by Grattan and Singer further evidence of their perception of charms and their users as simple practices, it also signals how this perception is likely based on the advancing modern scientific view which emerged at the end of the nineteenth century, which historian Karen Jolly also observed. Describing the changing perception on magic, she notes show scholars in this period, “influenced by the development of modern science, were shocked by the primitive and magical medicine of their Anglo-Saxon forebears and focused their attention on the superstitious quality of the remedies, seen as irrational from their own modern “rationalist” and Christian view of the universe and how it functions.”¹⁰⁹ The focus by these scholars which Jolly describes is evidenced by the edition of Grattan and Singer, whose scope of the charms was limited solely to the characteristics of their ‘Teutonic magic,’ as Aubrey Meany also remarks that, like Storms, “Grattan and Singer were too quick to assume magic where there was none.”¹¹⁰ However, while the observation by Meany that both editions focused almost solely on the magical qualities of the text, it is important to note the stark difference in attitude towards magic between Storms and the edition Grattan and Singer.

While both editions heavily concentrate on the magic function of the charm, the

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 157

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 58.

¹⁰⁹ Jolly, *Popular*, 115.

¹¹⁰ Audrey Meany, “The Practise of Medicine in England about the Year 1000,” *Social History of Medicine: the journal of the Society for the Social History of Medicine*, 13, no.2 (August 2000): 232.

perception of magic and its purpose differ greatly. Unlike Storms, Grattan and Singer, in their reminiscence of nineteenth-century perception, give little indication of magic and the charm actually having any practical value as a remedy. Nowhere in the large summary of magic in the introduction of the edition is it ever considered that these remedies might actually have any medical benefits. Whereas Storms considers the possibility of the magical incantations and preparations having some advantageous effect, Grattan and Singer pair magic with all superstitions and label it as a practice for the lesser, unlearned cultures. Although both Storms and Grattan and Singer noted the various cultural elements present in Anglo-Saxon culture, neither appears concerned with the amalgamated nature of Anglo-Saxon culture, but rather focused on dissecting the text into its different elements, which suggests that this too was a result of the dominant narrative at the time. Similar to the observation by Jolly, it could be assumed that the need for Grattan and Singer to distinguish the 'native Teutonic magic' in the *Nine Herbs Charm*, although influenced by perceptions of the previous century, are also influenced by the societal changes of the twentieth century.

3.3 Post-War Europe

The edition by Grattan and Singer and their translation of the *Nine Herbs Charm* might at first appear as a logical successor to the work of Cockayne, following in the nineteenth-century editor's footsteps. For the most part written in the decades prior to its publication, the translations of the charm, written in archaic language and edited on very little evidence other than own value, can then first be considered as a vestige of nineteenth-century scholarship. The editors' discredit of the charms as practical medicine based on their superstitious nature however signals an influence of the new twentieth century and a newly-emerging scholarly narrative, while the preserving perspective of Anglo-Saxon leeches also match observations of changes in England and Europe following the end of World War II. This difference in an otherwise strikingly similar text could actually be influenced by the changing scholarly

traditions and modern perspectives, as also noted by Van Arsdall. As she observes, “to disparage the medieval medical texts and show themselves attuned to modern thinking, many nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholars liked to point out what they called non-rational elements as further proof that the medieval texts were mere folly.”¹¹¹ The perception of Anglo-Saxon by Grattan and Singer coincides with Van Arsdall’s observation, as they considered the charms hardly scientific and therefore solely superstitious and magical. Although the text could for the most part be considered more of a product of the decades prior, evidenced by its staunch view of the Anglo-Saxon as unlearned and magic as an example of a degenerate culture, the edition remarkably also coincides with the cultural narrative of Europe in the first decade after World War II. In his book, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945*, English historian Tony Judt sets out an extensive description of the cultural and societal narrative that changed and developed following the end of WWII. He explains how Germany used to have a cultural dominance on European culture, which changed after WWII and the splitting of Germany, as the new West Germany was, “peripheral to the mainstream of European intellectual life.”¹¹² More importantly, the German cultural heritage, which had been held in high regard in the century prior, as evidenced by Cockayne’s edition and the influence of German romanticism, as Judt describes, had been “polluted and disqualified by its appropriation for Nazi purposes.”¹¹³ This consequence of the events of the previous decades similarly influenced the field of charm studies, as Roper notes that, “German interest in the study of the Old English charms has been less evident in the latter half of the twentieth century.”¹¹⁴ Grattan and Singer, from their older foundations, had based much of their work on the older German sources and, most importantly, were most interested in the ‘native Teutonic,’ a term which has in more recent years been considered dated. However, what Judt also explains is that for the first decade after the war,

¹¹¹ Van Arsdall, *Reading*, 23.

¹¹² Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005), 204.

¹¹³ Judt, *Postwar*, 204

¹¹⁴ Roper, *Verbal*, 33.

there was suspense of the prewar culture. “In many of its essential features, daily life in the first decade after World War II would have been thoroughly familiar to men and women of fifty years earlier.”¹¹⁵ In fact, Judt even states that European countries and Britain, “hung in a sort of delayed Edwardian Limbo,”¹¹⁶ and that, “the war had set things in reverse”¹¹⁷ The description Judt gives of post-war Europe bears striking similarities to what has been observed in the edition by Grattan and Singer. Their edition of the *Nine Herbs Charm* and its reminiscence of the earlier scholarly traditions could therefore also be considered an example of this effect of the post-war narrative.

It seems then that, while for the most part reflecting the cultural traditions within charm studies of the previous decades, the edition by Grattan and Singer could also signal the effects of the post-war narrative of Europe. Their methods of editing and translating of the charm appear for the most part uninfluenced by some of the new and emerging fields and scopes, such as the anthropological perspective demonstrated by the Grendon’s 1909 edition, and indicates the older context in which Grattan and Singer constructed the narrative of their edition, basing their work on the foundations laid by Cockayne’s *Leechdoms*. Yet this narrative also illustrates how scholars became more influenced by the advancements of modern science, with which they measured the texts they studied, as Jolly notes that, “Grattan and Singer defined charms as any remedy that involved special wording or actions to accomplish the cure, since these were inconsistent with modern scientific views and medical practice.”¹¹⁸ Jolly points out this tendency of scholars of the first half of the twentieth century to value the manuscripts based on their scientific value, “weighing these medical texts on a scale of intellectual worth within the elite literate realm.”¹¹⁹ Unlike Cockayne, they rejected the idea of Anglo-Saxon botanical

¹¹⁵ Judt, *Postwar*, 226

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 227.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 227.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 101.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 105.

knowledge and wisdom, instead measuring their knowledge based on modern scientific skill. The sentiments expressed by Grattan and Singer also then could mirror the cultural changes of England, as the country, as well as much of western Europe, repressed back into their culture from before the wars. Although it may at first appear that Grattan and Singer are going back to an earlier nineteenth century view of Anglo-Saxons as simple and unlearned, it instead seems that Grattan and Singer edition embodies the larger narrative of early post-war Europe in the fifties, which harkened back more to the period before the great wars while simultaneously continuing to base scholarly perspectives on the advancing scientific movement.

4. Cameron and Rational Medicine

Although the edition by Grattan and Singer marked a return of older perceptions of charms and Anglo-Saxon magic and medicine, the decades following their publication saw this perception drastically turn in a wholly different direction. Rather than examples of pagan magic and Germanic superstitions, charms instead appeared to be analysed more as examples of medical texts, placed in their own context viewed from a modern rationale. This new reception of charms is best exemplified by M.L. Cameron's 1993 book *Anglo-Saxon Medicine and Magic*. Despite not being a complete edition containing all the charms, Cameron's work nevertheless seems to convey the new medical scope with which they were now perceived. Cameron, a medical scholar and physician, does provide translations for some important charms, among which the *Nine Herbs Charm*, and provides the reader with a clear motive for his work, as he states that "it is inevitable that this present study must be in many ways tentative and opinionated. I shall feel amply rewarded if what I present here convinces others that Anglo-Saxon medicine deserves sympathetic consideration."¹²⁰ Rather than perceiving the charm first as magical and then as medical, Cameron instead places medicine before magic which as Roper argues states is, "emblematic of his approach."¹²¹ His translation of the *Nine Herbs Charm* displays his medical scope, as he provides a vast context for the herbs named in the charm, although neglecting the cultural and religious elements, explaining their medical benefits and signalling the new approach towards magic, perspective and rational medicine.

4.1 Cameron's Accessible Edition

Coming from a medical background, it is no surprise that Cameron places more of an emphasis on the medical nature of Anglo-Saxon charms compared to his medievalist and

¹²⁰ Cameron, *Anglo-Saxon Medicine*, 4.

¹²¹ Roper, *Verbal*, 34.

philologist predecessors. Yet what may perhaps strike the reader first about his translation of the *Nine Herbs Charm* is the way it is presented and the effort made by the editor to provide the necessary historical context for the text. All his knowledge he has inquired, as he states himself, “through [his] interest in medieval medicine.”¹²² He further explains how he supposes to offer little linguistic or textual insights and rather aims to demonstrate the medical advancement of the early medieval Germanic peoples in England, in such a way that it is accessible and understandable to a wider audience than just the relatively small group of scholars of Anglo-Saxon England. In doing so, his editorial procedures seem to reveal a drastic change compared to his predecessors. The translation by Cameron signals a new approach towards Anglo-Saxon medicine and literature, as he provides an extensive medical and historical context for both the manuscript and the charm, which he translates in a more accessible, modern fashion to be read and understood by a wider audience.

Besides the obvious medical insight he is able to give into the herbs and ailments, Cameron seemingly attempts to place the charm into a more grounded historical context. As Cameron compares a number of factors regarding Anglo-Saxon life, including estimated life expectancies, diet, childbirth and common afflictions, he determines suggestions for ailments the charm was supposed to treat. For this he also analyses the charm’s source material, the *Lacnunga* manuscript, which he then compares to other Anglo-Saxon medical manuscripts, most notably *Bald’s Leechbook*, a text likely compiled prior to the *Lacnunga* in the tenth century. Cameron states that the *Lacnunga*, “is a compilation made by non-medical collectors, showing no evidence of arrangement or of informed choice, what we may call folk medicine at its lowest level.”¹²³ He states how the remedies found in the *Leechbook* appear more grounded in science, while those in the *Lacnunga* are evidence of a more popular tradition. He also calls the latter, “a type of collection still being made by untrained and indiscriminating individuals

¹²² Cameron, *Anglo-Saxon Medicine*, ix.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 34.

whose chief interest to historians of medicine is that they keep alive a folk medicine which would otherwise have disappeared.”¹²⁴ Not only does this observation by Cameron indicate his perception of the various sources based on their intended purpose, it also demonstrates his effort to provide as much insight into the context of the charm as possible to generate a more nuanced, rational perception of the text and its purpose. The importance which is seemingly given here not only demonstrates the attitude of Cameron as an editor, but could also be seen as an early example of a drastic turn taken within Anglo-Saxon charm studies throughout the late twentieth century. In her 2004 article, *Anglo-Saxon Charms and Performance*, Lori Ann Garner voices a similar need, as she states that, “the Old English charms require us to move beyond conventional text-based literary analysis and classification to apply performance-based approaches that allow us to examine the charms on their own terms.”¹²⁵ Although her analysis, published in *Oral Traditions*, is mainly focused through a literary scope, the examination of charms within their appropriate context is nevertheless similar to Cameron’s approach, whom she also notes later for his contributions and medical analysis. This new, nuanced approach to charms, placed within their own context, appears then to have retained into the next millennium as an important perspective for the analysis of charms, already demonstrated by Cameron through his medical scope.

In his analysis of the *Lacnunga*, Cameron pays close attention to the order of the remedies, which are grouped together and whether this could indicate a shared ailment these remedies ought to cure. Considering that remedy preceding and the two remedies following the entry for the *Nine Herbs Charm* all meant to cure haemorrhoids, Cameron concludes that the charm must be a treatment for the same ailment.¹²⁶ Furthermore, he examines the different handwritings in the original manuscript. While today considered an important element within

¹²⁴ Ibid., 35.

¹²⁵ Garner, “Charms,” 20.

¹²⁶ Cameron, *Anglo-Saxon Medicine*, 144.

the study of Anglo-Saxon texts, not much attention was being paid to the actual handwritings until Grattan and Singer's 1952 edition. Cameron does not share their harsh perception of the scribe and his 'monastic stupidity', instead arguing that, since the manuscripts were all written in English, "they must have been processed through the minds of their translators and compilers, and so should give us a clearer insight into the workings of the English minds that put them together."¹²⁷ This conclusion by Cameron directly contrasts one of the important bases for Grattan and Singer's perspective of the Anglo-Saxons, that of the unlearned scribe and his mindless copying. He nevertheless displays a critical attitude towards the source and scribe, as he concludes that the *Lacnunga* must be the work of two scribes, of whom he states that, although, "the scribe (or compiler) of the first part was careless, the scribe (or compiler) of the second part was even more prone to errors."¹²⁸ The extensive analysis with which Cameron supplies the translated charm, aimed to demonstrate the medical expertise of Anglo-Saxon physicians and even the relevance of charms within this field, simultaneously denotes a novel editorial procedure and attitude, in which the context of the text is explored in greater detail and more focus is laid on understanding the role these remedies had from a modern perspective.

Although Cameron's *Anglo-Saxon Medicine* is not a complete edition of Anglo-Saxon charms and remedies, his translation of the *Nine Herbs Charm* does indicate a strong turn away from the dominant narrative and cultural perspective of the previous decades by focusing on the English translation rather than the Old English text. Unlike most editions, Cameron does not provide the original Old English text together with his translation, which he instead presents as appendixes at the back of the book, suggesting that they were less relevant in his narrative than in previous editions. His translation of the *Nine Herbs Charm*, as explained in a footnote, he based on Grattan and Singer's and, while the similarities between the two translations are evident, the changes Cameron made to his edition are equally palpable. Cameron's translation

¹²⁷ Ibid., 30.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 46.

of the *Nine Herbs Charm* appears in a modern script, save unique Old English characters and features useful line numbers, which Grattan and Singer saved for Old English lines. More importantly, Cameron's text appears significantly less archaic, both in language and structure. Translating some of the herbs, such as *Wegbrāde* as 'plantain' (1.7 Ca) and *Mægðe* as 'chamomile' (1.23 Ca), he appears to be less focused on preservation of the native pagan elements. Comparing the opening lines of the charm, Cameron translates the line attesting the herb mugwort, *Gemyne ðū, Mucgwyr, hwæt þū āmeldodest*, as 'Keep in mind mugwort, what you revealed' (1.1 Ca), as opposed Grattan and Singer's 'Have thou in mind, Mugwort, what thou didst reveal' (1.1 G&S). Cameron forgoes the antiquated prose of his predecessors and opts for a modernised 'you' instead of 'thou' in order to present a more accessible and commonly comprehensible text, further indicating that he is less concerned with preserving form. Similarly, the translated charm displays no attempt of the translator at keeping to the alliterative form of the original text. Cameron translates line 10, *ofer ðy bryde bryo- / dedon, ofer þy fearras fnaerdon*, which addresses the herb 'plantain' and what it has 'withstood', as 'Over you brides have cried out, over you bulls have snorted' (1.10 Ca). Compared to older translations of the line, such as Cockayne's 'over thee brides bridalled / Over thee bulls breathed' (1.19-20 C), the omission of the alliteration is striking, as it further suggests that Cameron, in his attempt to present a more practical translation of the charm, distanced himself from the earlier editors and their perception of the charm. The extensive effort in both the context and new approach by Cameron, as well as his accessible and less archaic translation of the charm suggest a turn away from the editors of the previous decades.

4.2 Magic and Rational Medicine

In his attempt to (re)evaluate the overly negative image of Anglo-Saxon medicine as based in superstition and copied by unlearned scribes, Cameron provides a translation of the *Nine*

Herbs Charm which supplies the field with a more medical rendition of the charm. Referring to the Anglo-Saxon practitioners of both the more rational remedies and the charms as ‘physicians’, the edition marks a stark shift from the previously dominant view as presented by Grattan and Singer and their image of the Anglo-Saxon ‘leech.’ In her book *Popular Religion in Late Saxon England*, published 3 years after Cameron’s book, Karen Lousie Jolly voices a similar need for medical appreciation of charms, based not solely on how we may perceive them now but rather on what they represent of Anglo-Saxon life. Explaining the medical context in which charms are found, she argues that, “we should first treat them in the context of those manuscripts and medical practice, not just in isolation. The medical context for all remedies, charms and others, scholarly and popular, reveals a worldview in which all things were interconnected, physical and spiritual, microcosm and macrocosm. Charms were a logical part of that system of medicine.”¹²⁹ Cameron’s medical approach towards the *Nine Herbs Charm* appears as part of a larger departure from previous philosophies, which focused on highlighting the medical nature of Anglo-Saxon charms by considering the texts within the larger contexts of their manuscripts and intended purpose.

In his edition of the *Nine Herbs Charm*, Cameron emphasises the modern scientific knowledge and insights that prove the medical benefits of some of the herbs, signalling a change in how charms were being perceived as either medical or superstitious. Providing an extensive overview of the medical practices and history of the Anglo-Saxons, he notes that, prior to the discovery of germs in the late nineteenth century and the resulting growth in scientific methods, reliance on herbs in medicine was far more common. This revolutionary turn, focused on observations and experiments and medicine of chemical origin, “prompted medical researchers to reject the old medicine.”¹³⁰ Cameron’s work then seems to indicate a new turn within the field, in which herbal medicine is being critically reevaluated rather than dismissed. Prior to his

¹²⁹ Jolly, *Popular*, 103.

¹³⁰ Cameron, *Anglo-Saxon Medicine*, 123.

translation of the charm, Cameron notes how many of the herbs and ingredients listed in the charm and other remedies, “are known from recent investigation to contain substances of real therapeutic value and to have been used by them for conditions where their therapeutic value should have had beneficial effects.”¹³¹ Cameron implies that much of the knowledge modern scientists have more recently discovered about the beneficial properties of these herbs was at least partially known, even if it was under the guise of superstition. While Cameron aims to illustrate the scientific foundations of Anglo-Saxon medicine, he does distinguish between different types of remedies, as he still refers to *Nine Herbs Charm* and other charms as magical recipes, since these remedies relied on the supposed magic properties of the listed ingredients. In his analysis of the herbs mentioned in the *Nine Herbs Charm*, Cameron identifies certain ingredients and details their known beneficial medical properties. One of the herbs attested to in the *Nine Herbs Charm*, *Wegbrade*, Cameron identifies as ‘plantain’ (1.7 Ca), and argues that the herb, “was invoked in the Old English *Nine Herbs Charm* in terms which seem to imply some knowledge of its antibacterial properties.”¹³² He explains how it has recently been shown to contain aucubin, a potent antibiotic,¹³³ which becomes active when the plant is crushed, thus making the ground up plantain help against various bacteria. Cameron’s observation of the discovered properties of the herb, in his aim to illustrate the medical knowledge present even in their ‘lesser remedies’, also influences his translation of the charm. Moreover, Cameron links the herb to the *onflyge*, the ‘flying disease’ (1.5) in the charm, which he identifies and translates as ‘infection (1.5 Ca), as he notes that, “it refers to a belief that certain diseases were caused by agents which 'roamed through the land' and carried disease from one person to another.”¹³⁴ Cameron links the role that the herb plays in fighting both the ‘infection and the *attre* ‘poison’ (1. 5Ca), as he explains that, “given the long-continued use of freshly

¹³¹ Ibid., 118.

¹³² Ibid., 123.

¹³³ Ibid., 123.

¹³⁴ Cameron, *Anglo-Saxon Medicine*, 149.

crushed plantain to treat wounds one may infer that it did exert observably beneficial effects and that its activity against *attre 7 onflyge* was appreciated.”¹³⁵ The identification of the herbs and their properties and the translation of these herbs in his edition of the charm demonstrate the medical knowledge of even the lesser Anglo-Saxon physician Cameron aimed to demonstrate, as well as the new role of charms as a recognized remedy.

Evidently, Cameron is not as dismissive of charms as his predecessors and argues for a more rational, medical consideration of at least certain elements of the text. While he seems adamant on the magical nature of charms, Cameron does seem to think it very important still in the general understanding of all Anglo-Saxon medicine, as he argues that, “this native medicine belonged to a tradition which is still transmitted in folk and herbal medicine and was competent to treat illnesses within the limitations of its period and place.”¹³⁶ These limitations may then also have affected Cameron in his approach to the charm, possibly interpreting certain parts as more important elements of folk medicine. Such could be the case with his translation near the end of the incantation, where the physician boasts to know the running streams. In his edition, Cameron translates the lines *Ic ānā wāt ēa rinnende / 7 þā nygon nēdran behealdað* as ‘I alone know the running waters / And the nine adders they restrain.’ (l.59-60 Ca). The translation of *behealdað*, which could also be translated as ‘hold, ‘guard’ or ‘contain,’¹³⁷ appears somewhat marked, as in Grattan and Singer’s edition, the word is translated as ‘guard’ (l.58 G&S), and although in their usual fashion they provide no explanation for their translation, this translation coincides with other editions, including Pettit’s translation of the word as ‘behold’ (l.60 P). Cameron’s translation then, in which the running waters ‘restrain’ the snake, who represents the cause of the afflictions, appears strikingly different and could suggest an attempt by the editor to indicate the role of clean, running water in medicine and health. The

¹³⁵ Ibid., 124.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 34.

¹³⁷ *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, ed. J.R. Clark Hall, 4th ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960), s.v. “behealdan.”

role of water as retainer of the serpent, the cause of ailments, suggests that the editor was keen to note the role of the different medical elements in his translation. Suggesting his medical focus in the translation, the line then also how this scope can affect the narrative of the text. Surveying the changes within charm studies, Roper too notes the limitations of Cameron's scope, most notably in the latter's 1988 article, which he claims, "focuses on the sometimes-ignored procedures which accompany the utterance of the words of a charm, but rather neglects the charm itself."¹³⁸ Thus, it appears Cameron, concentrating on the strong medical tradition and knowledge of herbs of the Anglo-Saxons, opposes the medical properties of the charm against the magical, possibly affecting the perceived narrative of the incantation.

This distinction Cameron appears to make in his translation and the extensive context separates the rational, medical knowledge of the Anglo-Saxons from the magical superstitions in the charm. While Cameron recognizes the charm as a mostly magical tradition, he also appears keen to alter the persistent perception of magical medicine of the previous decade. In an earlier paper published in 1988 titled, *Anglo-Saxon Medicine and Magic*, Cameron notes how up until then the Old English medical documents have been heavily discussed within the context of superstition, their magical elements or as remnants of pagan culture, but never through a medical scope. He argues that the various remedies deserve consideration as medical texts, as these texts were, "all originally conceived, used and finally preserved in writing as *medical documents*."¹³⁹ The distinction made here by Cameron is of note, as he bases it not on his own perceptions of medicine and magic, but rather through the perspective of the medieval physician or patient, a perspective he seemingly shares with other contemporary scholars. Jolly similarly critiques editors of the early twentieth century and their modern scientific views, judging charms by modern medical standards and regarding anything not within this view as magic. She notes how these texts were dubbed, "'superstitious,' that is, obviously wrong from

¹³⁸ Roper, *Verbal*, 34.

¹³⁹ Cameron, "Medicine and Magic." 191.

any rational standpoint.”¹⁴⁰ Instead, Jolly, much like Cameron, argues for a different approach to these texts, in which they are considered from the standpoint of the medieval Anglo-Saxon, as “they are consistent in their own context and hence we should not subject them to such artificial designations as magic or superstition.”¹⁴¹ As evidenced by both Cameron’s and Jolly’s similar views and vocal critique of past approaches, the perception of charms changed in the late twentieth century, which is demonstrated in Cameron’s translation of the *Nine Herbs Charm*.

In his attempt to illustrate and convince of this new approach and the role of charms in Anglo-Saxon medicine, Cameron also provides context for the use of charms, which he does not wholly discredit but rather considers useful for their possible psychological benefits. As he considers charms the least medically relevant and mostly favouring the remedies from the *Leechbooks*, he notes the importance of the magical side and says that, “magic is an integral and interesting part and deserves a sympathetic assessment.”¹⁴² In this, he argues from the perspective of both patient and physician and their attitude to the illness, a critical factor in charms, in which Cameron provides his own medical insight. The perception of charms he presents then becomes one in which, apart from certain charms like the *Nine Herbs Charm*, had little medical value in terms of their ingredients but relied more on their rituals. These rituals would then mostly be used for ailments ‘intractable to rational medicines,’ and states that, when all else failed, “the Anglo-Saxon physician could resort to charms, in themselves of no effect, but probably of great psychological benefit to the patient.”¹⁴³ What is suggested is that charms had a very specific purpose, to treat ailments where the Anglo-Saxon physician had no rational alternative, and that these incantations, “were resorted to for conditions where rational remedies

¹⁴⁰ Jolly, *Popular*, 101.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 101.

¹⁴² Cameron, *Anglo-Saxon Medicine*, 130

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 24.

had proved ineffective.”¹⁴⁴ This notion on charms, while wholly different from previous centuries, was not conceived or coined by Cameron. In his 1971 publication, “Verbal Charms in British Folk Medicine”, Thomas R. Forbes not only distinguishes charms from what we may now consider magic, he also proposes a consideration of the texts from the perspective of the Anglo-Saxon, who believed in the effectiveness of the charm. Forbes closes his article noting this purpose of charm as a resort rather than remedy, stating that, “verbal charms persisted because sometimes they seemed to help and, too often, nothing better was at hand.”¹⁴⁵ While Forbes’s article is not on the same level of medical analysis as Cameron, it does demonstrate similarities with Cameron’s later medical scope, likening charms and its instructions by the ‘charmer’ to prescriptions by physicians in modern medicine. The dualistic nature of charms then, being both part medicine and magic, could explain the significantly varied perception of the texts over the past decades, as well as the influence of recent medical knowledge on their reception.

The focus on these magical, superstitious elements of the charm by previous editors is touched upon by Cameron, and appears as a dominant narrative throughout the late twentieth century. C.H. Talbot in his 1965 article already presses the issue, as he states that, “it must be admitted that Cockayne's great services to medical history have never been properly appreciated and the material he accumulated has never been properly assessed.”¹⁴⁶ While valuing Cockayne and his impressive dedication to the field, Talbot notes the need for (medical) re-evaluation of the texts, which Cockayne mostly presented. Critiquing previous observations by Godfried Storms and his magical perception, whose dominant view contrasts his own, Cameron argues that he failed to comprehend or identify the medical elements of the charm. Cameron analyses the role of iron in these remedies which, as Storms also discusses, has played role in magical

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 130.

¹⁴⁵ Thomas R. Forbes, “Verbal Charms in British Folk Medicine.” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 115, no. 4 (1971): 314.

¹⁴⁶ C.H. Talbot, “Some Notes on Anglo-Saxon Medicine,” *Medical History* (1965): 156.

remedies and has also, “entered into rational remedies,”¹⁴⁷ which Cameron then expands upon. It seems that the rational concept of the remedy, in this case identified iron deficiency, was mistaken for non-rational magic, as Cameron concludes that, “not understanding the rationale behind this remedy, Storms treated it as a magical one.”¹⁴⁸ As Cameron provides an alternative explanation for the specific remedy and the role of its components, Garner too expresses how “this picture runs counter to much scholarship surrounding the Old English charms.”¹⁴⁹ Published in 2004, her article appears to still convey the importance of this new approach. What this implies is that the rationale with which Cameron distinguishes the medical elements of Anglo-Saxon medicine is a concept unfamiliar to Storms and based on new reason, which also starkly contrasts the latter’s magical approach. This distinction he makes between rational medicine and magical superstitions is also evident in his translation. While he translates the identified herbs and refers to the *onflyge* as ‘infection’, he similarly presents the narrative of Woden smiting the serpent from the magical view. Cameron, basing his translation on that by Grattan and Singer, seems to have agreed with their narrative, as he also translates the line *ðā genam Woden VIII wuldortānas* as ‘Then Woden took nine glorious twigs’ (1.31-32 Ca). Again, the word *ðā* is translated as ‘then’, creating a narrative of following events, rather than a cause and effect. What this suggests is that he was less concerned with the magical elements the herbs supposedly gained through the actions of Woden, instead presenting a translation in which the obvious rational medicine is highlighted against the contrasting magical elements which seem to still be inherent to the charm.

What Cameron’s translation highlights then is both the medical value of the *Nine Herbs Charm* as well as the new perspective of Anglo-Saxon medicine within a historical context rather than from a modern bias. Examining the nine herbs that are mentioned in the charm and

¹⁴⁷ Cameron, *Anglo-Saxon Medicine*, 126.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 121

¹⁴⁹ Garner, *Charms*, 27.

noting that six of them (mugwort, plantain, atterlothe, camomile, nettle or dead-nettle, crab apple) are known to in treating the supposed ailment, Cameron concludes that the magical narrative of the charm, “seems to be an addition to an otherwise rational treatment.”¹⁵⁰ By placing the charm within the context of the medieval patient and physician and their available knowledge, Cameron attempts to demonstrate a far more rational medical tradition and skill of the physician, whose “level of expertise and his attitude to medicine were impressive according to the standards of his time and his approach to medicine was predominantly rational in spite of his use of charms and magic for conditions intractable to rational treatments.”¹⁵¹ Cameron provides a counter-narrative to what was up till then a very dominant narrative, that of the unlearned Anglo-Saxon who relied on superstitious magic and had no reliable medical knowledge. Although not pioneering this new perspective, his extensive medical context provides strong arguments for a reevaluation of the charm as a medical text, even if his focus neglects the role of the charm as a text and incantation. While almost all editors had up to then praised the work of their predecessors, few have so distinctly highlighted the perspective they felt was lacking within the existing corpus and which they so meticulously attempted to explicate.

4.3 A New Perspective and Rational Magic

Cameron’s translation of the *Nine Herbs Charm*, focused on the medical benefits of the herbs which contrast the magical elements of the charm, signals the considerable turn that occurred within the field of Anglo-Saxon studies during the later decades of the previous century. In his medical analysis, great emphasis is placed on what is to be considered ‘rational’, a term that saw an increased use during this period. While many in the twentieth century use the term rational, it had up until this point been more of a fluid term in terms of what was

¹⁵⁰ Cameron, *Anglo-Saxon Medicine*, 147.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 24.

considered 'rational'. The changes that are evidenced by Cameron's translation indicate a new perception of charms as medical texts, which must be placed into their own context, likely motivated by a larger counter-narrative against the dominant values of the earlier decades.

The notion of magic opposing rationality was already touched upon by Grattan and Singer in their edition, as they open that the barbarian man, which they identify the scribe of the *Lacnunga* manuscript to at least resemble, "reaches no rational concept of the working of his body and his medicine, at its best, is narrowly empiric and, at worst, remains mere magic."¹⁵² Similarly, they speak of the, "rational Greek medicine,"¹⁵³ and how in Anglo-Saxon medicine, "rational elements are conspicuously rare."¹⁵⁴ This notion of rationality seems to be fluid then, as it adheres to the older views by Grattan and Singer. What is more, they devote an entire chapter of their edition to the 'rational elements' of A.S. medicine, which they call 'leechdoms', though, befitting of their approach of Anglo-Saxon medicine, this is a considerably short chapter. Their notion of rational medicine seems founded not from the perspective of the Anglo-Saxon within their own context, but rather from their own, more modern perception of medicine and science, as they conclude that, "without some theory of disease no rational remedies can be applied."¹⁵⁵ While later scholars often still relate rationality to scientific medicine and contrast it with magical rituals, they instead approach this by placing the charms within their own contexts, in a seeming attempt to move as far away from the previously dominant narrative as possible.

While Cameron's translation of the charm displays considerable evidence of this perception turn, he was not its pioneer, as Cameron himself bestows this credit onto Talbot. Reviewing his efforts and what he describes as a, "condescending and dismissive attitude to

¹⁵² Grattan and Singer, *Magic and Medicine*, 3.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 92.

Anglo-Saxon medicine”¹⁵⁶, Cameron stresses how, “in view of the effects of this unfortunate belief on the study of Anglo-Saxon medicine it is encouraging to see that scholars are now giving more attention to its medical aspects and less to its superstitious content.”¹⁵⁷ Talbot’s ‘Notes on Anglo-Saxon Medicine,’ published in 1965, conveys the need for a turn in perspective and medical appraisal which seems to emanate amongst following scholars of Anglo-Saxon charms into the next century. Talbot observes the heavy focus that predecessors like Singer and Bonser, who in turn based their work on Cockayne’s, had on folklore and the superstitious elements of the texts, which in turn gave, “the general impression that Anglo-Saxon medicine was nothing but a hotchpotch of incantations, charms, magic and old wives’ recipes.”¹⁵⁸ Talbot then voices the need for a change and, “to give some of these texts a more rational appraisal and to examine them a little more closely.”¹⁵⁹ This sudden and strikingly contrasting view of charms implies a drastic change and, considering how it is shared among following editors and scholars, indicates a possible foundation within the larger societal narratives of the late-twentieth century Western world.

Many other editions convey this similar criticism of the past perceptions and need for a new approach, as well as the dichotomous nature of the charm as being both medical and magical. Much like Cameron, who brought his own medical background into his translation of the charms, it appears more attention was paid to the environment which helped shape the previous editions. Noting the influence of folklorists, historians and cultural anthropologists had on charms throughout the decades, W.F. Ryan observes how scholars, “naturally tend to emphasise the perspectives of their discipline.”¹⁶⁰ Not only does this observation indicate an attention paid to the influence of

¹⁵⁶ Cameron, *Medicine and Magic*, 192.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 191.

¹⁵⁸ Talbot, “Notes,” 156.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 156.

¹⁶⁰ W.F. Ryan, “Eclecticism in the Russian Charm Tradition” In *Charms and Charming*, ed. Jonathan Roper (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 113.

the editor's background on their translation, it also demonstrates that this scholarly turn further developed into the twenty-first century. Similarly, Jolly concludes that editors of the first half of the century, using definitions based on their own sensibilities about magic, science, and religion, "present a picture of charms and medicine very different from what the Anglo-Saxons would have understood."¹⁶¹ The emphasis appears to be on creating the right perspective for the texts, and the most glaringly absent one then was the medical.

Although not as extensive as Cameron, many of his contemporary scholars display the same focus on the medical foundations of charms and the role of magic. L.M.C. Weston opens his 1985 article, *The Language of Magic in Two Old English Metrical Charms*, by stating how the notions of magic thus far were outdated. In a footnote, he states that both Grattan and Singer and Bonser, "work from modern assumptions about magic, especially as opposed to "scientific" medicine."¹⁶² Similarly, Braekman in his *Notes on Old English Charms* bases some of his arguments for his readings of the charm on its intended purpose as a remedy for a horse's sprained leg and amyloses of horse hock-joints.¹⁶³ Ultimately, Van Arsdall concludes that the changing modern perceptions were not limited to the distancing from and questioning previous assumptions about medieval medicine, noting that, "parallel work extends into probing the details of the medicinal plants mentioned in the texts, testing some of the remedies, and reading between the lines of the remedies to see what was meant for practitioners."¹⁶⁴ Her argument demonstrates that while the changing modern perception and the increasing interest in the medical practicality of the charms are connected, they must then not be seen as one and the same process, but rather two distinct changes which sustain and support one another. The medical scope demonstrated by Cameron, based on new ideas of rational medicine and

¹⁶¹ Jolly, *Popular*, 99-100.

¹⁶² L.M.C. Weston, "The Language of Magic in Two Old English Metrical Charms," *Neophilologische Mitteilungen* 86, no. 2 (1985): 176.

¹⁶³ W.L. Braekman, "Notes on Old English Charms," *Neophilologus* 64, (1980): 466.

¹⁶⁴ Arsdall, *Reading*, 16.

perspective, is a major aspect of the new narrative and perspective, in which, as Van Arsdall urges, “you must suspend judgement and expectations that are rooted in the present.”¹⁶⁵

Cameron, in his medical approach of the charms, places emphasis on what he considers rational medicine, of which he considers charms not to be part. Save a few charms, such as the *Nine Herbs Charm*, he links magic to irrationality.¹⁶⁶ In his 1983 article on Bald’s *Leechbook*, he states of the tenth-century Anglo-Saxon physician, “that his approach to medicine was predominantly rational is shown by the relatively few charms in the *Leechbook*.”¹⁶⁷ While this may insinuate Cameron considers most charms to be magical, he stresses how, as long as older perceptions of medieval medicine and the period as the dark age persists, “even rationally conceived remedies tend to be thought magical”¹⁶⁸ While the notion of what is rationally conceived has changed, as evidenced by the arguments by Grattan and Singer, it must be stressed that these are not limited to only medicine and also affected the perception of magic. As a part of the increasing change of the modern perception, the concept of magic also saw rational appraisalment.

One of the most important examples of the new, rational perspective on magic is provided by Richard Kieckhefer in his 1994 article *The Specific Rationality of Magic*. In the article, Kieckhefer denotes how, “the rationality of magic is a classic problem in both history and anthropology,”¹⁶⁹ as we can never explain magic through our own, modern perspective. Kieckhefer in his article seems to argue that magic and rationality/science are distinct from each other, although, “this is not to say that magic is irrational but perhaps rather that it is nonrational, or not grounded in a rational correlation of means and ends.”¹⁷⁰ Rather, what he presents is the

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁶⁶ Cameron, *Medicine and Magic*, 194.

¹⁶⁷ M. L. Cameron, “Bald’s ‘*Leechbook*’: Its Sources and Their Use in Its Compilation,” *Anglo-Saxon England* 12 (1983): 177.

¹⁶⁸ Cameron, *Anglo-Saxon Medicine*, 122.

¹⁶⁹ Richard Kieckhefer, “The Specific Rationality of Medieval Magic,” *The American Historical Review* 99, no. 3 (1994): 813.

¹⁷⁰ Kieckhefer, “Rationality,” 814.

perspective that magic was, by medieval standards, considered rational. From their perception of magic, there are three distinctions of magic: “appeal to God, invocation of demons, and exploitation of mysterious powers within nature,”¹⁷¹ arguing that people in the Middle Ages were capable of separating these different kinds of magic from each other. Jolly, in her comments on Storms and his edition, presents a similar notion of magic, as she claims that, “the organisation of his edition of charms according to five types of magic likewise uses modern categories of how magic works, subtly altering how the charms are read.”¹⁷² Evidently, it is important to consider not how we perceive magic, but how the Anglo-Saxons perceived it. Not only does this analysis by Kieckhefer and Jolly’s similar comment demonstrate the new approach towards magic and the sympathy with which medieval practitioners are now viewed, it also implies that rationality and magic are not as opposite as perhaps perceived. It would be safe to assume that this new vision came, as before the source of the interest in magic was because it was so far from our own rational beliefs, which had been forged during the nineteenth century, against which the scholars were now opposing themselves. This then also raises an important note on charms, as through this new perception the label ‘magic’, which charms have received, could be questioned. As Kieckhefer notes, it is never in the charm stated to be a magical incantation, but rather the charm has since been considered as such based on modern ideas of magic and medical knowledge. As he states, “magic deserves sympathetic consideration because it is psychologically and socially useful. But to assume that magic either has power to coerce external forces or else has nothing but subjective efficacy is to create a false disjunction.”¹⁷³ Cameron’s translation of the *Nine Herbs Charm*, focusing on the medical benefits of the herbs which have been identified, signals the drastic change which occurred over the past decades within the field of Anglo-Saxon studies and charms. As society started moving

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 835.

¹⁷² Jolly, *Popular*, 100.

¹⁷³ Kieckhefer, “Rationality,” 827.

away from the dominant narratives of the previous decades, Anglo-Saxon scholars started doubting the previously prevalent values regarding charms and Anglo-Saxon medicine. Previous editors like Cockayne and Grattan and Singer valued the *Nine Herbs Charm* and other charms as examples of purely, native pagan culture, traditions of the unlearned Early Medieval Germanics, opposite the science of the ancient Greeks and Romans. Cameron, on the other hand, demonstrates the new value of charms, illustrating the solid foundation that these remedies have in actual science, partially of Mediterranean origin, and the insight they provide into Anglo-Saxon medicine. Although even Cameron too states that, “not all Anglo-Saxon medicine was rationally conceived,”¹⁷⁴ his translation and edition of the *Nine Herbs Charm* exemplify the magical knowledge of the Anglo-Saxons and the new perspective with which these charms are approached and assessed.

¹⁷⁴ Cameron, *Anglo-Saxon Medicine*, 129.

Conclusion

The comparative analysis of the four translations of the *Nine Herbs Charm* highlights the transition which occurred among scholars of Anglo-Saxon charms and more importantly, illustrates how different narratives and cultural transformations determine the weight one side of the charm has over the other, being either magical or medical. While at first appearing as if the scope simply shifted from magic to medical, the evidence found reveals the evolution to be far more complex, in which different, external, preconceived notions strongly influenced how the charm was received and what elements gained prominence. While Cockayne's *Leechdoms* does portray the Anglo-Saxons as unlearned, his edition suggests a stronger interest in the preservation of the pagan elements of the text rather than a dismissal of the medical properties, as opposed to Grattan and Singer's edition over half a century later, who disregard any medical value of the charm altogether. Although Storms in his focus on the value of magic seemingly distances himself from the medical possibilities of the mentioned herbs, his method differs little from that of Cameron near the end of the century, who, in his medical perspective, focuses almost solely on these herbs and gives little value to the charm's magical elements. What this suggests then is that the dualistic nature of charms, being both medical and magical, causes the charms to be highly susceptible to this dissecting by scholars, in which the charm is placed on a cultural paradigm or hierarchy. This was also noted by Lori Ann Garner, who states that, "titles of books collecting and analysing the charms illustrate how easy our print culture makes it for us to separate components that would be inseparable in performance: *Anglo-Saxon Medicine* (Cameron 1993), *Anglo-Saxon Magic* (Storms 1948), *The Anglo Saxon Minor Poems* (Dobbie 1942), and the well-known *Leechdoms, Wortcunning, and Starcraft* (Cockayne 1864-66)—all of which include a number of the same remedies—are just a few of the works whose

titles suggest the rigid boundaries of classification.”¹⁷⁵ While Garner’s observation accurately pinpoints a key problem within Anglo-Saxon charm studies, she offers little explanation as to what influences these dichotomous perceptions. The evidence found in the various editions and translations of the *Nine Herbs Charm* suggests that these rigid boundaries are the result of strong, dominant narratives within Anglo-Saxon studies, which strongly influence the reception of the charm as either predominantly magical in nature or evidence of a more learned medical tradition.

As Cockayne was the first to publish the charm in his *Leechdoms*, his influence on the scholarly field to follow is only to be expected and evidenced by the lack of following editions. His presentation of the Anglo-Saxons as an unlearned people with great knowledge of the natural world appears as a lasting effect Romantic thinking had on Victorian England. His translation of the charm illustrates the role Anglo-Saxon heritage played in his time, as his charms are presented in no practical manner to be studied or used, but more as evidence, mostly untouched, of the culture of the noble but savage Anglo-Saxon. This dominant narrative was only further strengthened as science advanced during the latter nineteenth century and the scientific medicine associated with the ancient Greeks and Romans opposed the portrayed unlearned Anglo-Saxon medical traditions, a narrative which proves strong as it would take until the next century for new editions of the charms to emerge. And while these came with new conceptions of magic as an essential part of human civilisation, likely trailing from the path blazed by the growing field of anthropology, editions like Storms’ *Anglo-Saxon Magic* moved even further from the medical perspective. What Storms’ edition perhaps best exemplifies is the value charms have as magical documents, as he explains that, “magic is a universal phenomenon. It is to be found among all peoples, in all parts of the world, at all times.”¹⁷⁶ While also arguing for the value of charms as examples of Germanic pagan culture,

¹⁷⁵ Garner, “Charms,” 26.

¹⁷⁶ Storms, *Magic*, 27.

Grattan and Singer share little of Storms' notions of magic in their translation of the *Nine Herbs Charm*. Although their edition similarly pays little value to the medical proponents of the charm, their reception of the text appears more as a vestige of earlier notions of Anglo-Saxon medicine, hinging at the power of the narrative of the previous century, and a product of post-war Europe in the 1950s, in which much of European and British society culturally regressed to a state similar to that of fifty years prior. Yet, the scholars which followed, inveigled by the larger turn in western Europe which opposed itself from the old academic traditions, were quick to perceive these editors as analogous, as scholars like Meany are quick to conclude that, "Storms and Grattan and Singer were too quick to assume magic where there was none."¹⁷⁷ Although forged from different influences and receptions, their focus on the non-medical caused the different scholars of the early part of the twentieth century to be lumped together by the successors, as Jolly also argues that, "editors such as Grendon, Storms, or Grattan and Singer, defined charms as any remedy that involved special wording or actions to accomplish the cure, since these were inconsistent with modern scientific views and medical practice."¹⁷⁸ This new perspective, which instead focused on the medical context, is evidenced by Cameron's translation, which values the possible medicinal properties of the herbs mentioned, displaying little interest in other elements and only briefly mentioning the importance of the preservation of these texts. While Cameron's translation is a strong example of the medical scope which emerged, it also shows the flaw that remains within the field, as it still works to separate the different elements from the charms and create a hierarchy among these, in which the medical is now at the top and all others are mostly disregarded, even if the dominant narrative has shifted.

The evidence so far then suggests a narrative in which the medical scope has surpassed the older interest in pagan elements, although the new notion of magic, as exemplified by

¹⁷⁷ Meany, "Practise," 232.

¹⁷⁸ Jolly, *Popular*, 100.

Kieckheffer and his rationality of magic, opens the door for new conceptions of charms, in which magic and medicine are no longer opposed. Observing the work that has been done post-Cameron, we can see how the field seems to have moved from Cameron's theoretical approach of the medicinal properties of charm ingredients towards an empirical approach. This is perhaps best evidenced by the 2005 paper, *A reassessment of the efficacy of Anglo-Saxon medicine*, which aims to find, "empirical support for Cameron's thesis."¹⁷⁹ Building on Cameron's work, the paper details *in vitro* testing of bacteria based on Anglo-Saxon writing, indicating the importance of practical trials as they reveal that, while the herbs may demonstrate the antibacterial activity, the described preparations turn the effective ingredients ineffective, even stating how, "these results may be of interest to archaeologists and other students of Anglo-Saxon culture even as they challenge a view that has been unquestioned in the scholarship for more than a decade."¹⁸⁰ The paper signals an important shift within the perception of charms, moving beyond Cameron's theoretical analysis and towards an empirical approach of charm ingredients.

Around the same time, the role of a charm's incantation and the effectiveness of the words are also re-examined, indicating a scope of charms as remedies beyond their ingredients. In the 2002 publication, *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe, Volume 3: The Middle Ages*, Jolly, along with Catharina Raudvere and Edward Peters, detail the role of prayers and incantations as protection. Comparing the use of words in charms to prayer, they observe how, "many so-called charms employ Scripture and prayers found in the liturgy, while liturgical prayers often function rhetorically in the same way as charms, as effective means of cure."¹⁸¹ The connection they make between charms and prayers as means of protection indicates a deeper interest and recognition of the effectiveness of words in remedies, as they argue that, "words represent

¹⁷⁹ Brenessel, Drout and Gravel, "Reassessment," 184.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 184.

¹⁸¹ Karen Jolly, Catharina Raudvere and Edward Peters. *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe, Volume 3: The Middle Ages* (London: The Athlone Press, 2002), 36.

reality and their performance can therefore alter reality.”¹⁸² What this suggests is the idea that charms function in much the same way prayer does, and should therefore be studied as such, an idea that seems to have been accepted, as Roper presents the same similarities three years later, arguing that, “prayers can be seen as analogous to verbal charms,”¹⁸³ which indicates an increasingly wider notion of the incantatory components of the charm as a remedy to be considered and perhaps even tested.

Although one can only speculate what will follow this post-Cameron generation of Anglo-Saxon scholars, it feels hopeful to imagine Anglo-Saxon charm studies moving from the *in vitro* testing, as evidenced by Brennessel et al, towards *in vivo* approach, hinted at by Jolly, Raudvere and Peters, in which the role and effectiveness of Anglo-Saxon metric charms are tested as the paste is made from the herbs and the tale of Woden smiting the snake is sung into a patient’s mouth, ears and sores.

¹⁸² Jolly, Raudvere and Peters, *Witchcraft*, 39.

¹⁸³ Roper, *Verbal*, 16.

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