

# THE PERVINCA CHARM: A MEDIEVAL GERMAN LOVE CHARM

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The Pervinca love charm is a 15<sup>th</sup> century German text, preserved in clm. 7021, ff. 165v-166r. This article is the first attempt to provide a complete transcription of it, a translation and a description of its content. The Pervinca charm displays a perfectly coherent rhetorical structure enriched by Christian images of brightness and fire; the structure lays on a large set of non-Christian motifs, like: “*as the wax melts, let N. melt / neither eat nor drink / neither sleep nor be awake*”, as well as on ancient rituals with silver, gold, salt and wax. The theological frame gives even more power to the Pervinca, whose (Latin) name is here the key device of its irresistible magical power. A part of this charm is based on ancient curses and maledictions meant as a punishment if the beloved tried to resist the love charm. The performer needs the efficacy of the Pervinca in order to gain emotional, physical and mental power over a woman.

**Keywords:** “*as the wax melts, let N. melt*”, Clm 7021, “*neither eat nor drink*”, “*neither sleep nor be awake*”, lovesickness, Medieval Love charm, mental control, Periwinkle, Pervinca, Power of words, Seraphim and Cherubim, Verbena, voces magicae.

## 1.0. INTRODUCTION

*Omnia vincit Amor; et nos cedamus Amori.*  
(Virgil, Eclogues X, 69)

Love is magic, and there probably is nothing more suitable to incantations and rituals than love itself. German love charms are not older than the 14th century. Before this time, a vast number of German charms has indeed come down to us. Some of them are very old, dating back to the beginning of literacy in Germany in the 9th century. But these earliest texts are mainly verbal remedies to recover health, to heal wounds, to staunch bleedings. New types of charms find their way into the manuscripts only after the 13th century<sup>1</sup>. They are meant to solve a broader range of problems like finding a thief, bringing back a bee swarm, gaining protection against wolves or other evil creatures.

Verbal remedies written in manuscripts have very little to do with the Germanic pagan magic; they are rooted in the Mediterranean and Christian world.

It is only with the coming of Christianity to Germany and Northern Europe that charms and other verbal remedies became increasingly popular among Germanic people.

Blending the Mediterranean love charm tradition into the Germanic society was not as simple as one would imagine. The old Germanic society was based on trust, honour and, of course, on oral transmission of texts. As far as love poems and love charms are concerned, one cannot fail to notice that they were not easily accepted, at least at the beginning. In fact, some written documents of legal history, as for example the Old Icelandic *Landnámabók*<sup>2</sup>, prescribe that performers of love poems and charmers incur into a very severe punishment, the so called *Friedlosigkeit*, which means that they must be banned from the society. In the same fashion, love poems and love charms were considered as texts with a negative potential.

Probably the most important feature of a verbal charm is the power of its words, which were believed to produce an effect in the real world, precisely as actions do. This fits Austin's speech act theory perfectly. The power of words of poetry, as well as that of charms, can indeed arouse interest, desire, fantasy. Now, if we consider the act of falling in love, there is little doubt that the words between lovers contribute to the magical transformation of strangers into lovers. As a matter of fact, love words have always been thought to bear a strong erotic potential. In the love charm, this is represented as a sort of mental power. As we shall see, mental control over the object of love and desire is always evoked by the performer of a love charm.

## 2.0. THE MANUSCRIPT

The *Pervinca charm* is written by a 15th century hand in a Gothic *Bastarda* cursive script on four columns at ff. 165v and 166r of the Clm 7021 preserved in München<sup>3</sup> (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek).

Clm 7021 (14th century- 1st half of the 15th century) is made of 231 *in folio* paper pages measuring 295 x 210 mm<sup>4</sup>. Some pages are divided in two columns: ff. 105r-120v and 123r-231v.

Clm 7021 contains<sup>5</sup> a miscellany of texts in Latin and in German (Bavarian dialect) dealing with rhetoric, prose composition, and medicine:

ff. 1-69v: *Ars dictatoria* (Incipit: Cupientes rivulos scaturientis artis oratoriae);

ff. 70r-93v: *Tractatus dictandi* (Incipit: Nota quod ad perfectum oratorem requiritur latinitatis copia);

f. 94r: blank;

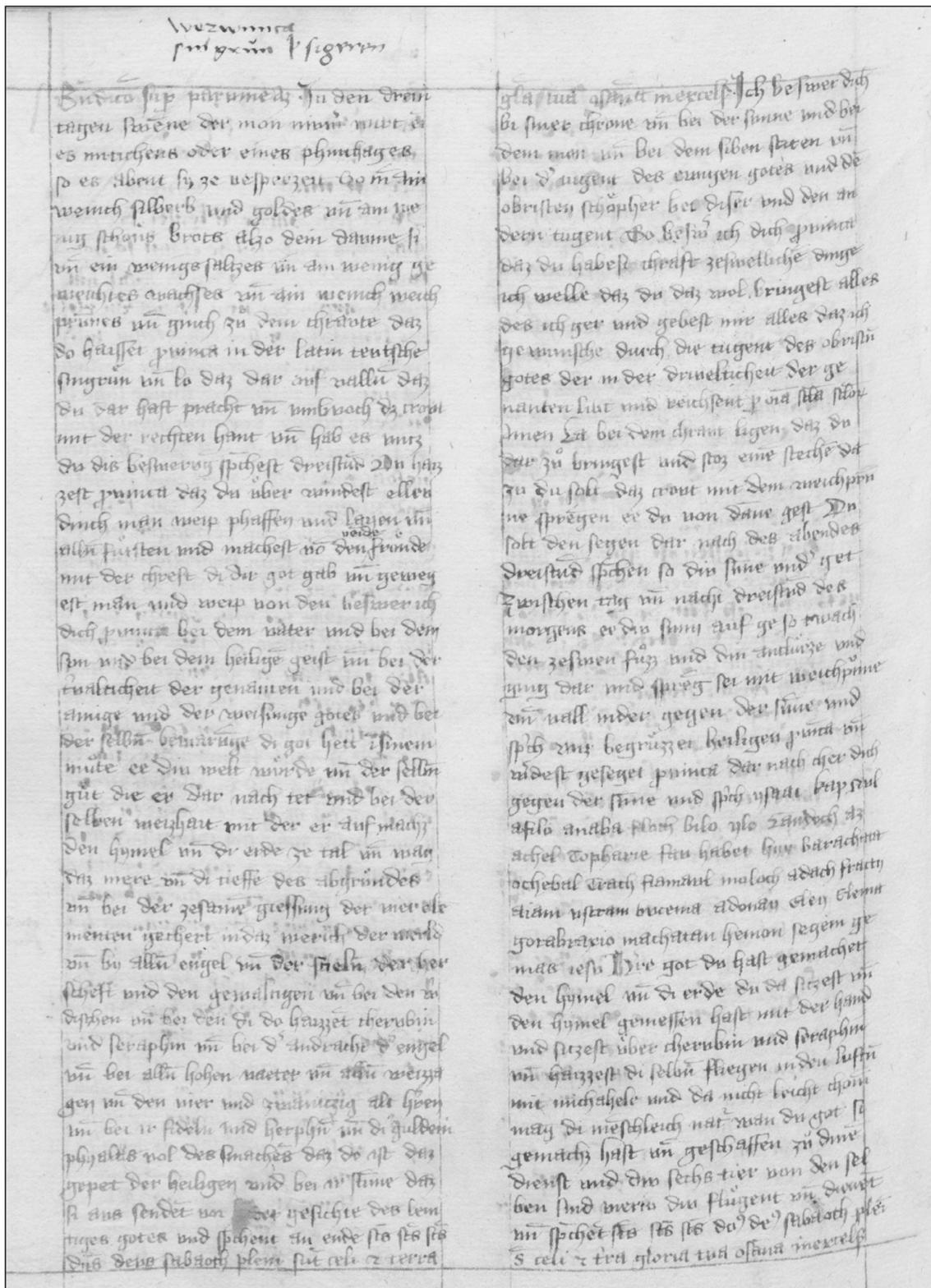


Figure 1: München (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek) Clm 7021, f. 165v

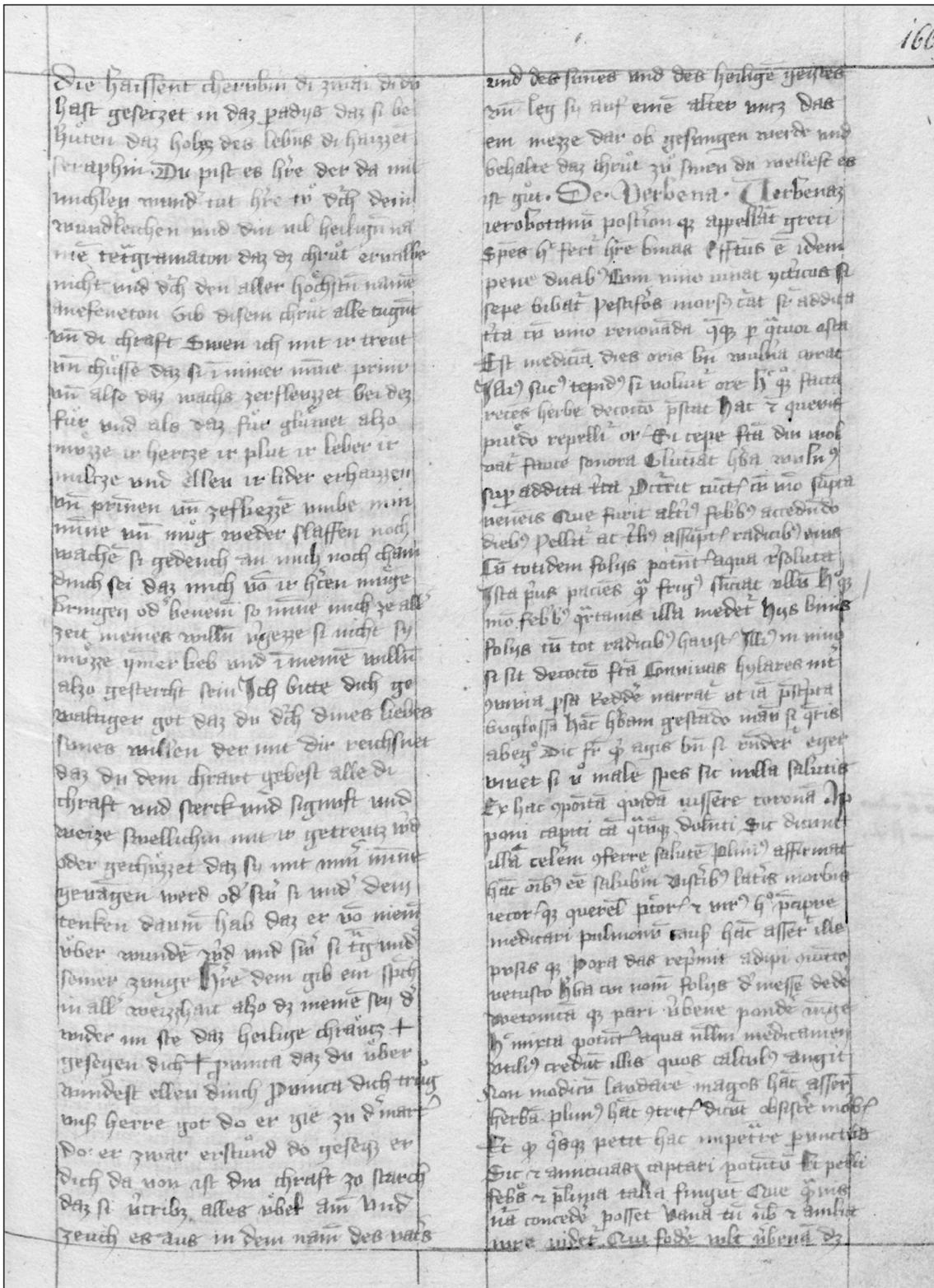


Figure 2: München (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek) Clm 7021, f. 166r.

- ff. 94v-103r: Laurentii de Aquileia, *Summa dictaminis*;
- ff. 103v-104v: scribbles and a *probatio pennae*;
- ff. 105ra-113ra: (in German) *Erkenntnis der Sünde* by Heinrich von Hezzen (Henry of Langenstein 1325-1397);
- f. 113v: blank;
- ff. 114ra-120v: (German version of the *Distichs of Cato*) *Catonis disticha moralia cum introductione et explicatione germanica* (Incipit: Waren die küdiger güter red nit geuär);
- f. 121: Formulae epistolares;
- f. 122v: (15th century) Eberhardi episc. Salzburgensis litterae ad concilium provinciale a. 1418 convocantes;
- ff. 123r-127v: von Erczney (Medicine book in German);
- ff. 128r-133r: *De herbis* (Medicine book in Latin with some German glosses);
- ff. 133v-157v: *Mauritii liber medicinalis* (Latin medical treatise by Mauritius with various recipes and charms, as well as historical, medical and astronomical notes-with some German glosses);
- ff. 157v-179 and 181-183r: Latin and German remedies and charms;
- ff. 165v-166r: *Benedictio super pervinca*** (the ***Pervinca charm***: the text is written in German, except the title and some usual expressions of invocation in Latin, with some common abbreviations);
- ff. 166r-171r: Latin and German remedies and charms;
- f. 171v: German legend: *Zwölf goldene Freitage*;
- ff. 172r-182r: Latin and German remedies and charms;
- ff. 182r-192: German version of the *Practica* by Bartholomaeus Salernitanus (medical treatise) with some parts in Latin (includes: ff. 180v-181r: *De pervinca*: a short Latin version comparable to the *Pervinca charm*; f.183v: left blank);
- f. 193r: Lodovici abbatis litterae ad monasteria confoederata a. 1418;
- f. 193v: blank;
- ff. 195r-196r: blank;
- ff. 197r-224: Martini Minoritae, *Chronica minor* (also known as *Flores temporum*, a. 1349 in Latin<sup>6</sup>);
- ff. 225-227: Chronik von Scheiern (in German);
- ff. 227-229: De IV ventis cardinalibus, de planetis, de terra, de signis coelestibus, de zonis (f. 228r: a picture displays the four elements of the earth);
- f. 229-231v: *De balneis*, de diatae et aliis medicinalibus.

Texts of rethorics may have been used to compose sermons and homilies. Medical texts focus on describing, treating and prevent diseases and injuries. The ***Pervinca charm*** appears in the medical section.

### 3.0. TRANSCRIPTION AND TRANSLATION OF THE *PERVINCA* CHARM

This is the first attempt to present the complete text of the *Pervinca charm*. So far, only a small portion of it has been mentioned in studies on charms. The oldest transcription of it appears in Schönbach 1900: 142-144, who prints only lines 10-23 (f. 166ra). Schönbach, however, uses a foliation system which might confuse the reader. Nevertheless, the same part of the text and the same wrong foliation has been often reproduced also by other scholars up to the present time<sup>7</sup>.

In my transcription, abbreviations are given solutions by means of italics, and italics are used for Latin words, too. Indications of page, column and, when necessary, corresponding line in the manuscript are always provided. Sentences and paragraphs are presented in a way that makes the best possible sense, but the manuscript line breaks are always indicated with a slash. An English translation of the German text has been provided. I discuss my translation choices, as well as some lesser common words, in the notes. I mainly refer to the Middle High German dictionaries of Lexer and Benecke, Müller, Zancke (BMZ).

#### f. 165va:

##### (Line 1)

##### [First part]

Benedictio super pervincaz.

*Benedictio super Pervincas.*

In den drein/ tagen swenne<sup>8</sup> der  
mon nimmer wirt<sup>9</sup>

On the third day, when the Moon  
does not grow anymore,

ein/es mitichens<sup>10</sup> oder eines  
phinthages<sup>11</sup>/

on Wednesday or on Thursday,

so es abent sy ze vesperzeit

and it should be evening, at dusk.

Lone<sup>12</sup> ain/ wenich silbers und  
goldes

Bring a bit of silver and gold,

und ain we/nig schoens brots<sup>13</sup>  
alzo dein davme si/

and a bit of white bread as big as  
your thumb,

vnd ein wenigs saltzes und

and a bit of salt and

ain wenig ge/weichtes wachses

a bit of soften wax

und ain wenich weich/prunnes<sup>14</sup>

and some Holy Water

und ginch zû dem chraute

and go to the herb

daz/ **(Line 10)** so haisset pervinca  
in der latin

teutsche/ singruen<sup>15</sup>

und la daz dar auf vallun<sup>16</sup> daz/  
du hast pracht<sup>17</sup>

und umbvoch<sup>18</sup> daz crout/mit der  
rechten

hant

und hab es wicz/

du dis beswerung sprechest dre-  
istund

**(Line 14)**

Du<sup>19</sup> haiz/zest pervinca

daz du ueber windest<sup>20</sup> allen/  
dinch

man weip phaffen und layen und/  
allen fürsten

und machest von den [veinde<sup>21</sup>]  
freonde/

**(Line 18)** mit der chreft di dir  
got gab

und geweg/est<sup>22</sup> man und weip

von den beswer ich/dich pervinca

bei dem vater und bei dem/son  
und bei dem heiligen geist

und bei der/trivalenticheit<sup>23</sup> der  
genanten

und bei der/ainige<sup>24</sup>

und der weisunge gotes

und bei/der selbin bewarnungen<sup>25</sup>

di got heit in sinem/

which is called *Pervinca* in Latin

and *Singruen* in German,

and put there what you brought

and spread it all over the herb  
with the

right hand

and make sure

you say this charm three times:

**[Second part]**

You are called *Pervinca*,

because you overcome all the  
things:

men, women, clergy and laymen  
and all the princes,

and you turn the enemies into  
friends,

with the power that God gave  
you,

and protect men and women.

Therefore I adjure you *Pervinca*,

by the Father, by the Son, and by  
the Holy Spirit,

and by the trinity of the above-  
named

and by the unity,

and by the wisdom of God,

and by the same attention,

that God had in his soul your  
world

**(Line 25)** müte<sup>26</sup> ce din welt<sup>27</sup>  
wuerde

und der selbin/güt die er dar  
nach tet<sup>28</sup>

und bei der/selben weizhait

mit der er aufmachz/den hymel  
und di erde ze tal<sup>29</sup>

und mag<sup>30</sup>/ daz mere und di tieffe  
des abgruendes/

und bei der zesamen giessung<sup>31</sup>

der vier ele/menten gechert<sup>32</sup> in  
daz werich<sup>33</sup> der werld<sup>34</sup>/

**(Line 32)** und by alliu engel

und der stieln<sup>35</sup> der her/scheft<sup>36</sup>

und den gewaltigen und bei den  
ir/dischen<sup>37</sup>

und bei den di do haizent cheru-  
bini/und seraphin

und bei der andtacht<sup>38</sup> der engel/

und bei alliu hohen vaeter

und alliu weizza/gen

und den vier und zwanzig alt  
herren/

und bei ir fideln<sup>40</sup> und herphn<sup>41</sup>

und di guldein<sup>42</sup>/ phyalas<sup>43</sup> vol des  
smaches<sup>44</sup>

daz do ist daz/ gepet der heiligen

und bei ir stimme daz/si ans  
sendet

vor der gesichte<sup>45</sup> des lew/tuges<sup>46</sup>  
gotes

was created,

and the same good he did after-  
wards,

and by the same wisdom

by which he made the sky part of  
the Earth

and originated the see and the  
depth of the abysses,

and by the outpour

by which the four elements en-  
tered the creation of the world,

and by all the angels,

and by the rank of the authority,

and by the heavenly and earthly  
powers,

and by those who are called  
Cherubim and Seraphim,

and by the devotion of the angels,

and by all the high fathers,

and all the prophecies,

and the twenty-four elder men<sup>39</sup>,

and by their lyre and harp,

and the golden vessels filled with  
fragrance:

this is the prayer of the Saints,

and by their voice that they direct

towards the pleasing face of God,

und sprechent am ende  
sanctus sanctus sanctus /  
(Line 43) dominus deus sabaoth  
pleni sunt celi et terra/

**f. 165vb:**

gloria tua osanna in excelsis  
Ich beswer dich/bi swer chrone<sup>47</sup>  
und bei der sunne und bei/dem  
mon und bei dem siben steren<sup>48</sup>  
und/bei der tugent des ewigen  
gotes  
und dem/obristen<sup>50</sup> schoepher<sup>51</sup>  
bei disen und den an/dern tugent

(Line 6)

So beswer ich dich pervinca/  
daz du habest chraft zeswelli-  
chen<sup>52</sup> dinge/  
ich welle daz du wol bringest al-  
les/ des ich ger  
und gebest mir alles daz ich/  
gewunsche  
durch die tugent des obristn/gotes  
  
der in der drivelticheit der ge/  
nanten liht und reichsent<sup>53</sup>  
*per omnia sæcula sæculorum.* /  
(Line 14) amen

La<sup>54</sup> bei dem chraut ligen daz du/  
dar zû bringest

and say at the end:  
*Sanctus Sanctus Sanctus,*  
*Dominus Deus Sabaoth. Pleni*  
*sunt celi et terra,*

*Gloria tua Osanna in excelsis.*  
I conjure you by this crown,  
and by the Sun and by the Moon  
and by the seven stars<sup>49</sup> ,  
and by the virtue of the eternal  
God,  
and the Highest Creator,  
by these and the other virtues.

So I conjure you *Pervinca*,  
because you have the power of the  
right things:  
I want you to bring me everything  
that I desire,  
and give me all I wish,  
  
through the virtue of the highest  
God,  
who reigns in the trinity of the  
above- named light,  
*per omnia sæcula sæculorum,*  
Amen.

**[Third part]**

Let what you are carrying lie  
there by the herb,

und stoz <sup>55</sup> einen stechen <sup>56</sup> da/zu	and cast there a stick.
du solt daz crout mit dem weich- prunn <sup>57</sup> /ne sprengen <sup>58</sup>	You should not sprinkle the herb with the Holy Water
ee du von danne <sup>59</sup> gest	before you go back.
Du/solst den segen dar nach des abendes/dreistund sprechen	You should say the charm three times the evening after,
so diu sunne under get/	when the sun goes down;
Zwischen tag und nacht dreis- tund	between day and night three times,
des/morgens er diu sunne auf ge	in the morning before the sun goes up,
so wach <sup>60</sup> /den zeswen fûzz und din anchûzze <sup>61</sup>	so move the right foot and your face and
und/ ging dar und spreng sei mit weichprunne/	go there and sprinkle it with the Holy Water,
und vall nider gegen der sunne und/sprich	and kneel down towards the sun and say:
wiz begrûzzet heiligen pervinca und/	Holy <i>Pervinca</i> , be welcome and
wirdest geseget pervinca	be blessed, <i>Pervinca</i> .
dar nach cher dich/gegen der sunne und sprich	Afterwards, turn towards the sun and say:
<b>(Line 26):</b>	
ysaac bapsiul/afilo anaba floch bilo ylo sandoch az/	<i>Ysaac bapsiul/afilo anaba floch bilo ylo sandoch az/</i>
achel topharie fan habet hyy barachaist/	<i>Achel topharie fan habet hyy ba- rachaist/</i>
ochebal trach flamaul moloch adach frach/	<i>Ochebal trach flamaul moloch adach frach/</i>
aiam ustram bucema adonay eley elenist/	<i>Aiam ustram bucema adonay eley elenist/</i>
gorabraxio machatan hemon segein ge/mas iesu	<i>Gorabraxio machatan hemon segein ge/mas Iesu</i>

**(Line 32):**

Herre got du hast gemachet/den  
hymel und di erde

du da sitzest und/den hymel  
gemessen hast mit der hand/

und sitzest über cherubin und  
seraphyni/

und haizzest di selbun fliegen in  
den luftin/mit michahele

und da nicht leicht chomen/ mag  
di menschleich vater

wan du got si/gemachz hast und  
geschaffen zû domine/dienst

und ain sechstier von den sel/  
ben sind werio diu flûgent und  
diowent/

und sprechent

*sanctus sanctus sanctus dominus  
deus sabaoth pleni/sunt celi et  
terra gloria tua osanna inexcelsis/*

**f. 166 ra:**

die haissent cherubin

di zwai di du/hast gesetzt in daz  
paradys

daz si be/hûten daz hohez des  
lebens

di haizzent/ seraphini.

**(Line 4)**

Du<sup>63</sup> pist es herre der da mit/  
michlen wunder tut

Lord God, you have made Heaven  
and Earth,

you, who sit there and have meas-  
ured Heaven with your hand,

and sit above the Cherubim and  
Seraphim

and order them to fly in the air  
with Michael

and there, where the human fa-  
ther cannot come easily,

You, God, have made them and  
shaped as Lord's attendants,

and six of them are those who fly  
and serve;

and say:

*Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus, Domi-  
nus Deus Sabaoth. Pleni sunt  
celi et terra. Gloria tua Osanna  
in excelsis.*

They are called Cherubim

the two that you set in Paradise,

those who protect the Highest  
Life<sup>62</sup>,

they are called Seraphim.

You are the Lord, who makes  
powerful wonders,

herre tue *durch* dein/ wunder-  
leichen

und din vil heiligen na/men tetra-  
gramaton

daz daz chruot ervalbe<sup>65</sup>/ nicht

und durch den aller höchsten na-  
men/ anefeneton

gib disem chrüt alle tugent/ und  
di chraft

**(Line 10)**

Swen<sup>67</sup> ich mit ir treut<sup>68</sup>/ und  
chüsse<sup>69</sup>

daz si in miner minne prinn/  
und also daz wachs zerfleuzzet<sup>70</sup>  
bei dez/ für

und als daz für glüwet

alzo/ müzze ir hercze ir plut ir  
leber ir/ milcze

und ellen ir lider<sup>71</sup> erhaizzen<sup>72</sup>/  
und prinnen und zefliezzen umbe  
min/ **(Line 17)** minne

und müg weder slaffen noch/  
wachen

si gedench an mich<sup>73</sup>

noch chain/ dinch sei daz mich

von ir hercen müge/ bringen oder  
benemen

so minne mich ze aller/ zeit  
meines willn

Lord, through your

wonderful and very holy name  
*Tetragrammaton*<sup>64</sup>,

make the herb not weaken

and through the highest name  
*Anefeneton*<sup>66</sup>

give this herb all the virtues and  
the power:

**[Fourth part]**

Every time I embrace and kiss  
her

so that she burns in my love,

and melts down like wax by fire

and glows like fire,

so must her heart, her blood, her  
liver, her spleen,

and all her limbs warm up,

and burn and melt down because  
of my love,

and may she neither sleep nor  
be awake

whenever she thinks about me,

there may never be anything that  
move or

take me away from her heart.

So— love me all the time at my  
own will.

vergesse si nicht sy/ müzze ym-  
mer lieb

und in meinem willin/ also ges-  
tercht sein

**(Line 23)**

Ich bitte dich ge/waltiger got  
daz du durch dines liebes/ sunes  
willen

der mit dir reichsnet<sup>74</sup>/

daz du dem chraut gebest

alle di/ chraft und sterch und  
signuft<sup>75</sup> und/ weize

swellichin<sup>76</sup> mit ir getreutz werd/  
oder gehüzzet

daz sy mit miner minne/ gevan-  
gen werd

oder swer<sup>77</sup> si under dem/ tenken<sup>78</sup>  
dawen<sup>79</sup> hab

daz er von niemer/ über winden  
werd

und swer si tung<sup>81</sup> under/ seiner  
zunge

Herre dem gib ein sprech/ in aller  
weizzhait

also daz meinen<sup>82</sup> sey

der/under im ste<sup>83</sup> daz heilige  
chräucz +/

**(Line 35)** gesegen dich + pervinca

daz du über/windest ellen dinch

May she never forget that she  
must love me forever,

and this must grow stronger ac-  
cording to my own will.

**[Fifth part]**

I beg you, Mighty God, that you,  
by the will of your beloved son

who reigns with you,

that you give the herb

all the power and the strength  
and the triumph and the wisdom,

so that if anyone is embraced or  
kissed by her

she be captured by my love,

or, whoever keeps her under  
control<sup>80</sup>,

never be overcome by anyone

and whatever be hidden under  
his tongue,

Lord, grant him a very wise  
speech

as if it means

that the Holy Cross supports him.

Bless you + *Pervinca*,

you that overcome all the things.

pervinca dich trüg <sup>84</sup> /uns herre got	<i>Pervinca</i> , Our Lord God carried you
do er gie zu <i>der</i> marter/ do er zwar erstünd do geseyz <sup>85</sup> er/ dich	as he went to the martyrdom, from which he then resurrected. He certainly seized you,
da von ist diu chraft zo starch/ daz si vertribz alles übel amen und/ ( <b>Line 42</b> ) zeuch es aus in dem namen des vaters/	therefore is your power so strong that it dispels evil. Amen. And testify it in the name of the Father
<b>f. 166rb:</b> und des sunes und des heiligen geistes/ <i>Amen</i>	and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.  <i>Amen.</i>
Ley sy auf einen alter wicz <sup>86</sup> das/ ein mezze dar ob gesungen werde und/ behalte daz chrüt zû swen <sup>87</sup> du wellest. es/ ( <b>Line 5</b> ) ist gût.	Let it lie on a white altar where a mass has been sung,  and keep the herb as long as you will. That is good.

#### 4.0. THE STRUCTURE OF THE CHARM AND ITS MOTIFS

I divide the text into five parts. The first part (4.1.) includes the beginning of the ritual and the explanation of the name *Pervinca*. In this case, Paragraphs are organised in order to single out the different elements of the ritual (silver, bread, wax and so on).

The second part (4.2.) consists of three long invocations to the *Pervinca* and of a request.

The third part (4.3.) contains the second part of the ritual, followed by gibberish words and two invocations to God.

The fourth part (4.4.) conveys the actual love charm and contains some recurrent motifs (Lovesickness, neither sleep nor be awake).

The fifth and final part (4.5.) contains new invocations to God and to the herb and the final ritual.

#### 4.1.0. FIRST PART: LINES 1-13 (F. 1665VA)

##### 4.1.1. The title of the charm

The Latin title of the charm: *Benedictio super pervincas* describes the text as a Roman Catholic benediction, that is, a blessing, not a *carmen*. We might therefore expect regular liturgical elements such as: the invocation of the divine blessing, the singing of Eucharistic hymns and prayers and we might imagine all that as a part of a religious ceremony. Even though many of those elements are indeed included in the text, the scribe or compiler of this text did not consider it a regular benediction, because it contains clear evidence of ancient non-Christian rituals and magic formulae.

The Latin word ***pervinca*** means “Periwinkle” (Old English *pervince*, Middle English *pervinkle*, *pervinke*, a loanword from Late Latin *pervinca*). The Latin name is a key word in this text, because it is related to the Latin verb *vinco*, *vincere* “to win, to overcome, to conquer, to prevail” preceded by the intensive prefix *per-*. Moreover, the sound of this word is very similar to another Latin verb: *vincio*, *vincire* “to bind, hold fast”, but also “to enchant”. The periwinkle is a trailing plant having a glossy, evergreen foliage and blue-violet flowers. Its scientific name is *Vinca minor* and it appears in other Medieval medical remedies. It is mentioned in the Old English *Nine Herbs Charm*, too. The efficacy of the charm seems to be due exactly to the overcoming power evoked by the name *Pervinca*. The importance of the name is clearly stated in the explanation given at line 10, where the Latin and its German counterpart are thoroughly discussed. Moreover, in the invocation following the description of the ritual, the performer is well aware of the power coming from the name of the plant and addresses it celebrating precisely its power of overcoming everything (see 4.2.1).

Besides our *Pervinca* charm, also other charms mention plants: the Verbena and the Mandrake (*Mandragora officinarum*) or the Gentian (*Gentiana cruciata*). Those charms may have other aims or functions, but they share some common elements with our *Pervinca* charm. See for example the following charm of the *Madelgêr*, the Gentian, written in a 15<sup>th</sup> century manuscript preserved in Gießen (Ms. 992, f. 143v):

**Madelgêr**<sup>88</sup> ist ein guot crût wrtz.

swer si graben wil der grab si an sant Johans tag ze sübenden an dem  
âbent vnd beswer si also dristund:

ich beswer dich madelgêr ain wurtz so hêr

ich mannen dich dez **gehaizz** den dir sant Petter **gehiez**

do er sînen stab dristund durch dich stiez. der dich ûsgruob vnd dich  
haim trug,

wen er mit dir vmbfauht ez sy frâw oder mân

der mûg ez **in lieb oder in minn** nimmer gelaun

in gotz namen amen wihe si mit anderen crütern.

## 4.1.2. THE RITUAL (FIRST PART)

### 4.1.2.1. When and how

In the *Pervinca charm*, the performer must take gold, silver, bread, salt, wax and Holy Water, and sprinkle them over the herb.

The ritual begins with some common magical elements. First: time precision: the action must be performed on a Wednesday or a Thursday, the third day after full moon (*In den drein tagen swenne der mon nimmer wirt*, line 1 of f. 165va), at sunset. The twilight hour is indeed a “threshold” time and therefore it is a perfect time for any magical activity.

All the gestures must be performed with the right hand (*mit der rechten hant*, line 13 of f. 165va) and the charm must be repeated three times (*dis beswerung sprechest dreistund*, line 14 of f. 165va).

Also the Dutch Love charm *Ad amorem*, written in the 14th century, contains a ritual prescribing that it must be performed on a Wednesday, the *dies Mercuri*.

This charm, which is found in a manuscript today at Erfurt, *Bibliotheca Amploniana*, Hs. Duodez 17, f. 37v-38r, also contains other recurrent motifs (such as the formula *Let her neither sleep nor stay awake* see 4.4.4).

### **Ad amorem**<sup>89</sup>.

In *die mercurij* vel nocte visu perqueras Venerem, teutonice Avonsterre, et illam carminabis sic pro tribus vicibus, et certe appropinquabit tibi voluntas tua:

Hele, vrouwe Avonsterre, Hele, vrouwe lieve,

langhe hebbic u gesocht, nu hebbic u vonden.  
nu manic u, vrouwe, wel diere, dat ghi mi lonet mine stont.  
Ic mane u bi den banne, ende bi den goeden sente Janne, [...]  
Schynt hem in tsine oren, schynt hem uut ten ogen,  
benemt hem allen lust van wive, sonder alleene van mine live,  
schynt hem onder zine voete ende wectene zo onzoete,  
**dat hi en mach slapen, no waken, no eten, no drinken,**  
**hi en moet om mi dinken!**  
ende comen to mi, ende doen dat mi lief zy  
ende niet dat mi leet zy. In Gods namen, Amen.

#### 4.1.2.2. Silver and Gold

Silver and gold (*ain wenich silbers und goldes*, line 5 of f. 165va) may be seen as precious gifts for God who gives the herb its magic power.

These elements can likewise be found in the so-called German Verbena charms, which are multi-purpose charms (*fur manic dinch gut*), and contain a ritual equivalent to the *Pervinca charm*. See for example the following Verbena charm of the 14<sup>th</sup> century preserved in Breslau<sup>90</sup>:

Ein krut heizet **uerbena**, daz ist fur manic dinch gut vnde nutze. [...]  
Der di selben wurtz graben will, der sal des abendes gen dar di wurtz stet  
vnde sal di vmbe rizen mit **gold** oder **silber** vnde **sal** da vber sprechen  
ein pater noster vnde Credo, vnde spreche: Ich gebiete dir edele wurtz  
verbena [...].

#### 4.1.2.3. Bread

The performer of the *Pervinca charm* needs, together with silver and gold, a piece of white bread as big as his thumb (*ain wenig schoens brots alzo dein davme ist*, line 6 of f. 165va). This part of the text has an analogue in an ancient Greek love spell (*Greek magical papyrus*) where some crumbs of bread must be brought to a gladiator field or somewhere where blood was shed, in order to ask heroes and gladiators for help. In this text, the aim of bringing gifts is a clear act of feeding supernatural powers, who, in return, should help holding control over a girl's mind. This Greek love charm likewise mentions the pain and the torture of sleepless eyes (see 4.4.4.).

**PGM (*Papyri Graecae Magicae*) IV 1390-1495<sup>91</sup>**

**Love spell of attraction performed with the help of heroes or**

**gladiators or those who have died a violent death.**

Leave a **little of the bread** which you eat; break it up and form it into seven bite-size pieces. And go to where heroes and gladiators and those who have died a violent death were slain. Say the spell to the pieces of bread and throw them. And pick up some polluted dirt from the place where you perform the ritual and throw it inside the house of the woman whom you desire, go on home and go to sleep.

The spell which is said upon the pieces of bread is this:

To Moirai, Destinies, Malignities,

To Famine, Jealousy, to those who died

Untimely deaths and those dead violently,

**I'm sending food:** [...] so that you, O luckless heroes

Who are confined there in the NN place,

May bring success to him who is beset

With torments. [...]

Unlucky heroes, luckless heroines,

Who in this place, who on this day, who in

This hour, who in coffins of myrtlewood, Give heed to me and rouse her, NN, on This night and from her eyes **remove sweet sleep**,

And cause her wretched care and fearful pain,

Cause her to follow after my footsteps,

And for my will give her a willingness

Until she does what I command of her. [...] come today, Moirai and

Destiny; accomplish the purpose with the help of the love spell of attraction, that you may **attract to me her**, NN whose mother is NN, to me NN, whose mother is NN [...]

#### 4.1.2.4. Salt

A little bit of salt (*ein wenig saltzes*, line 7 of f. 165va) is also needed. Salt might be a symbol of purification or might be considered, like the pieces of bread in the previous section, food for God.

Salt is kind of universal tool in magic: its use is widely distributed in almost every ritual in many cultures<sup>92</sup>.

#### 4.1.2.5. Wax

Wax is likewise a very common tool in ancient magical rituals.

In the *Pervinca charm*, the performer must bring soft wax (*ein wenich ge-weichtes wachses*, line 8 of f. 165va) and the other ingredients to the herb and leave it there.

The use of soft wax in the ritual might derive from Mediterranean pre-Christian magic practices like the one described in another *Greek love spell*, where wax or clay are used to create a human shape that must be pierced with thirteen needles. The Greek charm is conceived and structured as a curse: the girl should suffer pain if she does not fall in love. As we shall see, the text also contains the formula *Let her neither eat nor drink* (see 4.4.4.).

In the *Pervinca charm*, wax seems to have lost the original (negative) connotation: it appears again in the final part of the text, where it is used as a symbol of burning passion. See for example the following Greek love spell in PGM.

#### **PGM IV 296-466<sup>93</sup>**

##### **Wondrous spell for binding a lover:**

Take **wax** [or clay] from a potter's wheel and make two figures, a male and a female. [...] And take thirteen copper needles and stick 1 in the brain while saying, "I am piercing your brain, NN" [...] And take a lead tablet and write the same spell and recite it. And tie the lead leaf to the figures with thread from the loom after making 365 knots while saying as you have learned, "ABRASAX, hold her fast!" You place it, as the sun is setting, beside the grave of one who has died untimely or violently, [...]

Let her be in love with me, NN whom she, NN bore. Let her not be had in a promiscuous way, let her not be had in her ass, nor let her do anything with another man for pleasure, just with me alone, NN, so that she, NN, be unable either to **drink or eat**, that she not be contented, not be strong, not have peace of mind, that she, NN, **not find sleep** without me, NN, [...] attract her, bind her, NN, filled with love, desire and yearning [...]

#### **4.1.2.6. Holy Water**

Water is the symbol of purification well before Christianity.

In the *Pervinca charm*, Holy Water (*ain wenich weichtes prunes*, line 9 of f. 165va) is one of the gifts that the performer must bring to the plant. It closes the first part of the ritual and, after the invocations, it reappears in the second part, when the performer must sprinkle the herb with Holy Water according to an exact set of actions (see 4.3.1.).

#### 4.2.0. SECOND PART: FROM LINE 14 OF F. 1665VA TO LINE 14 OF F. 165VB

##### 4.2.1. Invocation and conjuration of the herb (first part)

As we have seen, the ritual ends mentioning the Latin and the German name of the *Pervinca* (*haisset pervinca in der latin teutsche sigruen*, line 10 of 165va).

After this, a very long invocation begins. This invocation starts with an interpretation of the Latin name (*Du haizzest pervinca daz du ueberwindest*, line 14 of f. 165va). According to this explanation (see 4.1.1.), the *Pervinca* is able to overcome all the things and win over every kind of person: *man, weip, phaffen, layen, fürsten* (line 16 of f. 165va). The *Pervinca* can even turn enemies into friends<sup>94</sup>.

This power was given to the herb by God himself (*mit der chreft di dir got gab*, line 18 of f. 165va) in order to protect mankind (*gewegest man und weip*, line 19 of f. 165va). God showed thus the same wisdom (*bei der selben wizhait*, line 27 of f. 165va) that he used as he created the world. We are then informed of the things that God created (*hymel, erde, mere, tieffe des abgruendes*) with a special attention to the four elements, whose flowing gave start to the creation itself (*vier elementen gechert in daz werich der werld*, line 31 of f. 165va).

After listing what God created on Earth, the performer invokes the power of Heaven and of its creatures, i.e. the angels (*by alliun engel*, line 32 of f. 165va), the Cherubim, the Seraphim (*bei den di do haizzent cherubini und seraphin und bei der andtacht der engel*, line 34 of f. 165va), the twenty-four elder men (*den vier und zwanzig alt herren*, line 37 of f. 165va) and their instruments (*bei ir fideln und herphn*, line 38 of f. 165va): all of them are called to give strength to the plant. The characters evoked have all biblical origin: Seraphim and Cherubim, from the Apocalypse, are in the highest place. Seraphs or Seraphim, according to the prophet Isaiah, stand above the Throne of God. A Seraph has six wings, two of them cover his face, two his feet, and two are used to fly. The Seraphim are regarded as an order of angels distinguished for fervent zeal and religious ardour and are hence associated with the image of fire. Their name comes in fact from the Semitic root *šrp*, which means “burn”. As we shall see, the symbol of fire plays a very important role in this charm (see 4.4.2.).

Fire, ardour and heat are likewise connected to the idea of brightness, which may suggest the ability of enlightening others, of giving spiritual guidance. The act of instructing might even include the intention of convincing someone to do something against his will (see 4.4.5.).

#### 4.2.2. INVOCATION AND CONJURATION OF THE HERB (SECOND PART)

The performer addresses directly the herb (*Ich beswer dich bi swer chrone*, line 1 of f. 165vb) and evokes again the divine act of the creation. The performer mainly invokes celestial bodies (*bei der sunne und bei dem mon und bei dem siben steren*, line 2 of f. 165vb) and the Creator itself, reaching thus the top of the universe.

#### 4.2.3. INVOCATION, CONJURATION OF THE HERB (THIRD PART) AND REQUEST

This is the final invocation of the herb (*So beswer ich dich pervinca*, line 6 of f. 165vb). What follows is a kind of summary of all its virtues and includes a clear order: since God gave you the power, now I want you to fulfil all my wishes (*ich welle daz du wol bringest alles des ich ger*, line 8 of f. 165vb).

Let me mention at this point, before continuing with our German *Pervinca charm*, a Latin *Pervinca charm*, which shares a lot of elements with ours (gold, silver, bread, salt, sunrise, images of fire and celestial bodies, and so on).

The text is written in a paper manuscript of the 15<sup>th</sup> century preserved in London (British Library), Ms. Sloane 962, at f. 17v:

Hic est **de pervinca**<sup>95</sup>

In prima luna cum ad uesperem stit accipe parum **auri** et aliquautulum **argenti** et **crustam panis** tritaei ad mensuram digiti et parum **salis** addis et omnia subpone et dimitte iacere sub radice pervince et veniens ad eam ante ortum solis dicens: In nomine patris et filii et spiritus sancti amen. O **pervinca**, patrem et matrem occidisti, Romam ambulasti pacatum delesti et portas intrasti per hostium exivisti. Propter hoc tibi dico, ut vincas omnes homines, clericos et laycos, potestates masculinas, et feminias, et cum veniam ad pallacium omnes sint mihi placiti, qui mihi nocere volunt; quamdiu te mecum portauero **semper me amant** omnes homines et femine ante et retro. **Vincas** etiam omnes **inimicos** meos mihi mala volentibus vincasque potestates masculinas et femininas et omnes gentes et totam orbem terrarum. Vinca ideodicis et omnes karacteres, vincas et omnes homines, viros et mulieres, malum indicentes et malum dominum et malam dominam.

Super ripam riue sorores sedebant pervincam manibus tenebant car-

mina reuoluebant sed nesciebant pre mala domina, quam habebant. Tunc supervenit sancta maria et dixit: super ripam riui tres sorores sedent. Respondit una<sup>96</sup>: pervincam sendens (l. sedentes) manibus tenemus carminare eam nescimus. Tunc sancta maria respiciens videt ihesum stantem et dixit: Ihesus fili karissime, hanc pervincam mihi carmina. Ihesus xpus ut audivit, dextera sua manu benedixit, dextero suo pede calcavit, dextera sua manu signavit, dextera sua manu benedixit, dextero pede calcavit et dixit: **pervinca** benedicta sis super omnes herbas, sis hoc carmine carminata, ut ad omnes res faciendas sis bona. Si quis te in nomine meo portauerit, sit securus in omnibus locis ubicumque ambulauerit. In nomine patris et filii et spiritus sancti domini nostri ihn xpi adiuro te herba vulgariter appellata **pervinca** quam in manu mea teneo eo quod cuncta vincas per deum patrem omnipotentem, qui pro salute generis humani descendit de celo et natus ex maria virgine passus sub poncio pylato cru. mor. et se. desce. ad inf. tertia die res. a mor. asce. ad celos. se. ad dex, dei patris om. inde ven. et iudi. vivas et mor. 7 seculum p. igne [...] invoco te **pervinca** per dei tonitrua necnon per coruscationes et fulgora. Adiuro te per septem candelabra, quae in suis luminaribus ante altare dei aureum sunt lucencia [...] Coniuro te per patrem et filium et spiritum sanctum et per sanctam mariam matrem dni ni Jhu xpi per celum et terram et herbas et flores et per **lucernas solis et lune** et per aquas turricutes et per **focas ardentes** et per lignum verum et per omnes creaturas et per omnes papas romanos et per cunctos episcopos et abbates et per cunctas viduas et virgines et per cunctas undas maris et per vii. dormientes.

Coniuro te per **maxima luminaria** celi et terrae die et nocte lucencia et per claritatem celi et per cuncta cetera sydera et per cuncta terrena dei deo plena, que per terram sunt serpentia et per omnia maria et per cuncta piscium genera, quae in maribus omnibus sunt natantia, et per quatuor elementa scilicet aquam, terram, aerem, ignem, et per omnia terrestria et infernalia [...] Coniuro te per nomen dei sanctissimum, quod est compositum hys iiiior a. g. l. a. Coniuro te per sanctum, qui hodie celebratur per universum mundum, ut qualemcunque puellam sive feminam te manu mea habens tetigero illico **in amore meo ardeat inextinguabiliter nec praeter me aliquem diligit nec concupiscat**. Etiam quamdiu te super me habuero omnes inimicos meos prevaleam et potentes devincam et quasi perterriti omnes omnes voluntatem meam faciant et impleant. Et si te mecum habuero coram aliquo episcopo siue rege aut alio principe sive magnate et

etiam quocunque homine clerico uel muliere sive viro sim illis placens. Et si aliquod negotium sive beneficium uel experimentum et aliquod experiri [?], statim ardentis sint tam homines quam spiritus ad illum perficiendum pro mea voluntate; et quamdiu te super me habeam non mihi arasci valeant sed semper me ament et quidcunque agavi sit illis placens et si aliquis uel aliqua mea licentia te gerat sive super se habeat voluntatem sam tamquam meam perficiat. Et si aliquis uel aliqua te furatus fuerit, non illi proficias sed semper inpedias. **pervinca nomen omne imple vincas** et vim habeas contra omnia illa, pro quibus te invocavi et coniu ravi per virtutem et potestatem domini nr ihu xpi qui in trinitate vnus regnas in secula seculorum amen. pr. nr. Credo. Deinde amputa superiorem ramum omni auro quod ibi tenes et repone in ceram benedictam et feras tecum honeste.

#### **4.3.0. THIRD PART: FROM LINE 14 OF. F. 165VB TO LINE 10 OF F. 166RA**

##### **4.3.1. Ritual (second part)**

After the invocations and adjurations, which form the second part of the ritual, the performer must bring all the ingredients and the precious tools to the herb and leave them there (*La bei dem chraut ligen daz du dar zuo bringest*, line 14 of f. 165vb). He must recite the charm three times before sunrise (*zwischen tag und nacht dreistund*, line 19 of f. 165vb) and, moving towards the sun starting with his right foot, he must sprinkle it with Holy Water. This part of the ritual deals with already mentioned elements, hence, all these actions must be performed in the “threshold hours” (*so diu sunne under get*: sunset, *er diu sunne auf ge*: sunrise) facing the sun (*gegen der sunne*, line 25 of f. 165vb). Again, an image of light, of brightness, of fire.

##### **4.3.2. MAGIC NONSENSE**

Once the performer has accomplished the ritual and has repeated the charm three times, he must also repeat a set of words and names (*Ysaac bapsiul a filo anaba floch bilo ylo*, lines 26-32 of f. 165vb). This particular sequence, also known as *vores magicae*, is in fact a sequence of words having no relation to

the language of the text in which they appear. And even if the modern linguist can trace some of them back to Greek or Hebrew, their importance in the charm lies not in their actual meaning, but in their supposed magical power<sup>97</sup>.

The use of gibberish formulas was very common in ancient Greek and Latin charms, but it is seldom used in Old High German charms. The number of gibberish formulas increases only after the 13<sup>th</sup> century, when also the number and the types of charms transcribed in manuscripts increases.

As Passalis (2012) points out, nonsense or pseudo-nonsense words are very common in charms and are usually mixed with intelligible speech. In the *Pervinca charm* we might recognise some names such as *Ysaac*, *Adonay*, *Eloy*, *Iesu*, but the other words are probably distorted names of some ancient deity.

### **4.3.3. INVOCATION OF GOD (FIRST PART)**

The performer talks directly to God. He repeats the importance of the creation of Heaven, (*herre got du hast gemachet den hymel*, line 32 of f. 165vb), of Earth, and of all the angels, repeating the importance of the role of the Seraphim and Cherubim who protect the Throne of God by flying around it singing *Sanctus Sanctus Sanctus*.

### **4.3.4. INVOCATION OF GOD (SECOND PART)**

One more invocation (*Du pist es herre der da mit michlen wunder tut*, line 4 of f. 166ra) reinforces the power and the virtues of the herb (*alle tugent und di chraft*, line 9 of f. 166ra) through the power of all the names of God (*Tetragrammaton*, line 7 of f. 166ra; *Anefeneton*, line 9 of f. 166ra).

### **4.4.0. FOURTH PART: FROM LINE 10 TO LINE 23 OF F. 166RA**

#### **4.4.1. Love charm**

This small portion of text (from line 10 to line 23 of f. 166ra) is the only one of the *Pervinca charm* that has been repeatedly published and is hence well known. This section has been often referred to because it contains a set of motifs comparable with other love charms in different times, languages and cultures<sup>98</sup>.

The segment contains the core of the whole ritual: so far the performer has collected and prepared his tools; the creation, the creatures and the Creator gave power to them: proper and actual magic must happen now. The performer summons the angels of God, the Seraphim as main symbol of fire and of the glowing glory of God.

A vivid and figurative language represents here objects, actions and ideas related to fire. The performer speaks in the first person now and begins demanding that every time he hugs and kisses the girl (*Swer ich mit ir treut und chüsse*, line 10 of f. 166ra), she be enflamed with passion (*daz si in miner minne prinn*, line 11 of f. 166ra).

The idea that the girl should burn because of love evokes indeed an impressive erotic imagery. We could argue that a physical reaction is expected, not only a sentimental one.

If our charm had been a literary text, we would speak of the power of love words as fictional device. If this text had been a love poem or a love letter, we could have compared it, for example, to the effect of Cyrano's words on Roxana. Nonetheless, our text also has other interpretations.

#### 4.4.2. The formula of the melting wax

The performer repeats what he has already said: the girl should burn of love after every kiss and hug. But he now adds a set of examples in which the image of fire becomes more vivid and realistic. The performer demands that the girl must melt down like wax in the fire (*und also daz wachs zerfluezzet bei dez fuor*, line 12 of f. 166ra).

The Russian scholar Andrej Toporkov studied the dissemination of love charms in Russia and compared them to similar charms in other cultures and languages. He argues that the formula “as the wax melts, let N. melt” was known to almost all Mediterranean cultures (Hittite, Assyrian, Aramaic and ancient Greek) since the 2d millennium B.C.<sup>99</sup>.

At that time, the formula was used in oaths and maledictions and it was usually followed by a ritual with wax figures (see the already mentioned Greek papyrus too, above at 4.1.2.5.).

#### 4.4.3. Lovesickness

The performer adds more details to the fire imagery. The comparison between the effect of wax as it comes close to fire and the body of the girl as she approaches the man includes now a detailed list of all the organs involved in the

action. It is a very simple comparison: as fire burns, her heart, her blood, her liver, her spleen and all her limbs must take fire (*als das fuor glüwet also müzze ir hercze, ir plut, ir leber it milcze und ellen ir lider erhaizzen* line 13 of f. 166ra). They all must burn and melt because of the performer's love (*und prinnen und zefliezzen umbe min mine*, line 16 of f. 166ra).

This list of organs finds striking analogues in more than a medical or verbal remedy to cure diseases or wounds: a clear mention of every part of the body involved in the cure or in the ritual is extremely important to make sure that the cure effectively works. In this case, the list resembles the description of the symptoms of a severe illness which has been known for centuries as "Love-sickness", and as such it is described and cured. 'To fall in love' has been seen parallel to 'to fall sick' and this particular illness could bring men and women to insanity. That is why lovesickness is listed together with other severe illnesses in many medical treatises of the Middle Ages<sup>100</sup>.

This formula, however, as we have already seen, is based on ancient curses and maledictions. The pains are the punishment for the one who resists the love charm. The burning of the organs is not considered as a symbol of erotic and passion, but a real and painful torture, as it appears in the Greek malediction on lead tablets. See for example the curse on the lover in:

**PGM II, 16 (1st cent. AD):**

may his heart burn, melt and his blood dry if he does not fulfil my love wish<sup>101</sup>.

The German charm tradition knows this kind of arranging the organs in a sort of list, see for example a love charm written in a 15<sup>th</sup> century manuscript preserved in Heidelberg, (Codex Palatinum germanicum 691, f. 79v)<sup>102</sup>:

**Biß gotwilkum, du liebeu abentsun!** du scheinst mir in meins herzen wund, du scheinst mir an ir bett und an irn arm und an iren atom warm und an ir trüb,  
das ich ir zum herzen ziech **durch ir lungen und durch ir leber, durch ir flayisch und ir plut:** dy sey mir fur all man gut, und fur mein lib müßestu versegnot sein!  
[...]

The following text, dating to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, is contained in a manuscript preserved in Stuttgart, (Württembergische Landesbibliothek, cod. med. et phys. 4°, nr. 29, f. 8v) and it shares some common elements with our ritual: the use of salt, the sunrise, the fire. The herb is here the (stinging) nettle and it must be thrown in burning ashes at the end, in order to trigger the simile with the heart of the beloved (*also machent zerbrinnen in hertzen vnd in sinnen*):

Item du solt gan an ainem fritag fruo **so die sunn vf gat** zuo ainer **nesel** vnd besich die nesel in dem nam der du hold bist **vnd bespreng die nesel mit saltz** vnd gang dar nach zuo aubent so die sunn vnder gat so gang wider dar zuo vnd grabe die nesel us gancz mit der wurcz vnd **leg sy in daz für in die haisen eschen** vnd sprich dise wort: oel vnd amel vnd ingimm ich beswer üch vnd gebüt üch **als diese nesel hie brinnet** in der haisen eschen das ir also machent **zerbrinnen in hertzen vnd in sinnen** das jr nimer ruo mogent gewinnen vnd haben bis das sie drinnen wil laun (so) bringen in der minnen<sup>103</sup>.

Another 15<sup>th</sup> century German love charm (Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Mondsee Perg. Cod. 1953, f. 65v, 66r) uses a variation of this formula<sup>104</sup>:

Perunder pawun, ich vmbvach dich, Sensucht, ich sach dich,  
**in ir fleisch vnd in ir pain**, Sensucht, ich sent dich  
dem lieb N. haim in irn sin vnd irn mût, in ir **fleisch** v[nd] in ir **plût**  
un[d] m[û]z dem [lieb] N. nach mir ha[im]  
alz we nach mir sein, als ir m[û]tter waz [...]

#### 4.4.4. Sleep and stay awake

The formula is connected to the previous one. The performer wishes that the girl should not sleep nor be awake if she does not think about him (*und müg weder slaffen noch wachen si gedench an mich*, line 17 of f.166ra).

The *topos* is very frequent in love charms<sup>105</sup> and it has a very old origin. It has been used for centuries (combined with the previous motif of the burning organs) to convey the symptoms of insanity caused by love. Thus, Hildegard of Bingen recommends the use of specific herbs in order to avoid love insanity<sup>106</sup>.

Toporkov<sup>107</sup> and other scholars thoroughly analysed the use of this peculiar formula and its evolution from the Greek medical papyri to the late Medieval charms in different cultures and languages. This motif is often combined with the formula: *Let her neither eat nor drink*, which has been described by Jonathan Roper<sup>108</sup>.

Compare this part also to the already mentioned charms at 4.2.1.1, 4.1.2.3., 4.1.2.5.

#### 4.4.5. Command

The performer addresses directly the woman and orders her: “love me forever at my own will, as long as I want” (*so minne mich ze aller zeit menes willin*, line

20 of f. 166ra). Here, the use of speech act is of remarkable efficacy. Nonetheless, the idea is repeated once again: she should never forget that she must love forever (*vergesse si nicht sy müzze ymmer lieb*, line 21 of f. 166ra).

Unlike the previous passages, there is a specific attention not only to the passion and the physical reactions to it, but to the psychological and emotional response.

The last part of the ritual has lesser to do with love and romantic. It is a sort of ill use of the power of words in order to gain mental power over the girl. Love and to be loved are seen by the performer as power devices, the power to force the girl do something against her own will, the power of restricting the freedom of her mind, the power of preventing her to fall in love with someone else.

#### **4.5.0. FINAL PART: FROM LINE 23 F. 166RA TO LINE 5 OF F. 166RB**

##### **4.5.1. Invocation of God (third part)**

The performer invokes God (*Ich bitte dich gewaltigen got*, line 23 of f. 166ra) and focuses this time to the exact goal of this charm: he wishes that every time he is with her, she is fight to him by the force of his love (*daz sy mit miner minne gavangen werd*, line 30 of f. 166ra). She should not desire anyone, even if she had an interest in another man. Even if she was kissed by someone (*swellichin mit ir getreutz werd oder geschüzzet*, line 28 of f. 166ra), still, she must be captured by his love (*daz sy mit miner mine gevangen werd*, line 30 of f. 166ra).

The performer attempts to gain control. He is clearly more interested in the psychological constriction (*gevangen*) over her rather than in a love feeling. To this end, the immense power of Almighty God is invoked.

##### **4.5.2. Invocation of the herb (fourth part)**

The final invocation summarizes what was asked and stated before: the herb is called *Pervinca* and the name means “to win” (*gesegen dich pervinca daz du überwindest ellen dinch*, from line 35 to line 1 of f. 166rb). We know that the power of the *Pervinca* was enhanced by the Lord who carried the plant as he was going to his sacrifice (*dich truog uns here got do er gie zu der marter*, line 36 of f. 166ra), and its power was made even greater (*da von ist diu chraft zo strarch*, line 39 of f. 166ra).

### 4.5.3. Final Ritual

The final ritual must be performed on an altar.

The precision of the description is once again very striking: the altar must be white (*auf einen alter wicz*, line 2 of f. 166rb) and it must have been recently used for the regular Roman Catholic office (*das ein mezze dar ob gesungen werde*, line 3).

We are informed that the ritual is now finished by the final remark “this is good“, a formul that (*Es ist guot*, line 5): is often used at the end of Medieval medical remedies and recipes: that’s it.

## 5.0. CONCLUSION

The *Pervinca charm* may be considered a *Sammelsegen*, i.e. the result of a collection of magical themes and motifs from different times and places, often of non-Christian origin. Whereas this characteristic is shared by other Medieval charms, one cannot fail to notice that the compiler of the *Pervinca charm* works with remarkable skill and consistency in assembling and presenting his magical text. To enhance the magical power of the *Pervinca* herb, elements of distinctive non-Christian tradition are included in a framework which is largely based on conventional Christian symbols ensuring that the *Pervinca* herb effectively finds its way to the Lord’s table.

Not surprisingly, the charm is based on an act of faith in the power of the words. Indeed, the *Pervinca* herb derives its power precisely from its name. Hence the first, very elaborate invocation is centred on the origin of the *Pervinca* name: the very power of the herb comes from God because it was God Himself who gave the name to it. The performer is required to recall the circumstances of this event: he must state when this happened, that is at the very beginning of time, during the process of Creation, when God created the world and named each creature.

A direct connection between the *Pervinca* herb and Heaven is thus established, moving from the things which occupy the lowest position in the order of Creation to those placed in the higher ranks of Universe. In the course of this description, the compiler makes sure that a number of supernatural powers be listed according to their importance to further enhance the power of the herb. Even the traditional magical gibberish, typical of this kind of charm, finds its proper place in this setting: the drivel is presented as a list containing the unspeakable names of God, which the performer must utter in order to properly increase the power of the herb.

As far as the aim of the charm is concerned, i.e. controlling a woman's body and mind, a climax can be observed in the *Pervinca Charm*. At first, the performer appeals to the power of the *Pervinca* to make sure that the woman he likes burn in passion for him: he wants that she melts down like wax by fire. He asks for physical control over her. But then, again, the charm moves to a higher level: the performer does not content himself with the mere control on the woman's body, but he wants control over her mind. She must accept his unlimited power over her soul and body forever. She is captured and locked in the lover's love cage helplessly.

A series of themes, motifs, biblical passages and magical instruments are arranged here in order of increasing intensity. The compiler shows a notable skill in combining very different magical elements into a consistent textual frame based on the equation of the Pervinca herb and the Almighty God. Like God, Pervinca can do everything, as love does.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> For further references on German charms see: Cianci 2004, Cianci 2013, Franz 1960, Holzmann 2001, Schulz 2003.
- <sup>2</sup> *The Book of Settlements*, see Scovazzi 1961: 169-170, see also Mitchell 2011: 67.
- <sup>3</sup> The digitized manuscript is available at: <http://daten.digital-sammlungen.de/~db/0009/bsb00095997/images/index.html?id=00095997&groesser=&fip=eayayztssdaszytswwyztseayafsdren&no=4&seite=1>.
- <sup>4</sup> <http://www.handschriftencensus.de/6376>.
- <sup>5</sup> <http://daten.digital-sammlungen.de/~db/bsb00008267/images/index.html?fip=193.174.98.30&seite=142&pdfseitex=>.
- <sup>6</sup> The *Flores temporum* was a world chronicle compendium, used for preparing homilies and sermons. It was one of the most well known and widely spread chronicles of the Middle Ages in Southern Germany.
- <sup>7</sup> Ernst 2011: 164, Mertens 1995: 54, Ruff 2003: 210.
- <sup>8</sup> *swenne, wenne, swanne, swan* (conj.) “when, whenever, if” (BMZ 3: 503-504).
- <sup>9</sup> *wirde, wart, wurden, worden* (sv.) “to turn, to become” (BMZ 2: 728-732).
- <sup>10</sup> *mideche, mittewoche, mitache, mittiche, mitiche* “Wednesday” (Lexer 1: 2191).
- <sup>11</sup> *phinztag, pfingstag* “Thursday” (Lexer 2: 247), or *phingesttag, phingestac, pfingstac* “Pentecost”.
- <sup>12</sup> Probably imperative of *lônen* (wv.) “to give, bring” (BMZ 1: 1042, Lexer 1: 1953).

- <sup>13</sup> *schoenes brot* “white bread” (BMZ 2: 191, Lexer 2: 768).
- <sup>14</sup> *wîch-brunne, wîh-brunne, weichbrunne, weichprunne* (m.) “Holy water” (Lexer 3: 817).
- <sup>15</sup> *singrüene, singruen* (f.) “periwinkle”, (adj.) “evergreen” (BMZ 1: 580, Lexer 2: 931), OHG *singruona* (f.), Lat. *pervinca*.
- <sup>16</sup> *vallen* (sv.) “to fall” (BMZ 3: 217, Lexer 3: 11).
- <sup>17</sup> Past of *bringen, brâhte, brâhten, brâht* (sv.) “to bring” (BMZ 1: 248, Lexer 1: 353).
- <sup>18</sup> *umbevâhen* (sv.) “to spread, diffuse” (BMZ 3: 203, Lexer 2: 1726).
- <sup>19</sup> <D> rubricated.
- <sup>20</sup> *überwinden* (sv.) “to win, to overcome, to conquer, to prevail” (Lexer 2: 1680).
- <sup>21</sup> written upon <den>.
- <sup>22</sup> *gewëgen* (sv.) “to estimate, regard; to protect” (BMZ 3: 634, Lexer 1: 980).
- <sup>23</sup> *drîvaltecheit* (f.) “trinity” (BMZ 3: 233, Lexer 1: 467).
- <sup>24</sup> *einunge* “unity” (BMZ 1: 423, Lexer 1: 529).
- <sup>25</sup> *bewarnunge* “attention, care” (Lexer 1: 252).
- <sup>26</sup> *muot* (m.) “soul, mood, feelings” (BMZ 2: 242, Lexer 1: 224).
- <sup>27</sup> *wërlt* (f.) “world” (Lexer 3: 272).
- <sup>28</sup> Past of *tuon* (v.) “to do, make” (Lexer 2: 1575).
- <sup>29</sup> *tal* (n.) “valley”, *ze tal* “downwards” (Lexer 2: 1397).
- <sup>30</sup> *mac* (BMZ 2: 3).
- <sup>31</sup> *gieszung* (f.) “outpouring, flowing” (Grimm 7: 7422).
- <sup>32</sup> Past of *kêre* (wv.) “to turn” (BMZ 1: 796).
- <sup>33</sup> *wërc* (n.) “work, creation” (BMZ 3: 586).
- <sup>34</sup> *wërlt* (f.) “world” (BMZ 2: 577).
- <sup>35</sup> *stal* (n.) “place, position, home, setting” (BMZ 2: 558, Lexer 2: 1130), might also be read as *stieln* or *sitelin*.
- <sup>36</sup> *hêrschaft* (f.) “lordship, authority” (Lexer 1: 1261).
- <sup>37</sup> *irdisch, irdesch* (adj.) “earthly, terrene” (BMZ 1: 442, Lexer 1: 1449).
- <sup>38</sup> *andâht* (f./m.) “devotion” (Lexer 1: 54).
- <sup>39</sup> According to the Apocalypse of John (Book of Revelation), twenty-four elder men sit on twenty-four thrones around the Throne of God. In Medieval imagery, they are often represented around four Seraphim.

- <sup>40</sup> *videle* (f.) “lyre” (BMZ 3: 305).
- <sup>41</sup> *harpfe, herpfe, harfe* (f.) “harp” (BMZ 1: 636).
- <sup>42</sup> *guldîn* (adj.) “golden” (BMZ 3: 553).
- <sup>43</sup> *phiole, viole* (f.) “ampulla, vessel, vial” (Lexer 3: 361, Grimm 13: 1833).
- <sup>44</sup> *smac, smache* (m.) “smell, odor, fragrance, taste” (Lexer 2: 994).
- <sup>45</sup> *gesiht* (f.) “face, sight, vision” (BMZ 2: 2).
- <sup>46</sup> *lâwes, lew* (adj.) “mild”, *lawe tugend* (Lexer 1: 1806).
- <sup>47</sup> *krône, krôn, krân* (f.) “crown” (BMZ 1: 886, Lexer 1: 1746).
- <sup>48</sup> *stërne, stërre* (m.) “star”, *sibenstërn* “Pleiades” (BMZ 2: 621, Lexer 2: 1182).
- <sup>49</sup> The Pleiades.
- <sup>50</sup> Superlative form of *obere* (adj.) “upper”, *oberist, oberôst, oberst* (BMZ 2: 428, Lexer 2: 132).
- <sup>51</sup> *schephære, schepfære* (m.) “creator” (Lexer 2: 705).
- <sup>52</sup> *willec* (adj.) “willing, inclined” (BMZ 3: 663).
- <sup>53</sup> *rîchesen, rîchsen* (wv.) “to reign, dominate” (Lexer 2: 419).
- <sup>54</sup> Imperative form of *lâzen* “to let” (BMZ 1: 944, Lexer 1: 1843).
- <sup>55</sup> *stôzen, stâzen* (sv.) “to push, put, cast” (BMZ 2: 665, Lexer 2: 1218).
- <sup>56</sup> *stecke* (m.) “stick, stock” (BMZ 2: 625).
- <sup>57</sup> *wîch-brunne, wîh-brunne, weichbrunne, weichprunne* (m.) “Holy water” (Lexer 3: 817).
- <sup>58</sup> *sprengen* (wv.) “sprinkle, asperse” (BMZ 2: 544, Lexer 2: 1115).
- <sup>59</sup> *danne* (adv.) (Lexer 1: 409).
- <sup>60</sup> *wagen*, (wv.) “to move, shake” (BMZ 3: 641, Lexer 3: 636).
- <sup>61</sup> *antlütte, antlütze* (n.) “face” (BMZ 1: 1060).
- <sup>62</sup> In Christianity, the six-winged angels Seraphim (or Seraphs) protect the Throne of God by flying around it and singing “Holy, Holy, Holy”. According to Medieval belief, the four Seraphim create indeed a connection between God and men.
- <sup>63</sup> Ernst 2011, Mertens 1995: 54, Ruff 2003: 210.
- <sup>64</sup> “Tetragrammaton” refers to the four letters name of God YHWH.
- <sup>65</sup> *erwalwe* (wv.) “become livid, to weaken” (BMZ 3: 213).
- <sup>66</sup> “Anefeneton”, “anaphenaton, anaphaxeton” refer to God, too.

- <sup>67</sup> See also the transcription in Braekman 1997: 421-22 and Schum 1887.
- <sup>68</sup> *triute, trouten* (wv.) “to love, make love, hug” (BMZ 3: 112).
- <sup>69</sup> *küssen* (wv.) “to kiss” (BMZ 1: 918).
- <sup>70</sup> *zerwliezen* (sv.) “to melt down, liquefy” (Lexer 3: 1092).
- <sup>71</sup> *lit* (n.) “limb” (Lexer 1: 1938).
- <sup>72</sup> *erheizen* (wv.) “to warm up, become hot, excite” (Lexer 1: 636).
- <sup>73</sup> Holzmann 2001: 172-173, <http://www.handschriftencensus.de/4805>, <http://geb.uni-giessen.de/geb/volltexte/2007/4985/>, Weigand 1855: 170-173.
- <sup>74</sup> *rîchsen, reichsen, reichsnen, reychszen* (wv.) “to reign” (BMZ 2: 696, Grimm 14: 598).
- <sup>75</sup> *sigenunft, sigenuft* “triumph” (BMZ 2: 272, Lexer 2: 917).
- <sup>76</sup> *swëlch, sôwilch, swilich, swelch sô* (pron.) “anyone, if someone” (Lexer 3: 750, BMZ 3: 577).
- <sup>77</sup> *swër, wër, sô wer so* (pron.) “who, anyone, if anybody” (BMZ 3: 567, Lexer 2: 1361).
- <sup>78</sup> *tenc, tenk, denk* (adj.) “left” (BMZ 3: 29, Lexer, 2: 1422), or *tenken, denken* (n.) “thought” (Lexer 1: 418).
- <sup>79</sup> *dûmo, daum, duom* “thumb” (Lexer 1: 474-475): in this case, it has a metaphoric meaning of “power, control”: *unter dem daumen sein* “to be under someone’s control” (Grimm 2: 845-851). The word can likewise be read as *döuwen, douwen, däwen, dewen* (wv.) “to digest, expiate, suffer” (Lexer 1: 455) so the whole sentence would be “or if she suffered worry”.
- <sup>80</sup> Lit.: “Under the left thumb”.
- <sup>81</sup> *tougen* (adj., adv. and n.) “secret, concealed, hidden” (BMZ 3: 59, Lexer 2: 1481), or *tauchen, taugen* “to do” (Grimm 21: 181).
- <sup>82</sup> *meinen* (wv.) “to think, mind, focus, mean” (BMZ 2: 107).
- <sup>83</sup> Conj. (*stê*) of *stân* (sv.) “to stay, stand” (BMZ 2: 567).
- <sup>84</sup> Past (*truoc*) of *tragen, trân* (sv.) “to carry, wear, bear” (BMZ 3: 67, Lexer 2: 1482).
- <sup>85</sup> *gesetzen* (wv.) “to determine, arrange, set” (BMZ 2: 354).
- <sup>86</sup> *wîz* (adj.) “white” (BMZ 3: 780, Lexer 3: 957).
- <sup>87</sup> *swenne, swan* (conj.) “when, whenever” (BMZ 3: 501, Lexer 2: 1337).
- <sup>88</sup> Holzmann 2001: 163, Mone 1838: 423, Priebisch ZfdA1894: 19. The plant is here the gentian, MHG. *madalgêr, madelgêr, modelgêr*, Germ. *kreuzwurz* (Grimm 12: 1427).
- <sup>89</sup> Holzmann 2001: 163-164.

- <sup>90</sup> Holzmann 2001: 164-167 transcribes this and other similar *Verbena charms* (14th-15th century).
- <sup>91</sup> English translation of the *Papyri Graecae Magicae*, in Betz 1986: 64-66.
- <sup>92</sup> For further reference see HWA 7: 898.
- <sup>93</sup> English translation of the *Papyri Graecae Magicae*, in Betz 1986: 44-47.
- <sup>94</sup> In the manuscript, the word *veinde* is written in the interlinear (it looks like a correction). Without this word, the sense of the whole sentence would have been unintelligible. This simple fact of a scribe correcting the text, might be worth further research, since it is an important clue in understanding both the process of composing/compiling and of performing/using the charm.
- <sup>95</sup> According to Priebisch 1894: 18-21: ms. Add. 17527, f. 17v. See also: Pfeiffer 1854: 191.
- <sup>96</sup> About the relationship among “*una*”, the pervinca and the *Nine Herbs charm* see: Braekman 1980: 464.
- <sup>97</sup> The bibliography on this peculiar topic is very dense, from Wittgenstein to Malinowsky to many other linguistic and folkloristic studies. A recent work of Passalis gives a summary of the main points and a list of fundamental reference works (Passalis 2012).
- <sup>98</sup> Borsje 2012, Roper 2009.
- <sup>99</sup> At a certain point, the formula of melting wax began to be related to love charms and it began even to be mentioned and described by some literary sources, such as: Theocritus (2<sup>nd</sup> Idyll), Virgil (8<sup>th</sup> Eclogue) and Horace (Satire 1.8.43-44). See: Toporkov 2009.
- <sup>100</sup> Battista 2011, Crohns 1905, Pachumi 2012, Wack 1990: 38-46.
- <sup>101</sup> Önnersfors 1991: 34-35.
- <sup>102</sup> Holzmann 2001: 164.
- <sup>103</sup> Ernst 2011: 160, see also: Holzmann 2001: 136, Menhardt 1951-52: 367.
- <sup>104</sup> Holzmann 2001: 136.
- <sup>105</sup> Borsje 2012, Roper 2009.
- <sup>106</sup> Crohns 1905, Ruff 2003.
- <sup>107</sup> Toporkov 2009: 127-129.
- <sup>108</sup> Roper 2009: 127-139.

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