

The Anxiety of Writing: A Reading of the Old English *Journey Charm*

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The Old English *Journey Charm* is one of the twelve metrical charms¹ that have come down to us from this period. It is an appeal to the biblical patriarchs, the trinity, the Virgin Mary, and the evangelists for help and protection on a journey. The charm suggests that the speaker hopes for aid not only on a particular expedition on which he is about to set out, but throughout the journey of life. The prayer-like poem is intensified by the ritual of the speaker's surrounding himself² with a rod to shield him against anything ranging from sore stitches to all evil in the land, as described at the beginning (Rodrigues 1993:156-57, lines 1-7):³

Ic me on þisse gyrde beluce and on godes helde bebeode

¹ I list the twelve metrical charms in note 18. The categorization is Dobbie's (1942:cxxx). The classification of *Journey Charm* as metrical is not unproblematic, as Stuart (1981:259) has noted, but she adds that "perhaps we are justified in leaving metrical peculiarities aside." There are numerous other texts that are referred to as charms. Grendon's (1909) edition of Anglo-Saxon charms includes prose incantations, exorcisms, recipes, and healing practices. Obviously, the term "charm" is not quite appropriate to refer to such a variety of texts. However, I suggest the term can be retained (as indeed it is) if we keep in mind Arnovick's (2006:28) definition of a charm as referring to "a linguistic text representing the illocutionary and/or physical action of a ritual performance."

² I use the masculine pronoun throughout, even though it is possible that women also uttered the charm.

³ I use Rodrigues 1993 throughout my paper, but adduce translations from selected other editions where significant. The word *gyrde* in line 1 is translated as *rod* in earlier editions by Storms, Grendon, and Cockayne. In a footnote, Grendon (1909:177) wonders if this *rod* could be a cross. Cockayne (1864-66:vol.1, 389), also in a footnote, is more assertive when stating that it "is probably a holy rod." Cockayne does not give any further explanations, but Storms (1948:221) contends that the half-line that follows "is an argument in favour of a Christian interpretation." The reading of *gyrde* as rod probably leads Cockayne (1864-66:vol.1, 389) to translate *beluce* as *fortify*: "I fortify myself with this rod, and deliver myself into God's allegiance." The idea that the person uttering the charm draws a magic circle around himself is thus lost. Like Rodrigues, Storms and Grendon opt for a translation of *beluce* that emphasizes such an activity. Storms (1948:221) points to the pagan origin of this gesture: "all the evils to be warded off are of secular, pagan, magical character and the verb *belucan* suggests a definitely pagan magical action. The charmer encloses, surrounds himself by a staff." While Storms stresses the pagan nature of the poem, Stuart (1981:260) contends that it "stands apart since it, together with the fairly homogeneous group of theft charms, has more specifically Christian references than it does non-Christian or magical references." Stuart (264ff.) also offers a more detailed analysis of this line. For a thorough discussion of the charms' pagan and Christian elements, see Jolly 1996.

wið þane sara stice, wið þane sara slege,
wið þane grymma gryre,
wið ðane micela egða þe bið eghwam lað,
and wið eal þæt lað þe in to land fare.
Sygegealdor ic begale, sigegyrd ic me wege,
wordsige and worcsige. Se me dege;

I encircle myself with this rod and entrust myself to God's grace,
 against the sore stitch, against the sore bite,
 against the grim dread,
 against the great fear that is loathsome to everyone,
 and against all evil that enters the land.
 A victory charm I sing, a victory rod I bear,
 word-victory, work-victory. May they avail me;

The hope for protection against the potential dangers incurred on a journey by uttering magical words and drawing a shielding circle points to the charm's explicitly performative and practical nature (Olsan 1999:401).⁴ Indeed, the term *g(e)aldor* used in line 6 (in the compound word *sygegealdor*) underlines the performative element of the charm as it derives from the verb *galan*, which means "to sing," "to cry," "to practice incantation" (Clark Hall 1960:147).⁵ According to Lori Garner (2004:20), the Old English charms therefore "require us to move beyond conventional text-based literary analysis and classification to apply performance-based approaches." It is thus in performance that "the charm's function as healing remedy becomes all-encompassing" (20). I quite agree that an analysis of the Old English charms profits considerably from a performance-based approach. However, in this article I want to examine what happens to the charm's originally performative nature when it is brought to parchment. The process of writing down the charm, I maintain, weakens its protective or healing power that is most effective when performed. Moreover, in *Journey Charm* the scribe arguably incorporates an awareness of his own disempowering activity.

In a larger context, the charm is an example of what Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe (1990:5) has termed *transitional literacy*, "a transitional state between orality and literacy" as she defines it. This phenomenon requires that we examine how a work was transmitted and received,

⁴ Stuart (1981:265) also argues that the circle need not necessarily be drawn, but could be "fashioned by some other means" and that it "need not even take the form of an action described continuously around the object to be isolated." However we may imagine the circle, Stuart does not deny that there is some activity, some performance involved.

⁵ Stuart (1981:268) has wondered why *Journey Charm* is not called "a victory charm (*sygegealdor*, as it is termed in v. 6) or a battle charm," a title that, according to her, implies that the journey should be read literally, but the imagery of armor and victory metaphorically. She points out that "there is no reason in *JC* for assuming that the protagonist who utters the incantation is about to set out on a journey from one physical location to another" (268). However, I do not see why this possibility should be ruled out. If we accept that the encircling of the speaker with a rod points to the poem's originally performative nature, then it is quite possible that this activity would have been followed by another one, e.g., that of geographical dislocation.

which “admits into evidence manuscript, readers, textual variance and textual fixity, and situates the work in its proper historical context” (14). I would argue that transitional literacy also entails focusing on the anxiety caused by the largely incompatible relationship between the spoken and the written word. For even though the scribe writing down or copying a poem that had been transmitted orally was presumably familiar with its specifically oral characteristics and therefore did not consider them as something alien, he must have felt that there was a difference between the oral and literate word, precisely *because* he was accustomed to oral techniques.⁶ This sense of difference is acute when the gestures accompanying the original performance of the poem are described by the content of the text, and, more particularly still, when the speaking subject of these descriptions is the first person singular, as in the initial line of *Journey Charm*.

For my analysis of *Journey Charm* I am mainly interested in the manuscript, not only as physical evidence of transitional literacy but also in the literal sense of the word of writing by hand. Therefore my focus will be on the scribe’s relationship with the charm’s speaking subject that is silenced in the process of being written down. By the same token, the entire charm is transformed from spoken words to voiceless signs. Inescapably, a written *Journey Charm* replaces enchanting activities with a semiotic representation, thus losing some of its original spell.

O’Brien O’Keeffe (1990:52) reminds us that the awareness of the Anglo-Saxons that “through writing, words, divorced from oral source and substance, are conveyed by silence and absence” is above all expressed in the riddles on writing. She points out that “the use of mouthless speakers, dead lifegivers, dumb knowledge-bearers, clipped pinions—all metaphors of loss—reflect an Anglo-Saxon understanding that speech itself is not a *thing*, but that writing, as it alienates speech from speaker, transforms living words into things” (54, emphasis hers). As the eighth-century Anglo-Saxon cleric Eusebius (1968:242, lines 1-2) puts it in his riddle on parchment sheets:

*Antea per nos uox resonabat uerba nequaquam,
Distincta sine nunc uoce edere uerba solemus;*

Once we had no voice of any kind to say a word,
now we produce words without an audible voice;

Parchment is the site of the transformation of spoken words into voiceless signs. And it would seem that certain anxieties connected to this transitional activity are reflected in *Journey Charm*.

The speaker of *Journey Charm* expresses his hope that performance and text will be equally victorious when he connects the two in line seven quoted above: “wordsigne and worcsigne.” The terms *wordsigne* (literally, “victory of word”) and *worcsigne* (literally, “victory of

⁶ Expanding on O’Brien O’Keeffe’s notions, Amodio (2004:45) notes that “the poets/scribes who apply these ‘oral techniques’ to the poems they are composing/copying employ these techniques because their direct experience with the register of traditional oral poetics has led them to internalize it, whether they have experienced it through their ears, their eyes, or some combination of the two.”

work”)⁷ are linked by alliteration and even quite similar in sound. Within the context of performance, *word* refers to the uttering of the charm, *work* to the drawing of the circle as the previous line would suggest: “Sygegealdor ic begale, sigegyrd ic me wege” (“A victory charm I sing, a victory rod I bear”). In her discussion of these two lines, Marie Nelson (1984:63-64) focuses on the interdependence of the utterance of magic words and the performance of magic deeds. She does not, however, examine what happens to the magic words and deeds in written form. For within the context of writing down the charm, *work* arguably also refers to the activity of transcribing the *words* of the poem, especially if we are prepared to see the staff as a metaphor for the writing tool. Like the speaker of *Journey Charm*, who is about to set out on a journey, the scribe is also about to “travel” over the parchment with his staff/pen. The riddle of abbot Aldhelm (d. 709) on the quill pen likens the writing tool’s activity with traveling through fields (Aldhelm 1968:454-55, lines 3-5 and 3-6 respectively):

*Pergo per albescentes directo tramite campos
Candentique viae uestigia caerula linquo,
Lucida nigratis fuscans anfractibus arua.*

Through snowy fields
I keep a straight road, leaving deep-blue tracks
Upon the gleaming way, and darkening
The fair champaign with black and tortuous paths;

According to Aldhelm (454-55, lines eight and seven respectively), writing not only pollutes, but it can also go astray easily: “For with a thousand bypaths runs the road” (“Semita quin potius milleno tramite tendit”). Those wanderers who find the right track, however, are led straight to heaven. This metaphor obviously points to the delicacy involved in trying to do justice to thoughts and speech as they are conveyed to parchment.⁸

The term *work* is used again in both senses when the speaker of *Journey Charm* appeals to holy men and women to direct his works (Rodrigues 1993:156-57, lines 21-25, emphasis added):

*Hi me ferion and friþion and mine fore nerion,
eal me gehealdon, me gewealdon,
worces stirende; si me wuldres hyht,
hand ofer heafod, haligra rof,
sigerofra sceolu, soðfæstra engla.*

⁷ For the first component, *word*, Clark Hall (1960:418) lists “word, speech, sentence, statement” as translation; for the second, *sig*, “victory, success, triumph” (305). Cockayne (1864-66:vol. 1, 389), Grendon (1909:177), and Rodrigues (1993:157) all translate literally: “word victory and work victory.” Storms (1948:217) turns the nouns into adjectives: “victorious in word, victorious in deed.”

⁸ Irvine (1994:103) points out that the riddles were texts used in the grammar curriculum, grammar being the art of speaking and writing correctly.

May they lead and guard me and protect my path,
 wholly keep me and rule me,
 guiding my *works*; be to me the hope of glory,
 the hand on my head, may the host of holy ones,
 the company of conquering, righteous angels.

The speaker of the charm hopes to perform the right gestures just as the scribe hopes to write properly. Furthermore, the protecting hand (of God?) over the head is to guide the traveler on the journey on which he is about to set out and possibly also the path of life that will hopefully end up in heavenly glory.⁹ Similarly, the superior hand protects the scribe's hand traveling over the parchment so that the path he takes may lead him to glory. The glory the scribe hopes for implies both achieving the successful balance of *worc* and *word* as well as realizing the splendor of heaven promised by Aldhelm in his riddle if this balance is found.

The metaphorical analogy between the charm's speaker and its scribe is continued in the lines that follow the ones just quoted and that invoke the writers of the gospels (Rodrigues 1993:156-57: lines 26-29):

Biddu ealle bliðu mode
þæt me beo Matheus helm, Marcus byrne,
leoht, lifes rof, Lucos min swurd,
scearp and scirecg, scyld Iohannes,

In blithe mood I bid them [the holy men and women] all
 that Matthew be my helm, Mark my coat of mail,
 strong light of my life, Luke my sword,
 sharp and bright-edged, John my shield,

Leslie Arnovick (2006:117) has pointed out that the military metaphors used here allow for *Journey Charm* to be read as a *lorica*.¹⁰ A *lorica* "originally specifies a leather breastplate, [but] comes to refer to the spiritual armor provided by sanctity or, more specifically, to a hymn begging saintly protection" (117). The address of the evangelists by means of a specifically oral formula, the hymn, points to the charm's performative nature, which is lost to a certain extent when it is written down. But the scribe can appeal to the same protective powers as the traveler to make sure that his journey over the page is a safe one, in other words that he finds the right

⁹ The Old English term *for(e)* of line 21 may be both a geographical trip and the journey of life. Clark Hall (1960:124) glosses as "going, course, journey, expedition" and as "way, manner of life." Grendon (1909:179) clearly reads this line as expressing the hope for protection throughout the journey of life since he translates as follows: "May they strengthen me and cherish me and preserve me in life's course." Cockayne's translation is ambiguous (1864-66:vol. 1, 391): "May they bear me up and keep me in peace and protect my life." "My life" may be "my entire life" or "my life on this particular journey." Storms (1948:219) has "save my life," with the same ambiguity as in Cockayne. Amies (1983) reads the entire charm as a *lorica* for life's journey.

¹⁰ For a reading of *Journey Charm* as a *lorica* see also Amies 1983.

way with words. The gospel authors, as the prime writers of the true story, are most adequate helpers in this case. Deriving from Old English *god spell*, the good and therefore true story (Clark Hall 1960:157 and 315), the gospels are a paradigm for correct “spelling,” that is, for proper speaking, and by the same token the proper translation of the Word into words. Besides being a call for aid in danger while traveling, the address of the evangelists thus also expresses the scribe’s hope for guidance in successfully transcribing the charm (or spell).

The gospel authors are also invoked in the metrical charm *For Unfruitful Land*, where they are equally connected to writing and performing. For a successful harvest, their names must each be written on a wooden cross and put in a hole in the ground. As they are placed there, each of the crosses has to be addressed in Latin: “Crux [cross] Matheus, crux Marcus, crux Lucas, crux sanctus Iohannes” (Rodrigues 1993:130). The power of the oral word (addressing the evangelists) and the power of the written word (the evangelists’ names spelled out on the crosses) are equally important in order for the charm to be effective. By analogy, such a power balance is ideally achieved when the charm is written down. However, such a balance is difficult, if not impossible, to attain.

In addition to raising questions about the proper representation of the spoken word on the page, *Journey Charm*, and by extension all charms, challenge the ability of the written charm to bring about magic changes. Stated quite simply, the charm has to be uttered and accompanied by some gestures in order to be effective. Such gestures may be described in the written charms, but their effect is weaker if they are read only. In a further step away from their original nature, some of the charms no longer include any instructions as to their performance. For example, the description of the medical treatment for a growth in *Against a Wen*, another metrical charm, is reduced to a minimum. For even though the desired effect, the cure of a cyst, is mentioned, there is hardly any description of magical/medical gestures anymore. Such gestures are still indicated in other medical charms, notably in *For Wens*, where the cyst has to be treated with a vessel filled by a maiden with water three times over (Grendon 1909:212-13):¹¹

Gif wænnas eglia mæn æt þære heortan, gange mædenman to wylle þe rihte east yrne, and gehlade ane cuppan fulle forð mid ðam streame, and singe þæron Credan and Paternoster; and geote þonne on oþer fæt, and hlade eft oþre, and singe eft Credan and Paternoster, and do swa, þæt þu hæbbe þreo. Do swa nygon dagas; sona him bið sel.

If tumors near the heart afflict a man, let a virgin go to a spring which runs due east, and draw a cupful, moving [the cup] with the current, and sing upon it the Creed and a Paternoster; and then pour it into another vessel, thereafter draw some more, and again sing the Creed and a Paternoster, and do this until you have three [cups full]. Do this so for nine days: he will soon be well.

¹¹ Called *Against Tumours* in Storms (1949:246-49). Number 114 of the *Lacnunga* (Recipes) in Cockayne (1864-66:vol. 3, 74-75).

In *Against a Wen* we simply learn that the wen's enigmatic brother "shall lay a leaf at thy head" ("sceal legge leaf et [*sic*] heafde," Rodrigues 1993:160-61, line 5), followed by the request that the wen (lines 8-10, emphasis added):

*Clinge þu als wa col on heorþe,
scring þu als wa scerne awage,
and weorne als wa weter on anbre.*

Shrivel as a coal on the hearth,
shrink as dung on a wall,
waste away *as water in a pail.*

The act of fetching water described in *For Wens* is here replaced by a simile. Garner (2004:33) concludes her analysis of the two wen charms as follows: "As they present themselves in the surviving texts, the two charms appear to offer two equally valid means of tapping into the same source of power, one a verbal description and the other a dramatic enactment symbolizing the desired reduction." Verbal similes and descriptions of the performative gestures may indeed be two equally strong devices *on the page* in order to maintain some of the original power of the healing performance. However, this power of the actual healing gestures inevitably wanes as it yields to the stasis of the written word.

A written charm not only causes problems with its healing performance, but with its performer as well. The moment of writing down *Journey Charm* marks a precarious shift of identity: the *ic* moves from its originally collective nature (the *ic* could be uttered by any member of a specific group)¹² to an individualized *ic* (the scribe at the time of writing). Doane (1991:80-81) points out that "whenever scribes who are part of the oral traditional culture write or copy traditional oral works, they do not merely mechanically hand them down; they rehear them, 'mouth' them, 'reperform' them in the act of writing in such a way that the text may change but remain authentic, just as a completely oral poet's text changes from performance to performance without losing authenticity." (M)uttering the *ic* brings the scribe closer to whoever initially performed the charm. Once it is on parchment, the *ic* becomes more universal again, since any reader might identify with it. Within the monastic context in which the charm was probably written down and read, it also becomes, on a different scale, a performing and performed *ic* again, since the monks would read actively, that is, they would ruminate the words. "What results is a muscular memory of the words pronounced and an aural memory of the words heard" (Leclercq 1978:90). It is moreover quite possible that the charms were not just ruminated by an individual reader but read aloud to an audience that might have been encouraged to identify with the *ic*. The *ic*, endowed with a multiple personality as it were, can now perform, or be performed, both in oral and written form. It is constantly shifting and does therefore not have a concentrated power.¹³

¹² It is likely that only a restricted group (druids, physicians, mass priests) performed the charms (see Jolly 1996, especially chapters 4 and 5).

¹³ See also Keefer 2003 on the fluidity of *ic* and *we* in Old English liturgical verse.

So why write down the charms at all if they and their speakers lose their magical power in this process? “Writing,” as O’Brien O’Keeffe (1990:70) has succinctly put it, “holds the power of memory, but exacts the price of silence.” The power of memory, however, is not guaranteed, since it is a deficient thing in connection with the writing of the charms. Garner (2004:23-26) points out that many of the Old English charms that have come down to us in manuscripts use abbreviated forms of the performed incantation. Such notable omissions may be indicative of the widespread popularity of and familiarity with the charms. Why bother to write down the charms in their entirety, if the user knows them or, more accurately, remembers them? But with gaps in the charms, memory becomes unreliable because they can be filled in more than one way. The gaps arguably also point to the writer’s anxiety that the charming word may lose its power once it has been caught on parchment. It therefore seems advisable to be reticent with letters. Moreover, by withholding parts of the magic formula, the scribe endows the charm with a certain cryptic aura, in this way striving to maintain in the transcription as much of its original power as possible. The scribe thus shows respect for the oral nature of the charms as well as his simultaneous uneasiness about conveying them to parchment.

Journey Charm does not have any apparent gaps in the manuscript, Cambridge Corpus Christi College 41 (CCCC 41).¹⁴ Insofar as only one copy of *Journey Charm* has come down to us, an examination of textual variants cannot be conducted. The poem itself, however, contains textual uncertainties, and as a result we have modern textual variants of the poem that derive from its having often been emended by its editors from the nineteenth century onwards.¹⁵ The scribe himself may not have been bothered by these uncertainties; indeed, he may not have considered them uncertainties at all. However, I want to argue that the appearance of *Journey Charm* on the manuscript bespeaks the scribe’s desire to keep a balance between the oral and literate powers contained in the poem.

Journey Charm is written in the margins of an eleventh-century copy of Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History* in Old English by a hand other than the two of the Bede text (Ker 1957:45). There are other marginal texts, Latin prayers, Old English homilies, charms in both languages, the Sator-Rotas Square, and *Solomon and Saturn I*.¹⁶ Of these marginalia Rowley (2004:29) has noted that “there is no way to know if the scribe of the marginal texts in CCCC 41 intended them to be ‘marginal,’ that is, secondary or supplementary to the Bede, if he was using the book as a commonplace book of texts meaningful to him, or if he . . . was using extra space to archive texts with ‘primary’ cultural significance.”

¹⁴ A paper facsimile of the CCCC 41 marginalia can be found in Robinson and Stanley 1991, a microfiche facsimile of the entire manuscript in Graham, Grant, et al. 2003.

¹⁵ See Stuart 1981:259-60. Another interesting example of (modern) textual instability can be found in Storms’ edition (1948:216, emphasis added), where line six reads “Sygegealdor ic beagle, sigegyrd is me wege.” Rather than an emendation, this is a typing mistake, since the manuscript clearly reads *ic* and Storms (217) translates with “I.” This mistake interestingly reflects on the scribal errors, in this instance unwitting mistranscription, that modern editors detect in medieval manuscripts and in most cases decide to emend.

¹⁶ Ker (1957:45) suggests that the marginalia “are probably all in one unusual angular hand.” Larratt Keefer (1996:148) more cautiously contends that “there is no clear agreement on whether one or more scribes added the marginalia to CCCC 41.”

Even though the scribe's motives for writing down these marginalia ultimately elude us, we can examine how they communicate with the central text. *Journey Charm* is found on pages 350 to 353 of the manuscript, written alongside the *Ecclesiastical History*, in which the triumph of Christianity over paganism is described. The charm in the margin arguably mirrors the same process of conversion on the plane of literature: a pagan poem is turned into a Christian one. However, we cannot decide if the scribe was aware of the original nature of the poem. It is probably safer to conclude with Nancy Thompson (2004:64) that the marginalia, together with the Bede text, are "a collection of devotional works that seem intended to enhance and strengthen religious faith."

The precise passages from the *Ecclesiastical History* that *Journey Charm* frames are from Book IV, including the end of chapter 29 and the beginning chapter 30.¹⁷ These excerpts describe St. Cuthbert's choice of a solitary life on an island, his election at the synod in Twyford (684 AD) as bishop of Lindisfarne abbey as well as his ensuing return from the wilderness at the intense bidding of the monks, and finally his preparation to go back to the island to die there. In terms of its communication with this specific content of the *Ecclesiastical History*, the place allocated to *Journey Charm* in the manuscript is thus rather arbitrary. But the way the charm is presented on the pages is quite remarkable as it appears to underline the idea of triumph expressed in it. Unlike the three other Old English metrical charms in the manuscript,¹⁸ this poem is not crammed in the margins in small and crumpled letters, but accompanies the Bede text quite elegantly over the four pages, looking much like the core text in terms of letter size, line numbers, and overall appearance.¹⁹ This particular metrical charm thus appears more grand

¹⁷ The charm begins on top of page 350 of the manuscript, where the Bede text starts with the letters *domes* of *witedomes*, and it ends in the middle of page 353 at the letters *hæb* of the word *hæbbe*. Chapter numbers refer to the edition by Miller (1890-98:368), line 19 to 372, line 2. Miller's edition is not based on the CCC 41 manuscript, but includes a collation of four extant manuscripts (for this excerpt see pp. 445-51). The collation does not, however, mention the marginalia of CCC 41.

¹⁸ The four Old English metrical charms in this manuscript are charms 8 to 11 (Dobbie 1942:cxxx-cxxxi): *For a Swarm of Bees*, *For Loss of Cattle*, *For Theft of Cattle*, and *Journey Charm*. Five other metrical charms can be found in MS Harley 585, British Museum (*Nine Herbs Charm*, *Against a Dwarf*, *For a Sudden Stitch*, *For Loss of Cattle*, *For Delayed Birth*), one in MS Cotton Caligula A.vii, British Museum (*For Unfruitful Land*), another one in Royal MS 12D.xvii, British Museum (*For the Water-Elf Disease*), and finally one in Royal MS 4A.xiv, British Museum (*Against a Wen*). See Olsan 1999 for a discussion of the place in the manuscript of some of these charms.

¹⁹ All four metrical charms in the manuscript frame the main Bede text. *Journey Charm* is written in the outer margins of the manuscript. It begins in the left margin of page 350 and runs over 24 lines, like the Bede text. It is continued in the right margin of page 351 and runs over 23 lines, like the Bede text. On the left margin of page 352 follow the next 23 lines, with *sigere* (emended to *sigeres* by Grendon, Storms, and Rodrigues) and *godes miltse* of line 33 written above the line; the Bede text has only 22 lines as there is a space to mark the beginning with an animal-shaped initial (a thorn) of chapter 30. The final six lines follow in the right margin on page 353 of the manuscript. *For Theft of Cattle* is found on page 206 of the manuscript, and it "occupies the first nine lines of the note in the bottom margin of the page" (Robinson and Stanley 1991:24). *For Loss of Cattle* is found on the same page and "occupies ll. 10-15 of the note in the bottom margin of the page" (24). "The manuscript is very tightly bound, and some letters at the end of ll. 13 and 14 of the note are lost in the gutter The scribe seems to have regarded this charm and the preceding one [*For Loss of Cattle*] and the ensuing [Latin] prose charm (which continues on p. 207) as a single text" (24). *For a Swarm of Bees* follows a Latin prayer, both written in the left margin of page 182 in the manuscript. Like *Journey Charm*, *For a Swarm of Bees* is written in the outer margins rather than crammed at the bottom in a note, but there is far less space between the lines.

than the others, as if to emphasize the notion of victory that permeates the poem. For O'Brien O'Keefe (1990:70) this notion of victory is also enhanced by the charm's communication with another marginal poem, *Solomon and Saturn I*. She rounds off her analysis of the tensions between the spoken and the written word in that poem by claiming that it is a visual reflex of the word *sygegealdor* in line 6 of *Journey Charm*. She does not further comment on her observation, but I would argue that the reflex is created by the emphasis in both texts on the intricate power relationship between the spoken and the written word. The alliance of these two poems through the visual and a common concern shifts our attention away from the words with which the poem is written down, words whose power to hold and to preserve threatens to obliterate the memory of oral performance. Through the visual, the scribe tries to accommodate both the oral and the literate in a balanced way so that *Journey Charm* may indeed be victorious.²⁰

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