

Witch-Crafting in Roman Literature and Art

New Thoughts on an Old Image

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Historians intrigued by the relationship between representations and realia of Greco-Roman women and witchcraft are faced with a question that is surprisingly difficult to answer: are witches depicted in Greco-Roman art and if so how would we recognize them? Well known are the depictions on ceramics and in statuary of epic characters like Medea and Circe, those prototypical, iconic, semidivine manipulators of magical power. These famed witches are certainly a beginning for such a study. But what about the potential for artistic depictions of what might be called the “common witch;” depictions not connected with a specific literary figure but that would convey the complex concerns of inappropriate power-grabbing, sexuality, role reversal, and suspicion of old age that were central to the fear and accusation of witchcraft that might be performed by more “common” women in antiquity.

It would not seem unreasonable to expect such a depiction. During the Western European late medieval and early modern periods, accusations of witchcraft were accompanied by clear artistic representations of famous literary, as well as more generic, witches. Among the visual motifs of female witchcraft in the early modern period were the witch’s kitchen, witches affecting the weather, flying up the chimney, departing for and flying to the

I thank the participants of the Ancient and Medieval Studies Seminar at the Robert Penn Warren Center at Vanderbilt University for their feedback on an earlier version of this material, as well as Michael Bailey and the anonymous readers of this article for their valuable suggestions. I also thank the students who have participated in many semesters of my “Historiography of Witchcraft Accusations in the Western European Tradition” seminar at San Diego State University—especially the student who first asked me what witches looked like in Greco-Roman art.

Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft (Winter 2008)

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sabbath, and finally witches at the sabbath with the devil or his minions.¹ While scholars have debated the extent to which these complex artistic representations inspired and were inspired by contemporary descriptions of what a witch could do, most agree that these depictions of witches are consistent with contemporary fears.² If the art of the early modern period depicts witches at their *artes*, might we not also expect depictions of witches in Greco-Roman art? What would be the visual clues that would enable us to recognize them? How can what is known about the complex and suggestive interplay between literary and visual images of witches in the early modern period teach us how to look for witches in Greco-Roman art?

This article argues that Greco-Roman literary descriptions of witches inform us of what we should look for and that some of the candidates in the art that fit that description include the statue type formerly identified as “old destitute” and drunken old women, as well as mosaics and terra cottas depicting the old bawd/nurse in Greco-Roman comedy. While there may not be a perfect correspondence between witches in Greco-Roman literature and art (beyond the famed Circe and Medea), there does appear to be a complex, even potentially dialogic, interplay between literary and artistic craftings of more mundane, drunken, old, witchy women. Whether this new way of looking at these statues, mosaics, and terra cottas is conclusive or not, it provides a useful exercise for thinking about the issues of whether or not, and why or why not, female witches would be represented in Greco-Roman art, how differing audiences may have viewed them, and what exactly might be the link between literary and artistic depictions.

1. D. Neave, “The Witch in Early 16th-Century German Art,” *Woman’s Art Journal* 9 (1988): 3–9; and Y. Pinson, “Witchcraft/Sorcery,” *Encyclopedia of Comparative Iconography Themes Depicted in Works of Art*, ed. H. E. Roberts, 2 vols. (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1998), 2:952.

2. These scholars, whose arguments are discussed later in this article, include: Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Linda Hults, “Baldung and the Witches of Freiburg: The Evidence of the Images,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18 (1987): 249–76; idem, *The Witch as Muse: Art, Gender, and Power in Early Modern Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005); J. L. Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Lyndal Roper, *Witch Craze: Terror and Fantasy in Baroque Germany* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2004); M. A. Sullivan, “The Witches of Dürer and Hans Baldung Grien,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 53 (2000): 333–401; Charles Zika, *Exorcizing Our Demons: Magic, Witchcraft and Visual Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2003); idem, *The Appearance of Witchcraft: Print and Visual Culture in Sixteenth Century Europe* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

EARLY MODERN ARTISTIC DEPICTIONS OF WITCHCRAFT

A brief look at early modern scholarship investigating similar issues offers perspective to historians of Greco-Roman witchcraft looking for possible images of classical witches. Scholars of early modern witchcraft have often recognized the connections between the artistic representations of witches and the contemporary imagination of what witches could do, although the exact nature of that connection is debated, especially given that these images appear in wide-ranging formats, including fairly straightforward illustrations in witch-hunting manuals and classical texts, more elaborate paintings, and finally mass-market broadsheets. While the earliest printed editions of some late fifteenth-century witch-hunting manuals, such as Kramer and Sprenger's *Malleus maleficarum*, were not illustrated, some of the first visual representations of witches at their craft do appear in illustrations of later editions of the *Malleus* and in Ulrich Molitor's *De laniis et phitonicis mulieribus*.³ Although these illustrations did little more than render visually what was going on in the text, artists such as Hans Baldung Grien and Albrecht Dürer drew inspiration from these manuals and their illustrations, and also from contemporary ideas about witchcraft, when they created their own images of witches.⁴ New printing technology made possible the mass production of pamphlets and broadsheets that could convey graphic images of witchcraft to a much wider, and illiterate, audience.⁵

A few examples of the representation of old women in these images should give a sense of the debate among scholars of early modern witchcraft. Stuart Clark uses Hans Baldung Grien's *Three Witches* (1514) (Figure 1), with its three naked intertwined female bodies, two young and one old, to discuss the fear of inversion and topsy-turviness into which the activity of witches tapped.⁶ The witches' nude bodies, nubile and pert mixed together with sagging and old, convey a degree of fear about women's sexuality and seductive power, especially as the women appear to be satisfying themselves without male involvement. Lyndal Roper draws on this image, along with Baldung's *Group of Female Witches* (1510) (Figure 2), to point out how "German artists developed the idea of contrasting the bodies of women of different

3. Zika, *Appearance of Witchcraft*, 7.

4. For this, see Hults, *Witch as Muse*, passim; and Zika, *Appearance of Witchcraft*, 11–35.

5. Zika, *Appearance of Witchcraft*, 179–209.

6. Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, 13. For detailed art historical discussion of this and other witchcraft images created by Baldung, see Koerner, *Moment of Self-Portraiture*, 323–44.

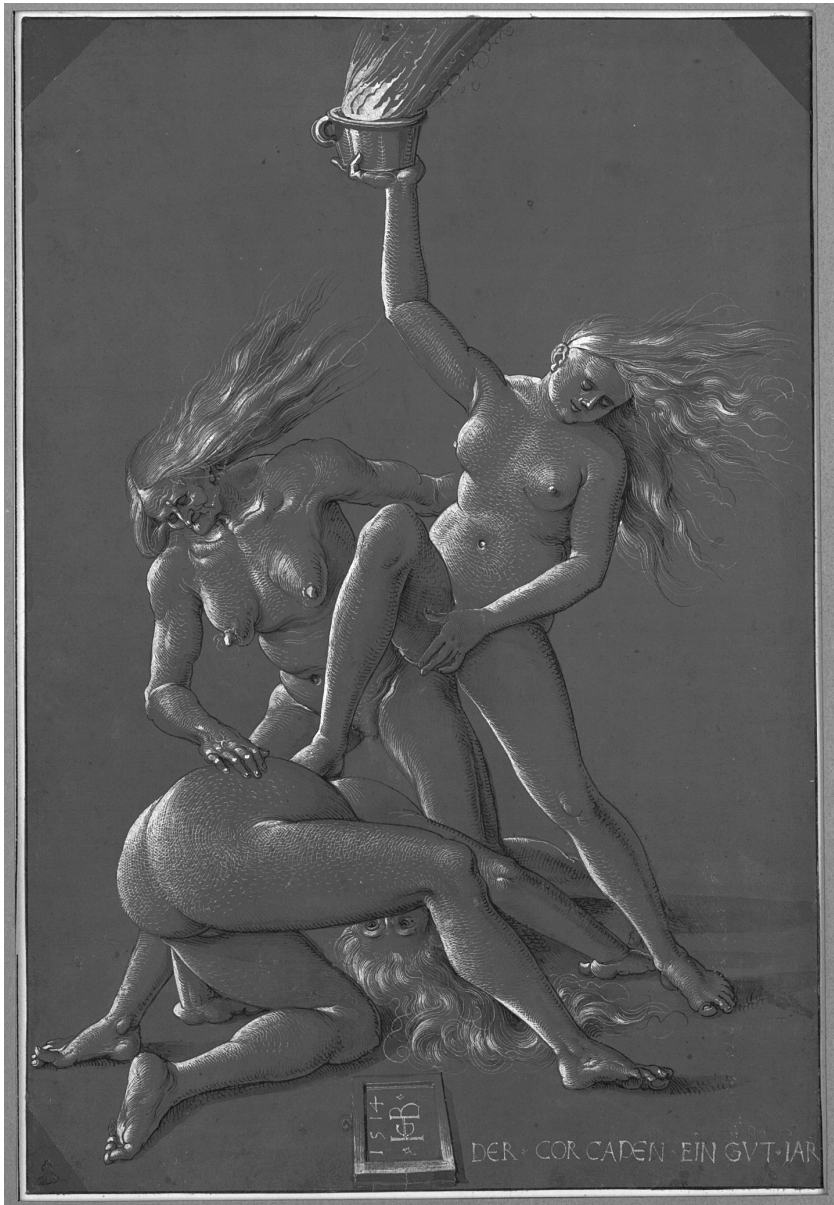


Figure 1: Hans Baldung Grien's *Three Witches*, 1514
(Inv. 3220 at The Albertina, Vienna).



Figure 2: Hans Baldung Grien's *Group of Female Witches*, 1510
(Acc. No. 69.1064, photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston).

ages and linked this to witchcraft.”⁷ Roper claims that “these images do point to some of the central imaginative connections at the heart of the witch craze,” in particular fertility, the life cycle of women, and the way that fears of witches were often tied up with these concerns.⁸ Linda Hults has examined depictions of witches by Dürer, Baldung, and many others. Hults’s study carefully unpacks their iconography and shows that these images, which were “made by men mostly for men,” functioned like dirty jokes among small groups of learned men.⁹ Hults notes how Baldung’s teacher, Dürer, in his *Witch Riding Backwards on a Goat*, picked up on “contemporary attitudes toward old women,” combining concerns about age, lust, and social disorder into the “quintessential old hag.”¹⁰ On the whole, Hults argues that early modern images of witches are rooted in “the ideals, fantasies, anxieties, and competitive demands of early modern models of masculinity.”¹¹ Charles Zika points to a woodcut showing three witches of different ages eating together from a late fifteenth-century edition of Molitor’s *De laniis* to make the point that “the range of age and female status in this and other images seem to suggest the representation of a separate female culture.”¹² Clark, Roper, Hults, and Zika all suggest that imaginative fear of what female witches could do and, in some cases, concern about old age and sexuality at least partly stimulated the early modern artistic impulse with respect to witchcraft.

Margaret Sullivan challenges the suggestions by well-known scholars of witchcraft accusations, including Brian Levack, Sigrid Brauner, Stuart Clark, and William Monter, that there is a direct relationship between the art of Dürer and Baldung and the witch craze that follows.¹³ Instead, Sullivan argues that the literary depictions of female witches in classical writers such as Horace, Varro, Apuleius, Lucan, and Juvenal would have had much more of an impact on these artistic depictions than contemporary witch manuals would

7. Roper, *Witch Craze*, 151.

8. Roper, *Witch Craze*, 152 and 156–57.

9. Hults, *The Witch as Muse*, 96.

10. Hults, *The Witch as Muse*, 73–74.

11. Hults, *The Witch as Muse*, 107.

12. Zika, *Exorcizing Our Demons*, 259.

13. Sullivan, “Witches of Dürer and Hans Baldung Grien,” 333–34, challenges in particular: Brian Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 2nd ed. (New York: Longman, 1996); Sigrid Brauner, *Fearless Wives and Frightened Shrews: The Construction of the Witch in Early Modern Germany* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995); Clark, *Thinking with Demons*; and E. William Monter, *Witchcraft in France and Switzerland: The Borderlands During the Reformation* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1976), 29.

have had, or witch hunts—coming decades later—could have had.¹⁴ Sullivan’s argument is in line with the classical borrowing that scholars have noted in other early modern contexts.¹⁵ While Sullivan emphasizes the role of classical literature as opposed to trials and witch hunting manuals in shaping Baldung’s and Dürer’s depictions, she does not entirely discount the connection of these images to contemporary imagination. Charles Zika has explored in great detail how classical witches such as Circe, Medea, Meroe, and others supplied a great deal of source material for a “new visual language of witchcraft” in the sixteenth century, emphasizing classical witches’ “capacity to negotiate the borders between the animal and human worlds and those between the realms of the living and the dead.”¹⁶

Either way, we are left with arguments rooted in readings of early modern art that can suggest how to look for manifestations of witchcraft in Greco-Roman art. If one follows Clark, Roper, Hults, Zika, and others, early modern images certainly bore some relationship to what contemporaries thought witches could do, whether or not that imagination was widespread or confined to an exclusive male elite, or whether it was spurred by manuals and actual trials or inspired by classical texts. If one follows Sullivan, these images

14. See Sullivan, “Witches of Dürer and Hans Baldung Grien,” 355, for her argument on the accessibility and likely influence of the classical authors on Baldung’s and Dürer’s depictions of witches. Roper, *Witch Craze*, also resists the temptation to link these images to a visual manifestation of the famous witch hunts of the early modern period, given that they date to some time before the major hunts. Hults, “Baldung and the Witches of Freiburg,” has similarly problematized the relationship between images, particularly those of Baldung, and the contemporary imagination of witches; however, Hults, *The Witch as Muse*, 64, has challenged Sullivan’s thesis because it “rests largely on the premise that witchcraft was not topical when Dürer made his *Four Witches* and *The Witch*.”

15. Examples include Linda Hults, “Dürer’s *Lucretia*: Speaking the Silence of Women,” *Signs* 16 (1991): 205–37, discussion of the suicide of Lucretia in early modern art; G. Costa, “Love and Witchcraft in Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola: La Strega between the Sublime and the Grotesque,” *Italica* 67 (1990): 427–39, treatment of Pico della Mirandola’s classical borrowings in his sixteenth-century interpretations of witchcraft; D. T. Starnes, “Shakespeare and Apuleius,” *PMLA* 60 (1945): 1021–50, extended discussion of Shakespeare’s use of Apuleius, especially the Pamphile episode; and H. W. Herrington, “Witchcraft and Magic in the Elizabethan Drama,” *Journal of American Folklore* 32 (1919): 484, asserting that witches in Elizabethan drama fall into two groups, those who draw on the “traditional conceptions of the witch as handed down from the classics, from the treatises on witchcraft and from the conventional features of popular superstition” and another group that “purport to give, in reportorial style, accounts of celebrated trials.”

16. Zika, *Appearance of Witchcraft*, 154; *ibid.*, 125–55, for full argument.

typified by Baldung and Dürer may not have fueled the witch craze or been informed by actual trials, but they were connected to Greco-Roman tradition. It would certainly be ironic if the sixteenth-century humanists deployed such an active artistic imagination of Greco-Roman witches but the Romans themselves did not. One could argue that artists in early modern Europe produced such images because that period was particularly witch-obsessed, more than Greco-Roman antiquity, and had the interest and technology to manifest that obsession. Given the well-documented ubiquity of magic in the Greco-Roman world, however, that is unlikely. If there is one point that recent scholarship on Greco-Roman witchcraft has made clear, it is that witchcraft and fears of witchcraft were everywhere in the Greco-Roman world: in relationships, sports, legal contexts, medical remedies.¹⁷ One might surmise, therefore, that witchcraft should be found in art as well, or at least that we should look for it.

The visualization processes and encoded meaning of certain images may have differed significantly for Greco-Roman and early modern viewers; I do not mean to suggest that both groups would have imagined witches in like fashion or viewed these kinds of images in the same way. What I do mean this quick review of the early modern evidence and scholarship to suggest, however, is that the impulse to depict in early modern art the fears that witches evoked may have had a precursor in the Greco-Roman period, and that the early modern model gives us an idea of how we might begin to look for that artistic manifestation, starting with fears of what witches do.

CLASSICAL LITERARY DEPICTIONS OF “WITCHES”

What fears are encoded in the classical literature that describes Greco-Roman witches? Do these fears differ when the witch is of epic proportion (e.g., Circe or Medea) versus the more everyday female magic user? As the following discussion will demonstrate, there was indeed a wide range of witch types in literature, from the semidivine Circe and Medea, to monstrous mortal “superwitches” such as Erictho and Canidia, to the potentially more realistic characteristics of more common witches, typified by their old age, threatening sexuality, and drunkenness. When it comes to “witches,” or *magae*, *sagae*, *veneficae*, and *maleficae*, to use just a few of the Latin terms, depictions in Greco-Roman literature possess clear visual richness. Leaving aside extended

17. As J. Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 3, writes in the opening words of his book, “*Defixiones*, or *katadesmoi* as they are called in Greek, reveal a dark little secret of ancient Mediterranean culture . . . [e]veryone, it seems, used or knew of them.”

legal and philological discussions of what counted as “magic” for the Greeks and Romans and what terms were used to designate magical practitioners,¹⁸ it is clear that classical literature contains many vivid depictions of women as practitioners of magical arts, including Circe and Medea, Lucan’s Erictho, Apuleius’ Meroe and Pamphile, and Lucian’s courtesans.¹⁹ Many scholars have noted that Greek and Roman literary sources feature women as magic-users, even though other evidence such as the Greek magical papyri and the surviving curse tablets emphasize men as ritual experts and users of magic.²⁰

18. Such discussion has become *pro forma* in discussions of Greco-Roman witchcraft, starting with E. E. Burris, “The Terminology of Witchcraft,” *Classical Philology* 31 (1936): 137–45, who offers a good, if dated, summary of the terminology related to practitioners of *ars magica* and the range of their *ars*. More recent scholars to deal with the issue of terminology for magical practitioners and their practices in antiquity include F. Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, trans. Franklin Philip (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), 20–60, who urges an emic construction of the category; and M. W. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 12–17, for discussion of terms, and *ibid.*, 18–46, for the argument that it is appropriate and not anachronistic to discuss magic as a category of Greco-Roman thought. See S. I. Johnston, “Describing the Undefinable: New Books on Magic and Old Problems of Definition,” *History of Religions* 43 (2003): 50, for concerns that “endless theorizing about how magic was or was not different from religion (or anything else) ha[s] stalled our progress toward examining and understanding some fascinating ancient material.”

19. For a thorough survey of the literary representations of the practitioners, both male and female, of magic in antiquity, see Georg Luck, “Witches and Sorcerers in Classical Literature,” in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: Greece and Rome*, ed. Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 91–158. For a treatment of the female practitioners in particular, see Chapter 2 of my “Magic Accusations Against Women in the Greco-Roman World from the First to the Fifth Centuries CE” (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2001), which surveys the fictional depictions of women’s *artes magicae* and concludes that they center around three particular categories for transgression: women as aberrant wives and mothers, women’s possession and transmission of inappropriate knowledge and ritual expertise, and women’s unacceptable appropriation of space. For additional treatments of magical practitioners in Greco-Roman literature, see also D. Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 78–145; Dickie, *Magic and Magicians*, 175–201; Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, 175–204; G. Luck, *Arcana Mundi: Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985); A.-M. Tupet, *La Magie dans la Poesie Latine* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1976); J. E. Lowe, *Magic in Greek & Latin Literature* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1929); and E. Tavenner, *Studies in Magic from Latin Literature* (New York: AMS Press, 1916).

20. Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts*, 78; Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, 185–90; M. W. Dickie, “Who Practiced Love-Magic in Classical Antiquity and in

Whatever the reasons behind that conundrum, there is no disagreement as to the vividness of the fictional descriptions of female practitioners of magic.

When scholars have written about ancient witches in art, however, more often than not they have written about the “prototypical” depictions of famous magical episodes such as Moses in Pharaoh’s court, Saul and the witch of Endor, Circe, Medea, and Simon Magus, all usually drawn from sixteenth-century and later artistic depictions.²¹ For example, when imagining witches in Greco-Roman art, one typically envisions Circe and Medea from seductive late-nineteenth-century images such as Frederick Sandys’ *Medea* or Edward Burne-Jones’s and J. W. Waterhouse’s depictions of Circe, rather than any classical artistic representation.²² Ancient art depicting these two women—on ceramics, wall paintings, and in stone—is quite different. A review of iconic literary witches from Greco-Roman antiquity points to the fears they inspire and how those correspond to the visual depictions.

CIRCE AND MEDEA IN LITERATURE AND ART

In antiquity, Circe is perhaps best known for her encounter with Odysseus and his crew, as recorded in Book 10 of Homer’s eighth-century BCE *Odyssey*, in which Circe uses memory-impairing *pharmaka lugra* (baneful drugs) and a tap of her wand to transform the crew into pigs.²³ Circe perverts the proper hostess role, serving in place of wholesome nourishment a drug-laced

the Late Roman World?” *Classical Quarterly* 50, no. 2 (2000): 563–83, and idem, *Magic and Magicians*, 175–92.

21. See, for example, Pinson, “Witchcraft/Sorcery.” Zika, *Appearance of Witchcraft*, 156–78; and idem, “The Witch of Endor: Transformations of a Biblical Necromancer in Early Modern Europe,” in *Rituals, Images, and Words: Varieties of Cultural Expression in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. F. W. Kent and C. Zika (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2005), 258, discusses the early modern depictions of the woman of Endor and points out that of the ten known illustrations of her that pre-date the sixteenth century, the earliest is the twelfth century. One rare exception that examines a Greco-Roman depiction of a Greco-Roman witch has been D. Ogden’s, *Greek and Roman Necromancy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 70–73, identification of a female necromancer on a late fourth-century BCE red figure amphora, drawing on M. B. Kerrigan, “A Theme by the CA Painter: Necromancy at Lake Avernus,” *Archaeology News* 9 (1980): 21–32. Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, 3, has commented on the rarity of images of witches in Greco-Roman art.

22. It is instructive to note that even classical scholars who are trying to interest readers in their books often choose as cover artwork the seductive nineteenth-century representations, whether Sandys’ *Medea* on the cover of J. J. Clauss and S. I. Johnston’s edited collection (see n. 29 below) or Ogden’s use of Waterhouse’s *Circe offering the Cup to Ulysses* on the cover of his 2002 Greco-Roman magic sourcebook.

23. *Odyssey* 10.133ff.

meal that literally unmans her guests. Odysseus, equipped with Hermes-supplied countermagic, a *pharmakon esthlon* (good drug), resists Circe's shape-shifting potion and charges her, drawing his sword against her wand—arguably battling *phalloi*, emblematic of their need to sort out the sexual power dynamics between them. A role-restoring sexual encounter between the two follows, before which Circe promises not to render Odysseus cowardly or unmanly while he is naked. Eventually, Circe agrees to transform the crew back into men by applying an ointment to Odysseus's porcine companions. When she does, Homer notes that the crew appear younger than they had been prior to their magical transformation.²⁴ This episode combines concerns about a woman's proper role as a hostess and sexual partner (even if she is superhuman) with the use of *pharmaka* that subvert the ageing process.²⁵

Various elements of this encounter are highlighted on Greek vases and *lekythoi*, from Circe's potion preparation to her wand waving and the transformation of Odysseus's companions. Late sixth- and fifth-century BCE Attic vases feature Circe (sometimes nude) surrounded by Odysseus's transformed companions.²⁶ Several fifth-century BCE vases highlight the moment when Odysseus rushes Circe with his sword. Circe—either dressed in Near-Eastern clothing, emphasizing her otherness, or nude, emphasizing her sexuality—is usually portrayed dropping her ointment jar and wand as Odysseus approaches.²⁷ An early fifth-century BCE black-figured *lekythos* in the National Museum in Athens shows Circe administering her shape-shifting potion directly to Odysseus.²⁸ Circe herself does not appear old in any of these images; but her magic, with what we know from Homer has unmanning and age-altering potential, is central to the depictions.

24. *Odyssey* 10.390ff.

25. Circe's age-bending ointment should perhaps be seen in the context of other age-reversal episodes in the *Odyssey*, the most striking of which being Athena's ageing of Odysseus, wrinkling his skin and destroying his hair, as a part of the plan to deceive and kill the suitors upon his return to Ithaca (13.430–35). When Odysseus bathes after slaughtering the suitors, Athena intervenes and makes him taller and stronger (23.153–58). The difference between the two episodes is one of intention: Circe's motives were malicious and undermined the hero's return, whereas Athena's motives supported the hero.

26. *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* (hereafter *LIMC*) Kirke 5 and 8 [4 and 14 nude] and Pinson, "Witchcraft/Sorcery," 954. For more discussion of this iconography, see M. Le Glay, "Kirke," in *LIMC*, 6.1 (1992): 48–60. *LIMC* is arranged alphabetically by topic and includes discussion and representative examples of motifs/characters in Greco-Roman art.

27. *LIMC* Kirke 19 [nude], 22, 23, 25, and 26.

28. *LIMC* Kirke 17; M. Rochelle, *Mythological and Classical World Art Index* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1991), 60.

While Circe's power, knowledge, sexuality, and otherness are her trademark features, Medea, on the other hand, is most frequently recalled today for killing her children. Artistic representations from antiquity—on Pompeian wall-paintings, on gemstones, and in statuary—illustrate this child-killing.²⁹ While that tragic event is part of the story from antiquity, classical literary references tended to emphasize her use of *pharmaka* (drugs) to achieve her aims. One example of this occurs when, aiding the Argonauts, Medea employs various materials to turn her hair gray and to wrinkle her face and body, consequently appearing as an old woman. In this guise, she terrifies the Colchians and gains access to their king Pelias. After washing off the old age creams and appearing young again, Medea tricks Pelias's daughters into boiling their father in a cauldron by promising the daughters that this cauldron-boiling procedure would make the old king young again (she had previously appeared to restore an old ram to youth in this way) (Diodorus 4.50–52). In a separate age-bending moment described by Ovid, Medea restores Aeson from old age, giving even the god Dionysus ideas about restoring youth.³⁰ Artistic depictions portray these events, including several late sixth- and early fifth-century BCE vases, on which Medea is shown next to the cauldron in which the ram is boiling while an old Pelias sits or stands nearby.³¹ Other Attic vases show Aeson's rejuvenation by Medea.³²

When we see Circe and Medea in classical art, we see some of the highly stylized scenes for which they are well known. As Sheila McNally has argued in her discussion of maenads on pottery, literary and artistic depictions of these frenzied women might differ in emphasis, but artistic depictions may well have played a larger role than literary in "shaping popular imagination."³³ The same could be true with the artistic scenes of Circe and Medea. In conjunction with the literary evidence, we should not underestimate the visual power of the gender subversion that occurs as Circe perverts hostess

29. See *LIMC* Medea [sic] 7–24 for various depictions of the child-killing scene. For more discussion of Medea in art, see M. Schmidt, "Medeia," in *LIMC* 6.1 (1992): 386–98 and C. Sourvinou-Inwood, "Medea at a Shifting Distance: Images and Euripidean Tragedy," in *Medea: Essays on Medea in Myth, Literature, Philosophy, and Art*, ed. J. J. Clauss and S. I. Johnston (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 253–96.

30. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 7.238–94.

31. *LIMC* Pelias 10–12.

32. *LIMC* Iason 58–62; Pinson, "Witchcraft/Sorcery," 954.

33. S. McNally, "The Maenad in Early Greek Art," in *Women in the Ancient World. The Arethusa Papers*, ed. J. Peradotto and J. P. Sullivan (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), 109–10.

duties, brandishes a phallus-like wand, and stands nude before the transformed crew, or as Medea uses age-altering potions and patricidal cauldrons in an inversion of the nourishing meals a woman ought to prepare. Just like the early modern images, fears of what witches could do are manifest in artistic depictions, only on pottery instead of on woodcuts. These witches are not themselves old, but both witches' activities have elements of age-bending, whether Circe's youth-inducing transformation of Odysseus's men or Medea's feigned old age and her promises to restore Pelias's youth. While these episodes and images illustrate possible fears such as age-bending, shape-shifting, and the sexualized threat that classical witches could inspire, they still represent stories of the epic past rather than a real and present danger.

MONSTROUS AND MUNDANE MORTAL WITCHES IN GRECO-ROMAN LITERATURE

What of the more "average," not semidivine, women described in later Roman fiction as witches? While there are many intriguing elements to Roman literary depictions of more mundane women described as witches, some of the more striking and vivid vignettes emphasize their old age and drunkenness.³⁴ In his late first-century BCE writings, Ovid frequently describes old witches. In *Remedia amoris*, he defends his work by calling to mind the trope of the old woman who is a practitioner of magical arts. He claims that "no old woman (*anus*) will disrupt the ground with a disreputable spell" as a result of his advice.³⁵ In other texts, Ovid offers far more elaborate descriptions of old drunk women who know well their magical arts. There is the old woman (*anus*) in his *Fasti* who performs rites to Tacita at the yearly festival of *Feralia*, which paid respects to dead ancestors.³⁶ After an extended discussion of the *Feralia*, Ovid describes how this old woman sits among young girls, corrupting them with a magical ritual that includes incense, threads bound together with lead, mumbling with beans in her mouth, and roasting a fish head that has been pierced with needles. Most interesting for our purposes, the old woman then consumes wine with the girls, taking the larger share for herself. In fact, the old woman is described as drunk (*ebria*) as she departs, saying to the girls as she goes, "we have conquered hostile

34. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians*, 79–91, 164–68, 175–92, 245–47, and 281–84, discusses the literary representation of drunken old women cast as sorceresses, tracing a consistent image from Hellenistic Greece through to the late antique Christian milieu.

35. Ovid, *Remedia amoris* 254.

36. Ovid, *Fasti* 2.571ff.

tongues and enemy mouths.”³⁷ Such a comment brings to mind Keith Thomas’s and Alan Macfarlane’s assertions that accusations of witchcraft against impoverished old women in early modern England sprang from neighborly and generational conflict and a fear of what mischief envious grumbling old women might be capable of, in response to being turned away when in need.³⁸ Ovid’s gathering of an old woman with young girls, attempting to banish hostile words, points to similar social tensions.³⁹

In addition to this nameless old woman, Ovid’s narrator in the *Amores*

37. *Fasti* 2.582.

38. K. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Scribner, 1971), 564–68; A. Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 158–77, esp. 172–74; and C. Garrett, “Women and Witches: Patterns of Analysis,” *Signs* 3 (1977): 462.

39. Although not explicitly linked to magic in Roman sources, it is worth mentioning another drunken woman who appears in Ovid’s *Fasti*, namely, the *pota anus* who drags an old man along in the procession for the rural festival of Anna Perenna held annually on March 15 (*Fasti* 3.541–42). Ovid debates, without providing a conclusion, who this drunken woman is: sister of Dido (3.543–656), the old woman at Bovillae who makes cakes for plebs who have revolted against patrician rule (3.661–74), or a frustrated seducer of the god Mars (3.676–95). Verrius Flaccus, preparing his *Fasti praenestini* at the same time Ovid was writing his *Fasti*, mentions his own parading *anus ebria*. Flaccus is preserved through the eighth-century deacon Paulus, who summarizes Festus (second century CE), who is in turn summarizing Verrius Flaccus. Paulus mentions, in his alphabetically arranged epitome, a “Petreia” (*Pauli Excerpta* 314, in Festus [ed. Wallace Lindsay, Teubner 1913, 281]). In Paulus, Petreia is the name for a woman who leads a festival procession in colonies and towns imitating a drunken old woman (*anus ebria*). She is named Petreia, according to Paulus, “for the blight of the fields, namely rocks (*petris*).” It would appear that this drunken old woman, given her title, provides an apotropaic role in such rural festivals, protecting fields from rocks that would make farming difficult. Although Paulus does not mention the connection, it is worth noting that the earliest mentions of magic in the Roman context are similarly agricultural in nature, namely the prohibition in the fifth-century BCE *Twelve Tables* against enchanting away a neighbor’s crops (*Twelve Tables* 8b). What do the *pota anus* in Anna Perenna’s festival and the *anus ebria* named Petreia have to do with this paper’s argument about witchy women in art and literature? Perhaps nothing, but there is certainly an intriguing mix of evidence here, with two rural festivals that include an *anus ebria* in the procession, one of whom is even nicknamed Stone-Lady. Amy Richlin in “Carrying Water in a Sieve: Class and the Body in Roman Women’s Religion,” in *Women and Goddess Traditions*, ed. Karen King (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 333–35, has discussed Paulus ex Festo as an example of the vexing fragmentary nature of the evidence for women’s participation in Roman cult. She compares the existing sources on Roman women and religion to “tattered lacework.” Arguments such as the one presented here about drunken women in literature and statuary are a part of making sense of that “lacy data.”

describes Dipsas, a procuress/bawd (*lena*), whom he overhears giving advice to the woman he loves. The name Dipsas, from the Greek word meaning thirst, connotes her proclivity toward drunkenness. Ovid describes this woman as old (*anus*) and as such a drunk that she has never been sober when the sun comes up. Furthermore, Ovid endows her with the panoply of skills possessed by every superwitch: she knows love potions and the uses of herbs, she can manipulate the heavens, she can shape-shift into an owl, and she can raise the dead.⁴⁰ In his rage at the advice this *lena* is offering his would-be lover, the narrator recounts wanting to pull out her sparse white hair and attack her wrinkled cheeks and her double-pupiled eyes, teary with wine.⁴¹ Once again, a drunken old woman, this one a procuress giving advice to a young woman, is described as a witch. Dipsas is not alone as an old procuress witch. Ovid draws on examples from Latin love elegy when constructing this memorable character and later we will examine other forerunners of this model from Hellenistic comedy as well.⁴²

Horace, Ovid's contemporary, features his own leading witch, Canidia, whose name is derived perhaps from *canities*, meaning hoariness, thus pointing to her age.⁴³ Canidia and her friends the elderly Sagana, Veia, and Folia undertake a number of witchy activities vividly described by Horace.⁴⁴ They gather magical supplies in a graveyard and kill a young boy to use his liver in a love potion. Horace describes Canidia with black dress, bare feet, unbound hair, and pale skin.⁴⁵ In one scene, Canidia and Sagana tear apart a lamb with their teeth, an image reminiscent of Bacchic frenzy. When they are startled by the flatulence of the Priapus statue observing their gathering of magical ingredients, Canidia's teeth fall out, suggesting that they are actually dentures.⁴⁶ Elsewhere, her wild hair is entwined with vipers, her nails long, and

40. Ovid, *Amores* 1.8.1–18.

41. *Amores* 1.8.111–12.

42. Tibullus 1.5.39–59 and Propertius 4.5.1–18 and 63–78 (which mentions in particular the procuress' wrinkled neck, her thinning hair and her gapped teeth).

43. E. Oliensis, "Canidia, Canicula, and the decorum of Horace's *Epode*," *Arethusa* 24 (1991): 107–39.

44. Just as Dipsas's name points to inebriation and Canidia's points to her age, Sagana's name points to her witchiness, since the name means old woman, with *saga* often used as a term meaning "witch" in literature.

45. Horace, *Satire* 1.8.24–26.

46. Although there is some humor to this scene, as the toothless Canidia and wigless Sagana flee the flatulent Priapus, given the truly terrifying aspect of what the women do, the tenor of such humor is tension-relieving catharsis rather than dismissively comic. Given the apotropaic effectiveness of the phallus against the evil eye (see, e.g., A. J. B. Wace, "Grotesques and the Evil Eye," *Annual of the British School at*

her teeth slate-grey (*dente livido*), perhaps another sign of old age.⁴⁷ Most interestingly, when Horace reviles Canidia for her effect on him, he specifically contrasts how when Circe returned Odysseus's crew to human form they were restored to their former good looks and dignity, while as a result of Canidia's attentions, his youth has fled, his bones rest on yellow skin, and his hair is white from her perfumes.⁴⁸ Lucan, in his first-century CE *Bellum civile*, presents another superwitch; the Thessalian Erictho, who is old with unkempt hair interlaced with vipers, is an expert at necromancy, and steals bits from the bodies of the dead, gnawing off their flesh with her teeth (more Bacchic imagery), in order to accomplish her desired ends.⁴⁹ A rough contemporary of Lucan, Petronius tells the story in his *Satyricon* of an old woman (*anacula*), who is a Priapus-priestess named Oenothea, or Wine-Goddess, performing a ritual designed to enhance a man's sexual performance.⁵⁰ Continuing the epic echoes, in love letters this character with the erectile disfunction takes on an epithet of Odysseus and the unsatisfied woman assumes the name Circe. Later, another episode depicts Oenothea inserting a pepper- and nettle-rubbed leather dildo into the impotent man's anus.⁵¹

These Roman authors clearly emphasize the age and frightening behavior of female practitioners of magical arts. In the case of Ovid, these drunken old women exert dangerous influence over young women. Canidia subverts appropriate sexual relations. Erictho intervenes in the male-controlled civic sphere, with her magic performed for Sextus Pompeius in his treasonous,

Athens 10 [1903–4]: 110) and the witches who might cast it, Priapus's ability to scare off Canidia and Sagana should not be surprising.

47. Horace, *Epode* 5.47.

48. *Epode* 17.15–23.

49. Lucan, *Bellum civile* 6.413–830.

50. Petronius, *Satyricon* 130–38.

51. This nettle-dildo prescription is a direct inversion of spells in the Greek magical papyri which aim to correct love and womb problems by inserting a medicine-coated dildo or penis into the woman's vagina. For such love spells, see, e.g., PDM (*Papyri Demoticae Magicae*) xiv.1046–47, a spell to make a woman love her husband, in which the man coats his phallus with a mixture of acacia, fruit, and honey and then has sex with her; or PDM xiv.1047–48, which coats the phallus with foam from a stallion's mouth. For womb spells, see, e.g., PDM xiv.961–65, a spell to stop menorrhagia, which includes coating the phallus with a mixture of myrrh, garlic, gall of a gazelle, and old scented wine; or PDM xiv.970–77, which uses a medicine-coated strip of linen inserted in and out of a woman "like a phallus" in an attempt to stop a flow of blood from the vagina. For an English translation of these demotic Greek spells, see H. D. Betz, *Greek Magical Papyri in Translation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 242–45.

anti-Caesarian, pre-Pharsalus preparations, albeit with an arguably bland and anticlimactic prophecy. Oenoe literally penetrates the man, overthrowing expected gender roles in sex and magic-use. Apart from these fears, the brief passages from Ovid, Horace, Lucan, and Petronius highlight the vivid contemporary imagination of what a witch would look like: she is old and often drunk, with thinning hair and wrinkled skin.⁵²

The depiction of the old woman who practices magical arts reaches its height in Apuleius's mid-second-century CE depiction of Meroe.⁵³ This innkeeper shares her name with a town located between the fifth and the sixth cataracts of the Nile.⁵⁴ Egypt carries traditional associations with magic, second only to Thessaly, the home to Erictho (among others) and the place where Meroe resides in Apuleius's story. Apuleius describes Meroe as an old woman (*anus*) and a leathery-skinned whore. She performs necromantic rites in a ditch, and brags about these feats while drunk. This drunken, leathery-skinned, old innkeeper's activities are drawn in rich detail, from her sexual promiscuity, to her vengeful treatment of competitors in business and in love, and her murder of a man who has jilted her. Notably in the jilter's death scene, Meroe and her sidekick Panthia consider "tearing [him] apart like bacchantes."⁵⁵ As with Canidia and Sagana's lamb-ripping episode, the frenzied activity of drunken maenads appears in a magical vignette. Shortly after the story of Meroe, Lucius meets Pamphile, whose magical skills include love potions and shape-shifting, to name just a few.

Key for recognizing that Apuleius could help us find a relationship between literary and artistic depictions of witches and, in fact, suggestive that

52. Working through this litany of literary witches, it is striking that the most famous Hellenistic depiction, Theocritus's Simaetha (*Idyll* 2), is not old. One major difference that might account for this apparent discontinuity is that she seems to be the end-user of a love spell and not a practitioner/mistress of multiple magical arts as these old Roman witches are.

53. Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 1.7–13. The most foundational work on the narrative structure employed by Apuleius is still J. J. Winkler, *Auctor and Actor: A Narratological Reading of Apuleius' Golden Ass* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985). Apuleius is a particularly intriguing source for images of witchcraft, given that he himself was brought to trial on charges of witchcraft. His *Apologia*, a defense of himself against charges of magic, is the nearest example to a witchcraft trial transcript to survive from antiquity.

54. The town of Meroe is described by the late first-century CE satirist Juvenal as being a centerpiece of extreme religious devotion by women who journey there on their knees to bring back water for the temple of Isis in the Campus Martius (*Satire* 6.526–29).

55. Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 1.13.

we should look for one, is a scene that is bracketed by Meroe on one end and Pamphile on the other. In it, Apuleius appears to reveal his belief in the ability of statuary to stimulate the imagination and to strike fear into the hearts of men whose hearts were already beating faster from fears of magical arts. At the beginning of Book 2 of the *Metamorphoses*, the protagonist Lucius, having just heard the full tale of Meroe and her powers, is full of awe for the magical arts. Apuleius puts these words into Lucius' mouth:

There was nothing in the city that was as I, gazing at it, thought it was; but absolutely everything had been transformed into another shape by funereal muttering, so that the rocks that I bumped into were as petrified humans . . . I imagined that the statues and busts would begin to move.⁵⁶

The Thessalian backdrop in which this story takes place, commonly associated with witchcraft, has (over)stimulated Lucius's imagination and made him fear that the artwork was magically possessed. Incidentally, Apuleius and/or Lucius are not alone in fearing that inanimate objects might be magically vivified. Lucian, composing his *Philopseudes* at about the same time as Apuleius was writing, drew on contemporary ideas that spirits could breathe life into objects such as statues. In fact, for Lucian, magicians are often the ones who are able to animate such objects.⁵⁷ Similarly, in the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* dating from the second to the fourth centuries CE, Simon Magus is reported to have claimed—among many other skills—that he could animate statues so that those who see them will think that they are men.⁵⁸

Returning to Apuleius's tale, Lucius reveals the insight into his active imagination of vivified statues just before he enters a house with an impressive statue group in its reception area. Apuleius describes in detail the scene, including a statue of Diana, carved from Parian marble, with hounds at her sides. Also included in the group is a statue of Actaeon just before his transformation into a stag in punishment for his crime of gazing upon the bathing goddess. As Lucius stares in awe at this group, his hostess links the statue of

56. *Metamorphoses* 2.1.

57. D. Felton, "The Animated Statues of Lucian's *Philopseudes*," *Classical Bulletin* 77 (2001): 84, argues that the tone of the *Philopseudes*, i.e., *Lover of Lies*, suggests that Lucian himself probably did not buy into this idea, but many in his audience would have. Ibid., 76, discusses spells from the PGM (*Papyri Graecae Magicae*) for animating objects.

58. Pseudo-Clement, *Recognitiones* 2.9.63, in *Patrologiae Cursus Completus Series Graeco-Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne, 161 vols. (Paris, 1857–66), 1:1252.

Diana to Pamphile when the hostess, swearing by the goddess, warns him against Pamphile's wicked arts and villainous allurements.⁵⁹ This statue group foreshadows Lucius's transformation into an ass through his misapplication of Pamphile's magical ointments, and it shows Apuleius's skill with ekphrasis (detailed literary description of an artwork).

As these two passages demonstrate, Apuleius clearly has statues on his mind in the first two books of his *Metamorphoses*, in which he so vividly describes his witches, Meroe and Pamphile. Scholars have noted the importance of Apuleius's ekphrasis when describing the Diana/Actaeon statue group. N. Slater has argued that Apuleius's discussion of the Diana/Actaeon group shows "how deftly he can manipulate the inheritance of the art historical tradition for his own literary purposes."⁶⁰ Discussing ekphrasis in other classical contexts, scholars have noted that arguments about ekphrasis should not focus too much on linking descriptions to an explicit work of art but should allow for poetic imagination.⁶¹ For ekphrasis to work, it requires that both writer and reader share a repertoire of images.⁶² Others have argued for the focalizing ability of ekphrasis to put the reader into the point of view of the narrator.⁶³

From these arguments about how ekphrasis works both in Apuleius and generally, we can draw a few conclusions. First, it is clear that Apuleius proved himself, in the Diana/Actaeon description, to be highly ekphrastic, drawing on a rich repertoire of artistic types that his audience would have known. Second, he need not be describing specific statues known today to be drawing on a statue type recognizable to his contemporaries. Third, if Apuleius is ekphrastic with Diana/Actaeon, he might also have been drawing on a recognizable type when crafting the witches he so vividly described in close proximity to the ekphrasis of Diana/Actaeon. If this is the case, Apuleius's description of his witches may help us to know what to look for in an artistic depiction of witches and might help us to understand how a viewer

59. Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 2.5.

60. N. W. Slater, "Passion and Petrification: The Gaze in Apuleius," *Classical Philology* 93 (1998): 46.

61. A. Laird, "Sounding out Ekphrasis: Art and Text in Catullus 64," *Journal of Roman Studies* 83 (1993): 19.

62. T. Yacobi, "Pictorial Models and Narrative Ekphrasis," *Poetics Today* 16 (1995): 599–649; H. Scheub, "Oral Narrative Process and the Use of Models," *New Literary History* 6 (1975): 353–77.

63. D. P. Fowler, "Narrate and Describe: The Problem of Ekphrasis," *Journal of Roman Studies* 81 (1991): 28.

may have felt when caught in the focal point of the gaze of a Meroe or a Pamphile, or of an artistic rendering that would call their witchiness to mind.

To sum up this discussion of literary witches, the Diana/Actaeon scene demonstrates Apuleius's awareness of the power of statue types, and indicates that he may have crafted in words his own witches, Meroe and Pamphile, with an awareness of how that sculpting might look in other artistic media. From fictional depictions dating from the early first century BCE through the mid-second century CE, from Ovid, Horace, Lucan, Petronius, and Apuleius, we have seen a graphic rendering of old, drunken female practitioners of magic. Clearly Apuleius draws on a broad repertoire of images, so perhaps his vivid depiction of witches in close proximity to the technical ekphrasis of Diana/Actaeon likewise draws on a contemporary statue type reminiscent of the fears that witches such as Meroe and Pamphile, not to mention Dipsas, Canidia, and Erictho, inspired. Drawing from these vivid literary depictions, the statue type that Apuleius, and his audience, had in mind may have been one like that of the old destitutes, in particular the *anus ebria*, or drunken old woman.

"OLD DESTITUTES" IN GRECO-ROMAN ART

The statue type of the "old destitutes,"⁶⁴ traditionally dated by art historians to the Hellenistic period on the basis of its realistic, rococo style, might provide a counterpart to these literary imaginings and may have been what Roman writers were thinking of when they crafted their witches. Examples of the "old destitute" type include the old woman in the collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the drunken old woman type (*anus ebria*) in the Munich Glyptothek and the Capitoline Museum in Rome.⁶⁵ Scholars

64. The most significant studies of the topic of old women in Greco-Roman art, including the type of the drunken old woman, have been undertaken by J. W. Salomonson, "Der Trunkenbold und die trunkene Alte," *BABesch* 55 (1980): 65–106; S. Pfisterer-Haas, *Darstellungen alter Frauen in der griechischen Kunst* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1989); and P. Zanker, *Die trunkene Alte* (Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1989). While Salomonson has seen the depictions as a sign of the deterioration of living circumstances in the period, Pfisterer-Haas has mapped a more thorough study of the old women in artistic depictions from Greece, ranging from nurses on vases, reliefs and terra cottas, and old women on grave reliefs. Pfisterer-Haas, *Darstellungen alter Frauen*, 69–77, discusses old women and ritual (although she uses the term magic fairly loosely), in particular the potential amuletic use of terra cotta figurines of old women and their potential connection with Demeter-cult.

65. Another example that might have fit this type is that of the old shepherdess, whose gender is now disputed, in the *Palazzo dei Conservatori* at Rome. J. J. Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age* (New York: Cambridge University Press 1986), 142–43,

have argued that most of the surviving examples of this type are Roman copies of Hellenistic originals. Even if these are copies of earlier statue forms, E. K. Gazda has successfully problematized the assumption that Roman copies are somehow less inspired, arguing that the copies could have their own meaning in their Roman context, entirely apart from that of their original Greek one. Gazda notes that we “must continue to ask how the copy functioned in its Roman setting and for its Roman audience.”⁶⁶ It stands to reason that Roman copies of the Hellenistic drunken old woman form were made because the form had meaning for a Roman audience, and it is important to formulate an understanding of what Romans would have thought when they gazed at these statues of the haggard elderly.

Art historian J. J. Pollitt describes the old woman at the Metropolitan Museum in New York (Figure 3) as having a “stooped posture, wrinkled face, furrowed neck, and sagging breast.”⁶⁷ Indeed, her right breast is exposed, as her clothing hangs shabbily on her hunched frame. She holds in her left hand a bucket filled with produce and three chickens. Brunilde Sismondo Ridgway further describes this character as having a face “wrinkled and emaciated, a study in ugliness and old age.”⁶⁸ Gisela Richter notes that “the stoop of the body, the sunken eyes, the wrinkled face, the furrowed skin on neck and chest, the open mouth are rendered with great truth to nature.”⁶⁹

Does such a woman match the visual clues provided to us by the fiction of the first and second centuries CE? Could Roman writers have been thinking of such a form when they crafted their literary depictions? Her stooped posture and shriveled features certainly call to mind the age of the magically skilled women in Ovid, Lucan, Petronius, and Apuleius. The items she holds in her hand could well be the ingredients an old hag might be thought to use in her magical ministrations. Granted chicken and produce could be an inno-

identified this statue as a shepherdess, whose emaciated frame is hunched, whose sagging right breast is exposed, and in whose right hand a lamb is carried, but B. S. Ridgway, *Hellenistic Sculpture I: The Styles of ca. 331–200 BC* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 333, disagrees.

66. E. K. Gazda, “Roman Sculpture and the Ethos of Emulation: Reconsidering Repetition,” *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 97 (1995): 147.

67. Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age*, 142; J. R. Mertens, *Metropolitan Museum of Art: Greece and Rome* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987), 74, pl. 54.

68. B. S. Ridgway, *Fifth Century Styles in Greek Sculpture* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981), 231.

69. G. M. A. Richter, *Catalogue of Greek Sculptures from the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1954), 222.



Figure 3: “Old Market Woman” at the Metropolitan Museum of Art
(Image courtesy of ARTstor).

cent dinner and need not on their own indicate magical intent, but a viewer already suspicious of the woman’s age could certainly imagine more grisly uses. The shriveled and exposed breast is suggestive of the subversion of traditional gender roles that fictional witches assumed when mothers killed children (Medea), old women raised the dead to life rather than birthing a

child (Erichtho), and Priapus priestesses penetrated men with dildos (Oenothea).⁷⁰ Many scholars have noted the ivy in the old woman's hair and attempted to connect it with women involved in drunken Dionysiac devotion.⁷¹ Yet while Ridgway suggests that such women "depict devotees of Dionysus who exemplify the dangers of excessive indulgence and the consequent disorderly behavior, subverting the implicit role-model their age should make them,"⁷² I would suggest that the Dionysiac clue of the ivy wreath is also consistent with the frequent Bacchic references in the literary imagination of witches, a different sort of disorderly, excessive, and subversive old woman. Recall the Bacchic elements of the Canidia (lamb-ripping), Erichtho (flesh-gnawing), and Meroe (rip-the-jilter-apart) episodes. Additionally, given that Priapus is related to Bacchus (his son, in some mythic traditions), the Priapus priestess Oenothea and the evil eye-repelling flatulent statue that startles Canidia also offer Bacchic connections to witchcraft. Indeed, the terrifying behavior of Dionysiac revelers, themselves drunk in their ecstatic revelry, and that of deadly witches are clearly linked to one another in Roman literature and perhaps in the minds of those viewing the statuary as well.

Even more convincing as a witch than the old market woman, however, is the *anus ebria* seen in examples in the Munich Glyptothek and the Capitoline Museum at Rome (Figures 4). Pollitt has connected this statue type to Egypt, on the basis of her clothes.⁷³ If the Egyptian identification for this old woman

70. L. Bonfante, "Nursing Mothers in Classical Art," in *Naked Truths: Women, Sexuality, and Gender in Classical Art and Archaeology*, ed. A. O. Koloski-Ostrow and C. L. Lyons (New York: Routledge, 1997), 174–96, discusses the infrequency with which the breast is bared for nursing in Greco-Roman art, determining that the breast's iconic power is probably why it was rarely displayed in such contexts. B. Cohen, "Divesting the Female Breast of Clothes in Classical Sculpture," in *Naked Truths*, 66–92, argues for the violent contexts, apart from the incidental exposure due to athletics, prostitution, or maenadic dancing, in which the breast often appears in classical sculpture, namely on female victims of violence. Cohen does not include the *anus ebria* breasts in her discussion.

71. Ridgway, *Hellenistic Sculpture I*, 333; Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age*, 143.

72. B. S. Ridgway, *Hellenistic Sculpture II: The Styles of ca. 200–100 B.C.* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), 282.

73. Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age*, 143, compares her clothes to garments worn by Egyptian women in Theocritus's *Idyll* 15 and he identifies the wine jug as a *lagynos*. Ridgway, *Hellenistic Sculpture I*, 337, and O. Waldhauer, "Myron's *Anus Ebria* and the Drunken Woman in Munich," *AJA* 50 (1946): 243, dispute the *lagynos* identification. Theocritus's own Alexandrian residence would have given him the opportunity to observe both the Ptolemaic festival of which this garment is arguably reminiscent, and the actions of women who performed the magical arts, if Theocritus's ritual



Figure 4: *Anus Ebria*
[photo by author (inv. MC. 299/S, Roma, Musei Capitolini)].

is correct, it would certainly be consistent with the connection of magic to Egypt, seen already with Meroe in Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*, but also with the necromantic Egyptian mother who in Heliodorus's *Ethiopica* raises her own son from the dead.⁷⁴ The Munich woman has been described by Pollitt as "spectral," and indeed her visage conjures up a sense of trepidation even in the modern viewer.⁷⁵ She crouches with much of her right breast and emaciated chest exposed. Her head is thrown back and her mouth is slightly open as if she is moaning. A viewer walking by is caught in the *anus ebria*'s piercing, desperate stare (Figure 5).

When considering whether or not such a statue would call to mind the image of the witch to a Roman observer, one cannot help but recall Plutarch's comments on the evil eye, which is so often associated with witches.⁷⁶ Plutarch writes of envy (*phthonos*):

expert, Simaetha, is any clue (Luck, *Arcana Mundi*, 67–68). These two statues, the one from New York and that from Munich, show a diversity of social class that is similarly suggested in the literary depictions of female practitioners of magic. While the old market woman from New York does not appear to be well-off, the crouched old woman from Munich wears earrings, a ring on her left hand, and a garment that all suggest that she is not poor, but may well be of the upper class. Similarly in fiction, Ovid's old woman performing rites to Tacita and Lucan's Erictho are from the underbelly of society, while Apuleius's Meroe is a successful innkeeper and Pamphile is the well-to-do wife of a prominent citizen.

74. Heliodorus, *Ethiopica* 6.12–15.

75. Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age*, 143. Both Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age*, 143 and 311 n. 13; and Ridgway, *Hellenistic Sculpture I*, 337, dismiss earlier associations of this statue with the *anus ebria* of Myron listed by Pliny in *Natural History* 36.4. Whether or not one identifies this statue with Myron's *anus ebria*, for our purposes here it is interesting to note that the context for Pliny's comment on Myron's *anus ebria* is a list of artists who are good at sculpting marble. In the same section, Pliny mentions a statue of Hecate (a goddess associated closely with witchcraft) at Ephesus by Menestratus. K. Cokayne, "Abuse of Old Women," in idem, *Experiencing Old Age in Ancient Rome* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 147, argues that these statues must bear some connection to reality, but links them rather to the harsh reality of old age and the potential that the elderly may have sought solace in drink.

76. For an overview of the evil eye in Greco-Roman antiquity, see Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts*, 222–26 and 312 (for related bibliography). K. W. Slane and M. W. Dickie, "A Knidian Phallic Vase from Corinth," *Hesperia* 62 (1993): 486 and n. 15, rightly note that the "Evil Eye of Envy" is short-hand for a "constellation of beliefs that differ in greater or lesser measure from one another. What they all have in common is the conviction that envy is able to harm by supernatural means." It is to that commonality—within this complex nexus of beliefs that would have varied widely throughout the Roman world, in both time and space—that I refer when I mention the fear of the evil eye that might have emanated from these *anus ebria*



Figure 5: Detail of Capitoline *anus ebria* gaze
[photo by author (Roma, Musei Capitolini)].

This wickedness [namely, envy], painters attempt to represent faithfully when sketching the face of envy. So when those possessed with envy set their eyes firmly on someone, those eyes, being positioned nearest the soul and drawing out evil, assault people as if with bewitched/poisonous arrows; I believe it is neither illogical or unbelievable if they stir up those upon whom they gaze.⁷⁷

Plutarch, conveniently for our purposes, draws a parallel with how artists represent the evil eye in order to explain the discomfort one feels when caught in an evil-eyer's gaze.⁷⁸ Might a viewer have felt the evil eye's weight

statues. For the complexity of this belief system with respect to the evil eye, see also, M. W. Dickie, "Invidia," *Classical Review* 49 (1999): 363–64.

77. Plutarch, *Moralia* 680c ff.

78. One artist's depiction of Envy is related by the second century CE author Lucian, *Calumniae non temere credendum*, 5, who describes a painting by Apelles in which Slander is accompanied by Envy, who is represented as a pale, deformed, and disease-wasted man, with piercing eyes; see M. W. Dickie, "Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 2.760–64," *American Journal of Philology* 96 (1975): 379–80. It should not be overlooked that this depiction is embedded in a complex tale of intrigue between two male painters at the court of Ptolemy, so the gender of Envy (*Phthonos* or *Invidia*) in this one painting may not be prescriptive, but merely suitable to the tale at hand.

emanating from the envious, desperate face of the *anus ebria*? Antiquity certainly linked evil gaze with the fear of witchcraft. In the Plutarch passage, the word used to describe the poisoned arrows comes from the same root as *pharmakis*, a word often translated as witch. The natural historian Pliny described in detail evil-eyers who had double pupils.⁷⁹ One of the features Ovid stressed in his vivid description of the old witchy Dipsas was her double-pupiled eyes, hence emphasizing the creepiness of her stare. There is nothing to suggest that the *anus ebria* statue type had double pupils, but clearly her stare is frightening and taps into fears of the witch's gaze.⁸⁰ M. W. Dickie has pointed out the connection between envy—in particular *invidia*—and emaciation; namely, that envy is a wasting disease, marked by lethargy.⁸¹ The *anus ebria* statues, crouched and emaciated, as well as the previously discussed old, emaciated woman at the Met, certainly fit this model. In this context, recall also the crouched Tacita-worshipping old woman, concerned about the mumbling of others, and Lucius's fears of the funereal muttering that he imagined had petrified humans. Just as Keith Thomas and Alan Macfarlane have described witchcraft accusations in early modern Europe resulting from fears of envious, curse-grumbling old women, Roman viewers of such a statue might begin to feel quite uneasy when caught in the gaze of this old woman whose stare transfixes and whose mouth is open to mutter a curse.⁸²

It is not just the fixed stare, emaciation, and gaping mouth of the old woman that suggest this identification. Between her legs and arms, this *anus*

79. Pliny, *Natural History* 7.16–18.

80. On envious women, see also S. I. Johnston, *Restless Dead: Encounters Between the Living and the Dead in Ancient Greece* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 192–99, who describes the *aorai*, restless dead who attack women of reproductive age. Such ghosts, because of their own failure to reproduce, attack women and children. Johnston reviews several examples of these envious dead, especially Lamia and Mormo, and offers a lively discussion of the palpable concern over the evil eye. Continuing the early modern connection mentioned earlier in this article, Koerner, *Moment of Self-Portraiture*, 330, discusses how the concern about the evil gaze of witches is similarly manifest in the *Malleus maleficarum* and in Baldung's art. Koerner draws a connection between the *Malleus*'s admonition that a witch be led backwards into the presence of an inquisitor in order not to bewitch a judge with her gaze and the visual significance of the witch's gazing directly at the viewer in Baldung's *Three Witches* (1514).

81. Dickie, "Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 2.760–64," 378–90.

82. One could also interpret her open mouth as a yawn. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians*, 246–47, drawing on a ritual in Heliodorus's *Ethiopica* and more recent parallels from Crete, has discussed how yawning may have been used by magic-practicing old women in rituals to remove the evil eye from one suffering its ill effects.

ebria embraces a wine amphora, suggesting her drunkenness. The neck of the jug juts out from her crotch like an erect phallus, evoking the gender-bending that occurs when witches take on the masculine, penetrative role in erotic relationships. This gender inversion is even more explicit when one considers that one Greco-Roman understanding of the womb was that it was an upturned jug.⁸³ This old hag's womb is not only dried up, it is external and turned on end—typical of the witch's ability to turn the world upside down.⁸⁴

To return to the early modern witch imagery again, the classical *anus ebria* form may have provided some inspiration for the witches depicted so famously by Hans Baldung Grien in his *Group of Female Witches* (1510). The *anus ebria* at Munich and at Rome, or some other copy, may have been on Baldung's mind when he created this image (Figure 2) drawing on classical references in the early sixteenth century. The classical *anus ebria* (Figure 4) is seen completely unclothed and in a broader imaginative context, anchoring the bottom right-hand corner of Baldung's sixteenth-century sabbath. If Baldung, drawing on a classical repertoire—from either literature or art or a complex interplay of both—saw this image as a witch, perhaps we should rethink its classical context as well. Charles Zika has explored in great detail the role of cauldrons in the new visual codes for witchcraft in the sixteenth century.⁸⁵ Zika draws on the association of food exchange with sexual exchange to argue that the cauldron links female roles such as food preparation and society-nurturing with women's sexuality.⁸⁶ While the language of witchcraft is complex and has many roots, it would be unfortunate to miss such a potentially direct inspiration for Baldung's amphora/cauldron, namely, its appearance between the legs of the *anus ebria* of Greco-Roman antiquity.

83. For the uterus as an up-turned jug, see C. Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1950), 275 no. 140; and A. A. Barb, "Diva Matrix: A Faked Gnostic Intaglio in the possession of P. P. Rubens and the Iconology of a Symbol," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 16 (1953): 193–238.

84. The manner by which the *anus ebria* clutches the neck of the amphora may also be another connection back to depictions of the evil eye and her potential witchiness. Slane and Dickie, "A Knidian Phallic Vase from Corinth," 486–96, have pointed out the connected motifs of the phallus and of self-strangulation in evil eye iconography. While the old woman does not strangle herself, she does have a stranglehold grip on the amphora that I argue here is a phallus substitution.

85. Zika, *Appearance of Witchcraft*, 70–98; and idem, *Exorcising our Demons*, 274–81.

86. Zika, *Appearance of Witchcraft*, 74.

Given that old age features so prominently in statuary and literary depictions of witches in antiquity, it is worthwhile to consider briefly the topic of women and old age in antiquity. Amy Richlin, in her discussion of the “Invective against Women in Roman Satire,” has offered perhaps the most vivid description of the physical flaws of the old woman, the “fear and disgust” her ugliness might have aroused, and the connection between old women and witchcraft.⁸⁷ Jan Bremmer has discussed the various roles (including, among others, midwife, participant in Bacchic ritual, and nurse) accorded to old women in Greece, as their postmenopausal status made them less of a concern for the men in their family. Bremmer also discusses the nature of the invective against these old women, including their drunkenness and the link between old age and witchcraft.⁸⁸ Other scholars have noted the connections between old age and drunkenness, mentioning the *anus ebria* statue type, and some, like Richlin, have discussed the connection between old age, drunkenness, and literary witches.⁸⁹ Tim Parkin offers useful comments on the social marginality of both old women and old men. He describes old women as “doubly marginalized” because of both their gender and age.⁹⁰ Richlin has noted the otherness of old women. Clearly, the elderly evoked feelings of discomfort in their contemporaries. What none of these scholars has done, however, is to suggest that the *anus ebria* statue type, rather than just tapping

87. A. Richlin, “Invective Against Women in Roman Satire,” *Arethusa* 17 (1984): 71.

88. J. Bremmer, “The Old Women of Ancient Greece,” in *Sexual Asymmetry: Studies in Ancient Society*, ed. J. Blok and P. Mason (Amsterdam: J. C. Gieben, 1987), 191–216. L. Pratt, “The Old Women of Ancient Greece and the Homeric Hymn to Demeter,” *TAPA* 130 (2000): 41–65, offers a challenge to Bremmer’s presentation of the harshly negative view of old women.

89. Cokayne, “Abuse of Old Women,” 134–52, discusses the fear of and invective against old women, including the stereotype of the witch, as well as the statue type of the *anus ebria*. She does not see the statue type of the *anus ebria* as embodying the fear of witches but rather the sadness of old age seeking solace in drink. T. G. Parkin, *Old Age in the Roman World: A Cultural and Social History* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 81–87, uses Juvenal’s tenth satire, among other sources, to parse the invective against old men, in particular and their wrinkled skin, their balding heads, and their toothless mouths. He also notes the tendency to stereotype the old woman as “disgusting, haggard, stinking, toothless, and sex-crazed fellatrix,” as “brothel madams,” as “superstitious crones or even evil witches,” and as “alcoholics.” Parkin even notes the representation of alcoholics in the statuary, but does not argue, as this article does, that this combined stereotype of witch and drunk would be at play in the mind of the viewer of a statue of the *anus ebria* type.

90. Parkin, *Old Age in the Roman World*, 241–47.

into a general anxiety about old age, might have been just as likely if not more likely to have been seen by her contemporaries as a witch.

Who would commission this kind of statuary, whether it is imagined simply as an old woman or as a witch? Pollitt suggests that “it could be argued . . . that all of these aged figures were created in the Roman period to satisfy the bucolic yet down to earth sensitivities of men whose minds were conditioned by reading Horace and Virgil.”⁹¹ Pollitt notes that if these realistic statues are Hellenistic, they could be for private collectors, for festivals, or “expressions of the philosophical predilections of their owners,” but regardless they “reflect a peculiar mixture of poetic fantasy and social realism.”⁹² But following Gazda’s warning to look for a Roman context for their use of copies, Pollitt’s reasoning is less satisfying. Brunilde Ridgway has attributed this statue type to “the propensity for the ugly inherent in Roman sculpture” and that “the setting for such realistic portrayals of old age can be more readily visualized as a Roman estate.”⁹³ Ridgway sets forth the possibility that “all these representations of old women are neither copies of fifth century works nor replicas of Hellenistic originals, but rather Classicizing Roman creations.”⁹⁴ While Ridgway suggests that these old women “could appear ludicrous but also sinister—a message that would not be lost on the viewers of the early Imperial period who had seen Julia, Augustus’s daughter, banned for her drunken and dissolute conduct,”⁹⁵ I would argue that these viewers would have received a similar and in fact more coherent and convincing “message” from contemporary fiction that depicted old, drunken witches with startlingly similar and sinister verbal imagery.

This frightening message would have been received differently depending on the gender of the viewer.⁹⁶ Men, who most likely would have bought

91. Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age*, 144.

92. Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age*, 146.

93. Ridgway, *Fifth Century Styles in Greek Sculpture*, 234.

94. Ridgway, *Fifth Century Styles in Greek Sculpture*, 232. Ridgway sticks with the first-century CE date in *Hellenistic Sculpture I*, 338 and *Hellenistic Sculpture II*, 282.

95. Ridgway, *Hellenistic Sculpture II*, 282.

96. For a discussion of the gendered diversity of the gaze, see B. McManus, *Classics and Feminism: Gendering the Classics* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1997), 81; and E. Stehle and A. Day, “Women Looking at Women: Women’s Ritual and Temple Sculpture,” in *Sexuality in Ancient Art*, ed. N. B. Kampen (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 101–16. S. Brown, “Feminist Research in Archaeology: What Does it Mean? Why is it Taking So Long?” in *Feminist Theory and the Classics*, ed. N. S. Rabinowitz and A. Richlin (New York: Routledge, 1993), 258–61, urges seeing the gendered aspects of archaeological finds and Koloski-Ostrow and Lyons,

into the prevailing misogynistic depiction of witches in fiction given that they shared the same gendered perspective of the ekphrastic narrators, would have seen a threatening witch in the sinister visage of the *anus ebria*. A woman viewing such a statue might have had a more complex response. On the one hand, she may well have felt marginalized by the depictions of witches in literature and consequently feared that she herself might someday be seen as that despised *anus ebria*. On the other hand, women were just as likely, if not more likely, to be a target of a witch's spells, given the competitive nature of women's relationships in the Greco-Roman world,⁹⁷ so a female viewer might have felt an even more intense fear than her male counterpart when captured in the envious and spiteful gaze of the old woman.

WITCHY OLD WOMEN IN MOSAICS AND TERRA COTTA FIGURINES

Lest this argument go only the way of Apuleius and Lucian, seeing statues come to life, it is worth briefly considering where else in the Greco-Roman artistic tradition there are visual representations of a drunken old woman who might be performing activities associated with witches. One answer is offered by an interpretation of two mosaics, one from the late third-early fourth-century CE House of Menander at Mytilene on Lesbos and the other the Dioskourides mosaic in the so-called Villa of Cicero at Pompeii, showing a scene from Menander's *Synaristosai* (*Women at Breakfast*). S. Charitonides discusses the full range of mosaics in the Lesbian Menander house, including the seven plays by Menander illustrated in the house's triclinium.⁹⁸ The scene that interests us is the first act of the *Synaristosai*, with Philainis, Plangon, and Pythias at breakfast. The mosaic at Pompeii, also showing this scene, is often used by art historians to demonstrate how popular early Hellenistic comedy scenes were in Roman imperial art.⁹⁹ For our purposes, it is important to note that the two mosaic scenes of Menander's comedy show two young women together with a hunched-over old woman holding a wine goblet. The age and drunkenness of this third woman are reminiscent of what we have already seen in the literary depictions and in the statue types discussed above. Ovid's Dipsas offering advice to his beloved and the drunken old

Naked Truths, 1, encourage considering the "role of the viewer in constructions of gender in art."

97. See, e.g., Johnston, *Restless Dead*, 192–99.

98. S. Charitonides et al., *Les mosaïques de la maison du Ménandre à Mytilène* (Berne: Francke, 1970), 41–44; see plates 5.1 and 5.2 for images.

99. J. R. Green, "Drunk Again: A Study in the Iconography of the Comic Theater," *AJA* 89 (1985): 465–72.

woman showing young girls a spell invoking Tacita provide a sense of how a Roman viewer might have engaged this scene.

Because Menander (342–291 BCE), whose work is depicted in this mosaic, has survived only in fragments, the story line of the *Women at Breakfast* must be reconstructed from a Roman adaptation of the play. Scholars have convincingly argued that the *Women at Breakfast* was the Greek model for the Roman Plautus's *Cistellaria* (third century BCE) and that these two mosaics should be identified with that story.¹⁰⁰ In the case of Plautus's adaptation, his *Cistellaria* has the three women discussing the unrequited love of one of the young girls. The fragmentary Menander scene can be reconstructed using Plautus's comparable scene in which the older woman, a *lena* who is mother to one of the girls, gives advice on love to the younger women. One of the younger women has lost the attentions of her beloved to another woman. Plautus's scene and presumably Menander's, if we had it in full, are full of imagery that is evocative of what we know from other sources describing the magical arts in this period.

The *lena* in Plautus is referred to as an old woman (*anus*).¹⁰¹ One of the young courtesans she is advising was a foundling conceived in the course of a Dionysiac festival and then abandoned at birth by her mother. The love-sickness from which the young foundling-turned-courtesan claims to be suffering calls to mind the logic of actual erotic spells from antiquity. She claims "I'm tortured! It is bad for me! I'm badly vexed! I ache from passion. I ache from my eyes. I ache from sorrow."¹⁰² Compare this to the "wondrous spell for binding a lover" found in a fourth-century CE magical text that urges that its object "be unable to drink or eat . . . not be contented, not be strong, not have peace of mind . . . not have sleep."¹⁰³ It is worth noting that the title of the play, *Cistellaria*, calls to mind the small boxes in which courtesans might keep not only cosmetics, but also aphrodisiacs or other magical *pharmaka*. Apuleius's witch Pamphile kept her transformative ointment in just such a small box (*pyxis*).¹⁰⁴

Apart from literary allusions to what courtesans do and are concerned with,

100. B. Prehn (*Quaestiones Plautinae* [Diss. Breslau 1916], 10 and n. 1), F. Marx (*Rh. Mus.* 79 [1930]: 197–208), E. Fraenkel (*Philologus* 87 [1932]: 117–20), and D. Lange (*CJ* 70, no. 2 [1974–75], 30–32), as cited in W. Geoffrey Arnott's Loeb edition of *Menander*, vol. 3 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 327 and notes 1–3.

101. Plautus, *Cistellaria* 1.3.149.

102. *Cistellaria* 1.1.59–60.

103. *PGM* IV.352–56.

104. Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 3.21, 24, 25.

compare this artistic depiction in the two mosaics and their relationship to plays by Plautus and Menander to other literary depictions of the ties that courtesans had to old women who could practice magic and help them with the troubles that their line of work entailed. Tibullus and Propertius in the late first century BCE both write of *lenae* with magical powers.¹⁰⁵ Propertius's *lena* works with herbs over an altar fire; can force the moon to do what she wants; can change herself into a wolf; and gathers magical ingredients including crow's eyes, blood, and *hippomanes* with which she can conduct her erotic magic. Christopher Faraone has argued convincingly for the connection between *lenae* and the use of masculine *agoge* spells to draw men into ill-advised trysts.¹⁰⁶ Apart from the *lenae* in Tibullus and Propertius, Lucian's second-century CE *Dialogue of the Courtesans*, which draws on New Comedy, reveals *hetairai* making use of a prostitute's mother who is a *pharmakis* and knows Thessalian spells, can bring down the moon, and flies at night. In Lucian's dialogue, the mother and her expertise serve as an excuse for why one courtesan has lost her lover to this *pharmakis*'s daughter rather than the solution to the problem as the mother/*lena* in Plautus.¹⁰⁷ Elsewhere in Lucian, two courtesans discuss a Syrian *pharmakis* who can help win back a lost love.¹⁰⁸ If Tibullus, Propertius, and Lucian are any indication, what these two young courtesans in the mosaics and in the plays by Menander and Plautus would be talking to this old woman about, at least in the imagination of the viewer, is how to use magical spells to get back a man.

To sum up, these two mosaics in Pompeii and on Lesbos show an old woman hunched over, drinking from a goblet of wine. From the literary tradition directly connected with this scene of women at breakfast, we recognize the woman as a *lena* who gives advice to young courtesans. The wider literary tradition of the discourse among courtesans suggests that what the aged *lena* would be telling them about is the use of magical arts for their sexual and social advantage. This scene provides a link between the literary imagination of what old female practitioners of magic could do and an artistic tradition that visually depicts these women as old, hunched over, and drunken. With all this in mind, it is likely that when ancient viewers looked at this old woman, they saw not just a *lena* but also a witch.

105. Tibullus 1.5.41–60, Propertius 4.5.1–18, and Tavenner, *Studies in Magic from Latin Literature*, 35 and n. 186, on *lenae* and magical power. See also, K. Sara Myers, "The Poet and the Procuress: The *Lena* in Latin Love Elegy," *JRS* 86 (1996): 1–21.

106. C. Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1999), 144–60.

107. Lucian, *Dialogue of the Courtesans* 1.281.

108. *Dialogue of the Courtesans* 4.1 and 4.4–5.

Another corpus of evidence that has not yet been discussed in this article is the terra cotta figurines and masks that represented characters from the stage. Relevant for this discussion is the terra cotta figurine type of the “grotesque” old woman, who is sometimes depicted holding a child. This figure has most commonly been linked to the nurse character in old comedy or more generally to characters in mime plays, not explicitly to witches.¹⁰⁹ Yet, J. R. Green has argued that when a character from Hellenistic drama is pulled from its narrative and molded in terra cotta, it “tended to lose its particular reference to an individual scene and came to have a more general application as a type.”¹¹⁰ This could well be the case with the terra cottas of old women from the stage. Whether or not they originally imitated a nurse or an old courtesan past her prime (characters who have already been demonstrated to have witchy connections in literature), once separated from their dramatic context the terra cotta could take on new meaning, tapping into the complex interplay of magical themes in literature and art. As with the statue of the *anus ebria*, again one must wonder who would want a terra cotta of a grotesque old woman as a souvenir? A. J. B. Wace has suggested that such figurines might have been used as charms against the evil eye.¹¹¹ Wace, and later M. W.

109. There is a range of representations of old women on terra cotta figurines, reliefs, and masks; fleshy versus emaciated, head only versus full-body, poor versus wearing jewelry, and with versus without a child. For the purposes of this article, each type does not need to be examined in detail in order to make the point that these images may have tapped into the complex visual typology of the witch. For masks, see T. B. L. Webster, *Monuments Illustrating New Comedy* (London: International University Booksellers, 1961), 21–24, 34–35, 43–44, 54, who reviews the varied types of old women in the terra cotta masks, including “the dry or wolfish old woman with long face, many fine wrinkles, squint . . . the fat old woman with wrinkles in a fat face and a fillet round her hair . . . [and] the little housekeeper, snub-nosed with two teeth in each jaw.” For figurines, see H. Goldman, “Two Terracotta Figurines from Tarsus,” *AJA* 47 (1943): 22, who describes a terra cotta old woman with contorted, wrinkled face and gaping mouth, and D. B. Thompson, “Three Centuries of Hellenistic Terracottas: The Second Century B.C.,” *Hesperia* 32 (1963): 304, for “a bent old woman, whose stocky frame, heavy face, and short curly hair mark her as a foreign slave.” See G. S. A. Richter, *Greek, Etruscan and Roman Bronzes* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1915), 83 for the old woman as mime; Pratt, “The Old Women of Ancient Greece,” 61–62, in general for old women in Greco-Roman art, including the terra cottas; Pfisterer-Haas, *Darstellungen alter Frauen*, 36–46, on terra cotta nurses.

110. Green, “Drunk Again,” 470.

111. Wace, “Grotesques and the Evil Eye,” 109; see also Richter, “Grotesques and the Mime,” *AJA* 17 (1913): 151; and idem, *Greek, Roman, and Etruscan Bronzes*, 83.

Dickie, have drawn on a variety of sources, both literary and archaeological, to demonstrate how craftsmen would hang objects with pronounced, even “grotesque or ridiculous” features in order to protect their trade (blacksmithing, ceramic production, etc.) from the evil eye.¹¹² These grotesques used as apotropaic charms would no doubt have varied depending on the evil against which one wanted to protect oneself.¹¹³ A grotesque old woman could be a suitable charm to ward against threats to relationships, children, and childbearing. This suggestion of how to make sense of terra cotta images, particularly the figurines, of drunken old women from drama brings us back full circle to concerns about the evil eye and old age in literature depicting witches (especially Ovid’s Dipsas and Tacita-worshiper) and the terrifying gaze of the *anus ebria* statue. What better way to protect yourself—especially if you were a woman, negotiating the unregulated competition of relationships, childbearing and rearing, and all the challenges those brought, from fertility to lactation—than with your own handheld mumbling witch?

CONCLUSION

In closing, it is useful to consider potential challenges to this identification of old destitutes in statuary, *lenae* in mosaics, and old women in terra cotta as tapping into the literary imagination of drunken old witches. First, it should be emphasized that this argument does not seek a one-to-one correspondence between literary and artistic renderings, but rather explores the continuities of the shared complex visual language of literature and art. Second, the argument herein does not require that the statue type was originally crafted to illustrate the fiction (although later Roman copies may have been carved with such connections in mind); rather it suggests that the fiction could have had these preexisting forms in mind when crafting vivid literary descriptions, and that a Roman encountering the statues would think of literary witches or, conversely, upon encountering the literary depictions might envision the statuary. Other challenges center on the hair of the statues, the likelihood that witches would be depicted in statuary, and the fact that this identification has not been made before now. What do these statues not have that might make them more convincing as “witches”? Instead of bound hair, these statues would fit the type even better if their hair were unbound or viper infested, as in the descriptions of Horace’s Sagana, Veia, Folia, and

112. Wace, “Grotesques and the Evil Eye,” 109 and M. W. Dickie, “A Joke in Old Comedy: Aristophanes Fragment 607 PCG,” *Classical Philology* 90 (1995): 243.

113. See Slane and Dickie, “A Knidian Vase from Corinth,” 502, for the variety of charms against the evil eye.

Canidia, with their unkempt heads and wild hair, or even knotted, as with the hair of Martina, the poisoner implicated in the murder in 19 CE of Germanicus, heir to the emperor Tiberius.¹¹⁴ Indeed, in the case of the old woman statue at the Met, her hair is bound back with Dionysiac ivy. But Dionysiac frenzy is also connected in literary depictions with the actions of witches. Regardless, the wrinkled faces, exposed breasts, emaciated bodies, and frightening grimaces and gazes of the statues more than make up for any bound hair. Why would witches be depicted in statuary at all? Art historians, with their emphasis on realism in the rococo, have given no more convincing reasons for the depiction of old women in statuary. The form and function of the rococo have always been problems for which Greco-Roman art historians must account. As the discussion of the literary evidence here suggests, there is firm documentation that throughout the Greco-Roman world audiences were clearly interested in imaginative depictions of witches, sorcerers, and the like. Why has no one before now made this connection between old witchy hags in art and literature? Only in recent decades have scholars begun to take Greco-Roman fiction seriously, recognizing that fiction was clearly an indication of contemporary concerns, including the imagining of witches.¹¹⁵ Additionally, the serious study of magic in antiquity, and in particular female practitioners of magic, is also a relatively recent subdiscipline within Classics.¹¹⁶

114. Horace, *Satires* 5.16 and 5.27. According to Tacitus, *Annals* 3.7, Martina's hair was said to be knotted with the ingredients of her poisoning craft (*venenum*).

115. Apart from Winkler's already cited *Auctor and Actor*, some of the recent monographs and edited collections on the novel include: Thomas Hägg, *The Novel in Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); Graham Anderson, *Ancient Fiction: The Novel in the Greco-Roman World* (London: Croon-Helm, 1984); James Tatum, ed., *The Search for the Ancient Novel* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994); and Gareth Schmeling, ed., *The Novel in the Ancient World* (New York: Brill, 1996). The two serials focused on the novel are similarly fairly recent: the *Gröningen Colloquia on the Novel* began in 1988 and was continued on-line by *Ancient Narrative*, which has been published since 2000.

116. Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells*, 30, n. 3, offers a brief review of the earliest modern scholarship on the topic. Peter Green, "Methods of Ancient Magic," *Times Literary Supplement* (April 19, 2002), 5, writes that "when [he] first began researching the subject, ancient magic was regarded in academic circles as peripheral, sub-literate and somewhat embarrassing." Although P. Green, "Now, Now, Quickly, Quickly," *New Republic* (August 21, 2000): 44–48, rightly points out that there had been some scattered scholarly interest earlier, Gager's *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells*, together with the publication of the essays in C. Faraone and D. Obbink's *Magika Hiera* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) and Betz's *Greek Magical Papyri in*

Granted both the witch and the old woman would be unusual to depict in the lasting and costly medium of sculpture. But what is more likely—that the statues were perceived by their viewers as old women or as witches . . . or even as both simultaneously? If she looks like a witch, drinks like a witch, corrupts young women like a witch, and enviously stares like a witch, can we not conclude that she may well have been a witch, at least in the minds of the contemporary viewers? Given the vivid and widespread occurrence in the literary imagination of old female practitioners of magical arts, the possibility that the fashioning of certain drunken old women in statues, mosaics, and terra cotta should be reidentified as witches seems at least worth a debate.

Translation in 1986 of Preisendanz's *Papyri Graecae Magicae* in the 1920s, marked the beginning of the recent upsurge in scholarly interest in Greco-Roman magic.