

From Goddess to Hag: The Greek and the Roman Witch in Classical Literature

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THE “WITCH” OF classical literature is a fascinating figure: sometimes beautiful, sometimes horrible, but always compelling.¹ In this article, I shall show that an analysis of the classical literary representations of witches reveals interesting similarities and important differences between the Greek and Roman sources, and I shall suggest some possible interpretations of these correspondences and contrasts. For the purposes of this article, I am employing the commonly accepted usage of the term “witch” in contemporary English, that is, “a woman claiming or popularly believed to possess magical powers and practice sorcery.”² This broad etic definition of the term allows me to consider under the category “witch” a variety of female magical practitioners from classical literature, although the ancient terms for these practitioners divide them into different emic categories.³ Thus, some of these women are distinguished by their methods, for example, those who used magical potions (*pharmakis* or *pharmakeutria* in Greek; *venefica* or *trivenefica* in Latin) or incantations (*kēlēteira* in Greek, *cantatrix* or *praecantrix* in Latin). Some are defined by other characteristics, such as their habit of lurking around graveyards (*tumbas* in Greek), or their ability to fly (*volaticus* in Latin). Others, particularly Roman witches, may be identified with animals (*striga* or *strix* in Latin, a term for a type of bird) or monsters (*lamia* in Latin, a mythological female monster who devoured children). Roman witches also may be identified with pejorative terms, such as *malefica*, “evil-doer,” or *lupula*, “whore,” or they may be called by more euphemistic terms: *saga*, “wise-woman,” *veteratrix*, “well-practiced, seasoned,” or *anus*, “old woman.” Finally, some ancient sources classify witches by their association with certain types of magic (*perimaktria*: one who purifies with magic; *telesphoros*: one who initiates with magic), while others employ feminine versions of words designating practitioners of magic in general:

so the Greek term, *goēteia*, leads to the use of *goēteutria* for a witch (cf. *goētēs* for a male magician), while the Latin term *magia* leads to the use of *maga* for the female magical practitioner (cf. *magus* for the male practitioner).

These latter terms emphasize the association of the witch with the general concept “magic” in antiquity, itself a highly contested term.⁴ For the purposes of this discussion of the witch in classical literature, I define magic as the socially unsanctioned use of supernatural powers and tools to control nature and compel both humans and superhuman beings to do one’s will.⁵ This definition helps to distinguish the witch from the Olympian goddess or female monster, who has no need of magical tools to carry out her will, and also from the priestess, whose contacts with the supernatural are socially sanctioned. Greek literary portraits of witches include Homer’s Circe; the Medea of Pindar, Euripides, and Apollonius Rhodius; and Theocritus’s Simaetha.⁶ Roman examples include Virgil’s Simaetha (or Amaryllis, if that is indeed her name); Horace’s Canidia and Sagana; the Latin elegists’ old women who sell love charms, Ovid’s Medea and Circe; Petronius’s Oenothea; Seneca’s Medea; Lucan’s Erictho; and Apuleius’s Meroe, Pamphile, and Photis.⁷ Now, to be sure, some of these figures overlap the distinction that I made above among witches, goddesses, priestesses, and female monsters. Medea and Circe, for example, are both of divine lineage, and Circe is called a “dread goddess” (*deinē theos*) (e.g., Hom. *Od.* 10.136), while Medea is a priestess (*arēteira*) of Hecate (e.g., Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 3.252). It may be that in the earliest stages of their mythic life these figures were not thought to be witches, that is, magical practitioners, for the concept of magic was not fully formed until the fifth century BCE.⁸ As Richard Gordon suggests, however, these figures of myth are emblematic of “magic before magic.”⁹ They fit the characteristics of the later witch, and so, I would argue, still fall under the etic category that I have defined as “witch.” For example, they make use of tools that are later interpreted as magical; Circe has her potion and wand that she uses to turn Odysseus’s men to swine (Hom. *Od.* 10.233–42), and Medea has potions that she gives to Jason to protect him from the fire-breathing bulls (Pind. *Pyth.* 4.220–29). Certainly, in later literature, Circe and Medea become paradigms of the “arch-witch” and are cited in a variety of contexts; so, for example, Theocritus has his Simaetha ask Hecate to make her drugs as potent as those of Circe or Medea (Theocr. *Id.* 2.5–16).¹⁰ The female monster also can overlap the witch figure, as with the so-called “night-hag” type, like the Roman *strix/striga*, who can be seen either as wholly animalistic (e.g., Ov. *Fast.* 6.131–69) or as more human in nature (e.g., Petron. *Sat.* 63).¹¹ These anomalous instances, however, I would argue, do not vitiate the basic definition of the witch as a woman who practices magic, and this definition allows us to recognize the variety of representations of such figures in classical literature.

These representations come from a variety of genres, including epic and lyric poetry, tragedy, satire, and the ancient novel.¹² Although genre conventions

certainly influenced the way in which these literary portraits of witches were constructed, nevertheless an in-depth examination of these portraits reveals certain important characteristics that transcend literary genre to show much about how the ancient Greeks and Romans thought about witches.¹³ It is important to recognize that these representations do not necessarily reflect reality; they probably do not tell us much about actual witches, that is, the real women in antiquity who believed they were practicing magic or were believed by others to do so.¹⁴ In other words, we should not read these literary portraits naively, as pointing toward the reality of the practice of magic. As Fritz Graf has recognized, "it is tempting to use [these literary representations] in order to fill the gap in the epigraphical documentation, and too many scholars have uncritically yielded to this temptation. But this procedure is dangerous. Works of literature have their own laws, and it is always risky to disregard laws."¹⁵ Nevertheless, the analysis of literary representations is a powerful tool that can reveal much about how the societies of classical antiquity thought about and with the cognitive category of "witch." For example, when the literary sources represent witches carrying out certain procedures, but do not show their male counterparts, magicians or wizards, carrying out these practices, it may well say something about cultural concepts of the relationship between gender and magic. Indeed, I shall argue that Greek and Roman cultural conceptions inform the category of "witch" as female magical practitioner, in many ways.

Let us begin by examining the basic similarities in Greek and Roman literary representations of witches. These figures all share two important characteristics: a connection with nature and a focus on the human body.¹⁶ The witch herself may be located in the natural world. Homer's Circe, for example, dwells in a forest glen (*Od.* 10.210), and Medea, according to Apollonius Rhodius, serves Hekate in a temple located in the woods far from the city (*Argon.* 4.47–53).¹⁷ The tools of the witch, particularly the ingredients she needs for her magic potions, come from nature; indeed their location in the natural world is consistently emphasized in the literary sources.¹⁸ Witches' potions contain potent herbs, which must be gathered on mountaintops at the dead of night. A fragment from Sophocles' *Rhizotomoi* shows Medea cutting the roots (*rhizōn . . . tomas*) of these herbs in the wild with a bronze sickle (Macrob. *Sat.* 5.19.9 = Pearson fr. 534). Witches' potions also contain the parts of wild animals, apparently the more exotic the better. Lucan's Erictho uses the froth of rabid dogs, the entrails of a lynx, the hump of a hyena, the marrow of a stag fed on snakes, the marine monster *echenais*, the eyes of a dragon, and the ashes of the Phoenix (6.667–84). Ovid's Medea uses the wings and flesh of screech owls, the entrails of a werewolf, the scaly skin of a snake, the liver of a stag, and the eggs and head of a crow (*Met.* 7.262–75). Witches are closely associated with animals in other ways as well. According to Homer (*Od.* 10.212) and Ovid (*Met.* 14. 255), Circe's house is guarded by wolves,

lions, and bears. Witches commonly transform themselves or other humans into animals:¹⁹ Circe transforms Odysseus's men into pigs (*Hom. Od.* 10.234–39), and Thessalian witches are said to be able to transform themselves into birds, dogs, mice, and even flies, according to Apuleius (*Met.* 2.22). Witches are frequently compared to savage animals or animal-like monsters, as Euripides (*Med.* 92, 187–89, 1342–43, 1407) and Seneca (*Med.* 407–8, 863–65) compare Medea in her wrath to a bull, lioness, tigress, and the monsters Scylla and Charybdis. Some witches look or sound like wild animals: Horace's Canidia wears serpents in her hair (*Epod.* 5.15–16), while his Sagana has hair like a sea-urchin or a raging boar (*Epod.* 5.25–28); Lucan's Erictho has a voice that sounds like a dog, wolf, owl, and serpent combined (6.685–93). Finally, some witches even behave like savage animals: Canidia and Sagana dig at the earth with their nails and tear a lamb to pieces with their bare teeth (*Hor. Sat.* 1.8.26–27); Erictho eats human corpses and tears into living flesh with her teeth and nails (*Luc.* 6.533–68).

This close connection between witches and the natural world may reflect a widespread cultural equation of women with nature. In a seminal article, Sherry Ortner argued that cross-culturally, women are symbolically associated with nature, as opposed to men, who are associated with culture.²⁰ Although Ortner has been criticized for being too reductionist in her interpretations and too universalizing in their application, I believe that her formulation of “female is to male as nature is to culture” remains an idea that is “good to think with” for understanding the role of the witch in classical literature.²¹ Ortner proposed that the connection of women and nature derives in part from a woman's body and its functions, which, being more involved with “species life” seem to place her closer to nature, in contrast to man's bodily functions, which free him more completely to take up the projects of culture.²² Women, she contended, are more commonly connected with the things of the body through their physiology, which involves menstruation, parturition, and lactation.

Witches in classical literature also exhibit this emphasis on the body, to an even greater degree than “normal women.” Ancient witches, in fact, seem obsessed with the things of the body. They are driven largely by bodily lust: Homer's Circe desires Odysseus for her bed (*Od.* 10.333–35); Apollonius Rhodius's Medea lusts for Jason (*Argon.* 3.286–98); Theocritus's Simaetha craves her Delphis (*Id.* 2. 82–90); Horace's Folia has a “masculine libido” (*Epod.* 5.41: *masculae libidinis*); and Apuleius's Meroe (*Met.* 1.7), Pamphile (*Met.* 2.5), and Photis (*Met.* 2.6) are all driven by their sexual desires. Witches' lust is considered so overpowering that it can cause male impotence.²³ In Homer, Hermes warns Odysseus that having sex with the witch Circe might make him “weakly and unmanned” (*kakōn kai anēnora*: *Od.* 10.301).²⁴ In Petronius, the woman Circe causes Encolpius to become impotent (*Sat.* 128). Although he tries to heal his impotence with the help of the witches Proselenos and Oenothea, their own lust also proves more

than he can handle (*Sat.* 138). The lustful actions of these witches are a form of inversion of the “natural” order, for according to ancient conceptions, it was the male who was supposed to be the active sexual partner. In assuming the active role, witches call into question the normative sexual roles of men and women in classical culture, threatening the culturally constructed boundaries of male and female.²⁵ Witches are also connected with the things of the body through their spells, which, the sources emphasize, make frequent use of bodily parts and fluids. Human bones, organs, flesh, appendages, blood, spit, gore, gall, and urine are all ingredients in magical spells.²⁶ Thus, according to Apuleius, Pamphile’s workshop contains a variety of items from the human body for use in her spells, including noses, fingers, and blood (*Met.* 3.17).

I suggest that witches’ connection with nature represents an intensification of the cultural association of women with the natural world and the human body. Witches are not merely *associated* with nature, they are *identified* with it.²⁷ As we have seen, witches can be found out in the wild, and they can even be described as savage animals themselves. Their connection with nature, however, extends even beyond this identification with nature to actual control of natural phenomena. So, for example, Ovid’s Medea addresses the gods and spirits of nature with these words (*Met.* 7.199–209):²⁸

With your help when I have willed it, the streams have run back to their fountain-heads, while the banks wondered; I lay the swollen, and stir up the calm seas by my spell (*cantu*); I drive the storms and bring on the clouds; the winds I dispel and summon; I break the jaws of serpents with my incantations (*verbis et carmine*); living rocks and oaks I root up from their own soil; I move the forests, I bid the mountains shake, the earth to rumble, and the ghosts to come forth from their tombs. You also, Luna, do I draw (*traho*) from the sky, though the changing bronze of Temesa strives to aid your throes; even the chariot of the Sun, my grandsire, pales at my song (*carmine*); Aurora pales at my poisons (*venenis*).

The image of the witch causing streams to run backward and “drawing down the moon” is found throughout the literary depictions of witches from Apollonius Rhodius to Lucan.²⁹ The witch’s control of the natural world is an inversion of the “natural” order of things, whereby men through their association with culture have control of the world.³⁰ The ancient authors presented this inversion as profoundly threatening.³¹ They suggested that it led to the dissolution of all law and the destruction not only of culture but also of the entire world. In Seneca’s *Hercules Oetaeus* (463), Deianira’s nurse notes that “naught holds to law against my incantations” (*nihilque leges ad meos cantus tenet*).³² And in Apuleius (*Met.* 2.5), Photis warns Lucius that as a witch of the first order (*maga primi nominis*),

Pamphile knows how to “drown all the light of the starry heavens in the depths of hell and plunge it into primeval Chaos” (*omnem istam lucem mundi sideralis imis Tartari et in vetustum Chaos sommergere novit*).³³ Witches, then, represent the ultimate fear of the loss of all human, or more specifically male, control over the world and of the chaos that will result from that loss of control.

Although witches’ connection with nature is an important common characteristic in their representations in both Greek and Latin literature, many other aspects of these portrayals are quite dissimilar. In general, Roman witches are represented far more negatively than Greek witches are. This description is applicable particularly to the witch figures invented by the Romans, like Canidia and Erichtho, rather than witches like Circe and Medea, whose portrayals were borrowed from Greek literature. Even the borrowed witch figures, however, show the influence of more negative ideas about witches than the original Greek sources.³⁴ The climax of this negative portrayal of the witch is found in Latin literature of the Golden and Silver Ages, that is, from the late first century bce to the mid-first century ce. We can see the distinctions between the Greek and Roman witches by examining the representations of their physical descriptions, motives, methods, and powers.

Greek witches are generally depicted as young and beautiful, while the Roman witches are old and ugly.³⁵ Homer describes Circe as “fair-tressed” (*euplokamos*: *Od.* 10.136; cf. *kalliplokamoio*: *Od.* 10. 220, 310: and as having a “sweet voice” (*Od.* 10.221: *opi kalēi*).³⁶ Simaetha, Theocritus tells us, has a “fair body” (*Id.* 2.110: *kalon chroa*) and “beautiful lips” (*Id.* 2.126: *kalon stoma*).³⁷ These women dress in lovely clothes to complement their beauty: Circe wears “a long white robe, finely woven and beautiful” (*argupheon pharos mega . . . lepton kai charien*) and around her waist a “fair girdle of gold” (*zōnēn . . . kalēn chruseiēn*) (*Od.* 10.543–45),³⁸ and Simaetha has a “fair long linen dress” (*bussoio kalon . . . chitōna*) and a “fine wrap” (*xustida*) (*Id.* 2.73–74).³⁹ Similarly, Apollonius of Rhodes gives a charming picture of the beautiful witch Medea in the following lines from the *Argonautica*: (*Argon.* 3.828–35):⁴⁰

Now soon as ever the maiden saw the light of dawn, with her hands she gathered up her golden tresses which were floating round her shoulders in careless disarray, and bathed her tear-stained cheeks, and made her skin shine with ointment sweet as nectar (*aloiphēi nektareēi*); and she donned a beautiful robe (*peplon kalon*), fitted with well-bent clasps (*eugnamptoisin . . . peronēisin*), and above her head, divinely fair (*ambrosiōi*), she threw a veil gleaming like silver (*kaluptrēn argupheēn*).

In contrast, the Roman witches are old, ugly, and frightening, and they wear frightful clothing to match their evil dispositions. Horace’s Canidia is one of

the “filthy old hags” (Epod. 5.98: *obscenas anus*), and her “locks and disheveled head (are) entwined with short vipers” (Epod. 5.15–16: *brevibus implicata viperis crines et incomptum caput*).⁴¹ She has uncut nails (*inresectum . . . pollicem*) and discolored teeth (*dente livido*) (Epod. 5.47–48); her pallid complexion makes her and her sister witch horrible to look at (Sat. 1.8.25–26: *pallor utrasque fecerat horrendas*). She does not wear the bright, shining garments like the Greek witches do, but instead a black robe (Sat. 1.8.23: *nigra . . . palla*). Ovid’s Dipsas is depicted as an old woman (Am. 1.8.2: *anus*) who has the double pupil (Am. 1.8.15: *pupula duplex*) characteristic of the evil eye.⁴² Petronius’s Oenothea is described as an old woman (*anus*), ugly in her black clothes (*nigraque veste deformis*) (Sat. 134). Lucan’s Erictho is most horrible of all (6.515–18): “Haggard and loathly with age is the face of the [witch]; her awful countenance, overcast with a hellish pallor and weighed down by uncombed locks is never seen by the clear sky” (: . . . *tenet ora profanae / foeda situ macies, caeloque ignota sereno / terribilis Stygio facies pallore gravatur / inpexis onerata comis* . . .).⁴³ Her clothes and hair are also quite ghastly (6.654–56): “She put on motley raiment, whose multi-colored wool was fit for a fiend to wear; she threw back her hair and revealed her face; and she looped up her bristling locks with festoons of vipers” (*discolor et vario furialis cultus amictu / induitur, voltusque aperitur crine remoto, / et coma viperis substringitur horrida sertis*).⁴⁴ Moreover, it is the Roman witches, like Horace’s Canidia and Lucan’s Erictho, who are represented as looking and behaving like animals, while the Greek ones are only associated with or compared to animals, as Homer’s Circe and Euripides’s Medea.

The motives of these two groups of witches are also quite different. The Greek witches are often driven to perform their magic by their sexual attraction for a man, whom they subsequently protect. In Homer, Odysseus says that Circe is “yearning for me to be her husband” (Od. 9.32: *lilaiomenē posin einai*).⁴⁵ Although she turned his men into pigs, when she cannot do so to Odysseus, she tries seduction to gain control of him. He refuses to sleep with her, however, until she swears an oath that she will do him no harm (Od. 10.343–44), and thereafter Circe keeps her bargain, offering him food and wine for his journey and sending fair winds to speed him on his way (Od. 11.7–8; 12.16–19 and 148–51), as well as offering him advice on his journey (Od. 12.36–141). Medea also is driven by sexual attraction to help Jason. According to Euripides (Med. 7–8), it was erotic love (*erōti*) for Jason that drove Medea to help him obtain the fleece and slay his uncle Pelias.⁴⁶ In Apollonius Rhodius (Argon. 4.360–68), Medea chastises Jason for trying to leave her when everything she did, she did for him:⁴⁷

I have left my country, the glories of my home and even my parents—things that were dearest to me; and far away all alone I am borne over the sea with the plaintive kingfishers because of your trouble, in order that I

might save your life in fulfilling the contests with the oxen and the earth-born men. Last of all the fleece—when the matter became known, it was by my folly you won it; and a foul reproach have I poured on womankind.

Now, to be sure, the Greek witch when crossed can turn against her man, as Euripides's Medea wreaks her vengeance on Jason after he has betrayed her by making plans to marry the Corinthian princess. However, her initial motive at least was to help rather than harm. So in general we can say that the Greek witch may cast her spells on behalf of another, or at least to attract another, and she is portrayed as morally neutral or as mixed, good and evil together. Roman witches, on the other hand, perform their magical arts for far more selfish and even evil purposes, and they are seen as morally repugnant. So, the witches in the Roman elegists Tibullus, Propertius, and Ovid cast their spells for money, seeking to bring a lover to a client, or to remove uncomfortable passion from a client whose love is now unattainable.⁴⁸ Horace's Canidia, Sagana, and Folia act out of lust alone, as do Apuleius's Meroe, Pamphile, and Photis, with no concern for their victims.⁴⁹ Erichtho, on the other hand, acts purely out of an evil desire for power; according to Lucan (6.578–85):⁵⁰

She feared that the war might stray away to some other region, and that the land of Thessaly might miss so great a carnage; and therefore the witch (*venefica*) forbade Philippi, defiled by her spells (*cantu*) and sprinkled with her noxious drugs (*diris . . . sucis*), to allow the warfare to change its place. Then all those dead would be hers, and the blood of the whole world would be at her disposal. She hopes to mutilate the corpses of slaughtered kings, to plunder the ashes of the Roman nation and the bones of nobles, and to master the ghosts of the mighty.

The methods that the Greek and Roman witches use are also quite different, as are the divinities upon whom they call to help them in their spells. The Greek witches generally use relatively simple methods, and little time is spent on their description by the ancient authors.⁵¹ The classic example is Homer's Circe, who works her magic rapidly and easily on Odysseus's men (*Od.* 10.233–39):⁵²

She brought them in and made them sit on chairs and seats, and made for them [a potion of] cheese and barley meal and yellow honey with Pramnian wine, but in the food she mixed baneful drugs (*pharmaka lugra* [a]), that they might utterly forget their native land. Now when she had given them [the potion], and they had drunk it off, then she presently smote

them with her wand (*rhabdōi*), and penned them in the sties. And they had the heads, and voice, and bristles, and shape of swine, but their minds remained unchanged even as before.

Similarly, in Pindar and Euripides, Medea uses drugs to carry out her will, but no description is given of their source or method of preparation, nor of any incantations employed during their preparation.⁵³ Among these authors, Euripides alone mentions Medea calling upon the gods, and most of the divinities she names are familiar celestial divinities, including Themis, Artemis, Zeus, Dike, and Helios, although as she becomes more angry and desperate she also calls on the witches' own goddess Hekate and the avenging demons, the Alastores.⁵⁴

As we reach the Hellenistic period, the Greek authors pay more attention to the methods of witchcraft and to the divinities invoked in conjunction with magical spells.⁵⁵ In Theocritus's *Idyll* 2, Simaetha's methods are carefully described, including the use of drugs and magical tools like the *iunx* and *rhombus*, although their effect seems relatively mild. In her incantations, Simaetha calls for the most part on benevolent celestial gods, primarily Selene, the Moon, but also Artemis, Aphrodite, Hekate, and the Moirai.⁵⁶ In Apollonius Rhodius, Medea uses a variety of drugs and spells to help Jason, and in two instances more information is given about her magical methods. First, when she prepares the drug (*pharmakon*) that is to protect Jason from the fire-breathing oxen and the sown men, the gathering and preparation of the appropriate plant is elaborately described, as is the necessary incantation to Brimo, queen of the underworld, identified with Hekate (*Argon.* 3.844–68). Then, when she prepares to neutralize Talos, the bronze giant who guarded the island of Crete, her incantations (*aidais*) to the death-spirits, the Keres, are described, as is the evil eye (*echthodopoin ommasi*) that she uses to carry out her will (*Argon.* 4.1631–77).

Although the authors of this period give more information about the methods of witchcraft and the divinities involved in magic than their predecessors, the overall impression given of the spells these witches produce is relatively benign. In contrast, the methods of the Roman witches are elaborate and frightening; the gods they call upon are the terrifying divinities of the underworld; and the overall effect of the description of their spells is horror. In one of Horace's poems (*Epod.* 5.51), the witches Canidia, Sagana, and Folia bury a living boy in the ground and starve him to death to obtain his liver for a love spell. They call upon Diana (Artemis), as did the Greek witches, but they add the more fearful Nox, the personification of Night, to their incantations. In his satire on the witches (*Sat.* 1.8.34–35), Horace has Priapus observe them tearing a lamb to pieces with their bare teeth and pouring its blood into a trench to draw forth the spirits of the underworld, as they call upon Hekate and the dread Fury Tisiphone to aid their spells. In the *Metamorphoses* (7.179–293), Ovid describes in great detail the

complex preparation of the spell that Medea casts to rejuvenate Jason's father Aeson, including a long list of ingredients and an elaborate series of incantations to Night, Hecate, Earth, Moon, and Youth. At the very opening of Seneca's *Medea* (1–18), the witch casts a curse on Jason with a litany of divinities, beginning with the gods of wedlock (*dī coniugales*), Lucina, Minerva, Neptune, and Titan, but ending with a long list of infernal gods, including Hecate, the “chaos of eternal Night” (*noctis aeternae chaos*), the “realms remote from heaven” (*aversa superis regna*), the “impious spirits of the dead” (*manesque impios*), the “lord of the realm of gloom” (*dominumque regni tristis* = Pluto) and his queen (*dominam* = Proserpina), and finally the “goddesses who avenge crime” (*sceleris ultrices deae* = Furies).⁵⁷ Later in the play, Medea's ritual to prepare the poisoned gifts for the Corinthian princess is elaborately described (675–843), and she herself makes a long incantation to a variety of denizens of the underworld (740–51):⁵⁸

I supplicate the throng of the silent and you, funereal gods, murky Chaos, and shadowy Dis' dark dwelling-place, the abysses of dismal Death, girt by the banks of Tartarus. Leaving your punishments, ye ghosts, haste to the new nuptials; let the wheel stop that is whirling his body, and Ixion stand on earth; let Tantalus in peace drink his fill of the Pierian spring. You, too, whom a fruitless toil mocks with urns full of holes, ye Danaids, come hither: this day needs your hands. On one alone, my lord's new father, let a penalty rest heavier—let the slippery stone roll Sisyphus backward o'er the rocks. Now, summoned by my sacred rites (*meis sacris*), do thou, orb of the night, put on thy most evil face and come, threatening in all thy forms.

Lucan's Erictho also calls upon the denizens of the underworld: the Eumenides, Poenae, Chaos, Hades, Styx, Elysium, Persephone, Hecate, the Fates, and Charon (6.695–705), and she uses all sorts of human body parts in her rituals, which she collects in a particularly gruesome way (6.538–49):⁵⁹

But when the dead are coffined in stone, which drains off the internal moisture, absorbs the corruption of the marrow, and makes the corpse rigid, then [the witch] eagerly vents her rage on all the limbs, thrusting her fingers into the eyes, scooping out gleefully the stiffened eyeballs, and gnawing the yellow nails on the withered hand. She breaks with her teeth the fatal noose, and mangles the carcass that dangles on the gallows, and scrapes the cross of the criminal; she tears away the rain-beaten flesh and the bones calcined by exposure to the sun. She purloins the nails that pierced the hands, the clotted filth, and the black humor of corruption that oozes over all the limbs; and when a muscle resists her teeth, she hangs her weight upon it.

How far have we come from the beautiful Circe and her magic wand!

Finally, the powers exhibited by Greek and Roman witches are quite disparate. The Greek witches have the power to change humans into animals, prophesy, cure childlessness, cast the evil eye, bewitch a lover, and poison an enemy. Dangerous they are, to be sure, but hardly horrific. Moreover, the powers that they exhibit are exercised largely in a mythical context. Until Theocritus's Simaetha in the Hellenistic period, the Greek witches, such as Circe and Medea, are mythological figures, rather than people in the real contemporary or historical world. By placing these figures in a mythological past, the Greek authors make their witches less "real" to their audience, and hence do not stimulate the same kind of fear among them. In contrast, Roman authors generally place their witches firmly in the real world. Except for the witches borrowed from Greek mythology, like Ovid's Circe and Seneca's Medea, Roman witches are represented as contemporary or historical figures, such as the witches from whom Propertius, Tibullus, and Ovid seek spells to beguile their lovers, or Lucan's Erictho, whom the Roman general Sextus Pompeius consults to learn his future. In addition to being more "real," the power of Roman witches is far greater than that of Greek witches. They can do all the things that Greek witches can, plus control the spirits of the dead, animate corpses, and even control the gods. Lucan's Erictho again provides the best example (6.523–28):⁶⁰

She addresses no prayer to Heaven, invokes no divine aid with suppliant hymn, and knows nothing of the organs of victims offered in sacrifice; she rejoices to lay on the altar funeral fires and incense snatched from the kindled pyre. At the first sound of her petition the gods grant every horror, dreading to hear a second spell (*carmen*). She buries in the grave the living whose souls still direct their bodies: while years are still due to them from destiny, death comes upon them unwillingly; or she brings back the funeral from the tomb with procession reversed, and the dead escape from death.

Erictho's powers thus break all the boundaries of natural law: the boundaries between sacred and profane, mortal and immortal and even between the living and the dead. It is this frightening power that threatens to bring primordial Chaos back to the world.⁶¹

How, then, can these significant differences in the literary representation of Greek and Roman witches be interpreted? A variety of explanations can be proposed, and indeed the reasons may be over-determined; that is, more than one may apply. One possible explanation is that the portraits of Greek witches that we have examined come from a period in which the concept of magic was not yet fully defined, and so its negative characteristics were not yet completely developed.

Richard Gordon notes that there are two different faces of magic in classical literature: "one face is that of religious power used illegitimately, the other the dream of power to effect marvelous changes in the real world."⁶² Gordon suggests that the negative marking of supernatural power does not appear until at least the fifth century, and it is fully developed only during the Hellenistic period.⁶³ The literary portraits that we have of Roman witches all come from a later period, and so were influenced by the development of the concept of magic in general.⁶⁴ This explanation, however, does not address why the Roman portraits are so much more negative than the Greek. In the Hellenistic period, when the concept of magic was full blown, the portraits of Greek witches, such as Theocritus's Simaetha and Apollonius Rhodius's Medea, are not nearly as frightening as Horace's Canidia or Lucan's Erictho. There seems to be a basic cultural difference here that this explanation does not sufficiently address.

Another possible explanation for the difference in the portraits of Greek and Roman witches is that magic in general was viewed more negatively in Roman than in Greek society. To some extent, this seems to be true. The Romans seem much more concerned about the negative effects of magic on society as a whole.⁶⁵ This concern goes back to the Twelve Tables, the Roman law code traditionally dated to the Early Republic, which lists attempting to enchant another's crops as a serious crime.⁶⁶ In the time period from which most of our literary portraits of Roman witches come, the Late Republic and Early Empire, concern over the practice of harmful magic seems to have been quite high. Special legislation was passed to stamp out the practice of such magic,⁶⁷ and magical practitioners, including magicians and astrologers, were periodically expelled from Rome and Italy.⁶⁸ Negative attitudes toward magic among the Romans may then explain at least partially the negative representations of the witch in Latin literature.

On the other hand, this explanation does not address the highly problematic representations of gender and magic. Literary portraits of male practitioners of magic in Latin literature and also in Greek literature from the Empire are in general far more positive than those of female ones.⁶⁹ These men are represented as learned magicians, or even philosophers, whose interest in magic is part of their search for knowledge.⁷⁰ So, according to Varro, the ancient Roman king Numa Pompilius used magic to obtain knowledge of the rites and practices he should establish for Roman religion (Varro, cited in August. *De civ. D.* 7.35). A similar motive is attributed to the magical dabbling of Nigidius Figulus, a polymath of the Late Republic, who is described as a "keen and diligent investigator of those things which seem to be hidden by nature." (Cic. *Tim.* 1: *acer investigator et diligens earum rerum, quae a natura involuata videntur*).⁷¹ Moreover, authors portray these male magicians as using their magic for good rather than evil. So Apollonius of Tyana, the great philosopher/miracle-worker of the Early Empire, supposedly performed exorcisms, cured the sick, averted a plague, and raised the dead

(Philostr. V.A. 3.38–39, 4.10, 4.45). A Palestinian miracle-worker of this period, Simon Magus, reportedly made cripples whole, the blind see, and the dead live again (Justin, *Apol.* 26.1–2). Even when these literary portraits are not quite so positive, the objection to male practitioners of magic seems to be that they are charlatans, performing conjuring tricks rather than real magic. So, Anaxilaus of Larissa, a Pythagorean and magus of the Augustan Age, had a collection of amusing spells to entertain guests at a drinking party, including one in which cuttlefish ink was put on a lamp wick to make all present look like Ethiopians (Plin. *HN* 19.19). The most famous of these supposed charlatans, Alexander of Abonuteichos, is reputed to have deluded the masses by using a fake talking serpent to give out his prophecies (Lucian, *Alex.* 26). This is not to say that men in the Roman period were not in reality accused of the practice of harmful magic, as the trial of Apuleius certainly shows (*Apul. Apol.*). My point is that the Roman literary representation of the male magician tends to be far more positive than that of the female witch. There are no portraits of evil male sorcerers in Latin literature comparable to the horrific images of the female witches Canidia and Erichtho. Negative attitudes toward magic in general among the Romans thus cannot fully explain why it is specifically the women who are demonized in Roman literary portraits of magical practitioners.

We must therefore seek another explanation for the differences in the literary representations of Greek and Roman witches. One possibility is that these differences are related to the cultural constructions of the female in Greek and Roman society,⁷² in particular to the divergent concepts that these peoples had of the appropriate relationship between women and power, and between women and the divine. In Greek society, at least until the Hellenistic period, the evidence suggests that women had little societal power, with the exception of religion, where as priestesses of official state cults they regularly mediated the divine alongside male priests for society as a whole.⁷³ If we follow Gordon's proposal that magic can be viewed as "religious power used illegitimately,"⁷⁴ we might hypothesize that since Greek women commonly had legitimate religious power, the notion that they might also have had illegitimate religious power, that is, magical power, would have seemed less threatening. Moreover, since Greek women's societal power was largely restricted to the religious sphere, the possibility that they might obtain power that would threaten male control of society as a whole would seem unlikely. The representations of Greek women with magical power thus would in general then be more positive, expressing more the positive fantasies of the men who created them rather than their negative fears. In Roman society, on the other hand, from the Late Republic on, women had considerable economic and political power, although this power was unofficial and highly contested, whereas their role in state religion was highly restricted.⁷⁵ We might hypothesize that the idea that Roman women might wield illegitimate religious power would be seen

as highly threatening, both since they were generally restricted from access to religious power in general, and because the possibility seemed more likely that they could in fact threaten male control of society. Such fears might lead to the highly negative portraits of witches in the Roman sources, producing the image of the witch whose power threatened to destroy natural law and lead the universe back into chaos.⁷⁶

If we consider in detail the cultural context in which the most negative representations of witches were produced, another possible interpretation also emerges. As I have noted, negative portrayals climax in Latin literature of the late first century BCE and the early to mid-first century CE with such frightening witch figures as Canidia and Erichtho. This period from the end of the Republic through the Early Empire was characterized by political, social, and cultural turbulence. One area that was singled out for concern was a perceived decline in socio-moral standards, particularly as they affected traditional gender roles.⁷⁷ There was a high degree of anxiety expressed in contemporary literature over the ways in which women were perceived as behaving, especially at the highest levels of society.⁷⁸ The reality may not have been that women were in fact changing their behavior; however, the literary representations of that behavior indicate a perception of such a change. According to these reports, upper-class women, such as Augustus's wife Livia, were meddling in affairs of state, contrary to social norms that proscribed women's interference in such matters.⁷⁹ Examples of female moral turpitude were held up for particular societal opprobrium, such as the notorious Messalina, the third wife of the emperor Claudius, who reportedly turned the imperial palace into a brothel and serviced its customers herself (*Juv. Sat.* 6.115–32). Moreover, the laws the emperor Augustus passed that attempted to encourage marriage and to discourage abortion and adultery indicate that considerable anxiety was being expressed over women's sexual behavior in this period, whether or not there was any real change in such behavior.⁸⁰ The early imperial poet Juvenal's vituperative Sixth Satire on women showcases the highly negative reactions to these reported changes in women's traditional roles and behaviors, attacking their inappropriate desires for sex and power. Perhaps the similarly negative witch portraits that belong to this period are another way of representing anxieties regarding women "out of control," that is, behaving in ways that threatened traditional gender roles and thus social stability. Kimberly Stratton has suggested that these negative portraits are tied to an ongoing discourse in Roman literature on women's dangerous independence.⁸¹ This discourse, which dates back to the third century BCE, was tied to magic in the Augustan period, heightening the demonizing power of the representation of the "wicked" independent and powerful woman. As we have seen, the witch represented the polar opposite of all that the "proper" Roman matron was supposed to be:⁸² the witch was ugly, lustful, castrating, power-mad, and evil rather than beautiful, chaste, fertile, submissive, and

good. The loathsome figure of the Roman witch therefore could serve to reassert traditional social mores through reaffirming by contrast the traditional roles held by women in Roman society.

This explanation assumes that the Roman stories regarding witches are being told as cautionary tales regarding women's behavior. We should recognize, however, that they also address issues concerning men's behavior, and that since they are tales written by men for a largely male audience, this may in fact be their primary focus.⁸³ These stories fit into an ongoing discourse in the late Republican and early imperial period regarding the Roman definition of masculinity and the challenge represented to that definition by *mollitia*, "effeminacy."⁸⁴ In an article on the tales regarding the Roman "night hag," the most frightening of the witch figures, I have argued that these stories focus on male concerns over their appropriate sexual and social roles and on their fears of emasculation/feminization and its concomitant loss of social status.⁸⁵ According to the traditional Roman view of gender roles, "real" men were dominant both sexually and socially. In fact, the two areas of dominance were closely linked, for those of high social status were supposed to be sexually dominant as well, able to penetrate others readily and to defend their own bodies from any type of penetrative assault, making them, in Jonathan Walters's terms, the "impenetrable penetrator."⁸⁶ The sexually dominant male, however, was only one of four sexual roles that people could hold, according to the Roman formulation of human sexuality, as Holt Parker explains:⁸⁷

The Romans divided sexual categories for people and acts on the axis of "active" and "passive." Active has, in their scheme, a single precise meaning. The one normative action is the penetration of a bodily orifice by a penis . . . Thus active is by *definition* "male" and passive is by *definition* "female." Accordingly, Roman society creates exactly four sexual categories for people. There is the normal/active male (*vir*) and the normal/passive female (*femina/puella*). Each then has its antitype: the passive/abnormal man (*cinaedus*) and the active/abnormal woman (*virago/tribas/moecha*).

I propose that the Roman night hag represents the antitype of the active/abnormal woman, while her male victim is the antitype of the passive/abnormal man. As I have noted earlier, the witch is generally driven by lust, and in the night hag stories, she acts upon that lust in a particularly violent way. Parker says of the sexually active woman, "she will desire to penetrate, but cannot be truly (phallically) active."⁸⁸ The female witches in these stories, however, actually do penetrate their male victims, and they do so not through the normal openings in the male body (anus or mouth),⁸⁹ but through monstrous orifices that they deliberately open in that body. They also penetrate their victims symbolically, by breaking through the boundaries of their household, the space that a Roman male was

traditionally supposed to control. Thus, in the night hag tales, penetration is expressed on two levels that are symbolically equivalent: the corporeal and the domestic.⁹⁰ The Roman witches repeatedly violate the margins of both the dwelling and the male body.⁹¹ By submitting to these abnormal acts, their male victims are made into weak feminized creatures and hence become objects of pity and/or derision. It is interesting that the night hag stories often end with the audience to the story laughing at the victim in the story. Such laughter may signal underlying anxiety as well as reinforcing social mores through ridicule of those who are represented as violating them.⁹² These stories may well express the fears of men that they could fail in their sexual role as the "impenetrable penetrator" and thus would no longer be a "real" man, a *vir*.⁹³ The threats of castration frequently expressed in these tales would then illustrate the fear of emasculation/feminization through falling into the role of the passively penetrated male. Indeed, the standard expression in Latin for assuming this role is *muliebria pati*, "to have a woman's experience."⁹⁴ The man who assumes this role to a certain extent becomes a woman, and the stories suggest that the ultimate result of this gender bending is humiliation and a drastic loss of social stature. I propose that one significant purpose of the night hag tales is to express the anxiety surrounding the active/passive sexual dichotomy and to reinforce strictures regarding appropriate male sexual and social roles.

One example of this type of story is Aristomenes's tale from Apuleius's *Metamorphoses* (15–19).⁹⁵ In this tale, Aristomenes meets his old friend Socrates, who has been reduced to a sorry state by his encounter with Meroe, a witch (*Met.* 1.8: *saga*). According to Socrates, Meroe had forced him to submit to her lust (*Met.* 1.7: *urigine*), taken away his clothing, and confiscated his wages. She had clearly assumed here the dominant male role, while Socrates was feminized/emasculated by his contact with the witch. Aristomenes does not sympathize with his friend, but instead castigates him for abandoning his ancestral gods and his family (*Met.* 1.8: *lari et liberis*), that is, his social status, for the witch's sexual charms. Socrates defends himself by proclaiming Meroe's power and relating a series of tales illustrating her dominance over her other lovers. These stories all emphasize the degradation that these men experience as a result of their sexual encounter with the witch, and one explicitly indicates that her goal is emasculation, for she turns one of her lovers into a beaver in the hope that like that animal, he might castrate himself in order to escape.⁹⁶ At the climax of his description of Meroe's powers, Socrates shows her control of both corporeal and domestic boundaries by relating how she had blocked up the womb of her lover's wife, so that the baby could not be born,⁹⁷ and how she had shut the population of an entire village up in their houses, preventing them from opening their doors or breaking through their walls.⁹⁸ The themes of domestic/corporeal boundary control/violation and emasculation echo throughout the remainder of the tale. Aristomenes and

Socrates hide from Meroe in a room at an inn, but in the middle of the night, Meroe and her companions spectacularly violate the domestic boundary, causing the bolts to be run back, breaking and tearing out the pivots, and throwing the doors to the ground.⁹⁹ They then threaten to rip all the limbs off Aristomenes and castrate him.¹⁰⁰ Instead, however, they turn to a violation of Socrates's corporeal boundary: Meroe plunges a sword into his neck, collects his blood, and rips out his heart through his throat.¹⁰¹ They staunch his wound with a sponge and some magical words, and then they turn back to Aristomenes, humiliating him by straddling his face and urinating on him.¹⁰² This act again points to the witches assuming the dominant male role, since urination and ejaculation are closely connected in Latin terminology.¹⁰³ Moreover, Aristomenes notes that by this act they had left him naked, cold and wet, like a baby just emerged from its mother's womb.¹⁰⁴ This statement shows that the witches have emasculated Aristomenes, simultaneously infantilizing and feminizing him, for coldness and wetness are precisely the characteristics attributed to women according to classical medical theory.¹⁰⁵ The retreat of the witches again signals their control of the domestic boundary, for the minute they depart, the doors, pivots, bars, and bolts are magically restored to their prior state.¹⁰⁶ Aristomenes, whose very name seems to reflect his manliness ("best in strength"),¹⁰⁷ then imagines someone casting doubt on his manhood for his behavior in this incident by saying "You could at least have called out for help, if a big man like you could not withstand a woman by yourself."¹⁰⁸ When in fear and shame he then tries to commit suicide, Aristomenes falls on Socrates, who awakens, apparently restored to his former self. Socrates and Aristomenes flee the inn, but later, Socrates collapses and dies, and Aristomenes flees the country in fear and trembling, abandoning his previous life and family, and thus being deprived of all his social status.¹⁰⁹ When Aristomenes finishes the tale, his travel companion ridicules him, saying that his story is both fabulous and ridiculous.¹¹⁰ The tale of Aristomenes is clearly a cautionary one, pointing to male fears of emasculation and loss of social status through the assumption of a passive pseudo-female role. The tale thus reinforces traditional Roman male gender roles, both social and sexual, and fits well with contemporary discourse on issues of masculinity and effeminacy.

In conclusion, then, we may note that the witch in classical literature can serve a variety of functions. First, she can represent male fantasies and fears of what it would be like to be associated with a woman of supernatural power. Like Medea in the *Argonautica* of Apollonius Rhodius, the witch can help a man to overcome impossible odds to win the object of his greatest desire; or like Meroe in Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*, the witch can utterly destroy a man, taking away his social position, his manhood, and even his life. Secondly, the witch can illustrate the consequences of inverting the "natural" order. When the female witch inverts the laws of Nature, all the boundaries that order the world are dissolved, and chaos

results. The clear message is that the natural order must be preserved, in which men through their association with culture are dominant over women and nature. Third, the witch can represent a highly negative model for female behavior and thus help to reassert traditional female roles within that society. The powerful and sex-crazed witch serves as the antithesis of the traditional submissive and chaste Roman matron, and thus encourages women and the men who are supposed to be in control of them to make sure that women remain faithful to their traditional roles. Finally, the witch can also express men's fears of what might happen if they do not maintain their own traditional male role of dominance, but rather sink to effeminate submissiveness. Such a shift would make them not only powerless but also ridiculous. Interpretations of the witch figure can clearly be multiplied beyond those I have suggested here.¹¹¹ She is clearly a prime example of the Other, against whom a wide variety of anxieties and desires can be projected. However we choose to interpret her in her manifold forms, it is clear that the witch was an extremely powerful archetype in classical literature. From the divine Circe to the demonic Erichtho, the witch looms threateningly in these ancient tales, alternately seducing and terrifying the reader with her magical powers.

Notes

1. This article was submitted in its final edited form in 2008, and I was not able to change the text in any substantive way or incorporate into the argument more recent bibliography after that date. I would like to thank the Loeb Classical Library Foundation, the College of William and Mary, the Reves Center for International Studies, the Newcomb Foundation, and the Center for Hellenic Studies for their financial support of my research on the witch in classical antiquity. For their helpful suggestions, criticisms, and comments on the content of this article, I would also like to thank Debbie Felton, Mary Gelfand, Fritz Graf, Sarah Iles Johnston, Dayna Kalleres, Paul Mirecki, Eric Midelfort, Kathleen Perkins, Oliver Phillips, Linda Reilly, Kimberly Stratton, and Aysé Tuzlak.
2. *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (4th ed.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000), s.v. "witch," first definition. I do not make the distinction, common to anthropological usage between witches and sorcerers, since this distinction is largely inoperative in ancient texts. On the anthropological usage, see, e.g., Max G. Marwick, ed., *Witchcraft and Sorcery: Selected Readings* (Magnolia, MA: Peter Smith, 1971), 11–19.
3. This discussion of the terminology for "witch" in antiquity is based on a search through the English to Greek (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/enggreekgreek?lang=greek>) and English to Latin dictionaries (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/enggreekgreek?lang=la>) in the online Perseus database for the terms "witch," "sorceress," and "enchantress," and a review of the terms under the

- category of "magic." For a general discussion of the terminology applied to magical practitioners in antiquity, see Matthew W. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 12–16; Fritz Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, trans. Franklin Philip (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 20–60; and E. E. Burris, "The Terminology of Witchcraft," *CPh* 31(1936): 137–45.
4. On this issue, see, e.g., Kimberly Stratton, *Naming the Witch: Magic, Ideology, and Stereotype in the Ancient World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 4–18; Jacob Neusner, Ernest S. Frerichs, and Paul V.M. Flesher, eds., *Religion, Science, and Magic: In Concert and in Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); and Dickie, *Magic*, 18–46. For more bibliography on this issue, see Daniel Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 305.
 5. For the approach that I am taking to the definition of magic as a form of socially unsanctioned religious activity, see, e.g., C. R. Phillips, "Nullum Crimen Sine Lege: Socioreligious Sanctions on Magic," in *Magika Hiera*, ed. Christopher Faraone and Dirk Obbink (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 260–76.
 6. Hom., *Od.* 10–12; Pind., *Pyth.* 4; Eur., *Med.*; Ap. Rhod., *Argon.* 3–4; Theoc., *Id.* 2.
 7. Verg., *Ecl.* 8; Hor., *Epod.* 3, 5, 17, *Sat.* 1.8; Tib. 1.2, 5, 7, 8; Prop. 1.1, 2.28, 3.6, 4.5; Ov., *Am.* 1.8, 3.7, *Her.* 6, 12, *Met.* 7, 14; Petron., *Sat.* 131–5; Sen., *Med.*; Luc. 6.413–830; Apul., *Met.* 1–3.
 8. On the formation of the concept of magic, see Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, 20–36 and Dickie, *Magic and Magicians*, 18–46.
 9. Richard Gordon, "Imagining Greek and Roman Magic," in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: Ancient Greece and Rome*, ed. Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark (London: The Athlone Press, 1999), 178.
 10. For more on the literary and artistic tradition surrounding the figures of Circe and Medea, see Judith Yarnall, *Transformations of Circe: The History of an Enchantress* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994) and James J. Clauss and Sarah Iles Johnston, eds., *Medea: Essays on Medea in Myth, Literature, Philosophy, and Art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).
 11. For the female monster, see Sarah Iles Johnston, "Defining the Dreadful: Remarks on the Greek Child-Killing Demon," in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, ed. Marvin Meyer and Paul Mirecki (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 361–90. For the night-hag, see Barbetta Stanley Spaeth, "The Terror That Comes in the Night: The Night Hag and Supernatural Assault in Latin Literature," in *Sub Imagine Somni: Night-time Phenomena in Greco-Roman Culture*, ed. Emma Scioli and Christine Walde (Pisa, Italy: Edizioni ETS, 2010), 231–58.
 12. For a collection of texts in translation on Greek and Roman witches, see Georg Luck, *Arcana Mundi: Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds. A Collection of Texts* (2nd ed.; Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 93–96, 102–27, 53–57, 246–56, 66–71, 77–80, and Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft, and*

- Ghosts*, 78–145. For further commentary, see Georg Luck, “Witches and Sorcerers in Classical Literature,” in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: Ancient Greece and Rome*, ed. Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark (London: The Athlone Press, 1999).
13. So, too, Melissa Jane Schons, *Horror and the Characterization of the Witch from Horace to Lucan* (PhD diss., University of California at Los Angeles, 1998), 216–20: “The complexity and flexibility of the witch’s character make it possible for poets to design her to appear successfully in satire, iambics, elegy, tragedy or epic and still maintain the conventions of the genre . . . In defining the witch’s character in each of these generic environments, the poet creates a figure who is immediately recognizable as a witch by drawing upon the aspects of the stereotype which suit his purposes . . . [The witch] defies the boundaries of genre, for her stereotypical character traits persist no matter what genre she inhabits . . .”
 14. A lack of recognition of the difference between reality and representation can lead to such highly problematic statements as the following: “Canidia, therefore, is probably a typical witch painted from life . . . All that Horace says of her agrees with what we know of other witches. She was, like them, an old woman of haggard features and ashen complexion. Her social position at Rome was the lowest . . . As the other witches whom we have studied were either procuresses or keepers of low wine shops, it is likely that Canidia met her friends and customers through the same convenient avenue of trade . . . They are all libidinous far beyond what would expect from their years. Indeed, if we ask why any Roman woman should wish to become a witch, the answer seems to be—*libido*”: Eugene Tavenner, “Canidia and Other Witches,” in *Witchcraft in the Ancient World and the Middle Ages* (vol. 2 of *Articles on Witchcraft, Magic, and Demonology*; ed. Brian Levack; New York: Garland, 1992), 38–39.
 15. Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, 175–6. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians*, 11, takes a rather different approach to the issue of representation, or as he calls it literary “stereotype”: “To return to the more general question of getting behind the stereotype in ancient literature to the reality it conceals or distorts, we can either renounce the attempt as hopeless and confine ourselves to the not very demanding task of recording ancient representations or tackle the problem.” Dickie uses literary portraits to try to reconstruct actual practice of witchcraft in antiquity, with somewhat mixed results. See David Frankfurter, review of *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, by Matthew Dickie, *BMCR* (27.02.2002; online <http://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2002/2002-02-26.html>; cited May 19, 2007) on Dickie’s overly credulous use of literary sources.
 16. These associations are commonplace in many representations of witches. On the witch and nature, see, e.g., Sylvia Bovenschen, “The Contemporary Witch, the Historical Witch, and the Witch Myth,” *NGC* 15 (1978): 83–119; on the witch and the body, see, e.g., Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-Century Representations* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 91–144. For a collection of tales from around the world that illustrate the figure of the witch,

see Shahrukh Husain, ed., *Daughters of the Moon: Witch Tales, from around the World* (Boston: Faber & Faber, 1994). For the witch in folklore and fairytale, see, e.g., Venetia Newall, ed., *The Witch Figure: Folklore Essays by a Group of Scholars in England Honoring the 75th Birthday of Katharine M. Briggs* (London: Routledge, 1973) and Sarah Miller, "Evil and Fairy Tales: The Witch as Symbol of Evil in Fairy Tales" (PhD diss., California Institute of Integral Studies, 1984).

17. Debbie Felton has suggested to me that the description of Circe's dwelling in the forest glen, with smoke rising from her house, may be an early standard description of witches' dwellings as seen in the folktales of the Brothers Grimm, for example, Hansel and Gretel.
18. This is not to say, of course, that male magical practitioners did not use natural ingredients in their potions, as the PGM certainly shows. However, the issue here is one of representation: the witches are often shown in the wild gathering their natural ingredients; the same is rarely true of the male practitioners in classical literature. On the representation of male practitioners, see below.
19. The ability of witches to transform themselves into animals is connected with their hybrid nature, a characteristic of the demonic in antiquity. See Johnston, "Defining the Dreadful," 363.
20. Sherry B. Ortner, "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?," in *Women, Culture, and Society*, ed. Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1974), 67–87; repr., Joan B. Landes, ed., *Feminism, the Public and the Private* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 21–44.
21. For criticism of Ortner's views, see, e.g., Carol MacCormack and Marilyn Strathern, eds., *Nature, Culture and Gender* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980). For Ortner's answers to these criticisms, see Sherry B. Ortner, *Making Gender: The Politics and Erotics of Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press 1996), 173–80. She argues as follows: "Gender difference, along with nature/culture is a powerful question. And the gender relationship is always at least in part situated on one nature/culture border—the body. What I think tends to happen in most if not all cultures is that the two oppositions easily move into a relationship of mutual metaphorization: gender becomes a powerful language for talking about the great existential questions of nature and culture, while a language of nature and culture, when and if it is articulated, can become a powerful language for talking about gender, sexuality, and reproduction, not to mention power and helplessness, activity and passivity, and so forth. The particular articulations of the relationship will vary across cultures, with surprising and unexpected shifts and alignments. But the chances that the two sets of issues will be interconnected in specific cultural and historical contexts still seem to me fairly high."
22. I find Ortner's arguments about the significance of women's physiology more persuasive than her interpretation of women's social roles and psychology in this context. It is the latter, in fact, that has led to much of the criticism of Ortner's

formulations, as well as her emphasis on the universality of the cultural devaluation of both nature and women.

23. Witches could also cause male impotence through the administration of potions; see Ov., *Am.* 3.20–36.
24. Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. A.T. Murray, vol. 1, LCL (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 367.
25. For more on witches and normative sexual roles in classical culture, see below and Spaeth, “Terror that Comes in the Night.”
26. Men’s magic, as revealed by ritual recipe-books such as the PGM and archaeological evidence, also employed body parts, but this is a representation versus reality issue. Men’s magic may have really involved these ingredients, but they aren’t commonly represented using them.
27. Cf. Ortner, “Is Female to Male,” in Landes, *Feminism, the Public and the Private*, 27: “Returning now to the issue of women, their pan-cultural second-class status could be accounted for, quite simply, by postulating that women are being identified or symbolically associated with nature, as opposed to men, who are identified with culture. Since it is always culture’s project to subsume and transcend nature, if women were considered part of nature, then culture would find it ‘natural’ to subordinate, not to say oppress, them. Yet although this argument can be shown to have considerable force, it seems to oversimplify the case. The formulation I would like to defend and elaborate on . . . then, is that women are seen ‘merely’ as being closer to nature than men. That is, culture (still equated relatively unambiguously with men) recognizes that women are active participants in its special processes, but at the same time sees them as being more rooted in, or having more direct affinity with, nature.”
28. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. Frank Justus Miller and G.P. Gould, 3rd ed., vol. 1, LCL (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 367.
29. E.g., Ap. Rhod., *Argon.* 3.528–33; Verg., *Ecl.* 8.69–67; Hor., *Epod.* 5.45–47; Tib. 1.8.17–27; Prop. 1.1, 2.28, 4.5; Ov., *Her.* 6.81–96, *Met.* 14.365–71; Petron., *Sat.* 129, 134–35; Sen., *Med.* 752–70; Luc. 6.461–506. For more on the ritual of “drawing down the moon,” see Oliver Phillips, “The Witches’ Thessaly,” in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, ed. Paul Mirecki and Marvin Meyer; vol. 141 of *Religions in the Greco-Roman World* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 378–85.
30. In this formulation, women are seen as intermediate between nature and culture, while men are seen as in control of the production of culture. I view this as a hierarchy, with men on top, in control of culture, then women, who are above nature, but still associated with it. Ortner points toward this hierarchy in the following passage (“Is Female to Male,” in Landes, *Feminism, the Public and the Private*, 39): “I argued that the universal devaluation of women could be explained by postulating that women are seen as closer to nature than men, men being seen more unequivocally occupying the high ground of culture . . . At the same time, however, [woman’s] ‘membership’ and fully necessary participation in culture are

recognized by culture and cannot be denied. Thus she is seen to occupy an intermediate position between culture and nature . . . (E)ven if she is not seen as nature pure and simple, she is still seen as achieving less transcendence of nature than man. Here 'intermediate' simply means 'middle status' on a hierarchy of being from culture to nature."

31. Such inversions are characteristic of demonic figures in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. See Jonathan Z. Smith, "Towards Interpreting Demonic Powers in Hellenistic and Roman Antiquity," ANRW II 16.1:4 25–39.
32. Seneca, *Tragedies*, trans. Frank Justus Miller, vol. 3, LCL (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 223.
33. Apuleius, *Metamorphoses (The Golden Ass)*, trans. J. Arthur Hanston, vol. 1, LCL (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 69.
34. See, for example, Carole E. Newlands, "Medea: Essays on Medea in Myth, Literature, Philosophy, and Art," in *Medea: Essays on Medea in Myth, Literature, Philosophy, and Art*, ed. James J. Clauss and Sarah Iles Johnston (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 186–92; and Yarnall, *Transformations of Circe*, 79–98.
35. Apuleius's witches span both categories: Pamphile and Photis are of the Greek type, while Meroe and her friends are of the Roman type. This mixture of categories seems appropriate, given the mixture of sources Apuleius used to create his work. On the sources for Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*, see James Tatum, "The Tales in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*," in *Oxford Readings in the Roman Novel*, ed. S. J. Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 157–94, and H. J. Mason, "Fabula Graecanica: Apuleius and His Greek Sources," in Harrison, ed., *Oxford*, 217–36.
36. Homer, *Odyssey*, 383.
37. A. S. F. Gow, ed., *Theocritus*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), 25.
38. Homer, *Odyssey*, 383.
39. Gow, ed., *Theocritus*, 23.
40. Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica*, trans. R.C. Seaton, LCL (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), 251.
41. Horace, *Odes and Epodes*, trans. C.E. Bennett, LCL (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 315.
42. On the double pupil and the evil eye, see Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft and Ghosts*, 224.
43. Lucan, *Civil War*, trans. J.D. Duff, LCL (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), 343. The term "witch" does not appear in the Latin, so square brackets are used to indicate its absence. Erictho is referred to here instead as an impious woman (*profanae*).
44. *Ibid.*, 353.
45. Homer, *Odyssey*, 305.

46. It is worth noting that in Pind., *Pyth.* 4.217, Jason uses magic on Medea first, getting her to fall in love with him, which is probably what he refers to in Eur., *Med.* 526–8 when he dismisses Medea's assistance, attributing all his help to Aphrodite.
47. Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica*, 319.
48. Tib. 1.2, 1.5, 1.8; Prop. 1.1, 3.6, 4.5; Ov., *Am.* 1.8, 3.7.
49. Hor., *Epod.* 5, *Sat.* 1.8; Apul., *Met.* 1–3, *passim*.
50. Lucan, *The Civil War*, 347.
51. On the simplicity of their methods, see below.
52. Homer, *Odyssey*, 36–12.
53. Pind., *Pyth.* 4.220–3; Eur., *Med.* 384–5, 717–8, 784–9.
54. Eur., *Med.* 160 (Themis and Artemis); 332, 516 (Zeus); 397 (Hecate); 764 (Zeus, Dike, Helios), 1059 (Alastores).
55. Kimberly Stratton has raised the possibility that this change in representation could reflect developments in ritual technology in this period, but concludes that ideological reasons are more likely to account for the shift: Stratton, *Naming the Witch*, 72. See also the discussion of changing ritual technologies in Gager, *Curse Tablets*, 7.
56. Theocr., *Id.* 2. 10, 69, 75, 81, 87, 99, 105, 111, 117, 123, 129, 135, 165 (Selene); 12, 14 (Hecate); 33 (Artemis); 30, 130 (Aphrodite); 160 (Moirai). Note that Simaetha calls upon the dread Moirai only at the very end of the poem, when she despairs of retrieving her lover.
57. Seneca, *Tragedies*, trans. Frank Justus Miller, vol. 1, LCL (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 229.
58. *Ibid.*, 291–3.
59. Lucan, *Civil War*, 34–35.
60. *Ibid.*, 343.
61. Cf. also Pamphile's description in Apul., *Met.* 2.5, cited earlier: she knows how to "drown all the light of the starry heavens in the depths of hell and plunge it into primeval Chaos": Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*, 69. Cf. on the Babylonian type of the demonic witch: Tzvi Abusch, "The Demonic Image of the Witch in Standard Babylonian Literature: The Reworking of Popular Conceptions by Learned Exorcists," in *Religion, Science, and Magic: In Concert and in Conflict*, ed. Jacob Neusner, Ernest S. Frerichs, and Paul V. M. Flesher (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 38: "The witch is transformed into a powerful human figure who introduces chaos into the social order and even intrudes on the divine world. She can compete with and even overpower the gods."
62. Gordon, "Imagining Greek and Roman Magic," 178.
63. *Ibid.*, 178–91. For the development of the concept of magic, see also Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, 20–36 and Dickie, *Magic and Magician*, 18–46.
64. The earliest Roman literary portrait of a witch seems to be Vergil's and he is clearly influenced by that of Theocritus's Simaetha: so Anne-Marie Tupet, *La magie dans la poésie latine I: Des origines à la fin du règne d'Auguste* (Paris: Société d'édition

- "Les Belles Lettres", 1976), 223–4. Tupet suggests that there may have been earlier such portraits, but we have little evidence for them.
65. See Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, 36: "The situation in Rome [regarding the nature of the concept of magic] seems comparable to what has just been described for Greece—yet, at the same time, it is rather different . . . The divergences resulted first from the fact that in Rome the practices of sorcery had always been fought by the civil authorities and, therefore, the accusation of magic was much more serious than in Greece . . ."
 66. The relevant primary sources are Sen., *Q Nat.* 4.7.2 and Plin., HN 28.17. On magic in the Laws of the Twelve Tables, see Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, 41–43 and Dickie, *Magic and Magicians*, 142–5.
 67. This legislation may be traced back to the Sullan law of 81 bce, the *Lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficiis*, although this law was probably not originally used to prosecute accusations of black magic. On the Sullan legislation and its later applications, see Dickie, *Magic and Magicians*, 145–51.
 68. On these "police actions" against magicians, see *Ibid.*, 152–7.
 69. For a collection of primary texts in translation of male magicians in this period, see Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts*, 41–77 and Luck, *Arcana Mundi*, 142–53, 57–61, 89–90, 271–2, 335–53. For further commentary, see also Luck, "Witches and Sorcerers". For an old, but still interesting, study of the male magician in classical antiquity, see E. M. Butler, *The Myth of the Magus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948), 44–83.
 70. On the learned magicians of the Late Republic and Early Empire, see Dickie, *Magic and Magicians*, 168–75 and 202–19.
 71. My translation.
 72. For a basic overview of the cultural construction of gender and the recent scholarship on this topic, see D. Boyarin, "Gender," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. M.C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 117–35.
 73. On women in Greece from the Dark Age to the Classical period, see, e.g., Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity* (New York: Schocken Books, 1975), 32–119; Eva Cantarella, *Pandora's Daughters: The Role and Status of Women in Greek and Roman Antiquity* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 38–76; Elaine Fantham et al., eds., *Women in the Classical World: Image and Text* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 10–127; Sue Blundell, *Women in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 63–196. For the role of women in Greek religion, see Ross Shepard Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings: Women's Religions among Pagans, Jews, and Christians in the Greco-Roman World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 22–49, 80–92; Matthew Dillon, *Girls and Women in Classical Greek Religion* (London: Routledge, 2002); Barbara Goff, *Citizen Bacchae: Women's Ritual Practice in Ancient Greece* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); and Joan Breton Connelly, *Portrait of a Priestess: Women and Ritual in Ancient Greece* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).

74. Gordon, "Imagining Greek and Roman Magic," 178.
75. For Roman women in the Late Republic and Early Empire, see, e.g., Pomeroy, *Goddesses*, 149–80; Jane Gardner, *Women in Roman Law and Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 257–66; Eva Cantarella, *Pandora's Daughters: The Role & Status of Women in Greek & Roman Antiquity*, trans. Maureen B. Fant (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 135–70; Fantham et al., eds., *Women in the Classical World*, 260–329. The importance of the role of women in Roman religion is contested in contemporary scholarship. John Scheid, "The Religious Roles of Roman Women," in *A History of Women in the West I: From Ancient Goddesses to Christian Saints*, ed. Pauline Schmitt Pantel (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 377–408 argues that women never filled leading roles in Roman state religion. This view is clearly contradicted by such priestesses as the Vestal Virgins and the priestesses of the Bona Dea and Ceres/Proserpina, who administered public cults on behalf of the Roman state; these priesthoods, however, are the exception to the rule that in general men held official religious power and authority in Roman religion. For the Vestal Virgins, see Robin Lorsch Wildfang, *Rome's Vestal Priestesses in the Late Republic and Early Empire* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006); for the other priestesses, see Ariadne Staples, *From Good Goddess to Vestal Virgins: Sex and Category in Roman Religion* (London: Routledge, 1998) and Barbetta Stanley Spaeth, *The Roman Goddess Ceres* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 102–13. Celia E. Schultz, *Women's Religious Activity in the Roman Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006) also argues for the importance of women's roles in a variety of aspects of Roman religion.
76. Cf., e.g., Sen., *Herc. Oet.* 463 and Apul., *Met.* 2.5, as discussed above.
77. This argument is derived from anthropological and sociological theory on witchcraft, which suggests that at times when a society is under stresses that threaten socio-moral boundaries and the stability of gender roles, a more negative view of the witch becomes prevalent, resulting often in an increase in witchcraft accusations. The classic anthropological text for this theory is E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937). For a discussion of the further development of Evans-Pritchard's ideas, see Mary Douglas, ed., *Witchcraft: Confessions and Accusations* (London: Tavistock, 1970). For the sociological adaptation of this theory, see Nachman Ben-Yehuda, *Deviance and Moral Boundaries: Witchcraft, the Occult, Science, Fiction, Deviant Sciences and Scientists* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985) and "Witchcraft and the Occult as Boundary Maintenance Devices," in *Religion, Science, and Magic in Concert and in Conflict*, ed. Joseph Neusner, Ernest S. Frerichs, and Paul V.M. Flesher (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 229–61.
78. For a discussion of the ideological reasons that such literary representations may have been promoted in the Augustan period, see Kristina Milnor, *Gender, Domesticity, and the Age of Augustus: Inventing Private Life* (Oxford: Oxford University

Press, 2005), 140–85 and Catharine Edwards, *The Politics of Immorality in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 34–62.

79. For example, see Suet., Tib. 50.2–3 for Tiberius's concern regarding Livia's meddling: "Vexed at his mother Livia, alleging that she claimed an equal share in the rule, he shunned frequent meetings with her and long and confidential conversations, to avoid the appearance of being guided by her advice; though in point of fact he was wont every now and then to need and to follow it. He was greatly offended too by a decree of the senate, providing that 'son of Livia,' as well as 'son of Augustus' should be written in his honorary inscriptions. For this reason he would not suffer her to be named 'Parent of her Country,' nor to receive any conspicuous public honour. More than that, he often warned her not to meddle with affairs of importance and unbecoming a woman . . ." Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars*, trans. J.C. Rolfe, vol. 1, LCL (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 381. On Livia, see, e.g., Anthony A. Barrett, *Livia: First Lady of Imperial Rome* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002) and Elizabeth Bartman, *Portraits of Livia: Imaging the Imperial Woman in Augustan Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
80. On changing sexual mores in the Augustan period and the attempts to control them through legislation, see Fantham et al., eds., *Women in the Classical World*, 294–329. For a skeptical view of the reality of such changes, see Milnor, *Gender, Domesticity, and the Age of Augustus*, 140–85 and Edwards, *Politics of Immorality*, 34–62.
81. Stratton, *Naming the Witch*, 96–105. I wish to thank Dr Stratton for allowing me to read an early draft of Chapter 3 of her manuscript.
82. So, too, Schons, "Horror," 815, who argues that the representation of the witch deliberately inverts the role of the ideal Roman matron in order to provide a negative model for female behavior in Roman society. See also Stratton, *Naming the Witch*, 99: "I suggest that while Augustus was promoting domesticity and an idealized and politicized vision of female behavior as part of his imperial ideology, the image of the witch emerged as the antithesis. Her uncontrolled libido, masculine behavior, and independence signified chaos, a reversal of natural order, and social evils such as murder and infanticide. The witch thus functions as a foil for the symbol of imperial order, peace, and domestic harmony embodied in the chaste women of the imperial house, who were prominent icons of Augustus's civic renewal." For further discussion of the figure antithetical to the witch, see my work on the Roman goddess Ceres, whose image was promoted as a model for the female virtues of chastity and fertility from the Middle Republic through the Empire: Spaeth, *Roman Goddess Ceres*, 113–23.
83. Cf. Kate Cooper's argument that ". . . many ancient accounts of female behavior are shaped rhetorically to suit a judgment of male character . . ." in *The Virgin and the Bride: Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 13. Cooper (45–67) applies this theory to the Christian

romances in the Apocryphal Acts. These tales, she argues, although ostensibly about women and their sexual behavior, in fact are about men and their authority and status: "The challenge by the apostle to the householder is the urgent message of these narratives, and it is essentially about a conflict *between* men. The challenge posed here by Christianity is not really about women, or even about sexual continence, but about authority and the social order." See also Stratton, *Naming the Witch*, 78: "Insinuations and accusations about women's sexual misconduct and luxury thus often concealed political and social contests between men and should not be accepted as a straightforward portrayal of women's behavior."

84. This discourse is treated in detail by a number of modern scholars, including Edwards, *Politics of Immorality*, 63–98; Maud W. Gleason, *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995); Anthony Corbeill, *Controlling Laughter: Political Humor in the Late Roman Republic* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 128–73; Erik Gunderson, *Staging Masculinity: The Rhetoric of Performance in the Roman World* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000).
85. See Spaeth, "Terror that Comes in the Night." In this article, I analyze four such tales: Ov., *Fast.* 6.131–69, Petron., *Sat.* 63, and Apul., *Met.* 1.5–19 and 2.21–30.
86. Jonathan Walters, "Invading the Roman Body: Manliness and Impenetrability in Roman Thought," in Judith P. Hallett and Marilyn B. Skinner, eds., *Roman Sexualities* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 30.
87. Holt Parker, "The Teratogenic Grid," in Hallett and Skinner, eds., *Roman Sexualities*, 48.
88. Parker, "Teratogenic Grid," 58.
89. Parker, "Teratogenic Grid," 48–49. For the female body, the normal openings include, of course, the vagina.
90. As C. M. McDonough notes, "(t)he penetration of boundaries marking the household's outer limits is recapitulated in the penetration of the victim's bodily margins." See C. M. McDonough, "Carna, Proca and the Strix on the Kalends of June," *TAPA* 127 (1997): 332. McDonough cites Artemidorus (4.30) on how in dreams a man can be symbolized by his house, Plautus on this same theme in the *Mostellaria* (84–157), and Lucretius (3.58–8) on how the affliction of the body can be expressed through the metaphor of architecture.
91. In this violation of boundaries, the witches show that they are liminal creatures, those who straddle boundaries. Liminality is another characteristic of the demonic in antiquity. See Johnston, "Defining the Dreadful," 363.
92. Cf. Corbeill, *Controlling Laughter*, 5–6 on Roman humorous invective: "... Roman humorous abuse creates social norms by exposing the violators of those norms. Rome's humor of aggression caters to, in Cicero's words, 'the interests of each individual and of the community as a whole' by simultaneously creating and enforcing the community's ethical values. Jokes become a means of ordering social realities ... At Rome, deviant behavior is behavior that public speakers so define in their invective. As they label deviance through political humor, the positive values

of society—the ‘proper’ way to look and behave—become reinforced by contrast. In creating and maintaining the ideal society envisioned in *On Moral Duties*, Cicero’s Rome does have access to a disciplinary mechanism: laughter.” Corbeill identifies accusations of effeminacy as one of the primary forms of Roman humorous invective. See Corbeill, *Controlling Laughter*, 11: “The orator had access to a specific set of external indicators that he could exploit to demonstrate his adversary’s lapse from proper male behavior.” On the social and psychological function of sexual humor, cf. also Abner Ziv, *Personality and Sense of Humor* (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 1984), 65–68: “Sexual humor functions as a regulator of our thoughts on the subject of sexual intercourse. By the term regulator, I mean a force that contributes to a normative organization of the system of sexual relations. Humor that ridicules ‘unacceptable’ forms of sexual intercourses acts as such a normative force. Sexual humor enables us to approach subjects in the area of sex that arouse anxiety: homosexuality, frigidity, sexual indifference, impotence, and so on. Mention of these subjects is apparently deeply embedded with taboos, even more so than general sexual subjects. And once again, humor allows us to approach these subjects without anxiety—or, at least, with less anxiety. By making the frightening elements of sexuality seem ridiculous, the intensity of the anxiety is lessened.” For the classic work on this topic, see Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and Their Relationship to the Unconscious* (New York: Moffat Ward, 1916).

93. For the significance of the term *vir*, see Gunderson, *Staging Masculinity*, 7: “In Latin, a *vir* is an adult male. But the same word also signifies a man who is a husband or a soldier. Thus, in ‘pregnant’ uses, a man in Latin is a real man, a manly man. The term also designates a position of authority and responsibility: the adult is enfranchised, while the child (or slave) is not; the man rules his wife in the household: the soldier is the defender of the safety of the state. In short, the term evokes more than mere gender.”
94. Walters, “Invading the Roman Body,” 30–31.
95. Direct quotations from this tale in the discussion below are taken from Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* (LCL).
96. *Met.* 1.9: *amatorem suum, quod in aliam temerasset, unico verbo mutavit in feram castorem, quod ea bestia captivitati metuens ab insequentibus se praecisione genitalium liberat, ut illi quoque simile [, quod Venerem habuit in aliam,] proveniret.*
97. *Met.* 1.9: *eadem amatoris sui uxorem . . . iam in sarcina praegnationis obsaepto utero et repigrato fetu perpetua praegnatione damnavit . . .*
98. *Met.* 1.10: *. . . cunctos in suis sibi domibus tacita numinum violentia clausit, ut toto biduo non claustra per, ingi, non fores evelli, non denique parietes ipsi quiverint perforari.*
99. *Met.* 1.11: *. . . repente impulsu maiore quam ut latrones crederes ianuae reserantur, immo vero, actis et evulsis funditus cardinibus prosternuntur.*
100. *Met.* 1.13: *quin igitur, . . . hunc primum bacchatim discerpimus vel membris eius destinatis virilia descamus?*

101. *Met.* 1.13: *et capite Socratis in alterum dimoto latus, per iugulum sinistrum capulo tenus gladium totum ei demergit, et sanguinis eruptionem utriculo admoto excipit diligenter . . . immissa dextera per vulnus illud ad viscera penitus cor miseri contubernalis mei Meroe bona scrutata protulit . . .*
102. *Met.* 1.13: *. . . varicus super faciem meam residentes vesicam exonerant, quoad me unrinae spurcissimae madore perluerent.*
103. Amy Richlin, *The Gardens of Priapus: Sexuality and Aggression in Roman Humor*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 251, note 8.
104. *Met.* 1.14: *. . . nudus et , igidus et lotio perlitus, quasi recens utero matris editus . . .*
105. For the theory, dating back to the works of Empedocles, see Corbeill, *Controlling Laughter*, 144–5.
106. *Met.* 1.14: *commodum limen evaserant et fores ad pristinum statum integrae resurgunt: cardines ad foramina resident, ad postes repagula redeunt, ad claustra pessuli recurrunt.* Cf. later, when Aristomenes himself is unable to open the doors, presumably because the witches still have them in their control: *Met.* 1.14: *. . . subdita clavi pessulos reduco; at illae probae et fideles ianuae, quae sua sponte reseratae nocte fuerant, vix tandem et aegerrime tunc clavis suae crebra immissione patefiunt.*
107. The name may be derived from the Greek *aristos* (best) + *menos* (strength); cf. B. L. Hijmans Jr., “Significant Names and Their Functions in Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*,” in B. L. Hijmans Jr. and R. Th. Van Paardt, eds., *Aspects of Apuleius’ Golden Ass* (Groningen: Bouma’s Boekhuis, 1978), 116–7, who interprets it as “good councilor.”
108. *Met.* 1.14: *proclamares saltem suppetiatum, si resistere vir tantus mulieri nequibas.*
109. *Met.* 1.19: *ipse trepidus et eximie metuens mihi per diversas et avias solitudines aufugi . . . relicta patria et lare ultroneum exilium amplexus . . .*
110. *Met.* 1.20: *Nihil . . . haec fabula fabulosius, nihil isto mendacio absurdus.* Cf. also *Met.* 1.2, where the companion laughs at Aristomenes after he first tells his tale, calling it an absurd and monstrous lie: *alter exserto cachinno: “Parce” inquit “in verba ista haec tam absurda tamque immania mentiendo.”*
111. For example, Dayna Kalleres has suggested to me that anxieties regarding the witch’s violation of boundaries may point not only to the strict divide between gender roles within the Empire, but also ethnic boundaries outside of (or more recently incorporated within) it.

Daughters of Hecate

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the Ancient World*



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with

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