

# The Real Tools of Magic: Pamphile's Macabre Paraphernalia (Apuleius, *Met.* 3,17,4-5)

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In this study, I will discuss how the description of the magical paraphernalia of the witch<sup>1</sup> Pamphile in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* 3,17,4-5 is deeply influenced by the material culture of magic in Apuleius' time.<sup>2</sup> In order to do so, I will compare this passage with the descriptions of magical components in earlier literature and show how they differ from that in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*. Then, I will focus on this passage of the *Metamorphoses* and suggest that the magical tools mentioned therein feature in sources pertaining to real goetic practices in Greco-Roman times.

Some methodological remarks are necessary, however, to understand the function that magic plays in ancient fiction and the extent to which these accounts may reflect real practices. When magic features in Greek and Latin literature – more specifically in poetry and in fictional narrative – it is characterised by dramatic depictions of goetic practitioners, male and female, and their uncanny skills and performances. The purpose of such descriptions was to both impress and entertain the ancient readership in a way that may be compared to how people nowadays enjoy horror, fantasy and sci-fi. There is, however, a noticeable difference between contemporary western ideas of magic and those of a person living in the Greco-Roman world, since practising magic was considered a serious crime and was punishable either by death or by exile under the *Lex Cornelia de sicariis et*

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<sup>1</sup> The modern English term 'witch' is used here for the sake of clarity to render the Greek and Latin terms μάγος, φαρμακίς, and *maga, malefica, saga, strix, striga, and venefica*. It is, however, necessary to bear in mind the ideas conveyed by this term do not necessarily overlap with the Greco-Roman imagery of these female practitioners of magic. For similar methodological remarks, see Paule 2014, 745, n. 1.

<sup>2</sup> On the question of the materiality of magic, see Bremmer 2015, 7-19.

*veneficis* during the Imperial age,<sup>3</sup> and this was the law under which Apuleius himself had likely been tried.<sup>4</sup> Thus, Greco-Roman magic was not only relegated to fiction and quackery: although often despised and criticised,<sup>5</sup> goetic practitioners did exist and were genuinely believed to possess fearsome powers.<sup>6</sup>

It is, therefore, necessary to ask ourselves whether these literary descriptions of magic could reflect the real, contemporary practices or not. Gordon argues that fictional accounts, in the specific case of Augustan literature, had very little to do with the practice of the goetic *magi* and derived from stock-themes inherited from Hellenistic literature, and a memorable model would have been Theocritus' *Pharmakeutria*.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, although some earlier literary *topoi* could have remained influential, it is possible to argue for the presence of interconnections between real magical practices and literary magic. As Ruiz-Montero points out, dividing literary from real magic is problematic:<sup>8</sup> classical authors enriched their dramatized descriptions of magic with details taken from contemporary goetic practices, as can be seen by comparing these accounts with evidence in the *Papyri Graecae Magicae* (*PGM*); this has been recently argued in Reif's monograph, where he compares the prescriptions of the *PGM* with literary descriptions of magic from the Hellenistic period up until Lucan's *Bellum Civile*.<sup>9</sup>

Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* is probably one of the finest examples of how an ancient author could draw on the material culture of his time to enhance his narrative with grim details concerning magic. I shall now focus on a specific passage of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, namely 3,17,4-5, which presents a description of Pamphile's magical laboratory. This will enable us to observe how, by borrowing from the material culture of magic, Apuleius could outshine previous literary descriptions of magical materials – especially those by Horace, Lucan, and Petronius – and enrich the profile of the terrible Thessalian witch Pamphile, who was not only an expert in love-magic but in every noxious goetic practice, as her magical paraphernalia suggests. Some context first: in *Metamorphoses* 3, the

<sup>3</sup> Paul. *sent.* 5,23,15-18.

<sup>4</sup> On the fact that this was the law under which Apuleius himself stood trial in AD 158/9, see Pellecchi 2012, 271-277, disproving the claims by Rives 2003, 313-339; 2006, 47-67; 2011, 70-108, who believes that the *Lex Cornelia* as preserved in Paulus' *Sententiae* is a late-antique formulation.

<sup>5</sup> E.g. Pliny's contempt for magic in *Nat.* 30,17: 'therefore let us be convinced that magic is unsteady, empty, and unsubstantial' (*proinde ita persuasum sit, instabilem, irritam, inanem [sc. magiam] esse*). Translations in this paper are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>6</sup> Regarding the existence of goetic practitioners in Greco-Roman times, see Dickie 2001.

<sup>7</sup> Gordon 2009, 209-228.

<sup>8</sup> Ruiz-Montero 2007, 38-39.

<sup>9</sup> See Reif 2016. The analysis in Graf 1997, 175-204 also offers an overview of possible connections between Theocritus and Lucan, and the *PGM*.

protagonist Lucius returns to his host's house in the Thessalian city of Hypata after having been laughed at by the entire city in a mock-trial for 'slaughtering' three inflated goatskins. Once in the house, Photis – Pamphile's slave-maiden – secretly confesses to Lucius that the cause of his mock-trial was due to the magical performances of the expert 'witch' (*saga*) Pamphile, against whom Lucius had already been warned by his aunt Byrrhena.<sup>10</sup> Photis reveals – increasing Lucius' own *curiositas*<sup>11</sup> about magic – that Pamphile, fallen in love with a Boeotian youth, had ordered her to steal a tuft of the youth's hair to perform a rite of attraction; however, having been caught and threatened by a barber, Photis took instead the blonde hair of some goatskin bags, which Pamphile's magic unnaturally brought to life. In order to perform this ritual, as Photis explains, the terrible *saga* needed to prepare her workshop, which is on a shingled roof open to the winds.<sup>12</sup> Our passage runs as follows:

*Priusque apparatu solito instruit feralem officinam, omne genus aromatis et ignorabiliter lamminis litteratis et infelicium [n]avium durantibus damnis, defletorum, sepulorum etiam cadaverum expositis multis admodum membris: hic nares et digiti, illic carnosi clavi pendentium, alibi trucidatorum, servatus cruor et extorta dentibus ferarum trunca calvaria.*<sup>13</sup>

'Firstly, she set up her unearthly workshop with the customary tools of magic, namely every type of herb and metal tablets with undecipherable inscriptions, and the desiccating remains of inauspicious birds, as well as several body parts taken from mourned and even buried corpses: here noses and fingers, there spikes dirty with the flesh of those who had been crucified, elsewhere the preserved blood of those who had been slaughtered, and mutilated skulls wrenched from the teeth of wild beasts.'

As I will argue below, such a vivid rendering of the materials employed in goetic magic is unprecedented in previous classical writings, and does not feature in the

<sup>10</sup> *Met.* 2,5,2-8. On the figure of Photis and Byrrhena, see May 2015, 59-74, and Frangoulidis 2015, 75-88, respectively.

<sup>11</sup> On Lucius and his *curiositas*, see Leigh 2013, 136-150.

<sup>12</sup> *Met.* 3,17,3. See the commentary by van der Paart 1971, 130-131.

<sup>13</sup> *Met.* 3,17,4-5. The text which I print follows the edition by Zimmerman 2012, but presents the emendation *infelicium avium* in place of the transmitted *navium*, originally proposed by the French humanist Jean Passerat (1608, 436), which is defended with new arguments in Costantini 2017.

*Onos* ascribed to Lucian.<sup>14</sup> As I argue below, this description – rendered in very graphic tones for dramatic purposes – bears striking comparison with the magical paraphernalia employed by real goetic practitioners, and it was meant to make the readership shudder while increasing that morbid curiosity about the occult which also typifies Lucius, the protagonist of Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*. Before analysing the sources that will enable us to assess how these tools were really employed by contemporary goetic practitioners, I shall compare Apuleius’ description with those of magical materials that can be found in Horace’s *Epodes*, Lucan’s *Bellum Civile*, and Petronius’ *Satyrical*. I have chosen to focus on these sources and to exclude the list of magical ingredients in Theocritus’ *Pharmakeutria* and Vergil’s *Eight Eclogue*, since their fearsome magical undertone is given by the ‘love-philtres’ (φίλτρα-*venena*), which are said to be as powerful as those by Circe, Medea, and Perimede,<sup>15</sup> not by the components employed to concoct such philtres. These are, in fact, harmless elements such as barley,<sup>16</sup> bay leaves,<sup>17</sup> bran,<sup>18</sup> wax,<sup>19</sup> coltsfoot,<sup>20</sup> a piece of a cloak,<sup>21</sup> and a lizard<sup>22</sup> in Theocritus; and frankincense,<sup>23</sup> a

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<sup>14</sup> In the *Onos* attributed to Lucian of Samosata, the presence of such magical details is limited to the description of a fearsome witch (μάγος γάρ ἐστι δεινή, see *Asin.* 4) as she transforms herself into a nocturnal screech-owl by performing a ritual with the aid of an oil-lamp, two grains of frankincense, spells, and an ointment kept in a phial; see *Asin.* 12. On the attribution to Lucian and the relationship between the *Onos* and the other ass-stories, see Mason 1994.

<sup>15</sup> Theocr. 2,15-16: φάρμακα ταῦτ’ ἔρδοισα χερεῖονα μήτε τι Κίρκας / μήτε τι Μηδείας μήτε ξανθᾶς Περμῆδας. In Verg. *Ecl.* 8 we find allusions to Medea (8,95) and Circe (8,70), but not to Perimede. On Circe, see Luck 1999, 110-111, and Ogden 2008, 21-27; on Medea, see Luck 1999, 111-113, and Ogden 2008, 27-35; on Perimede (or Agamede as in Hom. *Il.* 11,739-740), see Gow 1952, vol. II, 36, Dover 1985, 102-103, and Ogden 2008, 42.

<sup>16</sup> Theocr. 2,18.

<sup>17</sup> Theocr. 2,23-24.

<sup>18</sup> Theocr. 2,33.

<sup>19</sup> Theocr. 2,28.

<sup>20</sup> Theocr. 2,48, so Gow 1952, vol. I, 19 translates ἵππομανῆς φυτόν. See also the discussion in Gow 1952, vol. II, 45.

<sup>21</sup> Theocr. 2,53.

<sup>22</sup> Theocr. 2,58.

<sup>23</sup> Verg. *Ecl.* 8,65.

woollen band,<sup>24</sup> verbena,<sup>25</sup> bay leaves,<sup>26</sup> wax,<sup>27</sup> clay,<sup>28</sup> bran,<sup>29</sup> and multi-coloured threads<sup>30</sup> in Vergil.

In Horace's *Fifth Epode*, the wicked *saga* Canidia,<sup>31</sup> accompanied by her partners in crime Sagana, Folia, and Veia, bury a kidnapped boy up to his chin to let him die from starvation and, eventually, to collect his marrow and liver in order to concoct an all-powerful love-potion. Horace provides his readers with some concrete details which are, however, interspersed with references to literary tropes; for example, he describes Canidia while:

*Iubet sepulcris caprificos erutas,  
iubet cupressos funebris  
et uncta turpis ova ranae sanguine  
plumamque nocturnae strigis  
herbasque quas Iolcos atque Hiberia  
mittit venenorum ferax,  
et ossa ab ore rapta ieiunae canis  
flammis aduri Colchicis.*<sup>32</sup>

‘She commands that wild fig trees uprooted from graves, cypresses used in funerals, and eggs of the repugnant frog smeared with blood, and feathers of a nocturnal screech-owl, and herbs that Iolcos and Hiberia produce, fertile lands of poisons, and bones taken from the mouth of a starving dog, are well burnt in Colchian flames.’

As Watson explains in his commentary, frogs or toads, the eggs thereof, birds' feathers, and bones can actually be found in the formulae of the *Greek Magical Papyri* and the recipes ascribed to the *magi* in Pliny's *Naturalis Historia*.<sup>33</sup> Thus, Horace seems to enrich his poem with a mix of real magical elements. However, by mentioning the flames of Colchis as well as Iolcos and Hiberia, Horace wants

<sup>24</sup> Verg. *Ecl.* 8,64.

<sup>25</sup> Verg. *Ecl.* 8,65.

<sup>26</sup> Verg. *Ecl.* 8,82.

<sup>27</sup> Verg. *Ecl.* 8,80.

<sup>28</sup> Verg. *Ecl.* 8,80, on this see Abt 1908, 79-85, and Clausen 1994, 260-261.

<sup>29</sup> Verg. *Ecl.* 8,82.

<sup>30</sup> Verg. *Ecl.* 8,73-74; 8,77.

<sup>31</sup> For a detailed discussion of this figure in Horace's *Fifth Epode* and the sources that might have influenced Horace, see Paule 2017, 55-94.

<sup>32</sup> Hor. *Epod.* 5,17-24.

<sup>33</sup> Watson 2003, 202-206.

to distance his audience from the nefarious reality of magic, by taking them into a literary and exotic dimension,<sup>34</sup> connected with the figure of Medea. Colchis was, in fact, the region at the eastern end of the Black Sea and the homeland of Medea, and similarly Hiberia – which does not indicate the Spanish peninsula – was a country bordering Colchis, while Iolcos was a Thessalian town where Medea and Jason dwelled after their return from the Argonautic expedition.<sup>35</sup>

The description of the magical ingredients employed by Lucan's 'super-witch' – to borrow Luck's expression –<sup>36</sup> Erictho comprises abundant references to literary *topoi* too:

*Pectora tum primum ferventi sanguine supplet  
vulneribus laxata novis taboque medullas  
abluit et virus large lunare ministrat.  
Huc quidquid fetu genuit natura sinistro  
miscetur: non spuma canum quibus unda timori est,  
viscera non lyncis, non durae nodus hyaenae  
defuit et cervi pastae serpente medullae,  
non puppim retinens Euro tendente rudentis  
in mediis echenais aquis oculique draconum  
quaeque sonant feta tepefacta sub alite saxa,  
non Arabum volucer serpens innataque rubris  
aequoribus custos pretiosae vipera conchae  
aut viventis adhuc Libyci membrana cerastae  
aut cinis Eoa positi phoenicis in ara.<sup>37</sup>*

'Then she tore apart the chest of the corpse with new wounds and filled it with incandescent blood; she cleaned the vital organs from the putrid fluids, and administered a plentiful amount of moon-juice. In this was mixed every ill-fated creature produced by nature: the foam of dogs that, once rabid, fear the waves, the innards of the lynx, the hump of the cruel hyena, the marrow of a deer nourished with snakes, the remora which stops the hull of a ship in the middle of the sea, while the wind Eurus strains the ship's ropes, the eyes of the dragons, and the stones that ring when warmed by a female bird, the Arabian flying snake, the serpent from the Red Sea, keeper of precious pearls, the

<sup>34</sup> On the exoticism of magic, see Stramaglia 1990, 159-220, reprinted in Pecere, Stramaglia 2003, 60-111 with updates by Graverini at 189-196.

<sup>35</sup> Watson 2003, 204-205; 206-207.

<sup>36</sup> Luck 1999, 137-138.

<sup>37</sup> Luc. 6,667-680.

cast-off skin of a still living Libyan horned-snake, the ashes of the phoenix that lie on the eastern altar.’

The list of ingredients mixed with the so-called ‘moon-juice’ (*virus lunare*)<sup>38</sup> merges more easily accessible, although eerie, ingredients such as the foam of the rabid dogs, the innards of the lynx, the marrow of a deer, snakes, and even the fish called remora or *echeneis*,<sup>39</sup> with more exotic and even extraordinary components such as the hyena, the dragon, the Arabian flying snake, the serpent from the Red Sea, the Libyan horned-snake, or the legendary phoenix. This list conforms to a literary tradition to which the list of ingredients in Seneca’s *Medea* also belongs,<sup>40</sup> and follows the idea that magic and magical ingredients are related to exotic places. This already can be seen in Theocritus’ *Second Idyll*, when Simaetha says that she learned her goetic craft from an Assyrian stranger (Ἀσσυρίῳ [...] παρὰ ξείνοιο μαθοῖσα). Likewise, in Vergil’s *Aeneid*,<sup>41</sup> Dido recounts that she obtained her magical knowledge from a priestess of the Massylii, a tribe who lived in the remote North-African inland, in order to convey the idea that magic is an eerie and wondrous craft, pertaining to those living on the far side of the world.<sup>42</sup> This seems to bring us back to the mythical figure of Medea: an outsider, an exotic and mysterious enchantress.

Before finally focusing on Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* 3,17,4-5, we need to look at another description of the materials of magic, that of Oenothea’s house and laboratory in Petronius’ *Satyrica*.<sup>43</sup> This is quite different when compared to the previous accounts, since there is no trace of that mythical dimension pertaining to literary magic, with the exception of the poem sung by Oenothea herself at *Satyrica* 134,12,1-16 to boast about her uncanny skills. Oenothea’s house and paraphernalia are not exotic but quite common. Amongst these we find a wand

<sup>38</sup> In a forthcoming commentary on Apul. *Met.* 1-3, Graverini considers *virus lunare* as common dew, and connects it with the reference to *lunam despumari* at *Met.* 1,3,1. I would like to thank Luca Graverini for sending me a copy of his commentary ahead of its publication.

<sup>39</sup> On this fish and its connection with Hecate, see Watson 2010, 639-646.

<sup>40</sup> Sen. *Med.* 705-730. On this passage, see the commentary by Boyle 2014, 305-310, who stresses a comparison with the catalogue of places from which Medea gathers her herbs in Ov. *Met.* 7,220-233. For further remarks on this passage, see Bömer 1976, 259-262.

<sup>41</sup> Verg. *A.* 4,478-498. See Austin 1955, 142.

<sup>42</sup> For the idea concerning the remote origins of magical practitioners, see Fick 1991, 17-18, who focuses on male practitioners and applies this idea to the allegation defended in Apuleius’ speech (*Apol.* 24).

<sup>43</sup> Petr. 134-136. The text follows the edition by Müller 1995. For a detailed commentary on the whole passage, see Schmeling, Setaioli 2011, 518-531.

(*harundo*),<sup>44</sup> the head of a pig crushed into a thousand pieces (*sincipitis particula mille plagis dolata*),<sup>45</sup> some beans (*fabas*),<sup>46</sup> and three geese (*tres anseres*).<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, we do not have an eerie atmosphere but a filthy, rotten, and pathetic setting befitting the inverted world represented in Petronius' *Satyrice*. The wand, in fact, gets broken (*quassata*) when Proselenos – Oenothea's old assistant – uses it to beat Encolpius;<sup>48</sup> the stool which Proselenos climbs is rotten and also gets broken (*fracta est putris sella*) causing the crone's collapse;<sup>49</sup> the sacred sacrificial tray is old (*mensam veterem*);<sup>50</sup> the wine-cup is old and cracked (*camellam etiam vetustate rupta*)<sup>51</sup> and needs to be repaired with tar (*pice temperata refecit*);<sup>52</sup> the walls of the house have been dirtied by smoke (*fumoso parieti*).<sup>53</sup>

Such a parody of a magical laboratory is quite dissimilar from Pamphile's workshop in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, since Apuleius does not intend to portray a mock-witch. The description in *Metamorphoses* 3,17,4-5 also differs from those in Horace and Lucan, since the literary dimension, characterised by well-established tropes concerning the exotic nature of magic, recedes into the background. When Apuleius, through Photis, mentions Pamphile's customary tools (*apparatus solitus*), he does not want to allude to a fictional type of magic but rather to the material reality which could have characterised the goetic magic of his time. Apuleius lists the following magical tools: every type of herb, metal curse-tablet, the remains of inauspicious birds, and various human parts, which are gruesomely described in order to enhance the frightful aura evoked by these very objects. Each of the aforementioned tools were typical of the equipment of goetic practitioners, as it possible to deduce from legislation issued to interdict goetic magic and from sources written by the goetic practitioners themselves, namely the magical papyri from Roman Egypt and the curse-tablets which are collected in the modern corpora of the *PGM* and the *Defixionum Tabellae*, respectively.<sup>54</sup>

As to the use of various types of herbs in magic, this does not merely reflect a literary trope, which we already find in Theocritus' *Pharmakeutria*, but it was

<sup>44</sup> Petr. 134,3.

<sup>45</sup> Petr. 135,4.

<sup>46</sup> Petr. 135,4.

<sup>47</sup> Petr. 136,4.

<sup>48</sup> Petr. 134,4.

<sup>49</sup> Petr. 136,1.

<sup>50</sup> Petr. 135,3.

<sup>51</sup> Petr. 135,3.

<sup>52</sup> Petr. 135,4.

<sup>53</sup> Petr. 135,4.

<sup>54</sup> See Preisendanz 1973-1974 and Audollent 1904.

customary in real magical rituals.<sup>55</sup> In the Imperial age this practice would have been interdicted by the *Lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficis* that prosecuted those who administered ‘love-charms’ (*amatoria pocula*)<sup>56</sup> as well as those selling or concocting *venena*.<sup>57</sup> The main purpose of these *pocula* was love-magic, as Pliny the Elder confirms, when he comments on several ingredients for the philtres, such as herbs and plants,<sup>58</sup> animals, fish,<sup>59</sup> seafood,<sup>60</sup> and even arrows extracted from corpses,<sup>61</sup> reporting how these love-philtres could even cause death.<sup>62</sup> Nevertheless, the employment of aromatic herbs is prescribed in several rituals for the most disparate purposes: for example, frankincense (λίβανος) can be found in recipes for summoning a demonic assistant,<sup>63</sup> for divination,<sup>64</sup> to induce an oracular trance,<sup>65</sup> in recipes which are professedly for various purposes,<sup>66</sup> to attract and bind someone’s soul,<sup>67</sup> to catch a thief,<sup>68</sup> to consecrate a magical ring<sup>69</sup> or a curse-tablet by fumigating it,<sup>70</sup> to gain the favour of a crowd,<sup>71</sup> and also for love-magic.<sup>72</sup>

As to the use of curse-tablets (*defixiones*, *devotiones* or κατάδεσμοί), this was a crime under the *Lex Cornelia*<sup>73</sup> and their noxious effects were well-known: the illness that led to the death of Germanicus was believed to be caused by curse-tablets on which his name was inscribed (*nomen Germanici plumbeis tabulis*

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<sup>55</sup> Theocr. 2,1; 2,15; 2,159; 2,161. The references to φάρμακα in Hom. *Il.* 11,741 and *Od.* 4,229-30, which Apuleius cites in *Apol.* 31,5-6, cannot be considered as evidence for this convention, since Homer does not know the concept of ‘magic’, a position also supported by Dickie 2001, 5. It is true, however, that from the Hellenistic period these passages were retrospectively interpreted as concerning magic.

<sup>56</sup> Paul. *sent.* 5,23,14.

<sup>57</sup> Paul. *sent.* 5,23,1.

<sup>58</sup> Plin. *Nat.* 20,32; 25,160; 27,57; 27,125.

<sup>59</sup> Plin. *Nat.* 9,79.

<sup>60</sup> Plin. *Nat.* 13,142.

<sup>61</sup> Plin. *Nat.* 28,34.

<sup>62</sup> Plin. *Nat.* 25,25.

<sup>63</sup> *PGM* I,10; I,62.

<sup>64</sup> *PGM* II,13; II,19; II,20; II,24; IV,215; V,394; VII,543; VII,742; VII,828; VIII,842; VIII,70; XIII,354; XIII,1008; XIII,1017; LXXVII,23.

<sup>65</sup> *PGM* IV,907.

<sup>66</sup> *PGM* IV,1309; IV,2675; IV,2870.

<sup>67</sup> *PGM* IV,1830-1831; IV,2457.

<sup>68</sup> *PGM* V,201.

<sup>69</sup> *PGM* VII,637; VII,639; XII,310.

<sup>70</sup> *PGM* VII,927.

<sup>71</sup> *PGM* XXXVI,276.

<sup>72</sup> *PGM* IV,1269; VIII,58; XXXVI,135.

<sup>73</sup> Paul. *sent.* 5,23,15.

*insculptum*).<sup>74</sup> Yet the *defixiones* could also serve other goals. The archaeological evidence is so abundant that I will limit myself to a selection of Carthaginian curse-tablets dating to the second and third century AD, thus geographically and chronologically close to Apuleius, to show the different functions that they had in magic. These metal leaves were created for various purposes: to force someone, through the action of daemonic beings, to obey the practitioner;<sup>75</sup> to bind the tongue of the opponents in court proceedings;<sup>76</sup> to seduce a victim;<sup>77</sup> to kill the practitioner's enemies;<sup>78</sup> to kill charioteers and horses in the *circus*;<sup>79</sup> and to cause the death of people involved in gladiatorial fights.<sup>80</sup>

Birds, too, were commonly sacrificed for magical purposes in the Greco-Roman world, and Apuleius was fully aware of this: in *Apologia* 47,7 we find that the goetic ritual that he had allegedly performed over the slave-boy Thallus involved the killing of hens. Furthermore, the use of birds in goetic practices is also attested by two prescriptions of the *PGM*: in the first, the complete burning of various birds serves to consecrate a ring;<sup>81</sup> in the second, a bird's tongue is required to compel a woman to confess her lover's name.<sup>82</sup> Not only the birds as wholes or their parts, but especially their feathers played an important function in ancient magical practices. Amongst the allegations which Apuleius counters in the *Apologia*, one concerns the fact that birds' feathers were found in the house of a certain Iunius Crassus and attest Apuleius' magical rites. The use of feathers is also prescribed in the *PGM* for the achievement of different purposes: in *PGM* III,612-632, it is said that the practitioners can control their own shadow by putting the feather of a falcon behind their right ear<sup>83</sup> and that of an ibis behind their left ear.<sup>84</sup> In *PGM* IV,45-51, to complete a ritual of initiation, the practitioners need to rub their faces with the bile of an owl and an ibis feather,<sup>85</sup> or with the

<sup>74</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 2,69; these tablets were found plunged into walls together with human remains (*humanorum corporum reliquiae*). See Goodyear 1981, 409-410.

<sup>75</sup> *Def. Tab.* Audollent 216 (= Audollent 1904).

<sup>76</sup> *Def. Tab.* Audollent 218, 219, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226. On curses to tie someone's tongue, see Gager 1992, 116-124.

<sup>77</sup> *Def. Tab.* Audollent 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 256.

<sup>78</sup> *Def. Tab.* Audollent 217, 220.

<sup>79</sup> *Def. Tab.* Audollent 232, 233, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246. On these curse-tablets, see Gager 1992, 42-49.

<sup>80</sup> *Def. Tab.* Audollent 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254. See also the discussion in Gager 1992, 42-49.

<sup>81</sup> *PGM* XII,213-215.

<sup>82</sup> *PGM* LXIII,7-12.

<sup>83</sup> *PGM* III,619-620.

<sup>84</sup> *PGM* III,620.

<sup>85</sup> *PGM* IV,45-47.

yolk of an ibis' egg and the feather of a falcon.<sup>86</sup> Additionally, at *PGM* VII,335-340, one must hold an ibis feather fourteen fingers long in order to obtain a direct vision.<sup>87</sup>

The idea of human bones wrenched from beasts' teeth, which Apuleius inserts amongst Pamphile's magical components (3,17,5: *extorta dentibus ferarum trunca calvaria*), likely derives from a literary tradition that can be found in Horace's *Fifth Epode* (5,23: *et ossa ab ore rapta ieiunae canis*) and Lucan's *Bellum Civile* (6,551-553: *nec carpere membra / volt ferro manibusque suis, morsusque luporum / expectat siccis raptura e faucibus artus*).<sup>88</sup> Yet, the *PGM* seems to also offer evidence for the use of human parts in goetic magic. At *PGM* IV,1872-1927, in order to perform a love-spell adjuring Cerberus a piece of a skull is required from a man who suffered from a violent death,<sup>89</sup> while at *PGM* IV,1928-2139 we find human skulls (σκηνοῖ or σκύφοι) used for divinatory purposes.<sup>90</sup> Furthermore, other material evidence comes from a Roman settlement in Britain, now Barton Seagrave. The excavation in 2012 has revealed the presence of human bones mingled with horse bones in a ditch, and Chadwick argues that this evidence could be related to 'magical' rites.<sup>91</sup>

In conclusion, the evidence so far discussed suggests that the list of ingredients in *Metamorphoses* 3,17,4-5 is primarily influenced not by literary stock-themes, but by the material culture of real magical rituals. As we have seen, the purpose of these elements in real goetic magic is quite heterogeneous, and is not limited to love-magic but it includes divination, binding someone to the practitioner's will, causing people's death, summoning demons from the netherworld, sending dreams, and binding someone's tongue. This enables us to cast more light on the figure of Pamphile herself. She is presented as fully capable of performing a variety of goetic practices for different scopes: although she is driven by her uncontrollable sexual desire – which is typical of the imagery of the 'witches',

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<sup>86</sup> *PGM* III,48-51.

<sup>87</sup> See also the remarks in Costantini 2017, 334-336.

<sup>88</sup> On these connections see the comments on *Met.* 3,17,5 in Graverini, Nicolini 2019, and Watson 2003, 205-206.

<sup>89</sup> *PGM* IV,1880-1.

<sup>90</sup> *PGM* IV,1924; IV,1946; IV,1965; IV,1991; IV,2003; IV,2119; IV,2122; IV,2134. Further remarks in Faraone 2005, 278-281.

<sup>91</sup> See Chadwick 2015, 31-53, especially 38. His theoretical definition of 'magic' is, however, quite broad and does not focus carefully on ancient evidence to corroborate his argument.

especially from Thessaly, in Greco-Roman times<sup>92</sup> – her rites are not only concerned with love-magic and rituals of attraction,<sup>93</sup> but also with divination,<sup>94</sup> necromancy,<sup>95</sup> and the transformation of her own self<sup>96</sup> or of other people into animals or inanimate objects.<sup>97</sup> Therefore, with the single figure of Pamphile, Apuleius merges the features of her literary predecessors either performing love-magic, like Simaetha, Dido, and Canidia, or necromancy, like Erictho. Furthermore, by drawing directly on the materiality of goetic magic, Apuleius not only succeeds in emulating his forerunners, but also in stirring the morbid interest of his readership by creating a frightening description of unprecedented realism.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> *Met.* 2,5,5-6; 3,15,8. On the ancient belief that Thessaly was the homeland of the witches, see Phillips 2002.

<sup>93</sup> *Met.* 3,18,1-4.

<sup>94</sup> *Met.* 2,11,5-6, on which, see van Mal Maeder 2001, 203-204.

<sup>95</sup> *Met.* 2,5,4; 3,15,7.

<sup>96</sup> *Met.* 3,21.

<sup>97</sup> *Met.* 2,5,7.

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