

SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES: A HISTORIOGRAPHICAL APPROACH TO READING  
MAGIC IN ROMAN HISTORIES ALONG WITH *SENATUS CONSULTUM*

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**Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita* 39.8.3<sup>1</sup>**

Graecus ignobilis in Etruriam primum venit nulla cum arte earum quas multas ad animorum corporumque cultum nobis eruditissima omnium gens invexit, sacrificulus et vates, nec is qui aperta religione, propalam et quaestum et disciplinam profitendo, animos error imbueret, sed occultorum et nocturnorum antistes sacrorum. Initia erant quae primo paucis tradita sunt, dien vulgari coepta per viros mulieresque. Additae voluptates religioni uini et epularum, quo plurimum animi inlicerentur; cum uinum animos <mouisset> et nox et mixti feminis mares, aetatis tenerae mairibus, discrimen omne pudoris exstinxissent, corruptelae primum omnis generis fieri coeptae.

An obscure Greek man, a priest and a prophet, came first into Etruria with none of those skills, many which the most learned people introduced to us for the cultivation of our souls and bodies, he was not the sort who would initiate into error souls by an open religion, and by publicly declaring both profit and instruction, but he was a priest of rites secret and performed at night. There were sacred initiation rates which at first were passed down to a few, but then it began to be spread through men and women. The pleasures of wine and feasting had been added to the religion, by which the majority of souls were attracted; when wine had moved the souls and night and males having mixed with females, those of young age with older age, every distinction of propriety had been destroyed, corruptions of every kind first had been begun.

**Tacitus, *Annales* 2.69**

Saeuam vim morbi augebat persuasio ueneri a Pisone accepti; et reperiabantur solo ac parietibus erutae humanorum corporum reliquiae, carmina et devotiones et nomen Germanici plumbeis tabulis insculptum, semusti cineres ac tabo obliti aliaque malefica quis creditur animas numinibus infernis sacrari.

A conviction of being the recipient of a potion from Piso was increasing the fierce strength of his death; and the dug up remains of human bodies, incantations and curses, and the name of Germanicus inscribed on lead tablets were all found in the ground and the walls, and ashes, half-burnt and smeared with foul matter, and other sorceries by which it is believed that souls are consecrated to the infernal deities.

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<sup>1</sup> All translations are my own.

### **Tacitus, *Annales* 3.14**

Solum veneni crimen visus est diluisse, quod ne accusatores quidem satis firmabant, in convivio Germanici, cum super eum Piso discumberet, infectos manibus eius cibos arguentes. Quippe absurdum videbantur inter aliena servitia et tot adstantium visu, ipso Germanico coram.

He seemed to refute only the crime of poison, which indeed the prosecutors did not make strong enough, arguing that in a feast of Germanicus, when Piso was reclining beside him, the food was poisoned with his hands. Indeed it seemed absurd that he would dare it among foreign servants and in the sight of so many bystanders, in the presence of Germanicus himself.

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