Grunewald's Isenheim Altarpiece, the Ancient Feminine, Agrarian Science, and Art History

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GRUNEWALD'S ISENHEIM ALTARPIECE, THE ANCIENT FEMININE, AGRARIAN
SCIENCE, AND ART HISTORY

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ABSTRACT

Long standing tensions between formalism and instrumentalism are affecting the criteria through which scholars approach analysis of western arts and letters. This problem houses many others, most relevantly, the troubled state of art education and art history. One group of art historians and aestheticians has tackled problems in art history by suggesting westerners reconnect with their ancient *Feminine*, arguing their dialogue with her has become distorted due to confused applications of myth and metaphor. I think they are onto something, but are not considering that ancient myth and metaphor defined *Feminine* agrarian science, administrators of Hesiodic tradition who defined and used it, and complicated processes which usually involved some form of ritual prayer.

To reunite these elements of the *Feminine*, I studied Mattias Grunewald’s 15th century northern Renaissance plague shrine, the Isenheim Altarpiece, to understand what this masterpiece means and why scholars from a number of fields cannot reach any clear consensus on how to interpret it. I analyzed its muddled applications of *Feminine* myth and metaphor; and compared the views of major contemporary historians who have contributed to the present state of its analysis. This required four efforts: 1) redefinition of formalist and instrumentalist viewpoint, based upon my idea that they represent two versions of the same system running at different rates of speed, formalism being in front of instrumentalism; 2) documentation of problems art historians have had with illustrations of medical ritual practitioners and their complicated processes; 3) construction of a working definition of the ancient *Feminine*, because scholars do not have one; and 4) documentation of what have been referred to in this dissertation as “scholarly misunderstandings,” to search out a common denominator behind the various troubles in question.

In doing so, I learned that more scholarly concern should be shown for Mary’s function in this shrine. She is probably more than--at least as important as Christ. However, westerners have forgotten how to align her with ancient *Feminine* viewpoint and in the process, lost sight of how to interpret images like this shrine. Isenheim findings remain inconclusive for two reasons. One, scholars regularly interpret aspects of its *Feminine* elements literally instead of metaphorically. Worse, they have objectified and accordingly literalized the function of her related practitioners and their metaphorically defined esoteric ritual processes, if they study them
at all. Two, the shrine has been studied from many perspectives, but not all inclusively and relationally by any one scholar. Various interpretations of Feminine reality evolved over hundreds of years, and all were in one way or another connected because each presented a dimension of her that was contextually unique. Grunewald knew this and related accordingly, but modern scholars do not. They study her compartmentally—inadvertently refashioning the agrarian material she represents into a formally abstract and theoretical product reflected upon from perspectives like religion and philosophy.

Based on the above examination, I conclude that the Feminine is a tool not a product. Only when she is analyzed as a composite do key questions begin to surface regarding how and why a category of real people who used to be aligned with Feminine tradition and its complicated ritual processes have become muddled beyond comprehension. This dissertation will show through analysis of Grunewald’s Isenheim that westerners have more problems with these figures—most relevantly Mary, Mother of Jesus—than they do with any abstract system defining the ancient Feminine. This group—not some theory—is what the west is now, and has been, afraid of for a very long time.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

A Restatement of the Problem

Mattias Grunewald’s 15th century, northern Renaissance plague shrine, the Isenheim Altarpiece (Figures 1F, 1G, 2A), was originally located in the Anchorite Plague Hospital in Isenheim, Germany. Used instrumentally as a visualization tool for healing, the altar includes a number of saints and religious personages but features fourth century CE Saint Anthony (Fig. 2B) and the saint depicted on the right in (Fig. 8). He was the patron saint of deadly diseases like ergotism, produced by ingestion of rye fungus. It is common knowledge amongst Isenheim scholars that this Middle Age hospital, like many of its kind, honored Anthony and recognized shrines like his as places uniquely suited for treating patients with extreme cases of ergotism. The sick understood that this saint had become strengthened enough to fight off the devil, and believed he was similarly able to successfully confront deadly diseases. Before going through treatment, they are written to have accordingly visited him and an image of the crucified Christ on the Alter to contemplatively view their conveyed message. In doing so they believed they would become strong enough to fight off the Devil’s hold over them, like Anthony and Christ had.

I do not believe explanations like this one for Anthony's role in the Isenheim call upon the role myth played in images like this one. In addition, they do not reflect enough interest in describing the Andachtsbild process than its esoterically instrumentalist ritual function, which evidence indicates has a densely realized lineage of its own. From this perspective, their discussion of how it relates to ritual prayer amounts to little more than a skeletal list of facts. In 2001, I noticed a similar problem with scholarly analyses of Nicander’s herbal and toxicological manuscripts, Theriaca and Alexipharmaca, where I studied Nicander's depiction of metamorphosis. See (Fig. 45). In this dissertation I will use my analysis of Nicander's use of magnified scale in Nicandrea as a springboard for studying how Mary's Isenheim transformation can be related to Saint Anthony's application of what seems to be a similar ritual technique. An abbreviated account of this aspect of my 2001 efforts must be noted for my study of Anthony's relationship to Mary and ritual metamorphosis to make sense. The comparison accounts for why
I determined it necessary to construct a model for interpreting *Feminine* ritual metamorphosis in studied from the perspective of images like Grunewald's altar.

Most Isenheim historians include in with their assessment of the shrine that he moved to the desert to live as an ascetic, existing on water and bread brought to him daily by a “raven.” However, more needs to be written about Cooper (1978) and George Ferguson's (1994) having stated in their *Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols and Signs and Symbols in Christian Art* that ravens depicted in this visitation context signified “messengers” bringing spiritual sustenance in the form of an edible wafer (*Fig. 3A, upper left corner*). This information is significant because in the Isenheim, Anthony receives a wafer from a raven--assumedly to help him like the interchange is documented to have helped so many others--prepare psychologically and psychically to stand up to the “Devil.” When Antony finally met the Devil, he stood up to his torture and won, because the raven had sufficiently strengthened him (p. 137; pp. 24; 104-105).

Evidence indicates that Anthony's relationship with this bird triggered the events transpiring in Grunewald's metamorphosis panel (*Fig. 4B*). The raven is in the middle of strengthening Anthony, having metamorphosed into a human sized creature strong enough to wrestle with the saint so that he can in turn fight down the Devil. Interestingly, no Isenheim scholars have questioned the implied meaning underlying this raven’s presence in the shrine. The bird’s presence has not even been acknowledged--and the creature is as large as the Saint (*Figs. 4B, 5D*). This sizable oversight brings us to the first of three questions I am asking about Grunewald's shrine: "Why not?"

To answer this question, Anthony and other of the shrine’s elements must be studied iconographically, from the perspective of medicine and agrarian science, and this body of information must be aligned with another seemingly understudied Isenheim element, Mary, Mother of Jesus. Evidence indicates she was in her earliest form the ancient *Feminine's* Christianized equivalent, the essential model to which healers like Anthony turned. As scholars have overlooked Mary’s significance in the altar, however, so have they miscalculated the function of figures like Anthony. Only through reconnecting attributes like his pig (*Figs. 51, 52*) with *Feminine* symbols, however, does this disconnect become clear.

The pagan method I have in mind is mythic and scientific, based upon agrarian planetary knowledge. Its existence competed with Christian view, and Christian ideology appears to have
consequently overshadowed this side of science by incrementally demonizing it. This change took hundreds of years, and there is more. The transformation in question was further complicated by the efforts of physicians and medical historians seeking to eliminate religious and ritual references from the documented lineage of their art. Neither of these viewpoints has been represented in any of the shrine's assessments, and both were still being debated while Grunewald worked. By blending ways early westerners understood Anthony to have been associated with pigs, the plague, and ergotism; then screening that viewpoint through the mythic lens of “Feminine” science, it becomes clear that Anthony was not originally linked with the devil by way of his attribute the pig--at least as that creature has come to be defined in Christian iconography. The association of Anthony and the pig have become considerably altered, so our original question must accordingly broaden to include two more questions: “Why isn’t Feminine iconographical information being acknowledged in scholarly analyses of problems like the Isenheim?” and "What was the Feminine, really?” To understand the significance of these questions and at the same time exemplify how I have structured my analysis of Isenheim elements in this dissertation, let us consider Anthony alongside of his attribute, the pig.

According to Hall (1979) and Cooper (1978), Christians commonly associate the pig with lust, sloth, filth, ferocious anger, and cruelty (pp. 49; 22). Hall (1979) states further, however, that when associated with Anthony the creature's meaning is extended. In this context, it signifies innate ability to drive off evil spirits associated with the Christian Devil. Isenheim scholars are correctly identifying with Anthony's pig in the second way identified, but more seems to be going on in this image than has yet been acknowledged.

Merriam Webster's medical online dictionary and Hall (1979) indicate pigs were originally linked with Anthony because he was a plague physician and the Antonite monks bred them for their lard and used it to dress the wounds of serious skin diseases like ergotism (p. 21). This medical definition helpfully enables us to see how pigs functioned instrumentally, but does not acknowledge why they are able to drive off evil spirits, and what their association with Anthony means from this perspective. Cooper (1978) and Hall (1979) state what is common knowledge in texts documenting the ancient Feminine, there were many Greek and Roman animal signifiers of the Feminine's mythically "malefic," or malignant and errant side. The most relevant of these is the “pig” (pp. 65, 166; 62, 166-167). By associating this definition of the pig
with Hall's (1979) description of how medieval physiology was aligned with human temperament, we learn more.

The body's organs were understood to secrete four fluids, or “humours,” which defined character. Each was aligned with a particular animal, earthly element, and planet. We are most interested in "black bile," because it is aligned with the pig (pp. 130-131):

- Phlegm: phlegmatic
- Blood: sanguine
- Bile (Choler): choleric
- Black bile: melancholic

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"Black bile," also known as “Melancholy,” was according to Hall (1979) and Webster’s (1980) New Collegiate Dictionary, “aligned in an earlier context with early Roman deity of agriculture Saturn. Ancients paralleled humanity with the human body and believed that when melancholic disposition was born into human kind, lead was simultaneously introduced into the human body as an errant force. Melancholy accordingly signified cold, steady, gloomy and or surly, poisoned disposition” (pp. 273; 1019). Webster (1980), Hall (1979), L. Dixon’s March 1981 Art Forum study entitled “Bosch’s Garden of Early Delights Triptych: Remnants of a ‘Fossil’ Science,” J. Read's Models of Madness, and his earlier “Interpretation of this Drawing [Durer’s 1514 “Melancholia”]” define melancholic temperament similarly (pp. 1019; 130-131; 110; 1-3). However, ancient and early peoples did not view these attributes as only bad. Hall helpfully furthers our understanding of Melancholic disposition by directly and inadvertently associating her with certain Saturnine tools like the set-square, compass, and ruler of "Geometry"; the saw and plane of “Carpenters;” and the purse, hour glass, flask, pestle and mortar, and various distilling apparatus of alchemists and sometimes physicians. These tools and the technicians who used them signify children of Saturn: "introspective" figures in possession of "ultimate wisdom" (pp. 76, 77, 130).

This scholarly misunderstanding is what my dissertation is about. Feminine figures allegedly in possession of what Hall alludes to as "ultimate wisdom" have been overlooked in modern scholarship. They have been dammed by the Christian Church, and their value as an integral aspect of society has been the source of heated arguments since at least 700 BCE. This
is probably because according to Hall, Melancholics--viewed by him as individuals present amongst the broader group of figures called visual artists, writers, philosophers, and early alchemists--were in ancient and early times believed to be in command of "creation." By that Hall means that God and no one else framed their identity. This group measured the earth, for example, with compasses (pp. 76, 77, 130).

Based upon my findings, I agree with Hall but want to make two changes to his description of these hypothetically problematic figures. First, I would add physicians to this group, and extend the implied meaning of "healing" to reflect ancient view. Psychological and physiological health applications were originally not separated, and earth sicknesses like plagues and drought were viewed alongside of human ailments. Second, I would make a distinction between being in possession of wisdom and having a unique aptitude for acquiring it. Hall states Melancholics are in possession of wisdom, but evidence indicates he is viewing wisdom more formally than instrumentally and that is not how ancients saw wisdom or used melancholic force. Melancholics searched altruistically for more of this stuff, not for personal gain but to assist humanity in its ongoing effort to more fully define and use earthly existence. These figures were cultural tools who worked hard to function only in that capacity.

Cooper (1978) associates Feminine dogs and pigs with the “psycho pomp,” or “messenger” figure which was originally understood to guard the boundaries of heaven and earth while traveling between this world and the next (p. 52). Hall (1979) states though the pig was eventually changed out for the dog, the creature was Melancholia’s earliest helpmate. Essentially, pigs and dogs both signify this Feminine group of Saturnine figures (p. 130), and this evidence and much more indicates the innate ability to act as God's messenger was originally one and the same thing as the melancholic wisdom in question. As Melancholia and “Carpenters” were children of Saturn, so was Grunewald’s Anthony. That is why he is depicted in the company of a dog peaking out from within his robes, in every panel of the Isenheim altar that he is in (Figs. 1F, 3A, 5C, 12A).

Information like this must be acknowledged because according to Webster (1980), figures identified as “melancholics” are no longer viewed positively. They are and have been for some time viewed as depressed, frequently “hallucinatory,” “delusional,” “manic depressive” people who reflect “psychosis” (p. 709). Clearly, these weighty terms bear a solid implication. The intimate relationship Melancholics shared with God has been eliminated. They have
evolved from being a “messenger” of the Gods to manic depressive and delusional individuals in need of treatment. This dissertation will study Mary from this perspective because evidence indicates she was Anthony's essential model, and her identity along with that of Anthony and his attribute the pig seem to be causing more trouble for Isenheim scholars than they realize.

To understand the altar’s full significance, overlooked aspects of the ancient western Feminine need to be thoroughly reexamined. When viewed through this lens, Isenheim problems become a critical key to a larger loss: multiple problems in symbolic meaning which appear to have resulted from an estranged relationship between western modernity and its ancient and early Feminine heritage, coupled with the troubled relationships between arts and sciences, and science and religion. It does not matter which set of troubles happened first. The symbols in question and the larger troubles they refer to appear to have been overlooked as a result of a long standing tradition of oversights, referred to herein as scholarly “misunderstandings.”

Four "misunderstandings" will be acknowledged in the body of my dissertation. One is the “misunderstanding” imposed upon Mary attributes linked with what Harley’s 1885 Moon Lore alludes to as “mooncraft,” an endeavor he claims grew out of the ancient agrarian scientific observation that some human brains are “moister,” or more influenced by the high moon than others. Significantly, this point of view seems to have extended into the way ancient and early westerners accounted for human ability (pp. 187, 202). This body of information will facilitate our associating problems underlying the documented lineages of astronomy and biology, with another group of misunderstandings found in classics, cultural anthropology, and religion. The “misunderstanding” in classics becomes visible through Kurt Weitzman’s very helpful 1947 synopsis of some German classicists who unsuccessfully attempted to bring study of scientific manuscripts to the foreground over one hundred years ago. Weitzman outlined how these scholars documented antique literary rolls while fighting to establish need for studying scientific ones. His focus was on literary rolls. He acknowledged, but did not study the efforts these scholars made to promote study of ancient scientific manuals. Critical distinctions they made indicate, however, that there are two origins of western classical tradition instead of one, and from my perspective, this constitutes another “misunderstanding.” This concern has more recently been expounded upon by classicists Michael W. Haslam and Peter van Minnen. In the 1992 Proceedings of the 20th International Congress of Papyrologists, they argued that ancient
western literary papyri have until very recently been studied in isolation from scientific texts, and from outside the perspective of their cultural context (pp. 98-104; 35-39).

This German “misunderstanding” becomes clearer in light of additional problems classical, art historical, and medical historians seem to be having in their analyses of the ritual and metaphorical prayers found in agrarian scientific manuscripts. Evidence indicates the troubled lore they study can be traced to a seventh century BCE oracular priest of Apollo named Hesiod, whose influence was contemporaneous with that of Homer. Hesiodic lore constitutes an apparently even deeper layer of “misunderstandings”—but with or without this dimension of ancient material, there seems to exist on the part of some scholars from each of these groups an essential disregardance for the worth of esoteric content related to metaphorical language and processes, such as are involved in use of ritual and visualization.

My allegation becomes yet clearer through the fourth “misunderstanding” I will present. That is, changes which have transpired in the form and function of Mary, Mother of Jesus. Evidence indicates she was in her earliest form, the Christianized equivalent of the ancient Feminine. In this earliest capacity, she was the creator and administrator of healing rituals and prayers. Her and her metaphorical processes were the essential bridge between art and science, science and religion.

Significantly, Mary and the ancient western Feminine who preceded her were originally binarily instead of hierarchically defined, life giving and at the same time antidotally destructive. Mary's identity has changed, however, and she has come to reflect far more than problems westerners have with her. She is problematically aligned with key ideas which have and still do shape concepts involving, for example, the origin of original sin and immaculate conception. These ideas and the origin of the west's struggle with Mary have deeper roots than Christianity. They and her pagan counterparts can be traced at least as far back as circa 700 BCE.

In light of these symbolic oversights and “misunderstandings,” consideration will be given to the following three areas of concern. The first involves growing numbers of feminist art historians, some of whom might be additionally referred to as “aesthetic contextualists.” These scholars are searching for an overlooked ancient Feminine to account for the origin of problems in art, art education, art history, and aesthetics. They claim their means of participating in a dialogue with her (the ancient Feminine) has become distorted, and attribute their position to
confused adaptations of myth and metaphor in art history. I believe this group is on to something, but their argument seems too narrow.

To broaden it I fashioned a lens which includes Feminine agrarian science. It will be presented as a body of “Definitions.” This toolbox of "Definitions" must take precedence over my discussion of the image. When I first started this project, Dr. Anderson suggested that a list of “Definitions” be put at the beginning which in theory would help my readers educate themselves on my usages of terms like "Feminine," "muddled," and "agrarian." I did not yet know how to accommodate his suggestion, because it occurred to me that some readers might skip over my "Definitions" to save time. This in the end would only serve to perpetuate the problem I am writing about. More recently, Dr. Svetla Griffin similarly suggested that I develop a chapter on "Definitions.” In completing my paper and trying to comply with their request it has become clear to me that they are right, there is too much involved in analyzing this image that is not common knowledge. Fragments of information have been woven together which were drawn upon multidisciplinarily. Sometimes this activity required interpretive analysis. My findings accordingly do not necessarily correspond with those of scholars working within the context of any one discipline. In addition, the mythic dimension of agrarian science's rapport with the ancient Feminine has not been reestablished and nothing I have read considers this issue. I have had to compose a sort of dictionary of my own making, and readers need to study it before they can make sense of my interpretation of the altar. All of this has sometimes resulted in original scholarship which is additionally problematic, because it too, is not common knowledge. Therefore, I am viewing SECTION ONE as an introduction to the problem, SECTION TWO as my theoretical toolbox of required “Definitions,” and SECTION THREE as an analysis of the image and the aesthetic problem of why analysis of it remains an enigma.

My SECTION TWO “Definitions” account for my use of the terms “Misunderstanding,” “Agrarian,” “ancient Feminine (good and errant Mary)”, “Muddled” texts and images, and “Hesiod,” “as well as his “Erides” (strifes)--especially "Carpenters." The efforts of five groups of classicists are acknowledged, alongside of prominent views from science in agrarian medicine, alchemy, and astronomy. Historians of medieval Wild People, warfare, and Bestiaries, Christianity, Judaism, and pagan folklore; as well as scholars specializing in Mariology, the lore of Achilles, prophecy, and the Vulgate Bible are presented. The classicists, scientists, and historians struggle with similar problems as the ones identified by art historians, and all seem to
be inadvertently carrying consensus on one key point. That is, their views regarding what anthropologist and structuralist Claude Levi Strauss described in his 1998 “Structural Study of Myth” as “ritual studies” (blend of religion, myth and various usages of ritual) are confused and understudied (p. 101). According to Levi Strauss, we cannot understand the problematically compartmentalized elements of ritual studies without bringing them back together, and that is why I am studying the Isenheim. Evidence indicates that each of these groups is acknowledging problems which find parallels in misinterpretations of it. My examination of them will achieve three related goals: 1) create a more viable means for analyzing the Altar; 2) strengthen my proposal that the overlooked common denominator of these troubled groups is a group of figures who, alongside of their products, were originally associated with a version of Feminine science defined and used more metaphorically and synthetically than literally; and 3) push my study into the realm of feminist instrumentalist applications like that of Thomas Anderson and Melody Milbrandt, who in their 2002 Art For Life seek to engage art and art history in the everyday concerns of society (p. 3), while supporting specialized efforts of classicists like Svetla Slaveva-Griffin, who in her 2009 Plotinus on Number examines numbers in relation to underlying principles of existence.

These will reflect my belief that though there exists no single, clear cut definition of the Feminine which transcends disciplinary applications in academia, there is a simple explanation for why all of this has happened. The Feminine is described in terms ranging from alchemical and or medical and agricultural, to theoretical, religious, and abstract. Her sexual identity seems equally as subjective, bound to viewpoints determined by the contextual period during which she is being analyzed, dogma underlying the discipline from which the scholar analyzing her has emerged, the scholar's gender, and their place in the oracular scheme of things. The last of these criteria was defined by Hesiod circa 700 BCE. It is what this dissertation is about. Evidence indicates that there exists an oracular viewpoint and one which resists it. The latter has come to be embodied by five mythic forms of intolerance and I believe they propel the academic misunderstandings.

When the troubled state of the Isenheim and the ancient Feminine in arts and sciences are cumulatively considered through problems in art history, the oversights signify a human component of the Feminine which constituted a tradition of real people with a particular psychological profile. The group I have in mind worked practically, and they also paralleled
their efforts to ones commonly associated with deity of physicians Asclepius’ use of visualization ritual for healing purposes (Fig. 29). Based on Kerenyi’s 1959 Asclepius: Archetypal Image of the Physician’s Existence, which includes documentation of Asclepius’ mythological genealogy, there existed on the one hand a Greek deity of physicians. He was the Asclepius of dreams, visions, and mythological and religious embodiments. There was also a “techne,” or healer in possession of craft knowledge and skill handed down as a family tradition. This was hereditary talent (p. 6). These figures can be studied together with Asclepian healers because some were Greek. Viewed from this perspective, they might be described as transcultural tools which constituted the oracular and/or divinatory dimension of the Feminine in arts and sciences. With them in mind, I will argue in this section of my dissertation that the role of healers in the community and their symbolism in images like the Isenheim needs to be demythologized, dethorized, and deconceptualized. Evidence indicates these figures have as a group been grossly misunderstood and mismanaged.

By the conclusion of Section Two I will have framed my “Definitions” through the lens of Mary’s function as a physician of physiological and psychological medicine. She will have been presented as the Christianized model for the Isenheim healer, Saint Anthony, a notion which will facilitate my introduction of Section III.

In Section Three I will match the overlooked Feminine metamorphosing prayer dimension of ancient medical science to iconographical study of certain elements in Grunewald’s Altar. This effort will facilitate my outlining the activities of three key figures: Saint Antony, Mary Magdalene, and Mary whose activities have been sequentially identified below. I will present them as I believe Grunewald did. First they will be presented in their final stage, in the closed position. The subsequent stages of what led up to that event have been depicted in the middle and open positions. Regarding the activities of Mary and Mary Magdalene:

1. First, Mary is presented in the form of the ancient Feminine Devil, the Androgyne, standing outside the window of the room Antony stands in (closed position); she has come to help him (Fig. 2B, 2D).
2. Second, Mary is the peacock creature in the Angel Concert Panel (Fig. 11A, 10A). In this form she embodies alchemical metamorphosis, culminating through ritual dance and music.
3. Third, she is the alchemical and celestial Queen of Heaven (Fig. 1G, 2E, 9) moving from the angel concert into the earthly realm. There she will hold baby Jesus in the form of an earthly woman.

4. Fourth, she is Mary on earth holding baby Jesus (Fig. 9).

5. Fifth, she is two people split in the (closed position) crucifixion panel. On the one hand she is Mary. On the other hand, is Magdalene. Magdalene is earthly Mary on the day of the crucifixion. She is metamorphosing into Mary Mother of God, destined to exist in an altered capacity from that day forward (Fig. 2A, 11A, 6, 7A).

Regarding Anthony:

1. First we see the polyptych sculpture of Anthony enthroned between two sculptural Saints, Augustine and Jerome. This is the closed position of the Altar in which Anthony is seated in a position usually attributed to God (Fig. 1F).

2. Second, we see Anthony being approached by the Feminine Devil in the painted panel to the right of the crucifixion panel. This is crucifixion day and the viewers will die or heal. Christ will be their psychological savior. As they await their treatments to begin, they witness him waiting the healing of his own flesh wounds. Anthony will heal them physiologically. The Feminine Devil has come because Anthony called upon her and her tradition to help him prepare for his role in the battle for the Isenheim patients (Fig. 2B).

3. Third, we find him conferring with the desert father Hermit Paul, holiest of all hermits. He is learning how to combat the Devil (Fig. 3A).

3. Fourth, he is fighting the Devil in a state of metamorphosis (Fig. 4B).

In Section III I will argue that these three figures appear to be sequentially representative of two overlooked narrative substructures that run symbiotically alongside of each other. Their narratives are at the apparent heart of the Isenheim. They allude to the ritual healing activities of the ancient Feminine and of Mary, which forecasted Antony’s earned reputation. His presence in this shrine is commonly acknowledged, but only partially represented because the Feminine, Mary, and Mary Magdalene were Antony’s visualization models. Their presence, alongside of their symbolic form and function, has become as muddled and diluted as his.
To conclude Section III, I will shift away from my iconographic study of the Isenheim and focus on comparing the the ashen, transcendant, and angry dimensions of Achilles and Mary, referred to in this context as “Magdalene.” This activity will culminate in my proposing that Mary began as the Christian equivalent of the ancient *Feminine*. She and those who followed her, like Saint Anthony, functioned symbiotically as *Feminine* medicine’s representative. As a composite, they wove together an iconographical agrarian tapestry large enough to accommodate present and past, arts and sciences, and Church and State. Now the tapestry is no longer legible. She and they have become another misunderstanding—the biggest, most unmanaged and misunderstood antidote in the entire western world. Cultural misuse of them is the poison Hesiod wrote about in fearful anticipation over two thousand, seven hundred years ago. He argued and I agree, neglecting them and their metaphorical processes could result in some form of poison which knows no antidote. This is an arrow of our own making which could kill us.
CHAPTER TWO
THE PROBLEM FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ART HISTORY

In my introduction, I stated that some feminist art historians and aestheticians, classicists, and scholars claim that their concept of the ancient Western Feminine has become distorted. This chapter will discuss the foundation of these scholars’ concerns.

Art historian Belting’s 1987 *The End of the History of Art* (1987), Zerner’s *Crisis in the Discipline* (1982) from the same field, and aesthetician Dissanayake’s *What Is Art For?* (1988) similarly indicate that sizable problems exist in the discipline of art history. Zerner writes about art history, “A growing minority of art historians, especially those of the younger generation, are convinced that art history . . . has deteriorated and reduced the thought of its founders, Morelli, Wolfflin, and others to an uninspired professional routine feeding a busy academic machine” (p. 279).

Dissanayake’s more recent *Homo Aestheticus* (1992) embraces this problem and extends it to include other disciplines:

General readers, not familiar with the arcane discourses of today’s art world, may not be aware of the recent cataclysmic changes in aim and consciousness that go by the general label of “postmodernism.” In the larger society, “modernist” art . . . has scarcely been assimilated. . . . Thus the internecine squabbles of a bunch of artists and intellectuals may seem to be of little consequence.

These [postmodernist] arguments encapsulate, however, a larger debate . . . between those who wish to preserve the two-millennium heritage of Western, Greco-Roman, Judeo-Christian civilization and those who consider this heritage to be seriously inadequate. A vociferous and growing movement criticizes the traditional Western interpretation of art and culture, with its Eurocentric bias, for its neglect or outright oppression of non-Western cultures (of those “minorities” who are increasingly visible and vocal in a “multicultural” society) and of women. (p. xiv)

I agree with Dissanayake. More is at stake than western art history. However, evidence indicates the problem's origin cuts deeper even than Eurocentric bias, neglect, and outright oppression of minorities or women. We risk losing another, even more fundamental relationship. Hoeller’s assessment in his *Jung and the Lost Gospels* (1989) sits outside the fields targeted by
Zerner, Dissanayake, and Belting. However, he seems to reiterate and broaden the concerns of these instrumentalist critics, moving them closer to another kind of truth. “Something is wrong,” he states succinctly. “Somewhere, somehow, the fabric of being at the existential level of human functioning has lost its integrity” (p. 68). Bringing Hoeller’s statement into my targeted arena must begin with a definition of what the ancient Feminine was, how the language defining her functioned for ancient peoples. For the time being I will consider how, not why, she evolved.

Egyptologists have traced the origin of the Egyptian Feminine to Neolithic times. Her name was Hathor. Redford (2003), Wilkinson (2001), Silverman and Brovarski (1997), and Shafer, Baines, Lesko, & Silverman agree that although Hathor was very loosely defined until the 4th dynasty (2613 to 2494 B.C.E.), with the theory of matriarchal cultures existing in profusion before 3,000 B.C.E. scholars have come to believe she was probably androgynous in her earliest, prehistoric form (pp. 157-161; 283; 41; 24). References from historical times clarify this concept. Silverman & Brovarski (1997) and Oakes (2001) indicate that as Hathor matured, she came to be identified with the cow while absorbing attributes of other Feminine deities, most notably those of Mehturt, deity of the "great flood," and Wadjet, a vegetation deity who was also an "evil eye" and protectress (pp. 41; 157 -159).

These attributes are frequently acknowledged. Hathor presided over the marshes and vegetation, for example, as well as the sky, desert, the dead, and music and dance as used in religious ritual. The problem with these simplified interpretations is that they do not take the discipline of iconography far enough. Each is a frame of reference, a broad concept in itself, and more information is required to make sense of how ancient agrarian peoples related to this version of the ancient Feminine. As Hathor absorbed Mehturt, for example, Redford's (2003) Oxford Guide to Egyptian Mythology tells us she became Ra's mother and a cow. The horns she cradled her baby with signified the crescent moon, but they also personified a women's menstrual cycle. Similarly, her four legs held the sky up and her belly was interpreted to be a screen displaying the star system which governed human lives (pp. 157-161). Hathor's belly represented a cosmology because she had simultaneously assumed Mehturt's association with the Milky Way, which Egyptians viewed from an earth centered perspective. The Way helped them grow things. They saw it as a wide, all encompassing arch which touched earth where the sun rose and fell every day during the fall and spring equinoxes. They also equated it with their mythic great flood and the waterway of their heavens, the Nile River of their sky.
These metaphors provided them a conceptual model for human birth and an explanation for the existence of their deity. As a human amniotic sac breaks and floods its waters just before a child is due to be born, Hathor's waters broke every day as she gave birth to Ra. Most significantly, these metaphors seem to have afforded a model for framing human sexuality which has resulted in misunderstandings associated with the Oracle's relationship to Dionysus, and Mary's Isenheim identity. Western scholars had sizable problems with the idea that Hathor's function as Ra's mother was viewed alongside of knowledge that she was a sexual being. I mean, she was his wife and lover as well as his mother. She gave birth to him every morning, he matured into a man and they united sexually, then she reconceived him and he died to be born again. His life cycle paralleled the daylight hours, beginning with dawn and ending with dusk.

Another model that seems to have proven as, if not more distressing to westerners, is Hathor's affiliation with Wadjet, a green, evil eyed protectress. In Egyptian myth, Silverman & Brovarski (1997) and Oakes (2001) tell us that depictions of this eye did not originally signify the eye's literal function as an organ of sight. They represented an agent of action, protection, and wrath (p. 41; 157-159). That is Hathor's association with Wadjet and her link with the Milky Way. They were interpreted to equate her with the primal snake who protected Egypt. Ancient Egyptian and Near Eastern sailors, for an example that will come up later on in this dissertation, painted the symbol of Wadjet on the bow of their boats to ensure safe sea travel. These signifiers suggested a form of suprarational ability that seems to have originally been related to prophecy, and this is the model of Hathor's association with Wadjet that I am most interested in.

Robyn Gillam's (1995) "Priestesses of Hathor: Their Function, Decline and Disappearance" tells us that Hathor was originally a minister of prophecy. Both priests and priestesses served her, performing a valued role in political and religious affairs from the middle of the Old Kingdom to the early Middle Kingdom. The problem is that new laws were implemented with the New Kingdom which prevented women from holding priestly offices of functioning in divine service. Only men were allowed to be priests during these years. Gillam's recountance of Herodotus reflects that women prophets were only allowed to provide music and dances designed to accompany the religious efforts of male priests and prophets (p. 211).

Now I have described how the ancient Feminine Hathor evolved. To gainfully relate her changes to Hoeller's concern that human kind has devalued social and moral integrity, I must trace back 2,700 years to the "Erides." This is a vast body of iconographical information which
can be culled from priest, poet, and farmer Hesiod's *Theogony* and his *Works and Days* (eighth century BCE). In this material are key explanations accounting for how Hesiodic tradition was related to the *Feminine*, and why it appears to have lost prestige.

Hesiod seems to have anticipated the problem that Hoeller is worrying over 700 years before the time of Christ, but he addressed it metaphorically, poetically, and cross-referentially instead of literally so his Erides and the rest of his work remains difficult to interpret. Scholars do not yet fully understand the intended meaning of this poet’s work, but they do not need to for me to use it as a body of iconographical data from which aspects of its meaning can be determined. Uniting these iconographical signifiers and the various avenues of presentation they have assumed (Hesiodic, ancient pagan, and Christian) with the *Feminine* perspective from agrarian science that I plan to develop revitalizes both bodies of information. By applying these combined perspectives to the Isenheim Mary, I intend to show that the problem to which Hoeller refers is ultimately connected in some way with evil—not with evil’s existence but with its regulation.

Consider that many Westerners have forgotten how to use art as more than a means of deriving pleasure and that the term *formalism* may have additionally come to reflect—even privilege—various forms of intellectual, as well as visual, stimulation. This dissertation will search through ways hypothetically formalist oversights have colored myth, metaphor, and aspects of these systems, such as were manifest through complex processes of image visualization. With this knowledge, I will discuss the function of these *Feminine* elements of art as a tool for regulating evil and show that because they have become obscured and ill managed, the presence of evil has been magnified out of proportion. The answer to this overlooked *Feminine* tool lies in ancient iconographies associated with the agrarian *Feminine* and her Christianized component. Their door is locked, however; its key has been misplaced, and the template for making a new key is worn out. That is why I want to search for the original key.

Art historians, aestheticians, and others represented in such works as Holly’s 1990 “*Vision and Revision in the History of Art*” (pp. 151–168); Bal’s 1988 “*Visual Poetics: Reading with the Other Art?*” (pp. xx, 135–150); Tickner’s 1988 “*Feminism, Art History, and Sexual Difference*” (p. 99); Cixous’s 1998 “*Sorties*” (pp. 530; 578–582); and Irigaray’s 1985 “*The Power of Discourse and the Subordination of the Feminine*” (p. 571), argue with varying degrees of emphasis that the discipline of art history has become a tangled knot of contradictions. These
authors can be divided into three groups, those who claim that [brief synopsis], those who claim that [brief synopsis], and those who claim that reinstating the ancient Feminine could revitalize the field. The third of these groups is the one that most interests me.

Their claim represents an important step toward finding the key that I am seeking. They stress that the use of an ancient Feminine will facilitate the reconstruction, not the elimination, of Western art history, and I support this aspect of their argument. I disagree, however, with their definition of the Feminine, which seems too abstract. I want to see the Feminine demythologized, viewed not as a theory but as an identity associated with a category of real people who had a particular psychological profile.

I will support this notion of the Feminine using evidence compiled from reconstructed translations of ancient papyri; works connected to Hesiodic, Christian, and pagan folklore, including remote bodies of iconographical information related to the lore of Medieval Wild people and bestiaries; the shared histories of Christian and Hebraic religion, especially regarding such topics as prophecy, the Vulgate Bible, and graven imagery; the multiple histories of agrarian science, especially medicine and alchemy; Mariology (the study of changes in the form and function of Mary, the mother of Jesus); and ritual anthropology. In addition to recognizing Feminine elements, scholars of medieval art need to reconsider the identity of Mary, Mother of Jesus. This is perhaps the most significant of all the concerns I have listed. Scholars of mythology and folklore commonly acknowledge that the ancient Western Feminine was iconographically transformed some 2,000 years ago into Mary, but to my knowledge no art historians or aestheticians acknowledge this implied transformation in their analyses of the Isenheim Altarpiece.

That is why I contend that scholars cannot gainfully consider the ancient Feminine without acknowledging her transformation into the woman Christian's recognize as "Mary, Mother of Jesus," as well as the many ramifications of this transformation. My response to this dimension of the Feminine problem must begin at the beginning, with a three-part discussion of how art historical analysis has affected the ancient Feminine dimension of pictorial imagery.

2.1 My Analysis of Art History

2.1.1 Stage One: Formalism and Instrumentalism Redefined

Such modern formalists as Moore, Bell, and Langer follow Kant in the activity of theoretically separating form from content and privileging form. Bell’s Art (1914) advocates the
disinterested analysis of art. This notion of disinterestedness in art history, along with
disconnectedness from history and symbolic content, appears in critical writings about art and
artists from 1846. Its origin is earlier than that, if we consider that Kant died in 1804. Consider
this passage from Baudelaire’s formalist review entitled “The Salon of 1846: On the Heroism of
Modern Life”:

Many people will attribute the present decadence in painting to our decadence in
behaviour. This dogma of the studios, which has gained currency among the
public, is a poor excuse of the artists. For they had a vested interest in ceaselessly
depicting the past; it is an easier task, and one that could be turned to good
account by the lazy.

It is true that the great tradition has been lost, and that the new one is not
yet established.

But what was this great tradition, if not a habitual, everyday idealization of
ancient life—a robust and martial form of life, a state of readiness on the part of
each individual, which gave him a habit of gravity in his movements, and of
majesty, or violence, in his attitudes? . . . Ancient life was a great parade. It
ministered above all to the pleasure of the eye, and this day-to-day paganism has
marvelously served the arts. . . .

Everything, I say, combines to form a completely viable whole. . . . Woe
to him who studies the antique for anything else but pure art, logic and general
method! (Quoted in Frascina and Harrison, 1965, pp. 17, 23–24)

Statements like Bell’s and Baudelaire’s demonstrate formalism’s tendency to present both art
objects and their history as an isolated study of elegance and style. Instrumentalism, in contrast,
blends densely realized cognitive and intuitively associative processes to facilitate a broader
means of interacting with art objects. Although instrumentalists regard art objects as
fundamentally utilitarian signifiers of some process, they leave room for assessing art elements
more formally because they view form and content as interrelated. Formalistic assessments,
however, ignore content at the expense of form, and I am not alone in worrying about them.

Many scholars from the fields of art history, aesthetics, and art education have expressed
concern about tensions between formalism and instrumentalism. In his “Methodological Critique
Collins argues against these two very prominent, commonly recognized formalists to present the instrumentalist notion that art making is one of several strategic means of dealing with human problems (pp. 22A–24A). “[A]rt should be a strategic means of dealing with [human] problems like disease, poverty, and depression,” Collins argues (p. 22A). However, westerners are not making good use of this form of self-maintenance. Art historians and aestheticians incorrectly document and analyze art history. In addition, they overlook the significance of three critical factors related to artists: their personal history, views, and character; their socioeconomic context (beliefs, customs, and life circumstances); and the principles and practices that define their training and work efforts (pp. 22A–24A).

To substantiate his point, Collins identifies three broad influences on contemporary art historical instruction Janson, Greenberg, and Schapiro. He identifies Janson’s formalist perspective as the least efficient but the most prominent and Schapiro’s method as the best but least well received. Essentially, like other art historians arguing for instrumentalism, Collins criticizes academic use of these methods as inefficient. Because his review of this problem provides a historical lens for the consideration of formalism and instrumentalism and because it places the overlooked issue of how the study of artists can inform the analysis of art history into the larger context of art and modernity, I have included a synopsis of Collins’s 1987 critique here:

1. Janson’s approach, rooted in the views of late-19th-century art historian Wolfflin, is the most prominent of these viewpoints. However, while Wolfflin coupled formalistic study with analysis of meaning, Janson omitted meaning and turned analysis of form into an end in itself. In this way, states Collins, Jansonian analyses "denature" art: they reflect masterpieces robbed of their contextual role (18A–20A).

2. The Greenberg approach is second most prevalent. It is rooted in German philosopher Hegel’s proposal that historical forces are at work in humankind’s intellectual and moral tendencies. Such tendencies and efforts, according to Hegel, are part of the unfolding master plan of the Zeitgeist, or “spirit of the times,” and artists are accordingly an altruistic faction of culture motivated to change predominant tendencies through their works. They are the Zeitgeist, voice of determinant force, and their process of criticism—in the form of art—is force’s voiced effect. Collins draws on the Hegelian view only insofar as it shaped the ideas of Greenberg, a New York City art critic who tried to “purify” art by privileging study of art media over ideas about
illusionism. Greenberg’s efforts strongly influenced Arnason’s 1968 History of Modern Art, which discusses only so-called modern art (from Courbet [1819–1877] until the late 1960s, when Arnason wrote his text). According to Collins, Arnason ignored the influence of early Western civilization on modernity and couched his notions of individual achievement inside a view of art which reflected art history as an impersonally acquired body of factual data (pp. 20A–22A).

3. The Schapiro method is the least popular of these approaches, but it is Collins’s favorite. Schapiro accepts the ideas of Wolfflin and Hegel, but only insofar as those thinkers recognized art to be a manifestation of some form of “consciousness.” Whereas Wolfflin and Hegel define “consciousness” as a singular entity, Schapiro argues that it has two definitions, one privileging the cultural influence of art over that of the artists who produce it, and the other privileging artists over their creations. The latter definition depicts artists as unique individuals responding interactively to an ideological framework defined for them by their personal and societal circumstances (pp. 22A–23A).

I will articulate my concerns regarding art historical problems through Collins’s 1987 instrumentalist perspective. Using the tensions between formalism and instrumentalism as a means of advancing my conception of an overlooked ancient Feminine and producing evidence indicating that an overlooked and underused dimension of art can be tied to ancient Feminine scientific processes of healing visualization, I will argue that these terms, formalism and instrumentalism, in themselves need to be redefined—despite the fact that every analytical study done of the Isenheim Altarpiece presumes it to be symbolic, contextual, or some combination of these. This idea is based on the efforts of two men, the Marxist psychologist Vygotsky (1896–1934) and the anthropologist Scupin. According to Benjafield’s 1996 A History of Psychology, Vygotsky viewed art as a “tool” whose changing use reflected historical changes in society and material life (p. 252). Scupin’s Cultural Anthropology: A Global Perspective (1998) seems to move Vygotsky’s perspective a step closer toward the issue at hand. Scupin does not include an analysis of “tools,” per se, but he addresses symbols the same way as Vygotsky studies tools. According to him, the human capacity for culture stems from our linguistic and cognitive ability to symbolize. Because culture is transmitted from generation to generation through symbolic learning and language, he notes, it can change rapidly from one generation to the next (p. 39).

Based on the ideas of these two men and the increasingly apparent need to defend the instrumentalist view (see Anderson and Milbrandt, 2005; Clark 1973; Feldman, 1970; and
Hauser, 1951 and 1958), I suggest that Collins’s 1987 adaptation of the traditional means of viewing instrumentalism and formalism be reconfigured. Instead of viewing these two applications singularly as ideologies advancing alongside of each other, scholars can reposition them to reflect the stages through which Westerners have come to interact with fundamental content in art. Essentially, instrumentalism came first and formalism has followed. Each embodies part of a two-part transition, one tagging the other.

If these doctrines are inadvertently learned mindsets that reflect how Westerners have learned to wield art as a “tool,” and if Vygotsky is right in arguing that art reflects humankind’s capacity to symbolize, the consequences of formalistic indoctrination are troubling. As Westerners learn to view art formalistically, discounting the value of content in art, our human capacity to symbolize diminishes. This idea is alarming in and of itself, but what if still more losses are at stake?

I have deliberately framed my use of Collins’s idea to draw it closer to the humanistic concerns I will associate with my analysis of the Isenheim Altarpiece. I will respond in the conclusion of this dissertation to the concerns that Hoeller expressed in Jung and the Last Gospel. From my perspective, the instrumentalist idea that formalism schools viewers to revere art instead of using it practically, as a “tool,” can only remain a philosophical problem until aligned with troubles in art history. That is why my interest in formalism sits alongside scholarly efforts to study Grunewald’s shrine. I will use the fact that this major shrine continues to be analyzed problematically to exemplify two tensions. One is between formalism and instrumentalism, the other divides altruistic behavior and egocentricism. These will facilitate broader discussion of apparently related problems like those raised by Hoeller, Vygotsky, and Scupin.

For an example already accounted for, Isenheim scholars recognize symbols such as the raven and Saint Anthony in the altarpiece only minimally, even formally. Perhaps they have simply become too familiar with the shrine’s major figures. The identities of Mary, Jesus, John the Baptist, and Saint Anthony are, after all, common knowledge, and art historians rarely question them. They have not paid much attention to Grunewald’s numerous depictions of animals and hybrid creatures, either. This is in spite of the fact that there are more iconographical opportunities than I can record in this dissertation for directly correlating what I will refer to as the mythic dimension of agrarian science with the saints and other symbolic
beings depicted in the altarpiece. Decisions made by art historians to disregard this invaluable information seem to reflect a formalist tendency to view Grunewald’s work more appreciatively than contextually, in spite of the fact that it is narrative and symbolic. Vaguely acknowledged as a composite, studies of these signifiers reflect them as little more than elegantly realized devices for producing pleasure, empathy, or horror. They reflect grand concepts described in terms of monumentality, visual integrity, and presence. However, words like these depict a literal reality which demonstrates no concern for the shrine’s esoteric, Feminine content.

In all fairness, art historians are not the only scholars who respond to the altarpiece in this overly literal and formalistic manner. I will note in my analysis of Grunewald’s images that religious scholars have approached the shrine in a similar way, the difference being that their overt expectations of what an observer can gain from studying this altar, or any other Christian monument, center around spiritual issues rather than visual elegance. No religious critiques of this shrine that I have read, for example, view Mary’s role from any perspective other than that dictated by Christian tradition. These critics recognize her only as the Virgin and the sorrowing Mother of Jesus, overlooking evidence indicating that Grunewald’s articulation of her is more complex than that traditional role. With these distinctions made, I can finally respond to Hoeller’s concern, quoted earlier: “Something is wrong. Somewhere, somehow, the fabric of being at the existential level of human functioning has lost its integrity” (p. 88).

I have examined his worry through the lens of my concerns regarding the state of art history and art education. From this perspective, it seems humankind is sick and formalism is a symptom of our disease. We are becoming as uninterested in our humanity as we are in the art that our culture teaches us to create.

2.1.2 Stage Two: More Recent Views, Including an Overlooked Version of the Ancient Feminine

What to do with art history and arts curricula continues to be an issue of genuine concern for numerous art educators and aestheticians. From their various points of view, the issue that Collins addressed becomes more complicated. Belting (1987), for example, argues for an increased dialogue across the disciplines which minimizes, instead of elevates, form:

The project of writing the history of art has survived all too often on the fiction of elevating artistic form to the single hero of the story. But there is no new model in sight which could claim the same comprehensiveness. For the more complex our
conception of the work of art and its manifold determinants, the more difficult becomes a synthetic treatment, a narrative still capable of bringing art into the universalized perspective of a “history of world art.” . . . Traditional art history, which had achieved precisely this, can serve today only as a foil before which new tasks for empirical research may stand out in relief. . . . The dialogue among the humanistic disciplines is becoming increasingly more important than the independence of individual disciplines. . . . Openness to [it] is surely to be encouraged, even at the price of professional autonomy. (pp. 29–30)

Belting's concerns respond only in part to critiques like those of Zerner (1982) and Dissanayake (1988). According to Zerner, art history has “deteriorated and reduced the thought of its founders to an uninspired professional routine feeding a busy academic machine” (p. 279). Dissanayake (1988) asserts that cataclysmic changes in aim and consciousness are molding a debate “between [art historians] who wish to preserve the two-millennium heritage of Western, Greco-Roman, Judeo-Christian civilization and those who consider this heritage to be seriously inadequate” (p. xiv). These scholars and others like Thomas Anderson and Melody Milbrandt, Lisa Tickner, Michael Ann Holly, and Mieke Bal represent but a fraction of an ever-growing voice which can be fit into roughly three groups, all presenting similar points with varying degrees of emphasis.

The first group, which I will call Group 1, consists of scholars like Zerner and Holly who claim that art history’s absolute concentration on the Western tradition has become rerooted in Renaissance ideology. Struggling with the discipline of art history while staying within its parameters, they argue that the change has resulted in a perspective that becomes less workable as expectations of history become increasingly ambivalent. In this context, strict divisions exist between notions of archetype and the idea that facts can provide definitive explanations.

The second group, which I will call Group 2, is exemplified by scholars like Bal (1988) and Belting (1987). These scholars acknowledge the existence of a problem, but only from the perspective of art. They approach interdisciplinary proposals for a redirected focus the same way as those in Group 1, searching for a more reliable means of analyzing, defining, and using art objects. Although they claim to be open to some altogether new application of study that may or may not accept art objects as the predominant focus of art scholarship, art remains their primary concern and their definition of art continues to be object centered (pp. xx, 135–150; 29–30).
Group 3, which includes such feminist scholars as Lisa Tickner, Dissanayake, Helene Cixous, and Luce Irigary, also focuses on art objects but attacks the problem from the perspective of content. According to these scholars, problems in the definition and use of art have resulted from some overlooked death of the West’s ancient Feminine. Cixous’s “Sorties” (1998) helpfully accounts for this Feminine as information originally accessed mythically and binarily in the form of a masculine and Feminine, but not necessarily gender-specific, "double braid" (pp. 530 and 580–82). Echoing Irigaray’s *Power of Discourse and the Subordination of the Feminine* (1985), Cixous explains further that this form of the Feminine is at the root of all symbols in literature, the visual arts, religion, and philosophy. By multidisciplinarily seeking out the form and function of her origin, scholars can work together to reclaim her "braid," an effort which she says may facilitate an altogether new application of art (Cixous, pp. 529–530, 578–580; 571). Cixous reference to the Feminine's braid" will in my dissertation be shown to represent androgynous force, and from my perspective, reimplementing its presence into the west's depiction of arts and sciences, and science and religion could facilitate our regaining a lot more than art. Now I have in mind the concerns of Hoeller, quoted earlier: “Something is wrong. Somewhere, somehow, the fabric of being at the existential level of human functioning has lost its integrity” (p. 88).

Considered through these multiple views, Collins’s 1987 instrumentalist concerns take on a new meaning. He did not address any of the issues these scholars are studying in his paper. However he is an art historian, and if the crisis has been unfolding since at least the mid-1960s (Zerner 1982, p. 279), it follows that Collins (1987) must have had some familiarity with this issue, even if he did not acknowledge it. Putting aside the work of art historical Groups 1 and 2 (scholars like Zerner and Holly; Bal and Belting), I will blend Collins’s idea with the efforts of Group 3 scholars studying the Feminine to analyze an art object. This will extend his instrumentalist position, which is dated, into the contemporary academic arena while strengthening the potency of every theoretical voice I am studying, including his.

In the introduction to this dissertation, I associated this hypothetical content I have in mind with some sizable difficulties that Westerners appear to have with definition and use of Feminine myth, metaphor, and an identity associated with a category of real people who had a particularized psychological profile. In my response to Vygotsky’s analysis of how human use of “tools” was changing and Scupin’s (1998) study of humankind’s evolving linguistic and
cognitive abilities to symbolize, I viewed instrumentalism and formalism as embodiments of a two-part transition. I implied that our human capacity to symbolize appears to be diminishing, associating this idea with Hoeller (1989) and my reason for electing to study the Isenheim Altarpiece.

From my perspective, all of these problems are some version of the same problem. That is, misused tensions between altruistic and egocentrical values. An example is Greenberg's “Problems of Criticism II: Complaints of an Art Critic” (1967). He states: “I, who am considered an arch-‘formalist,’ used to indulge in talk about ‘content’ myself. If I do not do so any longer it is because it came to me, dismayingly, some years ago that I could always assert the opposite of whatever it was I did say about ‘content’ and not get found out; that I could say almost anything I pleased about ‘content’ and sound plausible” (pp. 38–39). Greenberg's statement seems to reflect egocentric, even cynical disregard for the state of symbolic material in art and the same attitude appears less obtrusively in his Art and Culture (1961). There, he says: “Art is a matter strictly of experience, not of principles, and what counts first and last in art is quality; all other things are secondary. No one has yet been able to demonstrate that the representational as such either adds or takes away from the merit of a picture or statue” (p. 133). Clearly, Greenberg is capitalizing on the troubled state of Western arts. However, his statements additionally reflects the gravity of the situation this dissertation is about. As a cog in the wheel of academia, he has not been trained to do more than make light of the west's symbol system, which acknowledges neither Feminine voice nor androgynous force and this tension is not restricted to formalist view. Recall Collins’s (1987) use of New York City art critic Greenberg's ideas to exemplify formalist view. In the same context, Collins also argued against Greenberg and Arnason (1968) because they equated artists with scientists working in the forefront of their discipline. He used this idea of theirs to reflect the degree to which formalist and instrumentalist scholars have both become as removed from their knowledge of symbolic material in art history as they have from the origin of why human's made and studied art:

The metaphor of the scientist was chosen not because modern artists have thought of themselves in these terms but because of its usefulness to these historians; it beautifully parallels and therefore reinforces the basic structure of the Hegelian historical model: the scientist is, in fact dialectically tied to present developments in his field and is concerned not with his own, private agenda but with the
advances he can make therein. The concerns of artists and scientists are hardly synonymous, however; to insist or subtly suggest that they are is either misguided or misinformed. (p. 22A)

I take issue with Collins’s (1987) assumption that artists in no way function like scientists. Contemporary expectations of modern artists differ radically from ancient and early applications of them. My analysis of how the Isenheim was related to the ancient Feminine and agrarian science suggests, however, that Greenberg and Arnason's analogy between artists and scientists is, at least in part, valid. As Collins denies a connection between artists and scientists, implying that artists, unlike scientists, always have some “private agenda,” he helpfully draws upon contemporary generalizations about these two groups. These shed needed light on two restrictions which I will place on my use of his model.

The first restriction involves his effort to reconcile tensions between arts curricula and the need to school an earlier version of art history by tracing late-20th-century conceptions of the artist to earlier times. While his idea of including historical accountability among the criteria through which he defines his proposal seems wise, his conception of “early”—at least in this context—is the 13th century. That date is not early enough. An instrumentalist version of an art history that includes Feminine and agrarian science must necessarily go back at least to the eighth-century BCE lore of Hesiod.

The second restriction involves Collins’s idea of extending the notion of “artist” to include administrators who either commissioned artists or planned their work for them (pp. 23A–24A). His struggle to reconfigure how artists have fit into the history of art is an established and very relevant concern, but to regard artists as one and the same as their administrators is incorrect. Scholars from multiple disciplines like Schapiro, Karl Marx, Carl Gustav Jung, and early-20th-century social anthropologist Ruth Benedict have long indicated there is good reason to reconsider the identity of the people Westerners call “artists.” Iconographical evidence in the multiple histories of agriculture and horticulture, fields which together incorporate alchemy, astronomy, mathematics, Mariology, depictions of the legendary group identified as Wild People, and bestiaries also indicates there is need to redefine this term. Lore involving the study of medicinal herbs and toxic venoms is especially telling, reflecting ideological histories that have shaped communicants underlying prophecy, the Vulgate Bible, and notions of “graven” imagery. This dimension of agriculture and horticulture is manifest in Egyptian, Greek, Hebraic,
and Christian viewpoint, seemingly representative of some now-lost category of artists who were also scientists—and they were not locked into a private agenda. These figures were simultaneously musicians, healers knowledgeable of medicinal roots and venoms, and poet priests able to function oracularly from within their respective didactic traditions.

For example, Nicander of Colophon lived during the second century BCE. He was a rhyzotomist physician, knowledgeable of herbs and venoms. He was also a didactic poet and oracular priest who was a member of the hereditary priesthood at Clarus, where there existed an ancient cult of Apollo. In the introduction to their Nicander: The Poems and Poetical Fragments (1953), A. S. F. Gow and A. F. Scholfield connect certain depicted actions of Nicander found in his poems with images illustrating them. My MFA thesis (2001) showed how these functioned literally and metaphorically as a composite signifier of ritual healing activity, involving use of image visualization. The existence of Nicander’s poetry in itself refutes Collins’s assumption that artists and scientists were at no time connected, and that artists have always functioned egocentrically with some “private agenda,” because Nicander was an artist, poet, priest, and scientist. Based upon this point, Collins’s conception of the creativity of artists seems to typify modern assumptions reflected by their current definition and use. Evidence presented in this dissertation indicates these are based more on dogma than truth.

2.1.3 Stage Three: My Art Historical Analysis of Rituals in Ancient Medical Manuscripts

How can combining elements of the controversy between formalists and instrumentalists with the feminist argument that Western art historians and aestheticians have overlooked the ancient Feminine advance analysis of Grunewald’s altarpiece? My answer begins with Group 3, which poses a two parted question that Western scholars of aesthetics, art history, and art education have not answered: what to make of on the one hand, ways art historians have documented and analyzed artists like Grunewald; and on the other, their documentation of the Feminine symbols in their art. I would add to their question that scholars would benefit by considering the healing content these signifiers represented (image-based processes of visualization which were by nature altruistically esoteric, metaphorically associative, and impulse based). Studies of both the altarpiece and the manuscripts appear to have overlooked the significance of Feminine myth and its related applications of metaphorically based use of ritual healing prayer in art. Answering this three parted question could help in resolving problematic
interpretations of Grunewald’s altarpiece while calling attention to ways scholars have neglected the role of ritual prayer in medical manuscripts.

According to James Snyder’s *Northern Renaissance Art* (1985), scholars of art history have long agreed that the altarpiece functioned in two interrelated ways for plague and ergot hospital patients and their physicians: 1) as a form of instruction from the perspective of the mythic dimension of medical lore; and 2) as a means of healing through visualization (pp. 348-356). With regard to the first use, in the right half of Grunewald’s Angel Concert panel (Fig. 1G, 9B) is depicted the infant Christ holding rosary beads made of red coral, a kind of petrified sea animal (regarded in ancient and medieval times as a form of seaweed) with a lengthy mythic and medical history. (See Ovid 4:740 ff for its use in myth and the 10th-century CE manuscript copy of Nicander’s medical manuscripts, Codex 247, for the fusion of myth with the function of red coral as a medicine and antidote.) According to Snyder, patients associated the red coral in the altarpiece with efforts to ward off evil. The altarpiece also includes numerous depictions of medicinal herbs, including white clover plants, germander, plantain, ribwort, and poppy painted into the desert where Saint Paul and Saint Anthony converse (Fig. 1F, 3A), all having mythic and therapeutic associations, and many similarly signifying Christ’s mother, Mary, and Mary Magdalene. It would seem these women are teaching the child Jesus how to ward off evil, specifically, how to cure ergot and the plague (p. 353).

The Isenheim Altarpiece also functioned for plague and ergot hospital patients as a healing visualization tool. According to Helen Gardner (1980), Christian Heck (1982), and Ruth Mellinkoff (1988), patients at the Isenheim hospital used the altarpiece to guide them through a course of visualization exercises that worked in two ways: as a narrative of the Crucifixion and as an *Andachtsbild* (a mystical, devotional, and meditative image). As they stared at the image of the crucified Christ (Fig. 5), they experienced the pain overtly manifest in Christ’s broken body and wounded flesh (pp. 606–607; 11; 2–3). According to Snyder (1985) and M. Cole (2003), the altar also served as a visual guide for meditatively counting Christ’s “sorrows” (pp. 349–350; Art Bulletin: 03/03). Apparently, this activity helped patients organize their thoughts, accordingly detaching themselves from the immediacy of their physiological and psychological crises. Many, I infer, were preparing to die.

I have no problem with the way scholars have documented the presence of medicinal herbs in the Isenheim Altarpiece, seeing them in the context of medical lore, but these related
analyses of how patients used the altar as an Andachtsbild seem too theoretical. They reflect more scholarly interest in describing the Andachtsbild process than its esoterically instrumentalist ritual function, which evidence indicates has a densely realized lineage of its own. From this perspective, their discussion of how it relates to ritual prayer amounts to little more than a skeletal list of facts. It is in this context that I will draw upon my 2001 analysis of Nicander's use of magnified scale in Nicandrea, as stated in my Introduction. This will facilitate my studying how Mary's Isenheim transformation can be related to Saint Anthony's depicted role as a ritual technician. Based upon this information, Nicandrea and Grunewald's altar reflect similar ritual techniques. However for the comparison to make sense, an abbreviated account of relevant aspects of my 2001 effort must be noted to act as a bridge.

In (2001), I critiqued art historian Kurt Weitzmann’s 1971, 1959, and 1947 analyses of Nicandrea. Noted herbalists Otto Pacht (1950), Agnes Arber (1938), F. W. T. Hunger (1951), and Peter Murray Jones (1984) link Nicandrea with their art historical past, and in every instance rely in part on Weitzmann’s assessment of them. In light of his widespread influence and because some assessments he made of ritual and metaphor in ancient and early medical manuscripts did not make sense to me, I analyzed his responses to Nicandrea as well as the manuscripts themselves. I found Weitzmann’s analyses unsatisfactory in two ways.

First, he approached this aspect of Nicandrea literally and "compartmentally." By this I mean he demonstrated little or no scholarly concern for available multidisciplinary connections. Most prominent were his scientific oversights. He did not acknowledge the relationship between the mythic, metaphorical lineage underlying ritual metamorphosis in Nicandrea and the ancient and medieval scientific manuscripts which he had used to study them. This aspect of his approach troubled me. In addition, I studied analyses by Hellenistic prose scholars of Hesiod and the third-century-BCE astronomer Aratus of Soli, as well as works by Alexandrian poets; ideas advanced by scholars of the history of medicine regarding ancient use of metaphor and ritual; findings of Egyptologists studying Egyptian medicine and medical manuals; and art historical studies of scientific images. Using these sources together with Weitzmann’s work, I compared magico-religious illustrations of figural elements in Nicandrea with those in surviving second-century-BCE to fourth-century-CE scroll texts from mathematics, medicine, alchemy, and astrology to ascertain the existence of human figures in Nicander’s no-longer-extant original manuscripts, as well as to determine what possible functions these figures might have served for
physicians and their patients. Through studying this composite alongside of Hellenistic prose scholarship being done on Hesiod, Aratus, and Alexandrian figures like Callimachus, I learned that prose scholars use the extant relationship between Aratus's and Nicander's manuals as one of several key models. As the works of these ancient scientists are believed to emulate the way Hesiod textually outlined his *Works and Days*, I posited that Hesiod may also have influenced their pictorial aspects.

Second, Weitzmann’s analyses of ancient and early medical manuscripts appears to reflect textual observations made about ritual and metaphor in ancient texts like Nicandrea which span a period of at least twenty four years. Aspects of this material related to my concerns is confusing. For example, he stated in 1971 that human figures in Nicandrea could not be shown to have existed in the original manuals (pp. 141,142). In some cases, (Fig.45) for example, he furthered that the image in which the figure in question was contained had also been inserted hundreds of years later (pp. 37–39). This material can be viewed together with previous commentary of his written in 1959 about metaphor, magic, and ritual:

> Writings on magic, astrology, alchemy, mantic, and related fields have been passed over because they lead into a substratum of literature [in magico-related texts] and their illustrations which, interesting as they may be for the historian of religion, science, and other disciplines, are either unartistic [sic] and crude, or consist of mere diagrams which in principle would not add much (p. 128)

Statements like these convinced me there was cause to disagree with Weitzmann about his assessment of the Nicandrian figures in question. My concerns were strengthened as I learned that his point of view regarding ancient medical manuscripts, certain human figures in them in particular, was poorly substantiated. First, his source for studying Nicander's text was a paraphrased version of his Codex 247 instead of the original. This source was discredited by Gow and Scholfield (1953) as being of “surprisingly little use to an editor of Nicander” (p. 10). Second, in Weitzmann (1959) and in his *Ancient book Illumination* (1947), Weitzmann made essential distinctions between imagery accompanying “simple prose poems” and “didactic poetry.” By his definition, didactic applications include ethical and religious associations and simple ones do not (pp. 166; 24). I became concerned as he applied these definitions inconsistently in his analysis of Nicander’s Codex 247, based upon Howard Clark Kee’s
Medical, Magical, and Miracle in New Testament Times (1986). Whereas Weitzmann defined Dioscorides’ text as an example of “simple” prose, Kee’s analysis of healing and magic in the first and second centuries classifies his work as being an example of a “bland,” but “deeply rooted in magic” didactic manual. Third is Weitzmann’s belief that while Nicander's poisonous snakes, lizards, scorpions, and herbs fit within “our concept of pure Classical Greek Scientific illustration,” human figures and elements reflecting use of enhanced scale cannot be shown to reflect Classical viewpoint (1971, pp. 35, 37).

With these discrepancies in mind I concluded that Weitzmann had analyzed Nicander’s 247 as he would a simple text rather than the complex “didactic” form he had classified it as being. As didactic applications include ethical and religious associations and simple ones do not, and because evidence indicates the Nicander figures in question are performing activities of a magico religious nature, Weitzmann inadvertently omitted elements of Nicander's magico-religious ritual processes, simplifying his methodological processes and forcing literal interpretations on prose passages originally conceived poetically and metaphorically. From my perspective, what he claimed were pictorial "inconsistencies" in scale--figural “intrusions”--might more accurately be viewed as interdependent healing tools.

My idea seems consistent with the views of medical historiographer Philip van der Eijk's (1997), in “Towards a Rhetoric of Ancient Scientific Discourse.” Eijk acknowledges "I" textually, as some form of first-person singular pronoun in ancient scientific manuscripts which may, in certain applications, have a ritual function (pp. 112-113). Based on his efforts, I extend my ideas about the pictorial use of "I" metamorphosing to include textual use of it. Weitzmann and Eijk appear to be considering twin aspects (textual and pictorial) of the same body of information.

In 1997, he set the perimeters of "I" study in textual material, acknowledging it in the passage below as a relatively unexplored topic:

[Ancient Greek] medical texts have long been ignored by classicists and left to historians of medicine and retired physicians, and the fate of mathematic and astronomical texts has not been much better. As a result, these writings have been studied almost exclusively with a view to their scientific or philosophical contents; their form was considered to be irrelevant to their interpretation and
unimportant from a literary or linguistic point of view, since they were thought to lack any significant degree of linguistic or stylistic organization. (p. 80)

From my point of view it is unfortunate that Eijk (1997) has separated use of the pronoun "I" in scientific manuscripts into two sets of applications, practical and ritual, and analyzed it selectively. He mentions formulaic applications of "I" in scientific manuscripts, based upon his idea that they signify what a writer has already said or is about to say, and argues that this application of "I" in itself deserves a study in its own right.” He also acknowledges “I” as a rhetorical strategy, focusing on its literal application in opening and closing formulae, or as a form of emphasis. He has acknowledged that "I" may have served some sort of ritual function in ancient scientific texts, but does not study that aspect of it (pp. 112–113).

G. O. Hutchinson (1968), who worked roughly during the same years as Weitzmann, predictably viewed “I” less sensitively than Eijk in his Hellenistic Poetry. In this earlier context, Hutchinson recognised "I" as a multi-faceted strategical device facilitating, for example, confidence in patients troubled about the healing powers of their physicians; as a rhetorical tool used by physicians against other physicians in an effort to control medical debates; and as a satirical position taken by poets with inflated egos (p. 113-120). Unlike Eijk, Hutchinson does not relate "I" to ritual in scientific manuscripts. Based on my idea that Weitzmann and Eijk have considered twin aspects (textual and pictorial) of the same body of information, Hutchinson's response to "I" seems accordingly more closely related to that of Weitzmann. Like him, he has wholly overlooked "I"s function in ritual, and when his efforts are viewed from that perspective, it is interesting to consider that Hutchinson also acknowledges "I" alongside of poets with "inflated egos" and as a rhetorical tool used to control the outcome of debates. Both responses seem to fearfully allude to misused power, and in my upcoming section on Errant Mary I will recognize scholars who appear to have similarly conflated oracular pride with human pride and come to the same conclusion.

My thesis (2001) interest in this aspect of "I" originated with study of Nicander’s prooimia, or introduction to his 247 manuscript, where I showed how his narrative references to a particular human figure tied together words and images as elements of ritual prayer. I used related examples from Egyptian, Greek, and Roman prose and imagery to support my proposal that oracular healers perceived themselves capable of ritually metamorphosing into something superhuman. Their ritual metamorphosis helped them to function, both cognitively and
experientially, within their ordained capacity as oracular healers. Their behavior had nothing to do with misused power such as was suggested by Hutchinson's use of the term "inflated ego." See (Fig. 49B), which depicts an Egyptian king alchemically metamorphosing from the state of a wolf into a higher state of transcendent kingliness, and (Figs. 4B, 35D & E, 64A), which depict Anthony in the midst of metamorphosis.

In this dissertation I intend to enhance my efforts to correlate human figures of Nicander, which I associated with ritual behavior, and what I argued were their textual counterparts found in the pronoun "I". I believe there are similarly defined references to "I" in the Isenheim Altarpiece which are being overlooked. Within Nicander’s iconography are mythic, medical signifiers originated by Hesiod that denote ritual metamorphosis. Although scholars studying Nicander commonly acknowledge that ancient medical manuscripts contain scientific principles intended for practical application by their readers, as well as mythological signifiers of scientific principles sometimes accompanied with magico-religious ritual, no scholar that I am aware of has attempted to link Nicander’s use of ritual prayer in his manuscripts with Hesiod’s works. This is unfortunate. From my perspective, Hesiodic lore is the root of every disciplinary opportunity worth considering.

Though many studies of Hesiod exist, I found Stephanie Nelson’s 1998 *God and the Land* especially helpful, particularly her discussion of Hesiod’s relationship with agriculture as revealed through poetic undertones. However, neither Nelson’s text nor such works as T. B. L. Webster’s *Greek Art and Literature* (1960), W. J. Verdenius’s *Commentary on Hesiod’s Works and Days* (1985), Richard Hamilton’s *Architecture of Hesiodic Poetry* (1989), and Robert Lamberton’s *Hesiod* (1988) reflects any genuine regard for Hesiod’s ritual activities even though all of them acknowledge his status as an oracular priest of Apollo, agrarian farmer, physician, and poet. These studies, which approach Hesiod formalistically, are insufficient for a full understanding of his works, but I can use the problem they represent as a tool for studying the Isenheim Altarpiece. Moreover, problems westerners have had with Hesiod seem to loosely parallel the underlying tension between altruistic and egocentric behavior that I previously alluded to in my study of Greenberg. Apparently, overriding assumptions about myth and ritual still shape the way that art historians and classicists approach the study of humankind’s relationship with healing. These assumptions are probably based less on reason than vaguely defined fears of misused power. Such responses will be shown to have been documented with
regards to Feminine power for at least three thousand years, and clarifying what defines this emotion—in this particular context—may result in yet another means of accessing the Isenheim Altarpiece. First, however, I need to establish what these scholars have overlooked.

**2.2 Overlooking the Feminine**

Scholars in medical history, folklore, Mariology, and the histories of Christian, Hebraic, and Greek religion generally agree that that as Christianity took its foothold, religious administrators of the early Church struggled to redefine certain Feminine elements of antique agrarian origin. I would add that the pre-Christian equivalents of these administrators had already determined these Feminine elements to be of questionable integrity hundreds of years earlier. They were too “pagan.”

The word *pagan* now means strange, uncivilized, heathen, polytheistic, irreligious, and delighting in sensual pleasures and material goods. However, *pagan* evolved from the Late Latin *paganus*, which originally meant “of the country.” This point cannot be separated from the idea that all ancient sciences (including alchemy), must have originated in agrarian—or pagan—tradition. Both science and art originally served a utilitarian purpose. Such anthropological studies of symbol and ritual as Victor Turner’s *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (1967) and *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (1969); David Guss’s *To Weave and Sing: Art, Symbol, and Narrative in the South American Rain Forest* (1989); and Roy Wagner’s *An Anthropology of the Subject: Holographic Worldview in New Guinea and Its Meaning and Significance for the World of Anthropology* (2001) support my screening the words *pagan* and *agrarian* through Wagner’s insight, in his assessment of Guss (1989), that “meanings have come to have things, rather than “things came to have meaning” (Preface). Through this apparently archetypal lens, scientific manuals about alchemy, medicine, astronomy, mathematics, Bestiaries, and Wild People take on new meaning which requires us to reconsider our general impression of western imagery, accordingly recreating a more accurate perspective of the western signifiers embedded in these scientific manuals. It would seem ideas in them parallel ones like these anthropologists are documenting.

As scholars of classics and art history overlook this perspective, so did administrative figures of the early Christian Church. They did not anticipate the degree to which scientific sensibility had originally factored into the Feminine, agrarian—essentially pagan—religious viewpoint that they sought to suppress. Early Christian officials destroyed Feminine artifacts and
pagan shrines, but at the same time, humanitarians and scientists treasured and held on to remnants of scientific manuscripts because they regarded them as useful tools. Northern Renaissance humanists, nearby where Grünewald lived and worked, recopied and printed the fraction of ancient scientific manuscripts still extant and compared the writers’ ideas to the established views of artists, philosophers, alchemists, astronomers, and physicians. In time, scholars would evaluate these manuscripts formally as “minor” (as opposed to "major") literary works, and from this perspective they are easy to overlook.

2.3 The Pronoun “I” as a Signifier of Ritual Empowerment in Religious Ritual

I propose that scholars examine ancient and early science from the perspective of Feminine agrarian myth, beginning with the use of the first-person pronoun “I” in magico-religious ritual. In the following passage from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Asclepius’s use of “I” highlights his transformation from the human form in which he usually resides into his antidotal form, a serpent:

Be not afraid; I shall come, and leave my statues,
But see this serpent, as it twines around
The rod I carry: mark it well, and learn it,
For I shall be this serpent, only larger,
Like a celestial presence. (Quoted in Kerenyi, 1959, p. 10)

Scholars typically view the “I’ in this passage as signifying Asclepius’s assumption of oracular power altruistically directed toward notions of medicinal and/or psychological healing. Kee (1959), a scholar of medicine and magic, does not discuss “I” directly but classifies the passages in which it occurs in three categories: 1) miracles, signs, and wonders, all of which he links with triumphs over evil; 2) absolute control over earthly elements, such as wind and waves; and 3) judgments that are about to fall (pp. 11–12). These categories seem similarly applicable to the following excerpt from the Song of Moses, which attributes to Moses an ineffably powerful identity through the use of the pronoun “I”: “I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand” (Deut. 32:39). Here Moses is simultaneously miracle worker, healer, and judge with control over life and death. I am interested in the implied association between this passage's reference to "I" and power of a very special nature. This is what will connect with the Feminine.
According to Tirzah Firestone’s *The Receiving* (2004), the Hebraic ancient *Feminine* (referred to in this context by the Greek name for this Hebrew concept) "Sophia," or Wisdom, whom some scholars associate with Mary Magdalene, brings me a step closer to understanding the use of “I” in early mythological accounts. Wisdom was God’s partner and consort, a mother and an agent of justice, the architect of creation, and an intermediary between God and human beings (pp. 130–133). The following passages from the second-century BCE Latin Book of Ecclesiasticus, less commonly known as the Book of the Wisdom of Ben Sira or Sirach, depict Wisdom singing of her powers in the first person:

When God established the foundations of the earth,
I was by God’s side, a master craftswoman,
Delighting God day after day,
Ever at play at God’s side,
At play everywhere in God’s domain,
Delighting to be with the children of humanity. . . .
I came out of the mouth of the Most High,
And covered the earth as a cloud.
I dwelt in high places,
And my throne is in a cloudy pillar. . . .
I alone compassed the circuit of heaven,
and walked in the bottom of the deep.
In the waves of the sea, and in all the earth,
And in every people and nation, I got a possession. (Quoted in Goldberg, 1929, vol. III, p. 307)

These passages emphasize Wisdom’s power and creativity, as well as her claim of ownership over humankind ("I got a possession"), through the pronoun “I.” However, the following passage, also from Ecclesiasticus, views her through the pronoun "I" as well as from a third-person perspective. The prophet compares his rapport with her to a tributary’s association with the river that feeds it. One is subservient to the other. At the same time, they are one and the same thing. These associations and more signify a variety of forms of *Feminine* power which will be identified in the chapters on Good and Errant Mary:

The first man knew her not perfectly:
No more shall the last find her out.
For her thoughts are more than the sea,
And her counsels profounder than the great deep,
I also came out as a brook from a river,
And as a conduit into a garden,
I said, “I will water my best garden
And will water abundantly my garden bed”:
And lo, my brook became a river,
And my river became a sea.
I will yet make doctrine to shine as the morning.
And will send forth her light afar off.
I will yet pour out doctrine as prophecy,
And leave it to all ages for ever.
Behold that I have not laboured for myself only,
But for all them that seek wisdom. (Quoted in Goldberg, 1929, vol. III, p. 309)

Another manifestation of “I” is present in Horus, son of the Egyptian *Feminine*, Isis. For example, in Pyramid Text Utterance 378, Horus says, “I am Horus, the young child with his finger to his mouth [Fig 41H]; [my] sandal . . . is what tramples the *nekhi* snake” (Excerpt from quotation in Nunn, 1996, pp. 108–110). Horus is typically depicted standing on such creatures as snakes, scorpions, and crocodiles. This signifies his victory over malign forces. In this spell, he proclaims victory over malign forces through his association with snakes (Figs. 41F, 41G). Weitzmann, following the model of classicist Max Wellman, is documented in my thesis (2001) to have established ways in which pictorial, iconographic elements in Egyptian healing imagery can be linked with similar ones in Greek imagery dating to Hellenistic times or earlier. Following their model, the following Egyptian spells, translated by John Nunn in his *Ancient Egyptian Medicine* (1996) and used by ancient Egyptians as a protection against the bites of venomous animals (pp. 110–111), are accordingly comparable to their Greek equivalents. Ralph Jackson’s 1988 *Doctors and Diseases in the Roman Empire* and Emma and Ludwig Edelstein’s 1945 *Asclepius: A Collection of the Testimonies* (1945) present examples of prayers to Asclepius that seem to use “I” in a similar fashion. Though none of these scholars, Jackson, the Edelsteins,
Wellman, or Weitzmann extended their associations to include Hebraic spells, neither have they demonstrated sympathy toward the issue of an overlooked "I."

Nunn’s translation of the spell from Ebers 131, “to be said four times and spat out over the site of the disease” (p. 105), shows “I” as a source of empowerment against the pathological entity *wekhedu*:

> I trample Busiris; I throw down Mendes; I ascend to the sky to see what is done therein. Nothing will be done in Abydos until the driving out of the [evil] influence of a god, a goddess, male *wekhedu*, female *wekhedut*, and so on, and the influence and all evil things that are in this my body, in this my flesh and in these my limbs. I will not say: I will not repeat: Perish as you came into being! (p. 105, brackets in Nunn’s translation)

In this spell, the speaker has metamorphosed into a being capable of absorbing all evil. Though Nunn has not identified who spits this spell out, Busiris and Mendes are cities. The speaker is most likely any figure of authority seeking to protect their people.

Metternich stela (end of the 30th dynasty, ca. 330 BCE) is an incantation invoking Isis’s son, Horus, to protect against snake venom: “Flow out, poison. Come forth [unto Horus, who is acting as “I”]. Go forth on to the ground. Horus will exorcise you. He will punish you. He will spit you out” (Quoted in Nunn, p. 105). The last sentence of this passage, the assertion that Horus will “spit [the poison] out,” or, I infer, exorcize it, seems connected to the sentence “I am Horus, the young child with his finger to his mouth” in the spell against snakes quoted earlier. In this Egyptian context it is clear that Horus is extracting the poison from someone else to heal them. This reference a finger almost to the mouth may blend the idea of induced vomiting to eliminate poison with superhuman healing capacity to extract poison for healing purposes.

Egyptian, Greek, and Christian images reflect use of this signifier. See, for example, the first illustration in Cooper's (1978) front pages, the figure in the lower right of the alchemical 17th century image entitled *Microcosmos Hypochondriacus*. See also his copy of the Adam figure on the lower right of Giovanni da Modena's depiction of Christ being crucified on the tree of knowledge, depicted alongside of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, page 179.

The last spell that I will consider, written onto the recto of the Chester Beatty papyrus VII during the reign of Ramses II (ca. 1300 BCE), is voiced by Serqet, one of three protector goddess companions of Isis, the Egyptian *Feminine*. According to Manfred Lurker (1995), Serqet
symbolizes the scorpion and personifies the sun’s scorching heat (quoted in Nunn, p. 106), attributes that I will later associate with the term *errant*. In this spell, either Serqet has metamorphosed into a medicine, or she is in the process of metamorphosing into one, in a manner strikingly similar to Nicander’s image of a human figure squatting in front of an over-scaled lizard (Fig. 45): “You, poisons, come forth to me. [I will absorb you and heal the patient.] I am Serqet” (p. 101). Serqet personifies the scorpion. As venom can become an antidote, she functions as a medicine.

Compare these spells to a Greek example from Nicander’s *Theriaca* (lines 80–84). This one is sang by Nicander, to align himself with Greek deity of Physicians, Asclepsius. Like the other *Feminine* figures identified thus far, Nicander perceived himself in alignment with the power of his deity. This passage exemplifies his oracular, all-knowing perspective—defined not by an enhanced ego—but an exaggerated impulse to heal and protect:

\[
\text{Yes, and I know too the devices of the WOODLOUSE, the deadly WASP, and of the tiny TREE-WASP, and of the two-headed CENTIPEDE, which from both ends can bestow death upon a man, and as the creature moves there speed beneath it as it were the winged oars of a ship; also of the blind and fearsome SHREWMOUSE, which brings destruction upon men and meets its death in the wheel-tracks of carts. . . . Furthermore I have knowledge of all the creatures that the sea whirls amid its briny surges, and the horror of the MURRY [define term], since many a time has it sprung up from the fish-box and striking them with panic has hurled toiling fishermen from their boat to seek refuge in the sea . . . if it be true that this couples with deadly-biting Vipers on the land, forsaking its salt pasturage. Again from the death-dealing STING-RAY and the ravening SEA-SNAKE I can protect you.} (Gow and Scholfield, 1953, (805-848).
\]

All of these examples, Hebraic, Egyptian, and Greek, refer to a deity or *Feminine* human to whom the gift of healing had been imparted. The next example describes Thoth, the Egyptian god of the moon. According to Lurker (1995), Thoth was recognized as the god of time and wisdom. He was a healer, the protector of Osiris, and a helper of the dead. Egyptians associated him, like Isis and her son Horus, with healing and in this capacity he was credited with having magical powers. What is significant about his knowledge to this dissertation is that it, like that of other deities and *Feminine* figures demonstrating these attributes, has come to be viewed as ill
fated and evil (p. 121). A mythic description of Thoth from Timothy Harley’s *Moon Lore* (1885) shows Thoth as the wellspring of Egyptian oracular power while being, at the same time, the source of misfortune and knowledge because he had ostensibly stole his knowledge from the gods:

According to legend, Thoth once wrote a wonderful book, full of wisdom and science, containing in it everything relating to the fowls of the air, the fishes of the sea, and the four-footed beasts of the mountains. The man who knew a single page of the work could charm [and accordingly control, or heal] the heaven, the earth, the great abyss, the mountains and the seas. This marvelous composition he enclosed in a box of gold, which he placed within a box of silver; the box of silver within a box of ivory and ebony, and that again within a box of bronze; the box of bronze within a box of brass; and the box of brass within a box of iron; and the book thus guarded, he threw into the Nile at Coptos. The fact became known, and the book was searched for and found. It gave its possessor vast knowledge and magical power, but [because this form of knowledge was perceived as evil] it always brought on him misfortune—the moral of the story seems to be the common one—that unlawful knowledge is punished by all kinds of calamities (Harley, 1885, pp. 109–110).

This evil and ill-fated quality is the most important common denominator I need to establish. It binds the composite of these characters together with upcoming ones defined in chapters that follow about, for example, Medieval Wild People (Figs. 53H, 19, 20A), saints with suprarational abilities to see (Figs. 37 A&B), and poets who were similarly gifted (Fig. 37C). By comparing the textual examples of "I" identified above to Wild People, for example, we are confronted with scholarly misunderstandings regarding their metamorphosing abilities, alongside of other of their attributes, which I contend have been cumulatively held against them for hundreds of years to substantiate their association with the Christian Devil. This curious race is not common knowledge, so an explanation is required for the correlation between them and these text passages to make sense.

Bernheimer (1952) tells us that image and text sources describing their physical characteristics indicate they were large bodied, covered with hair, except on their faces, feet, hands, and, sometimes, their knees and elbows. Wild Women were sometimes uglier and more
misshapen than were their male counterparts. Their breasts were not hairy, but some were so long that they could be thrown over the shoulders or dragged across the floor. Their mouths were big, sometimes extending from ear to ear, and their hair when left unattended is written to have crawled with snakes and vermin or had lichen and moss growing in it. Less frequently, visual imagery reflects them as being magnificently powerful winged beings whose bodies are feathered as well as hairy.

In Chapter 6, I will compare both categories of Wild People to Asclepius and Grunewald’s feathered creature in his metamorphosis panel. Like Asclepius, these figures worked roots and herbs, knew venoms, and had allegiances primarily with the agrarian poor and from my perspective, their metamorphosing abilities should be connected to the Hesiodic tradition of Asclepius--not associated with the Christian Devil--because in these images they are practicing how to altruistically channel their suprarational healing abilities toward the same healing end as Asclepius and all of these other entities.

There is more involved in their story, and those of the others involved, than can be told in this chapter.

Eijk (1997) has pointed out that antique physicians employed use of the pronoun "I" with several objectives in mind, but I am not interested in the other objectives he has identified. Attempting to account for ritual use of "I" the way he has these others will not help me. Evidence indicates more might be accomplished by studying them from the perspective of their signifying attributes because even more than these applications existed. There were numerous forms of oracles, priestesses of Apollo, vestal virgins, rhyzotomist healers like Nicander, alchemists, Achillian figures endowed with the ability to assume the watery identity aligned with transcendant rage, carpenters, northern prophets, southern prophets, the list goes on. Unfortunately, the composite of these groups has been studied compartmentally and their symbolic language systems have by and large been literalized. Worse, each of the west's cultural communities has throughout history has had its own application of the *Feminine*, and every one of them has defined and used their version of it a little differently. Enough commonalities exist amongst the signifiers of these groups to link them under one common umbrella, however, and all have in common altruistic, medicinal use of "I" metamorphosis.

Why hasn't their existence been identified as a viable force? Perhaps scholars have failed to understand how and why they resisted opportunities to revere themselves and their services
because they acted altruistically and comprehended material synthetically, and modern academia is schooled to approach material egocentrically and compartmentally. The gap between their attitude toward knowledge and service, and modern academia's may accordingly be too much for modern scholars to reckon with. There is also the relationship westerners have with their deity to consider. Christianity does not value Feminine communication, and even before western civilization became primarily Christian, numerous forms of fear based jealousy existed across the ancient world. There have always been egocentrically motivated transgressions against Feminine service, arguments over who talked to God best. Counterfeit agents serving themselves more than the Gods posed as representatives of the ancient Feminine to gain the power and control associated with their oracular title long before the time of Christ, and Church and State administrators were as afraid of them as Roman administrators are documented to have been of Christ. All of these points and more have been woven into this dissertation, but alone, they cannot be shown to be the reason westerners have failed to recognize Feminine viewpoint in images like Grunewald's shrine. They seem to signify a larger, more ineffably and fundamentally pervasive misunderstanding.

Raymond Scupin, in his 1998 text entitled Cultural Anthropology: A Global Perspective, quotes Ruth Benedict’s 1934 classic text entitled Patterns of Culture in his efforts to account for human "abnormalities. Scupin's assessment of Benedict reflects his effort to aid in further revising psychiatric and psychological classifications of mental illness. I am interested in Benedict because through her, Scupin inadvertently acknowledged an aspect of the west's problematic relationship with the Feminine. In the following passage, Benedict questions the criteria that western peoples have used to define human abnormality:

It does not matter what kind of “abnormality” we choose for illustration, those which indicate extreme instability, or those which are more in the nature of character traits like sadism or delusions of grandeur or of persecution, there are well-described cultures in which these abnormals function with ease and with honour and apparently without danger of difficulty to the society. (Benedict Quoted in Scupin, 1998, pp.73-74; [1959, p. 263].

Individuals able to hear loud voices and go into trance states, for the most relevant example that Scupin has provided from Benedict's text, are compared with western patients receiving treatment because they are “abnormal. However, the equivalent of these figures are in other
cultural contexts identified in terms like "medicine doctors" and shown great respect (pp. 73–74). Though not interested in the history of Feminine figures like those depicted in Nicandrea and the Isenheim, Scupin's synopsis of her position suggests she disagrees with ways Feminine agents have been classified as being abnormal in the western world. She argues that western decisions to reject such people reflects upon westerners more than the individuals in question (pp. 73-74). I would add that cultural expectations of them, ways they have been schooled to use their innate abilities, further enable westerners to promote this troubling distinction.

Ritual theoretician S. G. F. Brandon's "Myth and Ritual Position Critically Considered" (1958), approaches the same idea from the opposite direction. According to him: “The [Western] prophet had been exalted to the detriment of the priest, the inspirational element in religion at the expense of the cultic” (p. 264). Hoeller (1989), who earlier in this dissertation was quoted to have written "Something is wrong. Somewhere, somehow, the fabric of being at the existential level of human functioning has lost its integrity" (p. 68), questions this issue, too. His attention has been directed toward the long term effect prophets and priests are having on the community, but the same question is still implied: “It is undeniable that the mainstream religious traditions differ substantially from the alternative [Feminine] tradition, inasmuch as the former tend to enshrine the results of revelatory experience in belief and commandment, and the latter strenuously resists the metamorphosis of experience into theology and moral preachment” (p. 99).

The arguments of Brandon and Hoeller question what is more important, revelatory experience or theological assessment of it. Put in the language of my dissertation, they question whether westerners should use Feminine agents as a living force, or eliminate them and rely on priestly assessments of past revelation. The origin of their debate will be shown to be at least two thousand, three hundred some odd years old. Based upon Benedict's assessment of abnormalacy, however, it seems philosophical arguments like theirs represent formal abstractions of a question that was in all truth decided a long time ago, when the Feminine was for all intensive purposes silenced.

2.4 Rationale for a New Approach to Art History

The art historians who argue that reconstruction of the ancient Feminine may revitalize Western art, art education, and art history (Group 3) appear to have joined in league with a Western voice that can be traced back to as early as 700 BCE. However, they have inadvertently
stuffed these commendable intentions into a scholarly box that compartmentally reduces the ancient *Feminine* to a mere theory, ignoring the oracular and scientific voices which I am arguing were originally associated with her.

Consider, for example, Isenheim scholar Hayum's (1977) account of the history behind bans made on imagery. According to him, pre-Christian peoples resisted worship of “images” reflecting strange gods and goddesses for hundreds of years until 1500 BCE, when Moses presented the Ten Commandments to the Hebrew people (pp. 56–57). As Hayum did not look beyond the modern definition of *image*, he consequently narrowed his understanding of this term and missed the point behind this resistance. Consider Eliahu Auerbach’s (1974) discussion of the commandment: “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them,” Exod. 20:4–5 (quoted, p. 87). When this use of the term *image* is viewed contextually, it supports the commandment, “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain” (Exod. 20:7). In Auerbach’s view, many readers fail to understand that this commandment refers to magical processes which were probably associated with ritual healing. Auerbach’s translation of this second commandment demonstrates how far removed the original wording is from the usual translation stating that no one should take the lord’s name in vain: “God’s name ought not ever be used for magical ends in the practice of witchcraft or to force the will of man on God” (p. 90).

Some eight hundred years later in seventh-century-BCE Greece, Hayum (1977) continues, Westerners began worrying about their having lost their rapport with imagery, in the sense of graven images of the gods. Homer, says Hayum, framed concerns people had about having abandoned their ability to communicate with their imagery. Hayum quotes Robert Fitzgerald’s 1974 translation of Iliad 3.11: “Once we could trust in these [images]. But wrangling now and high words [philosophy] dissipate them, and we cannot turn up a remedy, though we talk [theorize] for days” (p. 46, interpolations my own).

Hayum concludes with the sad reminder that institutions underlying pre Christian Church and State continued to take their toll on Western uses of imagery for another thirteen hundred years until 600 CE, when Pope Gregory I tried to defend religious icons. Gregory’s conception was based on his belief that Western man needed art because it afforded him a helpful tool for
educating the illiterate and mentally deficient (p. 60). Together, Hayum (1977) and Pope Gregory reflect changes in how human beings have come to define and use imagery.

This process is more complicated than most scholars have recognized for two related reasons. One is Peter Toohey’s claim in his 1994 article “Epic and Rhetoric” that the seventh-century-BCE period of Homer and Hesiod (when scholars commonly agree that literacy was born) triggered an involuntary gulf between words and deeds. Toohey’s position is based upon J. C. Carothers’s “Culture, Psychiatry, and the Written Word” (1959) and Walter J. Ong’s Interfaces of the Word: Studies in the Evolution of Consciousness and Culture (1977). This gap, continues Toohey, resulted in an ever-broadening “interiorization” of deep feeling. Whereas Homer’s and Hesiod’s ability to compose in direct, oral form allowed them to experience the feelings they described, later poets (I would add image makers and their viewers) detached themselves from "orality," creative processes involved in speaking verse, and experienced a lesser range of feelings (pp. 169–170).

Studies like Toohey’s take the term imagery a step further than Hayum (1977) did by considering it on the one hand; alongside responses Western administrators of Church and State had to complex visualization processes such as those attributed by ancient writers to Feminine figures with oracular, divinatory ability; and on the other, in relation to pagan deities and the shrines which were constructed for them. Scholars exploring the context of the word imagery in Homerian passages like the one from the Iliad quoted earlier can only benefit by including overlooked references to Feminine signifiers. These deities and shrines constituted the bulk of images that seventh-century-BCE peoples communicated with, and, according to Auerbach (1974), most ancient peoples believed that to abolish ritual—which involved images representing deities and their shrines—was to destroy the deity (p. 84). This is a form of visualization which was, Margueron states, manifest at least as early as 3200 BCE in Sumer where there existed a belief called the “doctrine of the name.” Through it, a priest or prophet could confer a new “reality” onto an object by naming it or assigning it a symbolic identity. Knowing the name of the thing meant giving it form, but more important, naming it was the key to its empowerment (pp. 11, 173). Ben-Gurion (1974), Eliahu Auerbach (1974), and Abram Sachar (1960) similarly indicate that midway through the 11th century BCE, the Philistines entered Canaan and quickly absorbed its speech, customs, culture, and religion. The Hebraic peoples responded by massacring the Philistine priests and destroying their idols to eliminate the source they believed
to have been responsible for their empowerment (pp. 48–51; p. 84; p. 53). This idea seems similarly manifest in I Samuel 5:2–4, where ancient use of visualization is even more evident: “When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the house of Dagon and set it by Dagon. . . . And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the Lord; and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off upon the threshold.” These Hebrews probably cut off the idol’s head and hands because these two elements of human physiology represented the most prominent means of psychological and physiological exchange. Humans make themselves accessible to other humans mentally, thought being signified by the head, and physiologically, through touch, as symbolized by an extended hand.

Sachar's (1960) document of the years between 700 and 600 BCE indicates that Median, Chaldean, and Scythian tribes emerged to threaten Semitic dominance. First the Assyrian empire crashed under the Chaldeans, then Egypt fell, and the new Chaldean state began its climb toward world supremacy. One documented effort of the new Chaldean leader, Nebuchadnezzar, reflects another aspect of this ancient application of image visualization. Nebuchadnezzar took over Judah in 597 BCE, and then, Sachar states, psychologically reinforced his conquest through intimidation. He carried away Hebrew warriors, artisans, and craftsmen; razed the people’s temple; and killed their princes, priests, and elders (pp. 58-60). According to Herodotus, some from these groups drank the blood of their enemies from human skull cups made from their victims, and wore cloaks made from their victims’ scalps (p. 81). From my perspective, this is every bit as much an image as any graven image.

Such forms of intimidation must have created a lasting picture in the mind's eye. This was associatively visualized alongside of others like it into a psychic composite, which next became internalized, and then autobiographically personalized. Viewers experiencing destruction of their icons and shrines were probably confronted with recollected memories which they visualized in pieces like this, while literally witnessing yet another violation. This image—not the graven image in itself—constitutes the power underlying the power of images that Jewish authorities sought to ban.

Bans on images continued into Christian times. In his French History of the Council of Trent (1855), L. F. Bungener interprets Jesus’ advice to his followers in John 4:23 to mean that mature and true followers of Christ do not need imagery to pray to God: “[T]he hour cometh and
now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the father in spirit and in truth [sans the image]:
for the true followers seeketh such to worship him” (p. [499], brackets Bungener’s). Bungener
has gathered numerous examples like this one, all of them reflecting various forms of opposition
to worship of imagery, including Irenaeus’s “Against Heresies,” Justin’s “Dialogue with
Trypho,” and Lactantius’s “Institutions.” Here is what Martin Luther, living during the same
years as Grunewald, had to say in his “Table Talk” about saint worship and the use of images
and relics:

In Popish times, people made pilgrimages to the Saints; they would go to Rome,
to Jerusalem for the expiation of their sins. And now we still make pilgrimages,
but it is into the regions of faith. We go not to Jerusalem, but straight to God. This
is the true visiting of the promised land. What are the saints [and their signifying
images and relics] in comparison with Christ? (Quoted in Bungener, 1855, p. 499)

Unfortunately, Mary, Mother of Jesus, alongside craftsmen, carpenters, prophets, seers,
pontifices, and medieval wild people, were all of them in the middle of this argument. The
bastardization of this group becomes more concrete in light of tensions between ancient Jews and
early Christians regarding how to view prophets, prophecy, the Word, and the Vulgate, a fifth-
century Latin translation of the biblical text, including the New Testament and the Apocrypha.
Before I examine these elements, however, I need to consider the topic of prophets and
prophecy. Auerbach (1974) tells us that scholars of ancient Hebraic history saw prophets and
prophecy as having played a key role in the historical development of Israel. They constituted a
great “gift” that has been lost to Christians. Christian scholars, he continues, claim that Christ
was the last “true” prophet. His “Word”-- not the word of prophets who lived before him--is the
gift which must be preserved (p. 70).

It does not matter how this argument is framed, whether it be between scholars of
Hebrew and Christian religion, Hebrews and early Christians who were first Jewish and then
Greek, or Catholic and Protestant Christians. There seems to have been a contest between
Christ’s “Word” and Feminine viewpoint and Mary got stuck in the middle. My concern is not to
establish the truth of either view. However, qualities attributed to Mary, Mother of Jesus, can be
shown to have originated in lore associated with prophets and other Feminine figures. The
“Word” seems to have taken precedence over prophets and Mary, in spite of the fact that biblical
scholars have been recognizing certain aspects of it to be problematic for thousands of years. If
its contents are not what Westerners think they are, then belief in this hypothetical version of truth might constitute another body of misunderstandings. Of course, analysis of this material is beyond the scope of my dissertation, but documenting its existence might account for some of the problems scholars are having with the Isenheim Altarpiece.

To sum this chapter up, I can think of no more important goal than the one already defined by feminist aestheticians like Lisa Tickner (1988) and Luce Irigaray (1985) who seek to reconstruct contemporary definition and use of Western symbolic systems. Tickner shares Collins’s (1987) goal to establish practical applications of art history in the field of art education, extend it, arguing that the boundaries, concepts, and language of art historical inquiry and use must be refashioned because they are destroying art’s potential, and includes old-school instrumentalists like Edmund Burke Feldman (1970) in the process (1988, p. 99).

Whereas some feminist art historians and aestheticians currently consider revisions in art and art history as ends in themselves, Luce Irigaray’s 1985 “The Power of Discourse and the Subordination of the Feminine” seem to screen the changes in question more instrumentally, and, from my perspective, more appropriately. To Irigary and other feminists from Group 3, art is a tool. Westerners can relearn to use it to refashion their humanity, what Collins (1987) might have identified as one of their ongoing “problems.” Although I would include Schapiro’s historical investment in “artists” with the expressed concerns of this group for art products and processes, the essential relevance of the dichotomy between their voice and that of feminists looking only to refurbish art and art history seems crucial for the future not only of art but also of Western civilization. These scholars believe, and I agree with them, that reconnecting art history and art production with the ancient Western Feminine and its mythic universals could facilitate art’s realignment with what Cixous (1998) calls the deep structural meaning of literature, religion, and philosophy (pp. 579-80). This process could in turn result in a more efficient means of monitoring the conflicting drives and desires that will be shown to have shaped Hesiod's Erides seven hundred years before the time of Christ, apparently the same ones which are now determining the form and function of academic discourse. Unfortunately, there is little that has not been said and done by any scholarly group, and the problem remains unresolved. The concerns of aestheticians and art historians like Irigary (1985) and Dissanayake sit close to Hoeller’s (1989) worries that Westerners have lost sight of the guidelines underlining their integrity, and his poetic approach seems to have worked no more successfully than theirs.
For that reason, I am proposing that scholars put aside formalistic applications of art and art history to address their shared concerns more concretely. In this dissertation I will accordingly show how Grunewald may have visualized the *Feminine* elements of the Isenheim Altarpiece from the perspective of agrarian science. Through comparison with Hesiod’s “Erídes,” I will further show how the “deep structural meaning,” to borrow Levi-Strauss’s term, underlying these *Feminine* elements has come to be all but lost, and I will argue that the cause for these multiple oversights—the conflicting drives and desires behind them—points to a series of academic misunderstandings that reflect an essential disregard for myth, metaphor, and *Feminine* figures able to wield the various forms these devices have taken on.
CHAPTER THREE
GRUNEWALD’S ALTARPIECE: BACKGROUND, FUNCTION, AND PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Originally housed in Isenheim, Germany, Grunewald’s (ca. 1508) Isenheim Altarpiece, is one of the most imposing altars in Northern Europe, recognized by scholars as one of the major German monuments of the Middle Ages. The altar is like a book which can be opened and closed. When its panels are closed, the effect is frequently described as being surrealistically eerie, a twilight world from which luminous figures emerge. In this context, the gigantic Christ nailed to a cross set on a riverbank is most predominant (Fig. 6). His body is swollen and blotched with plague sores that drain blood and ooze pus. On left stands John the Baptist, anachronistically present at the Crucifixion. In the night sky behind him, written in red Roman majuscules, are the words, “Illum oportet crescere me autem minui,” or “He must increase, but I must decrease” (Fig. 7B). In Currents in Theology and Mission (2004), Roy Harrisville tells us that scholarly interpretation of these words is controversial (pp. 1–2), and Joris-Karl Huysmans exemplifies this point in his essay, “The Grünewalds in the Colmar Museum” (1958). Huysmans was the first to interpret them to mean, “He who decreased to make way for the Messiah, who in turn died to ensure the predominance of the Word in the world, is alive here, while He who was alive when he was defunct, is dead” (pp. 11–12). I would not argue with Huysman's assessment, that these words reflect the popular view that John died to make way for Jesus, who in turn died to ensure the livelihood of God's Word. However evidence indicates more lies behind these words than has been suggested. John's death signifies the death of the Feminine, sacrificed by necessity to make way for Jesus and Christian viewpoint, and Jesus' death signifies that the battle between Feminine and Christian world views has been decided.

I do not intend for this chapter to function formalistically as one more description of Grunewald’s monumental Christ. Nor will it be a conventional assessment of Christ’s suffering and the rapport of others, like John the Baptist, with his sacrifice. Instead, it will be an iconographical and contextual study of five figures associated with these two men, Christ and John the Baptist, by way of Christ’s mother, Mary. In addition to Mary, I will analyze five figures:

1. Mary Magdalene
2. An enigmatic feathered creature feverishly playing a musical instrument in the Angel Concert panel
3. A flame-crowned figure emerging from the peacock creature’s space to enter into the world of Mary and the Infant Christ
4. A very large snarling beast with a beak instead of a muzzle, three horns, and large, clearly defined female breasts.
5. Saint Anthony

As my first MFA emphasis was in painting, and since countless narratives have been written by art historians and scholars of religion accounting for the dynamic nature of these images, my description is more that of an artist assessing how and why Grunewald's image works. I will interweave my analysis of his painterly use of composition, tone, value, and color in with an assessment of the figural relationships in each image into my physical description. Together this information will provide clues for meaning and contextual discussion.

3.1 Background on Grunewald

Scholars know much more about the Isenheim Altarpiece than about the man who painted it and there appears to be little consistency in scholarly efforts to align what is known. Snyder (1985) and Harrisville (2004) state that the name Mattias Grunewald (also identified as Mathis Gothart Nithart, Matthias Gruenewald) was discovered in the 1920's to have been a fabrication created by the artist's first biographer Joachim von Sandrart (1606—1688). According to them, the artist’s real name was Mattias Gothardt. This name changed after his marriage to his wife's surname, Niethart (pp. 353; 1). Guido Schoenberger's 1948 study indicates that though Sandrart claimed Grunewald's name was changed after his marriage, scholars have more recently determined that Grunewald never married (p. 10).

Snyder (1985), Harrisville (2004), and Schoeberger (1948) state he was probably born at Wurzburg, Germany, sometime between 1465 and 1475. He first acted as court painter for the Archbishop of Mainz in 1490 in Aschaffenburg, up the stream from Frankfurt. In 1501 he moved to Seligenstadt, where he continued to work for the Archbishop of Mainz until that man retired and was replaced by his successor, Albrecht of Brandenburg (pp. 354; 1, 10). Snyder and Harrisvill further indicate that Grunewald was referred to during the years he functioned as court painter, as a “maker of fountains,” "architect," and "painter and mason." He had a reputation as an expert in the field of engineering. In this capacity he designed and oversaw construction of the
huge chimney-piece in the castle of Aschaffenburg, designed fountains for the cities of Magdeburg and Halle, and was called upon to assist another master work though problems he was having in constructing the fountain at Aschaffenburg (pp. 354, 11).

Although Grunewald was a devout Catholic, Snyder (1985) and Harrisville (2004) indicate he associated with fellow artist Albrecht Durer (1471–1528) and was acquainted with other supporters of the Reformation, most notably the reformer Philipp Melanchthon (1471–1560), a friend and colleague of Martin Luther. He was also involved in the Peasants’ Revolt of 1525. Because of this, he either left Albrecht of Brandenburg’s service or was dismissed from his post. Either way, he is written to have believed that his life was in danger and fled to Halle where he died of the plague in August 1528 (pp. 354; p. 1).

He left behind him a rosary scented with musk, a copy of the September or December, 1522 “Testament” edition of Martin Luther, and a copy of the reformer’s Wittenberg Invocavit sermons delivered March 9 through 16, 1522. As early as 1597, when the Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II (1552–1612) tried to buy the Isenheim Altarpiece, Grunewald’s name had already been forgotten. For many years, Harrisville (2004) tells us, Grunewald’s Altarpiece was attributed to Durer (p. 1).

### 3.2 Function of the Isenheim Altarpiece

The primary goal of the Isenheim monastery was, according to Harrisville (2004), to care for sick people afflicted by the “burning sickness,” often called “Saint Anthony’s Fire” (erysipelas) after the abbey’s patron saint. When this disease dissipated, the Hospital Brothers of Saint Anthony, or Antonines, treated other afflictions, including venereal diseases, which had devastated Europe since 1490. Years later, the monastery functioned as a lazar (leper) house for a time (p. 1). After the French revolutionary government closed the convent in 1793, Harrisville continues, the commissioners of the French Republic dismantled the altar and transferred it to Colmar. After that, the retable remained in a dismantled state, except for a brief exhibition at the Munich Pinakotech following World War I, until it was moved to the museum in Colmar, Alsace (p. 1) where it is now on display.

Scholars who study the altarpiece generally disagree on how the monks displayed it during weekdays and on holidays and on the extent to which the sick inmates of the hospital saw it, but it is generally agreed that the hermit monks who lived there must have seen it daily during the course of their devotions. Mellinkoff’s (1988) findings indicate conclusively through
Antonite statutes that as of 1478, all sick were ordered to be brought before the altar (p. 3). She seems correct in assuming that the sick saw it frequently.

Beyond how frequently it was seen, Mellinkoff and Snyder (1985) indicate it was Abbot Guido Guersi who originally commissioned the altar to function as the high altar in the Anchorite Plague Hospital, which was associated with the Church of Saint Anthony in Isenheim.

Isenheim physicians sought to re implement the ancient healing tradition of Saint Anthony in the tradition of Saint Paul the Hermit before him. Anthony had founded an Anchorite community of hermits living in the Egyptian deserts., and like him, men who Snyder claims were “mystics” and “hospitalers of a very special nature” (p. 353) founded the first Anchorite order at Isenheim and treated skin diseases, including gangrenous disorders like plague and ergotism (pp. 1; 348, 353). See R. Happle (1994), who links Grunewald’s Isenheim figures with illustrations of the disorder halo naevus, which is a dimension of ergotism (pp. 882–883).

Gardner (1980), Heck (1982), and Mellinkoff (1988) indicate that ergotism was a fatal skin disease, caused by eating rye and other grains or grasses that had become infected with ergot fungus. Its symptoms were convulsion and gangrene. Noting that gangrene often required amputation, these scholars argue that the monks could have slid the two movable halves of the altarpiece’s predella apart and used them as a visualization tool. This would have made the dead Christ’s legs appear to have been amputated, presumably easing the psychological pain of amputees who were given opportunity to associate their painful experience that that of Christ. Similarly, the cross in the two main panels is off center, and, when needed, the monks could have manipulated the left panel to “sever” one arm from the crucified figure (pp. 606–607; 11; 2, 3). Information like this reflects upon the physical properties underlying how the shrine was used. Gardner (1980), Heck (1982), and Mellinkoff (1988) indicate further, however, that patients drew upon more complex processes of visualization than these. They stared at the Isenheim image of the crucified Christ (Fig. 2A) to help them accept their own wounded flesh. (pp. 606–607; 11; 2–3).

Snyder (1985) and M. Cole (2003) account for this phenomena by explaining that patients were guided through their experience of pain by using Christ's "sorrows" as a visual meditative guide (pp. 349–350; Art Bulletin: 03/03). The following example from Snyder (1985) describes the images patients were taught to focus on to align their pain with his:
The crown of thorns was impressed on [Christ’s] head; it was pushed down firmly covering half of his forehead, and the blood, gushing forth from the prickling of thorns, ran down in many rills over his face, hair, and beard so that it seemed like a river of blood—the dead body sagged. . . . After the moisture in the body was consumed the stomach muscles contracted and the flesh receded to his back. (pp. 349–350)

Accounts like these seem helpful, but insufficient. The dynamic between physicians, their patients, and text passages like this needs to be studied within the context of what I alluded to in my 2001 thesis as "I" metamorphosis. I summarized my 2001 findings in Chapter 1 of this dissertation, arguing on the one hand that the documented history of medicine should be considered in analysis of the Isenheim, and on the other, that medical history should include the tradition of "I" ritual healing prayer. I did this to relate applications of magnified scale in Nicandrea to ways scale seems to facilitate "I" metamorphosis in the Isenheim, suggesting that Mary's role in this image is to model "I" metamorphosing transformation for Saint Anthony, who in turn is learning to be a ritual technician.

A thorough study of how "I" metamorphosing Isenheim activities were processed is beyond the perimeters of this dissertation. However, to more efficiently use this frequently referenced quotation I will in the next section suggest that Andachtsbild activity be related to two bodies of information. One is alchemical metamorphosis, related to Feminine cult worship of Mary, Mother of Jesus. In ancient and medieval times, symbols aligning her healing abilities with metamorphosis were common knowledge. This aspect of her will be related to Jack Lindsay's (1970) definition of alchemical synthemata, the force achieved by fusing two venoms intended to be used medicinally, or the temperament of certain humans (pp. 253: n.4; 421: n. 5). The other is "mensa," defined by Robert Herrlinger in his 1967 History of Medical Illustration (Fig. 46E, 47A). "Mensa" are schematized anatomical renderings of human beings depicted symmetrically in a "squatting" position, or similarly positioned lying on a table. They are used instructionally in the practice of medicine. (pp. 9-10). I used "mensa" in my 2001 thesis to argue that Nicander had deliberately depicted certain herbs and venomous creatures the same size as human figures, and that the humans in question were original. This was in response to Weitzmann's (1947) argument that they were later intrusions into a format which had originally reflected no oversized elements (pp. 167). My argument was based upon the fact that Nicander's
presentation of the herbal elements in question very closely resembles the way humans in mensa have been depicted (Fig. 45). Certain venomous creatures and herbs of his have been presented in a way similar to how mensa are depicted. That is, frontally, symmetrically, and oversized, with a square surface area that is roughly the equivalent to that of human figures.

In this upcoming context, I will compare applications of magnified scale in Nicandrea to Christ's role as a Andachtsbild tool in the Isenheim. Christ is also presented frontally, symmetrically, and very prominently in the shrine, and in images which are clearly derived from the scientific tradition of mensa (Fig. 46F). By including the way I think Grunewald intended that Mary function ritually, in with how his Christ is viewed in this context, putting them back together again to look at their composite function as a ritual tool, the comparison between how viewers were expected to view and use him and ways that mensa tools seem to have functioned for rhyzotomist healers becomes feasible. The metamorphosis panel of the Isenheim is the key. There, Anthony's relationship with the human sized raven seems to exemplify this form of confrontation. He is wrestling with an oversized raven which will be defined in the next chapter as an aspect of the Feminine.

3.3 Physical Description of the Altarpiece

Before considering the physical description of this Altarpiece, I will note its location. Today, Peter Elmer (2000) writes, it is on display in the Unterlinden Museum in Colmar, Germany, its three sets of wings separated and arranged in a row in the main hall of the museum to permit simultaneous viewing (pp. 5-11). However, according to Harrisville (2004), Grunewald painted the work for the Monastery of Saint Anthony and designed it to hang above the high altar, or retable, in the choir of the monastery church. The largest of its kind north of the Alps, the church had already stood for a century and its altar for almost half that period before Abbot Guido Gersi commissioned Grunewald to paint the altar panels, which he completed sometime between 1508 and 1516 (p. 1). Elmer further states that the abbot hired Grunewald to cover another sculpted shrine constructed fifty years earlier (p. 5-11). I will study the Isenheim panels in their proper sequence, as as originally dictated by the Church calendar (Elmer, (2000), pp. 5–11). This calendar will be discussed shortly.

According to Harrisville (2004), the shrine originally consisted of two hinged sets of movable wings, each consisting of nine panels. The wings could be manipulated to offer three different views, all of them two-dimensional. When the wings were closed (Fig. 2A), this outer
set consisted of a large central painting depicting a Crucifixion. On either side were stationary wings, the one on the viewer’s right depicting Saint Anthony (Fig. 2B), the patron saint of the Isenheim monastery, and the one on the viewer’s left depicting Saint Sebastian. Beneath this composite was a predella with a Lamentation, which, Harrisville tells us, probably remained in place when the first set of wings was opened (p. 1).

Opening the wings, continues Harrisville, revealed a central panel depicting what scholars typically allude to as an “Incarnation,” a “Christmas Painting,” the “Concert of Angels Nativity” (Fig. 1G, 9, 10A.) The painting on the left of the Incarnation depicted an Annunciation, the one on its right, a Mother and Child. Farther to the right, was a Resurrection (p. 1).

The next “opened state” (Fig. 1F) consisted of an opened second set of wings with a predella beneath. These wings, which spanned the entirety of the combined lengths, were composed of sculpted wooden pieces, carved circa 1490 by the Alsatian master Nicolas of Haguenau. In this grouping was a sculpted shrine with a seated wooden Saint Anthony flanked by standing sculptures of Saint Augustine on the viewer’s left and Saint Jerome on the viewer’s right (p. 1).

On the backs of the “opened state” of these wings is depicted the Temptation of Saint Anthony (Figs. 1F, 4B) on the viewer’s right and Anthony’s Meeting with Paul the Hermit on the left (Fig. 3A). These innermost panels, flanking a carved wooden shrine to Saint Anthony, consist of three central panels supported by a predella on the altar and split in the middle to facilitate changing scenes. The predella, a Lamentation, could also be opened to disclose half-length figures of Christ flanked by his twelve apostles, which were carved by an unknown sculptor. The order in which these panels were arranged has long been a matter of speculation (p. 1).

3.3.1 Detailed Description of the Closed Position

The closed position, commonly understood to have been exhibited on weekdays, contains Christ’s Crucifixion, Saint Anthony, Saint Sebastian, and the Lamentation.

The Crucifixion panel. Christ is in the middle foreground of the darkened panel. His wrap is white, but dulled. His skin and the cross behind him upon which he hangs are similarly muted. This figure is physiologically distorted. His arms appear unnaturally long, perhaps to emphasize his dislocated shoulders and his hands having stiffened into a cramp. His knees have
been turned inward to facilitate nailing his feet one on top of the other. With a slackened jaw, mouth and eyes half open, Christ’s head sags onto his swollen chest.

On Christ’s right (the viewer’s left) is a similarly muted Mary Magdalene. She wears a blue-and-red veil and is dressed in red. Her long hair streams from her veil past her waist. Her outstretched fingers are laced together in impassioned prayer. A white, covered container on which Hebrew letters have been carved sits on the ground in front of her. Behind Magdalene, who faces sideways, Saint John holds Mary, Mother of Jesus in his arms. Forming a pictorial unit, they are larger and more strongly lit than Magdalene, and their clothes are more brightly colored than either Mary Magdalene’s or Christ’s. John’s clothes are red. Mary’s wrap is white and her undergarment is dark, possibly black. Her long veil, which resembles a nun’s, constitutes the most brilliantly realized white form in this panel. Like Magdalene, she clasps her hands in prayer, but whereas Magdalene’s fingers are outstretched wide, Mary’s are comparatively closed. She cradles her left hand in her right. This distinction is warranted. Grunewald seems to have contrasted the hands of these two Maries to the stages Mary went through from the time she cradled baby Jesus in her arms to when she held him in her lap after the crucifixion. I will argue in chapters upcoming that Mary’s brilliantly realized white veil and her disproportionate size in relation to Magdalene suggest a deeper meaning than is apparent from the actions and expressions of these figures alone.

On Christ’s left is Saint John the Baptist in dulled red garb with fur underneath it. His left hand holds a book that is almost—but not quite—as brilliantly white as Mary’s veil. John’s right hand points toward the crucified Christ, but his gaze seems directed toward Mary. Immediately beneath him, to his right, is a standing lamb that is roughly the same value (degree of lightness) as John’s book. The lamb, which holds a cross in the crook of its leg, is bleeding; its blood flows into a golden chalice.

The background is dark. The only prominent element is a narrow body of water, possibly a pool, which appears to be breaking gently on the large boulders surrounding it. Immediately behind Mary Magdalene is a point of access allowing water to flow toward the crucified Christ. Behind Christ is a large boulder, and beneath it is a large darkened area, possibly an entrance to a cave. On the viewer’s far right, embedded in the boulder to the right of Saint John the Baptist, a figure resembling a small bearded man appears to be crouching.
The Saint Sebastian panel. Saint Sebastian’s panel (Fig. 8-left), on the viewer’s left, is comparatively lighter than the inside panel depicting the crucifixion. Sun streams in from the window behind him on his right (viewer’s left). Most prominently, two cherubs carrying what art historians have identified as a coral ring appear to be flying toward Sebastian. Another less defined cherub flies beneath them carrying what appear to be more arrows. All are depicted as though they are about to fly through the open window. Saint Sebastian wears brilliant red. He has one arrow through his right shoulder, two through his left calf, two bound to an architectural column behind him, and two more near his feet rest against the column. At the top of that same column and beneath the pedestal he stands on, a vine flourishes. His pedestal has the form of a seven-pointed star.

The Saint Anthony panel. Saint Anthony’s panel (Fig. 8-right), on the viewer’s right, is darker than Saint Sebastian’s, and roughly the same value as the center panel. Whereas sun streams through Saint Sebastian’s window, the light outside Saint Anthony’s room emanates from the beaked creature with three horns and large, very clearly defined female breasts (Figs 2B, 63). Scholars agree that this figure is in some capacity linked with the Devil, and every analysis that I have read alludes to that figure as a male figure. Whereas Saint Sebastian’s window is open, Saint Anthony’s is barred. However, the horned figure, whose arm is raised, appears to be breaking the window to come through it; panels of the top half of the window have already been broken open. Saint Anthony wears a dulled red cloak draped over a green undergarment. He wears a similarly muted red cap, and his long white beard is forked. He holds what scholars often refer to as a staff, but which is actually a crozier with a tau cross at the top (Fig. 2B, 51E) which will be discussed in an upcoming section. The column behind Anthony is enshrouded in darkness, and a vine like the one under Saint Sebastian’s pedestal grows underneath his. Like Saint Sebastian, Anthony stands on a pedestal, but whereas Saint Sebastian’s pedestal is a seven-pointed star form, Saint Anthony’s is square.

The Lamentation panel. The Lamentation on the predella below the Crucifixion is somewhat dark, but not as dark as Saint Anthony or the Crucifixion. It includes Saint John attending to Christ’s body; Christ’s mother, Mary; and Mary Magdalene. Mary Magdalene is no longer veiled. Both women continue to pray, but now Mary Magdalene’s fingers are interlaced tightly instead of outstretched. The pool is gone, replaced by a muted blue-gray form to the left of Mary Magdalene that peaks like a hill.
3.3.2 Detailed Description of the Middle Position

According to Snyder (1985), on Sundays and special feast days like Christmas and Easter, the first set of wings was folded back to reveal the middle Position (Fig. 1G), representations of the Annunciation on the viewer’s left, the Incarnation in the center, and the Resurrection on the viewer’s right (pp. 348–349). Like the closed position, the middle position contains only painted images.

The Annunciation panel. In contrast to the Crucifixion and Lamentation, the Annunciation panel is bathed in light. In the background is a vaulted room, rendered predominantly in green and separated from another room in the foreground by a green curtain on a red rod. Above the curtain, which has been pulled back, the Holy Spirit in dove form streams, as light would, into the room. In the front room, which has a ceiling with red vaults, Mary kneels before the angel. She wears a dark blue dress and a red undergarment. Her golden hair is long, and her head is unveiled. The book she was reading lies open, her eyes are half closed, and she has turned her head away as if to look toward the angel Gabriel who comes to her. He wears a red cloak with a yellow undergarment and an orange belt, or girdle, and holds a staff. Above this room in the upper left foreground, is an elongated sculpture of a man with a long, forked beard like Saint Anthony's who wears a white robe and holds a book. Golden architectural embellishments resembling vines and plant tendrils wind around him. This is the first elderly man mentioned who has a forked beard.

The Metamorphosis panel. This panel is divided into left and right halves, one depicting an angel choir and the other a Madonna and Child. On the left side, the viewer sees an elaborate open room or pavilion. Like the vaulted room in the Annunciation panel, this structure is embellished with golden vines and tendrils, as well as elongated figures with muted white clothing. This room, however, appears somehow altered. A broken circular embellishment over the doorway on the viewer’s left, hanging immediately above and behind the largest of the angels, appears to have been cut-- a painterly device allowing the viewer to see into the room. Inside is an overhanging curtain, caught up in the middle. On the overhang of this curtain above a haloed figure emerging from the room is a dull gold pedestal on which sits an enthroned figure with a halo. A second elderly man with a forked beard, this one wearing no hat, kneels before him. The architectural embellishments on the outside of this room are golden; the vines and
tendrils, which culminate in more condensed forms resembling flowers, seem to have come to life.

The floor in this room and the steps leading up to it sit on a sort of a platform constructed of large pale gray stones. The foreground floor in front of these stones is red dirt, and the stones appear to have been broken away, like the embellishment on the left overhanging panel. Similar stones lie beneath the Madonna’s feet in the other half of the panel, clearly cut away to reveal red dirt in front of them. Inside this room are a number of kinds of angels, old and young, some of whom are playing musical instruments. On the far left, a dulled green-and-red-feathered figure plays a musical instrument, forming a rough circle with the smaller, similarly colored figures in the background. Emerging from the room is a brilliantly lit gold-and-red woman wearing a flaming crown (Fig. 9). She and the angel playing a stringed instrument in the foreground are the most intensely lit figures in this panel. Above her are two angels who are almost as brilliant as she is, and immediately in front of her on the step is a pitcher of water. A large, dark green curtain suspended on a red curtain rod divides this room from the outdoor scene on the right side of the panel. On the other side of the curtain is a garden, presumably Mary’s since numerous Christian images reflect her and her child Jesus sitting in an herbal garden. The wall around it appears roughly six to seven feet tall, and the gate is closed. A cedar grows on the right side of the gate. A rosebush grows on Mary’s left (the viewer’s right). To her right, behind the curtain, is another tree, which I will identify in my analysis as a fig tree.

In the right foreground sits Mary holding a naked baby Jesus, who leans back his head to look at her. She sits beside a bed, perhaps the infant's, cloaked in blue and wearing a red dress with dulled pale blue undergarments. Jesus is playing with a coral rosary (Fig. 11B). Both he and Mary have faint halos around their heads. At Mary’s feet is a chamber pot. Next to it is a washtub covered with an outstretched cloth, most of which extends into the other panel.

Outside the gate is a mountainous landscape. The mountain directly behind Mary is dulled brown and green. At its base are small buildings and figures that appear to be shepherds interacting with two angels, one of whom is pink and gold like the ones above the crowned woman; the other is gray. The mountains behind this mountain appear steeper, and they resemble peaks of ice, cutting into the clouds. The darkened sky above the mountains merges with a cumulus cloud above which a brilliant light streams down, illuminating a scattering of angels. The darkened area above the mountain of ice appears to be a sort of changing ground because all
the angels except one change color as they fly through this area (going in one color and coming out another), while moving up or down. A large body of water to the right of the mountain appears to separate it from the garden.

**The Resurrection panel.**

To the right of the Annunciation panel is the Resurrection panel (Fig. 1G). In the upper center of this panel is the resurrected Christ with upheld hands, seemingly displaying his wounds to the viewer. Like the brilliantly depicted woman emerging from the vaulted room whose dark garments become red and golden in the midst of the flaming circle around her, his white shroud changes color. His skin is as white as his shroud, the nails in his palms gleam golden, and his circle of fire is significantly larger than hers is though it seems to function in the same way. Behind him at roughly the level of his calves is the stone that would have blocked the entrance of the cave in which he was buried. In front of and below it is the opened casket from which he is rising. Two soldiers seemingly knocked off their feet by the Resurrection lie heaped in the immediate foreground, and another two are in the background to the viewer’s right.

### 3.3.3 Detailed Description of the Opened State

Opening the second set of wings reveals sculpted images of three saints above a predella beneath them depicting Christ and his Apostles. The sculptures are flanked by two paintings of Saint Anthony.

**Sculpted images of three saints.** In the center sits a carved and gilded shrine of an enthroned Saint Anthony (Fig. 1F). On Anthony’s left (the viewer’s right) stands Saint Jerome. On Anthony’s right is Saint Augustine. Both men were famous doctors of the Church. Mellinkoff (1988) has noted that for some unknown reason, Saint Anthony is significantly larger than the other two saints who flank him, and they are in turn considerably larger than the peasants at their feet. She also notes that he is the only one in the entire image as large as Christ. He sits in the center of this panel, surrounded by attributes of the four Evangelists and accordingly enthroned in an uncommon position of hierarchic dignity usually reserved for God or the Virgin Mary. Saint Anthony’s beard is long and forked, and he holds a dark blue book with five circular forms on its cover under his left hand. In his right hand is a staff with a Tau cross. This depiction of the saint represents the third time I am noting the presence of an elderly man with a long, forked beard in this image. At the viewer’s right side of his feet is a peasant holding a boar. On the viewer’s left by his feet is another peasant. This one is holding a cock. From inside his cloak,
down by his left foot, a small dog looks out (Fig. 12A). Above Saint Anthony is latticework resembling that on the outside of the shrine in the Incarnation panel. Enmeshed in this grillwork on the viewer’s right is a griffin (winged lion) and on the left, a winged bull. Above them is a phoenix surrounded by a vine with at least five clumps of some fruit.

Saints Jerome and Augustine are standing and beardless. Jerome wears a cardinal’s robes and hat, and holds a red book that is bagged. A small lion rests at his feet. Above him is grillwork in which are embedded a number of birds and a vine without fruit. Augustine wears a miter and red gloves, and carries a bishop’s staff. At his feet is a pheasant.

**Christ and his apostles.** The predella at the base of the opened second set of wings discloses Christ flanked by his twelve apostles. The central figure is a carved half-length Christ holding a small cross standing under a pointed arch. His disciples are divided into four groups of three, two groups on either side of Christ. Next to them, on the inner left panel, are three more carved figures. One holds a closed book with five forms on it, which is similar but not identical to the books that Saint Anthony and Saint Jerome hold.

**Saint Anthony and Paul the Hermit.** To the left of the carved figure of Saint Augustine is a painted panel of Saint Anthony’s Meeting with Paul the Hermit (Fig. 3A). Saint Anthony sits on the viewer’s left. He wears muted blue-green robes with red underclothing and a tight-fitting reddish cap and has a long forked beard. This depiction of Anthony represents the fourth figure depicted in the altar with a long, forked beard. In his left hand he holds a cane. He extends his right hand, palm up.

To Saint Anthony’s right is Paul the Hermit, wearing a primitively woven toga. Possibly it is made of animal skins. He is white-haired and bearded, and appears to be resting on the red brick foundation of some ruined building. He holds his right hand palm upward with one finger extended and gazes upward at a raven, which is flying toward him from a dead tree behind Anthony with a wafer in its beak. His left arm rests on some red bricks of about the same size as the ones in the highly embellished pavilion of the Incarnation panel. Behind the two men are more red bricks and gray stones, now broken and overgrown. What appears to be a broken beam of wood immediately behind Saint Anthony has on its front end (by Anthony’s hand) and its back end (behind his back) pieces of vine resembling the carved tendril forms on the roof of pavilion.
Between the men lies a doe. In the background behind them is a forest with lichen, dead trees, and a palm tree. Behind these dead trees is rock passageway. In its clearing stands a male deer. Beyond this passage is a river, and beyond that is a dense forest. Behind the forest is a steep, iced mountain.

**The Temptation of Saint Anthony.** To the right of the three carved saints is a painting of the Temptation of Saint Anthony (Fig. 4B). In its lower middle foreground is Saint Anthony, whose blue-green robe and forked beard are identical to those depicted in the Meeting with Paul the Hermit. This is accordingly the fifth time I am accounting for a figure with a long forked beard. Anthony lies on the ground, accosted by a myriad of strange creatures, each a composite of several animals some of which have a few human body parts. Behind him is a goat-headed creature with human arms that appears to be pulling off his robe. To this figure’s left (the viewer’s right), a fishlike creature pulls Anthony’s hair. Opposite them is a lion-headed creature with arms and wings, whose body resembles that of a featherless bird. Its extended leg, pressing into Anthony’s side, resembles a lion’s except that it wears torn blue leggings.

To the right of this figure (the viewer’s left) is a small horned creature with a disfigured human head and gray arms. Next to him is a deer configuration that either sits on top of another animal resembling a bird or has that beast as its stomach. To the right of the lion animal is a very large raven from whose neck is extended humanlike arms clutching a stick (Fig. 5D). These arms beat the saint. Behind the raven is a baboon like creature with a torn red cap that, unlike the others, appears to be neither screeching nor moving. It is silent, immobile. In the background are two more creatures, one chasing the other. In the immediate foreground on the viewer’s left is a greenish figure with sores all over his body that appears to be human except for its webbed hands and feet (Fig. 4A). The figure wears a red hood and clutches at a torn red book with sores on it. At his feet, a bird headed serpent of some type with a long neck, and the legs and feet of a turtle bites Anthony’s hand. The ape with the tattered red cap, the deer, the lion, and the reptile all stare upward.

Behind these composite creatures in a darkened area of the painting is another group of beasts. All but one has a recognizable snake tail; most have some sort of wings. A few have animal heads—one is clearly a jackal—and others have human heads. All but one of these animals, a pale orange creature in combat with the jackal, are dark. As the dark creatures around
it demolish a wooden structure in the background or fight each other, the pale orange creature gazes upward.

In the distant background is a mountainous landscape rendered predominantly in shades of cool white. Above the mountains and the demolished building is what appears to be a mountaintop suspended in the air inside a pale pink and orange, roughly circular form. On top of the mountain, another figure with a forked beard holds a staff. This is the sixth figure with a forked beard that has been noted. There are more.

Although I have provided a very comprehensive list of the iconographical elements in this altar, there are more, and even the ones identified represent too many layers of information to acknowledge in this dissertation. I do not need to analyze all of them, however, for the painting to make sense. I will study the shrine contextually and iconographically by focusing on Anthony and the Devil in the Saint Anthony and the Devil panel; the two Marius and John the Babtist in the Crucifixion panel; the feathered creature, the small angry angel facing it, and the luminous woman in the Concert of Angels section of the Incarnation panel; and Saint Anthony, the raven fighting him, the figure with sores on his body, and the creature's book in the panel of Saint Anthony’s Metamorphosis.
CHAPTER FOUR
ICONOGRAPHICAL TOOLBOX OF DEFINITIONS

Defining Mary and Mary Magdeline from the perspective of the ancient *Feminine* requires the definition of nine sets of terms, which will build upon each other chronologically. These are 1) Hesiod, 2) Hesiod's Erides, special emphasis placed on "Hesiod versus Archilochos" and the "Carpenter," 3) “muddled” texts and imagery, 4) scholarly “Misunderstandings,” 5) agrarian biology and the moon, 6) agrarian alchemy, 7) *Feminine* antidotal medicine, 8) *synthemata* and binary twins, and 9) the errant. These will culminate in a discussion of the errant's determinant role in the development of all of these.

4.1 The Significance of Hesiod

As I approach the Isenheim Altarpiece, I need two things from Hesiod. I need to understand how and why scholars could have overlooked the significance of his form, content, and function for the last 2700 years because those Hesiodic elements are central to the *Feminine* agrarian iconography that I plan to use. And I will use his “Erides,” or strifes, to link the various misunderstandings that I have collected.

Based on M. L. West’s (1996) article entitled “Why Consider Hesiod?” I infer that Hesiodic scholars like Robert Lamberton have been arguing for a very long time against the form of Hesiod's prose, as well as its truth value--meaning that it has no basis in fact--without understanding either. This problem interests me because it seems similar to the response of most Mariologists regarding the metaphorical and iconographical attributes of Mary and the ancient *Feminine*. By studying both sets of problems, I have come to believe that Mariologists have been looking at Mary too formalistically, expressing no regard for the symbolic iconographical elements that originally defined her or for her numerous earth, water, plant, and animal attributes. The historical Mary unconsciously imitates Hesiod--what happened to him has also happened to her. I will trace problems in Hesiodic scholarship to show how contemporary analysis of the Isenheim Altarpiece, particularly its depiction of Mary, might benefit from study of Hesiod.

Classicists have not yet determined whether Hesiod or Homer were individual poets, traditions based upon types, or some combination of these. But this issue is a classical controversy, not an iconographical one. I should also mention that until 1966, most classicists
avoided Hesiod for two important reasons, which I will account for shortly. However, given that these troubles were resolved forty-three years ago, they cannot explain why scholars have continued until quite recently to ignore Hesiod’s perspective.

*Bulfinch’s Mythology* refers to Hesiod only in passing. The 1959 edition, for example, mentions him in only one sentence. James T. Gaster’s updated edition of James Frazer’s *Golden Bough* (1959, rpt. 1964) does not acknowledge him at all. Of compendiums like these, only Edith Hamilton’s *Mythology* (1930) reflects concern for Hesiod. She accounts for variances between him and Homer on two pages and writes about his early life on one. Though her text, too, is outdated, what little she wrote about him parallels more recent accounts. She states:

Hesiod was a poor farmer whose life was hard and bitter. There cannot be a greater contrast than that between his poem, the *Works and Days*, which tries to show men how to live a good life in a harsh world, and the courtly splendor of [Homer’s] *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. But Hesiod has much to say about the gods, and a second poem, usually ascribed to him, the *Theogony*, is entirely concerned with mythology. If Hesiod did write it [*Theogony*], then a humble peasant living on a lonely farm far from cities, was the first man in Greece to wonder how everything had happened, the world, the sky, the gods, mankind, and to think out an explanation. Homer never wondered about anything . . . [His poems] honor various gods (pp. 21–22).

Hamilton acknowledged differences between Homer and Hesiod in the 1930's (p. 3), but Lamberton's *Hesiod* (1988) reflects that it was not until the 1960's that scholars went beyond questioning who Hesiod was, what he had contributed, and how scholars ought to interpret his prose. More recent scholarship has more closely studied, for example, that these two priests of Apollo sang competitively about their oppositional priorities in divergent ways. Based upon the two poets’ use of *prooimia*, or introductory prayers; their respective applications of “I” (defined in chapter two of this dissertation as an enigmatically analyzed form of metamorphosing); and formal variances in their language and format, Lamberton (1988) and Carol G. Thomas and Edward Kent Webb (1994) have developed the idea that Homer’s work focused on arousing feelings of community understood within the context of patriotism, war, and slaughter whereas Hesiod’s efforts functioned to instill feelings of peaceful agrarian social utility in his rural contemporaries. (pp. 44–48, 68; 7–9). Although both poets were revered for their helping and
healing impulses and abilities, and in spite of the fact that each served as an oracular priest of Apollo, they functioned for the state in different ways. Hesiod was a farmer, an agrarian physician, and an oracular priest of Apollo; Homer was an oracle who sang for the state and for warfare. Consequently, he neither farmed nor healed people. As their life styles differed, their variant attributes seem to have accordingly emerged. In my conclusion, I will reconsider how interpretation and use of these oracular variations might have factored into the scholarly misunderstandings in question. Putting them and misunderstandings aside, I will return to tracing the development of Hesiodic analysis in order to establish its significance.

The first break came in 1961 when archaeologists discovered a sixth-century-BCE Orphic papyrus in a fourth-century-BCE Greek tomb. That discovery forever changed how scholars would date Hesiodic texts. Until then there had been room for doubt that Orphic theogonic material had existed before Plato’s time. With this information scholars were able to establish a sequence of Orphic generations comparable to the sequence of theogonies previously attributed to Hesiod. Scholars could finally substantiate the claim that Hesiod had written a theogony before the first century BCE by comparing his work with the newly discovered one. For this reason Hesiod has now come to be regarded as a reliable resource with an established point of origin (pp. 30–33; 41). Efforts to examine him have been refocused on what still exists of his original texts, not his translated ones, and both W. J. Verdenius’s 1985 Commentary on Hesiod’s Works and Days and G. Edwards’s 1971 The Language of Hesiod in Its Traditional Context state that Hesiodic manuscripts long attributed to him have been found to conform to the remnants of existing ancient poems attributed to him (p. 13; pp. 2, 4, 11–12).

The second breakthrough came, Edwards (1971) tells us, with M. L. West’s 1966 article entitled “Why Consider Hesiod?” Although classicists had established Hesiod’s authorship of the Theogony, they still had to reckon with a long list of difficulties regarding the state of his ancient manuscripts. Scholars approached Hesiod knowing that even the ancient Greeks had been confused about who Hesiod was and what he had written. Moreover, the earliest extant Hesiod manuscript had been dated to the 11th century CE, and most had been traced to the 15th and 16th centuries CE. These dates are closer to our time than Hesiod’s, and, to make matters worse, his poems had been translated and retranslated so many times that they had been massively reconstructed. Most original pieces of Hesiodic papyri, as well as ancient commentary about his work, had survived only in fragments, which scholars perceived to be removed from their
original context. Moreover, Hesiodic poems, which had evolved out of Western oral tradition, had been documented, performed, and maintained by rhapsodes several centuries before the remnants in question had been transcribed. Confronted with so many years during which Hesiodic texts could have been expanded and interpolated, scholars felt no need to take these fragments seriously (pp. 1,13).

Finally, M. L. West, generally regarded as the most influential Hesiodic scholar of the 20th century, provided a model for analyzing ancient didactic prose. Accordingly to Edwards' (1971) assessment of Hesiod scholarship, as scholars came to view Hesiod’s works in accordance with established understandings of poetic sensibility, the texts opened up. It became clear that earlier analysts had been approaching Hesiod’s metaphorical analogies literally, with little or no regard for poetic sensibility (p. 12).

The following statement, excerpted from Hamilton (1989) quoting P. Barron, Griffin, and Mondi’s “Hesiod,” reflects the traditional approach: “It is hard to find safe criteria for judging interpolation in an author like Hesiod. His extant poems show a certain diffuseness, a tendency to be sidetracked from the matter in hand, which leads one to doubt whether they ever processed any logical or rigorous arrangement” (p. 4).

Lamberton (1988) expresses a contrasting view: “The internal relationships of the elements of these passages and the relationships of the passages to each other seem largely arbitrary, and it does not stretch the imagination to attribute such compositional choices to the vagaries of improvisational performance, even for those who have little faith in the creative potential of such a mode of pre-literary creation” (p. 22).

Lamberton’s comment, which presents Hesiod’s work as his own without interpolations, reflects the influence of West through whose works the Hesiodic debate gained momentum in the late 1960s. According to his use of Nelson (1998) and Hamilton (1989) quoting West, scholars need to explore Hesiod associatively and poetically as well as constructively and severally:

To anyone who expects an orderly and systematic progression of ideas, [Hesiod’s Works and Days] is liable to appear a bewildering text. The same themes recur several times in different places, connections between neighbouring sections are often difficult to grasp, trains of thought are interrupted by seemingly irrelevant remarks, the didactic intention is here and there suspended in favour of pure description; and taken as a whole, the variety of contents is so great that it is
hardly possible to describe the subject of the poem in a single phrase. (Quoted in Lamberton, [1988], p. x)

Elsewhere, Lamberton (1988) quoting Nelson (1998) and Hamilton (1989) recounts and answers they question they related to the composition of Hesiod's *Works and Days*: “Did he envisage at the outset a poem which should begin with a series of stories and homilies to Perses [Hesiod’s brother] and the Kings, pass on to instruction on husbandry, then deal with sailing, then dissolve into a jumble of assorted advice, and lastly treat up the days of the month? The answer is surely, no. Such a plan has little logic and less beauty” (Quoted in Lamberton [1988], p. 47).

The tension between these two views of Hesiod, one viewing his work as a hard to understand body of poorly composed, hard to grasp ideas, the other recognizing it as poetry with an underlying logic, is relevant to my study for two reasons. First, what happened to Hesiod seems to have happened to the Mary that Grunewald depicted. Scholars have lost the ability to understand Hesiod’s works or the depiction of Mary on a metaphorical or symbolic level. Second, the same thing appears to have happened to symbols in art in general. I will return to Hesiodic problems with these concerns in mind. According to Richard Hamilton (1989), the interpretation of Hesiod’s *Works and Days* has undergone three stages of analytical development. During the 19th century, scholars examined it as a unified whole. During the early 20th century, critics studied it both within the context of its literary genre and in relation to the philosophical ideas of work and justice. Finally, scholars in the second half of the 20th century examined it reactively, in response to earlier explanatory efforts. Throughout these three periods, scholars adopted one of two positions. Those who disparaged Hesiod’s works found his content problematic at best. Those who supported his works as worthy of study saw the trouble as stemming not from Hesiod’s works but from their interpretation. In my view, these fundamental variances between the scholars who study Hesiod reflect two means of interpreting mythic content. One is formalistic and sensory, studying iconographical texts from an outsider’s perspective. This approach functions much like a pictorial analysis of any given myth based solely on the myth’s design elements, for example, looking only at the Medieval Wild Man's inherent anger while ignoring his relationship to *Feminine* transcendence. It separates an image from its story. The other way of interpreting mythic content considers the layered origins of the story. From the perspective of pictorial analysis, this way allows an image to work
instrumentally alongside its story so that text and image can function as ends, as well as multifaceted tools which inform each other. I will use this means of studying Hesiod and Hesiodic analyses as a model for my analysis of Mary and Isenheim imagery.

4.2 Hesiod’s Erides

Scholars analyzing Hesiod's Erides seem to be having the same problem as scholars analyzing the human figures in the Isenheim Altarpiece. The Erides are an invaluable resource for iconographical study. However, they also epitomize what I am construing to be tensions between two forms of oracular, *Feminine* disposition. Consider the eride identified as "Hesiod and Archilochos". On the one hand is the altruistic Greek priest of Apollo, autobiographically referred to in the case of one of the Erides as “Hesiod,” an archetypal figure seemingly endowed with enhanced helping and healing impulses, who served instrumentally as a farmer, physician, and rhyzotomist root digger from within his agrarian community. His struggle was to stay close to the earth. On the other hand is the more egocentrically defined Greek oracular priest named Archilochos, who most fundamentally looked out for himself while looking out for others, or only appeared to.

From this perspective, Hesiod's Erides represent binary attributes of an entity—the priest or oracle—a view that I want to apply to Mary later in this dissertation. My question about why Hesiod has been overlooked for so long” seems to sit alongside the backbone of the Eridic tensions Hesiod described in his efforts to care for his tradition. By this I mean that the western academic response to Hesiod exemplifies Hesiod's Erides, particularly the strife he acknowledges as having existed between himself and Archilochos. This same question applies to the academic misunderstandings I have been weaving into my dissertation, and it is probably the reason that scholars cannot understand Grunewald’s Isenheim Altarpiece. Worse, it is why western educators cannot figure out what to do with the arts in general. Hesiod seems to have understood that if or when the great body of agrarian information he passed on was no longer accessed correctly, or worse, not at all, it would become as unmanaged as any other poison which has not yet been transformed into a medicine.

4.3 “Muddled” Texts and Imagery

To answer my question: “How can scholars have made so many mistakes with so much available material at hand?” I must turn to the classics. The good news is that efforts like those of Heather White are overcoming inadequacies in that field. White demonstrates how confused
translations of metaphor in Hellenistic poetry relate to simple nouns or simple adjectives, and adverbs translated literally. In fact, I borrowed the term “muddled” from her and will build upon her use of it, defined in this section.

Her work interests me for two related reasons. First, she works with Nicandrea. Second, I plan to use her work for building a bridge between problems scholars are having with medical manuscripts and ones of a similar nature that Isenheim scholars face in their analyses of the altarpiece. As stated earlier, Nicander was like Hesiod, a rhyzotomist physician and Greek priest of Apollo. Although White does not discuss the Feminine, her thesis resembles the view of many feminist art historians arguing that the ancient Feminine has become lost or confused. She attacks the problem more pragmatically by studying erroneously translated prose passages, explaining how words and passages became “muddled,” and then correcting the errors. Her efforts reveal the nature of the errors which in themselves have contributed to the west's having refashioned the Feminine into what she is, and this is what I want to do with my interpretation of Mary in the Isenheim Altarpiece. What follows is an abbreviated version of White’s thesis.

White examines Gow and Scholfield’s Nicander: The Poems and Poetical Fragments (1953) and argues that these scholars have interpreted selected passages of Nicander individually and literally, instead of associatively, contextually, and metaphorically. In a thesis that seems to echo problems West had with Hesiodic scholarship, White identifies three categories of erroneous translations—simple nouns, simple adjectives and adverbs, and metaphorical elements of myth passages—and then iconographically interprets the same passages in the simplest, seemingly most expedient manner. These three forms of erroneous translation, which are interdependent and cannot be studied separately, parallel three categories of information in the Isenheim Altarpiece as follows: 1) simple nouns, which can be linked with the main characters (the Devil, the feathered creature, Mary and Mary Magdalene, and John); 2) simple adjectives and adverbs, which can be related to iconographical signifiers; and 3) metaphorical elements in myth passages, which can be related to how metaphor functions narratively in this imagery. White’s work is not common academic knowledge, so I will present examples of these three efforts to exemplify my point, taken from her 1987 Studies in the Poetry of Nicander.

4.3.1 Simple Nouns

To show a literal translation of a simple noun alongside a more generalized one intended to be understood poetically and metaphorically, White (1987) compares Gow and Scholfield’s
(1953) literal translation of *Theriaca* 30 —“where the grass at its first burgeoning brings bloom to the shady water-meadows”—with White’s more poetic version: “where the foliage at its first burgeoning overshadows the greenwater-meadows” (p. 9). White rejects Gow and Scholfield’s literal translation, arguing that the noun which they had translated as “grass” could also be interpreted as “foliage” and that substituting “foliage” for “grass” restored the poetic integrity of Nicander’s original text. By altering *foliage*, which she argues is a general word indicating the leafy parts of all plant forms, to *grass*, an overly specific translation, Gow and Scholfield changed the text and accordingly distorted the “truth value” of the original passage (p. 9). Here is a simplified version of her assessment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LITERAL TRANSLATIONS</th>
<th>MORE GENERALIZED TRANSLATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gow and Scholfield</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grass</td>
<td>foliage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.3.2 Simple Adjectives and Adverbs

To exemplify a mistranslated adjective from Nicander’s *Theriaca* 778, White (1987) uses Nicander’s metaphorical description of the “sequela [aftereffect] of a snake bite” (pp. 5–6). According to her interpretation, the feelings experienced by a person stung by a snake resemble ones felt while being struck by "driving hail." However, Gow and Scholfield eliminated the term "driving hail" from their translation of this line. They reasoned that hail could not have resulted from a snake bite, so Nicander must have erroneously described the wound when he described it as a "raging" or hailstonelike eruption of the skin. White argues that their assessment imposes a literal translation on a metaphorical passage. She uses Nicander’s *Theriaca* 252, in which Nicander referred to a “cold sweat” to suggest alternate feelings of hot and cold, to argue that the “hail” in *Theriaca* 778 is not real but metaphorical. It refers to the “shivering” that afflicts those who have been bitten by a viper (pp. 6–7). White supports her point with references to Galen, who wrote that someone attacked by a scorpion would feel sensations similar to those of someone being struck by hail while breaking into a cold sweat, and Dioscorides, who indicated that those struck by a scorpion begin to sweat while alternately experiencing feelings of hot and cold (p. 6). With numerous contextual references like these, White shows her readers that even though Gow and Scholfield conceded that scorpion wounds could resemble hailstonelike
eruptions such as would be created in soft earth when hail made its impact, they discounted Nicander by assuming that ancients privileged literal documentation of physiological responses to poison over descriptions of the victim’s sensations (p. 6).

Another example of how Nicander’s efforts to describe physical sensations have become muddled lies in the metaphorical parallel between the allegedly “clumsy” movement of a cerastes snake and those of a ship sailing against the wind in *Theriaca* 268. In this context, White defines the word "clumsy" differently than Gow and Scholfield do. She says it defines sensation as one would experience one's own bodily clumsiness from within, instead of as a viewer would observe clumsiness from the outside in another. Here is G&S’s translation of this passage: “Cerastes rolls on with clumsy movements of his middle, meandering on a crooked path with his scaly back . . . .” White's comments about the original poem, that: “The clumsy movements of the Cerastes are compared to the toil of the merchantman as it forces its way against the wind . . . .” interest me because they seem to exemplify the degree to which liberties are taken in translating textual material. In this instance, for example, Gow and Scholfield eliminated Nicander's reference to the ship all together, apparently not seeing the value of his poetic metaphor.

This point becomes more meaningful when compared to the previous study of human feeling responses involving sensations like "hail-stone." Both responses have been related to human fear, which must have contributed to ancient views of disease. They probably factored into why Nicander depicted poisonous animals like salamanders disproportionately in his imagery, and since this association might have contributed to the original interpretation of ritual in Grunewald's depiction of Isenheim elements, I have chosen another fear based example from White's study to exemplify her last category of studies. That is, analysis of metaphorical language.

4.3.3 Metaphorical Language in Myth and Narrative

Another way White shows that Gow and Scholfield, and in this third context Schneider (1856) too, imposed literal meaning on generalized feeling experience lies in how ancients relied on subjective emotional expressions like "most dreadful" to account for their human response to fear. In *Theriaca* 700-710, Nicander discusses the "Sea Turtle," commonly understood by ancients to have been an antidote for snake poisoning. According to White, Schneider altered Nicander's manuscript reading of passage 703 in his assessment of the *Theriaca* because he
reasoned that it was "inappropriate" for Nicander to have described the Sea Turtle as being "murderous" (p. 47).

Gow and Scholfield discredited Nicander's perspective as Schneider did, but they followed another line of reasoning. They found a literal explanation in ancient turtle-related myth and applied it, suggesting that this line of thinking was what Nicander had in mind. According to White, Gow and Scholfield believed that Nicander called the Sea Turtle "murderous" because "he was probably thinking of the [legendary] man-eating tortoise of the Scironian Cliffs (p. 47). Although Gow and Scholfield's proposal is feasible, it is an explanation which can be applied only to this passage.

White accounts for why ancients used terms rooted in their emotional responses to fear such as "most dreadful" or "murderous" more efficiently, by studying them contextually and associatively the way she explores nouns, adjectives, and adverbs. Through examining a variety of ancient and contemporary sources including the cited passage of Oppian's below, she argues that Nicander's use of the adjective "murderous" is not an explanation--it does not have anything to do with turtles being literal killers (pp. 48-49). Turtles and other "sea monsters" like dog fishes and sharks were subjectively regarded by Oppian and other ancients as being "dangerous" to them and to other animals in their environment (p. 49). Here is her example of Oppian on this issue:

And the huge Sea-monsters that are bred in the habitations of Poseidon are, I declare, no whit meaner than the ravening children of the land, but both in strength and size the dauntless terrors of the sea excel. There is upon the mainland the breed of tortoises which know no valour nor hurt: but the Tortoise of the sea no man shall confidently confront amid the waves. There are fierce Dogs upon the dry land: but not one could vie in shamelessness with the Dogs of the sea. Dread is the bite of the Leopard of the land but that of the sea Leopard is more terrible. Hyenas walk upon the dry land, but those amid the waves are deadlier far. The Ram of the Shepherds is a gentle beast, but he who approaches the Rams of the sea shall not find them kindly to encounter. What boar wields such strength as doth the invincible Lamna? What valour burns in the heart of the lion to be likened to that of the dread Hammer-head? Before the dread-eyed Seal the maned Bears on the land tremble and, when they meet them in battle they are
vanquished. Such are the beasts which have their business in the sea (Quoted in White, 1987, [Trans. of W.W. Mair's 1928 Oppian Loeb, pp. 461-463] p. 48).

White finds the solution she is looking for in Oppian's summary of the above passage. According to her recountment of him, the distinction between the degree of fear implied by these meanings is an accurate reflection of how ancient peoples felt. Sea turtles, for example, were perceived to be more dangerous than land tortoises: "while the tortoise is harmless the turtle is dangerous." Ancient peoples truly recognized monsters of the sea to be more terrible than their counterparts on land (p. 47).

White's study on mistranslated text elements in narrative reflects the degree to which Gow and Scholfield, and other translators like Henri Omont, have inadvertently contributed to the muddled state of the West’s ancient tradition. White studies what I would consider to be elements of Feminine language. She has not considered ritual or the nature of the Feminine in her assessment of myth fragments. However, her model sheds needed light on ways scholars have viewed elements of myth and metaphor in medical ritual too simply, as a confusingly superfluous body of discredited fragments that obstruct the facts. When her findings are applied to the people who described Feminine medical ritual, another “muddled” dimension of textual material surfaces. Access is gained to how long held assumptions made about the truth value of historical and scientific applications written by figures like CE 23-79 historian Pliny can be reevaluated. The apparently Feminine character of these figures, which has long been in question, can be conflated with bias in the sciences.


It is hard to resist the attraction of Pliny, whose enthusiasm preserved for all time so much invaluable information about the ancient world. Shrewd without depth, a learned gossip, intellectually opposed to superstition but unable to resist a tall story . . . . [H]e was filled with insatiable curiosity about the world, but was neither scientist nor philosopher. His treatment of [the botanist] Theophrastus is characteristic both of the man and of his epoch. Throughout the books on plants he [Pliny] draws constantly on Theophrastus, especially on his Enquiry. Indeed, he almost certainly adopted the arrangement of this work as a model for his own,
but the logical development of Theophrastus became lost in Pliny’s compulsive
digressions and obscured by his complete lack of any theoretical understanding,
so that all fundamental questions are either confused or ignored . . . (pp. 70–71).

Similarly, Stearns (1966) states as a truism a disparaging remark that Pliny’s Historia
Naturalis is a “great storehouse of misinformation as well as of information, even more valuable
as a collection of ancient errors than it is as a repository of ancient science” (p. 21). From the
perspective of this dissertation, Morton (1981) and Stearns (1966) misunderstand this ancient
historian for the same two reasons that West has demonstrated western scholars misunderstood
Hesiod. For one, Pliny's Historia Naturalis seems inherently encyclopedic, composed according
to Singer (1928), from about 2,000 works written by 146 Roman and 326 Greek authors which
have been classified categorically into the fields of cosmology, geography, anthropology,
zoology, botany, medicine, and mineralogy and art (I surmise the latter of these is an application
of ritual) (pp. 12-13). In addition:

As a writer this erudite and much travelled man exhibits great industry and an
interest in natural phenomena that is quite uncontrolled by any real scientific
standards. Learned and curious, Pliny is entirely devoid of critical faculty. In his
Historia he collected an enormous amount of material, entirely unsifted,
and this work. . . [has been described by Edmund Gibbon as] "that immense
register where Pliny has deposited the discoveries, the arts and the errors of
mankind" (Quoted in Singer, [1928], pp. 12-13).

For another thing, Pliny's efforts draws upon myth, metaphor, and narration in a manner
which stylistically resembles efforts of Hesiod. These textual tools, however, are in themselves
not the problem. According to Singer (1928), Pliny stood up for metaphorical applications of
ritual in medical practice, and his medical text has long been acknowledged as being the most
complete and extensive work of its kind that has come down to us from antiquity (pp. 16-24).
West did not consider how myth, metaphor, and narration might have factored into ancient and
early applications of medical ritual, but there can be no confusion that what binds this composite
together has resulted in some sizable misunderstandings. According to Singer (1928) quoting
Pliny, this man scorned Greek medical practice because it privileged "theory" over "experience":

Medicine, in spite of its lucravineness, says Pliny, "is the one art of Greeks that the
serious Roman has so far refused to cultivate. Few of our fellow-citizens have been willing even to touch it, and if they do so they desert at once to the Greeks. . . The collection of Pliny, which was to be a substitute for the works of these wretched Greeks, consists of a vast series of remedies built on the supposedly firm ground of 'experience.' It is based on no theory, it is supported by no doctrine, it is founded on no experiment. Yet it is the prototype of the medical output of the next fifteen hundred years. The cry of Pliny for 'experience' as against 'theory' has been plaintively echoed by the 'practical' man down the ages (p. 23).

Extending the classical models of White and West to include efforts like Pliny's presupposes that a correlation be made, first between Nicander and Pliny, and then between them and M. L. West's efforts to reconstruct the essentially poetic form and function of other manuals like Nicander's which I argued in my thesis were of Hesiodic origin. I presented these ideas earlier in this chapter, writing that Hesiod’s fate seems to have foreshadowed the fate of Mary in particular, and more generally, symbols in art. I will now extend this correlation to include a summary of my thesis use of some apparently long-forgotten tensions between ancient literary texts and scientific, or “school” texts. This will clarify what I mean by texts of Hesiodic origin, while exemplifying my use of the term misunderstanding.

4.4 Three Scholarly “Misunderstandings”

Scholars attempting to analyze classical works, medical ritual, and Mary herself have contributed to troubled interpretations of the Isenheim Altarpiece in three important ways which, for the sake of convenience, I will label as “misunderstandings.”

4.4.1 Misunderstanding Ritual Prayer Aspects of Classic Scientific Manuscripts

When I first framed the question, how scholars could have made so many mistakes with so much available material at hand?”—I had in mind the group of German scholars shown by Weitzmann (1947) to have been working almost one hundred years ago with literary and scientific material. Peter Van Minnen (1994) indicates that papyrologists have known about but rarely worked with classical literary and scientific rolls for more than a hundred years (p. 35). His assessment might exemplify the “misunderstood” and accordingly thwarted efforts of these German scholars who tried unsuccessfully to interest other scholars in ancient scientific manuscripts.
Between 1875 and 1945, Weitzmann (1947) shows that Erich Bethe, Theodor Birt, Karl Preisendanz, Carl Roberts, Wilhelm Schubart, Josef Strzygowski, and Wilhelm Wattenbach documented antique rolls of all kinds. At the same time, they fought to establish that the “rolls” in question included scientific “school texts” as well as literary texts (pp. 8, 10-11, 41). This distinction is important because it suggests there exist two essential origins underlying the so-called classical tradition, not one, and the one being overlooked is Hesiodic.

Problems cropped up among this group. Weitzmann (1947) writes that they could not agree, for example, on whether to incorporate ancient science more fully into the hypothetical origin of Western letters. More relevant to this discussion, they could not agree whether depictions of human figures in scientific manuals could, or even should, be compared with ones illustrated in literary manuals (pp. 8, 10-11, 41). Problems like these reflect the state of classical analyses at that time. Had these scholars compared these two forms of illustration, they would have better understood when and in what capacity Greek writers began to link words with images. Arguments also arose among them regarding how to use scientific texts. In what seems to be yet another manifestation of the tension between instrumental and formalistic analyses, one group argued instrumentally to include the content of these manuals in with their analyses of them. The second group tackled the problem more formalistically, putting their content aside and directing their efforts toward comparative analyses of what I call their design elements. By “design,” I mean the organization of pictorial elements with little or no regard to content.

What follows is a synopsis of Weitzmann’s assessment of these German efforts coupled with his observation of how but not why those of them whose analyses were based on content were received with less enthusiasm than was accorded the studies based on style. Weitzmann’s findings illuminate the reasons behind Western academia’s seeming rejection of ancient science and the essential disregard of some classicists, historians of science, and art historians for the significance of content in these narratives. Here is an abbreviated chronology of their scholarly efforts, based on Weitzmann’s (1947) account of them, along with some of his relevant responses:

Historian and philologist Wilhelm Wattenbach’s 1875 Das Schriftwesen im Mittelalter ([translated title]) represents the first effort to collect and categorize all available examples from the field of early illumination. He categorized scientific rolls as well as literary ones (p. 3). Archeologist Carl Robert’s 1881 Bild und Lied ([translated title]) further strengthened the link
between Egyptian and Greek iconography by developing two points, 1) that Greek peoples had begun to exchange ideas with Oriental peoples at least as early as the Alexandrian period and 2) that such objects as the Homeric bowls, and Roman sarcophagi had common Phoenician—not Greek—denominators that could be traced as far back as the seventh century BCE (pp. 7, 26).

Weitzmann regards Robert’s Phoenician proposal as the most comprehensive study of book illumination available at the time he wrote his book. He also credits Robert with having defined three fundamental stages in Greek efforts to relate their literature to representational art. However, according to Weitzmann, most scholars have ignored Robert’s proposals because they reflect conclusions based more on content than design, which Weitzmann refers to as “style,” noting that “style has become the trend” (p. 12).

Theodor Birt’s 1907 “Die Trajanssaule und das Bilderbuch” in Die Buchrolle in der Kunst ([translated title]) compares two reliefs, the Column of Trajan and the Joshua Rotulus, more formally than iconographically. Through analysis of details like the wavy edges of the spiral reliefs of the Column of Trajan, which he identified as reflecting the unevenness of the edges in a papyrus roll, Birt analyzed design and then successfully argued, from the perspective of Wietzmann, that words and images functioned separately during the classical period of Greece and that classical Greek illumination had not accompanied Greek literary texts (pp. 123–124).

According to Weitzmann, art historians continued to use Birt’s work and never been seriously contested it. This point is important because Birt opened the door to formal means of analyzing rolls, by and large eradicating academic concerns over tensions between literary and scientific manuals by redirecting the focus toward the elegance of the image. In his 1947 Roll and Codex, Weitzmann acknowledges Birt as an essential model, helping to establish the academic authority of formal analysis.

Following these efforts came Josef Strzygowski’s 1909 Eine Alexandrinische Weltchronik ([translated title]), which examined ancient book illumination from the perspective of content. According to Weitzmann, Strzygowski did not believe like most art historians that papyrus texts evolved into parchment texts. He thought that roll imagery had early on been incorporated into the text and had come out of Egypt, whereas parchment pictures, not originally a part of the text, had originated in Persia. Parchment pictures moved from there into Mesopotamia, Armenia, Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt, and later still, they infiltrated from these countries into Byzantium and Northern Europe (pp. 7–8). I have included Weitzmann's summary
of Strzygowski’s thesis because it further exemplifies established disagreements regarding the original function of images in textual material. However it also allows us to further define this misunderstanding because while Weitzmann draws from scholars who have used aspects of Strzygowski’s perspective, he simultaneously negates elements of Strzygowski’s premise because it is “anti-Greek,” “anti-historical,” and ignores the developed relationships known to have taken place within the context of Hellenistic and Roman roll illustration (pp. 7–8).

In 1921, Wilhelm Schubart’s *Das Buch bei den Griechen und Romern* (*Books by the Greeks and Romans*) and Karl Preisendanz’s 1921 *Papyrusfunde und Papyrusforschung* (translated title) emerged. These lists of illustrated antique papyri, which include scientific and literary texts, continue to be heavily relied upon lists of illustrated antique papyri (p. 7).

In 1945, Weitzmann (1947) continues, Erich Bethe published his hermeneutic perspective entitled *Buch und Bild im Altertum* (*Books and Pictures in Antiquity*), perhaps in belated response to Birt’s 1907 work. Bethe argued that because book illumination was well established by the pre-Hellenistic period, pictures must have been arranged on roll pages with more regard for content than principles of design by that period (p. 10). He identified two Greek text types: scientific *Bilderbucher*, representing fields such as mechanics, zoology, medicine, botany, and astronomy, and literary texts which categorically included epic poems. Scientific *Bilderbucher*, Bethe argued, intercalculated illustrations into a text for purposes of explanation, but pictures in literary texts were nonexistent until the late Roman advent of *Buchbilder* (Roman copies of Greek *Bilderbucher*), which, according to Bethe, contained the first examples of illustrated literary texts (Weitzmann, pp. 9–10).

As Weitzmann perceives Strzygowski’s perspective as “anti-Greek” and “anti-historical,” he perceives Bethe’s work as “anti-classical.” He has displayed great foresight by including these German researchers in his 1947 text, but his approach to scientific manuscripts and their illustrations worries me because his decisions sometimes appear too subjective. Reconsider his assessment of Erich Bethe’s hermeneutic argument that pre-Hellenistic illustrators of scientific rolls arranged their pictures with more regard for content than for principles of design, and that literary texts and epic poems were not illustrated until late Roman times. Weitzmann supported Bethe’s argument regarding the arrangement of illustrations in scientific manuals but argued against his proposal that images in scientific works preceded those in literary manuscripts because literary data, not scientific efforts, embody the “classical” tradition: “[T]he great
Classics, not only for the ancient reader but for the illustrator as well, were, from the Hellenistic period on, Homer and Euripides, and not Nicander, Oppian and the like” (p. 10). In other words, the classic works are poetry and plays, not scientific texts.

When Weitzmann claims, for another example, that both papyrus roll and Greek roll illustration began in the Hellenistic period, he is not referring to ancient scientific illustrations. Instead, he is alluding to illustrated literary rolls of what he calls a truly classical nature like Homer’s. Yet, in a separate context, he states that Greeks must have been familiar with Egyptian rolls before Egypt’s hellenization because papyrus did not grow in Greece. He concludes, rightly, that Greek roll illustrators using papyrus must have been importing it from Egypt (p. 66). Weitzmann admits that he briefly evaluated the scholarly contributions of the German researchers but put aside their discoveries until more conclusive evidence could be found (pp. 5, 57), and I appreciate his conservative attitude. It bears remembering, however, that scholars have never been concerned with whether scientific rolls existed. They have been wrestling over how scientific rolls were related to literary rolls, a question that Weitzmann leaves unanswered.

Contemporary responses to classical scientific and literary texts indicate that nothing has changed much since Weitzmann’s 1947 work. Michael W. Haslam’s “The Contribution of Papyrology to the Study of Greek Literature” and Peter van Minnen’s “The Origin and Future of Papyrology,” both of which were presented in Proceedings of the 20th International Congress of Papyrologists Copenhagen in 1992, edited in 1994, indicate that scholars still neglect the evidence of papyri. According to Haslam:

In matters of textual history, as with everything else, papyri teach us how little we really know, and how fragile what we think we know really is. Even to Homer, who comes medievally equipped with scholia extensively documenting the state of the text in antiquity, papyri have brought a wealth of new information. Among other things, they reveal the volatility with which the text of the Homeric poems was still being transmitted down to Ptolemaic times. . . . Papyri have consistently shown that the medievally transmitted text is more corrupt than it has been believed to be. We can be certain that much of what we read in even the best editions is not what the author wrote. That is not a comfortable thought, and understandably it encounters resistance. It must I think be this exposure of the unreliability of our texts, of the frailty of their foundations, that at least partly
accounts for the fact that the evidence of papyri, rather than being welcomed as
enlarging our knowledge, is so often minimized or discounted. (pp. 98–104)

Van Minnen makes a similar point:

The reason for the negative reaction to the new texts [papyri] until about the
middle of the nineteenth century lies in the fact that the scholarly public expected
to see new literary texts and was greatly disappointed by the documents. . . .
[M]ost philologists [were only interested in literary texts to start with]. . . . True,
allowance is made for the existence of an intermediate category of sub-literary
texts such as magical papyri, but that hardly serves as a bridge between the two
other categories [literary and scientific]. As a consequence, literary papyri are
accepted in philological circles, [but] documentary [scientific] papyri are
nowadays despised or simply ignored. . . . All this gains in importance once we
are dealing with [Greek] literature that was actually produced in Egypt during the
papyrological millennium such as the poetry of Callimachus [a close associate of
Nicander]. New literary papyri from Graeco-Roman Egypt are as a rule studied in
splendid isolation from the culture that produced them. . . .

Papyrology is not an ancillary discipline, a view often erroneously held
even by papyrologists. [It] is a primary discipline. Ever since papyri were found
and added to our stock of evidence from the ancient world, they are indispensable
and unavoidable. . . .

The context we have most sadly neglected in papyrological studies, even
in the program of the twentieth congress of papyrologists, is Egyptian culture. . . .
Graeco-Roman Egypt is only a slice out of a much longer, continuous, historical
culture. Most Egyptologists end their studies with the conquest of Egypt by
Alexander the Great. . . . (pp. 35–39)

As the remarks of Haslam and van Minnen indicate, the works of some classicists and
historians of both art and science still seemed to reflect an essential disregard for content-based
analyses even in the 1990s, nearly fifty years after Weitzmann’s 1947 book.

4.4.2. Misunderstanding Magico Religious Healing Rituals

Another misunderstanding stems from the problems that scholars, including medical
historians admit to having with esoteric healing ritual. The problem again goes back to
Weitzmann (1959), who in his *Ancient Book Illumination* demonstrated as little regard for manuscripts and illustrations associated with herbal and antidotal venom medicine, alchemy, astronomy, and mathematics—all of which include elements of ritual—as he did for figure and elements connected to it in 1947. However, Weitzmann is not the only classicist or art historian to disregard seemingly unscientific applications of certain ancient scientists. For example, the highly regarded and still frequently cited art historian and specialist of medical manuscripts, Charles Singer disparaged “rhizotomists” and their rituals in his 1928 classic *From Magic to Science*. Setting aside his tone, which was probably academically acceptable at the time, his assessment of these elements resembles the attitude until recently demonstrated by scholars toward Hesiod:

The recipients of this traditional herb lore among the Greeks were the so-called rhizotomists. These, as a class, were ignorant men corresponding in a measure to our herbalists. They were very superstitious and practiced a complex ritual in the gathering of their drugs, as still do many people on the same cultural level. . . . The key note of the herbal proper, however, is its practical character: that vague and foolish word with which ignorant and unpractical people have been accustomed in all ages to hide the nakedness of their minds. The earliest collection of this sort that we have is perhaps the Alexipharmaca of Nicander, written in the century following Theophrastus. It is a wretched production . . . in spite of the praise of Cicero . . . ill-written and obscure, with nothing poetic about it save its form (p. 175).

Singer’s contempt reflects his ignorance of ancient healing rituals, a fact admitted by more recent medical historians such as Ludwig Edelstein. Widely acknowledged as one of the two leading medical historians of the 20th century, Edelstein (1967) sheds light on an important, often overlooked, distinction between classical religion and classical magic as he questions the nature of ritual, how ancient peoples experienced it, how modern scholars of medical history analyze it, and why. Edelstein reveals that the tension between magic and science, and therefore the roots of the misunderstanding I intend to discuss, goes back at least to the ancient Greeks:

Greek medicine in its aetiology [study of the causes of disease] as well as in its treatment of diseases is rational. About this fact there can be no doubt. But this is Greek rationalism and empiricism: it is influenced by religious ideas. God and His
action are reckoned with by the physicians in their theory and in their practice. Every form of magic, however, is rejected as useless and wrong. If it [magic] is explained at all, it is on account of a religious belief that the physicians renounce magical superstition. Certainly, in many cases the Skeptic in his resignation also refrains from magical ideas. But this resignation, then, is not restricted to the renunciation of magic alone. It means also the disapproval of every aetiology and is therefore destructive of medical science. Moreover, the majority of physicians belong to the Dogmatic school. The Dogmatists and the unknown practitioners are religious and hostile to magic, which is held to be superstition. From the beginning until the end of antiquity there is no change in the attitude of the physicians in this respect. The relation of medicine to religion and magic therefore cannot be used for distinguishing different epochs of medical history. Greek medical art is a science; it is the beginning of modern science and yet different from it in its foundation. (p. 246)

This ancient misunderstanding between science, medicine, and magic continues today, influencing scholars from outside the field. I am not interested in documenting scholarly medical controversies regarding ritual; however, what scholars outside medical history often recognize as established “fact” in the field appears to be a simplified version of slanted speculation because medical historians themselves disagree on the interpretation of ancient texts. Edelstein (1967) remarks:

[I]t has certainly not been my intention to reopen the time-honored debate as to whether the physician or the philologist is the better qualified interpreter of Greek medicine . . . [One medical historian says,] “Only a physician should interpret the Hippocratic texts, for the opinions of the school man [philologist] can have little usefulness in so practical a field as medicine.” [Another medical historian says,] “Only a physician is justified in interpreting the physician Hippocrates . . . others . . . should confine themselves to the religiophilosophic or purely humanistic phases [which would embrace study of magic and ritual].” I for one do not believe in the mutual exclusion of the two approaches, and I plead for cooperation between the scientific and the philological interpreter. . . . For in
history no less than in science, there are facts which one cannot afford to overlook
(p. 130)

This oversight colors so many categories of art historical interpretation. The healing
rituals in question, rhyzotomist technicians who implemented them and the ingredients they were
taught to use, as well as the historical documents which, through symbolic iconographies, reflect
their interpretation-- all of these are essentially Feminine. Westerners have taken references to
her out of them the same way, and apparently for the same reason that they disconnected notions
of healing from use of the image. Consequently, essential premises underlying how and why
ancient and early art history were defined as they were have been overlooked. This includes
Feminine characters who were once recognized as orchestrators of healing visualization, the
most likely example being Mary.

4.4.3. Misunderstanding the Ritual and Magic Behind Mary and Magdeline

From my perspective the most serious of these misunderstandings relates to the historical
Mary, Mother of Jesus. It is commonly stated in iconographical texts that evidence underlying
Mary's history is troubling. Tracing her role as the mother of the Christian Church to
Renaissance times, when Grunewald painted the Isenheim, Hall (1974) tells us that she was
challenged by the Nestorians in the 5th century, and again by the Reformation in the 16th.
Nestorius's charge was that she was not the mother of God, but "the mother only of Christ the
human, not the divine person." His views were condemned as heresy by the Council of Ephesus
in 431, and this verdict fostered dissemination of the image of the Mother and Child as the
representation of official doctrine. The majestic effigies of her and the child enthroned which
adorn many centuries of ecclesiastical architecture first became widely diffused in the west in the
7th century. However, continues Hall, it was not until the 12th century, and even more the 13th,
when western Mary's development reached her highest outward expression. This was through the
Gothic cathedrals of France, typically dedicated to Our Lady (pp. 323-324).

The problem I have with portraits of Mary like this one of Hall's, is that they avoid her
connection with the ancient Feminine. This omission does not allow us to study her contextually,
as peoples of the Renaissance saw her. Accordingly, it alters her identity. Iconographical
evidence indicates Mary's earliest identity was associated with pre Christian Feminine figures.
Like them, she was powerful enough to manipulate ritual activity and much more. The problem
is, though attributes defining pre Christian Feminine figures can be shown to have anticipated
those of Mary, the bond she and they share has been divided in half. Only half of Mary exists now, and this part of her is only good. Her errant attributes seem to have been reconfigured in the figure named Mary Magdalene, and accordingly, have over the course of the last seventeen hundred years or so been all but eliminated, hidden inside of Magdalene's frequently shunned identity. If I can connect Mary to Magdaline, and then their composite identity to ancient *Feminine* tradition, these associations will bring me closer to establishing that history has not been afraid of Mary, so much as her oracular—even allegedly monstrous counterparts from pre Christian *Feminine* tradition. More than their ritual images and processes, the unique abilities of this group seem to be the origin of all the misunderstandings in question.

This section presents passages excerpted from arguments of selected Mariologists whose efforts support my investment in comparing pre Christian *Feminine* figures with the Christian ones named Mary and Magdalene. To understand the significance of this correlation, consider the following translated passage taken from an original agrarian Latin Roman spell. It is a prayer which was used to invoke assistance from the divine *Feminine*. Significantly, it credits the *Feminine* with having generated all things, including the sun and moon. She guards over the sky and seas while controlling the chaos of their storms, and protects all gods and their powers:

> Earth, divine goddess, Mother Nature, who generatest all things and bringest forth anew the sun which thou hast given to the nations; Guardian of sky and sea and of all gods and powers; through thy power all nature falls silent and then sinks in sleep. And again thou bringest back the light and chasest away night, and yet again thou coverest us most securely with thy shades. Thou dost contain chaos infinite, yea and winds and showers and storms. Thou sendest them out when thou wilt and causest the seas to roar; thou chasest away the sun and arousest the storm. Again, when wilt thou sendest forth the joyous day and givest the nourishment of life with thy eternal surety. And when the soul departs to thee we return. Thou indeed art duly called great Mother of the gods; thou conquerest by thy divine name. Thou art the source of the strength of nations and of gods; without thee nothing can be brought to perfection or be born; thou art great, queen of the gods. Goddess! I adore thee as divine; I call upon thy name; be pleased to grant that which I ask thee, so shall I give thanks to thee, goddess, with due faith.

(Quoted in Singer, 1928, p. 167)
The group of Mariologists I am interested in do not consider how Mary or the ancient *Feminine* might be affecting art history. Their worries are directed toward interpreting the ancient designation of Mary, Mother of Jesus, because this aspect of her affects how westerners distinguish the human from the divine in her, as well as her son, Jesus Christ. Ancient documents refer to her as a *Theotokos* (literally, "bearer of God"). But by 400 CE, controversies had emerged about how to distinguish the human from the divine in Jesus and his Mother, and interpretation of the term *Theotokos* seems to have become similarly confused as it became entangled in this argument.

No scholars question the fact that this term was used to refer to Mary. In 433, for example, John of Antioch sent Cyril of Alexandria a creed composed by the theologian Theodoret of Cyrus which read: "We therefore acknowledge our lord Jesus Christ . . . complete God and complete man . . . [A] union of the two natures has been made, therefore we confess one Christ . . . The holy Virgin is Theotokos, because God the Word was made flesh and became man, and from her conception united with Himself the temple received from her . . .”

The term *Theotokos* was used to refer to Mary in early Christian history, and the Orthodox Church still acknowledges her in this capacity. Protestants, on the other hand, do not generally use this term to refer to Mary, and neither do Roman Catholics. This distinction exemplifies a long lived, heated controversy over what the association between *Theotokos* and Mary originally meant to ancient and early peoples. From the perspective of this dissertation, the problem has become another misunderstanding, which has evolved to the point where contemporary scholars studying her have split into two groups: one small and one large. The smaller group studies Mary’s identity to reestablish her ancient lineage. The larger group, however, commonly acknowledges her as Jaroslav Pelikan (1996) does, in his *Mary Through the Centuries: Her Place in the History of Culture*. There he refers to her as a contemporary "problem" for twentieth and twenty first century theologians more than a source of information (p. 9). I have largely considered the minor group, because their concerns inform my analysis of the Isenheim Altarpiece. Pelikan (1996) and Stephen Benko, in his 1993 *Virgin Goddess: Pagan and Christian Roots of Mariology*, helpfully acknowledge that problems with interpretation of Mary escalated with the circa 1500 Northern Renaissance struggle between the Protestants and the Roman Catholics. These two religious groups fought over whether Catholic worship of Mary was a legitimate aspect of Christianity or some form of pagan cult, and there is still disagree
amongst them regarding this issue. As this is the time and place in history in which Grunewald created his Isenheim Altarpiece, it is especially interesting to me that neither group seems to care much about ancient references to Mary’s having been a *Theotokos*.

Modern Mariologists like Pelikan (1966) admit to worrying more about how to define Mary’s Assumption and the Immaculate Conception of Jesus. His assessment of this problem seems vaguely noncommittal, and he does not consider the value of relating Mary to ancient *Feminine* iconographies of agrarian science. He explains that though many scholars agree Marian worship can be traced to Greco-Roman tradition in one way or another, most have separated study of her Christian function from analysis of her ancient *Feminine*, agrarian origin. In their eyes, Mary’s original definition has become “quite secondary” to her “acquired” meaning. It serves Mariologists best to concentrate their efforts on establishing the Catholic view of Christian history. That is, Mary's association with Jesus is what is most important, and their relationship is based upon the belief that she was the virgin Mother of God. Only in this capacity is Mary understood to be the cornerstone of the Catholic “doctrine of [Trinity] development” (pp. 7–9). Her historical identity has accordingly in itself become “something of a problem” because contextual study of her represents a potentially enormous resource (p. 9).

Pelikan's views are reflected second hand, in the following passage of Geoffrey Ashe's excerpt from his *The Virgin* (1976). I write second hand because where Pelikan acknowledges the availability of evidence in ancient material, but ignores it, Ashe seems to see almost no opportunity in the ancient *Feminine at all*:

But with Mary the problem is subtler and more daunting. As an earthly person, she almost defeats the technologies of research. We have no data except, scantily, in the Christian writings themselves. There is no way of checking from outside them. Archaeology is irrelevant to her. She has no certain ancestry or background. If Christ himself existed, Christ's mother did; but a sceptic who questioned whether we know any more would have a case. When we turn from Mary on earth to Mary glorified, history is in danger of complete incoherence. Near-silence during the first Christian centuries gives way to an apotheosis which seems to have no real cause, no proportion to the facts at the point of origin, no development behind it to span the gap. Yet it happens. It is a phenomenon of history, to be handled and accounted for (p. 3).
The views of the group I am identifying with Pelikan (1966) are reflected by another group of figures like Ashe, whose perspective reflects an internal analysis of Mary developed from the perspective of Christian viewpoint which, because it all but ignores the preChristian ancient Feminine, remains unresolved. When these two groups are consolidated and viewed from outside of Christian scholarship, evidence appears to be mounting and tensions escalating as Mariologists struggle to define the gray area between the ancient version of Mary and the contemporary one. Mariologist and Priest Andrew Greeley (1977) helpfully outlines this controversy from within his discipline. I am aligning him with the second of the groups in question, the one that I am most interested in:

There seem to have been two factors at work in the emergence of Mary as an object of devotion. First, the early Christians were caught up in a fantastic exuberance. . . . They were free from old laws, old fears, old constraints, old customs. . . . Whatever was good was Christian. If the good was somehow mixed with the bad, that was no problem; the bad could be swept away and Christian identity would remain whole and clean. So the various local deities were transformed into saints, and the Feminine goddesses were integrated, and transformed into Mary. Whatever was good in the worship of the goddesses was already Christian and ought to be saved; and whatever was bad could be excised and dismissed as not constituting a very serious threat. . . . In any event, this exuberance for all things good and for all things human probably created a context in which Mary could emerge as a Christian symbol between the end of the first century and the beginning of the fourth. (pp. 81–82)

The above excerpt of Greeley (1977) supports my introductory observation that Mary has been divided into two parts, the errant one having been eliminated. Earlier in his book, in his stated intentions, Greeley sheds additional light on his assessment of this dimension of the Mary problem:

I hope at all costs to avoid the battle of the Reformation over Mary (one of the most unseemly and foolish conflicts in the entire history of Christendom). The antipathy of some of the reformers and their followers to Mary was a disastrous mistake, as were the Catholic superstitions which in part caused the antipathy and the triumphalism which followed. . . . [T]he reformers were quite correct in
insisting that Mary had taken on a quasi-divine role in the Catholic tradition. They were wrong, however, in thinking that such a role detracted from the worship of God; for we shall see that Mary, like all Feminine deities, reflects a central component of the deity and does not detract from its fullness. I think Catholic apologists have made a serious mistake by denying the obvious connection between Mary and the goddesses of pagan antiquity. In their overanxious fear that Mary would lose her uniqueness, they lost a powerful weapon in the controversy with the reformers and also an insight which might have enabled them to make Mary a much more pertinent symbol to fill the religious need to see the deity as both masculine and Feminine. . . .

Nor will I put much emphasis here on the specific Marian doctrines proclaimed or discussed by the Catholic Church. I surely do not deny such doctrines. . . . However, my interest is not in specific doctrine but in religious symbolism, and I would contend that the doctrines may be best understood as theologically directed attempts to explicate the symbols (some attempts to explicate the symbols being more successful than others, no doubt). (pp. 13–14)

Clearly, Greeley's ideas support my investment in studying the binary nature of Mary's ancient Feminine identity. However, through studying his efforts alongside of Jaroslav Pelikan's (1996), the significance of investing in Mary's ancient identity expands into a larger concern referred to in this dissertation as another misunderstanding. Pelikan has received more than 35 honorary degrees from universities all over the world, as well as awards and medals from numerous scholarly societies and institutions. His The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine (1971–1989), is widely acknowledged as the foremost history of its kind. However, he at the same time acknowledges Mary more as a contemporary problem than a critical source of information--and his viewpoint is privileged over that of Greeley. Here Pelikan accounts for his decision to privilege traditional means of studying Mary:

The Medieval Church remained pliable enough to accommodate to some degree the widespread need for myth. The major manifestation of this was the Virgin, which elevated [what might have been a comparatively inconsequential] figure recognized as Mary to stupendous symbolic stature. Here was the mother goddess Christianity lacked, worked up out of the meagerest historical material by the
mythic imagination - a triumph of collective visionary power at times so sweeping that the virgin nearly crowded out the official trinity. Of course, theology of the Church deftly delimited Mariology; but that had little meaning at the level of the piety.

In a real sense, our inquiry into the witness of the New Testament to the Virgin Mary has been begging the question—-and, in light of subsequent history, begging it falsely. For with their belief in the unity of the Bible, where “the New Testament is hidden in the Old and the Old becomes visible in the new [Novum in vetere latet, Vetus in Novo patet],” and with the consequent ability to toggle effortlessly from one testament to the other and from fulfillment to prophecy and back again, biblical interpreters throughout most of Christian history have had available to them a vast body of supplementary material to make up for the embarrassing circumstance that... “the reader of the Gospels is at first surprised to find so little about Mary.”... The evidence of the Bible is important not because of its contrast with subsequent tradition but precisely because of its anticipation of that tradition. Or, to put it the other way around and more accurately, the biblical evidence is interesting in the light of the way the subsequent tradition used it—or, as some might say, misused it.

Whereas celebration of the Virgin Mary and the elaboration of such praises in her name coincided chronologically with the heyday of allegorical and typological biblical interpretation, the rejection of both the Marian celebration and the allegory came together, first in the reformation, and then in the enlightenment and its aftermath. Looking back at both developments, in the Middle Ages and in the Reformation and enlightenment, it is difficult to avoid the tough questions of loss and gain. For the allegorical and typological method had saved the Hebrew Bible from its enemies and detractors in the Early Christian movement who read it literally and rejected it. They were also often the ones who opposed the direction in which the interpretation of the Virgin Mary was moving. The vindication of the Jewish Scriptures as part of the Christian Bible coincided not only chronologically but logically with this Mary. Vastly different though they seemed to be in their approach to the Bible, therefore, a fundamentalist literalism
and a modernist historicism both yielded a two-dimensional perspective in the reading of the Bible. At the same time they also led to an impoverishment in the attitude toward Mary (pp. 35–36).

I am as interested in comparing how and why Greeley and Pelikan have established their divergent points of view regarding the value of Mary's ancient identity, as I am in what I can cull from their findings. The tension between these two approaches suggests scholars might need to be comparatively studying why problems are defined as they are, by any given scholar, while analyzing that scholar's gains. Through studying Hesiodic and medical scholarship, for example, it was established that misunderstandings can be based upon disregard for certain kinds of peoples and their “superstitious,” “ignorant,” and “impractically” unscientific ritual applications, in addition to muddled adaptations of myth and metaphor. The efforts of Greeley and Pelikan appear to be grounded in similar observations, but they diverge at the point where their respective allegiances to Christian dogma has lead them. Greeley studies Mary at the expense of established dogma, for reasons associated with a broader, more culturally beneficial means of using her. Pelikan, on the other hand, reinforces the current state of Christian dogma at the risk of the advancement of ideas.

Reasons like these can be shown to have played a significant role in every one of these misunderstandings, but more has factored into them than has been discussed. By merging the ancient Feminine with agrarian medical science and Mariology, I will take my definition of Mary's relationship to Magdaline beyond documentary theory. I will consider them from the perspective of biology and genetics to constitute a more practical and tangible means of understanding them and these other various misunderstandings.

4.5 Mooncrafting: Agrarian Astronomy, Ritual Cleansing, and Catharsis

Ancient and early peoples originally worked to sustain themselves through a form of agrarian knowledge which included practical applications of astronomy. Referred to by Harley in his 1885 Moon Lore as "mooncrafting," this celebrated knowledge form (Fig. 36I) placed special emphasis on ways the moon's forces determined how and when to sow, grow, and harvest the earthly elements mankind required for survival. Practice of mooncrafting was always accompanied by prayers overseen or modeled by figures Harley identifies as "mooncrafters," figures in possession of knowledge which was innately realized in some humans more than others. These figures were supremely sensitive to the cyclical rhythms of the moons's waxing
and waning cycles and evidence presented in this dissertation indicates they were associated with the *Feminine*. This section will show that Mary and the *Feminine* were related to biology and genetics by way of agriculture through them, and that study of this composite can accordingly not be separated from their relationship with the moon.

Mooncrafting shaped ancient interpretations of how human beings interacted with food, medicine, the weather and temperature, and their use of natural elements. Ancient and early westerners appreciated the moon and its courses philosophically, religiously, and theoretically, but their chief investment in them was always a practical one. They used them to enhance their production of food and medicine, to predict the weather, and to use natural elements most effectively. Regarding food and medicine, they learned how to align the annual growth rhythms involved in flowering, fructifying, sowing, and harvesting with the moon’s changing position in relation to the sun and planets. Harley provides the following examples: 1) When an April moon goes far into May, the fowl are 10 to 12 days late laying their eggs (p. 96); and 2) Cucumbers, radishes, turnips, leaks, lilies, horseradish, and saffron increase in size during a full moon, but onions decrease in size (p. 178). Regarding weather, they learned to determine temperature and anticipate measured degrees of rainfall. Harley provides these examples: 1) An old moon in the arms of the new one (mist) means fine weather; and 2) A new moon with its horns turned upward contains water, but if the horns are turned downward, all the water has run out (p. 187).

From Horace Beck’s *Folklore and the Sea* (1973, rpt. 1999), we learn that ancient and early peoples could presage storms by comparing rings around the moon to rings encircling the sun, and they knew how to measure these findings by comparing them to the degree of clarity manifest in stars and the Northern Lights. Mirages, rainbows, double suns and moons, and moon dogs and sun dogs (small rainbowlike patches in the sky around the moon or sun) were all measured the same way, alongside the moon (pp. 83–84).

Alexander Porteous (1928) *Forest Folklore, Mythology, and Romance* cites Pliny’s *Natural History* (xvi c.75) and Cato’s *De Re Rustica* on Pliny to show how early peoples used mooncrafting knowledge to determine when lumber would be at its best tinsel strength. I am submitting this information about lumber because ancient and early peoples had similar knowledge of snake venoms, herbs, lichen, and other ingredients used for medicine. According to Pliny and Cato, Greeks and Romans interpreted degrees of moisture to anticipate the sap level of trees, thus insuring that the timber they felled would be at its optimal strength:
When you root up the Elm, the Pine, the Nut-tree, or indeed any other kind of tree, mind and do so when the moon is on the wane, after midday, and when there is no south wind blowing. The proper time for cutting a tree is when the seed is ripe, but be careful not to draw it away or plane it when the dew is falling. . . . Never touch the timber except when the moon is on the change, or else at the end of the second quarter: at these periods you may either root up the tree, or fell it as it stands. The next seven days after the full moon are the best of all for grubbing up a tree. Be particularly careful not to rough-hew timber, or indeed, to cut or touch it, unless it is perfectly dry; and by no means while it is covered with frost or dew (quoted in Porteous (1928), pp. 36–38).

None of this practical knowledge was used without demonstrating prayerful regard for the moon by way of worshipping the Feminine. According to Harley (1885), Lurker (1995), and Edith Hamilton (1942/1990), the Feminine was originally the moon’s principal identity and the central basis of all agrarian knowledge forms. Phoenicians, early Israelites, Greeks, Romans, and Egyptians all worshipped her (pp. 93–95; 31, 72, 93; 31). The mythologists Hamilton and Bulfinch (1855/1959), Egyptologist Lurker, and Hebraic scholar David Ben Gurion agree that all involved associated her with numerous “mothers,” “maiden goddesses,” and “sisters” who had overlapping attributes. Just as the Greek mother goddess Hera was Zeus’s sister as well as his wife, for example, these moon goddesses are often described together with one or more male figures viewed as her double and/or male equivalent, typically alluded to as “father,” “brother,” or “son” (pp. 25–28; 34, 82; 100, 124; 25). Ancient peoples defined and used these male/female composites in multiple ways that wove in and around each other to establish a single unified truth which I suggest can be loosely associated with contemporary efforts to account for them binarily.

J. C. Cooper (1978) assesses ancient Feminine attributes anthropomorphically instead of binarily, but his findings suggest they were binarily defined. According to him, the moon and the Feminine were equivalent representations of justice. They were “Queens of Heaven” ruling supremely over the productive powers of earth and all gods and goddesses. For this reason, ancient peoples configured their crown, defined in terms of pointed shapes, into a sort of “helmet” rising up from their collective head. This doubly powered life principle, says Cooper, signified that the moon goddess was the bride and mother of God (pp. 43–44, 50, 84, 108–109,
Based upon this iconographical definition of the Feminine moon, I infer she summarily represented a binary blend of heaven and earth, good and evil, light and dark, egocentrism and altruism; destruction and creation. Significantly, in all of these pairings, her Feminine presence was metaphorically associated with the underlying processes involved in the birth, life, death, and disintegration of all life forms. Unfortunately, though this perspective is interesting, it is ultimately theoretical and accordingly cannot help us analyze the Isenheim Altarpiece. It must be pushed into the realm of practicality.

4.5.1 “Mooncrafters,” "Moist" Brains, Humoural Theory, Melancholia, and Syzygy

Mooncrafting ability contributed to another great misunderstanding, this one being imposed upon Feminine figures endowed with what the early modern philosopher Francis Bacon, in his Works (1740), alluded to as people with especially "moist" brains. Bacon viewed this attribute as an essential weakness, based upon the ancient observation that some human brains are “moister,” or more influenced by the high moon than others (quoted in Harley, 1885, p. 202). By high moon, Bacon is referring to early knowledge of two daily tides occurring which were caused by the moon. These varied in time and strength in different parts of the world, and their height depended on the moon's position relative to the sun. This association, between the high moon and figures endowed with moist brains, has a very ancient lineage.

Dinsmore Alter, Clarence H. Cleminshaw, and John G. Phillips tell us in their Pictorial Astronomy (1948) that in 45 BCE it was ordered by Caesar that calendrical time and natural phenomena would cease being numbered and understood cyclically, alongside of the interrelated rhythms of the moon’s waxing and waning courses (pp. 47-48). The previous section about mooncrafting tells us it was common knowledge amongst ancient and early peoples that the moon determined man's experience of existence on earth, but long before and after this order was imposed, Juan Eduardo Cirlot (1971) indicates further that knowledge about the moon included critical relationships between its forces and those of the sun and planets (p. xvii). This key idea came to be described in a variety of ways, and some relate to why certain human beings were believed to be in possession of "moist" brains.

One way moist brains were accounted for was through the existence of macrocosmic and microcosmic relationships between and amongst earth's elements and other heavenly bodies. This application accounted for human brains, but only as part of a larger working system. Harley (1885) and Singer (1928) state that the moon and its tides impacted earth and its inhabitants
cyclically, through on the one hand, “macrocosmic” relationships between the earth and other heavenly bodies, and on the other, “microcosmic” relationships amongst the earth’s elements. Earth's tides, for example, were viewed as a manifestation of the moon’s “macrocosmic” powers which were accordingly perceived as affecting all fluids in earthly elements “microcosmically.” Most relevantly, this belief was extended to include human fluids--including those affecting the brain (pp. 96, 178, 195–198; 54).

Another way moist brains were accounted for was more directly, through what are commonly known as humoral relationships determined by bodily fluids which determined one's physiology and psychology. In his aforementioned *Works* (1740), Bacon extended the waxing and waning of the moon to the human brain to account for variant ranges of human ability, based upon their being able to tolerably adapt to the fullness of the moon (quoted in Harley, 1885, p. 202):

> It is like that the brain of man waxeth moister and fuller upon the full of the moon; and therefore it were good for those that have moist brains, and are great drinkers, to take sume [sic] of *lignum aloes*, rosemary, frankincense, etc., about the full of the moon. It is like, also, that the humours in men’s bodies increase and decrease as the moon doth; and therefore it were good to purge some day or two after the full; for that then the humours will not replenish so soon again. (p. 202)

Singer (1928) and P. Warren's *Roots of Scientific Medicine* tell us that long before Bacon’s time, medicine was equated with the philosophies of Hippocrates (c. 460-370 BCE), Plato (427-348 BCE), and Aristotle (384-322 BCE), all of whom viewed health as an equilibrium of the body determined by four humours, as was discussed in chapter one. In this original system of thinking, sap in plants and blood in animals was understood to have been the foundation of life. Other body fluids like phlegm, bile, and feces became visible in illness because the balance of the body had become disturbed. For instance, epilepsy was due to phlegm blocking the airways that caused the body to struggle and convulse to free itself, mania was due to bile boiling in the brain, and black bile reflected melancholy (pp. 54–58, 138-143; chap. : The Humoural Theory of Diseases). Most relevant to this dissertation is their idea that each of the humours was associated with particular physical and mental characteristics, which could moreover be combined to elaborately describe complex personality types (e.g. choleric-sanguine or melancholic phlegmatic):
### HUMOURAL THEORY OF DISEASES

#### SANGUINE
- Hot
- Moist

#### CHOLERIC
- Dry

#### PHLEGMATIC
- Cold

#### MELANCHOLY

*Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy (1621), and Rudolph Steiner* added that these humours were believed to give off vapors which, as they ascended to the brain, thus determined an individual's physical and mental, as well as moral attributes. This knowledge was common knowledge throughout the Renaissance period during which Grunewald was constructing his shrine. Here is a Renaissance interpretation of the four humours which includes an account of these various attributes:

### RENAISSANCE INTERPRETATION OF THE FOUR HUMOURS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SANGUINE</th>
<th>CHOLERIC</th>
<th>PHLEGMATIC</th>
<th>MELANCHOLIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Body Substance:</td>
<td>blood</td>
<td>yellow bile</td>
<td>phlegm</td>
<td>black bile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produced by:</td>
<td>liver</td>
<td>spleen</td>
<td>lungs</td>
<td>gall bladder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Element:</td>
<td>air</td>
<td>fire</td>
<td>water</td>
<td>earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualities:</td>
<td>hot, moist</td>
<td>hot, dry</td>
<td>cold, moist</td>
<td>cold, dry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complexion and Body Type:</td>
<td>ruddy, corpulent</td>
<td>red haired, thin</td>
<td>corpulent</td>
<td>sallow, thin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SANGUINE  CHOLERIC  PHLEGMATIC  MELANCHOLIC

Personality:  
amourous,  
violent  
happy,  
short tempered  
generous  
vengeful  
optimistic,  
ambitious  
irresponsible  
pallid  
cowardly  

The third way that moist brains were accounted for is less well known. It is an astrological, pseudoscientific explanation for why some brains might receive and interpret information differently than others. Today, only some in the history of astronomy acknowledge the scientific viability of figures that Harley referred to as mooncrafters, and they do not call them by this term. They consider them in relation to the term syzygy, which according to Donald Menzel's 1995 *Astronomy*, is the time of the month when the sun, moon, and earth are precisely aligned. Solar and Lunar eclipses also occur at times identified as points of syzygy, but the term is additionally applied to each instance of new moon and full moon, when the sun and moon are in conjunction or in opposition even though they are not precisely on one line with the earth. This is the meaning of syzygy that I am interested in. When the moon and sun are in syzygy, high tides are at their highest and low tides at their lowest. Some researchers, like Menzel, link this fact with the belief that human female menstrual cycles coincide roughly with the lunar month. Menzel states that during times of syzygy, the bodily fluids of women who are especially sensitive to the moon become highly influenced the same way the tides are (p. 14). Both peak. This observation becomes more meaningful when considered alongside the idea presented by Alter, Cleminshaw, & Phillips (1948), that the moon moves a little farther away from earth every year. They tell us that theoretically, as we move farther back in time, the moon moves closer and closer to earth. In antiquity, tides were higher than they are today (p. 75). It seems to follow that women's brains were being more heavily influenced, too, if we accept the ancient Greek Hippocratic concept of humours. Either way, this information contributes to some very complicated problems that seem to have become increasingly relevant because humoral medicine and notions of syzygy were deeply integrated into the beliefs of ancient and early peoples. Contextual study of Grunewald's Isenheim must account for them.

In Gnosticism, for example, a syzygy is a divine active-passive, male-female pair of *aeons* which are, according to F.W. Farrar's 1881 "Mercy and Judgement" and Thomas Talbott's
In 1995 "Three Pictures of God in Western Theology," complementary to one another rather than oppositional. A more ancient use of this concept characterizes aspects of God in Hesiod. There aeon, in the form of the Greek work Aion, refers to ages, or generations, its broadest meaning being the depth or profundity--before the beginning. The most relevant aspect of this ancient application is the Gnostic association between Christ and the Hebraic \textit{Feminine} Sophia. From the perspective of syzygy, he is her counterpart (pp. 378-382; 13-15). Sophia will be accounted for in my upcoming discussion on the \textit{Feminine}.

Essentially, early peoples seem to have connected the art of mooncrafting with a variety of names for the same kind of figure. In every context in which her presence has been accounted for, she is iconographically aligned with the \textit{Feminine}, and accordingly equated with prayerful applications involving food, shelter, and the preservation of health. These ideas cannot help me unravel the mysteries of the Isenheim Altarpiece, however, because there are still the misunderstandings to consider. When these \textit{Feminine} figures are viewed from the perspective of biological and genetic misunderstandings, additional clues to why Mary's ancient relationship with the \textit{Feminine} has been overlooked in Isenheim analyses become clearer.

The most relevant point supporting my investment in connecting this aspect of the \textit{Feminine} with Mary is biological and humoural. Bacon, in his previously quoted excerpt from Harley (1885), states that: "the brain of man waxeth moister and fuller upon the full of the moon; and therefore it were good for those that have moist brains, and are great drinkers." Bacon suggests that "great drinkers" who have problems, presumably with alcohol, should seek help from certain herbs (p. 202). He seems to have associated moist brain peoples with what in contemporary times would be identified as the disease of alcoholism, and though he does not connect moist brains with figures of melancholic disposition in this passage, the connection between these two brain categories is implied. My interest in this analogy is that by the time when Bacon wrote his \textit{Works} (1740), peoples endowed with moist brains were apparently being recognized as weak and sick individuals. This is in spite of iconographical evidence indicating that at least some of them were neither, and those who were had been taught to be that way. Mooncrafters had been demonstrating unique qualities for hundreds of years, and were in ancient times encouraged, albeit controversially, to develop and use them. Nevertheless, many were in positions of power. Their skills involved unique sensitivities to metaphorical thought processes involving rhythm and visualization. Because they were innately empathetic and instinctively
inclined toward altruistic effort, their unique abilities were used as healing tools, not ends, translated into fields involving prophesying, and divinatorily foreseeing for purposes of prescription in the capacity of physicians like Nicander, who was also an oracular priest of Apollo.

Unfortunately, the whole group seems to have come to be viewed with reservation, identified sometimes with volatility, other times as a needed resource opportunity. In addition, ancient peoples perceived mooncrafting efforts as ones directed by some higher being, and accordingly, viewed mooncrafters as having power and position. This perception seems to have triggered a long debate over what to do with them and whether their form of knowledge could or should be trusted. Perhaps, some degree of jealousy accompanied the idea that not all human brains were the same, probably since those whom the ancients perceived to be most heavily influenced by the moon were also identified as the ones most capable of intimately relating with God or the gods. Regardless of why things unfolded as they did, evidence indicates that humankind has had problems with mooncrafters and figures related to them since at least 1100 BCE, when Hebraic peoples first tried to stop moon worship. Their efforts transpired again between 1015 and 975 BCE, and then again in 641 BCE. See Harley (1885), Smith (1990), and Singer, (1908) (pp. 94–95; 282, 324, 369, 643; 54–58).

The Greeks appear to have dealt with mooncrafters the same way as Hebraics did. Harley's information is based upon the premise that mooncrafters worshipped the moon, and though he does not refer to mooncrafters as Feminine agents, both groups drew upon the powers of the moon or were equated with them, shared the same iconographical attributes, and ended up being alluded to as "witches." However, distinctions seem to have developed between what motivated figures in these various groups. There can be shown to exist in every one of these groups some degree of tension between egocentrical and altruistic approach, and this would account for their means of approaching their magical processes. In this dissertation we have studied or will study oracular Priests of Apollo who were poets and rhyzotomist healers, Delphic Oracles, Vestal Virgins, Carpenters and Potters, Wild People, Feminine warriors like Achilles, and Great Mother figures. All fit similar iconographical profiles, and I am choosing to view their efforts in theory, as altruistic ones, based upon what they represented to ancient and early peoples. That is, they were a connection between the people and their gods. In this context, they can be shown to have been one and the same thing.
Lindsay (1970) reminds us through literary sources like Aristophanes’ *Clouds* that some Greeks believed that “witches could control the moon” (p. 152), and Pliny exemplifies the same dismay from the perspective of magic’s effect on Greek alchemical medicinal practice. These concerns reflect deviation from principles which had originally governed the group I have in mind:

The first man, as far as I can discover, to write a yet-extant treatise on magic was Ostanes, who . . . sowed what I may call the seeds of this monstrous craft, infecting the whole world by the way at each stage of [his] journeying. A little before Ostanes, the more careful inquirers place another Zoroaster, a native of Proconnesus. One thing is certain. It was this Ostanes who chiefly roused among the Greek peoples not so much an eager appetite for this lore as a sheer mania (Quoted in Lindsay, 1970, p. 134).

In another passage, Pliny speaks of the gruesome habits of Greek and Roman patients:

Others seek to secure the leg marrow and the brain of infants. Not a few among the Greeks has even spoken of the flavor of each organ and limb, going into all the details and not excluding nail parings—as though it could be thought health [sic] for a man to become a beast and to deserve disease for the very remedies he begs. And by Hercules, well deserved is the disappointment if these medicines prove useless. To look at human entrails is considered a sin. What must it be to eat them? (Quoted in Lindsay, p. 154).

What had started out as prayerful worship became more complicated. Effects of the individual temperaments and egos of the participants of these various groups seem to have begun to take precedence over ways their original form and function had been viewed by the community. There had evolved a fundamental distrust of magical processes such as were used in alchemy, rhyzotomy medicine, and mooncrafting and it continued in Western European history in a variety of altered contexts. One was Christianity. In 1484, Innocent VIII issued a papal bull denouncing “witchcraft.” This is one of hundreds of such efforts to suppress the ability of high moon moisture figures to manipulate esoteric forces and my dissertation is not about this suppression, it is about misunderstandings that seem to have resulted alongside of these efforts which have shaped our views on the Isenheim Mary. Putting aside the countless numbers of figures demonstrating these unique abilities who had been killed during the years before 1484, in
the three hundred years followed, more than 100,000 “witches” were put to death by Christian authorities (p. 151). By the mid 1600s, mooncrafters were no longer worshipped, demonized, or ostracized. Their efforts had come to be associated more simply with those of the physiologically and psychologically “sick.” Harley notes that the Greek word σελήνιαξομάτον in both Matthew 4:24 is translated “lunatici, Beza; i lunatici, Diodati; les lunatiques, French version; ‘those [which] were lunatick,’ [King James]”. The English Revised Version of 1881, however, translates the word as “epileptic” (pp. 197–198). His observation that high moon moisture peoples came to be associated with lunacy exemplifies my efforts to connect the eradication of Wild People and the scholarly trend to humanize Achilles and isolate his anger from his altruistic impulses with Mary's altered identity.

4.5.2 The Agrarian Moon and Historical Mary

The best way I can think of introducing how this great body of mooncrafting information was iconographically translated into messages mythically signifying the historical Mary is by study of pointed forms. These include the horns of cows and castrated oxen, the tips of certain thorny plants, and the sharp points of the waxing or waning “crescent” moon. Ancient people perceived the crescent moon as both beautiful and useful. They drew on it to anticipate the lunar tides that dominated earth’s waters and brought on rain. It was also used to forecast drought, storms, and the seasonal pests that ravaged crops. In this way, the crescent moon was man's friend and his enemy. His relationship to it might be compared to how mankind has learned to relate to poisons and their antidote. The moon determines when and how much harm will come to earth. Simultaneously, it is mankind's tool for anticipating these harms so that he can prepare for them.

Another example of this principle of harms and their antidote lies in plant “points,” the pointed parts of plants such as thorns which became anthropomorphized into signifiers. The most notable example is the rosebush, or Rosa gallica, also referred to as rosaceae, particularly relevant to this dissertation because Mary is frequently associated with the rose. (See Fig. 50, in which Grunewald depicts her and her child Jesus alongside a rosebush.) It is common knowledge that roses are beautiful and their thorns are prickly to the touch. But rose plants also have medicinal properties. According to the 1888 edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, numerous ancient documents refer to rose oil, or “attar of rose,” which was used as aromatherapy for at least 5,000 years. Rose petals functioned as a sedative, an antidepressant, and an anti-
inflammatory. It was, moreover, common knowledge among ancient peoples that they reduced what are today recognized as being cholesterol levels, acted as an astringent, and made a valuable lotion for inflamed and sore eyes (p. 851). Like the moon's binary function as a friend and an enemy, roses and other thorny plants seem to represent opposite messages. They are dangerous to touch, while functioning as medical aids. With this thought about poisons and their antidotes in mind, it is time to explore Mary's lineage.

**4.5.3 Mary and the Pearl in Relation to the Moon**

According to the translator E. A. W. Budge (1933), the ancients understood the pearl to be the moon’s metaphorical equivalent. Budge took this idea from a 15th-century service book entitled *The History of Hannah*, which describes at length how Mary, in the form of a white pearl, was inserted into the body of Adam by God and then passed from body to body until it entered her mother, Hannah, or “Anna” in Greek, at which point Mary began developing into “Lady Mary.” Budge found similar evidence of the connection between Mary and pearls in Ethiopic salutations (pp. xx, 6) which he credits to having been printed in Lady Meux’s London edition of *The Miracles of the Virgin* (1899). This legend warrants further consideration.

David W. Cotter’s *Berit Olam: Studies in Hebrew Narrative and Poetry* (1996) states that although Hannah’s identity has until very recently been understudied, scholars are currently reconsidering who—and even what—this historical person living in Nazareth was (p.19). Budge (1933) translates and quotes a poem depicting Hannah and Mary “together like unto the two precious stones onyx and topaz” (p. 10), a symbolic binary opposition. In *The Curious Lore of Precious Stones* (1913), George Kunz likens onyx and topaz to “black and white.” The ancients believed that onyx “cools,” provokes discord, and separates (pp. 98–99). Topaz, in contrast, was associated with the sun, dispelling fear and driving evil away (pp. 66–67). Rephrased in terminology that I will use later in this dissertation, Hannah was errant and Mary was good. David Cotter's (1996) *Berit Olam: Studies in Hebrew Narrative and Poetry* indicates that the name Hannah originally signified the two sisters, not cousins, commonly known as Elizabeth and Mary, the mothers of John (the Baptist) and Jesus. Cotter argues that the relationships among these four figures matured and became Christianized, first borrowed by Luke of the New Testament and then refined in that context (pp.138–139). Cotter's statement becomes increasingly feasible when acknowledge alongside of the aforementioned fact that scholars are now writing the same thing about Isis having had an understudied twin. To return to Hannah’s
legendary affiliation with the pearl, Based upon his findings, Budge (1933) indicates that she was blind in one eye, had the capacity to heal sick people who touched her, and was a “seventh daughter.” Each of these mythic signifiers is significant, but Hannah’s relationship with the number seven is the key that will take us furthest in this study.

Ancient manuscripts contain numerous references to the number seven. One such text is the story of Joseph from Genesis 42–47 cited by George Ferguson (1961), in which the number seven seems to allude to cyclic occurrences: Joseph [of the Coat of Many Colors] was cast into prison by Potiphar because of false charges by [Potiphar’s] wife. While there, Joseph helped one of the servants of Pharaoh by interpreting his dreams. Some two years later Pharaoh himself had a dream which troubled him. He dreamed first that he saw seven fine fat cattle come down to a stream and drink. These were followed by seven lean, half-starved cattle that ate up the seven fat cattle. Again, he dreamed that he saw seven fine ears of corn spring up on one stalk. Thereafter, seven poor ears sprang up and they devoured the seven fat ears. When Pharaoh could obtain no satisfactory explanation of this dream from those around him, his servant persuaded him to send for Joseph, who interpreted the dream to mean that there would be seven years of plenty in the land of Egypt, followed by seven years of famine. (p. 57)

Cooper (1978) further indicates that the number seven is the “number of the universe and the macrocosm,” the "number of virginity," and a manifestation of the Feminine (p. 117). The Christian writer George Ferguson (1961) links the number seven with ethical and religious terms like charity and grace (pp. 154). James Hall (1974; rpt. 1979) and J. C. Cooper (1978) tell us that ancients associated it with “magical” or “perfect and complete” mathematical and/or occult properties (pp. 278–279; 112–120). Celsus’s second-century Book of Truth, cited in Lindsay (1970), links it with a representation of two heavenly revolutions, involving a movement of "the fixed stars," "that taking place among the planets," and the passage of the soul through them (pp. 34–35). Erica Reiner’s “Magic Figurines, Amulets, and Talismans” (1987) tells us that seven was associated with medicinal prayers found in Babylonian medical texts. These prayers, directed toward two particular constellations, the Goat and the Pleiades, always accompanied the preparation and administration of medicine (pp. 32–36).
My problem with these findings is that they are too theoretical to help me study the Isenheim Altarpiece. They make more sense when considered alongside astronomical and agrarian findings which, because they must have predated theoretical and abstracted definitions, must have been common knowledge to ancient and early peoples who wrote about the number seven. With this notion in mind, I will reconsider the connections between the number seven and the binary opposites, Hannah and Mary.

At the beginning of this subsection, I drew upon Budge's (1933) documentation of a legend indicating that Hannah was a direct descendant of Eve, the wife of Adam, and his posthumously published text entitled *Kebra Negast (The Book of the Glory of Kings, 2004)*, a book of sixth-century legends presenting an alternative view of a number of biblical stories, substantiates this view of Hannah. Budge (1933) notes that the number seven was associated with Mary but does not analyze its significance. However, his lengthy citations indirectly suggest that the pearl was implanted in Adam and then transferred, as described earlier, from Eve’s womb to the wombs of her successors in turn. The number seven signifying that the encodement of Eve's oracular powers was ensured to culminate in Hannah, her seventh generation child. Since Hannah is alluded to, I infer more metaphorically and symbolically than literally, as the seventh-generation descendant, Eve’s oracular powers (which I will discuss later in this dissertation) culminated in her. Astronomers related the number seven to patterns in astronomical occurrences, and Mary must have had a planetary relationship with the moon that extended beyond the biological relationship that I have shown her and the *Feminine* to have with it. Astronomical and agrarian evidence indicates that the juncture of Hannah and Mary represented a very special form of metamorphosis, a sort of genetic catharsis, in which Hannah’s oracular seventh-daughter powers culminated in Mary, Mother of Jesus.

Evidence culled by historians of astronomy substantiates this idea. Donald Menzel (1955) tells us that ancient figures like Aristotle understood scientific information more philosophically than scientifically, through a blend of observation and skillful argument. They seem to have accordingly reasoned that most rainfall patterns repeat themselves seasonally, so the position of the sun in the sky was the most important factor controlling rainfall (pp. 13–14). As they studied changes in the relationships between the sun, the planets, and the constellations, however, they must have noticed that their findings often involved the number seven. Plato, like all ancient observers, acknowledged seven heavenly bodies (the sun, the moon, and five planets) that
seemed to revolve around the earth. He similarly noted that seven stars made up the Pleiades, and the moon took seven days to go one quarter of the way around its orbit (pp. 27, 252–253). The maximum amount of time required for a total eclipse is seven minutes, and no more than seven eclipses can occur in any given year (pp. 108, 168). Alter, Cleminshaw, and Phillips’s *Pictorial Astronomy* (1948) adds that the phases of the new moon—first quarter moon, full moon, and last quarter moon—all occur at intervals of about seven days (p. 48).

Alter et al. present a good and very relevant example of how one of these literal facts might have come to be mythologized. The ancients believed the reddish tinge of a total eclipse was a very special form of “blood” covering the most visible of the moon’s seas, or *maria*. This Latin word, which means all visible seas including ones from earth, (pp. 108, 170) is identical with Maria, the Latin form of Mary’s name. The idea of linking her with the seas ties in with the fact that according to Hall (1974) and Cooper (1978), in almost every world community, including early Christianity, the moon has been associated with the *Feminine* and water, where the sun is linked with the masculine (pp. 213; 106-107). According to Menzel (1955), ancient peoples probably understood that the human female menstrual cycle coincides almost exactly with the lunar month (p. 14). It accordingly seems to follow that the “blood” on the moon may have been anthropomorphically associated with the very special menstrual cycle of first the *Feminine* and later with that of Mary as related to *maria*., based upon Menzel's observation and those of the others.

4.5.4 Astronomical Implications of the Number Seven

These astronomical applications of the number seven manifest themselves in agrarian tradition in various ways. For example, early agrarian feasts and festivals, which involved tributes and sacrifices to the gods, celebrated changes in the sun’s relationship to the planets and constellations. Consider, for example, the Hebraic celebrations Succoth and Sabbatical. According to Bridger's 1962 *New Jewish Encyclopedia*, the Hebraic feast Succoth fell in the seventh month of every year. Consequently, the ancient Hebrews associated the number seven with early fall, the season when humans gathered fruits and harvested crops (p. 530). Early Hebraic peoples did not consider agriculture only in terms of human gains and losses, however, and this distinction is crucial to understanding how the number seven signifies sacrifice in seventh-daughter figures like Mary’s mother Hannah. They seem to have viewed Succoth in relation to the life cycle of the earth, from the perspective of Earth. For this reason, they viewed
Succoth as a time when flowering trees, shrubs, and vines experienced purgation and cleansing. Similarly, according to Goldberg, Vol. 1 (1929), from circa 440 BCE onward, early agrarian Hebraic peoples celebrated Sabbatical every seventh year. During sabbatical years, the Hebrews kept their land fallow (pp. 136–137, 157–158). In what appears to have been a sacrificial effort to say thank you to the earth, Goldberg further states that Hebrew farmers were forbidden to sow or reap. The people could eat only what the soil yielded by itself, without human intervention. Through this act of sacrifice, the Hebrews cancelled the perceived debts owed that they owed to Earth (pp. 136–137, 157–158). In this example as in the others, the number seven signifies some form of what I will allude to as a catharsis. By this I mean to compare the number seven occurrences I discussed in astronomy with earth's purgation and cleansing, celebrated through Succoth; and this occurrence with the legend of Hannah, Eve, and the pearl, the pearl representing the encodement of Eve's oracular powers ensured to culminate in Hannah, her seventh generation child, and then return again in their most perfect state in Mary in the form of a sort of genetic catharsis.

4.6 Agrarian Chemistry, or Alchemy

The best place to begin a study of Mary’s relationship to agrarian science and the moon is with two alchemical symbols: unicorns and lions. Please see (Fig. 28-1), an image of a Wild Man interacting with both, a lion on the left and a unicorn on the right. The Wild man is undergoing metamorphosis, preparing to spear the serpent in the middle of the image. Spearing the serpent is a very ancient medical signifier. In medical manuscripts, rhyzotomists speared venomous creatures (Fig. 57A). In Christian times, Saints replaced rhyzotomists and poisonous creatures evolved into more generally depicted metaphors for evil (Fig. 57 B,C).

4.6.1 The Unicorn

Before I can explain the dynamic underlying fusion of the unicorn and the lion, I need to show that the unicorn and Mary have followed similar paths in Christian lore as when viewed from the perspective of the ancient Feminine.

Mary, like the ancient Feminine, is often iconographically associated with unicorns (Fig. 33E, 34A,B,C), which modern readers associate with innocence or purity. However, according to J.E. Cirlot's 1962 Dictionary of Symbols, the ancients sometimes regarded the unicorn as having certain “evil” characteristics. The bestiary entitled Physiologus Graecus, for example,
indicates that the unicorn was “an animal fleet of foot and single-horned, and harbouring ill will towards men” (p. 358). This definition, Cirlot continues, did not always hold true. Alchemists, for example, used these allegedly negative implications to define their Monstrum Hermaphroditum, an alchemical term for a unicorn that was also a "hermaphroditical" monster." Cirlot notes that, according to Jung, the Catholic Church does not recognize this “negative” dimension of the unicorn (p. 358). Much the same thing happened to Mary, as I will demonstrate later.

In imagery, unicorns lay their heads in the lap of the Feminine. Cooper (1978) tells us that this action signifies that it and the Feminine are part of the tradition identified in terms of a first mother, an Androgyous form of the Feminine named Tellus Mater, who preceded the female Feminine (pp. 12-13). Cooper states further that when unicorns have two horns, they are joined into one. According to him, this symbolizes the union of opposites, an implied merge reflecting perfect strength and incorruptibility. I would add that this point reinforces that unicorns are iconographically aligned with the original androgyne, as Mary is by way of her relationship with the ancient Feminine. Cooper also indicates that ancient and medieval peoples regarded unicorn horn as a “water conner,” or rod used, first to detect poison in water, and then to purify it. Mary and unicorns both functioned as antidotes for poisoned water and other toxic agents (p. 183). Mary's association with the Feminine indicates she is the origin of water's source, and water is always linked with cleansing.

Iconographical descriptions like this of unicorns are interesting, however, they seem to exist in a vacuum unless considered alongside of the signifying function these creatures have in alchemical process, also referred to as the Great Work. Cooper (1978) tells us the alchemical unicorn is always female and viewed this way, the creature represents the element “quicksilver” (mercury). This is alchemy’s metamorphosing agent. As quicksilver facilitates the alchemical process, Cooper continues, the unicorn’s united horns represent alchemical solve et coagula, or the ability of elements to break down so that they can reunite in a more refined state. This idea is also signified by two serpents winding and unwinding themselves together and apart, as in a caduceus (p. 183), and this symbol which will be discussed shortly in another context.

Cooper's iconographical description of this dimension of unicorns does not match up with alchemical process unless the reader understands alchemy because his interest lies in symbols. Lindsay's (1970) perspective is more comprehensive, defining alchemy though an outline of
alchemy's ancient western lineage, but it is too complicated for the purposes of this dissertation. Adam McLean's (9/23/2009) Animal Symbolism in the Alchemical Tradition (www.levity.com/alchemy/animal.html) describes this process as a cycle of six changes (p. 1), and his review of marking them with animals viewed alongside of colors which begin with black and culminate in the perfection of quintessence can define alchemy and the Isenheim both (pp. 1-6).

According to him, as alchemists reworked alchemical experiments they drew parallels between their familiar processes and nature. The living energies they created over and over, were metaphorically visualized through animals they were familiar with. For example, a black toad was a likely image for the seething black mass of substance digesting in their flask, and a white eagle seemed a fitting symbol for white steam, or fumes rising up into the neck of a flask containing a heated substance. Many animal symbols existed for each of the alchemical stages because alchemical practitioners worked alone, instead of alongside of others. In spite of this, there was a general consistency amongst the animal metaphors they were using. They rapidly became conflated, and developed into a universal language. This further facilitated the exchange of ideas, and what resulted was the following, more coherent set of metaphors which are a key element of the European Alchemical tradition.(p. 1). These colors and animals could be used in a more comprehensive analysis of the altar, as noted here:

- **Blackening**: black crow, raven, toad
- **Whitening**: white swan, white eagle
- **Greening**: green lion
- **Rapid rush of iridescent colors**: peacock's tail
- **White stone**: unicorn
- **Reddening, Red Lion Stage**: pelican feeding young its own blood
- **Final transmutation**: phoenix reborn from the fire.

According to McLean (9/23/09), **Blackening** (Step 1) marks the beginning of the **Great Work**, brought in two ways. One is "Heating" (dry way). The other is "Putrefaction," slow rotting or digestion which takes place over a period of weeks or months (wet way). In Heating, layers flake off and move like a crow's wings in the flask. In Putrefaction, the decaying mass which slowly pulsates and shifts as gasses are given off is is signified by the toad. **Blackening** is also symbolized by the dragon, which in some texts begins as well as ends the **Great Work. Whitening**
(Step 2) follows. As the black mass reacted with other substances, it heated and took on a white crust or dusty layer which sometimes puffs up into a cloud in the flask. This stage is symbolized by either a white eagle (dry way) or white swan (wet way). It is the stage of catharsis, when a new possibility is sensed. *Blackening and Whitening* are sometimes viewed together as a stage in themselves, referred to as the *Green Lion* (Step 3). The *Green Lion* is when certain chemicals form (wet) crystals tinted green, or dissolve (dry) metals like iron and copper, an activity which similarly results in a greenish residue. This stage is symbolized by the chaining of a toad and either an eagle, or an earthly dragon bearing wings. Significantly, physicians making medicines from plant matter refer to the *Green Lion* stage as the green, raw energy of nature stage. To them, the lion devours the sun in an act which represents the green pigment chlorophyll. At this stage a sudden rush of colors creating an iridescence on the surface of the material in the flask might show. This rush, called the *Peacock's Tail*, falsely suggests completion of the *Great Work.*

*Whitening of the Stone* (Stage 4) comes after the rush. Then, *Reddening, or Formation of the Red Stone* (Stage 5), which represents a new integration of polarities which emerged in the initial stages of *Blackening* and *Whitening.* Now these polarities have become digested into a white tincture and a stone has formed. This stage is symbolized in five ways that will be drawn upon in my analysis of the Isenheim: 1) by an androgynous unicorn whose horn represents the white stone, and whose body symbolizes a virgin vessel cable of being tamed only by a pure androgynous woman; 2) the nonsexual coupling of male and female agents. In this context acids, for example, can penetrate and dissolve metal ores. Acids are masculine, and ores *Feminine;* 3) a "White Queen" dressed in shining white robes who stands in an alchemical flask; 4) a Red Lion (also known as the Red King); and 5) a stag bearing antlers (masculine) alongside of the white unicorn. The *Phoenix or Ouroboros Stage* (Stage 6) occurs when the bird arises from the flames. This is resurrection. Here the alchemist attains the Philosopher's Stone, a place of solid ground within the shifting sea of the inner world. The most relevant symbol of this stone is the Ouroboros snake holding its tail. The winged dragon also symbolizes this phase (pp. 1-6).

### 4.6.2 The Lion

As stated in McLean (2009), the unicorn’s masculine twin is the “Red Lion” who belches out the sun (*Fig. 49A*). In the *Reddening* stage, the pair couple in the "forest of the soul." The lion is the same thing as the red human king, who is also the stag bearing antlers (pp. 5-6). The
signifier that marks this stage in the Isenheim is the stag in the visitation panel (Fig. 3A,B). Cooper alludes to this lion, also referred to as the stag, as sulfur (pp. 98–99).

4.6.3 Binary Opposites and the Origin of Woman

Ideas underlying alchemical notions regarding lions and unicorns are fundamentally similar to those reflected by early accounts of human physiology, including the origin of woman. For example, the ancient Egyptian conception of human physiology drew upon notions regarding the king and the queen, right and left, and sun and moon. According to Lurker’s (1995) interpretation of the 16th-century BCE Ebers Papyrus, the breath of life enters the body through the right ear and leaves through the left. Right and left as applied to the sun and the moon, kings and queens, and men and women in general expressed the polarity of world order. The right eye of the Lord of Heaven, corresponding to the sun and day, was male and associated with kings. The left eye, which corresponded to the moon and night, was female and linked with queens (p. 100).

The same underlying system of binary operations seems to have been true with regard to the origin of Woman. Mircea Eliade’s The Two and the One (1965) indicates, for example, that in several Midrashic writings, Adam was androgynous. One account suggests that he and Eve were fashioned back to back and joined at the shoulders. Then, God divided them with an ax stroke. Another account states that the first human being was an androgynous creature: “a man on the left side and a woman on the right” (p. 104). Hebraic terminology indicates the same principle to have been true. According to Cirlot (1962), Adam’s name, derived from the Hebrew word adama, or earth (Fig. 54), indicates that Adam was designed in an effort to signify the power of the universe. Its power was concentrated in him (p. 4). Other early accounts similarly suggest that Eve was born from Adam’s body because “only when like is joined unto like can the union be indissoluble.” Her creation was possible, Louis Ginzberg tells us in his Legends of the Bible (1909), because Adam originally had two faces, which became separated as Eve was born (p. 35). Most relevant, in both the Bible and the Platonic doctrine of the Androgyne, Cirlot (1962) tells us Eve was an “excision” of Adam, but her job was to integrate sexual duality. Here again is the same dichotomous couple, another form of the alchemical unicorn and the lion, and the Red King and the White Queen. These identities are different, but the principle underlying their fundamental function as a corporate entity designed to integrate sexual duality is the same. Cirlot (1962) tells us that Adam was static and Eve was active (p. 4). The alchemical, binary
figures presented in (Fig. 44 D-F ) seem to have derived alongside of this tradition, and spearing the serpent derivatives may reflect the same passive/active energies (Figs. 56 & 57). Based upon images like these, I infer woman was as much a catalyst for alchemical metamorphosis as the unicorn was.

4.7 Feminine Antidotal Medicine: Linking Astronomy and Chemistry

Even with all of this information as background, I still cannot explain Mary’s alchemical relationship with the Feminine in the Isenheim Altarpiece until I align this theoretical aspect of alchemy with its more practical application, the antidotal properties of the Feminine in general and Mary in particular. According to Lurker (1974) and Lindsay (1970), the Egyptians believed that the goddess Isis miraculously conceived her son, the sky deity Horus, by an act of will from an interaction with the remains of her dead husband and brother. The earliest versions of Egyptian myth, not to be confused with those recounted by the Greek historian Plutarch, indicate that in the beginning Osiris was understood to be the sun, and his sister, Isis, the moon. Isis is additionally written to have been the “eye” of the sun. Lurker and Lindsay suggest further that in either of these capacities she was strong enough to bring her dead child Horus back to life after he had been poisoned by a scorpion. Horus lived on, matured into becoming the sky god and a savior of mankind, and his eyes—like those of his mother before him, in that she in some contexts functioned as the eye of Osiris—became the forces directing the sun and the moon. He lived to direct them, as his mother and Osiris had before him. In other words, Isis and Horus saw all, were teachers and models, and symbolized victory over the forces of evil (pp. 65–66, 71–72; 39–42, 71, 141, 262–269, 288, 305–307, 317, 361–366, 426). Based upon Lindsay (1970), I infer this myth to be an alchemical, binary perspective. Ancient Egyptians, like ancient Greeks and Mesopotamians from as early as 700 BCE, had knowledge indicating them to have shared in being the seat of the origin of western alchemy (pp. 1-110).

By merging these iconographical elements with an analysis of Isis’s role in Egyptian medical manuscripts, we can begin to see Mary from an altered Feminine perspective. According to Lurker (1974), Isis was a physician recognized as the “great of magic,” a title that bears some surprisingly hefty implications. Ancient Egyptian healing spells signified that she protected all mortal children from snakes, predators, and other dangers (pp. 72, 93). These spells facilitate my establishing three points that will open the door to defining the Feminine and Mary as a medicinal force.
4.7.1 Linking Medical Manuscripts from Egypt and Greece

Egyptian healing spells can be related to Asclepian ideology, ideas relating to the deity of Greek medicine, Asclepius. Until fifty years ago, Western scholars showed little or no tolerance for melding the cultures of Egypt and Greece. As previously stated, Weitzmann (1947) tells us that scholars like Carl Robert, Franz Wickhoff, and Max Wellman established that Greek peoples had possibly exchanged ideas with Eastern peoples, perhaps as early as the seventh century BCE and at least since the Alexandrian period beginning in the fourth century BCE (pp. 7, 12, 26). Three centuries is a big time difference, so I will conservatively go with the second historical view. According to Weitzmann, Wellman also established links between pictorial elements in Egyptian imagery and similar elements in Greek imagery by comparatively analyzing human figures spearing serpents. Wellman noted that each figure was juxtaposed with a snake, with bodily position and gesture delineated in the same manner (p. 67). Following him, Weitzmann (1947) identified another example of figures juxtaposed next to snakes from before Hellenistic times (p. 67). His efforts, which involved comparing an Egyptian hieratic magical text from the fifth century BCE and a Greek magical roll from fourth century BCE, exemplify how scholars can use pre-Hellenistic Egyptian herbal knowledge to understand Greek herbal practice.

Wellman’s model and Weitzmann’s interpretation of it help to elucidate the metamorphosis panel of the Isenheim Altarpiece, which has been shown to depicts an oversized raven attacking a web-footed human figure, identified by scholars as Saint Anthony (Fig. 4 A,B). Anthony’s body precisely corresponds with the bodies and gestures of the serpents whereas the raven’s body and gestures correspond with those of the previously mentioned human figures spearing the serpents.

Assuming that Grunewald intended that his viewers associate his depiction of Anthony and the raven with this signifying tradition of figures spearing serpents, let us now consider what Grunewald might have meant by paralleling Anthony with these serpents being stabbed, because he is in the same position, apparently playing the same role, as they are. John F. Nunn’s (1996) Ancient Egyptian Medicine links ancient Egyptian healing incubation practices with Greek Asclepius temple incubation. Based upon these two efforts, Weitzmann's (1947) and his which link Egyptian and Greek medical practices, I will relate Asclepian image visualization to what appear to be similar processes in the Egyptian spells of Isis, particularly spells from the
Metternich stela from circa 664–332 BCE showing use of image visualization in magico-religious healing techniques related to poisonous animals.

Isis’s relationship with scorpions signifies much more than a literal depiction of arachnids. Lurker (1974) tells us that like the word *serpent*, which implied snakes and much more, the word *scorpion* represented both a species of venomous creatures and the composite of all venomous creatures, predators, and other related dangers (p. 105). Isis, continues Lurker, could allegedly will herself to become an anthropomorphized antidote whose force was capable of resisting the poisonous venoms of the “seven scorpions” which threatened the life of Isis’s poisoned son (pp. 72, 105, 114). Given what has already been established about the number seven, the phrase “seven scorpions” seems to suggest, in this context, the culmination of all poisonous forces into one strong enough to kill even the child Horus. Isis was accordingly called upon to reclaim her son from the dead. In the three-part spell for “scorpion”-stricken children that I will present in the following excerpts from Nunn’s (1996) translation of the Metternich stela, she works through the combined forces of “Thoth” and Re. She seems to be simultaneously recalling having willed herself into an antidote to save her poisoned child and conflating her love for Horus with her concern for the sick child in question in order to magnify her healing abilities. To make clear the use of visualization in Isis’s healing spells, I have prefaced each excerpt with a brief and simplified summary.

First, Isis personifies the poison to confront it while she massages the poisoned child’s throat: “May the child live and the poison die. As Horus will be cured for his mother Isis, those who suffer [all sick children] will be cured likewise.” Second, she draws from her memory an account of the time when she found Horus unconscious, stung by a scorpion. To help him, she sought the advice of Serqet, an authority on scorpions. Then, she appealed to deity of the sun, Re, crying out: “Horus has been stung. O Re: your son Horus has been stung who is without sin.” Isis’s plea was so full of force that it brought the equilibrium of Re’s barque to a stop. This disruption resulted in Thoth’s coming to help her: “Awake Horus. I am Thoth, sent to cure you for your mother Isis and to cure the sufferer likewise. The poison dies, its fire is drawn away [at my command]” (p. 110).

4.7.2 *Saint Anthony, the Serpent, "I" Metamorphosis, and Mensa*

The above magico-religious principle occurs in numerous other medicinal spells from Egypt. As a composite, their form and function parallels the one I have identified as "I" in
Nicandrea. Based upon this connection between Greek and Egyptian healing practices, Isis's spells appear to exemplify how Feminine force was originally defined in the magico religious ritual prayer dimention of ancient agrarian medical practice; her healing impulses and the resultant knowledge seem to have been understood summarily in Egyptian, Asclepian, and Western Renaissancian applications; and her association with a serpent has accordingly splintered in each of these contexts. The Greek Feminine, for example, battled with Pythia. The Hebraic Feminine's battle with the serpent originated in the Garden, with Eve. Mary's Christian battle with the serpent has already been traced to Eve's, through Hannah and the pearl. In Grunewald's depicted Renaissancian battle between the raven and Saint Anthony, we are led to believe the serpent has become manifest in the raven--based upon the serpent being speared by the figure association discussed in the section above.

I have already carefully described how Saint Anthony is being accosted by a myriad of strange creatures. In the midst of this confusion I identified the very large raven from whose neck extends humanlike arms clutching a stick, which beat the saint. But this interaction cannot be separated from the others which I studied in this context. Each of these creatures has been shown to have contributed to Anthony's metamorphosis, and his transformation cannot be separated from that of the torn red book that he is clutching at. Saint Anthony, the raven fighting him, the figure with sores on his body, and the creature's book--all of this constitutes what I am referring to as saint Anthony’s battle with the serpent.

In my previous discussion of the function of the Isenheim Altarpiece, I wrote that Isenheim physicians had sought to re implement the ancient Feminine healing tradition of Saint Anthony, and that the words “He must decrease and I must increase” would be reconsidered from this perspective. Now I will make the promised connection based upon this figural association.

Anthony had founded an Anchorite community of hermits living in the Egyptian deserts, where Snyder claims men were “mystics” and “hospitalers of a very special nature” (p. 353). They founded the first Anchorite order at Isenheim and treated gangrenous disorders like plague and ergotism (pp. 1; 348, 353). I am trying to show that Paul had been acting as Mary had, and that she had followed in the steps of the Feminine as she was defined by Hesiod through physicians like Nicander who blended knowledge of herbs and venoms with ritual "I" metamorphosing prayer. Study of how "I" was related to Andachtsbild activity in the Isenheim
requires acknowledgement of two bodies of information, alchemical metamorphosis and mensa medical drawings.

Alchemical metamorphosis was related to *Feminine* cult worship of Mary, Mother of Jesus, in ancient and medieval times when symbols aligning her healing abilities with metamorphosis were common knowledge. This aspect of her will in the following section be related to Jack Lindsay's (1970) definition of alchemical *synthemata*, the force achieved by fusing two venoms intended to be used medicinally, or the temperament of certain humans (pp. 253: n.4; 421: n. 5).

"Mensa" medical drawings, defined by Robert Herrlinger in his 1967 *History of Medical Illustration*, are schematized anatomical renderings of human beings depicted symmetrically in a "squatting" position, or similarly positioned lying on a table. They were used instructionally in the practice of medicine. (pp. 9-10). I used "mensa" in my 2001 thesis to argue that Nicander had deliberately depicted certain herbs and venomous creatures the same size as human figures, and that the humans in question were original. This was in response to Weitzmann's (1947) argument that they were later intrusions into a format which had originally reflected no oversized elements (pp. 167). My argument was based upon the fact that Nicander's presentation of the herbal elements in question very closely resembles the way humans in mensa have been depicted. Certain venomous creatures and herbs of his have been presented in a way similar to how mensa are depicted. That is, frontally, symmetrically, and oversized, with a square surface area that is roughly the equivalent to that of human figures.

Now I am comparing applications of magnified scale in Nicandrea to Christ's role as a Andachtsbild tool in the Isenheim because, like magnified elements in Nicander's manuscripts, Christ is presented frontally, symmetrically, and very prominently. By including the way I think Grunewald intended that Mary function ritually in with how he wanted his Christ to be viewed, putting them back together again to look at their composite function as a ritual tool, the comparison between how viewers were expected to view and use him and ways that mensa tools seem to have functioned for rhyzotomist healers becomes evident. The key that facilitates this comparison lies in the metamorphosis panel of the Isenheim. Anthony's relationship with the human sized raven in that panel seems to exemplify this form of confrontation. This saint is wrestling with an oversized raven which will be defined in the next chapter as an aspect of the *Feminine*. 

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In 2001 I argued that Nicander probably defined his use of his images with healing use of ritual in mind because in every image in which human figures are viewed next to these overscaled poisonous elements (the salamanders, snakes, and herbs in question), the elements in question are proportionately gigantic. Now I am extending my argument as follows. By positioning a human figure alongside an overscaled poisonous element, Nicander seems to have turned the poison into a kind of target which gave him and patients both something tangible to direct their fears toward so that they could fight against them. This probably helped patients control their fear of symptoms they were experiencing like trembling and chills, for example, such as would have resulted from having been poisoned by the venomous creature they and their physician were viewing. As they learned to refocus on the poison they were afraid of in this way, its presence as a toxic and killing agent ceased to overwhelm them--at least to the degree that it had been. It seems they were being taught to see it as the same size as them, the same way Isenheim viewers were schooled to see Christ's brutalized body as being synonomous with the disease that was disabling them. In both contexts, sickness was being presented as a force that could in one way of another be reckoned with. This must have helped even patients who were dying relax some.

Mensa seems to have functioned psychologically for Nicander, and accordingly for Isenheim physicians, in another way which can be shown to parallel how benefits were gained by practitioners using alchemical ritual processes. In 2001, I argued that Nicander probably used the images in question as a vehicle for detaching himself from what could have become an emotional investment in his role as an oracular healer. Alchemical method is commonly understood to have afforded its practitioners a means of gainfully developing esoteric insight, and scholars of both medical history and alchemy commonly acknowledge that physicians were familiar with alchemy. See Lindsay (1970) (pp. 60, 66, 83, 126, 133, 245, 278, 401, 403, 416, 429). Unfortunately, no one seems concerned with how alchemy might have served technicians as a tool for prudently detaching themselves from developing an egocentric investment in their practice, perhaps because they have similarly discounted the ritual function of "I," which I also argued served this function. As alchemists focused on transforming (elevating the status of) a stone instead of themselves, they seem to have by passed what might be an inherently egocentric response, and it is in this light that I suggest Saint Anthony's disproportionate size" in Hagenau's sculpted Saint Anthony Enthroned portion of the Isenheim be reconsidered.
Isenheim scholars seem to be approaching this topic or parts of it from a variety of perspectives. Snyder (1985) writes from the perspective of history, for example, that during the years in which Grunewald's shrine was painted, there existed in Europe a growing conflict regarding how to view artists. Were they craftsmen and human, or geniuses connected to God? Snyder quotes Durer as having interpreted his own abilities from the latter of these two perspectives: "The more we know, the more we resemble the likeness of Christ who truly knows all things"(p. 326). As was discussed previously, Mellinkoff (1988) views this topic less theoretically than visually, from the perspective of scale relationships noting that for some unknown reason Saint Anthony and the other two saints who flank him are considerably larger than the peasants at their feet, and Anthony is larger still than the other two saints (p. 5). She also rightly observes that Anthony is the only one in the entire image as large as Christ, and he is enthroned in a position of hierarchic dignity which is typically reserved only for God or the Virgin Mary (p. 5). In response to Mellinkoff I considered that in each of Grunewald's depictions of Anthony the saint's beard is long and forked, and in addition to these figures of Anthony there is another figure with a clearly defined long, forked beard. This is a very tiny man encircled in a yellowish light who hovers above and behind Anthony in the Metamorphosis panel.

Of course it is helpful to know that artists from Grunewald's period in history were questioning the nature of their relationship to God. However not until this point is blended with on the one hand Anthony's having been depicted so disproportionately large, and on the other, the fact that every depiction of Anthony has a forked beard, does it seem plausible that the tiny figure in question is Anthony watching his own transformation. As an alchemist is able to detach from the egocentrical investment involved in alchemical (cathartic) metamorphosis through use of the stone, Saint Anthony appears to have split away from and risen above his body to do the same thing.

Snyder (1985) inadvertently lends credibility to my observation by calling attention to Grunewald's use of "rainbow spectrum of light," which signifies another form of metamorphosis, the transformation of corporeal matter into divine light. Snyder tells us that this constitutes the halo of light encircling Grunewald's risen Christ and the head of the Mary stepping out of the temple (p. 352). It seems clear that this same halo effect is present in the elevated figure I am associating with Anthony.

4.8 Synthemata: Another Means of Looking at Mary and Magdeline
Additional support for Isis as an early representation of ancient *Feminine* healing force comes from the concept of *synthemata*. This system of thinking is critical, it leads us closer to understanding how to define the marriage I am proposing existed between Mary and Magdaline. According to Lindsay (1970), there was in the alchemical school of Cleopatra and Maria the Jewess a high priest and philosopher named Komarios, who wrote a *Dialogue* that includes important references to a serpent, its venom, and the alchemical change that the snake’s venom undergoes. Komarios refers to the serpent in a number of critically relevant contexts. For example, it is the same as the alchemical Ouroboros (Fig.48) that held its tail in its mouth as it “encircled the sphere [world]” is a serpent. So it is the creature that led Adam and Eve astray and the Hebraic “king of the worms of the earth” from the Jewish Apocryphal text called the Acts of Kyriakos and Iulitta (p. 272). Komarios’ idea that the serpent which led Adam and Eve astray was a positive force as well as a negative one will be explored later on.

These images relate to a special form of alchemical change that Komarios called *synthemata*. According to Lindsay, the term *synthemata* (Greek for “signs” or “tokens”) originally described the alchemical force achieved through the fusion of two opposing “compositions” of a special kind of venom. This force prompted changes in chemical compounds of medical mixtures and ointments. However, ancient peoples also understood *synthemata* to signify the temperament, or nature, of certain humans who could fuse the same way for the same reason (pp. 253 n. 4, 421, n. 5). Lindsey's findings imply two points, one, that the temperament of these humans consisted of a blend of good and errant qualities, the errant ones being the equivalent of a poison; and two, the kind of fusion they achieved paralleled that of special venoms which, through synthemata, evolved into medical mixtures and ointments. Bearing in mind that *synthemata* results in *Ouroboros*, the aforementioned (Stage 6) alchemical serpent holding its tail in its mouth while encircling the world, I infer that synthemata are binary compositions consisting of good and errant qualities which, when fused, become *Feminine* agents able to heal earth and humanity.

In inferring this I have extended Lindsay's definition of synthemata people to include figures like Nicander who served deity of healing Asclepius, or the *Feminine* Egyptian Isis I have suggested was his model, to heal people. This is the same group that I have associated with the afore discussed "I" misunderstanding. In other words, *synthemata* figures provide an alchemical definition for what and who lords over toxic venoms and certain humans. These
figures are like toxic venoms which, when guided, become antidotes. Through "I" prayer, they are guided in their efforts to transform themselves into a medicine so that they can serve earth and humanity by healing them.

Lindsay (1970) illustrates this concept of synthemata in relation to fused human figures with numerous passages. Most relevant is an excerpt from the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostle Thomas: “I [Thomas] am the offspring of the serpent nature, [the son of him] who encircles the sphere [and who] is around the ocean, whose tail lies in his mouth” (p. 272). Some legends, says Lindsay, indicate that Thomas had a twin sister named Lydia, but the fact that others suggest that he was the dark and errant twin of Jesus is more relevant to my study of the Isenheim (p. 272). By combining Lindsay's idea about Thomas with Smith’s classic Bible Dictionary (1884) suggestion that the apostle's dark half was either Judas or the nature of all darkness in itself (p. 692), I conclude that in every context I have identified so far, figures associated with alchemical synthemata represent a binarily defined healing force which is closely aligned with the serpent Ouroboros.

4.8.1 Isis and Nephthys as Synthemata

Mythological, historical material indicates that Egyptian society used the principle of synthemata to define significant figures like Isis, but until recently, scholars have not studied them or her from this perspective. For example, scholars have only recently begun to acknowledge that Isis had a twin sister, Nephthys. The Egyptologist Nunn (1996), who translated the spells from the Metternich stela cited earlier, does not mention her. Claude Traunecker, in The Gods of Egypt (2001), and Peter der Manvelian, in Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts (2005) are among the first recent scholars to study her. In the 1950's, only a few scholars acknowledged the significance of the connection between Isis and Nephthys. One was S. G. F. Brandon, in his 1958 article “Myth and Ritual Position Critically Considered.” Although Brandon did not consider the role of alchemy in understanding Isis and her twin, he did outline iconographical elements that depict these Egyptian sister goddesses as doubles (pp. 261-292). Based upon views established in this dissertation, they appear to have functioned alchemically as well as antidotally. The following passages from the Pyramid Texts show their binary composition: “Isis comes and Nephthys: the one from the right and the other from the left. . . . [Addressing Osiris and Anubis, Osiris's killer] They prevent thee [Osiris] from perishing in thy [Anubis's] name; they prevent thy putrefaction from flowing on the earth. . . . [T]hey prevent the odor of thy
corpse from being evil [reversing the process of putrefaction, or rotting]. . . . Isis brings a libation to thee, Nephthys cleanses thee [Osiris]; thy two great sisters restore thy flesh, they reunite thy members, they cause thy two eyes to appear in thy face (p. 276). This passage shows the sisters as agents of death and disintegration on the one hand, and regeneration on the other. Regardless of how scholars identify figures with binarily defined attributes like these, whether it be from the perspective of synthemata, "I" metamorphosis, or some combination of these, if Nephthys and Isis are joint representatives of the process identified as synthemata, the significance of the scholarly neglect of Nephthys is clear.

4.8.2 Wisdom and Her Errant Twin as Synthemata

The concept of synthemata also applies to the Hebraic Feminine, Wisdom, who, like Isis, had an errant female twin. I have already introduced Wisdom. Now I will discuss the significance of the dynamic between her and her errant twin. According to Robert Warnock and George K. Anderson (1950), the aspect of the Hebraic Feminine commonly known as Wisdom Transcendent is less ancient than eastern Feminines but much older than any Feminine in the West (p.12). In this context, as in that of the excerpted passages found in chapter two of this dissertation, Wisdom is commonly acknowledged as a powerful female character who was God’s partner and consort, as well as a mother and “master craftswoman,” a term that denotes her as the architect of creation. The problem is, Wisdom did not perform any of these duties alone. She had an errant twin, and though her twin remains a relatively understudied topic it is interesting to note that such significant Feminine figures as Isis, Mary, and Mary’s mother Hannah have all recently been acknowledged as having had twins. This topic seems to be rapidly becoming part of mainstream analysis.

Tirzah Firestone argues in The Receiving: Reclaiming Jewish Women’s Wisdom (2004) that some critical changes over the course of early Hebraic history altered Wisdom’s definition. Wisdom’s form and function were reappropriated by rabbis concerned that She might threaten the foundation of Jewish belief. Their need to redirect the oneness of God into the Torah required a parallel change in the Hebraic definition of the Feminine. Ancient lore documented before this decision such as the book of Job, for example, depicts Wisdom as a “hidden treasure” whose whereabouts are known only to God. In the Hebraic book of Proverbs written three hundred years after Job, when this change had already been implemented, however, her negative attributes had been erased. Instead of being a powerful figure with both good and errant traits,
she had become an almost exclusively good, but relatively weak and passive figure (pp. 130–133). Firestone cites the following passage to illustrate her description of this change:

When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth:
Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him;
Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men. (Proverbs 8:29–31)

I am less interested in how Wisdom's changed identity can be shown to reflect efforts to delimit her power than I am in how it reflects upon changes similarly imposed upon Mary.

4.8.3 Wisdom, Jesus Christ, Mary, and Magdalene

Hoeller (1994) states that the Gnostic scriptures identify Mary Magdalene, who I am arguing might have been one and the same person as Mary in the eyes of Grunewald, as the true “beloved disciple” of Christ, viewed by early Christians as the earthly manifestation of Wisdom (p. 115). Hoeller's documentation of Jung's interpretation of Wisdom, summarized below, is based upon fundamental principles of Gnostic alchemy. These descended from the Essenes, and continued within the Christian tradition. Their dispensation has always resisted the turning of experience into a theological-ethical construct (p. 99-116). I want to conflate Hoeller’s description of how Wisdom’s existence unfolded alongside of that of Jesus Christ with my idea that Grunewald reallocated Mary’s errant qualities in Magdalene. Christ is almost as important in this picture as Mary is because Mariologists commonly acknowledge that as her identity diminished, his became more prominent.

Hoeller (1994) indicates that, according to the Gnostic gospels, Wisdom was born of Depth and Silence. In their primal world of light, where they existed binarily, they brought balance and creative power in the form of thirty Aeons, or archetypal forms of consciousness. The youngest, and I infer most emotionally aggressive of these Aeons, was Wisdom. She fell in love with her father, Depth, became confused by her feelings, and then looked away in search of another light to substitute for that of her father. Though the light Wisdom redirected her attention toward was the reflected light of her father, Wisdom did not know the light’s source. She allowed it to seduce and bewilder her, and even her celestial consort and twin, named "Christ,"
could not restrain her. She descended into darkness; alone and without power, she created a child named "Jesus" through an immaculate conception (105–106).

Like Wisdom, Hoeller continues, Jesus was bound to the darkness. However, unlike her, he freed himself from this troublesome attachment and ascended into the fullness of light. Alone again and despondent, Wisdom began to experience every form of psychological storm imaginable. Passion, sorrow, fear, despair, and ignorance passed out of her and condensed into on the one hand, the four elements of earth, water, fire, and air, which constitute earth; and on the other, beings known as “the Demiurge” or archontes (rulers). Wisdom looked at these creations and reasoned that though they were impressive to look at, they only reflected painful and destructive emotions. At first she did not want them. Then pity for her creations, which reflected the gamut of her painful and destructive emotions, overcome her. She began to mother them, and became their spirit. She had begun to act as a mother overseeing her child, it being the spirit of her pain. This pain was manifest in all of earth, its elements and the rulers. This is how Wisdom created earth while learning to regard her errant emotions in a changed manner (p. 106).

Years passed. Jesus had been observing the sad fate of his mother. To save her, he fused with her twin, Christ, to become Jesus Christ, the messenger of God. In this capacity, he was sufficiently charged with the power of light to descend into Wisdom’s darkness and free her. As they neared the border that separated her world from the fullness of the light to which he was taking her, she looked down at her troubled creation which had become fused, composed of her errant feelings, and felt compassion for them and it again. She knew that she could not leave it, but neither could she abandon her godly child who had gone away to live in the light. In a desperate act of magic, she divided her nature in half again. One half was now free to live with Jesus Christ. The other half could remain close to Earth to nurse her creation. Wisdom’s second division resulted in the half of her left behind becoming recognized as Achamoth, errant or lower Wisdom (pp. 105–110). As Achamoth was born, Earth was simultaneously divided into three planes of existence. The upper level is the Pneumatic (“bridal chamber”), where the lesser human unites with its twin angel. This is the world above planets where Wisdom is enthroned. It is also the home of the collective human spirit, which remains unconscious in most human beings.

Beneath the bridal chamber is the psychic world of soul and mind, known as the “childish god” or the “blind one.” This realm presides over mind and emotion. It is the seat of ethical
awareness and reason, but it also reigns over arrogance, greed, and obsessions. People who dwell in this world worship the demiurge as God and reflect no knowledge of Wisdom.

The lowest world is that of hyletics, humans ruled by instincts, anger, and sensations revolving around the urges of material life and the survival skills of sustenance and propagation. This is the sublunar material world ruled by Pan, who rules over earth, the planets, and living creatures. Pan turns the wheel of birth, death, and rebirth of biological life (Hoeller, 1994, pp. 5-10).

4.9 The Errant Feminine

Finally I have arrived at the most crucial part of my examination of the ancient Feminine, the errant portion of the relationship between Mary the mother of Jesus and Mary Magdalene that seems to have caused so many problems. Examining errant Wisdom together with Mary Magdalene from the perspective of Levi-Strauss’s “basic logical processes” reveals that errant Wisdom is Mary Magdalene’s Hebraic equivalent, and the existence of Isis’s errant Feminine twin Nephthys strengthens and enhances this point because it suggests the existence of a pattern underlying various manifestations of the ancient Feminine. I will view Mary and Magdalene as one figure, binarily divided, with Magdalene and Nephthys as similar reflections of the errant side of Wisdom, to identify Magdalene as “errant Mary.” This split will be substantiated three ways: 1) the suprarational, or psychically; 2) sexually; and 3) from the perspective of out of control rage.

Scholars and other writers frequently refer to Mary Magdalene as a “whore,” which modern readers take to mean “prostitute.” Cooper (1978) states, however, that the word whore originally signified the alchemical prima materia, or the body sunk in darkness prior to transcendence. This stage is also referred to as the “unredeemed one” (p. 192). Cooper must be referring to use of the word whore, as translated in the King James Bible and other English works from its earlier context. By identifying changes like the one whore has gone through, along with other alterations imposed on terms with sexual connotations like virgin and pontifex, I will strengthen the grounds for reconsidering the two Maries in Grunewald’s Isenheim as twin sides of a single entity, questioning what Mary’s relationship to alchemical process would be if Magdalene’s role is that of a “whore.” The alchemical state following the prima materia is transcendence, and that is what I think Mary represented to Grunewald. To begin I will consider
the identity of the Delphic oracle. I have discussed oracles before, but only briefly and not from this perspective.

4.9.1 The Definition of Oracle

In applying Levi-Strauss’s search for the “basic logical processes” underlying myth to the Delphic oracles, it seems prudent to begin by establishing, first, what the word oracle meant in ancient times and how oracles were used, and, second, how the public view of them evolved into an association with the Christian Devil. With this information, I will be prepared to consider incongruities that surface when I examine sexual terms associated with oracles in and out of this context.

According to Bulfinch (1855/1959), the word oracle originally denoted a place and/or person through which divinities provided answers to worshippers’ questions. It also signified the oracular response itself. According to William Broad’s study of the documented lineage of Delphic oracles, The Oracle: The Lost Secrets and Hidden Messages of Ancient Delphi (2006), scholars have long known that these figures were altruistically inclined women, chosen one from every generation to preside over Apollo’s Delphic temple for nine months of every year based on their psychic and psychological abilities. According to Broad, there were other oracles in ancient Greece, and at some sites which has a medicinal function worshippers prayed not to Apollo but to the god of healing, Asclepius. The oracles at Delphi were the most famous (pp. 231–233). Apollo was and still is renowned for his reign over the Delphic oracle, but Bulfinch (1855/1959), Edith Hamilton (1942), and many others have long known that the duty of overseeing oracular prophetic vision was originally attributed to Feminine entities (pp. 232, 37). It became Apollo’s duty only rather late in ancient history. Noting that this tradition has been acknowledged by some theologians, such as Nelson (1953), as one of several pagan applications that helped to introduce ideas later associated with Christianity (p. 746), I can return to Broad (2006) to associate the Delphic oracle’s lineage with that of Mary and Magdalene.

4.9.2 The Oracle’s Evolution

The view and conscious actions of the Delphic oracles factored critically in defining Greek ideology as early as 1600 BCE, and their influence increased until seventh century BCE when two sets of changes were imposed upon the Feminine. First, Broad (2006) tells us that ancient peoples in various localities began to approach Feminine worship differently. Perhaps these differences resulted in the way western scholars now identify the composite of her
attributes, being that they seem to have become inadvertently compartmentalized and, in time, isolated, errant ones separated from the good. Second, according to Bernard Clive Dietrich in his *Origins of Greek Religion* (1974), the state unjustly imposed changes directed toward Dark Age and Bronze Age deities during this same period, resulting in a social and political crisis for the Greek common man (pp. 272-276). Dietrich does not consider the *Feminine* in his analysis, but the changes he writes about would have been of *Feminine* origin. State administrators claimed and reconstructed some deities but completely rejected others, which only the agrarian people retained (pp. 272-276). In spite of these changes, Broad tells us that certain aspects of the *Feminine* seem to have remained operational. One hundred years later in the sixth century BCE, state administrators similarly determined that at least within the context of Delphic oracles, the *Feminine* voice had become so strong that a committee was needed to oversee her administration. She began being used as a commodity. Through this outside influence, the oracular sanctuary began to be advertised as the “center of the universe,” making its position even stronger (pp. 47–50). Philosophers like Socrates and Plato interacted with the Delphic oracle, and these interactions affected their inquiries into ethics and moral philosophy. Socrates’ well-known injunctions “Know thyself” and “The greatest blessings come by way of madness,” both from Plato’s *Phaedrus*, resulted from talks that Socrates had with the Delphic oracle (quoted in Broad, pp. 62–63). Another quotation from the *Phaedrus* makes a similar point: “He, who not being inspired and having no touch of madness in his soul, comes to the door and thinks he will get into the temple by the help of art—he, I say, and his poetry are not admitted” (quoted in E. Hamilton, 1930, p. 277).

According to Broad (2006), these influences continued until 300 BCE, when Delphi, along with the rest of Greece, began falling into decline. Apollo and his oracle had little effect on younger Greek philosophers like Aristotle. The Romans, rather than the younger generation of Greek philosophers, salvaged the declining Apollonian mysteries. However, their documentary efforts included considerable additions drawn from early Etruscan ideology. These documents reflected the transformation of Greek deities into Roman gods and goddesses. Although the Romans strongly identified with Homeric mythology, they at the same time believed its influence to be posing many disadvantages, the most important being that major aspects of Delphic and Apollonian ideology were banned in their culture. Amid all these changes, the first-century-CE scholar and biographer Plutarch, who was born a Greek but became a Roman citizen,
served as high priest at the Delphi sanctuary. In this capacity, he defended the wavering integrity of Apollo and his oracle in his essay entitled the “Obsolescence of Oracles” and other works (pp. 30, 68–69).

Based upon this general information, I infer that Delphic oracles influenced Greece’s ethical code for hundreds of years, but all the while authorities questioned them and their actions. According to Broad (2006), when Christian administrators and scholars began officially challenging Feminine pagan deities and practices under the guise of the second-century-CE cult of Jesus, they eventually directed their efforts toward Delphic oracles. These figures, who had long constituted the matrix of pagan ideology, became the primary target for elimination. Christian administrators argued that the essential source of Delphic inspiration and activities was their “Devil,” and they equated his affairs with those of Apollo (p. 71). By the early fourth century CE, the oracular tradition admitted defeat:

Tell the king the fair-wrought house has fallen.
No shelter has Apollo, nor sacred laurel leaves;
The fountains now are silent; the voice is stilled. (Quoted in Broad, p. 71)

4.9.3 Scholarly Problems Related to the Oracle

Broad’s historical assessment of the oracles includes a review of archaeological and scientific evidence culled from interviews he conducted between 2002 and 2005 with the scientists who substantiated that the Delphic temple intoxicating fumes issuing from the bedrock did not inspire the oracles’ prophecies. He briefly assesses the surviving literature about Delphic oracles by such notable Greek figures as Herodotus, Euripides, Sophocles, Plato, Aristotle, Pindar, Xenophon, Strabo, and Plutarch. They highly regarded the views of these women, and regularly drew upon them as a collective voice in their work efforts (pp. 1–7).

Broad’s (2007) critique of modern scholars who have studied the oracle is equally informative. The most renowned of these figures was Freud, who in his “Psychoanalysis and Telepathy” (1921), “Dreams and Telepathy” (1922), and “Dreams and the Occult” (1933) viewed Delphic oracles as a manifestation of occult aberrant genius (pp. 93–95). Educational sociologist Reverend George Johnson thought about the Delphic oracles more from the perspective of culture, studying their abilities in relationship to those of scientists in his Fire in the Mind: Science and the Search for Order (1995) and his “Science and Religion: Bridging the Great Divide” (1998). The mathematician Corey Powell did the same in his God in the Equation:
How Einstein Became the Prophet of the New Religious Era (2002). Scholarly efforts like these to better understand the source of Delphic oracular inspiration are commendable, but they do not explain the incongruities that surface when the documented lineage of Delphic oracles is examined contextually and iconographically.

Broad (2006) notes the belief that Delphic oracles, by merging with Apollo, could achieve feats of extrasensory perception that included prophecy and divination. Priests, he says, functioned critically as symbolic intermediaries between humans and the divine, but unlike the oracles, they were not capable of merging with Apollo. Although modern scholars have been battling for decades over who actually took the prophetic lead, Delphic oracles or Greek priests, ancient scholars made careful distinctions between their roles while at the same time establishing that their efforts were symbiotically united (pp. 10-11, 30-31, 40, 47). By symbiotically I mean the two depended upon each other. It seems to have been understood that neither could gainfully function alone. This ancient view is significant because westerners have eliminated oracles and retained priests, and Mary seems to have originally been at least in part functioning as an oracular figure. Three scholarly problems regarding the Delphic oracles help to establish a common denominator between them and Mary.

**Problem 1: Who knows more?** Broad does not explore the question of who knew more about the oracle’s utterances—the oracle herself or the priest However, other scholars seem to be using ancient descriptions of the Delphic oracles to further the idea that Apollo and his male priest understood more about the oracle’s message than she did. A popular example of this idea lies in Morford and Lenardon’s popular classics text, *Classical Mythology* (2003), which describes the oracle’s response to Apollo as “incoherent ravings” uttered in a “frenzy of inspiration” and indicates that she never emerged from her mantic state. They suggest that the state relied on priests and prophets to transcribe oracular incoherencies into intelligible prose or verse so that she could communicate the passages to their solicitor (p. 233). Based upon their review, I infer she is a mere mouthpiece: sometimes defined as a pontifex who prepares for the road but does not build it.

**Problem 2: Problematic definitions of pontifex and virgin.** This Delphic confusion seems to me to reflect problems that Mariologists have raised about the words pontifex and virgin. Jona Lendering’s (09-10-09) online article “Pontifex Maximus” indicates that pontifex is a term of very ancient Etruscan origin originally derived from pont or road. It was understood to
mean “preparer of the road” (Lendering), what J. E. Cirlot (1962) similarly refers to as a bridging of worlds that separate God from human beings or one community of peoples from another (p. 33). Spanning the last one hundred fifty years, scholars of theology Bungener (1855), Walker (1970), and Pelikan, in his Mary Through the Centuries (1996), similarly states that the Greek theotokos and the Latin pontifex generally came to mean, respectively, a “bearer of God” or God’s word and a “builder of bridges” (pp. 490-492; xxvi; pp. 134-35, 67). These meanings metaphorically indicate that a pontifex was understood to serve as an intermediary between God or the gods and human beings. Interestingly, problems developed as early as 400 ACE regarding whether or not these terms should be applied to Mary. According to Pelikan, Christians worried over how their use would affect the Roman notion of “Immaculate Conception,” designed to preserve Mary from association with Eve and original sin. Though he does not mention Hannah or the pearl, and in spite of the fact that he might not concern himself with that problem, I infer his association includes Mary's aforementioned legendary link to Eve and original sin by way of the pearl (p. 67). Pelikan provides numerous arguments made for and against the original application of this title having been directed toward Mary, which signified her as being a priestess, instead of toward the cult of the divine Roman emperor. In the fourth century CE, scholars agree that it began to be associated with him. Years later, Christian bishops and archbishops took up the term pontifex. Eventually, pontifex developed into a title used exclusively for the bishop of Rome (p. 67). Mariologists typically suggest that when the famous Council of Trent meetings ended in 1563, too many elaborately defined arguments prevented the Council from seeing into the original problem. Cultural tensions demanded of the board that they make a conclusive decision about whether or not Mary should have ever been attributed the title of Pontifex, but the issue was never resolved.

Roman scholarship helps us see the muddled state of efforts to distinguish between the Roman and Etruscan meanings of pontifex. This reflects on the state of Mary's relationship to the word. Some scholars conflate the Etruscan application of this term or overlook the older term altogether. By this I mean they put its literal meaning, "builder of roads" (or bridges), together with its comparatively more recent Roman term, pontifex maximus, which signifies the priestly office of pontifex maximus. Pons is Latin for "bridge," not road, so that meaning changed when the word was borrowed from Etruscan. Where a bridge implies the only way two bodies of land can be brought together, a road suggest the right way of linking them. For a dated example, see
noller H. G. Wells's 1949 Outline of History (p. 685). Marietta Horster's review of classics scholar Francoise Van Haepenen's (2002) "Le college pontifical," found in Bryn Mawr Classical Review (2003), exemplifies the same problem from a more modern point of view. Van Haepenen has traced changes in the form and function of pontifex maximus over about 700 years, omitting the earliest periods of Roman history because in her view, too little is known about them (p. 467). Horster justified her omission for reasons that seem to me as questionable as the omission itself. According to her, the "most important" Roman resource for study of this topic has been lost. Though remarks made by Cicero, Livy, Plutarch, and others reflect unfavorably on some everyday actions of pontifices maximi, linking certain incidents in which they were involved with taboo "affairs of a questionable nature" is "too difficult." The testimonies of these scholars cannot be reconciled with other evidence, summarily identified as "questionable affairs," which indicates that pontifices maximi might have been something other than prominent citizens living so called "normal" lives (p. 4).

Editorial judgments like these have unfolded with little or no apparent regard for evidence that other scholars have culled from myth. If Wells (1949), van Haepenen (2002), and Horster (2003) had turned to Hamilton (1930) and Bulfinch (1855/1959), they would have learned, for example, that the Greek rainbow goddess Iris was identified as the mythic messenger and bridge builder of Greek deities. She afforded the gods a means of communicating amongst themselves and to humans (pp. 36, 122; pp. 173, 180). In the Iliad, Hamilton states Iris is the only messenger. In the Odyssey, she and Hermes both function this way but Hermes does not overshadow her (p. 36). Classicists Morford and Lenardon (2003) indicate further that Iris was a descendant of the sea and all water (p. 153), and Cooper associates her with the psychopomp but does not define that term. Morford and Lenardon translate psychopompus to mean "leader of the soul," but do not associate Iris with this important function. They link psychopompus with Hermes, in so far as it is him who brings the souls of the dead to Hades (p. 1-28).

Had Wells (1949), van Haepenen (2002), and Horster (2003) turned to iconographical resources like Cooper (1978) and Hall (1974/1979), they would have further learned that Iris was credited with being the personified rainbow because she signified the power of light and hope. She is also the equivalent of the Fleur-de-Lis, a stylized lotus or lily similarly signifying light and life. In this context, Iris is the androgyne, its masculine dimension being equated with the male trinity, its Feminine, the female circle. The masculine aspect of the Fleur-de-Lis
androgynous combination is additionally connected with the trident, caduceus, and thrysus, all of which resembling a spearhead which represents a certain form of masculine and military power. This will be discussed later within the context of Achilles and the errant Feminine. The Feminine half of the androgynous Fleur-de-Lis refers to the Queen of Heaven and the triple majesty of God, Trinity, and Royalty. When Iris is associated with the lily, not to be confused with associations between her and the Fleur-de-Lis, her Christian interpretation has come to be equated with the Virgin Mary, Queen of Heaven, and Immaculate Conception. When equated with the "sword lily," Iris is additionally associated with the seven Sorrows of Mary (pp. 69, 88; 55, 162, 258).

This information suggests that there is good cause to align Mary with the pontifexal bridge and its iconographical associations. However, there is also Iris's staff, or caduceus, to consider. According to Hall, this wand was identified with magician's wands and, like Iris, "unmolested passage." I infer the term "unmolested passage" can be related back to the virginity of Mary and Delphic oracles. According to Cooper (1978) and Hall (1974/1979), when Iris called upon her staff to change into a serpent, it did, and in this respect she and her staff together seem to have functioned as an antidotal force the same way Asclepius and Isis did. This dimension of her will be discussed in another context (55, 162, 258). Matthew Wood's 1992 The Magical Staff: the Vitalist Tradition in Western Medicine indicates moreover, that the caduceus is one and the same thing as the tree of knowledge. Its original owner was Thoth, Egyptian deity of knowledge forms involving sciences and the occult (Fig. 43 I,J). The Greeks transformed Thoth into Hermes, and from Hermes the staff traveled to Asclepius (Fig. 42 A,B,C). Wood does not acknowledge Iris, but tells us that Asclepius was associated with "medical interventionism," while other Greek gods and goddesses were not. Interventionism is the characteristic of the staff that enabled its owner to bring patients back to life (pp. ix-xi). These various references strongly suggest three points: 1) Iris, coupled with her caduceus, was the Feminine equivalent of Asclepius, and as such was a healing agent that could perform medical miracles, or interventionism; 2) that she was a pontifexal figure, and 3) Mary was one of her Christianized equivalents. Moses was another one. He will be discussed along with the Iris' caduceus wand.

The Roman vestal virgins (priestesses of the goddess Vesta who tended her sacred fire) similarly acted as "pontifices," intermediaries between the gods and human beings. Hamilton (1930), J. C. Stobart (1971), and Gaster's abridgment of Frazer (1922/1959, rpt. 1964) state that
vestal virgins were the only female members of a religious council referred to collectively as pontifices. The council's leader, the Pontifex Maximus, was ancient Rome’s high priest of the College of Pontiffs and his position was subsumed in 14 CE. For hundreds of years before that, however, pontifex priests and their administrator, the Pontifex Maximus, acted in accordance with their position as a religious council (p. 35-36; 138; 704).

The state defined their function, but it did not define the position of vestal virgins, who had evolved out of a more ancient tradition. Study of it clarifies first, that what the word translated as virgin in the Bible and ancient works written before it did not mean to peoples of antiquity what it means today. The Latin word virgin, from which the English word virgin is derived, did not originally imply the absence of sexual experience. Evidence from definitive ecclesiastical texts like W. Walker’s History of the Christian Church (1970) indicates that it signified a broader state of relative innocence defined psychologically as well as physiologically, and scholars have conclusively determined, based on interplay between the Greek, Hebraic, and Christian views, that the modern concept of virginity had many points of origin (pp. 15–16). I have already stated that there existed in multiple communities, from the same period in history and before, other women alluded to as virgins. Early Christians, I infer, must have been aware of the word’s larger meaning.

I will begin by reconsidering Roman Vestal Virgins from the perspective of MacKendrick (1958), Ramsay and Star’s The Ancient Romans (1971), Hamilton (1930), and Morford and Lenardon (2003). These scholars trace the legendary origin of the vestal virgins to Rhea Silvia, who immaculately conceived Romulus and Remus, the legendary founders of Rome, through an interaction with the Roman god of war, Mars (pp. 13, 95; 1189–1191; 43–44). In the tradition of vestal virgins before them, MacKendrick, Ramsay and Star, Hamilton, and Morford and Lenardon continue, these figures acted within their prescribed context under the direction of their comparatively recent counterparts, the Roman Pontifex Council. Children of noble families, Vestal Virgins entered the service of Vesta at or before the age of ten, and occupied and tended to the Temple until they were forty or older. Their life was charged with many taboos, and they were sworn to strict vows of chastity. They protected agrarian families, their hearths, and the hearths of the community by working year round to maintain the life of their fire, a sacred resource that they allowed to die and then rekindled only on the first day of
the Roman year, March first. As long as vestal virgins honored the tradition of Vesta and her fire, Romans believed no bad omens could be imposed upon them or their state (pp. 35–36, 138, 704).

The Greek conception of "virgin" (Greek parthenos), as it was applied to Delphic Oracles, had similar connotations. Although scholars studying this group of “virgins” admit to not knowing much about their relative ages and life experience, scholars use the same attributes when they apply the word virgin to Delphic oracles as they do for Vestal Virgins. Broad (2006) writes that the image of Delphic Virgins as lithe, beautiful, and young has become a cliché, and tentatively presents them as having been young and, I infer, a virgin physiologically only in very early history. During later centuries, however, he thinks they were most likely about fifty years old (pp. 30-35). Broad tells us further that important changes took place around the fifth and fourth centuries BCE when administrators began to question how old Delphic oracles ought to be and to what degree they should be educated. On the one hand it was argued that they should be mature women of roughly 50 years of age, past child rearing age, whose high social standing would reflect well upon their experience of affairs related to the institutions governing the political and religious affairs of their community. This woman's judgment was expected to be a culturally informed one. On the other hand it was believed that Delphic Oracles should be kept comparatively naive, especially regarding the same political and religious affairs. Their relative innocence, this group maintained, would enable them to approach Apollo’s temple with the mental and psychological perspective of a “virgin,” whose union with Apollo would reflect no or little apparent investment in the judgement for which she was preparing to intuit (p. 30–35).

This fifth-and-fourth-century BCE concern mirrors contemporary theological studies about Mary. Although the meaning of the word virgin as applied to the Delphic Oracle seems to have implied psychological purity rather than lifelong sexual abstinence, the original conception underlying Vestal Virgins required them to be chaste until they were past child bearing age. Most commentators have concerned themselves only with the literal and physiological dimension of Mary's immaculate conception of Jesus, ignoring the word's more metaphorical and psychological implications. This is despite the efforts of modern theologians like Arthur A. Just (2001), in his Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, and James D. G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson (2003), in their Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible. These scholars admit that academia cannot be certain what was originally meant by the word virgin, when the term was applied to Mary (pp. 61; 506).
As late as 1563, more than fifteen hundred years after Jesus was born, Bungener (1855) tells us that theologians hotly debated this issue in the famous Council of Trent convoked by Pope Paul III. Twenty-seven years of debate resulted in no conclusion (pp. xxvi, xxiv, 529). The issue was left unresolved until three hundred years later, continues Abram Sachar (1960), when in *Ineffabilis Deus* (1854), Pope Pius IX officially accepted the idea of Mary’s Immaculate conception. By this he meant that it had been determined that she was born and had remained free from original sin (p. 126). It appears that dogma surrounding this point, like the other misunderstandings I am considering, may have been more influential than factual truth.

**Problem 3: The Delphic Oracle’s link with the serpent.** Putting aside the question of virginity, Delphic oracles appear to have guarded fire like Vestal Virgins did. Broad (2006) tells us that to honor Delphi as the center of the ancient world, the Greeks marked it with a large conical stone called the *omphalos*, or navel. Ancient sources like Varro’s *On the Latin Language* (50 BCE), works of the fourth century CE Egyptian-born Latin poet Claudius Claudianus, and those of the fifth-century Alexandrian grammarian Hesychios indicate that before the *omphalos* was seated, the location was home to a huge snake or dragon called Python which embodied the powers of darkness. Apollo fought Python over its spot and won, and that is how Delphi gained the additional name *Pytho*. Interestingly, Broad continues, in time Delphic Oracles also came to be known as *Pythia*, and that name signified two things. First, their power was synonymous with the force of Python. Second, they were the new world center that had replaced the old. They were in themselves the power of every form of darkness, Python reconstituted (pp. 25–31).

Moreover, the name Pytho is derived from a verb meaning, “to rot.” If I may liken rotting to the kind of alchemical blackening mentioned in the subsection on unicorns and lions, the Delphic Oracle seems to have been associated with alchemical rotting or “blackening.” In this light, Pythia and her Apollonian knowledge were transformed from rottenness and darkness into useful agents much as a venom becomes an antidote. A more common way of referring to what seems to me the same process involves the three ways in which the Greeks defined the sexual nature of the Delphic oracle: as a “virgin,” which has been discussed, as the heterosexual wife of Apollo, and as an androgynous being.

**4.9.4 Sexuality and Apollo's Oracle**

I have already discussed the view of the Delphic Oracle as a problematically defined virgin. According to Broad (2006), the Greeks also regarded her as the "wife" and "consort" of
Apollo (p. 35). In this context, her generative efforts were critically dependent upon him: he was her husband, but he was also the essential source of her divinatory abilities. Apollo’s duties included being the keeper of prophecy and visions, and the Delphic oracle had an exclusively monogamous sexual relationship with him. This monogamy, if we can call it that given the human male surrogates, seems to have been not only on her side. My findings indicate that Apollo viewed all oracles the same way, as the composite vehicle through which he communicated his perspective. According to Broad, for eight months of every year (March through October), she and her helpers underwent purification rituals on the seventh day of every month to prepare for uniting in holy marriage with Apollo (p. 35). On these special days, a human male catalyst would act in Apollo’s stead. He and the oracle would unite with the intention of impregnating her words with Apollonian vision (pp. 10-21). In this capacity, she functioned uniquely as Apollo’s metaphorical mouthpiece, pontifexal messenger, and mistress. However her actions were signifiers far removed from the sexual activities typically associated with procreation, because in this context she seems to have been the human bridge between mankind and Apollo’s wisdom.

The Delphic oracle's visit to Apollo on the seventh day of the month can be connected to ways ancients associated agriculture with astronomy. As discussed, the number seven seems to have coincided with the belief that Earth was an anthropomorphic entity in Succoth and Sabbatical. Succoth, a feast celebrated during the seventh month of every year to honor the season when humans gathered fruits, reflects Earth being viewed as a living entity with bodily processes like those of humans. During Succoth, Earth's flowering trees, shrubs, and vines were understood to have been going through purgation and cleansing, the birth and cleansing associated with bodily elimination of afterbirth. Sabbatical, observed every seventh year, was similarly a time when the land was kept fallow, a time for the Jews to pay sacrificial tribute to Earth for everything that she had given them.

From this perspective, Apollo and his oracle's relationship to the number seven seem to have been similarly defined. Scholars commonly agree that Apollo was the source of his oracle’s inspiration. It follows that he was the metaphorical origin of her oracular “fruit,” which oracles gathered from him on the seventh of every month for the same reason that Hebrews kept Earth’s land fallow every seventh year. Both attempts reflect efforts to act respectfully and in accordance with propriety toward the origin of the fruit in question. As the Hebrews sacrificed to honor their
dependency upon Earth, Delphic oracles paid tribute to Apollo by approaching him only on the seventh day of every month, from November to February. Ancient Greeks believed that oracular abilities peaked on the seventh day, but restricting the oracle’s unions with Apollo to this one day a month may have also functioned as a means of curtailing the many opportunities oracles were presented with to wrestle with their human pride, being that their oracular function was so highly esteemed. In this sense, restriction may have served as an antidotal “medicine” woven into their prescribed behavior. Another way of showing how agriculture and astronomy factored into myths underlying oracular tradition is by considering Apollo’s relationship with his younger chthonic brother Dionysus [also referred to as Zagreus], who also had a sexual relationship with oracles.

**4.10 Apollo’s Oracle and Dionysian Sexuality**

Broad (2006) tells us scholars are unsure of the extent to which Delphic Oracles participated in Dionysian rites (pp. 40-43). Mircea Eliade’s *Rites and Symbols of Initiation* (1994) and Hamilton (1942) have not concerned themselves with this problem, but their findings similarly reflect that no one knows much about Dionysus’s earliest identity. He has for one reason or another been overlooked since as early as the eighth century BCE and it should come as no surprise that few connections can be made between him and the Delphic Oracle. Works written by ancient scholars like 1rst C BCE historian Diodorus Siculus give us clues about who Dionysus was, and two relevant ideas are substantiated through use of these sources. One is that there were two of him, and both versions remained earthly and connected to the ancient Feminine. The other is that his earliest form must have included some unidentifiably horrific material which caused a lot of problems even before the time of Christ. It seems significant that Dionysus’s father Zeus, the Greek sky and weather deity who was Apollo’s son and Dionysus’s grandfather, originally had a younger version too. Both of his applications were being acknowledged, albeit problematically, during Hellenistic times but now the earlier one is all but dead. Dietrich (1974) tells us Zeus’s more commonly recognized form was predated by a 7th century BCE overlooked version he refers to as “young Zeus,” which was connected to the ancient Feminine. Poets like Callimachus were censured for acknowledging this identity’s existence (p. 14-15), and Deitrich suggests further that the reason for this censure dates as far back as the seventh century BCE when young Zeus's connection to the earth and the Feminine first became a source of contention. According to him, numerous social wrongs were inflicted on the poor by landowning nobility during these
years, most relevantly, no or little regard was shown for the wide range of agrarian deities to
whom working Greek citizens had been bound since the Bronze Age and before (pp. 272-273).
What interests me about Deitrich’s findings is that they must have affected Dionysus too,
because he claims his lineage dates back even further than Zeus’s to Neolithic times, that is the
second millennium BCE or earlier (pp. 10-21). The following two passages support Dietrich's
claim while introducing the idea that there existed some serious concerns about Dionysus's
character. They have been excerpted from Oldfather’s translation of Siculus’s Library of History
(4.4.1 and 4.4.5 in Books III-VIII):

Some writers of myth, however, relate that there was a second Dionysus
[Zagreus] who was much earlier in time than the one we have just
mentioned. For according to them there was born of Zeus and Persephone
a Dionysus who is called by some Sabazios and whose birth and
sacrifices and honors are celebrated at night and in secret, because of the
disgraceful conduct which is a consequence of the gatherings.

The younger one [Dionysus] also inherited the deeds of the elder [Zagreus], and so the men of later times, being unaware of the truth and
being deceived because of the identity of their names, thought there had
been but one Dionysus.

This ancient information inadvertently acknowledges Dionysus’s sexual relationship with
the oracle if we consider two points: 1) both applications of him were generative and
reproductive, based upon the model of his father’s sexual relationship with the earth and the
Feminine; and 2) his father’s relationship with both was discounted, even in the seventh century
BCE. Although both versions of Dionysus are still being recognized, the conduct he and his
followers displayed during Dionysian rites was and still is frowned upon. By relating Diodorus’s
statements to on the one hand, a brief review of Zeus’s earliest form; and on the other,
anthropological evidence connecting worship of Dionysus to three forms of oracularly inspired
frenzy, the reason why Dionysian rites were received so controversially begins to surface.

Dietrich’s translation of Hesiod reflects that shortly after young Zeus was born in a
Cretan cave to Kronos and Rhea, Kronos tried to eat him. The baby was sent to Goat Mountain,
where the she-goat Almathea suckled him while Kuretes (fertility demons) danced about and
clashed their shields and swords to prevent Kronos from hearing the baby's cries. Putting the significance of the Kurete Warriors and the goat aside for now, young Zeus matured and experienced the entirety of his life that first year, I infer the same way that Hathor’s son who was also her husband was born every morning and then died. Dietrich tells us both were aligned with earth’s self sustaining cycle and that is why they were sexual, and as Dietrich tells it, “mortal.” By this term, he means that Zeus was unlike most deities in that he died as humans do (p. 14-15). Young Zeus evolved into his more recent, more commonly recognized form, and became identified simply as Zeus, the sky and weather god, and in this revised context Dietrich tells us Zeus no longer died every year alongside of the vegetation cycle (p. 14-15). He was not an agrarian deity. Nor was he mortal. He had risen above his mortal relationship with the Feminine, and had at the same time retained his sexuality--only now it was manifest in an altered context because it was stripped of its original meaning. Maybe the same thing happened to Dionysus, and if so, tracing these early efforts to reconstruct agrarian sensibility is important because they must have surely affected his troubled identity. Unfortunately, this part of Dionysus’s problem only inadvertantly accounts for his sexual relationship with the oracle. By relating Diodorus’s statements about Dionysus to anthropological evidence connecting his worship to three forms of oracularly inspired frenzy, the reason why Dionysian rites were received so controversially begins to surface.

4.10.1 Three Forms of Dionysian Frenzy which Anthropologists Associate with Oracular Inspiration

One form of frenzy connects Dionysus to the ancient rite of "hieros gamos," which Dietrich traces to the second millennium BCE or earlier through Neolithic cave paintings (pp. 10-21). This rite parallels his life cycle to that of vegetation, in that he and Earth both experienced a holy marriage and an annual death (pp. 14-15). His assessment and Eliade’s (1994) tell us that in theory, hieros gamos involved the Feminine's sexual union with a male deity to ensure human and earthly fertility. The activity accordingly became literalized through surrogates performing this ritual through what Eliade refers to as a "reactualization of primordial events narrated in myth" (p. 10). Dietrich and Eliade tell us these were performed evenings from November through February, and perceived mythically and metaphorically while being viewed literally with the intent that their visualized message be directed toward the best possible promise of a blessing (pp. 11, 272-274; 10). Dietrich further indicates that although Dionysus and others
were sexual partners of the *Feminine* they were also her biological sons. Their duality suggests they were subservient to her and were also essential to her generative process (pp. 10-21), and in this context, a comparison might be made between their relationship and that of Hathor and her sexual partner who was her son as well as her husband.

The second relevant way anthropologists relate Dionysus’s earliest form to frenzy producing inspiration is frequently acknowledged through use of sacred tree and plant substances. Frazer's text revised by Gaster (1964) tells us that Apollo's oracles chewed the sacred laurel, for example, and Dionysian ones ate ivy (pp. 96-99). Oracular use of laurel and ivy is commonly discussed, but use of the ash substance is not, and I will address it later on in another context.

The third way anthropologists relate Dionysian ritual to frenzy producing inspiration is ritual dismemberment. According to Gaster (1964), this means of linking the oracle to Dionysian sexuality has been so commonly discussed by ethnologists that no one questions its viability any more. My readings indicate otherwise, perhaps because according to Gaster (1964), ancient peoples viewed ritual dismemberment as being the necessary act behind how the oracle got the fresh blood she required to make authentic utterances. This idea probably offends people. As she sucked blood from the neck of a sacrificed victim, she is written to have been uniquely able to attract the prophetic spirit into herself. This topic is beyond the scope of my dissertation, but mythic material about Dionysus supports this association and makes its relevance clearer.

In William Smith’s 1876 *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology* (Volume 1), there are several accounts of infant Dionysus’s early childhood and one indicates that after the baby was dismembered by Titans, Athena carried his heart to Zeus (pp. 1046-1047). Hamilton (1942) tells us further that Dionysus’s heart was next given to the young human woman Semele in a drink, with the intent that she become impregnated. After Semele drank Dionysus’s heart and became pregnant, Hera changed herself to look like the girl’s nurse and told her to ask Zeus to come to her as he came to Hera so that she too might experience the ramifications of having slept with a deity. Semele did all of this, and was killed by Zeus’s thunderbolt (pp. 54-55).

4.10.2 Semele Allows us to Bridge Oracular Messengers with Mary

This popular version of Semele and Dionysus's story can help us understand the Delphic Oracles relationship to Dionysus if we ask two questions. One is why Hera asked Semele to draw
closer to Zeus. The other is whether Dionysus’s mother Semele was human or some suprarational reflection of the Feminine. No one seems to question Hera’s motives. It is commonly suggested that she was jealous of the girl. However at the same time scholars seem to refer to Semele both ways, in a seemingly subjective manner. Dietrich (1974), for example, does not even discuss the girl but suggests that Dionysus's mother reflected Feminine attributes. Hamilton (1942), on the other hand, acknowledges her as a mortal Theban princess. Statements like these do not reflect Semele’s relationship to Thyone, the name given her when she died and went to Hades after being burnt to death. According to Patricia Turner and Charles R. Coulter’s 2001 Dictionary of Ancient Deities, Semele was later retrieved by her son Dionysus and taken to live on Mount Olympus, where she was deified (p. 419). Bearing in mind that Eliade’s (1994) assessment of hieros gamos claims this ritual reenacted original truth, and remembering on the one hand that Dionysus was dismembered, and on the other, that oracles played a role in Dionysian ritual dismemberment, it follows that oracles participating in this rite might have been perceived the same way as Dionysian figures associated with the ritual of hieros gamos were. Both groups were reenacting fundamental truths. When this idea is blended with Hamilton’s (1942) statement that Semele’s mother Harmonia had in her possession a magical, cursed necklace which resulted in Semele’s being one in a long line of genetically cursed women destined to fail (pp. 254-256, 267), and studied next to my proposal that Semele’s inherited failure reflected suprarational abilities to access knowledge, it becomes plausible that both ways of referring to the girl are correct. That is, so long as her suprarational abilities are acknowledged-- and unfortunately, they are not.

In my comparison of the Greek warrior Achilles to errant Mary I will argue that interpretations of stories like Semele’s reflect efforts to humanize, and accordingly downplay unique human abilities. This is why I believe the girl’s inherited instincts prompted her to ask Zeus to reveal himself, and Semele’s fate appears to parallel what happened to other Feminine groups and individuals who have been misunderstood, sometimes damned, even killed. If this group has been identified as being errant because of their suprarational abilities, then details of Semele’s tragedy suggest an iconographical and genealogical correlation might exist between her story and the Eve to Mary, by way of Hannah and the Pearl perspective defined earlier in this chapter. My idea to link these two lineages is strengthened further by the fact that Semele’s story also reflects powerfully upon the oracle’s association with the Androgyne and her daughter Gaia,
who—because she was her mother’s messenger, was the original messenger. My last definition will be accordingly directed toward establishing the identity of the Androgyne. Analysis of this topic exceeds the boundaries of this dissertation, but we do not need to invest too much in her analysis to establish that westerners appear to have had some sizable problems with her identity, too.

4.11 Definition of the Androgyne

Mythographers like Hamilton (1930, rpt. 1959), Hall (1974); and Cooper (1978) tell us the Androgyne [also referred to as Gaea (Earth) and Tellus Mater], was in herself the origin of earth and all waters, and she was the seat of reproductive fertility. Descriptions of early mankind and the gods were fashioned after her. The entirety of mankind was originally androgynous, for example, and the Greek deities Chaos (formless confusion who bore the gods, earth, and the heavens) and Erebus (the origin of all darknesses) were “neuter,” another word for androgynous (pp. 63-64; 272-273; 12-13). From the perspective of contemporary psychology, Carl Jung's *Collected Works* associates the concept of an ancient androgynous *Feminine* with the Ouroboros, which he identified as a personified archetype for the basic mandala of alchemy. This is, the nature underlying human individuation (vol. 14: para. 513):

The alchemists, who in their own way knew more about the nature of the individuation process than we moderns do, expressed this paradox through the symbol of the [previously discussed] Ouroboros, the snake that eats its own tail. In the age-old image of the Ouroboros lies the thought of devouring oneself and turning oneself into a circulatory process, for it was clear to the more astute alchemists that the prima materia of the art was man himself. The Ouroboros is a dramatic symbol for the integration and assimilation of the opposite, i.e. of the shadow. This 'feed-back' process is at the same time a symbol of immortality, since it is said of the Ouroboros that he slays himself and brings himself to life, fertilizes himself and gives birth to himself. He symbolizes the One, who proceeds from the clash of opposites, and he therefore constitutes the secret of the prima materia which unquestionably stems from man's unconscious.
The Ouroboros, who mothered earth, humanity, and the gods, is one of many signifiers for the Androgyne. Our analysis of the Isenheim will gain more, however, by associating her with another of her signifiers, the "bitch," or female dog. In every one of Grunewald’s Isenheim illustrations of Anthony, the Saint is paired with a dog. I have studied the rainbow messenger deity Iris and related her to Mary, Jesus of Nazareth’s mother, but have not yet considered messengers from the perspective that they were originally “bitches,” too. This is accordingly the signifier I will use to tie Anthony with messengers and the Androgyne.

Modern scholars frequently misconstrue use of the term “bitch” in this context to mean promiscuity, the most relevant example being Mary Magdalene’s association with prostitution. However ancient peoples understood this powerful term to signify the watchful, noble, faithful, and philosophical principles of life. From the perspective of myth, Hamilton (1930, rpt. 1959), Hall (1974), Cooper (1978), and Morford and Lenardon (2003) tell us the female dog symbolizes the relationship between the Androgyne and her daughter Gaia, who vigilantly guarded over the boundaries between the world of mankind and her mothers while attending to the dead. In this way, Gaia was her mother’s messenger. She was also Zeus's mother and his messenger, and her interactions with him and the Androgyne seem to have served as the fundamental model for the bond between Apollo and his messenger, the Delphic Oracle (pp. 52-53, 65; 12; 108, 188-189; 272-273). This iconographical fact returns us to the Delphic Oracle’s relationship with Apollo and Dionysus. Although the Androgyne predated the ancient Feminine, the two seem to have represented two ways of referring to the same essence. Both were symbiotically and binarily connected to force in its original state, and their identities involved a male and female component which was defined metaphorically and binarily in terms of female and male, female and female, or male and male gender. They differed in that the Feminine acted alongside of a counterpart and the Androgyne was a generative entity in her self. Cooper warns that contemporary scholarship has disregarded how these combinations refer to force metaphorically, and focused instead on their literal implications. Zeus and others were sometimes depicted wearing women's clothes, for example, to suggest an association with the Androgyne—not homosexuality. My interest in Cooper’s point is that Dionysus and Apollo together seem to have represented one of several ways ancient and early peoples defined the male prototype underlying the ancient Feminine. Dionysus was biologically male, but he reflected psychosocial attributes which matched those of
the *Feminine*, and these attributes of his and the others I have studied which have become errant are what I am interested in. They facilitate our recognizing him as part of a synthemata.

I have connected the *Feminine* to the alchemical relationship lions shared with unicorns, and related the dynamic between them to the antidotal principle of synthemata. As stated earlier, synthemata assumes the existence of good and errant attributes and aligns any given antidote with the poison it was made from. I similarly accounted for the dynamic between errant Nephthys and good Isis, and Mary and Magdalene. As unicorns functioned antidotally and were in themselves the equivalent of an antidote, or a reconfigured poison, so I argued did Isis and Mary function antidotally in response to Magdalene and Nephthys. With these associations in mind, I will conclude this chapter by considering that Dionysus originally exemplified another form of the “errant” *Feminine*. In this context, “Apollo” was his “good” counterpart. Of course Dionysus and Apollo were literally male. However when their form and function are viewed psychosocially and metaphorically from the perspective of the agrarian *Feminine*, it becomes clear that they have been reconfigured, misinterpreted in another way separate from the assumption that they are homosexual. These deities were originally agrarian and sexual. Although Zeus and his father Apollo successfully outgrew their agrarian roots a long time ago and Apollo retained a sexual relationship with his oracle while simultaneously maintaining face, Dionysus never rose above the earth and his means of connecting to sexuality through various forms of frenzy have been rejected. I want to associate Dionysus with the oracle and her tradition because I believe their identities have been muddled the same way. What bothered westerners about Dionysus’s frenzy was part of what worried them about her. There was something else that worried them about her too, however. That is their concern about the powers she was believed to have had. She--like Semele--was recognized as having been a human manifestation of the Androgyne.

### 4.12 The Oracles Relationship to the Androgyne

Bearing in mind that in this context, male and female attributes ultimately do not hinge on physiological gender, but on psychic makeup, we now understand what the Greeks must have meant when they acknowledged the Delphic Oracle as the human representative of divination. Apollo was divination's deity but she was his spouse, and according to Cooper (1978), a working manifestation of the most ancient *Feminine* Androgyne. Weighty definitions like this signify a very unique form of power which modernity seems to no longer acknowledge. Hence, the
abilities of Saint Anthony, Mary, Magdalene, Semele, Wild People and so many others have been literalized, compartmentalized, humanized, and studied with no or little regard for their cultural context. This observation is best exemplified by Richard Payne Knight’s (1786) essay on Greek fertility worship, “A Discourse on the Worship of Priapus.” Priapus's iconographical attributes are inescapably intertwined with those of the identities listed above, but he is associated with the Christian Devil, or worse, passingly referred to as a comedic garden talisman. That is if he is acknowledged at all. Nevertheless, evidence indicates this curious character represents Tellus Mater reconfigured into a male, and I believe Grunewald intended that his viewers associate him with his Saint Anthony and the beaked creature he depicted with three horns and large, clearly defined female breasts (on the viewers' right when the altar is closed). I introduced Anthony in my introduction. The following analysis of Grunewald's Isenheim Altarpiece will lead us to consider this strange, beaked creature from the perspective of its being the Feminine Androgyne preparing to metamorphose into Mary, Mother of Jesus. Mary was Anthony's model for how to become a healing agent.
CHAPTER FIVE
ANALYSIS OF THE ISENHEIM ALTARPIECE, PART ONE
THE GOOD DIMENSION OF MARY

In this chapter, I will interpret Grunewald’s implied use of ideas behind the word *metamorphosis* to mean “catharsis directed toward a state of relative transcendence for altruistic purposes of healing.” Defined this way, the topic of metamorphosis seems to be one of the most prominently understudied features of his shrine. I will begin by applying my definition of catharsis to the underlying dynamic between two panels. On the one hand will be the Conversation panel, depicting Saint Anthony’s conversation with Paul the Hermit. This panel is also referred to as the Visitation panel because a raven brings a wafer to these two men (Fig. 3A). On the other hand will be the Temptation of Saint Anthony panel, also referred to as the Metamorphosis (Fig. 4 A,B). As stated in the introduction of my dissertation, scholars like Snyder (1985) typically interpret the creatures in the Temptation panel according to what Saint Anthony claimed to have seen while he was a student of Saint Paul the Hermit, who lived in the desert. Saint Anthony informed his biographer friend Athanasius that he (Anthony) had taken refuge in a “tomb” to teach himself how to challenge demons, and his frightening apparitions of lions, leopards, bears, lizards, scorpions, and serpents are believed to have been transformed by Grunewald into “hybrids of the most grotesque shapes” to delineate Anthony’s educational experience (p. 353). My problem with analyzing the creatures in Grunewald’s Metamorphosis panel from this perspective is that the activity seems to exemplify the degree to which scholarly efforts to study this panel have remained where they began. Neither Snyder nor any other modern scholar has taken these animals beyond what Athanasius said about them 1,700 years ago. No one is discussing them symbolically, from the perspective of the ancient Feminine’s relationship to cathartic, transcendent knowledge. Athanasius might not have discussed these fantastic creatures from this perspective, but he must have had knowledge of what these symbols meant. That is why I believe the essentially esoteric nature of what Grunewald was trying to convey is being overlooked.

In addition to animals Snyder tells us Athanasius identified in Anthony’s apparition, Grunewald depicted a creature with goat horns, another with elk or deer antlers, an ape, a dog, a baboon, a human-sized raven, and an apparently diseased man. The man has green colored flesh,
a distended stomach, inflamed boils, and webbed feet. This chapter will address all of these animals except for the goat and elk, which will be studied later on with attributes of the errant Feminine. The green man and these animals will be shown to signify aspects of the good dimension of the Feminine, which I plan to associate with what are typically acknowledged as good attributes of Mary's character.

According to Hayum’s *The Meaning and Function of the Isenheim Altarpiece: The Hospital Context Revisited* (1989), scholars have not carefully analyzed any other creature in Grunewald’s Metamorphosis panel aside from the web-footed human creature, which they typically interpret as an anthropomorphized depiction of the symptoms of Saint Anthony’s fire (pp. 20, 29). Snyder (1985), for example, interprets this figure as a diseased, possibly plague-ridden person clutching a book (p. 353). I suggest that scholars pay more attention to how this creature’s feet, apparently putrified green flesh, and book relate the raven depicted in Grunewald’s Visitation panel to Anthony. Later in this chapter, I will explain how the raven, the book, and the green man's webbed feet contribute to my idea of relating the Mary and Magdalene composite to Paul the Hermit’s conversation with Anthony.

5.1 Grunewald’s Feminine Raven

Snyder (1985), Ferguson (1954), and others have shown that the raven in Grunewald’s Visitation panel is bringing sustenance to Paul the Hermit and Anthony in the form of “loaves of bread” (Snyder, p. 353; Ferguson, pp. 104–105). Cooper (1978) notes that such wafers signify transcendent knowledge depicted as “sustenance,” or food. I want to extend their observations about this raven. I agree with them that the raven seems to be functioning as a helpmate to Paul and Anthony, but am curious about their relationship and that of the raven, to another creature in the lower right foreground of the Metamorphosis panel (Fig. 5D). There, the creature in question has metamorphosed itself into a larger-than-man-sized bird with human arms extending from its neck, and the arms are beating the saint. If these panels are viewed in sequence, the human figure with boils and webbed feet seems to prefigure the next form that it will assume in its efforts to support Anthony. First the bird introduced the saint to transcendence with its wafer. Then, in its oversized form, it beat him to show him how to suffer. This is a precondition of self-sacrifice on the part of prophets and desert fathers like his instructor, Paul. In this context, the bird appears to support figures in search of transcendence like Paul, Antony, and Mary too—if we consider that
she is their Christian model for how and why healing agents like themselves must learn how to suffer.

In the Metamorphosis panel, the same raven holds onto a papyrus roll as it beats Anthony. This additional element changes how the bird needs to be defined. Now, the creature appears to have taken on the additional role of a warrior, acting in defense of the ancient Feminine. According to Cooper (1978), ravens signify the blackening or dying-to-the-world stage of alchemy (p. 137) and I will discuss this aspect of her in a later chapter about Mary's transcendent Anger. For now, the significance of the raven's roll is that it prefigures another element, the tattered book that the web-footed human figure clutches on to. I presume this book is a later copy of the raven's ancient roll. It will serve as the book's model, much as ancient and medieval rhyzotomist physicians' manuals had been copied from the ancient scientific texts written by their predecessors. In this way, the bird and the word (God's word, in the form of a medicine) have undergone similar metamorphoses to aid the saint, and the saint learns these lessons because his job is to model them for plague victims.

Grunewald probably also intended that his viewers associate his raven with prophecy, in the way of ancient and medieval peoples. Edith Hamilton (1942) writes that ravens were associated with prophecy because they “talk” (pp. 279–281). Cooper (1978) further defines the association between "talking" and prophecy. According to him, early Hebraic writings relate ravens to Eve and the Tree of Knowledge, Greek texts align them with Apollo and deity of healing Asclepius, and Christian lore links them with its Devil (p. 137). All these sources relate ravens who "talk" to transcendent knowledge, and some of it--like Eve's-- is ill fated. Hamilton quotes a myth fragment (paraphrased here) showing the link between talking ravens, Asclepius, and ill fated knowledge: Apollo fell in love with a maiden named Coronis, but she did not love him. She had fallen in love with a mortal. Apollo’s bird, a pure white raven, brought him news that Coronis loved another. In a fit of rage, Apollo turned his raven black and condemned Coronis to death. As he watched her burn, he felt guilty and swore to save their baby, Asclepius. He snatched the child away from the flames and sent it to the centaur Chiron, who was “learned in the use of herbs, gentle incantations, and cooling potions.” In time, Asclepius’s knowledge came to surpass even Chiron’s. He became a universal benefactor, but the Gods did not forgive him his form of sinning, or talking “thoughts too great for man.” The sinful "thought" which the
raven associated with Asclepius's story talked about, for example, was the deity's ability to raise men up from the dead.

In this mythic context, a talking raven clearly signifies one in possession of knowledge triggered by cathartic transformation. This raven's change from white to black represents the same knowledge as what was previously discussed in terms of white alchemically metamorphosing into black mortification. The point that Asclepius emerged alive from the fire while his mother was dying seems to support this alchemical association. He emerged from the fire of black mortification out into the light and was reborn.

I propose this association be related to the necessary transformation Mary must have been understood to have undergone to attain cathartic transcendence. She emerged from her errant (black) form to her white (good) form on a regular basis to revitalize her state of transciendence.

If I may make an association between Mary and Art, based upon my previously defined definitions of formalism and instrumentalism in the arts, Mary's theoretical knowledge was in itself an abstract and formal property that became useful only when she altruistically--framed from the perspective of the arts, instrumentally, applied it to solve a problem. Altruistic impulses will be further explored in my upcoming chapter on the emotional aggressiveness of Achilles. For now it is enough to consider that in every mythic context defining these figures, they are also attributed with being in possession of heightened altruistic impulses. They prompted Errant Wisdom to elect to remain on Earth to help her children, for example, and inspired Prometheus to steal fire away from the gods to help humankind.

Blackenings, or temporary deaths like those of the raven and Coronis in the Asclepius myth, are an essential ingredient in a formula. They signify a formulaic series of alchemical changes which in this context, facilitated events leading to Asclepius's birth and his mother's death. If I may draw an analogy between Asclepius's efforts to heal mankind and Mary's, I have come to the reason why Good and Errant Mary should not be separated. Only by watching her son Jesus pass through what I am proposing are the same series of alchemical changes could Mary carry out her altruistic concerns for humanity.

As Mary witnessed events associated with her son Jesus' crucifixion, she and her errant twin Magdalene must have experienced a catharsis of the same type as the one previously attributed to Isis and Nephthys. As Isis and Nephthys prayed to bring their dead son Horus back to life, Mary and Magdalene together witnessed events associated with Jesus’ death. Putting the
significance of Jesus's death aside because my dissertation argues that Mary's role in Grunewald's shrine is as important as Jesus', Magdalene and Mary underwent a catharsis. As they necessarily passed from black to white, errant to good, a powerful form of altruistic concern which matched that of their pagan counterparts, Nephthys and Isis, was born. Previously it was established that Nephthys and Isis embodied an antidote strong enough to conquer the toxic force of all venomous creatures. Their altruistic concern for their son, like Mary's and Magdalene's for theirs, was an important ingredient in the formula underlying this unique form of medicine. Returning to Grunewald's shrine with this model for cathartic suffering in mind, the human arms extending from the bird’s neck to beat Saint Anthony, and the strange, web-footed human struggling to learn how to suffer, can now be viewed as powerful signifiers. Together they suggest implementation of a very special form of education--what Paul and the raven are teaching Anthony in the desert. This inference is based on the Feminine model of Mary, and before her, Isis. The raven brought to Anthony, by way of Paul and his knowledge of the sacrificial components of Feminine tradition, the idea that tolerance for self-inflicted suffering directed toward psychological mortification was the necessary key to catharsis. My belief that this lesson is iconographically correct, even expected, is a point which becomes more viable when considered alongside of the numerous stone, water, and animal sources located in the midst of the desert in these two panels of the Isenheim.

5.2 Feminine Water
The following paraphrase of a passage from Bulfinch (1855/1959) sheds needed light on how stones and slime worked together to define early Feminine accounts of such significant events as the birth of humankind:

Jupiter was disgusted with the state of humanity. He summoned the gods and they determined it best to kill everyone. He determined it best to drown them.. All became sea without shore. A good man named Deucalion and his pious wife Pyrrha (of the race of Prometheus) were the only survivors. Deucalion and Pyrrha went to a temple, now deformed with slime. They approached the altar where no fire was burning and began to pray. How could they save mankind's miserable state of affairs?

An oracle told them, by this I mean oracle as a messenger of some kind--maybe a significant formation of birds or rocks which triggered a response in them, to depart from the temple with their heads veiled and garments unbound. They were to cast behind them the bones
of their mother. They heard these words and were astonished. Pyrrha said, “We cannot obey; we
dare not profane the remains of our parents.” Finally, Deucalion said, “Either my sagacity
deceives me or the command is one we may obey without impiety. The earth is the great parent
of all; the stones are her bones; these we may cast behind us, and I think this is what the oracle
means. At least, it will do no harm to try.”

They veiled their faces, unbound their garments, picked up stones, and cast them behind
them. The stones began to grow soft and then they assumed shape. By degrees, they began to
resemble human form. The slime that was everywhere about them became their flesh; the stones,
their bones, and the veins in the stones became human veins, retaining only their name. (pp. 27–
28)

Numerous references to the Feminine Earth and moisture-bearing slime make it
additionally clear that this story was originally associated with the ancient Feminine. Beginning
with stones, Cooper (1978) tells us they signify birth and regeneration and are consequently
Feminine. In myths such as the above story of Deucalion and Pyrrha, for example, stones gave
birth to people. However it was also understood by early Greek peoples, continues Cooper, that
gods could turn people into sacred stones.

Other sources reflect the presence of Feminine water in the form of "slime" and
"moisture," both of which Cooper (1978) tells us are manifest in "moisture and or rain giving"
animals” like frogs, toads, and lizards (pp. 27–28; 160–61). These creatures were “humid,” in
possession of the “moist skin of life.” In this last context, they “appeared” and “disappeared” so
ancient and early peoples associated them with death and the dark side of nature (pp. 68, 72, 174,
190).

Cooper (1978) and Clement A. Miles (1912) additionally tell us that all of these elements,
with the exception of stones, are stream fed and represent the female dimension of a male/female
composite that is androgynous. The force of stream fed elements is female, for example, and the
stream itself is masculine because it feeds life. In this androgynous capacity, water contained
magic and power. It was magical because it facilitated contact with the underworld, powerful
because it could function antidotally and as a medicine (Cooper, pp. 188–189; Miles, p. 103).

Although no Isenheim scholars have draw upon these iconographic attributes of the
ancient Feminine in their analyses, the altar contains many of these water-related objects and
animals and I believe Grunewald intended that they function for viewers of his shrine as
signifiers. In the Conversation panel, for example, there are icy mountains far in the background, a river in front of the mountains, what appears to be a brick-paved pool immediately behind Anthony and Paul, what may be a similarly paved volcanic spring in the right front of the panel immediately beside Saint Paul, and a tropical forest with a very prominent palm tree in the upper right portion of the panel. All of these objects have symbolic significance. Consider, for example, the volcanic spring.

According to mythographers Alexander Porteous (1928) and Robert Charles Hope (1868/1968), ancient peoples erected temples at the mouths of volcanic caves because they believed that all caves, groves, and volcanoes became connected there. These entryways represented an invaluable means of accessing earth's energy, but caves, groves, and volcanoes juncturing at volcanic springs, or springs which emerged from volcanic mountains, were recognized as the most sacred of all volcanic signifiers. Apparently, the mephitic vapors coming out of these spring fed caves were used to heal the sick. Porteous and Hope tell us that some of these sites are written to have been restricted for use only by sick people, and according to legend, healthy people who ignored these restrictions died or were blinded. Priests reportedly received as much from being there as their patients because prophecies were revealed to them there. These informed the cause of their patients' sicknesses, as well as the best means of gainfully treating them (Porteous, p. 63; Hope, xvi).

The only form of water in the Isenheim Altarpiece that does not fit this definition of Feminine "slime" and "moisture" is the aforementioned steep iced mountain behind the forest in the Metamorphosis panel (Fig. 5B). According to Cooper (1978), ice represents Earth's "gross water," the portion of its waters which reflect earth's ongoing death and disintegration (p. 86). An analogy might be drawn between earthly disintegration and the disintegration of Anthony, since psychological disintegration was part of how Anthony tried to strengthen himself. This association becomes more feasible in light of the very small lizard depicted in the foreground of Grunewald's Conversation panel. In this panel, it faces the saint (Fig. 3A).

Cooper (1978) might have described this tiny creature as a “humid” lizard with the “moist skin of life,” his definition of lizards corresponds with those of other creatures he associates with the “dark or errant side of nature” (pp. 68, 72, 174, 190). He tells us that lizards are lunar, they subsist on dew, are tongueless, and symbolize silence. In Egyptian and Greek symbolism they represent divine wisdom, and most relevantly, Sabazios, a deity typically
associated with or equated to Zagreus and Dionysius (pp. 100). *Encyclopedia of World Mythology* (1975) reinforces and broadens Cooper’s (1978) description of lizards. According to this source, these creatures are generally associated with overpowering heat, fecundity, and blindness. Ancient Egyptians associated them with fecundity because of their increased activity during times when the Nile floods stimulated a resurgence of life (p. 219). This source does not mention why they were viewed as heated animals, but references to their heat probably reflected their association with alchemical viewpoint. Hall (1974) connects lizards with salamanders and alchemy, and tells us they were not only impervious to fire but had the power to extinguish flames, a belief recorded earlier by both Aristotle and Pliny. These early scholars accordingly identified salamanders as a personified attribute of fire (pp. 270). Returning to the *Encyclopedia of World Mythology* (1975), lizards were believed to be able to transform themselves from one state to another, an association which seems connected to two other points mentioned in the same source. One is that ancient Egyptians thought lizards became blind every winter during hibernation. Knowing instinctively that the sunrise would restore their sight, they are written to have climbed up “an eastward-facing wall” and waited, with their eyes turned toward the sun. This point seems connected to another documented in the same text, Pliny's (first century CE) statement that lizards were magical and that a lizard talisman could restore sight to the blind (p. 219). It also seems connected to Cooper's idea that lizards were believed to sleep through the winter and so symbolized death and resurrection (p. 100), blindness and sightedness being synonymous with death and resurrection.

Gow & Scholfield's (1953) version of Nicander of Colophon's previously discussed rhyzotomist textbooks entitled *Theriaca* and *Alexipharmaca* reflect ancient Greek knowledge of various venomous lizards, as well as their correspondent medicinal antidotes. Ancient Egyptian peoples defined and used these venomous creatures the same way. Please remember, Isis was in herself viewed as being an antidote against all venomous creatures, including poisonous lizards.

These various applications of how one might interpret a lizard in any given image become more useful when screened through the lens of two facts. One is that lizards functioned antidotally in the practice of medicine. When viewing Grunewald's lizard literally, and from this perspective, we are able to entertain the idea that he might have wanted his viewers to view this creature as a manifestation of a poison which would be turned into a useful ingredient in a medical recipe. The second fact I have in mind extends this idea, and makes it more relevant.
According to Albert Pott's 1982 *The Evil Eye*, a correlation has long been known to exist between lizards, prophylactic figures like Sabazios, Dionysus, and Priapus, and the evil eye. Dionysus and Priapus have already been discussed, but emphasis was not placed on their use as an antidotal cursing device. The evil eye represented a mystical tradition of antidotal cursing which, through use of muttered formulas and written documents, remained popular from ancient times in Egypt, Greece, Rome, and the near east into Medieval Hebraic, Germanic, and Greek culture.

Consider that Grunewald viewed the lizard he depicted as a manifestation of the evil eye, and expected that the creature would dually signify to his viewers the errant aspects of the *Feminine* darkness that Anthony was preparing to encounter, and at the same time, the eye that could remedy their evil effects. This idea can be related to the numerous water signifiers which I have identified as being in close proximity to this saint. With them and my idea in mind, it seems plausible that their relationship with Anthony and this lizard is metaphorically correspondent to a venom and its antidote. Said another way, Anthony's fear is correspondent with a poison and he seems to be responding to his fear with the expectation that by taking it on he will trigger his own cathartic transformation. This will in turn enable him to function antidotally, as a plague physician able to successfully combat plague poison. This is why I believe the tiny lizard squarely facing Anthony in Grunewald's Conversation panel is one and the same creature as the larger reptile in his Metamorphosis panel. Grunewald has confronted his viewers with a two parted narrative illustration: in the creature's second encounter with Anthony it has metamorphosed into the large, beaked, reptile which is biting the saint instead of staring at him (Fig. 60). And clearly--this creature's bite should be taken to mean more than its literal association would imply.

It seems we continue to return to the same problem, presented from differing perspectives. If Grunewald was sensitive to these dark, symbols of moisture, and if he meant that his lizard be interpreted as a manifestation of them, did he present his point too cryptically or have westerners simply forgotten how to interpret the language he knew so well? Western man began relinquishing medicinal and prophetic use of volcanic wells, groves, springs, caves, and moist, hot creatures as early as the seventh century BCE. Homer’s *Iliad* acknowledged this change:

> It seems but yesterday . . . when the ships
Woe-fraught for Priam, and the race of Troy,
At Aulis met, and we beside the fount
With perfect hecatombs the gods adored
Beneath the plane tree, from whose root a stream
Ran crystal-clear [this plane tree signifier represents Ilex, first mother Oak], there
we beheld a sign
Wonderful in all eyes. (2:361–372)

Writers living during Christian times expressed similar regrets. Consider Gilda's sixth century CE. Lamentation, quoted in Hope (1868/1968): “Nor will I call out the mountains, fountains, or hills, or upon the rivers, which are now subservient to the use of men, but once were an abomination and destruction to them, and to which the blind people paid divine honor” (p. xix). Of course the "blind people" to which Gilda refers were probably connected to Grunewald's lizard. Please remember, Egyptian lore tells us lizards become blinded every hibernation time, and as lizards honored the sun, so it seems that "blind people" paid divine honor to their god.

These understandings about moisture began to change, however, together with a series of Christian bans implemented at about the same time which continued well into the period during which Grunewald painted his altarpiece. Hope notes, for example, that the Council of Tours banned the idolatry of groves, wells, and springs in 567 CE, but agrarian peoples seldom obeyed the law. Five hundred years later in 963 CE Anglo Saxon England, 16th of the canons of Edgar directed all believing Christians to advance their cause by putting a halt to the worship of trees, stones, and fountains. Fifty-five years later in 1018, the laws of King Knut prohibited worship of fire, rivers, fountains, rocks, and trees. And in 1102, the 26th canon of Saint Anselm, archbishop of Canterbury, banned Christians from revering a dead body or a fountain without his authorization (Hope, pp. xx, xxiii). A list of these bans could constitute a paper in itself. The loss to Westerners of these moisture signifiers coupled with oversights regarding signifying elements like Grunewald’s raven appears to have resulted in another version of misunderstandings. Study of the following animals will reinforce and enhance these findings, while helping me define who and what Errant Mary might have been in Grunewald's eyes.

5.3 Grunewald's Feminine Animals
Anthony’s relationship with the following animals in the Metamorphosis panel—the deer, dog, and baboon reinforce my argument that every element in this panel can be traced to the ancient *Feminine*, and accordingly directed toward constructing a definition for Good Mary.

5.3.1 The Male and Female Deer

In Grunewald’s Visitation panel, a doe reclines between Saints Anthony and Paul (Fig. 3A), and a stag stands in the remote clearing behind them and to the left of the dead trees in the middle of the painting (Fig. 3B). According to Cirlot (1971), the counterbalancing of male and female animals of the same species, such as a lion and a lioness, or in this case a doe and a stag, signifies the essential contrast between sulfur and mercury, the fixed and volatile elements of alchemical processes (p. 12). In some reproductions of the altarpiece, the stag, like other key elements, appears faded, obscuring the symbolic content of the painting. In Snyder’s (1985) illustration (p. 344), for example, the stag is almost indiscernible.

5.3.2 The Small Black Dog

Something similar happens with the small black dog with a brown muzzle nestled beside Anthony’s feet in the same panel. He appears to be disappearing, too. In fact, some web site mechanics appear to have painted it out altogether. It is hard to see in Snyder’s (1985) reproduction (p. 344), for example, and is curiously absent from his assessment (pp. 348–356).

Putting this issue aside to study the painted panels in a chronological sequence, the dog first appears hidden by Anthony’s feet, in among his undercoat in the large, seated sculpture (Fig. 12A), and this same dog is in the Conversation panel (Fig. 3A). Snyder’s oversight is especially unfortunate, because as stated in Cooper (1978), many early communities believed that dogs functioned as messengers going back and forth between the higher and infernal worlds. According to Cooper, dogs and pigs accompany the alchemical *Feminine*, and like ravens, they are both attributes and companions of Asclepius (pp. 52–53). Grunewald seems to have recognized the dog’s alchemical significance because the large darkened creature in the Metamorphosis panel (Figs. 4B, 5C,) located a little above Anthony’s left arm appears to be this same dog. It has the same coloration and markings. In this secondary context, however, it has metamorphosed into a much larger animal with what appears to be an alchemically flaming mane. Its ears are sticking up and out, and they appear to have multiplied. Moreover, the dog is calmly staring upward and in the same direction as a baboon standing near by. Both animals seem disproportionately content in light of their tumultuous surroundings. Perhaps they wait for
what they have come to expect. That is, the transcendence of Paul's most recent student Anthony. Let us consider this issue from the perspective of Grunewald's baboon.

5.3.3. The Baboon God Thoth.
Standing behind Anthony and the so-called Devil is a creature that resembles a baboon (Fig. 4B, 5D). Like the dog, this creature appears immobile. While at first glance it seems to be watching the fight, more careful study indicates it is gazing upward instead of at Anthony and his opponent. Perhaps it too is waiting for some sign of the ensuing transcendence of Paul's most recent student, Anthony. No Isenheim scholars I have read have tried to explain this baboon's form and function. However, I think Grunewald intended it to be associated with the Egyptian baboon deity Thoth, whom Isis called upon to give her power as she struggled to heal her son. It wears a red cap similar to the one that Anthony wears in the right panel of the closed position (Fig. 2B), and since baboons do not typically wear red caps the hat in itself suggests a connection between these two figures. When we consider that it is a red cap we become yet more focused on what this relationship might signify. Cooper (1978) tells us on the one hand, that the color red is commonly associated with war, anger, martyrdom, faith, and the renewal of life—all of which signify aspects of catharsis; and on the other, that Gods (like Thoth) are painted red or wearing red to signify supernatural power, sacredness, and the solar dimension of alchemy (pp. 40-41). These attributes matches those of the large, very prominent palm tree that Grunewald's baboon stands in front of and Isenheim scholars do not pay much attention to it either. Some mention this tree, but only practically and or very simplistically, instead of mythically and comprehensively, essentially separating their analysis of it from their assessment of how it affects the identity of this creature. Snyder, for example, notes that the palm in the desert panel of the image affords Saint Paul literal “nourishment” (p. 353). Observations like his are correct, but they overlook how Egyptian, Hesiodic Greek, Roman, and Early Christian iconographies might have factored into Grunewald's decision to put a palm tree in the panel prefiguring the place inhabited by these struggling figures (Fig. 3A). Palms signified Feminine figures able to undergo cathartic transformation, and this ability meant far more than is currently being acknowledged.

The first fact that can be culled from palm iconography is that these trees signify the androgyne and the cedeuces (Fig. 41E, 42). Cooper (1978) clarifies this association anatomically. Their fronds were “phallic” and their fruit was Feminine (pp. 125-126).
Lurker (1974) associates them with Thoth as well as Isis, who has been previously established to have been a medicine (pp. 94-121), saint stories (Figs 15B), creation lore (Fig. 61B), and lore about Jesus's early years support extending this association to include Mary and Jesus. See Hall (1974), Cooper (1978), Encyclopedia of World Mythology (1975), and Alban Butler and Paul Burns's (2000) Butler's Lives of the Saints (pp. 231–232; 125; 229, 121, 125; 94-96). The Encyclopedia of World Mythology (1975) tells us, for example, that angels carried dead souls up to Heaven on palm fronds (p. 244), and Hall (1974), Cooper (1978), and The Encyclopedia of World Mythology (1975) associate palms with Mary. According to these sources, an angel gave a palm leaf to Mary on her and her families way to Egypt, the Holy Family slept under a palm tree, and people who met Christ at Jerusalem held palm fronds as they greeted him. These myth fragments confirm that an association exists between Mary and the palm, or between it, her, and Christ, but I want to link them and palms both to this baboon figure that Grunewald painting into his catharsis panel. Thoth's historical background enables me to show that the circle of events which Anthony moves through in Grunewald’s shrine signifies knowledge generated by a very ancient line of Feminine wisdom which has come to be associated with Mary only recently, from the relatively recent perspective of Christianity. Before these attributes were associated with her they were linked with him, and traced to a Neolithic origin.

Thoth's lineage cannot be separated from that of Hathor, the most ancient Egyptian Androgyne. As discussed in Chapter One, Redford (2003), Wilkinson (2001), Silverman and Brovarski (1997), and Shafer, Baines, Lesko, & Silverman tell us that by historical times Hathor had come to be linked with the cow, the Milky Way, Nile of the sky, and the great flood, all of which personified the amniotic sac's function in the birth process. She was also the primal snake and the green evil eye of Horus, functioning as an agent of action, protection, and wrath. Hathor's identity as the Feminine androgyne was in time substituted by that of Thoth in some districts, but Thoth was always either synonomous with her in this context. In districts where she ceased being viewed as the androgyne and became only a female element, he was recognized as being her spouse (pp. 157-161; 283; 41; 24).

Lurker (1974) tells us what this association meant. Thoth was the “blood of Isis” and the “tongue” and “heart” of the sun god Re, the tongue meaning manifest will: what was conceived in the heart becoming an action (pp. 121-122). Robert Graves, in his Larousse Encyclopedia of...
Mythology (1959), make a similar point as poetically. Thoth’s eyes were binarily aligned with the sun and the moon, and at death he became the great measurer of lunar time who created all forms of calculation and annotation. All of this signifies that Thoth was the Androgyne. He divided lunar time into months, seasons, and years, for example (pp. 25–27), and the Egyptians credited him with teaching the arts and sciences, most relevantly medicine, math, and agrarian use of astronomy, to humankind so that they could take care of themselves. As keeper of the gods’ records, or “Lord of Holy Words,” Thoth taught the arts of observation and transcription, which enabled scribes to analyze and transcribe knowledge, including lunar wisdom and knowledge of the dead in the form of mystic revelation. Most significantly, Thoth acted as a teacher who brought a special form of musical rhythms to mankind, ones intended to be merged with medical ritual (pp. 25–27, 72, 88–91, 94, 109–110, 121–121; 155). These rhythms were associated with creation, and I infer, processes involving psychological and psychological birth.

I base my inference on Graves’s (1974) observation that Thoth’s wife Hathor was preceded by Seshat. Hathor assumed many of Seshat's attributes, most notably her association with all that was good which lead her to being acknowledged as "Nechmetawaj," or the (one who) expels evil. Hathor was also associated with another of Thoth's previous wives who was also a protective deity, Nehmauit, “she who uproots evil”(pp. 25-27). According to R. F. Willet’s (1958) “Cretan Eileithyia” and Dietrich (1974), Nehmauit personified all forms of protection, especially motherhood and childbirth, and carried a scepter with a serpent twined around it (pp. 221; 88), apparently even before Asclepius did. Willet tells us that Nehmauit was older even than Thoth and the Greek deity Kronos (p. 221). He connected her to her Greek equivalent, Eileithyia, who reflects traits associated with prophetizing, the spider, and the ancient Greek Feminine, and traced their origin back to a Neolithic prototype (p. 221).

Through the efforts of Willet, Nehmauit can be viewed as an antidotal “protection” as well as a birthing deity, and this aspect of her identity enables me to expand my view of Thoth’s use of musical rhythms within the context of medicine. I am associating him with ritual birthing, based on his wife Nehmauit’s duties as the protectress of motherhood and childbearing. However there is more to my association than Thoth's affiliation with his wife. According to Lurker (1974), Cirlot (1962), Graves (1959), Harley (1885), and The Encyclopedia of World Mythology (1975), Thoth’s “music” increased the force of magical medical incantations and was so ancient that even Isis referred to him as her director. His musical performance seems to have been the
equivalent of a *Feminine* function, because the moment when he first parted his lips he gave birth. First he bore watery chaos, then he repeated his sounds and bore four gods, then finally he gave birth to four goddesses. From that time forward, Thoth sang these special sounds morning and night, not to make music but to perpetuate the world he had created. Isis must have called upon Thoth through an adaptation of this lens, because myth indicates she used him as some form of a directive, or "teacher," and his special sounds are written to have increased the force of magical medical incantations (pp. 72, 94, 121–121; 155; 25–27; 109–110; 88–91).

How does this factor into my analysis of Grunewald's metamorphosis panel? The attributes of Thoth and his wife enable me to align Thoth with Errant Mary's hypothetical role as the protective medicine which Anthony was learning to ritually draw upon in his efforts to heal Isenheim patients. As the director of birthing processes and the creator of ritual music used for healing purposes, Thoth's role can be further extended to include rebirthing efforts such as would involve cathartic transcendence. This knowledge is further substantiated by his identity as a pontifex, or “bridge builder,” which has previously been associated with medical ritual.

**5.4 Iris as Pontifex**

Greco-Roman Hermetic literature altered this view of Thoth, linking him with Hermes Trismegistus and with Charon, who ferried dying souls across the River Styx, which the living from the dead (*Encyclopedia of World Mythology*, 1975). Scholars who analyze these combined definitions of Thoth conflate his function as an Egyptian and Greek *psychopomp*, or “soul leader,” with his identity as an oracular pontifex. This dimension of his efforts can be clarified by comparing him with others identified as pontifices, for example, the Greek rainbow goddess, Iris. Greek art signifies her role as messenger to the gods with swift animals like the hare, deer, dog, and celestial winged serpent, all of which suggest various dimensions of metamorphosing ability (pp. 89, 136, 120–121).

According to Edith Hamilton (1930), Iris is the pontifex’s attendant. She is the essential bridge between Heaven and Earth, and at the same time, the bridge’s key. Similarly, she is the “seventh ray of the sun” and the “sun’s gate” (pp. 25–28). These analogies make more sense in light of Hesiod’s *Theogony* (l. 265). There, Iris’s father is identified as the sea deity Thaumas (“wondrous”). Her mother is Electra, or “amber,” a shining cloud. In this context, Iris’s birth suggests a marriage between the sea and the sky. She is clearly the visual link between heaven and earth, in that she is a rainbow.
As the seventh ray of the sun, she must represent the cathartic, or conclusive, aspect of transcendent knowledge directed toward divinatory processes of healing. This aspect of Iris appears in her relationship to the iris plant, which Daniel Zohary and Maria Hoph (1994) indicate was domesticated in the Near East as early as the Neolithic period. H. C. Kee (1986) tells us that this attractive plant, called Iris illyrica, is a powerful medicine. Dioscorides states that the iris has a warming effect on the body, which makes it suitable for treatment of coughs, humors that are hard to bring up, and choler. In addition, women used it to ease menstrual difficulties (pp. 42–43), an aspect of it that I could probably link with birthing medicines in a larger paper. Pliny’s Naturalis Historia indicates that the oil and bulb of iris plants was an ingredient in antidotal remedies directed against bites of poisonous snakes and ingestion of toxic fungi. According to Pliny, only “virgins” gathered the iris leaves (15.31; 21.126-127; 25.40; 28.223, 235; 30.50, 110; 32.40, 109), which brings us back full circle to Mary.

5.4.1 Thoth’s Caduceus

Greco-Roman literature altered this view of Thoth, linking him with the Greek deities Hermes and Charon who ferried dying souls across the River Styx (Lurker, 1974, p. 121). According to the Encyclopedia of World Myth (1975), scholars who analyze these definitions of him conflate his function as an Egyptian and Greek psychopomp, or “soul leader” which means that he conducts the souls of the dead, with his identity as an oracular bridge builder, previously referred to as a "pontifex" in my discussion of Mary (pp. 89, 136, 120–121). This dimension of Thoth's identity can be clarified by comparing him with two other figures identified as pontifices, the Greek rainbow goddess, Iris, and Mary, Mother of Jesus, because both are associated with the rainbow. This signifies that they function as essential messengers between the gods and mankind.

Hamilton (1930) defines Iris's association with the rainbow from the perspective that she was the pontifexal attendant, the essential bridge between Heaven and Earth, the “seventh ray of the sun,” and the “sun’s gate”(pp. 25-28). I have associated the number seven with agrarian sacrificial rites, and them with cathartic transformation, and suggest that in this context number seven means the same thing. From my perspective, the "sun's gate" would accordingly be interpreted to be the equivalent of the bridge’s key. Until Isis undergoes catharsis she is unable to function as a bridge so the gate is inoperative. After going through cartharsis, she is able to act for the gods as their key to relating with mankind. These analogies make more sense in light of
Hesiod’s Theogony (l. 265). There Iris’s father is identified as the sea deity Thaumas (“wondrous”). Her mother is Electra, or “amber,” a shining cloud. In this context, Iris’s birth suggests a marriage between the sea and the sky. She is clearly the visual link between heaven and earth, in that she is a rainbow.

Mary is frequently depicted in the presence of a signifying rainbow in imagery. This association allows us to link her with the messenger deity Iris, as well as with the Greek Feminine Hera when she is coupled with Zeus, who Cooper (1978) indicates were together associated with the rainbow (p.136). The rainbow is a very ancient signifier and its use extends into many ancient communities. Please see the rainbow necklace of Lilith, the Hebraic woman who was first woman and Adam's first wife (Fig. 27). Hall refers to the following passage from Genesis 9:8–15 to illustrate how the rainbow iconographically factors into Christian lore (p. 257):

> God said to Noah and to his sons with him: “See, I am now establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you: all the birds, and the various tame and wild animals that were with you and came out of the ark. . . .” God added: “This is the sign that I am giving for all ages to come, of the covenant between me and you and every living creature with you: I set my bow in the clouds to serve as a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth, and the bow appears in the clouds, I will recall the covenant I have made between me and you and all living things. . . .”

Mary is not mentioned in this passage, but the existence of a messenger is. As a pontifical agent she is the "bow in the clouds," the "sign of the covenant" between God, humankind, and all living things.

Iris and Mary are also associated with the iris plant, which Daniel Zohary and Maria Hoph (1994) tell us was domesticated in the Near East as early as the Neolithic period. H. C. Kee (1986) states that Iris illyrica is a powerful medicine represented in Dioscorides' Materia Medica, composed circa 60 ACE. According to this medical manual, the iris has a warming effect on the body which makes it suitable for treatment of coughs, humours that are hard to bring up, and choler. In addition, women are written to have used it to ease menstrual difficulties, an aspect of it that could probably be linked with birthing medicines in a larger paper. The leaves
of this plant, continues Kee, must have been privileged over other parts of this plant because Pliny’s *Naturalis Historia* indicates that only “virgins” were allowed to gather them. All parts of the Iris were useful, however. The oil and bulb of iris plants were ingredients in antidotal remedies directed against bites of poisonous snakes and ingestion of toxic fungi (pp. 42-43). See Pliny (15.31; 21:126-127; 25.40; 28.223:235; 30.50:110; 32.40: 109).

My interpretation of this aspect of Iris and Mary is based upon a blend of the iris plant's medicinal function, most notably its association with women's birthing and use as an ingredient in antidotal remedies, and Hamilton's (1930) reference to the deity Iris being viewed as the "seventh ray of the sun." Bearing in mind that the iris plant and the deity Iris were viewed as being synonymous, I infer that these two bodies of knowledge contributed to Iris's association with a form of cathartic, or conclusive, transcendental knowledge that is not studied enough. I have in mind the way this form of knowing was divinatorily accessed and used prescriptively in processes related to healing such as are signified by Iris's caduceus staff. Iconography linking Mary with the iris flower substantiates this point while shedding additional light on her relationship with Grunewald's Anthony, based upon her having acted as the baboon deity Thoth and Isis had before her. They were her essential model as she is Anthony's.

Through Mary's association with the messenger goddess Iris, Cooper tells us that the iris flower signifies the Virgin Mary, Queen of Heaven, and immaculate conception (virginity). In this context it suggests the power of light and hope, often depicted as the Fleur-de-lis. As the “sword lily,” the iris takes on additional meaning. Cooper and Hall tell us that this aspect of the iris suggests the seven sorrows of the Virgin. These involved the seven sequential stages of mankind's rejection of Mary's child, Jesus (pp. 88; 325). Mary’s relationship to the signifying number seven has been discussed from the perspective of the link between Eve, Mary, and Mary's mother Hannah. This aspect of the iris may additionally reflect her innate aggression as an entity endowed, through processes involving divinatory catharsis, with the antidotal force of a venoms. Given the iris’s medicinal properties, this ability can be similarly associated with catharsis as related to rebirthing processes. Iris and Thoth's relationship with the caduceus substantiates this link.

5.4.2. Thoth and Iris have a Caduceus. Where is Mary's?

According to Graves (1959), the caduceus is a short herald’s staff entwined by two serpents in form of a double helix sometimes surmounted by wings (p. 157). This staff represents a very
ancient form of divine power connected with healing that scholars William Hayes Ward (1910) and A. L. Rothingham (1916) traced to Mesopotamian cylinder seals about one hundred years ago. All deities identified as pontifices carry the caduceus, with one notable exception, Mary, Mother of Jesus. Graves (1959) tells us that Iris was the first to carry one, but her function as a pontifex carrying a caduceus resembles that of the later messenger god, Hermes, and accordingly, Thoth.

The caduceus signifies power in the figure holding it, and it also holds power in itself. Iris’s staff, like pontifical rods belonging to Moses and Asclepius, could metamorphose into a serpent and back, into itself. This ability identified the staff and its carrier as an alchemical composite, what Cooper (1978) refers to as “pontifical” solve et coagula (pp. 50, 52–53, 79, 88, 97–98, 108–109, 117, 136, 138, 140). In other terms, the two serpents on Iris’s caduceus represent healing and poison, illness and health, hermetic and homoeopathic “nature can overcome nature” view. These signifiers represent the complementary nature of the two forces operative in the universe. They are the androgynous union of the sexes, the alchemical powers of binding and loosening--all that has been previously discussed as being manifest in the Feminine (p. 28).

The above information confirms Thoth's connection with the caduceus and matches it to his description as a pontifice aligned with the medicinal plant named iris. We are still left to question, however, why no one has bothered to study the baboon in Grunewald's metamorphosis panel from the perspective of its being related to Thoth, or for that matter, why they have not concerned themselves with this creature's function at all. The concern of how to interpret the caduceus from the perspective of medical history is relevant to this problem. Scholars have been worrying for at least one hundred years over how to categorize figures who carried this powerful tool, and medical scholar Robert Wilcox discusses the question in his 2003 article “The Symbol of Modern Medicine: Why One Snake Is More than Two.” As he sees it, there are two kinds of staffs and two forms of power as he states are indicated by the number of serpents on the staffs illustrated (Figs.42, 43 H & K). There is the staff of messenger deities like Thoth and Iris, with one serpent. This was typically aligned with alchemy. There was also the caduceus of deity of physicians Asclepius with two serpents, which signifies medicine. Wilcox (2003) continues that scholars of medicine admit that this issue becomes complicated as they consider that the biblical figure Moses was a messenger who carried a pontifical rod like Iris’s (Fig. 63). They argue over
which group he fit into, magical or medical, based on how many serpents he carried on his staff. Assumptions like this one of Wilcox (2003), that medical physicians have never in all of medical history been at the same time practicing alchemists; and alchemists never practiced medicine, seem unwarranted. For one reason, because the staff of Asclepius has one serpent on it, not two (Fig. 42 A,B,C). Peter Murray Jones' 1984 *Medieval Medical Miniatures* refers to the 15th century manuscript *BL, Sloane MS 6, f. 175u*, in which medicine and alchemy are linked through myth. In this story, Jones tells that two distinct characters have been made out of deity of healing Asclepius. Apollo passed knowledge of alchemical healing skills on to Aesculapius, his son, and Aesculapius in turn passed this form of knowing on to his son Asclepius. According to this manuscript, Aesculapius used "physic" (alchemy in medicine) in his medical efforts. He gathered roots, herbs, flowers, and fruit into baskets, then constructed powders, confections, and medicinal pastes from them with the help of a mortar and pestle. After that, he "balanced" them using various processes of alchemy. Applied to vegetable simples, for example, the alchemical process of distillation resulted in medicinal waters like rosewater and mellissa cordial. Applied to compounds which contained salt, sal ammoniac, sulphur, vitriol, or saltpetre, in various combinations, it produced aquae acutae (sharp waters). These are the foundation of hydrochloric, sulphuric, and nitric acids. Aesculapius taught western physicians all that he knew, but for 300 years after he died they were afraid to use what he had taught them because he and his son Asclepius had been slain by thunderbolts for using physic to heal a man whom the gods had determined should die. Westerners did not want to suffer the same fate as their instructors had (pp. 73-74). 300 years later, continues Jones, Hippocrates revised this aspect of medicine. His work was further clarified by Galen, and this is how the refining process of alchemy in medicine was introduced into the west. Jones also tells us that medicinal use of physic was one of several applications of western alchemy. Its main objective was the transmutation of metals, in general, and the making of gold in particular (pp. 71-72).

Jones does not address the related history behind medicinal use of metals and gems, but statements like that of Wilcox (2003) are further informed by the fact that alchemists knew of and practiced the arts of rhyzotomy and mineralogy with and without medicine in mind. Frederick Kunz's *The Curious Lore of Precious Stones* tells us that belief in the curative properties of precious stones was at one time in early history universal knowledge. Little by little, he continues, superstitious use of them based upon their color and quality came to take
precedence over their practical use (pp. 367-391). Mathew Wood's 1992 *The Magical Staff: the Vitalist Tradition in Western Medicine* similarly informs us that empirical doctors and rhyzotomists developed means of documenting herbs to make them work in exact, reliable ways for a certain medical problems, and at the same time, metallurgists and alchemists were slowly accumulating knowledge about the specific properties of the substances they studied. The combined efforts of these two groups of figures working individually, but simultaneously alongside of each other, resulted in the form of modern medicine which eventually replaced Greek humoralism some five hundred years ago (pp. 1-2).

Neither does Jones concern himself with how Wilcox's (2003) one snake or two snakes problem might be informed by studying changed applications of mythic signifiers found in medical manuscripts. Alchemical treatises like the 1617 Latin manual *Atalanta fugiens*, reflect what appears to be an atypical blend of alchemical and medical terms, based upon medical myth. Please note in the following passage that mythic references to "Asculepius" (father of Asclepius) and "Dionysius" are functioning metaphorically as signifiers for alchemical elements. See also that these two signifying names are presented alongside of reference to a two snake caduceus in an alchemical manuscript. What follows has been excerpted from McLean's (1995) online documentation of Discourse 1 from MS. Sloane 3645, a 17th century English translation of *Atalanta fugiens*:

> ...Nor is it indeed without reason that Mercury is called the Messenger or Interpreter & as it were the running intermediate Minister of the other Gods & has Wings fitted to his head & feet. ...But because he carries a Rod or Caduceus about which two serpents are twined across one the other, by which he can draw souls out of bodies & bring them back again & effect many such contrarities. He is a most Excellent figure or representation of the Philosophical Mercury. Mercury, therefore, is Wind, which takes Sulphur, or Dionysius, or (if You please so to call it) Asculepius, being yet an imperfect Embryo out of the Mother's belly or out of the Ashes of the Mother's body burned, & carries it thither where it may be brought to maturity (Maier, http://www.alchemywebsite.com/atll-5.html, retrieved 9/23/2009, p. 5 of 17).

Regardless of how one looks at these applications of physic, Jones (1984) tells us that certain techniques used in these various refining processes helped promote knowledge of the
production of medicines, and one has only to look at alchemical surveys like Lindsay's (1970) discussion of the origins of alchemy in Graeco-Roman Egypt to establish this point. Lindsay, for example, has accounted for Plato (pp. 9, 12-16, 27, 51, 61, 63, , 69, 93, 107, 116, 129, 141, 211, 287, 350); Aristotle (p. 404); Pythagoras (25, 30, 93, 97, 107, 109, 403); Theophrastos (pp. 83, 93, 99); Dioscorides (pp. 60, 66, 83, 126, 133, 245, 278, 401, 403, 416, 429); and Galen (pp. 21, 75, 162, 185, 204, 306, 378, 408, 414, 425, 431).

Based upon evidence culled from this dissertation, the problem seem not to be with alchemical processes in themselves, but with their related rituals and the technicians able to wield them because the latter were demonized. See (Fig. 33A, 35H, 39G) for a comparison. Nunn (1996) states that physicians of the state are documented to have dissociated themselves from rhyzotomist practitioners and the ritual prayer dimension of medicine hundreds of years ago. Pliny, for an example provided by Nunn, wrote that the ancient practice of reciting magico-religious incantations while administering medicine was widely controversial even as late as the first century CE (pp. xxviii, 3). Henry E. Sigerist (1943) assesses the same problem from the perspective of a gap that developed between physicians of the state and rhyzotomist root doctors by Greek and Roman times. Physicians of the state came to exclusively care for the elite (senators, emperors, and other ruling figures), the rhyzotomists attended primarily to the poor, and the latter of these two groups of physicians continued to prayerfully use medical ritual (pp. 132–134). See also Karolyi Kerenyi’s Asklepios (1950), Sara B. Aleshire’s Asklepios at Athens (1991), and Ludwig Edelstein’s Ancient Medicine (1967).

Historians of medicine like Wilcox (2003) may be unwittingly denouncing aspects of medicine which originally involved divinatory prescription and application, simply because this dimension of healing applications cannot be taught. It is an inherited ability. If this aptitude plays no role in how physicians are currently being evaluated, the criteria for evaluating them would have to be changed and the status of some doctors might become diminished. This concern, however, is not the reason I am studying Thoth's relationship with the caduceus. I have in mind another more fundamental misunderstanding. Viewed this way, the problem Wilcox writes to is an effect of my concern.

In my dissertation I have thus far not acknowledged my concern that disconnects like this one might have contributed to problems in the Christian Church. These interest me because they might shed light on Grunewald's Mary. There can be no confusing facts, physiological and

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psychological healing have by and large become separate applications, and psychological healing--until the advent of psychology about one hundred years ago--has remained a concern of the Church. Viewed this way, it is interesting to consider that both physiological and psychological healing have become relatively divorced from ritual prayer processes, and neither admits to having much of a relationship with the other.

Perhaps this represents another misunderstanding. Please recall, every messenger figure discussed in this section has been iconographically related to Mary in all ways except for the fact that they have a cadeuces and she does not. As has been discussed, Mariologists still struggle to determine what was originally meant by Mary's having been associated with the title "pontifex." Regardless of whether Mary had a cadeuces and lost it or never had one at all, these disconnected attributes together present a problem. Too many of her messenger attributes have been ignored or reconstructed. This problem is important because it might be contributing to why her presence is being overlooked in the Isenheim. I will link this aspect of her with others that appear to have been cut from her identity in the next section called Errant Mary.
CHAPTER SIX
ANALYSIS OF THE ISENHEIM ALTAR, PART TWO: THE ERRANT AND SEXUAL DIMENSION OF MARY

In this chapter, I will establish that spiders, octopi, and dragons are iconographically linked with swallows and thunder and that these elements symbolize or represent strong divinatory ability associated with the Errant Feminine. This part of her has been demonized by the Christian Church. However, the Church's response echoed another motion set in force long before the time of Christ. Western responses to this aspect of her have resulted in multiple misunderstandings exemplified by, but not limited to, the following five Isenheim elements. I will present them sequentially to define the steps Grunewald seems to have intended that Mary take to attain cathartic transformation. Anthony follows her because she is his model, and she represents a personified reflection of the Christianized Feminine:

1. The so-called Devil outside the window in the panel on the viewer’s right when the altar is closed.
2. The peacock-feathered human creature in the Angel Concert panel
3. Mary and Magdalene as a binary composite, manifest through the flame-crowned female figure emerging from the side door of the temple in the Angel Concert panel.
4. Three John the Baptists, presented as an anachronism: 1) John as a small bodiless head with flattened, unruly, dirty hair amongst other angel saints who have died, immediately to the peacock’s right in the Angel Concert panel; 2) the man in the Crucifixion panel depicted as the John who lived before being beheaded, pointing to the Crucified Christ with the fore knowledge that this figure was destined to replace him as the Christian model for faith; and 3) John in the Crucifixion panel depicted after his beheading, a memory Mary called upon to support her as she bore witness to her son's death. Both of these Johns are represented in the Crucifixion panel.
5. Crucifixion Day (Mary and Magdalene fused). that spiders, octopi, and dragons are iconographically linked with swallows and thunder and that these elements symbolize or represent strong divinatory ability associated with the Errant Feminine.

I will consider these elements from the perspective of three Feminine signifiers which have been shunned, and relate them to the lore of medieval Wild People. The elements, which are also collections of elements, are: swallows, spiders, octopi, dragons, thunder, and peacocks.
Whereas these signifying bodies of information existed alongside of each other as encapsulated ideas which were at the same time compartmentalized, anthropological and iconographical evidence indicates Wild People were once an extant faction of the community. Their qualities match those I am attributing to the both dimensions of the ancient *Feminine*, good and errant, at any rate writers attributed those qualities to them and or they attributed them to themselves. The problem is, Wild People did not acculturate well. By that I mean the strongest of them could see no reason in valuing the criteria through which our western world has come to be defined, so they all but dropped out. Many, however, acculturated to various degree in a reduced and altered form. This powerful faction of the western community, which was once equated with thunder, and it with the voice of the gods, now has what amounts to being no cultural identity.

According to Richard Bernheimer’s 1952 *Wild Men in the Middle Ages: A Study in Art, Sentiment, and Demonology* and many others, the definition and origin of this curious race are subject to debate. Some scholars argue that they were legendary, others that they were real but are now extinct (pp. 27–28). As previously stated, I disagree with both positions because evidence seems to indicate that ancient and medieval writers and illustrators used Wild People to symbolize a real fragment of human society that survives today, only in a reduced and altered form. This is the group that my dissertation is about, and I will examine them through the lens of two questions: 1) why Westerners demonized their oracular abilities and emotionally aggressive, but at the same time inherently altruistic, impulses, because Wild People are often viewed as “witches,” and 2) why scholars have largely overlooked their lore while struggling to understand figures associated with them. Scholars of Mariology, for example, do not acknowledge wild people in spite of the fact that Mary, Magdalene ([Fig. 31G,H](#)), and numerous saints are depicted among them, the most relevant saint being John the Baptist. Scholars of classics and medicine also ignore Wild People, despite their efforts to understand the role of medicine and ritual metamorphosis represented in the arts. Please recall my previous Chapter Two discussion of the scholarly debate regarding the pronoun “I” in medical manuscripts. Wild People metamorphosed in thunder storms, for example, in their various efforts to protect and or communicate with the common man. Still, scholars of literature and the visual arts demonstrate little or no concern for how the lore of these powerful figures might aid them in understanding the writers and poets who composed the materials they analyze. Similarly, they show no regard for what might be
gained by anthropologically coming to terms with what originally fueled the poetic and metaphorical language systems with which these people communicate.

It is remarkable to consider that Andree Hayum’s (1993) analysis of the Isenheim does not reflect consideration of the peacock-feathered creature in Grunewald’s metamorphosis panel (Fig. 10A). This scholar studies only its musical instrument to examine the effect of music on medical practice during the years in which the shrine was in use. Hayum writes in response to the long established question scholars ask regarding whether Grunewald was attempting to use the Isenheim Altarpiece as a surrogate scripture, or “gentle goad” to urge his viewers to contemplate the religious struggle between Protestantism and Catholicism which was so prominent during his time. Hayum argues against this idea: “We cannot charge him,” she writes, “with an attempted or deliberate transgression of the decorum of religious worship.” She argues that the Isenheim is instead an attempt to create a powerful and legitimate agent for spiritual transformation (p. 61). I agree with her, with the stipulation that Grunewald's views about spiritual transformation be realigned to fit views consistent with those of the ancient Feminine, revitalized with opportunities available in the arts and sciences. Viewed this way, Grunewald's image functions on more than one level, spiraling ever deeper, inward and downward, as might a great work of literature. Of course it speaks to us about views Grunewald lived with and reacted against. At the same time, however, it speaks unwaveringly about a chronology of cultural responses to his alter—the historical life that his alter has taken on in spite of him. This second, deeper layer of Grunewald's altar is a critical tool which cannot be separated from what Grunewald wanted to convey to his viewers about spiritual transformation, and this is the idea behind my investment in aligning various Feminine elements of the altarpiece, in this chapter and the next, with anthropological study of Wild People.

6.1 The Peacock Feathered Creature

The peacock-feathered creature in the Angel Concert panel is central to my discussion of Feminine elements in the Isenheim Altarpiece. Scholars have analyzed this creature philosophically, theologically, from the perspectives of alchemy and medicine, and as a reflection upon the Jews. No one has studied it contextually from the perspective of agrarian Feminine medicine, and iconographically, from perspectives related to Wild People lore.

6.1.1 How Scholars See The Peacock Creature
This peacock-feathered creature has human attributes and plays a violin. According to Mellinkoff (1988), scholars remain confused regarding the significance of this figure (p. 15). They cannot even agree on what it is. Hayum’s (1993) view has already been discussed above, and I agree with her conditionally. My biggest problem with her analysis is that she has analyzed the bowed musical instrument this creature is playing but ignored the creature itself. Her interests are in alignment with most Isenheim scholars who believe the shrine was designed to function as a magical catalyst for protection and transformation, and I agree with this position. To substantiate her point, Hayum focused on what she considers the three most important figural elements of this panel, the music-making angels at the left side of the central section which she links with the age-old tradition of using music as a curative agent (p. 44). She states that while the Isenheim Altarpiece was being constructed throughout the 15th century, scholars and physicians like Paracelsus were discussing how to relate ancient ideas that music could chase away demonic forces, cause ecstasy as related to contemplation of the supernatural, and generate healing based on a cathartic reconnection between mind and body. These ancient ideas were to be meshed with more contemporary medicine (pp. 45–46). Hayum’s (1989) analysis is informative, but it doesn’t address the question of who and what the peacock figure is supposed to be.

Mellinkoff (1988) treats it much more efficiently, summarizing the varying scholarly views on this creature. According to her, the 1975 Munich reprint of Joseph Bernhart’s *Die Symbolik im Menschwerdungsbild des Isenheimer Altars* (1921) indicates that Grunewald’s peacock creature represents a strange combination of human, bird, vegetable, and mineral elements seeking the certainty of redemption through grace (pp. 43–47). In her *Matthaus Gotthart Neithart*, Maria Lanckoronska describes the peacock creature as an angel symbolizing “Hope of Immortality,” one of the three theological virtues (Mellinkoff, pp. 131–32). Other Isenheim scholars, continues Mellinkoff, describe it as a prideful, greenish, all-feathered angel-like version of Lucifer; a cherub or seraph; and the embodiment of the sin of pride, as pride was defined in pictures of the serpent living in the Garden of Eden (pp. 19, 21, 24-26). Some scholars have noted, continues Mellinkoff in her synopsis, that the creature in question has what seems to be a peacock’s crest on its head. Bernhart (1921), she notes, considered the crest when he described the creature as a strange combination of human, bird, vegetable, and material elements. He determined that these combined elements signified the legendary bird known as the
Caladrius, whose upward gaze accordingly signifies the certainty of redemption through grace (pp. 43–47). Maria Lanckoronska, Mellinkoff adds, associated the crest with faith, charity, and incorruptibility (pp. 131-132). In the end, concludes Mellinkoff, most scholars view this creature, with or without considering its crest, as a cherub or seraph (pp. 24–26).

Unlike the scholars whose positions she identifies, Mellinkoff links the creature’s crest with the sin of pride. She credits her views to those of the poorly received Hieronymus Bosch scholar Wilhelm Fraenger, whose assessment of this creature is based upon depictions of the serpent in the Garden of Eden. According to Mellinkoff, Fraenger links Eve to Mary, and her to this "demon." She describes his narrative as curiously and poetically succinct, and although her argument that its poetic nature has prevented scholars from taking it seriously is probably right, that issue is not relevant here. I am interested only in her observation that Fraenger’s description of this creature is more accurate than that of any other scholar. According to her, he describes the creature as a he instead of a she, a “Lucifer-like” form of Mary:

One only, the most peculiar of these angels, turns his head sidewards toward the dark aura. His face is large and beautifully drawn, but decked out fantastically with a peacock crest, and his entire body submerged in a dark colored green of plants. . . . To emphasize his Lucifer-like character, the painter placed a dwarflike goblin to his side, a head in the dark gloom, the only one of all the temple guests who does not glance toward the east, but with plaintive grimace turns toward the demon, who today—turning alternately from Eve to Mary—is permitted to mix the undertones of his search for redemption into the duet of the celestial violinist.

(Walter Holm’s translation, quoted in Mellinkoff, p. 94, n. 23)

No one aside from Hayum has paid much attention to Fraenger’s interest in linking Eve to this “demon.” I agree with her that he was on the right track, and think she is correct in associating this feathered creature with the Garden of Eden like he did. However, my support for her stops as she refers to the creature as a “he” and relates “him” to the Devil, who waits to learn of the infant Christ’s identity because he wants to eliminate him (pp. 26–31). I want to see this creature linked with the afore discussed seventh daughter of Eve named Hannah (Mary’s mother), because both share common iconographical signifiers, and moreover, I want to iconographically screen it through explanations of "fig" trees for the same reason. This is the road Fraenger took in his assessment of Bosch's Garden of Earthly Delights and Grunewald's
Altarpiece. Accordingly, it is the basis for Mellinkoff’s (1988) view that the fig tree in the Angel Concert panel is the home of the serpent who lives in the Garden of Eden. But Mellinkoff does not appear to have studied the symbolism of fig trees closely enough in her attempt to link Grunewald's feathered creature with the serpent in the Garden. Had she done so, she would have found the key she needed.

According to Cooper (1978), the Biblical Tree of Knowledge was sometimes but not always referred to in ancient texts as a “fig” tree because figs represented a blend of masculine and feminine principles, the fig leaf being male, and the fig fruit, female. As Cooper links this idea with the fact that the Greeks and Romans associated fig trees with male Greek fertility deities Dionysus and Priapus (p. 66), he provides a useful tool for my argument.

Richard Payne Knight’s (1786/2003) essay on Greek fertility worship, “A Discourse on the Worship of Priapus,” tells us further that in Priapus's earliest state he was androgynous, and was moreover recognized as the origin of the Tau cross, previously associated with Anthony (p. 3). Knight, Ferguson (1954), Hall (1979), and Cooper (1979) all tell us that the T, or "Tau," is the first letter of the Greek word Theos which means God in Greek. The T signified the older, "Old Testament" cross, and served early pagans who converted to Christianity as their "emblem of creation and generation" until Christians adopted the symbol as the sign of “Jesus’ salvation” in the third century CE. (pp. 28-54; 105, 165; 21-22, 78; 45-46, 169). In other words, the Tau cross is also androgynous. Hamilton (1942), Hall (1974), Cooper (1978), Morford and Lenardon (2003), and Jung (collected works) tell us further that the ancient feminine predated Priapus (pp. 53, 65; 12; 108; 272-273; Vol. 14, para. 513), and this point will be further developed in my analysis of the Devil creature later on. For now, it is enough to consider that the creature whose head Mellinkoff (1988) associated with the head of the Serpent in Eden, could easily be argued to signify the androgynously defined knowledge and abilities of the tau deity Priapus, and at the same time, the ancient feminine who is argued to have existed before him. The problem with assessments like these is that they are too theoretically obscure for my purposes.

6.1.2 How I See the Peacock Creature
That is why Grunewald’s feathered creature will be studied in three ways, all of which will be directed toward furthering Fraenger’s description: 1) alchemically, with regard for its color, 2) from the perspective of peacocks and oracular pride, not to be confused with the arrogance
typically associated with human pride, and 3) the relationship of these two ideas to the medieval Wild Man..

6.1.3 The creature’s colors and alchemical processes.
The colors of this feathered creature are dulled shades of green and red, and Grunewald seems to have chosen to use these same colors to depict many other elements in this panel and in the others. Green and red constitute the inner temple and the room in which the Annunciation takes place. Saint Anthony’s inner and outer robes in the altar’s closed position, and Magdalene’s robes in both the Crucifixion and Lamentation panels are green and red. Red and green have been used to depict the clothing of Mary and John united in the crucifixion and Lamentation panels. By united I mean John is holding Mary so closely that they form a single unit. Mary also wears red and green when she is holding her dead son, Christ, and the same colors are reflected in infant Christ’s halo. Finally, they play a role in the suggested transformation of the afore discussed flame-crowned figure emerging from the temple in the Angel Concert panel (Fig. 44). However, in the case of this crowned figure, the color green seems energized, evolving into red and then culminating in gold. This same sequence of color changes is sequentially present in the rays that fall from the golden angels shining down upon Mary holding Jesus. Clearly, red and green are more than mere formal elements and serve some thematic purpose.

These various usages of green and red make sense if we consider them iconographically, from the perspective of alchemy. According to Cooper (1978), green and red are alchemical symbols that signify stages of the “Great Work,” or alchemy. Cooper’s various interpretations of “green” further suggest that this color represents a meld of alchemy and agriculture, and this idea—although it extends beyond the scope of my dissertation—can be easily supported through analysis of alchemical studies like that of Lindsay (1970). Most simply, green signifies the beginning of both processes: the first stage of alchemy, represented by the green lion or green dragon, and the young corn god in agriculture. In either context, green represents growth and its symbolic equivalent, hope. The red lion and red dragon, in contrast, represent maturity, much as it represented the mature deity of the grain to ancient agriculturalists. From the perspective of alchemical method, red is the element of fire. Alchemists see it as old, not young, because it represents heating a substance and reducing it to ashes. This is the third stage of the “Great Work.”
In light of this color symbolism, the peacock creature seems to represent an alchemically androgynous blend of beginnings and endings much as Priapus, the *Feminine Androgyne*, and the fig tree did. If so, the figure in question could be a self-generating entity with male and female attributes. The flame-crowned figure echoes this alchemical color scheme: her head and shoulders are golden, her torso and lower arms are red, and her hips and lower body are green. In alchemical terms, the transition of these colors from green to red, red to gold, and then gold to luminous white signifies metamorphosis into the divine essence and transmutation of the alchemical sun. In this context, gold and the luminosity it reflects are synonymous with the alchemical power and the essential equilibrium of all metallic properties. This is the fourth and final stage of alchemy (Cooper, 1978, pp. 40–41).

### 6.1.4 The peacock creature and oracular pride.

I agree with Mellinkoff (1988) that Grunewald was iconographically equating the peacock creature with Lucifer. However, I believe that Mellinkoff and other scholars who associate this creature with “pride” may have overlooked the differences between early definitions of pride and modern ones and this issue will be addressed in the next chapter, on Mary's transcendant anger. Pictorial evidence, including images of angels with peacock wings, peacocks sitting on the roofs of buildings associated with the annunciation, peacocks associated with witchcraft, and images of figures getting their tongues cut out, being blindfolded, or having their eyes pierced out (Figs. 23, 24, 37,) suggest that the pride Grunewald had in mind when he fashioned this creature was meant to be iconographically linked by way of Eve, Mary, Hannay, and the pearl to the real human beings that this dissertation is about. They struggle with endowments perceived as being superhuman—not problems associated with simple human arrogance, and this is how I believe Grunewald was interpreting "pride." To initiate distinguishing in the next chapter between these two meanings of pride, I will consider that this peacock creature depicts Mary not as a woman, but as a model for how oracular figures alchemically generated themselves into metamorphosed cultural agents of healing. My idea is based upon mythic and scientific meanings associated with peacocks in Grunewald’s time and before him.

### 6.1.5 Peacocks and thunder.

*The Encyclopedia of World Mythology* (1975), Cooper, (1978), Hall (1974), and Hamilton (1942) tell us that peacocks originally belonged to the phallic Greek deity Pan, "Pan" being the Greek word for "all," meaning to pervade all things. In this capacity, Pan presided over the
woods, flocks, herds, and fields alongside of the most ancient of the *Feminine* attributes which were male, the androgyne Priapus. Pan gave peacocks to Hera, and they and the cow became her sacred attributes. Hera was the sister of Zeus and his equal as the bearer of thunder (pp. 127-128; 182, 232-232, 28). This accounts for why peacocks are associated with thunder, acknowledged by Aristotle and Aristophanes, and revered by Alexander the Great. Ancients believed they were agents of the gods. But was there some other reason why they were held in such high regard?

Images of them appear in agrarian manuals like the 15th-century Hortus Sanitatis (Origin of Health), where they are identified as forecasters of rain and bad weather. See also Michael Drayton (1563-1631), who wrote of the forecasting peacock that it strutted yawling "gainst the rain." In these texts, the idea is commonly presented that peacocks attack serpents and dance joyfully when they see clouds or hear thunder. Ancient and early sources indicate that they become restless before rainstorms. Their response has been reported to culminate in a sort of dance which was early on associated with the spiral, a signifier which is broadly associated with *Feminine* divinatory ability (pp. 221; 127-128; 182; 28). Peacocks were similar to sparrows in this capacity because sparrows were associated with the spiral, too.

### 6.2. Spiders, Sparrows, Peacocks, and the spiral.

According to Cooper (1978), *The Encyclopedia of World Mythology* (1975), and Cirlot (1962), we can access the spiral through the swallow. Mythic material from ancient Greece and early Christianity links swallows with the spider and other *Feminine* “thunder symbols” like peacocks, dragons, and octopi, which represent lunar phases. Spiders associated with the spiral, for an example that has been related to the ancient *Feminine* (*Fig. 50, on her dress by her hip, on the viewer's left*), signify innate aggressiveness manifest through the creative powers involved in the spider’s weaving activities. Anthropomorphically, the spiral links the *Feminine* spider’s web weaving efforts to those of the creator. That spirally defined web is, anthropomorphically and from the perspective of the *Feminine*, a net converging toward a central point which collapses and unfolds. These spinning whorls signify the forces of all creation. Viewed literally, they suggest the revolutions of the universe. Metaphorically, however, they compare universal revolutions to the cycles of birth, life, death and past, present, future. Similarly, they represent destiny, and the veil of human illusion. Cooper, *The Encyclopedia of World Mythology*, and
Cirlot tell us more relevantly that ancient Greek peoples associated the moon's generative qualities with those of spiders, and related both to the human psyche's imaginative contribution to woven products (pp. 108-09, 122; 156, 190; pp. 242, 304–305). This aspect of the Feminine spider is connected to her other attributes, all aspects of her represent various ways of referring to a similar principle. However, the spider's weaving abilities represent the most obvious way to link her through myth with ancient women, and accordingly, with Mary. Ancient peoples allegorically understood weavers to represent craftswomen like her and Isis, in whom the craft of weaving was manifest in more ways than abilities which can be interpreted literally. It signified figures in possession of suprarational or godly abilities in the process of using them.

Hamilton (1942) recounts Ovid's version of the story of a gifted weaver named Philomela, for example. She, her sister Procne, and her brother who was part dragon, were the half-human daughters of the ancient king Erechtheus of Athens. He ruled during the years when Demeter, a representative of the ancient Feminine, brought agriculture to human beings. Procne married. Her husband Tereus violated her sister Philomela. To silence his sister in law, Tereus cut out her tongue so she could not tell Procne that her husband had violated her. Philomela’s voice was silenced forever, but her hands and their implied voice were not. In those days, some smiths and weavers were “marvelous craftsmen such as have never been known since,” and Philomela was one such weaver. Hamilton tells us she had a greater motive to make her story clear than any artist ever had before, so she produced a wondrous tapestry on which was recorded the whole account of wrongs done to her by her sister’s husband, Tereus. In the end, the gods transformed Philomela, her sister Procne, and her sister’s husband Tereus into birds. Philomela alone became a “swallow” (pp. 269-271). Swallows signify divinatory ability in the form of augurium, and they also are associated with the Feminine, Mary, and Child Jesus. See him holding a swallow (Figs. 25A, 26B), Isis with swallow wings (25B), and a swallow sitting on the arch above Mary and Jesus (26A).

6.2.1 Sparrows and divination
The swallow has two representations in mythology: real swallows and human beings referred to in myth as "swallows." According to The Encyclopedia of World Mythology (1975), many ancient peoples regarded swallows as predictive tools. An auger is a kind of tool used for drilling wells, ecetera, but there is also a divinatory application referred to as "augurium" which relates to another form of drilling, a means of accessing and interpreting observations culled from patterns
underlying the habits of certain birds (p. 226). Smith (1875/1990) tells us that augurs were ancient priests from Rome, Etruria, and Greece, whose role it was to interpret the will of the gods by studying whether kinds of birds flew in groups or alone, what noises they made as they flew, their direction of flight, and what kind of birds they were (pp. 174-179). *The Encyclopedia of World Mythology* (1975) suggests but does not state that as swallows inadvertently reflected the intentions of the Gods, humans and deities identified as "swallows" reflected superhuman ability to move or *reweave* such forces. One example provided in this source tells us that according to Plutarch, Isis fluttered around dead Osiris’s remains while in the form of a swallow. She wafted the breath of life into his dead body with her wings, reweaving and redirecting the will of the gods. Her intent was to resurrect Osiris and impregnate herself with Horus, the son she and Osiris were destined to have (pp. 93, 119; pp. 88, 226). While this idea reflects upon Isis’s aptitude to antidotally restore life in a manner which was equivalent to that of the Gods, it also tells associates Isis with swallows, and links them with her healing abilities. Peacocks were aligned with Hera, but they were also connected to healing properties such as have been associated with Isis. In this capacity, they function antidotally as a healing force like she did. They are in art about Mary, too, but are not typically studied this way (Fig. 48; 1H; 49A,B,C).

**6.2.2 Scientific and medical accounts associated with peacocks.**

Peacocks have been and still are used medicinally. According to *The Encyclopedia of World Mythology* (1975), Cooper (1978), and Hall (1974), the ancient Greeks associated them with use of the flowering medicinal "peony," which is one of the few alchemically "masculine" (referred to as "yang" in the east) flowering herbs in existence. Through association with this medicinal, ancient peoples understood peacock bile and blood to have functioned antidotally against poison. Other parts of the bird were used also, to cure diseases and disabilities ranging from tuberculosis, asthma, catarrh, and headaches to barrenness and paralysis. In addition, the burnt “ash” of peacock feathers was an essential ingredient used to restore balance in the sick, and it was believed that the smoke from burning peacock plumes gave off a “venomous” smell which warded off evil spirits (pp. 221; 127–128; 238, 285). Samudratwar and Garg (1995), in *Biological and Pharmaceutical Bulletin*, have conclusively established what must have been common knowledge in ancient times. That is, burnt peacock feathers result in “ash,” which is rich in the elements manganese, iron, copper, and zinc. They also contain an inordinately high concentration of mercury.
6.2.3 Another possible interpretation is that Grunewald's peacock is a peewit.

It is possible but less likely that the creature in question is not a peacock at all but a koukouphas, or peewit. According to findings excerpted by Lindsay (1970), excerpted from the Byzantine bestiary Kyranis, which brought together the works of Hermes and Harpokration, peewits were four-colored birds with long crests like that of a peacock. Their two-finger-long crest consisting of seven colors signified the alchemical table of seven stages. The fact that they were four colored meant that they were aligned with the four elements: fire, water, air, and earth. These represented perfect balance as the Greeks defined it mythically. Alchemists used both peacocks and peewits in a variety of alchemical recipes. Some were medicinal and some were talismanic (p. 180–81). Alchemists used peewit and peacock ingredients together, along with peony, as ingredients in a recipe for a good-luck talisman that was also an antidote:

Take then from a sea-seal the hairs between nostrils and jaw, a stone of green jasper, the heart and liver of a peewit, a radicle of peony or glykyside, vervain seed, cosmic blood of the chrysanthemum, the point of a seal’s heart, and again the crest on the peewit’s head. Then you’ll have a recipe more powerful than all those that have been given. After rolling the lot with a little musk, in a balsam of four ingredients, put it in the skin of ichneumon [define in brackets] or seal or young peacock or vulture, and carry it, being in a state of purity. (Quoted in Lindsay, pp. 180–181)

If Grunewald knew about ways that peacocks, peewits, and sparrows were mythologically associated with Feminine augury, religion, and medicine, it seems to follow that although modern scholars of the Isenheim associate Grunewald’s peacock creature with worldliness, pride, and vanity, their efforts reflect Christianized values at the expense of the ancient Feminine and agrarian science. Grunewald probably knew more about these ancient applications of these birds than the contemporary associations which have replaced them. He had something else in mind with regards to this peacock creature. Given the association of peacocks with ancient Greek healing and the belief that peacocks attack serpents and are associated with thunder, I will conclude my analysis of this creature by relating it to two traditions associated with medicine, disease, and or pollution. One reflects previously referred to rhizotomist physicians stabbing serpents, and their apparently Christianized counterparts who stab dragons.
and/or serpents. The other involves Medieval Wild People, studied from the perspective that they too acted as a medicine.

6.3. Medieval Wild Man Lore

I have established that peacocks allegedly attacked serpents and danced joyfully when rainstorms were coming, and indicated that Mary, Isis, and Hera, were aligned with the peacock as well as the sparrow. Images of Wild People include pictures of them attacking various forms of evil in positions which resemble those of rhyzotomists spearing ‘serpents” and dragons (Fig. 19), and Mary stands on top of the serpent (Figs. 36 J,K). Now I will put these two traditions together.

6.3.1 Characteristics of Wild People

In Chapter 2, I briefly introduced the topic of Wild People with Bernheimer's (1952) description of their physical characteristics. I included in with his definition winged, feathered Wild People whose bodies are covered with hair as well as feathers because they are most relevant to Grunewald's peacock creature. I also that these creatures metamorphosed into larger, more aggressive entities while dancing in the midst of thunderbolts, and Cirlot (1971) and Cooper (1978) tell us this activity signifies supreme godly power, dawn, illumination, and the fecundity of Earth’s momentary marriage with the heavens (pp. 342; 172).

No scholars of Wild People use the term "pontifice" in their discussion of this dangerous dance, but concepts underlying both this term and the rainbow bridge, previously associated with Mary, Iris, and Thoth, are iconographically related to thunder in images and text. Rainbows and thunder are two of many signifiers indicating this group was originally recognized as being a device through which deities communicated with humanity. The thing that interests me most about this unique ability of Wild People is what they did with it. They did not use it for personal gain. They were helpers and healers. Like Asclepius, they worked roots and herbs, knew venoms, and had what I infer were altruistic allegiances--primarily with the agrarian poor, or for the poor by way of the Knight.

I will concentrate on ways scholars appear to have overlooked this aspect of them, while admitting themselves unable to conclusively establish their identity. In his *Wild Men in the Looking Glass: The Mythic Origins of European Otherness* (1994), Robert Bartra sums up this situation:

The problem is rooted in the fact that, for modern culture, the mythological structure of the wild man is also the origin of a civilization that turns against its
primogenial cradle. As a result, the wild man has become a privileged object of modern thought and modern art, which has transformed him into a rational and scientific concept claiming to capture and define the otherness of noncivilized societies. . . . My hope is that, within the scope of Western man’s understanding of the mythical nature of the European wild man, he shall be able to confront the history of the third millennium, lessening or even avoiding predictable or unpredictable misfortunes by finally coming to terms with the fact that he might have existed otherwise with less suffering than man suffers today for having abandoned so many alternative paths, paths occasionally evoked in the melancholic voice of the poet or the curiosity of the eccentric scholar. The European wild man reminds us that we might have been something else. . . . (pp. 206–208, emphasis mine)

Bartra’s view about Wild People reflects concern for the link between them and melancholic personality identified in my abstract. His general assessment indicates similarly that their circumstances constitute what I would suggest is another misunderstanding. He has not drawn upon research findings related to the term "pontifice" in his study, nor has he acknowledged concern for how many prophets, saints, and religious were, in early western history, identified as Wild People (Figures 9 G,H; 14 H,I,J; 18 B,D,E,F). Mary, her husband Joseph, Magdaline, and Saint John the Baptist are representatives of this group, and with the exception of Joseph are all in this shrine. For these reasons I will begin my study of how Wild People lore might contribute to analysis of Mary, Magdaline, John, and the feathered peacock creature in Grunewald's metamorphosis panel by acknowledging how their attributes connect them to "I" metamorphosing tradition, and it to academic misunderstandings.

6.3.2 Wild People Metamorphosis

According to Bernheimer (1952), Wild People could metamorphose into entities as large as trees and small mountains by absorbing natural forces. Imagery and descriptions in books on this topic indicate that they were strengthened by the “force” of whirlwinds, lightning, and thunderstorms (Fig. 70). Wild women, in particular, were close to whirlwinds (pp. 24, 33–35, 44–45).

Of course these stories are wonderful and amazing, but in addition to acknowledging this remarkable ability of theirs, the physiological and psychological effect metamorphosis had on Wild People needs to be explored too. One effect was psychological, but its signifier was
physiological in that figures of Wild People are depicted as being in the midst of hurricanes, tornadoes, or whirlwinds. This signifies the psychological transformation they must have gone through as they metamorphosed into a transcendent state. The other effect was alchemical and physiological, in that their transformed state was equated with the element gold, or AU. These two forms of information come alive through use of bestiaries and collections of lore about signifying animals, groves with wild people. Wild people are depicted metamorphosing in the middle of groves and alongside wells and springs for symbolic reasons which have already been discussed. Their usual animal companions--hares, deer, oxen, donkeys, owls, phoenixes, griffins, boars, unicorns, regular dogs as well as ones with serpent tails, sea tortoises (which functioned antidotally in ancient healing manuscripts like Nicander's), woodpeckers, lions, leopards, elephants, swans, apes, and squirrels--are much more than animals in this context. They represent various forms of empowerment. When a wild person is depicted in the company of a woodpecker, for example, viewers might infer that the creature is blessed with the power of Zeus. The loud, crackling sound that woodpeckers make as they bang their beaks into trees must be equated with the thunderous crack of Zeus' lightning. Another example of the same sort is the squirrel's function as a guardian of the Feminine Oak, also referred to the first world tree, or Ilex. Wild People are typically associated with the Oak, too, and are frequently depicted with a squirrel somewhere in their general proximity.

According to Bernheimer (1952), these many animal references ought to be interpretively aligned with animals mentioned in the two following passages. In this context, these animals suggest that Wild People “Lord over all beasts” (pp. 27-28). The first passage he uses to exemplify this point is from a 12th-century German version of the “Epic of Grendel.” He says it is muddled, but is nevertheless one of the earliest renditions of the Wild Man theme. It incontestably describes a Wild Man whose arm is a “bear” and back a “boar” in the beginning of the passage, and whose fingers become increasingly laden throughout the passage with deer and rabbits (Fig. 71). This curious compilation is depicted “stretched out under a linden tree. . . . a lion and a dragon, a bear and a boar, as pretty to see as could be. [By the end of this passage] There stood the wild man, and I can tell you, that although made of gold, he looked as if he were alive” (p. 30).

The second passage, from Chretien de Troyes’s 12th-century Breton poem, “Yvain,” also illustrates the wild man’s place as “Lord over all beasts.” According to Bernheimer, this passage
is the most famous of all descriptions of the wild man. In contrast to Grendel, Chretien’s wild man is a hunchbacked giant clad in bull-skins with a head as big as a battle horse’s, and a hunchbacked chest with no neck. His eyes are like an owl’s, he has the tusks of a boar, and the ears of an elephant (pp. 27–28).

Bernheimer (1952) has not addressed these two transformations from the perspective of alchemy or the ancient Feminine. He acknowledges them more symbolically as representing Wild Men reflecting possession of the title “Lord of the beasts,” based on his having similarly identified the status of their changes with animal attributes (pp. 27-30). I mean, Yvain was as strong as a bull with the force of a boar, had the mindset and will of a battle horse, and was in possession of owl eyes which could see everything, all day and all night, and supra human hearing abilities as large as an elephant's ears (huge ears being equated with supra abilities to hear). I have no argument with Bernheimer's assessment, but would add that in references to wild people being “made of gold,” the creature in question has probably alchemically metamorphosed into a product which is the equivalent of gold, as valuable to mankind as gold is to western man. In addition, I would argue that Wild people did not “lord” over “beasts,” as Westerners have come to understand their relationship with the plant and animal world. They acted instead, as lords over a particular category of Feminine animal signifiers. Their hierarchy over these creatures was expressed only so far as the attributes of each of these animals signified strengthened aspects of their own transcendent state.

6.3 3 Wild Men’s Innate Knowledge of Roots, Herbs, and Venoms

Besides being able to metamorphose like Asclepius did, Wild Men resembled him in that they too had innate knowledge of toxic and or medicinal herbs, roots, and venoms, and were similarly accompanied by dogs. This knowledge is signified by references to their having been born of certain trees, in particular the two world trees (ash and oak), and known to carry wooden clubs, maces, and sometimes even tree trunks made of these trees (Figs 14E, 15B) (pp. 1, 24).

6.3.4 Wild People and Animals

As stated, images and stories of wild people depict them with numerous animal companions, and all are as sacred as groves, caves, wells, and springs. However, they have different signifying jobs to perform that these other elements. Dogs are sacred signifiers in Greco Roman lore, and are moreover messengers of the gods. That is probably why they often accompany saints and priests in art, and is probably why the aforementioned dog follows Anthony from Grunewald’s
Visitation panel through the various stages of the saint’s metamorphosis. Ferguson's (1954) assessment of Christian signs and symbols tells us they represent "watchfulness and fidelity" (p. 15). They are the attribute of the Feminine and her agents. More specifically, they guard the flocks and represent the good shepherd, bishops, and priests. They are an emblem of Bernard, Roch, the plague saint who Ferguson says was fed by his dog (pp. 140-141), Sira, Tobias, and Wendelin. In any case, dogs were also the constant companions of Asclepius, perhaps because the Greeks mythically credited dog’s tongues with healing properties. Numerous sources document this phenomena and the fact that the Greeks sacrificed dogs to Asclepius. Art historians Beryl Rowland (1993) and Jan Schouten (1967) exemplify the long-standing scholarly position that Asclepius’s cult was originally a dog cult (pp. 62–63; 43–44), and Schouten paraphrases S. Reinach’s 1884 “Les chiens dans le culte Esculape,” which made the same point:

[T]he dog in several antique Greek shrines [to Asclepius] played a more important part than merely that of guarding the shrine and offertories. Because of the supposed curative properties of canine saliva, the dog also became dedicated to Asklepios and in a certain respect was equated with the divine physician’s serpent, notwithstanding the fact that Greeks and Romans generally declared dogs to be unclean and lewd. As a sacred animal belonging to Asklepios, the dog possibly represents an ancient belief forgotten in later times. Even the Phoenician Eschmun, identified by the Greeks with Asclepios, is said to have been accompanied by a dog as a sacred animal. (Schouten, p. 129, emphasis mine)

Schouten notes that in some temples of Asclepius, Goats were substituted for dogs, indicating a change in the mythic relationship of these animals to Asclepius:

The temple of Apollo Maleatas was situated on the Kynortion hill and was called Kyon. When Asklepios made the shrine of Maleatas, whose associate he had once been, his own, the dog, the sacred companion of Maleatas, also became attached to Asklepios. It may be that in the time of Thrasymedes, dogs were associated with the birth myths and that this animal was regarded as the foster-mother of the child Asklepios abandoned by his mother. It was in the 2ndcentury BC that bitches were represented as foster-mothers. Their places in myths were later taken by goats, a fact which Pausanias, for one, noted. For when shepherds began to replace huntsmen and a goat took over the duties of a wet-nurse, Asklepios
became suffused with a slight Arcadian tinge and the dog was only mentioned as
the watchdog of the flock. (p. 44)

As discussed in my iconographical discussion of the *Feminine*, the Greeks signified both
the *Feminine* and Priapus by goats and dogs, both of which are depicted in the Metamorphosis
panel. Since earliest times, ancient Egyptians and Greeks symbolically associated goats with
libido and procreation, a connection that becomes important in relation to the phallic fig tree in
the Angel Concert panel.

According to J. P. Wiseman's 1995 *God of the Lupercal*, 50 BCE Ovid tells us that on the
February 15 holiday called Lupercalia, healing oracles who sought to remedy barrenness in
women prescribed that they have intercourse with a “rough goat” to facilitate sexual potency. On
this day, men and women who allegedly performed these rituals were ensured of becoming
fathers and mothers. This complicated iconographical issue far exceeds the boundaries of my
dissertation, but it is possible that the elements of this holiday are mythic and metaphorical
signifiers which have become muddled, because Romans document the prescriptive events of
this day very differently from modern scholars do. They sacrificed a goat, cut its skin into
thongs, and then applied these bloodied pieces to the bared backs of women in a ritual involving
flagellation. Another important ritual task performed during this festival was “caprifying of the
fig,” an attempt to fertilize the figs by linking the fig’s male and female parts. Figs are an
emblem of the phallus, as I mentioned in my discussion of Priapus, and the Romans used wild
male fig trees to fertilize cultivated female fig trees. Some scholars suggest that they viewed this
fertilization as a purification ceremony, and from my perspective the idea of trying to promote
pregnancy in a possibly infertile woman results from the same impulse. The logic would be that
an infertile woman is impure and her sickness is her infertility. For the purposes of my
dissertation, the clouded meanings behind these two rituals is not as important as the fact that
goats and figs were used for ritual purification purposes in them. Women associated with goats
were sacrificed on this ritual day even as late as 44 BCE. They were forced to wear strings of
figs around their necks as they were paraded at the festival, and then stoned to death (pp. 541–
556).

6.3.5 The Wild Man’s Altruistic Impulses

Like Asclepius, the wild man was a teacher and a physician. By studying how wild people cared
for the common agrarian man and the medieval knight, it seem they were similarly compelled to
use their abilities altruistically and instrumentally. Bernheimer (1952) tells us that farming peoples gained important knowledge about agriculture, livestock, weather, and seasonal changes from wild people (pp. 24, 25). Establishing that they functioned in the same capacity for the medieval knight (Fig. 72) is only a little more complicated. On the one hand, they were the knight’s physicians. This idea is conveyed in passages like the following mythic account of a wild man’s efforts to help an injured knight lost in his forest, excerpted by Bernheimer from Spenser’s *Faerie Queene* (vi,iv,12) (p. 25):

A certain herbe from thence unto him brought,  
Whose virtue he by use well understood;  
The juyce whereof into his wound he wrought,  
And stopt the bleeding straight.

On the other hand, they were the knight’s teachers. This section will show that the wild man gave the knight tools with which he could control the powers of the spring, and these were the essential source of the wild man’s transcendence. Although scholars have documented this transference of power, the portion of it that is common knowledge seems grossly distorted. This point is especially important because as the wild man helped the knight, Paul the Hermit—also associated with wild people—taught Anthony how to metamorphose so that he could heal people. This of course is the function that Anthony had in the Isenheim, and this association seems to exemplify another example of a pagan myth transferred onto a Christian one.

Beginning with the issue of the spring: I have already established that wild peoples could manipulate weather forms like thunder. In the passage that follows it will be shown to have also been common knowledge amongst medieval peoples that they were originally charged with the sole responsibility of protecting all water forms (streams, wells, springs), as well as plants and animals. At some point in history, their many responsibilities seem to have been incrementally minimized, restricted to plant and animal care only.

This mythic transference of power, which seems to have transpired as wild people benevolently transferred their abilities to the medieval knight, appears in Chretien de Troyes’s story of a wild man named Broceliande. This creature, says Bernheimer (1952), was the sole orchestrator of thunderous rainstorms until the time came for him to help mankind (pp. 27–28). In response to Bernheimer’s interpretation of this story, an analogy can be drawn between Prometheus and the Wild Man, Broceliande. As Prometheus rose to the sun and stole a chunk of
it from the gods to help mankind, so, it seems, did Broceliande fasten a gong to the overhanging branches of a tree with the intention of showing the Medieval knight he was trying to help how to release the gong to create rainstorms by himself. And, as the knight advanced, Broceliande seems to have literally as well as figuratively receded. Chretien de Troyes's story is not, of course, fact. It is one version of many associated with the tales of King Arthur, and this dissertation is not about him or Broceliande. From my perspective the story represents a means for me to establish an inference of mine which will help me discuss the Isenheim.

From the information presented in this section I infer that the Wild Man's transference of power to the Knight, and consequentially his recession, resemble Grunewald’s depiction of Saint John the Baptist’s transference of power to Christ. Pagan means of worshipping the ancient Feminine receded had to recede as Christianity was advanced, and when the story of Wild Man's demise is viewed this way, it seems to represent another prototype. This one exemplifies an exchange of power.

It is interesting to consider that while scholars are in agreement about the Wild Man's transcendent ability, they do not concern themselves much with how it factored into his apparently self imposed sense of altruistic duty. Based upon my chapter two findings, an analogy might be made between him and the arts. They are not conflating these two attributes of the Wild Man, and are accordingly approaching their studies of him and his abilities formalistically, as a curiosity, instead of instrumentally, from the perspective of him being a creature with an overlooked function in the larger scheme of things. Essentially, they are neglecting the significance of his self imposed sense of altruistic duty--his relationship with the agrarian poor and the medieval knight--and accordingly losing sight of the reason why Wild People shook trees and danced with thunder.

6.4 The Flame-Crowned Figure

For compositional and iconographical reasons, I need to view the relationship I suspect Grunewald's peacock creature, John the Baptist, Mary, and Magdaline had with Wild People through the lens of another problematically analyzed figure typically acknowledged as some form of Mary. This is the flame-crowned woman emerging from the side door of the temple in the Angel Concert panel (Fig. 9). Next to her is the fig tree that I discussed in chapter three.

Snyder (1985) has documented how scholars have variously studied this luminous, flame-crowned figure. All of them agree that she is some version of Mary as they consider her
relationship to the Mary holding Baby Jesus whom she faces as she steps through the temple door. Scholars variously suggest that she is Mary visited by angels in the temple before the Incarnation, or the “idea of Mary” defined by the mind of God as he was looking upon her in terms of a potential fulfillment. Another popular idea is that Grunewald aligned her with the ideas of the mystic Saint Bridget. Snyder tells us that evidence indicates that Grunewald very likely knew about Bridget’s 14th-century-CE Sermo Angelicus, and some scholars argue that he aligned this figure with her meditation describing the jubilant celebration of God’s angels when they learned of his decision to create Mary. That is, they were celebrating God's decision before Mary was created.

In this context, Mellinkoff (1988) states that her luminous qualities have been variously aligned with figures like the angel Gabriel or St. Catherine of Alexandria, even referred to as a symbol for the Christian soul. Most, however, see her as the Virgin Mary in another symbolic guise. That is, the pregnant Mary awaiting birth (pp. 77).

Snyder similarly tells us that according to George Scheja, Grunewald based her identity on Dante’s vision of Paradise, an idea which Snyder claims inverts the temporal aspects of the Bridgetine interpretation and relates her to the Resurrection of Christ through a pictorial account of Mary’s joyful anticipation of her future coronation in heaven (pp. 351–352). He concludes that these complementary and contradictory interpretations are too poetic and mystical to make concrete sense. Mellinkoff seems to support his assessment in concluding that Anton Groner's 1920 less complicated interpretation is best. That is, that the young woman in question symbolizes Ecclesia—not the Virgin Mary as Ecclesia—just a personification of Ecclesia (p. 77).

From my perspective, both scholars are correct and at the same time, neither is because they have compartmentalized their views about who Mary was and how she was originally related to Ecclesia. Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon, the Encyclopaedia Britannica, and Webster's Unabridged Dictionary, indicate the word "Ecclesia" has come to be regarded analogously, as a term for the "Church." It also denotes the body of the faithful, and the Body of Christ and or people who believe in him. When viewed from outside of Christianity, Ecclesia signifies transcendant reality tied to one or more deities. From my perspective, these modern interpretations of Ecclesia are too theoretical to help me. I am more interested in Smith's (1893) interpretation of her. In his Dictionary of the Bible: Comprising its Antiquities, he allignes her with Wisdom (pp. 174-175).
Isenheim scholars seem to have been demonstrated no interest in associating this woman with a blend of Mary and Magdalene from the Crucifixion panels, the peacock creature in the Angel Concert panel which I previously argued was androgynous, and the similarly androgynous Devil who waits outside of Anthony’s window.

From the perspective of the Feminine, Mary seems to function in this image compositionally as well as contextually. Hayum (1989) provides an inroad with her description of the space behind the tiny, squashed bodiless head I plan to argue is John the Baptist’s. She posits that Grunewald distinguished between foreground and background space by coding the colors of the rib vaults to familiar moral and emotive attributes, with the red ribs signifying martyrdom and sacrificial love and the green signifying promise and hope (pp. 82, 351). These red and green shifts in value and hue match those which I have already discussed in relation to the peacock creature, and I agree, they are probably symbolic. I have already examined the peacock creature from the perspective of its being red and green, and aligned these colors with alchemical transformation. However, artists do not make color choices based solely upon abstract ideas. Art historians, theologians, and critics may attach meaning to an image through time or it might be intentional. But artists require that an image engage their viewer first, and then make sense. By this I mean that red and green are complementary, or binarily paired colors, which are opposite each other on the color wheel. Together they suggest movement which stimulates the eye, engages, and then excites the brain. This is part of how Grunewald appears to have approached the creation of his image. He must have been as sensitive to how color functioned in this room operatively, as a system, as he was to how it signified meaning. Of course artists were not trained to analyze color this way until hundreds of years after the period of Grunewald. Instinctive usages of color like his can be subjectively experienced, however, and then learned. Based upon this idea, I will interpret the ribs in this architectural space alchemically, and from the perspective of color theory.

The light outside the temple (Fig. 32) is dim, and very discernibly greenish. The angels and cherubs in the foreground of the inside of the temple, to the right of the bodiless head, change from dark to light and from green to oranges and reds tinted pink as they move from back to front and left to right. These changes are important for two reasons. I have already discussed the first change, which I believe is alchemical. The second has resulted in the visual flow of these images, which culminates at two critical points. One is the dirty, squashed, bodiless head.
that I will discuss shortly. The other is the significantly larger flame-crowned figure this section is about. Both faces are some version of pink. Whereas the bodiless head is obviously dead and painted a darkened pink, the flame-crowned figure appears alive and luminous. Her face is brilliantly lit gold, meshed with deepened pink.

I agree with Snyder (1985) that these color choices are “mystical,” but Hayum (1989) assesses the application better in stating that this luminous figure is an alchemical signifier. For some reason, however, neither Synder nor Hayum has considered the red and green aspect of alchemical symbolism in their analysis of this image. Hayum interprets the golden aura around the flame crowned woman’s head, for example, from the perspective of the alchemical and astrological literature of Grunewald’s period. She tells us it represents the highest and most potent of all antidotal agents invoked against the morbid influences of disease, but neglects to acknowledge why Grunewald might have painted the lower portions of this figure red and green (p. 48).

Hayum's idea that Grunewald’s imagery reflects morbid and diseased elements has been written about in several ways and is in itself common knowledge. She has aligned the chamber pot with Hebraic lettering, sitting at Mary’s feet, with this point of view. I will use her association to further establish the identity of Grunewald's Mary.

**6.5. Grunewald's Chamber Pot**

Scholars argue in two ways about the chamber pot in the panel to the right of the angel choir where Mary holds the infant Christ. Mellinkoff (1988) exemplifies one interpretation by suggesting the pot signifies the antithesis of the bathtub near Mary. According to her, whereas the tub was viewed as a cleansing tool, this uncovered pot signified “filth such as what vessels like this are designed to contain.” This was Grunewald’s means of symbolizing the decay of the Old Hebraic Law and the advent of the New Law. The characters on the pot are real, but the way they are combined makes no good sense, and letters like these are more often than not connected by Isenheim scholars with “sorcery or worse” (pp. 61–63). The first letter is Shin, she continues. Jews attached copies of it on the doors of their homes to protect themselves from Christians because they were afraid of them. This association was not a hostile one. Shin was taken to have the more hostile meaning that Grunewald had in mind, continues Mellinkoff, when it was written on or near Jewish religious facilities. In this context, it signified to Christians that the facility in question represented individuals banded together as enemies of Christ and the saints. Mellinkoff
argues that the letters on the chamber pot in Grunewald's shrine were intended to signify this meaning: Hebraic peoples were “enemies of Christ and the Saints” (p. 63).

Hayum (1989) exemplifies the other form arguments about this chamber pot typically take by attempting to aligned the first and last letters of the script encircling Grunewald's chamber pot with their original meaning. She argues that folk and mystical traditions associated protective powers with combinations of special spoken words and written letters, and I infer from her study that both letters must be studied because to study them compartmentally, and or from outside of the deeper layer of their original meaning, makes no sense. The example Hayum provides is described by alchemist and forensic chemist Agrippa von Nettesheim, in his 1531 De Occulta Philosophia. In that context, she claims that only the first and last letters of script matter. Read from right to left, the first is Shin. She and Mellinkoff are in agreement that this letter marked Jewish residences as a good-luck or protective charm. The last letter, however, is Ayin. Hayum argues that Ayin necessarily changes how Shin should be interpreted because it is the first letter and the first word in Hebrew for the Ayin Hora, meaning “Evil Eye” (pp. 41–42).

Hayum has helpfully acknowledged both letters. However, Ayin was not studied from the perspective of the Feminine. And, the Feminine origin of the divinatory process behind combining Shin and Ayin in itself represents an esoteric decision. It was not acknowledged either. Hayum's conclusion in the end resembles Mellinkoff's. Both scholars conclude that Grunewald intended his viewers to negatively associate these letters with the Jews. Scholars of folklore, alchemy, iconography, and Hebraic religion commonly agree that most Christian authorities were violently opposed to divination. Jews continued to use this means of esoterically accessing information, however, throughout the period during which Grunewald was painting his altarpiece. Iconographical signifiers he used in his shrine indicate he was sensitive to the Feminine, and I suggest his use of these letters was meant to signify an aspect of divination used prescriptively for purposes related to healing. Numerous communities used divination this way, not just Jews. He was not criticizing the Jews or sustained regard for these processes.

6.5.1 The Ayin Hora, or Evil Eye on Grunewald's chamber pot.
In my earlier discussion of controversies regarding figures associated with the cadeceus, I linked it with Thoth, Iris, and Mary and noted that although Mary has all of the other attributes of figures who possess a caduceus, she does not herself have a caduceus. I additionally associated carriers of this powerful tool with the Evil Eye, noting that Thoth and Iris are depicted with one,
so Mary should be too. I did not discuss the affiliation any of these figures had with *Evil Eye*
then, but will now, from the perspective that it represents yet another misunderstood aspect of
suprarational ability.

Peter Walcot's 1978 *Envy and the Greeks* and A. Melville and E. Kenney's *Metamorphosis* (1986) tell us the *Evil Eye* is a cursing device of very ancient origin, referred to
by Hesiod as early as the seventh century B.C.E., and after that, by Callimachus, Plato, Plutarch,
Pliny, Ovid, and Nicander (pp. 55; 416). Scholars agree that the *Eye* was a cursing device, but
there is no consensus amongst them on what it was or how it was used. Through folklore, A.
Dundes's (1992) *Evil Eye: Folklore Casebook* associates its effect with dying, diarrhea, and
constant crying amongst infected infants, children, and adult females (257-259). He further
relates these symptoms to dying, desiccation, withering, and dehydration, and tells us the cure
for all of these problems is "moistness" (pp. 257-259). Dundes also extends definition of the *Eye*
to include people in possession of one, telling us it signified powers attributed to certain persons
able to inflict injury on others (pp. 257-259). Walcot's (1978) assessment of the *Eye* curse is
more psychologically positioned, but it leaves readers with a similarly negative impression.
According to him, *Evil Eye* curses are usually imposed in response to painful feelings resulting
from some form of jealousy (p. 55). Dundes's statement, like those of the others mentioned
above, indicates that the *Eye* and people associated with it was a very powerful, but ultimately
negative and threatening influence.

**6.5.2. The pot's *Evil Eye* may also signify a *Good Eye*.**

S. Hirsch's *Chapters of the Fathers, Translation, and Commentary* assesses the *Evil Eye* more
comprehensively by identifying the existence of a "*Good Eye*" as well as a bad one. According to
Hirsch, ancient and early Jews associated a *Good Eye* with individuals reflecting good will and
the *Evil Eye* with ones who "do not only feel no joy but experience actual distress when others
prosper, and will rejoice when others suffer." The significance of Hirsch's distinction is critically
relevant because persons endowed with a negative or *Evil Eye* threatened the "moral purity" of
Hebraic communities and ones associated with having a *Good Eye* saved it. (p. 32). When
viewed alongside of these other studies, my original statement that Thoth, Iris, and maybe Mary
were endowed with an *Evil Eye* makes sense. They must have possessed a *Good Eye*
temperament, and were accordingly able to direct powers associated with the *Evil Eye* against
individuals threatening the purity of their community.
There is more. In my discussion of Feminine water forms present in Grunewald's image, "moist" creatures and water forms were iconographically linked with the Feminine, and "moist nature" was similarly related to Feminine transcendence and antidotal, cathartic cleansing. With Dundes's 1992 findings, I am able to extend my definition of "moistness" to include the relationship between moist nature and the Evil Eye. According to him, a connection exists between "moistness" and fish, fish signifying an "eternally wet" remedy for the dryness connected with effects of the Evil Eye (pp. 257-259). This would account for why the Feminine is traditionally associated with water and its related healing properties, why there are so many water forms in the conversation panel of the Isenheim, and why (although it it hard to see in pictures I have to work with) the goat headed creature immediately behind Anthony in the metamorphosis panel has what appear to be two large dorsal, or topmost fish fin type wings protruding out of his back. This goat headed creature might be part fish, but I cannot see it well enough in pictures I have of it to make the creature out so I cannot know for sure. Either way, based upon my findings and those of these scholars, there is a more important question than this one which needs to be asked. Mary's status as a Feminine agent of the Evil Eye seems to be being overlooked and I want to know why.

6.5.3. Mary, the Evil Eye, and the Christian Annunciation.

Mary's statis as a Feminine agent with a Good Eye, that is, a figure able to justifiably impose the Evil Eye upon peoples of ill will, seems to have not been overlooked so much as transformed. L. Ryken, J. Wilhoit, and T. Longman's 1998 Dictionary of Biblical Imagery tell us that after the fish was adopted by early Christians as a symbol, it very quickly became recognized almost exclusively as a signifier of the Announciation, or angel Gabriel's announcement to Mary that she was destined to become Jesus' mother (p. 32). Based upon these various assessments of the Evil Eye, I would a year ago have inferred that the fish's Christianized transformation involved a Feminine to masculine shift in power. I would have further assumed that Mary's aggressive and arguably negative attributes were accordingly transferred over to her son Jesus. Her Eye became his. Since then I have readjusted my way of thinking about Feminine dynamic and what changed my mind will be addressed in Chapter 6. Returning to my interpretation of Hayum’s (1989) assessment of Grunewald's chamber pot, it will serve as a means of introducing the other two versions of Mary that are in this panel. One is the version of her with the flaming crowned head. The other is her holding the infant Christ.
6.6. Mary's *Evil Eye* sheds light on her identity as the flame crowned figure, while suggesting that this aspect of her ought not be separated from the one Grunewald depicted holding the Christ Child.

Hayum argues that the flame crowned version of Mary is the highest and most potent of all antidotal agents, and I would argue in response that Grunewald's Mary holding the infant Christ, sitting near the pot with the *Evil Eye* inscription on it, signifies an equally powerful antidote. As was discussed, *Good Eyes* existed alongside of *Evil* ones--the significance of this oversight cannot be overstated. Neither Mary nor the chamber pot near her feet can be taken to symbolize efforts made by Grunewald to represent the Jews as enemies of Christianity because the Jews did not view the *Evil Eye* compartmentally as a separate agent set aside from the *Good Eye*. In addition, Jesus must have had an *Evil Eye* which he used to counteract disease and other evils because his mother had one and that is what she did with it. I can substantiate this position by returning to the Mary with the flaming crown whose luminous head Hayum argues is the highest and most potent of all antidotal agents. I agree with Hayum about Mary with the flaming crown's antidotal abilities, but that is where my consensus with her position ends.

As I see it, this Mary with the flaming crown has a story of very, very ancient origin, and it has many faces which are all grounded in the *Feminine*. In this Isenheim context, Mary seems to wear two faces, not one, and analysis of them has been separated. Like Isis who instructed Horus hundreds of years before her, this aspect of Mary is the androgynous alchemical Queen on fire--but she is more than that because she will emerge from her dark space, walk into the light, and become Mary who holds the Christ child--the same Mary who will instruct him in how to use his *Evil Eye*. I will substantiate these associations by incrementally comparing these two versions of Mary to three categories of alchemically transcendental figures.

6.6.1. **Flaming Mary and alchemical figures surrounded by "aureoles."

Aureoles are luminous oval shaped areas signifying a state of transcendence. Some alchemical examples are represented in (Fig. 44: D,F,G). These allow us to study Grunewald's flame crowned Mary alongside of other Maries with aureole shapes surrounding them. Please see the Mary in the circa 1450 woodcut entitled *Madonna in the Sun* (Fig. 32A); the one in Petrus Christius's 1492 *Madonna of the Dry Tree* (Fig. 32B) whose aureole is fashioned of dry tree branches; and both Jans Geertgen's 1480 *Madonna of the Rosary* and the painting *Our Lady of Guadalupe*, whose aureoles consists of swarming venomous creatures bathed in light (Fig. 32C,
The dry tree and swarming creature aureoles are symbolic and I will return to them shortly. For now, the composite of these associations allows us to further compare Grunewald's flaming figure to (FIG. 65A), the circa 1425 Italian woodcut entitled *Madonna of the Fire* which clearly acknowledges Mary as an entity of fire. This association is particularly important because according to M. Bessy's (1964) *Pictorial History of Magic and the Supernatural*, alchemical "mortification and dessication," both of which result from fire, necessarily preclude transcendence (p. 114).

**6.6.2. Alchemical transcendence also related binarily to death and disintegration.**

I will discuss two applications of this stage of alchemy. One seems to parallel what I am referring to in this dissertation as the *Errant Feminine*. No aureole surrounds human figures in this state. Instead they are presented binarily in terms of light and dark, and good and errant. See the angelic split identified in (Fig. 44 E).

The split in these images interests me because it seems to summarily reflect previous discussions of mine which were directed toward mythologized and personified binary systems. These were made up of combinations of binary elements like the unicorn and lion, Adam and Eve, synthemata, the *Feminine*’s symbiotic relationship with Dionysus and Apollo, as well as ways these two masculine entities interact with each other from the perspective of the *Feminine*. I must add, some of these combinations overlap so their sets can be connected. Image (Fig. 34), for example, depicts an annunciation, but while Gabriel approaches Mary a unicorn is sitting next to her with its head in her lap. I have established that unicorns are antidotal and shown that Mary had a *Good Eye*, which is also antidotal, so it would follow that she could have a child destined to function antidotally. These images and the connections I have established in my dissertation together reflect my interpretation of Mary's relationship with Magdalene. This has already been defined. However, they similarly show how I will in conclusion connect Mary with the Infant Christ.

The second application I have in mind further supports this association. It involves studying how human figures of binary nature relate with each other, earth, and fire--perhaps even assuming earth's character in images like the controversially studied 1500's *Fire Rocks* (Fig. 44H). These figures seem to exemplify volcanic, emergent molten fire personified and my idea is further supported by another application of what appears to me to be the same principle. See (Fig. 49 B), Maier's (1617) *Atalanta Fugiens* (*Emblem XXIV*), and (Fig. 49C), Stoleius.
Stolcenberg's (1624) *Viridarium Chymicum, or Killing of the King, or the Father*. These images are commonly referred to as the Alchemical King's transformation. That is, his death—and after his passing through the fire—his being reborn into a higher plane of consciousness.

### 6.7. Mary and the Infant Christ dynamic

The alchemical myth mentioned above seems connected to the idea that I think Grunewald intended to convey about the nature of Jesus's relationship with his mother, but only if we view Mary the way that I have defined her in this dissertation. Viewed this way, I would argue that Grunewald related the Infant Christ to both Mary and Magdaline in his mind, even though he painted the Christ Child sitting exclusively on Mary's lap. The correlation between these two Maries has been discussed before in my dissertation, and now I will extend that idea to include another. That is, Mary holding the Infant Christ represents a set of signifiers which were meant to be interpreted metaphorically instead of literally. Westerners seem to have lost sight of this aspect of their relationship, however, at least partly for the same reason that they view the alchemical images mentioned above singularly, as literal references to an all powerful, *Alchemical King*, instead of binarily, as a signifier suggesting the dual presence of a *Queen* and or an *Androgyne*. My dissertation has mentioned several contexts in which *Feminine* identity appears to have been transformed into a masculine one. The same principle can be applied to this concept of the *Alchemical King*.

Several chapters ago I introduced my plan to study Jesus's relationship with his mother, based upon my previous discussion of blackenings, or temporary deaths associated with the raven and Coronis in the Asclepius myth. In that context, I suggested that death and disintigration signified a formulaic series of alchemical changes which facilitated events leading to Asclepius’s birth and his mother's death, and said I would parallel this series of events to Christ's relationship with his mother later on in my dissertation. I have fulfilled part of my promise in this chapter, but must outline a few more elements before I can complete this task. I will return to Jesus's relationship with Mary in my conclusion.

### 6.8. John the Baptist

Most scholars see only two depictions of John the Baptist in Grunewald’s altarpiece. I see three. John’s presence ties together the prophetic tradition, the wild man, and the *Feminine*.

#### 6.8.1 John the Baptist’s Tousled, Dirty, Bodiless Head
In the Angel Concert Panel to the right of the peacock creature is a small, dirty, bodiless head that is tinted red. It is the foremost of numerous cherublike flying figures that scholars typically describe as strange and or hybrid forms entering a circular window in the back of the right side of a two-part enclosure. Mellinkoff (1988), for example, alludes to them as symbols for the battle between demons and angels in her chapter entitled “Fallen Mankind” which I will draw upon shortly (pp. 45–57). Here she again presents a synopsis of scholarly views. According to her assessment, many scholars do not mention this disembodied head at all. Those who note it, Mellinkoff (1985) continues, include Erwin Poeschel, who viewed it and the figures around it as peoples of Earth awaiting their Redeemer; Mellinkoff herself, who argues that the same group represents demonic rebels who fell with Lucifer because they were confounded by the Incarnation; and Fraenger, who poetically alluded to the bodiless head as a dwarflike “goblin” that does not glance eastward like the others swarming around him but instead turns this tiny head toward the peacock creature with a “plaintive grimace.” Only Joseph Bernhart has suggested that this group of figures represents “saintly protectors of various ethnic groups” (pp. 21; pp. 46–47, 94, n. 23).

I do not agree with Fraenger’s idea that this tiny head is a “goblin’s,” but I appreciate his pointing out that it alone is looking toward the peacock creature. Bernhart’s assessment that the swarming figures represent “saints” makes the most sense to me, and if by the term “ethnic groups” he means to include Hebrew prophets in with Christian saints, I agree with him on this point, too. From my perspective, the head represents the living spirit of the beheaded John the Baptist, and this is the third head of his that I have in mind. For my assertion to make sense, however, I need to approach the problem with two bodies of information in mind. One is prophecy’s lineage, and the other is an iconographical analysis of selected elements found in biographical studies of John the Baptist.

6.8. 2 Prophecy’s Lineage in Relation to John the Baptist

There are two related ways to argue prophecy’s relevance to analysis of Grunewald’s Isenheim Altarpiece. One is by considering changes imposed on prophets by Hebrews as early as 1150 BCE. The other is rooted in the long-standing tension between Jews and Christians regarding what to do with prophecy and prophets. Remarkably, this troubled issue centers around a form of this composite far removed from their innately realized form and function. I will begin with an etiological assessment of the origin of the word *prophet* Greek definitions of the word *prophet*
were similar to Hebraic ones. I will cull the Hebraic definitions from Hebrew scholars as well as Christian ones because the evidence they present differs.

According to Israel Goldberg (1929), the earliest peoples perceived divination as an alternative means of gaining wisdom. In time, however, the Hebrews apparently tried to restrict its use to figures they called “prophets” (p. 565). According to William Smith (1873/1990), the English word *prophet* comes from the classical Greek word *prophetes*, meaning “one who speaks for another or for a god” (p. 534). Smith (1873/1990) and Auerbach’s “The Prophets” (1974) a “speaker” or “teller” inspired or driven to prophesy (p. 534; 70). Auerbach links *Navi* with *Nevi’im* and associates it with “prophesiers” who have been traced to the original circa-1100-BCE Canaanite inhabitants of Judea. He also views *Nevi’im* alongside its reflexive translation *hitnabeh*, which means, “to behave as a prophet,” and *hitnabeh* alongside its synonym *hishtage’a*, which means to “go mad or act as a madman.” Sometimes prophesiers and madmen appear alongside one another in the same text, and sometimes the Hebrew texts simply refer to prophesiers as “madmen” (p. 70–73). According to Auerbach and Goldberg (1929), Nevi’im demonstrated an “ecstatic” state of mind and a particular speech style. Members of their community regarded them with awe because God spoke through them, but also looked on with contempt because [of their supposed madness?]. They moved around the country in groups isolated from the larger community and prayed by dancing fervently and playing deafening music, which is why [their contemporaries?] regarded them as “madmen” (p. 70, 283–284).

George Ferguson (1994) and James Hall (1974) contextually link these early figures with Sibyls (discussed earlier in this dissertation as priestesses of Apollo). Prophets are generally understood to have connected the Jewish world with Christianity, and Sibyls are commonly understood to have done the same thing for the Greeks and Romans. By the end of the Middle Ages, the Christian Church had acknowledged twelve of these figures, all of them men, prophets announcing the coming of Christ (pp 100–101; 282). Even more telling is Ginzberg’s (1909) assertion that [who?] ranked Abraham’s wife, Sarah, sometimes called Iscah (“seer”), even higher than her husband in prophetical powers—and he was the founding father of all Israel (p. 97). Strangely, this information is now far removed from mainstream knowledge about the same topic. The reason seems to lie in the education of Hebrew prophets, which changed the form and function of prophets long before the advent of Christianity. Prophecy became a learned skill, not an innate one, and Christians may have resisted it for that reason.
Walker (1970) states that no question in Church history has been more controversially studied and scantily documented than the exchange of Church officers for prophets. Most scholars believe that the earliest Gentile churches had no officers. Paul’s letters (ca. 50–100 CE) acknowledge two classes of Christian leaders: “apostles,” whose function was to found churches, and “prophets and teachers,” charismatic men who proclaimed or interpreted the divinely inspired word. By mid second century, says Walker, bishops had assumed supreme power over this composite, and although scholars acknowledge this changeover, they have many questions regarding how and why it happened. Many scholars believe that [who?] came to use the words bishop, prophet, and teacher interchangeably; however, some scholars argue that the prophets were than the teachers, and bishops in time replaced them both (pp. 39–41).

According to Smith (1873/1990), historical documentation of the prophets’ education began around 1150 BCE, when the ancient Hebraic Order created schools for prophesiers (p. 80). Teaching had been being enforced by “act” and “word,” but during this period the priesthood was degenerating, and people were no longer learning from the “acted lessons” of ceremonial service. Goldberg (1929) and Ginzberg (1909) indicate that some means of reform was required, so priest and prophet Samuel (ca. 1150 BCE, the 15th of the 15 judges who presided during this period) tried to reconcile Church and State troubles through developed use of prophesiers (pp. 279–282; 525). These figures had played a sizable role in their communities even before the time of Moses (ca. 1550 BCE), but never before had their skills been developed. Samuel implemented “companies” similar to modern theological colleges, where promising boys were educated to be prophets. The primary course of their study was the “law” and its oral interpretation. However, according to Jose Patterson (1991), “law” during these years was meshed through religion with every aspect of Jewish behavior and knowledge—including medical cures, commercial advice, biographies, history, and philosophy (p. 70). In addition to “law,” the curriculum included music, dance, and sacred poetry because these studies were recognized as an integral part of the history of prophesying (Goldberg, 1929), p. [number] and Ginzberg (1909), p. [number]. Samuel’s schools were so successful that there was never an undersupply of official prophets. Almost all students who went through this program of studies became part of the Prophetic Order.

These efforts to organize and restrict prophetic behavior enabled the prophets to function in three critical ways: 1) politically, as powers in the state in possession of pastoral or quasi-pastoral offices; 2) poetically, as national poets of Judea whose duties included the work of
analysts, historians, authorized exponents of the law, and preachers of patriotism and morality; and 3) prophetically, as linking devices through which God’s will was allegedly revealed to mankind. They continued to function in this capacity until around 800 BCE, when the prophet Amos of Tekoa (785–749 BCE) began imposing careful distinctions upon their prophetic tradition. Most notably, Amos transformed prophecy from being an oral effort to a written one, and this notion seems to have forever altered the Western perception of the form and function of prophecy. Christian authorities incorporated these written prophecies into the Bible long ago and, consequently, the written prophecies became mainstream knowledge. Stephen Winward (1968) comments: “Unlike their predecessors, the great prophets did not experience ecstasy of a wild and orgiastic type. Their revelatory states were of a more moral and personal character, with the tranquility of sublime inspiration” (p. 21).

Auerbach (1974) and Kugel (year) indicate that Amos’s application was limited to southern Judaic men who bred cattle; lived a seminomadic, tribal existence; and had a relationship with the desert that idealistically resembled that of their Hebraic forefather Moses. According to Auerbach, Amos’s innovations did not extend to the other original center or Hebraic prophecy. Northerners continued to practice “ecstatic” prophecy, but southerners did not. Amos and his followers became a “literary” or “classical” group of prophets. For them, the art of writing came to play as critical a role in prophesy making as did content. Perhaps the great divide between form and content, at least as it can be related to prophetic texts, began here. In any case, when the two tribes united under the rule of King Saul, the southern group became dominant. In that capacity, they exercised the bulk of prophetic influence on Israel’s cultural development until the end of the sixth century BCE (pp. 70–73; 5–7).

In 587CE, the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem and destroyed its Temple. According to Abram Sachar (1960) and Walker (1970), [who?] altered the definition and use of the name Yahweh, the Religious, and the Holy Writ (Hebraic law), and prophecy ceased (pp. 11–14; 12). Many Israelites turned their backs on reform proposals and began returning to ancient Feminine rites (i.e., Jeremiah 44:15–25). At the same time, however, hereditary priestly families became a new form of aristocracy. Their highest judicial council, the Sanhedrin, consisted of seventy-one politically influential advisers and Hebraic historians, rabbis, and scribes (law interpreters) whose rulings became synonymous with the formal aspect of Hebraic religious life. They represented the lost Temple and its priesthood. However, the changes they implemented were
untraditionally marked by political interest and religious indifference, and prophets were not a part of the Sanhedrin. Accordingly, prophets no longer shared in mainstream efforts to represent the Temple and its priesthood. The ordinary Jew who elected to adhere to Hebraic tradition instead of abandon it inadvertently aligned himself with a word that had been refashioned more by lawmakers than by prophets (sources?). By the end of the fourth century BCE, the definition and use of Hebraic Law had changed again. On the one hand, according to Sachar (1960) and Walker (1970), it had evolved into a textual religion based on sacred scripture, but it did not align itself with the lineage of prophetic voices that represented reform. On the other hand, the text had in and of itself become corrupt, clearly defined in some places but muddled beyond recognition in others (pp. 11–14; 12). These changes resulted in problems that Jesus of Nazareth objected to. According to Walker (1970), around the time of Jesus’ birth Augustus transferred the unlimited powers of authority that had in earlier times been allocated to apostles and “prophets and teachers” to emperors (pp. 39–41). His system broke down, but, shortly afterward, Diocletian restored it. Through him, Lopez tells us in *The Birth of Europe* (1966), emperors began wearing purple, calling their office a “sacred empire,” and requiring their subjects to kneel before them (pp. 18–19). Jesus seems to have been wrestling with troubles that anticipated these monumental changes in the role and definition of Western prophets. His ministry lasted only one to three years. During this time, he seems to have followed the example set for him by Hebrew state that the comparable ancient Hebrew word for prophet is *Navi*, meaning, “to bubble forth” as prophets and teachers of Israel who preceded him. Like them, he criticized the priests who had replaced the prophets and belittled the leaders of orthodoxy. From his perspective, the first group was too complacent and the second hypocritical. He had few quarrels with the foundation of Judaic thought. Instead, he directed his efforts toward those who had perverted its essence (pp. 130–131; 18–20), and a good chunk of what he objected to was the cessation of Jewish reliance on prophets. That idea takes us back to the long-standing troubles between Christians and Jews regarding what to do with prophets and prophecy.

It is common knowledge that the ancient Greeks, Babylonians, Assyrians, Egyptians, Romans, and Hebrews alike had figures recognized as prophets. According to Auerbach (1974), however, a major difference developed between how Jews and the others used these powerful predictors the future. Ancient communities other than the Jews came to perceive prophetic words of proclamation as synonymous with inescapable fate. As they equated prophetic powers with
godly ones, they became as afraid of prophecy’s power over them as they were afraid of their
gods, and, for this reason, they eventually implemented major policies regarding the dictates of
prophets (p. 82). Hebrew scholar Auerbach (1974) and Christian biblical scholar Smith
(1873/1990) both indicate that the Hebrews, alone among ancient peoples, believed that man was
accountable only to God. In their eyes, man mastered his own fate and prophets were useful
tools, not omniscient oracles. They helped mankind monitor events instead of trying to create or
erase them. Because the Hebrews came to measure prophetic efforts by the degree to which they
could be related to the Hebraic definition and use of “morality,” they understood divinity to be
inherent in prophetic words. In this way, the Hebrews believed that prophets, not God, were the
origin of human morality (82–84; 80, 534–535). Christians saw this point very differently.
According to them, morality originated with God and no one else. This notion became one
critical point of separation between Jews and Christians. The other point, according to The New
Jewish Encyclopedia (1962), was the Christian belief in original sin, which the Jews denounced
(p. 453).

From my perspective, these two points seem somehow related, based on evidence
indicating that divinatory and oracular ability have been in one way or another demonized since
before the time of Christ. The best and most relevant example is Eve’s legendary link with Mary,
discussed in chapter two of this dissertation. To reiterate, the Gnostic Gospels link Mary to Eve
by way of Mary’s mother Hannah based on the tradition that Hannah is the seventh-generation
descendant of Eve. This legend does not demonize Eve or her abilities, but the Christianized
perspective of their connection blames her for original sin while at the same time identifying
Mary’s job as God’s decision to correct Eve’s mistake.

Amos’s revisions (ca. 700 BCE), which privileged southern prophets over northern ones,
were imposed at roughly the same time as literacy was becoming established. As Western man
moved from an oral tradition to a textual one, the art of persuasion became as important to
prophesying as content, and the Hebrew peoples began to view its ecstatic dimension as
unfavorably as they viewed imagery. In addition, the qualities that they originally viewed as an
integral part of prophecy (music, dance, sacred poetry) and the inherent strengths that early
prophets were encouraged to develop for purposes of cultural advancement (knowledge of the
law and its oral interpretation, religion, knowledge of medical cures, historicizing, and agrarian
science) are similarly attributed to oracular physicians who were also priests of Apollo like Nicander.

Of course, my interest in this issue relates specifically to one question. Grunewald must have been at least somewhat familiar with the controversies surrounding prophets and prophecy because the famous 1536 Council of Trent made crucial decisions about prophets only about thirty years after he completed his altarpiece. This information about prophets and prophecy is of course relevant to John the Baptist, who appears in several of Grunewald’s panels. According to Walker (1970), Jesus considered John the Baptist to be the last and among the greatest of the prophets. Many of his followers became followers of Jesus, but some persisted in following him. He was an ascetic in life, which is why he is included in the lore of wild people, and he despised all formalism in religion (p. 33)—perhaps because the Sanhedrin had constructed its laws with no or little regard for the prophetic voice.

6.8.3 Scholarly Interpretations of Grunewald’s John the Baptist

Setting aside the tiny squashed head, which I think belongs to John the Baptist, Grunewald depicted John in at least two places, from the perspective of two life stages. No scholars have considered the tiny squashed head as the third aspect of Grunewald’s interpretation of John the Baptist, but much has been written about John’s two-part presence in the Crucifixion panel. One part depicts the resurrected prophet holding Mary, the sorrowing mother, who is about collapse. [Who] takes this figure to be John after he was killed (source?). According to Snyder, scholars have written much about Grunewald’s surprisingly lack of interest in scale in the Crucifixion scene because of this figure, which is second in size only to Christ. Snyder bases this idea on the premise that Grunewald used scale to emphasize varying emotional reactions to Christ’s death, emotional states instead of doctrinal significance having dictated Grunewald’s use of scale in his depiction of John (pp. 349–350).

The other depiction of John is the one I am most interested in. It is typically taken to be John the Baptist before he his execution. In this capacity, he is what Scheja calls the “archetypal evangelizing anchorite who lived in the desert wilderness” (quoted in Snyder, p. 350). According to Scheja, this John is the witness of doctrine through whom Grunewald has ingeniously fused historical and iconographic Crucifixion types (Snyder, p. 350). Snyder’s position echoes Scheja’s with regard to this figure. Like most Isenheim scholars studying John, they are focusing overtly on the words that Grunewald painted behind the evangelizing version of John the Baptist. I have
separated them out and italicized them for emphasis: “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30).

The accepted scholarly view of these words as they appear in the painting, according to Snyder, is that they refer to John the Baptist’s beheading while Christ was still a young minister (pp. 349–350). But based on the information that I presented in the previous subsection on prophecy and biographical information about John, I think the reference to a prophet who must “decrease” to let Christian ways “increase” should be taken more specifically to mean that John’s *Feminine* prophesying abilities, including his innate sensitivity to divinatory interpretation, must now “decrease.”

6.8.4 John the Baptist’s Biographical Information

No scholar studying the Isenheim Altarpiece has provided John’s biographical information beyond stating in one or two sentences that he was a desert hermit or the equivalent, and none has considered him from the perspective of the *Feminine*. For this reason, I will outline some important biographical information about the man named John the Baptist and then supplement that and established scholarly views about John with *Feminine* iconographical data.

Like Jesus, John the Baptist was born in Nazareth. His birth was foretold by an angel which qualifies the event as being a supernatural occurrence. His clothing was a garment made of camel hair in the tradition of elder prophets who had preceded him by hundreds of years and, a leather girdle worn about his loins (2 Kings 1:8). His “meat” (food) was “locusts and wild honey” (Lev. 11:22; Ps 81:16). He lived as a hermit who baptized people in the River Jordan to cleanse them of various sicknesses, and many scholars believe that he was a practicing Essene. It is certain that he abided by strict rules about food and bathed in a spring every morning. He had no wife, for example, opposed sacrifice for gain, and was a martyr, physician, prophet, and “messenger” (pp. 315–318, 76172, 58–72; 535).

6.8.5 Iconography and John the Baptist

From a mythological perspective and with regard for the *Feminine*, we must consider what might have been meant by alluding to John the Baptist as a “messenger.” Although modern scholars follow Murray (1880) in taking the word *messenger* to mean that John was the forerunner of Christ, in the “Good Mary” chapter of this dissertation, I established that the word *messenger* originally meant something else. Before the time of Christ, the word was linked with the *pontifex* or God bearer, and that meaning was associated with a number of deities who functioned as links
between the gods and human beings. The same definition applies to John the Baptist, who served as God’s “messenger” by introducing Jesus and Christianity to the western world.

Smith (1873/1990) mentions the “significant lesson of the gourd,” whose “growth and decay brought truth home to him” (p. 318). Cooper writes that the gourd plant produces a medicinal substance commonly known as castor oil, but it is also a highly concealed symbolic signifier associated with Hebraic mystery and sorcery. The revised edition of Smith’s (1873/1990) classic text supports Cooper’s point. In its documentation of the biblical prophet Jonah’s adventure with the whale are references indicating Jonah was similarly schooled “by the gourd.” Jonah resisted what God told him to do, so he was swallowed by a large fish and kept in its belly for three days. After it threw him up, the prophet was overjoyed. At the same time, he saw that he could no longer avoid his obligation to spread the word of God. He had, Smith tells us, been “taught by the significant lesson of the gourd, whose growth and decay had brought the truth at once home to him.” The truth Jonah learned was that he could not avoid his duty to preach to the people of Nineveh (pp. 222, 315–318, 743; 76). This story of the gourd indicates that God communicated his intentions for John and Jonah through their efforts to interact with events designed for them by God. I infer based on material already discussed that they wrestled with these events as a diviner might intuitively interact with signifying messages implied by cards on a table, or flight patterns of swallows. Their altruistic investment in their community further facilitated their ability to discern what God expected of them. In this way, that God spoke through them to other people. It seems that “messenger” in this context might mean not only that John was the forerunner of Jesus, as Murray and others have suggested, but also that John was a “messenger” in the ancient Greek sense of the word.

Another iconographical element associated with John the Baptist is the ancient and medieval implication of water. John is frequently depicted in the proximity of a spring, which has symbolic implications beyond the fact that he baptized people. Hayum (1989) has not concerned herself with the ancient Feminine, but she does consider this image from the perspective of medicine. Isenheim scholars, she notes, tend to overlook that John stands in front of a small body of water, a clear indication of baptism, and the “relevance of this sacrament to the meaning and function of the altarpiece cannot be overemphasized.” She adds that water in the context of a hospital is a purifying and rejuvenating agent. She provides the Old Testament example of Naaman the Syrian, who is cured of leprosy by dipping himself seven times in the
River Jordan. She adds that many handbooks describing and advertising local mineral baths were published in the sixteenth century, and hydrotherapy and that the analysis of mineral waters preoccupied Alsatian physicians during the years when Grunewald was painting his panels. The region of the Vosges Mountains, less than five kilometers from the altar, was rich with thermal springs, and often viewed monasteries as guardians of mineral baths. She concedes that we do not know that physicians recommended baths in the treatment of Saint Anthony’s fire, but the use of baths to treat diseases such as leprosy and epilepsy suggests that they did. She furthers her point by noting that Grunewald was evidently a hydraulic engineer both before and after his execution of the Isenheim panels (pp. 39–40).

Had Hayum (1989) analyzed the spring from the standpoint of Feminine iconography, she might have considered the possibility that Grunewald depicted John the Baptist three times in the Isenheim Altarpiece, not two. Numerous early iconographers like Porteous (1928) tell us that springs, wells, rivers, and underground streams watered the previously mentioned “sacred groves,” and that ancient people worshipped all parts of this composite (p. 48). Many images depict wild people reposing at home alongside existing wells, springs, caves, and the like. Setting aside the fact that springs, rivers, and wells were blessed and that early Christians used them for baptisms, and not counting the point that ancient and medieval people attributed curative properties to some of them, these bodies signify special divinatory ability in Feminine iconography. According to Porteous, ancient and early texts and images consistently depict persons who have had prophetic visions alongside (xii) a body of water. According to him, the ancients understood that the “limpid murmurs” of springs could trigger such visions. The physiological and psychological sensations that prophets experienced when confronted with running water seems to have subliminally triggered a mental association with the mythic gush that the Greeks believed was felt by the roots of first oak (p. 59). Hope (1868) supports Porteous’s (1928) statement. According to him, ancient and early westerners connected water and bubbles to divination, and they read the bubbles that arose from throwing pins, needles, coins, or other small objects into wells designated as holy (p. xvi). Combining the ancient idea that bodies of water signify divinatory ability and transcendence with John’s other symbolic attributes, and this with my proposal that Grunewald depicted three Johns instead of two, raises the question of whether Grunewald intended his viewers to identify John with divination, and,
accordingly with the Feminine. In this hypothetical context John seems to signify a very special form of medicine frequently alluded to in the Western world as “sacrifice.”

The flame-crowned figure that I linked with Mary also represents sacrifice. The example from 2 Kings 5 provided by Hayum (1977), in which Naaman the Syrian is cured of leprosy by immersing himself seven times in the River Jordan, ties in with my previous discussion of the number seven, suggesting the moment of physiological and possibly psychological catharsis, during which the decision is made—perhaps through divination in the subconscious mind of the patient—that that person will return from sickness to health.

Another iconographical element is John’s traditional food, “locusts and wild honey.” A recent archaeological discovery confirms that ancient people did indeed eat locusts. The so-called Damascus document (Zadokite fragment), states that ancient people living near Qumram in what is now Israel ate roasted or boiled locusts and grasshoppers (Kelhoffer, 2004, p. 63).

Whereas research about locusts seems irrelevant from an iconographical standpoint, honey is another matter. According to Kelhoffer (2004), few scholars consider which sweet substance is designated in certain ancient writings by the Greek word meli, which scholars generally translate as “honey.” Unless the document makes a clear connection with hives, bees, or honeycomb, says Kelhoffer, this word may denote other sweet substances ranging from figsand dates to sweet tree sap (pp. 59–60). The biblical references to meli in relation to John’s diet may refer to the aforediscussed hallucinogenic substance ash.

6.9 Synopsis and Inferences

John’s diet and his association with water suggest that, like Nicander and Hesiod, he followed the path of Feminine deities like Isis, Nicander acting on behalf of the agrarian poor. This tradition aligns him with Mary, Mother of Jesus.

From my perspective, there is only one path to transcendence and it is not only John’s. No ethnic group, as Bernhart rightly says, can call this path their own and that is why the tiny, squashed head in the angel concert panel, which I am calling John’s spirit, is looking toward the peacock creature, which I have identified as errant Mary. John’s head is watching Mary because she has been and still is John’s model. His head is becoming part of the swarming collective force that long ago defined John’s path for him, and in the Crucifixion panel, the force is in the midst of arriving again. This time it will define Anthony’s path for him. His job will be to function as a model for Isenheim viewers.
I have correlated wild people to peacocks, and peacocks to a type of figure sometimes accounted for in saint and prophet lore. I have shown that the range of wild people’s abilities was significant and related their relinquishing that power in folklore and iconography to knights to Saint John’s having passed popular adoration of his abilities over to Christ. But to I still need to raise and answer several questions. Was the transference of power from wild people to the knight fully and essentially or only cosmetically realized? Did wild people also pass their response to thunderstorms to knights. Scholarly efforts to study the lore of wild people indicate that they did not.

If altruistic concern and a wider range of emotions than is normal in humans fueled the wild man’s drive to wield tree trunks and interact with whirlwinds and thunderstorms, and if verbal and iconographical depictions of his response were metaphorical allusions to what gave these creatures their power, why did they disappear from Western folklore and iconography? Were they real, and, if so, what happened to them? Numerous scholarly analyses provide insights into how but not why they disappeared. Now scholars like Bartra and Bernheimer discuss them as little more than a curiosity. From my perspective, however, they represent just another problematically defined *Feminine* data bank.

It would be easy but unwise for me to advance the idea that Western scholars have interpreted this dimension of Mary and wild people as they are currently interpreting symbols in art—that is, formally instead of instrumentally and egocentrically instead of with due regard for the author’s intended meaning. Theoretical approaches like this do not appear to be working, however, because there are controversies about what to do with art and art education, and escalating social effects which can be traced to the division between the arts and the sciences, and science and religion.

In the next chapter, I will study factual data from ancient times regarding a human attribute that the Greeks called *menis*. In ancient times, it was common knowledge that *menis* existed in some people. Greek administrators and scholars like Plato seem to have worried over whether it should be accepted or demonized, and Hebrew authorities appear to have done the same thing. If I can establish that the Hebrews called some of the people who had this quality “prophets,” I can show that what fueled the wild man’s innate impulse to help and to heal was a very special form of anger that was not associated with fear-based feelings like jealously or shame but with a magnified level of altruistic righteousness. In other words, like Achilles
himself, the stream that he fought was empowered by aversion to wrong. I will argue that this hypothetical quality of wild people resembles errant qualities in Mary and that these same attributes are more apparent in Magdalene and John the Baptist.
CHAPTER SEVEN
ERRANT MARY'S RELATIONSHIP WITH ACHILLIAN "WATER" AND HEROIC TRANSCENDENCE
PART THREE

7.1. Affection and aversion precipitated Feminine transcendence.

Many monsters earth then essayed to create, born with strange faces and strange limbs; the man-woman; between the two, yet not either, sundered from both sexes; things bereft of feet; things without hands; things dumb; things blind; things locked together by the clinging of the limbs so that they could not move nor avoid calamity nor take what they needed. Monsters and prodigies she would thus create, yet vainly, since nature forbade their increase, nor could they reach the bloom of age nor find food. . . . Many races of living creatures then perished nor could beget nor propagate, for whatever animals now feed on the breath of life, either craft or courage or speed has preserved their kind from the beginning of their being.

The above passage excerpted from Singer (1928) reflects 200 BCE Lucretius' account of extinct "creatures" like the "man-woman between the two, yet not either" (pp. 6-9), which I infer is the previously discussed, earliest version of the Feminine Androgyne. Thirteen hundred years later, Grunewald seems to have viewed the creature differently--perhaps as an overlooked, near extinct Feminine to which he credited the existence of Magdalene, John the Baptist, and the peacock creature. In this hypothetical context, these figures would have been designed to represent various "monstrous" dimensions of the Androgyne, and these are the parts of her that I am referring to as "errant." This chapter will follow Hope (1868) in advancing the idea that certain individuals like Achilles related with water to experience superhuman feelings of affection and aversion. Then it will extend his views, considering that Achillian affection and aversion in turn precipitated Feminine transcendence. I believe this combination (water and ashen anger) fronted Achilles' wrathful, cathartic, and morally indignant response to human indignities, and that westerners have demonized the response to which these attributes refer.
We considered how *Feminine* water was related to transcendence in the form of "stones," "slime," "moisture" and moisture giving animals like frogs, toads, and lizards in the section entitled "Good Mary." In "Errant Mary," we discussed it from the perspective of springs, wells, and rivers. There remains one more aspect of water to consider, however, which Hope's (1868) text associates in the following two passages with "extreme responses toward feelings of affection and aversion." Percy Gardner's 1876 *Greek River Worship* and Hope (1868) both similarly state that water is the anthropomorphic equivalent of honored deities whose force was sometimes present in human form, and other times manifest as a mass of H2O. They indicate that when water took the shape of H2O it possessed a soul capable of supremely feeling and acting upon human responses, the most relevant of which Hope described in terms of "affection" and "aversion" (pp. xi, 17; xiii-xiv, 103). This chapter will build upon Gardner and Hope's observation, beginning with two examples excerpted from Hope (1868). It is a well known Homerian reference to a contest between Achilles and the outraged river "Scamander" which claims to have power over Achilles. According to Hope, Scamander's claim is the source of the hero's aversion:

Achilles, not content to only choke the stream with dead bodies, dared even to address insulting words to the deity. [He derided his lack of power, and taunted him with the lowness of his origin saying he was only the son of a small river]. Scamander [river metamorphosing into a human man] rose from his waves in human form to reproach the too daring hero, and to demand him to carry on his murderous warfare elsewhere than amid the sacred waves of a river-descended stream.---[Achilles replied tauntingly and in bitter wrath, calling upon Apollo in vain]. Scamander, in fierce fury [reconstitutes himself back into H2O river form and] hurls himself upon Achilles in the form of the river, in waves and waterspouts, trying to overthrow him and mingle his [Achilles'] body with those of his many victims (pp. pp. xiii- xiv). To substantiate his interpretation of Achilles' interaction with water, Hope (1868) provided additional examples. The one below reflects water demonstrating "feelings of aversion" in a more recent context, from a folk myth found operative in Cheshire, Hayfield, and Derbyshire during the years while his text was being written. His impression of this passage is that it is narrated by the river, personifying the river's "Zeus-minded" rapacity for human life:
Div ye noken
Where ye drown ae man
I drown ten (p. x).

Hope and Gardner wrote in the late 1800's. More recent iconographers like Cooper (1978) and Ferguson (1994) also acknowledge this curious aspect of water, and their descriptions are harder to access than those in earlier texts unless the reader knows what to search for. This problem sits under the umbrella of another. Iconographical signifiers of human transcendence defined in terms of water have been common knowledge for thousands of years, but the key combinations underlying them seem to be explored to increasing degree only partially and or inadvertently.

I believe that descriptions of Achilles are shifting and he is being humanized. Scholars define Achilles to increasing degree as a human opponent of the river, instead of as Hope (1868) and Gardner (1876) did, as an element of water's domain able to blend affection with anger transcendence. From this perspective, Hope and Gardner's definition is correct but incomplete. Achilles does not challenge Scamander in the first of the passages above playfully, as one brother pitting himself against another to see who is strongest. He challenges him instead, to exercise his experience of the transcendent state of mind required of binarily masculine agents of the Feminine, while immersed in battle. This is Achilles' obligation to the Feminine, his reason for existence. His job is to respond in a wrathful, cathartic, and morally indignant manner to human indignities.

My concern with this aspect of Achilles is that if he is currently being humanized in this way, screened from the perspective of out of control rage instead of Feminine transcendent behavior, maybe her behavior was altered a long time ago. This would account for so many misunderstanding. One example would be Mariologist Greeley's concern that westerners have lost sight of Mary's anger. Another would be the Wild Man and knight problem, targeting whether Wild Man's seemingly superhuman concern for mankind and his range of emotions was transferred to the Knight fully and essentially, or only cosmetically. And let us not forget the many muddled efforts made on the part of art historians and theologians to understand Grunewald's alter. To establish a basis for connecting these concerns, let us consider three ways that water and ash are iconographically connected. If these problems can be demonstrated to be fundamentally similar, the viability of my idea that the same thing happened to Mary will be
significantly strengthened. The three areas of study in question are: 1) Achilles' relationship to his ashen spear, as related to Mannerbund, ash "meli" and witchcraft; 2) Achilles' relationship to water and ash, as defined through his mother, Thetis; his instructor, Chiron; and Feminine mud; and 3) Achilles' relationship to the number nine, originally part of a cursing device which functioned binarily as an antidote and a blessing.

7.1.1 Achilles, his Ashen Spear, and the Mannerbund.

Contemporary texts of war scholars like G. P. Fernandez's 2004 Encyclopedia of Religion and War and Bruce Lincoln's 1991 Death, War, and Sacrifice, which draw upon Achilles' attributes to construct empirical models for concepts like "hero" and "war," reflect two approaches toward studying Achilles. Both draw upon the concept of "Mannerbund" warriors, generally understood to have gone mad during battle to the point where some scholars argue they had to have their anger exorcised from them before returning to human society. However, as each represents a different view on Achilles. So do they reflect some controversy with regards to how to identify the Mannerbund.

One approach is reflected by the recent classical scholarly efforts of Gregory Nagy, who in his 1999 The Best of the Achaeans: Concepts of the Hero in Archaic Greek Poetry studies Hesiod's ashen period (one of his "Four Ages of Mankind") from the combined perspectives of two resources: circa 1960's structuralist Levi Strauss (pp. 190-192) and Hesiodic scholar West, who enlivened Hesiodic analyses by demonstrating how the figure's use of metaphor has been being widely misinterpreted (p. 148). Nagy's views on Achilles seem to parallel those written about Mannerbund anger in general texts like J.P. Mallory and D.Q. Adams's 1997 Encyclopedia of Indo European Culture. Mallory and Adams (1997) align it with upbringing more than genetic heritage, apparently omitting myth from their anthropological definition of Mannerbund hero's like Achilles. According to them, Mannerbund were separated from the constraints of society and raised by men and amongst animals from early childhood to ensure that they had only one code, their societal function as an instrument of battle. They were dressed in animal hides and schooled to fight like "battle mad" animals to the death to defend this code.

The other reflects theoretical efforts made by mythologists like George Dumezil, whose iconographical efforts to study Achilles include anthropological assessment. According to Scott Littleton's 1996 New Comparative Mythology: An Anthropological Assessment of the Theories of George Dumezil, Achilles represents an archetype more than an individual and Mannerbund
were "dysfunctionally" able to pass out of all forms of control to the point where they became impervious to pain. With responses that are inherited, not learned, these warriors were iconographically affiliated with war deities who, like them, are written to have thrust swords into the earth before killing dark forces. This facilitated empowerment which has been likened to a frenzy that could not be calmed until their relationship with the earth--and I infer the Feminine--had been exorcised out of them. As Dumezil recognizes the mythic connection Mannerbund warriors share with war deities, so does he helpfully acknowledge that scholars have come to view them as being a morally flawed or dark element of society? A few scholars, he concludes, have argued that their maddened state was drug induced (pp. 192-193; 630-633).

Dumezil's position on Achilles and Mannerbund dovetails with efforts of scholars representing three additional fields of study. These will be acknowledged but not studied because they enable us to associate Mannerbund with Wild People. Historian of science James Dow (2004), theologian Walter Burkert (1972), and scholars of foreign language J.P. Mallory and Douglas Adams (1997) variously associate these two groups in their respective studies. As previously discussed, Wild People are iconographically associated with "ash" and ash groves so it follows that both were ashen. This point does not need to be substantiated, only defined. No interest has been demonstrated in studying ash beyond correlating Hesiod's ashen period with the fact that Mannerbund spears like the spear of Achilles were made of ash wood. To define ash, let us turn to the second stage of my effort to define Achilles' relationship with his ashen spear. This involves biological, etymological, and mythic study of ash.

7.1.2 Ash is "Meli"

Numerous scholars have studied ash's medicinal use. Fred Hageneder's 2005 The Meaning of Trees, for example, indicates that since at least fourth century BCE, ash leaves have been boiled and used curatively as a laxative, diuretic, blood detoxifier, and to increase the excretion of uric acid (p. 104). Some scholars of the history of medicine have extended study of the medicinal function of ash to include its mythic signifiers. Gabrielle Hatfield's 2004 Encyclopedic of Folk Medicine: Old World and New World Traditions, incorporating the efforts of folklorists Beith (1995) and Black (1883), adds to her general compendium that ash was used antidotally against snake bites. Pliny and Gerard, for two examples she provided, claimed there was such a strong antipathy between ash and snakes that "a snake would rather pass through fire than confront an ash tree" (p. 16).
When early views like these are aligned with the fact that wild people were in themselves equated with ash, they become potentially invaluable resources. Dumezil (1996) reminds his readers, for example, that some still maintain that the maddened state of Mannerbund, and accordingly Achilles, was drug induced (pp. 630-633). Unfortunately, Dumezil could not take this statement any further. He did not think to draw upon Darl Dumont's 1992 *The Ash Tree in Indo European Culture*. Dumont's biological, etymological, and mythological study indicates that ash's prominence in ancient Greek materials--most relevantly, Achilles' ashen spear--has long been left unacknowledged and or condescendingly addressed by classical scholars viewing it too literally. Scholars correctly view it as a signifying weapon, but demonstrate no or little regard for the fact that ash had another function beyond its use as a wood with superior tinsel strength. Dumont's biological, etymological, and mythological study includes analysis of etymologists like Chantraine, whose frequently used dictionary categorizes scientific names used by ancient scholars to refer to various species of ash, and commonalities between the mythologies and literatures of numerous world communities (pp. 323-336). He very persuasively argues that the extant connection between early mythologies, ash trees, and ashen individuals is biological.

Regarding Dumont's meaning behind the term "biological," ash trees secrete a sweet substance from their bark and leaves which was alluded to by ancient Greeks as "meli," or "honey," a substance which was harvested and sold pharmaceutically under the name of "manna" until the early part of the twentieth century. This overlooked property of ash served early peoples as an antidote for warding off evil, and as a triggering agent for inspiring the mind. Problematically, the word "meli" held multiple meanings. Classical Greek writers used the term "meli" to represent honey in the form of secreted manna made by ash trees, but they also used it to describe honey made by bees, as well as the substance alluded to today as "honeydew." Although contemporary academicians understand that honeydew is produced by aspids and scale insects, ancient scholars believed these three substances were the same thing, coming from the same source. To further complicate matters, the bee which made "meli" was also referred to as "meli," or honey, and it was generally understood that honey fell from the skies or was spontaneously precipitated from the atmosphere. Bees made meli by collecting it after it fell from flowers, off tree leaves, and out of the fields (pp. 323-336). See A. L. Peck's 1970 translation of Aristotle's "Historia Animalium" (5.22, Volume II: p. 191), and H. Rackham's
translation of Pliny's *Natural History* (9.30, Volume II: p. 450) for two examples provided by Dumont (pp. 323-336).

Dumont's (1992) efforts further indicate that even in the early twentieth century German and Scottish peoples are written to have fed newborns meli honey to keep them safe, and this tradition is as important as the substance's value as a chemical agent. Octopus (1975) tells us ash was attributed with magical properties associatively directed against snakes and snake bite--as well as witches--well into the 16th century. That explains why it was fed to babies and worn, in the rims of hats, for example. It was believed to protect people from evil forces (p. 236). There can be no misunderstanding regarding how Dumont and Octopus have interpreted findings like these. Ash was originally viewed as an antidotal and beneficent force.

### 7.1.3 Ash and Witchcraft

What is missing from these accounts is that ash has been re-interpreted as a signifier of evil. The advent of Christianity had a powerful effect on the Medieval Wild Man, whose signifiers include the ash tree, and Wild People were burned or otherwise eradicated as the Christian world determined them to be Pagan, evil manifestations of witchcraft. This issue was discussed in the previous chapter. Let us turn to Achilles' ancient origin. His father was mortal, but his mother was Thetis, a Greek sea goddess raised by the most ancient *Feminine* Androgyne named Hera. In this dissertation, figures like Achilles will be referred to as human beings endowed with super human abilities.

### 7.2 Achilles' Relationship to Water and Ash, based upon his relationship with his Mother and his instructor, Chiron.

Beginning with Achilles' relationship with his mother, Thetis, I will begin with an excerpted passage from Reverend John Parkhurst's 1807 assessment of what he perceived to be erroneous translations of Chaldee words for "mud" and "water." This was noted in his *A Hebrew and English Lexicon*:

> The fact is, we have here some broken traditionary scraps of the true, that is of the Mosaic history of the creation and formation. Tethys and Thetis originally meant the chaotic mud, or deep, which existed before earth and the sun, moon and stars, and the gods of heathenism were formed. . . . See Gen.1: 2-18; and Thetis, from being afterwards considered as the mud at the bottom of the sea, was personified into a goddess sitting there by her aged sire (p. 253).
Tracing the breakdown to which Parkhurst (1807) referred in the early 1800's begins by noting which iconographical elements of Achilles' biographical data have been acknowledged and which have been overlooked by modern scholars of mythology in order that a comparison be made between modern and antique points of view. E. Fuller's (1959) abridgement of Bulfinch's Mythology (1855), E. Hamilton (1942), and Morford and Lenardon (2003), indicate Achilles' father was mortal and study of him is not relevant. His mother, however, was the Greek sea goddess Thetis, raised by the ancient Feminine Hera (pp. 181-184; 142; 147). To sit under the iconographical umbrella of Hera is in itself significant. In another context E. Hamilton (1942) indicates she was the "sister" and "wife" of Zeus, and I infer by this combination that Hera was Zeus' binary twin. She is written to have protected "heroes" like Achilles, and was affiliated with peacocks (p. 28). As she and Mary both shared an iconographical affiliation with peacocks and water, and since some prophets, desert fathers, and Saints can be similarly shown to have been affiliated with heroes, my idea that this point has been understated warrants consideration.

From the perspectives of E. Fuller on Bulfinch (1959), E. Hamilton (1942), and Morford and Lenardon (2003), two important points about Achilles' relationship with his mother Thetis need to be mentioned. The first involves a definition of her unique shape shifting abilities. Like water she could shift herself into a variety of states in rapid succession, always assuming the shape of her container. Noting this characteristic is essential because metamorphosing abilities have been shown to be a prominent attribute of Wild People, Asclepius, and the Greek rainbow deity Iris, all associated with Mary in the last chapter. The second point about Achilles' relationship with his mother that has been capitalized on by these scholars is the fact that Achilles was taken away from his mother and given to centaur Chiron when she almost killed him because she could not tolerate his human component. After that, child Achilles lived with and was schooled by Chiron the same way as Asclepius had been after his mother was killed (pp. 181-184; 142; 147).

Chiron is a very complicated symbol. Hewitt's (1907) Primitive Traditional History tells us that he fathered ash, and was essentially bound to Feminine "mud" and Masculine generating will because he had combined them. For this reason I infer that he--not they--facilitated the creation of life on earth (p. 401). This becomes clear by retracing studies done on Chiron's relationship with Achilles back one hundred years to when studies like J. Hewitt's were written.
Hewitt (1907) and Sir William Smith's 1867 Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology indicate that Chiron, in a manner which seemingly predates the tradition of Mannerbund, grew up in the forest eating the entrails of lions and wild boars and the marrow of bears. All the while, he was learning about hunting, gymnastics, the art of prophecy, and medicine. As he gained knowledge of medicinal roots and herbs, he began concocting drugs and fashioning spells for healing purposes (Il. 11. 832). It is in this capacity that he became known to his contemporaries as the healing hand of "Cheir" (Greek word for "hand"), and "kheirourgo," or surgeon. All of this knowledge was shared with his students, children of the Gods and Greek heroes (pp. 401; 172).

Chiron was also associated with the sun, so he accordingly came to be recognized as the "Sun Ass." This is why the Bronze Age of Ash was in its earliest state alluded to as the "Age of the Sun Ass." He lorded over the Ashen, or Bronze Age, and he functioned for ashen "sons of the ash tree" as their humanized deity. In fact, not only did he lord over these sons of ash, he was the first son of the ash tree. Chiron's mother Philyra, daughter of another water deity named Oceanus, requested of Zeus that she turned into a "linden" tree because she was ashamed when she gave birth to the centaur. Linden trees are a variation of ash trees which were iconographically associated with Wild People in the section about them, so it seems plausible that Chiron was the first son of the ash tree.

To conclude this section, Hewitt (1907) and Smith (1867) have documented numerous ancient and early sources which support these references (pp. 401; 172). See Homer's Iliad, xi; Pindar's Pythian, Ode 3: 43 ff, 61 ff, 52 ff; Pseudo-Hyginus, Fabulae 138 (trans. Grant); Pseudo-Apollodorus' Bibliotheca 3 (172: trans. Aldrich). Iconographies defining Peleus' ashen "spear" and Thetis' "wheel" appear to reflect an androgynous, alchemical application which was compartmentalized and redefined long ago. This process was discussed in "God and Two Marias" from the perspective of Knight's (1786) allegedly misunderstood views about the ithyphallic deity named "Priapus," and it was also noted in my comparative discussion of Isis and Asclepius. All of these associations are relevant in this chapter, because scholars like Parkhurst (1807) and Hewitt (1907) accounted for an earlier mythic explanation for Achilles' ashen spear than is currently being acknowledged, and at the same time, modern studies of Achilles seem to be in the process of redefining him. He is being humanized, and his infamous rage is
accordingly being compartmentalized and viewed from the perspective of human anger instead of as a prerequisite for superhuman transcendence. If Achilles' altruistic impulses can be shown to have been similarly compartmentalized and either edited out or muddled beyond comprehension for reasons beyond those identified by Parkhurst (1807) and Knight (1786), we may have found another useful tool for analyzing the errant dimension of Grunewald's Mary. Let us now turn to Achilles' affiliation with antidotal medicinal cursing as it was originally defined through the number nine for the answers.

7.3. Achilles, the number nine, medicine, and archeoastronomy.

Multiple references to the number nine exist in Hesiodic and Homeric lore. Consider, for one example, the epigram of Alcaeus of Messene ("Palatine Anthology," vii 55) regarding how Hesiod's dead body was cared for.

> When in the shady Locrian grove Hesiod lay dead, the Nymphs washed his body with water from their own springs, and heaped high his grave; and thereon the goat-herds sprinkled offerings of milk mingled with yellow-honey: such was the utterance of the nine Muses that he breathed forth, that old man who had tasted of their pure springs.

I believe the origin of these references is more ancient than has until very recently been understood, based upon two bodies of information. One is conjectural, associating nine with an antidotal cursing tradition which used to play a role in western medical arts. The other is based upon very recent efforts to relate nine to Homeric material from the perspective of technology and certain, non medical aspects of science. Let us begin with the medical application of nine.

> Down from Olympus he strode, angry at heart, carrying bow and quiver: the arrows rattled upon his shoulders as the angry god moved on, looking black as night.---First he attacked the mules and dogs, then he shot his keen arrows at the men, and each hit the mark: pyres of the dead began to burn. For nine days the god's arrows fell on the camp. On the tenth day Achilles summoned all to a conference (p. 12).

The above passage from Homer's Iliad, represents a scholarly tool commonly used for studying the "ashen" and angry disposition of Homeric warrior and hero Achilles. Achilles showers nine days of arrows on his people to rain death on their camp. This section will consider that Achilles' anger is being studied too literally and compartmentally. There are two
metaphorical signifiers in this passage which are being overlooked, arrows and the number nine. Although pictorialized arrows represent weapons, iconographical encyclopedias like Cooper's (1978) commonly acknowledge them to have functioned as signifiers of sickness and other evils (p. 15), Singer's (1928) evidence indicates the number nine represented a counting tradition of cathartic antidotal "cursing" which was directed against human and earth sicknesses (pp. 150-153). When aspects of Achillian anger which are currently being defined literally are re-screened through the lens of these other, more poetically defined signifiers, two changes take place. One is that his anger borrows from the Feminine, and his emotional response begins to make new sense. The other is that the link between ashen figures like Achilles and antidotal cleansing becomes clearer. Let us now consider ways that medical evidence related to the number nine can be associated with cathartic reconstruction.

We will begin by acknowledging art historian and scholar of medical history Singer's (1928) documentation of Teutonic deity Wodan's association with a medical curse. This is in the "Lay of the Nine Healing Herbs," excerpted from a Germanic 10th C ACE Teutonic manuscript entitled Lacnunga (pp. 150-152). Wodan study is in itself relevant to analysis of Grunewald's Isenheim for two reasons. The most obvious being that Wodan and the shrine both reflect northern Germanic view and no scholar of Grunewald, including myself, have approached iconographically analyzing the shrine from this perspective. For my part, this iconographical material is simply too vast and much of it is not essential to my argument. The second reason brings us to what we will study about Wodan and why. His lore very helpfully includes a blended reference to "I" metamorphosing with the number nine and toxic serpents, all of which can be found in earlier healing manuals like the Egyptian prayer entitled "The Funeral Papyrus of Louiya." Let us begin by considering a Wodan application of "I," followed by Theodore Davis' (1928) translation of an Egyptian "I" proclamation. Comparing them will enable me to establish that Wodan served the same Feminine function as did the aforestudied "I" figures Thoth and Wisdom:

I alone know
The running streams
And the nine serpents
Now behold.
All weeds must now
Fall among herbs,
Seas must dissolve,
All salt water,
When I this venom
From thee blow.

Hail to thee, the great god who is in this lake. I know thee, I know thy name.
Deliver me from these [nine] serpents [which I infer are manifestations of
physiological and psychological disease] which are in Rosetu, who live on the
faces of men and eat their blood. For I know your names.

Now consider Wodan's relationship to the number nine. It will be compared with ways nine
sheds light on study Greek and Egyptian medical manuscripts because in each of these contexts
"I" can sometimes be shown to have functioned medicinally as an antidote:

Then took Wodan
Nine magic twigs,
smote then that serpent
That in nine bits she flew apart.
Now these nine herbs avail
Against nine spirits of evil,
Against nine venoms
And against nine winged onsets.
Gains the red venom,
Gains the white venom,
Gains the purple venom,
Gains the yellow venom,
Gains the green venom,
Gains the livid venom,
Gains the blue venom,
Gains the brown venom,
Gains the crimson venom.
Then he charmed Wodan
as well he knew how
for bone sprain
for blood sprain
for limb sprain.
Bone to bone
blood to blood
limbs to limbs
as though they were glued.

To understand the significance of comparing these two applications of the number nine, the one in the previously studied Achilles passage, and the other in the Wodan one above, we must better understand Wodan. Singer's (1928) research indicates he was the chief deity of Germanic northern peoples and a sacred healer who could strike back at disease because he fully understood it (pp. 149-152). His documentation of the medical curse associated with Wodan's tradition is essential to my study, but his findings cannot be efficiently used because he did not consider how and why nine factored so prominently, and the association of the number nine with antidotal healing is what interests me. To compare Wodan's antidotal cursing tradition with Achillian water, transcendence, and use of the number nine, we must more comprehensively account for Wodan's iconographical attributes.

Based upon information culled from J. S. Ryan's 1963 *Odin in England: Evidence from the Poetry for a Cult of Wodan in Anglo Saxon England*, E. and R. Littll's *Littell's Living Age* (Vol. 150), and Kris Kershaw's 2001 "One Eyed God: Odin and the Indo Germanic Mannerbund," in *Journal of Indo European Studies*, Wodan was commonly understood by northern medieval and Renaissance Germanic peoples to govern storms, wind, and the ocean. Like other previously discussed *Feminine* deities of Greek origin (Priapus and Thetis), he accordingly saved ships and sailors. He is often iconographically accompanied by two wolves and two ravens. These signify his supernatural knowledge. They carry his omens. Some sources indicate further that wolves are his children. In this context they additionally signify criminals and the socially dead. This attribute ties him in with his commonly understood function as the Germanic Lord of battle, dead warriors and wolves both being his children. From this northern perspective he fathered the Mannerbund and the Wild Hunt, in which warrior
members like Achilles have already been shown in this chapter to have donned animal skins and shape shifted themselves into a state of rage strong enough to facilitate their becoming Berserkers. Most sources additionally recognize Wodan as having been the father of the "mudguard" snake encircling the earth. This title similarly refers to the previously discussed alchemical Greek serpent, the "Ouroboros," whose "end is its beginning." Finally, he is always associated with the ash tree, and his spear, like that of Achilles, was made of ash. Scholars of Wodan trace his ash spear to the first world tree called Yggdrasil (pp. 460; 815-816).

Bearing this information about Wodan and his iconographical relationship to Achilles in mind, let us take one more step to consider that views developed in my MA Thesis and summarized in Chapter One of this dissertation suggest Wodan functioned for Northern Germanic peoples the way Nicander leads his readers to believe the Greek Titans did for ancient Greeks in the "Introduction" to his *Theriaca*. Please recall discussion of Omont's (1929) translation of his second century BCE medical compendium of various antidotal venomous creatures, lichen, and roots in Chapter One. Now consider that the introductory lines (8-12) of Nicander's *Theriaca* refer to the "Gigantomachia," a battle between the Titans and the Gods. This rhizotomist physician did not mention Achilles in this manual, but his reference to the Titans facilitates our viewing them as being of one and the same type as Achilles and Wodan. Nicander associated the Titans with the number nine and poisonous venoms used antidotally. Like Wodan, they are alluded to as being the source of both poison and its antidote.

This point becomes critically relevant in light of Cooper (1978) and Cirlot (1962), who further indicate that the Titans represent positive behavioral attributes of superhuman figures, as well as the so-called negative ones like warrior aggressiveness, "ambition," and "envy." The latter two of these attributes (ambition and envy) have been discussed in several previous contexts (as, for example, "oracular pride, not to be confused with human pride and envy"). In addition, it is commonly understood, as has been exemplified by this scholarly position that these negative attributes ultimately result in human destruction (pp. 73, 173-174; 117-118).

Cirlot (1962) helpfully enables us to take this scholarly assumption in another direction which will contribute to my discussion of Mary and errant Mary's twin relationship. According to him, there is a deeper, more ancient meaning of Giants. They originally signified the existence of an immense, primordial being (I infer, the Feminine), by whose sacrifice creation was brought forth. From Cirlot's point of view, human sacrifice resulted from efforts made on
the part of mankind to recreate the original sacrifice of the *Feminine*. Those who were sacrificed functioned altruistically for purposes of earth and human healing and or rebirth. From the perspective of this dissertation, Wisdom's afore described decision to divide herself into two parts, her and Christ, to protect humankind seems to fit Cirlot's. However, neither he nor Cooper have connected the existence of Titans and giants to humankind. With this distinction in mind, consider Nicander's reference to the Titans:

> Now I would have you know, men say that noxious spiders, together with the grievous reptiles and vipers and the earth's countless burdens, are of the Titans' blood.

Omont (1929) has connected this passage from Nicander's *Theriaca* with four images which constitute the physician's introduction. These are: (fol. 48) LXV (2vo); LXV (2vo); LXVIII (47); and LXVIII (47 vo). See (Figure ). This passage and these images were chronologically related to a narrative event in my MA thesis, reflecting what I argued was Nicander's recountment of the prescriptive model for "I" metamorphosing: the physicians' call for empowering catharsis. The four parted narrative sequence is this: 1) in image LXV (2vo), the main character of this prescription is depicted walking, with a lance; 2) in LXV (2vo), the same character uses the lance to let blood in preparation for "I" metamorphosis; 3) next, this figure spawns disease in LXVIII (47); and 4) in LXVIII (47 vo), the individual appears to have attained the required state of elevated transcendence, in that the physician leads two people, one of whom is crawling. These followers probably represent the common man to which such figures usually dedicate their lives. In Nicander's *Theriaca*, they are referred to as the "toiling ploughman, herdsman, and woodcutter" referred to in lines 1-7. I am arguing that this proclamation of Nicander reflects earlier examples noted in the previous section about "I" the unique connectedness of metamorphosing, made on the part of *Feminine* figures like Thoth and Wisdom who were understood to be in possession of special knowledge, to the common man. Here is Nicander's *Theriaca* (1-7):

> Readily, dear Hermesianax, most honoured of my many kinsmen, and in due order will I expound the forms of savage creatures and their deadly injuries which smite one unforeseen, and the countering remedy for the harm. And the toiling ploughman, the herdsman, and the woodcutter, whenever in forest or at the
plough one of them fastens its deadly fang upon him, shall respect you for your learning in such means for averting sickness.

Now that I have demonstrated how Wodan seems to have functioned for Northern Germanic peoples the way Nicander leads his readers to believe the Greek Titans did for ancient Greeks in the "Introduction" to his *Theriaca*, I can advance the idea that Nicander's reference to the Titans facilitates our viewing them as being of one and the same type as the one signified by Achilles and Wodan. It would accordingly follow that Nicander associated the Titans how many are the titans? 12 with number nine and poisonous venoms which were used antidotally. Like Wodan, these venoms were viewed as being the source of the poison and its antidote. They were beneficent and they were what will be viewed as being a curse in the next section. This distinction is important because Cooper (1978) and Cirlot (1962) exemplify the commonly accepted point of view that the Titans' behavioral attributes are distinguished, good from bad. Positive ones are privileged over so-called errant or negative ones like warrior aggressiveness, "ambition," and "envy." In addition, these scholars represent how the latter of these groups, the errant component, is typically depicted. That is, in terms like "the ultimate result of human destruction."

Unfortunately, in the same way for what appear to be the same reasons, no apparent efforts have been made on the part of classicists to correlate their knowledge of how number nine factors into ancient Homeric texts with information culled from medical scholars. At the same time, attributes like pride, ambition, and envy continue to be viewed singularly, as negative emotions that are only human.

Let us now develop this point, facilitating a means of first, returning to the problem of Mary's attributes having been compartmentalized, with good ones privileged over so called negative ones. This trouble will then be associated with the scholarly misunderstanding scholars have maintained in their analysis of Grunewald's Mary. Very recent opportunities for studying the number nine alongside of Homeric work have opened up, from the perspective of science and technology's impact on Homeric texts. They do not involve analysis of Mary or medicinal lore, but I have woven this investment of mine in with their study to establish the perspective that is required.

S.A. Paipetis' 2008 edited text *Science and Technology in Homeric Epics* indicates that Greek use of the number nine in Homeric lore is very recently being studied afresh, from
scientific perspectives like the ancient calendar and archeoastronomy. Aspects of this material strengthen the viability of my associating nine with the medical tradition of using cathartic antidotal "cursing" for purposes of periodic cleansing of human and earth sicknesses. The idea that any given negative force represented a curse as well as a blessing very helpfully seems to parallel the truths underlying the medical tradition of cathartic antidotal "cursing," and it is with this perspective in mind that we will use Paipetis' 2008 material.

7.3.1. The Number Nine, as Related to Ancient Calendars and Archeoastronomy

It is easier to associate the number nine with agrarian science, based upon ideas established in P.D. Gregoriades' "Encoros Minos and the Minoan Calendrical Abacus." In Paipetis (2008), Gregoriades reconsidered the oldest and general meaning of "hour," which was originally understood to mean a time period repeating itself. His study was based upon calendrical knowledge of the number nine, a controversially studied Homeric passage (Od. 19.178-179), and a Minoan abacus believed until very recently to be a refined game. Through these, he conclusively demonstrated that ancient calendars co-align themselves every nine years, and that the Homeric passage in question refers not to a game, but the oldest calendar in existence (pp. 319-324).

Gregoriades' study demonstrates how ancient astronomical applications of the number nine can greatly expand our knowledge of ancient calendrical systems and their related artifacts. More important to my dissertation, he models that by blending planetary study of the number nine with Homeric iconography, unacknowledged archeological truths become evident. Amanda Laoupi's 2008 "Divine Fires of Creation: Homeric Hephaestus as a Comet and Meteor God" similarly associates the number nine with planetary lore, and her study involves cursing traditions.

Laoupi (2008) has blended planetary study of the number nine with related Homeric iconography to further promote the idea that there exists a very ancient, yet unacknowledged archeological truth beneath materials currently being studied to understand Homer's Iliad. Her efforts are based on the long established belief held by archeoastronomical, paleoclimatic, and geochemical scholars that Homeric epics, like other world accounts, are a palimpsest of archeoenvironmental knowledge. Victor Clube and Bill Napier's 1982 The Cosmic Serpent, for example, documented comets, including the comet Hephaestus, which have broken off from the still active comet Encke. This 1978 discovery is one of the largest earth orbit crossing objects.
found so far. One of Encke's fragments hit earth and caused its Ice Age, but the comet
Hephaestus is more relevant to my dissertation. These scholars, Laoupi (2008) included, study
great bodies of information like Homer because they expect another of Encke's fragments to hit
earth between 2000 and 2400 ACE, and they want to know more about what to expect. Laoupi's
(2008) account interests me because it reflects upon deity Hephaestus in new ways which inform
my investment in Achillian lore.

According to her, it is common knowledge amongst classicists that Hephaestus'
celebration of city fires being annually turned off for nine days was in response to his nine year
stay underwater with Achilles’ mother Thetis and some of her sisters. There is a missing link,
however, an older explanation based upon an archeoastronomical truth which Laoupi (2008) has
associated with the "plasma" model of physicist Anthony Peratt (1992). According to her
assessment of his theory, in ca. 4kya B.P., a comet hit earth. Its impact resulted in seaquakes,
followed by “tsunami” water waves, and a giant plasma column produced in the atmosphere of
the Earth. Humans all around the world observed as this column was transformed into a glowing
stack of nine segments with a semi-permanent aurora (Laoupi's note #42). Laoupi (2008) has
considered multiple world accounts of this incident, but the evidence substantiating her
Mediterranean study of it is what I am interested in because she links it with Hephaestus,
viewing him as an archetypal personification of the comet that impacted earth. This is the
knowledge of number nine that ancients writers had in mind as they wrote that he was either
thrown from Olympus by Hera, who was ashamed of his deformity (Iliad, XVIII.136; Quintus
Smyrnaeus Fall of Troy, 2.549), or thrown out by Zeus, because he had tried to help Hera.
Either way, Hephaestus passed into earth’s atmosphere, of our planet, traveled all day, landed in
the sea about sunset, and then washed up on shore where he lay broken until rescued by Achilles'
mother Thetis and some of her sisters (pp. 325-340). He stayed with them in underwater caves at
the bottom of the sea for nine years, which Laoupi recognizes as a second womblike opportunity.
This defined his superhuman, creative ability to resist curses (pp. 325-326). Please see Iliad,
XVIII.136 & 423-432; Homeric Hymn 3 to Pythian Apollo, 310; Apollodorus, 1.3.11 ff.; and
Pausanias, 8.41.5.

Laoupi’s (2008) efforts to correlate Homeric lore with Peratt’s (1992) assessment were
based upon three key elements: Hephaestus' children, the Kabeiroi warrior twins; the Lemnian
labyrinth; and the link between three cursed traditions: Pandora, Harmonia, and "Dragon Pearls."
These represent vast amounts of information which cannot be considered in this context. A synopsis of them is, however, as important to my dissertation as her investment in Hephaestus. Viewed together, they enable me to relate the number nine to antidotal, medical cursing in lore about Achilles.

7.3.2. Hephaestus' Daemon Children, the Kabeiroi Warriors
Hephaestus' children the "Kabeiroi warrior twins" were viewed like Priapus. Both he and they were protective antidotal forces able to resist the killing agency of the sea. Burkert and Raffan's *Greek Religion* and Diethrich (1973) equate them with other men’s groups like the Dioskuroi and Kuretes, while admitting that their iconographical identity remains muddled (pp. 281; 185, 187 n. 317). Laoupi (2008) more helpfully indicates that their mysteries involved an annual, nine day long celebration of fire. This was designed to reenact the nine year period during which Hephaestus had remained at the bottom of the sea with Thetis and her sisters. Her having associated Hephaestus with a comet impact, and it with the number nine, enables us to assume they should be viewed as Hephaestus was. They sought empowerment through participation in the mysteries as he sought and earned knowledge during his stay with Thetis and her sisters. This information becomes useful when combined with Burkert and Raffan's documentation of Nonnos (24.77; 27.120; 27.325; 29.193; 30.42; 30.36.5; 36.129), in which the Indian River "Hydaspes" is written to have tried to drown them. A larger study would consider whether their struggle with the river unfolded the same way and for the same reason as other rivers are documented to have tried to drown Achilles, based upon previous links made between Achilles, Priapus, the number nine, and men’s groups.

7.3.3. The Labyrinth
The second resource Laoupi used is the Lemnian labyrinth. Its original meaning continues to be debated. Cooper (1978) writes about labyrinths more generally that early ones were sometimes defined in terms of nine concentric circles which functioned collectively for ancient peoples as a signifier for an astronomical map. This linked human death to the planets and protected human souls as they passed into the hereafter. More relevantly, they acted as a spiritual guide for the living, and a means of persuading sea winds (pp. 92-94). Laoupi's (2008) on line article draws upon very recent archeological, theological, and natural findings to argue more specifically that these forces, like those of Hephaestus, were designed to resist "tsunami" water waves following
seaquakes, such as would have resulted from impact events. See http://www.labyrinthos.net/centre.htm. Her idea broadens the scholarly assumption that the labyrinth functioned antidotally as a protective force able to resist sea wind influences to include "tsunami" effects of seaquakes.

7.4. Feminine Cursing Traditions

The third of Laoupi's (2008) key elements blends three curses. Beginning with Pandora and her "Box," her interpretation of ancient sources [Hesiod's *Works and Days*, 60; Hyginus *Astronomica*, 2.15; and Orpheus' *Argonautics* (972-977)] indicates Hephaestus fashioned Pandora from earth, water, and divine fire for Zeus. The expectation was that she would serve as a curse against all mankind because they had stolen some of Zeus’ fire away from him. Pandora was powerful in herself, but not as powerful as the contents of her box. In it were the various positive and negative, and visible and invisible, forces which defined earthly life. However, whereas contemporary westerners have learned to view forces like tsunami as negative and cursing agents, ancient peoples perceived them in a manner which might be described as binarily, as twins. That is, according to Laoupi, as a curse and a blessing both (pp. 325-340).

From this perspective, Pandora's negative forces can be equated with every misunderstanding I have studied. Please recall problems with Hesiodic material in and of itself, due to literalized interpretations of metaphor; mythological figures like Priapus; Thoth and his errant wife, Isis and her errant twin Nephthys, and Wisdom and her twin; *Feminine* communities referred to as Wild People, Mooncrafters, Carpenters, even Physicians; and finally, Mary Magdalene. All these which have in this dissertation been referred to as "misunderstandings" can be similarly recognized as errant equivalents of the negative forces released from Pandora's box. None are currently being viewed binarily, and every one has been or could be shown to be aligned in some way with figures believed to be in possession of special knowledge such as that which is signified by Pandora's infamous box. When these misunderstandings are screened through Laoupi's (2008) reconstructed lens of evils and their binarily correspondent blessings, they can be reconsidered more constructively. It is from this perspective that we will next consider Laoupi's (2008) study of Harmonia, another of Hephaestus' children who also represents a cursed tradition. Laoupi has not concerned herself with Mary in either of these studies. However their tragic lineages can be associated with the afore discussed relationship Mary
shared with Eve, by way of her mother Hannah and the pearl. This is the direction we are headed in.

Harmonia's curse has been recognized by some ancient writers in the form of a necklace. Others write about it from the perspective of an empowering "peplus," or sacred Feminine robe embroidered by virgins. Evidence indicates these two signifiers suggested similar meanings. Laoupi (2008) states that Hephaestus fashioned Harmonia's necklace as a marriage gift with the intent that it act as a curse against her and all of her descendants because she was a child born of an adulterous affair his wife had with another deity. The necklace was allegedly figurative, consisting of eagles and coiled serpents which spit poison from either side of their mouths. It was also "multi colored" and "breathing still of the furnace." (pp. 325-340).

Harmonia's "Peplos" can easily be related to her necklace. To understand its significance, consider Minerva's peplos, which is more famous than Harmonia's. According to Bulfinch (1959), Minerva is the goddess of wisdom, warfare, divinatory applications of seafaring navigation, and weaving. All of these but weaving parallel attributes of the Kabeiroi warriors and Achilles. It seems to follow that her peplos signified the female equivalent of male gendered, Feminine empowerment. Regarding Feminine weaving, previously aligned with the ability of spider's to shape human destiny, her peplus is best defined through an interaction she had with the human woman named Arachne. Bulfinch (1959) writes that Arachne challenged Minerva's skills as a weaver and refused to stop competing with her. Minerva designed a weaving contest to allow Arachne to reconsider her transgression. When the contest did not help, she solicited from her feelings of shame and guilt by touching her forehead. Arachne could not endure this and tried to escape by hanging herself. Minerva saved her life by turning her into a spider with the intent that she function as a signifier, saying: "Live, guilty woman, that you may preserve the memory of this lesson, you and your descendants will continue to hang for eternity" [emphasis mine] (pp. 91-94; 127-128).

Arachne’s challenge to Minerva crossed the invisible line which, according to these myths, defines perimeters of human ability. Minerva’s curse on Arachne signified what happens to disrespectful humans who cross this line. As a result of her behaviors, she and her future generations become dammed. Laoupi did not concern herself with Hebraic lore, but her study of the tragic lineages associated with Arachne, Pandora, and Harmonia suggest a correlation might
be drawn between them and the relationship Mary shared with Eve, by way of her mother Hannah and the pearl.

Bearing in mind that Harmonia's story exemplifies Greek cursing traditions, Pandora's signifies what lies beyond the invisible line, and Arachne's represents figures who cross it, consider that popular contemporary views about Eve suggest she, like Arachne, sinned against her deity in search of wisdom. Arachne's story clearly existed long before the lineage of Eve, Hannah, and Mary became an established truth amongst early Christians and evidence indicates there is good cause to compare her and them. In doing so we are confronted with yet another ancient archetype transformed long ago into what has come to be recognized as Christian truth. This idea becomes significantly strengthened as we acknowledge that there is no scholarly consensus that on how Eve should be interpreted.

According to Cirlot (1971) and Elaine Pagel's 1988 *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent*, the tale of Eve’s relationship with Adam and the serpent evolved orally over the course of at least three thousand years. Its present state did not solidify until around 200 B.C.E., and Eve did not evolve into Mary’s "demonized inversion" until Christian times. There is more. During the first four hundred years of Christian history, "orthodox" leaders of Christian view began denouncing metaphorical interpretations of Eve's story, while Gnostics advanced them, and contemporary scholars of theology still debate whether to view Eve and Adam's story literally or metaphorically. Literal documents generally indicate she persuaded Adam to disobey divine law. This places the blame on her, and suggests original sin was literal and carnal. Metaphorical ones place the blame on mankind instead of Eve, viewing their activities from the perspective that they reflect evolving Hebraic attitudes toward human sexuality. Analysis of Eve's complicated story extends far beyond the requirements of this dissertation. One does not need to go any further, however, to admit that scholarly positions advancing the idea that Grunewald interpreted Eve to represent the demonized inversion of Mary are based more on popular assumptions than evidence (p. 99; pp. xvii- xxviii).

This point leaves us to question whether Grunewald viewed Eve as the source of Christian evil and recognized Mary conversely, as her antidote. Or did he view their cursed tradition from the deeper historical perspective of the ancient *Feminine*, in line with cursed traditions like that of Harmonia. Bearing in mind Laoupi’s (2008) statement that ancient curses were feared as well as welcomed, curses as well as blessings, it would follow that there are two
parts of Mary and only one is being recognized. Evidence indicates Grunewald's interpretation of Mary was aligned with the latter of these descriptions for two reasons, connecting Harmonia’s necklace and or peplus to previously discussed Feminine figures in Grunewald’s altar. Here is my analogy of how this correlation is related to the altar.

Laoupi did not draw upon medical, alchemical, or Mariological lore in her study. However, as Harmonia’s necklace was fashioned of eagles and coiled serpents which spit poison from either side of their mouths, and since it was described as being “multi colored” and “breathing still of the furnace” (pp. 325-340), evidence previously defined from the perspective of ancient alchemical chemistry and medical cursing suggests the necklace informs two signifiers of Grunewald’s Mary. One is the previously studied woman with a flaming crown who steps as if she was aglow from the angel concert choir panel into the landscape panel containing Mary and the child. The other is the peacock feathered creature sitting to this figure's left in the same panel. They must be related, and to substantiate this correlation and conclude I will associate Mary's errant dimension (previously aligned with the peacock feathered creature and Grunewald's androgynous Devil outside of the window), with what is probably the most frequently studied curse in Christian history, the link between Eve and Mary. I want to study this curse more inclusively, however, from the perspective of how Eve and Mary relate to Hannah, by way of the pearl.

By comparing it with Harmonia's curse, defined from the perspective of her having been given either a necklace or a peplus, the existence of an essential, overlooked function of Mary's previously discussed legendary relationship with the pearl becomes clearer. In my "Definitions," I argued that it represented the agrarian moon, which on the one hand signified significantly heightened abilities such as are present in Feminine figures; and on the other, reflected the genetic link binding Eve to Hannah, and her to Mary. Laoupi's (2008) material is not about them or the Feminine, but it substantiates the viability of their having been viewed as a cursed generation. Her ideas about dragon pearls are equally important. They enable me to more fully realize the correlation I made earlier between these Marian figures and the pearl while opening the door to another viable body of information which indicates further that Mary and other Feminine figures should be associated with cathartic anger. This association draws upon the number nine in that the medical tradition of casting out nines is antidotal and so is Mary. Of course it is relevant that Grunewald's shrine has nine major panels, but a larger paper would gain
more by taking into account the way that healing prayers addressed to Mary center often times center around the number nine.

7.4.1. Dragon Pearls

Thou art chiefest among the great gods, Thy fate is unequalled . . . O Marduk, thou art our avenger! They give him an invincible weapon, which overwhelmeth the foe. Go, and cut off the life of [Feminine dragon] Tiamat, And let the wind carry her blood into secret places. . . . He slung a spear upon him and fastened it . . . He set the lightning [he controls it] in front of him, With burning flame he filled his body [anger as a manifestation of cathartic aggression]. He made a net [signifies magical abilities, Cirlot (1971): p. 228] to enclose the inward parts of Tiamat, The four winds he stationed so that nothing of her might escape. . . . He created the evil wind, and the tempest, and the hurricane [all of which are reflections of his power]. . . . And the lord drew nigh, he gazed upon the inward parts of Tiamat, But Tiamat, she turned not her neck. With lips that failed not she uttered rebellious words. . . . [Then] She was like one possessed, she lost reason.

Tiamat uttered wild, piercing cries, she trembled and shook to her very foundations. She recited an incantation, she pronounced her spell. [But] The lord spread out his net and caught her, And the evil wind that was behind (him) he let loose in her face. As Tiamat opened her mouth to its full extent, He drove in the evil wind, while as yet she had not shut her lips. The terrible winds filled her belly, And her courage was taken from her, and her mouth she opened wide. He seized the spear and burst her belly, He severed her inward parts, he pierced (her) heart. He overcame her and cut off her life. [Then] He cast down her body and stood upon it. (pp. 58-77).
According to the above text excerpted from Leonard W. King's 2009 translation of the Fourth Tablet of "The Enuma Elish: The Seven Tablets of Creation," Marduk, the chosen deity of the Babylonian gods who was a storm god, killed *Feminine* dragon Tiamat and her army. He went on to slice her in half, making her ribs the vault of heaven and earth and her weeping eyes the source of great rivers. With the "Tablets of Destiny" in his possession, he became the head of the Babylonian pantheon, but was captured later and slain. That is when his red blood mixed with the red clay of Earth to make the body of humankind. E.A. Speiser's 1942 "An Intrusive Hurro-Hittite Myth" and E. O. James' 1963 *The Worship of the Skygod: A Comparative Study in Semitic and Indo-European Religion* exemplify scholarly disagreements over whether this Marduk version, him being the Babylonian equivalent of Zeus, reflects an older Sumerian text in which Enlil, not Marduk, slew Tiamat (p. 100; 24, 27f). There is also controversy over whether Tiamat was herself a dragon, in spite of the fact that her physical description includes a tail, and she gave birth to dragons, serpents, scorpion men, and storm people. Many sources have linguistically connected her with them, so I have. See Thorkild Jacobsen's 1968 "The Battle between Marduk and Tiamat" and Walter Burkert's 1993 *The Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern Influences on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age* (pp. 104-108; p. 92, footnote).

Put the first of these problems aside. It is not relevant. I am interested in an offshoot of the second problem. That is, how interpretations of the implied transformation of power from Tiamat to Marduk can be shown to have affected scholarly interpretation of her *Feminine* status as a dragon. J. Black and A. Green's 1992 *Gods, Demons, and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia: an Illustrated Dictionary* aligns the battle between Tiamat and Marduk with the "Tablet of Destinies." And it with ownership of which determined who maintained supreme authority over everyone else as ruler of the universe. According to Cirlot (1971), Mardak sacrificed Tiamat to redefine primordial existence into two planes, heaven and earth (pp. 64, 104, 186, 228, 257). I am not questioning this interpretation. I want to extend it to reflect another dimension of the usurped *Feminine* power that this dissertation is about. As Marduk fought and destroyed Tiamat and her army, he claimed the Tablet for himself and legitimized his rule among the gods. Tiamat and her husband Apsu were binarily defined counterparts, and Marduk is singular and masculine. This transference, from *Feminine* androgynous power to masculine control, seems self evident. But there is another exchange that has transpired and it is
more pervasively cunning than some battle between the sexes. This is the battle seemingly implied by Hesiod's Erides, defined in my "Definitions." It pits Hesiod (and I would add those acting in his tradition) against on the one hand, Archilochos, and on the other, Homer. It describes wars between carpenters and potters, and oxen and donkeys. All allude to a masculine contrasted to, but also binarily aligned with, Feminine point of view. This is a different war, the one that my dissertation is about. Here, the Feminine, her advocates, and their processes, have become overlooked or altogether lost and Hesiod anticipated this problem and wrote to it. To move us toward a broadened expression of his projected fears, we will conflate my comparative analysis of ashen Achilles and the Eve to Hannah, and her to Mary transition, and extend Laoupi's study of "dragon pearls." She aligned them with comet impact disasters for us. We will explore "pearls" in and of themselves, "dragon bones and teeth," "dragons," and "dragon pearls" metaphorically, associatively, and from the perspective of medicine.

7.4.2. Pearls
Beginning with "pearls," Cassell's 1995 Dictionary of Superstitions indicates that they have long been associated with “tears.” As a medical substance, legend indicates they cured human madness and female depression, as well as snake and insect bites (p. 201). Information like this does not mean much until conflated with surprising studies done on "dragon bones and teeth."

7.4.3. Dragon Bones and Teeth
Evidence indicates these were and still being similarly used curatively, to medicate human madness and depression. And there is more. Herbalist physician and biologist Subhuti Dharmananda has helpfully outlined what has been common knowledge in his field since at least the 1950's. That is, that medicinal references to "dragon bones and teeth" are metaphorical. These are more accurately signifiers of the fossilized bones and teeth of various mammals, including dinosaurs and mammoths, from 20,000 to 12,000 years ago. "Dragon" bones and teeth" were and still are taken internally to tranquilize nervousness, astringe sweating, stop palpitations, clear fever, and treat epilepsy. Topically, they promote tissue regeneration and astringe boils (http://www.itmonline.org/arts/dragonbone.htm).

Many of these disorders are experienced simultaneously, so there can be no confusing the fact that "dragon bones and teeth" were and still are valued for the treatment of spirit disorders, which are accompanied by physiological ones. The two are not separated in this
context any more than they were in Hippocratic medicine, as was previously discussed. See also, Yang Shouzhong’s 1988 translation of *The Divine Farmer’s Materia Medica*; Zhang Guijun’s 1995 edited text, *Color Pictorial Handbook of Chinese Crude Drugs and the Prepared Cuttings*; and Yen Kunying’s 1986 *Illustrated Chinese Materia Medica*.

### 7.4.4. Dragons

Regarding dragon lore, Cooper (1978) and Hall (1979) have helpfully written that iconographies associated with dragons and serpents are usually interchangeable because the latin word "draco" means dragon as well as snake (pp. 55-56; 109). This fact allows us to conflate dragon material with recollection of my previous study of Eve's relationship with the serpent, and Apollo's interaction with the Delphic oracle. With the significance of these ramifications in mind, let us acknowledge six dragon signifiers culled from Cooper (1978) and Hall (1979). These facilitate comparison between dragons, the storm god Marduk, who in the previous passage captured the Feminine dragon Tiamat, and Achilles. I noted characteristics of Marduk within the passage in question expressly for this purpose.

The first signifier that needs to be acknowledged is that dragons were shape shifters (pp. 55-56; 109). Please remember, so were Achilles' mother Thetis, Feminine water and mud; Iris the rainbow and messenger deity, deity of healing Asclepius, and Wild People. The second signifier is that dragons are warriors (pp. 55-56; 109). Warriors who attacked them and won, like Marduk, possessed invincible spears which could only be controlled by them. Achilles has such a spear, and both he and Marduck filled the bodies of the dragons they killed with a "burning flame," or something like it if a parallel can be drawn between the preparatory activities these two warriors underwent before warfare. I am suggesting a parallel be drawn between Marduk's "flame" and the afore mentioned out of control state of rage sought by Achilles in his battles with water. The third signifier is that dragons controlled weather (pp. 55-56; 109). Marduk, like the Wild Man and Achilles, delighted in lightning, hurricanes, and other malignant wind forms. The fourth signifier is that dragons were in possession of magical abilities (pp. 55-56; 109). Marduk made a "net" which according to Cirlot (1971) signified magical ability (p. 228). Achilles' magical abilities are apparently no longer acknowledged, but they are signified with the same symbols used to define the same powers as those of Wild People. The fifth signifier is that dragons are binarily aligned with universal forces. They reflect chaos, for example, unmanifest, and undifferentiated aspects of the sea; thunderbolts; and lightning. On the
other hand they represent sacrifice and creation. In sacrificing them, Stephanie Dalley's 1987 *Myths from Mesopotamia* states, form and matter are born.

While Tiamat was a living, empowered force she defended her offspring from evil. When her husband, Apsu, was killed, however, she tried to end her creation. The other Gods who had been born from her interaction with Apsu rose against her, alongside of her son Marduk. He killed her by shooting an arrow into her mouth and then used her dragon body to form the earth's present state. From Tiamat’s dead body, life and substance emerged (p. 329). Cooper and Hall indicate further that this account exists similarly in the Epic of Gilgamesh, where the Dragon’s name is Humbaba, and in Egyptian lore, with the Dragon's name being Apophis (pp. 55-56; 109). I am interested in the Greek version of this lore because the *Feminine* dragon's name is Typhon. After Zeus killed her with one of his thunderbolts she was either killed again by Apollo, who also shot an arrow down her throat, or taken into Apollonian service to become the oracular serpent at Delphi. This idea can be taken no further until we study "dragon pearls," also referred to as "dragon balls" and "flaming pearls." Our study of Errant Mary will conclude with them.

### 7.4.5. Dragon Pearls are thunder

Dragon pearls represent rolling balls of thunder. This is a negative application of them, which lends itself to Laoupi’s idea that they represent comets. A more positive, agrarian application aligns them with the moon as rain-bringer. Another agrarian application that is calendrical: when the dragon swallows its pearl, the moon wanes. When it belches it forth, the moon waxes. Most relevantly, dragon pearls signify a special, overlooked form of esoteric knowledge which is *Feminine*. This has already been referred to in several other contexts in my dissertation.

Aligning it with dragon pearls will enable us to link *Feminine* dragons with the alchemical, androgynous Ouroboros, thus more firmly establishing that there exists a connection between dragons, the serpent, and Isenheim figures I am claiming are errant and *Feminine*.

From the perspective of alchemy, the Ouroboros serpent purifies. As an agrarian symbol which is also alchemical, it represents the Great World Serpent, also manifest in the cyclical nature of the seasons, oscillations of the night sky, self or androgynous fecundation, and disintegration and re-integration. This dragon forms a circle with its tail in its mouth. The circle sometimes has a black half, symbolizing night, earth, and the destructive force of nature; and a light half, representing day, heaven, and generative, creative force. It is accordingly a binarily defined creature. As a tail-devourer, it signifies abstract philosophical concepts similarly
involving completion, perfection, and totality. From either of these perspectives, be it agrarian science or abstract philosophy, the Ouroboros dragon represents the endless alchemical round of existence. There is a problem with information like this, however. It is too theoretical to fit into the Feminine model I am constructing to account for errant Mary in Grunewald's shrine.

To understand how "dragon pearl" signifiers can be made to affect our interpretation of the Isenheim, we must read into how alchemical lore about the Ouroboros dragon came to be reflected in the early Christian Church. Jung on early Gnosticism as defined by Hoeller (1994) states the Ouroboros creature represented truth and cognition realized in their most complete form (p. xi-xii). What could have been the problem with an explanation like this? The answer to this question is the same as the reason why scholars of Adam and Eve still cannot agree on who Eve was.

Elaine Pagels 1979 The Gnostic Gospels, Hoeller (1994), and Lindsay (1970) similarly account for how this aspect of Christian view came to be lost to westerners. They trace the loss to ca. 325 ACE, when Christian bishops who had been victimized by police begun commanding them. During these years, possession of books denounced as heretical became a criminal offense. Copies of Gnostic books were accordingly burned and destroyed. Gnostic devotees either learned to adapt to the comparatively narrow orthodoxies of the Church, or they hid their theories and practices behind the mysterious phrases and symbols of alchemical ideology. Simon Magus, John the Baptist, Jesus, Mary Magdalene, and others constituted this group which referred to itself as the "gnostikoi," or "those who know"(pp. xviii-ix; 63-64, 90-91; 272).

The early Gnostics, according to Hans Jones cited by Hoeller (1989), conflated their interpretation of the Gnostic symbol of the Ouroboros dragon with the "pearl." This composite of signifiers was one of the principal metaphors for the concept of soul. In this context, the pearl in question is the only one of its kind. It is a lost gift that needs to be found and retrieved, watched over by its Ouroboros guardian. The Gnostic dragon pearl symbolizes what is sought after—the soul's effort to reconnect ego with self (pp. 163-164, 172, 376). This tension reflects necessary struggle between two parts of a whole which might also be alluded to as egocentrical versus altruistic inclination. From my perspective, this is the first of three forms of the same polarity.
The second form of this polarity lies in a yet undiscussed pagan definition for dragon pearls, the fight between the *Feminine* dragon and the knight. In this context, there exists an ongoing struggle to overcome the other, signified through key combinations of animals like the stag (solar and male) and unicorn (lunar and female) combination, or the wild wolf versus tamed dog fight for supremacy.

The third form represents what I am arguing is an extension of these two problems, the usurped *Feminine* power that this dissertation is about. This is a working manifestation of the first tension between human ego and the self, in that it involves egocentric will displaced at the expense of altruistically gifted *Feminine* inclination. It similarly reflects upon the second problem, the fight between *Feminine* signifiers like the dragon and masculine ones like the knight. Here the struggle to overcome the other in a fight for supremacy appears to have been by and large resolved long ago, again—at the expense of the *Feminine*.

In conclusion, as was stated earlier in this chapter, the battle I have in mind is implied in Hesiod's Erides, defined in my "Definitions." The Erides pit Hesiod (and I would add those acting in his tradition of oracular, ritual healing) against on the one hand, Archilochos, and on the other, Homer--both of whom reflect aspects of the knight. They similarly symbolize wars between Hesiodic signifiers like "carpenters and potters," and "oxen and donkies."

Unfortunately, as scholars cannot agree about how to interpret Hesiod's Erides and the effects of this loss, so do they inadvertently fuel and direct ways that ashen Achilles and Mary have been desacralized, humanized, and all but lost to westerners. The origin of this problem resembles the cause of why westerners have overlooked the significance of the Eve to Hannah, and her to Mary transition, why they cannot relate to Mary's significance in the Isenheim. There is no describing the effects of this problem.

Hesiod anticipated and wrote to it. However, he did not guess the breadth of what westerners were destined to confront. It is time to move forward and reckon with some broadened expression of Hesiod's projected fears.
Conclusion

According to Elaine Pagels' 1988 *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent*, misunderstandings related to western mankind's definition and use of human sexuality, as defined through the reconstructed lens of Adam and Eve, have resulted from religious insight, moral choice, and actual experience. Pagels credits this idea to what anthropologist Foucault calls "the politics of truth." This is, according to her synopsis of Foucault, the idea that what each of us perceives and acts upon as true has much to do with our social, political, cultural, religious, and philosophical situation. She also argues that those who seriously confront the Bible must approach the activity from the perspective that genuine interpretation has always required of the reader an ability to actively and imaginatively engage with its texts. Through this process of interpretation, the reader's living experience becomes woven into ancient texts: what was "dead letter" comes to life (pp. xxvii-xxviii).

In this dissertation, I have worked toward showing that the same principle applies to the iconographical lineage of symbols in art history and literature. Further efforts must be made to redefine the ancient *Feminine*, and they must be approached multidisciplinary and instrumentally with regard for on the one hand, the mythic, metaphorical, and symbolic dimension of Hesiodic *Feminine* agrarian science; and on the other hand, misunderstandings which are in themselves rooted in these aspects of science. My belief is based upon my having acknowledged four aesthetic problems. Three are easily documented. One has been how to create an initial dictionary for *Feminine* terms like "unicorn" and concepts like "synthemata" and "binary." My analysis of Grunewald’s image constitutes yet another version of my dictionary, so my original dictionary and the analysis have come to work together as a composite tool. A second problem was how to iconographically analyze an early image like the Isenheim. I see now that for me, no real gains are made without analyzing images decompartmentally and with real regard for all of what artists who made them had to have known about pagan world view. This includes material that many scholars do not seem to want to think about like the idea that Mary had an *Evil Eye* or might have been one and the same person as Magdalene. Third is the value of documenting academic misunderstandings. I have noted several variations of them, and their documentation has afforded me an increasingly invaluable means of recognizing, classifying, and accordingly substantiating the existence of others. I write this regarding the categories I have referred to:
gender shift, feminine ability denounced, and metaphorical to literal problems with terms and processes. These three aesthetic problems are referential tools which shed needed light on troubled analyses of images like the Isenheim, which is one of three points at the heart of this conclusion. The other two refer to popular concerns about Mary’s form and function and the disconnect between science and the arts in public education. And as I see it, the misunderstandings I have documented cannot—should not be separated from these troubles. Before briefly acknowledging them, I write briefly because this dissertation is not about them but problems in art history and art education, I want to show how the three aesthetic problems identified above can be made to work in a way which results in a fourth concern that I would like to develop further, and can exemplify this fourth tool by briefly fulfilling a promise I made several chapters ago.

In Chapter Six I resolved part of my promise to study Mary and the Infant Christ dynamic by considering their relationship from the perspective of alchemical transformation, suggesting that when Grunewald painted Mary and the Christ Child he related the baby to both Mary and Magdaline in his mind, even though he painted the Child sitting exclusively on Mary’s lap. I proposed further that Mary holding the Infant Christ represented a set of signifiers which were originally meant to be interpreted metaphorically, and based my observation that westerners view alchemical references to an all powerful, Alchemical King literally, instead of binarily and metaphorically as dual signifiers of a Queen and or an Androgyne as well as a king. I reasoned that this dimension of Mary’s and Jesus’s relationship might have been overlooked for the same reason, and further substantiated my notion by comparing Jesus's relationship with his mother to my previous discussion of blackenings, or temporary deaths which appear to have facilitated events leading to Asclepius’s birth, and his mother Coronis’s death. I said I would parallel this series of events to Christ's relationship with his mother later on in my dissertation. Now I will fulfill my promise by speculatively outlining Jesus's relationship with Mary in picture form, based upon the above aesthetic problems that I have developed. I will do this to demonstrate how they work, and why they need to be drawn upon as a composite tool.

My discussion draws upon previous study of hieros gamos and an iconographical and pictorial comparison of Jesus's Crown of Thorns. This comparison is based upon three seemingly related applications of dry wood which might have played the same thematic role in the images they are in, as the crown of thorns does in images of Jesus wearing one.
Beginning with hieros gamos, it was described earlier as an earth based alchemical concept involving the earliest versions of the relationship between the ancient feminine and her binarily defined partners (sons and surrogate lovers) who died cyclically with earth's seasons. In this section, Mary is hypothetically being viewed iconographically as a Christianized version of this earth mother, and Jesus is recognized accordingly, as her partner in hieros gamos. Please understand, this explanation of Jesus's relationship with Mary is based upon my idea that Mary, Magdaline, and Jesus might have played more than one role in the ideological construct of early western peoples. What follows is only one of them.

This comparison originates in noting that the Isenheim conversation panel (Fig. 3A) confronts viewers with what might be interpreted as the blackening which would by necessity preclude Anthony's transcendance. Read from left to right, dead trees are depicted in this panel on the left and in the middle behind Anthony and Hermit Paul. The only living tree is the palm on the right, previously established to represent transcendance.

Next consider Jesus's crown of thorns depicted in Albert Durer's northern Rensaissance Christ with Thorns and Grunewald's Christ with a crown of thorns inserted as a DETAIL into the same image for purposes of comparison (Fig. 33G). I compare these crowns to three seemingly related applications. The first consists of depictions of dry, wooden, woven fences around Mary's enclosed garden where she sits holding the Christ Child. Please see Mary's Annunciation, depicting her in her enclosed garden with a unicorn (Fig. 34 C); the circa 1450 Mary with the Infant Christ, depicting her and the baby with a sparrow in her enclosed garden (Fig. 34D); and the circa 1420 Mary with a unicorn in her enclosed garden, with what appears to be a rhyzotomist in the foreground picking flowering herbs (Fig. 33E). The second application which I am relating to Jesus's crown of thorns consists of dry wood configurations in the shape of an aureole, surrounding alchemical Maries like the previously mentioned 1492 Mary with aureole of thorns, or dead tree by Petrus Christius (Fig. 32B). The third application which I am relating to Jesus's crown of thorns consists of two rare images of Mary and Magdalene depicted together in a way which suggests they were sometimes perceived binarily, as a single entity in the midst of a ritual transformation--apparently directed toward transcendance. Both images suggest Mary's ritual metamorphosis through use of light to dark gradations of value. In (Fig. 35 D), a detail of Mary and Magdalene in Hieronymus Bosch's Ca. 1500's Triptych of Saint Anthony, Bosch's use of the two Maries to distinguish this transformation draws upon a distinction
between light and dark that is very pronounced. Grunewald does this and more. His depiction of Mary and Magdalene viewing the Crucifixion (Fig. 7A) additionally draws upon a scale shift, with the darker of the two women being smaller.

I am comparing Jesus's crown of thorns to these images and ideas based upon two iconographical points, and one supporting point of my own that I see only in imagery. The first to the crown, Cooper (1978) tells us that crowns in themselves symbolize the circle of timelessness and completeness. These terms, of course, refer to transcendence. They are an attribute of sun gods, supernatural people, and saints (pp. 47-48). Surprisingly, the crown of thorns is an attribute of Jesus, but it also signifies Mary Magdalene (p. 47). The second iconographical point I have drawn upon involves the "enclosed garden," a term which Cooper tells us signifies Mary's garden, represents the feminine, protection, and virginity. In its Christianized form, for example, the garden represents the Virgin Mary (p. 72). However, Mary's garden appears to mean more than this, else why would there be what appears to be a rhyzotomist picking flowering herbs in the above mentioned image entitled Mary with a unicorn in her enclosed garden (Fig. 33E). The third point I need to make is image based, exemplified in Bernard Parentino's circa 1500's Temptation of Saint Anthony (Fig. 35). Here, a very clear effort has been made to suggest a dark to light—even white, and evil to good transformation. The figure closest to this Saint Anthony might be Christ. Regardless, this images suggests that more images like these probably exist, and a larger study would gain by studying them.

Doing so could result in further establishing that Jesus's relationship with his mother resembles an alchemical blackening, or temporary death such as was associated with the raven and Coronis in the Asclepius myth. Magdalene is relatively black (disintegration) and Mary white (transformation and transcendence) in both of the images I have discussed, with the two of them together, and since the dead wood and thorns in the images of mary with the aureole and her and the infant Christ in her garden also suggest death and disintegration, the Crown of Thorns might be another symbol which has come to be interpreted literally instead of metaphorically, and like the other signifiers of alchemical disintegration, it involves Mary. Sadly, this disconnect reveals more than problems in art history, and long debated divisions between arts and sciences, and science and religion.

So what I said above is not saying enough.
Science education does not include the frequently overlooked historical lineage of science that was mythic, for example, and this is the part of science that is not being schooled in the arts. Chemistry, biology, astronomy, and meteorology all contain the rudiments of key concepts like metamorphosis and photosynthesis, and these have also been inadvertently been shown in my dissertation to have originally been connected to ethical principles--but none of this material is included in ways that art and science are being schooled..

This is still not saying enough.

These fields originally crossed the boundaries of science (especially man’s relationship with trying to heal himself), extending into fields of study now referred to as religion, psychology, and the social sciences. For an example of how my aesthetic problem with art’s lineage might be further extended into problems in the fields of history and psychology briefly consider Emily Rice's *American History in the Elementary Schools*, which, indicated roughly one hundred years ago that history was not being taught satisfactorily in the public school system. In the 1980’s, social science educator John D. Hoge’s 1980 “Teaching History in the Elementary School” (ERIC DIGEST # 293784), alongside of Sewall (1987), Cheney (1987), and more, similarly argued that history was what amounts to being a bland topic presented from a voiceless perspective. These scholars pressed for screening historical narratives through the lens of Piaget’s theory of development in response to the long established view that Elementary children cannot comprehend formal, conceptual abstractions of history involving lengthy time frames, sweeping generalities, and complex causal inferences. They argued that Elementary children can gainfully explore important values, while at the same time developing skills in studying, thinking, and communicating, though an approach to history that was narrative.

Based upon the findings of my dissertation I would argue that the approach they have in mind should include a history of earth’s processes which parallels those attributed to humankind. For another example, one pertaining to religion, there is currently much discussion of who Mary Magdaline’s identity and her relationship with Jesus might inform biblical interpretation. In 1982, Henry Lincoln, Michael Baigent, and Richard Leigh’s *Where Holy Blood, Holy Grail* analyzed Mary Magdalene literally, suggesting her to have been the vessel which carried the blood of Christ into Europe in the form of an unborn child, making her and her womb the "Holy
Grail." This text addresses the problem of Magdaline from the perspective that she and Jesus had a child, and there is according a bloodline stemming from their union. Margaret Starbird's 1993 Woman With The Alabaster Jar recognises Mary Magdalene as the lost sacred feminine of Christianity. According to her, there exists a "true" Christianity that acknowledges God more as a partners, than a ruler of mankind. This idea is based upon screening the Gospel through the lens of its functioning as a re-enactment of a hieros gamos ritual, derived from the fertility cults studied in this dissertation. In this secondary context, the bloodline is less important than the west’s loss of its sacred feminine. This source suggests that as Magdaline anointed Jesus’s brow she was reinacting hieros gamos, as she married the land she married the king. Their marriage symbolized the rejuvenation of the land and the community soul, and the connection between humankind and their deity. This application of studying Mary Magdalene more closely parallels the feminist views of art historians which my dissertation has responded to. However, it does not draw upon feminine material and concepts available in the sciences. It views western problems from the comparatively recent association of the feminine and the Christian Church
APPENDIX
IMAGES
FIGURE 1:


FIGURE 2:


2D: Grunewald, Mattias. (1515). DETAIL. *Androgynous Devil, outside of Anthony’s window.* (Closed Position). Snyder et al.

FIGURE 3:


3B: Grunewald, Mattias. (1515). DETAIL. *Stag in the clearing*. Snyder et al.
FIGURE 4:


4B: Grunewald, Mattias. (1515). DETAIL. *Diseased human with webbed hands and feet in Metamorphosis panel*. Snyder et al.
FIGURE 5:


5D: Grunewald, Mattias. (1515). DETAIL. *Metamorphosed Raven and Baboon in Temptation.* Synder et al.
FIGURE 6:

Grunewald, Mattias. (1515). COLORIZED Christ on Cross with Mary and Magdaline. Synder et al.
FIGURE 7:

7A: Grunewald, Mattias. (1515). DETAIL. Mary and Magdaline in *Christ on Cross panel*. Synder et al.

7B: Grunewald, Mattias. (1515). DETAIL. *Saint John the Baptist*: “He must increase, but I must decrease.” Synder et al.
FIGURE 8:

FIGURE 9:

Grunewald, Mattias. (155). COLORIZED. DETAIL of Incarnation with enhanced copy of beheaded angel and his companions. Synder et al.
FIGURE 10:

FIGURE 11:

FIGURE 12:

12A: Hagenau, Nicolas. (1505). DETAIL. Saint Anthony Enthroned with Dog peaking from under his robe. (By his left foot, on viewer's right). Snyder et al.


FIGURE 13:


FIGURE 14:


FIGURE 15:


FIGURE 16:


16B: DETAIL of Man-lion cannibalistic giant. Husband et al. p. 21


FIGURE 17:


FIGURE 18:

FIGURE 19:

FIGURE 20:


FIGURE 21:


FIGURE 22:


22B: Mary of Burgandy, Master of. (1485). *Mary going over the hills to visit Elizabeth*. From the *Hours of Engelbert of Nassau*. Oxford: Bodleian Library. Snyder et al. p. 194.


FIGURE 23:

FIGURE 24:

FIGURE 25:


FIGURE 26:


FIGURE 27:

FIGURE 28:

FIGURE 29:

FIGURE 30:

FIGURE 31:


FIGURE 32:

FIGURE 33:


FIGURE 34:


34C: Unknown. Gabriel and Mary in conversation in the enclosed Garden [Canvas transferred to panel]. 73 x 59".


FIGURE 36:


FIGURE 37:

http://familyfeastandferia.wordpress.com/category/saints/saint-lucia-or-lucy/

http://www.wga.hu/frames-e.html?/html/b/beccafum/index.html

38A: (1450-1500). *The monstrous races of India.* From *Le livre des merveilles de ce monde.* This is a compilation of texts translated from the Latin, including Pliny's Historia. (no. 2), fol. 41v. Husband et al. p. 43.


FIGURE 39:

FIGURE 40:

FIGURE 41.


41H: Egyptian. (27 BCE. - 14 CE.). Horus with his finger to his mouth: Side screen of a birth house built by Augustus. [Relief sculpture]. Mammisi within the temple wall of Dendera.


42C: Cartari, Vincenzo. (1550). *Asclepius presented in three ways.* #16 in *Le Imagini de I Dei de gli Antichi.* [Engraving]. Schouten et al.

FIGURE 43:

43H Greek messenger deity carrying caduceus. [Amphora].


43J: Solar baroque of sun god Khepri, represented as a scarab us beetle, supported by Thoth the baboon deity.

FIGURE 44:

44D, E, F, G: Collection of binary figures and women in an alchemical nimbus, or "aureole" shaped halo surrounding the head and or body of a "holy" figure. Cooper, p. 113.


FIGURE 45:
FIGURE 46:


FIGURE 47:


47B: Mesopotamian. *Fertility goddess from Ur.*[Seal].

47C: Egyptian. *God Bes, from a copy in Wells.*


48B: Pelecanos, Theodoros. In the alchemical tract, Synostius. [Drawing].

48C: Jennis, Lucas. De Lapide Philosophico in the alchemical tract. [Engraving].
FIGURE 49:


FIGURE 50:
Bocotian. (Archaic). The lady of the beasts. [Terra cotta].
FIGURE 51:


FIGURE 52:

FIGURE 53:

56E: Untitled. [ox, lion, boar, and monkey feeding people poisons]. Monsters and Demons.

56F: Devil and woman. Monsters and Demons.


FIGURE 54:


FIGURE 55:


FIGURE 56:


56G: DETAIL of 56F.


FIGURE 57:


57C: Lady Meus M.S.: No. 4 (Introductory picture to Life of Hannah). Saint George Spearing the dragon: "O Saint George bring me out of nonpurificare of the body and soul." Budge et al.


57E: M. S. Ludwig XV4: Fol. 94. Dragon (Note that the tail of this dragon resembles those of the dragons listed above. All are curled around.). Los Angeles, California: J. Paul Getty Museum.
FIGURE 58.


58B: Virgin emitting toxic substances. In Monsters and Demons.
FIGURE 59:


59C: Detail of *Monstrous races of the east with a Ptolemaic world map no. 4.* Husband et al. p. 49.

59D: Monsters and Demons.
FIGURE 60:

FIGURE 61:

61A. North Netherlandish. (1465). *Annunciation with the Fall of Eve and Gideon's fleece, from the Biblia Pauperum.* [Woodcut]. Snyder et al. p. 69.


FIGURE 62:


FIGURE 63.
FIGURE 64:


64B: *Creature metamorphosing. Monsters and Demons.*


FIGURE 65:


FIGURE 67:  


67C: Two Wild Men and two pairs of lovers. No. 18. Husband et al. p. 27.

67D: (Early 15th). *Detail from sanctuary altar to the Virgin Mary, originally at Cologne.* Beer et al. p. 68.
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south-western Asia, Egypt, and Europe, and the colonies thence sent forth.


(Original work published 1913)


Lewis-Williams, J. & Dowson, T. The signs of all times: Entoptic phenomena in Upper Paleolithic art. Current Anthropology, 29 (2), 201-245.


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Cynthia Y. Kent-Toussaint grew up in Miami, attended the University of South Florida, married while attaining an MFA in studio painting and drawing, and then worked as an adjunct professor teaching ancient and early western humanities for nine years. When her daughter was two, circumstances required her to move to Tallahassee with her child to become more marketable by attaining additional degrees in art history. The move was a fortunate one. She became interested in problems in the visual arts, first in art history and later in art education. After receiving a second masters in art history, she moved to the College of Art Education and broadened her interests to include Aesthetics. Her doctorate is in that field of studies.