

Wine before Swine: Circe's Anticholinergic Potion



England's Anne Pratt depicted (ca.1860, *right*) the intoxicating beauty of the Nightshades Family, or Solanaceae, such as (1) Thornapple (*Datura*), and the (2) Stinking (henbane), (3) Woody (bittersweet), (4) Black (common), and (5) Deadly (belladonna) Nightshades. One or more plants like these and/or Mandrake (*Mandragora*) likely supplied deliriant anticholinergics for the wine-laced potion that J. M. Waterhouse painted (1891, *left*) witch-goddess Circe feeding to the shipmates of Odysseus (Ulysses). In high doses, such tropane alkaloidal mixtures of hyoscyamine, scopolamine, and atropine can kill; in low doses, these deliriants can induce hallucinations of flying or of transforming into animals. According to Homer's *Odyssey*, each drugged sailor (believed that he) was transformed into a pig (*left*, at Circe's feet) by the witch-goddess' anticholinergic potion. (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists, Inc.)

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