Canidia: A Literary Analysis of Horace’s Witch

Dissertation

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Abstract

This dissertation takes as its underlying premise that the assumption of the existence of a concretized witch figure in the literature of the ancient world is fundamentally flawed and that the highly generalized term “witch” has been applied retroactively to the categorization of so-called witches in the ancient world and has thus condensed a heterogeneous host of characters into a single category for which the ancient world had no analogue.

The introductory chapter is devoted to the exposition of this problem and its proposed solution: the treatment of individual witch characters not as part of a generic group but as specific instantiations of a particular set of actions and attributes primarily contingent upon the precise circumstances of their deployment. The following four chapters examine the six appearances of the character of Canidia in Horace’s (65 - 8 BCE) poetic corpus as a test-case for this hypothesis on the basis that proof of a single character - who is confined to the works of a single author - manifesting multiple, unique aspects that vary from poem to poem, constitutes a significant demonstration of the pluralistic nature of the ancient witch. Such a drastic realignment of these figures’ typology also makes available considerable re-readings of the literature in which these characters appear.

The second, third and fourth chapters examine Canidia’s three longest appearances in the Horatian corpus: Satire 1.8, Epode 5, and Epode 17. Each chapter
limits itself to the exploration of Canidia’s role in a single poem and analyzes only those attributes demonstrable in that specific literary context before seeking external analogues – again drawn only from their similarity to one particular instantiation of Canidia’s character. Chapter two examines Horace’s use of Canidia in Satire 1.8 as a liminal boundary-walker intruding in the Gardens of Maecenas as a means to discuss the problematic issues of genre inherent in the composition of the Satires. Chapter three considers the Canidia of Horace’s Epode 5 as the incarnation of a child-killing demon along the lines of Lamia or the strix, and reads the poem as a potential response to Vergil’s fourth Eclogue, a poem that anticipates the birth of a child to usher in Rome’s golden age. The fourth chapter finds Canidia in the role of a demonic Empusa where she serves as the embodiment of Horace’s iambic poetry; an inversion of the elegiac puella, Canidia does not invigorate Horace or inspire his poetry, but saps him of his energy and effectively concludes his book of epodes.

The final chapter is devoted to the three other poems in which Canidia is mentioned only in passing: Epode 3, Satire 2.1 and Satire 2.8. In these poems, instead of functioning as a powerful magical practitioner, Canidia acts as a generic bringer of misfortune whose lack of detailed magical capabilities sets her apart from the three other poems in which she is primarily featured. This final shift in characterization serves as means to review the multi-faceted nature of Canidia’s character and to reaffirm the central thesis of the dissertation.
Dedication

For my wife.
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Chapter I

Introduction

Canidia is one of the best-attested witches in Latin literature. She appears in no fewer than six of Horace’s poems – in three of which she has a prominent role. She can be seen throughout Horace’s *Epodes* and *Satires* desecrating graves, kidnapping and murdering children, torturing people and poisoning others. She invades Maecenas’ gardens, rips apart a lamb with her teeth, starves a Roman child to death, and threatens to unnaturally prolong Horace’s life in order to keep him in a state of perpetual torment. She also occupies a special place in regards to Horace’s own poetry: she is repeatedly juxtaposed with his literary patron, she becomes the personification of his iambic poetics, and she is given the dubious honor of concluding not only his *Epodes* but also his second book of *Satires*.

Yet Canidia has received little in the way of extensive scholarly analysis. She has never been the exclusive subject of single book, and has been the primary subject of only a handful of articles. Sergio Ingallina’s *Orazio e la Magia* (1974) comprises the most extensive work on Canidia to date by virtue of being a study of the presence of magical elements within Horace’s poetry. Ingallina’s study focuses its attention on the three poems in which magic, and, as it happens Canidia, features most prominently. However, since the work concerns itself with explicating the magico-religious significance of the
ritual minutiae that happen to be practiced by Canidia and her companions, it does not interpret the role that Canidia plays as a character within Horace’s poetry, nor does it address her three minor (and considerably less magical) appearances in *Satires* 2.1, 2.8 or *Epode* 3.

Published just two years later, Anne-Marie Tupet’s treatment of Canidia is somewhat similar to Ingallina’s in that the aim of her 1976 work *La Magie dans la Poésie Latine* is to analyze the presence and purpose of magic in Latin poetry. Since Canidia is the primary magical practitioner in Horace’s poetry, Tupet’s chapter on magic in the Horatian corpus is *de facto* about Canidia. Like Ingallina, Tupet’s focus is on *Satire* 1.8 and *Epodes* 5 and 17; she does not mention Canidia’s appearances in *Satires* 2.1 or 2.8, and refers to her role in *Epode* 3 only once.¹ Tupet does provide numerous potential interpretations of the rituals Canidia enacts and she explores the significance of several magical details Horace includes, but her primary concern is to use Canidia as a source of information rather than an object of analysis. As a result, Tupet largely avoids interpreting the significance of Canidia’s actions beyond their purely ritualistic contexts and ventures only so far as to state that Horace’s repeatedly negative depictions of Canidia and her ilk were likely fashioned as a response to (or tool of) Augustus’ staunch opposition to magical practitioners.²


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¹ Tupet (1976) 295.
contributions to Canadian scholarship to date, reading Canidia as a symbol of Horatian powerlessness and as a dark mirror through which Maecenas’ patronage can be reflected. Little work of comparable quality has been done on Canidia in the two decades since that article’s publication, however, for all of its merits, Oliensis’ treatment of Canidia operates under the assumption that her character can be treated as a unified entity that behaves consistently in each of her six different incarnations. While I will challenge the validity of this assumption in the course of this dissertation, the value of Oliensis’ contributions is not to be diminished.

Emily Gowers closely follows Oliensis’ reading of Canidia as she touches briefly on Canidia’s roles in Horace’s Satire 2.8 and Epode 3 in her 1993 volume The Loaded Table. In it, she explores Canidia’s character as a foil for Horace’s iambic persona and as a symbol of satiric venom, yet like Oliensis before her, she too treats Canidia’s appearances throughout the Horatian corpus as part a consistent narrative.

Aside from these works, most scholarship on Canidia has limited itself either to exploring her role within a single poem, to analyzing individual aspects of her character, or to mining Horace’s descriptions of her for evidence about the practice of magic in the ancient world. So far, there has been little interest in developing a holistic assessment of Canidia’s character as it appears throughout the Horatian corpus, and the

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5 See Barchiesi (1993, 1995) and Bushala (1968) for explorations of Canidia’s role in Epode 17, Herrmann (1953) and Paschoud (1980) for work on Canidia in Epode 5, and Freudenberg (1995) on her role in Sat. 2.8.
6 See Manning (1970) and Rudd (1966) on Canidia’s biography; D’Arms (1967) on her potential ties to Campania.
closest attempts to be made have appeared only as brief notes in various commentaries on the *Satires* or *Epodes*. The most extensive of these is provided by David Mankin as an appendix about Canidia following his commentary on the *Epodes*. It is two pages long.

The decision to make Canidia the focus of this dissertation was made in part due to the dearth of scholarship about her, and as a reaction against the tendency to explain Canidia’s role(s) in Horace’s poetry through appeals to her historicity. The first section of this chapter is thus a survey of the scholarship surrounding Canidia’s “historical” origins that concludes with the assertion that Canidia will be best treated as a fictional character (specifically a witch). The second section then details the lack of unity among the so-called Roman “witches” and advocates a systematic reanalysis of Canidia – and numerous other witch-characters as well – based not on her presumed relationship to other Roman witches, but on the observation of the specific attributes she manifests. It is through this methodological approach that Canidia will be most accurately interpreted, and the poems in which she appears will be most accurately read.

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The Historical Canidia

Despite all of Horace’s attention to her, Canidia’s character still remains a mystery. The evidence for her historical existence is sparse and scholarly evaluation of her literary role(s) is incomplete. What little we do know is largely derived from information provided by the scholiasts Porphyryion and Acron. While these scholiasts offer copious explanatory notes on Horace’s works, much of the information pertaining to Canidia seems to have been extrapolated almost exclusively from Horace’s own poetry. Nevertheless, the scholiasts’ inferences and speculations have resurfaced in numerous modern academic treatments of Horace.

The most popular of these suppositions is that Horace used the name Canidia as a pseudonym for a woman by the name of Gratidia. According to Porphyryion, since it was inappropriate to write slanderous poetry against someone using his or her real name, poets used pseudonyms that resembled their victims’ names both phonetically and metrically. Hence Vergil purportedly substituted the name Lycoris for Cytheris, just as Catullus was famously to have dubbed Clodia “Lesbia.” Following this practice, Horace is presumed to have concealed Gratidia’s true name under the pseudonym “Canidia.”

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10 Porph. Comm. In Hor. Epod. 3.8: sub hoc Canidiae nomine Gratidia Neapolitanam unguentariam intellegi vult, quam ut veneficam Horatius semper insectatur. sed quia non licet probrosum carmen in quemquam scribere, idcirco fere poetae similia [nomina] adfingunt. Pseudo-Acron’s commentary corroborates <this>: Canidiam pro Gratidia posuit; non enim proprium nomen notari decebatur in carmine (Comm. In Hor. Epod. 3.8), though the relationship of Pseudo-Acron’s text to that of Porphyryion’s is admittedly a tangled one. See Kalinina (2007) and Noske (1969) for further treatment of the matter.
We are told – again by our scholiasts – that Gratidia was a producer and seller of perfumes (an *unguentaria*) who lived in Naples.\(^\text{11}\) The notion is not an implausible one since skill with perfumes or other ointments may well have garnered a woman a reputation for possessing other, more supernatural knowledge such as the kind demonstrated by Canidia’s expertise in love potions and the like,\(^\text{12}\) and it would not be a terrific stretch to imagine Horace converting a particularly loathsome perfumer (potentially Gratidia) into a dreadful practitioner of magic (Canidia). Further, the Campanian origin of the name of Canidia’s supposed son, Pactumeius,\(^\text{13}\) could likewise validate the assertions of Gratidia’s Neapolitan roots.\(^\text{14}\)

Yet the very idea of Canidia’s true identity being that of Gratidia, a perfumer from Naples, is most likely a fanciful construct of the scholiasts, cobbled from lines of Horace’s own poetry. In *Epode* 5, Canidia’s recalcitrant lover Varrus is described as anointed with perfume (59: *nardo perunctum*), a statement that may have suggested to the scholiasts – the earliest of whom was active two or three hundred years after Horace’s death – Gratidia’s career as an *unguentaria*. Similarly, the details of her location may have stemmed from Horace’s description of one of Canidia’s fellow witches being well known in Naples and the surrounding towns (*Epode* 5.43-4: *et otiosa credidit Neapolis / et omne vicinum oppidum*). The 16th century commentator Cruquianus provides an

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\(^{11}\) Porph. *Comm. In Hor. Epod.* 3.8; Ps-Acron *Comm. in Hor. Epod.* 3.8: *fuit autem Gratidia unguentaria Neapolitana, quasi malefica.*


\(^{13}\) *Hor. Epod.* 17.50-53.

\(^{14}\) D’Arms (1967). Problematically, this potential validation of Gratidia’s Neapolitan origin is itself still anchored in Horace’s poetry.
explanation for Horace’s poetic vitriol against Canidia; he claims that the two had once been lovers, and that Horace exacted his literary revenge following the relationship’s demise.\textsuperscript{15} This too, seems based on a reading of Epode 17, wherein a sexual relationship between Canidia and the narrator may be inferred.\textsuperscript{16}

All of these remarks come either directly from Horace’s poetry itself or from the scholiasts who were extrapolating from that poetry. There is no external evidence to corroborate even the existence of a Neapolitan Gratidia, let alone to verify her as the basis for Horace’s Canidia.\textsuperscript{17} Fortunately, the modern scholars who have advanced theories as to Canidia’s identity have (largely) moved beyond the scholiasts’ reliance on Horace’s own writing. Of those investigating the potential reality or source of Canidia’s character, there are two main camps – those who would see her character as representative of either a real person or group of people, and those who would see her as a purely literary construct. Others fall somewhere in the middle, acknowledging Canidia’s probable roots in reality while recognizing the necessarily fictional nature of her character as it exists in Horace’s poetry. First, let us turn to the potential historical sources posited as models for Canidia’s character.

\textsuperscript{15} Cruq. Comm. in Hor. C. 1.16: cantando revocat scripserat iratus in amicam Gratidiam. According to Cruqianus, C. 1.16 (whose addressee is notably unnamed) was written as a palinode to reconcile Horace and Gratidia, an apology for his prior poetic attacks. The problems endemic to this reading of C. 1.16 are discussed on p. 11-12.

\textsuperscript{16} See Bushala (1968), and my discussion in Chapter 4 of Horace’s portrayal of Canidia as a quasi-Empusa in Epod. 17.

\textsuperscript{17} The biographer Suetonius (active roughly a century after Horace’s death, and thus at least a century prior to any of the Horatian scholiasts) wrote a brief tract on the poet’s life (Suet. Poet. 40). In it, Suetonius included such salacious details as Horace’s preference for hanging mirrors in his bedroom for the express purpose of watching himself and his partner having sex, yet he makes no mention of Canidia or Gratidia. His silence in regard to Canidia or Gratidia, while by no means to be taken as firm evidence, is intriguing given his propensity to record sexual gossip.
There are three primary methods scholars have adopted in the search for a historical Canidia. The first and simplest has been to read the character of Canidia as a literal rendition of an actual woman with whom Horace was well acquainted. The second has been to search for known historical figures for whom Horace’s Canidia could serve as a likely caricature. The third method has been to search not for one specific, historically verifiable figure but to consider instead what sort of person Horace would have chosen to satirize by representing her as the witch Canidia.

In the first case, the equation of the character of Canidia with a flesh-and-blood woman by that same name rests on a number of dubious premises. It assumes that Horace’s poetry was an honest and unadulterated depiction of life as he lived it and that his depiction of magical practitioners was unembellished. This in turn assumes that Horace was in a position to have witnessed such magic firsthand or was at least very well acquainted with it. Neither of these are reliable suppositions.

One proponent of this view, C.E. Manning, suggests that it was Horace’s post-civil war poverty that led him to “the backstreets of Rome” where he discovered “the nature of life in plebian society” and cultivated a real concern for rites such as those described in *Epode* 5. The assertion is little short of fantastic. Although Horace did side with Brutus during the civil war and may well have had his paternal lands confiscated, the “poverty” he professes was likely exaggerated. His assumption of the post of scribe for the Roman treasury, his rank of *eques* (itself requiring not inconsiderable financial means) and his presence among the most influential circle of poets in his day is not

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19 *Hor. Ep.* 2.2.49-52.
indicative of a man reduced to supreme economic distress.\textsuperscript{20} Furthermore, the idea that magic was practiced only by Rome’s lower class is both inaccurate and entrenched in a condescending view of the Roman plebs as somehow backward and uneducated, a stance that has been abandoned in recent scholarship.\textsuperscript{21} To wit, Manning is troubled by Canidia’s knowledge of Medea and Circe; he finds Canidia’s reference to these magical characters normally found in elevated literature anomalous to his understanding of Canidia and her ilk as members of an ignorant lower class. Manning’s solution to the quandary is illustrative:

If there existed people who dabbled in black magic, …even if they themselves were ignorant unlettered persons, they would certainly be able to learn from tradition what divinities presided over witchcraft… just as today the inadequate people who gather in the more obscure and fanatical religious sects, though sometimes barely literate, may have a working knowledge of the bible and the history of their group.\textsuperscript{22}

This literalistic interpretation of Canidia’s character stems from a simplistic and uncritical reading of Horatian poetry that fails to provide a compelling rationale for its

\textsuperscript{20} White (1993) offers an insightful analysis of the economic stability of poets in the early Roman principate.

\textsuperscript{21} There are numerous examples of magic use (or at least accusations thereof) among the Roman upper class: cf. Cicero’s charge of Vatinius practicing human sacrifice (\textit{In Vat.} 14), Apuleius’ speech in defense of himself against charges of erotic magic (Apul. \textit{Apol.}), and the emperor Nero’s reputed fascination with all things magical (Plin. \textit{Nat.} 30.14-15; Suet. \textit{Nero} 34). Manning’s identification of Canidia as belonging to Rome’s lower class is also suspect; the setting of \textit{Epode} 5 is a villa of some sort (\textit{totam domum}: 25), large enough to accommodate an inner garden in which to successfully bury someone alive. The possession of such property is not indicative of one who lives on the bottom rungs of Rome’s social ladder.

\textsuperscript{22} Manning (1970) 398.
claims. Unfortunately, adherents to this kind of reading have cited Canidia’s behavior in Horace’s poetry as supposedly reliable examples of magical practice in Rome.  

In the second case, those who would search for a historical person upon whom the character of Canidia was based have found several candidates beyond the Neapolitan Gratidia. In each instance, the identification is one supported by significant reliance upon circumstantial evidence and is ultimately impossible to verify with full confidence. Not unlike certain claimants of reincarnation whose past lives are invariably those of well known public figures, the “real” identifications of Canidia are often intimately connected with some of the most notable characters from late republican Rome. Some proponents of these theories readily admit that they are “fascinating rather than profitable” and I include them here only in an effort to provide as complete an overview of Canidian scholarship as possible.

Two such theories involve women each by the name of Caecilia. In the first, Canidia’s potential identity is posited by Tenney Frank to be that of Caecilia Metella, daughter of the notorious Clodia Metelli who was herself the object of Ciceronian ire and (supposedly) Catullan infatuation. Frank’s position owes much to the idea that Canidia and Clodia are both accused of flagrant promiscuity and are both reputed to have had

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24 Hahn (1939) 216.
25 The metrical and phonetic similarities between the names Caecilia and Canidia make this particular name an appealing prospect.
dealings with poisons. Horace’s frequent echoes of Catullan poetry are thus read by Frank as further indications of Canidia’s identity: whereas Catullus is presumed to have addressed poetry to Clodia via the pseudonym Lesbia, so Frank supposes Horace (casting himself as Catullus’ poetic heir in numerous ways) addressed her daughter by reusing much of Catullus’ poetic language.

This conscious textual interplay (if that is truly what is going on) is at its most apparent in Horace’s Ode 1.16. According to Frank’s interpretation, the poem’s unnamed addressee is designated as Canidia by its opening line: O matre pulchra filia pulchrior – “Oh daughter, more beautiful than your beautiful mother.” Frank reads this language as an echo of Catullus’ poem 79, written against a man named Lesbius. Its opening words, Lesbius est pulcher – “Lesbius is handsome” – are often cited as one of the primary textual clues for identifying Lesbius (and his sister Lesbia) as the brother and sister pair of Clodia and Clodius Pulcher. Hence Horace’s pointed use of the adjectives pulchra and pulchrior in Ode 1.16 are read as significant in terms of identifying this otherwise unnamed mother and daughter as Lesbia/Clodia and Canidia/Caecilia.

There are numerous reasons to question this reading. Let it suffice to say that Horace’s portrayal of Canidia elsewhere is hardly in line with the description of the daughter found in Ode 1.16; when Horace recounts Canidia’s physical appearance, he takes the utmost care to detail her grotesque nature. It is also problematic to assume that a reader of Horace’s Odes would be familiar enough with Horace and Catullus’ work to

27 On the promiscuity of Lesbia/Clodia: Cat. 11, 58, 72; Cic. Cael. 34f. On her association with poison: Cic. Cael. 56f.
29 Frank (1936) provides this and many other potential justifications for the reading of Canidia as Caecilia Metella.
recognize Canidia/Caecilia through the allusive *matre pulchra filia pulchrior* yet at the same time have no trouble reconciling this image of a beautiful woman with the horrific or threatening images of Canidia that recurred so frequently in the *Satires* and *Epodes*.

On a more fundamentally problematic level, this reading assumes that the existence of the living person on whom the character of Canidia was (supposedly) based can be verified solely by an appeal to the poetry of Horace and other writers, poetry that is often clearly fictionalized. This is the logic also behind Léon Herrmann’s identification of Canidia as another Caecilia, relative of Caecilius of Como.\(^\text{30}\) Herrmann describes Caecilia as a woman of generally loose virtues and questionable morals, the potential lover of Horace himself as well as of Quintilius Varus, Cornelius Nepos, Postumius and Quintus Cornificius Longus, among others. All of this derives from Herrmann’s triangulation of the characters of Horace’s Canidia, a promiscuous woman named Maecilia in Catullus 113 and an unnamed adulterous female relative of a certain Caecilius mentioned in Catullus 77.

Herrmann equates the unnamed adulteress (Cat. 67) with the promiscuous Maecilia (Cat. 113) on the basis that Catullus refers to both women as carrying on affairs in the northern Italian city of Brescia.\(^\text{31}\) Herrmann then brings Horace’s Canidia into the picture because she, like Caecilius’ adulterous relative, is reputed to have falsified a birth.\(^\text{32}\) This correlation yields Herrmann’s conclusion: because Maecilia and the

\[\text{30}\] Herrmann (1958).
\[\text{31}\] Cat. 67.31-36 specifically mentions Brescia. Poem 113 does not, but Herrmann reads the mention of two anonymous adulterers there as a reference to the two adulterers (Postumus and Cornelius) of Brescia in 67.
\[\text{32}\] Cat. 67.48: *falsum mendaci ventre puerperium*. Hor. *Epod*. 5.5-6: *per liberos te, si vocata partubus / Lucina veris advuit; 17.50-52: et tuo / cruore rubros obstetricì pannos lavit, / utcumque fortis exsilis puerpera.*
anonymous relative of Caecilius were both known for adultery in Brescia, and because both Canidia and the relative of Caecilius were described in terms of falsified childbirth, the three characters may refer to the same person. That person’s true name he posits as Caecilia, named by the metrically similar pseudonyms of Maecilia in Catullus and Canidia in Horace. The dangers of such an equation are readily apparent; similarity does not prove identity, especially via the textual relationships as tenuous as those cited here.

A third possibility as to Canidia’s identity sees her as a fictionalized stand-in for Publius Canidius Crassus.\textsuperscript{33} Based on the resonance of Canidia’s name with Canidius’, the assumption is that Horace’s portrayal of Canidia served as an indictment of the actual Canidius who was a supporter of Antony and enemy of Octavian. Further, albeit tenuous, connection may be drawn between them based on a passing reference to Hiberia at \textit{Epode} 5.21 (\textit{herbasque quas Iolcos atque Hiberia}): whereas Canidia gathered herbs from Hiberia, Canidius Crassus conquered Hiberia in 36 BCE.\textsuperscript{34} This proposition not only presumes a fairly late date of composition for \textit{Epode} 5, but it also reads heavily into the reference to Hiberia, a reference that fits well within the poem’s ritualistic context given the location’s prominent status as a land rich in magical flora and need bear no other significance than that.\textsuperscript{35} As such, I am not inclined to read Canidia’s relationship to Canidius as any more or less viable than the other potential options for Canidia’s historical basis.

\textsuperscript{34} Plut. \textit{Ant.} 34.
\textsuperscript{35} Also see Mankin (1995) \textit{ad loc.} on the association of Thessalian witchcraft with Hiberia.
Frankly, the most accurate solution to pinpointing Canidia’s historical origins may ultimately be the most vague. Niall Rudd outlines three potential options, none of which offer any concrete answers: 36 1) Canidia may be based on an unverifiable group of people with whom Horace was acquainted and may perhaps be an adaptation of the character Neobule (the repeated – and likely fictitious – target of Archilochus, one of Horace’s own literary models); 2) Canidia may again be based on a group of unidentifiable people but the details of her character may hint at one (unknown and unknowable) person in particular; 3) Canidia may be based wholly on one individual but has been so thoroughly re-imagined for the purpose of mockery that her original identity has been completely obscured to the modern reader. Of these options, it is impossible to say which, if any, is the most accurate.

Intriguing as these theories are, however, not one of them can be relied upon either to identify conclusively the origin of Canidia’s character, or to contribute significantly to our understanding of her role in Horace’s work. Insofar as this dissertation is concerned, Canidia’s true origins, whatever they are, have been long-since obscured and it is not my intention to speculate on what part of her character may or may not have been rooted in actual people or events. Instead, it will be more accurate and beneficial – both in terms of understanding Canidia’s character and in reading the poetry in which she appears – to approach her as a purely fictional character whose every detail has been consciously dictated by the poet Horace. Neapolitan Gratidia need not lurk on the periphery of our reading, nor should thoughts of Caecilia or Lesbia, of Canidius

36 Rudd (1960).
Crassus or of any other anonymous figure who might have been known to Horace. By keeping Canidia firmly within the confines of Horace’s poetry, I hope to remove any potential preconceptions about her identity in order to observe her solely as Horace presented her, which is to say – as a witch.
The Problem With Witches

Unfortunately, treating Canidia as a witch poses more questions than it answers. In this section, I will explain some of the primary issues that complicate the study of ancient witches, namely the absence of any substantively specific language in either English or Latin that would serve to differentiate meaningfully between witch characters of vastly disparate abilities, motives or backgrounds.

To begin with, the modern English word “witch” is a highly generalized term that is broadly applicable to a multitude of disparate entities, many of which may be decidedly mundane. On a very basic level, “witch” may be used as a simple pejorative for an elderly woman (“that batty old witch”),37 or a description of a beguiling female whose charms – while not precisely magical – are nonetheless impressive.38 When the term is applied to women actually assumed to be in possession of phenomenal powers, the term’s many accumulated connotations all but guarantee that those women labeled as witches need have little in common save some knowledge of the supernatural. To appeal to *The Wizard of Oz*, the dichotomy of the two characters of the Wicked Witch of the West and the Good Witch of the North demonstrates how the naturally opposite natures of the two characters (antagonist/protagonist, wicked/good) are unrecognizable through the use of

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37 e.g. Coleridge: (1835) “There are only three classes into which all the women past seventy that ever I knew were to be divided:—1. That dear old soul: 2. That old woman: 3. That old witch.”
38 e.g. Whitaker (1800): “In 1634 was acted a play entitled The Witches of Lancaster… The term has since been transferred to a gentler species of fascination, which my fair countrywomen still continue to exert in full force.” (*OED* Online. “witch, n.2”.)
the term “witch.” It is only following the addition of the adjectives “wicked” and “good” that the cloud of potential meanings attendant on the noun “witch” coalesces into a more recognizable and more specific form to create two distinct entities from an original ambivalence: a Good Witch and a Wicked Witch. In addition to the word’s potential to contain embedded contradictory meanings (malevolent/benevolent) it possesses a ready applicability to a multitude of distinctive characters. Limiting the scope only to recent popular western culture, we find such diverse witches as Samantha from the television program *Bewitched*, the Queen from Disney’s *Snow White*, C.S. Lewis’ White Witch and J.K. Rowling’s Hermione Granger. This does not even begin to account for the many and varied figures from Asian, African, South American or eastern European cultures that are regularly identified in English as “witches”: the Japanese *kitsune-mochi*, the Chilean *kalku*, the *gonja* of Ghana, the Slavic *Baba Yaga*. In short, the word “witch” is applied broadly and with little discrimination to describe an expansive host of supernatural women; this has resulted in the grouping together of significantly disparate characters on the basis of impressively few shared attributes.

Whereas English has only a few terms with which to condense this heterogeneous host of characters (“witch,” “sorceress,” and “enchantress” are largely interchangeable), Latin has a plurality: a character labeled easily as a witch in English may be described in Latin as a *cantatrix* or *praecantrix*, a *sacerdos* or *vates*. She may be *docta*, *divina*, *saga* and *maga*, a *venefica*, *malefica*, *lamia*, *lupula*, *strix*, or *striga*. She may be simply
quae dam anus.\textsuperscript{39} The available terms are copious and diverse, and the presence of such an abundant differential vocabulary would suggest (incorrectly, I shall argue) that Latin – unlike English – made clear linguistic distinctions between various witch types. It would seem a reasonable expectation that praecantrices, a word evocative of those who sing of events before they happen (praee + cantare), would be concerned with divinatory practices\textsuperscript{40} while veneficae, given the term’s close relationship to the word for poison (venenum), would deal in potions or philters, leaving the lamiae (a Latinization of the Greek demon Lamia) or striges (personifications of the rapacious screech owl) to function as quasi-demonic bogeys posing threats to the lives of small children.\textsuperscript{41} However, this expectation of semantic and morphological harmony is quickly disappointed upon attempts to correlate a witch’s title with her function.\textsuperscript{42}

It is true that in many instances there exists a seeming concordance between the name attributed to a witch and the function she fulfills: Erictho is dubbed a Thessala vates (Thessalian prophet) as she reanimates a corpse to deliver a prophecy for Sextus Pompey;\textsuperscript{43} Hypsipyle labels Medea a venefica (poisoner) for ensnaring Jason with special plants instead of relying on her beauty and good character;\textsuperscript{44} Horace, when advising

\textsuperscript{39} See Burris (1936) for an extensive survey of Latin descriptive terms for magical practices as well as those applied to male and female magical practitioners. Though I depart from his generalizations regarding the deployment of these terms, the assembled material is an invaluable catalogue of the Latin witch vocabulary.

\textsuperscript{40} The dual meaning of prae as both a temporal and spatial designation begins to complicate this interpretation, however, and is an indication of the problems attendant upon appeals to etymological explanations.


\textsuperscript{42} The general imprecision of Latin (or Greek) terms for magic and magical practitioners has been a phenomenon widely observed, though rarely with prolonged attention to the Roman witch; cf. Dickie (2001) 12-17, 124-141; Faraone (1999) 15-30; Graf (1997) 36-60.

\textsuperscript{43} Luc. 6.651.

\textsuperscript{44} Ov. Ep. 6.19, 93-94.
against the composition of highly fictional literature, posits that removing a still-living boy from a *lamia*’s stomach would be an example of excessive fictionalization. Each name complements the witch’s function: the *vates* is prophetic, the *venefica* plies potent herbs and the *lamia* has literally eaten a child. However, for each such occasion of apparent harmonic nomenclature there are multiple demonstrations of its discordance. In these instances, terms whose denotations are *prima facie* quite specific are deployed in situations that belie their problematic nature.

In an oft-cited anecdote, Pliny explains that the farmer Cresimus was accused of enhancing his own harvest while depleting those of his neighbors through the use of *veneficia*; this accusation makes little sense if *veneficia* are merely potions or poisons since the use of such materials provides no logical explanation for an increase in Cresimus’ crops. Even though the term *veneficia* is intrinsically related to the use of poisons (*venena*) and although mundane poisoners are repeatedly referred to as *veneficae* or *veneficii* this is a clear instance wherein the use of *veneficia* must signify an act quite separate from the simple manipulation of poisonous materials and must be expanded to encompass an ill-defined range of subtle, potentially supernatural, aggressive behaviors. By extension, witches labeled as *veneficae* cannot be classified neatly as potion

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45 The *lamia* is a demon known to kill (and occasionally eat) children. She is discussed at length in chapter three, p. 131-133.
46 Hor. *Ars* 340.
47 Plin. *Nat.* 18.41.5f.
48 e.g. Cicero often refers to the charge of poisoning leveled against his client Cluentius as *venefici crimen* (*Clu. 1.5; 166.1*) and Tacitus describes the famed poisoner Martina both as *infamem veneficiis* (*Ann. 2.74.5*) and *famosam veneficiis* (3.7.6).
49 Graf (1997) 46-49 outlines the evolution and double nature of the term in republican Rome and later (2007) 139-150 examines epigraphical testimonia for the untimely dead by way of *veneficia/pharmaka*.
specialists or poisoners when it is absolutely uncertain precisely what actions are and are not inscribed within the limits of *veneficium*.

An analysis of the term *saga* demonstrates far more specifically the multitude of potential meanings of just one of the many Latin terms for witch. At its most basic level, the noun/adjective *saga* conveys a sense of knowledge. Cicero etymologizes that one who is sagacious (*sagire*) is keenly aware (*sentire acutē*), hence some old women are sage (*sagae*) because they know many things (*multa scire*). That these are *old* women is important only insofar as their age has accorded them additional opportunities to obtain knowledge and the term seems to carry with it no pejorative connotations. In this sense, a woman who is *saga* need not possess any supernatural abilities, merely a sharpened awareness of her surroundings. For this reason, Cicero can apply the root of this term equally to dogs (*sagaces canes*). Moreover, he makes a sharp distinction between this keen perceptiveness (*sagire*) and the ability to perceive the future (*praesagire*). For Cicero, *sagae* cannot predict the future. One who perceives events not in the moment but in the moment beforehand (*ante sagit*) is said to presage (*praesagire*), or to sense events before they occur (*futura ante sentire*). This does not apply to those who are simply *sagae*.

Alternatively, Columella (writing circa 60 CE) specifically groups *sagae* together with the divinatory *haruspices* and advises that both sets of practitioners be avoided lest their empty religious observation (*vana superstitione*) drive base individuals to needless

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expense and ultimate disgrace.\textsuperscript{51} That \textit{sagae} are here discussed in explicit combination with \textit{haruspices} and are actively counseled against due to their appeal to the uneducated (\textit{rudis animos}) suggests that Columella’s \textit{sagae} are of an altogether different sort than those sage old women described by Cicero. If their association with the \textit{haruspices} can be read as a reliable indication of their practice, these \textit{sagae} appear to be a type of professional consultant, presumably available for a fee to offer predictions about the future. This interpretation would be commensurate with the description of a Syrian \textit{saga} in the retinue of Gaius Marius: Frontinus (circa 90 CE) explains that Marius kept this \textit{saga} so that through her knowledge he could pretend that he himself knew the outcome of battles before they even occurred (\textit{dimicationum eventus praediscere simulabat}).\textsuperscript{52}

Although Cicero understood \textit{sagae} to be older women who possessed knowledge separate from that held by those who could predict the future, Columella and Frontinus clearly considered \textit{sagae} to be women who were explicitly skilled in the divinatory arts.

This difference regarding the powers of a \textit{saga} might be attributed to the roughly one hundred thirty years dividing Cicero’s \textit{De Divinatione} from Frontinus’ \textit{Strategemata}; the intervening time could have allowed the term to evolve and expand from describing women who were merely wise to include those who were gifted with preternatural foresight. However, the evidence offered by a contemporary of both Frontinus and Columella suggests otherwise. In Martial’s \textit{Epigrammata} a \textit{saga} is mentioned on two occasions and in neither instance appears to possess any powers of divination; each \textit{saga} is instead invoked as a purifier, specifically of dreams:

\textsuperscript{51} Col. 1.8.6.
\textsuperscript{52} Fron. \textit{Str.} 1.11.12.
iam prior ad faecem, sed et haec vindemia, venit, 
exorat noctes dum mihi saga tuas.\textsuperscript{53}

Last year’s wine – this year’s as well – has reached its dregs while the saga purifies your dreams for me.

amphora nunc petitur nigri cariosa Falerni, 
expiet ut somnos garrula saga tuos.\textsuperscript{54}

Now an expensive jar of dark Falernian wine is needed for that chattering saga to cleanse your dreams.

Insofar as their function is concerned, these sagae are unrelated to those envisioned either by Cicero, Frontinus or Columella; they offer no predictions, they possess no innate wisdom; they are drunken purifiers.\textsuperscript{55} Without mention of their predilection for wine, the second century grammarian Pompeius Festus describes sagae similarly and includes them in a list of synonyms used to describe women adept at purification: “A priestess (sacerdos) experienced in rites of purification was called a purifier (piatrix), labeled by some as a shifter (simulatrix), by others a wise woman (saga) and others an expiator (expiatrix).”\textsuperscript{56}

These unique, concomitant perceptions of the saga indicate that the lack of any rigid or consistent definitions of this figure amongst Roman authors cannot be attributed

\textsuperscript{53} Mart. 7.54.3-4.
\textsuperscript{54} ibid. 11.50.7-8.
\textsuperscript{55} It is worthwhile to note a similar situation at Tib. 1.5 where an anus is present and incanting (praecinuisset) as the poet himself acts as a pseudo dream purifier (procuravi ne posse saeva nocere / somnia). There is a tendency to extrapolate from drunken witches such as these a trend in witches to incline toward the ebriose. While there exists a demonstrable and long-lived literary trope of old women and their love for wine (Rosivach (1994) 113-114), just as there are a handful of inebriated older women cast as witches, this occasional overlap has collapsed into a false assumption of drunkenness as a prevalent attribute among Roman witches. Pollard (2008) exemplifies this in her desire to identify as a witch an Anus Ebria statue from the Capitoline Museum in Rome.
\textsuperscript{56} Fest. p. 213P. Curiously, the single other extant use of simulatrix is found in Statius (Theb. 4.551) to describe Circe, where the term evokes not purificatory abilities but her practice of transforming or ‘shifting’ her guests into animals.
solely to a temporal semantic shift; Martial knows *sagae* to be purifiers while his contemporaries understand them as diviners, whereas Cicero had previously drawn a clear distinction between diviners and *sagae*, yet made no mention of their work as purifiers. Moreover, Horace, as a younger contemporary of Cicero (he was twenty-two years old at the time of the consular’s death) would potentially have shared Cicero’s understanding of *sagae* but instead cast them as either purifiers or scornful objects of empty and superstitious dread. Even the Roman elegists Tibullus, Propertius and Ovid, although they themselves were younger contemporaries of Horace, present yet another interpretation of the *sagae*: within the elegiac corpus, these women are not diviners or purifiers *per se* but are regularly referred to as specialists of erotic magic. Tibullus twice mentions the powers of a certain *saga*, once when she provides a spell to deceive his lover’s husband and a second time when he curses the *saga*, this time for counseling the object of his affection to value wealth over love. Propertius’ *Thessala saga* was unable

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57 Hor. C. 1.27.21-2 quae saga, quis te solvere Thessalis / magus venenis, quis poterit deus?
58 *ibid*. Ep. 2.2.208-9 somnia, terrores magicos, miracula, sagas / nocturnos lemures, portentaque Thessala rides? It is likely this dreadful aspect of the *saga* that is captured on a child’s epitaph, apparently stolen (and presumably killed) by a *saga*’s hand (*CIL* vi. no. 19747).
59 Tib. 1.2.42f.
60 *ibid*. 1.5.47f. This type of professional practitioner of erotic magic *qua* female pimp (*lena*) is one of the most easily recognized and therefore affords a generic (though mistaken) association of witches and prostitution that can result in a readiness to identify witches as prostitutes/pimps (or vice versa) on the basis of little verifiable evidence: cf. Dickie (2001) 178-191, wherein Horace’s Canidia is cast as an aging prostitute (*Epod*. 5: 17), and an old woman performing a rite “to bind hostile mouths” at the Feralia (Ov. *Fast.* 571-583) is identified as “a *lena* and her girls” based solely on their consumption of wine at the ceremony (See also Ogden (2002) 129). The fourth century grammarian Nonius provides a significantly earlier example of this conflation in his citation of the Lucilian line “in age and aspect like a *saga* and a good go-between” (*aetatem et faciem ut saga et bona conciliatrix*). Neither *saga* nor *conciliatrix* need specify a woman acting as a pimp in this instance; the terms may just as readily pertain to a *saga* who offers erotic magic for reconciliatory purposes, especially given that it is only in Tib. 1.5 that a *saga* is ever explicitly identified as a *lena*. Nevertheless, Nonius glosses *saga* by explaining, “Women are called *sagae* who hunt to satisfy the lust of men” (*sagae mulieres dicuntur feminae ad lubidinem virorum indagatrices*) (Luc. *Sat*. 7.271; Non. 23, 1).
to rid him of his love for Cynthia and Ovid considered that it might have been a *saga* at the root of his otherwise inexplicable impotence. Such erotic associations, while commonly attributed to *sagae* in Roman elegy, are simply not employed by Horace, Cicero, Martial, Columella, Festus or Frontinus, whereas *sagae* with purificatory or divinatory skills are wholly unattested in the elegiac corpus.

However, *sagae* as practitioners of erotic magic do occur in Apuleius’ second century novel, the *Metamorphoses*, although with considerable additional powers. The witch Meroe, described by the traveler Aristomenes as wise and god-like (*saga et divina*), is known for her ability to compel men the world over to fall passionately in love with her, and another unnamed *saga* is sought out to reconcile a wife to her husband. The similarities these women bear to their elegiac counterparts end there: the anonymous *saga*, after failing to assuage the husband, summons the ghost of a violently slaughtered woman to kill the man instead and Meroe’s other supernatural skills include transforming her enemies into animals (a beaver, frog and ram), indefinitely preventing a woman from giving birth, locking an entire city indoors and transporting a man’s place of residence to the peak of a barren mountain. Other *sagae* appear as nameless, menacing shape-shifters (*versipelles*), vile women who gnaw off the faces of corpses and will attempt all manner of evil to satisfy their lust. Although both Apuleius and the Roman

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61 Prop. 3.24/25.9-10.
62 Ov. Am. 3.7.27f.
63 Apul. Met. 1.8 *ut se ament efflictim non modo incolae verum etiam Indi vel Aethiopes utrique vel ipsi Antichones, folia sunt artis et nugae merae.*
64 Apul. Met. 9.29.
65 ibid. 9.30f.
66 ibid. 1.9-10.
67 ibid. 2.21f.
elegists present sagae in specifically erotic contexts, it is clear that the sagae of the Metamorphoses are operating on a significantly different plane than those of Roman elegy. The elegiac sagae are professional practitioners of erotic magic, consulted and paid by both men and women to either help or hinder amorous relationships; Apuleius’ sagae are not exclusively magical professionals available for hire, they possess skills far beyond simple amatory magic and their behavior – including corpse defilation, mordant facial disfiguration and the commission of dispassionate murder – borders on the monstrous. Yet in spite of their outstanding disparities, none of these sagae can be reconciled with those who are conceptualized as mere diviners or purifiers.

The breadth of Latin witch terminology and the vagaries of meaning contained in even a single component thereof clearly indicates that there was never a cohesive set of witch characters who were easily typified and categorized by either name or ability. Even though the terminology for such distinctions was demonstrably in use, it would seem that the Latin witch vocabulary was deployed with a relative indiscrimination that conflated characters of substantially different calibers and motivation. As mentioned above, English acts with similar disregard – although instead of Latin’s extensive polyvalent terminology, English condenses that range into a single term: witch. A notable example of the semantic condensation at work in both Latin and English is Georg Luck’s survey of some of the most famous “witches and sorcerers in classical literature,” an examination of which will provide a starting point from which to explore the intense plurality of those characters whose diverse roles have been occluded through the use of

\[68\] Luck (1999) 93-158.
non-specific vocabulary. Witches, as we would describe them, are a collection of largely unrelated characters that have been united only through the use of a generic vocabulary that has promoted false assumptions of equivalence.

In the preface of his survey, Luck is careful to indicate the often vague nature of ancient terminology for magical practitioners. He explains the many problems inherent in the semantically ambiguous terms such as *magos/magus* and then provides a distillation of the magical practitioner’s primary attributes, sketching what he terms “the conventional image of the sorcerer.” This distillation proves somewhat unsatisfactory for Luck; he concedes that even the broad generalizations he has identified are apt to be contradicted. “It becomes clear that there is not one single image [of the sorcerer], which does not surprise in such a complex culture… The sorcerer, after all, remains a shadowy figure, wrapped in secrecy, because that is his trademark.” Yet after acknowledging the inherently elusive nature of this figure, Luck remains confident in the ability to identify and describe a list of over thirty prominent ancient witches and sorcerers. A prime example of ‘I know it when I see it,’ these characters demonstrate no consistency in their

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69 The polyvalent nature of the English “witch” is comparable also to the Italian usage of *strega* (cf. Barchiesi (1995)), the Spanish *magabruja* (Meléndez-Valdés (2002)), the French *magicienne/sorcière* (Tupet (1976)) and the German *hexe* (Luck (1962)).

70 The primary problem with such terminology is that *magos* is the Hellenized name for Persian priests whose actual practices, one may imagine, had little to do with what later became known as *mageia* or ‘magic.’ Graf (1997) 20-35 treats the evolution of the term fairly extensively.

71 Luck (1999) notably uses the term *magos* in reference to both male and female practitioners, each of whom he treats as functionally equal. He makes no distinction between the actions or affordances of either. His usage of “witch” and “sorcerer” implies only a distinction in gender and does not convey any further denotations. e.g. “We have little evidence concerning the actual attire and appearance of the *magos* during the performance of a ritual. It must have varied greatly – from the rags worn by Lucan’s Ergitcho to the priestly robes embroidered with symbols favored by the theurgists.” (p. 93) “Sometimes, the *magos* does not quite understand what is actually working through him and for him. The sorcerer and the witch only know that something is working.” (p. 105)

72 It should be mentioned here that, as with his treatment of *magos*, Luck often uses “sorcerer” as a gender-neutral English term that is applicable to both men and women.

73 Luck (1999) 102, 106.
attributes, abilities or social roles yet are each readily and consistently identified as either “witches” or “sorcerers.” Luck’s analysis of the source material cannot be faulted; it is the extreme versatility of the ancient witch terminology along with the English terms “witch” and “sorcerer” that enables the combination of so many figures who bear so little in common. Were the witches to be isolated from the sorcerers in the survey, the level of demonstrable consistency would rise but little: the characters sampled still range from powerful quasi-divinities to bumbling housewives and elderly hags; their only consistent characteristics are their gender and a broadly defined ability to manipulate supernatural forces.

Luck’s survey encapsulates some of the most prominent witches of the ancient world for whom there is the most substantial extant literary testimony; as such, this list is an ideal starting point from which to demonstrate the profusion of abilities, functions and terminology surrounding the ancient witch. What follows is a brief summary of each of the characters of Luck’s survey, with occasional quotations from Luck where his choice of terminology is particularly relevant or enlightening. Several charts follow afterwards, wherein the specific attributes, accoutrements and titles of each witch are compared and analyzed for consistency. Again and again it will be made clear that precious little unites these figures and that even the most commonly demonstrated attributes are incapable of categorizing witches in any significant or meaningful manner.
Name: Circe
Source: Homer, *Odyssey* 9-12
Description: A “witch-like character,” Circe is a “beautiful woman, a seductress and a temptress.” Perhaps a “minor goddess,” she exercises her power through potent drugs and a type of wand. She is capable of turning men into animals, has some knowledge of divination and is versed in the proper performance of rituals for communicating with the dead. Her influence is localized to her own island and she poses no threat to those beyond it, although her name is often invoked by others as a byword for magical potency.

Name: Medea
Description: In many ways the archetypal witch, “Medea may be in the same class as Circe… a minor goddess, or the priestess of a goddess from a distant age.” She destroys a giant bronze monster with the power of the “evil eye” and is gifted with extensive knowledge of destructive and protective herbs, some of which she prepares in a cooking pot. She rides a dragon-drawn chariot through the air, calls upon the powers of the underworld gods and can rip constellations from the sky. At times benevolent, at others purely malicious, Medea is variously reported to have killed kings, rival lovers and family members (including her brother and children). Originally from Colchis, different sources situate her exploits throughout the Greek world, specifically in Corinth and Athens.

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74 All proper names have been regularized according to predominant Americanized spelling.
75 The sources listed represent the texts in which each character primarily features. These texts are also the same works surveyed in the charts that follow. The sources listed represent the only classical works in which each character appears, with the exception of Circe, Medea, Deianira and Dido. Due to the extent of texts in which these characters are mentioned briefly and with little detail, only the most prominent works are treated here.
76 The descriptions are intended to provide the reader with a basic familiarity with the characters of Luck’s survey. More detailed information may be found in the charts that follow.
78 Luck (1999) 112.
Name: Deianira
Source: Sophocles, *Trachiniae*; Seneca, *Hercules Oetaeus*
Description: The jealous wife of Heracles, Deianira attempts to rekindle her husband’s interest through the use of a love charm created on the advice of the dying centaur Nessus: a gift of clothing smeared in Nessus’ own blood. Unfortunately, instead of igniting Heracles’ passion, the cloth binds to his flesh to cause excruciating pain from which he finds relief only in suicide. This motif (deadly clothing as a gift from a jealous wife) is also found in Euripides’ *Medea*, although Medea was aware of the cloth’s properties while Deianira was not. In contrast to Circe and Medea, Deianira is a mortal woman. She is from the city of Trachis and although her actions result in death, she is not intentionally murderous.

Name: Simaetha
Source: Theocritus, *Idyll 2*
Description: The jilted lover Simaetha conducts an elaborate love spell with the assistance of another woman to regain the wandering attentions of her lover Daphnis. Based on the presence of the assistant and on her consultation of multiple other professionals (from local old women to an Assyrian stranger), Simaetha is labeled as an “amateur witch” by Luck and others. In the course of her spell, Simaetha uses various esoteric ingredients (including a magic wheel and waxen figurines), invokes the moon and the goddess Hecate, and likens the potency of her drugs to those of Circe and Medea. Simaetha’s use of magic seems not the day-to-day practice of a woman well-versed in erotic magic but more like the last recourse of a desperate lover. Her actions are limited to this one instance and are likely set on the island of Cos.

79 In Seneca’s *Hercules Oetaeus*, Deianira has a nurse who claims power over the elements, experience in consulting ghosts and a command of spells and chants (452-464). Unlike Dido (see below), Deianira does not avail herself of her nurse’s magical talents.
80 Luck (1999) 120.
Name: Not Given
Source: Vergil, *Eclogue* 8
Description: This character is almost certainly a purposeful adaptation of Simaetha from Theocritus’ second *Idyll*. Just as Simaetha, this woman conducts a spell to regain the love of a young man named Delphis (instead of Simaetha’s Daphnis). She, too, has an assistant and makes use of a similar range of materials – strange ingredients, colored threads, clay and waxen figurines. She mentions Circe and Medea\(^1\) and, like Simaetha, has consulted a magical professional.\(^2\) No other mention is made of her continued magical exploits and it can be assumed that this instance, much like that of Simaetha’s, is a one-time event.

Name: Dido
Source: Vergil, *Aeneid* 4
Description: A blend of the characters of Circe and Medea, the Carthaginian queen Dido turns unwillingly to magic after being rejected by her lover Aeneas. She consults a Massylian priestess with an extensive list of qualifications: reputedly a guardian of the temple of the Hesperides, this priestess is capable of freeing people from the pains of love, or inflicting them; she can stop the flow of rivers, reverse the stars and rouse the dead; she makes the earth shake and trees walk. This is the woman who assists Dido in the conduct of a ritual to ease her heartache, but the ritual is unsuccessful and may have served only as a pretense to disguise Dido’s planned suicide. Dido’s use of magic is explicitly cited as contrary to her normal character and is not found elsewhere.\(^3\)

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\(^1\) Circe is mentioned explicitly (*Ver. Ecl. 8.70*), Medea by reference to herbs gathered in Pontus (95).

\(^2\) The man, Moeris, has a number of supernatural abilities to his credit – namely turning himself into a wolf, summoning the spirits of the dead and charming crops from one field to another (96-99).

\(^3\) Curiously, in Luck’s explanation of Dido’s role as a witch, his description of her powerful Massylian assistant is limited to the single clause, “with the assistance of a famous priestess-witch” (121).
Name: Canidia

Sources: Horace, *Satires* 1.8, 2.1, 2.8; *Epodes* 3, 5, 17

Description: Dubbed by Luck “the love-witch,” Canidia is presented as an “evil witch” who starves a Roman child to death to make a love potion from his body parts and who elsewhere visits a cemetery to dig up corpses and summon ghosts. (Though characterized by Luck as primarily amatory in nature, it should be mentioned that Canidia’s spells are explicitly erotic in only one instance and only potentially erotic in two others; her three remaining appearances are wholly removed from erotic contexts and focus instead on her knowledge of poisons.) Canidia is a regular practitioner of magic and professes to be able to rip the moon from the sky and waken the dead. She appears several times in the company of other female magical practitioners and seemingly operates in and around the city of Rome.

Name: Acanthis, Dipsas, and unnamed others

Sources: Tibullus, *Elegiae* 1.2, 1.5, 1.8; Propertius, *Elegiae* 1.1, 3.6, 3.11, 3.19, 3.24/25, 4.5; Ovid, *Amores* 1.8, 3.7; *Ars Amatoria* 2.99f, 329f; *Fasti* 2.572f; *Medicamina Faciei* 36f; *Remedia Amoris* 249f

Description: Throughout Roman elegiac love poetry, various women are repeatedly consulted by men and women alike for their expertise in aggressive erotic magic. These women seem to be local professionals whose services are available for a fee and are often closely associated with the business of prostitution. When physical descriptions are provided, the women appear old, repulsive and not infrequently inebriated. Though their spells are primarily amatory in nature, they are occasionally requested to perform purificatory rituals for medicinal ends. The powers attributed to these women are extremely varied: most are said to have the ability to raise the dead, draw down the moon and

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84 Luck (1999) 122.
reverse the course of rivers and stars yet some are also shape-shifters and charmers of crops. Like the literary genre in which they feature, these witches are centered in and around Rome although their origins, powers and magical accoutrements are sometimes identified as Thessalian.

Name: Erictho
Source: Lucan, Bellum Civile 6
Description: “A kind of superwitch... like all the former witches, from Medea to Canidia, wrapped into one,” Erictho is the foulest, most meticulously grotesque witch in the entirety of ancient literature. She is characterized by her total devotion to impiety and the reversal of natural order; she is a murderer and a defiler of corpses, she sleeps outdoors or in abandoned tombs, avoids daylight and addresses the gods not with prayers but commands. Erictho is versed in virtually every magical technique mentioned previously, and Lucan pays special attention to her gruesome ability to reanimate a corpse in order to predict the future. Her other magical actions are not explicitly narrated, but it is clear that Erictho’s career is an extensive one, based in the heart of Thessaly.

Name: Not Given
Source: Petronius, Satyricon 131
Description: An older woman consulted for her knowledge of cures for impotence, this character seems to be something of a local expert in erotic magic and conducts a ‘restorative’ spell using strands of colored thread and small pebbles. Mention is made of other women in the area who can pull the moon from the sky, but it is unclear whether this woman is of their ilk. Because of the fragmentary nature of the Satyricon it is impossible to accurately localize the

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85 Tib. 1.2.41f.; 1.8; Prop. 1.1.19f.; Ov. Am. 1.8.2f.; Rem. 254f.
86 Prop. 4.5; Ov. Am. 1.8.2f.
87 Prop. 1.8.
88 Luck (1999) 137.
geography of this character, but she may be situated on the southern Italian peninsula.

Name: Sosipatra
Source: Eunapius, Vitae Sophistarum 6.6.5
Description: “A philosophical teacher and psychic,” Sosipatra possesses considerable powers of divination and an expert command of poetry, philosophy and oratory. She correctly predicts the number and gender of her children as well as the manner of their deaths. She once interrupted a discourse on the nature of the soul to inform her audience that a friend’s carriage had just toppled and left him badly injured. Sosipatra’s outstanding intellect is attributed to her initiation into the Chaldean mysteries at the young age of five, after which she seems to have become a theurgist. She was born near the city of Ephesus and lived with her husband in Pergamum.

Name: Not Given
Source: Heliodorus, Aethiopica 6
Description: This elderly Egyptian woman raises the corpse of her dead son by conducting a grisly nocturnal ritual in the same vein as that committed by Erictho and reminiscent of the rite instructed by Circe. She makes use of exotic ingredients, libations and a cake shaped into a mannequin to carry out the explicitly impious rite. As her son’s spirit returns to his corpse, he rebukes her for her disrespect of natural law and presages her own imminent death. It is unclear whether this woman is a regular practitioner of magic, but it seems likely. The scene is set near Egyptian Bessa.

These brief outlines readily demonstrate one fundamental point: the women identified by Luck as witches represent a wide swath of characters with few significant unifying

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characteristics. Of these characters, divinities appear alongside mortals, professional and lifelong practitioners with desperate amateurs, youthful maidens with elderly hags, philosophers with grave-robbers, and fictional characters with historical figures. Appeals to unification on the grounds of geography, morality and intentionality are likewise defeated: Thessaly is mentioned frequently, but not consistently; explicitly impious characters (Erictho and the unnamed Egyptian woman) keep company with the religiously devout (Sosipatra), and intentional murderers like Medea and Canidia are grouped with kindly old women and loving wives. The only common ground shared by each of these witches – the most well known of the ancient world – is their gender and, as mentioned previously, a vague notion of supernatural abilities.

However, even the supernatural abilities displayed by these witches are largely inconsistent. The following three charts present synopses of those most common powers, as well as of the implements and ingredients employed by the witches, and an analysis of the specific terminology used to describe these characters and their magical practices. Because the women described in Luck’s survey are the witches for whom the most literary evidence has survived from the ancient world, they comprise the sample group for each chart.\(^90\) The diversity of the data demonstrates that the modern conceptualization of the ancient witch is not based on any clearly unifying attributes, properties, or vocabulary shared between a group of characters: the collection of women Luck has

\(^90\) I have added two further entries beyond those characters in Luck’s survey: the Massylian priestess who assists Dido, and the race of Thessalian women (only insofar as they are described by Lucan). Both new entries were as equally documented as the others and seem to me valuable additions to the data set.
identified as witches have no similarities substantial enough upon which to base
inferences of characterization and behavior.

The first chart is a catalogue of the most common supernatural abilities
demonstrated by each witch. The abilities are broadly defined so as to be as inclusive as
possible without becoming overly vague; for example, any textual mention of a spell
(carmen, cantus, ἔπῳδός), repeated formula or song in a witches’ repertoire would
qualify as “chanting/singing,” whereas the act of physically reanimating a corpse is
substantially distinct enough from the simple evocation of spirits and thus necessitates a
separate categorization. Although the abilities attributed to single characters (Circe,
Medea, Deianira, as well as the collective of elegiac witches) by multiple authors have
been artificially collapsed for the ease of visual representation on each chart, this has not
afforded a false sense of unity.
The abilities listed here are not exhaustive. For the sake of comprehension and visual presentation, I have omitted several abilities attributed to single witches only; those abilities include, among others, the power of flight (Medea), command of the evil eye (Medea), supernatural speed (Circe), invisibility (Circe) and bewitching crops (anonymous witch of Tib. 1.8).


The category of animal transformation is differentiated into two types – that which targets the practitioner (self) and that which targets others (others). Erotic magic is likewise distinguished based upon the intended beneficiary.

Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Circe</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Medea</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Self / Others</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Deianira</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Simaetha</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Self</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anon. (Ver. Ecl. 8)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Self</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dido</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dido's Assistant</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canidia</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Self</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acanthis, Dipsas, et al.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eriphyes</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thessalians (Luc. 6)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anon. (Petr. 131)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sosipatra</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anon. (Heliod. Aeth. 6)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As can be seen from the chart, none of these abilities are ubiquitous. There is no single supernatural element that each of these witches share, which suggests that there is no specific activity that could serve as a litmus test for identifying the ancient witch. Moreover, the lack of characters with corresponding abilities – i.e. a repeating set of two or more attributes shared among a few figures – casts doubt on the existence even of certain witch-types or subsets of witches: characters such as the necromancer, the hag, the seductress, etc. Only two witches in this survey display a complete overlap in abilities: Theocritus’ Simaetha and the unnamed witch of Vergil’s eighth Eclogue, and due to Vergil’s conscious reworking of Theocritus, I would argue that the close resemblances between the two characters are more indicative of a literary engagement than they are evidence of a particular witch type.

There are certain general trends in the abilities of these witches that can be observed; erotic magic is a common attribute, as is the usage of spells through chants or songs and the invocation of divinities, but not even half of the witches surveyed here share all three of these attributes. Of those that do, none possess a further set of shared recurring abilities.

More intriguingly, none of the supernatural abilities assessed are wholly specific to female practitioners. While an exhaustive list of the male practitioners who also possess these skills is beyond the scope of this survey, the following examples of male supernatural activity may serve as evidence for the gender neutrality of each action: the

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94 It is not in question whether certain witches share some salient characteristics with one another. The issue is that these shared characteristics are perceived as justifiable grounds upon which to base further equivalencies. This leads to the creation of subcategories of witches whose assumed similarities are far greater than those actually demonstrated – see p. 45-52 for further discussion.
usage of spells and chants in the ancient world is widespread among men and women;\textsuperscript{95} animal transformations (while rare), can be found in the male characters of Moeris and the anonymous lycanthropic traveler in Petronius’ \textit{Satyricon};\textsuperscript{96} Hippocrates mentions men who can pull the moon from the sky;\textsuperscript{97} the famed lyricist Orpheus is reputed to have charmed rivers and moved trees with his music;\textsuperscript{98} Zatchlas, an itinerant Egyptian priest, reanimates a corpse in full view of the public;\textsuperscript{99} Odysseus and the mythic Roman king Numa both rouse the spirits of the dead;\textsuperscript{100} Jason uses erotic magic to kindle Medea’s desire;\textsuperscript{101} the invocation of divinities is common to virtually all priests of the ancient world, male or female, and all manner of diviners – from Tiresias and Pythagoras to the Roman \textit{haruspices} - were said to have knowledge of the future. In sum, there is not one supernatural ability held in common by every witch and of the abilities afforded to witches each is also practiced by non-witches.

\textsuperscript{95} The double meanings of the Latin \textit{carmen} and Greek \textit{ἐπισεδός} as both ‘spell’ and ‘poem’ are indicative of the power accorded to speech in general and of poetry in particular, neither of which are the exclusive purview of either men or women. Ovid himself plays with this ambiguity by claiming that his elegies (referred to as \textit{carmina}) have the power to soften harsh doors, to draw down the moon, reverse the sun, burst the jaws of snakes and force rivers to flow backwards (Ov. \textit{Am}. 2.1.21-26). The efficacy of speech acts has a long history both in practice and in scholarship. Examples of the ‘enchanting’ power of speech as practiced by both men and women occur in the classical world as early as Homer’s \textit{Odyssey}, wherein words with the root \textit{θελ-} (denoting an act of enchantment) are used of the bard Phemius (\textit{θελκτήρας}: 1.337), the Sirens (\textit{θελγοναι}: 12.40) and Circe (\textit{κατέθελεν}: 10.213). The Babylonian creation epic, the \textit{Enuma Elish}, provides even earlier instantiation of efficacious speech; there, the words of the god Marduk carry with them the explicit powers of generation and disintegration as he commands a ‘constellation’ to be created and at once destroyed (4.22-26). Segal (1999), Watson (1991), Detienne (1996) and Parry (1992) engage at length with the efficacious powers of the voice in the ancient world.

\textsuperscript{96} Moeris: Ver. \textit{Ecl}. 8.96-99; anonymous lycanthrope: Petr. 61-2. The ability to transform other people into animals is far more rare than the ability to transform oneself. To my knowledge, only two characters (aside from gods) in classical literature are credited with this power: Homer’s Circe and Apuleius’ Meroe (\textit{Met}. 1.6-19).

\textsuperscript{97} Hippoc. \textit{Morb. Sacr.} 1.29-31.


\textsuperscript{99} Apul. \textit{Met}. 2.28-30.


A similar lack of uniformity can be found in an analysis of the ingredients and implements used by these same witches in the process of their varied magical practices. The following chart is a catalogue of each individual material specifically mentioned in the execution of a witch’s magical arts; in the case of a witch’s use of drugs and/or poisons, the precise terminology is given along with any modifiers, where present.

Comparison of Implements, Ingredients\textsuperscript{102} and Drugs\textsuperscript{103} Employed\textsuperscript{104} by Literary Witches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Implements</th>
<th>Ingredients</th>
<th>Drugs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Circe</td>
<td>wand</td>
<td></td>
<td>ἀγαθήν ἀργυρῆς\textsuperscript{105}</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.

\textsuperscript{102} Distinguishing between implements and ingredients used in magical contexts is a somewhat arbitrary activity. The divisions created in this chart do not correspond to any categorizations made or followed in the source texts and exist solely as a means to simplify the presentation of so many diverse materials. Some materials still do not easily fit into this scheme: e.g. cloth, when burned by Simaetha, seems to be an ingredient in a lengthy rite of sympathetic magic whereas the thread of the Thessalian witches seems an implement in and of itself. In such instances, I have sought to categorize the items according to their usage in a specific context.

\textsuperscript{103} The prevalence and frequency with which these items occur necessitates their separation from the broader categories of esoteric ingredients and implements employed. “Drugs” is used here as a generic term that includes also potions, poisons, herbs, etc. Due to the close proximity of meaning among the terms found in this category, these entries are listed in their original Latin or Greek.

\textsuperscript{104} For the sake of precision, only the items actually employed by a given witch are listed here. This yields no noticeable irregularities save in the case of Circe. The many accoutrements utilized in Odysseus’ famed evocation of the dead in the eleventh book of the \textit{Odyssey} do not appear in this chart specifically because Odysseus, not Circe, enacted that ritual.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Implements</th>
<th>Ingredients</th>
<th>Drugs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medea</td>
<td>altar (turf) bowl (bronze) cup ditch</td>
<td>ash; Hercules’ pyre birds (vile) blood; black sheep blood; centaur (Nessus)</td>
<td>gramina: flore mortifero Lethaei sucī mortifera herbae: cantatae letales pollentes vexexov mala: frugis infaustae medicamina medicatia: docti pahula: diva pestes phormacia: αἰνία ἐποθλα θέλετημα θυμοφρῶς Πομηρίαν όχαστημα radices: Haemonia valle sanies: serpentum suci: atrī dirī validī veneni venena: Colcha virus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>figurines (waxen) knife needle torch tripod</td>
<td>head; crow (nine generations old) heart: bubo hoarfrost honey limbs; Typhoeus liver; deer milk sand; ocean scales; snake seeds snakes stones (Far Eastern) sulfur torch; Althaea water wings; strix wreaths verbena</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>blood; centaur (Nessus)</td>
<td>iōs lues pestis: immensa serpentis phormacia φίλτρα tabes venena: feminea virus: femineum ferum hydrae nitiens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deianira</td>
<td>charms: κηρητήριον στέγημα</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simaetha</td>
<td>basket bell/gong? (bronze) figurine (waxen) iunx rhombus</td>
<td>barley cloth grain husks hippocame laurel lizard wool (red)</td>
<td>phormacia φίλτρα ποτῶν: ηαχόν</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Continued)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Implements</th>
<th>Ingredients</th>
<th>Drugs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anon. <em>(Ver. Ecl. 8)</em></td>
<td>altar, figurines (waxen, clay)</td>
<td>ash, incense, laurel, moly, thread, water, wool, verbena</td>
<td><em>herbae venena</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dido</td>
<td>altar</td>
<td>moly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dido's Assistant</td>
<td></td>
<td>hippomane water, “Avernus”</td>
<td><em>herbae lac veneni</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canidia</td>
<td>ditch, figurines (waxen, woolen)</td>
<td>beard, wolf blood, frog, bones (ripped from a dog's mouth), cypress, eggs, eyes, human feather, strix figs (from tombs), liver, human tooth, snake</td>
<td><em>herbae pocula:</em> desideri, <em>potiones radices venena:</em> dira Medaeae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erictho</td>
<td></td>
<td>ash, Phoenix blood, human eyes, dragon fetus, human fish (exotic), funereal implements, hair, human humpback, hyena intestine, lynx marrow, deer (after eating snake), nails (crucifixion), remains, human slime, moon snakes (exotic), sputum, dog stones, eagle</td>
<td><em>herbae frondes:</em> saturatae infando carmine, <em>pestes:</em> viles, <em>suci:</em> diri, <em>venena</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Implements</th>
<th>Ingredients</th>
<th>Drugs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thessalians (Luc. 6)</td>
<td>thread (magical)</td>
<td>hippomane</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>herbae:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>nocentes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>pocula:</td>
<td>nocia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anon. (Petr. 131)</td>
<td>rocks (wrapped in purple cloth) thread (colored)</td>
<td>dust</td>
<td>spittle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sosipatra</td>
<td>basket(^{105}) books instruments (ἄγγελον) robes (cloth)</td>
<td>dust</td>
<td>spittle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anon. (Heliod. Aeth. 6)</td>
<td>bowl (clay) ditch figurine (spelt-cake) fire sword tripod</td>
<td>blood; human fennel honey laurel milk wine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From such an eclectic blend of materials, we can again notice the lack of any single unifying element, even among a sample group that contains some of the most well-known and well-documented witches from the ancient world. The most frequently used implement (a figurine) is employed by less than half of the witches surveyed, while a magical wand appears only once. That the ingredients used by these witches are so diverse is unsurprising (as is the presence of so many unique items), but the expectation of an item or group of items with frequent, repeated usage is disappointed; hippomane is the most common of these and appears in only four instances. Looking more broadly, generic poisons and drugs are the most commonly used elements; employed by ten of the fourteen women, so even these cannot be put forward as positive identifiers of a

\(^{105}\) In Eunapius’ text, although Sosipatra does not technically use these implements, she does keep them in her possession and they have been included here to offset the lack of other material accoutrements employed by her.
practicing witch. Just as with the supernatural abilities, the manipulation of drugs and
other esoteric ingredients or implements is repeatedly attributed to men as well as
women, meaning that none of these elements can be used in either a positive or
negative identification of a witch; no element is used exclusively by female magical
practitioners and no element is common to all female magical practitioners here
surveyed.

The specific terminology used in the description of these witches and their crafts
yet again illustrates the diversity of these women:

*Catalogue of Significant Terminology Applied to Literary Witches and their Practices*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Significant Descriptive Terminology</th>
<th>Magical Practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Circe</td>
<td>goddess (dreadful) δεινὴ θεός</td>
<td>arts (lethal) ὀλοφρόνεια δήνεια</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sceleum artex vnefica</td>
<td>art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pololφάρμακος ἄμφιτυα</td>
<td>arts (secret)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>δολοσέσσα</td>
<td>arts (of the mages)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>drugistry</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>mysteries (secret, forbidden)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>rites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>rites (silent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medea</td>
<td>crafet of evil deeds</td>
<td>art (secret)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>druggist</td>
<td>magorum artes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>possessing many drugs</td>
<td>φαρμάκαια</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>priestess</td>
<td>vneficia</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tricky</td>
<td>arcana secreta</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>abdita</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>sacra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>tacita sacra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deianira</td>
<td>enchantments</td>
<td>θελητια</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>evil</td>
<td>malum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mystery</td>
<td>arcanum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>power (dread)</td>
<td>dira vis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tricks</td>
<td>doli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simaetha</td>
<td>druggist</td>
<td>sacrifices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[φαρμακευτησια]</td>
<td>θεσος</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>magica sacra</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Anon. (Ver. Ecl. 8) | rites (magical) |

Table 3.

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106 Plato chastises those who practice φαρμακευτησια and use (or become frightened by) waxen figurines (Pl. Leg. 933a-b.), and Pliny devotes books 20-32 of his *Natural History* to a catalogue of the many and varied *materia* employed for dubious restorative properties by men and women alike.

107 In contrast to the specific actions detailed in the *Frequency of Supernatural Abilities Commonly Displayed by Literary Witches*, this is the vocabulary of generic supernatural activity, much like the English “witchcraft” or “magic.” Due to the nearly ubiquitous use of terms relating to spells or enchantments (*carmina, cantus, ἀτελεῖα, ἔποδος*, etc.) I have specifically excluded them from this chart. The frequency of such terms may be analyzed in the first column of the *Frequency of Supernatural Abilities*, p. 36.

108 The term φαρμακευτησια is unattested in the text of the poem itself and is only transmitted in certain manuscripts as a title of *Idyll* 2. The date of its application is uncertain.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Significant Descriptive Terminology</th>
<th>Magical Practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dido</td>
<td></td>
<td>arts (magical)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>magicae artes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dido's Assistant</td>
<td>priestess</td>
<td>sacerdos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canidia</td>
<td>druggist</td>
<td>venefica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>old woman</td>
<td>anus</td>
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<td>μαγεία</td>
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They are explicitly labeled as priestesses, goddesses and divinities, as old women, cunning women, prophets, mages and bawds. Many of their skills are generically termed “arts;” some women draw power from their knowledge of drugs and charms, whereas others deal in quasi-religious practices, forbidden rites and manifestations of divine inspiration. There is no constancy. This collection of women is not a cohesive group.

As we can see, no characteristic or ability or attribute is so fundamental as to be shared by every witch. If old age is a requisite factor, Medea, Circe and Simaetha are not witches; if it is the usage of spells that defines a witch, Deianira, Dido and Sosipatra do not qualify. Is it regular magical practice that constitutes a witch, or is it enough to have
dabbled just once? If only regular practitioners can truly be called witches, the list becomes rather small. On the other hand, if every woman who attempted a love spell or tried her hand at making a charm or used the evil eye is now to be called a witch, then few women in the ancient world were not witches.

This is not to say that generalizations cannot be made. Certain attributes clearly occur with relative frequency among the women most often identified as witches by modern scholars: old age, erotic magic, and knowledge of various exotic ingredients (including drugs) and spells are found repeatedly among this group of characters. However, these generalizations cannot and should not be used to generate a rubric for identifying and categorizing witches in the ancient world. Doing so creates a virtually limitless group of characters that may then be incorrectly assumed to possess interchangeable skills and abilities. True, there are significant demonstrable overlaps between some witches: Medea and Deianira each make gifts of clothing laced with deadly drugs, Erichno and the old woman from the "Aethiopica" each resurrect a corpse, Simaetha and the woman of Vergil’s eighth Eclogue both use magic to recapture a lover’s interest. These observations can yield fruitful comparisons between specific witches but they should not induce us to create (or assume) a relationship or similarity between all of these characters. This information may provide material for consideration but it is not in and of itself grounds for positive identification.

Unfortunately, it has been the tendency of scholarship to make generalizations such as this about witches of antiquity. In the most recent volume dedicated to the study of witches in the ancient world, *Night’s Black Agents* (2008), Daniel Ogden describes the
type of witches that he claims “dominated the Latin tradition” in broad strokes, calling the lot of them “typically old hags, wicked, drunken, and… primarily motivated by their lust for attractive young men.” He says that they “…put the gods under constraint… [and] can shape-shift, most commonly into wolves.” These women include, according to Ogden, Canidia, Erictho, the strigae from Trimalchio’s tale in the Satyrica, Apuleius’ Meroe and several other anonymous characters from Apuleius’ Metamorphoses. Curiously, the unnamed witch of Vergil’s Eclogue 8 is here treated as an outlier because she does not possess what Ogden perceives as these witches’ “Gothic quality” that “can not be paralleled in Greek literature.” He identifies this characteristic as unique to Roman witches, claiming that they “smell of the arena… a product of the sensibilities of the Romans’ own more bloodthirsty culture.”

Ogden’s desire to identify a single type of witch within Roman literature necessitates significant generalizations and overlooks many of the available (or missing) details in order to create an apparently coherent witch typology. The exclusion of the woman from Vergil’s eighth eclogue from his typology of the Roman witch is indicative of the typology’s shortcomings, as is the assertion that Roman witches were fundamentally different (that is, more violently represented) than their Greek predecessors merely because of the Romans’ “more bloodthirsty culture”; not only is this

110 Ogden (2008) 45-70. These anonymous characters from the Metamorphoses include the corpse-mutilators and the treacherous wife within Thelyphron’s tale, as well as the old woman who sends a ghost to kill the baker in book nine.
111 Ogden (2008) 43-44.
112 Ogden (2008) 75-76.
a gross oversimplification, but it glosses over similarly “Gothic” descriptions that may be found throughout Greek literature.

Kimberley Stratton’s *Naming the Witch* (2007) is to be commended for its assessment of the role that “Augustan political ideology” and “long-standing societal concerns about female sexual license” had in shaping the portrayal of witches in Roman literature, but it overemphasizes these factors to the exclusion of virtually all else in order to create an image of the “predatory and nefarious witch” that includes the anonymous woman from Vergil’s eighth eclogue (who was, we shall remember, the only character *not* included in Ogden’s description), Canidia and Sagana from *Sat*. 1.8 and *Epode* 5, Acanthis and other elegiac witches, Seneca’s Medea, Lucan’s Erictho, Apuleius’ Meroe and Pamphile, and perhaps the unnamed old woman from Horace’s eighth epode – a character whom Stratton views as a potential witch merely because she is an old woman who is “sexually independent and desiring,” and because “she possesses wealth, and therefore, presumably, some autonomy as well as social and political influence.” Because of Stratton’s thesis that the Roman literary witch emerged in large part as the result of Roman masculine anxieties over uncontrolled feminine sexuality and

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113 One cannot read certain battle-scenes of the *Iliad* without imagining that Greeks, too, were somewhat “bloodthirsty.”
114 Consider Agave’s dismemberment of her own son and her subsequent parading of his severed head in Euripides’ *Bacchae*, Diodorus Siculus’ narrative of the cannibalistic queen Lamia (20.41), or almost any narrative detailing the exploits of the House of Atreus.
118 Stratton (2007) 94.
power,\textsuperscript{119} she has boiled down a multitude of different characters\textsuperscript{120} in order to fit within the same generic mold. As with Ogden, this results in numerous inaccuracies or generalizations that are at their most evident in Stratton’s treatment of the anonymous woman from Horace’s \textit{Epode} 8, wherein in a character with no qualities or abilities that would otherwise suggest her status as a witch is classified alongside Erictho and Meroe.

Whereas Ogden reads Roman witches as characters from a gothic horror story, and Stratton would cast them as symptoms of male patriarchal apprehension, Matthew Dickie in his 2001 volume \textit{Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World}, describes the witches of Roman literature as “consistently portrayed as old, drunken, and often as not as procuresses.”\textsuperscript{121} He argues for understanding most Roman literary witches as either prostitutes or bawds, whom he repeatedly refers to as \textit{sagae}.\textsuperscript{122} He characterizes their arts as almost entirely related to erotic magic or magic practiced for the benefit of prostitutes or those who visit them. Even Canidia, Dickie asserts, “represents the aging prostitute who has turned or is turning herself into a sorceress and who has acquired or inherited books of spells as one of the tools of her trade.”\textsuperscript{123} Dickie concedes few exceptions to this typology, and those he passes over but briefly, mentioning only that “there is the very real possibility that \textit{sagae} emerged from quite other millieux and that there were some \textit{sagae} whose authority rested on their having access to the arcane mysteries of Eastern

\textsuperscript{119} Melissa Schons’ dissertation \textit{Horror and the Characterization of the Witch} (1998) promotes much the same idea, reading the Roman witches as operating either as Medea or “the hag witch,” each of whom she believes generates horror through the inversion of Roman matronly decorum.

\textsuperscript{120} Many of these characters are discussed previously on p. 28-33. A quick review of their traits will demonstrate how little these women have in common.

\textsuperscript{121} Dickie (2001) 176.

\textsuperscript{122} On the problems of this term, see above p. 20-25.

\textsuperscript{123} Dickie (2001) 181.
cults.”¹²⁴ No further explanation or citation follows Dickie’s statement here, and again we clearly see the elision (and assumption) of a number of details in the author’s attempt to force a wide array of different characters to fit within a simplistic rubric.¹²⁵

Jean-Benoît Clerc’s (1995) study of sorcery and magic in imperial Rome takes a broadly anthropological approach and thus treats the poetic representations of witches in this period only in passing, but in doing so he, too, sketches what he terms the “standard representation” of the magician as the “incarnation of evil and the perverse” that contains within it “all the negative traits of human nature – every form of social and moral deviance.”¹²⁶ As prime examples of this, Clerc cites Canidia, Sagana, Veia and Folia, as well as Erictho, and Medea (as she is described in Ovid’s *Heroides* 6). He then outlines what he understands as the typical portrait of the poetic witch. According to Clerc, she is typically robed, old, ugly, bare-footed, with disheveled hair (sometimes bound with serpents); she is pale and gaunt, fevered, shrieking in the night, clawing at the earth, killing animals with her teeth, torturing and sacrificing human victims and mutilating corpses; her rites are secretive and frequently nocturnal; she deals primarily with the dead, using corpses for ingredients and spirits to predict the future; she often uses repulsive animals in her spells, and may actually transform her own body into that of a beast.¹²⁷ All of this, Clerc states, is because the witch, “according to the layman” was an

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¹²⁵ Notably, the figures of Erictho, Meroe and Pamphile – characters who would seem to be primary candidates for a work on “magic and magicians in the Greco-Roman world” – are nowhere addressed in Dickie’s book.
¹²⁶ Clerc (1995) 197. “La représentation sociale standardisée qui faisait du magicien une incarnation du mal et de la perversité, qui concentrerait en lui tous les traits négatifs de la nature humaine, toutes les formes de déviance sociales et morales…”
incarnation of evil that signified the inversion of human nature and was a concentration of everything that inspired terror, disgust and revulsion; living on the margins of society, the witch symbolized the rejection of culture, civilization, and logic.\textsuperscript{128} As we saw with Dickie, Stratton and Ogden, Clerc’s impulse to situate the many witches of Roman literature into a single category (for him, it is the witch as the incarnation of evil and the inversion of civilization) results in a description that is meant to be broadly applicable to each witch, yet in actuality pertains to a scant few.

Richard Gordon’s “Imagining Greek and Roman Magic” (1999) is a step removed from this urge to identify large groups of witches as essentially multiple facets of the same character. He notes that some witches are operating on fundamentally different levels than others and articulates two basic categories into which he divides various characters: one being the “every-day witch… the kind of person one might well meet and whom many people knew (of),” the other being the “night-witch… the radical enemy of all human civilization such as the strix, the night-owl that is really a flesh-devouring woman, a child-killing demon.”\textsuperscript{129} Such broad divisions can only go so far, and Gordon rightfully observes that “in narrative fiction the two [categories] refuse to remain distinct.”\textsuperscript{130} Nevertheless, the realization that witches portrayed in the literature of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{128} Clerc (1995) 200.
\item \textsuperscript{129} Gordon (1999) 204.
\item \textsuperscript{130} ibid. Pilar Muro Meléndez-Valdés’ (2002) 243
\end{itemize}

division of witches operates in much the same vein, even if I do not find her own dichotomy of the young, quasi-divine, characters of literary fiction and the elderly, malevolent practitioners of reality to be particularly appropriate. It is also worth noting that Meléndez-Valdés cites the primary (named) witches of antiquity as: Circe, Dido, Medea, Canidia, Sagana, Folia, Veia, Acanthis, Thessala, Dipsas, Erictho, Pamphile, Locusta and Martina (p. 235). The inclusion of Dido within this list, as well as the indiscriminate blending of fictitious characters (Erictho, Pamphile, etc.) alongside historical ones (Locusta, Martina) is not anomalous among scholars of Greek and Roman witches.
antiquity do not belong firmly to a single category remains both valuable and comparatively rare.

The concept of “the ancient witch” has effectively been rendered too generic for practical application. We can no longer simply categorize a figure as a witch and thereby assume that she is similar to each other character ensconced in that arbitrary grouping. But how then is a study of these characters (or any particular one of them) to proceed? To begin with, I would suggest that we treat witch-characters as individuals first, and as potential members of larger group second. Characters identified as witches can possess a considerable variety of attributes, powers and motivations; in this way, they are not unlike demons in that, to quote Sarah Iles Johnston:

Demons are clay with which people mold images of their fears and anxieties; in order to express the fears and anxieties of the moment effectively, that clay must remain malleable. It is not until those who stand outside of a community begin to make lists of demons (i.e., demonologies) for their own purposes that any real consistency of traits and imagery is obtained, and it is an artificial consistency, born of a scholar’s desire to organize, a magician’s desire to control, or a missionary’s desire to devalue and eventually overcome.131

It is in this capacity that I believe the Roman “witch” is operating – as a character onto which authors can project the “fears and anxieties of the moment;” it is only we scholars who have created the sense of “artificial consistency” that purportedly encompasses the witches’ varied incarnations. In light of this, it is my contention that witch-characters should be examined primarily on their own terms to determine what specific attributes they are manifesting at a given moment. It is also of the utmost importance to recall that

any traits these witches manifest are the direct result of a conscious decision made by their author and as such, they need not be seen to reflect some adherence to a “real” external source. Therefore, by analyzing precisely how an author has chosen to portray a certain witch in a certain situation, we may expect to gain a deeper understanding of that particular character in that particular context, but we can not then assume that one author’s portrayal of one witch should as a matter of course hold any bearing on another author’s portrayal of another witch. This is not to say that comparisons of witches cannot be made (indeed they can, and should be), but this should occur only after careful consideration of each of the characters in question, and then only if there are legitimate and demonstrable reasons to draw comparisons between them. Not only will this approach yield more accurate analyses of the roles and functions of specific witch characters, but the interpretations resulting from these analyses will also provide more nuanced readings of the texts in which these witches appear.

With this in mind, the following chapters function as an extended test case for this hypothesis. Because the source material on Canidia is so abundant and the need for a holistic treatment of her character is so great, Canidia is an ideal subject for this study. By analyzing Canidia’s roles in each of the six poems in which she appears, this dissertation demonstrates that even though Canidia is a single character confined to the works of a single author, she still manifests multiple, unique aspects that vary from poem to poem and thus provides significant evidence of the pluralistic nature of the ancient witch and of

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132 The disparity between literary and ‘historical’ representations of magical practitioners has been frequently observed; see, for example, Graf (1997) 175-185.
133 Although Canidia is not nearly as well documented as Circe or Medea, there are few other witches as well attested as she.
the need to evaluate other witch-characters on the basis of their own individual merits as opposed to their artificial inclusion within a generic witch typology. I also argue that the recognition of Canidia’s separate aspects yields new readings of the Horatian poetry in which she features, readings that both inform many of the larger scholarly issues regarding Horace’s work and that can also be used to push some of this scholarship in new directions. Accordingly, chapters two, three, and four each focus on Canidia’s role in one of her three major poems, whereas chapter five treats her three minor appearances in separate poems collectively.

Chapter two examines Canidia’s appearance in *Satire* 1.8 and analyzes Horace’s presentation of her as a transgressive creature that confounds physical and categorical boundaries. In the poem’s narrative of Canidia’s intrusion into the Gardens of Maecenas and her subsequent expulsion by a statue of Priapus, I read a meta-narrative of Horace’s own poetic struggles with the composition of the *Satires*, wherein Canidia’s presence within the space associated with Horace’s literary patron may be likened to Horace’s anxiety over the potential intrusion of elements from foreign genres into his *Satires*. This reading of Canidia’s character as a tool which Horace utilizes to comment upon his literary process thus rehabilitates this often overlooked poem and situates it alongside *Sat. 1.1, 1.4 and 1.10* as another instance of Horace’s conscious reflection about what it means to compose satire.

Chapter three finds Canidia’s behavior in *Epode* 5 to be highly reminiscent of ancient child-killing demons, and through this identification as well as the prominent role played by the anonymous child who is Canidia’s victim, I establish connections between...
this poem and Vergil’s fourth Eclogue. I argue that Epode 5, taken alongside Epode 16, may then be reread as a part of a dual response to the expectations of coming peace that were predicted in Vergil’s eclogue. With this realignment, Epode 5 then ceases to be a puzzlingly macabre outlier of the Epodes and becomes instead an integral part of a collection largely concerned with the Roman civil wars.

Chapter four analyzes Canidia’s appearance in the final poem of Horace’s Epodes and finds that she there behaves much like an Empusa – a murderous, seductive monster that preys on young men, yet can be repulsed if insulted vigorously enough. This identification is useful on several levels in that it 1) explains the strange symptoms Horace’s poetic persona confesses to suffer from, 2) explains the contradictory behavior of this persona who begs Canidia to stop torturing him while at the same time continuing to insult her, and 3) provides further support for those who would read Horace’s interactions with Canidia within this poem as a metapoetic statement about Horace’s relationship to (and withdrawal from) the genre of iambic.

In contrast, the final chapter presents Canidia in the three separate poems in which she appears as a minor character: Epode 3, and Satire 2.1 and 2.8. I argue that in these instances, Canidia is not to be understood as the powerful, magic-wielding figure we have seen previously, but instead as a generic bringer of misfortune, a threatening – albeit largely mundane – character who may potentially taint food. Based on the cursory treatment of her in these poems and on her striking lack of detailed magical abilities, I conclude that her roles there must be substantially different than in her larger works (Sat. 1.8, Epod. 5 and 17) and that attempts to conflate each of her separate guises into one
unified character are ultimately confounded by their vast disparity. The inability to reconcile each of Canidia’s incarnations with one another while still maintaining literary cohesion is taken as confirmation of the original hypothesis: that the incredible breadth of behaviors and traits potentially ascribable to characters identified as witches necessitates the examination of such characters in a manner that treats them not as a generic entities, but as figures that can possess an incredibly particular set of context-specific characteristics.
Chapter II

Satire 1.8: The Limen, the Witch and the Warden

Translation and Text.

Once I was a fig stump, a useless piece of wood, until a craftsman, unsure whether to turn me into a stool or a Priapus, preferred that I become a god. And so I am a god, a source of terror to thieves and birds: my right hand wards off the thieves – that and the red pole sticking straight out of my filthy crotch – but the reed stuck on my head frightens those damnable birds and keeps them from settling in these new gardens. Not long ago, slaves arranged for the corpses of their fellows to be carried here in cheap boxes after their bodies had been hurled from their narrow cells. This place served as a common grave for the poor mob; for Pantolabus the rake and Nomentanus the playboy a plot one thousand feet in front, another three hundred back and, according to this marker “The monument is not to pass to the heirs.” Yet now you can live here on the Esquiline hill, a healthy place to walk the sunny promenade, where just recently mourners looked upon grounds misshapen by whitened bones, although it is not the beasts and thieves who typically plague this place that trouble me and keep me busy, so much as those women who disturb the spirits of the dead with their spells and drugs. I am utterly unable to foil these women or keep them from gathering bones and harmful herbs “the very moment the wand’ring moon doth proffer her decorous face.” I saw with my own eyes Canidia advancing, girt in black cloth, feet bare, hair down, shrieking with the elder Sagana. Paleness had made them both dreadful to look at. They began to scratch the earth with their nails, they ripped apart a black lamb with their teeth; the gore they poured into the ditch to summon spirits from, ghosts to answer their questions. There was a wool effigy and another of wax: the woolen one was larger so as to threaten the smaller one with violence; the wax one was standing like a suppliant, as if soon to die a slave’s death.
One of the women calls on Hecate, the other, dread Tisiphone: you could see snakes and nether hounds about, and the blushing moon hiding behind great tombs to avoid witnessing their rites. If I am lying about even one thing, let my head be smeared with white bird shit and may Julius and dainty Pedia and Voranus the thief come piss and shit on me, too. Why bring up every detail, how the shades spoke back and forth with Sagana, how their voices echoed sad and shrill, how those women secretly hid wolf’s-beard in the earth and the tooth of a mottled snake, how the fire burned brighter when they threw in the wax figurine and how I shuddered—not some unavenged witness— at the voices of those Furies and the things those two women had done? Because, loud as popped balloon, I farted, a fig tree with a split ass! Those two ran off to the city! You would have grinned and laughed to have seen Canidia’s teeth fall out and Sagana’s great wig, too, along with their herbs and enchanted arm-bands!

Olim truncus eram ficulnus, inutile lignum,\textsuperscript{134} cum faber, incertus scamnum faceretne Priapum, maluit esse deum. deus inde ego, furum aviumque maxima formido; nam fures dextra coercet obscaenoque ruber porrectus ab inguine palus, ast importunas volucres in vertice harundo terret fixa vetatque novis considere in hortis. huc prius angustis eiecta cadavera cellis conservus vili portanda locabat in arca; hoc miserae plebi stabat commune sepulcrum; Pantolabo scurrae Nomentanoque nepoti mille pedes in fronte, trecentos cippus in agrum hic dabat, heredes monumentum ne sequeretur. nunc licet Esquiliis habitare salubribus atque aggere in aprico spatiari, qua\textsuperscript{135} modo tristes albis in formem spectabant ossibus agrum, cum mihi non tantum furesque feraeque suetae hunc vexare locum curae sunt\textsuperscript{136} atque labori,

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[134]{I follow here and in all subsequent chapters Klinger’s (1959) edition of the text. Any deviations are indicated in the footnotes.}
\footnotetext[135]{I have here accepted Bentley’s proposal of \textit{qua} for \textit{quo}. The directional \textit{quo}, while neatly following \textit{huc} (8), is perhaps less appropriate for \textit{spectabant}.}
\footnotetext[136]{In section one (Threshold), I discuss the timeframe of the events recounted by the narrator Priapus. Klinger prints \textit{sunt} at line 18, whereas the Strasbourg manuscript (D) reads \textit{sint}. I favor the subjunctive here as the resulting concessive \textit{cum} clause is more logically and narratively sensical than the simple temporal
\end{footnotes}
quantum carminibus quae versant atque venenis humanos animos: has nullo perdere possum
nec prohibere modo, simul ac vaga luna decorum protulit os, quin ossa legant herbasque nocentis.
vidi egomet nigra succinctam vadere palla Canidiam pedibus nudis passoque capillo,
cum Sagana maiore ululante: pallor utrasque fecerat horrendas adspectu. scalpere terram
unguibus et pullam divellere mordicus agnam coeperunt; cruor in fossam confusus, ut inde
manis elicerent animas responsa daturas.
lanea et effigies erat, altera cerea: maior lanea, quae poenis conpesceret inferiorem;
cerea suppliciter stabat servilibus ut quae iam peritura modis. Hecaten vocat altera, saevam
altera Tisiphonen: serpentes atque videres infernas errare canes, Lunamque rubentem
e foret his testis, post magna latere sepulcra. mentior at si quid, merdis caput inquiner albis
corvorum, atque in me veniat mictum atque cacatum Iulius et fragilis Pediata furque Voranus.
singula quid memorem, quo pacto alterna loquentes umbrae cum Sagana resonarint triste et acutum,
utque lupi barbam variae cum dente colubrae abdiderint furtim terris, et imagine cerea largior arserit ignis, et ut non testis inultus horruerim voces furiarum et facta duarum?
nam, displosa sonat quantum vesica, pepedi diffissa nate ficus: at illae currere in urbem.
Canidiae dentis, altum Saganae caliendrum excidere atque herbas atque incantata lacertis vincula cum magnó risuque iocoque videres.

clause brought about by the indicative sunt. In both instances, the reading of Priapus’ fears being a manifestation of present circumstances remains viable.
**Introduction**

The first book of Horace’s *Satires* is a complex collection of ten poems that defies neat categorization as a unit. It is a blend of moralizing diatribes, loosely connected anecdotes and ruminations on literary technique. It is simultaneously self-referential, self-deprecating and self-aggrandizing, mocking an ambitious freedman in one poem only to affectionately reference Horace’s own father’s status as a freedman in another. At times politically discrete,\(^{137}\) at others willfully distasteful,\(^{138}\) the collection is frequently in flux, consciously at odds with itself and its self-presentation.

All of this confusion, this blend of separate elements and styles, is inherent to the genre of Roman satire – the mastery of which Horace was purposefully claiming for his own in book one of the *Satires*. In it, he deliberately casts himself as taking control of the genre from the hands of the father and originator of Roman satire himself: Lucilius.\(^{139}\) In the process of claiming this genre as his own, Horace actively redefines Roman satire. In fact, the first and second books of the *Satires* are not infrequently read as Horace’s reworking and re-envisioning the very essence of the genre.\(^{140}\)

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\(^{137}\) *S. 1.5,* the so-called ‘travelogue’ that records Maecenas’ journey to Brundisium in order to mediate a meeting between Octavian and Antony, reveals very little of political substance (Oliensis (1998) 28).

\(^{138}\) At *S. 1.7.35* Horace badly puns on Brutus’ role in Caesar’s assassination – a questionable reference for a number of reasons, not the least of which being that Horace had fought with Brutus against Octavian at Philippi not seven years prior (see Henderson (1994) 146-170).

\(^{139}\) Schlegel’s “Horace and the Satirist’s Mask: Shadowboxing with Lucilius” (2010) is one of the most recent in a long line of scholarship on the relationship between Horace and Lucilius.

It is within this literary context that Canidia makes her first appearance. In comparison with much of the rest of the first book of the Satires, Sat. 1.8 has not garnered significant scholarly attention, likely because the poem seems to be a simple, rather obscene piece about a farting Priapic garden statue. Fraenkel can only explain the presence of the poem as a source of “fresh themes which might help [Horace] to vary the contents of his book and round it off.”\footnote{Fraenkel (1957) 124.} Those scholars who have devoted more than a page or two of vague summary to the poem have tended to focus primarily on its epigrammatic nature or on the significance of the poem’s Priapic narrator.\footnote{e.g. Rudd (1966), Anderson (1972), Hallett (1981), Habash (1999).} In many instances, Canidia herself has gone largely overlooked or as has been examined only insofar as her role in Horatian autobiography.\footnote{Oliensis (1998) 68ff. and Pagán (2006) 37-63, however, are two of the few who have devoted considerable attention to the literary character of Canidia. Oliensis primarily focuses on her role in the Epodes, and will be further engaged in the following chapters. Pagán devotes an entire chapter to Satire 1.8 in her book Rome and the Literature of Gardens, but the discussion of Canidia herself is largely conducted in generalities that offer few original interpretations. Daniel Ogden (2001) 168-69; (2008) 46-50 frequently cites Canidia, although less in terms of literary analysis and more for the somewhat dubious purpose of extracting evidence of actual Roman magical practice from her narrative. Almost directly Ogden’s methodological opposite, Ingallina (1974) also treats Canidia and Sagana extensively, but rather than read the pair as themselves examples of Roman magical practices, he explicates the specific artifacts of prior magico-religious elements that appear in their narratives.} In this chapter, I read Canidia as an interloper, a creature “betwixt and between,”\footnote{I borrow this phrase from Turner’s (1967) essay, “Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites de Passage” not to suggest that Canidia is undergoing a ritual of initiation but to characterize her status as much the same as those initiands in the liminal period of transition denied concrete status.} whose presence in Maecenas’ gardens is as much a cause for concern as her arrival in Horace’s Satires, making Satire 1.8 an expression of Horace’s anxiety about the mutable and transitory nature not only of satire as a genre but of his Satires in particular. This anxiety about satire’s generic permeability and the difficulties of erecting firm
barriers around literature in a state of transition is explored through the narrative of liminality, intrusion and expulsion enacted by Canidia, Sagana and Priapus in the unfinished gardens of Horace’s literary patron, Maecenas. The first section (Threshold) outlines the transitory nature both of the Gardens of Maecenas and of Horatian satire; section two (Intrusion) explores the characters of Canidia and Sagana as invasive elements from the genres of epic, iambic and bucolic; the third section (Warden) examines Priapus’ role as an apotropaic guardian and a Horatian mask, functioning as a protector of the Gardens and Horatian satire itself.
Satire is the one Roman genre that really has no defined boundaries, the exception that proves the rules about other genres, which are normally based on principles of decorum.

-Emily Gowers

Within the first and second books of his *Satires*, Horace is conspicuously experimenting with the genre; *Satires* 1.4, 1.10 and 2.1 have been repeatedly analyzed in terms of their explicit confrontation with the earlier satires of Lucilius, the *Iambi*, *Hymns* and *Aitia* of Callimachus, the theories of literary genre espoused by Aristotle and various other sources of potential poetic engagement. Horace’s aim seems to have been the creation of a new type of satire cobbled together from multiple other genres, including previous incarnations of Roman satire. What emerged from this endeavor was his *Satires*, a novel creation that evolved as a work-in-progress over the course of its two books. Indeed, *Satires* I appears to be an example of Horatian satire very much in transition. Depending on one’s interpretation, Horace may be seen struggling in his *Satires* with an “absurd, impossible combination” of Greek Old and New Comedy as well as invective, negotiating between “superficial Callimacheanism and excessive admiration for

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146 See notably Freudenburg’s *The Walking Muse* (1993), a seminal work on the problem of genre within Horace’s *Satires* and the constant struggle the poet undertakes as he positions himself and his work in relation to the significant theorists of literary style who have preceded him.
149 Freudenburg (1993) 100.
Lucilius,\textsuperscript{150} attempting to erect a \textit{cordon sanitaire} between the genre of satire and those ‘unofficial’ or ‘folk forms,’\textsuperscript{151} or orchestrating other, similar amalgamations and redefinitions of the satiric genre.

It is not my intention here to isolate the particulars of Horace’s satiric innovations, but rather to focus on the singular fact that these innovations (regardless of their specifics) required the successful combination of components from multiple genres in order to yield a new, hybridized satiric genre – no easy task considering satire’s intrinsic status as a blended genre.\textsuperscript{152} The result is a form of satire that is simultaneously excluded from other genres yet also inclusive of (and included by) them. As such, the \textit{Satires} occupy a nebulous space impossible to assign comfortably to one genre or another, but constantly threatening to drift across its borders into the territory of invective, of comedic or bucolic poetry, or any of the many other genres it has assimilated.

I read this innate \textit{generic} ambiguity of the whole of Horatian satire as then reflected in the \textit{spatial} ambiguities that manifest in \textit{Satire} 1.8,\textsuperscript{153} a poem whose action is significantly set in the gardens of Horace’s literary patron, Maecenas – gardens that were themselves in the process of being converted from a public cemetery. The incompleteness of Maecenas’ gardens, its former status as a cemetery and its location at the edge of the city engages several features that cannot be securely placed into one category or another but reside uncomfortably at their junction. I read the presence of these liminal locations

\textsuperscript{150} Scodel (1987) 206.
\textsuperscript{151} Ruffel (2003) 35.
\textsuperscript{152} Gowers (1993) 114n23 cites the grammarians Diomedes (\textit{GLK}, 1.485) and Isidorus (5.16) who explain the nature of the satiric genre as related to the \textit{lex satura}, a law under which many potentially unrelated issues were contained.
\textsuperscript{153} A potential relationship between the Gardens of Maecenas and Horace’s \textit{Satires} was posited by Habash (1999), but unelaborated upon beyond its service as a mere reference to satire’s roots in Old Comedy.
in the poem as purposefully evocative of a sense of spatial anxiety that in turn mimics the generic anxiety educed by the fluctuative nature of Horace’s *Satires*. This spatial ambivalence naturally attracts boundary-crossing elements (Canidia and Sagana, discussed in *Intrusion*), which in turn necessitates the presence of a protector (Priapus/Horace, discussed in *Warden*). Within this section I will explicate the liminal status of the physical setting of *Sat.* 1.8, starting with the anxiety of place suggested by the presence of a Priapic guardian, then analyzing the liminal status both of cemeteries and of gardens, before looking at the location of the Gardens of Maecenas in particular.

Prior to beginning an analysis of the specific liminal features of *Sat.* 1.8, I would momentarily address the nature of liminality itself. Liminality (from the Latin *limen*: threshold) is the quality of being in between two distinct categories, of existing on the boundary of one thing and another but not fully belonging to either. Objects, beings or places that possess aspects of the liminal tend to elicit uncanny, uncomfortable, and disconcerting feelings. To quote J. Z. Smith, “Negative valence is attached to things which escape place (the chaotic, the rebellious, the distant) or things found just outside of the place where they properly belong (the hybrid, the deviant, the adjacent).” So it is that squirrels, as animals who typically remain within their designated category (outside), are generally regarded with apathy or even mild affection, whereas rats (for all intents and purposes akin to squirrels) are often viewed as filthy creatures because of their

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155 Perhaps worthy of consideration here is Heidegger’s explanation of the anxiety brought about by the “uncanny” (unheimlich) as a sense of displacement, or of “not being at home” (das Nichtzuhause-sein) – for the observation of which I am indebted to Danielewski (2000) 24-25.
156 Smith (1978) 429.
propensity to cross the established boundaries of ‘outside’ and ‘inside.’ This disregard for boundaries attaches to rats the “negative valence” resulting from things that “escape place.”

Conceptually, crossroads are an excellent point of departure from which to consider liminal locations and the definitional ambiguities they share with the satiric genre. Crossroads, like rats, are categorically problematic because they do not belong to one road or another; the intersection of two roads effectively belongs to neither and both. Sarah Iles Johnston has demonstrated that crossroads were widely recognized in the ancient world as places of transition, and that that which is transitional was viewed as potentially fraught. She explains that the spatial ambiguity afforded to crossroads engendered the perception of a heightened ambiguity not just of physical space but also between the realms of the living and the dead. The negative valence attached to the crossroads extends also to the people found there: the elegist Tibullus imagines a troublesome bawd lurking at the crossroads, Catullus laments his lover’s lewd behavior at the crossroads, and Oedipus notoriously kills his father at a crossroads.

Satire, like a crossroads, is an unfixed genre situated at the border of others; both share the qualities of uncertainty and of simultaneous inclusion and exclusion from

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158 The many rituals performed at the crossroads (evocations of the untimely dead, offerings of food to the goddess Hecate, placement of offscourings left over from religious purifications) were all contingent upon an understanding of crossroads as liminal locations defined by the detachment and uncertainty that surrounded them.
159 Tib. 1.5.56: post agat e triviis aspera turba canum. “May a savage pack of dogs chase after her from the crossroads.”
160 Cat. 58.4-5: nunc in quadriuiis et angiportis / glubit magnanimi Remi nepotes. “Now she’s at the crossroads and in alleys / stroking the descendents of Remus.”
161 Soph. O.T. 715-716: καὶ τὸν μὲν, ὄσπερ γ' ἣ φάτες, ἕξεναι ποτὲ / λημοταί φονεύσαν' ἐν τριπλαῖς ἐμφόρησον. “As the story goes, strangers – robbers – killed him at the triple crossroads.” See also lines 729-730, 733-734, 800-801.
multiple categories. The presence of Canidia and Sagana in Satire 1.8 (characters of multi-generic composition)\textsuperscript{162} along with their invocation of Hecate (a goddess often found at crossroads) and their attempts to exploit the blurred lines between the living and dead (a practice often enacted at crossroads) suggests that – through the poem’s emphasis on the navigation of liminal space – Horace was exploring the ramifications of satire’s liminal position at the intersection of multiple genres.

The setting of Sat. 1.8 is characterized as a liminal, spatially ambiguous location by the presence of a statue of Priapus, by its status as a garden, and by the lingering taint of its former role as a graveyard. The figure of Priapus indicates the perception of Maecenas’ Gardens as a place of liminal ambivalence, or a figurative threshold. Prominent displays of phalloi – like Priapi or their cousins, the herms – are in wide use as apotropaic figures,\textsuperscript{163} and it is significant that the Priapic statue of Sat. 1.8 repeatedly proclaims his duty as a guardian: in lines 3-7 he describes how his “red pole” frightens away thieves and the reed on his head keeps out the birds, in lines 17-22 he claims to have no trouble keeping at bay thieves and the usual beasts (\textit{furesque feraeque suetae}), and the remainder of the poem (lines 23-50) is a demonstration of his (albeit unorthodox) expulsion of the unwanted intruders Canidia and Sagana. Symbols of protection (like this

\textsuperscript{162} The details and implications of Canidia and Sagana’s multi-generic makeup are discussed further in \textit{Intrusion}.

\textsuperscript{163} However, ithyphallic divinities can also function as symbols of fertility, and one purpose of the Priapus located in Maecenas’ gardens may have been as a guarantor of growth and fecundity. The House of the Vetii in Pompeii boasts a well-known wall painting that illustrates this fertile capacity quite nicely. In it, Priapus holds a set of balancing scales, on one side of which rests a full sack of coins, balanced on the other side by his impressive phallus while directly beside him sits an overflowing basket of fruits. The juxtaposition would indicate that Priapus brings both monetary and agriculture abundance. Other images of Priapus as a quasi-fertility god feature him carrying fruits in his lap, wearing garlands of crops, carrying cornucopiae, or holding various agricultural products like apples, grain, leaves, etc. (Herter (1932) 198-199, 236).
Priapic statue) are placed at points of crisis, like entryways and thresholds;\(^\text{164}\) guardians are not needed where intrusion is not feared.

Neither inside nor out, thresholds are physical manifestations of moments of transition and crossing them (much as with crossroads) is a potentially anxiety-inducing act – confirmation of which may be found in the nearly universal apotropaic accoutrements that are attached to thresholds,\(^\text{165}\) and the manifold instances of expressed concern that arise from crossing a threshold.\(^\text{166}\) The Indian story of the death of the demon Hiranyakasipu at the hands of Nrisimhadeva neatly exemplifies not only threshold-anxiety but the dangers of liminality in general.\(^\text{167}\) In this myth, Hiranyakasipu had received a boon from Brahma that he could be killed neither by man nor animal, neither at day nor night, neither on land nor in the sky, neither inside nor

\(^{164}\) It is not likely a coincidence that the painting of Priapus in the Pompeian House of the Vetii – though perhaps depicting him in his guise as a fertility god – is placed in the entranceway of the home, affording the image a dual function as genitor and ianitor.

\(^{165}\) The Jewish Passover ritual prescribed that blood be smeared on doors and lintels of homes in order to avoid divine wrath (Exodus 12:1-13), and it is still common practice for Jews to affix a small scroll case containing verses from the Bible (a mezuzah) to their doorframes; the modern European and American holiday practice of hanging wreaths of holly or mistletoe on doors is tied to earlier protective associations with those plants (see Gale (1997) and Hillaby (1979)), just as horseshoes are still fastened to doorframes to avert bad luck, and farther east, in China and much of southeastern Asia, terrifying quasi-gorgonic faces called kirtimukha are carved over doorways, arches and fashioned into door-knockers to act as guardians (Beér (1999) 69).

\(^{166}\) The tradition of the groom carrying the bride across their threshold on the wedding night can be traced back to republican Rome (Plaut. Cas. iv.4. 4,1) and has since been documented among the Native Americans, in Abyssinia and in China (Marindin (1891)). Robert Parker’s (1983) 18-31 work on Greek concepts of pollution and purification also demonstrates the considerable concern surrounding the moment (and locus) of transition from one place to another. In the realm of Roman literature, Catullus notes that his mistress’ sandal inauspiciously squeaked upon the threshold of their pleasure-villa (Cat. 68.71-2; …trito fulgentem in limine plantam / innixa arguta constituit sola. “…she put her shining foot upon the worn threshold and her sandal complained as she stepped.”), and one of Trimalchio’s slaves in the Satyrica is on hand to warn guests to enter the dining room “on the right foot.” (Petron. 30: cum conaremos in triclinium intrare, exclamavit unus ex puereis, qui super hoc officium erat positus: "Dextro pede!" sine dubio paulisper tremidavimus, ne contra praecipsum aliquis nostrum limen transiret. “We were about to enter the dining room when one of the slaves (who had been set in place for just this task) shouted out, ‘Use the right foot!’ That definitely shook us up. What if one of us crossed the threshold the wrong way?”) See also McDonough’s (2004) examination of Ovid’s placement of a “hag” at a threshold in the Fasti 2.533-638.

\(^{167}\) Srimad Bhagavatam 7:8.
outside. Although seemingly invincible, the demon was ultimately killed by
Nrisimhadeva, a man/lion hybrid (neither man nor animal) who grabbed Hiranyakasipu at
twilight (neither day nor night), placed the demon onto his lap (neither on land nor in the
sky) and tore him apart in a doorway (neither inside nor outside). The story is a clear
demonstration of the problematic nature of places and things that defy categorization; the
power of categorical ambiguity, here amplified by the presence of multiple ambivalent
layers, was purposefully exploited to bring about the death of an otherwise invincible
demon. It is this anxiety over spatial ambiguity that the figure of Priapus has been
installed to combat, and while its presence is designed to offer protection, its existence
suggests that that very protection had been deemed necessary in Maecenas’ Gardens.

As with thresholds, graveyards are liminal spaces, too. Although cemeteries are
integral parts of any settlement, throughout the Greek and Roman world gravesites were
regularly located beyond the walls of the city, often along its roadways. Thus they are at
once part of the city and demonstrably excluded from the city, both belonging to it and
separated from it – frequently by clearly delineated boundaries such as city walls.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁸ The site of the pyramid of Caius Cestius at Rome is an interesting example of this phenomenon. A tomb
originally built around 18-12 BCE well beyond the Servian walls of the city (at a crossroads of the Via
Ostiensis), it was thereby excluded from the city itself but within close enough proximity to be associated
with it. Almost three hundred years later, as the city of Rome expanded the pyramid was incorporated
literally into the new Aurelian city walls. The city walls abutted against the very sides of the pyramid;
today, the pyramid can still be seen jutting out from between the walls (Claridge (1998) 364-366). Again,
the tomb was kept separate from the city proper, fashioned into physical boundary marker where it
remained neither inside nor outside the city. By the 18th century, the lands within the Aurelian walls just
surrounding the tomb of Cestius had become uncultivated meadows (the site is labeled as “I Prati del
Popolo Romano” (“The Fields of the Roman People”) on Giovanni Batista Nolli’s 1748 map La Piccola
Pianta di Roma), quasi-pastureland located within the city – neither wild nor urban, but something in
between. It was this space around Cestius’ tomb, in the fields that were and were not part of the city of
Rome that later became the site of Rome’s only Protestant cemetery. The cemetery, still in use today, has
been surrounded by Rome’s urban sprawl but remains a place of separation; it still hugs the massive
Aurelian walls to the south and is cordoned off by thick, twelve-foot walls on all other sides. The
symbolism is clear – the cemetery may be inside the city but it is not fully part of it.
The spatial distinctions afforded to graves and cemeteries may be a result of the perceived reduction in the physical and psychological distances between the living and the dead in those places, much as was observed happening at crossroads. There are many graveside rituals that operate on the assumption that certain rites are most appropriately carried out in physical proximity to the dead, the simplest of these being the practice of graveside offerings and libations. Numerous gravestones fashioned with small funnels corroborate this understanding; the offerings of wine, milk or honey would be poured onto the grave marker, through the funnel and were thus imagined to flow more easily to the deceased. So, too, was the practice of evocation (the act of calling forth the shades of the dead) often carried out near tombs. Also, numerous spells from the Greek Magical Papyri direct the magical practitioner to conduct various activities (reciting magical formulae, depositing particular objects, etc.) at a gravesite, frequently at the grave of one killed violently or untimely. Each one of these practices points to the perception of graves and cemeteries as physical locations where the boundary between life and death is unclear and somehow more permeable.

Horace sets *Satire* 1.8 not only in the midst of a graveyard, but a graveyard that is being transformed an urban pleasure garden. Gardens themselves, much like cemeteries, function as liminal space. On the one hand, a garden is an encapsulation of nature and a

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169 This assumed proximity of contact between living and dead is famously depicted in Electra’s prayer to the dead Agamemnon at the opening of Aeschylus’ *Choephori* 124-151.

170 Philostratus recounts in his *Vita Apollonii* (4.11-16) the appearance of the ghost of Achilles beside his tomb, and Aeschylus’ *Persae* features a lengthy speech by the ghost of the dead Persian king Darius at his tomb (681-842). Ogden (2001) 3-12 and Johnston (1999) 36-81 discuss the somewhat uncomfortably easy transition between making grave offerings for the dead and invoking the spirits of the dead at graves.

171 e.g. PGM IV.296-466; 2006-2125.
demonstration of mastery over it;\textsuperscript{172} there, plants grow in orderly rows, groomed and shaped by the desire of the gardener, and the whims of nature are subordinate to human will. Yet the very act of creating an urban garden is to invite wilderness inside the city – no matter how well ordered it may be – immediately rendering the space into something other than wholly urban. Gardens are then places where the wilderness of the country blends with the civilization of the city to create an area of the in-between.

Although the precise location of the Gardens of Maecenas has unfortunately been lost, archaeological records do offer an approximate location. They were certainly near the Esquiline hill, either abutting or traversing\textsuperscript{173} the old Servian walls that had served as the boundary for the city from the sixth century BCE.\textsuperscript{174} Regardless of the exact positioning, the sources are agreed that the nearby stretch of the Servian wall had been included within the gardens – the “sunny promenade” mentioned by Horace (15: \textit{aggere in aprico}) seems to be a reference to its conversion into an elevated walkway.\textsuperscript{175} The city of Rome had expanded beyond the confines of the Servian walls by the first century BCE,\textsuperscript{176} but the symbolism of the wall as a demarcation of urban space was no doubt still firm. By incorporating this wall into the landscape of the gardens, the once clear

\textsuperscript{172} Compare for instance, how the gardens of the Phaeacians (Hom. \textit{Od.} 7.112-132) serve as one of the many indicators of their quasi-divine status. Whereas gardens are a testament to human skill at taming nature, the gardens of the Phaeacians (immaculately arranged and in bloom throughout every season) are beyond the reach of human ability and can exist for them only by the favor of the gods.

\textsuperscript{173} Platter and Ashby (1929) 269 states that the gardens were “laid out on the Esquiline, on the Servian \textit{agger} and the adjacent necropolis… These gardens were near those of Lamia, but it is not easy to reconcile the indications of the ancient literature or to determine their exact location. Topographers are not agreed as to whether they lay on both sides of the \textit{agger} and both north and south of the \textit{porta Esquilina}.”

\textsuperscript{174} Claridge (1998) 59 discusses the construction dates and usage of the Servian walls, and estimates the Gardens of Maecenas to be “along and across the line of the old republican city walls” (267). Volpe and Parisi (2010) situate the gardens on the \textit{outside} of the Servian wall, though they indicate that the wall was also incorporated into the gardens themselves.

\textsuperscript{175} Morris (1909) 118n15; Palmer (1959) 215n15.

\textsuperscript{176} Claridge (1998) 59.
definition of space became blurred further still. The gardens were not firmly identifiable as belonging to the city or the country and the wall no longer served as a clear marker of division but had been engulfed by nebulous space.

By virtue of being a garden situated on the edge of the city astride what had once been a definitive line between city and country, the Gardens of Maecenas would have been spatially ambiguous even had they been fully complete. However, the poem is set at a time when the conversion from graveyard to garden was as yet in progress, thus adding another layer of liminality to the setting. The Priapic narrator explains, “Not long ago, slaves arranged for the corpses of their fellows / to be carried here in cheap boxes after the bodies were hurled / from their narrow cells …” (8-9: huc prius…), “yet now you can live here on the Esquiline hill, a healthy place” (14: nunc licet Esquilis habitare salubribus). The surrounding area was formerly (prius) a graveyard but at the time of the poem it is now (nunc) refurbished. But the transition is not complete: Priapus states that although he is no longer troubled by the usual wild animals invariably drawn to the cemetery by the scent of carrion, nor by thieves looking to loot graves, he still must endure “those women / who disturb the spirits of the dead with their spells and drugs” and come to the graveyard to gather bones and herbs (19-22). The presence of these women (later given form in the characters of Canidia and Sagana) indicates that Maecenas’ gardens were effectively operating on two separate functional levels at the same time, existing as a charmingly revitalized garden with sunny walkways where the grounds are still filled with bones and the memory of the place’s status as a cemetery is still fresh.
As a former graveyard, the Gardens of Maecenas are a place where the fluid boundary between life and death can be exploited. Here, the bones of the dead are harvested, animals are killed and their blood drained for the ghosts, and spirits are questioned by the living (22, 27-29). Their spells allowed the denizens of the underworld – designated by the adjective *infernas* – to emerge from below into the garden *qua* cemetery, rendering it once again a space uncomfortably in-between: the sight of snakes and “nether hounds” (*infernas canes*) wandering the earth is symbolic of the uncomfortable fracture between the upper and lower worlds. No boundary within this place is secure: not the old Servian walls of the city, not the division of urban and rural space, not the identification of space as garden or graveyard, not even the line between the living and dead remains intact.

An apotropaic Priapus marks the transitional Gardens of Maecenas’ as a figurative threshold, an ambivalent location subject to potential attacks that must be guarded against. The same may be said of the whole of Horace’s *Satires*; each is a thing ill-defined, in transition, composed entirely of elements that both do and do not belong.

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177 In an ideal Roman environment, the local dead might be propitiated with libations of honey, wine, milk, oil, or water and held in solemn familial respect (see Graf (1980) 217-220). Canidia and Sagana’s blood libations, on the other hand, are functioning outside the realm of acceptable graveside offerings. It should be stated that offerings of blood to the dead are not explicitly taboo in all instances: Ogden (2001) 7n13 acknowledges that blood offerings may have been considered appropriate for the heroic dead, and certainly Odysseus’ evocation of the ghost of Tiresias (among others) was conducted without hint of transgression (Hom. *Od*. 11.23f.). Still, Cicero’s allegations that Appius had attempted to rouse the dead with offerings of blood (*Tusc*. 1.37) carry with them a judgment of impropriety, and that is likely the sentiment echoed here.

178 The adjective *infernus*, literally describing the quality of belonging beneath, is often used of the underworld, not infrequently in relation to the so-called “hell hound” Cerberus. In a list of underworldly *adyrnata* Seneca writes “the infernal dog kept quiet” (*Her. Oet.* 460; *siluit inferus canis*), Propertius has Cerberus “guarding the infernal cave with his triple jaws” (3.5.43: *tribus infernum custodit faucibus antrum*), and the scholiast Porphyrian glosses Orpheus’ accomplishments in the underworld “Cerberus and every other infernal thing was soothed by his lyre’s song” (*Commentum in Horati Carmina* 3.11.15-16: *Cerberum et cetera inferna cantu citharae lenita esse*).

The plethora of ambiguities at work in the gardens of Horace’s poetic patron shadows the problems of generic definition that Horace faces in the creation of the *Satires*. In a genre situated at the threshold of other genres, intrusion is a constant threat. How much polemic can creep into satire before satire becomes invective? At what point will comic elements transform satire into comedy? As with the Gardens of Maecenas, the book of *Satires* (especially given its state of generic innovation and transition) is permeable space, a place where the construction of limitations is intrinsically problematic and the attempt to erect boundaries or definitions is immediately undermined. It is nebulous space, and nebulous space invites transgression.
**Intrusion: Canidia and Sagana’s invasion of the Gardens of Maecenas**

Canidia and Sagana are intrusive figures who enter the Gardens of Maecenas, are identified as foreign elements whose presence within the gardens threatens to undermine it, then labeled as physically monstrous and morally unacceptable before being ejected from the grounds by the guardian Priapus. The narrative also has a second layer of meaning – just as the physical location of Maecenas’ gardens doubled as a means by which Horace could treat the ambivalent nature of his *Satires*, so the entry of Canidia and Sagana into that space is simultaneously a story of invading threats to the integrity of Maecenas’ gardens as well as a representation of the invasion of extra-generic elements into Horace’s literary program.

Strictly within the narrative frame of the poem, Priapus categorizes Canidia and Sagana as intruders within the garden. The introduction to his anecdote regarding the two women includes specific descriptions of the characters whom he works to keep out of his appointed space: birds, thieves, animals and *the women who bother the dead with their spells and drugs*. It is directly following the mention of these women that Priapus begins his story, “I saw Canidia…” The Priapic guardian and the witches are thus immediately at odds. Priapus has situated himself as an established member of the community that exists within the Gardens of Maecenas. It is a community of sunny walkways and pleasant views overseen by Rome’s wealthy elite, whereas Canidia is an intruder, one of the many elements Priapus has been charged with fending off. She and Sagana do not
belong within the Gardens of Maecenas – they are grotesques, intent on using that space as a cemetery for the poor, a place of the dead best visited at night.

The intrusion of Canidia and Sagana presents a real threat both to Priapus and the identity of Maecenas’ gardens: as discussed previously, the Gardens of Maecenas are a liminal location with uncertain boundaries; efforts were clearly under way to re-identify the space as a garden as opposed to a graveyard (hence the restructuring, landscaping and various building projects mentioned by Priapus (14-16)), but the change was incomplete and firm identification still illusive. Given that architectural space is largely defined by human usage, Canidia’s use of Maecenas’ gardens as a cemetery was a direct existential attack; by entering that space and purposefully using it in a manner that had been explicitly eschewed, Canidia and Sagana were not only foreign elements intruding upon a space that was struggling to attain purity (concrete self-identification as a garden), but their actions threatened to alter the foundational identity of that space and the community that identified with it.

In light of this threat, Priapus’ discourse casts the two intrusive women as utterly alien from the world of Maecenas’ Gardens, although in actuality (since the space is operating as both garden and graveyard) Canidia and Sagana are as well suited to the space as Priapus. In order for Priapus to maintain the space and community he has

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180 It is arguable (though far from certain) that the faber of line 2 may be read as part of Maecenas’ reclamation crew tasked with fashioning furniture and décor for the new gardens.  
181 Which is to say that a structure (be it a building, hut or cave) is not properly a home until it is lived in, a room (corner, pit) is not a kitchen until food is prepared there, etc. Adornments and furnishing may suggest purpose, but it is usage that truly defines space.  
182 As statues of Priapus are – with few exceptions – not placed within cemeteries, the potential reversion from garden back to cemetery would then be a radical loss of place for Priapus and a complete corruption of his community. (For an extensive treatment of the varied incarnations of Priapic statuary and cult, see Herter (1932).)
defined himself as part of, the intruders are treated as the Other, unwelcome visitors, foreign and repugnant outsiders who threaten the ways of garden life. They are vilified from the outset in two ways – primarily as practitioners of inappropriate rites, but also as mourners whose presence in non-cemetery space Priapus cannot accept. Their appearance, their morals and their ultimate flight from the gardens mark the pair as rejected intruders.

Priapus’ emphasis on divisions of space and categorizations of belonging/non-belonging can be considered in terms of pollution anxiety. The social desire for internal consistency (purity) manifests itself through fears of external intrusion (pollution). The fear is that when figures cross over from the realm of the external into that of the internal, they carry with them a taint of the foreign, of the taboo and unwanted, that acts as a pollutant. Their entry into civilized space brings that external pollution with them. This anxiety is evidenced repeatedly throughout the Greco-Roman world by way of the multiple rituals that surround the transition from one defined space to another – be that crossing from one side of the river to another, from profane space to sacred space, or crossing a simple threshold. Each of these moments of transition are marked by some ritual to accompany the transference, to somehow acknowledge the significance of the transition.

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183 To quote Mary Douglas (1966) 35:

“If we can abstract pathogenicity and hygiene from our notion of dirt, we are left with the old definition of dirt as matter out of place. This is a very suggestive approach. It implies two conditions: a set of ordered relations and a contravention of that order. Dirt, then, is never a unique, isolated event. Where there is dirt there is a system. Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements. This idea of dirt takes us straight into the field of symbolism and promises a link-up with more obviously symbolic systems of purity.”
movement in space and to ensure the progression is not only successful, but not pollutive.\textsuperscript{184}

This pollutant is at the heart of the fear of foreign intrusion into established social groups; the greater terror is not that there exist people (or things) dissimilar to the group, but that those elements will somehow infiltrate the group and fundamentally alter its status. It is the theme of the ‘body as temple’ writ large: the notion that a body should be inviolate, self-contained and impregnable, that the greatest threat to the body is the invasion of a foreign element that fundamentally changes its nature.\textsuperscript{185} We can see this at work in the trials of Cresimus\textsuperscript{186} and Apuleius.\textsuperscript{187} There, the accusations of magic use and \textit{veneficia} functioned as a means of social distinction: our society does not do this, but the intruder does; if the intruder remains within the group, the entire community would be threatened because those ‘external’ practices of magic could no longer be safely relegated to others but would become part of the group’s identity. At the trials, the established community attempts to identify a foreign newcomer\textsuperscript{188} as morally and/or religiously

\textsuperscript{184} Parker’s \textit{Miasma} (1983) is a thorough exploration of the conceptualizations of purity and pollution in early Greek civilization. His chapter \textit{Purification: A Science of Division} (18-31) was particularly influential upon my understanding of boundaries and the anxiety surrounding their proper observance. I am also grateful to Katherine Rask for sharing with me her unpublished work on Etruscan spatial transitional rites.

\textsuperscript{185} The science-fiction/horror film \textit{Alien} capitalizes on this fear. In it, the alien creature forcibly penetrates and impregnates human hosts with its young. The terror of the film arises not solely from the anticipation of the creature’s attack (a breach of the body), but from the knowledge that the creature will convert its victim’s body into a vessel for alien reproduction. Barbara Creed’s article “Horror and the Archaic Mother: \textit{Alien}” (1993) 18-19 touches on this phenomenon.

\textsuperscript{186} Plin. \textit{NH} 18.

\textsuperscript{187} Apuleius’ defense is recounted in his \textit{Apologia}.

\textsuperscript{188} On the story of Cresimus related by Pliny, Graf (1997) 63 notes “he must be of eastern origin, since he bears a common Greek name, Chresimos, which became his cognomen upon gaining his emancipation. His adversaries are clearly rich people, of a much higher social station, a situation more likely than any other to produce conflicts.” Apuleius, too, as a native Madauran (in modern Algeria) found himself as a foreign resident in Alexandria when he was brought up on charges of practicing erotic magic (\textit{ibid.} 65-88).
distinct and thus worthy of removal from the group.\footnote{189} A conviction would restore communal purity via the expulsion of the foreign element (either through death or exile); an acquittal would (ideally) allay fears of contamination by affirming that the accused had conformed to the values and behaviors of the group all along.

With this in mind, we may return to Priapus’ reaction to the two intrusive women. Many of the attributes associated with female mourners in antiquity are applicable to the characters of Canidia and Sagana. Throughout most of the Greek and Roman world (and in many modern Mediterranean cultures), traditional mourning rituals for women consisted of dressing in dark clothing, leaving their hair unbound and smearing their faces with dirt or ash. These women often remained in close contact with the corpse, sang funeral dirges and emitted loud, piercing wails of lament typically known as ululations. They also beat their bodies with their fists and tore their clothing and flesh with their fingernails. In instances of cremation, they may have been responsible for collecting bone particulate from the ashes.\footnote{190} Priapus describes Canidia and, it is implied, Sagana as women who sing (carminibus), whom he cannot keep from entering the graveyard to collect bones (quin ossa legant). They are cloaked in black (nigram succinctam... palla), with loosened hair (passoque capillo) and pale complexion (pallor utrasque / fecerat horrendas aspectu). He remarks that the pair were shrieking (ululantem) and using their

\footnote{189} The Lex Cornelia de Sicariis et Veneficiis, though not positively in use for the case of Cresimus, seems to treat veneficia as a capital offense (Rives (2002)).
\footnote{190} Dillon (2002) 268-292. Whether the collection of bone particulate fell to female mourners is uncertain and difficult to verify given the paucity of the evidence, but is at least one other potential point of overlap between Canidia, Sagana and women in mourning.
nails to claw at the earth (scalpere / terram unguibus). This strongly characterizes
Canidia and Sagana as professional mourners – their appearance, behavior, and presence
in a graveyard are all in accordance with this. Insofar as Priapus is concerned, this is
problematic for two reasons: 1) the concerted effort to convert the cemetery into a garden
would be undermined by the presence of mourners; 2) Canidia and Sagana are not
actually women in mourning, but are the sorts of supernatural female figures who are
generally viewed with fear and dread.

For although Canidia and Sagana’s ensemble is strongly evocative of women in
mourning, their appearances are typical of literary depictions of horrific female magical
practitioners. Combinations of dark imagery, unshod feet, pale skin and disheveled hair
may be found attributed to various frightening supernatural females such as Erictho (pale
skin, wild hair, ability to extend the night), Dido’s assistant (unbound hair, black venom),
Medea (loose hair, bare feet, black lamb, black pit), a murderous ghost
from Apuleius’ Metamorphoses (bare feet, pale face, unkempt hair coated in ash) and
numerous others. These two women are then doubly excluded from the Gardens of

191 We may consider here Od. 24.315-317, where Laertes, in utter abjection, wallows in dust and grabs
great heaps of dirt with which he smears his face in grief.
192 This overlap should not be surprising given the evolution of early magical practice out of funereal rituals
(see Johnston (1999) 82-123).
193 Charles H. Cosgrove’s “A Woman’s Unbound Hair in the Greco-Roman World” (2005) provides a
general overview of the significances potentially at work behind the state of women’s unbound hair and
notes the commonalities between women in grief and women “associated with conjury.” See also Winkler
(1980) 160-165 on various literary descriptions of ghosts and those who resemble them.
194 Luc. 6.616-618, 624-625: caeloque ignota sereno / terribilis Stygio facies pallore gravatur / inpexis
onerata comis... noctis geminatis arte tenebris / maestum tecta caput squalenti nube pererrat.
195 Ver. Aen. 4.509, 514: crinis effusa... nigri cum lacte veneni.
196 Ov. Met. 7.183, 243, 259: nuda pedem nudos umeros infusa capillos... in guttera velleris atri... in fossa
sanguinis atra.
197 Apul. Met. 30: nudis et infectis pedibus, lurore buxeo macieque foedata, et discerpiae comae semicanae
sordentes inspersu cineris.
Maecenas – first on account of the fact that mourners are no longer appropriate in non-cemetery space, and secondly because their actions surpass those of mourners and extend into those of the culturally inappropriate magical practitioners.

Canidia and Sagana have come to the Gardens of Maecenas to conduct rites that – depending on context – are socially questionable at best and flagrantly impious at worst. Although it does not seem that either Horace as author or Priapus as narrator has attempted to offer a true-to-form explication of the rituals at hand, the predominant themes bear enough resemblance to other ritual scenes to suggest probable interpretations of Canidia and Sagana’s actions. While it is impossible to determine whether the narrated events of *Sat.* 1.8: 26-45 account for one extended ritual or multiple smaller ones, Priapus creates the impression that Canidia and Sagana’s behavior is something Other, something that should not be done in his garden.

A summary of the ritual(s) is as follows: the assembled elements include pit evocation, the manipulation of figurines, invocation of divinities, and the burial of esoteric implements. The pouring of blood into a pit to summon spirits of the dead is typically done in order to obtain prophetic knowledge.\(^{198}\) This may be what is meant by *animas responsa daturas* (29), but those replies (*responsa*) need not necessarily have pertained to the future. The presence of woolen and waxen effigies – especially posed as they are and given the waxen form’s eventual immolation – is a strong indication that the pair of women were practicing erotic magic,\(^{199}\) but it is uncertain whether this was the

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\(^{198}\) Notably Homer’s *nekuia* (*Od.* 11).

\(^{199}\) For explicit discussion of this passage, see Faraone (1989) 298-299. Gager (1992) 15 treats the general function of figurines in binding spells – erotic and otherwise. PGM IV.296-466 and the so-called *Louvre Voodoo Doll* are useful comparanda for figurines posed in threatening / submissive positions.
singular aim of these rites. Since the invocation of Hecate is standard in a number of unrelated rituals,\(^{200}\) it cannot definitively identify any of Sagana or Canidia’s actions, whereas Tisiphone is a Fury rarely invoked except in the specific context of revenge, and then not typically in magical rites.\(^{201}\) Wolf’s beard and snake’s tooth are common protective objects and may here be in use as a type of counter-spell,\(^{202}\) but the combination of all of these elements does not resemble any one known rite and rather appears as a fantastic pastiche cobbled together from unrelated rituals.\(^{203}\)

\(^{200}\) Hecate is associated in various contexts with gate protection, birth, young children, crossroads and the control of ghosts among other things (Johnston (1999) 203-249). A small selection of the many purely literary examples of Hecate’s powers includes Jason invoking Hecate as he yokes the fire-breathing bulls (Apollon. 3.1211); Medea swearing by her (Eur. Med. 397); Menelaus and Helen naming her as both sender and guarantor of visions (Eur. Hel. 569-570: see Blondell (1999) 441n52); Dido invoking her alongside the sun, Juno and the avenging Furies – presumably in the hopes of having her dying oath fulfilled (Ver. Aen. 4.609) and Circe calling upon her along with Nox, Chaos and Erebus as she sets a forest in motion and turns king Picus’ men into animals (Ov. Met. 14.402ff.). The sphere of influence of Hecate is considerable.

\(^{201}\) Ingallina (1974) 107 explains her presence by a weak appeal to the general ritual practice of invoking multiple divinities:

> “Orazio, nonostante la tradizione greca della Erinni vendicatrici e sostenitrici dell’ordine familiare e universale, può, a buon diritto, inserire Tisifone in una scena di magia. Egli sa che in magia si suole invocare ogni divinità infernale: in questo caso Tisifone, dea dell’ira e della vendetta, può ben soddisfare l’interesse egoistico della maga. Contro la sua stessa volontà, Varo sarà ridotto alla mercé dell’amante; in qualità di Furia, la dea lo porterà ad un sicuro traviamento amoroso.”

> “Horace, in spite of the Greek tradition of the Erinyes as embodiments of vengeance and upholders of familial and universal order, can justifiably insert Tisiphone into a magical scene. He knows that it is customary to invoke every deity of the underworld: in this case Tisiphone (a goddess of wrath and revenge) is well adapted to satisfy the personal interests of the magician. Against his will, Varus will be left at the mercy of his lover; in her capacity as a Fury, the goddess will bring him to an unavoidable erotic encounter.”

I find his subsequent qualification (n110) more likely: “…è possibile affermare che, poiché la Furia è personaggio secondario della magia, Orazio, introducendola a fianco di due streghe, ha voluto soltanto creare una particolare atmosfera.” “….it is possible to posit – since the Fury is a secondary character in the practice of magic – that Horace, by introducing her alongside two witches, merely wanted to create a particular ambience.”

\(^{202}\) Ingallina (1974) 107-108, citing Plin. NH. 28.31. Several spells in the PGM call for parts of a wolf to be used, likely in apotropaic or purificatory functions (e.g. I.278-292; II.141-149), and the spell at IV.2891-2942 uses a tooth (of an ass) as a charm of protection.

\(^{203}\) Some have ventured interpretations of these rites as a single, extended erotic binding ritual (Rudd (1966)) in which the pit-evocation functions as a type of “he loves me, he loves me not” questioning
The perceptions of practices such as these vary considerably, but it is clear from his characterization of the women that Priapus views their actions as wholly inappropriate deeds done by those removed from civilized society. He dehumanizes Canidia and Sagana by emphasizing their grotesque physicality, their resemblance to animals and their rejection of proper divinities. Their horrifying appearance (26: *horrendas adspectu*) is a mark that places them on the fringe of humanity, neither wholly separated from nor wholly included by society. Their bestial nature removes them a step further, into the realm of the human-animal hybrid: they use their nails to claw at the

204 On the many varieties and perceptions of erotic magic, see Dickie’s “Who Practiced Love-Magic in Classical Antiquity and in the Late Roman World?”; on evocation rites, Ogden’s *Greek and Roman Necromancy* (2001) 163-190.

205 Hybrid species like harpies and satyrs are marked by a physical duality and typically bear a simultaneous resemblance to both their human and animal halves. They are neither human nor animal, but a strange amalgamation of the two and so are not easily categorized as either. Centaurs, as half-human half-horses, are the proverbial exemplars of the hybrid Other in the ancient world. Their animal halves mark them as less-than human, yet they are still partially human and thus not relegated solely to the wilderness, though the moments in which they cross into human civilization are accompanied by anxiety brought about by the knowledge of their potential bestiality. Centaurs carry with them the constant threat that their animalistic excesses of violence and lust will overwhelm their half-human natures. The dominance of the animal savagery of centaurs is demonstrated at the wedding party of Pirithous (Hom. *Od*. 21.295ff.) to which the centaur Eurytion had been invited. Upon drinking too much wine, Eurytion transformed from an accepted part of the group to a maddened beast that attempted to rape the bride. At one moment, the centaur was a participant in two quintessentially civilized actions – marriage and alcohol consumption – in the next, he was an animal out of control, bringing chaos to what had once been orderly. The attempted rape of Deianira by the centaur Nessus (Ov. *Met*. 9.101ff., Soph. *Trach*. 555ff.) further highlights centaurs’ dual nature: it is while crossing a river (an obvious instance of passing through liminal space) that the two aspects of Nessus shift – he enters the river as a civilized being who has offered assistance to fellow travelers, yet changes midstream into a terrible, rapacious beast.

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earth and rip apart a lamb with their teeth (27: *mordicus*). These women are now distinct from the world of humans, fundamentally different on account of their animalistic actions – they dig with their claws, they kill with their teeth. Even their gods are different: from Priapus’ (and likely Horace’s) perspective, Hecate and Tisiphone are not goddesses properly invoked in an urban pleasure garden. The one divinity not out of place – Luna – preferred to hide her face rather than watch Canidia and Sagana at their work. Both human and animal, marked by their hideousness, the invasive pair has thus been effectively distanced from the community.

For Priapus, Canidia and Sagana embody the notion of the intrusive outsider. As a garden statue, his world is within the Gardens of Maecenas, a lush space purchased and redesigned by one of Rome’s political elite for the enjoyment of the city’s citizens. Canidia and Sagana threaten all of that; their entry into the gardens is polluting and erodes the thin boundary that has been erected between the former cemetery and the current garden. Their resemblance to mourners and their evocation of dead spirits blurs that division and calls into question the integrity of the space into which they have intruded. In reaction to this incursion of external influence, Priapus explicitly marks the two women as those who do not belong: they are inhuman, animalistic intruders whom even the proper gods cannot abide. They must be expelled, driven away back to the separate place from which they came: the city.208

206 Ingallina (1974) 95-97 finds this a potentially comic detail: whereas magic is typically considered an old art, it avoids the ‘new’ technology of iron and keeps to the older bronze implements; Horace then has Canidia and Sagana go one step further and use their bare hands.
207 For further analyses on Canidia’s resemblance to dogs (*canes*), see Oliensis (1998) 68-77.
208 The implications of the retreat of Canidia and Sagana back to the city are discussed in Warden.
All of this works insofar as the presentation of Canidia and Sagana within the context of a story as narrated by a Priapic warden of Maecenas’ gardens; he exists in a newly defined space still struggling to assert its identity and witnesses two intruders whom he perceives as threats to the space’s internal cohesion. The Horatian meta-narrative is a variation on that theme: the author Horace is in the midst of a newly defined space still struggling to assert its identity (the *Satires*) when he introduces two characters that could potentially threaten the integrity and originality of that work by their too-close resemblance to characters from other genres. Within the Priapic narrative, the intrusive liminal figures are expelled from the gardens to preserve the unity of the space. For Horace, the expulsion of Canidia and Sagana from the *Satires* is not an option; such an act – in essence the deletion of Horace’s own characters and poetry – would be tantamount to literary destruction. Were Horace to systematically expunge from his *Satires* all elements originally foreign to the genre, there would be virtually nothing left. The only option for dealing with invasive foreign elements in satire is integration.

*Integrating the Intruders*

Because Canidia and Sagana are intrusive figures in the garden/cemetery, the pair are also intrusive figures within Horace’s *Satires*. Yet satire, as a genre comprised of multiple generic elements, is inherently inclusive of foreign elements; a successful satirist must then constantly work to prevent those foreign elements from overwhelming the genre and instead successfully incorporate them into his or her literary space, thus forcing the external to become internalized. The appearance of Canidia and Sagana is the locus of
such an endeavor: so-called “witch scenes” are common to many genres\textsuperscript{209} and by including one in the \textit{Satires}, Horace has the opportunity to engage multiple external elements, yet these elements must be tightly controlled lest his poetic play devolve into mere mimicry. Canidia and Sagana’s presentation must then be evocative of other characters while maintaining a sense of Horatian satiric originality; they must be simultaneously identifiable as belonging within and without.

In this section, I will demonstrate how Horace accomplishes this by directly alluding to three witch scenes from three separate genres in \textit{Satire} 1.8, thus incorporating elements of the bucolic from Vergil’s \textit{Eclogue} 8 (and thus Theocritus’ \textit{Idyll} 2), epic from Homer’s \textit{Odyssey} 10, and iambic from Horace’s own \textit{Epode} 5. Yet as soon as each allusion is secure, Horace almost immediately creates inversions of the same scenes to which he has just made reference. As each character and genre is engaged, it is mutated from its original state and adapted to fit within its new satiric context. Horace draws connections between Canidia and Sagana in \textit{Satire} 1.8 and characters from non-satiric genres, each time demonstrating the Otherness of the characters to whom he alludes – Circe does not belong in satire, nor does Simaetha, nor in fact does Canidia – yet one by one, each of these characters are refashioned in the figures of Canidia and Sagana until those who seemed most external to the genre eventually become part of it.

\textsuperscript{209} E.g. epic (Hom. \textit{Od}. 10-11; Apollon. \textit{Argon}. 3-4), bucolic (Theoc. \textit{Id}. 1. 2, Ver. \textit{Eclog}. 8), drama (Soph. \textit{Rhizotomoi}).
Elements of Vergil, Elements of Theocritus

Vergil’s Eclogues and Horace’s Satires have several things in common. Like Vergil’s Eclogues, the first book of Horace’s Satires is a collection of ten poems in dactylic hexameter. Like the eighth poem of the Eclogues, the eighth poem of the Satires also features a pair of women conducting an erotic spell. Both sets of women sing, have herbs and drugs, and make use of a pair of figurines – one of which is made of wax and melted in a fire – in the execution of their spells. The sense of liminality that pervades the setting of Sat. 1.8 is also prefigured by Eclogue 8. Of course, as Vergil’s Eclogue 8 is itself a conscious reworking of Theocritus’ Idyll 2, there are points of intertextuality not only between Theocritus and Vergil but also between Theocritus and Horace: Theocritus also has two women conducting an erotic spell using songs, drugs and a melted waxen figurine, the primary practitioner in Idyll 2 invokes Hecate just as Canidia and Sagana do, and throughout the idyll there are various liminal foci. The further potential comparanda of the three poems need not be discussed here, suffice it to say that Horace has securely incorporated elements of Vergil’s eighth Eclogue and

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210 Collections of ten poems may not have been terribly common; see Leach (1978) 79-106 for a comparison of some thematic connections between Vergil’s Eclogues, Horace’s Satires and Tibullus’ first book of elegies – each of which are collections of ten.
211 Sat. 1.8.19: carminibus; Ecl. 8.67-109 passim: carmina.
212 Sat. 1.8.19: venenis; 22: legant herbasque nocentis; Ecl. 8.95: herbas... lecta venena.
213 Sat. 1.8.30: lanea et effigies erat, altera cerea; 43-44: et imagine cerea / largior arserit ignis; Ecl. 8.80-81: limus ut hic durescit et haec ut cera liquescit / uno eodemque igni. Faraone’s Clay Hardens and Wax Melts (298-299) notes the similar appeals to sympathetic magic activated by the melting of waxen figurines in the rituals of Sat. 1.8 and Ecl. 8.
214 Note the emphasis on thresholds: Ecl. 8.93: ego limine in ipso; 107: Hylax in limine latrat.
215 Theoc. Id. 2.11 : ποταεισομαι.
216 ibid. 15: φάρμακα.
217 ibid. 25: ὁς τούτων τὸν χειρὸν ἐγὼ σῶν δεάμον τάχω.
218 ibid. 36: ἂθεός ἐν τριόδοιοι; 60: τὰς τήνω φλιὰς καθ’ ύπέστερον ἂς; 105: θύρας ὑπὲρ οὐδὸν ἐμειβόμενον.
Theocritus’ second *Idyll* into *Satire* 1.8, and in so doing has brought aspects of bucolic poetry into his *Satires*.\(^{219}\)

Practically as soon as these allusions are made, their established expectations are subverted. The general frame of Vergil and Theocritus’ poems is as follows: two women (one young, the other of indeterminate age, but likely a slave) conduct an erotic ritual directed at a man whose interests have wandered; Theocritus’ poem leaves the ritual’s efficacy ambiguous, Vergil’s all but guarantees its success. Since Horace has established such strong bucolic resemblances to *Eclogue* 8 and *Idyll* 2, he has created expectations that his poem will have a similarly bucolic ending. *Satire* 1.8 features two women conducting an erotic ritual directed against an unknown target but – unlike in the two bucolic poems – Canidia and Sagana are not only prevented from completing their ritual, they are done so by the intervention of a farting Priapus, and as opposed to the potentially youthful women of Theocritus and Vergil’s poems, Canidia and Sagana’s age is concealed until the poem’s closing lines, wherein they are finally revealed to be old women. There are more pointed inversions as well: throughout *Idyll* 2, the moon is repeatedly called upon,\(^{220}\) yet in *Sat*. 1.8 the moon hides her face and refuses to watch Canidia and Sagana’s rite, and at the close of *Ecl.* 8 the speaker says of her lover, “Hold, he comes from the city,” (*parcite, ab urbe venit*) while Canidia and Sagana, alarmed by Priapus’ outburst, “ran into the city,” (*currere in urbem*). Horace has thus drawn clear parallels between his own *Satire* 1.8, Vergil’s *Eclogue* 8 and Theocritus’ *Idyll* 2 in order

\(^{219}\) On the bucolic nature of Vergil’s *Eclogues*, see Gutzwiller (2006).

\(^{220}\) The phrase φραξεό μεν τὸν ἔρωθ’ ὀδηγον ἔκατο, πότνα Σελάνα ("Consider, mistress Selene, where my love came from," ) is repeated twelve times throughout the poem.
to establish expectations of similarity between the women of his *Satire* and the women of Vergil and Theocritus’ bucolic poems. He then manipulated those expectations and morphed the borrowed bucolic elements into something truly satiric.

*Elements of Homer*

Horace applies the same technique to his allusion to the Homeric Circe. In book 10 of the *Odyssey*, Circe instructs Odysseus on the proper conduct of an evocation ritual in order to question the dead; among other things, the rite (carried out at night) calls for a pit to be dug and the blood of a sacrificed black lamb to be poured within, such that the ghosts might drink from it and answer any questions put to them. In Horace’s satire, Canidia and Sagana sacrifice a black lamb at night and pour its blood into the hole they have dug in order to ask questions of the dead who will rise there (26-29). Yet unlike the Homeric passage, these women claw at the dirt with their nails instead of using a blade to fashion an evenly measured pit, they tear the lamb apart with their teeth instead of cleanly jugulating it, and their purpose in conducting the rite – be it prophecy or erotic insight – is a pale shadow of Odysseus’ consultation of the famed seer Tiresias. Likewise, Canidia and Sagana are naught compared to Circe. The “lovely haired” goddess is found

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221 Since Circe is explicitly named at *Idyll* 2.15 and *Eclogue* 8.70, it is possible that this reference to Circe’s role in the *Odyssey* is also a subtle allusion to Theocritus and Vergil.

222 Hom. *Od*. 10.487ff. The question of whether Odysseus’ actions in book eleven constitute a katabasis or an evocation ritual is an old one – certain parts of the passage seem to indicate that Odysseus has actually traveled to the land of the dead, while others suggest that the ghosts are coming to meet him. Despite the ambiguity, the Horace’s repetition of key aspects of the rite is highly suggestive of the Homeric passage.

223 The Homeric ritual is specifically carried out near the land of the Cimmerians, people who live in constant darkness and fog (11.15-19).

surrounded by tamed wild animals, weaving with divine skill and singing beautifully. Canidia and Sagana, by comparison, are overmatched at every turn: Circe hails from true Homeric epic while these two follow Priapus’ faux-epic scene setting “simul ac vaga luna decorum / protulit os”; Circe is flowing haired, attractive, divine and a skilled weaver, Canidia’s hair is undone, she is old, mortal and in a simple black cloak; Circe’s voice is clear, Canidia wails; Canidia and Sagana bestially scratch and bite, Circe has subdued lions and wolves. By invoking the character of Circe and then systematically crafting Canidia and Sagana in opposition to her, Horace here successfully converts characteristic elements from an epic witch-scene into a wholly satiric mirror of the original, thereby creating a work at once epic and satiric.

*Elements of Horace*

The most obvious source material for Canidia may have come from one of Horace’s own poems in the iambic genre, *Epode 5*. Although the publication date for the first book of *Satires* (c. 35 BCE) predates that of the *Epodes* (c. 30 BCE), the composition date for

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225 *ibid*. 10.210-223.
226 A line thus rendered as bombastic as possible in my translation, “the very moment the wand’ring moon doth proffer her decorous face.”
227 This characterization of Canidia and Sagana is remarkably similar to the depiction of Circe on the Theban Kabeiroi vases. Several of these vases depict scenes from the Odysseus and Circe episode in the *Odyssey* with a decidedly comedic bent; Odysseus is portrayed naked, pot-bellied and sporting the prominent phallus so characteristic of comedic scenes while Circe is depicted as a grotesque old woman in simple clothing (Bedigan (2006) 8-9). As a small measure of the attractiveness accorded her presentation, I note that Bristol Press’ 1996 printing of W.B. Stanford’s edition of *Odyssey I-XII* features on its cover an image from one of the Kabeiroi vases (a Boeotian black-figure skyphos, 410-400 BCE, Ashmolean Museum G259) widely interpreted as Circe presenting Odysseus with her drugged potion. The image shows a naked Odysseus holding his unsheathed sword as Circe (presented in profile and thus showing only one of her eyes) holds aloft a cup. Somewhat amusingly, the copyright page misidentifies the cover illustration as “Odysseus and Polyphemus.” The import of such a characterization of Circe and Odysseus on the Kabeiric vases is unsure but would almost certainly have interesting ramifications: it could point to a unique type of Theban cult, a series of lost comedies centered around Odysseus’ exploits, or an early artistic instantiation of the widespread folkloric motif of the old woman as witch.
Epode 5 is generally placed prior to Sat. 1.8. The precise dating of either poem is difficult due to the lack of verifiable references, but the mention of a cemetery on the Esquiline in Epode 5 suggests that the poem was written (or, arguably, simply set) prior to the renovations of Maecenas discussed in Satire 1.8.

In this poem, (the only other to feature Canidia in the company of Sagana), the women have captured a Roman child and plan to bury him alive in order to create a potion to recapture the affections of Canidia’s errant lover Varus. At the poem’s end, the boy interrupts their ritual to swear an oath of vengeance (87-102). There are several clear points of comparison between Epode 5 and Satire 1.8: Canidia and Sagana appear in each poem, erotic magic is practiced, a sense of the macabre pervades and both poems close with spells that are interrupted by characters in search of revenge. As in Sat. 1.8, the Canidia of Epode 5 has disheveled hair, gathers herbs and bones, and along with Sagana is repeatedly compared to savage beasts. However, as in case of the allusions to other witch-scenes in Sat. 1.8, the resemblances to Epode 5 are deftly manipulated so as to render them essentially satiric. The most basic change is that of tone: Epode 5 is a horrific narrative centered on the slow torture of a child who vows to take revenge after his murder at the hands of a group of sadistic old women; Satire 1.8 is a darkly comedic anecdote told by a talking statue of Priapus in which no one dies, Canidia and Sagana are
revealed to be harmless objects of mockery, and the narrator’s vengeance comes not in the form of a death-oath but in a surprisingly loud fart. Moreover, despite their similarities, the Canidia of *Satire* 1.8 is not the same Canidia of *Epode* 5; the epodic Canidia is a terrifying murderer of children – the satiric Canidia is a timid old hag scared of statues and noises in the dark. Although their names are the same, the resemblance between the two characters is minimal.

A more specific comparison between *Satire* 1.8 and *Epode* 5 may be found in the wording of the boy’s final threats: “The wolves and Esquiline birds will tear apart your unburied limbs.”234 The sentiment captures the overall sense of the epode as a harsh, pointed assault against the characters of Canidia, Sagana and their ilk; it is a quintessential piece of iambic invective. The eighth *Satire*, set as it was in the Esquiline cemetery, would have provided an ideal location for the fulfillment of the dying boy’s curse but for a number of exceptions: 1) the Esquiline cemetery, now in the process of becoming Maecenas’ gardens, is no longer the place for unburied bones it once was, 235 2) Priapus is now keeping away the very birds and beasts who might have torn apart Canidia and Sagana’s corpses, 236 and 3) the poem does not end with the deaths of Canidia and Sagana, merely their humiliation and comic flight. The Canidia and Sagana of *Epode* 5 have been defanged, reimagined and transported into a separate genre. Again, Horace has introduced foreign elements into his poem – this time borrowing from characters that he himself created – yet by changing the manner of their presentation he has made them

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234 *ibid.* 99-100: *inseputa membra different lupi / et Esquilinae alites.*
235 *Sat.* 1.8.16: *albis informem spectabant ossibus agrum.*
236 *ibid.* 3-4: *furum aviumque / maxima formido; 6-7: ast importunas volucres in vertice harundo / terret fixa vetatque novis considere in hortis; 17: cum mihi non tantum furesque feraeque suetae.*
work as integrated parts of his satire. He has repeatedly identified Canidia and Sagana with intrusive, external elements generically distinct from satire and has each time rendered them ultimately satiric.

The creation of space within the Satires for Canidia and Sagana – characters consciously drawn from sources beyond the world of satire – is a demonstration of the essential nature of the Satires itself: it is a collection created through the careful incorporation of elements from multiple genres, recrafted and rewritten until they at last became integral components of a genre to which they had never belonged.
**Warden: An Apotropaic Phallus in Defense of Horace’s *Satires***

One final element remains in the story of Canidia and Sagana – the figure of Priapus. As an ithyphallic statue, Priapus’ role is fairly clear: he is a traditional apotropaic symbol put in place to ward off unwanted visitors. But the question of why such a figure should be the only narrator other than Horace in the entirety of the first book of *Satires* is less evident. The general scholarly consensus is that Priapus is a type of Horatian mask – another of Horace’s many poetic voices – but the potential implications of such an identification are manifold. This section briefly covers the prevalent usage of phalloi as apotropaic symbols before surveying the various interpretations of the Horatian Priapic narrator that have been previously suggested. It closes with an interpretation of Priapus in keeping with Horace’s struggle for the integrity of the satiric genre and his propensity to manage the incorporation of separate genres into his *Satires* through the subversion and manipulation of the expectations created by them – in this case, the *Priapea* and Callimachus’ *Iambi*.

Extensive work has been carried out on the apotropaic usage of phalloi in cultures the world over.\(^{237}\) As a basic demonstration of male sexual power designed to establish dominance through the assertion of reproductive strength, the phallus eventually comes to be associated with the ability to ward off potential intruders. The symbol is immeasurably

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old, stretching far back along humans’ evolutionary timeline such that even primates will aggressively display their erect penis when threatened or presented with an intrusive newcomer. This, paired with the phallus’ nearly ubiquitous global presence as a potent symbol is indicative of its long tenure.

The ithyphallic divinities of Mutunus Tutunus and Fascinus – often represented simply by the depiction of an erect phallus – were employed very early on in Rome’s history to ward off evil and combat aggressive supernatural acts such as enchantments and the evil eye. Phallic amulets are thus commonly found throughout much of Roman territory and phallic images often appear carved or sculpted around various urban buildings, used as boundary markers in the countryside and positioned at crossroads. 238

The Priapic statue in Maecenas’ garden is one such figure. As discussed previously, the Priapus of Sat. 1.8 explicitly describes itself as guardian in place for the express purpose of keeping out the unwelcome. In this role, he is well in keeping with the aggressively sexual descriptions of Priapus found in the Priapea. For example, in just two shockingly obscene lines the Priapic speaker of Priapea 22 establishes his status as a ward and the means of sexual punishment that await the various people who might attempt to steal from him:

\[
\textit{femina si furtum faciet mihi virve puerve,}
\textit{ haec cunnum, caput hic praebeat, ille nates.}\]

238 See Moser (2006) 41-69. Similar images have also been found in Egyptian tombs, at Viking burial sites in Norway, and carved into a cathedral doorway at Toulouse (Hartland (1917) 825). As of the twenty-first century, megalithic phalloi are still prevalent on the Indonesian island of Nias and graphic images of erect, often ejaculating phalloi abound in modern Bhutan – also with apotropaic intent (Bendick (2010) 1535-1542).

239 Priapea 22.
“If a woman steals from me, or a man, or a boy –
Let her present to me her cunt, the man his mouth, the boy his ass.”

The figure’s impressive phallus is here imagined both as a deterrent and as a weapon of enforcement. Accordingly, Horace’s Priapus states that “the red pole sticking straight out of my filthy crotch” will aid in the protection of the garden. That phallic amulets and hand gestures were in wide use as charms against ‘witchcraft’ also aligns with Priapus’ expulsion of Canidia and Sagana\(^\text{240}\) in that the presence of the statue acted as an antidote against the women’s activities that ultimately disrupted their rites and removed them from the space altogether.\(^\text{241}\) Strange though this poem may be, Priapus’ role in it conforms to the culturally widespread apotropaic properties typically associated with prominent phallic displays.\(^\text{242}\)

But that does not explain why this Priapic statue has been given the role of narrator in Satire 1.8, the only poem in the first book not written in Horace’s own voice.\(^\text{243}\) In fact, it is partially because of this anomaly that the Priapus-as-narrator has been read by many (correctly, I believe) as a stand-in for Horace.\(^\text{244}\) Their shared humble

\(^{240}\) Elworthy (1895) 148-155.
\(^{241}\) Of course, this is not a wholly accurate description of Priapus’ role in the aversion of Canidia and Sagana; the particulars of that event will be examined later.
\(^{242}\) Through Horace specifically avoids turning Sat. 1.8 into a pure invective, Amy Richlin’s (1992) 113 observations on invective directed against old women are here particularly relevant: “It seems at least possible that invective against vetulae [old women] constitutes a sort of apotropaic satire that attempts to belittle and control the power of old women, pitting the phallus against the threat of sterility, death and the chthonic forces.”
\(^{243}\) The question of what one means by “Horace’s voice” is a difficult one, wrapped up in assumptions (or rejections) of poetic biography, the existence of a constructed persona, or indeed multiple constructed personae. Freudenburg’s (2010) “Horatius Anceps: Persona and Self-revelation in Satire and Song” is one of the more recent additions to the debate. For my own part, I feel it is important to note that – regardless of the personae adopted or masks worn in the other poems of Satire 1 – Priapus is the only narrator in the book to identify himself as a character that is decidedly not Horace. That said, I am also of the opinion that the statue of Priapus does ultimately serve as another of Horace’s masks.
\(^{244}\) See _inter alios_ Anderson (1972), Hill (1993), Habash (1999), Sharland (2003) and Edmunds (2009) - who includes still further citations: see 130-131n32).
beginnings, indebtedness to Maecenas, similar narrative styles favoring observation and behavioral correction, as well as the intrinsic jest of a poet with the cognomen “Flaccus” (droopy, floppy, flaccid) choosing as his alter ego a statue with a comically engorged phallus, all suggest a similarity between the Priapic narrator and the overarching narrative voice(s) of the rest of the Satires. However, these often-cited resemblances between Horace and Priapus overlook the pair’s status as liminal figures – a comparison that further bolsters the identification of one with the other.

As the son of a freedman brought into the literary circle of Rome’s social elite, Horace occupies a unique position. He has risen drastically from one of the lowest rungs of Rome’s social ladder to the city’s upper echelon by virtue of his poetic ability, yet the satire that earned him this new elevation in status also marks him as alienated from it. Satire was considered a low, coarse genre, its style similar to everyday speech as opposed to the more lofty genres of epic or lyric in vogue in Maecenas’ circle. Tara S. Welch (2001) explores this phenomenon in depth, noting how Horace’s strained literary relationship with Maecenas is reflected throughout the Satires in his navigation of space, particularly Maecenas’ gardens and the city center of Rome: “He participates at Maecenas’ domus in spite of his satire. Yet he participates in Maecenas’ domus because of his satire.” On the other hand, while his poetry puts him in an odd position with regards to his literary patron, his elevated social ranking keeps him from being fully

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245 Based on their shared quality as “upstarts,” Hill (1993) draws comparisons not only between Horace and Priapus, but also between them and Canidia. She then tracks in each character what she perceives as an initial rise in status followed by an “unmasking” that restores each character to its originally low state. I am unconvinced of every shift in status Hill finds at work within the poem, although the potential for unity and thematic continuity it would present within the Satires is intriguing.

246 Oliensis (1998) repeatedly engages this dichotomy.

integrated within the city: “His satiric poetry is at odds with his access to Maecenas’ *domus*, for his poetry dislocates him in the gardens, and his status dislocates him downtown.”

This quality of existing on the cusp of two separate realms is common to apotropaic figures, especially phallic ones. Priapi are frequently found in gardens and crossroads, border stones are often shaped as phalloi, and herms – headed columns with protruding phalloi – are ubiquitously found in classical world at boundaries and other transitional points.

Hence Priapus. An ithyphallic guardian of an urban garden, he is in much the same position as Horace. He is a god – more precisely, a statue of a god – crafted from a fig log, “useless wood.” His form pronounces him a divinity while his material marks him as a cheap garden fixture. He has been elevated to godhood from a base stump, but cannot escape his essentially low nature, and whereas a true Priapus would avenge himself with his phallus, this one can only act in accordance with the fig wood from which he was carved.

Under stress, the Priapus statue splits and reveals its wooden composition; like Horace, that which lifted him to a new status simultaneously keeps him on its fringe.

Following his acceptance into Maecenas’ literary circle, Horace found himself removed from the city center (the source and object of his *Satires*) and displaced into

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248 *ibid.*

249 Compare also the character of Hermes – a divinity, like Priapus, often depicted as ithyphallic – in his capacity as escort to the souls of the living entering the realm of the dead. Again, a figure with strong phallic associations is positioned at the threshold of two worlds.

250 Contrary to Priapus’ divinity, the fig wood from which his statue is made is a notoriously poor material and prone to split in the heat. Hallet (1981) 341-347 explores the possible significance of the sexual connotations of *ficus* and their import regarding Priapus’ metaphorical impotence at the poem’s conclusion.

251 Sharland (2003) 105 reads this “scatological humor” as “reminiscent of Old Comedy,” an association that would further Priapus’ descent into the low and uncouth.
Maecenas’ Gardens where his urban satiric poetry set him apart from the group’s literary aesthetic. Priapus, too, is somewhat out of place in these gardens: his naked sexual aggression puts him in league with the likes of Pan and his wild satyrs, and his function as a scarecrow has agricultural associations, yet it was due to these very qualities that he was erected in the Gardens of Maecenas, an urban pleasure garden for Rome’s elite. Thus Priapus, a thing of the wild, remains an outsider in the quasi-urban space where he has been established.

Horace and Priapus are thus both liminal guardians. Priapus is positioned in a garden (itself a blend of the wild and the civilized) in a transitional state from its previous status as a graveyard, and serves as protection against unwanted, invasive elements who would undermine the garden’s status. Horace on the other hand, included and excluded from Maecenas’ poetic circle, is the guardian of his own poetry, the transitional Satires, from which he wards off potentially hyper-generic elements and ensures that they are safely incorporated lest they upset the generic balance of his work.

Given this identification of Priapus as a type of Horatian mask, numerous readings of Priapus’ expulsion of Canidia and Sagana from the Gardens of Maecenas have been put forward. The two women have been read as representatives of unwanted poets attempting to encroach on Maecenas’ circle, critics of Horatian poetry,252 as symbols of the “post-generic” responsibilities attendant upon Horace’s induction into Maecenas’ coterie,253 representatives of the magical practitioners who were eventually

forced from Italy in 33 BCE by Octavian\textsuperscript{254} and as icons of the rejected iambographic tradition.\textsuperscript{255}

These views are – for the most part – valid alternative readings of Canidia’s role in \textit{Satire} 1.8.\textsuperscript{256} My own understanding of the poem is similar to that outlined by Sharland, although I do not see in Canidia only the embodiment of the iambic genre, but of others as well. Priapus is another of Horace’s satiric voices, one narrating the events of the poem in such a way as to maintain the generic integrity of the \textit{Satires}, to distance Horace and his work from the overly iambic, bucolic, and epic and to align himself with a type of reinvented Callimachean aesthetic.

\textit{Satirizing Callimachus’ Iambi}

The Callimachean flavor of the poem – and much of the first book of the \textit{Satires} – has been well observed. Horace’s engagement with the themes of verbal paucity, purity and elegance of style seem deeply influenced by the aesthetics of Callimachean poetry.\textsuperscript{257} Still, these observations tend to overlook the full extent to which Callimachus’ \textit{Iambi} influence \textit{Satire} 1.8. The trope of the talking Priapic statue as well as the actions of

\textsuperscript{254} LeJay (1911) 220.
\textsuperscript{256} LeJay’s (1911) interpretation of Priapus’ expulsion of Canidia and Sagana as an artifact of Horace’s endorsement of Octavian’s impending action against Italian magical practitioners is dubious at best. In the first place, it implies an unnecessary sycophancy on the part of Horace toward Octavian, and in the second, such an endorsement seems rather preemptive given that Octavian’s expulsion of the magical practitioners did not take place until 33 BCE – two years after the poem’s publication and perhaps many more beyond its composition. Finally, the recurring presence of Canidia in Horace’s \textit{Epodes} and in the second book of the \textit{Satires} would have rendered moot any political significance underlying her expulsion in \textit{Sat.} 1.8. Edmunds’ (2009) hypothesis that an actual fig-wood Priapus that “had split along the crease between the buttocks” served as the inspiration for the poem – a theory also pondered by Rudd (1966) 72 – is curious, albeit unlikely.
\textsuperscript{257} See especially Freudenberg (1993) 185-235, also Welch (2001) 170-174 and Sharland (2003). It should be noted as well that many of these readings focus primarily on Callimachus’ \textit{Aitia} and \textit{Hymns}. 
Canidia and Sagana are informed both by the authorial personae of Callimachus’ *Iambi* in general and by direct comparison with *Iambi* 7 and 9 in particular.

Although the *Iambi* are traditionally interpreted as having been heavily influential upon Horace’s *Epodes*, it is clear that there are also many overlapping themes between them and Horace’s *Satires*. Both collections are explicitly concerned with generic innovation in the face of their literary predecessors, both contain conscious juxtapositions of high and low generic elements, and both authors employ multiple narrative voices in which they critique and correct the inappropriate behavior of the people around them. Certainly the invective nature of the *Iambi* made them a more natural model for the *Epodes* rather than the *Satires*, but invective elements run through the *Satires* as well.

Specific connections between *Satire* 1.8 and the *Iambi* can be found in the seventh and ninth poems of that collection. These poems – like much of the *Iambi* – are extremely fragmentary. Only the first two lines of *Iambus* 7 are complete and the twenty-four lines immediately following contain roughly twenty legible words between them. The text then breaks off for approximately twelve lines and is followed by thirteen fragmented half-lines. *Iambus* 9 is in even worse condition: only two lines remain of the entire poem. Fortunately, a later scholar in antiquity (known only as the diegete) has

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258 Horace engages the stylings of the earlier satirist Lucilius (*Sat. 1.4*.56 ff.; *1.10*.1 ff.), just as Callimachus casts himself as following in the steps of the iambicist Hipponax (*Iamb. 1*.1ff.).

259 For example, Horace sets the scene of Brutus’ judicial court (*Sat. 1*.7) directly prior to *Sat. 1*.8, which of course features the distinctly base humor of a Priapic fart; Callimachus placed his poem about the majestic statue of chryselephantine Zeus at Olympia (*Iamb. 6*) just before a similar poem on a beaten up wooden statue of Hermes that had been rescued from the sea (*Iamb. 7*).

provided brief summaries (Diegeses) of each of Callimachus’ *Iambi* which have made it possible to analyze these otherwise inaccessible poems.\(^{261}\)

*Iambus* 7 bears an immediately apparent resemblance to *Satire* 1.8 in that both poems are narrated by talking statues.\(^{262}\) The statue of *Iamb.* 7 is a wooden image of Hermes, specifically in his cultic guise as Hermes Perpheraios (Hermes who has been ‘carried about’).\(^{263}\) According to the Diegesis, the statue recounts its own creation at the hands of Epeius, its many journeys – during one of which its shoulder was damaged – and its eventual establishment as a revered cultic object. There are thus several similarities between *Iamb.* 7 and *Sat.* 1.8: both poems feature talking ithyphallic wooden statues\(^{264}\) that describe their own creation and the origin of a noticeable structural flaw.\(^{265}\)

Given these overlaps, it is reasonable to assume that Horace was employing Callimachus’ *Iambi* – to some extent – as a model for his *Satires*.

In the tightly arranged collection that is Callimachus’ *Iambi*, many of the poems are bound together by thematic repetition;\(^{266}\) as two poems that each feature speaking ithyphallic statues of Hermes, there is a close connection between *Iambi* 7 and 9 – both of

\(^{261}\) Naturally the synopses of the *Iambi* presented by the diegete cannot be taken completely uncritically, but they do offer valuable insights into poems that are on their own too fragmentary to yield any but the most rudimentary observations.

\(^{262}\) The basic similarities between *Sat.* 1.8 and *Iamb.* 7 and 9 have been remarked upon by Acosta-Hughes (2002) 296 and Freudenberg (1993) 105-106.

\(^{263}\) Cal. *Iamb.* 7.1 (Pfeiffer fr. 197): Ἐρμᾶς ὁ Περφερέας, Αἰνίων θεός.

\(^{264}\) Hermes is not always depicted as ithyphallic, although numerous coins depict the cult image of Hermes Perpheraios as an enthroned phallic object; see especially the Thracian drachmae (c. 357-342 BCE) and tetradrachms (c. 455-453 BCE) from Ainos, the region specifically mentioned at *Iamb.* 7.1. This, in combination with the meter of the poem (alternating iambic trimeters with ithyphallics) and its thematic pairing with *Iamb.* 9 (featuring an ithyphallic statue of Hermes) strongly suggests a formal similarity between the image of Hermes Perpheraios and the Priapus of *Sat.* 1.8.

\(^{265}\) The entirety of *Sat.* 1.8 may be conceived of as an *aition* for Priapus’ misshapen rump (see note 144), just as *Iamb.* 7 may be read as the *aitiology* of a particular cultic figure – a poetic exercise particularly favored by Callimachus.

\(^{266}\) Acosta-Hughes (2002).
which inform the depiction of Priapus in Horace’s *Satire* 1.8. *Iambus* 9’s extant lines read:

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Ἐρμᾶ, τί τοι τὸ νεύρον, ὦ Γενειόλα,
potτὰν ὑπήναν καὶ ποτ’ ἵχνυσον ;
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“Bearded Hermes, why is it that your shaft at your beard, not your feet…”

The diegete explains that the poem, set in a wrestling school, was fashioned as a verbal exchange between a young boy’s lover and a statue of Hermes that had been erected in the school. In it, the lover asks if Hermes’ arousal is due to the beauty of the young boy, Philetades. Hermes recounts his origins and says that his state is explained by the rites of a Tyrrhenian mystery cult. Finally, the statue criticizes the lover’s pursuit of Philetades.

The basic premise of the poem (a speaking statue of Hermes), its appeal to cultic origins and emphasis on the statue’s physical appearance clearly signifies a link between *Iambi* 9 and 7.

There are four important points of contact between *Iambus* 9 and *Satire* 1.8: 1) The obvious repetition of a speaking, ithyphallic statue, 2) the statue’s explanation of its origins and physical characteristics, 3) disapproving commentary on nearby erotic activity and 4) the inversion of generic convention. The first of these two are fairly obvious and need not be discussed further. The third and fourth points, however, merit some analysis as they are directly relevant to Priapus’ treatment of Canidia and Horace’s portrayal of the character of Priapus.

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Hermes’ criticism\textsuperscript{268} of the unnamed lover’s relationship with Philetedas in \textit{Iamb}. 9 appears to be in line thematically with \textit{iambi} 3 and 5, themselves also criticisms of “sexual behavior in homoerotic settings.”\textsuperscript{269} Once we allow for the translation of Callimachean poetry out of a specifically homoerotic context (a relatively common occurrence),\textsuperscript{270} it is possible to see that the Hermes of \textit{iamb}. 9 and the Priapus of \textit{Sat}. 1.8 fulfill similar functions as arbiters of proper erotic behavior. While Canidia and Sagana’s rites were not likely exclusively amatory, the portions of their ritual that involved melting a waxen effigy almost certainly were. Priapus’ interruption of them – although not an explicit condemnation – serves as an implicit critique and correction of those actions, a stance remarkably similar to that taken by Hermes regarding Philetedas’ lover. Within the first book of the \textit{Satires}, the Horatian narrator repeatedly points out and corrects the improper behavior of the people around him. In \textit{Satire} 1.8 it is Priapus (modeled on the Callimachean Hermes of \textit{iamb}. 9) who acts in the capacity of a Horatian narrator by commenting on the impropriety of Canidia and Sagana’s activity.

The similarities between Callimachus’ Hermes and Horace’s Priapus are furthered by Callimachus’ portrayal of Hermes in a manner contrary to generic expectations. Acosta-Hughes suggests that erotic poems addressed to ithyphallic Hermes were not uncommon: “Callimachus has strikingly varied this convention by having the reason for the statue’s physical state be something quite different from immediate lust and by

\textsuperscript{268} Diegesis to \textit{iamb}. 9. 39-40: ἐπὶ ξακώ δὲ αὐτῶν φιλεῖν τὸν / Φιλητάδαν.
\textsuperscript{269} Acosta-Hughes (2002) 303.
\textsuperscript{270} Compare the adaptation of Meleager’s epigram (\textit{A.P.} 12.101) by Propertius (1.1), and Catullus’ possible reworking of a phrase from Callimachus’ lament for the dead Heracleitus – ὁ πάντων / ἀφαντῆς Αἴδης (\textit{Epigram} 2.5-6) – into his own eulogy for his lover’s dead sparrow: \textit{Orci, quae omnia bella devoratis} (3.14).
turning the poem to fault the erotic desires of the *erastes* who first questions the statue.”

Like Callimachus’ Hermes, Horace’s Priapus also fails to live up to his generic expectations. As an ithyphallic statue, and especially as a statue of Priapus, the narrator of *Sat. 1.8* would be reasonably expected to wield his phallus in the defense of Maecenas’ gardens, an action commensurate with many of the poems of the *Priapea*. Of course, this does not occur. The Priapus of *Satire 1.8* instead comedically defends his territory through the use of a fart, thus turning his anus – as opposed to his phallus – into a weapon and thereby inverting not only his standard means of attack but the very genre of iambic as well.

Priapus’ literary reminiscence of Callimachus’ Hermes – much like Canidia and Sagana’s resemblance to their various supernatural predecessors – is a potential threat to the *Satires*’ generic integrity. The narrator of *Satire 1.8* is a re-imagining of the Hermes from *Iambus 9*, a figure so closely tied to the genre of iambic that it in fact “assumes the character of iambic poetry... [and] becomes the iambic voice.”

Through Priapus’ close engagement with the *Iambi* and the *Priapea*, he could very well have overwhelmed the satiric balance of multiple genres at play within *Sat. 1.8*. However, as with Priapus’ inversion of the generic expectations elicited through his descriptions of Canidia and Sagana, in the poem’s final lines Priapus manipulates the genre of iambic he had threatened to embody. By frightening off the two women not with his phallus but his

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272 Hallett (1981) analyzes the significance of this anal/phallic inversion.
anus, he effectively diverts and reclaims the aggressive genre of iambic for Horatian satire.
Conclusions

There are two narratives at work in Satire 1.8, enacted by the characters of Priapus, Canidia and Sagana in the Gardens of Maecenas. The more readily apparent of the two is a simple tale of witches being kept from accomplishing their will: Canidia and Sagana (virtually archetypal intruders) come at night to a cemetery to conduct their illicit spells only to be interrupted and run off at the intervention of an ithyphallic figure. This is a narrative steeped in common folkloric motifs, from the women’s physical appearance and presence in a graveyard to their undoing at the hands of an apotropaic phallus. The basic elements of the poem – the liminality of the site of intrusion, the otherness of Canidia and Sagana, the protective role of the Priapic statue – all correspond to widely documented multicultural phenomena. While such a narrative might seem out of place in a collection like the Satires, its essential form is certainly not without precedent.

It is with the poem’s metanarrative that the place of this story within the Satires becomes more clear. Through the narrative of invasive figures trespassing in ill-defined territory, Horace constructs a commentary on the challenges facing him during his composition of a new form of Roman satire. The Gardens of Maecenas and their nebulous status as a place in transition are the embodiment of his Satires, a multi-generic work in progress. Canidia and Sagana are representative of the potentially overwhelming extra-generic elements that comprise the Satires, elements that must be controlled and re-conceptualized in order to maintain the satiric nature of the poem and the collection.
Priapus then becomes an extension of Horace, the warden and voice of the *Satires*. He is the one responsible for regulating the many components borrowed from non-satiric genres and, through his poetic voice, rendering them into fully integrated parts of his satire.

*Satire* 1.8 is thus in keeping with poems 1.4 and 1.10 as an instantiation of Horace wrestling in his poetry with what it means to write Roman satire in the shadow of authors such as Lucilius and Callimachus. It is a constant struggle, requiring him to balance the style and technique of his predecessors against his own drive towards innovation.
Chapter III

Hag and Snatcher: Canidia as Child-Killing Demon\textsuperscript{274} in Epode 5

Translation and Text.

“Oh, whatever god above guides
the world and the human race,
what does this commotion mean? Why are all of your
cruel faces turned against me alone?
I beg you, by your children – if Lucina was truly
invoked at their births –
by this futile band of purple, by Jupiter
who is sure to condemn these acts,
why do you gaze at me like a stepmother,
or like some wounded beast?”
The boy spoke with quavering lips,
then grew quiet
as the trappings of his youth were stripped away.
His was the body of a child, youthful enough to soften
even the godless hearts of the Thracians,
yet Canidia, her unkempt hair
bound with slender snakes,
orders fig trees to be uprooted from tombs,
orders the funereal cypress
and the blood-smeared eggs of a hideous frog

\textsuperscript{274} The problematic nature of the term “child-killing demon” has been discussed by Johnston (1999) 162-165 who argues instead for the use of the word \textit{aōros} (“untimely”) – a reference to the fact that many demons are said to kill their victims prematurely, and also to have died prematurely themselves. It avoids the specific “child-killing” designation (these demons often do more than kill children) and is without the entanglements of the later theological concepts that underlay modern notions of demons and demonology. Despite the clear merits in using the connotatively sterile \textit{aōros}, I have opted for the use of “child-killing demon” here for several reasons. In the first, the intrinsic generality of the term “demon” is attractive for a discussion about loose typologies of supernatural entities, as it can be applied with relative ease to several different figures without causing confusion. Secondly, as Canidia’s abduction and murder of the \textit{puer} in \textit{Epode 5} is the primary focus of this chapter and the primary trait shared by the figures with whom I will be comparing her, the term “child-killing demon” effectively highlights this continuity. Finally, since the women in \textit{Epode 5} (Canidia and her companions) as well as Lilith and the \textit{strix} are not technically dead, the term \textit{aōros} could be potentially misleading.
and the feather of the nocturnal *strix*,
and the herbs that Iolcos and Hiberia
(savage in its poisons) send forth,
and the bones snatched from the mouth of a starving hound -
all of these she orders to be burned in Colchian flames.
In the meantime, Sagana immediately sprinkles
water from lake Avernus throughout the entire house,
her bristling locks standing on end
like a sea urchin or a running boar.
Veia, unrestrained by any sense of guilt,
groans with exertion
as she digs up the earth with a firm mattock
so that the boy, buried in the pit,
can be starved to death in sight of a meal
that is renewed two or three times a day
while only his head projects from the earth, like a swimmer
whose chin just emerges from the water.
She does this so that his dried liver and bone marrow
can be made into a love potion
just as soon as his pupils, fixed on the forbidden
food, have melted away.
If Ariminian Folia (she with the lust of a man)
were not in attendance,
opulent Naples could not believe it,
nor could any of the towns nearby;
after the stars have been charmed by her Thessalian voice,
she rips them from the sky along with the moon.
Now, as fierce Canidia gnawed at her untrimmed thumb
with a blackened tooth,
what did she say, or what did she leave unsaid? “Night and Diana,
not unfaithful overseers
of my affairs, you who maintain silence
when the sacred rites occur,
now, now be at hand, now turn your wrath and power
against hostile homes.
While the listless beasts sleep sweetly
in the treacherous woods,
the bitches of the Subura275 bark at that adulterous old man

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275 Literally “Suburan female dogs,” I have rendered *Suburanae canes* more colorfully than most commentaries or translations would suggest. Based upon the adjective *Suburanae*, I have interpreted this line not as a reference to literal dogs (as have Cavarzere (1992), Mankin (1995), Watson (2003)) but to the prostitutes who were said to operate in the neighborhood of the Subura. (On the usage of place names – particularly the Subura – in euphemisms for prostitutes, see Adams (1983), esp. n24.) The sense of Canidia’s opening prayer then runs as follows: “Night and Diana, I prepared and administered an incredibly
- something everyone laughs at -
smeared with an ointment whose better
my hands have never fashioned.
What happened? Why are the dire poisons of Medea
the barbarian not working?
With these, she took her revenge and escaped that haughty concubine –
the daughter of great Creon –
with a cloak, a gift rubbed down with slime, she snatched
the new bride away in flames!
Yet no herb, no root hidden in a treacherous place
escaped my notice;
he sleeps in a bedchamber laced with the forgetfulness
of all other mistresses.
Ah! Ah! He walks about, freed by the spell
of a more powerful witch.
Varus, you are soon to weep profusely. Not through
the use of my usual potions
will you run back to me, and your mind – though summoned
by Marsian chants – will not return:
I will prepare something better, a better potion to pour upon you
in your reluctance,
and the sky will sooner sit beneath the sea
with the earth stretched out atop it
before you fail to blaze with passion for me like
bitumen in black flames.”
After this, the boy no longer sought to soften the godless
women with gentle words,
but doubtful as to how to break the silence,
sent forth Thyestean oaths:
“Magic poisons are not strong enough to confuse
right and wrong, or human vengeance;
I shall pursue you terribly; my terrible hatred
will be appeased by no sacrifice:
condemned to die, when I breathe my last,
I shall return, a Fury of the night,
and as a shade I shall claw at your face with hooked talons,
- this is the power of the gods of the dead -
and sitting astride your restless hearts I shall steal

potent ointment for Varus, but it did not work. He is keeping company with those prostitutes, not me. What
happened?" This reading requires acceptance of Housman’s conjectured *latrant* for the manuscripts’ *latrent*
– the reading preferred by Shackleton-Bailey (2008) – and I follow Drew’s (1923) reasoned assessment of
the general confusion produced by retaining *latrent*. The oft-proposed reading of actual dogs’ barking as an
indication of Varus’ amorous wanderings seems to me an unnecessary and awkward periphrasis that can be
neatly excised by the reading proposed here.
your sleep through fear:
\*a crowd, attacking you hideous old women with rocks, will stone you street by street.\*
And afterwards, the wolves and the birds of the Esquiline will tear apart your unburied limbs, and my parents – alas, forced to survive me – will not flee from the sight.”

“\*At o deorum quidquid in caelo regit terras et humanum genus, quid iste fert tumultus? Aut quid omnium volitus in unum me truces? per liberos te, si vocata partubus \*Lucina veris adfuit, per hoc inane purpureae decus precor, per improbaturum haec Iovem, quid ut noverca me intueris aut uti petita ferro belua?\* ut haec trementi questus ore constitt insignibus raptis puer, impube corpus, quale posset inpia mollire Thracum pectora, Canidia brevibus implicata viperis crinis et inomptum caput iubet sepulcris caprificos erutas, iubet cupressos funebris et uncta turpis ova ranae sanguine plumamque nocturnae strigis herbasque quas Iolcos atque Hiberia mittit venenorum ferax, et ossa ab ore rapta ieunae canis flammis aduri Colchicis. at expedita Sagana per totam domum spargens Avernalis aquas horret capillis ut marinus asperis echinus aut currens aper. abacta nulla Veia conscientia ligonibus duris humum exhauriebat, ingemens laboribus, quo posset infossus puer longo die bis terque mutatae dapis inemori spectaculo, cum promineret ore, quantum exstant aqua suspensa mento corpora;\*
exsecta\textsuperscript{276} uti medulla et aridum iecur
amoris esset poculum,
interminato cum semel fixae cibo
intabuiscent pupulae.
non defuisse masculae libidinis
Ariminensem Foliam
et otiosa creditit Neapolis
et omne vicinum oppidum,
quae sidera excantata voce Thessala
lunamque caelo deripit.
hic inresectum saeva dente livido
Canidia rodens pollicem
quid dixit aut quid tacuit? “O rebus meis
non infideles arbitrae,
Nox et Diana, quae silentium regis
arcana cum fiunt sacra,
nunc, nunc adeste, nunc in hostilis domos
iram atque numen vertite.
formidulosus dum latent silvis ferae
dulci sopore languidae,
semem, quod omnes rideant, adulterum
latrant\textsuperscript{277} Suburanae canes
nardo perunctum, quale non perfectius
meae laborarint manus.
quid accidit? cur dira barbarae minus
venena Medaeae valent,
quibus superbam fugit ulta paelicem,
magni Creontis filiam,
cum palla, tabo munus inbutum, novam
incendio nuptam abstulit?
atqui nec herba nec latens in asperis
radix fefellit me locis:
indormit unctis omnium cubilibus
oblivione paelicum.
a, a, solutus ambulat veneficae
scientioris carmine.
non usitatis, Vare, potionibus,
o multa fleturum caput,
ad me recurres nec vocata mens tua

\textsuperscript{276} The variant \textit{ex(s)ucta} (“sucked out”) for \textit{exsecta} (“dried out”) is tempting in light of my reading of Canidia as a quasi-demonic child-killing being with a penchant for harvesting organs. However, given the comparative reliability of the manuscripts containing \textit{exsecta}, there is little justification in preferring the weaker \textit{ex(s)ucta} for its support of this chapter’s thesis.

\textsuperscript{277} On the reading Housman’s \textit{latrant} versus the manuscripts’ \textit{latrent}, see p. 109n273.
Marsis redibit vocibus:
maius parabo, maius infundam tibi
fastidienti polum,
priusque caelum sidet inferius mari
tellure porrecta super,
quar non amore sic meo flagres uti
bitumen atris ignibus.”

sub haec puer iam non, ut ante, mollibus
lenire verbis inpias,
sed dubius unde rumperet silentium,

misit Thyesteas preces:

‘Venena maga non fas nefasque, non valent
converetere humanam vicem.’

diris agam vos: dira detestatio
nulla expiatur victima.
quin, ubi perire iussus exspiravero,
nocturnus occuram furor
petamque voltus umbra curvis uguibus,
qua vis deorum est Manium,
et inquietis adisidens praecordii
pavore somnos auferam.
vos turba vicatim hinc et hinc saxis petens
contundet obscaenas anus.
post insepulta membra different lupi
et Esquilinae alites
neque hoc parentes, heu mihi superstites,
effugerit spectaculum.”

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278 The debate surrounding this couplet is extensive. I quote Kraggerud (2000) 80, whose recommendation of Haupt’s conjecture I have followed here: “No modern edition of the couplet Venena magnum fas nefasque non valent / convertere humanam vicem is satisfactory, either in text or in interpretation.” The general sense of the portion of the couplet that is most significant for my reading of this poem (non valent / convertere humanam vicem) remains largely the same in the conjectures of Borzsák, Shackleton Bailey, Venini, Cavarzere and Klinger; in each, the puer’s meaning is that Canidia’s venena cannot avert his vengeance.
Introduction

Horace’s *Epodes* is an odd collection. Strongly influenced by the turbulent political struggles of the second triumvirate and the ongoing civil wars that had wracked Rome off and on since Julius Caesar’s assault on the city in 49 BCE, the *Epodes* are often discussed as ‘triumval literature,’ but the collection is at the same time keenly self-aware of its position in relation to its Greek and Roman iambic predecessors - namely Archilochus, Callimachus and Catullus. In the midst of these seventeen epodes – which range in content from playful jokes with Horace’s patron, blush-inducing obscenities leveled against an aged lover, and pointed remarks as to the status of the war effort – we find *Epode 5*, a poem seemingly unrelated to the rest of the collection save for the presence of Canidia, who is also featured in *Epode 17* and briefly mentioned in *Epode 3*.

Ostensibly focused on Canidia’s abduction and planned murder of a child, *Epode 5* has been called “one of the most mysterious poems in Latin.”\(^\text{279}\) Lindsay Watson finds the epode’s “mood and intention… notoriously difficult to fathom,”\(^\text{280}\) and in Fraenkel’s seminal monograph *Horace*, he can say of the poem only that its spirit is “indubitably Hellenistic” and that its opening couplet “can perhaps be regarded as a reminiscence from Archilochus.”\(^\text{281}\) As to the character of Canidia, he explains that “[Horace] felt a fresh victim was required for the aggressive *iambi*… He could not indefinitely go on…

\(^{281}\) Fraenkel (1963) 64.
inveighing against the physical and moral repulsiveness of some old woman devoid of any particular interest." 282 What makes this poem so enigmatic is not only its jarring subject matter and strange presence within the Epodes as a whole, but more a question of its tone: just how is this poem to be read? Is it a comic piece in the style of the Greek and Roman mime? 283 A scene of utter horror? 284 A blend of the two, yielding a mixture of the macabre and the comedic? 285

The poem begins in medias res as an anonymous, kidnapped boy (whose abduction is not narrated within the poem) addresses the women who have captured him (1-10) and brought him to some unidentifiable household (25) – hardly the stuff of comedy. The opening lines are in essence a profession of the child’s utter confusion and a prayer for the women’s mercy. He cannot understand what has happened to him, or why his captors have abducted him. He attempts to appeal to the women in their capacity as mothers, invokes their children, and finally begs that they respect his status as an otherwise defenseless child (5-8).

His pleas go unheeded. The boy is stripped of his clothes and possessions (12) as the group’s ringleader, Canidia, begins the preparations for a spell. She calls for all manner of noxious ingredients to be gathered and burned (15-24) while another woman, Sagana, sprinkles the house with water from Lake Avernus (25-26) – one of the supposed entrances to the underworld. A third woman, Veia, digs a deep hole in which the boy is to be buried up to his neck and starved to death within sight of food (29-36), and although

282 Fraenkel (1963) 64.
the fourth member of the group – Folia – is given no specific task, she is credited with being able to rip the stars and the moon from the sky (41-46).

Her preparations complete, Canidia prays to Night and Diana for aid (49-82). In the course of the prayer, Canidia reveals that one of her earlier spells has failed (61-62): she had created an ointment designed to make her former lover Varus forget any romantic interests other than her, then smeared this ointment on his bed (69-70). Despite this, Varus has still been frequenting a neighborhood known for its prostitutes (57-58) and Canidia surmises that her failure is the direct result of a rival magical professional’s intervention (71-72). Her response is to enact the spell whose preparation is narrated throughout Epode 5 – the production of a “better love potion” (77-78), crafted from the ingredients collected at the poem’s opening and featuring as its primary components the boy’s dried liver and bone marrow (37-40). Because of this new potion’s unusual nature (73), Canidia predicts that Varus will have no choice but to return to her (75-76, 79-82).

As the boy learns what Canidia and her companions have planned to do to him, he abandons his previously mild tactics and swears a dire oath of vengeance (87-102). He condemns their spells as useless to avert his wrath (87-88), and vows to return from the dead as an implacable Fury (89-92) that will attack them in their sleep (93-96). He then imagines that the people of the town will stone the women to death (97-98), and his parents will watch as their unburied corpses are torn apart by wild animals (99-102).

With that, the poem suddenly ends, leaving the question of Canidia’s success and the boy’s fate open to speculation. It has been suggested that its abrupt conclusion is
symptomatic of its relationship to the genre of mime\textsuperscript{286} and that its resemblance to the similarly abrupt ending of \textit{Satire} 1.8 implies an element of humor and an expectation of Canidia’s impending failure.\textsuperscript{287} The poem’s overtly macabre nature has also been read as farcical because of Canidia’s “entirely disproportionate”\textsuperscript{288} response to Varus’ errant wanderings. However, its seems highly unlikely that a poem whose primary subject matter is the planned starvation of a child in the execution of a dreadful ritual could be understood as featuring a “prominent… element of comedy.”\textsuperscript{289}

Watson and others are convincing in their observations of mimimiambic elements in \textit{Epode} 5,\textsuperscript{290} but this is hardly proof that the poem need be comic in tone – especially given the existence of characters within mimes who were, in Watson’s own words, “coarsely erotic, violent, sadistic and murderous, … creature[s] virtually devoid of conscience.”\textsuperscript{291} Likewise, the assumption that Canidia’s gruesome spell would be read as laughable\textsuperscript{292} because it was a mere love spell that was executed with meticulous morbidity fails to take into consideration the multitude of extant erotic curse tablets that involve truly horrific rituals.\textsuperscript{293} Canidia’s spell is, in fact, a superb example of

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\textsuperscript{286} Watson (2003) 182-184. \\
\textsuperscript{287} Hahn (1939) 213-223, imagining that the \textit{puer} is representative of Horace himself, believes that the “boy’s” death is not narrated because it simply never happened. Moore (2009) 21-22 states that the boy’s position at the close of the poem “allows him to have the last word, the upper hand,” and that this renders Canidia as “an object of ridicule.” \\
\textsuperscript{288} Watson (2003) 185. \\
\textsuperscript{289} Watson (2003) 184. \\
\textsuperscript{290} Ingallina (1980) 357 and Fedeli (1979) 95-96 both see significant resonances between \textit{Epode} 5 and Theocritus’ \textit{Idyll} 2, which has many qualities of Greek mime. \\
\textsuperscript{291} Watson (2003) 183. \\
\textsuperscript{292} Clauser (1993) 84-89 reads Canidia as a comic figure in general, largely due to his assumption that the character of Canidia in \textit{Epode} 5 is meant to be the same laughable character from \textit{Satire} 1.8. \\
\textsuperscript{293} Compare the text of an erotic \textit{defixio} found in upper Egypt, accompanied by two waxen figurines. It was likely placed in a cemetery or necropolis, calls upon underworld deities and (much like Canidia’s spell) imagines apocalyptic results if the event of failure: “I bind you with the unbreakable bonds of the Fates in the underworld and powerful Necessity. For I invoke you, \textit{daimones} who lie here, who are continually
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sympathetic erotic magic: the basis of her spell’s efficacy hinges on instilling a feeling of intense desire in the boy; by starving him specifically within sight of food, his desire for it will be highly elevated. This desire then manifests itself in the liver and bone marrow (often considered in ancient anatomy as seats of passion and emotion). By harvesting these organs and converting them into a love potion, Canidia is attempting to transfer the starving boy’s desire for food into Varus’ desire for her. The only extraordinary element of Canidia’s spell is her willingness to commit murder in order to harvest human organs – an action that aligns her more with the horrific Erictho of Lucan’s *Bellum Civile* than it serves to characterize her as somehow absurdly excessive.

To be certain, there are moments within the poem that can be read as humorous - the image of Veia struggling as she digs a pit for the boy or of the aged and overly-perfumed Varus cruising for prostitutes – but the overriding tone is one of horror. I tend towards the reading put forth by Alberto Cavarzere, who follows Pellizer’s description of the nature of iambic poetry as situated along an axis of extremes (with irrational, child-like terror on one side and calming, liberating laughter on the other), and thus understands *Satire* 1.8 as emblematic of iambic’s humorous side, and finds in

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294 Hor. *Epod.* 5.31: *ingemens laboribus.*
Epode 5 the embodiment of its frightening tendencies. As such, what we have in this poem is at its heart a tale of horror: Canidia, a woman with vast knowledge of the supernatural arts, has tried and failed to secure the affections of a man who no longer wants anything to do with her, then reacts to this failure by enacting a ritual of powerful sympathetic magic designed to produce a love potion guaranteed to win the man over. However, there is more to the poem – and the character of Canidia – than this.

In Horace’s depiction of Canidia within this epode, he has projected onto her role as a magical practitioner a number of attributes that are highly reminiscent of various child-killing demons of the ancient world. In virtually every aspect of her character as it is detailed in the poem, Canidia resembles these typically female demonic figures who are said to prey on small children, often abducting them from homes or killing them outright; primarily active at night, child-killing demons frequently have avian or bestial features, and may jealously seduce unwitting men. Certain details may change, but this rough archetype remains relatively constant across a wide variety of cultures and time periods. It is this class of creature upon which, I argue, Horace has purposefully modeled Canidia’s character in Epode 5. In doing so, he creates in Canidia a logical enemy for the captured child of the poem (the bumbling hag of Satire 1.8 would be inappropriate) and through her interactions with child, Horace also casts her as a foil for

Cavarzere (1992) 35.
297 The Babylonian Lilith, the Italian strix and the Malaysian Langsuyar are all examples of this same basic demonic type, and others may be found in the Americas and Africa as well (Hurwitz (1992) 46-48). The Greek Gello and her counterparts Mormo and Lamia are similar child-killing demons, well-attested in both Greek and Latin literature and were presumably common features in oral folklore (on the relationship of these demons to the Near Eastern Gallû and Lamashu, see West (1991) 361-368 and Johnston (1995) 361-387). The figure of the strix was so prevalent in classical Greece and Italy that similar figures still exist today in the folklore of many European countries (Scobie (1977) 8-9; (1978) 74-75).
the *puer* of Vergil’s 4th eclogue, the poem to which I read *Epode 5* as a conscious response.

The first section of this chapter will concern itself with an overview of three child-killing demons from the ancient world (Lilith, Lamia and the *strix*) in order to provide a basis for the second section, in which I detail the parallels between those demons and Horace’s depiction of Canidia in *Epode 5*. Following these observations and the consequent understanding of Canidia as being cast as a specific threat to children, the third section of this chapter will present a re-reading of *Epode 5* that positions the poem as a companion to *Epode 16*, both of which were designed to function as a paired response to Vergil’s fourth eclogue. It is my contention that Horace’s narrative of Canidia’s puericide can thus be read as a counterpoint to the fourth eclogue in which Vergil looks forward to the imminent birth of a child who is prophesied to usher in a new age of Roman peace and prosperity. This grim juxtaposition of Vergil’s child and Horace’s Canidia then serves as a cynical commentary in which Horace expresses his doubt as to the possibility of lasting peace in Rome.
Three Child-Killing Demons

1) Lilith

A Sumerian demon attested as early as the third millennium BCE, Lilith has two primary aspects: the “terrible mother” and the “divine whore.” As a terrible mother, her predominant feature is that of a demon of the night who abducts and murders children. Often described as childless herself, she poses a significant threat to newborn children and their mothers, although she also threatens the stability of family life in general.

Lilith is a domestic demon, typically found in or around the home of her victims, the Babylonian demon Lamashtu (frequently equated with Lilith) is said to “slither in through the door like a serpent,” and to “drive the wife from her husband’s lap / remove the son from a man’s knee / and oust the groom from his father-in-law’s house.” A jealous lover, there are tales of Lilith infiltrating a family’s home, killing the children, then taking the wife’s place in the household and driving her out as an

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299 Much of this section is indebted to Hurwitz’s (1992) monograph Lilith – The First Eve.
300 An exception to this may be found at Isaiah 34:14, in which Lilith has been relegated to the wasteland.
301 By the 3rd millennium, Lamashtu, Lili, Lilith and Ardat-Lili were being invoked in concert in the Utukku Lemnutu texts (cf. 3.140). Geller (2007) xiv describes Ardat-Lili as a “female ghost who never had a husband or children,” which places her in much the same context as other child-killing demons. Hurwitz (1992) 35 likewise finds for the nearly identical nature of Lamashtu and Lilith.
302 Utukku Lemnutu 4.74, 76-78.
adulteress. Lilith is thus a demon of household tragedies, and is often held responsible for acts of domestic strife or for the otherwise inexplicable deaths of children.

A considerable collection of amulets and magical texts specifically designed to ward off Lilith’s attacks against young children and mothers have been found throughout the Near East, the Mediterranean and across parts of Europe, some dating as late as the 19th century CE. Many contain the names of three angels - Senoy, Sansenoy, and Semangelof - a reference to the story of Lilith’s role as Adam’s first wife wherein she was rejected for her sexual aggression. When Adam refused to allow her an active sexual role, she retreated to the wilderness, bred with demons and bore thousands of demonic children. She then took on the role of a killer of human children, and only when threatened by the angels Senoy, Sansenoy and Semangelof did she swear not only to spare those children who were protected by the names of those angels, but she also agreed to allow one hundred of her own children to die each day. The story itself is a representation of Lilith’s refusal to adhere to expected feminine roles: unwilling to accept a traditional sexual relationship, she mates with horrific non-human entities, becomes a mother to monsters, turns against those children birthed from successful domestic relationships and abandons her own children to their deaths. The basic themes attested to

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303 This story is told of Buznay-Lilit, and was drawn from a compilation of dual inscriptions on a Mandic magic bowl and a lead amulet, edited and published by Müller-Kessler (1996).

304 These associations are particularly evident in the figure of Ummu’s-sibyan, a Persian incarnation of the Lilith-demon described in detail by ʿAbdu’l-Qawī ibn Shihābī’dh-din in the 14th century CE (Ivanow (1926) 195-199). Her name translates in Arabic to “the mother of children,” though she is also referred to as “night mother” or “mother in law.” She is an old, childless woman who comes in the night to kill newborn children and their mothers, and amulets or charms must be hung in the bedroom to keep her away.

305 Patai (1964) 296-297. The most detailed account of this story is found in the Alphabet of Ben Sira 23a-b.
by Lilith’s transformation from wife to child-killing demon recur throughout the origin stories of many other child-killing demons.

In keeping with her role as a child-killing demon, Lilith is consistently connected with birds of prey. An early Sumerian terra-cotta relief from the late third or early second millennium BCE (The Burney Relief, Fig. 1) depicts her as a shapely nude woman, winged, with feathered legs and taloned feet virtually identical to those of the owls that flank her. The pairing of Lilith with such creatures – both in her position between them and in her physical resemblance to them – is not a subtle statement, and clearly serves to identify Lilith as a lethal nocturnal predator: swift, silent and deadly.\textsuperscript{306}

This most basic quality of being a rapacious bird-woman is evident in the Greek relatives of Lilith – the harpies.\textsuperscript{307} Half-women, half-birds, their very name is derived from the Greek \textit{harpazein} (\textit{ἀρπάξειν}): to snatch. On a relief from an early fifth century BCE Lydian tomb (Fig. 2) a harpy\textsuperscript{308} is depicted with traits similar to that of Lilith on the plaque pictured in Figure 1. Like Lilith, the harpy is a winged, nude female with the feet of a bird of prey. That the harpy holds clutched in her hands and feet a small, human

\textsuperscript{306} Similar descriptions of this plaque have been made by Scobie (1978) and Frankfort (1996). Likewise, on a Syrian tablet from the seventh century BCE Lilith is shown as a winged sphinx and accompanied by a brief incantation that again casts her as a nocturnal bird to be avoided; “O, Flyer in a dark chamber / Go away at once, O Lili!” (Patai (1964) 295-296). Another incantation from a seventh century CE bowl discovered in Babylonia succinctly describes Lilith as “Hag and Snatcher” (Patai (1964) 298).

\textsuperscript{307} I do not mean to imply that there exists a \textit{direct} relationship between Lilith and the harpies, only that the overlaps in their form and function suggest that these entities would have been perceived in a similar fashion despite their differing cultural contexts.

\textsuperscript{308} Due to the considerable iconographic similarities between sirens and harpies, there is doubt as to the identity of the winged females depicted on the “Harpy” Tomb. As both figures are related to the Near Eastern Lilith-type demon, the question is in this case moot, although I find Draycott’s (2008) assessment of the figures as harpies convincing based on her analysis of the female figures being abducted.
figure is further suggestive of her role as a Lilith-type child-killing demon. That her core attributes would so accurately recur centuries later in a distinctly separate culture attests to the inherent potency of such a supernatural construct.

2) *The Strix*

The Roman *strix* (plural *striges*) bears a striking resemblance to the demon Lilith. Ovid provides one of the most detailed descriptions of the creatures in his work on the Roman calendar, the *Fasti*, in a section where a nursemaid finds that *striges* have been attacking the child Proca in her absence.

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309 Compare the role of the “whirlwinds” (Ἀνάγκη) snatching away the daughters of Pandareus at *Od.* 20.61ff.; again, we see children being abducted by “harpies” from the sky.

310 Burney Relief, terra cotta, Sumer, c. 2000 BCE: British Museum. (Reproduced with permission. © Trustees of the British Museum.)

311 Harpy Tomb, Xanthos, Lydia, c. 470-460 BCE: South side pediment detail. British Museum. (Reproduced with permission. © Trustees of the British Museum.)

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There are insatiable birds, not the harpies that deprived Phineas of his feasts, although it is from them that they descend: their heads are large, their eyes unblinking, their beaks made for hunting; their wings are white, their talons hooked, at night they fly and seek out children separated from their nurses to snatch them from their cradles and rend their bodies; they are said to tear out children’s milky entrails with their beaks and fill their gullets with the blood they have drunk. There is a name for those birds – *striges* – so called because of their strident shrieking in the night.

We can see that, like Lilith, the *striges* are demonic birds that prey on young children (*pueros*) in the night (*nocte*), draining their blood (*poto sanguine*) and eating their innards (*viscera*) when left unprotected (*nutricis egentes*). That Proca is considered particularly vulnerable to *striges* since he is only five days old (*natus in illis / praeda recens avium quinque diebus erat*) is reminiscent of Lilith’s declaration in the *Alphabet of Ben Sira* that she has power over male children until they have lived for eight days.²¹³ Although Ovid describes the *striges* as descendents of the harpies, it is not necessary to establish a clear genealogy from one to the other; we need only note that in Italy during the first century CE, it was possible for a Roman to see in the child-killing, avian *striges* a definite relationship to those other rapacious bird-women of myth, the harpies.

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²¹³ *Alphabet of Ben Sira* 23b.
The particular type of bird that Ovid imagined to be the *strix* is uncertain, and may very well never have corresponded to any actual ornithological species. However, given such details as its nocturnal nature, its large head, unblinking (or simply focused)\textsuperscript{314} eyes, white feathers, curved beak, hooked talons and piercing cry, it is not unreasonable to assume that the *strix* was imagined to bear some resemblance to one of the many species of owls prevalent in Italy.\textsuperscript{315} This potential link to the owl is yet another commonality between Lilith and the Roman *strix*.

It is also worthwhile to note that later in the story of Proca and the *striges*, the nymph Carna performs a ritual to drive out the birds and restore the boy’s health after their attack. In this ritual, she offers a piglet in place of the child:

\begin{quote}
\textit{atque ita “noctis aves, extis puerilibus” inquit}
\textit{“parcite: pro parvo victima parva cadit.}
\textit{cor pro corde, precor, pro fibris sumite fibras:}
\textit{hanc animam vobis pro meliore damus.”}\textsuperscript{316}
\end{quote}

And thus she said, “Birds of the night, spare this boy’s organs: a small victim falls on the small boy’s behalf. Take a heart for a heart, entrails for entrails: we give this life to you in place of one better.”

This ritual is not unlike many Babylonian rites of substitution\textsuperscript{317} that were made to avert demons. The specific use of a pig resonates with a sacrifice particular to Lamashtu – a demon also associated with pregnant women and their newborn children, and who was in

\begin{footnotes}
\item[314] The adjective \textit{stantes} is indicative of a lack of motion, here likely as the result of being fixed on a certain point as is common in predatory animals.
\item[315] Oliphant (1913) reads this passage as a description of a bat and holds that the Roman *strix* in general is more appropriately a bat that has been repeatedly mis-identified as a bird. While I find his argument interesting, I tend to favor Cherubini’s (2010) 87-91 explanation of the *strix*’s bat-like appearance not as a literal resemblance to a bat, but as a manifestation of its potential to invert natural order.
\item[316] Ov. \textit{Fast}. 6.159-162.
\item[317] McDonough (1997) 335-336. presents an impressive reading of the episode of Carna and the *strix* in Ovid’s \textit{Fasti}, and within this article he draws the correlation between Carna’s ritual sacrifice and Near Eastern antecedents.
\end{footnotes}
many ways interchangeable with Lilith already by the third millennium. In that sacrifice, the pig’s body would be burnt in holocaust and its heart offered to a statue of Lamashu to placate the demon and keep it at bay. In Carna’s ritual, the pig’s entrails and heart are offered as a replacement for those of the child. That we find a pig-sacrifice with particular attention to a heart offering in connection with both the strix and Lamashu again suggests a similarity in the function of these beings and the likelihood that the strix would be perceived in much the same manner as the other child-killing demons Lilith and Lamashu.

In an account of the strix’s origin as narrated by Antoninus Liberalis in his Metamorphoses (but attributed to the little-known Boio, likely from the fourth century BCE) we find associated with the strix the inversion of traditional feminine roles displayed by Lilith. The story centers on Polyphonte, a young woman who spurned Aphrodite and retreated to the mountains in favor of the virginal goddess Artemis. In anger at her rejection, Aphrodite instilled in Polyphonte an intense sexual passion for a bear. Upon mating with it, she birthed two cannibalistic giants who habitually abducted and ate people. Out of abhorrence at the trio, Zeus ordered Hermes to cut off their hands and feet, but due to Ares’ last-minute intervention, they were instead transformed into birds. Polyphonte became the strix (στριξ) that “cries in the night, without food or water, its head below its feet, a messenger of war and strife;” one of her two sons became a

318 See p. 119n298 on the early similarity of Lilith and Lamashu.
319 Ant. Lib. 21.5: φθεγγομένη νυκτός ἄτερ σίτου καὶ ποτοῦ. τὴν κεφαλὴν ἱσχούσα κάτω, τοὺς δὲ πόδας ἄκρους ἄνω, πολέμου καὶ στάσεως ἀνθρώπως ἄγγελος.
lago (λαγός), a bird of ill omen, and the other became a vulture (γύψη), the bird “most hated by gods and men,” possessed of a “constant desire for human flesh and blood.”

In Laura Cherubini’s analysis of this transformation, particular attention is drawn to the description of the strix having its head below its feet (τὴν κεφαλὴν ἠχουσα κάτω, τοῦς δὲ πόδας ἡχουσα ἀνω). This detail, says Cherubini, is emblematic of Polyphonte’s inversion of proper feminine behavior:

“… Polifonte divenuta strix sembra riproporre nella posizione a testa in giù quel principio di ‘inversione’ che ha segnato la sua esistenza di donna. Non solo, infatti, la fanciulla aveva voluto vivere fuori dalla società umana, dove l’attendeva il proprio ruolo di adulta: ma la sua mostruosa passione per una bestia selvatica aveva trovato compimento nella procreazione di una prole semibestiale. Con la sua femminilità svilita, con la sua maternità snaturata, Polifonte è una donna ‘al contrario’: nella sua vicenda e, ancora, nel segno della strix a capo di sotto, creatura della notte e del malaugurio, le altre ragazze potranno vedere distintamente ciò che ‘non’ devono fare, ciò che ‘non’ devono diventare.”

“Polyphonte becoming a strix seems to represent (with the position of its upside-down head) that principle of ‘inversion’ that has marked her existence as a woman. In fact, not only had the girl wanted to live outside of human society, where her proper role as an adult awaited her, but her monstrous passion for a wild animal had reached fruition in the birth of quasi-bestial offspring. With her femininity debased and her maternity perverted, Polyphonte is the opposite of a woman. In her story and in the symbol of the strix’s upside-down head (an ill-omened creature of the night), other girls could clearly see what they must not do, what they must not become.”

Polyphonte’s rejection of heterosexual sex and its expected results of marriage and procreation (represented in the myth by her disgrace of the “works of Aphrodite” and becoming a companion of Artemis), her subsequent removal from civilization (going

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320 Ant. Lib. 21.5: πάντων ὀρνιθῶν ἐξήυσαν θεοίς τε καὶ ἀνθρώποις καὶ διὰ παντὸς ἔμερον αὐτῷ χρέως καὶ αἴματος ἐνέβαλον ἀνθρωπείου.
321 Cherubini treats the myth of Polyphonte both in her dissertation (2010) and in an earlier article (2009).
323 Ant. Lib. 21.1: τὰ μὲν ἔργα τῆς Ἀφροδίτης ἐξέβρισεν… Αρτέμιδος ἐγένετο συμπαίκτιον καὶ συνήθης.
into the mountains), participation in unnatural sexual behavior (frenzied sex with a bear), and her birthing of monstrous offspring (her children were massive and had no respect for gods or men) directly oppose the expected roles of Greek women. Polyphonte eschews sex instead of marrying, she avoids human society instead of contributing children to it, she mates with an animal instead of a man and gives birth to lawless giants in the place of citizens. These inversions, represented in Polyphonte’s transformation into the *strix*, align well with the Lilith of the *Ben Sira* text, where Lilith also refused the expected ‘marriage’ (a subservient relationship to Adam), retreated to the wilderness, mated with demons and birthed a horde of demonic children. Like Lilith, Polyphonte the *strix* is thus a symbol of inverted femininity that has strong associations with predatory birds and attacks on humankind.

It is this combined essence of the inverse feminine and the figure of the predatory owl that creates a powerful ambiguity in the Latin term *strix*. The word has dual meanings, on the one hand signifying a literal owl, on the other hand referring to the supernatural nocturne. So it is that Tibullus can wish that “the violent *strix* always sing from your rooftop” (a particularly avian image) while Trimalchio can regale his dinner.

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324 Ant. Lib. 21.2: ἡ δὲ κατὰ δαίμονα οἰστρήσωσα ἐμίζηνυτο τῷ ἄρχτῳ.
325 Ant. Lib. 21.3: μεγάστους καὶ δύναμιν ἔχοντας ἄπλετον. οὕτως ἐτίμων οὔτε θεόν οὔτε ἄνθρωπον, ἀλλ’ ἐξύμφορον εἰς πάντας.
326 Oliphant (1913) 134-135 says of the tale of Polyphonte, “In it are found, explicit or implicit, all the essential characteristics of the uncontaminated legend of the *strix*.” Among those characteristics he cites a rejection of Aphrodite, an association with witchcraft and magic, likeness to a nocturnal bird of ill omen, and a “craving for human flesh and blood.”
327 Tib. 1.5.52: et semper e tectis strix violenta canat. Although this appearance of the *strix* is too short to make a definitive decision as to whether it is a bird of ill omen or its more demonic partner – especially because Tibullus likely means to invoke the creature’s dreadful nature here – the mention of singing from the rooftop establishes a thoroughly bird-like context.
guests with a tale of body-snatching strigae\textsuperscript{328} (clearly more feminized, humanoid figures named in the same context as mulieres plussciae, “women who know too much”). The term’s duality neatly expresses the close relationship between the owl and the child-killing demonic strix.

Given the similarities between the Sumerian Lilith and the Roman strix, it is clear that the figure of the child-killing bird-woman is not only a potent one, but one that is so broadly appealing that it finds expression in numerous distinct cultures. Further evidence of this can be found in the multitude of similar creatures appearing across the European continent and beyond with names either derived from or related to “strix.”\textsuperscript{329} The most obvious is the Italian strega, but similar figures are found in Romania as the striga, Portugal as the estria, and in old France as the estrie. Modern Greeks refer to the creature as a strigla, the Russians call it stryga and the Polish strzyga. In Slovenia it is the strija, in Albania the shtrige, and the Swiss-German strägelle (said to carry off disobedient children) may be a distant relative. Even in the Americas, (although terminological similarity is not evident) many native American tribes identify the owl either as a child-killer or a witch’s familiar, and among the Cherokee, the term tsikili signifies both witch and owl.\textsuperscript{330}

\textsuperscript{328} Petron. Satyr. 63. On Petronius’ use of striga instead of strix, Scobie (1977) notes that this is the first extant usage of the term’s “more vulgar form.”
\textsuperscript{330} Scobie (1977) 74-75.
3) Lamia

We have by now witnessed the significant overlap in the figure of the *strix* and that of Lilith. The Greek demon Lamia is another such demonic child-killer, as the story of her origin – related by Diodorus Siculus\textsuperscript{331} – demonstrates:

...\textgreek{περιέχεται, κατ' ο&muacute;&nuacute; και σφ&nuacute;λακα συνη&rhoacute;r&omicron;}&muacute;νονε&nuacute;ναι βασ&acute;λισσαν Λ&acute;αμιαν τ&acute;ν κ&acute;αλλει διαφέ&rhoacute;νον&umuacute;νον· δι&acute;α δ&acute;ε τ&acute;ην τ&acute;ης ψυχ&acute;ης ἀγρι&omicron;τητα δια&rhoacute;τασσό&nuacute;να φα&nuacute;σαι τ&acute;ην ὄνυν α&omicron;τής τ&acute;ον μετὰ τ&acute;α&nuacute;τα χρό&nuacute;νον θη&nuacute;ρ&acute;ω&nuacute;δη· τ&acute;ων γ&acute;αρ γ&nuacute;νομέ&nuacute;νον α&omicron;τ&acute;η πα&nuacute;δων ἀπ&acute;α&nuacute;των τελευτά&nuacute;των βαρ&omicron;θυμο&nuacute;ναν ἐπ&acute;α τ&acute;η π&acute;αθει κα&acute;δε φ&nuacute;νο&nuacute;ναν τ&acute;α&nuacute;τ&acute;ης τ&acute;ων ἄλλων γυ&nuacute;ναι&nuacute;ων ε&nuacute;τεκτ&nuacute;νας κ&acute;ελε&nuacute;ειν ε&nuacute;κ τ&acute;ων ἀγκα&nuacute;λων ἐ&nuacute;ξαρ&nuacute;π&acute;ζο&nuacute;σθαι τ&acute;α βρ&acute;ε&nuacute;&acute;ει κα&acute;δε παραχ&nuacute;ρ&acute;μα ἀπο&nuacute;κτ&acute;&nuacute;ν&nuacute;n. δ&acute;ιδα κα&acute;δε &tauacute;' ἡμ&acute;ας μ&acute;ε&nuacute;χ&acute;&lambdaacute; τ&acute;ον ν&acute;υν β&acute;ιον πα&alphaacute;ρά τ&acute;ο&nuacute;ιν κ&acute;η&nuacute;π&acute;οις δια&nuacute;με&nuacute;&nuacute;ν θ&acute;ην πε&nuacute;ρα τ&acute;ης γυ&nuacute;ναι&nuacute;ως τ&acute;α&nuacute;της φ&acute;η&nuacute;μαν κα&acute;δε φο&nuacute;βερα&nuacute;τ&acute;ην α&omicron;τ&acute;ω&nuacute;ς ε&nuacute;ναν τ&acute;ην τ&acute;α&nuacute;της προ&nuacute;ση&nuacute;ρ&acute;μαν.\textsuperscript{332}

...there was a huge cave, shaded with ivy and yew, in which they say the queen Lamia was born – a woman of excellent beauty. However, because of her fierce nature, they say that the passage of time changed her face into that of a beast; that since each of her children died she, heavy-hearted at her misfortune and jealous of other women’s successful childbirths, ordered those infants to be ripped away from their mother’s arms and killed immediately; it is because of this, they say, that even now the story of this woman remains among our children, and that her name is extremely frightening to them.

Here we have the same combination of characteristics as found in Lilith and the *strix* – a failed mother who turns into a bestial creature that steals and murders young children.

The interconnectivity of these figures is further evidenced by an appeal to the Latin translation of the Hebrew text of Isaiah 34:14, rendered in the King James Version as “The wild beasts of the desert shall also meet with the wild beasts of the island, and the satyr shall cry to his fellow; the screech owl also shall rest there, and find for herself a place of rest.” It is the last portion of the passage that concerns us, specifically the term

\textsuperscript{331} See also the account from Duris of Samos (20.41.3-5); Johnston (1999) 174n27 cites numerous other minor references to Lamia including the *Suda*’s “Lamia” entry, and the scholia on Aristoph. *Pax* 758.

\textsuperscript{332} Dio. Sic. 20.41.
denoting “the screech owl.” As we have seen, the owl is an animal intimately connected with the child-killing demon; the translation of the Hebrew word לילית (transliteration: *lilith*) into English as “the screech owl” merely reaffirms this relationship. What is more to the point here is that the Vulgate renders this passage *ibi cubavit lamia et invenit sibi requiem* – thus substituting Lamia as a Latinized version of the demon Lilith. That such a replacement of one (Lamia) for the other (Lilith) was possible speaks greatly to the similarity of the two characters.333

Just as Lilith and the *strix* fulfill much the same role, Johnston notes of Lamia that “there is reason to believe that the *strix*’s essential characteristics aligned with those already assigned to the Greek child-killing demons.”334 There is thus a triangulated relationship between Lamia, Lilith and the *strix*, each of them child-killing demons with similar attributes and cultural roles. Johnston goes on to explain that the figure of Lamia is herself similar to two other Greek demons, Mormo and Gello, and that the stories surrounding the three characters all place a similar emphasis on the demon’s role as a failed mother and her eventual metamorphosis into a slayer of children.335

As Lamia was said to have been a monstrous queen whose failures as a mother turned her into a child-killing demon, similar narratives are told about the characters of Gello and Mormo.336 Gello, it is said, was a young woman whose untimely death kept her

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333 I am indebted to Resnick and Kitchell (2007) 84-86, for these observations. They also note that the Septuagint renders the Hebrew *Lilith* as *ὀνομάξενταυρόι* (ass-centaurs), although they do not offer further commentary. Given Johnston’s (1999) 375-379 insights into the hybridized and animalistic associations of child-killing demons (including asses, birds, horses and wolves) the term *ὀνομάξενταυρόι* likely points to this type of creature, although in a more generalized fashion.


from marriage (and thus childbirth) and led her to become a ghost that preyed on children.\textsuperscript{337} Mormo, likewise, was a bogey invoked to scare children, and was supposed to have been a woman who once devoured her own children before flying away in the night.\textsuperscript{338} These three characters are in fact so similar in their roles that a scholiast (glossing a reference of Theocritus’ to Mormo)\textsuperscript{339} explained that Mormo and Gello were simply alternate names for Lamia.\textsuperscript{340} Gello and the Strix were later discussed in concert by John of Damascus as creatures “who flew through the night, slipped into houses although the doors and windows were barred, and then strangled sleeping infants.”\textsuperscript{341}

\textsuperscript{337} Zen. Prov. 3.3.
\textsuperscript{338} Schol. Aristid. p. 41 Dindorf: λέγει δὲ τὴν Μορμὸ, ἵνα ἄχοιοντα ὀφρωδεῖ τὰ παιδία. φασὶ ταύτην γυναῖκα εἶναι Κορινθίαν, ἢτις ἐν ἐσπέρᾳ τὰ παιδία αὐτῆς καταφαγοῦσα ἀνέπη κατὰ τινα πρόνοιαν. Mormo’s purported Corinthian origins and her eventual flight is reminiscent of the Corinthian portion of Medea’s mythology, wherein she famously kills her children before taking to the skies in her chariot and fleeing the city of Cornith. I do not speculate here on origins or influences of either Medea’s or Mormo’s mythology, but the similarities of the two narratives are striking and have been examined by Johnston (1997) in some depth.
\textsuperscript{339} Schol. in Theocrit. Id. 15.40: ἔπος Μορμῶ: Λάμια βασάλισσα Λαστρυγόνων, ἢ καὶ Γελλὼ λεγομένη δυστυχοῦσα περὶ τὰ ἑαυτῆς τέκνα ὡς ἄποθνήσκοντα ἤθελε καὶ τὰ λειπόμενα φονεύειν.
The Demonic Traits of Canidia

There is clearly considerable overlap between these (and other) incarnations of child-killing demons, even though they are spread across a wide geographic and temporal spectrum. There are certain attributes that recur with enough consistency – an association with nocturnal raptors, a perceived threat against children and general domestic integrity, a belief that the demon’s origins spring from some maternal failure – to suggest (if not a shared origin) a distinct commonality in the perception and cultural function of characters that conform to this typology.

Before turning to Canidia specifically, I should remark that having elements of the child-killing demon emerge in non-demonic literary characters is not without precedent; we can see this at work in Euripides’ portrayal of Medea – a character to whom Canidia directly (and extensively) compares herself. Medea was a jealous wife, who – after killing a rival lover – stole her children from her husband, then took to the sky on a chariot drawn by serpents. These elements (jealousy, domestic disruption, child abduction and murder, avian and serpentine characteristics) are all traits we have seen demonstrated by numerous child-killing demons. Similar elements may also be at

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343 Note the emphasis in the play’s closing lines (1377-1414) on Medea’s explicit denial of her children’s bodies to Jason.
344 Mills (1980) explores many of the similarities (including jealousy, child-slaughter and avian transformation) between the myths of Medea, Procne/Philomela and Ino.
play in the myth of Procne and Philomela. In Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, after Procne discovers that her husband Tereus has been secretly raping her sister Philomela, both women take their revenge by killing Procne and Tereus’ child, then feeding him to his father. The myth concludes as all three are turned into birds. Again, we have elements inherent to child-killing demons (jealousy, domestic disruption, the abduction and murder of a child, and an explicit avian comparison) transposed onto non-demonic figures in an explicitly literary setting.

Keeping in mind the many similarities between the varied child-killing demons – and especially those likely to have been well known figures in Rome during Horace’s lifetime (the strix, Lamia, Gello and Mormo) – let us now address the figure of Canidia herself as Horace portrays her in his fifth epode. In the following section, I will catalogue the actions and characteristics Canidia has in common with the child-killing demons just discussed.

*The Abduction and Murder of a Child* – The quintessential aspect of the child-killing demon is, rather obviously, the killing of a child. Canidia, along with her three companions, has kidnapped a young boy with the express purpose of starving him to death and is thus in keeping with the child-killing demon’s *modus operandi*. The boy, while not an infant, is still quite young. He is on three occasions referred to as a *puer*.

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346 Note that Tereus repeatedly asks after his son’s whereabouts in Ovid’s account (*Met. 6.656: atque ubi sit quaerit: quaerenti iterumque vocanti*...).
347 The age discrepancy between Canidia’s victim (a young child) and the victims of many other demons (infants) is not a cause for surprise. In the myths of Medea and Procne/Philomela, both likely to be variations of a child-killing demon topos, neither of the children are newborns. Note also that the subject of
(a term used of pre-adolescent males) as opposed to a *iuvenis* (typically applied to young men in their early twenties) and his body is *impube*, “youthfully undeveloped.” His appeal to the “band of purple”\(^{349}\) is a reference to his *toga praetexta*, a garment worn specifically by children who have not yet undergone the ceremonial transition to manhood, and the “trappings” that were taken from him are generally assumed to have been various accoutrements typical of Roman youth – likely including a *bulla*, a small bag containing assorted childhood trinkets.\(^{350}\)

*Domestic Setting* – Unlike demons who prey on travelers or haunt the unexplored, unsettled fringes of civilized space, child-killing demons are demons who prey within the domestic sphere, operating within the house itself (*striges* steal children from cradles, Lilith creeps into homes undetected, etc.). Whereas Canidia was in a graveyard on the outskirts of the city in *Satire* 1.8, here she is inside a home – presumably belonging either to her or to one of her companions\(^{351}\) – to which she has brought the child to perform her spell.\(^{352}\) It is true that the homes primarily featured in narratives of child-killing demons are those belonging to the victim’s family, but we must recall that there is no precise

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\(^{348}\) Hor. *Epod*. 5.12, 32, 83.

\(^{349}\) Hor. *Epod*. 5.7: *purpurae decus*.

\(^{350}\) On the potentially apotropaic powers of the *toga praetexta* and the *bulla*, see below.

\(^{351}\) Given the grisly nature of the women’s work and the extent of time required to starve someone to death (lines 32ff. indicate at least an entire day was needed), it is unlikely that they were attempting to carry this out within someone else’s home.

\(^{352}\) Hor. *Epod*. 5.25: *Sagana per totam domum* indicates the poem’s setting. It would have been a home of at least moderate means based on the presence of the internal garden in which the women intended to bury the child.
science dictating the manner in which specific narrative elements are preserved.\textsuperscript{353}

Additionally, Canidia’s acts of aggression directed against an external house are present elsewhere, in her prayer to Night and Diana:

\begin{quote}
\textit{…nunc, nunc adeste, nunc in hostilis domos iram atque numen vertite.}\textsuperscript{354}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
…now, now be at hand, now turn your wrath and power against hostile homes.
\end{quote}

\textit{Jealousy} - It is with this prayer that we see another intrinsic quality of the child-killing demon in Canidia: jealousy. Killing children and killing/replacing legitimate wives (cf. Lamashtu, Medea, Buznay-Lilit\textsuperscript{355}) are all domestically aggressive actions that are often said to have resulted from the demon’s failure to establish a successful familial relationship: Lamia kills children because she could not successfully raise children of her own; Medea kills her children and her husband’s new wife following the failure of her own marriage; the \textit{strix}/Polyphonte’s monstrous union with a bear and subsequent bestial offspring are synonymous with attacks on children and new mothers. Canidia, having unsuccessfully attempted to lure her would-be-lover Varus to her (with a spell enacted prior to the events of \textit{Epode 5}\textsuperscript{356}), now abducts a child and plans to kill it in order to magically compel Varus’ affection. She also feels threatened by Varus’ other lovers, the

\textsuperscript{353} Oliphant (1913) 135 is well aware of this, noting that in Boio’s version of the \textit{strix}’s origin, the \textit{strix}’s desire for human flesh and blood was accounted for by \textit{transference} of this property to Polyphonte’s children and to the vulture that one of her sons metamorphosed into.

\textsuperscript{354} Hor. \textit{Epod.} 5.53-54.

\textsuperscript{355} On Buznay-Lilit, see Müller-Kessler (1996).

\textsuperscript{356} Hor. \textit{Epod.} 5.57-70.
“mistresses” whom she tried to replace. Canidia thus follows the expressed pattern of child-killing demons by enacting the murder of a child following her unsuccessful establishment of a familial unit.

Childlessness – Canidia’s initial failure with Varus is all the more poignant when considered in concert with the *puer’s* insinuation that (given Canidia’s penchant for kidnapping) any children she claims to be hers are of suspect origin. The boy begs her “by your children – if Lucina was truly invoked at their births.” He also characterizes her as a stepmother (*noverca*), a figure known proverbially for her cruelty, but one who is importantly not the biological mother of her new family’s children.

It is curious that this charge of suspect motherhood is also alluded to in *Epode* 17, where the narrator assures Canidia (with tongue in cheek) that he is certain her son is truly hers, “After all,” he says, “you leapt right up again the moment you’d given birth, like nothing had happened.” Combined with her failure to establish a union with Varus, this minor detail of Canidia’s suspect status as a successful mother is thoroughly in keeping with that of a child-killing demon, and is a quality shared by Lamia, Polyphonte, Lilith, Lamashtu, and Ummu’s-sibyan, among others.

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357 Hor. *Epod.* 5.69-70: *indormit unctis omnium cubilibus / oblivione paelicum.* Interestingly, François Paschoud (1980) sees the rivalry between Canidia and the *paelices* potentially as a contest for the right to be Varus’ legitimate wife, or an attempt on Canidia’s behalf to lure him away from his wife and supplant her. While I am not wholly convinced by the argument (it requires a somewhat creative reading of *Epode* 5 that hangs in no small part on an otherwise unattested reading of *ambulet for ambulat* (71)), the reading does nicely highlight the poem’s theme of sexual and romantic jealousy.

358 Hor. *Epod.* 5.5-6: *per liberos te, si vocata partubus / Lucina veris adfuit.*

359 Hor. *Epod.* 5.9: *quid ut noverca me intueris.*

360 Hor. *Epod.* 17.52: *utcumque fortis exsilis puerpera.*

361 The argument may be put forth that such a specific accusation – of having falsified her children’s births or of being incapable of bearing children – must surely be derived from actual circumstances surrounding an actual person: the figure behind the character of Canidia. This supposition relies partially on
Association with Nocturnal Birds of Prey – As demonstrated previously, child-killing demons are most frequently associated with nocturnal birds of prey; those birds are typically owls, not uncommonly the strix. Canidia’s request for “a feather from the nocturnal strix”\(^{362}\) in the concoction of her spell then seems rather evocative of this relationship, and her invocation of Night personified (Nox) certainly indicates her affinity for darkness. One must also take into account that child-killing demons perpetuate their existence through the act of killing their victims and converting them into demons like themselves. Johnston says of the aōrai, “By killing women of reproductive age and their babies, aōrai created new aōrai, or, to look at it the other way around, aōrai became what they were at the hands of other, preexistent aōrai.”\(^{363}\) With this, the boy’s final curse may then be read as reflective of Canidia herself, as the boy swears to return from the dead as an embodiment of vengeance:

\[
diris agam vos: dira detestatio
nulla expiatur victima.
quin, ubi perire iussus expiravero,
nocturnus occurram Furor
petamque voltus umbra curv\is unguibus,
\]

understanding the name of Canidia’s son (mentioned in Epode 17 as Pactumeius) as corresponding to style of names found in the purported region of Canidia’s origin, and although the problems of these suppositions have been discussed previously (see Introduction, p. 6-7), they pose an interesting question. If we presume that the character of Canidia has been based, even in some part, on a figure or group of figures with whom Horace was aware, we have two options in reading the detail of Canidia’s potential childlessness. Either A) this is one of Canidia’s few traits Horace has based on “fact” among the slew of others that are almost certainly fictional inventions, or B) like Canidia’s exaggerated physical appearance (S. 1.8.23ff., Epod. 5.15ff., 47ff.) and her inhuman behaviors (S. 1.8.26ff., Epod. 5.15ff., 17.76ff.), this is yet another colorful fabrication created by Horace in an effort to typify Canidia as a monstrous character. In light of Horace’s propensity for creative license with Canidia’s character, the first option is highly unlikely; the second is more probable and more provocative, as it would mean that Horace consciously decided that the inclusion of a small detail suggesting that Canidia was herself without natural children was a worthwhile addition to his characterization of her. This would provide further evidence that Horace’s portrayal of Canidia was similar to that of many child-killing demons.

\(^{362}\) Hor. Epod. 5.20: plumamque nocturnae strigis.
\(^{363}\) Johnston (1999) 165.
I shall pursue you terribly; my terrible hatred
will be appeased by no sacrifice:
condemned to die, when I breathe my last,
I shall return, a Fury of the night,
and as a shade I shall claw at your face with hooked talons,
- this is the power of the gods of the dead -
and sitting astride your restless hearts I shall steal
your sleep with fear…

There are several items of note in the boy’s vow. The first is his characterization of himself as a *nocturnus Furor*, a “Fury of the night,” a description aptly befitting the child-killing demon’s role as a nocturnal predator. His subsequent promise to attack his captors’ faces with his “hooked talons” is almost certainly an avian analogy, especially given Ovid’s description of a child attacked by *striges* as having had his cheeks sliced open by their talons. The idea that the boy will become a nocturnal terror with bird-like characteristics, in light of his ‘rebirth’ at the hands of Canidia and her companions, is strongly suggestive that he – much like Canidia already is – will become a child-killing demon.

The image of the boy-turned-demon sitting atop a sleeping person’s chest conjures another potential association between the *puer*, Canidia and the child-killing demon. Along with aggressive acts directed against children and mothers, child-killing demons are not infrequently believed to seduce men as well (often in their sleep). For example, in Sumeria around the third millennium BCE, there appears to be mention of a

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364 Hor. *Epod.* 5.89-96.
366 This duality, alluded to earlier in the mention of Lilith’s “divine whore” aspect, is discussed more extensively in the following chapter.
masculine version of Lilith, named Lilu; whereas Lilith comes to men in their sleep, Lilu "attempts to disturb or seduce women in their sleep by night."\footnote{Hurwitz (1992) 52.} Raphael Patai explains a similar phenomenon attested on Jewish bowls of the seventh century CE (although the incantations inscribed within are likely of considerably older origin): "At night, the female Liliths join men, and the male Lilis women, and generate demonic offspring. … Jealous of the human mates of their bedfellows, they hate the children born of ordinary human wedlock, attack them, plague them, suck their blood, and strangle them."\footnote{Patai (1964) 298.} If we take into consideration the 	extit{puer}'s creation at the hands of a woman who very much resembles a child-killing demon, and his oath to return as a taloned, nocturnal terror, it is possible that the boy’s promise to sit on his victim’s chests in their sleep is an artifact of his existence as male counterpart to the child-killing demon. This position is neatly illustrated in an 18\textsuperscript{th} century painting by Johann Heinrich Füssli entitled 	extit{The Nightmare} (Figure 3). In it, a grotesque, impish figure crouches upon a sleeping woman’s chest as her body drapes over the edge of her bed. From behind the drapes, a black horse emerges. The painting is a curious collection of nightmarish iconography, from the demon to the literal mare itself. The presence of the horse in particular is striking and is strangely evocative of a mother’s warning to her child regarding the child-killing demon Mormo: “Mormo, the horse, bites!”\footnote{Theocr. \textit{Id.} 15.40: Μορμό, δάχναει ἵππος. This line first came to my attention at Johnston (1995) 365.} In all, the imagery surrounding the boy’s re-incarnated

\footnote{367 Hurwitz (1992) 52.\footnote{368 Patai (1964) 298.\footnote{369 Theocr. \textit{Id.} 15.40: Μορμό, δάχναει ἵππος. This line first came to my attention at Johnston (1995) 365.} 141}
form points to its creation at the hands of a child-killing demon – an instance of like begetting like.\textsuperscript{370}

\textit{Accompanied by Female Companions} – Another point of overlap between Canidia and the child-killing demon is the presence of her three female companions, Veia, Sagana and Folia. It is a minor point, but worth noting that Lilith is often accompanied by other female demons,\textsuperscript{372} that Petronius’ \textit{strigae} appear as a pluralized group, and Buznay-Lilit

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image.png}
\caption{Figure 3\textsuperscript{371}}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{370} See Hufford (1982) 53-55; 130-131 on the etymology of the language of ‘nightmares’ that suggests an explicit connection between nightmares and the sense of being crushed in one’s sleep by a supernatural creature.
\textsuperscript{371} Johann Heinrich Füssli, \textit{The Nightmare}, 1781, Detroit Institute of the Arts. Reproduced with permission.
\textsuperscript{372} \textit{Utukku Lemnutu} 3.139-140: “Lamastu, Labasu, and Ahhazu demons, / Lilu, Lilith and Ardat Lili.”

142
is with “three hundred sixty female companions.” That Canidia has specifically three companions may also be significant, as this number is frequently associated with supernatural potency; the number of Buznay-Lilit’s 360 companions, for example, may have been arrived at based upon the addition of three numbers, each themselves a multiple of three (300+30+30).

Sexual Perversion — Canidia’s willingness to kill a child and convert his desiccated, pulverized organs into a love potion qualifies her as possessing an unnatural sexual desire, especially given her advanced age and the tendency of Roman males to perceive sexually active women beyond child-bearing age as repulsive and unnatural.

We should note likewise Folia’s *mascula libido*, a sexual aggression also considered unnatural and improper for Roman women to possess. These sorts of abnormal sexual behaviors are also shared by Polyphonte (who refused a human marriage and was impregnated by a bear), by Lilith (who desired the active sexual position with her husband and was subsequently impregnated by countless demons), and Lamia (who is depicted as a ghastly, fanged hermaphrodite on an Attic vase of the fifth century BCE and is described by Aristophanes as having testicles).

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374 At Hor. *Epod.* 5.98, the boy calls Canidia and her companions “hideous old women” (*obsenas anus*).
376 Stratton (2007) 71-105 is right to notice the frequent non-adherence to expected gender roles demonstrated by many witch characters (including Canidia and Folia), although her insistence on reading into these (and other) characters a continual threat to overthrow male dominance seems to me too generic a motivation to apply so broadly.
377 Lilith’s sexual aggression may also be indicated by a sketch from a seventh century CE bowl that depicts her with “strongly marked genitals” (Patai (1964) 298).
Harvest of Internal Organs – Canidia’s expressed desire to remove the boy’s liver and bone marrow\(^{379}\) is a demonstrable fascination with the internal organs of her victim, a fascination shared by many child-killing demons. The *strix* is said to drink children’s blood and tear out their viscera, and the propitiatory offering to both the *strix* and Lamashtu is comprised of a heart and entrails.\(^{380}\) In Trimalchio’s tale of an attack by *strigae*, there is a similar emphasis on the internal organs:

\[
dum\ mater\ amplexaret\ corpus\ filii\ sui,\ tangit\ et\ videt\ manuciolum\ de\ stramentis\ factum.\ non\ cor\ habebat,\ non\ intestina,\ non\ quicquam:\ scilicet\ iam\ puerum\ strigae\ involaverant\ et\ supposuerant\ stramenticum\ vavatonem.\(^{381}\)
\]

As the mother goes to embrace her son’s body, she feels and sees a mannequin made of straw. It had no heart, no guts, nothing at all: clearly the *strigae* had swooped down on the boy and substituted a straw puppet in his place.

In this case, although the *strigae* have stolen the boy’s entire body, a focus on the organs still remains within the narrative. As for Lilith, she too is said to drink the blood of children and to suck the marrow from their bones.\(^{382}\)

Animalistic Characteristics – The bestial savagery of the child-killing demon is well attested: a terra cotta plaque has Lilith flanked by raptors and lions, Lamashtu is called a slithering snake,\(^{383}\) Lamia is described as ‘beastlike’ (\(\theta\eta\rho\iota\varpi\omicron\delta\eta\)),\(^{384}\) and figures like

\(^{379}\) Hor. *Epod.* 5.37: *exsecta uti medulla et aridum iecur.* These two organs were also considered to be potent seats of emotion, and so their usage in a ritual operating on certain maxims of sympathetic magic (“As the boy desired the food, so let Varus desire me…”) is in some sense logical (Ogden (2002) 118). That these organs belong to a human child she has abducted and will kill solely for this purpose is both alarming and comparatively unique, cf. Cicero’s abhorrence of Vatinius’ supposed use of children’s bodies for mantic rituals (*In Vat.* 14).

\(^{380}\) See above, p. 126-127.

\(^{381}\) Petron. *Satyricon.* 63.

\(^{382}\) Gaster (1971) 1025.

\(^{383}\) Utukku Lemnutu 4.74.

\(^{384}\) Dio. Sic. 20.41.
Mormo and Gello are often associated with birds, wolves, goats and horses. In *Epode* 5, Canidia and her kin are repeatedly likened to animals. The boy says of Canidia that she looks “like some beast (belua) struck by a blade,” her hair is bound with snakes (viperis) and many of the ingredients for her ritual further typify her character as animalistic: her hideousness is hinted at by the “blood-smeared eggs of the vile frog,” the feather of the *strix* suggests her inclination towards rapacity and kidnapping just as the bones snatched from the mouth of a starving hound indicate her savagery. Sagana, too, is said to have bristling hair, like that of a sea urchin (marinus echinus) or of a running boar (currens aper), both animals with harsh and aggressive connotations.

**Susceptibility to Counter-Charms** – Protections against child-killing demons of all kinds are widely attested in a variety of forms: amulets containing protective spells against Lilith have been found in abundance across the European continent; in the Middle East, weapons were hung in children’s bedrooms to ward off Ummu’s-sibyan; the Italian *strix* could be kept away with a ritual sacrifice (as in Ovid’s *Fasti*) or with an incantation. This use of physical objects and spoken/written spells as means of defense is evidenced in *Epode* 5 on three occasions. In the first, the boy mentions his “band of

390 Hor. *Epod*. 5.23: et ossa ab ore rapta ieiunae canis. The mention of canis here may be a nod to the origins of Canidia’s name (Oliensis (1998) 68ff.).
392 Patai (1964) 296-297.
393 Ivanow (1926) 196.
394 The grammarian Festus preserves an apotropaic chant aimed at the *strix* in formulaic language not dissimilar from charms against Lilith (Johnston (1995) 386).
purple” – the colored hem of his toga praetexta – that was considered a symbol of the inviolability of childhood and thus possessed an apotropaic function, now rendered futile (inane) by Canidia’s actions. His bulla, a necklace containing other assorted protective devices, was also considered a powerful apotropaic symbol \(^{395}\) and is likely among the items stripped (insignibus raptis) purposefully from the boy upon his capture. \(^{396}\) The third instance of an apotropaic device enacted against Canidia is in reference not to the puer but to Varus, who was the target of one of Canidia’s earlier rituals. She laments her lack of success and cries:

\[
A, a, solutus ambulat veneficae
scientioris carmine.\(^{397}\)
\]

Oh, oh, he walks about, freed by the spell of a more knowledgeable venefica.

This couplet is problematic for a number of reasons, most of which hinge on our interpretation of veneficae; as the denotations of the term venefica are unclear, \(^{398}\) Canidia’s relationship to this venefica is difficult to characterize with any certainty. \(^{399}\) However, in light of Canidia’s multiple other associations with demonic figures, we should note that spells (carmina) were often employed to defend against demonic

\(^{397}\) Hor. Epod. 5.71-72.
\(^{398}\) On the multiple potential meanings of venefica, see p. 19-20.
\(^{399}\) The term is generally used to refer to magical practitioners, but any potential for further specificity ends there. Are we to assume that Canidia is, like the woman referenced in the couplet, also a venefica? Does Canidia see herself as somehow elevated above this other woman and thus uses venefica as a term of contempt? Is the opposite the case, that Canidia sees this woman as beyond her own skill and so calls her a venefica to indicate her power? Regardless of the particulars, it is usual to treat this couplet as evidence of two competing magical practitioners, Canidia who has attacked Varus, and the venefica who has defended him.
attacks.\textsuperscript{400} Compare Demeter’s statements about her knowledge of protective spells in the Homeric \textit{Hymn to Demeter}:

\begin{verbatim}
oīδα γὰρ ἀντίτομον μέγα φέρτευον ὕλοτόμου,  
oīδα δὲ ἐπιλυσίης πολυπήμονος ἐσθολὸν ἑρυσμόν.\textsuperscript{401}
\end{verbatim}

For I know an antidote far stronger than a “woodcutter,”  
And I know an excellent defense against woeful witchcraft.\textsuperscript{402}

Following Maas, Faraone reads these lines as reflective of protective, spoken incantations fashioned against childhood ailments wrought by demons,\textsuperscript{403} and I cite them because of their particular emphasis on the spell being “far stronger” (μέγα φέρτευον) than the demon (referred to in the text as the “woodcutter”) against which they were directed. It is this concept of a demon being outdone by a more powerful spell that bears relevance on Canidia’s lament; I would argue that one could potentially read the lines “He walks about, freed by the spell of a more knowledgeable \textit{venefica}” as evidence of a protective charm invoked against a quasi-demonic figure, much as the boy’s \textit{bulla} and \textit{toga praetexta} were apotropaic symbols designed to guard him against creatures like Canidia.

Let us now review Canidia’s character in Horace’s fifth epode. She is a childless old woman, ugly, violent, and accompanied by a retinue of three other women quite like her. Having had both her attempt to secure the affections of a man uninterested in her and her efforts to keep him away from other women rebuffed by a \textit{venefica}’s spell, she

\begin{verbatim}
\textsuperscript{400} Spells (be they a \textit{carmen}, ἐπιθοδός, etc.) of this nature can be found throughout the Magical Papyri and the classical world at large to bind, ward off or otherwise control demonic figures. Gager’s (1992) \textit{Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World}, especially the chapter “Antidotes and Counterspells,” provides an excellent overview of the function of efficacious language in the manipulation of / defense against supernatural agents.
\textsuperscript{401} Hom. \textit{Hym. In Cer.} 228-229.
\textsuperscript{402} Transl. Christopher A. Faraone (2001).
\textsuperscript{403} Maas (1944) 36-37, Faraone (2001) 1-10. See also Johnston (1999) 168.
\end{verbatim}
abducts a child in the night with every intention of killing him and harvesting his organs. The boy, divested of his various apotropaic accoutrements, curses her and swears that he will return from the dead incarnated as a nocturnal terror to claw at his tormentors’ faces and haunt their sleep. From this, her similarity to a child-killing demon is quite evident: we can readily identify a number of their shared themes (jealousy, failed motherhood, the perpetuation of the demonic through the murder of a mortal, etc.) and we can even pick out the skeleton of that familiar tale in which a woman fails to attain a proper heterosexual union (perhaps due to sexually aggressive behavior), is unable to successfully raise children of her own and eventually becomes a child-murderer herself.

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Canidia and the Puer - Epode 5 as Response to Vergil’s Eclogue 4

Having established Canidia’s strong resemblance to a child-killing demon, I would now like to examine the literary implications of this identification. To be sure, the horrific and savage figure of Canidia, when countered by the image of the helpless child she has stolen, contributes to the dramatic tension of the poem as a whole.\(^{405}\) However, the details of her character (in particular, the strong associations with child-stealing demons that Horace has imbued her with) carry more weight than mere horrific posturing. Through the character of Canidia and her interactions with the boy, Horace engages with Vergil’s fourth eclogue and in doing so, answers what he sees as Vergil’s naïve hopes for peace with his own cynical expectations of continued civil war.\(^{406}\)

The first objection likely to be raised against this proposition is that Horace already crafted a reply to Eclogue 4 with his sixteenth epode. The interaction between Epode 16 and Eclogue 4 is almost certain; there are numerous parallels between the two poems (indicated by most commentaries) that point toward a high level of purposeful engagement with one another, regardless of one’s views as to the temporal priority of either Vergil or Horace’s piece. In light of this, I maintain that Epode 5 is designed to

\(^{405}\) Paratore (1985) 77-81.

work in conjunction with *Epode* 16 as a critique of the Golden Age predictions of Vergil in *Eclogue* 4.

That Horace should engage the same poem of Vergil’s with more than one of his own should not come as a surprise; the use of repeated allusions is not uncommon practice either for Horace or other poets of the Augustan era. To wit, in *Satire* 1.4, when Horace describes Lucilius’ poetry as “flowing full of mud, with bits that should be removed”⁴⁰⁷ and his own work as terse and laconic,⁴⁰⁸ he makes reference to Callimachus’ *Hymn to Apollo*:

> Ἄσσυριόι ποταμοῖο μέγας ὤσσε, ἀλλὰ τὰ πολλὰ λύματα γῆς καὶ πολλόν ἔφι ὡδιτι συρφητὸν ἠλκει. Δημοὶ δ’ οὐκ ἀπὸ παντὸς ὤδωρ φορέοι μέλισσαι, ἀλλ’ ἣτις καθαρῆ τε καὶ ἀρκαντὸς ἀνέρπει πιθαχος ἐξ ἀγάθη ὄλγη λιβας ἀκρον ἀωτον.⁴⁰⁹

The flow of the Assyrian river is massive, but it bears a considerable amount of dirt and filth in its water. Yet the bees do not bring just any water to Deo, but that which comes pure and untainted from a holy spring, a small stream – the very best.

Horace refers to this work again in the *Satires*’ closing poem, with much the same language as before:

> at dixi fluere hunc lutulentum, saepe ferentem plura quidem tollenda relinquies.⁴¹⁰

But I said that [Lucilius] flowed full of mud, often containing more that should have been thrown out than there was to keep.

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⁴⁰⁷ Hor. S. 1.4.11: *cum flueret lutulentus, erat quod tollere velles.*
⁴⁰⁸ Hor. S. 1.4.17-18: *di bene fecerunt, inopis me quodque pusilli / finixerunt animi, raro et perpaqua loquentis.*
⁴¹⁰ Hor. S. 1.10.50-51.
By contrast, Horace’s own poetry is highly edited,\textsuperscript{411} his collection but a “little book” (\textit{libello})\textsuperscript{412} and meant for a select few (\textit{paucis lectoribus}).\textsuperscript{413} The case for Horace’s repetition of his earlier reference to Callimachus’ \textit{Hymn} is fairly clear – there is a distinct repetition of vocabulary (\textit{lutulentus/lutulentum, tollere/tollerenda}) and of the muddy river imagery used to compare Horace’s precise brevity to Lucilius’ unrefined verbosity.

Vergil, too, twice refers to a single passage of Callimachus’ with two of his own. As Dido, the queen of Carthage, takes her own life at the end of \textit{Aeneid} 4, the goddess Iris descends from Olympus to take a lock of the dying queen’s hair. This is a somewhat oblique reference\textsuperscript{414} to Callimachus’ \textit{Lock of Berenice}, a poem about the Ptolemaic queen Berenice’s dedication of a lock of her hair and its subsequent transformation into a star.\textsuperscript{415} The allusion is contingent on recognizing Dido’s status as a north-African queen, similar to that of the Alexandrian Berenice. The allusion is revisited upon Aeneas’ descent into the underworld in \textit{Aeneid} 6; there, he meets Dido’s shade and says by way of apology:

\textit{invitus, regina, tuo de litore cessi}.\textsuperscript{416}

Unwillingly, queen, did I depart from your shore.

This language is a careful (perhaps even playful) adaptation of a line from the poet Catullus’ rendition\textsuperscript{417} of Callimachus’ \textit{Lock of Berenice}. In Catullus’ poem, which at

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\setcounter{footnote}{411}
\item Hor. \textit{S.} 1.10.68-73.
\item Hor. \textit{S.} 1.10.92.
\item Hor. \textit{S.} 1.10.74.
\item This is discussed at length by Tatum (1984).
\item Callimachus fr. 110 Pfeiffer. It is possible, - even likely, considering Vergil’s neat reworking of Catullus 66.39 at 6.460 – that Vergil is incorporating in these passages a double allusion, using Catullan language to get at the Callimachean original. See Tatum (1984) 440ff. For the various Vergilian and Catullan engagements with Berenice’s lock, see Hardie (2006), Acosta-Hughes (2010) 86-81.
\item Ver. \textit{Aen.} 6.460.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
many points corresponds closely to the extant fragments of Callimachus, it is a talking hair that narrates the story of Berenice’s lock. At one point, the hair says to Berenice:

_invita, o regina, tuo de vertice cessi._

Unwillingly, oh queen, did I depart from your head.

Vergil has thus twice engaged the story of the _Lock of Berenice_ — the first at the conclusion of book four with Iris’ retrieval of Dido’s lock, and the second in book six as Aeneas echoed the words of loss and separation spoken by Berenice’s lock in Catullus 66.

A final example should satisfy us that Horace’s engagement with Vergil’s _Eclogue_ 4 within two of his own poems is not inconceivable. In this case, it is Ovid who twice reworks a passage of Vergil’s. The story of Orpheus and Eurydice is narrated near the end of Vergil’s _Georgics_ and Ovid ludically adapts the first portion of it in the opening lines of the tenth book of his _Metamorphoses_, then returns at the opening of book eleven to reengage Vergil’s passage with his own narration of Orpheus’ death. Although the exact nature of the relationship between Ovid’s version of the Orpheus myth and Vergil’s before him has long been the subject of discussion, it is generally agreed that Ovid’s lines are purposeful re-imaginings of Vergil’s.

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417 I hesitate to call Catullus 66 a “translation” of Callimachus fr. 110 for a number of reasons, primarily because slavish, unembellished translation of Greek poetry simply does not appear to have been Catullus’ style. His version of Sappho 31, for example, while remaining close to the Greek original for the first three stanzas, contains a fourth that is quite divergent from the extant fragment. On the relationship between the Catullan and Callimachean _Lock of Berenice_, see Bing (1997) and Marinone (1997) 29-54.

418 Cat. 66.39.


Before addressing the ways in which *Epode 5* can be read alongside *Epode 16* as a response to *Eclogue 4*, it would be best to review the primary points of Vergil’s poem. Often called Vergil’s “Messianic Eclogue,” this poem is in essence an ode to an as-yet unborn child (referred to only as *puer*) destined, as Vergil would have it, to usher in a new age of Roman peace. Composed around 40/39 BCE, the poem is very much the product of years of civil war. Julius Caesar had been assassinated four years prior, and his killers were systematically pursued by Octavian and Antony until the last of them were defeated at the battle of Philippi. Even then, civil war again seemed likely as Octavian besieged the city of Perusina (41-40 BCE) in order to quell an uprising of Antony’s supporters. The treaty of Brundisium (40 BCE) and Antony’s marriage to Octavian’s sister then offered a welcome prospect of peace between the members of the triumvirate. It was likely to this brief respite from civil strife that Vergil was so hopefully reacting as he predicted the birth of a child for whom “the iron age would first come to an end, and a golden age rise in its place throughout the world.”

The idealistic golden age of Vergil’s poem is replete with standard utopian imagery: the earth yields crops of its own accord (18-20), goats freely offer their milk (21-22), fertile land is in abundance (28-30) and people again follow a simple life devoid of agriculture, commerce and sailing (38-45). And at the heart of this miraculous, worldwide transformation is the boy just about to be born (*aderit iam tempus*), a child of whom Vergil says:

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422 See Nisbet (2007) 9-10. On the debate over the dating of *Eclogue 4* and its priority in terms of *Epode 16*, see p. 149n406.
He will receive a life of the gods and he will see heroes among the gods and will himself be seen by them, and he will rule a world pacified by his father’s brave deeds.

It is, on the whole, a hopeful poem, centered on the imminent birth of a boy whose life Vergil expects to reshape the face of the known world and lead Rome into an era of peace.

Horace’s *Epode* 16, in contrast, is far from positive in its expectations for Rome’s future. Probably composed around the first half of 38 BCE – roughly a year after *Eclogue* 4 – the poem’s opening lines lament the recent outbreak of civil war between Octavian and Sextus Pompey (son of Pompey the Great).

\[
\textit{altera iam teritur bellis civilibus aetas} \\
\textit{suis et ipsa Roma viribus ruit}.\]

Another age is now being ground apart by civil wars and Rome is ruined by her own strength.

The language of the first line, closely modeled on similar lines from Vergil’s fourth eclogue,

\[
\textit{ultima Cumaei venit iam carminis aetas;} \\
\textit{magnus ab integro saeclorum nascitur ordo}.\]

The final age of Cumaean song has now come; A great cycle is born from the eras’ end.

immediately establishes the position of *Epode* 16 as a calculated response to *Eclogue* 4. Where Vergil celebrated the coming of a new era, the birth of a new temporal cycle that

\[425\text{ Verg. Ecl. 4.15-17.}\]
\[426\text{ Nisbet (1984) 2-9.}\]
\[427\text{ Hor. Epod. 16.1-2.}\]
\[428\text{ Verg. Ecl. 4.4-5.}\]
would move Rome from the violent age of iron into the pacified age of gold,\(^{429}\) Horace decries the city as all but lost already. If there is to be a golden age for Rome, Horace sees only one option: abandoning the city. Rome, he says, will be conquered; foreign invaders will trample her ruins and defile the tomb of her founder (9-14). Any peace there is to be found must be sought across the ocean, on the islands of the blessed. It is in the description of this fantastical place that Horace echoes Vergil’s predictions of a utopian golden age for Rome. It is there, on these remote islands beyond the reach even of fabled sailors (57-60), that Horace envisions his displaced utopia: there, crops grow of their own accord (43-46), goats freely offer their milk (49-50), and abundant fertile land is unmarred by inclement weather (53-56). The very things Vergil said the unborn \textit{puer} would bring to Rome, Horace cannot imagine belonging anywhere but in the lands of myth.

Yet, for all of the careful responses to \textit{Eclogue} 4 that Horace fashioned in \textit{Epode} 16 (the above two paragraphs’ repetitive language regarding the characteristics of the golden age reflects to some extent the similarity of the original Latin)\(^{430}\) a key element of the fourth eclogue goes completely unmentioned in Horace’s sixteenth epode: the boy. In light of this omission, it is my contention that \textit{Epode} 5 was written as a later companion piece to \textit{Epode} 16, designed to respond to \textit{Eclogue} 4’s prophetic proclamation of the \textit{puer}’s imminent birth just as \textit{Epode} 16 was designed to answer the eclogue’s hopes for a

\(^{429}\) On the cyclical nature of the ages as envisioned by Vergil – and on the implicit, though eventual, necessity of the golden age’s conclusion – see Patricia A. Johnston’s \textit{Vergil’s Agricultural Golden Age} (1980) 8ff..

\(^{430}\) Watson (2003) 486-488 presents a succinct summary of the (not inconsiderable) debate over the priority of \textit{Epode} 16 or \textit{Eclogue} 4’s composition, as well as the primary passages relevant for establishing the relationship between the two poems.
coming golden age. To establish a secure connection between the two poems, I will outline several basic lexical and thematic resonances between Epode 5 and Eclogue 4 before examining the relative rarity of the term puer in the Epodes. Then, based on the connection between these poems and an understanding of Canidia’s strong resemblance to a child-killing demon, I will present a reading of Epode 5 as a further critique of Vergilian optimism as expressed in his fourth eclogue and as a statement of Horace’s countering prediction of continuing civil war.

Lexical and Thematic Resonances between Hor. Epod. 5 and Ver. Ecl. 4

At first glance, there are admittedly few compelling reasons to read Epode 5 against Eclogue 4; in fact, Epode 5 has not yet been read as bearing any sort of relationship to Eclogue 4. That said, there are several striking overlaps between the two poems – the most obvious being their shared emphasis on a steadfastly anonymous puer, to whom we will return momentarily.

First, let us consider five instances in which the language of Epode 5 at once recalls that of Eclogue 4 and at the same time re-contextualizes it to alternate purposes.

1) Ecl. 4.8, 10: \textit{tu modo nascenti puero… / casta fave Lucina}  
Epod. 5.5-6: \textit{si vocata partubus / Lucina veris affuit}

A goddess of childbirth, Lucina is present in both poems but, as we will see in each of the following lexical similarities, her role in Epode 5 is opposite that in Eclogue 4. In Vergil’s poem, Lucina is directly addressed by the poet and asked to look after the boy during his birth (\textit{modo nascenti}). It is a protective request, typical for those about to
undergo the often dangerous ordeal of giving birth. Conversely, Lucina’s intervention is specifically left uncertain in *Epode 5*: the *puer*, begging for his life, pleads with Canidia “by your children – if Lucina was truly invoked at their births,” thus casting doubt on Canidia’s motherhood. We can here observe that the figure of Lucina has been deployed in both poems to opposite effects: in Vergil’s eclogue, she is invoked to secure the *puer*’s safe birth; in Horace’s epode, the *puer*’s invocation of her is meant to call into question Canidia’s very status as a mother. This technique of echoing yet simultaneously repurposing Vergilian ideas serves both to connect *Epode 5* to *Eclogue 4*, and to establish the one as an almost mirrored inverse of the other.

2) *Ecl. 4.24:* occidet et *serpens*  
   *Epod. 5.15-16:* Canidia brevibus illigata *viperis* / *crinis*

The second example is a minor point but one that nonetheless suggests further contact between the two works: both poems mention snakes, each to the opposite effect. While Vergil anticipates the death of the snake as a symbol of the peace and tranquility of the golden age heralded by the *puer*’s birth, Horace envisions snakes twined about the hair of his *puer*’s killer. Much as with Lucina, the same entity used by Vergil is redeployed and inverted by Horace. As regards the lexical shift from Vergil’s *serpens* to Horace’s *viperis*, the interchangeability of the two words is evidenced by Horace’s prior use of *viperis* at *Epode 16.52* (*nec intumesce alta viperis humus*, “nor does the deep soil swell with snakes”), another line that was crafted in answer to Vergil’s *serpens* at *Ecl. 4.24*.

3) *Ecl. 4.24-25:* *et fallax herba veneni* / occidet  
   *Epod. 5.61-62:* cur dira barbarae minus / *venena Medeae valent*

In three words (*fallax herba veneni*) Vergil describes the “deceitful venomous plant” (herbs with the potential to be used for all manner of harm) that will be absent from his Golden Age utopia. Yet Horace, using variations on Vergil’s same language (*venena... herba... fefellit*), describes Canidia as actively employing the “venoms” of Medea and proclaims that “neither plant, nor hidden root deceived [her.]” Again, Horace has used the same language as Vergil did of his golden age, but has twisted the meaning: instead of a land devoid of poisonous plants, Horace creates a woman skilled in their use.

“Look!” the narrator of *Eclogue* 4 says. “The curved mass of the world nods in consent / the lands, the paths of the sea, the vast sky as well. / See how everything delights in the age to come!” The entirety of the world acknowledges the boy’s status and awaits the new era that he will introduce. In an exact inversion of this original order (land, sea, sky) Canidia swears that “the sky will sooner set beneath the sea / with the land stretched over top” (sky, sea, land) before her spell does not bring Varus to her. Vergil’s imagery of a properly ordered world consenting to the boy’s birth (and the magnitude of his role in it) is here co-opted and inverted to describe the utter certainty of the witch Canidia’s success – a success that is wholly dependent on the boy’s violent death. Just as Vergil invokes the arrangement of land, sea and sky to look forward to the *puer*’s imminent birth, Horace reverses that order to look forward to the child’s imminent death.
The final example is more thematic than it is lexical, but still demonstrates a calculated response by Horace to Vergil’s idyllic eclogue. In Vergil’s idyllic golden age, he describes a litany of natural wonders: the earth will voluntarily offer the boy a cradle of ivy, *baccaris*,

Egyptian *colocasia*, *acanthus* and other lovely flowers, while the goats themselves bring their swollen udders home to be milked and even the lions will be at peace with the cattle. These are all standard utopian tropes that have been matched in some sense (as mentioned previously) in *Epode* 16. There, those tropes were relocated, placed not in Rome but in the inaccessible islands of the blessed. Here, the same themes are treated again, but effectively inverted: instead of the earth yielding pleasant foliage for an infant’s crib, Canidia orders her companions to bring fig trees that have been uprooted from tombs, funereal cypresses and poisons from Iolcos and Hiberia; the serene image of lions and cattle at peace is matched with blood-smeared frog eggs, feathers from a bird of prey, and bones stolen from a starving dog – and all of these elements, far from

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432 Precise identification of this plant remains illusory (see OLD: *baccaris*).
welcoming a child into the world, are here called upon as elements of the puer’s death. We thus have multiple inversions of Vergil’s fourth eclogue in this passage: the life-affirming cradle of ivy and flowers willingly offered is paired with funereal trees and foreign poisons gathered under compulsion (iubet); the cooperation of domesticated and predatory animals is answered with ingredients symbolic of animals’ death (bloody eggs, bones) and savagery (the strix is a noted raptor, and starving animals are notorious for their abnormally aggressive behavior), and Vergil’s overall theme of birth is countered by Horace’s narrative of the puer’s death.

The strongest argument for the connection between Epode 5 and Eclogue 4 is the emphasis both poems place on the character of the unnamed puer. Over half of Eclogue 4 (18-52) is an extended direct-address to the child, and the theme of the entire poem is a dedication to the boy’s birth and subsequent life. Similarly, Epode 5 opens and closes (1-10, 83-102) with speeches from the boy and the remainder of the poem relates, in one manner or another, to his impending death. That both poems feature as a central figure an anonymous child whom they repeatedly refer to as a puer is reason enough to suspect a potential dialogue between the two, but this is compounded by the rarity with which both authors use that term in reference to an anonymous figure.

Puer occurs twenty one times in Vergil’s Eclogues, three of which are in reference to the child of Eclogue 4. Of the remaining eighteen instances, all but two refer

434 A pack of squirrels, for example, perhaps suffering from a lack of adequate food in the Russian forest in which they lived, uncharacteristically attacked and killed a “big” dog in December of 2005. According to one witness, the animal was “literally gutted,” (BBC News, “Russian Squirrel Pack ‘Kills Dog’”).
435 Hor. Epod. 5.11-14: the boy’s physical appearance; 15-46: descriptions of the boy’s murderers and their preparations for the ritual that will involve his death; 49-82: Canidia’s prayer, a lament over the failure of an earlier ritual (not narrated within the poem) culminating in Canidia’s expression of her certainty in the current ritual’s success.
to characters that are elsewhere identified by name. The two remaining usages of *puer* in the *Eclogues* are found in the third eclogue and – importantly – they occur only in the plural. The word is used in a general sense for servants or otherwise inconsequential companions of the main characters: in the first instance, the shepherd Damoetas tells several boys who are picking flowers to flee because a snake is nearby; in the second, another shepherd directs (presumably different) boys to gather his sheep. None of these *pueri* have speaking roles or play any more significant role in the poem than was just demonstrated. Additionally, the usage of the plural indicates that the children in question are treated more as a collective group than as any sort of identifiable figure. Therefore, the boy of *Eclogue* 4 occupies a unique position within Vergil’s *Eclogues* as the only anonymous *puer* in the collection who is a character unto himself, and the only anonymous *puer* who is the subject of an entire poem.

The *puer* of Horace’s fifth epode is also the only usage of the term wherein its referent is anonymous and plays a central role in the poem. Horace uses *puer* eight times in the *Epodes*, three of which are in *Epode* 5 and refer to the child in question. Three of the remaining five instances may be dismissed immediately: *Epode* 13.12 refers to Achilles and 11.4 (*pueris*) and 11.28 (*pueri*) both situate boys alongside girls as

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437 Verg. *Ecl.* 3.92-93: *qui legitis flores et humi nascentia fraga, / frigidus, o pueri, fugite hinc, latet anguis in herba*.

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generic objects of the poet’s affection.\textsuperscript{440} The fourth use of \textit{puer} (9.33) is not so generic, but is clearly intended to refer to one of the poet’s slaves who was acting in the capacity of wine steward.\textsuperscript{441} “Boy! Bring some bigger wine cups over here!”\textsuperscript{442} This is a common trope of sympotic literature and can be seen elsewhere in Horatian poetry.\textsuperscript{443} The remaining usage of \textit{puer} in the \textit{Epodes} is in the context of a simile and does not, as such, apply to a particular character: the poet, after a good deal of posturing and threatening directed at the poem’s hostile addressee, asks “Or if someone comes after me with a black tooth / am I to weep like an unavenged child (\textit{puer})?”\textsuperscript{444} That these lines occur in the poem immediately following \textit{Epode 5} may suggest some affinity in the simile to the vengeful \textit{puer} of that epode, however that reading is far from certain and the use of \textit{puer} may ultimately serve more of a connective thematic function than it is a literal recurrence of a character. This again places the anonymous \textit{puer} of \textit{Epode 5} in the unique position of being the only anonymous \textit{puer} in the \textit{Epodes} to speak or play a major role in any of the poems; the other two unnamed \textit{pueri} of the collection are each limited to single line appearances and either have a specifically designated role (the steward of 9.33) or are not properly characters (the hypothetical \textit{puer} of 6.16). That means that the \textit{puer} of \textit{Eclogue 4} and the \textit{puer} of \textit{Epode 5} are each the only primary characters in their respective poetic works to go unnamed but for the appellation “\textit{puer}.”

\footnotesize

\textsuperscript{440} Hor. \textit{Epod. 11.3-4}: \textit{amore, qui me praeter omnis expetit / mollibus in puerris aut in puellis urere}; 27-28: \textit{sed alius ardur aut puellarie candidae /aut teretis pueri longam renodantis comam}.

\textsuperscript{441} Mankin (1995) 179.

\textsuperscript{442} Hor. \textit{Epod. 9.33}: \textit{capaciores affer huc, puer, scyphos}.

\textsuperscript{443} cf. Hor. C. 1.9, 1.38.

\textsuperscript{444} Hor. \textit{Epod. 6.15-16}: \textit{an si quis atro dente me petiverit / inultus ut flebo puer}?
To summarize, Augustan poets like Horace, Vergil and Ovid frequently engaged with specific passages of their literary predecessors on multiple occasions. Horace, having once responded to the golden age predictions of Vergil’s fourth eclogue with his own sixteenth epode, uses another poem – *Epode 5* – to engage with the messianic *puer* from Vergil’s fourth eclogue whose role had gone unaddressed in Horace’s earlier sixteenth epode. By employing several lexical and thematic echoes of *Eclogue 4* – especially that of the anonymous *puer* – Horace has constructed a poem that can be read as a second⁴⁴⁵ response to Vergil’s overtly optimistic eclogue.

*Epode 5 as Commentary on Civil War*

As I have suggested earlier, *Epode 5* is similar to *Epode 16* in that both are criticisms of Vergil’s expectation of a coming golden age as indicated by Horace’s pointed inversion of various Vergilian phrases and themes. The treatment and transformation of the *puer* in *Epode 5* is the most significant inversion and condemnation of Vergil’s fourth eclogue which serves as a specific critique of the high hopes placed on Vergil’s *puer*. I do not imagine that the *puer* of *Epode 5* is intended to be the same child as in *Eclogue 4*, but the one was surely meant to be read closely against the other, and in so doing, a certain affinity between the characters emerges. What that affinity yields is a reading of the *puer’s* role in *Epode 5* as anathema to that of the boy in *Eclogue 4*.

⁴⁴⁵ This argument is not dependent on *Epode 5* having a later date of composition than *Epode 16*. However, given the dating of *Epode 16*’s composition to around 38 BCE (closely following *Eclogue 4*’s in 39), it is more likely that *Epode 5* followed rather than preceded 16. Also, if the pairing of Maecenas and Canidia in *Epode 3* and in *Satire 1.8* (see Oliensis (1999) 77-90) is any indication, the association of the two may be suggestive (though hardly proof) of Canidia’s status as a feature of Horace’s writing that arose after his introduction to Maecenas in 37 BCE, thus providing further evidence for situating *Epode 5*’s composition after that of 16.
We have already reviewed the many lexical and thematic inversions in relation to *Eclogue* 4 and *Epode* 5. Let us now examine the primary aspect in which the children diverge: the presence of Canidia. In *Epode* 5, the anonymous *puer* is a child of an indeterminately youthful age, perhaps just becoming old enough that – as Vergil predicted for the eclogian *puer* – he would be learning to read. As opposed to the Vergilian boy, foretold to be at that age in the midst of a world of incredible fecundity (“ripe grapes will hang from the thorn bushes and stout oaks will drip wet with honey”), the *puer* in Horace’s poem has been abducted by Canidia and is soon to be slain in a ritual that is rife with the symbolism of death and decay. It is with the intervention of Canidia that Horace reroutes the narrative of Vergil’s messianic *puer*; Vergil’s poem of a child’s upcoming birth and the positive social changes contingent on that child’s successful maturation are answered in Horace’s poem by the looming murder of the *puer* at the hands of Canidia and her companions – characters who bear remarkable resemblance to various child-killing demons. The hope that Vergil places in the *puer* of *Eclogue* 4, Horace sees cut short by child-killing demonic figures in *Epode* 5.

Canidia, an (allegedly) childless hag with unnatural lust and bestial features – the epitome of a child-killing demon – is the perfect counterpoint to Vergil’s promising young child. Under her influence, the child who began *Epode* 5 with tremulous, plaintive entreaties for his life is twisted and manipulated into a demon himself by the poem’s conclusion. It is with this transformation that Horace makes his most powerful statement

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446 Verg. Ecl. 4.26-27: *at simul heroum laudes et facta parentis / iam legere et quae sit poteris cognoscere virthus*…
447 Verg. Ecl. 4.29-30: *incultisque rubens pendebit sentibus uva / et durae quercus sudabunt roscida mella.*
– the *puer* whom Vergil foresaw as the symbol of the civil wars’ end is here turned into an agent of vengeance that will perpetuate a cycle of generational violence that is representative of the civil wars themselves. When the *puer* speaks, it is of retribution that cannot be averted and of hatred that cannot be appeased. Where the *puer* of Vergil’s eclogue was to be born into a world devoid of “constant fear” (*perpetua... formidine*), this child swears to be its agent (*pavore somnos auferam*) as – in the manner of child-killing demons – he returns from the dead to inflict the same horrors on others that were visited upon him. As Canidia and her companions attacked the *puer*, so will he attack them after his death; the hapless boy whose youth could “soften / even the godless hearts of the Thracians” has sworn to become a night fiend (*nocturnus furor*), clawing at the faces of his enemies and perching atop their chests as they sleep. Even the people of the town will be drawn into the scope of his violence as the boy anticipates their participation in driving the women from the city, and what began as a single act of violence is predicted to spiral ever greater. As a metaphor for the swift spread of civil war, of its perversion and corruption of youthful innocence, and of its relentless tendency to instigate further violence, it is apt; as an answer to Vergil’s unabashed hopes for the new-born *puer* and an end to civil warfare, it is damning.

The reading of this poem as a commentary on civil war is further supported on four bases: 1) the many stylistic and thematic echoes (discussed previously) within *Epode* 448 Hor. *Epod*. 5.88: *convertere humanam vicem.*
452 See p. 139-142.
5 that serve to position the poem in connection with *Eclogue* 4 and *Epode* 16, both poems
that overtly focus on civil war; 2) Horace’s description of the boy’s final words as
“Thyestean oaths;” 3) the *puer*’s metamorphosis into a horrific demon; and 4) an allusion
in the poem’s final two couplets to the Theban civil war of myth.

As Canidia completes her speech and the boy’s death is all-but assured, the *puer*
sends forth “Thyestean oaths.”\(^{454}\) This is a reference to the oath with which Thyestes
cursed his brother Atreus upon realizing that Atreus had killed Thyestes’ children and
secretly fed them to him for dinner.\(^{455}\) The force of “Thyestean oaths” then conveys an
almost proverbial sense of impassioned outrage,\(^{456}\) but there is another layer at work
within this reference: that of continuous, intra-familial violence – a neat parallel to
Rome’s civil wars.

Thyestes’ family was one marked by generations of atrocities perpetrated against
itself: Thyestes’ grandfather, Tantalus, killed his son and served his flesh to the gods;
Pelops, Thyestes’ father, married Hippodamia by arranging for her father’s death;
Thyestes, in order to avenge Atreus’ cruelty, raped his own daughter to beget Aegisthus,
the man who would ultimately kill Atreus’ son Agamemnon; Agamemnon famously
sacrificed his daughter Iphigenia and for this was later killed by his wife Clytemnestra
and her lover Aegisthus; Orestes, son of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, avenged his
father’s murder by killing his own mother and her lover Aegisthus (who was of Orestes’

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\(^{454}\) Hor. *Epod.* 5.86: *misit Thyestas preces.*

\(^{455}\) The story is primarily known to us through Seneca’s *Thyestes*, though was also featured in Ennius’
*Thyestes* and mentioned in Aechylus’ *Agamemnon* (Mankin (1995) 133).

\(^{456}\) Cavarzere (1992) 155.
own bloodline). An allusion to Thyestean internecine slaughter would have been particularly poignant during the mid 30s BCE, when Rome had been in the midst of civil wars that had their beginnings nearly sixty years prior with Lucius Cornelius Sulla’s unprecedented march against Rome. Sulla marched again on Rome in 82 and established a relative peace that lasted until Aemilius Lepidus’ attack on the city in 78. The following years were punctuated by slave revolts and various plots against the republic, but were largely free of large-scale civil strife until the outbreak of war between the triumvirs in 49 that was to mark the beginning of nearly constant civil conflict that would not end until 31, after Julius Caesar was assassinated, his assassins and their supporters either defeated or murdered, and Octavian’s former ally Mark Antony lay dead by his own hand following his defeat by Octavian at Actium.

Due to the high prevalence of inter-marriage and familial interconnectivity among the Roman elite, it is not surprising that we find the civil wars characterized throughout Roman literature in terms of repeated self-mutilation, much as was the house of Atreus. Horace’s opening lines from *Epode* 16 echo this thought (*suis et ipsa Roma viribus ruit*, “Rome is ruined by her own strength”), as do the following lines from Vergil’s *Georgics*:

\[
\text{ergo inter sese paribus concurrere telis}
\]
\[
\text{Romanas acies iterum videre Philippi.}\]

Thus Philippi saw Roman battle lines yet again rushing against one another with the same weaponry.

The most vivid of these images comes from the preem to Lucan’s *Civil War*:

\[
\text{bella per Emathios plus quam civilia campos}
\]

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Of wars across Emathian plains, worse than civil wars, and of legality conferred on crime we sing, and of a mighty people attacking its own guts with victorious sword-hand, of kin facing kin, and, once the pact of tyranny was broken, of conflict waged with all the forces of the shaken world for universal guilt, and of standards ranged in enmity against standards, of eagles matched and javelins threatening javelins. 460

The repeated massacre of the self that so permeates Rome’s conception of the atrocities of civil war is at the heart of the puer’s “Thyestean oaths,” and the boy’s oath itself is suggestive of the continuous, cyclical violence that was endemic to the Roman civil wars of the first century BCE.

Horace, in Epode 7, after questioning why his countrymen have yet again taken up arms, laments:

\[ \text{Sic est: acerba fata Romanos agunt} \\
\text{scelusque fraternal necis} \\
\text{ut immerentis fluxit in terram Remi} \\
\text{sacer nepotibus cruor.} 461\]

So it is: a harsh fate impels the Romans, and the crime of a brother’s murder when the innocent blood of Remus flowed upon the ground, a curse for his descendants.

This is the language of blood-guilt, a familial pollution whose taint transcends generational boundaries. 462 It was the driving force behind the horrors of the house of

459 Luc. 1.1-7.
460 I use here Susan H. Braund’s superb translation of the Bellum Civile (Oxford University Press, 1992).
461 Hor. Epod. 7.17-20.
Atreus, crimes that reverberated throughout the entire family for generations and were only stopped after the purification and trial of Orestes for the murder of his mother, committed in order to avenge his father. Compare the following lines from Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*, as the chorus predicts to Clytemnestra a continuation of violence within the family:

\[
\begin{align*}
\pi\tau\rho\omicron\omicron\omicron\nu\varepsilon\\delta\varepsilon
\sigmaυλλήπτωξ\gamma\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\varepsilon\\delta\varepsilon\varepsilon\nu\nu\nu\varepsilon\nu\nu\nu\varepsilon
\beta\nu\uomicron\zeta\epsilon\tau\iota\delta\varepsilon\varepsilon\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\varepsilon\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu
\varepsilon\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\varepsilon\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu
\mu\ell\alpha\zeta\varsigma\chi\nu\varepsilon\tau\iota\delta\varepsilon\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu
\pi\acute{a}n\acute{a}\varepsilon\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu
\end{align*}
\]

Yet, from the father [Agamemnon]
some accomplice may come, an avenger.
Black Ares rages
in kindred rivers of blood,
where on his march he will offer recompense for the blood of devoured children.

With the emphasis both Horace and Aeschylus place on blood and generational violence, we can see a distinct similarity in the ideology underlying both the perpetuation of crimes in the house of Atreus and the recurrent outbreaks of civil war in Rome.464

This similarity is vividly expressed in the fact that Octavian himself was repeatedly likened to Orestes - both were men who prided themselves in taking vengeance for the murder of their fathers. At the end of the first book of the *Georgics*, Vergil describes the civil war like a speeding chariot whose rider cannot control it; the

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464 This same idea is preserved in Seneca’s *Thyestes* (25-29): *certetur omni scelere et alterna vice / stringatur ensis. Nec sit irarum modus / pudorve, mentes caecus instiget furore, / rabies parentum duret et longum nefas / eat in nepotes.* “Let them fight without morals and let each sword / in turn be drawn. Let there be no checks upon wrath, / nor shame in it; let blind rage goad men’s minds; / let the parents’ madness live on and may their blasphemous deeds / stretch long down line of descendants.”
passage, Michael Dewer has argued, invites the reader to presume Octavian as the charioteer, yet the metaphor itself (taken from Aeschylus’ *Libation Bearers*) was originally applied to Orestes as he compared himself in his madness to a charioteer unable to control his horses.\(^\text{465}\) The implicit connection between Octavian and Orestes in the *Georgics* is made explicit in the writings of the poet Claudian, who cites both men in succession as examples of sons who avenged their fathers’ deaths through murder, though unjustly.\(^\text{466}\) Pausanias also corroborates the link between these two men through his record of a statue of Orestes at the temple of Hera in Argos that was later repurposed (through the addition of an identifying inscription) as Octavian.\(^\text{467}\) Also, it is suggested – both by a passage in Ovid’s *Tristia*\(^\text{468}\) and in the performance of Atilius’ *Electra* at Caesar’s funeral celebrations – that the myth of Orestes’ revenge was a personal favorite of Augustus.\(^\text{469}\)

Despite the many potentially negative connotations that the comparison between Octavian and Orestes implies, it is evident that the mythology of the house of Atreus was a tool by which a Roman audience could grapple with the enormity of the civil wars. For this reason, I see in the Horace’s description of the boy’s words as “Thyestean oaths” a

\(^{465}\) Dewer (1988) 563-565. Dewer’s point may be bolstered slightly by observing that Vergil’s description of war in this passage as “impious Mars raged” (*Georg.* 1.511: *saevit toto Mars impius orbe*) may be a translation of Aeschylus’ βιωτίζεται… μέλας Άρης (see p. 169n458) taken from a passage also related to Orestes.

\(^{466}\) Dewer (1990) 580-582. Claudian *De Sexto Consulatu Honorii* 113-121.

\(^{467}\) Cecioni (1993) 506. I am uncertain whether to follow Cecioni’s assumption that the statue’s inscription dates to just after Actium; she does note that Pausanias uses the name Augustus, not Octavian, but that he is not directly quoting the inscription and may be using “Augustus” out of convenience rather than textual fidelity. In either case, its exact date is of less import than the mere fact of its re-identification.


\(^{469}\) Tilg (2008) 368-370.
contextualization of his closing speech in terms of the ongoing civil wars – especially
given its emphasis on revenge.

It remains only to address the final two couplets of *Epode 5*:

> post insepulta membra different lupi  
> et Esquilineae alites  
> neque hoc parentes, heu mihi superstites,  
> effugerit spectaculum.\(^{470}\)

Afterwards, the wolves and the birds of the Esquiline will tear apart your unburied limbs,
and my parents – alas, forced to survive me – will not flee from the sight.

In these lines, the *puer* curses Canidia’s corpse (and presumably those of her companions) to remain unburied. He mentions wolves and birds rending her limbs, and describes the whole ordeal as a thing to be watched (*spectaculum*). I cite the lines here largely to underscore my previous points by drawing out an allusion therein to the aftermath of the Theban civil war between the two brothers Eteocles and Polynices; the boy’s curse is strongly evocative of Creon’s declaration in Sophocles’ *Antigone* regarding the corpse of Polynices. This was a man who had incited civil war, led an army against his home city of Thebes, and killed his own brother in single-combat only to be killed by that same brother’s dying blow. Of his corpse, Creon says:

> ἐὰν δ’ ἀθαπτὸν καὶ πρὸς οἰωνῶν δέμας  
> καὶ πρὸς κυνῶν ἐδεστὸν αἵμαθέν τ’ ἰδεῖν.\(^{471}\)

> [the city must] leave his body unburied, to be eaten by the birds and the dogs – a disgraceful thing to behold.

\(^{471}\) Soph. *Ant.* 205-206.
We have in these passages three overlapping themes: the unburied corpse, the corpse as food for bird and dogs/wolves, and the implicit importance of witnessing the corpse’s mistreatment.\textsuperscript{472} While these points of contact could potentially be interpreted to cast Canidia and her companions as themselves instigators of civil war and the \textit{puer} as a Creon-figure at the helm of a war-torn city, I would not push the allusion quite so far.\textsuperscript{473} I am content to see in this echo of Sophocles’ \textit{Antigone} more of a gesture to the moral and social decline that is attendant upon civil war and the suggestion of its imminent presence in Rome, perpetuated by the lust for violence the \textit{puer} has come to embody.

\textsuperscript{472} Griffith (1999) 162: “It is not enough merely to deny burial: for the proper public example to be made, the corpse must be \textit{seen} to suffer violence and humiliation, to match the honours paid to Eteokles.”

\textsuperscript{473} Those who would read in Canidia’s name a reference to the Antonian supporter Publius Canidius Crassus may find some support for that theory in this allusion, if \textit{Epode 5}’s date of composition is situated rather late – either following Canidius Crassus’ conquest of Hiberia in 36 or Octavian’s execution of him after the battle of Actium in 31 (Watson (2003) 204-205).
Conclusions

Given the prevalence of child-killing demons in the cultural/folkloric environment to which Horace certainly belonged, it is unlikely that Canidia’s strong resemblance to such figures in *Epode 5* was a product of accident or chance. Rather, Horace attributed the characteristics of a child-killing demon to her to craft her as a foil to the young boy of *Epode 5*. This pairing of a vulnerable *puer* and a witch *cum* child-killing demon was designed as an answer to the hope with which Vergil had predicted a *puer*’s birth in *Eclogue 4*: as Vergil’s *puer* was soon to be born, Horace saw a *puer* menaced and eventually murdered by a demonic woman that preyed on children. The relationship of *Epode 5* to *Epode 16* and Vergil’s *Eclogue 4* suggests strongly that *Epode 5* can be read as a commentary on the Roman civil wars. This reading is further supported by Horace’s characterization of the *puer* at the poem’s conclusion as an agent of vengeance; by mention of the house of Atreus, whose intra-familial violence was often described in Greek and Roman literature much the same way as the civil wars were; and by echoes in the *puer*’s final words of Creon’s declaration regarding the corpse of a man who had instigated civil war. Taking these points into consideration, *Epode 5* can be read in combination with *Epode 16* as a cynical response to Vergil’s optimism regarding the chances of lasting peace in Rome. Vergil’s child, the bringer of peace and a Roman golden age, is answered by Horace’s Canidia, who kills an innocent boy and turns him into an agent of vengeance and fury.
Chapter IV

Routing the Empusa: Canidia as Horatian Metapoetry in Epode 17

Translation and Text.

“I am already surrendering my hands to your potent knowledge, and as a suppliant I implore you, by the kingdom of Proserpina, by the immovable powers of Diana and by those books of spells that can call down the stars that are fixed in the sky, I beg you Canidia, please stop those sacral words, turn back that swift spinner, turn it back!

Telephus prevailed upon Nereus’ descendant against whom he had brashly arrayed the Mysian troops and had launched his sharpened javelin; the Trojan mothers anointed the body of man-slaying Hector (which had been left for the savage birds and hounds) only after the king quit the walls and – dear god – prostrated himself before the feet of unyielding Achilles; the oarsmen of many-labored Odysseus shed their bristled limbs and toughened hides through Circe’s consent, and then their minds and voices returned, as did the beauty of their familiar forms.

I have paid the penalty to you enough and more than enough, you who have often been the lover of sailors and salesmen! My youth has fled, the healthy flush has left the sallow flesh that clings to my bones, and your unguents have turned my hair white.

No respite releases me from my labor, night follows day follows night and it is impossible for me to breathe deeply and ease my strained heart.

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474 A precise identification of Canidia’s *citus turbo* is difficult (see p. 191), hence the literal translation of “swift spinner.”

475 Somewhat anachronistic, I have attempted to convey the derogatory nature of *institoribus* (merchants) by translating the term as “salesmen,” thereby attempting to invoke the door-to-door salesmen of mid-twentieth century America, characters often considered low-class and of dubious moral character.
And so, in my misery I am compelled to believe in that which I denied: 
that Samnite charms rattle my chest
and Marsian chants split my skull.
What more do you want? Earth and sea do I burn!
Hercules, smeared in the black gore of Nessus
did not burn this hotly, nor do the Sicilian flames
that flourish in boiling Etna! Will you keep scorching me
like a factory of Colchian poisons until I am but dry ash,
swept away by the harmful winds?
What end awaits me? What price?
Tell me! I shall gladly pay what penalty you demand!
I am ready to atone, whether you require
one hundred cattle, or if you want my deceitful lyre
to sound out, “You chaste woman, you upright woman,
you will walk through the heavens as a golden star.”
Castor and the brother of great Castor,
incensed at the wrath of Helen-made-infamous, were both won over
by prayer and returned to the bard the sight they had stolen from him.
You – for you have the ability – free me from this madness,
you who are not sullied by your father’s filthy poverty,
nor are you some old woman who knows how to scatter
the ninth-day ashes at paupers’ graves;
yours is a kind heart, and pure hands,
and Pactumeius came from your own womb, and it was your
blood the nurse rinsed from the reddened rags
when you vigorously leapt right up, the moment after you had given birth.”

“Why do you pour prayers upon ears that are shut to them?
The rocks that Neptune lashes in the winter on the deep sea
are as deaf to the stripped sailors as I am to you.
Did you think that you could mock and divulge Cotytia’s rites
unavenged? The rites of lusty Cupid?
That, like the high priest of Esquiline venom, 476
you could fill the city with my name and get away with it?
What good will it do you to have paid off those Paelignian hags,
or to have mixed up some fast acting poison?
No, no, you will beg for death long before it comes:
you will lead a miserable existence, unwelcome
as you are continually subjected to new labors.
The father of Pelops the liar longs for respite,
Tantalus ever without his hearty meal;

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476 While a technically inaccurate translation of *veneficium*, “venom” here hints at the duality of the term’s meaning, and is meant to signify either dangerous (and likely ‘magical’) botanical knowledge or harmful speech. Similarly ambiguous terms are deployed throughout the poem (cf. “books of spells” (4), “Samnite charms” (28), “Marsian chants” (29)).
Prometheus, bound and awaiting his bird, longs for respite, too;  
Sisyphus as well, longs to place his rock on the mountain’s peak – but Jupiter’s laws forbid it.  
You will yearn to leap from tall towers,  
to open your chest with a Noric blade,  
and in vain will you tie a noose around your neck  
in anguish at your loathsome grief.  
Then I will ride upon your shoulders, a knight atop my foe  
as the earth itself yields to my brazen arrogance.  
Or will I, I who can move waxen figurines –  
as you yourself know first hand – I who can rip  
the moon from the sky with my very voice,  
I who can rouse the cremated dead  
and brew potions of desire,  
am I to lament that against you, my skills have reached the end?”

iam iam efficaci do manus scientiae,  
supplex et oro regna per Proserpinae,  
per et Dianae non movenda numina,  
per atque libros carminum valentium  
refixa caelo devocare sidera,  
Canidia, parce vocibus tandem sacris  
citumque retro solve, solve turbinem.  
movit nepotem Telephus Nereium,  
in quem superbus ordinat agmina  
Mysorum et in quem tela acuta torserat,  
unxere matres Iliae additum feris  
alitibus atque canibus homicidam Hectorem,  
postquam relictis moenibus rex procidit  
heu pervicacis ad pedes Achillei;  
saetosa duris exuere pellibus  
laboriosi remiges Ulixei  
volente Circa membra; tunc mens et sonus  
relapsus atque notus in voltus honor.  
dedi satis superque poenarum tibi,  
amata nautis multum et institoribus:  
fugit iuventas et verecundus color  
reliquit ossa pelle amicta lurida,  
tuis capillus albus est odoribus;  
nullum a labore me reclinat otium,  
urget diem nox et dies noctem neque est  
levare tenta spiritu praecordia.  
ergo negatum vincor ut credam miser,  
Sabella pectus increpare carmina
caputque Marsa dissilire nenia.
quid amplius vis? o mare et terra, ardeo,
quantum neque atro delibutus Hercules
Nessi cruore nec Sicana fervida
virens in Aetna flamma: tu, donec cinis
injuriosis aridus ventis ferar,
cales venenis officina Colchicis?
quae finis aut quod me manet stipendium?
effare: iussas cum fide poenas luam,
paratus expiare, seu poposceris
centum iuvencos, sive mendaci lyra
voles sonare: ‘tu pudica, tu proba
perambulabis astra sidus aureum.’
infamis Helenae Castoroffensus vice
fraterque magni Castoris victi prece
adempta vati reddidere lumina:
et tu – potes nam – solve me dementia,
o nec patermis obsoleta sordidibus
neque in sepulcris pauperum prudens anus
novendialis dissipare pulvers;
tibi hospitale pectus et purae manus
tuusqueventer Pactumeius et tuo
cruore rubros obstetrix pannos lavit,
utcumque fortis exsilis puerpera.
“quid obseratis auribus fundis preces?
non saxa nudis surdiora navitis
Neptunus alto tundit hibernus salo.
inultus ut tu riseris Cotytia
volgata, sacrum liberi Cupidinis,
et Esquilini pontifex venefici
impune ut urbem nomine implieris meo?
quid proderat ditasse Paelignas anus
velociusve miscuisse toxicum?
sed tardiora fata te votis manent:
ingrata misero vita ducenda est in hoc,
novis ut usque suppetas laboribus.
optat quietem Pelopis infidi pater
egens benignae Tantalus semper dapis,
optat Prometheus obligatus aliti,
optat supremo conlocare Sisyphus
in monte saxum; sed vetant leges Iovis.
voles modo altis desilire turribus,
modo ense pectus Norico recludere,
frustraque vincla gutturi nectes tuo
fastidiosa tristis aegrimonia.  
vectabor umeris tunc ego inimicis eques  
meaeque terra cedet insolentiae.  
an quae movere cereas imagines,  
ut ipse nosti curiosus, et polo  
deripere lunam vocibus possim meis,  
possim crematos excitare mortuos  
desiderique temperare pocula,  
plorem artis in te nil agentis exitus?"
Introduction

Like *Epode 5*, *Epode 17* has been a source of scholarly consternation for some time. A metrical anomaly in comparison to the rest of the collection, the poem’s tongue-in-cheek apology from Horace and the following grim pronouncement of victory by Canidia have remained problematic despite various attempts to make sense of them. In the first place, if the premise of the poem is that Horace has been tortured horribly by Canidia’s spells and now, brought to his breaking point, is begging her to relent and is apologizing for the wrongs he has committed against her, why is Horace’s “apology” riddled with insults that seem far more likely to cause further offense than they do to bring about a reconciliation? Why would Horace so viciously provoke the woman who has demonstrated her ability (and willingness) to cause him pain? In the second place, the poem’s position is itself problematic: situated as it is at the close of the *Epodes* and arranged in such a way as to give Canidia the final word (literally), this poem in essence turns over the authorial voice of the *Epodes* to Canidia. It is then under her influence that

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477 Opinion is divided as to the proper categorization of *Epode 17*’s meter: as the only one of the *Epodes* not composed in “epodic” couplets (Mankin (1995) 14), it is unique among the collection; Cavarzere (1992) 233-234 describes the meter of 17 as an intentional departure from the previous Archilochean meters of the *Epodes*, thus rendering through the rejection of Archilochean meter a broader rejection of Archilochean iambic aesthetics, whereas Barchiesi (1993) 216 finds the poem “metricamente la più giambica di tutte” (“metrically the most iambic of the lot”).
the *Epodes* comes to an end. Closing the collection in this manner is clearly a significant maneuver on Horace’s part, but its precise import is still unclear.478

I begin addressing these issues by rendering a close reading of the insulting double entendres that pepper Horace’s so-called apology to Canidia. From there, based on a reassessment of the symptoms Horace has suffered at Canidia’s hands, I posit as an explanation for Horace’s ailments and his insulting treatment of Canidia the idea that Canidia is being characterized here like an Empusa – a female demon that seduces younger victims, then feeds on their bodies, often reducing them to impoverished, sickly versions of their former selves. However, these creatures may be chased away if they are insulted vigorously enough. In this context, both Horace’s condition and his purposeful aggravation of Canidia make considerably more sense.

The second half of the chapter takes this characterization of Canidia as an Empusa into account while recognizing at the same time that in *Epode* 17 we see Canidia at her most literary. After detailing the numerous ways in which Canidia shares a close relationship with the *Epodes* themselves, I present a reading of Canidia as the female personification of Horace’s *Epodes* – not unlike the elegiac *puella* who often served as an embodiment of the elegist’s poetics. Taken alongside her treatment as an Empusa, Canidia’s interactions with Horace in *Epode* 17 may then be read as a narrative of Horace’s departure from the genre of iambic.

Horace’s (Not So Apologetic) Apology

The final poem of Horace’s book of *Epodes*, Epode 17 is structured as a dialogue between the poet and Canidia, presented without any external narrative framework or intrusive remarks from an uninvolved third-person voice. Horace’s situation, as it would seem, is dire. Assaulted by Canidia’s spells, he has lost his youth, gone prematurely grey, and his skin is hanging sickly from his bones. His chest is tight, he cannot breathe easily, and he complains that Canidia has driven him mad.

As a result of these maladies, Horace begs Canidia to relent, debasing himself before her superior power. By citing a series of mythological exempla in which injured parties showed mercy toward their aggressors, Horace acknowledges his fault in offending her and pleads for her forgiveness. From Horace’s monologue, it is difficult to say precisely how he has offended Canidia, although there are certain clues. His offer to praise Canidia in song (39-40), combined with the allusion to Stesichorus’ palinode of Helen (42-44) suggests that his offense was one of slander, and given the prior treatment of Canidia in *Epodes* 3 and 5, as well as *Satire* 1.8, her anger would hardly be surprising. Yet, as Horace notes, even though Helen’s brothers blinded the poet Stesichorus for slandering their sister in verse, they later forgave him and returned his sight when he wrote a new poem in praise of her virtue.

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479 In an effort to avoid confusion (because Horace appears as a character within his own poem), references to Horace in this chapter will refer to the character of Horace in Epode 17 rather than the poet himself.
Therefore, on the very surface of Horace’s monologue, we have what is read by many commentators as an open plea for forgiveness. He apologizes for insulting Canidia in the past, cites numerous mythological exempla of people who have forgiven those who had offended them, and vows to do whatever it takes to make it up to Canidia. He will sacrifice cattle, he will praise her in song—anything, so long as she relents and frees him from the wretched torment that she has inflicted upon him. In this reading, we have a contrite Horace attempting to reconcile with Canidia.

Yet here we run into trouble. While Horace has ostensibly prostrated himself before Canidia, debased himself and sworn to have seen the errors of his past mistakes as he begs for her mercy, the entirety of this apology and request for clemency is interspersed with serious insults leveled against Canidia. As I highlight several of Horace’s more blatant gibes at Canidia in the pages that follow, let me stress that these insults have all been widely documented in the many commentaries available on Horace’s Epodes. What is remarkable is that despite all of this, we have come no closer to understanding why it is that Horace would frame his apology in such a fashion.

Therefore, after we review the slanderous nature of Horace’s speech, I will suggest that

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480 e.g. Mankin (1995) 272-273 “[Horace] pleads with Canidia to stop tormenting him: he is willing to admit the power of her magic and to lie about how wonderful she is. Canidia’s answer is that she will show no mercy: for the crimes he has committed he will be punished until he begs in vain for death.” Mankin recognizes that Horace’s address to Canidia rings an odd note, but remarks only that that “‘palinode’ section of H.’s speech is clearly meant to be humorous, but the overall tone of the poem may be more serious.” Likewise, Garrison (1991) 198 labels Horace’s speech as a “mock apology” and an “ironic palinode or recantation,” but cannot reconcile this attitude with Horace’s stated request for mercy. Even Cavarzere (1992) 233-239, whose reading of this poem is otherwise thorough, leaves unaddressed the disconnect between Horace’s “vero e proprio inno alla potenza ‘divina’ della strega” (“real hymn to the witch’s ‘divine’ power”) and his later “sarcasm” and “transparent irony.”

the disjunct of an insult-ridden apology will be resolved if we view Canidia in the context of a monstrous Empusa.

After Horace spends roughly twenty lines praising Canidia’s powers and asking for her forgiveness, he tells her that he has suffered enough at her hands already:

\[ \text{dedi satis superque poenarum tibi,} \\
\text{amata nautis multum et institoribus.}^{482} \]

I have paid the penalty to you enough and more than enough,  
You who have often been the lover of sailors and salesmen.

The real problem of this couplet is the second line, when Horace – in a considerable gambit – calls the agent of his agony a “lover of sailors and salesmen.” It is not necessary to possess an intimate knowledge of the social and cultural associations regarding “sailors and salesmen”\(^{483}\) to read this line as a less-than subtle gibe at Canidia’s sexual appetite and promiscuity. However, this line becomes even more degrading in the context of the two Catullan lines it engages:

\[ \text{Cat. 8.5:} \quad \text{amata nobis quantum amabitur nulla} \]

\[ \text{Cat. 37.12:} \quad \text{amata tantum quantum amabitur nulla} \]

In the first line, Catullus tenderly describes his lover Lesbia as “loved by us as no other woman will be.” The echo of the first two words of Catullus’ line (\textit{amata nobis}) in Horace’s \textit{amata nautis} juxtaposes the characters of Canidia and Lesbia, and leaves Canidia the worse for the comparison; Lesbia was portrayed as the object of Catullus’ singular adoration, whereas Canidia is the lover of assorted low-class tradesmen. However, the comparison of Canidia to Lesbia becomes even less favorable in light of

\(^{482}\) Hor. \textit{Epod.} 17.19-20.  
\(^{483}\) See Watson (2003) 552-553 on the promiscuous nature of \textit{nautae} and \textit{institores}.  

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Catullus’ reuse of this line. Readers familiar with Catullus would know that he slightly rewrote the line he first so tenderly addressed to Lesbia and re-deployed it in another poem that described her rampant promiscuity with Rome’s disreputable masses.\textsuperscript{484} The poem alleged that Lesbia had taken up residence in a “filthy tavern” where she was “loved” by “one or two hundred lay-abouts,” not just the beautiful people (37.14: \textit{boni beatique}) but by “wimps and back-alley gigolos,” too (37.16: \textit{pusilli et semitarii moechi}). Therefore, a reader who would recognize Catullus’ \textit{amata nobis} in Horace’s \textit{amata nautis} would likewise recall Catullus’ redeployment of the line, thus putting Canidia on par with Lesbia’s descent into deviant sexual promiscuity, and perhaps prostitution.\textsuperscript{485}

Shortly after this, Horace issues a slightly more subtle insult with a seemingly earnest declaration of his willingness to please Canidia:

\begin{verbatim}
quae finis aut quod me manet stipendium?
effare: iussas cum fide poenas luam,
paratus expiare, seu poposceris
centum iuvencos, sive mendaci lyra
voles sonare: \textit{“tu pudica, tu proba}
perambulabis astra sidus aureum.”
\end{verbatim}

What end awaits me? What price?
Tell me! I shall gladly pay the penalty you demand.
I am ready to atone, whether you require
One hundred cattle, or if you want my deceitful lyre
To sound out, \textit{“You chaste woman, you upright lady,}
You will walk through the heavens, a golden star yourself.”

Two phrases in particular demand our attention here. The first is concerned with Horace’s “deceitful lyre” (39: \textit{mendaci lyra}). The initial reading of the line is that Horace is

\textsuperscript{484} The correlation between Catullus 8.5 and 37.12 is widely recognized and is commented on within most commentaries on Catullus (e.g. Merrill (1893) and Garrison (1995) \textit{ad loc.}).

\textsuperscript{485} Watson (2003) 552-553 notes, “The statement that Canidia consorts with sailors, as also with \textit{institores}… as good as accuses her of prostitution.”
apologizing for having slandered Canidia in song, an act that rendered his lyre “deceitful.” His suggestion for atonement is then to correct his error and sing a hymn of praise in Canidia’s honor – “You chaste woman, you upright lady…” Yet, the language of these lines permits an entirely separate reading. Instead of Horace stating that his lyre’s past actions have rendered it deceitful, these lines may just as plausibly imply that the lyre’s deception rests not in Horace’s earlier verses, but in the lines that immediately follow, as he plays on his lyre “You chaste woman, you upright lady…” We then have two competing readings for these same lines: the first designed to ingratiate Horace to Canidia (‘I was lying before, but I shall correct my error’), the second designed to insult her further (‘The truth offended you before, but now I shall lie and call you what you are not’).

The second noteworthy phrase in this passage is *tu pudica, tu proba*, another allusion to Catullus by which Horace yet again slanders Canidia. The words *pudica* and *proba*, combined with their context within a poet’s address to a woman whom he has publicly slandered, bears more than a slight resemblance to Catullus 42. There, the poet exhorts his own poetic verses to chase after a woman who has made off with a book of his writing:

\[
\begin{align*}
conclamate iterum altiore voce: \\
“moecha putide, redde codicillos, \\
redde, putida moecha, codicillos!” \\
\text{sed nil proficimus, nihil movetur.} \\
\text{mutanda est ratio modusque vobis,}
\end{align*}
\]

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486 Lindo’s (1969) 176-177 proposition that Horace’s *pudica* and *proba* refer not to Catullus but to Stesichorus’ (lost) palinode is intriguing, if not wholly convincing.
Shout at her again, louder this time:
“You filthy slut, give back our writing tablets!
Give back our writing tablets, you filthy slut!”
Yet we accomplish nothing. She remains unmoved.
You have to change your tactics, your methods,
if you are to accomplish anything further:
“You chaste and upright lady, give back our writing tablets.”

By offering to praise Canidia with the same language whereby Catullus had mockingly flattered a woman he had earlier accused of being a “filthy slut,” Horace again renders his offers of apology to Canidia profoundly insincere and insulting.

This is further compounded by Horace’s comparison of his offense of Canidia to Stesichorus’ offense of Helen:

\[
\text{infamis Helenae Castor offensus vice fraterque magni Castoris victi prece adempta vati reddidere lumina.}^{488}
\]

Castor and the brother of great Castor, incensed at the wrath of Helen-made-infamous, were both won over by prayer and returned to the bard the sight they had stolen from him.

Like much of Horace’s address to Canidia, the surface reading is innocuous. On the one hand, Horace is comparing Canidia to a daughter of Zeus and one of the most beautiful woman of the ancient world. However, Horace is also likening Canidia to a woman notorious for her promiscuity. As for Stesichorus, we are told in Plato’s *Phaedrus* that he lost his sight “because of his slanderous treatment of Helen”\(^{489}\) but later regained it after

\(\text{487}\) Cat. 42.18-24.
\(\text{488}\) Hor. *Epod.* 17.42-44.
\(\text{489}\) Pl. *Phaedr.* 243a: διὰ τήν Ἑλένης κακηγορίαν. To quote Bowra (1934) 115, “The details of the *EAENA* and the *ΠΑΛΙΝΩΔΙΑ* are so confused with fairy-tale that it is hard to distinguish history from
writing another version of the story, this time asserting that Helen had never actually gone to Troy. So while the appeal to the example of Stesichorus and Helen may be read as potentially flattering for Canidia, it also contains within it further insinuations of Canidia’s depravity—hardly ideal content for an apology to such a powerful force as Canidia.

In much the same vein, Horace’s closing lines can be read very differently than they are literally framed. Following the insinuation that Horace’s poetry may be perjuring itself in praise of Canidia and that his recanting, like that of Stesichorus, is meant only to appease a wrathful woman, his assertion of Canidia’s virtues can be read instead as an effective condemnation of her:

\[
\begin{align*}
O \text{ nec paternis obsoleta sordibus} \\
\text{neque in sepulcris pauperum prudens anus} \\
\text{novendialis dissipare pulvers;} \\
\text{tibi hospitale pectus et purae manus} \\
\text{tuasque venter Pactumeius et tuo} \\
\text{cruore rubros obstetrix pannos lavit,} \\
\text{utcumque fortis exsilis puerpera.}\end{align*}
\]

You are not sullied by your father’s filthy poverty, nor are you some old woman who knows how to scatter the ninth-day ashes at paupers’ graves; yours is a kind heart, and pure hands, and Pactumeius came from your own womb, and it was your blood the nurse rinsed from the reddened rags when you vigorously leapt right up, the moment after you had given birth.

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ficit. But if we lay aside all discussion of the poet’s temporary blindness, it is clear that in the first poem Stesichorus said something offensive about Helen which he retracted in the second.”


491 Hor. Ἐποδ. 17.46-52.
These lines, purportedly in praise of Canidia, become veiled insults when played upon Horace’s “deceitful lyre,” rendering his compliments in precisely the opposite sense: Canidia, you were born into poverty from a low family, you are old and well-acquainted with death, your heart is cruel, your hands unclean and Pactumeius is not truly your child.492

Whether Canidia has picked up on the malicious subtext of Horace’s apology is uncertain. Regardless, she shows him little mercy. She answers his mythological exempla of famous acts of forgiveness with her own, equally learned citations of famous mythological sinners who are tortured without end. She swears to torment Horace until he longs for death, but promises to deny even that release to him. Canidia concludes the poem – and the entirety of the Epodes – by asking whether Horace supposes that she, whose powers he has repeatedly enumerated, is suddenly going to be powerless against him. The only answer is silence. With that, we return to our original question: Why would Horace, so vexed by Canidia’s wrath, risk further angering her by offering up insincere apologies that cloaked thinly veiled insults?

*Canidia qua Empusa*

The answer is to be found through Horace’s characterization of Canidia and the effect she has had on him. In this section, I will suggest that Horace is using Canidia’s generic status as a female practitioner of magic – in the same vein as *Satire* 1.8 and *Epode* 5 – as

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492 The repetition of the accusation of illegitimate motherhood (*v. Epod. 5.5-6*), as well as the inclusion of the proper name Pactumeius, are tantalizing details for those who would look for Canidia’s “real model” (cf. D’Arms (1967) 141-145), but not particularly relevant here beyond their significance as insults.
a backdrop onto which he can project more case-specific attributes. In this instance, her traits reflect those of the demonic Empusa. To support this claim, I will examine the particularities of Canidia’s influence upon Horace’s poetic persona, arguing counter to the common explanation that Horace’s miserable state is the result of Canidia’s love spells. Following this, I will juxtapose Canidia’s assault on Horace alongside narratives of Empusa attacks to emphasize the similarities between Canidia and an Empusa as well as between Horace and an Empusa’s victim. This section will then close with the characterization of Horace’s insulting apology as a natural outgrowth of Canidia’s relation to an Empusa.

In Horace’s speech, he makes it clear that through Canidia’s efficacious knowledge (17.1: efficaci... scientiae), her books of spells (4: libros carminum), sacral words (6: vocibus... sacris), her “swift spinner” (7: citum... turbinem), unguents (23: odoribus), Samnite charms (28: Sabella... carmina) and Marsian chants (29: Marsa... nenia), she has taken his youth, prematurely grayed his hair and caused his skin to hang sickly from his bones. He complains that his chest is tight, he cannot breathe easily, and that Canidia has caused him to go mad. The symptoms are difficult to typify, but the standard response is to say that Horace has been the object of an erotic love spell enacted by Canidia.\footnote{See Watson (2003) 534n1.} This understanding is primarily built on two observations: the first is of classical descriptions of “love sickness” that resemble the maladies Horace is purported to be suffering from;\footnote{Horace’s unhealthy pallor, loss of weight and madness are typical symptoms of love sickness in the ancient world (cf. Cavarzere (2002) 237-238); their overlap with symptoms of attacks by sexually predacious demons is not coincidental.} the second is that Horace directly relates his symptoms to
Canidia’s magical actions. However, Lindsay Watson has recently detailed at length some problems with this understanding – namely that erotic love spells are designed to inflict *temporary* torture in order to hasten an erotic encounter, whereas Canidia explicitly states that her aim is to *continually* punish Horace.\(^{495}\) This discrepancy casts serious doubt on the prevalent assertion that Canidia has worked an erotic binding spell against Horace. That said, Watson does not discount the possibility of Canidia’s use of a binding spell altogether; he posits that Canidia has simply cast a punitive spell rather than an amatory one.\(^{496}\)

Yet, much as is the case in many literary accounts of magical or ritual practices, strict representation of “actual” procedures is rarely achieved (or even likely intended). Indeed, while Horace lists numerous magical devices employed by Canidia, each detail is itself thoroughly generic, and even in combination these details reveal little as to the ritual Canidia is supposed to have employed. From a narrative standpoint, this is unproblematic as there is no reason for Horace to have been aware of the details of Canidia’s spell against him, but it does call into question the validity of identifying Canidia’s actions against Horace as indicative of a binding spell – be it erotic or otherwise – based on the evidence available in the poem.


\(^{496}\) Watson’s critique of the notion that Canidia tortured Horace by means of a love spell is convincing, and his suggestion that Canidia has in actuality worked a punitive binding spell against Horace is tempting, yet I remain uncomfortable with the idea that Horace would risk further angering the source of his agony unless there were something specific to be gained other than a continuation of his punishment.
There are certainly binding spells that produce effects similar to those reported in the poem, but that does not mean that Horace’s symptoms are necessarily the results of a binding spell. We must consider that the particulars of a given magical scene often have less to do with realia (either of historical events or ritual practices) than with the established literary tradition that has grown up around the treatment of such events. A poet’s description of a rite typically says more about previous literary descriptions of that rite than it says about the rite itself.

However, even the literary tradition is of little help in explicating Canidia’s particular actions here. Her scientia, carmina, voces sacrae and odores are all too vague to place Canidia firmly within any established literary context. The turbo is slightly more promising as it is a less widely used implement, but it, too, is ultimately insufficient. Firstly, its magical referent is illusive; it may be a Latinization of the Greek iynx, as used by Theocritus’ Simaetha, it may refer to the “bull roarer” – an implement designed to create an ominous ‘roaring’ noise by virtue of spinning a disk along tightened string, or it may be something else entirely. In the second place, there are no Latin parallels for the usage of a turbo in a magical situation. The closest parallel is from Tibullus 1.5, wherein a citus turben (here a “swift top”) appears in a specifically erotic context. Neither

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497 Watson (2003) 535-539 cites numerous spells from the PGM (I.328-332, IV.2443-4, XII.307-8, XV.26-27, XXXVI.147-151) and several defixiones (e.g. Audollent 140, 250).
498 See, for example, Graf (1997) 175-185 on the “mosaic” of literature and ritual of Simaetha’s spell in Theocr. Id. 2.
500 If Canidia’s turbo could be positively identified as a rhombus or iynx, it would contribute greatly to the reading of a sexual relationship between the characters of Horace and Canidia (discussed on the following pages), since those implements are frequently used in erotic rites like those found in Theocritus Id. 2 and Pindar P. 4.219 (Johnston (1990) 94-100 and (1995b)). Due to the many potential (non-erotic) uses of the iynx and the uncertainty of the equivalence of Canidia’s citus turbo and the iynx, I remain somewhat hesitant to embrace this identification fully. Still, it remains an attractive possibility.
Canidia’s *Sabella carmina* nor her *Marsia nenia* are of particular use in characterizing the spell, either. “Samnite spells” are unattested except here, and the term *nenia* was used primarily in reference to funeral dirges until Horace imbued it with a sense of the supernatural, only after which point do we find *Marsia nenia* in magical contexts.\(^501\)

Given the lack of ritual specifics or a literary tradition by which we might more broadly contextualize Canidia and Horace’s interactions, I will approach this poem from a different angle. I argue that if we view *Epode* 17 in terms of Canidia and Horace’s basic actions and characteristics, we will see a much different interaction than has been viewed previously – that of an Empusa and her victim.

If we examine the poem’s narrative at its most basic level, we have a man who has suddenly lost his health and youth at the hands of a woman with whom (I will argue) there are reasons to believe he is involved in an erotic relationship. In an effort to put an end to her malicious influence, the man issues a quasi-apology that contains numerous insults directed at the offending woman. This narrative arc corresponds to the basic schema present in narratives about the demonic figure of the Empusa (discussed in the following pages): therefore, it is my contention that recognizing Canidia’s similarities to the Empusa will not only provide an explanation for Horace’s strange maladies within *Epode* 17, but will explain his delivery of such an antagonistic “apology.”

This characterization of Canidia as an Empusa presupposes an erotic relationship between Canidia and the poetic persona of Horace in *Epode* 17; this reading requires little imagination, and the turbulent relationship between Horace and Canidia/Gratidia was in

\(^{501}\) cf. Ov. *Ars* 2.102; *Fast.* 6.142.

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fact treated as a standard part of Horace’s biography in the early twentieth century.

Although such biographical readings are no longer in vogue, there are numerous indications within *Epode* 17 that Canidia and Horace’s persona are sexually involved. This much has been posited by Eugene Bushala, who suggested that the description of Circe’s mercy towards *laboriosus Ulixes* at 17.16 would likely imply – in light of Ulysses’ year-long, amorous delay on Circe’s island – that the “labors” were of a sexual nature. Horace’s later reuse of the term *labor* in lines 24-26 then recapitulates the idea of ceaseless sexual activity, but this time within the context of Canidia and himself:

nullum a labore me reclinat otium,  
urget diem nox et dies noctem neque est  
levare tenta spiritu praecordia.

“No respite releases me from my labor,  
night follows day follows night and it is impossible  
for me to breathe deeply and ease my strained heart.”

Canidia herself echoes this with her own proclamation:

ingrata misero vita ducenda est in hoc,  
novis ut usque suppetas laboribus.  

You will lead a miserable existence, unwelcome as  
you are continually subjected to new labors.

Canidia’s promise of Horace’s forced service, if read as continuous and unwelcome sexual labor, is in keeping with Horace’s repeated characterizations of Canidia as a

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502 See Hahn (1939) 213-230 and Sturtevant (1912) 119-122, both of whom follow the commentator Crucianus’ description of *Epode* 17: *cantat palinodiam* – i.e., *cantando revocat scripsen iratus in amicam Gratidiam* (“He is singing a palinode – that is, through his song he is taking back the things that he wrote in anger against his lover Gratidia”).

503 Buschala (1968) 7-10.

504 Hor. *Epod*. 17.63-64.
hyper-sexualized woman by likening her to Catullus’ promiscuous lover Lesbia, to a nameless “filthy slut” and to the faithless wife par excellence, Helen.

Another implication of an erotic relationship between Horace and Canidia is found within Horace’s plea to Canidia that she reverse her “swift spinner/top” (citum... turbinem). This specific language appears elsewhere in Tibullus 1.5, wherein the poet laments a recent lover’s spat:

asper eram et bene discidium me ferre loquebar:
at mihi nunc longe gloria fortis abest.
namque agor, ut per plana citus sola verbere turben,
quem celer adsueta versat ab arte puer.\footnote{505 Tib. 1.5.1-4.}

I was harsh, and I kept saying that I was dealing with our separation well:
but now that brave, bold front is long gone,
because I am driven like a swift top whipped across the smooth floor
that a quick boy keeps spinning with practiced skill.

Tibullus uses the simile of being driven “like a swift top” to describe a lover’s agitated state following a fight. Note that the child in the simile has “practiced skill” (1.5.4: adsueta... arte) with which he keeps the top (turben) continually spinning, and that Horace begs Canidia, a woman with efficax scientia, to reverse the whirl of her turbo; both ars and scientia can operate in the register of magic. The ambiguity of the “spinner” is admittedly problematic in Epode 17: Horace’s request for its reversal is not especially in keeping with the children’s game of spinning a top (an attempted ‘reversal’ of a top in motion would assuredly result in its fall) yet it works well within the realm of sympathetic magic where the reversal of a magical item correlates to a reversal of a

\footnote{505 The chronology of Tibullus’ elegies is difficult to pinpoint accurately. His first book was almost certainly published after Horace’s Epodes, but since the two were well acquainted with one another (Horace’s C. 1.33 is addressed to Tibullus) the extent to which their poetic material was shared and/or discussed prior to publication may have been considerable.}

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spell’s effects. Nevertheless, the verbal resemblance of Tibullus’ *citus turben* to Horace’s *citus turbo* may suggest a shared erotic mood in both instances. This poetic metaphor is corroborated by a Callimachean epigram which also features a “swift top” whipped about by children, also within an erotic context.\(^{507}\)

Moreover, Canidia concludes her address to Horace with the erotic image of her riding atop his shoulders, “a knight atop [her] foe.”\(^{508}\) The usage of equestrian vocabulary within sexual metaphors has a long history\(^{509}\) that this may well be drawing upon. In these metaphors, it is the submissive partner who must be “tamed,” “broken,” and “ridden,” thus mastered by the active partner’s desire and power. That Canidia claims this role for herself is a clear indication of her perception of the power dynamic between herself and Horace. Also worth mention here is a tale from the 13\(^{th}\) century about the aged philosopher Aristotle being outwitted and subsequently ridden like a horse by Phyllis (a supposed lover of Alexander the Great), to whose pleasures Aristotle had succumbed.\(^{510}\) The eroticism inherent in this “ride” is evident in Hans Baldung Grien’s illustration of the tale, *Phyllis and Aristotle*:

\(^{507}\) On the erotic context of the Tibullan (and likely Callimachean allusion), see Bleisch (1996) 454-461.
\(^{508}\) *Epod.* 17.74: *vectabor umeris tunc ego inimicis eques.*
\(^{509}\) Ormand, in his discussion of Anacreon 360 and 417, notes that such metaphors were common throughout archaic Greek poetry (2009) 35-36.
\(^{510}\) Oates (2003) 211 cites this tale as a variation of the theme of the magical-bridle with which witches transform men into beasts of burden. Horowitz (1976) 189 states that the story is first attested in the early 13\(^{th}\) century by Jacques de Vitry, and Sarton (1930) 8-19 explains the likely (Eastern) origins of this folk-motif and speculates as to date and location of the introduction of Aristotle into it.
Further indications of the sexual nature of Horace and Canidia’s relationship in *Epode* 17 may be found in Canidia’s profession to have been a participant in the mysteries of Cotytia — the so-called “rites of licentious Cupid” (57: *sacrum liberi* Phyllis and Cupidinis). Unfortunately, the reference to Cotytian rites is more confounding than it is illuminating; few ancient descriptions exist, most of which come from twenty three “short and unrevealing” fragments of

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511 *Phyllis and Aristotle*, pen and black ink. 1503: Louvre, Paris. © RMN, Musée du Louvre, author Grollemund Hélène.
512 This is a rare occasion on which Canidia names, in her own words (as it were), the actions Horace has attributed to her: “Cotyta’s rites… the rites of licentious Cupid” (17.56-57: *Cotytia / volgata, sacrum liberi Cupidinis*). Unfortunately, the reference to Cotytian rites is more confounding than it is illuminating; few ancient descriptions exist, most of which come from twenty three “short and unrevealing” fragments of
Cupidinis) – and in her assertion that Horace knows of her skill in crafting “potions of desire” (80: desideri... pocula). These things, taken in combination with Horace’s “labors,” the comparisons of Canidia to Circe and Helen, and the Catullan allusions designed to highlight Canidia’s sexual promiscuity, strongly suggest the presence of an erotic relationship between Horace and Canidia in *Epode* 17. As Bushala rather fortuitously phrases it: “Considering, then, the magical weapons employed, the erotic symptoms afflicting the poet, and the appetite he must forever appease, one may assume that the poet has been made an amatory slave of a voracious demon-mistress.”

His description of Canidia as a “voracious demon-mistress” was surely meant to be more figurative than literal, but I would argue that it is not ultimately far from the mark.

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Eupolis’ comedy *Baptai* (Storey (2003) 94) and scholarship on the topic is sparse at best (see primarily Storey (2003) 94-107 and Lozanova-Stancheva (1995)). It would seem that Cotytia/Cotyto/Cotys was a goddess of Thracian origin (perhaps relevant to the mention of *Thracum pectora* at *Epod*. 5.14), similar in some respects to Bendis, Cybele and Dionysus (Allen (2004) 138). In precisely which manner the deities overlapped remains to be seen, yet speculation abounds about “orgiastic rites” (see Allen (2004) 140, Heinze (1964) 562). Most intriguingly, the so-called “rhombus” or “bull-roarer” was described as a “sacred instrument of Cotyto” (Else (1958) 88n18), an identification that could potentially influence the reading of Canidia’s *citum turbinem* (*Epod*. 17.7) as a similar instrument (Ingallina (1974) 157-173 suggests this identification as a distinct possibility independently of the device’s usage in the rites of Cotytia.). However, in spite of the tenuous links to the worship of Cotytia that may or may not exist in *Epode* 17, Canidia’s re-description of them as “the rites of licentious Cupid” effectively neutralizes any underlying references – whatever the “actual” status of Cotytia’s worship, it is to be understood here as a (likely deviant) sexual experience.

Bushala (1968) 8. While there are no narratives of an Empusa explicitly stealing youth from her victim, it is telling that in the narrative of Menippus and the Empusa (see below, p. 199-203), it is explicitly his status as a young man that the Empusa finds so attractive. We would do well to consider the Empusa as one in a wide spectrum of supernatural female entities who either A) initiate a sexual relationship with a younger man and ultimately retain their own youth while the male partner ages (e.g. Eos / Tithonus) or B) subdue male victims – often through some form of enchantment – in such a way that the men grow old even though the women do not: e.g. the Homeric sirens whose “high, thrilling song… will transfix him, / lolling there in their meadow, round them heaps of corpses / rotting away, rags of skin shriveling in their bones,” *Od*. 12.44-46 (Transl. Fagles). Even Circe may be worthy of consideration here, since – after turning Odysseus’ men back into humans – “they became younger than they were before” (10.395: ὅψιν ἐγένετο νεώτεροι ἢ πάροι φησίν), suggesting that she had prematurely aged them during their transformation. (I am not entirely convinced of Ogden’s (2008) 23 reading of this detail as evidence of Circe’s ability to “prolong life” and “bestow immortality.”)
In order to contextualize Canidia as an Empusa-like character and her relationship to Horace as reminiscent of an attack by an Empusa, I will provide here several examples of Empusae (or Empusa-type characters) preying on mortal men in situations similar to that described in *Epode* 17. Because our most extensive and detailed Empusa narratives from antiquity are found in Philostratus’ *Life of Apollonius*, I will begin there in order to fully flesh out the type of creature whose attributes Horace has imbued Canidia with in *Epode* 17. While descriptions of the Empusa per se are fairly limited outside of Philostratus, I argue that the characteristics of the creature outlined therein are in keeping with a broader demonic trope for which evidence may be found in a scene from Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* and Aristophanes’ *Frogs*. It is this broader demonic trope, which I refer to for the sake of convenience as an Empusa, that I see present in Horace’s seventeenth epode.

Although the demonic Empusa has numerous characteristics and can appear in multiple guises, she is often portrayed as a female demon who preys on young men, seducing them before she attacks.\(^{514}\) In modern Greece, the folklorists Richard and Eva Blum report that there are still “many tales” of an Empusa taking the shape of “a winged female of some attractiveness” to seduce sleeping shepherds.\(^{515}\) In Philostratus’ *Life of Apollonius* she is classified alongside other potentially seductive demons like Lamia or

\(^{514}\) Johnston (1999) 134 cites the roots of Empusa’s name (empodon “underfoot,” or empodeia “impediment”) as a clue to her origins as a demon who hindered ritual transitions, but acknowledges that at least by the first century CE (and, I would argue, likely earlier) “we see already the later image of the empusa as a sexually voracious sort of succubus, as she intends to seduce and then consume her victim.”

\(^{515}\) Blum (1970) 332.
Mormolyke, and the Blums place Empusa in the same generic category as the *strix*. She is also not infrequently believed to be able to shapeshift.

As mentioned, the *Life of Apollonius* features two encounters with an Empusa, both of which feature shape-shifting to some extent but also display the Empusa’s seductive nature, which will yield more specific comparanda with Canidia. The more lengthy and detailed of the two episodes revolves around one Menippus, a young man who has taken up with a woman who, we discover later, is in actuality an Empusa. As this is the most detailed extant Empusa narrative, I cite it here in its entirety. We will return to the second of Philostratus’ Empusa tales later.

...Μένιππος ἦν ὁ Λύκαος ἐτή μὲν γεγονὼς πέντε καὶ εἶκοσι, γνώμης δὲ ἰκανώς ἔχουν καὶ τὸ σώμα εὗ κατεσχευαμένος, ἔφεξε γοῦν ἁλητῇ καλῷ καὶ ἐλευθερίῳ τὸ εἶδος. ἐράσθαι δὲ τὸν Μένιππον οἱ πολλοὶ ἤτοι ὑπὸ γυναικὸν ξένου, τὸ δὲ γύναιον καλὴ τε ἐφαίνετο καὶ ἰκανῶς ἁβρὰ καὶ πλούτειν ἔφαινεν, οὐδὲν δὲ τούτων ἄρα ἀτεχνὸς ἦν, ἀλλὰ ἐδόκει πάντα.

κατὰ γὰρ τὴν ὀδὸν τὴν ἐπὶ Κεγχρεάς βαδίζοντι αὐτῷ μόνῳ φάσμα ἐντυχόν γυνὴ τε ἐγένετο καὶ γείων ἔξυπνην ἐρὰν αὐτοῦ πάλαι φάσκουσα, Φοίνικος δὲ ἐίναι καὶ οἰκεῖν ἐν προαστείῳ τῆς Κορίνθου, τὸ δεῖνα εἰπούσα προάστειον, “ἐς οὗ ἐσπέρῃς” ἐφι “ἀφικομένης οὐι ψῆθη τῇ ὑπάρξει ἐμοῦ ἀδούσης καὶ οἷον, οἴον οὐπο έπιε, καὶ οὐδὲ ἀντεραστής ἐνοχλήσει σε, βιῶσομαι δὲ καλῇ ἐξιν καλῷ.”

toútois ὑπαχθείς ο νεανίας, τῆς μὲν γὰρ ἅλλην φιλοσοφίαν ἔφρωτο, τῶν δὲ ἐρωτικῶν ἡττήτο, ἐφοίτησε περὶ ἐσπέραν αὐτῆ καὶ τὸν λοιπὸν χρόνον ἐθάμμεζεν, ὄσπερ παιδικοῖς, οὗτος ἔμνεις τοῦ φάσματος.

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516 Philostratus *VA* 4.25. Although both Lamia and Mormo were discussed previously (p. 199-203) in terms of their roles as child-killing demons, female demons such as these often possessed dual (non-mutually-exclusive) aspects, one of a child-killer, the other of a dangerous seductress (Hurwitz (1992) 31-63).

ο δὲ Ἀπολλώνιος ἀνδριαντοποιοῦ δίκην ἐς τὸν Μένιππον βλέπων ἐξωγράφει τὸν νεανίαν καὶ εἴθεωρε, καταγνοὺς δὲ αὐτὸν “οὐ μέντοι” εἶπεν “ὁ καλὸς τε καὶ ύπὸ τῶν καλῶν γυναικῶν θηρευόμενος ὁφιν θάλπεις καὶ σὲ ὀφις.”


ἐπιφυλάξεις οὖν τὸν τοῦ συμποσίου καρών ὁ Ἀπολλώνιος καὶ ἐπιστάς τοὺς δαυτυμόσιν ἄρτι ἱρουοι “ποῦ” ἔφη “ἡ ἄβρα, ἃ’ ἤν ἤρετε;” “ἐνταύθα” εἶπεν ὁ Μένιππος καὶ ἀμα ὑπανίστατο ἐρυθρων. “ὁ δὲ ἄργυρος καὶ ὁ χρυσὸς καὶ τὰ λοιπά, οἷς ὁ ἄνδρων πεκτόμηται, ποτέρου ὑμῶν;” “τῆς γυναικὸς,” ἔφη “τάμα γὰρ τοσάτα” δεῖξας τὸν ἐαντοῦ τρίβωνα.

ὁ δὲ Ἀπολλώνιος “τοὺς Ταντάλου κῆτους” ἔφη “εἶδετε, ὡς ὄντες οὐκ εἰσὶ.” “παρ’ Ὄμήρῳ γε,” ἔφασαν “οὐ γὰρ ἐς Αἴδου γε καταβάντες.” “τοῦτ” ἔφη “καὶ τοῦτον τὸν κόσμον ἤγειοθε, οὐ γὰρ ὕλῃ ἐστίν, ἀλλὰ ὕλης δόξα. ὥς δὲ γηγώσκοιτε, ὦ λέγω, ἢ χρηστῇ νυφή μία τῶν ἐμπουσών ἐστιν, ἃς λαμίας τε καὶ μομολυχίας οἱ πολλοὶ ἤγουντα. ἐρώιο δ’ αὐταὶ καὶ ἀφροδισίων μὲν, σαρκών δὲ μᾶλστα ἀνθρωπεῖών ἐρώι καὶ παλεύουσι τοῖς ἀφροδισίοις, οὕς ἂν ἐθέλωσι δαισασθαί.”

ἡ δὲ “εὐφήμει” ἐλεγε “καὶ ἀπαγέ” καὶ μυσάτεσθαι ἑδόξει, ἃ ἱρουε, καὶ ποι καὶ ἀπέσκωπτε τοὺς φιλοσόφους, ὡς ἂε ληροῦντας. ἔπει μέντοι τὰ ἐπιώματα τὰ χυμᾶ καὶ ὁ δοκῶν ἄργυρος ἀνεμαία ἡλέγχη καὶ διέπη τῶν ὕθαλμων ἄπαντα οἰνοχόι τε καὶ οὐσίων καὶ ἢ τοιαύτῃ θεραπείᾳ πάσα ἡσανίθησαν ἐλεγχόμενοι ὑπὸ τοῦ Ἀπολλωνίου, δαχυνότυ ἔσχε τὸ φάσμα καὶ ἐδείτο μὴ βασανίζειν αὐτὸ, μηδὲ ἀναγιάζειν ὀρόλογειν, ὃ τι εἶη, ἐπικειμένου δὲ καὶ μὴ ἀνίεντος ἐμπουσα τε εἶναι ἐφη καὶ παϊνειν.
Menippus was a Lycian, twenty-five years old with a reasonable intellect and a well-conditioned body; indeed, his appearance was that of a handsome and noble athlete. The story goes that he was beloved by a foreign woman who seemed attractive and rather graceful, and she said that she was wealthy, but she was in actuality none of these things even though she appeared to be.

For as Menippus was walking alone along the road toward Kenchrea, a specter (φάσμα) came upon him and turned into a woman who then grasped his hand and claimed that she was very much in love with him. She said she was a Phoenician and that she was living in a suburb of Corinth. When she specified which suburb, she told him: “Tonight when you arrive, the enchantment of my singing (ψιθυρίζω) will begin and there will be wine as you have never tasted, and no rival for my affection to vex you. I will live with you, a beautiful woman with her beautiful man.”

With that, the young man was seduced. Although he was an enthusiastic philosopher, he was weak in matters of love. That evening, he paid her a visit and thereafter spent his time with her as if she were his beloved, not yet aware that she was a specter (φάσματος). But like a sculptor, Apollonius considered Menippus, drew a character sketch of the young man and inspected him. When he had formed an opinion of the boy, he said to him “You are a handsome man, pursued by beautiful women, and you are at this moment hotly intent on a serpent, as is the serpent on you.”

Menippus was astonished. “That kind of woman is not the wife for you,” Apollonius said. “What? Do you think she loves you?”

“By god I do!” Menippus replied. “She certainly acts like she does!”

“So you’re going to marry her, then?”

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518 Philostratus VA 4.25.
“It would be wonderful to marry such a lovely woman.”
“When’s the wedding?”
“Soon,” said Menippus. “Probably tomorrow.”

Apollonius was therefore on the lookout for the precise moment of the wedding party and, standing next to the guests who had just arrived, said “Where is the lovely woman on whose account you’ve all come?”

“There,” said Menippus, flushing as he stood.

“The silver, the gold, and all the rest that this hall is decked out in – whose is it? Yours? Or hers?”

“Hers,” said Menippus. He then pointed to his fraying cloak, “This is all I’ve got.”

Apollonius said, “Do you know about Tantalus’ fruit trees? How they exist, yet do not exist?”

“Yes, from Homer,” Menippus replied. “Since no one actually went down into Hades.”

“Then consider all that you see here in the same way, as it is not matter, merely the appearance of it. Thus will you understand what I am saying, that your happy bride is one of the Empusae (μία τῶν ἐμπούσεων) that people know as Lamiae and Mormolyciae (λαμίας τε καὶ μορμολυκίας). These creatures love sex, but they especially love human flesh, and they ensnare with erotic pleasures those whom they long to devour.”

“Silence!” said the woman. “Get out!” She seemed disgusted at what she heard and jeered at the philosophers, saying that they had always been fools. However, when the golden cups and the silver roofing-beams were proven to have been made of mist and then vanished before their eyes, and the wine-bearers and chefs and the whole ceremony itself disappeared after being tested (ἐλεγχόμενοι) by Apollonius, the specter (φάσμα) seemed to weep and begged him not to subject it to questioning (βασανίζειν), nor to compel it to acknowledge what it was. Apollonius did not relent, but pushed on and it said it was an Empusa
(ἐμποσφά), that it was fattening Menippus up with pleasures in order to eat his body, as feeding on young and handsome bodies was its habit since their blood was pure.

We can see here the basic shape-shifting characteristics noted previously: the Empusa is first introduced as a specter (φάσμα), then takes the form of a woman (γυνή) only to be revealed later as a deadly monster. We will see this same pattern demonstrated by the Empusa in Aristophanes who was at first an unidentifiable monster (θηρίον μέγα), then became a desirable woman (γυνή ωραίοτάτη) and finally a "bitch" (χύων), whereupon she was recognized as an Empusa. In Philostratus, Apollonius is able (through his knowledge of philosophy) to deduce the Empusa’s true nature even while she appears to be a beautiful woman. Still, the creature’s final shift is the most important, and the emphasis of Philostratus’ narrative is correspondingly resolved with the woman’s horrifying and unexpected transition from an object of desire (a Beauty) into a dangerous and seductive monster (a Beast), much the same transition as Canidia undergoes in Epode 17.

Other overlaps between Philostratus’ Empusa and Canidia include their capacity for enchanting song, their hyper-sexuality, and their choice of prey. In both narratives, the youth of the male prey is at risk of attack by a female figure with supernatural powers. In the case of Philostratus’ Empusa, she planned to seduce the young man, then feed on his body. The emphasis on Menippus’ youthful health (remarked upon both at the beginning and end of the narrative) and the Empusa’s desire for it is also present in Epode 17, wherein Horace notes with horror that Canidia has caused his own youth to

519 See p. 209-211.
flee leaving his once healthy flesh sallow and his hair white. The sense of sexual predation is implied in *Epode* 17 rather than explicitly stated, but the parallels between Canidia and the Empusa are remarkable. That both women are in possession of powerful voices also speaks to their similarities; whereas Philostratus’ Empusa lured Menippus to her by means of “the enchantment of [her] singing” (ὅδη τε ὑπάρξει ἐμοῦ ὁδούσης), Horace also attributes to Canidia this power of enchanting music, twice invoking the power of her “spells” with the word *carmina*, an ambiguous term used equally to denote music, poetry, or magical incantations. It is the same ambiguity attendant upon Philostratus’ use of the noun ὁδή and the participle ὁδούσης that imparts to the Empusa the same supernatural power of enchantment demonstrated by Canidia. Recognizing Horace’s portrayal of Canidia in *Epode* 17 as resemblant of an Empusa will then resolve some of the poem’s problematic aspects; Horace’s emphasis on the loss of his youth, his emaciated condition, his generally miserable state – these are all in keeping with the victims of Empusae.

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520 Hor. *Epod.* 17.21: fugit iuventas.
522 Borthwick (1968) 204 bolsters the connection between Empusa and unwanted female attention in his assessment of an epigram of Macedonius (*AP* 5.245) in which the speaker wards off an aggressively forward woman by “swearing with three stones”; he finds in the epigram’s emphasis on swearing three times a correlation with the Empusa scene in Aristophanes’ *Frogs*, wherein Dionysus forces Xanthius to swear three times that the Empusa has gone.
524 On the pervasive conception of song as efficacious language, see Habinek (2005), Parry (1992), Watson (1991), Lewisohn (1950).
525 Horace’s mental anguish (17.29, 45) is not usually cited as a symptom of an Empusa’s attack, but it does fit well within the context of an attack by a magical practitioner like Canidia. As has been noted before, Horace (like most narrators of the supernatural) is rarely meticulous about all of the particulars concerning his portrayal of Canidia as a quasi-demonic figure; most of her characteristics have plausible origins or analogues – others may not be so neatly categorized.
The parallels between Canidia and an Empusa become more evident when compared to an episode from Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*. There, the story of Socrates’ interaction with the witch Meroe, an Empusa-like character, provides yet another instance of the trope we are witnessing in *Epode 17* and Philostratus’ *Life of Apollonius*: that of an older woman with supernatural powers engaging in a sexual relationship with a younger man to the direct detriment of her lover’s health and well-being. In the *Metamorphoses*, the traveler Aristomenes relates the story of how he came upon a friend of his, Socrates, once a prosperous businessman who had been reduced to poverty and a state of extreme emaciation – all apparently due to his relationship with the strange woman Meroe. The scene begins as Aristomenes unexpectedly discovers his friend abroad:


> “modico prius quam Larissam accederem, per transitum spectaculum obiturus in quadam avia et lacunosa convalli a vastissimis latronibus obsessus atque omnibus privatus tandem evado, et utpote ultime adfectus ad quandam cauponam Meroen, anum sed admodum scitulam, devorto, eique causas et peregrinationis diuturnae et domuitionis anxiae et spoliationis [diuturnae et dum] miserae refero; quae me nimis quam humane tractare adorta cenae gratae atque gratuitae ac max urigine percita cubili suo adaplicat. Et statim miser, ut cum illa adquievit, ab unico congressu annosam ac pestilentem con<suetudinem> contraho et ipsas etiam lacinias quas boni latrones contegendo mihi conesserant in eam
contuli, operulas etiam quas adhuc vegetus saccarium faciens merebam, quoad me ad istam faciem quam paulo ante vidisti bona uxor et mala fortuna perduxit.”

“Pol quidem tu dignus” inquam “es extrema sustinere, si quid est tamen novissimo extremius, qui voluptatem Veneriam et scortum scortum Lari et liberis praetulisti.” At ille digitum a pollice proximum ori suo admouens et in stuporem attonitus “Tace, tace” inquit et circumspiciens tutamenta sermonis. “Parce” inquit “in feminam diuinam, ne quam tibi lingua intemperante noxam contrahas.”

“ain tandem?” inquam “Potens illa et regina caupona quid mulieris est?”

“saga” inquit “et divina, potens caelum deponere, terram suspendere, fontes durare, montes diluere, manes sublimare, deos infimare, sidera extinguere, Tartarum ipsum inluminare.”

And look! I saw my old friend Socrates sitting on the ground, barely covered by clothes that were apt to fall apart at any minute, so pale that he practically looked like a stranger to me. He was thin enough to be repulsive, like those beggars who ask for money at the crossroads. This was the sort of man I approached, and even though he was a good friend – almost family – I didn’t know what to think. “Er...” I said. “Socrates? What’s the matter? Why do you look like this? What misfortune have you encountered?”

... [Socrates, restored somewhat by a hot bath and a meal, tells Aristomenes his tale.]

“A bit before I arrived in Larissa to attend a show, I was beset in some boggy, trackless valley by a number of highwaymen and stripped of all I owned. I finally escaped and, given my truly deplorable state, turned to the innkeeper Meroe – an old woman (anum) but still rather attractive – and explained to her the reasons behind my constant wandering, my homesickness, and that damnable robbery. She treated me far more kindly than was strictly necessary, gave me a wonderful meal on the house, and then (apparently feeling rather horny) she soon took me to bed!

526 Apul. Met. 1.6-8.
“I was ruined immediately. The moment I slept with her, from that single instance of contact I caught some chronic, lingering disease. I even gave her the rags that those noble highwaymen had left me to cover myself with, those and whatever earnings I could make busily carrying people’s bags here and there. A ‘good’ wife and terrible luck have made me into the man you saw a little while ago.”

“By God, you deserve to have suffered all of that,” I said, “and whatever’s worse (if anything can be) for putting the pleasures of sex and an aged whore before your duty to your home and your children.” But that man put his index finger to his lips and in utter shock told me to keep quiet. After he looked around to make sure we weren’t overheard, he said, “Careful what you say about that god-like woman! You don’t want your wagging tongue to bring you any harm, do you?”

“What are you talking about?” I asked. “That ‘powerful’ woman, this innkeeper queen – what kind of a woman is she?”

“She knows things,” he replied. “She’s like a goddess, capable of pulling down the heavens, lifting up the earth, turning rivers to stone and mountains to water, raising the dead, laying low the gods, snuffing out the stars and brightening Tartarus itself.”

In the story of Socrates and Meroë there is a clear causal relationship between Socrates’ failing health and his commencement of a sexual relationship with the older woman. Aristomenes agrees, cajoling Socrates that he deserved what he got for his pursuit of “the pleasures of sex.” As with Philostratus’ Empusa, Meroë has lured a younger man to her by way of erotic enticements and their union has heralded the man’s imminent demise. Like the Empusa who was able to conjure an entire wedding party from nothing, so too is Meroë capable of incredible feats, and just like the Empusa who planned to feast on
Menippus’ body and blood, Meroe ultimately slits Socrates’ throat, pulls out his heart and collects his blood.\textsuperscript{527} The shift from attractive lover to repulsive monster that we witnessed in Menippus’ bride is also seen in Apuleius’ story through Socrates’ initial characterization of Meroe as kindly and “somewhat attractive” (\textit{admodum scitulam}), followed by Aristomenes recharacterization of her as “an aged whore” (\textit{scortum scorteum}), as is her eventual transition from an amorous innkeeper into a murderous fiend.

The connection between Meroe and Philostratus’ Empusa is also seen in a terminological overlap between these characters: in Philostratus’ tale, Apollonius explains to Menippus that his wife is “one of the Empusae (\textit{μία τῶν ἔμπουσών}) that people know as Lamiae and Mormolyceae (Mormo) (\textit{λαμίας τε καὶ μορμολυκίας}).” Apollonius has given Menippus three different names by which the creature before him can be identified: Empusa, Lamia and Mormo.\textsuperscript{528} In Apuleius’ \textit{Metamorphoses}, Meroe (along with another woman) is described by Aristomenes also as a Lamia:

\begin{quote}
\textit{at ille, odore alioquin spurcissimi humoris percussus quo me Lamiae illae infecerant, vehementer aspernatur}.\textsuperscript{529}
\end{quote}

But he [Socrates] quite hastily pushed me away, taken aback as he was by the stench of that horribly foul liquid those Lamiae had drenched me with.

Although Lamia and Mormo were discussed in the last chapter in terms of their roles as child-killing demons, it is not uncommon that these (and other) demons have a second

\textsuperscript{527} Apul. \textit{Met.} 1.13.
\textsuperscript{528} The tendency of demonic characters to blur into one another and to escape neat categorization is a common one (see p. 51, 64-65). That these three characters in particular have been pluralized likewise indicates that they have shifted from one concrete figure into a broader, more generalized demonic type.
\textsuperscript{529} Apul. \textit{Met.} 1.17.
aspect in which they serve as succubi: see Johnston (1995) 378-379 on the dangerous eroticism of Lamia, Mormo and the Empusa, also Hurwitz (1992) 31-63 on the “dual aspects of Lilith.”

531 This is a common trope that spans numerous cultures: e.g the Japanese fox-wife (injû / kitsune) (Bathgate (2004) 41-47), the Chinese ghost-ladies (Shafer (1965) 100-116) or ‘Madame White Snake’ (Lai (1992) 51-66), and the multitude of European tales of succubi seducing holy men who “ultimately wasted away as a result of this supernatural contact” (Elliot (1999) 52-56).
Xanthias: I think I hear something!
Dionysus: Where? Where?!
Xanthias: Behind us!
Dionysus: Then get behind me!
Xanthias: But it's up front now!
Dionysus: Then get to the front!
Xanthias: Oh god, is that one massive beast I'm looking at.
Dionysus: What does it look like?
Xanthias: It's terrible – it keeps changing from one thing to another…
One second it's an ox, the next it's a mule. And now it's a woman in the prime of her youth!
Dionysus: Where is she? I'm going to find her!
Xanthias: She’s not a woman anymore. Now she’s a bitch.
Dionysus: So it's Empusa.

Whereas Dionysus and Xanthias were unsure of the creature’s identity as it was “changing from one thing to another,” the demon was finally recognized as Empusa when it changed form from that of a “woman in the prime of her youth” (γυνῆ ὡφαιτήτης τις) to a “bitch” (κύων). This transformation from a desirable woman to a beastly one (we may take both the literal and figurative implications of κύων under consideration) can then be understood as one of the Empusa’s key traits. As the scene continues, more identifying markers are given – she has two legs made of different materials, her face glows, etc. – and while these are common markers of demonic creatures throughout many

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533 As with many demons, the creature may be conceptualized as a definite entity (e.g. Lamia or Empusa) or as one of larger group of indefinite entities (e.g. a Lamia, or an Empusa) depending on regional – or even personal – preference. In this scene from Aristophanes, the creature is characterized as the definite being (“Empusa”), as opposed to the creature of Philostratus VA 4.25 that was described as “one of the Empusae” (μία τῶν ἐμποσσόν). In recognition of the Empusa’s often indefinite appearances within the literature at hand, I treat her as one of a larger group of similar creatures throughout this chapter.
cultures, I want to emphasize that the moment of recognition for Dionysus and Xanthias specifically comes when Empusa makes the transition from a beautiful woman to a “bitch.” This is in keeping with the shift experienced by Menippus’ bride and Meroe.

A similar transformation is effectively enacted twice in Epode 17. In the first instance, if the audience takes Horace at his word and reads his monologue as an honest proclamation that Canidia is a “chaste” and “upright woman” with a “kind heart” and “pure hands,” Canidia’s status as a Beauty is radically subverted by her own reply when she responds as a vindictive, sexual Beast intent on ruthlessly drawing out her torture of the suppliant Horace. In the second instance, the poetic references which Horace’s monologue draws upon likewise recreate the shift from Beauty to Beast for an informed reader: on the surface, Horace’s description of Canidia casts her as a desirable woman, while the allusions nestled within that description typify her as anything but.

We should observe here that Helen, to whom Horace has likened Canidia, underwent this same Beauty to Beast transformation; a woman who looked “like the immortal goddesses,” so beautiful that Aphrodite’s offer of her famously swayed Paris’ decision in the mythical Judgment of Paris, Helen would later be characterized as “dog-eyed” and a “conniving, malevolent bitch” – even Aeneas described her as a

534 Cf. the Arabic ghūl (Tritton (1934) 719) and the numerous medieval depictions of demons in otherwise human form yet identifiable by their animalian feet (e.g. the woodcuts of Hans Schäufelein, wherein Satan appears wholly human with the exception of his rooster-like feet).
535 On Helen’s shifts from timorous beauty to treacherous destroyer, specifically within the context of the Aeneid, see Suzuki (1989) 94-102.
536 Hom. II. 3.158: αἰὼνος ἀθανάτιοι θεῖς εἰς ὦπα ἔοιξεν.
537 Hom. II. 3.180: ὀλήρ ἀντὶ ἐμὸς ἐσσε χυμώπλας.
538 Hom. II. 6.344: δὲρ ἐμεῖο χυνὸς κακομιχάλου ὀχυρόεσθης.
“destructive Fury of Troy and his entire homeland.”539 While Helen is certainly not an Empusa *per se*, she does share some of the same (metaphorically) transformative properties as the Empusa as well as a significant sexual appetite.540 That Horace explicitly draws comparisons between Helen and Canidia is then another potential link connecting Canidia and the Empusa.

We then have before us an emerging pattern of the Empusa’s behavior into which the figure of Canidia in *Epode* 17 would seem to fit: a woman, possessed of supernatural abilities, initially appears to a younger man as an attractive object of sexual desire; over time, perhaps upon consummation of an erotic relationship, her true nature (that of a repulsive, perhaps elderly woman) emerges and her partner realizes that his health – even his very life – has been compromised by virtue of the relationship that enticed him in the first place. In *Epode* 17, the erotic intimations within Horace and Canidia’s monologues are highly suggestive of a sexual relationship between the two. As the poem opens, we find Horace lamenting the loss of his youth and health at the hands of Canidia – a state similar to Apuleius’ Socrates. Horace begs Canidia to relent, addressing her in terms that (on the surface) depict her in a positive light – he even explicitly compares her to Helen, the acknowledged pinnacle of female erotic beauty in the ancient world. In a move that parallels the Empusa’s typical shift from Beauty to Beast, this characterization of Canidia

539 Vir. *Aen.* 2.573: *Troiae et patriae communis Erinys*. Hurwitz (1992) 59-60 goes so far as to place Helen on par with the Babylonian Ishtar as an incarnation of the “divine whore” whose hyperactive sexual desires lead only to the destruction and death of her partners.

540 See Helen’s many husbands: Theseus (Hyginus *Fab.* 79), Menelaus, Paris, Deiphobus (Ver. *Aen.* 6.509-530). As for the Empusa’s sexual appetite, Brown (1991) 43 notes that Demosthenes slandered Aeschines’ mother by calling her an Empusa, and thus implied that she had been prostituting herself: *De Corona* 130: τὴν δὲ μητέρα σεμνὸς πάνιν Γλαυκοθέαν, ἦν Ἐμποτενάν ἀπαντῆς ἵππαι καλουμένην, ἐκ τοῦ πάντα ποιεῖν καὶ πάσχειν δηλονότι ταύτῃ τῆς ἐποιείμης τυχοῦσαν.
as a sexually desirable woman is then undermined, either through an understanding of Horace’s veiled insults or through Canidia’s self-revelation as a fearsome and unrelentingly figure. The poem concludes with Canidia’s victory: she has bound Horace to her, has asserted absolute control over his life and will prevent any of his attempts to escape; she has accomplished the Empusa’s aim – to sexually ensnare a younger man, then drain his youth and vitality.

Having identified Canidia as bearing a not inconsiderable resemblance to an Empusa, I would turn once again to Philostratus, this time to a passage that treats Apollonius’ defeat of another Empusa. It is here that the rationale behind Horace’s derogatory remarks toward Canidia will become clear.

...as they were traveling in the bright moonlight, the specter of an Empusa (φάσμα... ἐμπούσης) came upon them, seeming to be one thing, then another, then disappearing altogether – but Apollonius knew what it was and insulted the Empusa, then instructed those with him to do the same thing because this was the way to repel its attack. And then the specter fled, shrieking like ghosts do (τὰ εἰδώλα).

In this instance, Apollonius demonstrates that an Empusa can be repelled through the use of insults or slander (λοιδορία), and immediately after the verbal abuse of the creature, it

541 Philostratus VA 2.4.
flees. We can see similar behavior in Apollonius’ actions at the wedding party of the Empusa and the young Menippus. There, after the all the accoutrements had been closely inspected (ἐλέγχομεν) by Apollonius, the Empusa’s spell was undone and they vanished. Given Apollonius’ status as a philosopher, the act of investigation (ἐλέγχειν) was surely meant to have been situated in a Platonic register of philosophical inquiry, but the verb’s alternate meaning of “causing disgrace or shame” fits equally well within the context of a story about the defeat of a creature that is susceptible to abuse and insults. Therefore, while the Menippus episode may be read as the triumph of philosophy over a monster who confounds reality, there is contained within it the notion that bringing shame or disgrace to the Empusa (or its creations) will render it powerless, thus freeing its hold over its victim.

And with that, we may return to Horace’s insulting speech against Canidia. If Canidia is being characterized in *Epode* 17 like an Empusa, a demonic figure that may be successfully chased away by vigorous insults, then Horace’s blatant abuse of her becomes a deliberate attempt to rid himself of her monstrous influence, as opposed to an ill-conceived, tongue-in-cheek apology that was designed to be simultaneously ingratiating and offensive. Yet, for all of Horace’s efforts at extricating himself from Canidia’s grasp, one cannot fail to notice that Canidia neither yields nor flees, and that she concludes her scathing monologue by swearing to retain mastery over the subjugated poet and to torture him until the end of his days.
Canidia and the Epodes

The abrupt ending to *Epode* 17 and to Horace’s collection as a whole has been commented on upon numerous occasions.\(^{542}\) It is a jarring ending, and unusual that Canidia should be given the honor of speaking the book’s closing lines, especially given that her last word is the poetically charged “end” (*exitus*). Alessandro Barchiesi remarks of the conclusion:

“La fine della sua arte coincide con la parola fine del poeta – quanto dire che questa Musa nera del giambo sta alla poesia degli Epodi come l’amante elegiaca sta alla poesia di Properzio (*eventum formae disce timere tuae* sono le ultime parole del III libro). Capire meglio la figura retorica di negazione che lega Canidia al modello di Lesbia, Lycoride e Cinzia significa capire meglio la poetica degli Epodi.”\(^{543}\)

“The end of [Canidia’s] art coincides with the final word of the poet – so much so that this black muse of iambic poetry stands before the *Epodes* like the elegiac lover before the poetry of Propertius (the final words of his third book of elegies are: *eventum formae disce timere tuae* [‘learn to fear the end of your beauty’]). A better understanding of the rhetorical figure of opposition that reads Canidia alongside the models of Lesbia, Lycoris and Cynthia will provide a better understanding of the poetics of the *Epodes.*”

It is in precisely this manner that Canidia – and Horace’s interactions with her – can be best understood in *Epode* 17. Many scholars, Barchiesi included, have come close to suggesting that Canidia is effectively a personification of Horace’s *Epodes,*\(^{544}\) but they have turned back just short of that proclamation, presumably because Canidia cannot be

\(^{542}\) See above, p. 180n478.

\(^{543}\) Barchiesi (1993) 217.

consistently read in such a fashion throughout her other appearances in the *Epodes* and *Satires*. But since we have witnessed Canidia’s tendency to shift attributes and functions from poem to poem, it is wholly reasonable to treat Canidia’s appearance within *Epode* 17 as operating in yet another context-specific manner – in this case representing Horace’s epodic collection.

In this final section of this chapter, I shall argue for reading the Empusan Canidia within *Epode* 17 as fulfilling much the same meta-poetic function as does the *puella* within the genre of Roman elegy. My reading of Canidia as a meta-poetic representative of Horace’s *Epodes* is based on 1) the close relationship established by other poets between particular female characters and their poetic collections, 2) the many references in *Epode* 17 that link Canidia’s character to Horace’s *Epodes*, and 3) Horace’s penchant for concluding poetic collections with metapoetic pieces that comment on the status of the work as a whole. Based upon these observations, I will suggest that *Epode* 17 is an announcement of Horace’s retirement from the field of iambic poetry and that Horace’s treatment of Canidia as an Empusa is an appropriate parallel for his attempt to divest himself from the iambic genre.

It should be no great shock to find Horace utilizing one of the *Epodes*’ female characters as the embodiment of the collection as a whole. From at least as early as Hesiod, the author’s poetic voice had been personified in the form of the feminine muses,\(^{545}\) female divinities who – to a greater or lesser extent – were equated with poetic

\(^{545}\) Hes. *Th.* 80-93.
skill, inspiration, and even poetry itself. In Penelope Murray’s analysis of various treatments and conceptions of the muses, she observes that “the Muse can be individualized and tailor-made to suit the needs of all types of poet.” Thus we later find by the Roman imperial period the nine muses distilled into individual patronesses of particular poetic styles (Calliope overseeing epic poetry, Erato erotic, Thalia comedy, etc.), and in this vein certain literary genres are themselves eventually personified as female characters (e.g. Tragedy and Elegy in Ovid’s *Amores* 3.1). It is this conceptual background of personifying an aspect of one’s poetic art (inspiration, genre, personal style) as a female character – often one with whom the poet was erotically involved – that prefigured the slightly more abstracted personification of elegiac poetry in the form of the elegiac mistress.

Maria Wyke has written extensively about the role of the elegiac *puella* as a means through which the Roman elegists could write about poetry itself, such that some elegiac mistresses – particularly Cynthia – were so intimately associated with the practice of writing “as to undermine [their] identity independently of that practice.” That is to say, in certain instances it would be a mistake to read these women as anything but vehicles through which the elegiac poets envisioned and wrote about their own

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546 Sommerstein (2005) 169 reads “a comparison between the Muse and a prostitute or bawd” in Pindar’s *Isthmian* 2.6-8: ἀ Μοίσα γὰρ ὀφνέφωδής πιθ λόγας / ἀ οὐδ' ἐρωμένη γλυκεία μεληθήρ' ἑπτά Τερψιχόρας / ἀγνωθείσα πρόσωπα μαλακοφόνους άνδρα. (“For the Muse was not yet then a working woman out for profit / nor were sweet, soft-toned songs / sold by honey-voiced Terpsichore” [Trans. Sommerstein].)
547 Murray (2005) 159.
poetics. Not all elegiac *puellae* were so decisively metapoetic in function, but Wyke makes a convincing case for understanding these “written women” as she calls them, as “textual bodies” with layers of significance regarding the poets’ own work.

In *Epode* 17, Canidia functions in a similar fashion. The poem associates Canidia with Horace’s iambic poetics in three ways: 1) the format explicitly compares Canidia’s *carmina* with Horace’s *Epodes*, 2) Canidia, like Horace, repeatedly refers to themes of and reuses vocabulary from the *Epodes* and 3) the poem’s replacement of Maecenas in the *Epodes*’ opening with Canidia at its close implies Canidia’s close relationship to the entirety of the poetic collection. These three factors, in combination with Horace’s characterization of Canidia as an Empusa, make the reading of Canidia as an embodiment of the *Epodes* an attractive possibility.

To begin with, the structure of the poem as a pair of monologues places the two narrators in direct comparison with one another and invites the observation of parallels and distinctions between the two. Ellen Oliensis remarks that

> “the kinship of their discourses is on display in *Epode* 17, which pits Horace’s exempla (‘Achilles forgave Telephus’) against Canidia’s (‘Tantalus suffers eternally for his sins’). As the dialogue-form of Epode 17 suggests, moreover, Horace’s poems and Canidia’s spells are alike enmeshed in the seemingly inescapable symmetries of revenge.”

It is no coincidence that when Horace begs Canidia “by those books of spells” (4: *per atque libros carminum*), he uses the ambiguous term *carminum* of Canidia’s spells in order to place her abilities as equally in the ritualistic sphere as they are in the poetic. That Horace specifically mentions Canidia’s *books* of spells is further indication that he

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553 cf. Ovid’s proclamation about the power of his own *carmina* at *Am.* 2.1.21-28.
is intentionally activating both senses of the term. Since the Greek ἔποδος (“epode”) and the Latin carmen each possess the double meaning of “spell” and “poem,” Canidia’s books of carmina are here comparable to Horace’s book of Epodes.  

Both characters are then in possession of powerful and efficacious forms of speech. Canidia’s carmina clearly have the capacity for supernatural impact, we must recall that poetry, too, was commonly acknowledged to have its own potency; Archilochus, one of Horace’s literary models for the Epodes, was often reputed to have driven his enemies to suicide through his poetry. And even though Horace attributes his physical condition to Canidia’s spells, Barchiesi finds that “the physiology of the poet – yellowish, obsessive, melancholic – looks as if he has been drenched in iambic poetics and not only poisoned by Canidia’s philters,” which is to say that the effects Canidia has on Horace are similar to the effects that iambic poetry has upon its victims. To quote Oliensis once again, “Horace is at pains to distinguish his speech acts from [Canidia’s],” so while Horace’s poetry has begun to resemble Canidia’s spells, so too have her spells begun to resemble Horace’s poetry.

Echoing this overlap in spells/poetics on the part of Canidia and Horace, each of their monologues is rife with citations from previous epodes, in effect rendering the final poem an exercise in demonstrating mastery over the collection. The frequency of their respective quotations of and references to the Epodes is illustrated in the following table:

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555 See, among others: AP 7.69; 7.71; 7.351-2.
556 Barchiesi (2001) 152.
## Frequency of Quotations of and References to the Epodes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Epode 17 Text</th>
<th>Reference(s) to Prior Epodes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Horace | 3: per et *Dianae* non movenda *numina* | 5.51: Nox et *Diana*…
| | | 5.54: …*iram atque numen* vertite |
| | 5: *refixa caelo* devocare *sidera* | 5.45-46: *quae sidera* excantata *voce* |
| | | *Thessala* / *lunamque caelo* *deripit* |
| | 8-14: *Achilles at Troy* | 13.12-18: *Achilles en route* to Troy |
| | 16: *laboriosi remiges* *Ulixei* | 16.60: *laboriosa* nec *cohors* *Ulixei* |
| | 17: *volente Circe* membra | 1.30: *Circaea* tangat *moenia* |
| | 19: dedi *satis superque* | 1.31: *satis superque* me *benignitas tua* |
| | 24: *nullum a labore* me *reclimat otium* | 1.7-10: utrumque fuisse *persequemur otium* / non dulce, *ni tecum simul, / an hunc laborem*, mente *laturi deceit* |
| | 29: caputque *Marsa* dissilire nenia | 16.3: … *finitim valuerunt perdere Marsi* |
| | 31: *atque delibutus Hercules* / *Nessi cruore* | 3.17-18: *nec munus* *umeris efficacis Herculis* / *insitis aetosuis* |
| | 35: *Medea’s poisons* | 3.10-13; 5.24; 5.61-66: *Medea’s poisons* |
| | 39-40: *sive mendaci lyra* / *voles sonare* | 9.5: *sonante* *mixtum tibiis carmen lyra* |
| | 48: *novendialis dissipare pulveres* | 16.14: *nefas videre – dissipabit insolens* |
| | 50-52: (Potential) False Motherhood of *Canidia* | 5.5-6: (Potential) False Motherhood of *Canidia* |
| Canidia | 53-55: Rejection of Prayers for Aid | 10.18: *Maevius’ Prayers for Aid Rejected* |
| | 56: *inultus ut tu riseris* Cotytia | 6.16: *inultus ut flebo puere*… |
| | | 15.24: *ast ego vicissim risero* |
| | 69: *sed vetant leges lovis* | 5.8: *per inprobaturum haec Iovem* |
| | 73: *fastidiosa tristis aegrimonia* | 13.8: *deformis aegrimoniae dulcibus adloquiis* |
| | 74: *tunc ego inimicis eques* | 4.15-16: *sedilibusque magnus in primis eques* / *Othonem contempto sedet* |
| | | 16.2: *eques sonante verberabit ungula* |
| | 80: *desiderique temperare pocula* | 5.38: *amoris esset poculum* |

Table 4.

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558 Hahn (1939) 220n35.
559 Bushala (1968) 7.
561 Hahn (1939) 220n35.
562 Oliensis (1998) 94-95 expounds on Canidia “avenging” the poet’s treatment of Maevius with her own rejection of the poet’s prayers. She also notes a correspondence between “Maevius’ ship ‘launched and on its way’ (10.1: *soluta… exit*)… *Horace’s prayer for release (17.7: *solve, solve*; 45: *solve*)… [and] Canidia’s refusal of an exit (17.81: *exitus*).”
564 Hahn (1939) 220n35.

220
As the citation of these examples is meant only to demonstrate Horace and Canidia’s repetition of language or themes from the previous epodes, I have underlined the relevant vocabulary in each instance. However, a few citations can benefit from further explanation: in the first place, Horace’s mention of Circe at 17.17 seems only tenuously connected to the reference to “Circean walls” at 1.30 (the reference is to the walls of Tusculum, supposedly founded by Circe’s son, Telegonus). However, the connection becomes significantly clearer once the surrounding lines are taken into account:

1.30-31  
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Circaea tangat moenia} \\
\text{Satis superque me benignitas tua…}
\end{align*}
\]

17.17-19  
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{volente Circa membra; tunc mens et sonus} \\
\text{relapsus atque notus in voltus honor.} \\
\text{Dedi satis superque poenarum tibi…}
\end{align*}
\]

Here we may observe that the phrase \textit{satis superque} closely follows the mention of Circean walls in \textit{Epode} 1, and in \textit{Epode} 17 the presence of \textit{satis superque} again closely follows a mention of Circe. Next, we should note that the repetition of \textit{dissipare} (17.48) and \textit{aegrimonia} (17.73) should be considered as significant because of their extreme infrequency of usage by Horace: outside of the citations indicated in the table above, \textit{aegrimonia} is wholly absent from the Horatian corpus, and \textit{dissipare} occurs elsewhere only once, in an ode (C. 2.11.17) whose composition post-dates that of the \textit{Epodes}. Likewise, Canidia’s application of \textit{inultus ut} and \textit{riseris} to the character of Horace is significant not merely because of her repetition of earlier epodic language, but because Horace’s poetic persona had used precisely those descriptions of \textit{himself} in prior poems, making Canidia’s reuse of Horace’s arrogant boasts all the more pointed. Much the same effect is achieved when Canidia remarks that although Tantalus, Prometheus and
Sisyphus all long for respite from their punishment, “Jupiter’s laws forbid it,” thus echoing Horace’s narrative of the puer in Epode 5 who begged for mercy “by Jupiter, who would not approve” of Canidia’s actions. Toward the poem’s end, Canidia claims that she will ride Horace’s shoulders like a knight (eques), a term that activates not only the hostile eques astride the ruins of Rome in Epode 16, but also the anonymous eques and military tribune of Epode 4 – a character suspiciously reminiscent of Horace himself. The poem concludes with two references (not included in the previous chart) commonly observed in commentaries565 to point not to the Epodes themselves, but to Satire 1.8., Canidia’s skill with waxen figurines (76: cereas imagines) and her ability to rouse the dead (79: possim crematos excitare mortuos) are references to Canidia’s evocations of ghosts at Satire 1.8.29 (manis elicerent, animas responsa daturas) and her manipulation of figurines at 1.8.30 (lnea et effigies erat, altera cerea). I would argue that Canidia’s reference to these lines, while not from the Epodes, is still a demonstration of her command of Horace’s iambic poetics, since Satire. 1.8 is a poem in which Canidia’s presence within Maecenas’ gardens signals a potential intrusion of the Epodes’ iambic genre into the Satires.566

The plethora of citations of Horace’s Epodes within Epode 17 is perhaps not unexpected of Horace’s poetic persona, but surprisingly, Canidia appears to be as familiar with the collection as its author. Horace makes fourteen references to the Epodes in his fifty-two line speech (approximately 1 reference every 3.7 lines), whereas in Canidia’s twenty-nine line response she makes eight references to the Epodes (approximately 1

565 e.g. Mankin (1995), Smith (1903) and Chase (1895) ad loc.
566 See p. 89-92.
reference every 3.6 lines). The difference between the two – a rate of 1:3.6 vs. 1:3.7 – is statistically negligible. The result is that within *Epode* 17, Canidia appears to be as closely acquainted with the *Epodes* as Horace is. That Canidia – as a character within the *Epodes* – should be as well-versed in her literary surroundings as the very author of that literature is a strong indication of Canidia’s meta-literary nature.

The third and final indication of Canidia’s meta-poetic relationship to Horace’s *Epodes* may be found in her juxtaposition with Horace’s literary patron, Maecenas. It is not my intention to dwell overly long on the potential intricacies of Canidia’s relationship to Maecenas and the implications thereof in regards to Horace and his collection,\(^{567}\) rather I wish only to demonstrate the association between Canidia’s role in *Epode* 17 to that of Maecenas’ in *Epode* 1, and by so doing to establish that Canidia is granted a position similar to that of the man responsible for enabling Horace to create this poetic collection.\(^{568}\)

There are three primary correspondences between Canidia in *Epode* 17 and Maecenas in *Epode* 1. The most obvious is that the first word of *Epode* 1 (and thus the first word of the *Epodes*) is spoken by Horace to Maecenas as he begins a journey: *ibis* “you will go;” this is countered in *Epode* 17, where the last word of the poem (and thus the last word of the *Epodes*) is spoken by Canidia to Horace: *exitus* “end, exit.” These two concepts of beginning and ending, respectively, define the physical limits of the

\(^{567}\) This triangulation has been explored in considerable detail by Oliensis (1998) 77-90, to whom I am indebted for many of the following observations.

Epodes, just as the characters of Maecenas and Canidia are situated as distinct, yet similar arbiters of the collection.\textsuperscript{569}

Another connection between the two characters appears in Horace’s reuse of language describing his interactions with both Maecenas in Epode 1 and Canidia in 17. In the first epode, he says to Maecenas that “your goodwill has enriched me enough and more than enough,”\textsuperscript{570} then echoes the phrase “enough and more than enough” in his plea to Canidia at 17.19: “Enough and more than enough have I paid the penalty to you.”\textsuperscript{571} By repeating this phrase in his address to Maecenas at the Epodes’ opening and in his address to Canidia at the Epodes’ close, Canidia is deliberately juxtaposed with Maecenas, and thus becomes an opposing organizational feature of the Epodes.

The third point of association is in the language of labor and leisure that Horace employs to describe his relationship with Maecenas in Epode 1, which is then revisited in Epode 17 as Horace and Canidia negotiate the terms of their own relationship. In Epode 1, Horace activates this typical Roman dichotomy of labor versus leisure when he asks Maecenas whether he should accompany his patron on an imminent journey:

\begin{quote}
\textit{utrumne iussi persequemur otium}
\textit{non dulce, ni tecum simul,}
\textit{an hunc laborem mente laturi, decet}
\textit{qua ferre non mollis viros?}\textsuperscript{572}
\end{quote}

On your order, am I to chase after leisure, even if it is bitter in your absence? Or will I endure this labor, as it befits hardened men to do?

\textsuperscript{569} See again Oliensis (1998) 77-90.
\textsuperscript{570} Hor. \textit{Epod}. 1.31-32: \textit{satis superque me benignitas tua / ditavit}.
\textsuperscript{571} Hor. \textit{Epod}. 17.19: \textit{dedi satis superque poenarum tibi}.
\textsuperscript{572} Hor. \textit{Epod}. 1.7-10.
This concern with *otium* and *labor* is absent from the remainder of the collection, and recurs only in *Epode* 17 as Horace laments his condition to Canidia: “No respite releases me from my labor.”\(^{573}\) Canidia herself picks up on this language of *labor* in her reply, saying “You will lead a miserable existence, unwelcome / As you are continually subjected to new labors”.\(^{574}\) With this reiteration of patron/client language that had previously been specific to Horace and Maecenas, Canidia inscribes herself within their relationship and casts Horace as her subordinate and subject to her dictates of *labor*, while simultaneously replacing Maecenas (conspicuously absent from *Epode* 17) as the authority over Horace’s poetic output.\(^{575}\)

Having observed the overlap between Canidia’s function as a dark mirror of Maecenas’ patronage, her intimate knowledge of the text of the *Epodes* and the rising ambiguity between her spells and Horace’s poetry, it is apparent that Canidia’s character in *Epode* 17 has been connected in some fashion to the *Epodes* as a whole. Before moving forward from this point to expand upon the earlier position that this poem can be read as a narrative of Horace’s departure from the genre of iambic, I would like to position *Epode* 17 in the context of other meta-literary poems with which Horace had often concluded his various collections:

\(^{573}\) Hor. *Epod*. 17.24: *nullum a labore me reclinat otium.*
\(^{574}\) Hor. *Epod*. 17.63-64: *ingrata misero vita ducenda est in hoc / novis ut usque suppetas laboribus.*
\(^{575}\) This connection between Canidia and Maecenas is likewise borne out in *Satire* 1.8, *Epode* 3, and *Epode* 16: in *Sat. 1*. 8, Canidia makes an appearance in Maecenas’ renovated cemetery/garden on the Esquiline; in *Epode* 3, after Maecenas secretly slipped Horace a surprisingly garlic-filled dish, Horace speculates whether it was Canidia’s doing, and in *Epode* 16, Oliensis (1998) 90 notes that Horace addresses his patron as *candide Maecenas*, and thus “comes as close as he ever will to revealing (perhaps inadvertently) that Canidia and Maecenas form in effect a single corporate whole.”
• *Satire* 1.10: The poem that concludes the first book of satires contains within it a critique of Lucilian poetics, a recounting of Horace’s dream of poetic instruction and an excursus about writing satire. The poem’s final line is a command to the poet’s servant to “Go quickly and write all this down in my little book!”

• *Satire* 2.8: Horace’s final satire features an abrupt end both to a particularly boorish feast and to the book as well. It has been read as a meta-poetic reflection on the second book as a whole,\(^5^7^6\) on the nature of satiric composition and anxiety over its potential reception,\(^5^7^7\) or as a “test of the effectiveness of the teachings embodied in the preceding poems.”\(^5^7^8\) Notably, Canidia also appears in the poem’s closing couplet.

• *Epistle* 1.20: Blatant in its meta-literary nature, the last poem of Horace’s first book of epistles is addressed to the book itself (“Book, you appear to gaze [toward the booksellers.]”) and contains within it Horace’s predictions as to the book’s future “life” among the people of Rome.

• *Ode* 3.30: The final piece in Horace’s three-book collection of lyric poetry famously says of the work’s completion: “I have created a monument to outlast even bronze”\(^5^7^9\) then proceeds to order the muse Melpomene to crown him with victory laurel for his skill in composing the *Odes*.

\(^5^7^7\) O’Connor (1990) 23-34.
\(^5^7^8\) Caston (1997) 235, 233-256.
\(^5^7^9\) Hor. C. 3.30.1: *exegi monumentum aere perennius.*
Given Horace’s propensity to conclude his collections with poems such as these that comment specifically on the collections that they have concluded, I read the narrative of Horace’s engagement with Canidia in *Epode* 17 as an explicit commentary on Horace’s relationship to the *Epodes* as a whole.

*Canidia: An Epodic Empusa*

As discussed previously, feminine incarnations of literature typically bear some resemblance to the work they represent. Eroticized *puellae* (often with names derived from Apollonian epithets that further suggest their meta-poetic nature) are frequently cast as personifications of the elegiac poetry in which they feature, just as Callimachus’ preference for poetic refinement and restraint is exemplified in Apollo’s injunction to “keep your Muse thin.” That the *Epodes* are without any other recurring (non-mythical) female characters aside from Canidia, and the fact that the muses (or any other

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580 Only two of Horace’s collections do not conclude with poems of this vein: the second book of epistles (which contains only two poems and would thus render such a conclusion somewhat awkward) and the fourth book of odes (which concludes, as only this book must, with a hymn of praise to Augustus).

581 A comparison of *Epode* 17 with Propertius 4.1 may also serve to contextualize Horace and Canidia’s interactions as metapoetically significant. If we understand *Epode* 17 as the final poem of the collection, split into two parts, the first of which is spoken by author’s poetic persona, the second of which is a response to that persona delivered by a numinous speaker, we can observe in the structure and content of Propertius 4.1 several remarkable similarities. There, we may read the first poem of Propertius’ fourth book of elegies as split into two parts, the first of which is spoken by Propertius’ poetic persona (4.1a: 1-70) in which he outlines the projected program of the collection, the second of which is a response to Propertius delivered by the astrologer Horos who asserts his own powers, then corrects and redirects Propertius’ poetic ambitions (4b: 71-150). The basic structural resemblance between *Epod.* 17 and Prop. 4.1 (poet speaks the first half, quasi-mystical figure speaks the second), as well as the overlaps in content (the poet’s plans are contradicted by the second speaker’s) might then suggest that Propertius 4.1 is loosely modeled upon Horace’s *Epode* 17. If this is the case, the blatantly programmatic statements in Prop. 4.1a (e.g. 57-70) and 4.1b (e.g. 135-144) could be further indications of the metapoetic nature of *Epode* 17. However, this reading of Propertius 4.1 as potentially modeled after Hor. *Epod.* 17 relies heavily on the understanding that 4.1a and 4.1b are two halves of the same poem, which there is reason to doubt (see Kidd (1979), Murgia (1989)).

582 e.g. Tibullus’ Delia (Δῆλος), Propertius’ Cynthia (Κύνθως), Gallus’ Lycoris (Λύκειος).

583 Callim. *Aetia* Fr. 1.24.
potential poetic stand-ins) are wholly absent from this collection\textsuperscript{584} is cause enough to look at Canidia as a potential poetic embodiment of the *Epodes*, but taken in combination with the prior demonstration of Canidia’s significant ties to the *Epodes* through her command of *carmina*, her knowledge of Horace’s epodic corpus, her juxtaposition with Horace’s literary patron, and the frequency with which Horace makes metapoetic statements in the final poems of a collection, the case becomes more promising.

To revisit the quotation from Barchiesi with which I began this section, the Canidia of *Epode* 17 may be read as the “black muse of iambic poetry [who] stands before the *Epodes* like the elegiac lover before the poetry of Propertius.”\textsuperscript{585} Simultaneously an *artifact* of the poetic collection as well an *embodiment* of that very collection, we can read Canidia as a representative of the *Epodes* – like the elegiac *puella* – an incarnation of the poet’s work who is reflective of the poetic collection itself. Correspondingly, Canidia possesses many attributes in *Epode* 17 that are also seen throughout the *Epodes*: Canidia’s desire to wreak vengeance on Horace for his slights against her recapitulates the themes of revenge expressed by the *puer* of *Epode* 5 and of Horace himself in *Epode* 6; her repugnant sexuality reflects the awkward sexual encounters of *Epodes* 8 and 12, and her tone – a blend of indignation, condescension and implacable contempt – mirrors the tone with which Horace assaults the upstart of *Epode* 4, a rival in *Epode* 6 and Maevius in *Epode* 10.

Taking these points into consideration, it is increasingly likely that Canidia (as she appears in *Epode* 17) has been constructed as an embodiment of Horace’s book of

\textsuperscript{584} Barchiesi (2001) 148.
\textsuperscript{585} Barchiesi (1993) 217.
Epodes. However, since she is the incarnation of a collection typified by an overriding sense of hopelessness and destruction\textsuperscript{586} hers is not a generative or productive presence as compared, for example, to Propertius’ Cynthia.\textsuperscript{587} Whereas Propertius claimed “Cynthia was first, and Cynthia will be the last,”\textsuperscript{588} for Horace, Canidia is only the end. She does not open his Epodes, she closes them, and she is not so much the inspiration of his poetic output as the agent of its demise. She is no coy puella – she is a monstrous Empusa, a draining, venomous sexual partner bent on Horace’s destruction; she wrests control of the Epodes from him and runs the collection to the ground. Like the Odes through which Horace would later claim to have achieved immortality (“I shall not wholly die”),\textsuperscript{589} the completion of the Epodes brings about a similar state of near-immortality, yet instead of being crowned victorious by the muse Melpomene, Horace’s epodic immortality is a horrific eternity of punishment and torture at the hands of the quasi-demonic Canidia who has latched herself onto Horace and brought him to ruin through her carmina.\textsuperscript{590}

Let us now return to the poem’s conclusion and the final image of Canidia’s sinister victory despite Horace’s attempt to be rid of her influence once and for all. If we read Canidia as the embodiment of the Epodes, we have in Epode 17 a narrative of Horace trying to extricate himself from the genre of iambic by delivering an offensive monologue to Canidia on the assumption that she (like the Empusa by which he has

\textsuperscript{586} This cynicism is, I believe, especially evident in Epod. 5 (see the previous chapter) and 16.

\textsuperscript{587} Cynthia’s very name serves as the title of Propertius’ first book of elegies – the first words being Cynthia prima – and her influence may be felt in nineteen of the book’s twenty-two poems.

\textsuperscript{588} Prop. 1.12.20: Cynthia prima fuit, Cynthia finis erit. The line neatly encapsulates Cynthia’s prevalence throughout Propertius’ elegies as well as being an acknowledgment of Cynthia’s role as the bookends to his first three works: “Cynthia prima” being the opening words of 1.1 and “Cynthia finis” foreshadowing the conclusion of his third book, which ends with a farewell to Cynthia.

\textsuperscript{589} Hor. C. 3.30.6: non omnis moriar.

typified her) will flee before his insults, and that at her departure, he will be free to move on from the *Epodes*. Unfortunately, to judge by Canidia’s reply, this technique seems to have failed completely – at least at first glance. She does not run off in disgrace, she does not relinquish her hold over Horace; if anything, she reaffirms her control over the poet.

However, we should recall that the overall status of the *Epodes* as collection of repeatedly self-defeating poetry has often been remarked upon.\(^{591}\) There are a number of pointed examples throughout the collection wherein Horace’s poetic persona launches an attack against someone else, only to have his assaults somehow rebound against himself. For example, the fourth *Epode*, in which Horace harangues a freedman who has risen rapidly up Rome’s social ladder, closes with a description of this upstart as a “military tribune” – a title that would remind the reader not only of Horace’s own position as military tribune, but of his father’s status as a former slave,\(^{592}\) thus rendering Horace’s vehement attack as a simultaneous self-critique.\(^{593}\) In *Epode* 6, where Horace boasts about the vengeful power of his invective poetry, he concludes by asking “Or is some black-tooth going to come after me and leave me to weep like an unavenged child?” (*inultus ut flebo puer*). The specific mention of a weeping child (*puer*) cannot help but recall the helpless *puer* killed by Canidia in the preceding epode – a comparison that does not bolster Horace’s claims to self defense. Likewise, his proclamations of manliness and sexual vigor in *Epode* 15 (“Neaera, you will weep so much at the loss of my manhood / for if there’s any man in Flaccus / he will not allow you to spend all your nights with

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\(^{592}\) *Hor. S.* 1.6.46-48.

\(^{593}\) Remarks to this effect may be found in most commentaries, and Oliensis (1998) 66-68.
someone stronger…”)\textsuperscript{594} are undercut by his prior confessions of impotence (\textit{Epodes} 8 and 12) and by his specific use of the term “Flaccus” in his boast. (Although Horace’s cognomen was indeed “Flaccus,” its literal definition of “floppy” or “flaccid” is in deliberate juxtaposition to his assertions of masculine potency.)

This tendency of the epodic narrator to undercut him/herself should then give us pause when Canidia – as the embodiment of the \textit{Epodes} – assumes the role of the epodic narrator at the close of \textit{Epode} 17. Although she claims victory over Horace, she effectively concludes the \textit{Epodes}, the collection which she herself embodies. Her victorious ride atop Horace’s shoulders, her wresting of the authorial voice of the \textit{Epodes} away from the him – it all puts an end to the \textit{Epodes}, and in putting an end to the \textit{Epodes}, Canidia has put an end to her own power. As she voices the final lines of the poem, “Will I lament... that my skills have reached the end?” the answer can only be “Yes,” for in asserting her domination over Horace, she has ultimately silenced her own voice. Horace has won. He has accomplished what he set out to at the very beginning of the poem – to rid himself of Canidia’s influence by insulting her and chasing her off like the Empusa she was. At the conclusion of the poem, the \textit{Epodes} are finished, Canidia is silent, and Horace is free to pursue another genre.\textsuperscript{595}

\textsuperscript{594} Hor. \textit{Epod.} 15.11-13: \textit{o dolitura mea multum virtute Neaera / nam si quid in Flacco viri est, / non feret assiduas potiori te dare noctes.}

\textsuperscript{595} This reading is further supported by Cavarzere’s (1992: 233-234) understanding of Horace’s deviation from the meter of Archilochean iambics in \textit{Epode} 17 as a statement of generic intent: “Il suo ripiegamento sul trimetro giambico stichico significa un ritorno alla tradizione giambica callimaco-ipponattea, quale si era in precedenza instaurata a roma: in altre parole, un rientro nell’alveo del genere satirico.” (“His rejection of the stichic iambic trimeter signifies a return to Callimachean/Hipponactean iambics of the sort that had been previously established at Rome: in other words, it is a return to the stream of the satiric genre.”)
Conclusions

In this chapter, I have provided a resolution to two problematic aspects of *Epode* 17. I have shown how Horace’s insulting apology to Canidia can be better conceptualized if she is understood as possessing the qualities of the demonic Empusa who can be chased away by the prodigious application of slander and insults. Reading Horace’s mocking apology to Canidia in this manner rehabilitates his speech from a nonsensically flippant palinode into a deliberately insulting volley against a demon with a weakness for slander.

Following that realignment, the case was made for reading Canidia as an embodiment of the *Epodes*. Although similar readings had been suggested by others, they were not fully endorsed due to Horace’s tendency to portray Canidia with drastically different characteristics in different poems. However, with the knowledge that Canidia’s characteristics may change to suit Horace’s needs of her in specific contexts, we have may now accept this reading and pursue it to its natural conclusion – that of reading *Epode* 17 as a literary sign-off, and an indication that Horace has concluded with the iambic genre.
In the first chapter of this dissertation I suggested that the character of Canidia had been fundamentally misunderstood and that much of the scholarship about her had been operating under the false assumption that she was portrayed as a consistent witch-character throughout Horace’s poetry. I then demonstrated that the characters of ancient literature that were often identified collectively as “witches” were in actuality a highly pluralistic group whose many differences were obscured both by the deceptively unifying label of “witch” and by the attempts of numerous scholars to develop a cohesive typology for categorizing these varied characters under one or two all-inclusive rubrics. After proving that these characters were not bound by any significant, consistent or unifying vocabulary or attributes, I observed that it would be methodologically unsound to treat these so-called witches as part of a homogenous conglomerate. Instead, I contended that each individual character should be analyzed and evaluated only in terms of the traits she actually displayed, and not on the basis of those that could be attributed to her on the assumption of her relationship to a larger group. Underlying this was the basic notion that there was not a reliably identifiable category of witch-characters in the literature of the ancient world, and that those characters who were dubbed “witches” did not behave in a
consistent manner, but served as a backdrop onto which authors projected a widely varying assortment of specific traits and attributes.

Furthermore, I contended that many of the misinterpretations regarding Canidia’s roles in the Horatian corpus could be traced to the widespread practice of treating witch-characters A) as part of a unified group and B) as figures whose behavior was consistent and predictable. By extricating Canidia from those expectations and then conducting a study of her specific actions as they were inscribed within specific contexts, I produced novel readings not only of Canidia herself, but of Horace’s poetry as well. These readings enhanced existing scholarship on the relevant texts and in many cases promoted significant reinterpretations of the material.

Canidia was an ideal subject for this study for two reasons: the first was that the demonstration of a single witch-character (confined to the works of a single author), manifesting multiple, unique aspects, would provide significant evidence that the nature of the Roman “witch” was not static, but was instead in constant flux depending on the character’s literary context; the second was that the scholarly treatments of Canidia were minimal and tended to overlook the disparities in Horace’s separate portrayals of her. Thus, the bulk of the dissertation has been devoted to a careful exposition of Canidia’s roles in the three poems of Horace in which she had the most detailed presences; each of the previous three chapters focused on Canidia’s attributes and the literary roles she played within each poem. As we have seen – both Canidia’s characteristics and her literary functions varied considerably throughout the Horatian corpus.
Chapter two focused on Canidia’s depiction in Horace’s *Satire* 1.8, wherein her transgressive nature was directly related to Horace’s metapoetic anxieties as to the literary composition of the *Satires*. Canidia’s uncanny ability to cross established borders was read as being in direct conflict with Horace’s attempts to erect a literary boundary around his *Satires* and Horace’s emphasis on this quality of Canidia’s marked the poem as operating alongside several other works in *Satires* I (1.1, 1.4, 1.10) that had long been recognized as commenting on Horace’s engagement with the genre of satire. The reinterpretation of Canidia in terms of her context-specific attributes thus rehabilitated *Sat. 1.8* from its status as merely a rude poem about a farting Priapus and recontextualized it as an important metapoetic commentary.

Within *Sat. 1.8*, emphasis was placed on Canidia’s propensity to go where she was not wanted, and her trespassing in the Gardens of Maecenas threatened the integrity of Maecenas’ renovations by raising the question of the Garden’s transitional status from a cemetery into garden. Once within the garden, the rites she carried out were (although of uncertain purposes) consistent with her transgressive nature: the potentially erotic magic would have crossed the bounds of acceptable feminine behavior, and summoning the spirits of the dead actively blurred the boundaries between life and death. Beyond her characterization as a boundary-crosser, Canidia is also presented in this poem as an object of humor: the subject of a bawdy tale told by Priapus, she is ultimately the butt of the joke as she runs in abject terror from the sound of Priapus’ fart. In her flight from the gardens – at which Priapus openly invites the reader to laugh (*S. 1.8.50: cum magno risuque iocoque videres*) – she loses her false teeth and is thus revealed in the poem’s
final lines as a fraud, a comic hag with pretentions of power (and beauty) but without even the stomach to endure Priapus’ interruption.

This laughable, impotent creature has little to do with the horrific character of Canidia in *Epode* 5. In chapter three, Canidia was no longer a ridiculous hag to be chased from her ritual by a flatulent statue but a terrifying woman orchestrating an elaborate spell to concoct a love potion. Instead of being described in terms of her transgression of physical space or boundary-crossing, in *Epode* 5 she displays many of the characteristics of a child-killing demon of the ancient world, and is the centerpiece of a poem concerned with an extensive erotic ritual involving kidnapping a child and starving him to death in order to harvest his dried organs. Childless and husbandless, Canidia is portrayed here as a merciless predator, snatching children in the night to slaughter for her own designs. Far from the comedic depiction of Canidia in *Satire* 1.8, there is no abatement of Canidia’s savagery here: any expectation for a last minute divine interruption (*a la* Priapus) goes unanswered, and the poem concludes with Canidia’s victim – once an innocent child, now perverted by the poem’s events – being transformed into a malevolent agent of vengeance. The bumbling, harmless hag of *Satire* 1.8 is gone; a murderer of children has taken her place.

It was also observed in the third chapter that Horace’s depiction of Canidia as similar to a child-killing demon and his placement of her opposite a conspicuously anonymous *puer* was designed to engage with Vergil’s fourth eclogue and thereby answer Vergil’s hopes of a coming peace at the hands of an anonymous child with Horace’s own cynical expectations of continuing civil war. Much as *Sat. 1.8, Epode* 5 is
often viewed as an anomaly, a curious inclusion in an otherwise cohesive poetic collection, but by recognizing Canidia’s resemblance to a child-killing demon and thus noting the poem’s engagement with Eclogue 4, the poem ceases to be a macabre outlier and becomes an integral component of a collection deeply concerned with the politics of the day.

Yet, as we saw in chapter four, Horace depicted Canidia in still another manner in Epode 17. There, it was not the characteristics of a boundary walker, nor those of a child killing demon that Horace projected onto Canidia’s role as a magical practitioner; in this instance, she was given the qualities of a demonic Empusa, a hyper-sexualized seductress who drains the life from her male partners. In this poem, Canidia reduced Horace’s poetic persona to the point of madness with her magic, wasting him away with her spells and ointments until he begged for her to stop. However, Horace’s troubles likely stemmed from his sexual relationship with Canidia qua Empusa, and his condition was the result of her demonic, sexual insatiability. Canidia’s characterization as an Empusa was furthered both by her tendency to hide her true, hideous form beneath external beauty and by her susceptibility to being chased away with insults.

Also emphasized in this particular portrayal of Canidia was her command of carmina; while present to some extent in Satire 1.8 and Epode 5, her mastery of carmina is of note in Epode 17 because of the explicitly metapoetic role she assumed there as the incarnation of Horace’s collection of iambic Epodes. Nowhere else does she personify Horace’s work like she does in this poem, where Horace’s quarrel with her becomes a commentary on the poet’s desire to free himself from the genre of iambic. This
interpretation of Canidia’s character as the pseudo-muse of Horace’s *Epodes* had been to some extent proposed by scholars previously,\textsuperscript{596} but a full endorsement was difficult due to the irreconcilability of the expectation that Canidia would behave consistently throughout the Horatian corpus and the acknowledgement that her role in *Epode* 17 was different than it was elsewhere. However, as a result of the recognition of Canidia’s polyvalent nature, this interpretation may now be accepted without further caveat.

Although it has been my intent to demonstrate the disparities between Canidia’s appearances in each of these three poems, I must mention the similarities that recur throughout them as well. In general, Canidia is depicted in these three poems (I purposefully exclude *Satires* 2.1 and 2.8 as well as *Epode* 3 from these remarks) as an old woman\textsuperscript{597} with a command of spells\textsuperscript{598} and specialized magical ingredients.\textsuperscript{599} More specifically, Canidia is associated with erotic magical practices and a willingness to defy cultural and moral taboos in her rituals.\textsuperscript{600} Beyond that, however, little can be found to liken one aspect of Canidia to another, and the many differences between her separate characterizations effectively negate any attempt to understand Canidia as a consistent figure. The comically skittish Canidia of *Satire* 1.8 is a far cry from the vicious murderer of *Epode* 5, who is likewise incapable of being read as the meta-poetic embodiment of Horace’s *Epodes* that she appears as in *Epode* 17. Ultimately, even despite the few

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\textsuperscript{596} See p. 215n544.
\textsuperscript{597} Canidia’s advanced age is implied at S. 1.8.48 and *Epod*. 17.46-8, and made explicit at *Epod*. 5.98.
\textsuperscript{598} The usage of spells by Canidia is implied at S. 1.8.18-20 (and possibly at *Epod*. 5.71-2), and is explicit at *Epod*. 17.4-6, 28-9, 78.
\textsuperscript{599} On Canidia’s many *magica materia*, see S. 1.8.29-33, 42-4, 29; *Epod*. 5.17-24, 37-8, 59-70, 73-8; *Epod*. 17.7, 21-3, 35, 76-80.
\textsuperscript{600} These taboos include: trespassing, tomb desecration, impious summoning of ghosts (S. 1.8); kidnapping, torture, murder, corpse desecration, aggressive erotic magic (*Epod*. 5); hyper-sexual behavior, magical assaults, torture (*Epod*. 17).
general similarities, the Canidia of one poem resembles the Canidia of another in name alone.
Canidia the Lesser

The disparity between the many ‘faces’ of Canidia becomes clearer still when her three minor appearances are taken into consideration. If we examine her roles in *Epode* 3, *Satire* 2.1 and 2.8, it will be apparent that only in these three poems does she demonstrate any real consistency – unfortunately, the very consistency she displays here is incongruous with any of the roles she has filled in the three major poems. In the following three subsections, I will analyze the relevant portions of Canidia’s minor appearances and in each case it will become clear that Canidia fulfills here only the most basic role of a generic bringer of misfortune^{601} who has little depth or motivation save simple malevolence, and that she does not – and cannot – function as a fully developed supernatural character as she has elsewhere^{602}.

1) *Epode* 3.1-14

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{parentis olim siquis impia manu} \\
\text{senile guttur fregerit,} \\
\text{edit cicitis alium nocentius.} \\
\text{o dura messorum ilia.} \\
\text{quid hoc veneni saevit in praecordiis?}
\end{align*}
\]

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^{601} cf. the anonymous *sagae* and *veneficae* blamed for otherwise inexplicable untimely deaths in numerous epigraphical records (Graf (2007)).

^{602} This distinction is remarked upon only by Muecke (1993) 108-109, who recognizes a difference between what she terms Canidia the “poisoner” and Canidia “the witch,” although she acknowledges the lack of a real distinction in the terms/concept in Latin. As I discussed in the introduction (p. 19-20), Latin makes no lexical distinction between poisons / poisoners (*venena / veneficae*) and magical materials / magicians (*venena / veneficae*) (Rives (2003) 317-322 provides a brief summary of the issue in terms of the *Lex Cornelia de Sicariis et Veneficiis*); the difference in usage is discernable only through a contextual analysis. Thus, while Muecke’s separation of Canidia’s roles into that of “witch” and “poisoner” may imply too stark a contrast, the mere fact of her acknowledgement of a shift in Canidia’s behavior is significant.

240
num viperinus his cruor
incocctus herbis me fefellit? an malas
Canidia tractavit dapes?
ut Argonautes praeter omnis candidum
Medea mirata est ducem,
ignota tauris inligaturum iuga
perunxit hoc Iasonem,
hoc delibutis ulta domis paelicem
serpente fugit alite.

In days of old, if some impious soul
placed his hands around a parent’s aged throat,
he had to eat garlic, more noxious than any hemlock.
(Its reapers have such strong stomachs!)
What is this poison raging in my chest?
Was viper’s blood cooked into these
herbs without my knowledge? Or did Canidia
prepare this treacherous feast?
When Medea marveled at the Argonauts’ leader -
him more radiant than all the rest -
It was with this that she anointed Jason so he could
yoke the bulls to the unfamiliar plow,
and when the palace was smeared with this she took revenge
on his mistress and fled on her winged snake.

Although Canidia’s role within this poem is somewhat ambiguous, the poem itself is
fairly comedic and consists of a slew of Horatian hyperbole as the poet reacts with a
mixture of horror and indignation to a particularly garlicky dish he has been served at one
of Maecenas’ dinners. Following an explicit mention of poison (quid... veneni), a
reference to viper’s blood (viperinus cruor) and the poem’s prevailing concern with
tainted food, Canidia can be understood as operating here in the capacity of a potential
poisoner – that is, as a malicious character with the ability to adversely and covertly
manipulate her victim’s food, likely through the useage of venena – hence Horace’s
simple question, “Did Canidia prepare this treacherous feast?”
This identification, however, tells us little else about Canidia’s character in the poem. Since this is her first appearance in the *Epodes*, there is no immediate precedent for attributing to Canidia a implicit battery of significant magical powers, and even for those readers who may have been familiar with her role in *Satire* 1.8 (or, *Epode* 5, for that matter), this would have marked the first occasion on which Canidia had been accused of tampering with food and would thus have required a reconceptualization of her character’s qualities. Unfortunately, the manipulation of food and the implied knowledge of *venena* imputed to Canidia here is not adequate to inform her abilities or character much further, since this activity was imagined in the ancient world to have been broadly practiced by various types of women whose powers ranged from the incredible to the comparatively ordinary, and whose motivations could have been malicious or simply misguided. We are left only with knowledge that Horace suspects Canidia’s involvement in the preparation of his food, and he is not pleased at the prospect.

Still, in order to establish the poem’s premise, the reader does not require much else. Horace’s concern is that – presumably through her knowledge of herbs and poisons

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603 While the precedence of publication for *Satires* I and the *Epodes* is clear, I follow Carubba’s (1969) understanding of the potential order of composition of the major Canidian poems as 1) *Epod.* 5, 2) *S.* 1.8, 3) *Epod.* 17.

604 One of our earliest examples of a witch-character tainting food is Homer’s Circe, who offers her guests a drink laced with *pharmaka* in order to transform them into animals (10.233-335). Her powers are extensive and her status as a quasi-divinity is quite rare. In contrast, Helen (who is in possession of powerful drugs from Egypt) slips beneficial *pharmaka* into her husband’s and Telemachus’ wine in order to dull their impending grief (Hom. *Od.* 4.215-234). This is a charged and potentially dangerous action on Helen’s part, but it does not imply that she is in possession of other, more powerful abilities. Martina (Tac. *Ann.* 2.74) and Locusta (*ibid.* 12.66) were reputed to have been notorious poisoners possibly employed by members of the Roman elite to carry out political assassinations, yet beyond poisoning they are not cited as being able to enact anything more magical than binding spells – and even that is speculative (*ibid.* 2.69). An anonymous woman described in Antiphon’s trial (*Antiph.* 1) as inadvertently murdering her lover with a love potion illustrates the thin line between magical practitioners and poisoners, yet also demonstrates that tainters of food/drink need not necessarily possess extensive magical abilities (see Faraone (1999) 110-119).
Canidia has altered his food. That she is invoked after references to poison and viper’s blood means that we need not impart to her any other substantial supernatural capabilities in order to sympathize with Horace’s nervousness at the prospect of her involvement in the preparation of this garlicky dish. The subsequent mention of Medea suggests that Canidia’s actions in this poem are perceived as somehow magical – although to what extent is unknown and largely unimportant.

Those who would see in Canidia’s many appearances throughout the Horatian corpus a consistent depiction of a powerful supernatural figure might point to her close pairing with Medea here as an indication of her significant magical abilities in this poem, but to do so would miss the point of Horace’s inclusion of these two separate references. Canidia and Medea are each mentioned for very different purposes: the reference to Canidia is fairly one-dimensional in that it simply expresses Horace’s anxiety that someone unsavory has slipped something into his food; the reference to Medea, on the other hand, includes two metaphors by which Horace categorizes the quality of the poison he jests he has eaten. I understand the logic of the poem’s opening lines as follows:

(1-3) Garlic was once used as punishment; (3-4) Garlic is incredibly spicy; (5-7) Is this poison or garlic? (7-8) How could I have been served this? Has Canidia poisoned me?; (9-12) This garlic is so potent, it is just like the material with which Medea protected Jason from the fire-breathing bulls, (13-14) and just like the material with which she incinerated Jason’s new wife.

Watson (1983) 84-86 explores Horace’s rationale for the inclusion of his allusions to Medea, stating “The myth then becomes a vehicle for the thought that, so awesome is the power of garlic, it even shielded Jason from the scorching breath of the bulls: now, we understand, it is working with the same formidable efficiency for Horace’s ‘destruction.’”
The garlic, Horace says, is noxious (*nocens*) and rages in his chest (*saevit in praecordiis*) – just like poison or viper’s blood. As to how it got into his dish, he jokingly suggests that it must have been Canidia – implying here that Maecenas could never have *knowingly* served such a dish and that it must therefore have been tampered with. References to Medea are then made to describe the power of the garlic’s overwhelming heat. Horace compares it to the *venena* that Medea used on two occasions, each specifically associated with flames and heat: the first was an ointment designed to protect Jason from the bulls “that breathed fire” (Eur. *Med.* 478), the second was a daub that, when smeared on a robe, immolated Jason’s new wife in a “stream of all-consuming flame” (Eur. *Med.* 1187). Thus, although Horace refers to both Medea and Canidia within the space of a few lines, they are each deployed for separate reasons. The comparison to Medea’s *venena* serves to qualify the garlic’s intensity, whereas Canidia is invoked only as a passing, potential explanation for the garlic/poison’s origin. Elsewhere, Canidia is certainly compared to Medea in order to characterize her as a powerful witch, but that is not the case here.

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606 The appearance of Canidia within another poem so closely tied to Maecenas is intriguing (on Canidia’s intrusion into Maecenas’ Gardens in S. 1.8 see p. 74-92; on the juxtaposition of Canidia and Maecenas in *Epod.* 17 see p. 223-225). That *Epod.* 3 is explicitly concerned with the creation of a “convincing picture of genuine friendship” (McNeill (2001) 14) between Horace and his patron renders Canidia’s presence here all the more puzzling, especially if its final lines are, as Oliensis (1998) 87-89 reads them, meant to reinforce Maecenas’ superiority. Likewise, Gowers (1993) 304-307 observes that the metaphors deployed throughout the poem make it unclear precisely to whom Canidia is being compared – is it to Maecenas, or to Horace? In either case, this is another striking example of Horace’s tendency to pair Canidia with his literary patron.

607 Oliensis (1998) 87-89 characterizes Horace’s experience with the garlic as “resembling a bout of sexual overheating.”


609 Gowers (1993) 299: “Horace equates garlic with a savage poison, viper’s blood… and with food infected by the witch Canidia.” Gowers’ usage of the term ‘witch’ is, of course, rather broad here.

610 Medea is invoked in the context of Canidia explicitly at *Epodes* at 5.61-66 and implicitly at 17.35. That Medea is then named or alluded to in each of the three Canidian epodes is not likely coincidental.
My point in making such a strong distinction between Horace’s citations of Canidia and Medea is to show that Canidia is not being envisioned in Epode 3 as the powerful magician she will appear as in Epodes 5 and 17; the possession of the host of otherworldly powers she displays elsewhere would be wholly irrelevant to her actions here. Canidia’s presence here, as in Satire 2.1 and 2.8, is fleeting. We, the readers, are not meant to dwell overly long on her appearance. Food may have been tainted and Canidia may have been involved, but that is all. Attempting to project the traits and attributes she possesses in other poems onto her brief appearance within these few lines yields no deeper interpretation. It furthers our reading of Epode 3 not at all to imagine that Canidia has the qualities of a child-killing demon here, or that she may be read as a personification of Horace’s Epodes – neither of these roles contributes any additional layers of anxiety that would complement those already expressed in the poem. Moreover, if we presume that Canidia is here the same laughable hag as we saw in Satire 1.8, the gravity of Horace’s mock-terror would be cut prematurely short and the joke’s build-up would be considerably diminished.

2) Satire 2.1.47-53

Cervius iratus leges minitatur et urnam
Canidia Albuci, quibus est inimica, venenum,
grande malum Turius, siquid se iudice certes.
ut quo quisque valet suspectos terreat utque
imperet hoc natura potens, sic collige mecum:
dente lupus, cornu taurus petit: unde nisi intus
monstratum? Scaevae vivacem crede nepoti
matrem; nil faciet sceleris pia dextera: mirum,
ut neque calce lupus quemquam neque dente petit bos:
ved mala tollet anum vitiato melle cicuta.
ne longum faciam; seu me tranquilla senectus
exspectat seu mors atris circumvolat alis,
dives, inops, Romae, seu fors ita iussert, exsul,
quisquis erit vitae scribam color.

Cervius, when angry, menaces with his laws and ballot box, \(^{611}\) Canidia uses Albucius’ poison against those at whom she is vexed, and Turius employs a massive penalty if you ever try a case in his court. Each person frightens those they distrust as he or she is best able and as nature has best equipped them. I understand it like this: the wolf attacks with his teeth, the bull with his horns; how would they know this, unless by instinct? Entrust your dear old mother to Scaeva the rake and his pious right hand won’t even think of committing a crime; it’s amazing how a wolf won’t trample his enemy, nor will the cow bite – but cruel hemlock cut with honey will slay an old woman. I won’t carry on much longer; whether a peaceful old age awaits me, or if death is flitting about on her black wings, whether rich or poor, at Rome – or if chance so bids it – in exile, whatever the quality of my life will be, I shall write.

Not until the opening poem of the second book of Satires does Canidia reprise her role from Epode 3 and reappear as generic bringer of misfortune. \(^{612}\) In this poem, Horace explains his compulsion to write by appealing to an analogy: that everyone fights with the weapons nature has given them; as wolves use their teeth, and bulls their horns, so Horace uses his pen. In the construction of this analogy, Horace also invokes three characters who were (presumably) well-known to his audience: Cervius the over-eager prosecutor used laws (leges) and the ‘ballot box’ (urnam) against his enemies, Turius the corrupt judge who levied heavy fines and/or penalties, and Canidia who used “Albucius’

\(^{611}\) I have adopted Bovie’s (1959) translation of urnam as “ballot-box;” it is, of course, anachronistic, but useful in its simplicity.

\(^{612}\) Littlewood (2002) 63 and Anderson (1984) 39 read Canidia’s venenum in S. 2.1 as poison, not materia magica, and see her in the role of poisoner, not sorceress. Lowrie (2005) 429n64, on the other hand, states that “Canidia was a witch, and her associations with poison here put her in the realm of potent but mysterious transgression against religious norms.” I would argue for the middle ground between each of these viewpoints and suggest that Littlewood and Anderson’s poisoner/sorceress dichotomy is too strong, while Lowrie’s understanding of Canidia is colored both by Canidia’s exploits in other poems, as well as an interpretation of the Lex Cornelia de Sicariis et Veneficiis that places more emphasis on magical/religious aspects than is strictly necessary.
poison” (*Albuci venenum*) against those at whom she was angry. Like the animal examples, these three characters – each known for a particular brand of attack – further solidified Horace’s assertion that each person fights as he or she is best able.

Canidia, therefore, is here explicitly characterized by her use of *Albuci venenum* and in so doing is once again cast by Horace as – first and foremost – a wielder of *venenum* who has no other specifically delineated supernatural abilities. This reading is supported on two counts: the first relates to the scholia on *Canidia Albuci*, and the second has to do with Horace’s choice of words in describing Canidia’s *venenum* as belonging specifically to Albucius. I will demonstrate that in both instances, it is clear that Canidia’s use of *venenum* is not intended to imply any further powers on her part.

The scholiast Porphyrius explains the somewhat puzzling description of *Albuci venenum* as follows:


There are two meanings: either “Canidia threatens to use poison” or “Canidia threatens to use Albucius’ poison,” since this man Albucius is said to have killed his wife through the use of poison.

Pseudo-Acron has a similar reading and glosses *Albuci* as “some poisoner who killed his mother,” (*quidam veneficus, matris extinctor*). Despite the fact that the two scholiasts disagree as to the victim of Albucius’ poison (either his wife or his mother), neither of them imparts to Albucius anything more than a knowledge of poisons. In this context,

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613 See Fraenkel (1957) 148, who says “[Canidia] has no special importance here: any other *venefica* or sorceress would do. The real purpose of the reference to her is to remind the reader of her role in Book I, and it is for this same reason that her name reappears in the very last line of Book II.”

614 Both scholiasts also consider interpreting the genitive *Albuci* as a familial marker for Canidia (implying either *filia* or *uxor*) but neither favors it.
Pseudo-Acron’s usage of *veneficus* implies only that Albucius possessed skill with poisons, and Porphyrion – avoiding the use of the multivalent *veneficus* – simply says that Albucius was rumored to have poisoned his wife. In both interpretations then, Albucius was not a powerful magician or a character in possession of significant supernatural abilities, but a mere wielder of *venenum*. That Horace describes Canidia’s primary weapon as a simple poison (like the wolf’s fang and the bull’s horn) strongly indicates that Canidia’s character is here conceptualized as a far less powerful and far less supernatural entity than she was in *Epodes* 5 and 17.

This understanding of Canidia is strengthened by Horace’s use of the qualifying term “Albucian” to describe Canidia’s *venenum*. Given Canidia’s extensive acquaintance with *venena* throughout the *Epodes*, it is unsurprising to see her here wielding them yet again. However, the *venena* that Canidia plied earlier had been explicitly magical in nature. In *Epode* 5, she lamented the inefficacy of the ointment (*nardo*) with which she had attempted to secure Varus’ passion, describing it as the “dire poisons of Medea” (61-2: *dira… venena Medaeae*), yet using *venena* in a loose and magical sense here, as her intention was surely not to kill her would-be lover. Later in this same poem, the unnamed *puer* also described Canidia’s arts as explicitly “magic poisons” (87: *venena maga*), where again the meaning of *venena* – here specifically in reference to Canidia’s intended love potion – cannot be meant to signify a “poison” that would cause death or natural harm. The same understanding must be applied to the “Colchian poisons” (17.35: *venenis… Colchicis*) of *Epode* 17, since Horace not only imparts to them the utterly

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615 See p. 113n278 on the textual problems surrounding this couplet.
fantastic powers of stealing his youth, emaciating him, rendering his hair gray and driving him mad, but also expressly links them to Canidia’s spells (carmina, nenia) and – through the adjective ‘Colchian’ – imparts to these venena the magical abilities employed by Medea, who famously hailed from Colchis.

Therefore, since Horace has already portrayed Canidia on multiple occasions as wielding magical venena, it is significant that in Satire 2.1 he specifies that Canidia’s weapon of choice is a poison like that with which Albucius (who has no hint of sorcery about him) killed his wife/mother. Even though Horace has described Canidia in various ways throughout now five different poems, he here boils her entire character down into one trait: Canidia poisons people that she does not like (quibus est inimica). This simple distillation of Canidia’s character works only if Satire 1.8, and Epodes 5 and 17 are disregarded: whatever Canidia is doing in Satire 1.8, she is not poisoning anyone; in Epode 5 she bears no apparent ill will toward the child she intends to kill, and if she can be said to be “angry” at Varus, she still does not poison him; Epode 17 comes closest to matching this description of her as using venena against her enemies, yet the

\[616\] From Horace’s poetry, we know nothing else of Albucius, although there was a character by the name of Albucius satirized by Lucilius as a pretentious philhellen. Cicero quotes a relevant passage at De Fin. 1.9:

> Graecum te, Albuci, quam Romanum atque Sabinum, municipem Ponti, Tritani, centurionum, praeclarorum hominum ac primorum signiferumque, maluisti dici. Graece ergo praetor Athenis, id quod maluisti, te, cum ad me accedis, saluto: 'chaere,' inquam, 'Tite!' lictores, turma omnis chorusque: 'chaere, Tite!' hinc hostis mi Albucius, hinc inimicus.

It is difficult to tell to what extent (if at all) Horace’s Albucius was modeled after Lucilius’, although the description of Albucius as inimicus in Lucilius corresponds surprisingly well to Horace’s description of Canidia as inimica at S. 2.1.48.

\[617\] On the ambiguity of Canidia (and Sagana’s) actions in S. 1.8, see p. 80-81.
disjunct between the “Colchian poisons” and the “poison of Albucius” remains unresolved. In sum, there are two options regarding Horace’s characterization of Canidia in Satire 2.1 – the first is to read Horace’s description of Canidia in these lines alongside her other appearances as a wielder of significant supernatural powers and be left with a nonsensical statement that undercuts Horace’s ultimate point if Canidia’s main weapon is then something rarely before seen, used in situations rarely before mentioned; the second option is to recognize that Canidia’s characterization here cannot (and need not) coincide with her actions in each of her other poems, and – in favor of working with rather than against the poet – to contextualize her alongside only those poems that do correspond to this description of her: Epode 3 and, eventually, Satire 2.8.

3) Satire 2.8.90-95

\[\textit{tum pectore adusto}\\
\textit{vidimus et merulas poni et sine clune palumbis,}\\
\textit{suavis res, si non causas narraret earum et naturas dominus; quem nos sic fugimus ulti,}\\
\textit{ut nihil omnino gustaremus, velut illis}\\
\textit{Canidia adflasset, peior serpentibus Afris.}\\

Then we spied blackbirds with charred breasts being set out, and haunchless pigeons - delectable treats, if only the host weren’t going on about their origins and natures. And so we took our revenge upon him and took flight so we wouldn’t have to taste a thing, as if Canidia had breathed on the meal, worse than any serpents of Africa.

Canidia’s last appearance in the Satires and in any poetic collection of Horace’s comes in the final lines of the Satires’ final poem. Naturally, the correspondence between her presence here in the last poem of Horace’s satiric collection and her presence in the last
poem of Horace’s epodic collection has been often remarked upon, but comparatively little has been said about her function within the context of the poem itself. Most commentaries, for example, either leave Canidia unglossed here, or refer the reader to her role in some other of the Canidian poems.

In some respects, this silence only makes sense. Canidia does not appear in Satire 2.8 as an actual character, but is mentioned only by way of an analogy from the poem’s primary narrator, Fundanius. In recounting to Horace the details of a recent dinner party hosted by the seemingly boorish Nasidienus, Fundanius concludes his tale by saying that in order to spite their host, he and the others left before the meal was even through, refusing to taste the fancy dishes and acting “as if Canidia had breathed on the meal.” Aside from Fundanius’ brief comparison of Canidia to the snakes of Africa, this is the full extent of her ‘activity’ in the poem. Our last glimpse of her is not a reprise of the dreadful murderer of Epode 5 or the bumbling hag of Satire 1.8, rather we find Canidia acting yet again in the capacity of a (potential) tainter of food. As in Epode 3 and Satire 2.1, Canidia is not a supernatural juggernaut marshalling her powers of prophecy, erotic

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619 The primary exception to this is Freudenberg’s (1995) piece: Canidia at the Feast of Nasidienus, an article that takes a synoptic interpretation of Canidia’s character throughout the Horatian corpus and reads in Nasidienus’ overly elaborate feast several dark undertones of Canidian magic. Freudenberg thus finds that Fundanius’ tale “is not so much about one man's bad taste as it is a story of covert aggression and the desperate lust to control and possess the object of one's desire” (215-216). Although I am not completely convinced of this (Nasidienus’ culinary arts bear only vague resemblances to Canidia’s rites, and the role of Canidia’s venomous breath is largely overlooked) Freudenberg still represents the only significant attempt to understand Canidia’s presence in S. 2.8 based on the internal logic of the poem itself. More typical is the statement put forth by O’Connor (1990), in which he said of Canidia’s appearance in S. 2.8 that she was “the embodiment of art become spoiled and perverse.” Unfortunately, this claim is supported only by a footnote to a brief article by D.L. Clayman (1975) on the hags of Epodes 8 and 12 – neither of whom are ever identified (either by Horace or in Clayman’s article) as Canidia. Not only must O’Connor look beyond the poem itself in order to support his argument, but the characters in the external poems he cites cannot be convincingly identified as Canidia.
magic, or control over the elements; her realm of influence within these three poems is limited to the manipulation of *venenum* and here, as in *Epode* 3, it is specifically in regards to the tainting of food.\(^{620}\)

Regardless of the purpose behind the somewhat enigmatic inclusion of Canidia in these final lines, it is certain that she is not conceived of as operating in a manner consistent with what we have seen throughout the three major Canidian poems in the *Epodes* and *Satires*. However, while she does not align perfectly with the Canidia of *Satire* 2.1 and *Epode* 3 due to her poisonous breath, the recurring anxiety over Canidia’s involvement in food preparation is enough to suggest that we would not be far from the mark in reading some similarity of character between her roles in each of these three poems. Nevertheless, this minute thread of consistency is utterly absent from *Satire* 1.8, and *Epodes* 5 and 17 – there are no anxieties over food preparation, no characterization of Canidia as a generic evil-doer – and we are left to draw the conclusion that Canidia is an absolutely inconsistent character, manifesting different sets of characteristics from one poem to the next and demonstrating only shallow correspondences between her perfunctory appearances in *Epode* 3, and *Satires* 2.1 and 2.8.

\(^{620}\) Although it is not Canidia’s *venena* that Fundanius mentions here but her breath, this need not characterize Canidia as a particularly powerful character; poisonous breath is not a trait that Horace has previously ascribed to her, and given the humorous context in which Canidia has been invoked, the notion that she could taint a meal merely by breathing on it is likely meant to be taken as an amusing hyperbole rather than a horrifying literality. In my opinion, this is probably an accusation of nothing more sinister than halitosis, and it serves to render Canidia the subject of yet another of Horace’s jokes. However, if we are inclined to take Canidia’s noxious breath as a serious threat, Fundanius’ accompanying analogy to serpents (whose breath was sometimes considered poisonous [cf. Ver. *Aen.* 7.753]) further underscores Canidia’s association with poison. (We may also consider the example of the malicious man at Ps.-Cic. *Rhet. Ad Herr.* 4.62: *qui hodie per forum… circum inspectans huc et illuc si quem reperiat cui aliquid mali faucibus adflare…* a reference for which I am indebted to Gowers (1993) 286.) The only other witch character in Latin literature of the classical era who has poisonous breath is Lucan’s “super-witch” Erictho (*Luc.* 6.621-2), and in addition to post-dating Canidia by almost a century, Erictho is a figure so utterly different than the Canidia of *S.* 2.8 that a comparison between the two would be grossly inappropriate.
Final Remarks

It is on the basis of this lack of consistency that I return to the formulation laid out in the introduction, that the literary characters apt to be labeled by scholars as witches should not be assimilated with one another based on a desire to project a unifying (and thus artificial) rubric upon a disparate group. These characters cannot be classified and grouped together on the assumption that polyvalent witch terminology carries with it an inherent capacity for accurately typifying a pluralistic collective. As I have demonstrated in my analysis of Canidia’s roles throughout the Horatian corpus, even a character who is confined to the works of a single author still demonstrates multiple and discrete aspects in each of her various appearances; attempting to collapse all of those unique aspects into one figure yields a nonsensical literary result – a character who is simultaneously terrifying and harmless, a mere poisoner as well as a vindictive and powerful monster. Because of this variability, labeling Canidia – and others – as a simple “witch” becomes a highly problematic practice that can detract not only from our understanding of them as characters, but also from our readings of the texts in which they appear.

In the first place, the witch label implies a false sense of uniformity: If Canidia is a witch, she is always a witch, and should thus behave similarly in all situations. This is a sense of consistency that, we have seen, is not actually present; the term then effaces the particular distinctions Horace has created in Canidia’s character and precludes the possibility of her possessing different aspects that are meant to function in precise
contexts. The second issue is that calling Canidia a witch necessarily implies a similarity to other “witches” who may or may not bear any significant resemblance to her: if Canidia can be called a witch, it only makes sense that she is similar to other witch-characters - like Erietho, Circe, Dipsas, etc. This false analogy then encourages comparisons between characters who may otherwise share little in common, a practice that can result in false assumptions about the characters’ underlying motivations or unexpressed traits. Along this vein, as the witch-label at once urges us to draw comparisons between characters thus identified, it likewise discourages comparisons of characters who are not labeled as “witches.” As we saw with Canidia, those figures with whom she had the most in common were often not labeled “witches” so much as “demons,” and while I endeavored to provide reasonable explanations for reading Canidia alongside these characters, it is indicative of the obfuscating effects of the witch-label that comparatively little scholarship has explored Canidia’s relationship to such figures.

Canidia is, of course, somewhat of an anomaly in Latin literature: only rarely does a witch-character appear so frequently and in such detail as Canidia. Thus the caveat about the witch-label eroding potential distinctions between a character’s repeated appearances is not as widely applicable as those other concerns. That is not to say that it is irrelevant – in fact, it is directly applicable to characters like Medea, specifically since she is treated by Ovid in numerous, distinct manners – but it is perhaps a less immediate issue than recognizing the dangers and limitations of the term “witch.” To label a

character as a witch is, all too often, to over-simplify her, to assume knowledge of her motivations, her abilities, and the uses to which she has been deployed by her author. The reality of things is, of course, very different, and characters simply labeled as witches can almost always benefit from a detailed analysis that – thanks to the false confidence of understanding provided by the witch-label – is rarely pursued.

It is my hope that this study of Canidia’s polyvalent nature has provided a substantial demonstration of the need to push beyond the simple witch-label, to assess each of these figures on the basis of their specific descriptions in a given context, and then to re-read those scenes with these re-evaluations in mind. Just as a reassessment of Canidia’s differing roles in *Satire* 1.8, *Epode* 5 and *Epode* 17 enabled (sometimes radical) reinterpretations of those poems, so should similar treatments of other “witches” significantly enhance our understanding of the intricacies of these characters and, as new properties are observed in them or new figures are discovered as comparanda, we may well stumble upon new readings of the texts in which these characters feature.
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