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# CANIDIA: META-MUSE OF ANTI-ELEGY

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**Abstract:** This paper attempts to analyze Canidia as the meta-muse of anti-elegy (rather than Paule's characterization of her as the "anti-muse of elegy") by looking at all of her appearances within Horace's works. Canidia is compared to other elegiac muses to show her transformation into more of an iambic figure. She is also examined within the context of Grecian witchcraft. She disgusts Horace, but he still continues to write poetry about her. She must therefore be viewed as a muse who combats the norms of elegiac poetry.

## INTRODUCTION

The *Epodes*, the classical poet Horace's collection of poems that were drawn from bucolic predecessors, do not disgust nearly as much as his muse, Canidia the witch, does. Even though she is mentioned only four times in two separate bodies of texts (*Epodes* and *Sermones*),<sup>1</sup> Canidia holds vast sway over Horace. While other Augustan poets like Vergil, Catullus, and Propertius engaged in epic and elegy, Horace turned to a vulgar mode of expression: iambic poetry.<sup>2</sup> For this reason, his work directly opposes contemporary poets, and we can best describe his muse as the meta-muse of anti-elegy.<sup>3</sup> Canidia is a

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1. Unless otherwise noted, all primary sources used in this paper are taken from the Loeb Classical Library (LCL), and all English translations are the author's. *Sermones* reflects the Latin name for Horace's *Satires* (see *Horace: Satires, Epistles, and Ars Poetica*, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough, LCL 194 [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926; rev. and repr., 1929–1966]), and it and abbreviations for it (i.e., *Sermones*, *Sermo*, and *Serm.*) will be used throughout this paper to refer to the *Satires*.

2. Iambic poetry is a form popularized by Greek poets and known for its obscenities and invective elements. See Douglas E. Gerber, "Introduction," in *Greek Iambic Poetry: From the Seventh to the Fifth Centuries BC*, ed. and transl. Douglas E. Gerber, LCL 259 (1999), 1–4.

3. Throughout his monograph, Paule refers to Canidia as the anti-muse of elegy. I change this phrasing because I think that to refer to someone as an "anti-muse" implies that

sensual, senile sorceress who seduces Horace to engage in the same work that she does: the work of destruction. No matter how many pretenses he offers, he has a morbid fascination with her witchcraft. He tries to make it seem like she finally wins by giving her the last words of *Epode* 17; however, he reports these last words, exercising dominance over her. Horace wrestles Canidia and her magic, engaging in a creative relationship with her that is characterized by sexual overtones. Such “poetic intercourse” continues throughout the *Epodes*. Despite his disgust with her, he still prefers this meta-muse of anti-elegy to the muse of elegy.

### CANIDIA THE MUSE

When a poet writes, he enters into a relationship with his muse. Such elegiac muses are often beautiful women whose sexual relationships usually end in heartbreak. Elegiac poets sincerely love their subject matter,<sup>4</sup> but that affection is often not mutual.

Horace manipulates long-standing elegiac tradition both to call the reader’s mind to elegy and to show how Canidia contrasts with it. Describing her unique role within Horatian verse can be formulated in a simple phrase: the meta-muse of anti-elegy. This phrase consists of many different components. Horace writes her as a “meta” figure who is meant to deliberately fill the role of muse of his poetry. The term “meta” here emphasizes how he creates her to function as a part of the genre of anti-elegy/iambic poetry. He does not draw wholly upon his real life,<sup>5</sup> but creates a woman to represent everything that elegy does not symbolize. If all the disgust of iambic poetry were to be embodied, it would certainly resemble his disgusting muse Canidia.

Maxwell Paule decides to refer to Canidia as “the Anti-Muse,”<sup>6</sup> but this term proves problematic, because it implies that she does not inspire anything. She cannot be an anti-muse since she does inspire poetry in the same way any other muse would. The method she uses to ensnare the poet may consist of magical (instead of physical) charms, but she nevertheless still functions as

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they do not inspire anything. On the contrary, we see how Canidia inspires Horace’s poetry and that she becomes the muse for his genre of choice: iambic poetry. Thus, she functions as a meta-muse or self-referential muse of anti-elegy (since iambic poetry seems to oppose elegy).

4. W. P. Trent, “The Roman Elegy,” *The Sewanee Review* 6 (1898): 271.

5. Some may take the connection between Canidia and Gratidia, a woman believed to be Canidia, for granted and assume that Horace models Canidia on a past lover (see David Bain, “‘Waiting for Varus?’ [Horace, *Epodes*, 5, 49–72],” *Latomus* 45 [1986]: 127). This does not appear to be the case, as she symbolizes much more than a potion maker (see Anderson, “Horace’s *Satire* I,8,” 4).

6. Maxwell Teitel Paule, *Canidia, Rome’s First Witch* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 134.

a muse of poetry. To suggest otherwise would fundamentally misunderstand her function within Horace's poetry. She inspires him to write iambic poetry even though he would prefer to write elegy. However, Canidia does not inspire Horace to write iambic poetry for the sake of writing iambic poetry but because she opposes the genre of elegy. She lacks everything an elegiac mistress would, but still functions in a similar way. Obviously, she exerts power over Horace for a period of time, like elegiac mistresses controlling their poets. Nevertheless, she functions as a muse who opposes elegy—hence the term “anti-elegy.”<sup>7</sup>

The name *Canidia* could originate from the Latin adjective *canus* (“white,” “gray”), which harks back to elegiac depictions of women, especially beautiful women.<sup>8</sup> If Horace indeed works with this etymology, he creates both irony and tension. Canidia's name may suggest beauty, but she is not beautiful. Although her name may call back to elegiac muses, she does not represent one. Horace thus creates a tension between this etymological connection and Canidia's witchy characteristics.

Horace chooses Canidia's name to establish her role *in conflict* with elegy and beauty. This can be explained by observing Catullus, who uses the word *candida*, a derivative of *canus*, to describe his muses. He even deifies his beloved elegiac muse, Lesbia, when he refers to her as *candida diva* (Catullus LXVIIIa.70).<sup>9</sup> Catullus also uses *candidus* to refer to figures associated with love and lovely women.<sup>10</sup> This connection to love contrasts nicely with Horace's use of a *canus* derivative.<sup>11</sup> Horace immortalizes Canidia within his poetry, but does not deify or praise her, except in a lie (*Epode* 17).

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7. Another appropriate description of Canidia would be “the muse of iambic poetry,” though this term does not fully capture Horace's project. Throughout the *Epodes*, Horace shows that more masculine men write bucolic or iambic poetry, while more feminine men spend their time with elegiac mistresses. Horace separates himself from these softer poets when he directly attacks them and their mistresses.

8. George Davis Chase, “The Origin of Roman Praenomina,” *HSCP* 8 (1897): 122.

9. Caroline A. Perkins, “The Figure of Elegy in *Amores* 3.1: Elegy as *Puella*, Elegy as *Poeta*, *Puella* as *Poeta*,” *CW* 104 (2011): 324.

10. John W. Zarker, “Lesbia's Charms,” *CJ* 68 (1972–1973): 112.

11. Horace uses a *canus* derivative to refer to Maecenas his patron as “shining Maecenas” (*candide Maecenas*, *Epode* 14.5). Horace also debuts Canidia in Maecenas's garden. Such connectivity underscores Horace's manipulation of this term. Writing iambic poetry tortures Horace and he discloses that Maecenas requested that he do it (*Epode* 14.5). Perhaps Horace connects these two figures because they both have the power to compel him to do or feel something. Although Horace enjoys writing poetry, he does not like iambic poetry, but Maecenas continually asks him when he will be done with his poetry. As his patron, Maecenas funds Horace's expenditures and thus has the power to compel him to do things, like engaging his disgusting muse Canidia. Canidia fuels Horace's inspirations and has the power to compel him to write about subject matter that he does not enjoy. He illustrates how they both compel him against his will to further show his disgust with Canidia.

Canidia represents a different kind of *candida* that elegiac poets do not seem to use. Tibullus, a Golden Age elegiac poet, hopes that his elegiac muse, Neaera, “may be happy and that [her] fate may be shining” (*sis felix et sint candida fata tua*, *Elegy* III.VI.30). At the beginning of the same poem, Tibullus refers to personified Liber as *candide* (*Elegy* III.VI.1), connecting this figure to Neaera. Throughout his poetry, Tibullus uses *candida* to refer to its religious significance.<sup>12</sup> He deems it a term that is good enough to describe his mistress.<sup>13</sup> Propertius, another Golden Age elegiac poet, also uses this same word to describe the complexion of his own mistress, demonstrating its long-standing position within the elegiac world.<sup>14</sup> Canidia breaks from this tradition and does not mirror the shining, beautiful muses other poets interact with.

An elegiac mistress must also be *formosa*, or shapely. For instance, Catullus differentiates his Lesbia from Quintia, another elegiac mistress, when he states that he finds Lesbia *formosa*, but not Quintia, though other individuals do (Catullus LXXXVI.1, 5).<sup>15</sup> This word spans other elegiac poets’ works, as Propertius uses it to refer to the natural, beautiful curvature of a woman.<sup>16</sup> Tibullus also applies the same term to his Delia when describing her feet (*Elegy* I.V.24).

While other elegiac women all have *forma*, Canidia does not. Horace describes her “withered breasts” (*mammae putres*, *Epode* 8.7) and “soft belly” (*venterque mollis*, *Epode* 8.9). He contrasts her entirely lacking *forma* with an elegiac muse. Not only does Canidia not have the key characteristic of an elegiac muse, she has the exact opposite of it. Not once does Horace refer to her as *formosa*—he shows only how she may have *canus* in her name; however, she embodies none of its necessary characteristics. She is “horrible to look at” (*horrendas adspectu*, *Serm.* I.8.26), though her name etymologically suggests that she would resemble a beautiful goddess more than an ugly hag.

Canidia differs much in appearance from Pyrrha, the beautiful elegiac muse in Horace’s *Carmen*, but they serve a similar purpose. Pyrrha represents

12. See “*candidus*” in *A Latin Dictionary*, comp. Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1879), 277, where *candida* can refer exclusively to goddesses, showing a connection to divine and reinforcing the earlier point made about the deification of Lesbia.

13. Joan Booth and Robert Maltby, “Light and Dark: Play on *Candidus* and Related Concepts in the Elegies of Tibullus,” *Mnemosyne*, Fourth Series 58 (2005): 124–32.

14. R. O. A. M. Lyne, “Propertius and Tibullus: Early Exchanges,” *ClQ* 48 (1998): 542.

15. When *formosa* applies to a woman in Catullus, she becomes worthy of elegy and elevated above other women—see Zarker, “Lesbia’s Charms,” 112.

16. Archibald W. Allen, “Notes on Propertius i.2 and i.8,” *CP* 45 (1950): 36. *Formosa* appears to define the elegiac mistress’s capacity to be attractive—see Konstantinos P. Nikoloutsos, “Beyond Sex: The Poetics and Politics of Pederasty in Tibullus 1.4,” *Phoenix* 61 (2007): 60.

an ideal elegiac mistress: “[Now] the trusting boy enjoys your goldenness, he hopes you will always be available, always affectionate, not knowing of the deceitful breeze” (*quin nunc te fruitur credulus aurea, / qui semper vacuum, semper amabilem / sperat, nescius aurae / fallacis*, *Odes* I.5.9–12). Pyrrha exerts power or magic over the person she attracts, deceiving him into thinking that she will always be a golden mistress. The initial rush of her presence blinds the poet, but she quickly departs as soon as she grows tired of him. Horace hoists Pyrrha up as an archetype of elegiac mistresses: beautiful, charming, attractive, but also deceitful. Her appearance does not resemble her personality. Catullus also understands this idea when he says that “it befits her to write on the wind and swift water” (*dicit: sed mulier cupido quod dicit amanti, / in vento et rapida scriber oportet aqua*, Catullus LXX.3–4). Both Horace and Catullus use wind imagery to show how fickle and changing the elegiac mistress is. While Canidia does not look like an elegiac mistress or behave like one, she, Pyrrha, and the unnamed woman in Catullus (presumably Lesbia) all deceive men. Pyrrha and Lesbia do it through their charm—Canidia, however, relies on her magic to enjoy the same success.

### CANIDIA THE WITCH

Horace plays on the Greco-Roman tradition of witchcraft to formulate Canidia. He develops her by harking back to infamous Grecian witches—Medea, Hecate, and Circe. Each of these witches enjoys some notoriety regarding her deadly methods. While Medea relies heavily on potion making to kill her enemies,<sup>17</sup> Circe engages in both spell work and potion making,<sup>18</sup> and Hecate prefers to involve herself in the affairs of men by using her personality.<sup>19</sup> Canidia does not resemble just one of these witches, but all of them.

Canidia exceeds Greek witches in ugliness. While traditional classical depictions of Medea, Hecate, and Circe render these women as beautiful goddesses or as “an aspect of the goddess,”<sup>20</sup> Horace’s Canidia is completely different. As previously explored, her name generates both irony and tension—her ironic ugliness has separated her from both muses and witches, all her beautiful predecessors.

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17. Charles Segal, “Black and White Magic in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*: Passion, Love, and Art,” *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics*, Third Series 9 (2002): 7.

18. Hugh Parry, “Circe and the Poets: Theocritus IX.35–36,” *Illinois Classical Studies* 12 (1987): 7–8.

19. Patricia A. Marquardt, “A Portrait of Hecate,” *AJP* 102 (1981): 247–49.

20. Nancy Tuana, “Medea: With the Eyes of the Lost Goddess,” *Sound* 68 (1985): 254.

Scholars have long compared Canidia to Medea, which would suggest that Canidia's magic pales in comparison to Medea's deathly spells.<sup>21</sup> However, even if one makes this comparison, Canidia's witchcraft greatly overpowers Medea's because she shows cruel creativity beyond that of other witches. Medea's magic consists of patterns—she employs the same strategies over and over again as they are successful. Canidia experiments with a variety of different types of magic, including attempting to steal livers, creating love potions, controlling people, and watching a young boy starve to death.<sup>22</sup> She prolongs pain and torture, while Medea swiftly disposes of her enemies for her own personal gain. Medea's motivation stems from her desire to punish those who harm her, performing magic on a personal level. Canidia's magic appears more random than Medea's, and her motivations do not receive much attention at all. Perhaps we can attribute this to Euripides's psychological interests,<sup>23</sup> but Horace also consciously separates her from the Grecian tradition to emphasize the style and reach of her magic.

Medea, an earlier witch, seeks *only* to destroy, not to influence—she's hell-bent on obliterating those she dislikes and whomever may stand in her way, much like Circe turning men into pigs (Homer, *Od.* 10.212–307). Their motivation is contained within their sexual desires and their lack of fulfillment,<sup>24</sup> so these earlier witches seem to be internal, introspective, and emotional creatures. Meanwhile, Canidia, a much later witch, ensnares Horace through her magic for the whole of the *Epodes*, inspiring him to write poetry that he does

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21. See Meredith Prince, "Canidia Channels Medea: Rereading Horace's *Epode* 5," *CW* 106 (2013): 610. An elementary understanding of witchcraft's evolution produces such an idea. But since witchcraft differed so much between Canidia's and Medea's times, their magic would obviously be different (see Barbette Stanley Spaeth, "From Goddess to Hag: The Greek and the Roman Witch in Classical Literature," in *Daughters of Hecate: Women and Magic in the Ancient World*, ed. Kimberly B. Stratton with Dayna S. Kalleres [New York: Oxford University Press, 2014], 41–70). Comparing their magic in this way is inaccurate because Canidia inherits the Medean magic, but since the definition of magic has changed over time, she naturally practices it in an expanded context.

22. When Canidia buries the small boy in *Epode* 17, she performs a magical ritual. This is evidenced by the boy's initial plea as he gives himself to her magic and describes how she has the power to use spells (*Epode* 17.1–7). He also undergoes physical transformations because of her potions (17.22–23) and declares that he no longer denies magic (17.27–29). This scene thus contains magical elements and may even hark back to Horace's *Sermo* (I.8) where Canidia steals herbs from Maecenas's garden.

23. Monica Silveira Cyrino, "Sex, Status and Song: Locating the Lyric Singer in the Actors' Duets of Euripides," *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica*, New Series 60 (1998): 82–83. Euripides pays special attention to the emotions and psychological status of particularly female choral characters. This is evident as he discusses Medea.

24. Our perspective on earlier witches's focus on sexual desire may have developed during the Christian era, but evidence exists for this view within the classical sphere as well—see Margaret Denike, "The Devil's Insatiable Sex: A Genealogy of Evil Incarnate," *Hypatia* 18, no. 1 (2003): 27; and Spaeth, "From Goddess to Hag," 41–70.

not wish to write. In this way, her magic clearly succeeds as she continually mystifies him. He would not even be writing about her if she did not inspire him to do so. Later witches therefore appear to be much more concerned with the external—seeking money, fame, power, or influence over another person. Unlike earlier witches, later witches' magic is not an external display of an internal struggle but rather a manifestation of them seeking what is external. Though Watson says Canidia's magic is "vain, ineffectual, and pretentious," such is the case only if one considers the magic Horace describes, not the magic he presides over and invents.<sup>25</sup>

To this end, Horace introduces a new kind of witch—one who, while in close connection with her literary predecessors, goes beyond the mark and develops the need to control and manipulate for sport, not just for sexual gratification. Magic changes over time and does not involve a specific archetype, even though early witches often fit this mold. There are distinct forms of magic that require a different practitioner. While Medea, Circe, and even Hecate are beautiful and delicate creatures, Canidia is a hag, more animal-like, disgusting.<sup>26</sup> Their physical differences separate them because she does not fit the practitioner archetype of the past. This description of Canidia begins early in the *Sermones* and continues throughout the *Epodes*, offering some liberty for the rest of the *Epodes*.

Horace mentions hags in *Epodes* 8 and 12 with sexual appetites and senile appearances similar to Canidia and the Roman witch archetype—these unnamed women could potentially be our central muse Canidia, as they resemble her in both appearance and attitude. They bark at him, insisting that his performance does not satisfy them, suggesting that a bucolic poet<sup>27</sup> would do so more (*Epode* 12). Horace suggests that his poetic intercourse with these women does not result in the elegiac poetry that he craves, but instead becomes as rough and withered as Canidia herself. The *Epodes* never become elegiac but stay consistently iambic throughout, which suggests that the muse remains Canidia throughout the entirety of *Epodes* because she embodies the characteristics of iambic poetry. And yet she differs from her literary predecessors in a multitude of ways, not only in appearance but in goals and practice.

25. Lindsay C. Watson, *A Commentary on Horace's Epodes* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press: 2003), 182.

26. Spaeth, "From Goddess to Hag," 41–70.

27. Horace names Amyntas of Cous in *Epode* 12. Vergil mentions Amyntas in his *Eclogues*, referring to him as a very good bucolic poet (*Ecl.* 2.35–73, 3.66–67, 5.8–19, 10.37–77). He makes an appearance in Theocritus in a similar fashion (Theocritus, *Id.* 7). We do not know whether he existed as a real poet, but the thought here is intriguing. While he does not write iambic poetry (at least to our knowledge), he still breaks from the elegiac tradition, which allows him to be masculine enough to handle a muse like Canidia.



While we must be careful not to assume that Canidia's magic is *not* of the same cloth as Medea's, Circe's, and Hecate's (since she is directly connected to these witches), Horace does differentiate her by focusing on the power that she lords over him, the poet.

### CANIDIA IN THE *SERMONES*

The *Sermones*, a series of satirical works by Horace, introduce Canidia in *Sermo* I.8. She is positioned in the Garden of Maecenas, a *locus amoenus*. She and her companion Sagana, another witch in the *Sermones*, enter it with the intent to steal herbs for their witchcraft as Priapus, a Roman god of fertility, is protecting the garden.

Maecenas, who was Horace's patron, had earlier remodeled a graveyard into these gardens. Platner describes this action as "transforming this unsavoury region [from the graveyard] into a beautiful promenade. . . . [These] gardens were near those of Lamia."<sup>28</sup> The transformation suggests that Maecenas's infiltration beautifies, making one wonder what happens when Canidia invades this same garden, "converted from a plague spot into a place of beauty."<sup>29</sup> Horace mentions this garden in *Odes* III.29.12, contrasting its beauty to "the smoke, splendor, and din of Rome" (*fumum et opes strepitumque Romae*). It can also be viewed in contrast to the lair of Lamia the legendary Roman child eater, as will be examined later in this section. Although someone within the garden could still see Rome's smoggy fog and potentially even the lair of Lamia, it protected them from that negativity—until Canidia came.

Even though Maecenas thought he transformed the space, it remained a liminal space between life and death.<sup>30</sup> Despite its loveliness, the garden had come from a graveyard. The life of the new flowers budding under Priapus's auspices is juxtaposed with Canidia, who ushers in a tension between life and death. Maecenas attempts to cover all the remaining graveyard elements with the beauty of flowers and new life, but underneath lurk connections with death. Such deathly elements attract Canidia to the garden previously invaded by Maecenas's infiltration.

Priapus, as guardian of the garden and god of fertility, clearly represents life, while conniving and liver-stealing Canidia represents death. Horace constructs a satirical battle between the two as she invades his space. She and Sagana invoke Hecate and Tisiphone, a witch and a Fury unmistakably

28. Samuel Ball Platner, *A Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome*, rev. Thomas Ashby (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1929), 269.

29. Ellen Churchill Semple, "Ancient Mediterranean Pleasure Gardens," *Geographical Review* 19 (1929): 438.

30. Paule, *Canidia*, 37.

connected with death, as they scour the garden to “gather bones and harmful herbs” (*ossa legant herbasque nocentis*, *Serm.* I.8.22). Horace makes a direct reference to the garden’s past while also suggesting that harmful herbs lurk there between the beautiful flowers.

The collection of harmful herbs also suggests that one of Canidia’s hobbies is potion making and that she intends to inflict harm. Her magic is not simply creating love potions; she concocts potions with the capacity to injure, maim, harm, or even kill. Horace sets her apart from other witches through this development of her cruelty. Even within a garden, Canidia sniffs out the harmful herbs.

Horace’s placement of Canidia here suggests something revelatory about her. Even though he as poet is *vates* (“prophet”), it is *Canidia* who reveals a key aspect about how someone could defeat her. Staying true to the constraints of the genre he works in, Horace has Priapus—who symbolizes life, as he is connected to fertility—expel a loud noise, which scatters the witches. Horace could be inserting himself as Priapus in this particular scene,<sup>31</sup> and if he indeed represents the poet, then this accidental instance of nature becomes even more interesting. Horace becomes the safeguard of nature while Canidia sneaks into the garden—the *locus amoenus*, his poetry—and he scrambles to expel her, realizing his artificial methods are not effective enough. What eventually does stop her is not artificial but natural. Neither Priapus nor his skill and honor can do anything about the witches in the garden—only an accidental fart drives the scene forward.<sup>32</sup> This scene functions as commentary on the natural versus the unnatural. Canidia reveals the concealed potential perversion of nature lurking within the garden, while he (Horace/Priapus/the poet) learns that only nature can overcome this perversion.

Horace also discusses Canidia in the context of a dinner party in *Sermo* II.8. She is connected with human sacrifice, deepening her witchy conviction. There she morphs into a supernatural creature who first interacts with nature at its most basic level and then perverts it for her witchy purposes. He only briefly comments on her: “[As] if Canidia had breathed on them, in a worse manner than African snakes” (*velut illis / Canidia adflasset peior serpentibus Afris*, *Serm.* II.8.94–95). He clarifies her connection to nature when he compares her to an African snake—but again she goes beyond the natural with devastating consequences.

31. Martha Habash, “Priapus: Horace in Disguise?,” *CJ* 94 (1999): 285.

32. William S. Anderson, “The Form, Purpose, and Position of Horace’s *Satire* I,8,” *AJP* 93 (1972): 8.

The purpose of mentioning Canidia in the midst of a dinner party seems evasive, but Freudenburg notes that “this is the *only* place in extant Latin literature where the salt and barley is mentioned without specific reference to the *mola salsa* . . . sprinkled on sacrificial victims.”<sup>33</sup> By the time that Horace was writing, the only acceptable form of human sacrifice was killing unchaste Vestal Virgins in order to restore order to the universe.<sup>34</sup> His connection of Canidia with human sacrifice indicates it to be an unnaturally cruel and perverted phenomenon.

Greco-Roman society did not generally approve of human sacrifice, even within mythology, because of its cruelty.<sup>35</sup> The sacrifice of Iphigenia was not well received even in the fifth century BCE, when Aeschylus refers to her as “sister, cruelly sacrificed” (*Cho.* 241). Athena swoops in to save Iphigenia by performing a magical metamorphosis, which shows that magic surpasses human sacrifice, even when society did not necessarily approve of it either. Those who did perform human sacrifice often connected it to the supernatural, as a way of pleasing the gods, but no traces of that notion exist within the Horatian canon. Canidia performs human sacrifice not only for sport, but for elevating herself above the supernatural. Her methods include using natural ingredients, extracted from beautiful places but distorted from their original purpose. By strengthening this connection to human sacrifice, Horace elevates Canidia; not only does she become more venomous than a natural creature, she transcends social norms and natural law and participates in nasty affairs.

Horace more subtly develops this same view of Canidia by placing her in the Garden of Maecenas in *Sermo* 1.8, which is in close proximity to Lamia’s lair. Diodorus Siculus describes Lamia as a beautiful woman who incidentally happens to devour children (XX.41), whereas Horace portrays Canidia as a ghastly hag who happens to enjoy human sacrifice. By the first century CE (shortly after Horace’s lifetime), Lamia was seen more as a seductress who used her sexuality to lure and eat young men.<sup>36</sup> This effectively makes Canidia the double of Lamia.

33. Kirk Freudenburg, “Canidia at the Feast of Nasidienus (Hor. S. 2.8.95),” *TAPA* 125 (1995): 214.

34. Celia E. Schultz, “The Romans and Ritual Murder,” *JAAR* 78 (2010): 518.

35. Andrejs Petrowski and Bert Klein, “Iphigenia,” in *Brill’s New Pauly Supplements I – Volume 4: The Reception of Myth and Mythology*, ed. Maria Moog-Grünwald, <http://www.brillonline.nl/entries/brill-s-new-pauly-supplements-i-4/iphigenia-e526970?s.num=0> (accessed May 3, 2019). In section B.1.1, “[Reception in] Literature and philosophy,” Petrowski and Klein discuss how human sacrifices were cruel and “subjected to ethical reflection.”

36. Leonhard Schmitz, “Lamia,” *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology*, ed. William Smith, 3 vols. (London: John Murray, 1880), 2:713–14.

Both women are smelly, supernatural, serpentine creatures who are shunned and feared by the rest of society. When Horace describes Canidia as having breath or venom worse than a snake (cf. *Serm.* II.8.95) and places her in close proximity to Lamia's lair, he creates a connection between the two because of their serpentine characteristics. Both creatures disgust those who see them. Horace shows that Canidia resembles Lamia in terms of reception and disgust. However, even though they are disgusting creatures, both possess some level of intrigue. There is something about the unnatural and supernatural that engages the human mind. We cannot comprehend or even stop this force in a deliberate manner—it can only be ended with an accidental action, which happens in *Sermo* I.8 and *Epode* 17.

The comparison of Lamia to Canidia (and that of Hecate to Lamia)<sup>37</sup> creates a stronger witch than previously conceived. The infamous witches in antiquity—Lamia, Medea, Hecate, and Circe—all find their way into Horace's poetry when he attempts to describe Canidia. She embodies characteristics of each, but he adds another layer of Roman cruelty to develop her more fully.

In the *Sermones*, Horace shows Canidia to have supreme supernatural powers that stem from her willingness to pervert nature for her wicked deeds. Horace establishes early that when interacting with Canidia, one must cease and desist from artificial methods because nature ultimately stops her. This proves particularly interesting for understanding his interactions with her throughout the *Epodes*.

### CANIDIA IN THE EPODES

The concept of “poetic intercourse” rings especially true in Horace's *Epodes* as he discusses how he has sex with nasty women like Canidia. Procreation is natural, since life comes from it, whereas Canidia manipulates nature in order to destroy it. Her magic differs from her literary predecessors because it is of “unprecedented cruelty,” which is evident when she engages in human sacrifice in *Epode* 5.<sup>38</sup> She collects materials in preparation for such activities, but she also serves to disgust the reader, especially when contrasted with the central character Priapus.<sup>39</sup>

Canidia's perversion of nature is highlighted in the *Epodes*. In *Epode* 17, Canidia and her fellow hags capture an unsuspecting boy to steal his liver for

37. Erwin F. Cook, *The Odyssey in Athens: Myths of Cultural Origins*, 2nd ed. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 89.

38. C. E. Manning, “Canidia in the *Epodes* of Horace,” *Mnemosyne*, New Series 23 (1970): 399.

39. E. Adelaide Hahn, “*Epodes* 5 and 17, *Carmina* 1.16 and 1.17,” *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 70 (1939): 213.

their magical purposes. Horace describes how she buries the boy alive and starves him to death so that she can collect his liver. Despite his protests and curses, which conclude the poem, no savior attempts to rescue the boy, leading the reader to assume that he dies.

The setting here is somewhat similar to that in *Sermo* 1.8. It takes place in a graveyard near the Esquiline, a Roman hill,<sup>40</sup> and is centered on the interaction between a male figure and the witches. There is a shift from a *locus amoenus* to a *locus horridus*, implied by the sparse details given by the sacrificial victim referring to a dark forest graveyard. This transition in scenery is due not only to genre but also to the perception of Canidia. In the *Sermones*, she was somewhat silly. She ran off cackling and did not exhibit numerous monstrous characteristics. Here Horace tries to portray her as evil while staying true to the basic elements he included in *Sermones*. The audience must laugh at her evil because she leaves the little boy in a hole in the ground for days and just stares at him; Horace's attempt at comedy is highly ineffective.

Bearing this in mind, Horace could be the little boy in this *Epode*,<sup>41</sup> and, if he does parallel both the little boy and Priapus, a discussion on victimhood is necessary. Canidia entraps this boy, and he eventually resigns to the fact that he will die by her hand. Looming over him as he stands in the hole, she awaits his starvation, intending to use his liver for a love potion (*Epode* 5.30–40). This type of excessive cruelty is satirically contrived and is meant to intrigue Horace's audience. Instead of simply killing the boy in a quick and easy fashion, Horace's witch prefers to lord over him for many days and watch as the torture and torment unfold. While her magic may not be efficient, it certainly has an element of cruelty previously unseen in typical depictions of witches. Additionally, she places the rotten food in front of him, so that his eyes will rot away as well (of course Horace writes this to show the absurdity of the situation). While she intends to inflict as much cruelty and pain on him as possible, she ends up creating a scene that is laughable.

Canidia still displays her uniquely Roman cruelty, but Horace undercuts it by showing the lengths she will go to in order to appear cruel. Circe's transformation of the crew members into pigs was relatively quick and somewhat painless (Homer, *Od.* 10.229–40). Even Medea's infanticide did not drag itself out,

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40. Marguerite Johnson, "Witches in Time and Space: *Satire* 1.8, *Epode* 5 and Landscapes of Fear," *Herm* 192 (2012): 13–14, makes the interesting connection between the placement of the Gardens of Maecenas and this graveyard. They appear to be in close proximity to each other. This idea is particularly useful because it strengthens the amount of parallels between the two scenes and solidifies the importance of discussing them in relation to each other.

41. See Hahn, "*Epodes* 5 and 17, *Carmina* 1.16 and 1.17," 213–30.

no matter how disturbing and off-putting it was.<sup>42</sup> Horace makes Canidia even crueler than these witches because she prolongs the experience of her magic. He depicts her as a bumbling, stumbling witch who wants to have sex with whomever she considers to be the best performer (*Epode* 12.14–20). She is not the delicate muse with whom he falls in love and can write quaint dainty verses about, and she derives pleasure from sex and snatching livers. Regardless of how disgusting she is or how much she insults him, Horace still draws something from her that he does not draw from anyone else. The tension in their relationship represents him struggling with her magical influences over the course of a collection of iambic poems he does not want to write.

In *Epode* 5, Canidia begins her liver-harvesting process in order to concoct a love potion for a man she wishes to have. She presumably gives the potion to Horace, because from that point forward he writes about the hags with whom he has sex, although he resents it. His affair with a ghastly woman continues as he cannot break the spell and she continually overpowers him. This shows that her love potion definitely worked but could not overpower her witchy attributes. She is such a witch that, even under the influence of a potion, Horace recognizes her magic but cannot seem to halt the affair. Her magic gets the job done, but he longs to show a more disgusting and disturbing witch that ever before—a witch whose inner nature cannot be hidden, even though she may cast spells and cook potions.

Horace's recognition that her magic works and that one must submit to her occurs again in this poem. The little boy (Horace) echoes this point and recognizes a solution: "When I have been ordered to perish and breathed my last, I will haunt you nightly as a Fury" (*Ubi perire iussus exspiravero, / nocturnus occuram Furor, Epode* 5.91–92). Much like Priapus, the boy realizes that there is nothing that he can do presently to stop Canidia from working her terror upon him, but he also recognizes that he will have time to take revenge on her later. His opportunity eventually comes in *Epode* 17. Her influence remains strong over him, but the bonds of death, a natural occurrence, will ultimately grant him victory over her. Horace captures the witch in the end, doing so through a complex narrative, which itself empowers him to restrict her witchcraft.

Canidia makes her final appearance in *Epode* 17, where she and Horace engage in direct dialogue with one another. He begins by supplicating to her and submitting to her will, and then she responds sarcastically. This response

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42. Nicholas A. E. Kalospyros, "The Greek Vision of a Female Infanticidal: The Euripidean Medea and the Murderess of Alexandros Papadiamantis," *Parnassos (Ιαπωνιασσός)* 49, no. 1 (2007): 65–86.

ultimately closes off the poem, unlike the little boy/Horace's final remarks in *Epode* 5. Furthermore, *Epode* 17 finishes the collection as compiled by Horace. Even though she may have the last word, we must take caution and remember that Horace writes the poems and reports her words. Although it may at first seem like she has completely overpowered the poet, a closer look at Horace's plea and the last lines of the poem proves otherwise.

Horace's plea does not satisfy Canidia. He offers to play a song for her, lying about his feelings for her: "[Or] if you wish my lyre as a liar to sound forth: you chaste, you good woman, you walk as a golden star among the stars" (*sive mendaci lyra / voles sonari, tu pudica, tu proba / perambulabis astra sidus aureum, Epode* 17.39–41). Canidia reacts to this by asserting that it was better if he did not give this plea at all (*Epode* 17.53–55).

Her ghastly appearance contributes to her witchy powers. If she wished, she could concoct a potion that allowed her to look more desirable. But her deliberate choice to remain disgusting means she enjoys her appearance for some reason. Another possible and intriguing interpretation of this section involves her inability to finish off a man. Horace allocates certain levels of power to her, even engages in poetic intercourse with her, which allows him to be at least somewhat vulnerable. Despite doing this, he also does not allow her to overpower him. Her disgusting and ghastly appearance prevents him from being completely overpowered by her. Unlike elegiac poets who encounter the problem of falling deeply in love with their muse, Horace's Canidia disgusts him so much that he does not run the risk of such a dilemma. As aforementioned, she gives someone a love potion and this sparks a level of infatuation with her, but critically her appearance prevents him from loving her truly. While a potential detriment, this certainly can be seen as an asset because it separates her from the realm of elegiac muses.

While Canidia may disgust Horace, she possesses a remarkable sense of self-confidence that allows her to mock his sexual prowess (or lack thereof) and assert a measure of dominance over him. Throughout the *Epodes*, the unnamed hags, all of whom he cannot seem to stop having sex with, lack physical beauty—which means that there must be something else about them that intrigues him. This could come from a love potion or from her intelligence. Nevertheless, Horace establishes this dominance over himself, only to undercut it in his poetry.

Since Horace reports Canidia's words, we must remember that he also has the power to manipulate her and her ideas. She exists within his work as his creation. While he subjects himself to her because of her magic, ultimately she is the puppet and can be molded into whomever he pleases. She ends the

*Epodes* with this: “[Am] I supposed to cry over the failure of my doing art on you?” (*plorem artis in te nil agentis exitus*, *Epode* 17.81). Despite her magic working perfectly on him for a series of poems, his control over her constitutes his ultimate victory. While she may have the last word, that last word comes through Horace.

Canidia is thus woefully and deliberately unfinished. In *Sermo* 1.8, she scurried away without fully achieving her purpose. In *Epode* 5, she never officially concludes her liver-harvesting. And here in *Epode* 17.81, she doesn’t finish Horace off. He offers a glimpse into her cruelty but never consummates it because of his ultimate control over her. She may have power to change his appearance (*Epode* 17.21–23) and his feelings for her, but she is not able to control him forever.

## CONCLUSION

Throughout the *Epodes* and *Sermones*, Horace constructs a uniquely Roman witch. She surpasses the witchcraft of Medea, Hecate, Circe, and Lamia, although he satirizes her particular brand of evil. While other witches depended on internal motivations to forward their witchcraft, Canidia presents a unique evil as she relies on external motivations to accomplish the same thing. Her witchcraft ends up being both impersonal and personal. In the *Epodes*, Horace engages in poetic intercourse with her. Both strive to overpower each other: she engages in liver snatching; he in insulting. At the end of the *Epodes*, they have their final encounter together. Although she has the last word, he reports them, showing that he ultimately overpowers her. His relationship with her shows that he constructed her as the meta-muse of anti-elegy.