“Canidia in the foreground of the defixiones: Curse tablets and Roman satire.” Colloquium Atticum, Universität Hamburg, 15 June 2012.
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Texts from The Latin Library (www.thelatinlibrary.com). Translations are my own.

1) Horace Epodes 3.7–8: an malas | Canidia tractauit dapes? “Or is it that Canidia has handled this evil meal?”

2) Horace Epodes 5: the speaker first mentions “Canidia, hair fastened with little vipers and head disheveled” (Canidia, breuibis illigata uiperis | crinibus et incomptum caput, lines 15–16); later “savage/wild Canidia, nibbling with a dark tooth an untrimmed fingernail” (inresectum saeua dente liuido | Canidia rodens pollicem, 47–48); the speaker calls the four women “impious” (inpias, 84)

3) Horace Epodes 5: the puer describes Canidia as a “step-mother” (nouerca, line 9) and “hunted beast” (petita ferro belua, 10); and calls her and her compatriots “vile old women” (obscaenas anus, 98)

4) Horace Epodes 17.81: plorem artis in te nil agentis exitus? “Shall I lament my skills’ providing no means against you / destruction for you?”

5) Horace Sermones 1.8.23–26:
uidi egomet nigra succinctam uadere palla
Canidiam pedibus nudis passoque capillo,
cum Sagana maiore ululantem: pallor utrasque
fecerat horrendas aspectu.

I myself saw come in, clothed in a black cloak,
Canidia, feet bare and hair loosed,
ululating along with her elder, Sagana; paleness
had made each of them horrifying to look upon.

6) Horace Sermones 1.8.47–50 (the poem’s final lines):
at illae currere in Vrbem.
Canidiae dentis, altum Saganae caliendrum
excidere atque herbas atque incantata lacertis
uincula cum magno risuque iocoque uideres.

And those women ran back to the City.
Canidia’s teeth, Sagana’s tall wig
falling out/off, and also the herbs and the enchanted chains falling
from your arms—this you would’ve seen with great laughter and humor.

7) Horace Sermones 2.1.48:
Canidia Albuci, quibus est inimica, uenenum [minitatur]

“Canidia threatens her enemies with the poison that finished off Albucius”

8) Horace Sermones 2.8.94–95:
ut nihil omnino gustaremus, uelut illis
Canidia adflasset, peior serpentibus Afris.

[We fled our dinner-host.] so that we would taste nothing altogether, as if
Canidia—worse than African snakes—had blown upon them [the foods].
9) Horace *Odes* 1.16.1: *o matre pulchra filia pulchrior*  
“O daughter more beautiful than her beautiful mother”

10) **Name-associations with Canidia:** *canis* (“dog,” cf. satire and iambic), *canities* (“old age”); *canere* (“to sing” poetry or a magical spell);  
_Canicula_ (Sirius, the Dog Star)

11) *Sermones* 1.8.1: *olim truncus eram ficulnus, inutile lignum*  
“Once upon a time, I was a figwood trunk, useless wood”


```plaintext
scalpere terram  
They began to scratch at the earth

unguibus et pullam diuellere mordicu agnam  
with their nails and to tear apart a baby lamb with their teeth,
coeperunt; cruor in fossam confusus, ut inde they could draw out souls of the dead to answer their questions.
manis elicerent animas responsa daturas.

lanea et effigies erat altera cerea: maior  
There were two figurines, one of wool and one of wax. The wool one was
30  
bigger, in order to imprison the smaller one with punishments.
lanea, quae poenis conpesceret inferiorem;  
The wax one stood like a suppliant, like it was about to perish in

30  
the manner of a slave. One woman invokes Hecate, the other

cerea suppliciter stabat, seru  
 savage Tisiphone. You would have seen snakes and hellhounds
ilibus ut quae  
wandering around, and the moon blushing to be a witness to these things

ut infernas errare canes Lunamque rubentem,  
and hiding behind the bigger tombs.…
35  
ne foret his testis, post magna latere sepulcra.

.................................

singula quid memorem, quo pacto alterna loquentes  
Why should I recount everything individually?—how, speaking in turn,
umbreae cum Sagana resonarint triste et acutum  
the shades/spirits sang gravely and shrilly with Sagana;
utque lupi barbam uarias cum dente colubrae  
and how they took a wolf’s beard along with the tooth of a multicolored snake
abdiderint furtim terris et imagine cerea  
and secretly hid it in the earth; and how the fire burned bigger
largior arserit ignis et ut non testis inultus  
with the wax image cast in; and how I—a witness not unavenged—
horruerim uoces furiarum et facta duarum? 40  
shuddered at the words and deeds of the two Furies?

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Works cited


