

Canidia at the Feast of Nasidienus (Hor. S. 2.8.95)*

Kirk Freudenburg
Ohio State University

In the final lines of Horace's *Sermones* 2.8, the guests at Nasidienus' feast take their leave abruptly, vengefully. Mounds of charred blackbirds and rumpless wood-pigeons remain steaming on the serving-tray, the finer qualities of these delicacies still (and always to remain) concealed:

tum pectore adusto
vidimus et merulas poni et sine clune palumbis,
suavis res, si non causas narraret earum et
naturas dominus; quem nos sic fugimusulti
ut nihil omnino gustaremus, velut illis
Canidia afflasset peior serpentibus Afris.

Then we saw blackbirds being served up with burnt breasts, and wood-pigeons without rumps; sweet things, were our host not going to regale us with their causes and innate properties.¹ We escaped him, thus avenging ourselves in tasting nothing at all, as though Canidia had breathed on them, she more foul than African snakes.

The conclusion is abrupt and open-ended, hardly a conclusion at all: there is no summing-up, no return to the opening conversation, no sentimental good-byes, no moral of the story. We are left only with the hint of snake-breath and the brooding specter of Canidia's witchery.

Scholarly opinion on the poem's final lines is every bit as inconclusive as the ending itself: some have suggested that Horace, like the jaded guests he por-

* I would like to thank Will Batstone, Denis Feeney, Sarah Johnston, and Christopher Rowe for reading this paper in draft. Their comments contributed greatly to its improvement. Thanks also to Sander Goldberg for sticking with this (somewhat speculative) piece, and to John Bodel and Martin Winkler for tough and helpful criticisms.

¹ The imperfect subjunctive in place of the pluperfect expresses either continuous action or a future likelihood in past time. See Woodcock §199. The guests made their escape just as Nasidienus was about to unveil the hidden qualities of his charred blackbirds and rumpless wood-pigeons. The terms *causas* and *naturas* suggest a connection between Nasidienus' gastronomic studies and Epicurean natural science; cf. Hor. S. 1.4.116, 2.4.45, Lucr. 1.25-26, 3.1070, 5.1185, etc., Verg. G. 2.490.

trays, was himself in a rush, preparing for bigger things now that the natural stream of his *Sermones* had run dry. Others, more plausibly, have drawn connections with the last-minute escape scenes of mime, taking this as evidence for satire's "moral ambivalence;" still others have suggested associations with the *conviva satur* of *S.* 1.1.119, reading the hasty retreat as a metaphor for the poet's retreat from the writing of satire.²

In spite of these efforts to draw something meaningful and programmatic out of the poem's final lines, the question of Canidia's role in all this remains unexplained: what does she, the amorous witch-hag of *Sermones* 1.8, *Epodes* 5 and 17, have to do with Nasidienus' dinner-party? Why is she brought in so late, unexpected and unannounced? And what can be the point of giving her such prominence in the book's last lines, Horace's last words as a satirist? As E. Oliensis rightly insists, her inclusion here is nothing short of "astonishing":

Her name breaks into the last line of Horace's last satire (*S.* 2.8.95) as suddenly as the banquet described in that poem breaks up, and Canidia actually speaks the closing lines of the book of *Epodes*. Canidia is thus a structural counterpart to Maecenas, who is invoked at the beginnings of both collections. (110)

Oliensis' explanation, excellent though it is, follows the standard procedure of those few critics who have thought it worthwhile to puzzle over Canidia's arrival in 2.8.³ Without exception, all have looked outside the poem in order to explain Canidia's role within it, variously suggesting that her name provides structural links with *Sermones* Book I, with *Sermones* 2.1, with *Epodes* 17, perhaps even repeating an "in-joke" concerning Canidia and bad food established in *Epodes* 3.⁴ All are "external" connections which, however provocative and useful, do nothing to make Canidia's appearance in *S.* 2.8 seem anything other than abrupt and artificial, a "satiric signature" that has everything to do with ending a book of poems but nothing to do with concluding or illuminating this particular poem.

Canidia's name provides structural links. No one seriously questions this. It is my contention, however, that her inclusion at the end of *S.* 2.8 can and

² Fraenkel 145. Rudd 222 says it is "structurally . . . the weakest ending in the book." For connections with mime, see Gowers 179, and Muecke 239; for the *conviva satur*, see Gowers 179, and Freudenburg 235.

³ Typical is Kiessling-Heinze: "Der Schlussvers gibt in überraschendster Weise, ähnlich wie 1, 120; 2, 134, H.' alter Freundin Canidia einen vernichtenden Hieb." True enough, but hardly illuminating. The remainder of the note treats the matter of snake-breath.

⁴ For connections with *Sermones* Book I, see Fraenkel 148, and Muecke 239; with *S.* 2.1, see Gowers 179; with *Epodes* 17, see Carrubba 42-3; with *Epodes* 3, see Baker 231.

must be read as an integral part of the feast-narrative which it concludes. Taken in this way, it sheds new light upon the relationship of Nasidienus to his guests and his unstated aims in feasting them so lavishly. I am suggesting, in a sense, that Oliensis' proposed link with *Epodes* 17 can and should be expanded, for it is clear that in the last epode not only does Canidia speak the last lines, but she plays an obvious role in the rest of the poem as well. The same, I think, can be said of her role in the last satire. *Sermones* 2.8, after all, is a poem about elaborate herbal concoctions, the careful manipulation of foods, wines, and sauces to inspire friendship and respect in the principal guest, the powerful and stand-offish Maecenas. Such a context neatly accommodates the metaphor of witchery at the poem's end, not merely as a structuring device, abruptly appended, but as an image naturally enmeshed with the narrative that produces it. I hope to show that, at least as early as lines 45-53 (and perhaps much earlier), there is a quasi-magical, incantational quality to the feast that Fundanius describes, as if, in his desperate attempt to win the *amor* of Maecenas, Nasidienus has come to resemble (in Fundanius' comic imagination) an amorous witch manipulating spells and potions to tame an unruly lover (exactly as Canidia in *Sermones* 1.8). The poem's final lines, drawing on this, make the comparison explicit; here all subtlety and innuendo are jettisoned in favor of an explicit metaphor comparing the host's latest concoctions to foods tainted by Canidia. The exposure of Nasidienus is thus complete. This is not to say that Horace's audience, with the help of this final comparison, will have "figured out" Nasidienus by poem's end (as if that were possible) or that this reading of the final lines excludes all others, solving most or all of the poem's numerous puzzles. As I hope to show, the note of witchery on which the poem ends has much more to do with opening up options for reading than with closing them off.

Allusions to witchcraft are sparse and unassuming at the outset of the poem. After Nasidienus' return in line 84 they intensify greatly in both number and transparency. Their net effect early on is only to nudge the reader's curiosity, to hint that there may be something slightly askew ("but what is it?") in Nasidienus' various culinary obsessions. Is there a hint of witchcraft, for example, in the host's insistence that honey-apples be picked under the light of a waning moon (*minorem ad lunam delecta*, 31-2)? The stipulation is easily ignored or shunted aside as so much bravado on Nasidienus' part (which it undoubtedly is). Yet, connections with ancient magic and with folk beliefs concerning the unstable potencies of certain natural agents suggest that the braggart's refinement may in this case possess a darker potential. Pliny *Nat.* 24.12, for example, relates that certain anonymous healers superstitiously believed that mistletoe had its full potency only "when gathered at the new moon, from

oak-wood, without iron" (*prima luna collectum e robore sine ferro*). Witches were thought to do their best work at night under the light of the moon (usually the full moon), and they too followed strict rules concerning when and how their herbs, extracts, or whatever were to be harvested.⁵ Immediately prior to his encounter with Canidia and Sagana in *Satires* 1.8, Priapus says of the witches on the Esquiline (*S.* 1.8.20-2):

has (sc. veneficas) nullo perdere possum
nec prohibere modo, simul ac vaga Luna decorum
protulit os, quin ossa legant herbasque nocentis.

As soon as the wandering moon has shown her lovely face, there's no way I can get rid of these witches or prevent them from collecting⁶ their bones and noxious herbs.

Equally suggestive is the Lucanian boar of lines 6-7, served (pretentiously here) as a mere appetizer. Nasidienus is careful to point out that the boar was "captured in a gentle, southerly breeze" (*leni fuit Austro captus*), an extreme stipulation, even by the standards of Apicius, the most finicky of all Roman cooks. Further, Trimalchio and the cooks of Greek and Roman New Comedy (with one notable exception) never insist on anything quite like this.⁷ Closest is Archestratus, who, though he might insist that the tastiest moray eel is caught in the Sicilian straits, nowhere stipulates that this eel be caught under the light of a waning moon, or that game is best taken when the winds are from a certain direction. For Nasidienus, however, attention to nature's many moods is a central obsession, and in his version of the cooking art, the cook pays strict attention to all such matters.⁸ He understands something of the world's hidden

⁵ Cf. Vergil *A.* 4.513-14 *falcibus et messae ad lunam quaeruntur aenis / pubentes herbae nigri cum lacte veneni*, and Ovid *Met.* 7.180-81 on Medea's incantation *postquam plenissima fulsit . . . luna*. For the magical powers of the waning moon, see *PGM* IV.2241-2358.

⁶ *Lego* is used for picking both apples and olives; cf. Cato *Agr.* 144.1, Prop. 2.32.39.

⁷ The exception is the braggart cook of Damoxenus' Σύντροφοι (Damoxenus fr. 2K-A). Like Catius in *S.* 2.4 and Nasidienus in *S.* 2.8, Damoxenus' cook is a student of Epicurus, and he applies his knowledge of natural phenomena to his studies of food and dining. He argues, for example, that "Nature is the first author of every skill" (ἡ φύσις πάσης τέχνης ἀρχέγονόν ἐστ', v.7-8), including his own cooking skill. The true Epicurean cook will understand "the difference between a horse-mackerel in winter and summer . . . for changes and movements create differences in foods" (αἱ μεταβολαὶ γὰρ αἱ τε κινήσεις . . . ἀλλοιώματα ἐν ταῖς τροφαῖς ποιοῦσι, 21-3). The language is a parody of Epicurean technical vocabulary; see Dohm 163-9, and above n. 1. It is likely that Horace draws on Damoxenus' Epicurean cook in creating Catius in 2.4 and Nasidienus in 2.8; see Lejay 446-7. The culinary prescripts of Catius and Nasidienus, however, go much farther than those of Damoxenus' cook in their obsessive attention to Nature's subtleties.

⁸ Catius, the novice Epicurean cook of *S.* 2.4, is equally attentive to Nature's rhythms and moods. Pseudo-Acro (ad *S.* 2.8.1), seeing the many characteristics shared by Catius and his

powers and is fully in tune with the larger rhythms and forces that steer the natural world, the cosmic variations making one apple redder than the next, one boar more tender than another. Moreover, his concern for nature extends even to the presentation of the meal. One sees this, for example, in the two principal courses of the feast, the boar and the eel. Both are presented whole and in a serene, natural setting: the boar served among roots and herbs (the things a boar feeds on in the wild), and the eel served in a briny sauce, set amid swimming prawns.

Even more suggestive than the presentation of the fish-course are the ingredients of the sauce (lines 45-53). Comparison with the sauce-recipes of Apicius shows that the uniqueness of this particular sauce stems from Nasidienus' peculiar choice of herbs, just as he claims in lines 51-2: *erucas viridis, inulas ego primus amaras / monstravi incoquere*.⁹ The specially chosen herbs were by reputation powerful stimulants, not normally used as flavoring agents. Apicius, in 468 recipes, never uses *inula* (elecampane), and he has no certain attested use of the leaves or stem of *eruca* (rocket), as Nasidienus prescribes in his recipe. Three times he calls for rocket seeds, and once for the "juice of rocket."¹⁰ In the recipe calling for *sucus erucae* Apicius is careful to point out that he intends the dish for those desiring sexual intercourse (*qui Veneris ostium quaerunt*), and it is clear that he believes similar stimulative and curative qualities to inhere in the *semen erucae*, a principal ingredient in his recipe for "relishes that aid digestion, stir hunger, and ward off ill health, disease, and all lack of energy" (*sales conditos ad digestionem, ad ventrem movendum, et omnes morbos et pestilentiam et omnia frigora prohibent generari*). As these recipes suggest, the rocket was best known not as a flavoring agent, but as a stimulant, especially an aphrodisiac, and nearly every reference to it elsewhere in Greek and Roman literature has something to do with the plant's presumed stimulative qualities. It appears, for example, in the garden of Simulus at *Moretum* 86 as "the rocket which recalls flagging lust" (*Venerem revocans eruca morantem*); Columella 10.109 suggests that rocket planted near the statue of Priapus is effective "in arousing sluggish husbands for love-making" (*excitet ut Veneri tardos eruca maritos*), and these are just two of many similar references in Greek and Roman literature attesting to the

alter-ego in *S.* 2.8, argues that the unnamed *auctor* from whom he takes his precepts is none other than Nasidienus.

⁹ Cf. especially the sauce recipes for *morena* at Apicius 10.2.1-6 = André recipes 449-454.

¹⁰ There is a discrepancy among the manuscripts of Apicius as to whether recipe 217 (André) calls for *eruca* or (more likely) *semen erucae*. Other recipes with rocket seeds are André recipes 29 and 337. For *sucus erucae*, see André recipe 308.

plant's presumed stimulative effects.¹¹ Similarly, elecampane (*inula*) was thought by the Romans to incite hunger and to ease various digestive ailments. (Cf. Porphyrio ad S. 2.2.44: *inula dicitur herba quae incocta aceto cruditis fastidium decutit*.) Lucretius 2.429-30 dwells on the peculiar capacity of elecampane *titillare sensus*, and Pliny *Nat.* 19.92 suggests that Julia Augusta, best known for her sexual indiscretions, included elecampane in her daily diet.¹² That these herbs were thought to induce sexual desire and other cravings was surely known to Nasidienus and to his guests. Already with the description of his sauce, one suspects a curious and menacing side to his peculiar brand of pleasure-mongering, for his herbs are more readily associated with love spells and erotic pharmacology than with a sauce served over fish (here an eel, notably pregnant, [*gravida*, 43]).

No one had a chance to taste the *pièce de résistance*: the tapestries fell and the fish bit the dust. Guests scrambled, the host cried, the mess was cleared away. Despite this setback, Nasidienus refuses to concede defeat. He returns in lines 84-5 "determined to emend fortune by means of art" (*ut arte emendaturus fortunam*), as if his culinary skill now possessed some mysterious potential to steer the larger forces at work in the universe.¹³ From this point on, things become increasingly bizarre, with dishes served at a frantic pace, each with its own dark, threatening potential: first there are the *discerpta membra gruis* served up on a gigantic *mazonomus*. The epithet *discerpta* ("torn to shreds") suggests that the crane was violently dismembered, not simply sliced up (the word is invariably violent, cf. *OLD discerpo* 1a). The same is true of the hares' shoulders in line 89, described as "wrenched off" (*avulsos*).¹⁴ The black-birds' breasts in line 90 have been "charred" or "burnt" (*adusto*) so as to be rendered inedible.¹⁵ No animal is served whole in the meal's final stages.¹⁶

¹¹ See also Mart. 3.75.3, Juv. 9.134, Parker 139-41 = *Priapea* 46.8, 47.7, Kyranides 1.5.15-18, Diosc. *Mat. Med.* 2.140. For the plant's use in inhibiting desire, see Winkler 81.

¹² Given these erotic associations, it is likely that *amaras*, the epithet of elecampane in line 51, would be heard as a pun on *amor*. The "bitter/love" pun was a favorite among Latin writers since Plautus; cf. Pl. *Cist.* 68, *Trin.* 260, [Cic.] *Rhet. Her.* 4.21, Virg. *Ecl.* 3.109-10, Lucr. 4.1134. For a discussion of the *amor/amarus* pun, see Brown 265-66.

¹³ Cf. Erichtho's power to alter fate (*fata movere*) at Luc. 6.605.

¹⁴ Relevant here is Luc. 6.540-68, suggesting that witches used teeth and hands, not knives, to extract body parts; cf. *Epodes* 5.47-9 *hic irresectum saeva dente livido / Canidia rodens pollicem / quid dixit aut quid tacuit?*

¹⁵ Cf. verse 68 *panis adustus*, and Laber. fr.134 *Bonaria cocus si lumbum adussit, caedetur flagris*. When used of food, *adustus* unambiguously means "burnt." The point has been convincingly argued by Gowers 176-7. For the word's magical connotations, see below n. 19.

¹⁶ This is in obvious contrast to the boar and eel served earlier in the meal, both presented in a "natural" setting (see above); cf. pseudo-Acro ad 92 *idest ista pulmenta, quae attulit nobis Nasidienus, suavius comederemus, nisi nobis narrasset causam, quare partes eorum attulisset et*

Each is described by Fundanius as having undergone some carefully devised dismemberment or torture. Appreciating the many menacing overtones of the foods served here, Gowers has argued that “the elegant dish is transformed into a tragic *sparagmos*: culinary preparation becomes violent butchery” (176). She goes on to suggest that such violence recalls Canidia’s peculiar style of sacrifice in the performance of her love incantation in *Sermones* 1.8: *scalpere terram / unguibus et pullam divellere mordicus agnam / coeperunt* (26-28).

Subsequent dishes all have associations with the occult, especially with love-charms: there is the specially fed liver of a white, female goose in line 88. The liver was connected with violent emotions, especially with frustrated desire, and thus it was thought to be an effective ingredient in love-charms and potions.¹⁷ One recalls that in *Epodes* 5 Canidia prepares to extract the liver from her boy victim for use in a love-potion. The liver is “parched” (*aridum iecur*, *Epod.* 5.37) to give it a reciprocal potential to parch the one who ingests it.¹⁸ Similar, I suggest, are the blackbirds’ charred *pectora* served by Nasidienus. That this part of each bird was intentionally “burned” (*adusto*), perhaps even “burned off” (see above n. 15), strongly suggests an erotic spell: because fire was (as it remains) a standard metaphor for passion and love-pangs may be thought of as a “burning” or “smoldering,” ritual burnings were a common feature of love charms.¹⁹ Thus Canidia burns a waxen effigy of her lover in *Sermones* 1.8 to elicit a seething, corrosive torment like that of *Epodes* 17.30-5: *o mare et terra, ardeo / quantum neque atro delibutus Hercules / Nessi cruore nec Sicana fervida / virens in Aetna flamma: tu, donec cinis / iniuri-osis aridus ventis ferar, / cales venenis officina Colchicis?*²⁰ In *S.* 2.8 the

non integra. The refusal to serve the birds and hares whole can also be explained as a gourmet’s obsession; cf. Gel. 15.8.2 *negant [praefecti popinae] ullam avem praeter ficedulam totam comesse oportere*.

¹⁷ See especially Nisbet-Hubbard ad *Carm.* 1.13.4, and Oliensis 112. Elsewhere in Horace see *Carm.* 1.25.15, 4.1.12, *Ep.* 1.18.72. For the liver’s use in Roman magical rites, see Ingallina 132-4; cf. *PGM* IV.117; Hor. *Epod.* 5.37-8; Ov. *Am.* 3.7.29-30 and *Ep.* 6.91-2.

¹⁸ Cf. *Epod.* 17 where the poet feels he is being parched into dry ash (*cinis . . . aridus* 33-4) by Canidia’s spell. Again, when called on by Venus to write love poetry in *Carm.* 4.1, the poet defers to the goddess by suggesting that she scorch the liver (*torrere iecur*, 12) of someone younger and more energetic. On the desiccation of body parts in Roman magic, see Tupet 313-14.

¹⁹ On *aduri* as metaphor for passion, cf. Hor. *C.* 1.27.15 and Ov. *Ep.* 4.33. For the word’s magical connotations, see Ingallina 126-30; cf. Hor. *Epod.* 5.24 *flammis aduri Colchicis*, and 81-82 *amore sic meo flagres uti / bitumen atris ignibus*. On fire in magical rites, see Tupet 30-4. For its symbolic/sympathetic potentials, see Winkler 86-7.

²⁰ *S.* 1.8.43-4: *abdiderint furtim terris et imagine cerea / largior arserit ignis*. On the burning of figurines to effect torment or annihilation, see Tupet 259, 305 and 388. Verg. *Ecl.* 8.80-1 mentions the burning of wax and clay in an amatory rite: *limus ut hic durescit et haec ut cera*

blackbirds' *pectora* have been set aflame. In the language of sympathetic magic, such a gesture has strong symbolic potential, since the *pectus* was regarded by the Romans as the seat of lust.²¹ Further, blackbirds, white geese (not gray, as Nasidienus is quick to point out), hares, and pigeons were all notoriously amorous and fertile, and eating certain parts of such animals was presumed to affect one's sex-drive.²²

Beyond peculiarities of preparation and content, the presentation of these last dishes has sacrificial overtones that are similarly salient and dark: especially significant is the *mazonomus* ("trencher") on which all the delicacies of lines 86-9 were served; such trenchers had strong associations with sacrificial ritual, used commonly for the wholesale distribution of food and gifts at public festivals.²³ Only here is it used for serving foods at a private dinner-party. Of the foods served on the *mazonomus*, Fundanius first notices the limbs of a male crane "sprinkled with much salt and a good portion of spelt" (*sparsi sale multo, non sine farre*, line 87). This is the *only* place in extant Latin literature where the sprinkling of salt and barley is mentioned without specific reference to the *mola salsa*, the salted barley-cakes sprinkled on sacrificial victims prior to their slaughter.²⁴ The sacral and magical associations of a dish prepared and presented in this manner are too potent to be handled as aspects of the host's "uncouth behavior" and nothing more: the striking incongruity between the elegance of the crane, an expensive gourmet's delicacy, and its sacral presentation hints not just at bad taste, but, I suspect, at sacrilege as well.²⁵

liquescit / uno eodemque igni, sic nostro Daphnis amore. It is unclear whether the materials used here are unworked or are fashioned to resemble the lover (i.e. a reference to *effigiem* line 75) or some part of his body. For this question see Coleman 247; cf. *PGM* IV.296 specifying figurines of either clay or wax in a spell binding a lover. For the use of figurines in Greco-Roman magic, see Ingallina 101-3, and Tupet 49-50.

²¹ Cf. *Lucr.* 1.19, and *Hor. Ep.* 1.1.33 *feruet . . . cupidine pectus* ("the chest that seethes with lust"); cf. also *C.* 4.1.12 *torrere iecur* describing the onset of passion.

²² For their extraordinary fertility, cf. *Hor. S.* 2.4.44, *Col.* 8.14.3, *Plin. Nat.* 8.217, 10.147, 10.179, *et passim*. Accordingly, small birds and hares were commonly used as lovers' gifts; cf. *Calp. Ecl.* 3.76-7, and *Serv. A.* 1.474. For their use in an erotic spell, see *PGM* XII.30-9; as aphrodisiacs, cf. *Mart.* 3.82.20-1, and 13.67.1-2; cf. also *Athenaeus* 9.384e-f on the aphrodisiac feast of the courtesan Gnathaena.

²³ Cf. *Nem. Auc.* 17, *Ath.* 4.149b, 5.197f. The word occurs on numerous inventory lists from temples in the Greek east, e.g. *IG* 7.3498.50, *OGI* 214.50.

²⁴ For the sprinkling of salted barley-cakes as an element in Roman sacrificial practice, cf. *V. Max.* 2.5.5, *Serv. A.* 2.133 *sal et far, quod dicitur mola salsa, qua et frons victimae et foci et aspergebantur et cultri*.

²⁵ Tupet 250 points out that the sprinkling of the *mola salsa* was *not* confined to public sacrificial ritual: "*mola*—propre aux sacrifices religieux aussi bien que magiques." For its use in private incantations and fertility rites, cf. *Verg. Ecl.* 8.82 (*sparge molam et fragilis incende bitumine laurus*) and *Parker* 70.2.

Taken together, these details suggest that there is something more to the poem's closing reference to Canidia than first meets the eye: the witch belongs here not simply because her name provides structural links with other poems, but because she calls attention to the latent metaphorical potential of the feast itself. She is the last in a series of images suggesting a link between Nasidienus' feast and the witch's black arts. The parting comparison with Canidia unmasks the host, exposing him as a conjurer on the make, a version of the witch-hag intent on entrapping an unsuspecting potential lover. Such an image suits the comic imagination of Fundanius, the implied narrator of the feast, whose talent for comic fiction is evident throughout. It suits him not only because it is laughable and deftly deflates the pretensions of the host, but because the braggart cook and amorous witch are charlatans known principally from the stages of comedy and mime. Plautus establishes a precedent in Roman comedy for dwelling on the similarities of witches and cooks and for imagining them as a hybrid type. At *Pseudolus* 868-72 the cook says to Ballio:

Quia sorbitione faciam ego hodie te mea,
item ut Medea Peliam concoxit senem,
quem medicamento et suis venenis dicitur
fecisse rursus ex sene adolescentulum,
item ego te faciam.

[Ballio] Eho, an etiam es veneficus.

Ah, but my potage! What I shall do for you today with that! Why, just like old Medea boiled Pelias and made him new, so they say, from an old hunk to a fresh young blood, with drugs and potions—that is just what I shall do for you.

[Ballio] Potions, eh? are you a poisoner too? (trans. Nixon)

The same “cook as witch” metaphor appears in Greco-Roman moral literature with sufficient frequency to suggest that the figure was already available to Horace, perhaps even quite common, and that it should not therefore be credited to him as his own unique creation.²⁶

That is not to say that the poet's use of the image here is in any sense routine or unimaginative, for, as I said in beginning this paper, the inclusion of Canidia at the poem's end opens up new options for reading the poem by providing a different perspective from which to consider the host's many odd obsessions and his guests' determination to leave. By introducing Canidia, Fundanius shows that his version of events is not so much about one man's bad

²⁶ For the cook as magician/enchantress elsewhere in Greek and Roman moral literature, see the fourteenth letter of “Crates” = Malherbe 65, Plut. *Mor.* 126a, 661e, 662a, and 663c.

taste as it is a story of covert aggression and the desperate lust to control and possess the object of one's desire. That the host is cast as "witch-like" in his efforts makes clear that there are serious questions being raised here concerning the uses of food and feasting in Roman social life as a means to friendship and power; how prestige is negotiated and social connections formed (or ruined) in a world where all persons, from the lowest slaves to the highest magistrates, attained some sense of their place in society by the manner in which they took their meals.²⁷ Further, there is the all-important question of how poets of the age fit into the picture (or did not); what they had to put up with, the behavior expected of them to have and maintain a place at a rich man's table.

With these questions in mind, we witness the groveling desperation of one man, the noble host, who thinks nothing of trading seats with a low-life parasite (lines 25-6), even toadying up to the lowliest buffoon in Maecenas' entourage (lines 75-6), all in an attempt to see that Maecenas has a good time. Then there are the *umbrae* of Maecenas, present because Maecenas asked them to be, smiling their way through one boring lecture after the next, biting their tongues when they want to laugh (line 63), whispering when they want to scream (lines 77-8). Some of them are poets, others parasites. Commentators often take pains to separate them, though the text of the satire does little to suggest this separation. For example, in line 22 the phrase referring to the "tag-alongs" of Maecenas (*quas Maecenas adduxerat umbras*) may well include everyone mentioned in lines 20-2. In terms of grammar and syntax, there is no reason why the phrase should refer exclusively to Balatro and Vibidius. Again in lines 26-7 Fundanius readily includes himself in the larger "motley crowd" (*turba*) of Maecenas, further blurring any distinctions of status one might assume in his favor.

Such, in other words, was the "good life" of an "esteemed" poet and friend of Maecenas in Fundanius' Rome. The goose livers and old Falernian were all very fine, but one had to drink an awful lot of that gorgeous wine to filter out the prattle of outsiders striving to get in and, even worse, those sneering voices that accused one of being Maecenas' parasite. Clearly Nasidienus is not the only character under scrutiny here. Although this is principally the story of his disgrace, others are implicated in his folly. Too often, I think, it is assumed that *Sermones* 2.8 is always and exclusively about the business of poking fun at Nasidienus, painting him as an upstart gleefully mocked by the

²⁷ On the further potentials of food and feasting in Roman social life see D'Arms 1984 and 1990. For the larger context of these issues in the works of Horace, see now Johnson.

satirist and his like-minded friends for aspiring to an elite social standing from which he is ultimately “disqualified by his vulgarity and lack of *savoir faire*.”²⁸ Read in this way, the social and moral judgments of the poem are clearly fixed: Nasidienus is the butt of the joke, the neatly marked “other” who helps Horace and his audience decide who they are, or (more realistically) who they would like to be. Horace and friends have a good laugh at Nasidienus, a man clearly unlike themselves, and in so doing they show that they are superior to him and unimplicated in his tasteless activities. At worst, Vibidius and Balatro, buffoons in a sophisticated coterie, might be censured mildly for being rude and presumptuous.²⁹ Horace, at any rate, is not sullied by any of it. He is safely distanced from the events that he (with Fundanius as his mouthpiece) describes, since he was nowhere near the scene, and he makes a point of not being there.

Wasn't he? The odd thing about Horace's scapegoats, his excoriated “others,” is that they routinely look rather like himself, sometimes remarkably so, threatening his identity (or the reader's construction of it) rather than setting it neatly in relief.³⁰ Take Nasidienus, for example. Here we have a hybrid version of a braggart cook and (I have argued) an amorous witch-hag, two charlatans well-known from the stages of comedy and mime. Horace wants us to laugh at him. How strange, then, that so many self-implicating details should have crept into his description of the fool: his name (besides being etymologically suggestive = Mr. Snooty) suggests that Nasidienus is from an undistinguished family, perhaps with origins in the Italian countryside (Muecke 227). At his own feast he occupies the seat not of the host, but of a lesser *amicus*, such as a parasite or freedman (and where would Horace have taken his seat had he been invited?). He desperately wants Maecenas to take notice of him, to marvel at his special skills, so he serves up plates and trenchers stuffed with all types of foods, from a huge boar surrounded by radishes and turnips, to a rare moray swimming in an aphrodisiac sauce. These dishes have metaphorical potential as versions of the poet's own *lanx satura*, the “stuffed plate” meticulously fashioned by Horace for the enjoyment of Maecenas.

That the *lanx satura* metaphor may inform some of the food imagery of this poem is suggested, for example, by pseudo-Acro's gloss on *mazonomo* in line 86: *genus lancis, in quo portantur escae*. The note recalls the scholiast's de-

²⁸ Muecke 228 (summarizing Rudd *et al.*); cf. Rudd 222: “He stands for a type common enough in Horace's day, a type which always appears when wealth is acquired without either education or a social conscience.”

²⁹ Baker argues that Nasidienus deserves sympathy, and that the satire describing his feast contains an implied criticism of his guests' behavior. Even so, Baker 226-7 is quick to point out that Horace has carefully distanced himself from the entire affair.

³⁰ See Oliensis 118, on the upstart of *Epodes* 4; and Henderson, on the bore of *S.* 1.9.

rivation of *satyra* in his preface to *Sermones* Book One: *Satyra dicitur lancis genus tractum a choro Liberi patris, qui est minister vini et epularum*.³¹ Further, the courses served by Nasidienus resemble intricate literary productions in being painstakingly arranged, and so sophisticated that they require immediate, exhaustive commentary from someone in the know, a parasite positioned in Nasidienus' seat "so that, if any detail should happen to go unnoticed, he might point it out with his index finger" (lines 25-6). Like the satirist of *S.* 1.4, the host has an aversion to drunkards who abuse too freely. Then there are his claims to inventiveness, spoken in the distinctive *ego primus* language of poets asserting their originality: *erucas viridis, inulas ego primus amaras / monstravi incoquere*; cf. the poets' proud claims to originality at *Lucr.* 5.336-7 *primus . . . ego sum in patrias qui possim uertere uoces*; *Ep.* 1.19.23-4 *Parios ego primus iambos / ostendi Latio*; *Prop.* 3.1.3-4 *primus ego ingredior puro de fonte sacerdos / Itala per Graios orgia ferre choros*.³² Connections such as these suggest that the host's culinary precepts are curiously analogous to Callimachean principles of style.

The net effect of these analogies, I suggest, is to unsettle; to suggest that there is more to this poem (and to all the poems of Book Two) than first meets the eye. As John Henderson puts it: "We know that, whatever else, Satire satirizes the satirist and satirizes the genre of Satire, turns on itself and on the consciousness of its voice and its readers" (69). Gone, in other words, are handy dichotomies of "us" versus "them," and with them goes the tidy and polite social critic whose audience always knows precisely where his criticism is directed and, more importantly, where it is not. Canidia helps us see this. She alerts us to the ugly, power-mongering underside of the feast, the subtext where the host's ingratiating sweetness turns witch-like, menacing and sour. Yet it is here too, I suspect, that the poet's own obsessions are drawn out and dissected, namely his (and his friends') desire to beguile and get ahead by concocting verses, stroking egos, and stuffing plates.³³ Canidia, after all, has at least as much to do with Horace's peculiar brand of "incantatory" invective as

³¹ The *lanx satura* and the *mazonomus* are both associated specifically with sacrificial rites (see above pp. 212-14).

³² Cf. the same *ego primus* formula in the poets' claims to originality at *Verg. G.* 3.10-14, *Ov. Pont.* 4.3.11-17.

³³ Winkler 90-1 says of the Canidia figure in Greek and Roman literature: "It might be tempting to identify such old women, wrinkled and dressed in black, as a source for the witch fantasy in men's imagination, but they are at most a Rorschach blot onto which men projected facets of their own behavior. One more paradoxical conclusion to be drawn from the confrontation of real *agogai* with literary fantasies is that Horace's Canidia behaves in a masculine style, and not only because she is energetic in going after what she wants (*mascula libido*, *Epode* 5.41)."

she does with cooking eels and simmering sauces.³⁴ It is no accident, then, that at the very moment when Fundanius and friends walk out on Nasidienus, the readers of Book Two walk out on Horace: they are full, having had just enough (or perhaps just a bit too much) of long-winded diatribes (2.3 and 2.7) and intricate lectures on the art of dining (S. 2.2, 2.4, much of 2.6 and 2.7, all of 2.8). The feast is unfinished (why only 8 poems instead of 10?). Yet, anything more would be indecorous, Canidia-like, sheer poison. *Iam satis est*.

Works Cited

- André, J. 1965. *Apicius: L'art culinaire*. Paris.
- Baker, R. 1988. "Maecenas and Horace *Satires* II.8." *CJ* 83: 212-31.
- Brown, R. 1987. *Lucretius on Love and Sex*. Leiden.
- Carrubba, R. 1969. *The Epodes of Horace: A Study in Poetic Arrangement*. The Hague/Paris.
- Coleman, R. 1977. *Vergil: Eclogues*. Cambridge.
- D'Arms, J. 1984. "Control, Companionship, and *Clientela*: Some Social Functions of the Roman Communal Meal." *EMC* 3: 327-48.
- _____. 1990. "The Roman *Convivium* and Equality." In O. Murray (ed.) *Symptica*. Oxford. 308-20.
- Dohm, H. 1964. *Mageiros: Die Rolle des Kochs in der griechische-römischen Komödie*. Munich.
- Fraenkel, E. 1957. *Horace*. Oxford.
- Freudenburg, K. 1993. *The Walking Muse: Horace on the Theory of Satire*. Princeton.
- Gowers, E. 1993. *The Loaded Table: Representations of Food in Roman Literature*. Oxford.
- Henderson, J. 1993. "Be Alert (Your Country Needs Lerts): Horace, *Satires* 1.9." *PCPhS* 39: 67-93.
- Ingallina, S. 1974. *Orazio e la magia*. Palermo.
- Johnson, W. R. 1993. *Horace and the Dialectic of Freedom*. Cornell.
- Kießling, A. and R. Heinze. 1961. *Q. Horatius Flaccus: Satiren*. Berlin.
- Lejay, P. 1911. *Oeuvres d'Horace*. Paris.
- Malherbe, A. 1977. *The Cynic Epistles*. Atlanta.
- Muecke, F. 1993. *Horace: Satires II*. Warminster.
- Nisbet, R. and M. Hubbard. 1970. *A Commentary on Horace Odes, Book I*. Oxford.
- O'Connor, J. 1991. "Horace's *Cena Nasidieni* and Poetry's Feast." *CJ* 86: 23-34.
- Oliensis, E. 1991. "Canidia, Canicula, and the Decorum of Horace's *Epodes*." *Arethusa* 24: 107-38.
- Parker, W. 1988. *Priapea: Poems for a Phallic God*. London/Sydney.
- Rudd, N. 1966. *The Satires of Horace*. Cambridge.
- Tupet, A. 1976. *La magie dans la poésie latine*. Paris.
- Winkler, J. 1990. *Constraints of Desire*. New York.
- Woodcock, E. 1959. *A New Latin Syntax*. London.

³⁴ The term "epode" designates principally a song of enchantment.