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OLD WOMEN: DIVINATION AND MAGIC OR *ANUS* IN ROMAN LITERATURE

ABSTRACT. Migdał Justyna, Old Women: Divination and Magic or *anus* in Roman Literature.

Word *anus* was used in a primarily negative sense to describe an old woman. *Anus* is usually presented as a libidinous and hideous hag who indulges in strong wine or practices black magic, mainly for erotic purposes. Though Latin literature brings as well examples of a different type of *anus*: goddesses assuming the shape of old women to guide or deceive the mortals and old prophetic women, inspired by the gods. *Anus* can be gifted with divine powers and secret knowledge. The paper traces the motif of *anus* as a witch or a divine woman on the basis of selected examples from the works of Horace, Ovid, Petronius, Apuleius and Silius Italicus.

Keywords: *Anus*, old woman, witch, magic, prophetess, divination, Horace, Ovid, Petronius, Apuleius.

Anus is rarely used in Latin literature as an indicator of solely age and gender, without additional, pejorative associations. One of the three most common usages of the word is to denote a drunken, lascivious and repulsive aged woman, a *meretrix* who is no longer capable of earning her living (see Martial 10.90; Horace *Carm.* 1.25, 3.15, 4.13; Propertius 3.25) or a procuress (Ovid, *Am.* 1.8; 3.5). Another denotation is of an old female servant (Horace, *Sat.* 1.4), usually an aged *nutrix*, nurse or nanny, though it can be as well a cook (Apuleius, *Met.* 4.7), an inn-keeper (Apuleius, *Met.* 1.7; 1.21) or even a farm worker (Ovid, *Met.* 8.612): the *anus* is here a woman of a lower class, sometimes mildly prosperous, though usually forced to earn her living, being abandoned by family and poor. The third, most rarely used denotation is that of an old priestess, usually, though not solely, of a minor cult. The common associations invoked by *anus* in all of these three denotations are poverty, insignificance, powerlessness and the feeling of pity or revulsion she inspires in others. There is, however, a wholly different picture of *anus* intermingled with the three general presentations described above. An old woman can be knowledgeable in the areas of magic and divination: clairvoyance and skill in *artes secretae* can make her appear

strong instead of weak. The purpose of this paper is to show the motif of *anus* as a witch and a prophetess on the basis of several selected examples. At first, I intend to present four pictures of old witches from the works of Horace, Ovid, Petronius and Apuleius. Next, I would like to contrast them with three other descriptions of *anus*, goddess Anna Perenna (Ovid) and prophetess Sybil of Cumae, as viewed by Ovid and Silius Italicus.

The fifth epode of Horace presents an unflattering picture of four witches: Canidia, Sagana, Veia and Folia, starving a young boy to death in order to obtain his magically potent liver and marrow which Canidia intends to use in a love philtre in order to regain her unfaithful lover Varus.¹ The structure of the poem is chiasmic: starting (lines 1–10) and ending (lines 87–102) with the speech of the boy, while in the centre there is placed Canidia's incantation (lines 49–82), bracketed by Horace's narration of the proceedings (lines 11–49 and 83–86).² At a first glance nothing in the poem suggests what the age of the women might be, until the dying boy calls them *obscaenas anus*, old wicked women, in the final part of the poem (line 98). Yet subtle allusions to their age are dispersed throughout the text. In the first part, the boy pleads with Canidia asking her to recall her own children, if she ever had them (*per liberos te, si vocata partubus / Lucina veris adfuit*, line 5–6) and likens her implacable stare to the gaze of a step mother (*noverca*, line 9). The statement suggests that Canidia is probably not in the very first bloom of her youth, if she already gave birth to several children, as the boy seems to think. The boy's plea is followed by the narrative part, which describes some specific characteristics of the four witches. Firstly, Canidia is presented as implacable and immovable, possessing a heart harder to mollify than the one of an impious, wild Thracian (lines 14–15): she is the polar opposite of a typical *anus* whose heart is usually gentle and full of compassion. It is interesting to compare this fragment with Seneca, *Clem.* 2.5.1, who says that pity is a typical characteristic of old and weak women, *anus* and *mulierculae*: they can become moved by the tears of even the worst criminals; other literary examples of *anus* as a soft-hearted and caring person are numerous (e.g. Apuleius *Met.* 4. 27, where an old woman takes pity on Charis, a girl abducted by band of thieves).

Next, Sagana is presented while she purifies the house, sprinkling every corner with water from lake Avernus: she is the very picture of an industrious, full of energy woman (*expedita*);³ she seems to be running here and there with her hair in disarray (*horret capillis ut... currens aper* – her hair is standing up as

¹ *Ousia* obtained from prematurely dead were especially potent substances in black, erotic magic. The fact that the boy will die of starvation enhances the power of his body parts: the lost lover will burn with desire the same way the boy burned with hunger (sympathetic magic).

² See Carruba 1969: 40.

³ The word *expedita* might also mean that her sleeves or robe is hiked up; perhaps this is an intended wordplay.

bristle on a wild, running boar). While her industriousness is typical of an old woman, her energy is not.

Third of the witches, Veia, is described as both having no pangs of conscience (*abacta nulla Veia conscientia*; a picture similar to the one presented by Canidia) and capable of hard physical work (she digs a hole for the young boy who the witches intend to bury alive, up to his neck), though her exertion makes her short of breath (*ingemens laboribus*), which may be an indication of her age. Finally, the fourth of the witches, Folia, is described as having insatiable desire for men (line 41, *non defuisse masculae libidinis / Ariminensem Foliam*), a typical characteristic of *anus*. Folia, though, is neither weak nor incapable of acquiring lovers: she possesses the power to bring down the moon from the heavens and to make the stars invisible with her Thessalian incantations (lines 44–45); in other words, she is a powerful, successful witch, well-known for her magical prowess, especially in erotic magic (drawing down the moon was considered powerful attractive magic, though it could be used for other purposes as well: Apuleius in *Metamorph.* 1.3. mentions that the moon, when drawn to the earth, deposits its foam on plants; this substance, *virus lunare*, can be later used in powerful magical potions, like the one prepared by Erictho in Lucan's *Pharsalia*, 6.667–718, where it serves as one of ingredients for a necromantic potion to bring back to life a recently deceased corpse).

As we can see, all four witches possess certain traits typical of the conventional descriptions of old women: industriousness and lascivious nature. On the other hand, they contradict some other conventional aspects of *anus* by being heartless and cruel, as well as powerful, both physically and magically.

The long, central speech of Canidia does not hint much at what the age of the witch might be. However, it gives us a direct comment on the age of her unfaithful lover Varus: Canidia calls him an old adulterer (*senem adulterum*, line 57). It might be induced that if she were a young woman, she would be capable of holding the interest of a young rich man, instead of a *senex*. The short descriptive passage that follows serves only as an introduction to the final speech of the dying boy: he utters a terrible curse on his four tormentors. Here finally the witches are called directly hideous old women, *obscaenas anus*, who shall be stoned to death by vengeful crowd (line 98–99). The picture of power and strength held by the four witches seems to be an illusion: due to their evil deeds they will meet a bad end: hunted, stoned and unburied, their remains left to scavengers of the Esquiline hill, where formerly the poor of the city were entombed in communal graves. The worst aspects of old age will become their lot: they will be poor, uncared for, hated and abandoned: the power they sought through magic will turn itself against them, as the very vengeful spirit of a prematurely dead boy, instead of being their servant and helper, will set itself against them.

A vivid picture of an old witch is provided as well in Ovid's *Am.* 1.8. The whole poem describes a procuress who is attempting to convince the poet's lover

Corinna to abandon him for richer men. She is an old woman and her name is Dipsas (*est quaedam nomine Dipsas anus*), from Greek *dipsa*, thirst, hunger, desire, an apt name for the woman, as she has never seen dawn while sober. Apart from being a drunkard, she is catalogued with other typical features of an *anus*: she is garrulous and can be extremely convincing in her speech (*nec tamen eloquio lingua nocente caret*, line 20); she is also a good story-teller and serves as an advisor to the girl, features she shares in common with *nutrix*; she is cunning and deceitful, as can be glimpsed from her catalogue of tricks to ensnare lovers (lines 69–104); she is also showing all signs of old age: her hair is white and sparse,⁴ her eyes are teary, her cheeks wrinkled (lines 109–112). However, before her habits and physical appearance is presented, Ovid gives, in the first place, vivid presentation of her magical skills. At first, he mentions what kind of magic she has learned – the tricks of Persian Magi and of Circe. This suggests that she is knowledgeable in all areas of magic, not only the one used for erotic purposes. The statement is followed by the catalogue of her skills, which confirms her wide expertise: she can revert the course of rivers (similarly to Medea, in *Met.* 7.325–327, further testament to her power), she can wield *inyx*, *rhombus*, i.e. a magical wheel, to win somebody’s love (see: Pindar 4.211–250 for the aetiological myth on how Aphrodite gave Jason the *inyx* to seduce Medea), she can use *hippomanes* to induce desire (line 8), she has power over the weather and the heavenly bodies (including the power to draw down the moon, and make it blood-red in the process, lines 9–12. She is a shape-shifter, capable of turning her old woman’s body into a nocturnal bird, probably an owl or a screech owl, as she flies during the night (lines 13–14; compare with Pamphile changing into an owl in Apuleius, *Met.* 3.21–22). She possesses the power of *fascinum*, the evil eye, i.e. the envy-driven blighting magic, here characterised by her double pupils (lines 15–16): the evil eye could be used in order to drive the love or desire away. Last of all, the powers of Dipsas encompass necromancy, which, as we have already observed on the example of Canidia and her three companions, may be used as means of erotic magic, both to attract and to repel. Thus the majority of the old procuress’s skills seem to be conventionally associated with erotic magic. She seems to possess as well some knowledge of astrology, as she interprets the positions of planets, currently favourable to gaining new love (lines 41–42).

Despite her power and knowledge, Dipsas ends cursed by her victim, the same way Canidia and her accomplices became cursed. The poet-lover bursts through the door and wishes her to become homeless and abandoned, poor and cold, and to suffer permanent thirst. The poem of Ovid follows the same schema as the epode of Horace: the old woman’s power is to a large extent illusory, her attempts to improve her lot gain her only a curse from her victims.

⁴The lack of abundant hair may be both an indicator of age and of engaging in magical practices, see Horace, epode 5, about Sagana’s hair; also Ogden 2009:117.

The incompetence of old witches and futility of their magical rites, contrasted with the women's wild claims about their power, is a motif which reappears in Petronius's novel, *Satyricon*. When the main protagonist of the novel, Eucolpius, discovers his sudden impotency, an old hag (*anicula*, little old woman) by the name of Proselenos (a telling name, indicating, by all probability, her skill in bringing the moon down) attempts to help him by magic: she mixes her spittle with dust and, to the disgust of her "client", marks his forehead with the ointment, then uses an incantation to elicit Priapus's help. Her magic, though it initially seems to bring desired effects, ultimately fails (section 131). When Eucolpius prays to Priapus in his temple, Proselenos returns with a, reportedly, more powerful witch, priestess Oenothea (again a telling name, "goddess of wine", indicative of the woman's fondness for drinking). Oenothea's boast about her magical prowess seems to mirror the tirade of Ovid's Dipsas:⁵ she claims power over nature, animals (though, instead of shape-shifting, she is merely able to command them as Homeric Circe did), moon and stars – the whole world bends to her will. Yet she is living in poverty and squalor: she uses old, chipped kitchenware, the stool she stands on is rotten and collapses under her weight; the meat (brawn, pig's head) she takes from her stores is old (probably as old as herself) and slashed with thousand cuts (similarly to her own face, Petronius seems to imply) and the beans she needs to shell are filthy (135).⁶ When she takes a winecup from the wall, the nail on which it hung falls off. Her house is old, poor and in decay. The magical rite she intends to perform is interrupted by Eucolpius killing a sacred gander, devoted to Priapus. Oenothea, though initially angered by the sacrilege, is quickly mollified by money. She proceeds to drink a lot of wine and feast on the lately lamented goose. She attempts as well some divination:⁷ she throws some nuts into wine and, judging from whether they float or sink, predicts Eucolpius's future. The man though cannot but notice that the logical explanation for the floating nuts is the fact they are empty shells, while the ones that sink are full – Oenothea's prognostications are not worth much. She also attempts some haruspicine, predicting future from the goose's liver. After the predictions and the feast on the "sacrificial" goose she again attempts to restore Eucolpius's virility, however the "patient" runs away and no magic is performed. Neither witch is capable of doing magic or divining the future – their skills are illusionary and they have no power.

⁵ See Connors 1998: 45.

⁶ "simulque pannum de carnario detulit furca, in quo faba erat ad usum reposita et sincipitis vetustissima particula mille plagis dolata."

⁷ "Infra manus meas camellam vini posuit et cum digitos pariter extensos porris apioque lustrasset, avellanas nuces cum precatatione mersit in vinum. Et sive in summum redierant, sive subderant, ex hoc coniecturam ducebat. Nec me fallebat inanes scilicet ac sine medulla ventosas nuces in summo umore consistere, graves autem et plenas integro fructu ad ima deferri. Recluso pectore extraxit fortissimum iecur et inde mihi futura praedixit."

The picture of Proselenos and Oenothea is decidedly negative. Their catalogue of faults includes lasciviousness, drunkenness, filthiness, lack of hospitality (she gives Eucolpius a tongue lashing for improperly shelled beans and killed goose), greed and slovenliness. Oenothea is allusion to two old women from Ovid: Dipsas, of whom she is a carbon copy, and Baucis, to whom she is juxtaposed.⁸

In *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius's there are several old witches whose power is seemingly not presented as illusionary at all. I want to concentrate on the most well-known figure, Meroe. She is introduced in the story recounted by Aristomenes almost at the very beginning of the *Metamorphoses* (1.6–19). Lucius, the main protagonist of the novel, meets Aristomenes on the road, shortly after he crossed the boundaries of Thessaly, the fatherland of witches and magic. Aristomenes is in the middle of telling a story to another man, who suddenly shouts that he cannot bear any longer to hear such absurdities and high tales of magic. Lucius, being drawn by his curiosity of all things magical, requests of Aristomenes to tell him the whole story. Aristomenes gladly obliges and recounts how he met in Hypate his old acquaintance, Socrates, heard his incredible tale about a witch who enslaved him and witnessed Socrates's murder by Meroe and her accomplices.

In this tale, Meroe is mildly well-off as she runs her own inn. She is described as *anus sed admodum scitula* (1.7), an old woman, but still quite pretty. Two most conventional aspects of *anus* are thus negated: she is not poor and she is not repulsive or ugly. Meroe is also hospitable and kind, providing Socrates with a free meal and a willing ear, as he recounts to her the stories of his past misfortunes. However, her hospitality is deceptive: she lures her guest into a trap. She takes him to her bed (an indication of her lasciviousness). This single night costs Socrates dearly – he becomes Meroe's slave, as mythical Odysseus became a slave of Calypso, barely avoiding the same fate at Circe's hands (see Ogden 2009: 136).

Socrates proceeds to tell Aristomenes the stories of magical feats performed by Meroe. She is a witch (*saga*) who possesses divine skills: she can revert the natural order – revert the positions of heaven and earth, extinguish stars, bring back the dead and make the gods and daemons obey her (1.8). She can work love magic on people of the whole earth, no matter how remote they are (1.8). She can change people into animals (1.9), she can bind a pregnant woman, preventing her from giving birth. She can imprison entire town and move buildings over great distances (1.10). Aristomenes decides to help his friend escape. However Meroe apparently uses magic to spy on people, as she arrives at their lodgings near midnight with an equally old witch Panthia. On the eyes of Aristomenes Meroe ritually kills Socrates, cutting his throat and ripping out his heart. Panthia

⁸Connors 1998: 44.

blocks the wound with a sponge and incantation (“sponge, born in the sea, do not cross over a river”). Both witches spare the life of a terrified Aristomenes, only urinating over the petrified man. He spends the night trying to escape or kill himself, afraid he will be executed for the murder of his companion. However, in the morning Socrates wakes up, as if nothing happened, and they both set out. Aristomenes believes the whole thing was only a nightmare, induced by too much drink and food. His friend seems to be whole and hale, without any sign of the wound. However, there are some worrying signals: Aristomenes himself is stinking of urine. His friend Socrates had a similar nightmare, dreaming that somebody severed his throat with a sword and pulled out his heart. He is also feeling faint. While they rest for a moment by the road and eat a breakfast, he grows increasingly pale, as if he had suffered severe blood loss. Finally, he is seized by unquenchable thirst. The moment water from a small by-road rivulet touches his lips, the sponge falls out and he dies on the spot: the spell of Ponthia does takes effect.

The magic of Meroe (and her accomplice Ponthia) seems to be all-encompassing and powerful. There are no overt signs of mockery, there is no proof that their magic is only an illusion and does not bring about the desired effects. Yet Meroe’s greatest deeds are presented as a story within a story within a story – recounted by some unnamed witnesses to Socrates, who recounts them to Aristomenes, who in turn recounts them to Lucius. There is no definite proof of Meroe’s capabilities, only a tale which might have grown in proportions through numerous retellings. Moreover, the magic supposedly witnessed by Aristomenes is not so certain. Aristomenes himself half believes everything he saw and heard was a nightmare. Additionally, his actions point to the fact he might be a murderer himself: his panic in the inn, the secret burial of Socrates near the side-road stream, his unwillingness to return to his home country and family. Additionally, the audience of Aristomenes believes the tale to be fantastical and unlikely to happen, an absurd and mad lie (“*Parce*” inquit “*in verba ista haec tam absurda tamque immania mentiendo*”, 1.2). Even Aristomenes himself has not believed Socrates when he spun the tale of Meroe’s accomplishments (he wondered why such a powerful queen would remain an innkeeper, if she could bend the world to her will: “*Potens illa et regina caupona quid mulieris est?*”, 1.8). Lucius though postulates the belief in things which are against natural order – he is willing to open his mind to the possibility that magic exists.⁹ Only in such a world an old woman would be able to wield an immense power.

As we can see, magic provides old women only with illusions of grandeur, not with real power. However, an old woman may become powerful by the grace of the gods. Ovid describes in *Fasti* (3.667–696) the story of Anna Perenna.

⁹See the thesis of the religious dreamworld in Apuleius’s work by James Timothy Gollnick 1999: 53–60.

She used to be a mortal woman, an old lady, poor, but very industrious and with a kind heart. Her help in voluntarily feeding the inhabitants of Rome gained her eternal respect. She was made a goddess. Ovid describes next how the god Gradivus (Mars) attempted to obtain Anna's help as a procuress, in order to gain Minerva's love. Anna deceived him with false promises and delays, then she dressed herself as a bride – Gradivus discovered her deception only when he tried to kiss her. Anna laughed at the god. Ovid's story, while using traditional motif of anus as a procuress, shows an old woman in a positive light: her power, though by no means magical, is true: she has not faded into insignificance and poverty as the old women who tried to gain importance via magical means.

While Anna is an example of *anus* turned into a goddess, there are multiple examples of gods and goddesses who assumed the shape of an old woman as means of deception (see e.g. Ovid, *Met.* 3.251– Juno; 6.26–69 – Minerva; 11.266 – Apollo; 14.609 – Vertumnus): they used the persona of anus as a *nutrix* and advisor, a priestess or a prophetess (see Alecto as the clairvoyant priestess of Juno in Vergil, *Aen.* 7.406).

Old women were often fortune-tellers. Horace mentions an old woman from Sabinum (traditionally, Sabine women were considered authorities on divination, see *Ep.* 17, 28), who predicted the manner of his death when he was a boy. Propertius, in elegy 2.4., mentions an old woman as an interpreter of dreams. These ordinary fortune-tellers though do not have much importance in literature – they are usually mentioned as an aside, without even a name provided. There is one older woman, though, who is the subject of multiple descriptions: Sybil of Cumae. I would like to concentrate on two fragments devoted to Sybil, wherein she is explicitly called *anus*: Ovid, *Fasti* 4.157–160, and Silius Italicus, *Punica* 13.488–504.

Ovid mentions Sybil as an old woman from Cumae (*Cymaeam, veteres, consuluistis anum*) who was consulted by the Roman senate when the public morality deteriorated. She advised them to build a temple of Venus, a goddess who changes hearts. This short (4 verses) description shows the Cumaean prophetess as a figure of authority, who was consulted on the matters of public importance, albeit they were matters of morality and religion rather than politics. Nothing more is said about Sybil herself in this fragment, though Ovid provides us with her backstory elsewhere, in *Met.* 14.101–153: Aeneas seeks Sybil in an underground cave in Cumae, to gain knowledge of the future and seek entrance to the underworld. Sybil is not called *anus*, but *vivax*, signalling her supernatural longevity. Her power seems to be great, as she offers Aeneas both protection on his journey and knowledge of the future. Aeneas regards her as a goddess or a being truly favoured by gods; both because of her power and her kindness to him – he offers to put up a shrine for her. However, Sybil protests she is not a divinity and tells him the true story of her long life. Apollo sought to obtain her love – he told her to ask him for any gift she wished. She chose to live as many years as there

were sand particles grasped in her hand – she forgot though, to ask for eternal youth. She realized her error. Apollo though promised to gift her with youth as well, if she gave up his virginity to him. Yet Sybil spurned him and remained unmarried. Thus old age crept upon her, but she was forced to linger, despite her infirmity.

Sybil in this story is not a typical old woman. She is neither promiscuous, lascivious, nor a drunkard. The negative aspects of her old age are primarily physical: she is weak, walking on unsteady feet, her body has shrunk and shrivelled. She fears that her physical decay will go on until not even Apollo will admit she was once his love – she fears loneliness and abandonment, the typical lot of old women. But it is, for the time being, only her fear – Apollo is still with her, still speaks through her about the future.

Another unusual aspect of Ovid's Sybil is the fact that she neither seeks power nor rejoices in it. She refuses Aeneas' offer of building her a temple. She admits that her power is not her own, but a gift – she is merely a mortal woman who made a foolish error in her youth. She looks upon the time left her with dread: the fact that her beauty will be forgotten and only her voice, fated to speak prophecies, will be still heard is a burden for her.

A slightly different, less humble picture of Sibyl is provided by Silius Italicus in *Punica*, 13, 488–504. Scypio Africanus visits an entrance to the underworld (after the Romans' invasion of Capua, when Africanus receives news of his father and uncle's death) and with the help of the current Cumean priestess, Autonoe, summons the ghosts of his kinsmen and of the great prophetess Sybil. According to Autonoe, Sybil currently dwells in the Elysian fields and she is the only person who truly knew Apollo's will, a priestess much greater than Autonoe herself (*namque tibi Elysio repetita oracula campo / eliciam veterisque dabo inter sacra Sibyllae / cernere fatidicam Phoebei pectoris umbram* 410–12). When Sybil's ghost finally appears, Autonoe again praises her, saying she is the fountain of truth and even Apollo does not have knowledge greater than she (*haec, haec veri fecunda sacerdos, / cui tantum patuit rerum quantum ipse negarit / plus novisse deus*, 490–492). Autonoe never calls Sybil *anus*; she describes her as *vetus*, a much more neutral word, used perhaps more for describing men than women. It is the narrative voice of the poet which calls Sybil an *anus* (*gravida arcanis Cymes anus*, 494), an old woman burdened with the knowledge of mysteries.

The common feature of both Ovid and Silius's accounts is the opposition between how others view Sybil and how she perceives herself. Both Aeneas and Autonoe believe her to be god-like, her powers and knowledge equal to Apollo's. Aeneas extols her kindness, Autonoe – her chastity (line 444, where she calls her *casta*). Yet Sybil perceives herself in a much less splendid way: in Ovid, she denies having a power of her own and admits to youthful stupidity; in Silius, she declares she is but a shade, no longer able to enjoy the light of sun

(*aetherea fruerer cum luce*), though she perceives that her knowledge is valuable (calling the lack of preserving her prophecies a stupidity on Romans' part).

Vincent Rosivach,¹⁰ when he summarised the usages of *anus* in literature, stated that “the only circumstances in which the word *anus* is used without negative connotations are those [...] when sympathy is sought for an aged woman who, say, loses or is betrayed by an adult son, and here it is noteworthy that all of these women are members of the elite” (1994: 115). I believe there is another set of circumstances when the word *anus* is used in a positive sense: when it denotes a woman chosen by gods:¹¹ either due to her great moral value and wisdom, as we have seen on the example of Anna Perenna, or due to her beauty and talent, as in the case of Sibyl. An old woman who does not seek power or mystical knowledge, but nonetheless has it, is a woman that commands respect, especially if she has other virtues, such as kindness and willingness to help. On the other hand, an old woman who tries to force the gods and nature to her will, may only boast of her own magical abilities, yet her powers are either non-existent or, in the end, will be turned against herself: magic is only a way to ridiculousness and futility, it does not provide the means to conquer old age. Only by the grace of gods an old woman can find some power, some consolation or even happiness, as a shade on Elysian fields or an immortalised goddess.

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¹⁰Rosivach 1994: 107–117.

¹¹The multiple types of positive and negative representations of old women in Latin literature are probably derived from Greek sources; on the subject see e.g. Rosivach 1994: 108; Bertman 1989: 157–171 (here attention is paid particularly to the development of old woman topos in Greek poetry, with relevant allusions in Latin poets pointed out); Mencacci 2006: 144. The literary theme of an old woman as a witch may well be a much older invention, especially the types of nurse-witch and shrine-keeper; for examples from Assyrian literature see Rollin 1983: 38–9, however please note the Assyrian witches were in majority unmarried women who did not bear any children, not necessarily old.

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UNE VIEILLE FEMME: LA DIVINATION ET LA MAGIE,
OU *ANUS* DANS LA LITTÉRATURE LATINE

R é s u m é

Le mot *anus* était utilisé par décrire une vieille femme principalement dans le sens négatif. D’habitude, *anus* est présenté comme une libidineuse et hideuse vieille sorcière qui se permet le vin fort ou qui pratique la magie noire, avant tout pour les raisons érotiques. Mais la littérature latine fournit aussi les exemples d’une différente sorte d’ *anus* : les déesses assumantes une forme d’une vieille femme pour guider ou tromper des mortels, ou les prophétesses âgées, inspirées par les dieux. *Anus* peut être dotée des pouvoirs divins et du savoir occulte. Cet article suit la trace du motif d’*anus* comme une sorcière ou une femme divine, basé sur les exemples sélectionnés des oeuvres d’ Horace, Ovide, Pétrone, Apulée et Silius Italicus.