(UN)SYMPATHETIC MAGIC: A STUDY OF *HEROIDES* 13

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In the Ovidian Corpus, reading and writing are dangerous if not done with great care. Ovid's Laodamia, both hypersensitive and unlucky, is no exception: she shows herself to be an uncritical reader who misconstrues language in a fatal way. She is also a writer, and her *carmen* (*Her.* 13) is the "wrong" kind of *carmen*. The letter that she writes to her husband, Protesilaus, is intended to encourage him to return from the Trojan War, but (along with some of her other behaviors) it precipitates a chain of events that is fraught with supernatural, perhaps even deadly, coincidences. Laodamia's suspicious nature leads her to create by her very words the situation she most fears. She is, ironically, a superstitious woman in a story full of events that serve only to increase her superstition.[1] Yet she herself contributes to these circumstances, most notably by creating a statue of her still-living husband and worshiping it. Because she loses control over her text, the multiple representations that Laodamia creates prove catastrophic for both Protesilaus and herself.

This essay explores the literary use of erotic magic imagery in Ovid's *Heroides* 13 and suggests that the ambiguity of the word *carmen* ("poem, magic spell") seduces its protagonist into unwittingly replicating (and perhaps even causing) the death of her husband. The key to unlocking the magical referents of the poem lies in the wax *imago*[2] of Protesilaus and in Laodamia's account of her behavior during his absence. Commentators and critics have often marked her actions as peculiar, but few offer convincing interpretations, and the *imago* has received infrequent treatment. Most discussions of the poem to date treat isolated actions of Laodamia and therefore fail to make sense of the poem as a whole.

[1] Cf. 149–50, "Nos sumus incertae, nos anxius omnia cogit, / Quae possunt fieri facta putare timor" ("I am unsure, anxious fear makes me think that everything that could happen has happened").

[2] Lieberg notes that, according to Tzetzes, *Historiarum variarum Chiliades* 2.52, Laodamia had an image of wood (1962, 212).

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SOURCES AND BACKGROUND

In *Heroides* 13, the newly wed Laodamia is writing to her husband Protesilaus, commander of the Thessalian ships sent to Troy.[3] Laodamia thinks that the ships are still at Aulis, awaiting a favorable wind, and Ovid offers no reason to doubt this, despite the fact that his heroines are often "incorrect" about specific details of their stories.[4] Laodamia worries about her husband's safety at war, repeatedly urging him to take care of himself and reminding him that her life depends on his. Readers with mythological and etymological knowledge know that she worries with good reason, because, as Laodamia herself notes, an oracle had stated that the first Greek to set foot on Trojan soil would die first (93–94). As a result none of the Greeks was willing to disembark once the ships arrived.[5] Protesilaus scoffed at the oracle and leapt from his boat; he was accordingly the first to die, and a hero cult was established for him in the Chersonesus, near his tomb.

In their versions of the story, Eustathius and Hyginus concur with these elements of the tale but disagree on Laodamia's subsequent fate. According to Eustathius, the deceased Protesilaus (at either his request or Laodamia's)[6] is granted permission by Hades to appear to his wife and tell her of his fate.[7] When she hears the news, she kills herself. Eustathius says that she runs a sword through herself; other sources give different accounts of the means she chose, ranging from the sword and

[3] The story itself is first attested in *Iliad* 2.695–710, although no mention is made of Laodamia by name. In some versions, Polydora, daughter of Meleager—not Laodamia—is Protesilaus' wife (Pausanias 4.2.7.5–7, who quotes the *Cypria*). The name Polydora appears to be the earlier. Séchan suggests that Euripides was the first to alter the heroine's name to Laodamia (1953, 9).

[4] Most other discussions of the poem have also assumed that Laodamia is correct in placing her husband at Aulis (Jolivet 1992, 139; Séchan 1953, 18; Di Lorenzo et al. 1992, 10–11). Farrell, however, thinks Laodamia writes to an already dead Protesilaus, but this seems unlikely (1998, 310). On the unreliability of the women of the *Heroides,* see Verducci 1985, 16.

[5] The oracle is first attested in the *Cypria* but clearly assumed in many earlier treatments. Cf. Auson. *Epitaphs* 12.4, Hyg. *Fab.* 103, Lucian *Dial. Mort.* 19, Eust. *Il.* 2.698 and *Od.* 11.521, Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.29, etc.

[6] Hyginus 103.2 says it was because Laodamia "flens, petit a diis ut sibi cum eo tres horas colloqui liceret" ("weeping, sought from the gods that it be allowed for her to speak with him for three hours").

[7] For three hours, according to Hyginus 103 and Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 11.8; a full day, according to Lucian, *Dialogi Mortuorum* 23; Lucian, *Charon* 1; and Statius, *Silvae* 2.7.120.

hanging to immolation.[8] Hyginus tells the story twice: first, a brief mention of Laodamia's death, and then a more detailed version (secs. 103–4). The elaborated version serves our analysis better. In it, Laodamia creates a statue of him to fondle *after* she hears of Protesilaus' death.[9] A servant sees her "Protesilai simulacrum tenentem atque osculantem" ("holding and kissing the image of Protesilaus"), assumes she is committing adultery, and summons her father, who discovers the truth. He orders the statue to be burnt and Laodamia, "dolorem non sustinens" ("not able to bear the pain"), throws herself onto the pyre and dies with the *simulacrum.* Despite important differences in detail, the myth tells a not atypical (if here exaggerated) story of a lover who could not bear life without her beloved.

The poem itself is not easy to divide into sections, and the lack of structure reinforces a characterization of Laodamia as unaware of the complexities of reading and writing, not fully in control of her text. She begins with the departure of Protesilaus' ships and her reactions to the event: she faints when she can no longer see him (5–30). An outline of her daily routine follows, particularly her lack of interest in her appearance and her determination to live like Protesilaus during his absence (31–42). Laodamia then apostrophizes both Paris and Menelaus (43–48) and mentions an *omen sinistrum* that is not yet explained (49–62). Her fears become more specific (63): she warns her husband to beware of Hector and urges him to think of her as he prepares for battle. This prompts her to suggest that Menelaus should fight the war by himself, since he alone has a reason to fight; her husband should fight only for his life (71–78). She begs the Trojans to spare Protesilaus, even if they have to kill all of the other Greeks to do so (79–84). She now explains the evil omen of line 49, telling Protesilaus that, as he left the house, his foot knocked against the door (85–92). The omen reminds her of another fear, the prophecy that the first Greek to touch Trojan soil will be the first to die (93–102). She describes herself as lying in bed dreaming of Protesilaus and praying to the gods for his return (103–24). The lack of wind causes her further concern; she takes this as a sign from the gods,

[8] Sword: Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.30, Tzetz. *Antehomerica* 233–34 and *Chil.* 2.52.777–79. Hanging: Paus. 4.2.7. Immolation: Hyg. *Fab.* 104. Servius, *ad Aeneid* 6.447, says merely "in eius [imaginis?] amplexibus periit" ("She died in his [statue's?] embrace").

[9] The timing of the statue's creation is critical to my understanding of the story, since Ovid seems to have invented Laodamia's creation of a statue while her husband is still alive. Wilkinson too notes, but does not develop, Ovid's alteration of the relative chronology of the canonical version (1955, 88). Cf. Brescia 1996, 34, on the timing.

assuming that even Neptune is against the Greeks (125–36). She says that she envies the Trojan women because they are near their husbands, imagines Trojan couples conversing (137–48), and then mentions that she has made a waxen image of Protesilaus, which she holds and speaks to as if it were him (149–58). At the poem's end, Laodamia swears to be Protesilaus' companion in whatever place he might summon her to and warns him to take care of himself for her benefit (159–66).

Although many of the sources available to Ovid are lost to us,[10] he must have used the very influential *Protesilaus* of Euripides (frs. 649–58 Nauck).[11] Reconstructions of the play suggest that it incorporated the death of Protesilaus at Troy, his appearance to Laodamia in a dream, and Laodamia's death, that is, the basic elements used by Ovid.[12] Some critics think it included vengeance by the goddess Aphrodite,[13] although there is little evidence in the extant fragments to support that proposition. Laevius wrote an *erotopaignion* called the *Protesilaudamia*,[14] of which we have seven fragments (frs. 13–19 Courtney). It is thought to have included a letter from Laodamia to her absent husband and a statue,[15]

[10] Palmer (1898, 400–401) lists most of the prior sources but neglects Hesiod fr. 199; Pindar *Isthmian Odes* 1.53, which talks of the cult honors paid to Protesilaus; a Greek comedy of Anaxandrides (Kock *CAF* 2.150); Sophocles' *Poimenes* (although the story seems to have merely been alluded to in the play); and an episode of Heliodorus. Cf. Jacobson 1974, 196; and Mayer 1885, 101.

[11] Séchan 1953, 18–19. Mayer more cautiously concurs (1885, 130).

[12] Mayer's reconstruction (1885) involves Protesilaus' return from the dead, his desire to take Laodamia with him and her father's objection. Mayer believes that the play incorporated a statue (quite possible but difficult to prove). Jouan outlines the following plot: After Protesilaus leaves for the Trojan War in the middle of his wedding and Laodamia dreams of him (but before he returns), she creates an *imago* (1966, 321–22). Her father wants her to remarry but she refuses, whereupon he (probably) threatens to throw the statue into the fire (fr. 655). The dead Protesilaus comes back to life but can't bear to tell Laodamia of his demise. He finally tells her he has to return to the underworld and asks her to come with him, which causes an argument between Protesilaus and Laodamia's father. Laodamia, realizing she can't live without her husband, kills herself. Séchan concerns himself with cultic aspects of the play since he thinks it ended with the establishment of a hero cult for Protesilaus. See, however, Jacobson's cautions on reading backward (1974, 198).

[13] Jouan cites a tradition in which Protesilaus did not offer the requisite marriage sacrifice to Aphrodite and her consequent curse (1966, 319). Cf. Séchan 1953, 12.

[14] There is some doubt as to whether the named poems are part of the *erotopaignia,* but most scholars assume that they are. Cf. Granarolo 1971, app. 1, on the problems of attribution. Courtney says that the *Erotopaignia* comprised at least six books and cites seven other titled poems within the collection (1993, 119).

[15] Courtney 1993, 13: "fac papyrin . . . haec terga habeant stigmata." See Frassinetti 1974, 316, for a persuasive interpretation of *stigmata*. It is (barely) possible that the letter in Laevius inspired Ovid to conceive of the *Heroides*. Cf. Di Lorenzo et al. 1992, 14.

and it probably encompassed the entire story (Courtney 1993, 118–19). It may also have stressed the wedding night of the couple (Mayer 1885, 118). There are many other treatments of the myth, but few of them bear on my reading; we simply cannot tell how Ovid used them because they are so fragmentary.[16]

PROTESILAUS ERIT: MAGIC IN THE AIR

A brief overview of magical practices in contemporary poetry and society will help to put the magical elements in *Heroides* 13 in context.[17] In antiquity "magic" is often indistinguishable from the (modern) categories of "science," "religion," and "medicine," and scholars are still far from a consensus on whether "magic" is even an acceptable term for what they study (Versnel 1991, 177 and passim).[18] Magical rituals are ubiquitous in ancient literature, especially in poetry, and love magic was

[16] Also key, of course, are Propertius 1.19 and Catullus 68, the latter particularly in the lines immediately preceding the Laodamia excursus (68–72). Lyne (1998) offers an excellent discussion of both poems. Other scholars note influential poems: Merklin (1968) discusses Laodamia as a counterpart to the Propertian Arethusa (4.3). Rosati's analysis of the poem is compelling, showing the ways in which Laodamia recreates the famous scene between Hector and Andromache of *Iliad* 6; Laodamia's version, however, significantly differs (1991, 104; cf. also Jacobson 1974, 204). Jolivet compares portions of Laodamia's letter to the speech of Thetis to Achilles in *Iliad* 18.128–37 (1992, 147).

[17] Studies of magic in individual *Heroides* include Tupet 1976, 20–21; Rosenmeyer 1996, 24 (*Her.* 6 and 12). See Grantz 1955, 182, on magic in *Heroides* 5. Oppel mentions both magical motives and the element that I have seen as key to the poem, the timing of the statue's creation (1968, 97).

[18] This enormous topic has been discussed by many; I have found Versnel 1991, Betz 1991, and Graf 1991 and 1997 most useful. See Betz 1991, 255 nn. 1 and 11, and Graf 1991, 207 nn. 1–4 for bibliography. See also Graf 1997, 26–27, 49–56, 82, 213, and passim, who notes that magic is generally reserved for those rites designed to grant their practitioner private access to the divine. Versnel (1991, 183) notes that "magic" is often a term used to distinguish oneself from others ("we" perform appropriate religious rituals while "they" do magic); and Johnston rightly draws attention to the notion of power inherent in magical rituals (1999, x). Faraone suggests that "magic" can be defined as "a set of practical devices and rituals used by the Greeks in their day-to-day lives to control or otherwise influence supernaturally the forces of nature, animals, or other human beings" (1999, 16). Liebeschuetz notes, "[I]n many cases, particularly in the field of healing, men would have been hard put to distinguish between a natural and a magical cause" (1979, 127). Pliny thought magic and medicine were cognate; but see Graf 1997, 49–53, on Pliny's differences from the Augustans. Filliozat notes that the first medical text has magical portions (1943, 1–2). See also Faraone and Obbink 1991, vi, on the distinctions between magic and religion; and Faraone 1999, 17, on magic, science, and religion as inappropriate categories.

widely used throughout antiquity; it may well be one of the oldest forms of magic.[19] Perhaps for that reason, magic seems to have a particular resonance in poetic *carmina,* as both a subject and a subtext.[20] It has been noted that in elegy, the opposition between magic and love "is always already collapsed into an identification."[21] The significance of this semantic field is of course increased by the fact that a *carmen* is both a poem and an incantation,[22] and a *vates* is both a poet and a prophet. Elegy exploits this implicit connection between poetic and supernatural *carmina,* in addition to using overt invocations of magical rituals.[23]

Although a commonplace in Augustan poetry and probably also in Augustan Rome, magic is almost always treated as a foreign importation, coming from Egypt, Persia, or Mesopotamia by way of Thessaly and Thrace.[24] Yet several laws against magical practices were passed in Re-

[19] Gager 1992, 78. Varro and other Latin grammarians derived the root *vene(n)-*, (poison/medicine), later used for private erotic magic, from the same stem as *Venus,* the goddess of love. Whether this etymology is correct is irrelevant (it is not; Venus comes from *van-/ven-* meaning desire; cf. Maltby 1991, 635). What matters is that Romans saw a clear connection between magic and love. *Pace* Liebeschuetz, who notes that the poets "do not take magic very seriously" (1979, 129), I find magic to be a significant presence in elegy.

[20] See Romilly 1975, which provides an early but still key discussion of the connections between magic and poetic language (4 and passim). See too Sharrock's excellent study on the use of magic as metaphor in book 2 of the *Ars* (1994, 50–78).

[21] Sharrock 1994, 56. She provides (1994, 51 n. 47) a list of passages in Augustan elegy in which magic is referred to as possessing real power: Tib. 1.2.41–56, 1.5.11–16, 41, and 49–58, 1.8.7–22; Prop. 1.1.19 and 2.1.51–52, 4.5; Ov. *Am*. 1.8, 2.1.23–28, and 3.7.31–36. Cf. Viarre's discussion of "la fréquence dans la littérature de l'époque de mots comme *ars magica, magus, carmen, herba magica,* etc." (1964, 161).

[22] This use of *carmen* appears in its first attested usage in the Twelve Tables, which prohibit the use of a *carmen malum* against crops. See Graf 1997, 41–43, 46–48.

[23] Cf. Sharrock: "[T]he discourses of love, poetry, and magic blend into one" and "[t]he metaphorical connection between love and magic, and actual pharmacological practice in erotic matters, constitute a well-developed, though elusive, tradition in literature" (1994, 53). She provides a list of passages where *carmen* refers to a spell: Verg. *Ecl*. 8.67–70; Tib. 1.2.45–56, 1.5.11–2, and 1.8.17–21; Prop. 2.28.35; Ov. *Am*. 3.7.31 (1994,. 63 n. 63). See also Luck 1962, 5: "Sagten nicht die Dichter, daß ihre eigen Kunst eine Magie sei?" ("Do the poets not say that their particular craft is a kind of magic?"); and O'Neill 1998, 65–66.

[24] On the complex relationship between the perceived foreignness (generally eastern, especially Mesopotamian, Egyptian, and Persian) of the magical practitioner and his "importation" into Greco-Roman culture, see Gordon 1987, 60, 77–78; Burkert 1992, 41–87; Graf 1997, 5, 29, 52, 169–70; and Johnston 1999, 86–95. Graf (1997, 56–58) suggests that during the Julio–Claudian period a distinction was drawn between native incantations and "foreign" *veneficium*. Mesopotamia: Burkert 1992, 65–68 and 73–87; Johnston 1999, 87–90; Faraone 1999, 36–37. Egypt: Graf 1997, 89–92; Johnston 1999, 90–94; Faraone 1999, 32. Persia: Pliny 30.2.1; Gordon 1987, 75. Thessaly: Graf 1997, 198. Plut. *Num.* 15.3–6, Livy 1.20,

publican Rome,[25] and Augustus himself sponsored at least one public burning of magical texts.[26] While laws obviously provide no direct evidence for contemporaneous magical practices, they do show that both government and people perceived (some) magic as subversive.[27] *Heroides* 13 is set in Thessaly, a fact that plays a role in the events of the poem.

My examination of the actions of Laodamia and several mythic parallels illustrates the ways in which Ovid adapted the poetic traditions of his predecessors to create a magical character who cannot control her writing and is therefore ultimately controlled by it. Much of the ironic pathos in this poem derives from the presentation of Laodamia as consistently open to the possibility of magic while missing its most important manifestations, those that she (unwittingly) creates.[28] There is no explicit textual evidence that she performs magic, yet, perhaps because of her superstitious hypersensitivity, magic seems to happen around her. Unfortunately, Laodamia is unskilled in her interpretation of various supernatural occurrences, and she suffers for her incompetence. Further, she seems to cause her own worst fears to become manifest by writing them. The character portrayed in the poem is delusive and paranoid,[29] yet this characterization of Laodamia heightens the irony for the reader because her paranoia turns out to be completely justified; we could call it *pronoia*.

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and Cato *Agr*. 160, however, suggest that native Italian magic played a part in the early history of Rome.

[25] In 187 B.C.E. and 81 B.C.E. Cf. Livy 4.30, 25.1, 6–12, 34.8–19; *CIL* 1.581, 10.101; Cassius Dio 49.43, 52.36 and 53; Servius' citation of the eighth of the Twelve Tables for earlier sanctions against magic in Rome (*ad Eclogues* 8.100). On laws against magic in imperial Rome, see also Pharr 1932, 281; Phillips 1991; and Graf 1997, 36–41, 53, and 263 n. 55.

[26] Suet. *Aug.* 31, *Tib.* 36, and *Vit*. 14.

[27] I would not wish to take the subversiveness of magic, particularly magic in the poetry of Ovid, as far as Viarre, who tentatively suggests that his interest in magic could have been one of "les causes de son exil" (1964, 164). (Presumably she takes the *carmen* portion of his offense as magical.)

[28] Cf. Douglas on the Kachin wife who is seen as "the unconscious, involuntary agent of witchcraft" (1984, 102); and Gordon (1987, 62), who notes the distinctions in Greek thought between "unconscious magic and intentional magic."

[29] Laodamia shows her paranoia as early as the first line of the poem, sending Protesilaus wishes for good health and hoping that her letter gets there, "Mittit et optat amans, quo mittitur, ire salutem" ("Your lover sends health, and hopes [this letter/wish] goes where it is sent"). Mail delivery was of course significantly less reliable in antiquity than now, but the fact that her first words express fear that all will not proceed according to plan characterizes her as superstitious. Cf. Williams 1996, passim, on the paranoia expressed by the *persona* who writes Ovid's *Ibis*.

Protesilaus has barely left, and Laodamia is already convinced that he is dead. The fact that the reader knows Protesilaus is doomed does not sufficiently explain Laodamia's excessively superstitious terror.

Laodamia describes herself taking a series of actions, which I will summarize and then examine in detail. She tells Protesilaus about an omen that occurred as he was leaving but that she feared to tell him about at the time and suggests he should never have left home (86–92). The subject of omens reminds her of the oracle about Troy (that the first Greek soldier to touch Trojan soil will die), which she repeats to Protesilaus, adding that she has a premonition that he will be first off the ship (93–100). Laodamia brings up a related point, the meaning of Protesilaus' name, which is usually etymologized as "first of the people." Yet she orders him to be last off the ships (*novissimus exi,* 99). She speaks of nightmares in which Protesilaus appears and berates her; when she awakens, she worships (*adoro,* 111) the dream figure and then prays at every altar in Thessaly (112). She demands Protesilaus' immediate return, warning him that the sea and winds will be unfavorable to Greeks making war on Poseidon's Troy, but this prompts the fear that by predicting danger she has uttered a self-fulfilling prophecy and cursed the Greeks (131–35).[30] Laodamia insists on imitating the conditions of Protesilaus' situation insofar as she is able, refusing to wash and pretending she is in a military camp (37–42). She links her life to his and begs the Trojans to spare Protesilaus alone among the Greeks, and so spare her life (79–80). Finally, she claims to have fashioned a waxen image of Protesilaus that she keeps in her bedroom, holds in her lap, and kisses. She claims that it is his exact likeness—all it needs is a voice and *Protesilaus erit* (156).

Her letter begins with the telling of the omen:

> Nunc fateor: volui revocare, animusque ferebat;
> Substitit auspicii lingua timore mali.
> Cum foribus velles ad Troiam exire paternis,
> Pes tuus offenso limine signa dedit.
> Ut vidi, ingemui tacitoque in pectore dixi:
> 'Signa reversuri sint, precor, ista viri.'
> Haec tibi nunc refero, ne sis animosus in armis
> Fac meus in ventos hic timor omnis eat.[31] (85–92)

[30] Jacobson also discusses her actions to this point (1974, 208–10).

[31] I use Palmer's 1898 text of the *Heroides*.

> Now I confess: I wanted to call you back, and my mind carried me that way; but my tongue stuck with fear of an evil omen. When you wanted to go to Troy from your ancestral home, your foot gave a sound as it struck the threshold. When I saw, I groaned, and I said to myself, "I pray that may be the sound of a man who will return." I tell you this now, so that you not be courageous at arms. Make it that all my fear blow away in the winds.

The evil omen—that Protesilaus stumbled as he crossed the threshold—is a commonplace of elegiac poetry and is often used by the departing lover-poet to delay or prevent him from leaving his mistress (e.g., Tib. 1.3.17–20).[32] In most texts, the omen remains only a possibility, or if it does occur, the person who has stumbled cancels it in some way, either by turning around and leaving again properly or by not leaving at all.[33] The mention of the omen in *Heroides* 13 is particularly striking because the person leaving no longer has the power to repair it.

Laodamia's words here characterize her as overly superstitious and show her lack of discretion. She mentions the omen because she *must* mention it, because she has been obsessively contemplating every detail of her husband's departure.[34] Yet she raises the issue too late: he is gone and cannot retrace his steps. The evil omen stands. Her accidental "slip of the pen" is similar to Protesilaus' accidental slip of the foot.

The significance of the stumble omen derives not so much from its occurrence as from Laodamia's decision to describe it to Protesilaus. Studies of curse and erotic magic suggest that a significant part of their efficacy lies in the victim's knowledge of the curse;[35] in fact, antiquity held it reasonable to expect fulfillment of a curse.[36] Laodamia is therefore

[32] Ovid *Amores* 1.12.3–6, is a slightly different case, in which Ovid notes that the maid who was carrying his wax tablets to his lover tripped and then came back with his lover's refusal. Cf. Cic. *De Div*. 2.84 with Pease (1923, 486–87) on this line.

[33] On Ovid's departure from Rome, see Ov. *Tr.* 1.3.55–56; his reluctance to leave causes his foot to drag on the threshhold, providing an omen in confirmation of his misfortune.

[34] Is the statement that she saw (*vidi*, 89) the sound his foot made meant to convey that she was (superstitiously) *watching* the door as he left?

[35] Cannon notes that "the belief that one has been subjected to sorcery, and in consequence is inevitably condemned to death, does actually result in death" (1942, 175). Cf. too Gager 1992, 21; and Johnston 1999, 121.

[36] Watson 1991, 22. O'Hara notes, "Curses in ancient narratives generally come true" (1990, 99). He finds this true in tragedy (*Oedipus Coloneus, Hippolytus,* the house of Atreus) and also in history: Leuktra, Hannibal's curse on Prusias who "died within a year or two," and Cinna and Crassus, who were cursed and died (1990, 100). See too Cannon 1942, 180, on death caused by fear.

performing a dangerous act by warning her husband of an omen that he is now powerless to avert.

Laodamia makes two other slips. In lines 137–38, she says that she envies the Trojan women because they can attend the funerals of their husbands ("Troasin invideo, quae sic lacrimosa suorum / funera conspicient, nec procul hostis erit").[37] This parallels the epic statements of Odysseus and Aeneas that the men who died in the Trojan War were lucky, but it differs in a significant way.[38] The epic heroes wished themselves to have died in the glorious arena of battle, while Laodamia wishes she could see her dead husband (who, we must remember, is not yet dead). The reader assumes that the statement reflects Laodamia's desire to be near Protesilaus and her worry about not knowing how he is faring, but her explicit statement—that she wants to see his funeral—is open to multiple interpretations.

She makes her third slip in wanting her fears to disappear with the winds (92). This could be nothing more than a standard apotropaic saying. But she is a superstitious person, so her statement linking the wind to her fear will not be meaningless; readers of the *Heroides* will quickly recognize the dramatic irony in this situation. As Laodamia knows, there *is* no wind at Aulis; thus her fear will persist until a wind returns to bear it away. Her fear and her *carmen* will travel together to Protesilaus and, when the wind does finally return at Aulis and he sails to Troy, his fate and hers will be sealed. Her greatest fear is that Protesilaus will die in the Trojan War. He does precisely this, and her fears thus disappear. Laodamia's misreading of the omen foreshadows and parallels her misreading of her own *carmen* and of her fate: her fears do indeed come to an end, but it is not the end she wants.

We see her mistakes and misreadings multiply as the poem progresses. The next example comes in Laodamia's description (or reminder) of the prophecy about the first soldier to set foot on Trojan soil, which could be a straightforward exercise in Ovidian irony.

> Sors quoque nescioquem fato designat iniquo,
> Qui primus Danaum Troada tangat humum.
> Infelix, quae prima virum lugebit ademptum!

[37] Cf. Jacobson, who reads the distich as designed to depict Laodamia's touching naïveté (1974, 204). Yet the use of *procul* shockingly suggests that she would prefer her own town to be attacked, if it would bring Protesilaus home.

[38] Cf. *Od.* 5.306–12, *Aen.* 1.94–101, and Di Lorenzo et al. 1992, 23–24, for parallels with *Il.* 6.

Di faciant, ne tu strenuus esse velis.
Inter mille rates tua sit millensima puppis
Iamque fatigatas ultima verset aquas.
Hoc quoque praemoneo: de nave novissimus exi:
Non est, quo properas, terra paterna tibi. (93–100)

Fortune also designates somebody for an unfair fate, whoever of the Greeks first touches Trojan soil. Miserable woman, who will be the first to mourn her lost husband! May the gods make it that you not want to be active. Let your ship be the thousandth of a thousand ships, and let it, last, turn the worn-out waves. I warn you about this too: be the last from the ship. That land to which you hurry is not your home.

The first irony is that she warns Protesilaus to sail his ship last and to be the last soldier off that last ship when we know that he will be the first. If lines 63–64 are genuine, as I assume them to be,[39] it is also ironic that Laodamia tells Protesilaus to watch out for Hector, the Trojan who is said in most versions of the story to have killed him.[40] Ovid may mean only to convey a knowledge about the later uncertainty surrounding Protesilaus' killer. The irony would, however, be even more pointed if Laodamia draws misfortune to her husband by telling him his fate. As with the stumble omen, the warning becomes a curse.

Laodamia speaks of prophecy, and she herself may have this gift,[41] since she predicts the future. Lines 93–94, quoted above, give us

[39] The argument against the authenticity of these lines ("Hectora nescio quem timeo: Paris Hectora dixit / ferrea sanguinea bella movere manu" ["I fear someone named Hector. Paris said Hector would bring harsh war with a bloody hand"]) boils down to an erroneous appeal to reality and an insistence that Laodamia would not know who Hector is. While this is possible it is surely not necessary. See Verducci on the "wit, comedy, parody, and malice [that] so often subject the melodramatic and pathetic exhibition of the poet's heroines to seemingly gratuitous interventions" (1985, 15).

[40] The *Iliad* does not name the killer, calling him only *Dardanos anēr* (2.695). Hector is favored by Hyginus *Fab.* 103.1.1; Ps. Apollodorus *Epit*. 3.30; Lucian, *Dialogi Mortuorum* 23; Quintus Smyrnaeus 1.816–17; and Tzetzes, *Antehomerica* 232. The scholiast to *Iliad* 2.701 names Aeneas as his killer. Eustathius (*Il.* 508.8) says that Palaiphatos attests that Aeneas seized Protesilaus but also that there is some debate. "Others say that he fell at the hands of Achates, the companion of Aeneas. Some think that the Dardanian man was Hector, but others do not accept it, and if Hector snatched Protesilaus, they insist that he would have said 'shining Hector killed him,' or 'Hector the Dardanian.'" Ausonius (*Epitaphs* 12.4–6) blames the death on "pellacis Laertiadae insidiis" ("the treacheries of the seductive son of Laertes"). At *Metamophoses* 12.67, Ovid casts his vote for Hector. See Mantero 1970, 188 n. 3, for bibliography on the question.

[41] Merklin (1968, 491) notes, "[A]ls eine griechische Kassandra erscheint diese Laudamia" ("This Laudamia appears like a Greek Kassandra").

one instance, in which she repeats the prophecy about the first soldier to reach Troy. Her other prophecies include "Tu, qui pro rapta nimium, Menelae, laboras / ei mihi! quam multis flebilis ultor eris" (47–48; "You, Menelaus, who work too hard for a stolen woman, ah me! what a tearful avenger you will be for many") and "Ipse suam, non praebet iter Neptunus ad urbem" (129; "Neptune himself does not offer a passage to his own city"). Laodamia also couches much of her writing in the terms of a vague prophecy or curse: "Tam sis hostis iners, quam malus hospes eras" (44; "Paris, may you be so lazy an enemy as you were an evil guest"); "Hectora quisquis is est, . . . caveto: / signatum memori pectore nomen habe. / . . . alios vitare memento, / et multos illic Hectoras esse puta" (65–68; "Watch out for Hector, whoever he is, and have that name inscribed in your mindful heart . . . remember to avoid others, and think that there are many Hectors there"); "Haec tibi nunc refero, ne sis animosus in armis" (91; "I tell you this now, in order that you not be bold at arms"); "Hoc quoque praemoneo: de nave novissimus exi" (99; I warn you about this too: leave last from the ship"); "Invitis ire paratis aquis" (126; "You prepare to go with the waters unwilling").[42]

Another of Laodamia's unusual actions is the use she makes of Protesilaus' name. One cause, if not the main cause, of Laodamia's premonition about Protesilaus' death is that his name means "first of the people" or "first to jump."[43] His is not an unusual name; up until his death

[42] These parallels, when combined with other suggestions of magic in the poem, adumbrate Laodamia's ties to the supernatural. It is worth noting the preponderance of imperatives (twenty) in *Heroides* 13. 14, 36, 49, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 77, 79, 92, 101, 102, 130, 131, 134, 135, 144, 155, 156. Imperatives are more frequent in this poem than elsewhere in the *Heroides*. They occur at 1.2, 113; 2.27 and 98; 3.26 (twice), 85, 87, 88, 91, 127, 130, 140, 145, 152, and 154; 4.3, 14, 66, 127, 147 (twice), 156, 162, 165, and 176; 5.1, 26 (twice), 27, 31 (twice), 52, 88, 118, 119, 155; 6.73, 105, 119, 141 (twice), and 164; 7.31 (twice), 42, 63, 65 (twice), 71, 97, 102, 105, 110, 129, 150, 151, 152, 163, and 173; 8.16, 24, 29; 9.13, 105 (thrice), 110, 165, and 168; 10.35, 36, 56, 63, and 149 (twice); 11.59, 60 (twice), 63, 101, 102, 103, 105, 122, 123 (twice), 126, and 128; 12.56, 81 (twice), 82, 134, 151, 159 (twice), 160, 187, 193, 194 (twice), 202, and 204 (twice); 14.47, 54, 57, 63, 73 (twice), 125 (twice), and 126; 15.23, 53, 95, 98, 100, 171, 172, 179, 202, 205, 213, and 214. The only poems that even come close to the number of imperatives in *Heroides* 13 are 7 (seventeen), 11 (thirteen), and 12 (sixteen)—but *Heroides* 7 and 12 are at least thirty lines longer. The imperative is frequently used in curses; Laodamia may (unconsciously) replicate the syntax least appropriate to her situation. See Faraone 1991, 6, on the imperative in magical texts.

[43] There is another possible etymology: *prōtos ilaos* (first to propitiate). Chantraine says the proper etymology of Protesilaus is from *prōti* and *hiēmi* (1968, 945). See Eustathius: "He did not say 'he started out' [from the ship], but 'he jumped out.' He means that he threw himself, and thus Protesilaus was slain. . . . [H]e was not only first from the Achaian

it was probably taken in a military sense and signified that he was a leader (Séchan 1953, 4). The second meaning lies unnoticed until a context develops. Once she hears the prophecy, Laodamia, full of superstitious dread, *knows* what will happen. She uses her knowledge of etymology and anthroponymy to tell the future[44] and her name magic dooms Protesilaus by invoking his fate.[45]

Laodamia's nightmares and subsequent actions are as notable as her curses and have been the subject of much scrutiny. While it is true that many myths involve dream figures of both living and dead people, Laodamia's dreams raise the question whether her bed is truly *caelebs*. On the surface, her dreams are tastefully depicted erotic fantasies; Laodamia is able to pretend that her lover is physically present (Jacobson 1974, 294):

> Aucupor in lecto mendaces caelibe somnos;
> Dum careo veris, gaudia falsa iuvant.
> Sed tua cur nobis pallens occurrit imago?
> Cur venit a verbis multa querella latens?
> Excutior somno simulacraque noctis adoro. (107–11)
>
> I chase deceitful sleep in a solitary bed; while I am lacking true ones, false pleasures satisfy. But why does your pale image appear to me? Why does complaint come, hiding much from words? I am struck from sleep and I worship the forms of the night.

Laodamia's act of worship too is worthy of note: first, she is "struck from sleep" (*excutior somno*);[46] then, she worships the *simulacra noctis*.[47]

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people, but by far the first, both in jumping and landing. From which Protesilaus was derived, because it sounds like 'to be first.' For 'Protesilaus' sounds as if Proteusilaus has lost the *u*. And he was said to be by far the first to pay" (508.8).

[44] In Hyginus, *Fabulae* 103, Protesilaus is named Iolaos until he dies and is posthumously named Protesilaus. Our Laodamia, however, knows her husband as Protesilaus (*Her*. 13.12 passim).

[45] There may be another connection between Laodamia and magic: Pausanias, quoting the *Cypria*, says that Protesilaus' wife is the daughter of Meleager (son of Oeneus) and Kleopatra (daughter of Marpessa) (4.2.7.5–7). Laodamia is thus Althaea's granddaughter. This also means that Meleager's sister, Deianira, the woman who killed her husband, Herakles, with a magical potion, is Laodamia's aunt. This provides a further reason, if one were needed, to connect Laodamia with magic—her family is famous for sorcery.

[46] Aeneas awakens from his dream of the dead Hector with the same phrase (*Aen*. 2.302); it appears also in Horace, *Satirae* 2.6.112.

[47] Cf. Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* 15.38.6, for the phrase *simulacris noctium*.

On the surface, Laodamia's assertion "nulla caret fumo Thessalis ara meo" (112; "no Thessalian altar lacks my smoke") characterizes her as extreme in her religious zeal. It is surely not necessary for her to worship at *every* altar in Thessaly. Her claim is of course an exaggeration, but the mention of Thessaly is vital to an understanding of this passage. While all versions of this myth state that the couple is from Thessaly, Ovid capitalizes on their homeland by mentioning it four times in this poem, twice referring to them as "Haemonian" in a single emphatic line (2). Thessaly is a traditional locus of witchcraft,[48] and Haemonia, a region in Thessaly, is mentioned in many poetic contexts.[49] The emphasis on Thessaly is another allusion to the supernatural events that are happening all around Laodamia, events that she is powerless to understand, let alone change. Even her homeland joins in the conspiracy to involve her in various magical happenings.

Other supernatural forces are at work:

> Hoc quoque, quod venti prohibent exire carinas,
> Me movet: invitis ire paratis aquis.
> Quis velit in patriam vento prohibente reverti?
> A patria pelago vela vetante datis?
> Ipse suam non praebet iter Neptunus ad urbem:
> Quo ruitis? Vestras quisque redite domos.
> Quo ruitis, Danai? Ventos audite vetantis:
> Non subiti casus, numinis ista mora est.
> Quid petitur tanto nisi turpis adultera bello?
> Dum licet, Inachiae vertite vela rates!
> Sed quid ago? Revoco? Revocaminis omen abesto,
> Blandaque compositas aura secundet aquas! (125–36)
>
> This also disturbs me, that the winds prevent the ships from leaving: you prepare to go with the sea unwilling. Who would want to turn back home with the winds prohibiting? Do you set sail away from home with the sea forbidding it? Neptune himself does not offer passage to his city. Where

[48] See Nisbet and Hubbard 1970, 316; to their citations add Ov. *Am*. 3.7.27; *Met*. 1.155, 2.221, 2.225, 2.243, 7.350, 8.350, 8.768, 8.813, 12.190; *Fast.* 3.321; also Plaut. *Amph*. 1043; Hor. *Ep*. 7.45; Hor. *Od*. 1.27.21; Prop. 1.1.24, 1.5.6, 3.24.10; Tib. 2.4.56; Juv. 6.611; Pliny *NH* 30.2.7, 36.130; Apul. *Met*. 2.1.114, 2.21; and *PGM* 4.296–336. See also Graf 1997, 198; Lowe 1929, 8 and 106; Séchan 1953, 3; Viarre 1964, 199; and Tupet 1976, 352.

[49] Magical mentions of Haemonia are at Ov. *Ars Am.* 2.99, *Rem. Am.* 249, *Met*. 1.568, 2.543–45, 5.306, 7.132–59, 314, 11.229, 11.409, 11.652, 12.89, 12.213, 12.262–64, Tib. 1.5.45, Luc. 6.45, 7.314. For the citations from the *Metamorphoses* in this footnote and the previous, I am indebted to Viarre (1964, 199–200), who describes how each is magical.

> are you rushing? Go back, each of you, to your homes. Where are you rushing, Greeks? Listen to the forbidding winds: These are not random occurrences; the delay is from a god. What is sought by such a war except a foul adulteress? While it is permitted, Greek ships, turn back your sails!—But what am I doing? Do I call you back? May the omen of calling back be gone, and mild breezes favor a calm sea!

Laodamia's assertion that the gods are against the Greeks repeats a theme she has mentioned earlier. She finds the expedition ill-omened and urges Protesilaus to return home immediately.[50] Since Poseidon is on the side of the Trojans, she assumes there is little chance the ships will safely arrive at Troy, but then she decides it is unsafe for her husband to trust to the sea even to come home. In part, this scenario recreates the traditional elegiac fear of separation, with the addition of the "winds/sea against the lovers" *topos*.[51] Yet it is more than that. According to Laodamia, Protesilaus is doomed no matter what. He cannot stay where he is and he cannot come home. She has clearly "forgotten"[52] that there are no winds of any kind at Aulis, and so the ships are still there; this is why she can write to Protesilaus. He can therefore return home without sailing. In the meantime, she realizes that she has again suggested that Protesilaus will die. Interestingly, her statement is right in its essentials—after the Trojan War, Poseidon and other gods *do* wreak vengeance on the returning victors. She is characterized here too as a prophet. More important, she is characterized as being hypersensitive to magic while simultaneously unaware of the astounding coincidences occurring around her.

Laodamia's tendency to stumble into magical situations shows up in another of her actions. She has decided to imitate Protesilaus' life at war:

> Nec mihi pectendos cura est praebere capillos,
> Nec libet aurata corpora veste tegi:
> . . . . . .
> Scilicet ipsa geram saturatas murice vestes,
> Bella sub Iliacis moenibus ille gerat?
> Ipsa comas pectar, galea caput ille prematur?
> Ipsa novas vestes, dura vir arma ferat?

[50] *Revocamen* is a prosaic word, appearing in Ovid only here and at *Metamorphoses* 2.596 and *Fasti* 1.561. In the *Metamorphoses* the raven uses it to wish bad luck to the crow, but in the *Fasti* it appears to have no superstitious connotation.

[51] Cf., e.g., Cat. 64.164, Prop. 1.8.9.

[52] Cf. her other "forgetting" in line 92, discussed above.

> Qua possum, squalore tuos imitata labores
> Dicar et haec belli tempora tristis agam. (31–32, 37–42)
>
> Nor do I care to offer my hair to be combed, nor is it pleasant to have my body covered by golden cloth. . . . To be sure, shall I myself wear garments drenched in purple, while he wages war under the walls of Ilium? Shall I have my hair combed, while he covers his head with a helmet? Shall I wear new clothes although my husband wears harsh armor? Inasmuch as I can, let me be said to imitate your labors in squalor, and let me pass this time of war in sadness.

The passage suggests that Laodamia may be unwittingly invoking a kind of magic now known as *similia similibus* or "persuasive analogy."[53] The examples James Frazer gives in *The Golden Bough* include wives who mimic the conditions of the hunt or war while the men are gone; they are often thought thereby to ensure the success of the expedition (1912, 26).[54]

More significantly, Laodamia's actions are strange in their Greco-Roman context. There is no rational explanation for much of Laodamia's behavior. She walks about barefoot with unbound hair and loose clothes. This is the standard description of a mourning woman, but it is also the standard poetic description of a woman performing magic (although it can, of course occur in other situations).[55] Although Laodamia's unconscious attempt to create a bond between herself and Protesilaus may be successful, it does not ensure a happy outcome. In linking their lives, she merely ensures that they both will die.

[53] These terms for the kind of magic that seeks to establish a similarity in some respect between the item acted upon and the desired result (e.g., "May NN burn like this leaf burns") seem to be the most acceptable among modern scholars, replacing the Frazerian "sympathetic magic" of my title. Cf. Graf 1997, 12–14, 134, 145–46, and 205–15, on problems with Frazer (primarily the imputation of "primitive thinking") and on the history of the term "sympathetic magic." See Frazer 1912. *Similia similibus,* coined by Audollent (1904), avoids the problems of Frazer's later term. See Tambiah 1985, 60–87, and Faraone 1991, 7–8, for the terms "persuasive analogy" and "performativity" in ritual. O'Neill (1998, 73–75) discusses a similar kind of magic in Propertius 4.5.

[54] His examples operate under the principle that "the behavior of friends and relations at a distance" is significant: "When a party of men are out hunting or fighting, their kinsfolk at home are often expected to do certain things or to abstain from doing certain others, for the sake of ensuring the safety and success of the distant hunters or warriors" (1912, 26). Frazer's methodology has been astutely criticized by many, and his evolutionary model (magic-religion-science) is now understood to be anachronistic; there is no evidence that magic predates religion or science (insofar as they are separate categories).

[55] Cf., e.g., *Aen.* 4.509, 517–18, Hor. *Ep*. 5.15–16.

TWO DEATHS IN ONE

In addition to living like Protesilaus, Laodamia says she wants to die like him. She instructs Protesilaus to preserve *her* life: "et facito dicas, quotiens pugnare parabis / 'parcere me iussit Laudamia sibi'" (69–70; "and make sure you say, whenever you prepare to fight, 'Laodamia orders me to spare her'"). She begs the Trojans to spare Protesilaus, insisting that, if they kill him, her blood will run out of his body ("ne meus ex illo corpore sanguis eat," 80; "lest my blood flow out of his body").[56] Laodamia's peculiar language has been singled out by critics; most read it as indicative of her overwhelming love for her husband. Not only is this likely, but the similar statement by Alcyone in the *Metamorphoses*, "mittat ut auxilium sine se, verbisque precatur / et lacrimis, animasque duas ut servet in una" (*Met*. 11.387–88; "she begged with words and tears that he would send help without himself and preserve two lives in one"), suggests that Ovid recognized its effectiveness.[57]

There is yet another irony in this poem. In most variants of the story Laodamia makes a wax statue of Protesilaus only after she knows he is dead. In Hyginus, she kills herself when her father burns the *simulacrum,* throwing herself on the fire. In Ovid, she makes the statue while her husband is still at Aulis. This means that both she and the statue could be destroyed while Protesilaus is still alive or, more poignantly, at precisely the moment when he is killed by a Trojan.[58] Her linkage of her husband's life to her own is more than a poetic way of saying she loves him. It in fact creates a magical bond between them, so that we may be meant to imagine that, when she and the effigy of him are burned, he too must die (and vice versa). It only increases our sense of irony that she does not appear to know what she is doing.

Although Laodamia does not die within the compass of *Heroides* 13, her death provides the all-important conclusion to it and would be in the mind of the poem's reader, coloring the entire poem.[59] Nicole Loraux,

[56] Significantly, she begs the Trojans to spare Protesilaus alone (*de tot . . . uni*, 79). By her indifference to the fates of the other Greeks, she may also "curse" them.

[57] Bömer also cites *Metamorphoses* 3.473, 9.780, 10.707, 12.229, and Propertius 2.28.41–42 on the idea of two dying as one (1980, 336–37). Cf. *Amores* 1.7.60, Propertius 2.20.17, and (in a variant of the *topos)*, *Heroides* 7.133–36, where Dido suggests that she and her unborn child will die together. Bréguet (1960) discusses the *topos* at length.

[58] If Laodamia dies before he does, it will prove that she is mentally unstable. If they die at the same time, she will show herself to have created a magical bond that kills them both.

[59] Jacobson makes the important point that although the *Heroides* "exist at only a very specific and brief moment in time they constantly partake of the entire myth, present, past, and even future" (1974, 41).

in her study of women's death in tragedy, notes that the death of a man seems to require the suicide of his wife (1987, 7). Interestingly, the mythological tradition gives Laodamia several kinds of death. She hangs herself, pierces herself with a sword, or burns herself.[60] Hanging, Laodamia's method of choice in Pausanias 4.2.7, needs little discussion because it is so familiar from tragic sources.[61] Hanging is the default, the "natural" way for a wife to kill herself. Suicide by sword, ascribed to Laodamia in Apollodorus *Biblioteca* 3.20 and Eustathius 325.25, is also known from Greek tragedy, appearing in the *Trachiniae* and the *Suppliant Women*.[62]

There is one other version of Laodamia's death, immolation, which fits best with Ovid's alteration of the statue of Protesilaus to a waxen one, as well as with the magical elements present in the poem.[63] This is the method of death in Hyginus 104, the account that includes an *imago* for Laodamia to caress. Immolation is a less common way in mythology for a woman to kill herself—Evadne is one of the few[64]—and it sounds vaguely foreign and exotic.[65] A well-known parallel lies close to hand: Dido, a precursor to the *Heroides* in many ways (as well as the author of her own letter, *Heroides* 7), kills herself by immolation. She tells her sister to build a pyre and place Aeneas' weapons and their bed on it (*Aen.* 4.494–98) and then performs a magic ritual that includes an *effigies*

[60] See note 8 above for source material.

[61] The women in extant tragedies who hang themselves are Jocasta in the *Oedipus Tyrannus*, Phaedra in the *Hippolytus,* and Antigone and Eurydice in the *Antigone*. Althaea and Meleager's wife, Kleopatra (Laodamia's mother?), also hang themselves according to Apollodorus 1.8.1–3.

[62] Fr. 656 of Euripides' *Protesilaus* seems to be a discussion by Laodamia of the method by which she should die, and most critics agree that in that play she kills herself with a sword.

[63] Di Lorenzo et al. also seem to think this was the version Ovid intended (1992, 67–68).

[64] After her dead husband's body is returned to her, Evadne gives a speech explaining why life is no longer worth living and throws herself onto her husband's funeral pyre (Apollod. 3.7.1). Cf. also Eur. *Suppl*. 1034–37; Apollod. 3.7.1, Zenobius, *Cent*. 1.30; Prop. 1.5.21; Ov. *Trist.* 4.14.38; Ov. *Ars Am.* 3.21 and *Pont.* 3.1.111; Hyg. 243; Stat. *Theb*. 12.800; Mart. 4.75.5; and Plut. *Eroticus* 17.

[65] Perret calls immolation "héroïque, masculin" (1964, 252), and Tupet characterizes it as more noble than poison or hanging (1976, 259). Cf. the story of Croesus in Herodotus 1.86–87, as well as his description of *sati*, clearly meant to seem sensational to the Greeks. Dido, the most famous classical example, is clearly depicted as a foreigner throughout the *Aeneid* as well as immediately before her death.

of Aeneas.[66] She dies by throwing herself onto a funeral pyre, but she also dies by Aeneas' sword (4.663–74; it is unclear which is fatal). In all versions of her story, even the non-Aenean, Dido builds a pyre.[67] Finally, and perhaps most significantly, Laodamia is one of Dido's underworld companions in book 6 of the *Aeneid*; their collocation in that vital scene may have influenced Ovid (and Laodamia) to choose immolation.[68]

PLAYING WITH WAX: THE *IMAGO* OF PROTESILAUS

We come, finally, to the creation of the wax *imago* of Protesilaus,[69] the clearest evidence that Ovid is playing with magic. Wax had many uses in the Roman world in general and is often cited by the love poets.[70] It was, obviously, used in tablet form for writing, particularly letters.[71] Statues, sometimes made of wax, frequently commemorated absent loved ones or even ancestors,[72] often with no explicit magical purpose intended.

[66] Interestingly, Dido, like Laodamia, has a statue; Dido's represents her husband, Sychaeus (*Aen*. 4.460, *Her*. 7.99). Bowie notes that the *effigies* was apparently Virgil's invention (1998, 57). He reads Dido's death in light of the multiple substitutions effected through the story (1998, 62). His reading persuasively captures the physicality of the situation, an element often overlooked. He notes the continuous presence of *effigies* of Aeneas, including the image on the temple, Cupid disguised as Ascanius, and the *exuviae* and the *effigies* of book 4 (1998, 73). Tupet too sees the *effigies* as important (1976, 259).

[67] According to the historians Timaeus of Tauromenium and Pompeius Trogus, Dido, faced with marriage to the Libyan king, again builds a deceptive pyre, pretending to perform a rite to free her of her love (in this case, for her former husband); she then commits suicide on it (Bowie 1998, 57).

[68] *Aen*. 6.447. The women included are surely not haphazard; many of their stories contain the element of continued contact between the living and the dead. Cf. Perret 1964, esp. 254. Bettini too notes the connection between Laodamia and Dido (1992, 104).

[69] The *imago* is clearly a statue of Protesilaus, but its size is unclear. Laodamia claims to hold it in her lap, which implies that it is no larger than a child. Yet she says of the statue, "adde sonum; Protesilaus erit" (156; "add a voice and it will be Protesilaus"); this suggests both that it bears a close resemblance to Protesilaus and that it is lifesized, or life-like. Additionally, the variant in which someone catches her embracing the statue makes sense only if the statue is the size of a man. See Smith on ritual wax statues roughly three feet high (1995, 25).

[70] Molten wax is associated with love in many contexts; cf. *Anthologia Palatina,* in which Meleager refers to "Nossis, for whose tablets Eros melted the wax" (4.1.9–10).

[71] For love letters on wax tablets, cf. Ovid, *Am.* 1.11–12. Are we to understand *this* letter as written on a wax tablet? If so, Laodamia's doubling of wax (statue and letter) parallels her doubling of *carmina*.

[72] See Flower 1996 on *imagines* in general.

Ovid suggests in the *Remedia Amoris* that someone trying to forget a lover should destroy all effigies of the beloved, citing Laodamia as an example of what happens when one doesn't (724–27).

In addition to its communicative and figural uses, wax was almost certainly used (as was lead) in *defixiones,* although no wax specimens survive because of their fragility.[73] Wax, clay, and bronze *imagines* were used in binding rituals, both those related specifically to erotic magic and those that are agonistic, judiciary, or meant to harm in other ways.[74] Wax figurines were even used for public magic rituals on occasion.[75] Literary depictions of wax *imagines* used for erotic magic abound.[76] In erotic magical uses, wax is usually formed into an *imago* of the victim of the spell and is either pierced with pins[77] or melted in a fire (or both), often while a *carmen* is recited. Yet this is almost precisely the procedure that is followed when one wishes harm to someone. Laodamia's tragedy, then, is caused in part by the ambiguity of words (her "prophecies") and practices (the fact that wax is used for spells both on loved ones and on enemies).[78]

[73] Cf. *Am*. 3.7.29 and Tac. *Ann*. 2.69. On Greek *defixiones*, see Dodds 1951, 194–95, and Faraone 1991.

[74] Wax: Nonerotic binding spells using wax *imagines* can be found at *Her.* 6.91–93, *Am*. 3.7.29, Pl. *Leg*. 933B, Prop. 3.6.30, Hor. *Sat*. 1.8.30–3, 43–44. But, as Faraone shows, "evidence for the destruction of wax effigies in Greece is . . . limited almost entirely to descriptions of private erotic magic" (1993, 64). Clay: Louvre inv. E 27145 is a (famous) clay figurine, pierced by thirteen needles, from the Roman period. Bronze: see Dugas 1915 for bronze curse figurines.

[75] For studies of the fascinating treaty found at Cyrene, in which wax *imagines* were publicly burnt as part of an oath ceremony, see (among many) Graham 1960 (with bibliography); Faraone 1993 and 1999, 50; Vernant 1983, 207–8; Bettini 1992, 62; and Graf 1997, 207–9. For the Anatolian oracle of Apollo, which gives instructions for driving away a plague (and says it was caused by wax statues), see Merkelbach 1991 and Graf 1992. Due to the fragility of wax, it is impossible to determine whether these *imagines* were common.

[76] Theoc. *Id.* 2.28–38, Verg. *Ecl.* 8.73–5 (loosely based on Theoc.) and *Aen.* 4, Hor. *Sat*. 1.8.30 and *Ep*. 17.76, Ov. *Am*. 3.7.29 and *Fasti* 2.55; *PGM* 1.83–87, 1.167–68. See Tupet 1976, 302, on the mechanics. Gow gives a good background on the magic in *Idylls* 2 (1950, 1:35–36). There are numerous depictions of wax images used for nonerotic magic: cf., e.g., Pl. *Leg.* 992e–993a.

[77] Cf. *Her.* 6.91, *Am*. 3.7.29–30.

[78] As Winkler notes, erotic spells frequently "include wishing discomfort, annoyance, profound inner turmoil, and pain on the body and soul of one's beloved" (1991, 215; cf. 231). See Gager on the "deeply aggressive, even violent language" of amatory spells (1992, 81). He offers as an explanation the suggestion that other kinds of *defixiones* were used earlier and that the erotic spells adapted them almost unchanged. Faraone (1999, 49–55, and passim) says that since *eros* could itself be viewed as a curse, the blurring of two kinds of spells is not surprising.

Let us examine the *imago* itself. In a brief discussion of artistic representations, Jean-Pierre Vernant notes that antiquity had a "psychological category" that he calls "the double": it comprises the *psuchē*, the colossus, the dream image, the shade, and the supernatural apparition, as well as statuary (1985, 308).[79] Examining how one can stand for another, he concludes that the double "always established a link between the living and the underworld" (310–11).[80] Maurizio Bettini's work on statuary shows that dream images, portraits, and statues all fulfill essentially the same function in myth[81] and notes that tales of images are ubiquitous (1992, 7). Laodamia's case is peculiar because her statue is (perhaps) both a funerary monument and a reminder of someone absent but expected home. She does not expect Protesilaus to return and has transferred her affections to his statue, yet he is not dead, and there is no reason why he could not come home.[82] Again, she misreads the situation, confused by the fact that statues are sometimes made to commemorate the living and sometimes the dead.[83]

Laodamia says of the *imago*:

> Dum tamen arma geres diverso miles in orbe,
> Quae referat vultus est mihi cera tuos:
> Illi blanditias, illi tibi debita verba
> Dicimus, amplexus accipit illa meos.
> Crede mihi, plus est, quam quod videatur, imago:
> Adde sonum cerae, Protesilaus erit.
> Hanc specto teneoque sinu pro coniuge vero,
> Et, tamquam possit verba referre queror. (151–58)
>
> Nevertheless, while you will bear arms as a soldier in a different part of the world, I have a wax statue to remind me of your face. To it I speak the endearments and words owed to you, and it accepts my embraces. Believe

[79] Cf. Ducat 1976, 250, and Bettini 1992, 53–54, on supernatural aspects of statues.

[80] Viarre supports this, claiming that Laodamia's myth is dreamlike in its confusion of living and dead (1969, 773).

[81] Tupet 1976 agrees, noting Propertius 2.4.15.

[82] She also swears by Protesilaus' body, an action that, as Mayer notes, is only appropriate for the dead (1885, 157).

[83] Flower (1996, 2) sees no connection between physical *imagines* and magic or the spirit world, but the *imago* here must be supernatural. *Imago* was also a standard word for ghost (1996, 2 n. 12; see 33–35 and relevant bibliography). In fact, it seems that even nonmagical statues may contain unintended elements of the supernatural, elements that work against Laodamia (see Vernant 1983, passim). Solodow discusses the use of *imagines* in the *Metamorphoses,* suggesting that Ovid was fascinated with the concept (1988, 205–6).

> me, an image is more than it might seem. Add voice to the wax and it will be Protesilaus. I look at it and hold it in my lap instead of my real husband and, as if it could reply, I complain.

The fact that Ovid's Laodamia fashions the image while Protesilaus is alive and at Aulis is contrary to all other versions, in which Laodamia creates the *imago* to console herself after his death (Jacobson 1974, 211).[84] This alteration is noteworthy because it is apparently unprecedented, and Ovid capitalizes on his innovation by incorporating from the tradition precisely the elements that add a supernatural flavor to the story. His use of an object to represent an absent loved one, although perhaps harmless and certainly common in mythology,[85] is one such element. The image of Protesilaus is traditionally made either of wax or bronze; Ovid's—and Laodamia's—choice of wax recalls the use of anthropomorphic waxen images frequently associated with magic spells.[86]

Imagines share certain important characteristics with letters. Each serves the function of dispelling loneliness and of making the absent seem present. Yet Laodamia's letter (inscribed in wax?), combined with her dream images and her wax image, is redundant. Laodamia has made an image of Protesilaus that satisfies her in every way, but she still longs for the original. The doubling she effects in wax is only the most visible of many doublings in this poem: the "real" Protesilaus, an epic hero still at Aulis with the other Greek soldiers; the wax Protesilaus, who sleeps with Laodamia and receives her whispered endearments; the dream Protesilaus, who nightly menaces Laodamia (while she embraces the wax Protesilaus?); the Protesilaus who provides Laodamia with her *gaudia falsa* (108; "deceitful pleasures"); the dead Protesilaus, a tragic figure who will come back to Laodamia because of the power of their love.

[84] Bettini seems to feel that the requirements of the epistolary genre have altered the timing (1992, 13). Yet it is possible to write a letter to someone who is dead if you do not know of the death; Ovid could quite plausibly have presented Laodamia unknowingly writing to an already dead Protesilaus.

[85] Cf., among many examples, Menelaus' creation of a statue of the absent Helen and Admetus' planned statue for the dead Alcestis. Pygmalion creates a statue of a woman who does not exist and Narcissus falls in love with his own image, so in a sense those *imagines* are also absent.

[86] Apollodorus explicitly says that she makes love to the image (3.30). Several modern critics have seen deviance in her behavior, among them Rosati (1991, 106) and Bettini (1992, 12). She says of the statue that she holds (*teneo*) it in her lap (*sinu*) (157). The sexual nuances of *sinus* are too common to need mention; Adams cites Ovid himself for a sexual use of the noun at *Fasti* 5.256 (1982, 90). *Teneo* is also used for intercourse (Adams 1982, 181, on Tib. 2.6.52). *Teneoque sinu* is difficult to read in a way that is not erotic.

Finally, on a symbolic level, there is the *other* Protesilaus, the one Laodamia attempts to create through her (wax?) letter, one who would rather be with his lover than at war—an elegiac Protesilaus.[87] Whatever Laodamia intends, the presence of so many Protesilai is dangerous, both to him and to herself.[88] She cannot tell the difference between them and ends up dying for the wrong one.[89] Because of her *carmen* and her misinterpretation of events and words, she writes Protesilaus to death, thus proving that the pen is indeed mightier than the sword.[90]

I have argued that *Heroides* 13 is a more complex poem than has been thought. According to my interpretation, Laodamia's lack of alertness to the multiple readings available in her poem dooms herself and her husband. In Ovid's version of Laodamia's story, the *imago* of Protesilaus will be burned and, in accordance with various mirrorings throughout the text, Protesilaus will die, each of those events occurring after the close of this letter. Laodamia's letter therefore backfires, precipitating two deaths instead of the desired reconciliation. In various ways, *Heroides* 13 shows a Laodamia who, attempting merely to assuage her loneliness, unwittingly writes her husband's death as well as her own through her misuse of wax and of *carmina* and also through her obliviousness of the power of (her) words.[91] Ovid's innovations and careful selection of the material available to him, combined with his portrayal of Laodamia's superstitious nature, provide a key to unlocking the poem's meaning. Using a subtext of magic and superstition, he has turned a story

[87] Cf. Brescia 1996 and Oppel 1968 on Laodamia's modeling of Protesilaus as a would-be elegiac lover. Brescia outlines the rhetorical strategies adopted by Laodamia (1996, 41–46); Laodamia in fact outlines a new ethos of war, in which fidelity to one's wife is paramount (1996, 55–56). Oppel provides a detailed study of rhetorical elements in the *Heroides* and notes in this poem several rhetorical devices (1968, 53). Viarre notes that there are several Laodamiae as well, since she begins as an epic figure and neoteric poets appropriate her for elegy (1969, 769).

[88] See Bronfen (1992, 113–14), who suggests that when a representation is too realistic, it may necessitate the death of the original.

[89] Propertius 1.19, another Augustan version of Laodamia's story, also contains an *imago*. In this poem, the statue is portrayed as a "waxen, false Protesilaus" (Lyne 1998, 211–12). Part of what is so bizarre about Ovid's Laodamia is that she seems to find the wax *imago* of her husband perfectly satisfactory. It is *before* Protesilaus' death and while his *imago* is being burned that she confronts the loss of her husband. Cf. Flower 1996, 47, on *imagines* as "doubles" in Plautus.

[90] I owe the phrasing of this point to one of the anonymous readers, who also draws my attention to the similarities between inscribing a wax tablet with a stylus and the magical ritual that involves piercing a wax figure with needles.

[91] See Graf 1997, 212–13, on the idea of "freezing" words in a text that often accompanies magic.

about a love lasting beyond death into an example of the dangers of misreading. The fears that seem ridiculous turn out to be true, and Laodamia's *carmen* ironically has a hand in bringing about what she fears most.[92]

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