An Incident of Magic in *Heroides* 20 and 21

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Introduction

The myth of Acontius and Cydippe was narrated by Callimachus in his *Aetia* and by Ovid in the so-called "double *Heroides*", a text that was in circulation at the time of Ovid's exile, albeit in draft form.[1] It relates Acontius' efforts to secure a promise from Cydippe of amorous exclusivity. Acontius' objective is achieved when Cydippe unintentionally swears an oath by Artemis. However, a closer reading of the two texts suggests that Cydippe's oath draws on popular magical spells of near-eastern origin, which often included oaths.[2] Under the longstanding influence of the Egyptians, the Jews, and the Babylonians, who excelled in the practice of magic, spells — especially erotic spells — became widespread in the Greco-Roman world, infiltrating its literary circles.[3] During the Hellenistic period, a renewed interest in magic facilitated the cultural interface between the Greeks and the peoples of the East.[4] Similarly, although magic was practised in Rome from the earliest times and the Romans were irrefutably familiar with Greek magic,[5] towards the end of the Republic, a new array of magical practices that had

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[1]   Call. *Aet.* fr. 75.33-37 Pfeiffer; cf. Aristaenet. *Ep.* 1.10; Ov. *Her.* 20 and 21. Poems 16-21 are often referred to as "double-*Heroides*" because they contain three cases of erotic couples who exchange letters (see poems 16-17 for the letters exchanged by Helen and Paris, 18-19 for those of Hero and Leander, and 20-21 for those of Acontius and Cydippe). They follow the "single *Heroides*", that is, the first fifteen poems of Ovid's collection containing letters exclusively from legendary female characters complaining to their lovers. Although questions about the authorship and date of the "double *Heroides*" have frequently been raised in scholarship (see, for example, Clark 1908: *passim*), nowadays it is agreed that the style is Ovidian and that the text was probably never published during the poet's lifetime (Kenney 1996: 20-7, esp. 25-6).

[2]   Kotansky 1994: 245-46; cf. id. 1995: 250 where, in a discussion of the Jewish exorcistic tradition and practices for adjuring spirits, he notes 'a curious cross-over from the Jewish exorcisms of benevolent magic to the more malicious adjurations of the aggressive-sexual spells'; cf. Gager 1992: 62-3 referring to later oaths (3rd century CE). In erotic magic an oath could be understood as a self-binding spell; Martinez 1995: 336.

[3]   Kotansky 1991: 108 traces the antecedents of written charms 'to ancient Egyptian and near-eastern rituals with which early Greek traders may have had contact'; Brashear 1995: 3390-3429; Dieleman 2005: 269-274; Bohak 2008: 201-209. Yamauchi 1983: 179 discusses a striking parallel between a Greek graffito from Tell Sandahannah (Idumea) and Theocritus, *Idyll* 2.

[4]   Dickie 2001: 98; Faraone 1995: 297-333; Ritner 1993: 179-80; Luck 2006: 6, 14-5, 25-6.

[5]   Graf 1999: 36-7; Dickie 2001: 130-141; Dillon and Garland 2005: 162-163. Ancient cultures differentiated between malevolent rituals designed to inflict harm (*goēteia*) and religious practices often sanctioned by states (*theourgia*). Still, our evidence indicates that the definition of Roman magic (as opposed to witchcraft) was fluid and varied between

their origins further in the East entered Rome.[6] Priests of oriental deities, slaves turned miracle workers, and itinerant magicians[7] expedited the familiarity of the Romans with Egyptian and Mesopotamian magic. Magical handbooks, scrupulously copied from ancient near-eastern sources, appeared by the first century BCE in lands as distant from each other as Rome and Bactria.[8] However, despite numerous recent studies which exemplify the links between Greco-Roman magic and its 'antecedents in indigenous Egyptian tradition',[9] as well as its ties with Syriac and Mesopotamian traditions, the literary implications of these findings have not been fully appreciated.[10] Furthermore, although magic was a familiar *topos* in Roman elegy and the Ovidian corpus in particular,[11] the tale of Acontius and Cydippe has never been interpreted as a paradigm of it.

Therefore, taking as my point of departure Ovid's rendering of the tale of Cydippe, I argue that his familiarity with themes of erotic magic was informed by eastern traditions, including Mesopotamian magic, which had infiltrated the Greco-Roman cultural milieu and had also been employed by his Hellenistic models. Ovid, a member of an intellectual

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cases; Cramer 1954: 264, 276-7; Frances 1995: 90-2; Graf 1999: 46-58; Rives 2007: 192; cf. Dickie 2001: 91-2. In Egyptian magic the distinction relied on the magician's intentions, rather than his dealings with the supernatural powers; Pinch 1994: 46. In Mesopotamian magic, illegal practitioners of black magic (*kaššapu* and *kaššaptu*) are cast as the enemies of the licensed exorcist who is associated with the temple (*ašipu*); Abusch 2002: 3-14 and 84-5. Still, erotic magic is a special case: although its purpose (to impose one's will on the object of desire) aligns it with black magic, we only have priestly Mesopotamian love spells because only these were collected. Biggs 1967: 6 with Leick 1994: 194.

[6]   Hence, Pliny knows of the Persian magi: Pl. *HN* 28.6, 69; Cic. *Vat*. 14. Also, see *HN* 32.49 and 29.81, recording versions of a magic recipe originating from ancient Babylonia (*KAR* 61.22-5 discussed in Dickie 2001: 120-1; see n. 8 below). Although Beard (1994: 759-61) argues that the belief in the origin of magic outside the civilized world, for example, in barbarian Persia, may have derived from Greek definitions of magic and Greek polemic against the Persians, this does not diminish the appeal of what is perceived as "eastern magic" in Rome; cf. Dieleman 2005: 249.

[7]   Regarding our scarce evidence on itinerant magicians within the Roman world, see Dieleman 2005: 242 and Dickie 2001: 202-250; cf. his pp. 109-114 where Dickie discusses Eunus, a Syrian miracle-worker and oracle who attempted to gain political power during slave-revolts in Sicily. Also, see Chamoux 1974: *passim*.

[8]   Faraone 1999: 33 with Jordan 1996: 123-125; Dieleman 2005: 193-194. Dickie 1999: 183-193 and id. 2001: 120-1 discussed the transmission of ancient Babylonian spells into the Greco-Egyptian papyri of the 2nd or 3rd century CE thanks to Bolus of Mendes (3rd century BCE) and his influential compilations of near-eastern magic. Given the considerable time span between the near-eastern originals and their Greco-Roman versions, Dickie argued that numerous intermediaries were responsible for the transmission of these magical recipes.

[9]   Noegel, Walker, Wheeler 2003: 3, esp. nn. 8-10 with extensive bibliography.

[10]   Rynearson (2009: 342-3) hints at the influence of Egyptian magic on Callimachus' Acontius.

[11]   For example, Sharrock 1994 and Fulkerson 2002. Propertius' lover, modelled after Callimachus' Acontius (*El*. 1. 1), had famously turned to magic to make Cynthia responsive to his passion; see Cairns 1969: 131-4; Rosen, Farrell 1986: 241-3; Barchiesi 1993: 360-3.

circle that appreciated Mesopotamian myths and astrology,[12] could not possibly have ignored the magical aspects of this tradition which had become widely popular in Rome during his time.[13] Indeed, the influence of Babylonian astrologers, steadily increasing since the last days of the Republic, reached its height during the early imperial period.[14] At that time the term "Chaldean" came to mean any wandering magician of eastern extraction, thus leading to Augustus' edict of 11 CE by which all astrologers *and* magicians were expelled from Rome.[15] Nonetheless, there was an apparent demand for eastern magic in first century Rome and Ovid was acutely aware of the trend which was prominently reflected in Augustan poetry.[16]

Following a summary of the tale of Acontius and Cydippe, the article consists of two parts: in the first part, I examine the wording of Ovid's letters in relation to the ancient understanding of oaths as a form of (self-)consecration typically accompanied by curses against perjurers. Such curses were commonly found in judicial prayers, but, also in binding spells since 'the techniques of many forms of erotic magic are quite indistinguishable from those of hostile curses used against enemies or of self-curses used in especially fearful oaths'.[17] Ovid, using poetic license, boldly fuses the two traditions, drawing on a variety of eastern models which had acquired renewed popularity already in the Hellenistic period. One of these models, of Mesopotamian derivation, is analysed

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[12] Moran 1997: 234-6; Gee 2000: 58-60. Herbert-Brown (2002: 112-120) argues that before his exile Ovid had seen Manilius' *Astronomica* which influenced his *Fasti* considerably.

[13] Barton 2002: 31-50. For Mesopotamian astrology in Rome, see Cat. *De agr*. 5.4; cf. Vitr. *De arch*. 9.6.2; for Augustus and astrology, see Dio 56.25.5; Suet. *Aug*. 94.12; Pliny *HN* 2.94. For the *princeps'* interest as reflected in contemporary poets, see, for example, Hor. *Carm*. 1.11.2; Prop. *El*. 4.1.81-6.

[14] Chaldean astrologers had a longstanding reputation: Athanassiadi 1999: 154-5; cf. Strab. 16.1.6 and Pliny *HN* 2.39 on the Babylonian astrologer Kidinnu (= Cidenas); Diod. Sic. 2.29-31. For the edict of 139 BCE that banished the "Chaldaeans" from Rome, see Val. Max. 1.3.2. Berossus, a priest of Bel at Babylon, was instrumental in spreading Babylonian astrology in Greece (Tatian, *Speech on Greece* 36; *FGrH* 680T5a-b); cf. Kuhrt 1987: 36-44, 55-6.

[15] Dio 49.43.5; Ap. *Apol*. 26.6; cf. Dickie 2001: 110-12 for "Chaldean" as denoting an eastern magician. The Persian *magoi* were also famed as the 'exponents of sacerdotal magic', in the words of Hull 1974: 29: 'They were believed to have inherited the yet more venerable secrets of Assyrian and Babylonian magic and hence to be the heirs of the Chaldaeans.'

[16] See Anagnostou-Laoutides 2005: 83-96 on the connection of the elegiac mistresses (and their Hellenistic models) with eastern deities such as Isis and Cybele who had a reputation for their proficiency in magic; cf. O'Neill 1998: esp. 70-5 and Myers 1996: esp. 6-10 on magic in Latin elegy; Moran 1997: 237 (cf. 1991: 121-7) suggested that Ovid was aware of the tale of Gilgamesh which reached Rome through a 'complex transfer'; even if one does not accept the argument, the point remains that Ovid's work indicates knowledge of eastern traditions.

[17] Faraone 1999: 55; he also argues that curses use punishments as an end *per se*, while love magic curses aim at forcing the victims to submit to the will of the magicians. Faraone (1996: 83) differentiates between *agōgē* spells, violent binding formulas used predominantly by men, and *philia* spells used by women. Equally, Martinez, who compares Greek and Jewish oath formulas (1995: 336), differentiates between 'self-actualizing' and 'agonistic' vows.

in the second part of the article as an example of the type of spells which shaped Roman beliefs about eastern magic down to Ovid's time.

A Summary of the Tale

According to legend, Acontius and Cydippe met at a public feast where Acontius managed to pass to Cydippe an apple on which he had engraved an oath: 'I vow by Artemis, Acontius shall be my husband.'[18] The girl held the apple in her hands and read the inscription loudly. At the same time, she swore an oath and the divine witness invoked demanded its fulfilment. Therefore, when her parents, ignorant of their daughter's promise, made a second pact to marry her to someone else, Artemis opposed the wedding by sending an illness to Cydippe. Every time the wedding was due, Cydippe fell ill with a mysterious disease that no practitioner could either explain or cure. The wedding was postponed three times until her father sought advice from the Delphic oracle; Apollo responded that Cydippe ought to marry Acontius and the nuptials were soon prepared.

Part A: Between a Prayer and an Oath

Callimachus wrote that when Apollo was consulted, he explained Cydippe's illness in association with her oath to Artemis (*Aet*. fr. 75.22): Ἀρτέμιδος τῇ παιδὶ γάμον βαρὺς ὅρκος ἐνικλᾷ ('A solemn oath by Artemis frustrates your child's marriage'). Apollo additionally clarified that the goddess was present in Delos Ἀκόντιον ὁππότε σὴ παῖς ὤμοσεν, οὐκ ἄλλον, νυμφίον ἐξέμεναι (*Aet*.75.26-7: when Cydippe swore never to marry anyone else but Acontius), a detail repeated in Aristaenetus' summary (*Ep*. 1.10.37-8): μὰ τὴν Ἄρτεμιν Ἀκοντίῳ γαμοῦμαι (by Artemis, I shall marry Acontius). In addition, Aristaenetus stressed the role of Artemis, whose connection with magic was prominent in the Greek east,[19] as vindicator of broken promises, by adding:[20]

> ὁπότε καί φασι τὴν θεὸν ἐπὶ πάσαις μὲν ἁμαρτάσι κινεῖσθαι δεινῶς, μάλιστα δὲ τοὺς ἀμελοῦντας τῶν ὅρκων πικρότερον τιμωρεῖσθαι.
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> (They say that this goddess is dreadfully provoked by all transgressions, oath-breaking most particularly).

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[18]   Couat 1931: 151; Kenney 1996: 15-18 briefly compares Callimachus' and Ovid's treatment of the tale, stressing Ovid's shift of focus from Acontius to Cydippe and his introduction of elegiac motifs that make the plot more dramatic. Also, see his pp. 18-19 arguing that all three stories in the "double *Heroides*" focus on marriage and marriageability. All unacknowledged translations of ancient texts are mine.

[19]   Aremis Ephesia had a reputation for magic especially through the tradition of the *Ephesia Grammata*, magical formulas inscribed on her statue. Versnel 2002: 114; Preisendanz 1962: 505-7; McCown 1923: 128-30; cf. Eustath. ad *Od*. 20.247 and Ath. *Deipn*. 12.548c.

[20]   Kenney 1996 ad loc. with Aristaenet. *Ep*. 1.10.65-7; cf. Ov. *Her*. 20.99: *violentius*, an epithet that reflects Artemis' connection with magic; cf. Faraone 1999: 45-6, 80-1; Dickie 2001: 139 and 180 with reference to 'books of incantations'; also, see Cat. 34.13-16; Hor. *Ep*. 5.

In the footsteps of his Hellenistic model, Ovid's Acontius also refers to the presence of Artemis at Delos and accuses Cydippe of oath-breaking (*Her.* 20.17-20):[21]

> *non potes hoc factum teste negare dea.*
> *adfuit et, praesens ut erat, tua uerba notauit*
> *et uisa est mota dicta tulisse coma.*

> ('you cannot deny this was done with the goddess as my witness. She was there and, while present, she marked your words and seemed to accept them by the shaking of her tresses').

In support of his accusation, the verbs *iurare*, *promitto* ('swear', 'take an oath'), and their derivatives, recur frequently in the letters which our protagonists exchange in the *Heroides*.[22] However, Cydippe's oath could also be understood to have included a tacit self-curse, since individuals taking an oath would often invoke divine punishment upon themselves as a guarantee that the oath would be kept.[23] Acontius' reaction could then be understood in the context of judicial prayers that often included curses and aimed at the restoration of justice when placed in the hands of the summoned god.[24] Hence, he repeatedly refers to the *injustice*[25] he suffered by Cydippe's perjury and in *Her.* 20.39 he is depicted as asking the gods to intervene on his behalf: *di faciant possim* ('may the gods give me power to…'; cf. *Her.* 20.44). Oath-curses were also particularly popular in ancient Mesopotamia where perjurers were invariably believed to suffer from sickness and demonic possession[26] — possibly reminding us of Cydippe's recurrent, yet inexplicable, illness. It's worth mentioning here that Callimachus (*Aet.* fr. 75) had

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21   The Romans were acutely aware of Artemis' connection with magic as Tacitus (*Ann.* 4.56) confirms when explaining that Ephesos was refused permission to build a temple to Tiberius in 26 CE because the Senate thought they were fully occupied with the cult of Diana; also, see Arnold 1989: 37. Trans. here mine based on Showerman 1977: 277.

22   *Her.* 20.1-2 (*iurabis; promissam*); *Her.*20.93-98 (*iniuria, promissum reddere, decepta rubebas*) and 127-8 (*periuria*).

23   Parker 1983: 186-88; also, see Anderson 2014: 34-5 with nn. 22-4, with further bibliography on the popularity of curse-oaths in the Old Testament. Leicht 2006: esp. 320-1 discusses exorcism formulas in the Jewish apocalyptic and legal traditions (first to fourth centuries CE) which display strong linguistic similarities with those found in Greek and Coptic magical texts. He argues that they functioned as 'the quasi-legal binding of demons through an oath'. Notably, the formulas were very flexible and often they would only imply the anticipated punishment in the case of false swearing (see esp. his pp. 326, 333-5).

24   Versnel 1991: 64-9.

25   Ov. *Her.* 20.17-20, 158-62, 185-6, 189-90, 195-6. Chaniotis (1995: 326-7) discusses perjury as a common transgression in Greek propitiatory inscriptions from Hellenistic Asia Minor; cf. id. 1997: 354-6 (with nn. 6-16) and 2004: 6. In many such cases the gods invoked forced the perpetrators into admitting their error by inflicting them with illness; also, see Meyer 2004: 101-2; Rynearson 2009: 354ff.

26   Pinch 1994: 44; Stol 1999: 61; also, see Feder 2010: 124-135 on Hittite and Mesopotamian oaths accompanied by self-curses; cf. Livingstone 1999: 136 for a spell where the magician calls on certain gods to abjure all oaths. The Mesopotamian goddess Lamaštu was depicted on prophylactic plaques against oaths; Leick 1994: 227-8. For her associations with Artemis, see Marinatos 1998: 122-3.

compared her illness with the sacred disease which was often believed to be the result of magic.[27] Ovid writes (*Her.* 20.110-114):

> *consulit ipsa tibi, neu sis **periura**, laborat,*
> *et saluam salua te cupit esse fide.*
> *inde fit, ut, quotiens existere **perfida** temptas,*
> *peccatum totiens corrigat illa tuum.*

> ('the goddess herself takes care of you striving lest you are found lying under oath, and wishes you kept intact by keeping your trustworthiness intact. This is why as often as you attempt to become perfidious, (that often) she corrects your wrongdoing').

According to modern typologies, judicial curses differ from those found in binding spells in that they aim at the restoration of justice rather than benefiting the *defigens* through a rival's social degradation.[28] Greek judicial prayers and reconciliation inscriptions in which the offenders admitted the alleged sin(s) and were, thus, released from the curse, became exceedingly popular in late Hellenistic Asia Minor where the Greeks had the opportunity to renew their cultural interaction with Anatolian traditions.[29] Mesopotamian judicial prayers against perjury (and other injustices) were often inscribed on cursory *stelae*[30] which publicized the acts that had supposedly caused divine wrath, as a way of

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[27] Dickie 2001: 38-9, 61-2. See Kenney 1996 ad Ov. *Her.* 20.109-110 and 21.13-4 for the doctors' inability to explain the illness. In addition, in *Aet.* 74 (cf. Aristaen. *Ep.* 1.10.64-5) Acontius referred to Cydippe's illness as φόβος (fear) that appears in Greek magical papyri along evils inflicted through magic. Fear is a symptom of magic in ancient Mesopotamia (Wessely 1888: xlii.31, 42, 64; Stol 1999: 64), while in Egypt illnesses were often considered the result of magic (Budge 1901: 206ff; Griffiths 1991: 60ff.). Cf. Sharrock 1994: 53 n. 50 on love sickness and magic in Augustan poetry.

[28] See Versnel 1991: 76 for "judicial prayers" as a kind of borderline *defixiones* (for example, *TAM* 525). The *PGM* lists numerous spells invoking deities: for example, I.262-347 (Apollo), II.89-90 cited by Luck 2006: 100, IV.2524 (Artemis); cf. IV.2241-2358 and Faraone 1997: 195-99 who quotes IV.2714-83 (Selene-Artemis-Hecate). The Romans adopted adjudication by consecrating stolen objects or personal affairs to a god as early as Seneca; see Versnel 1991: 81-2, esp. n. 117. Budge 2001: 58 claims that Greek magicians followed Babylonian and Egyptian practices; Montgomery 1913: 68 (quoting Orig. *contr. Cel.* 1.24f. and 5.45f.); also, see Jastrow 1898: 1.291 and Budge 1987: 171 for divine names in Babylonian and Egyptian magic.

[29] Chaniotis 1995: 39-40 for the role of Anatolian lore in the tradition of judicial prayers and reconciliatory inscriptions; cf. id. 1997: 357-62 where he discusses the judicial vocabulary employed in curse tablets and reconciliation inscriptions. Also, see Leicht 2006: 330-8 discussing the consequences of false oath-taking in the Jewish legal tradition and its investment with magical properties. As he concludes on p. 338: '[I]f we try to summarize our evidence regarding exorcisms in the first and second century C.E., we can now state that from a formal point of view, there was little formal difference between magical, legal and rhetorical exorcisms'. Leicht admits the Mesopotamian origins of this tradition already on pp. 322-3.

[30] Chaniotis 2004: 40 argues that the practice of erecting reconciliatory *stelae* (which obviously also record the curse that caused the suffering of the guilty party in the first place) in Hellenistic and Roman Asia Minor was probably influenced by healing rituals. Yet, he

forcing the culprits to visit the relevant sanctuaries and confess their sins. Such prayers enjoyed renewed popularity in second- and first-century BCE Asia Minor when they were copied fervently,[31] and are probably reflected in the tale of Cydippe whose father eventually consults the Delphic Oracle, prompted by her illness (*Her.* 21.233-4).[32] Equally, Acontius' assurance that the goddess can still be appeased (*Her.* 20.115-6; cf. *Her.* 21.230) seems to subscribe to the practice of judicial prayers.

However, praying to the gods for justice and enlisting their help magically were not mutually exclusive[33] and binding spells would commonly include a "prayer formula".[34] Hence, Acontius' prayer in *Her.* 20.39 wishes for *plures nodos* (more bonds) to be placed upon Cydippe, an obvious allusion to language used in erotic binding spells.[35] In addition, Cydippe appears anxious that her debilitating illness has damaged her desirability as a bride (Ov. *Her.* 21.212-224) — that is, her social standing, alluding to the curses typically found in binding spells. Her description of the divine favour that Acontius enjoys (cf. *Her.* 21.64: *illa tui est*, 'she's on your side') also draws on binding spells designed to constrain the powers of certain gods or daemons — in our case Artemis, who would then be enlisted in the service of a magician (*Her.* 21.237-8):[36]

> *Unde tibi fauor hic? Nisi si noua forte reperta est*
> *quae capiat magnos littera lecta deos.*

> ('how did you secure such favour? Unless perhaps a new text has been found, the reading of which *ensnares the mighty gods*').

[ ] does not take into account the Mesopotamian connection of illness with wrongdoing as an additional paradigm of this tendency.

[31] Boiy 2004: 25-7; also, see Leicht 2006: esp. 322.

[32] Of course, the Greeks and the Romans would typically visit an oracle when seeking help for inexplicable phenomena, but judicial curses in Hellenistic and Roman Asia Minor were emphatically administered with the help of local priests; Chaniotis 2004: 39 discusses the role of Lydian and Phrygian priests in helping worshippers understand their past behaviour and hence, identify the transgression for which they were punished. For cursory *stelae* in ancient Egypt especially used in cases of undetected crimes, see Johnston 2004: 352.

[33] Barb (1963: 101) argued that magic involved subjugation of the divine through rituals (cf. *PGM* I.247-62), while religion relied on divine appeals; cf. Hull 1974: 41 and Dickie 2000: 563-5. For magic as pseudo-religious deception, see Betz 1986: xlviii; Gager 1987: 82; Winkler 1991: 233. Sharrock 1994: 50. Also, see Farrell 1998: 312; cf. Kenney 1996 ad Ov. *Her.* 20.95. On the separation of magic and religion, see Faraone, Obbink 1991 and Asirvatham, Pache, Watrous 2001, *passim*.

[34] Cohen 1975: 592ff.; Cunningham 1997: 41ff.; Van Dijk 1985. Such prayer formulas were used in Sicily since the mid-fifth century BCE; see Faraone 1991: 5-6; cf. Graf 1991: 188ff.

[35] See Ov. *Her.* 20.233-40: *iuncta salus nostra est* ('your safety is joined with mine'); also, *Her.* 20.226: *…me tibi iungit Amor* ('Love binds me to you') and *Her.* 21.138: *uincula* ('bonds'); cf. Kenney 1996 ad *Her.* 20.39 who refers to the "bonds of love" and *Her.* 20.85-6. Note that Kenney draws attention to the legalistic connotations of the vocabulary chosen by Ovid, although the legalistic conception of magic has a longstanding tradition in Mesopotamia; Shaked 1998: 174-5.

[36] Cf. Ov. *Her.* 20.9-12; also Aristaenet. *Ep.* 1.10.2-3 discussed in Rynearson 2009: 354.

Apparently, not only Artemis, but now Apollo, too, is "seized" to help Acontius achieve his goal.

Furthermore, material evidence such as the Knidian curses of the early first century BCE, deposited in the local temple of Demeter, but inscribed on lead (similar to *defixiones*) rather than on *stelae*, offer a clear indication of the progressive overlapping of judicial prayers and binding spells in Greco-Roman east.[37] As a result of this tendency, the verb ἐνορκίζομαι is commonly found in *defixiones* while in later antiquity it is replaced by the verb ὀρκίζω — the latter is also used in first-century CE Jewish oaths which are employed both in legal and apocalyptic contexts and are invested with magical qualities.[38] By the second century CE, especially in Asia Minor, curses developed a formula for adjuring the gods, which probably reflects Anatolian influence.[39] Artemis was often invoked in these curses to punish the perpetrators — as Aristaenetus possibly hinted.[40] Such a curse was found in the region of Lydia, near the ancient city of Maionia; inscribed on a *stela* that is dated ca. 156/157 CE, it names as executors of the curses Great Artemis, Anaeitis and Men of Tiamos.[41] The curse further highlights the connections of Artemis with magic in Hellenistic Asia Minor mainly through her syncretism with Hecate and Cybele.[42] Hence, it seems that in fusing the traditions of judicial prayers and binding spells Ovid introduced in literature a pattern witnessed in the east for some time — a pattern which modern typologies tend to overlook.

Besides, Acontius' use of magic is constantly alluded to in the letters the two lovers exchange: broken love oaths were often bemoaned in Hellenistic epigrams[43] as much as

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[37]   Chaniotis 2004: 6-7; Petrovic 2004 cited by Rynearson 2009: 351 n. 17.

[38]   See Wessely 1888: 36, 53, 1.341ff. Ἐξορκίζω means: 1. 'to swear a person, administer an oath to someone' and 2. 'to banish an evil spirit'. Dickie 2001: 232 mentions that Lucian regarded Jewish exorcists as magicians; on early conditional curses, see Faraone 1996: 77 ff.; cf. Geller 1985 for the Sumerian tradition in exorcisms. Still, Faraone 1991: 25 n. 28 warns that the use of ὀρκίζω in binding spells is not enough for rituals to qualify as "magical" acts; yet, also see Chaniotis 1997: 356 on the use of the verb on propitiatory inscriptions. For the use of ὀρκίζω in Jewish oaths, see Leicht 2006: 326. On the latter see also above, nn. 23 and 29.

[39]   Gager 1992: 178, esp.n.13; Martinez 1995: 335-9; cf. Martinez 1991 for the later *PMich 757* (2nd-4th century CE) inscribed in Greek on a lead tablet. The spell, designed to secure sexual gratification, adjures a ghost to carry out the commands of the officiant; cf. Abusch 2002: 227-38.

[40]   Apollo and (mainly) Artemis are invoked in Greek funerary imprecations which are analogous to Anatolian 'non-funerary' imprecations; Strubbe 1991: 37, 39 n. 52; cf. Versnel 1991: 77-93.

[41]   Gager 1992: 247; also, see Leicht 2006 cited in n. 23 above; cf. Chaniotis 1997: 367 (with n. 81) and Johnston 2004: 364; cf. Ov. *Her*. 21.29.

[42]   In myth, Artemis often posed as an angry goddess who punished perpetrators harshly (for example, Hom. *Il*. 9.530ff.; Apollod. 1.66 and 105; Callim. *h*. 3.259-60; Hyg. *Astr*. 2.7 and 2.18 and *Fab*. 172 and 174; Paus. 7.18.8; Diod. Sic. 4.34.2; Ov. *Met*. 8.269). For the syncretism of Ephesian Artemis with Cybele and Hecate, see Arnold 1989: 20-5; Knibbe 1995: 144; Lesser 2005: 43.

[43]   For oaths in Hellenistic epigrams, see *A.P.* 5.8, 175, 184, 197 (Mel.), *A.P.* 5.6.3-4 (Call.); *A.P.* 5.7 (Asclep.), *A.P.* 5.52 (Diosc.), *A.P.* 5.133 (Maec.), *A.P.* 5.245 (Mac.Cons.).

Latin elegy,[44] and they were generally considered as non-binding;[45] however, often in his letter Acontius refers to the oath he inscribed on the apple — a fruit with explicit erotic and magical connotations — as his cunning *fraus* (= 'deceit', 'wile'),[46] a term used to denote magical affliction. Likewise, Cydippe maintains that she did not intend to take the oath — instead she was 'deceived' into doing so: *decipe sic alias* (*Her.* 21.145: 'thus, deceive others'). Her protest echoes common eastern beliefs about magical spells which could allegedly enforce someone to take (or break) an oath unwillingly. Thus, charms against the power of oaths were very popular in the ancient Near East, a tradition traced back to Babylonian magical texts.[47] In *Her.* 21.133-144 we read:

> *quid tibi nunc prodest **iurandi formula iuris***
> *linguaque praesentem testificata deam?*
> *quae **iurat** mens est. nil **coniurauimus** illa;*
> *illa **fidem** dictis addere sola potest.*
> *consilium prudensque animi sententia **iurat***
> *et nisi iudicii **uincula** nulla valent.*
>
> …………………………………
>
> *sed si nil dedimus praeter sine pectore uocem,*
> *uerba suis frustra uiribus orba tenes.*[48]
> *non ego **iuraui**, legi **iurantia uerba**;*
> *uir mihi non isto more legendus eras.*

('What is now your benefit from the formal words of the oath and the tongue that called as a witness the present goddess? It is the mind that takes an oath; I swore nothing to her. She alone can impart truth to what has been said. It is reasoning and prudent judgement of the mind that take an oath and no bonds can prevail over judgment. But if I have given you nothing but my voice, without my heart, you possess vain words without any power of their own. I took no oath — I read words that formed an oath; my husband should not have been chosen in that way of yours.')

Cydippe claims that Acontius' deception, identified with the oath he imposed on her, forced her to act against her character, similar to victims of magic who were subjected to

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44   See, for example, Cat. 87.1-4; Prop. *El.* 1.15.25-6; 2.28.3-8; cf. 4.7.51-3; Tib. *El.* 1.3.51-2; 1.4.21-6; 1.9.3-4 and 31-4; 2.6.13-4; 3.1.23-6; 3.6.39-40 and 47-52; cf. Hor. *Carm.* 2.8.1-8.

45   *Her.* 20.21-4, 209-212; 21.122 and Aristaenet. *Ep.* 1.10.26; 1.10.38-40; cf. Sharrock 1994: 50-86.

46   For apples in near-eastern spells, see Faraone 1990: 233-6; 1999: 72-5 and 2002: 319-22; also, Versnel 2002: 112-3.

47   Wessely 1888: xxxvi.81, l.81; Montgomery 1913: 69; Ebeling 1919: 77-8. For incantations against curses and oaths inscribed on late near-eastern bowls, see Levene 2003: M123, M138; cf. M50, M59, M103 and M119. The tradition survived in the Byzantine years; Vassiliev 1893: I.332.

48   For *teneo* in Latin elegy meaning 'to embrace someone sexually' (Cat. 2.18; Tib. *El.* 1.5.39, 1.6.35, 2.6.52; Ov. *Am.* 3.7.3) and 'to mesmerise, keep spellbound' (Tib. *El.* 1.2.27; Ov. *Her.* 9.12, 13.20, 20.125), see Sharrock 1994: 23, esp. nn. 3-7. Cydippe (Ov. *Her.* 21.112-3) describes (the moment of) her bewitchment as: *sensi…tenebam* ('I realized…I was captured').

the will of another.[49] Hence, it seems that Ovid wants his readers to differentiate between Cydippe's promise and the light-hearted and inconsequential love oaths in Latin elegy, which could be readily broken. Elsewhere in his letter, Acontius refers to the binding words of his oath as *insidias* ('traps', *Her.* 20.66) as well as *doli* ('deceptions', 'tricks', *Her.* 20.41) which will "capture" Cydippe (*Her.* 20.66; cf. *Her.* 20.43.3), thus highlighting the connection between his deceptive words and Cydippe's (magical) binding. Our sources concur that the binding formula could be simple and often submitting the victim's name to a god summoned for the deed was enough:[50]

καταδῶ τὸν δεῖνα τῷ δεῖνι θεῷ

('I bind so-and-so to such-and-such god')

Again Mesopotamian traditions indicate that binding through oath incantations was very popular and simply required someone to swear by (the life of) a god — thus, magically enticing the god to intervene in the event of perjury just as in the case of Cydippe.[51] These so-called "loyalty oaths", used primarily for political treaties and inscribed on monuments throughout the ancient Near East, were common in Hellenistic Asia Minor and Egypt, and had become familiar to the Romans by the time of Augustus.[52] Accompanied by a number of curses (implied or not), such oaths would typically incite a judicial prayer in the event they were broken.[53] It is not unreasonable to think that such formulas were used for erotic binding as well, especially since the typical requirement on behalf of the adjured was unreserved "love/φιλία".

Acontius possibly alludes to the formulaic language of binding spells / oath incantations in *Her.* 20.151 when he refers to the *formula pacti* ('the formula of our pact') and its power in an attempt to scare off his rival, Cydippe's fiancé, whom he suspects of trying to force the maiden take another oath (*altera pacti*, *Her.* 20.155). He also adds that if his *artes* ('arts', *Her.* 20.47) are not effective he will take up arms, thus employing the well-recognisable elegiac motif of *militia amoris*. Yet, Acontius' *artes* also allude to the so-called *doliai technai* ('deceiving arts') which were akin to magic and included writing and reading, especially as magic typically involved writing down or "registering" the names of the victims and reading obscure words which could allegedly make things happen.[54] Callimachus had already employed this tradition,[55] even specifying that Acontius had to be instructed in his art by Eros, since he was somewhat dim-witted (*Aet.* 67.2; cf. Aristaen. *Ep.* 1.10.20-24). Ovid was keen to echo this detail

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[49]   Magical spells were often designed to attack the reasoning of their victims, to make them fall in love (against their will) with the spell-caster. Faraone 1999: 68.

[50]   Brashear 1995: 3445-6; Faraone 1991: 5-6 quoting *DTA* 91; cf. Budge 1901: 141.

[51]   Cunningham 1997: 30-1.

[52]   Weinfeld 2005: 18-31; Abusch 2002: 219-270. Faraone 1993: passim; cf. Chaniotis 1995 and 1997 who discusses oaths and curses widely employed in cases of interpersonal justice in Hellenistic Phrygia and Lydia (cf. nn. 30 and 32 above); also Leicht cited above in nn. 23, 29 and 41.

[53]   Schroeder 2001: 148.

[54]   Rosenmeyer 2001: 127-8.

[55]   Rynearson 2009: 355-7; for reading and writing in near-eastern magic, see Geller 2010: 165-6.

(Ov. *Her.* 20.25-36, 41-6), although his Acontius is a rather formidable interlocutor, probably alluding to popular invocations of Eros in love spells to carry out the wishes of the magicians.[56] Besides, Acontius admits to gazing on Cydippe intensely (*Her.* 20.206; cf. Ov. *Her.* 21.103-4), a possible allusion to Propertius and his erotic capture by Cynthia (*El.* 1.1.1), but, also, a technique prescribed in magical spells to ensure their success.[57] Acontius further alludes to the magical powers of his *iterum* ('second') piece of writing when he admits that Cydippe rightfully suspects it to be another ploy (*altera fraus*, *Her.* 20.34). By using repetition, also prescribed in magical spells,[58] his *rogantia verba* (*Her.* 20.33, 'pleading words') have the power to renew her initial oath; aware of the danger, Cydippe is wary of reading Acontius' *carmen* aloud, and instead murmurs as she goes through it, in case she takes another oath (*Her.* 21.103-110).[59] Hence, the oath Cydippe unwittingly swore triggered a self-curse that could be revoked only if she appeased Artemis by keeping her promise, that is, by reciprocating Acontius' love.

So far, we have discussed the tradition of judicial prayers and binding spells during the Hellenistic and Augustan periods and their employment in Ovid's rendering of the tale — Ovid seems to have used magical traditions in a fluid manner which pays little attention to our strict classifications of ancient magic. In addition, the eastern influences which shaped these traditions point to ancient Mesopotamia where erotic literature often reflected incidents of magic.

Part B: Oath Breaking and Magic in Mesopotamia

Mesopotamian literature seems to have anticipated the tendency of fusing binding spells and judicial prayers. In a sample published by Lambert we read:[60]

> *én ili-i$_{14}$ ul i-di še-ret-[ka dan]-na-at*
> *niš-ka kab-tu qa-liš [a]z-za-kar*
> *me-e-ka am-te-eš ma-gal al-lik*

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[56] *PGM* IV.1759-60 and 1852-9; V.1716-1870; VII.478-90; XII.14-95. Also, see Winkler 1991: 226-231. The use of court vocabulary in the *Heroides* is often noted (for example, Kenney 1996 ad Ov. *Her.* 20.29 and 20.143-4), but was also commonly adopted in magical spells; see Kagarow 1929: 53-4; cf. Zingerle 1926: 31-32 on the use of court vocabulary in reconciliatory inscriptions.

[57] Faraone 1999: 158-9. Cf. *ZA* 49, Tablet II, 24-5: *at-ta-na-ap-la-ás el-[šu] / a-ka-aš-ša-ad ir-ni-it-ti [x-x]*: 'I shall look and look [at him]/ I shall attain victory…'

[58] See *PGM* IV.3089-90 and 1265-74; *PGM*² 52-60; cf. Ov. *Her.* 20.3-4 and 213-4 and *OLD* s.v. 9, 10 for the legal meaning of *repeto* in connection with n.33 above; also, Martinez 1991: 6-7; Sharrock 1994: 69; Versnel 2002: 122 n .44 and 130 n. 67.

[59] Cf. Ov. *Her.* 21.226-8. For *carmen* as spell, see Dickie 2001: 17; Sharrock (1994: 56) stresses the 'contagiousness of deceit, its pharmacological duplicity' in ancient love poetry. Also, see Luck 2006: 61-3; Graf 1999: 41-48; Fulkerson 2002: 66n.22; and McKeown 1989 ad Ov. *Am.* 2.1.23-28.

[60] Lambert 1974: 275 (ll.23-5) and 267. In *Enlil's Beloved Come Come*, Inanna who practised magic against her lover Dumuzi (ll.32-3) prays on his behalf (ll. 61, 4): *šà-diĝir-za *ḫa-*me-ši-ḫun-e…/diĝir-zu kaskal ḫa-ra-ab-*sì-ge* ('May the heart of your god be soothed toward you /…may your god pave the way for you'). Text and translation by Sefati 1998: 268-71.

('my god, I did not know how severe your punishment is.
I frivolously took a solemn *oath* in your name,
I profaned your decrees, I went too far...').

Incantation prayers were also used when the victims believed themselves bewitched and wished to exorcise their affliction; in this case, any form of illness would be suspected as a physical manifestation of their bewitchment — reminding us of Cydippe's symptoms.[61] The connection between prayers and love spells both of which employed oaths seems to be exemplified by an Old Babylonian poem that 'testifies to the blurring of distinctions between incantation and love poetry'.[62] In this poem, one of many in circulation during the first millennium despite their considerably older time of composition,[63] a woman, anxious to secure her lover's loyalty, imposes an oath on him in the name of Ishtar, a goddess often invoked in magical spells and syncretised with Artemis in pre-Hellenistic Asia Minor (*ZA* 49, Tablet I.9-16):[64]

li-iz-zi-iz ki-it-ti
i-*na ma-ḫa-ar Ištar šar-ra-tim*
li-iḫ-bi-it ra-mi li-ba-aš
ka-ar-ri-iš-ti
šu-[ur]-˹kam˺ pa-la-ḫa-am ku-uz-zu-
ba-am
i-ta-ás-ḫu-ur ma-ri-im
i-na qá-bé-e ᵈ*Na-na-a-a x x da-ri-iš*
a-li me-hi-ir-ti

'May my loyalty remain constant

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[61]   Abusch 2002: 89. Cydippe suffered particularly from fever (Ov. *Her.* 20.117-8), a symptom of erotic *and* magical affliction; Cael. Aurel. *Acut. Pass.* 2.10.60; Aretaeus 3.6.1.12-15 Hyde; [Arist]. *Pr.* 866A, 23; Hippoc. *Aph.* 4.43. Yet, several spells were designed to induce in the beloved fury and burning comparable to running a high temperature: see, for example, *PGM* XIXa.50; *PGM*² IV.1540-1; *PGM*² IV.2767; *Suppl. Mag.* 42.37-8 and 45.31-32; *DT* 51; *DT* 271.12-14. For the feverof love induced by magical spells,see Faraone 1999: 57-8; cf. Edelstein 1967: 205-246; Kotansky 1991: 112-8 discusses amulets against fever and epileptic attacks. Fever was also prominent in Syriac and Jewish charms: Montgomery 1913: 91-3. Besides, Martinez (1995: 335-7) argued that enervating illness spells tend to derive from oath declarations rather than curses. Cf. Geller and Wiggermann 2008: esp. 159 for Old Babylonian incantations preoccupied with diseases which were copied in popular spells such as the Muššu'u IV of the first millennium and the Sag.gig VII. LiDonnici 1998: 67-9, 86-91 analyses ancient binding spells wishing physical harm on the beloved, especially fever spells, on the basis that humans experience emotions with their bodies, as our own expression about the 'heat of passion' and other similar ones still demonstrate (see esp. p. 89).

[62]   Leick 1994: 233; Hjerrild 2009: 44-7; also, see Foster 1995: 339; cf. Fulkerson 2002: 65-66.

[63]   See Abusch 2004: 353; on the same page he also discusses the *šuillas*, incantation prayers which often described an individual's physical or psychological suffering as well as a promise of praise should the petition be granted; cf. his pp. 456-8 on the close affinity between medicine and witchcraft in ancient Mesopotamia.

[64]   Text by Held 1961: 6; trans. Leick 1994: 234-5; the incantation dates from the Old Babylonian period.

before Ištar, the Queen.
May my love prevail (and) shame (be upon) her
who slanders me.
Give me devotion, passion,
the constant attention of my darling!
At the command of Nanâ [..] forever!
Where is my rival?'

Such poems contributed significantly to the dissemination of Mesopotamian magical lore down to the first century C.E. The poem quoted above has been identified as one of thousands of love-lyrics which in the first millennium enjoyed huge popularity and became increasingly associated with magic.[65] When the lover speaks in the poem, written in dialogue form, he refers to the 'tricks' of his mistress (= *ši-ib-qí*, line 18) resonating the complaints of Cydippe against Acontius in Ovid. Still, the spell-caster proudly announces that she has "seized" her lover thanks to her constant *prayers* to Nanâ (lines 22-6), a by-form of Cybele, also syncretised with Artemis:[66]

ú-ṣa-ab-ba-at-ka-ma UD-ma-am
ra-am-ka ù ra-mi uš-ta-ma-ga-ar
us-sé-ne-el-li-ma a-na ᵈNa-na-a-a
sa-li-im-ka be-lí da-ri-a-am e-le-eq-qé
na-ad-nam

'I seize you and this day
I will make your love and my love coincide!
by constantly praying to Nanâ
I shall win your affection, o my master, forever,
as a gift.'

In the poem cited above, the woman's determination to claim her lover is similar to that of Acontius who states that he will 'not stop harming' Cydippe until she fulfils her oath and, therefore, his erotic desire (*Her.* 20.35: *sine fine nocebo*).[67] Ovid's choice of the verb *noceo* (harm) once more aligns his poem with ancient *katadesmoi* that often wished physical suffering on their victims in the hope to ward off a rival.[68] The rivalry between

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[65]   Held 1961: 1-2; on Babylonian love-lyrics and their eventual use in incantations, see Wiggermann 2010: 342-6.

[66]   Azarpay 1976: 537-9.

[67]   See *PGM*² IV.1510-20. This determination is also traced in near eastern spells: see Biggs 1967: 77; trans. Leick 1994: 203; also see *MAD* V 8, ll.30-8 in Groneberg 2001: 105-6 with trans. by Leick 1994: 195. On the same topic, see Wilcke 1985: 200-1; Winkler 1991: 215, 231; Gager 1992: 81; Faraone 1999: 49-55.

[68]   For the erotic/magical connotations of *noceo*, see Sharrock 1994: 57. See Ov. *Ars Am*. 2.106 (*philtra nocent*) and *Her.* 21.231-2 (*nocuere…noceant*). For competition between rivals in Greek *defixiones*, see Faraone 1991: 13 citing *PGM*² IV.2740-2. For a very similar Egyptian spell, see *SM* 40 (= Ostracon 2 in *PGM*). Anxiety for a rival is also employed in Prop. *El.* 1.16.21-22, 33-4 and 1.9.5-8.

Acontius and Cydippe's fiancé is confirmed by the maiden herself (*Her*. 21.39-42) who feels 'tossed like a ship' between the two:[69]

> *dum necque tu cedis, nec se putat ille secundum,*
> *tu uotis obstas illius, ille tuis*.[70]

> ('while you don't retreat and he does not think himself second to you, you hinder his prayers, he hinders yours;)

In addition, Acontius' successful engagement with magic is implied when Cydippe, lying ill as a result of her perjury (*Her*. 21.169-72), refuses to speak to her fiancé who has grown suspicious of her and turns to her side to avoid him (*Her*. 21.189-206). Similarly, in *ZA* 49, cited above, the woman who cast the spell soon turns her attention from imposing an oath on the beloved to frustrating the efforts of an alleged rival.[71] In tablet II, lines 6-7, the woman asks Ishtar to strike her rival with blindness. She adds (lines 8-9):

> *ki-ma ja-ti la ṣa-la-lum* [*lu e-mi-is-si*]
> *ka-li mu-ši-im li-ku-úr* [*li-id-li-ip*]…

> ('may she, like me, be afflicted with sleeplessness,
> may she be sleeplessly toss around all night!').

When the lover finally speaks out he confirms his love invoking Ishtar and, as Leick argued,[72] he seems to join in the task of banishing the rival (Tablet IV, lines 17-24):

> *et-ti la ma-ás-ku*
> [*az*]-*zi-iz-ki-im-ma*
> [*qá-qá-a]d-ki te-te-en-di-{di}*
> [*ma-g]i-ir-tum šum-ki*
> [*be-l]e-et mi-il-ki-i na-ba-ki*
> *ša-ni-tum-*ma* (text: *mi*) *lu li-mu-ut-*
> *ta-ni*
> [*ma*]-*ḫa-ar Ištar*

> 'My only one, undisgraced,
> As before…
> (when) I stood by you,
> And you leaned your shoulder (against me)
> '[Agr]eeable One' is your name,

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69   The Roman *uotum* involved striking a deal with a deity and could employ the rationale of magical spells. Its Greek equivalent (εὐχή) is used both for prayers to the gods and curses.

70   See *Her*. 20.155 for Acontius' suspicion that his rival also practised magic to win over Cydippe which would fit my understanding of the tale as presented as an incident of magic.

71   In ll.27-30 the woman's fury turns against her rival: *a-la-wi-ki ni-tam i-na ṣe-ri-ki / taš-bi-a a-ka-aṣ-ṣa-ar / mu-ta-ak-ki-il-ta-ki li-il-qé-e /ru-ḪA-am ti-qí-a-ti-ki ḫu-ul-li-[ma*…('I besiege you /I will make you surrender. /Let your supporter take possession of your /charm...'). Text and trans. by Held 1961: 7. For erotic insomnia and magic, see Dickie 2001: 221-3; Cyrino 1995: 102-3; Faraone 1999: 26, 44-5.

72   Leick 1994: 237.

'[La]dy-of-Good-Sense' is your title;
May the other woman be our enemy!
Ištar being witness.'

This spell echoes closely the oath of amorous exclusivity that Acontius imposed on Cydippe (Ov. *Her.* 21.151-60). Accordingly, Cydippe is keen to inform Acontius of the success of his deceptive "writing", particularly that his rival has never exaggerated his affections toward her (*Her.* 21.189-92), a typical motif of spells against erotic rivals.[73]

Nec tu credideris illum, cui destinor uxor,
aegra superposita membra fouere manu.
adsidet ille quidem, quantum permittitur, ipse
sed meminit nostrum uirginis esse torum.

('Do not believe that he whose wife I am destined to be, lays his hand to fondle my sick limbs. He sits by me, as much as it is permitted, but he remembers that mine is a virgin bed').

The request for physical deterioration, also reflected in the "binding" phraseology of Acontius' letter examined above, is often associated with the so-called *agōgē* spells.[74] Yet, Mesopotamian literature offered numerous examples of fusing the language of binding spells and oath incantations with "judicial" prayers, a tradition which Hellenistic Greeks adopted keenly as their placatory inscriptions, found across Asia Minor, indicate. Although Ovid's direct knowledge of Mesopotamian traditions can only be inferred, Mesopotamian magic, popular in Rome since the second century BCE, had acquired noticeable pace in the regions that became the Roman East.

Conclusion

In adapting the tale of Acontius and Cydippe, masterfully told by Callimachus, Ovid exploits to the extreme the subtle references to magic found in his model, and presents the tale as a daring incident of magic fuelled by Acontius' relentless passion. In general, love spells were widespread in Augustan society and literature, and their eastern lore added to their appeal and perceived effectiveness. In Roman elegy, in particular, the near-eastern background of love magic could add dramatic highlights to the conventional surrender of the elegiac persona to erotic suffering and further pronounce the inevitability of erotic subjection. By modelling his poem close to the rhetoric of such spells, Ovid acknowledges the magical background of Callimachus' version, but, also, exaggerates the decadence of the elegiac lover. His crafty merging of binding spells and judicial prayers seems to add another episode to a longstanding Mesopotamian paradigm where the boundaries of modern typologies were transcended. Finally, Ovid's interest in eastern magic also allows for a refreshing insight into his contemporary society which avidly received exotic traditions as long as they could (allegedly) assist its members in their relentless pursuit of social success. Acontius, symptomatic of such consumers,

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73   Fulkerson 2002: 69 citing Gager 1992: 21; Johnston 1999: 121.
74   See n. 17 above; Faraone 1999: 41-95; cf. id. 1991: 3-32; see contra Frankfurter 2001: 487.

managed to capture Cydippe, but, also, generations of readers with the magic of his *carmen* — proving Ovid a true spell-caster.

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