

DO YOU BELIEVE IN MAGIC?
A STUDENT'S READER IN CURSE TABLETS AND MAGICAL TEXTS
OF THE ROMAN WORLD

by

ANNE ROGAN

(Under the Direction of Christine Albright)

ABSTRACT

This thesis is formatted as a student's reader for a collection of Latin texts concerning magic in the Roman World. The reader includes multiple curse tablets as well as excerpts from six Latin authors: Apuleius, Ovid, Propertius, Tacitus, Tertullian, and Vergil. The reader includes commentaries and vocabulary lists for each text. The reader is intended to make these texts more accessible to high school Latin students.

INDEX WORDS: Roman magic, curse tablets, *defixiones*, spells, witches, magicians,
demons

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This reader explores magic and curse tablets in the Roman world. Scholarship on magic in the ancient world has become increasingly popular, partially as a counter movement to the long-held idea that ancient Greeks and Romans lived in a philosophical haven, which was free from ‘superstition’ and other ‘irrational’ practices. Recent scholars have explored the categories and classifications of magic and endeavored to answer questions about what differentiates magic from religion and how these categories have historically been used to delineate various groups, particularly when one group exercises imperial power over the other.¹

Curse tablets, also known as *defixiones*, are small sheets of lead, which have been inscribed with a message to a spirit, demon, or god, who lives underground (also known as a chthonic deity). This message asks the recipient to harm someone on the orders of the author. The sheet of lead was then rolled up and sometimes pierced with one or more nails, before being deposited in a cold and dark place, such as a grave, within a wall, under a floor, a fountain, or a Roman bath. Hidden in such a place, the tablet was believed to be accessible to the chthonic deities, who would then follow the instructions. Gager argues that magic works, in that it provides a feeling of power for those in powerless circumstances.² Currently, over fifteen hundred examples of curse tablets survive.³

¹ John G. Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells From the Ancient World*, (Oxford University Press, 1992), 25.

² *ibid.*, 23.

³ *ibid.*, 3.

It is difficult to know where beliefs in magic came from.⁴ There are records of early curses and binding spells in many parts of the Mediterranean; Egyptian, Babylonian, and Hebrew magical practices dating at least as far back as the 18th century BCE resemble the Roman curses included in this reader. Some magical words, also known as *voces magicae*, come from other Mediterranean languages, such as Hebrew, Aramaic, Persian, and various forms of Egyptian.⁵ Even the English word ‘magic’ comes from an Old Iranian word for a religious leader, a *magus*. Roman magical rites and beliefs heavily overlap with Greek practices, and many surviving tablets are composed bilingually or using the Greek alphabet to write in Latin. The texts of this reader are Roman, but they originate from a complex tradition of cultural exchange spanning across the Latin speaking world and beyond. The literature within the reader connects to magical beliefs in various ways. Some express anxiety about the power of magic wielders or demonic influences, while others seek out help from magical priestesses and witches.

The reader is divided into six thematic chapters, which reflect the 5 categories of curse tablets and an additional chapter on professional magicians.⁶ Each chapter features a literary depiction of magic or superstitious events and at least one curse tablet. This reader exposes students to real Latin passages, which have not been heavily edited. Students will have the opportunity to recognize differences in style between authors, as well as the variety between published works and more colloquial tablets. The lengthy passages will help to increase students’ confidence in their reading abilities.

The reader is designed for students in their 3rd or 4th year of high school Latin. The texts are organized separating prose and poetry, with each group increasing in difficulty. The

⁴ *ibid.*, 26.

⁵ *ibid.* 10.

⁶ Daniel Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 7.

commentaries provide grammatical help, identify and define rhetorical devices, and provide cultural and historical context. Each text has its own vocabulary list for difficult or uncommon words.

Not only hidden in antiquity, curse tablets are scarcely found outside of archeological reports and not made easily accessible to high school-level Latin students. This reader provides students with the opportunity to interact with Latin in multiple forms, from iconic texts to hidden pieces of daily life. These tablets often come from perspectives which are underrepresented in Latin curricula, such as those of the working class and women. The ultimate goal of this reader is to introduce students to an aspect of ancient life which is often overlooked, to encourage students to interact with both the literary and the material evidence of the ancient world simultaneously, and to improve the reading skills of students in an engaging and exciting way.

CHAPTER 2

AGONISTIC MAGIC

Introduction to Tertullian's *De Spectaculis*

Tertullian was born in North Africa, near Carthage (in modern-day Tunisia) and lived c. 160-240 CE.⁷ He converted to Christianity before 197 CE, and he wrote many works concerning Christianity.⁸ In *De Spectaculis* he navigates how a Christian should interact with Roman arts, theater, and festivals. In the following passage, he warns about the dangers of idolatry connected to the demonic art of chariot racing.

***De Spectaculis* 9.1-6**

[1] nunc de artificio quo circenses exhibentur. res equestris retro simplex: de dorso agebatur, et utique communis usus reus non erat. sed cum ad ludos coactus est, transiit a dei munere ad daemoniorum officia. [2] itaque Castori et Polluci deputatur haec species, quibus equos a Mercurio distributos Stesichorus docet. sed et Neptunus equestris est, quem Graeci ἵππιον appellant. [3] seiugas vero Iovi, quadrigas Soli, bigas Lunae sanxerunt. sed et

primus Erichthonius currus et quattuor ausus
iungere equos rapidusque rotis insistere victor.

Erichthonius, Minervae et Vulcani filius, et quidem de caduca in terram libidine, portentum est daemonicum, immo diabolus ipse, non coluber. [4] si vero Trochilus Argivus auctor est currus, primae Iunoni id opus suum dedicavit. si Romae Romulus quadrigam primus ostendit, puto et ipse inter idola conscriptus est, si idem est Quirinus. [5] talibus auctoribus quadrigae productae merito et aurigas coloribus idololatriae vestierunt. namque initio duo soli fuerunt, albus et russeus. albus hiemi ob nives candidas, russeus aestati ob solis ruborem voti erant. sed postea tam voluptate quam superstitione provecta russeum alii Marti, alii album Zephyris consecraverunt, prasinum vero Terrae matri vel verno, venetum Caelo et Mari vel autumnno. [6]

⁷ *Oxford Classical Dictionary* 4th ed., ed. Hornblower and Spawforth (Oxford University Press, 1996), s.v. "Tertullian."

⁸ *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* 3rd ed., ed Cross and Livingstone (Oxford University Press, 1997), s.v. "Tertullian."

cum autem omnis species idololatrae damnata sit a deo, utique etiam illa damnatur, quae elementis mundialibus profanatur.

Notes

1 de artificio: Supply *scribo*.

quo: Ablative of location.

res equestris retro simplex: Supply *est*.

retro: In the sense of time, rather than space.

de dorso agebatur: Supply a subject, *equus*. Refers to horseback riding.⁹

daemoniorum: In the Classical world, daemons were supernatural beings, who could influence human life for good or ill. For Christian writers, such as Tertullian, daemons “were interpreted as both the embodiment and the cause of evil and sin against the will of God.”¹⁰

2 Castori et Polluci: Twin gods and sons of Zeus, Castor and Pollux were known for their friendliness to humans, including their assistance in human athletic competitions. “Both in art and literature they are constantly associated with horses.”¹¹

quibus: Dative.

Mercurio: A god, Mercury fulfilled many roles. He was “the patron god of circulation, the movement of goods, people, and words and their roles.”¹²

Stesichorus: A Greek lyric poet who worked c. 600-550 BCE; he is mentioned the *Suda*, a Byzantine encyclopedia from the 10th century CE, but his work does not survive except in fragments and quotations.¹³

docet: Begins indirect statement; supply *esse* with *distributos*.

et: Emphatic, rather than a conjunction.

Neptunus: A god, Neptune was closely associated with water and with horses.¹⁴

ἵππιον: “Hippion” in Roman letters, a Greek adjective meaning “of horses.”

3 Soli: The personified god of the sun, Sol.

Lunae: The personified god of the moon, Luna.

primus... victor: This is a quote from Vergil's *Georgics* 3. 113.¹⁵

Erichthonius: An Athenian hero, Erichthonius was connected to the mythological founding of Athens.¹⁶

currus: Second u is long; this form is accusative plural.

ausus: Supply *est*- Perfect tense, semi-deponent verb, here meaning “dared.”

rotis: A metonymy for chariot, similar to the modern use of “wheels” when talking about a car.

⁹ T.R. Glover, *Tertullian: Apology, De Spectaculis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 257.

¹⁰ *OCD*, “daimon.”

¹¹ *OCD*, “Dioscuri.”

¹² *OCD*, “Mercurius.”

¹³ *OCD*, “Stesichorus.”

¹⁴ *OCD*, “Neptunus.”

¹⁵ Tertullian, *Apology, De Spectaculis*, trans. T.R. Glover, 257.

¹⁶ *OCD*, “Erichthonius.”

victor: Appositive to *primus Erichthonius*, meaning ‘as the victor.’

Minervae: A goddess, Minerva here stands as the Roman equivalent to Athena, the virgin patron goddess of Athens.¹⁷

Vulcani: A god, Vulcan here stands as the Roman equivalent to Hephaestus; both are gods of fire.¹⁸

libidine: Ablative of material, agrees with *caduca*. This refers to the origin story of Erichthonius. Apollodorus in *Bibliotheca* explains that Erichthonius was born after Vulcan ejaculated on Minerva’s leg, and she wiped the semen off and threw it to the ground, which created Erichthonius (Apollod. *Bibl.* iii. 14. 6).

coluber: Apollodorus also explains that when Erichthonius was an infant, Athena kept him in a box with a snake. (Apollod. *Bibl.* iii. 14. 6) Here Tertullian is manipulating the classical connection between Erichthonius and the snake with the Judeo-Christian connection snakes and the devil.

4 Trochilus Argivus: A Greek man, Trochilus is also credited with the invention of the chariot by Hyginus in *De Astronomica* (Hyg. *Poet. astr.* 2.13).

currus: Second u is long; this form is genitive singular.

Romae: Locative case, meaning “in Rome.”

Romulus: Mythical founder of Rome, Romulus was deified after his death, and by the 3rd century CE he was alternately identified with the god Quirinus.¹⁹

puto: An aside, does not subordinate the verb *conscriptus est*.

Quirinus: The Roman god of the state, Quirinus was sometimes seen as a peaceful alternative to Mars, who symbolized organized society.²⁰ See note on Romulus.

5 productae: Supply *est*, Perfect tense passive form.

merito: Adverbial form.

et: Emphatic, rather than a conjunction.

duo: Refers to colors: white and red.

albus... russeus: Asyndeton, the emphatic omission of conjunctions, which is common in lists; Tertullian also uses asyndeton in the next sentence with *alii... alii*.

provecta: Feminine ablative singular, modifying both *voluptate* and *superstitione*.

Zephyris: The personified god of the west wind, Zephyrus.²¹

Terrae: The personified god of the earth, Terra.

Caelo: The personified god of the sky, Caelum.

Mari: The personified god of the sea, Mare.

6 cum: Causal clause with *cum* and the subjunctive verb *damnata sit*.

deo: Refers to the Abrahamic god.

¹⁷ *OCD*, “Minerva.”

¹⁸ *OCD*, “Volcanus.”

¹⁹ *OCD*, “Romulus and Remus.”

²⁰ *OCD*, “Quirinus.”

²¹ *OCD*, “Zephyrus.”

Vocabulary

aestas, aestatis f. summer

albus, -a, -um white, of the White team

appello, appellare, appellavi, appellatus to call, address, name

artificium, artificii n. art, craft, trade

audeo, audere, ausus sum to dare, have courage

auriga, aurigae m. charioteer, driver

autumnus, autumni, m. autumn, fall

biga, bigae f. two-horsed chariot

caducus, -a, -um that has fallen, falling

candidus, -a, -um white, bright, clear, shining

circenses, circensium, m. pl. circus games

cogo, cogere, coegi, coactus to force

coluber, colubri m. snake, serpent

communis, commune common, public, general

conscribo, conscribere, conscripsi, conscriptus to write down, commit to writing

consecro, consecrare, consecravi, consecratus to dedicate, vow to a god

currus, currus m. chariot

daemonium, daemonii n. demon

damno, damnare, damnavi, damnatus to condemn, pass judgment

deputo, deputare, deputavi, deputatus to assign to, allot, attribute

diabolus, diaboli m. devil

distribuo, distribuere, distribui, distributus to divide, distribute, assign

doceo, docere, docui, doctus to teach, show, point out

dorsum, dorsi n. back

elementum, elementi n. elements, beginnings

equestris, equestre equestrian, of a horseman

equus, equi m. horse

exhibeo, exhibere, exhibui, exhibitus to present, produce, show

hiems, hiemis f. winter

idololatres, idololatrae m. idolater, idol worshipper

idololatria, idololatriae f. idolatry, idol worship

idolon, idoli n. idol, image of a god

immo, adv. rather, no indeed, on the contrary

initium, initii n. beginning

insisto, insistere, institi to stand on

iungo, iungere, iunxi, iunctus to join, yoke

libido, libidinis f. desire, lust, passion

ludus, ludi m. game, sport

merito, adv. deservedly, appropriately

mundialis, mundiale worldly, belonging to the world
munus, muneris n. service, tribute, offering
nix, nivis f. snow
ob on account of, for the sake of
officium, officii n. duty, service
ostendo, ostendere, ostendi to show, point out, display
portentum, portenti n. omen, portent
prasinus, -a, -um green, of the Green Team
produco, producere, produxi, productus to produce, make, bring out
profano, profanare, profanavi, profanatus to offer
proveho, provehere, provexi, provectus to carry away, advance
puto, putare, putavi, putatus to think, believe, suppose
quadriga, quadrigae f. four horse chariot
retro, adv. formerly, back
reus, -a, -um guilty, sinful
rota, rotae f. wheel, chariot
rubor, ruboris m. redness, blush, burning
russeus, -a, -um red, of the Red Team
sancio, sancire, sanxi, sanctus to devote, dedicate
sejuga, sejugae f. six horse chariot
simplex, (gen.) simplicis simple, plain
superstitio, superstitionis f. superstition
transeo, transire, transivi, transitus to go over, cross
utique, adv. in any case, especially
venetus, -a, -um blue, of the Blue Team
vernum, verni n. spring
vero, adv. in fact, (postpositive) but
vestio, vestire, vestivi, vestitus to dress, adorn
voluptas, voluptatis f. pleasure, delight, enjoyment
voveo, vovere, vovi, votus to vow, dedicate, consecrate

Translation

[1] Now I will speak about the profession in which circus games are performed. Riding horses used to be simple in the past: the horse was lead by someone on its back, and at least the usual way that people used horses was not sinful. But when horses were forced into the games, it moved over from being a gift from god to being favors for demons. [2] And so this spectacle is attributed to Castor and Pollux, to whom horses were given by Mercury, as Stesichorus teaches.

But even Neptune is an equestrian god, whom the Greeks call Of Horses. [3] But they devoted the six-horse chariots to Jupiter, the four-horse chariots to the Sun, the two-horse chariots to the Moon. But even “Erichthonius, having dared to join the chariots and the horses and to quickly stand on the wheels, was the first champion.”

Erichthonius, the son of Minerva and Vulcan, who in fact was made from sperm which fell to the earth, is a demonic omen, or rather he is the devil himself, not a snake. [4] If Trochilus of Argos is truly the inventor of the chariot, he first dedicated his work to Juno. If Romulus first exhibited the four-horse chariot in Rome, I think he himself is listed among the idols, if Quirinus is the same god. [5] Having been made by such inventors, the four-horse chariots appropriately also adorn the charioteers in the colors of idolatry. For in the beginning there were only two colors, white and red. White had been devoted to winter for the shining snows, red to summer for the burning of the sun. But afterwards, as much because of delight as intense superstition, some dedicated the red team to Mars, others dedicated the white team to Zephyr, the green team to the mother Earth or to spring, and the blue team to Sky and Sea or autumn. [6] However since all spectacles of idolaters are condemned by God, even those things, which are dedicated to the natural elements, are condemned.

Introduction to Agonistic Tablets

The name Agonistic comes from the Greek word agon (ἀγών) which refers to a competition or struggle. These tablets focus specifically on athletic games. They represent nearly

20 percent of all of the curse tablets recorded, and all originated in Africa.²² It is likely that Agonistic tablets existed in other parts of the Roman Empire, but they have not survived.²³

Against the Chariot Teams²⁴

This tablet was discovered in North Africa, in a city called Hadrumetum (modern-day Sousse) in Tunisia. It is two sided. Side A features an illustration of a daemon holding an urn while standing on a ship. Ten magical words are written to the left of the daemon. The daemon and the ship are both labeled with names. Side B contains the curse itself.

A: Cuigeu, Censeu, Cinbeu, Perfleu, Diarunco, Deasta, Bescu, Berbescu, Arurara, Bažagra; Antmoaraitto. Noctivagus, Tiberis, Oceanus.

B: adiuro te demon, quicumque es, et demando tibi ex hac hora, ex hoc die, ex hoc momento, ut equos prasini et albi crucies, occidas et agitadores Clarum et Felicem et Primulum et Romanum occidas, collidas neque spiritum illis relinquo. adiuro te per eum, qui te resolvit vitae temporibus deum pelagicum, aerium Ιαω Ιασδαω Osiro Lahia.

Notes

A Cuigeu... Bažagra: These ten magical words are written next to the daemon. Their origin is unclear. This includes the first instance of the author shifting from the Latin alphabet to the Greek, using the Greek letter ζ “zeta” in the last magical word, “Bazagra.”

Antmoaraitto: This magical word, also of unknown origin, is written on the chest of the daemon. It may represent the daemon’s name, but in the text of the curse the author seems unfamiliar with the daemon’s identity. Many tablets use illustrations to further embody the chthonic beings they summon.²⁵

Noctivagus, Tiberis, Oceanus: These Roman names are written on the ship on which the daemon stands. They are the names of the horses which the curse targets.²⁶

²² Daniela Urbanová, 2017, “Latin Curse Texts: Mediterranean Tradition and Local Diversity,” *Akademai Kiado*: 62.

²³ *ibid.*

²⁴ EDCS-16800202

²⁵ John G. Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells From the Ancient World* (Oxford University Press, 1992), 11.

²⁶ Urbanová, 62.

B quicumque es: The author here does not specify the identity of the demon. The formulas and phrases of tablets stress the truth, and so when the truth is unknown, the authors must be vague to avoid being false.²⁷

ex hac hora: Ablative of Time, along with *ex hoc die* and *ex hoc momento*

crucies: Subjunctive verb in an *ut* Purpose Clause, along with *occidas*, *collidas*, and *relinquas*

occidas: The repetition creates emphasis but serves no grammatical purpose.

illis: Dative of Possession, which is common with things that intrinsically belong to a person, including body parts.

temporibus: Ablative of Separation with the verb *resolvit*.

pelagicum: From the Greek adjective *πελάγιος*, meaning “of the sea.”

pelagicum, aerium: Asyndeton, both adjectives describe the god.

Ἰαὼ Ἰασδαὼ Osiro Lahia: The name of the god, which is spelled both in Greek and in Latin, appears separately in other tablets and may be borrowed from other religions.²⁸

Vocabulary

adiuro, adiurare, adiuravi, adiuratus to conjure, beg, swear to

aerius, -a, -um of the air, aerial

agitator, agitatoris m. charioteer, driver

albus, -a, -um white, of the White team

collido, collidere, collisi, collisus to beat, strike

crucio, cruciare, cruciavi, cruciatus to torture

demando, demandare, demandavi, demandatus to entrust, hand off

demon, demonis m. demon, spirit

equus, equi m. horse

occido, occidere, occidi, occisus to kill, slay

pelagicus, -a, -um of the sea, marine

prasinus, -a, -um green, of the Green Team

quicumque, quaecumque, quodcumque whoever, whatever

relinquo, relinquere, reliqui, relictus to leave behind, let go

resolvo,olvere, resolvi, resolutus to release, let go

Translation

I conjure you demon, whoever you are, and I entrust to you from this hour, from this day, from this moment that you torture the horses of the Green team and of the White team, that you kill

²⁷ Celia Sánchez Natalías, *Sylloge of Defixiones from the Roman West : A Comprehensive Collection of Curse Tablets from the Fourth Century BCE to the Fifth Century CE*. (BAR Publishing, 2022), 67.

²⁸ *ibid.*, 22.

the charioteers Clarus and Felix and Primulus and you kill Romanus, that you beat the spirit of them and that you do not let them go. I conjure you through him, who released you from the times of life, the god of the sea, of the air Jao Jasdao Osiro Lahia.



Fig. 1 Facsimile of the tablet *Against the Chariot Teams* from Hadrumetum, DT 286

Against Vincentius Thearithonus²⁹

This tablet was discovered in North Africa, in the city of Carthage (in modern-day Tunisia). It survives in a fragmentary form; the following is an excerpt from the text that survives. It alternates between Latin and Greek text. The Greek has been translated in brackets.

obligate, implicate laciniam Vincentio Thearithonei, quem peperit Concordia, ut ursos ligare non possit in omni hora, in omni momenti, in die Mercurii καὶ τὴν ἰσχὺν, τὴν δύναμιν, τὴν καρδίαν, τὸ ἥπαρ, τὸν νοῦν, τὰς φρένας [et vim, potentiam, cor, iecur, mentem, viscera] · ἐξορκίζω ὑμᾶς [voco vos], ἵνα [ut] Vincentio Thearithonei, quem peperit Concordia, in amphitheatro Carthaginis in die Merccuri obligate, implicate laciniam, Vincentio Thearithonei, quem peperit

²⁹ EDCS-34100190

Concordia, in amphitheatro Carthaginis in die Merccuri, ut ursos ligare non possit. Omnem ursum perdat, omnem ursum Vincentius non occidere possit in die Merccuri in omni hora iam iam, cito cito, facite...

Notes

Vincentio Thearitheni: Dative of Possession with *laciniam*. Vincentius is a gladiator and his *lacinia* is the net he fights with.

quem: Relative Pronoun modifying Vincentius.

Concordia: Vincentius is identified through his mother. Tablets often identify subjects by matrilineal descent. John Gager discusses some of the proposed explanations, including that only the mother could know for certain that the child was hers. The practice was influenced by other cultures, such as those of Egypt or Babylonia, where matrilineage appears in earlier spells.³⁰

possit: Subjunctive verb in an *ut* Purpose Clause.

die Mercurii: The Roman days of the week were named after the gods; Mercury's day was Wednesday.³¹

et vim... viscera: Repeat the verb *obligate* with these objects. The author wants to inhibit Vincentius' physical body, courage, and mental capacity. Tablets frequently include itemized body parts for the chthonic being to attack. Specificity of language is vital to the magical process, and so the fact that the body parts are listed in Greek elevates their importance. Similar to the magical words and image of the previous tablet, the fact that this curse is bilingual reflects the author's effort to reach another level of communication with the chthonic being.

τὰς φρένας: The Greek *phren* was thought to be the seat of emotion and intellect, located approximately in the middle of the torso. Its use here is similar to the English idiom of a "gut feeling" or "following your gut."

ut: A Purpose Clause, however the verbs are the repeated imperatives *obligate*, *implicate*. This is not a proper grammatical construction, and the imperatives must be translated as second person subjunctives. The following clause is made of repeating phrases in differing orders. This creates a confounding affect which could reflect the heightened emotional state of the author or the repetitive nature of many magical rituals.³²

perdat: A hortatory subjunctive .

iam iam, cito cito: Repetition creates a sense of urgency.

Vocabulary

amphitheatrum, amphitheatri n. amphitheater

cito, adv. quickly, fast

cor, cordis n. heart

iecur, iecoris n. liver

³⁰ Gager, 14.

³¹ Urbanová, 62.

³² Gager, 14.

implico, implicare, implicavi, implicatus to entangle, grasp

lacinia, laciniae f. strip of cloth, net

ligo, ligare, ligavi, ligatus to bind, tie

mens, mentis f. mind

obligo, obligare, obligavi, obligatus to bind, fasten

pario, parere, peperii, partus to give birth to, beget

perdo, perdere, perdidi, perditus to lose to, waste

potentia, potentiae f. power, force

ursus, ursi m. bear

vis, vis f. strength, might

viscus, visceris n. internal organ, (pl.) entrails, guts

voco, vocare, vocavi, vocatus to call, summon

Translation

Bind, entangle the net of Vincentius Thearithaeon, whom Concordia bore, so that he is not able to bind the bears in every hour, in every moment, on the day of Mercury and [bind] the strength, the power, the heart, the liver, the mind, the guts; I conjure you, so that you bind, entangle the cloth of Vincentius Thearithaeon, whom Concordia bore, in the amphitheater of Carthage on the day of Mercury, Vincentius Thearithaeon, whom Concordia bore, in the amphitheater of Carthage on the day of Mercury, so that he is not able to bind the bears. Let him lose to each bear, let Vincentius not be able to kill each bear on the day of Mercury in each hour now now, quickly quickly, do it..."

CHAPTER 3

LEGAL MAGIC

Introduction to Tacitus' *Annals*

Tacitus was born around 56 CE, in either Narbonese or Cisalpine Gaul (in modern-day Southern France or Northern Italy).³³ His most famous work is the *Annals*, a history of the Roman Empire in 18 books. Many of the books are now lost. The following section comes from the reign of Emperor Tiberius. It describes the accusations made against Piso, the governor of Syria, upon the death of Germanicus, the nephew and heir of Tiberius.

***Annals* Book 2.69-70**

[69] at Germanicus Aegypto remeans cuncta quae apud legiones aut urbes iusserat abolita vel in contrarium versa cognoscit. hinc graves in Pisonem contumeliae, nec minus acerba quae ab illo in Caesarem intentabantur. dein Piso abire Suria statuit. mox adversa Germanici valetudine detentus, ubi recreatum accepit votaue pro incolumitate solvebantur, admotas hostias, sacrificalem apparatus, festam Antiochensium plebem per lictores proturbat. tum Seleuciam degreditur, opperiens aegritudinem, quae rursum Germanico acciderat. saevam vim morbi augebat persuasio veneni a Pisone accepti; et reperiabantur solo ac parietibus erutae humanorum corporum reliquiae, carmina et devotiones et nomen Germanici plumbeis tabulis insculptum, semusti cineres ac tabo obliti aliaque malefica quis creditur animas numinibus infernis sacrari. simul missi a Pisone incusabantur ut valetudinis adversa rimantes.

[70] ea Germanico haud minus ira quam per metum accepta. si limen obsideretur, si effundendus spiritus sub oculis inimicorum foret, quid deinde miserrimae coniugi, quid infantibus liberis eventurum? lenta videri veneficia: festinare et urgere, ut provinciam, ut legiones solus habeat. sed non usque eo defectum Germanicum, neque praemia caedis apud interfectorem mansura. componit epistulas quis amicitiam ei renuntiabat: addunt plerique iussum provincia decedere.

³³ *Oxford Classical Dictionary* 4th ed., ed. Hornblower and Spawforth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), s.v., "Tacitus."

Notes

69 Germanicus: The heir to Emperor Tiberius, Germanicus was a powerful general and politician.³⁴ He was rivals with Piso, the governor of Syria.

Aegypt: South of the Mediterranean Sea, Egypt was at this time a province of the Roman Empire, which specifically belonged to the emperor, unlike other public provinces.³⁵ Germanicus had visited the province without the emperor's permission, overstepping his power and offending Tiberius.³⁶

quae... iusserat: A relative clause.

abolita: Indirect statement, following *cognoscit*. Supply *esse* following *abolita* and *versa* to form the perfect tense infinitives.

in contrarium: *in* and the accusative translates to "into."

cognoscit: A vivid present tense verb, referring to historical action.

graves... contumeliae... acerba: Supply *erant*.

in Pisonem: The governor of Syria, Piso was appointed by Emperor Tiberius to assist and monitor Germanicus in 17 CE.³⁷ However, the two men frequently fought. Here *in* and the accusative should be translated as "against," which occurs many times in the passage from Apuleis (Trade Magic).

quae... intentabantur: A relative clause.

ab illo: Refers to Piso.

Caesarem: Refers to Germanicus, who was the crown prince and a member of Caesar's family, but he died before he could become emperor.

Piso: Pay close attention to when Piso is or is not the subject.

Suria: A region east of the Mediterranean Sea, Syria was at this time a province of the Roman Empire.

adversa Germanici valetudine: An ablative absolute modified by a genitive.

ubi: Here equivalent to *tum*.

recreatum: Supply "that he..."³⁸

votaque... solvebantur: The subject briefly becomes *vota* before switching back to Piso.

admotas hostias... Antiochensium plebem: Asyndeton, the emphatic omission of conjunctions; the asyndeton makes the list of Piso's targets seem unending and his worsens the audience's opinion of him.

admotas: Supply *altaribus*, an ablative of separation with *admotas*.³⁹

³⁴ *OCD*, "Iulius Caesar, Germanicus."

³⁵ *OCD*, "Egypt."

³⁶ *OCD*, "Iulius Caesar, Germanicus."

³⁷ *OCD*, "Calpurnius Piso (3), Gnaeus."

³⁸ lit. "he received him, having recovered."

³⁹ Henry Furneaux, *The Annals of Tacitus, Vol I: Books I-VI* (Clarendon Press, 1896), 365.

Antiochensium: Refers to the citizens of Antioch, a city in the province of Syria (in modern-day Turkey), where Germanicus had fallen ill.⁴⁰

per lictores proturbat: Here *per* means “with the help of;” it is possible that leaving offerings for male member of the Imperial house was not allowed,⁴¹ but this action characterizes Piso as being aggressive towards Germanicus and the people who want him to recover.

Seleuciam: A city near the province of Syria, Seleucia Pieria was a coastal city, and its port was commonly used to leave Antioch.⁴²

opperiens aegritudinem: Supply “the result of;”⁴³ Piso does not need to wait for Germanicus to be sick, but rather for him to either get better or die.

persuasio veneni a Pisone accepti: An objective genitive, the idea that Piso poisoned Germanicus is the thing he believes.⁴⁴ Tacitus does not comment on whether this accusation is true or not; only that Germanicus got worse because of his fear that it was.⁴⁵

reperiebantur: Tacitus specifies that the magical tools were actually found, and not just alleged.⁴⁶ He does not specify where the tools were found, other than *solo ac parietibus*.

erutae humanorum corporum reliquiae... tabo obliti: These items were frequently used in magic rituals.⁴⁷

carmina et devotiones et nomen: Polysyndeton, the emphatic repetition of a conjunction.

plumbeis tabulis: An ablative of location without a preposition; curse tablets are made of lead.

semusti: This most likely refers to human remains which have been cremated.⁴⁸

tabo: An ablative of means.

quis: An ablative of means.

creditur animas... sacrari: A passive indirect statement, following *creditur*, which is an impersonal verb, referring to general beliefs. Tacitus implies that some people believe in magic, but he does not.⁴⁹

missi a Pisone: Refers to the people who were working for Piso.

ut valetudinis adversa rimantes: Here *ut* takes a participle, rather than a finite verb. The clause specifies what they were accused of; their visits seems suspicious: if Piso is secretly keeping track of Germanicus’ illness, it may be because he wants him to die and in fact poisoned or cursed him.⁵⁰

70 Germanico: An ablative of agent.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

⁴¹ *ibid.*

⁴² *ibid.*

⁴³ *ibid.*

⁴⁴ *lit.* “belief in poison having been received from Piso.”

⁴⁵ Furneaux, 365.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*

⁴⁷ *ibid.*

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, 366.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

ira quam per metum: Tacitus changes the construction from ablative to accusative, but the ideas are parallel: ‘in anger’ and ‘through fear.’⁵¹

accept: Supply *est* to form the finite verb.

si... obsideretur, si... foret: The sentence begins as a present contrary to fact conditional, with two imperfect tense subjunctive verbs in the protasis, but it is altered into a question at *quid*. Instead of stating, “If x happens, then y will happen,” Tacitus questions, “If x happens, what will happen next?”

limen: May be literal, imagining an attack on Germanicus’ home, or metaphorical, referring to Piso limiting the boundaries of his power.

effundendus: A gerundive, denoting obligation.

quid... eventurum: The participle *eventurum* here acts as a future tense subjunctive, which does not exist in Latin.

miserrimae coniugi: A dative of reference, along with *infantibus liberis*.

liberis: Two of Germanicus’ children were with him at the time: his son Gaius, who would later be known as Caligula, and his infant daughter Julia.⁵²

lenta... mansura: Supply *cogitat*; these sentences are an extended indirect statement.

ut... habeat: A present tense subjunctive in a purpose clause; here *habeo* refers to having control of.

solus: Refers to Piso.

caedis apud interfectorem: Germanicus, while getting worse, considers himself already dead, and seeks to punish Piso for killing him.

quis: An ablative of location without a preposition.

amicitiam ei renuntiabat: It was the custom that both individuals and states breaking alliances for war would create a formal end of their friendship. When the emperor, or, in this case, his heir, renounced someone, that person was often banished.⁵³

ei: A dative of reference.

iussum: Referring to Piso. Despite Germanicus’ order, Piso returned to Syria, claiming that he answered to Tiberius and could not be commanded by anyone else.⁵⁴ After Germanicus’ death, Piso was formally accused of poisoning him and disobeying orders and was brought to trial.

Vocabulary

abeo, abire, abivi, abitus to leave, depart

aboleo, abolere, abolevi, abolitus to abolish, end

accido, accidere, accidi to happen, occur, fall upon

accipio, accipere, accepi, acceptus to receive, take, learn

acerbus, -a, -um harsh, bitter

⁵¹ *ibid.*

⁵² *ibid.*

⁵³ *ibid.*

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, 366-367.

admoveo, admoveere, admovi, admotus to move
adverto, advertere, adverti, adversus to turn, deteriorate
aegritudo, aegritudinis f. sickness, disease
alius, -a, -ud other, another
amicitia, amicitiae f. friendship, alliance
apparatus, apparatus m. tool, supplies
apud, prep. near, in front of, with
at, conj. but
augeo, augere, auxi, auctus to increase
caedis, caedis f. murder, assassination
carmen, carminis n. incantation, song
cinis, cineris m. or f. ashes
compono, componere, composui, compositus to write, compose
coniunx, coniugis m. or f. spouse
contrarius, -a, -um opposite, contrary
contumelia, contumeliae f. insult, abuse
cunctus, -a, -um every, all
decedo, decedere, decessi, decessus to depart, leave
degradior, degrading, degressus sum to leave, go down
detineo, detinere, detinui, detentus to keep, hold, delay
devotio, devotionis f. curse, spell
effundo, effundere, effudi, effusus to surrender, pour out
epistula, epistulae f. letter
eruo, eruere, erui, erutus to dig up
evenio, evenire, eveni, eventus to happen, come out
festino, festinare, festinavi, festinatus to hurry
festus, -a, -um festive, celebrating
haud, adv. not at all, hardly
hostia, hostiae f. sacrifice, offering
incolumitas, incolumitatis f. safety
incuso, incusare, incusavi, incusatus to accuse
infans, (gen.) infantis infant, new born
infernus, -a, -um infernal, of the underworld
inimicus, inimici m. enemy
insculpo, insculpere, insculpsi, insculptus to engrave, carve
intento, intentare, intentavi, intentatus to threaten
interfector, interfectoris m. killer, assassin
iubeo, iubere, iussi, iussus to order, command
legio, legionis f. legion
lentus, -a, -um slow

liber, liberi m. child
lictor, lictoris m. lictor, a Roman officer
limen, liminis n. threshold, limit
maleficus, -a, -um evil, wicked
maneo, manere, mansi, mansus to remain, stay
metus, metus m. fear, dread
miser, -a, -um poor, miserable
morbus, morbi m. sickness, illness
mox, adv. soon, next
numen, numinis n. god, divinity
oblino, oblinere, oblevi, oblitum to mark, cover, smear on
obsideo, obsidere, obsedi, obsessus to attack, besiege
oculus, oculi m. eye
opperior, opperiri, opperitus sum to wait
paries, parietis m. wall
persuasio, persuasionis f. belief
plebs, plebis f. people, plebians
plumbeus, -a, -um lead
praemium, praemii n. reward, prize
proturbo, proturbare, proturbavi, proturbatus to clear, push away
recreo, recreare, recreavi, recreatus to restore, revive
reliquia, reliquiae f. remains
remeo, remeare, remeavi, remeatus to return, come back
renuntio, renuntiare, renuntiavi, renuntiatus to reject
reperio, reperire, repperi, repertus to discover, find
rimor, rimari, rimatus sum to examine, investigate
rursum, adv. again
sacro, sacrare, sacravi, sacratus to doom, curse, dedicate
sacrificialis, sacrificale sacrificial
saevus, -a, -um cruel, harsh
semustus, -a, -um half-burnt
solum, soli n. floor, ground
solvo, solvere, solvi, solutus to give, release, offer
statuo, statuere, statui, statutus to decide
tabula, tabulae f. tablet
tabum, tabi n. gore, blood
urgeo, urgere, ursi to drive, push
usque, adv. up to
valetudo, valetudinis f. health
veneficium, veneficii n. poisoning, magic

venenum, veneni n. poison, drug

vis, vis f. strength, force

votum, voti n. dedication, vow, offering

Translation

[69] But Germanicus, while returning from Egypt, learned that all the things which he had ordered in front of the legions or the cities were abolished or turned into the opposite. This is where the serious insults against Piso came from, but they weren't less harsh than the things which were being threatened against Caesar by that man, Piso. Then Piso decided to leave Syria. Soon he was delayed, with Germanicus' health having worsened, then he received the news that Germanicus had recovered, and when offerings for his recovery were being given, he disturbed the sacrifices, which he moved from the altars, the sacrificial tools, the people of Antioch, who were celebrating, with the help of his lictors. Then he marched down to Seleucia, waiting for the result of the sickness, which had fallen on Germanicus again. The belief that Piso had poisoned him was increasing the cruel power of the sickness; and dug-up remains of human corpses, incantations and curses and Germanicus' name engraved on lead tablets, ashes half-burnt and marked with gore and other evil things, with which it is believed that souls can be doomed by spirits from the underworld, were discovered in the floor and the walls. At the same time, the messengers sent by Piso were being accused that they were investigating the deterioration of Germanicus' health.

[70] These things were heard by Germanicus no less with anger than with fear. If his home was attacked, if his soul would need to be surrendered under the gaze of his enemies, then what would happen to his poor wife, what about his infant children? He thought that poisoning seemed too slow: Piso was hurrying and pushing so that he alone might have control of the province, the

legions. But Germanicus had not entirely weakened from his former self, and he would not let the reward of an attempted murder remain with the killer. He wrote letters, in which he was rejecting his friendship: and many people add that Piso was ordered to leave the province.

Introduction to Legal Tablets

Legal tablets were used to sabotage a court trial of some kind, typically by silencing another party in the case. These tablets have been found in every Roman province except Britain and represent nearly 20 percent of all extant tablets.⁵⁵

Against Primaus⁵⁶

The following tablet was discovered in Southern Spain in a city called Cordoba.⁵⁷ It dates to the 1st century BCE. The author seems to be involved in an inheritance case.

Priamus libertus mutus sit omnibus modis. adnue, ne quis possit de hereditate verbum quod facere, omnes obmutescant, sileant.

Notes

Priamus: The target of the tablet, Priamus was formerly enslaved.

sit: A hortatory subjunctive, along with *obmutescant* and *sileant*.

omnibus modis: An ablative of specification.

adnue: An imperative.

ne... possit: A present tense subjunctive in a negative purpose clause

quis: Equivalent to *aliquis*, following *ne*.

hereditate: Suggests that the author is involved in an inheritance dispute in court.

verbum quod facere: *quod* is equivalent to *aliquod*, following *ne*; *facere* with *verbum* is equivalent to *dicere*.

⁵⁵ Daniela Urbanová, 2017, "Latin Curse Texts: Mediterranean Tradition and Local Diversity," *Akademiai Kiado*: 61.

⁵⁶ EDCS-09000266

⁵⁷ Urbanová, 61.

Vocabulary

adnuo, adnuere, adnui, adnutus to promise, allow

hereditas, hereditatis f. inheritance

libertus, liberti m. freedman, former slave

mutus, -a, -um silent, mute

obmutesco, obmutescere, obmutui to become silent

sileo, silere, silui to be silent, not speak

Translation

Let Primaus the freedman be mute in all ways. Promise that no one may be able to say anything about the inheritance, let them all become mute, let them all be silent.

Against Sura⁵⁸

The following tablet was discovered in Italy in the city of Rome in a fountain, believed to inhabited by water nymphs.⁵⁹ It dates between the 4th and 5th centuries CE.⁶⁰ It curses a court judge.

sacrae sanctae a supteris et angelis quod rogo et peto magnam virtutem vestram: tollatis pertollatis oculos sive dextrum et sinistrum Surae, qui natus maledicta modo est de vulva. fiat rogo et peto magnam virtutem vestram. tollite oculus dextro sinistro ne possit durare virtus arbitri Surae, qui natus est de vulva maledicta.

Notes

sacrae sanctae: An address to nymphs, who inhabit the fountain where the tablet was found.⁶¹

supteris et angelis: The word *supteris* is not attested elsewhere; it is constructed as the opposite to *superis* and is equivalent to *inferis*.⁶² The author contrasts the heavens with the chthonic nymphs.

quod: The object of *rogo*; refers to the list of commands which follows

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, 76-77.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, 75.

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, 76.

⁶¹ *ibid.*, 77.

⁶² *ibid.*, 76.

rogo... vestram: A plea to the nymphs, repeated later in the tablet for emphasis.

tollatis: A present tense second person hortatory subjunctive, along with *pertollatis*.

oculos sive dextrum et sinisterum: The plural noun is modified by two singular adjectives; *sive* suggests that the author is asking for one eye to be removed, but *et* suggests that it is both.

Surae: The target of the tablet, Sura, is a judge, as is later stated.

maledicta... vulva: The author may not know Sura's mother's name and so refers generally to her womb instead; *maledicta* modifies *vulva*.⁶³

modo: An ablative of manner, without the preposition.

fiat: Supply *ut*; a present tense subjunctive in a purpose clause.

arbitri Surae: *arbitri* is in apposition to *Surae*; both are possessive genitives.

Vocabulary

angelus, angeli m. spirit, angel

arbiter, arbitri m. judge

dexter, -a, -um right

fio, feri, factus sum to happen, occur

maledictus, -a, -um evil, cursed

oculus, oculi m. eye

pertollo, pertollere, persustuli, persublatus to take away, destroy

sacer, -a, -um sacred, holy

sancio, sancire, sanxi, sanctus to make sacred, holy

sinister, -a, -um left

supterus, -a, -um infernal, of the underworld

tollo, tollere, sustuli, sublatus to take, remove

vester, -a, -um your (pl.)

virtus, virtutis f. strength, power

vulva, vulvae f. womb

Translation

By the infernal gods and spirits, I ask this and seek your great power, oh sacred, holy nymphs:

take, take away the eyes, either the right or left, of Sura, who was born in this way from an evil

womb. I ask and beg your great power that it may happen. Take his eyes, on the right side, on the

left, so that the strength of Sura the judge, who was born from an evil womb, cannot endure.

⁶³ *ibid.*, 77.

CHAPTER 4

TRADE MAGIC

Introduction to Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*

Apuleius was born around 125 CE in Madaurus, in North Africa (in modern-day Algeria).⁶⁴ He studied in Carthage, Athens, and Rome, and wrote the only Latin novel, which survives in its entirety, *The Metamorphoses*. *The Metamorphoses* follow a young man who is fascinated by magic and accidentally transforms himself into a donkey. Throughout his journey, he hears many fantastical stories. The following passage is one such story, which the character Aristomenes tells. Aristomenes' friend Socrates explains that he is hiding from a witch, the innkeeper Meroe. Meroe uses magic for her own benefit, including punishing a rival business owner.

***Metamorphoses* 1.8-10**

[8] "parce," inquit, "in feminam divinam, ne quam tibi lingua intemperante noxam contrahas."

"ain tandem?" inquam. "potens illa et regina caupona quid mulieris est?"

"saga," inquit, "et divini potens caelum deponere, terram suspendere, fontes durare, montes diluere, manes sublimare, deos infimare, sidera extinguere, Tartarum ipsum inluminare."

"oro te," inquam, "aulaeum tragicum dimoveto et siparium scaenicum complicato et cedo verbis communibus."

"vis," inquit, "unum vel alterum, immo plurima eius audire facta? nam ut se ament efflictim non modo incolae verum etiam Indi vel Aethiopes utrique vel ipsi Anticthones, folia sunt artis et nugae merae. sed quod in conspectu plurium perpetravit, audi. [9] amatorem suum, quod in aliam temerasset, unico verbo mutavit in feram castorem, quod ea bestia, captivitatis metuens ab insequentibus se praecisione genitalium liberat, ut illi quoque simile quod venerem habuit in aliam, proveniret.

⁶⁴ *Oxford Classical Dictionary* 4th ed., ed. Hornblower and Spawforth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), s.v., "Apuleius."

cauponem quoque vicinum atque ob id aemulum deformavit in ranam, et nunc senex ille dolio innatans vini sui adventores pristinos in faece submissus officiosis roncis raucus appellat. alium de foro, quod adversus eam locutus esset, in arietem deformavit, et nunc aries ille causas agit. eadem amatoris sui uxorem, quod in eam dicacule probrum dixerat, iam in sarcina praegnationis obsaepto utero et repigrato fetu perpetua praegnatione damnavit, et ut cuncti numerant, iam octo annorum onere misella illa velut elephantum paritura distenditur.

[10] quae cum subinde ac multi nocerentur, publicitus indignatio percrebuit statutumque ut in eam die altera severissime saxorum iaculationibus vindicaretur. quod consilium virtutibus cantionum antevortit et ut illa Medea unius dieculae a Creone impetratis induitiis totam eius domum filiamque cum ipso sene flammis coronalibus deusserat, sic haec devotionibus sepulchralibus in scrobem procuratis, ut mihi temulenta narravit proxime, cunctos in suis sibi domibus tacita numinum violentia clausit, ut toto biduo non claustra perfringi, non fores evelli, non denique parietes ipsi quiverint perforari, quoad mutua hortatione consone clamitarent quam sanctissime deierantes sese neque ei manus admolituros, et si quis aliud cogitarit salutare laturos subsidium.

et sic illa propitiata totam civitatem absolvit. at vero coetus illius auctorem nocte intempesta cum tota domo, id est, parietibus et ipso solo et omni fundamento, ut erat, clausa, ad centesimum lapidem in aliam civitatem summo vertice montis exasperati sitam et ob id ad aquas sterilem transtulit. et quoniam densa inhabitantium aedificia locum novo hospiti non dabant, ante portam proiecta domo discessit."

Notes

8 **parce**: An imperative, Socrates is warning Aristomenes to be careful and not insult Meroe, which he had just done before the passage began.

in feminam divinam: Supply *dicere*;⁶⁵ this accusative form is similar to the accusative of motion towards, but instead denotes speaking against her.

ne... contrahas: A present subjunctive in a negative purpose clause.⁶⁶

quam: Equivalent to *aliquam*, following *ne*.⁶⁷

tibi: A dative of reference.

lingua intemperante: An ablative of means; the form is equivalent to *intemperanti*.

ain tandem: A combination of *ais* and *ne*, *ain* can be translated like the colloquial, "Really?" Tandem emphasizes Aristomenes' impatience.⁶⁸

quid mulieris: Supply "kind of woman" in English; he's not asking for her name, but rather how she can be so powerful.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ James Ruebel, *Apuleius The Metamorphoses Book I* (Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, 2000), 23; lit. "Spare to speak against the supernatural woman."

⁶⁶ *ibid.*

⁶⁷ *ibid.*

⁶⁸ *ibid.*

⁶⁹ *ibid.*

Tartarum: The deepest part of the Underworld, Tartarus is a dark pit.⁷⁰

dimoveto: A future tense imperative, the tense serves to emphasize the command and give directions that should generally be followed, not only in this precise moment; *complicato* is also a future imperative.

cedo: An irregular, conversational verb; *cedo* is formed from the archaic imperative of *dare* and *-ce*, a demonstrative particle.⁷¹ The same particle appears in the professional magicians tablet.

verbis communibus: An ablative of means.⁷²

vis: The main verb, not be confused with *vis*, *vis*, f.

ut se ament: Supply *efficit*; a present subjunctive in a purpose clause. Here *se* is equivalent to *eam*; the reflexive is indirect, going back to the subject of the implied verb, *efficit*.⁷³ She inspires the locals to love her, not themselves.

Indi: The people of India were engaged in trade with Rome by Apuleius' time.⁷⁴ Socrates demonstrates how far-reaching Meroe's powers are.

Aethiopes utri: A geographic region south of the Mediterranean, Aethiopia was considered to be a distant, unfamiliar land;⁷⁵ It's precise location varies across authors, but Apuleius places it near modern-day Egypt and Sudan, touching the Nile river; *utri* refers to the populations on the east and west sides of the Nile.⁷⁶

Anticthones: A mythical tribe of people, the Anticthones were thought to live on the other side of the earth.⁷⁷

quod: Supply *rem*; the relative clause is the object of *audi*.

plurium: A substantive partitive genitive.

9 temerasset: A pluperfect subjunctive, signifying that her reason for transforming him is alleged.⁷⁸ This refers to adultery.

quod... liberat: A causal clause with an indicative.

ab insequentibus: An ablative of separation with *liberat*.

praecisione: An ablative of means; it was a common myth in antiquity that beavers self castrate, possibly because their name, *castor*, is similar to the verb *castro*.⁷⁹

simile: This adjective acts as the subject of *proveniret* and is translated "a similar thing."

ut proveniret: An imperfect subjunctive in a purpose clause.

⁷⁰ *OCD*, "Tartarus."

⁷¹ Ruebel, 13.

⁷² *ibid.*, 24.

⁷³ *ibid.*

⁷⁴ *OCD*, "India."

⁷⁵ *OCD*, "Ethiopia."

⁷⁶ Ruebel, 24.

⁷⁷ *ibid.*

⁷⁸ *ibid.*

⁷⁹ *ibid.*

venerem habuit in aliam: A common euphemism for sex; the goddess of love and sex was called Venus, and so “having Venus with someone” means having sex with them.⁸⁰

cauponem quoque vicinum: Supply *erat*.

ob id: Here *id* is equivalent to *hoc*.⁸¹

dolio: An ablative of location, which usually has a preposition such as *in*.⁸²

roncis raucus: An onomatopoeia, a word for a sound which imitates that sound, like “ribbit;”⁸³ *roncis* is an ablative of cause, resulting in the hoarseness.

aries... agit: Lawyers in antiquity were mocked by being compared to rams, because they love to fight;⁸⁴ *alium de foro* indicates that the man is a lawyer.

in eam: Similar to the beginning of the passage, *in* and the accusative signifies speaking against someone.

in sarcina praegnationis: The woman was far along in her pregnancy, to the point of being weighed down, as if carrying baggage.⁸⁵

obsaepto utero et repigrato fetu: Two ablative absolutes; *repigro* is not found before Apuleius.⁸⁶

perpetua praegnatione: An ablative of means.

velut elephantum paritura: This refers both to the size of her belly and the length of time; the comic playwright Plautus claims elephants are pregnant for 10 years.⁸⁷

distenditur: Socrates switches to the present tense to make the story more vivid.⁸⁸

10 quae cum subinde ac multi nocerentur: Supply *faceret* before *ac*; *quae* is the neuter plural accusative.⁸⁹ The verbs are imperfect subjunctives in a *cum* circumstantial clause.

statutum: Supply *est*.⁹⁰

in eam: Again the combination of *in* and the accusative denotes motion towards and action against Meroe. Here the motion is more literal since they intend to stone her: *saxorum iaculationibus*.⁹¹

vindicaretur: An imperfect passive subjunctive in indirect discourse.

⁸⁰ *ibid.*, 25; lit. “had love for another”

⁸¹ *ibid.*

⁸² *ibid.*

⁸³ *ibid.*

⁸⁴ *ibid.*

⁸⁵ *ibid.*

⁸⁶ *ibid.*

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, 26; *auditavi saepe hoc volgo dicier solere elephantum gravidam perpetuos decem esse annos*. (Stichus 167-169)

⁸⁸ *ibid.*

⁸⁹ *ibid.*

⁹⁰ *ibid.*

⁹¹ lit. “with the throwing of rocks”

quod consilium: Here *quod* is equivalent to *illud* and serves to connect the two sentences.⁹²

virtutibus: An ablative of means.

ut illa... sic haec: A simile, describing Medea's revenge on her husband Jason, after he remarries. She gifts his new bride, Creusa, a robe and golden crown, which bursts into flames, killing her and her father Creon and burning down their palace.⁹³ Here *illa* denotes her fame.

Medea: A famous witch in antiquity, Medea is known for using magic to save the hero Jason. They later married and had children, but when Jason abandoned her for another woman in Corinth, Medea violently took her revenge on him by killing their children.⁹⁴

unius dieculae... impetratis indutiis: An ablative absolute, modified by genitives of quality.⁹⁵

Creone: The king of Corinth, Creon was killed by Medea after his daughter married Jason.⁹⁶

cum ipso sene: An ablative of accompaniment.

flammis coronalibus: An ablative of means.⁹⁷

devotionibus sepulchralibus in scrobem procuratis: An ablative absolute; similar to Odysseus' invocation of the dead in book 11.⁹⁸

ut... narravit: *ut* with the indicative, meaning "just as."

temulenta: Referring to Meroe.

suis sibi: Repetitive use of both *suis* and *sibi* is colloquial; Apuleius uses the phrase many times, and it is also common in Roman comedy.⁹⁹

tacita numinum violentia: An ablative of means, with a modifying genitive.

ut... quiverint: A perfect tense subjunctive in a result clause; *quiverint* takes the complementary infinitives *perfringi*, *evelli*, and *perforari*.¹⁰⁰

toto biduo: An unusual ablative of duration; duration is typically expressed with the accusative.¹⁰¹

quoad... consone clamitarent: Here *quoad* is equivalent to *ut* and begins a purpose clause; *clamitarent* is an imperfect tense subjunctive. *consone* is not found before this passage.¹⁰²

mutua hortatione: An ablative of means.¹⁰³

quam sanctissime deierantes: The participle begins a future tense indirect statement, and is modified by *quam* and the superlative adverb, meaning "as solemnly as possible."

quis: Equivalent to *aliquis*, following *si*.

⁹² Ruebel, 26.

⁹³ *ibid.*

⁹⁴ *OCD*, "Medea."

⁹⁵ Ruebel, 26.

⁹⁶ *OCD*, "Creon (2)."

⁹⁷ Ruebel, 26; lit. "with the flames from the crown"

⁹⁸ *ibid.*, 27.

⁹⁹ *ibid.*, 17.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*, 27.

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*

¹⁰² *ibid.*

¹⁰³ *ibid.*

si... cogitarit... laturos: A perfect tense subjunctive in both indirect speech and a mixed conditional. The condition is future less vivid in the protasis and future more vivid in the apodosis; translate using “would.”¹⁰⁴

coetus illius auctorem: The direct object of *transtulit*; *coetus* is an objective genitive, modified by *illius*.¹⁰⁵

cum tota domo... omni fundamento... clausa: An ablative of accompaniment, with objects rather than a person: “with the whole house, with the walls, with the floor, with all the foundations, all closed up.”¹⁰⁶

id est: Introduces a more specific description of *tota domo*; *id* is equivalent to *quod*.

ut erat: *ut* with the indicative, meaning “just as;” supply *id* as the subject.¹⁰⁷

ad centesimum lapidem: She has brought him and his house away from her city.¹⁰⁸

ad aquas sterilem: Meaning dry.¹⁰⁹

Vocabulary

admolior, admoliri, admolitus sum to struggle, fight

adventor, adventoris m. customer, visitor

adversus, prep. against

aemulus, -a, -um rival, jealous

aio, aiere, ait to say

antevorto, antevortere, antevorti, antevorsus to anticipate

appello, appellare, appellavi, appellatus to call, address

aries, arietis m. ram

aulaeum, aulaei n. theater curtain

biduum, bidui n. two days

cantio, cantionis f. incantation, song

captivitas, captivitatis f. capture

castor, castoris m. beaver

caupona, cauponae f. innkeeper

cedo to give, hand over

centesimus, -a, -um hundredth

claudio, claudere, clausi, clausus to close, shut up

coetus, coetus m. meeting

cogito, cogitare, cogitavi, cogitatus to think, try

complico, complicare, complicui, complicitus to roll up

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*, 28.

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*

consone, adv. together, as one
contraho, contrahere, contraxi, contractus to bring together, attract
coronalis, -e of a crown
deiero, deierare, deieravi, deieratus to swear, take an oath
deuro, deurare, deussi, deustus to burn, destroy
devotio, devotionis f. incantation, spell, vow
dicacule, adv. wittily, cleverly
diecula, dieculae f. brief day, short time
diluo, diluere, dilui, dilutus to wash away, drench
dimoveo, dimovere, dimovi, dimotus to remove, put aside
discedo, discedere, discessi, discessus to leave
distendo, distendere, distendi, distentus to stretch
dolium, dolii n. barrel, vessel
duro, durare, duravi, duratus to harden
eadem, adv. at the same time, likewise
efflictim, adv. passionately, desperately
elephas, elephantis m. elephant
evello, evellere, evelli, evulsus to tear out
exaspero, exasperare, exasperavi, exasperatus to roughen
faex, faecis f. dregs, sediment
fero, ferre, tuli, latus to bring, carry
fetus, fetus m. baby, offspring
folium, folii n. insignificant part, leaf
fons, fontis m. stream
foris, foris, f. door
fundamentum, fundamenti n. foundation
genitalis, genitalis, n. genitals
hortatio, hortationis f. pleading, encouragement
hospes, hospitis m. or f. guest, visitor
iaculatio, iaculationis, f. throwing
impetro, impetrare, impetravi, impetratus to obtain, make
incola, incolae m. or f. resident, local
indignatio, indignationis f. indignation, anger
indutia, indutiae f. truce
infimo, infimare, infimavi, infimatus to weaken
inlumino, inluminare, inluminavi, inluminatus to light up, illuminate
innato, innatare, innatavi, innatatus to swim
inquam, inquit to say
insequor, insequi, insecutus sum to follow, pursue, hunt
intemperans, (gen.) intemperantis reckless

intempestus, -a, -um dark, stormy
lapis, lapidis m. milestone
libero, liberare, liberavi, liberatus to free, release
loquor, loqui, locutus sum to speak
manes, manium, m. pl. ghosts, spirits
merus, -a, -um only, pure
metuo, metuere, metui to fear
misellus, -a, -um (*diminutive*) poor, wretched
mutuus, -a, -um common, shared
noceo, nocere, nocui, nocitus to harm
noxa, noxae f. harm, injury
nuga, nugae f. nonsense, joke, trifle
numen, numinis n. god, divinity
numero, numerare, numeravi, numeratus to count
obsaepio, obsaepire, obsaepsi, obsaepus to close, seal
officiosus, -a, -um dutiful, attentive
onus, oneris n. load, burden
oro, orare, oravi, oratus to beg, ask
parco, parcere, peperci, parsus to be careful, let go
pario, parere, peperci, partus to give birth to
paries, parietis m. wall
percrebesco, percrebescere, percrebui to spread
perforo, perforare, perforavi, perforatus to break through, penetrate
perfringo, perfringere, perfregi, perfractus to break through
perpetro, perpetrare, perpetravi, perpetratus to do, accomplish
praecisio, praecisionis, f. cutting
praegnatio, praegnationis f. pregnancy
pristinus, -a, -um previous, former
probrum, probri n. insult, shame
procuro, procurare, procuravi, procuratus to tend, manage
proicio, proicere, proieci, proiectus to throw out, abandon
propitio, propitiare, propitiavi, propitiatus to sooth, win over
provenio, provenire, proveni, proventus to happen, come into being
proxime, adv. recently
publicus, adv. generally, among the people
queo, quire, quivi, quitus to be able
quoad, adv. as long as, until
rana, ranae f. frog
raucus, -a, -um hoarse
repigro, repigrare, repigravi, repigratus to hold back, be slow

roncus, ronci m. croak
saga, sagae f. witch, magician
salutaris, -e helpful, saving
sanctissime, adv. solemnly, sacredly
sarcina, sarcinae f. baggage, burden
scaenicus, -a, -um theatrical, stage
scrobis, scrobis m. grave, ditch
sepulcralis, -e of the tomb, dead
severissime, adv. severely, seriously
sino, sinere, sivi, situs to put down, set
siparium, siparii n. backdrop, curtain
solum, soli n. floor
statuo, statuere, statui, statutus to decide, establish
sterilis, -e barren
subinde, adv. repeatedly, constantly
sublimo, sublimare, sublimavi, sublimatus to raise
subsidium, subsidii n. help
tandem, adv. finally, at last
temero, temerare, temeravi, temeratus to cheat, dishonor
temulentus, -a, -um drunk
tragicus, -a, -um tragic, dramatic
uter, -a, -um either (of two)
uterum, uteri n. womb
venus, veneris f. love
vicinus, -a, -um nearby, neighboring
vindico, vindicare, vindicavi, vindicatus to punish
violentia, violentiae f. violence

Translation

He said, “Leave this supernatural woman alone, so that you don’t attract some injury to your reckless tongue.”

“Seriously?” I said. “What kind of woman is that powerful and royal innkeeper?”

“A witch,” he said, “and one with the power of the gods, able to pull the sky down, to lift the earth, to harden streams, to wash away mountains, to raise spirits, to weaken gods, to snuff out the stars, to illuminate Tartarus itself.”

“I beg you,” I said, “remove the tragic curtain, and roll up the stage backdrop, and tell me the story with regular words.”

“Do you want,” he said, “to hear one or two, or even many of her deeds? Indeed she makes it that not only locals desperately love her but even Indians or people from both Aethiopias or the Antichthones themselves; these are insignificant parts of her skill and just jokes. But listen to what she did in front of many people. [9] Because he had cheated with another woman, with one word she changed her lover into a wild beaver, because that animal, when afraid of being caught, frees itself from hunters by cutting off its genitals, so that the same thing would also happen to him, because he made love to another woman.

There was also a neighboring innkeeper and because of their rivalry, she transformed him into a frog, and now that old man, swimming in a barrel of wine, sitting down in the dregs, hoarse from his attentive croaks, greets his old guests. She transformed a lawyer from the forum into a ram, because he had spoken against her, and now that ram takes cases to court. In the same way, she punished her lover’s wife with eternal pregnancy, with her uterus having been closed and with the baby having been held back, when she was already heavily pregnant, because the wife had cleverly insulted her, and as they counted in all, now that poor little woman is stretched by the burden for the eighth year, as if she were about to give birth to an elephant.

[10] And when she kept doing these things and many were repeatedly harmed, public indignation spread and it was decided that she would be punished most severely on the next day by stoning her. But she anticipated this plan by of the power of her incantations, and like that famous Medea, when a truce of one day was made by Creon, she destroyed with a flaming crown his whole house and his daughter with the old man himself, in this way with her invocations of the dead having been completed in a ditch, as she recently told me while she was drunk, she

closed them up together in their own houses with the quiet violence of the spirits, so that for two whole days the locks would not be able to be broken, the doors would not be able to be torn off, and then the walls themselves would not be able to be penetrated, so that they shouted together with shared pleading, swearing as solemnly as possible that they would not raise their hands against her, and if anyone else plots against her, they would bring help to save her.

And so when that woman was satisfied, she released the whole city. But in fact during the dark night, she moved the leader of the meeting, with his whole house, that is with the walls and the floor itself and the entire foundation, as it was, closed up, near the hundredth milestone into another city settled on the highest peak of a rough mountain, and because of this she brought it to a dry place. And since the cramped houses of the residents were not leaving space for the new guest, she left with the house having been thrown before the gate.

Introduction to Trade Tablets

Trade tablets utilize magic to improve one's business or harm one's rivals. Trade tablets have been mostly found in Greece and Sicily from the classical and Hellenistic periods.¹¹⁰

Against Malcius and Rufa¹¹¹

This tablet was found in Normentum, present day Mentana, in Italy. Side A and Side B feature similar curses against two different business people, a man and a woman. Both contain the detailed lists of body parts with repeated terms, as well as business terms. The author may have owned a competing business.

¹¹⁰ John Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (Oxford University Press, 1992), 152.

¹¹¹ Augustus Audollent, *Defixionum Tabellae* (Minerva, 1967), 193 (DT 135).

A: Malcio Nicones oculos
 manus digitos brachias ungues
 capillos caput pedes femur ventrem
 nates umbilicum pectus mamillas
 collum os buccas dentes labias 5
 mentum oculos frontem supercilia
 scapulas umerum nervos ossum
 merilas ventrem mentulam crus
 quaestum lucrum valetudines defigo
 in his tabellis. 10

B: Rufae Publicae manus dentes
 oculos brachia ventrem mamillas
 pectus ossum merilas ventrem
 ... crus os pedes frontem
 ungues digitos ventrem 5
 umbilicum cunnum
 vulvam ilia Rufae Publicae defigo
 in his tabellis.

Notes

A: 1 **Malcio**: The target of the A side of the tablet, Malcius is expressed as a dative of reference, modifying his body parts, which are cursed.

Nicones: The mother of the target, Niconas has a Greek genitive form.¹¹² As is common in curse tablets, Malcius is identified by his mother's name.

1-9 **oculos... valetudines**: A list of body parts and assets which the tablet curses; these accusatives precede their verb *defigo*.

6 **oculos**: The author may have become confused, since this is repeated from line 1.

7 **ossum**: Oddly singular, refers to the skeleton as a whole.

8 **merilas**: This word cannot be identified, though it is clearly written on the tablet. It may be a typo from the author; however the same word is repeated on side B, line 3. Audollent suggests that it could be a misspelling of *meritas*, but that would not fit with the other items in the list.¹¹³

The **mentulam**: The word is vulgar, rather than formal.

9 **quaestum**: The lists shifts from anatomy to business matters.¹¹⁴

defigo: The main verb, postponed for emphasis.

10 **in his tabellis**: The plural may refer to both sides of the tablet, which have the same structure.

¹¹² Audollent, 193.

¹¹³ *ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Gager, 172.

B: 1 **Rufae**: The target of the B side of the tablet, Rufa is expressed as a dative of reference, parallel to Malcius on side A.

Publicae: The mother of the target, Publica is expressed in the genitive.

1-7 **manus... ilia**: Again, A list of body parts and assets which the tablet curses, preceding the verb. This list is similar but not identical to side A, suggesting that the order of words may be random.

2 **ventrem**: The author repeated this word in lines 2, 3, and 5, heavily emphasizing the stomach as a target of the curse.

7 **Rufae Publicae**: Here, Rufa's name is repeated, either as a typo or for emphasis. Audollent suggest that if it is emphatic, it may help the demons recognize her.¹¹⁵

Vocabulary

bracchium, brachii, n. arm

bucca, buccae f. cheek

collum, colli n. neck

crus, cruris n. leg

cunus, cunni m. vagina

defigo, defigere, defixi, defixum to bind, curse

dens, dentis m. tooth

digitus, digiti m. finger

femur, feminis, n. thigh

frons, frontis m. or f. forehead

ile, ilis n. groin

labia, labiae f. lip

lucrum, lucri n. profit

mamilla, mamillae f. nipple

mentula, mentulae f. penis

mentum, menti n. chin

natis, natis, f. butt

nervus, nervi m. muscle, sinew

os, oris n. mouth, face

ossum, ossi n. bone

pectus, pectoris n. chest

pes, pedis m. foot

quaestus, quaestus m. business, profit

scapula, scapulae f. shoulder blades

supercilium, supercilii n. eyebrow

umbilicus, umbilici m. navel

umerus, umeri m. shoulder

¹¹⁵ Audollent, 193.

unguis, unguis m. nail
valetudo, valetudinis f. health
venter, ventris m. stomach, belly
vulva, vulvae f. womb

Translation

A: The eyes of Malcius, son of Niconā,
 the hands, fingers, arms, fingernails,
 hair, head, feet, thigh, stomach,
 butt, navel, chest, nipples,
 neck, mouth, cheeks, teeth, lips, 5
 chin, eyes, forehead, eyebrows,
 shoulder blades, shoulders, muscles, bone,
merilas, stomach, penis, leg,
 his business, profit, health, I bind
 in these little tablets. 10

B: The hands of Rufa, daughter of Publica, the teeth,
 eyes, arms, stomach, nipples,
 chest, bone, *merilas*, stomach,
 ... leg, mouth, feet, forehead,
 fingernails, fingers, stomach, 5
 navel, vagina,
 the womb, the groin, of Rufa, daughter of Pulica, I bind
 in these little tablets.

CHAPTER 5

LOVE MAGIC

Introduction to Propertius' Elegies

Propertius was born in Central Italy, in Asisium between 54 and 47 BCE.¹¹⁶ He was an elegiac poet and often wrote about his love affair with a woman he calls Cynthia. We have four complete books of his poetry. The following poem is the opening of his first book of elegies. In it he discusses the magical powers of love and his desire that witches assist him in making Cynthia love him back, as witches were commonly believed to have command over the forces of the universe and the ability to reverse the natural order.

Elegies 1.1

Cynthia prima suis miserum me cepit ocellis,	
contactum nullis ante cupidinibus.	
tum mihi constantis deiecit lumina fastus	
et caput impositis pressit Amor pedibus,	
donec me docuit castas odisse puellas	5
improbis, et nullo vivere consilio.	
ei mihi, iam toto furor hic non deficit anno,	
cum tamen adversos cogor habere deos.	
Milanion nullos fugiendo, Tulle, labores	
saevitiam durae contudit Iasidos.	10
nam modo Partheniis amens errabat in antris,	
ibat et hirsutas saepe videre feras	
ille etiam Hylaei percussus vulnere rami	
saucius Arcadiis rupibus ingemuit.	
ergo velocem potuit domuisse puellam:	15
tantum in amore preces et bene facta valent.	

¹¹⁶ *Oxford Classical Dictionary* 4th ed., ed. Hornblower and Spawforth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), s.v. "Propertius, Sextus."

in me tardus Amor non ullas cogitat artes,
 nec meminit notas, ut prius, ire vias.
 at vos, deductae quibus est fallacia lunae
 et labor in magicis sacra piare focis, 20
 en agedum dominae mentem convertite nostrae,
 et facite illa meo palleat ore magis!
 tunc ego crediderim vobis et sidera et amnes
 posse Cytinaeis ducere carminibus.
 aut vos, qui sero lapsum revocatis, amici, 25
 quaerite non sani pectoris auxilia.
 fortiter et ferrum saevos patiemur et ignes,
 sit modo libertas quae velit ira loqui.
 ferre per extremas gentes et ferre per undas,
 qua non ulla meum femina norit iter. 30
 vos remanete, quibus facili deus annuit aure,
 sitis et in tuto semper amore pares.
 in me nostra Venus noctes exercet amaras,
 et nullo vacuus tempore defit Amor.
 hoc, moneo, vitate malum: sua quemque moretur 35
 cura, neque assueto mutet amore locum
 quod si quis monitis tardas adverterit aures,
 heu referet quanto verba dolore mea!

Notes

1 **Cynthia**: Cynthia is the woman who Propertius is in love with, though she does not seem to like him back.¹¹⁷ Both Artemis and, by metonymy, the moon are referred to as Cynthia in Latin literature. Mount Cynthus is on the island Delos, the birthplace of Apollo and Artemis.

cepit: Literally translates to “seized,” but can mean “fascinated” and with the reference to *ocellis*, there is a magical connotation.¹¹⁸

2 **contactum**: Desire both makes contact with the poet and damages him.¹¹⁹

3 **deiecit**: Amor compels the poet to lower his gaze in humility.

mihi lumina: Translated in the same way as *mea lumina*. Both the eyes and sight are referred to in Latin literature as *lumina*.

constantis... fastus: *constantis* is a genitive singular present active participle, agreeing with *fastus*.

¹¹⁷ *OCD*, “Propertius.”

¹¹⁸ Lawrence Richardson, *Propertius Elegies, I-IV*, (University of Oklahoma Press, 1977), 146.

¹¹⁹ *ibid*.

4 **Amor**: A god, Amor is the Roman equivalent to Eros; both are gods of love.¹²⁰ Amor is the subject of both *deiecit* and *pressit*.

impositis... pedibus: Ablative absolute, in the image, Amor is pushing the poet's head to the ground with his feet.

6 **improbis**: Referring to Amor.

7 **toto... anno**: Ablative of time, in place of the accusative.¹²¹

8 **cum... deos**: Temporal clause.

adversos: The poet is forced to be in conflict with the gods, who are now his enemies.

9 **Milanon**: A mythical young man, Milanion fell in love with the virgin huntress, Atalanta, daughter of Iasus. In other versions of the story, Atalanta's love interest is named Hippomenes.¹²²

fugiendo: Gerundive in the ablative case.

Tulle: A friend of Propertius, this book of poetry is dedicated to Tullus.¹²³

10 **durae... Iasidos**: *durae* refers to both his emotional and physical state, Richardson phrases the English as "hard hearted and physically tough."¹²⁴ Iasus was the father of Atalanta.¹²⁵

11 **modo... et... etiam**: This grammatical construction is unusual; typically, the phrase is *modo... modo*. Some commentators believe this to be a mistake and have tried to reconstruct missing lines here.¹²⁶

amens: On account of his unrequited love.

Partheniis: A mountain in Arcadia, where Atalanta was exposed as a baby and raised by a bear.¹²⁷ This is where Milanion goes to find her.

12 **videre**: The poet uses an infinitive rather than a supine to denote purpose, a grammatical construction taken from Greek and used in Augustan poetry.¹²⁸

13 **percussus vulnere rami**: Literally meaning "beaten with a wound of a branch," but best translated as "wounded by a branch."

Hylaei: A centaur, Hylaeus attacked Atalanta with the help of the centaur Rhoeteus.¹²⁹ In the poet's version of the story, Milanion helped to save her but was wounded, which caught her attention. For other variations on the story see Apollodorus (3.9.2) and Ovid *Ars Amatoria* (2.185-92).¹³⁰

¹²⁰ *OCD*, "Eros."

¹²¹ Richardson, 147.

¹²² *OCD*, "Atalanta."

¹²³ Richardson, 147.

¹²⁴ *ibid*.

¹²⁵ *OCD*, "Iasus."

¹²⁶ Richardson, 147-148.

¹²⁷ *ibid.*, 147.

¹²⁸ *ibid.*, 148.

¹²⁹ *OCD*, "Atalanta."

¹³⁰ Richardson, 147.

14 **Arcadiis**: A region of the Peloponnese, Arcadia is the home to many magical creatures in Greek mythology.¹³¹

15 **potuit domuisse**: The perfect infinitive is an archaism and emphasizes that the action is complete (Richardson).¹³²

17 **in me**: "in my case," a phrase used often by the poet.¹³³

tardus: The sense can be either that Amor is late to arrive or slow to help.¹³⁴

18 **meminit... ire**: *memini* can take the infinitive.

ut prius: Referring to the Age of Heroes, when the story of Atalanta and Milanion takes place.¹³⁵

19 **vos**: The poet changes who he is addressing, from a general audience to witches specifically.

deductae... lunae: It is better English to make it present active "drawing down the moon."

Powers over nature are a trope in ancient stories about witches. Drawing down the moon refers to removing the moon from the sky and may originate in the natural phenomenon of a lunar eclipse.¹³⁶

20 **sacra piare**: *piare* has a religious connotation, which makes *sacra* unnecessarily specific.

Richardson claims that *sacra piare* may be an idiom "for speaking of dark rites for divinities one does not name."¹³⁷

21 **en agedum**: Richardson states that this is a colloquialism meaning "come on, get to it."¹³⁸

nostrae: In poetry, authors frequently refer to themselves in the "poetic plural."

22 **facite... palleat**: *palleat* is a subjunctive with *facite*, "cause her to become pale;" pallor is an indication of love.

meo... ore magis: Ablative of comparison.

23 **crediderim**: Perfect subjunctive.

23-24 **et sidera et amnes posse... ducere**: Witches control over forces of nature extended to stars and rivers.

Cytinaeis: Cytae is a town in Colchis, the birthplace of the infamous Greek witch Medea.¹³⁹ It is located in modern-day Georgia, on the east coast of the Black Sea.

25 **amici**: Here, the poet again changes who he is addressing, as he asks his friends to cure him of his lovesickness.

27 **patiemur**: Poetic plural, see note on line 2.

¹³¹ *OCD*, "Arcadia."

¹³² Richardson, 148.

¹³³ *ibid.*

¹³⁴ *ibid.*

¹³⁵ *ibid.*

¹³⁶ *ibid.*

¹³⁷ *ibid.*

¹³⁸ *ibid.*

¹³⁹ *ibid.*, 149.

ferrum saevos... et ignes: An example of metonymy, where something is represented by one of its parts, here 'iron' for 'blade, knife.' The blade and fire here refer to medical practices of the time, though they would not fix a broken heart.¹⁴⁰

28 **sit modo:** *modo* and the subjunctive may be translated as "if only..."

velit: Subjunctive in a relative clause of characteristic.

29 **ferre:** supply "me" with *ferre*.¹⁴¹

per: Not only 'through' but 'beyond' to a more distant destination.¹⁴²

30 **norit:** The syncopated form of *noverit*, perfect subjunctive, relative clause of characteristic.¹⁴³

31 **quibus:** A dative.

deus annuit: Refers to Amor, but nodding approval is a signature move of Jupiter.¹⁴⁴

facili... aure: An idiom, a *facili aure* hears prayers and is willing to send help.¹⁴⁵

32 **in tuto... amore pares:** The poet depicts his friends' relationships as secure and healthy.

sitis: Hortatory subjunctive from *sum, esse*

33 **in me:** See note on line 17.

nostra Venus: A goddess, Venus is the equivalent to Aphrodite; both are goddesses of love and sexuality.¹⁴⁶ She may be referred to as *nostra*, either as a poetic plural referring only to the poet, or in reference to both the poet and his love, Cynthia.

34 **nullo vacuus tempore defit Amor:** Amor is always present and working in the poet, and yet Cynthia does not love him back. *defit* is an alternate form of *deficit*.

35-36 **sua quemque moretur cura:** Hortatory subjunctive; literally "let his dear one entertain each person," but it makes more English sense to flip the grammar. *cura* is often used like a term of endearment, referring to *puella*.

36 **assueto... amore:** An ablative of separation, "change from a love to which he has grown accustomed."¹⁴⁷

mutet: A hortatory subjunctive.

37 **quod si:** An idiom meaning "but if."

quis: Translate as *aliquid*; remember this rhyme, "After *si, nisi, ni*, and *ne*, *ali* takes a holiday!"

adverterit... referet: Mixed conditional with a future perfect and a future verb.

Vocabulary

adversus, -a, -um hostile, opposed

amarus, -a, -um bitter, harsh

amnis, amnis m. river, stream

¹⁴⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *ibid.*

¹⁴² *ibid.*

¹⁴³ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ *OCD*, "Venus."

¹⁴⁷ Richardson, 149.

annuo, annuere, annui, annutus to nod assent, agree to
annus, anni m. year
antrum, antri n. cave, cavern, hollow
ars, artis f. trick, strategy, art
assuesco, assuescere, assuevi, assuetus to become accustomed, used to
auris, auris f. ear
auxilium, auxilii n. help, medicine
capio, capere, cepi, captus to take hold, seize
carmen, carminis n. incantation, song
castus, -a, -um chaste, pure
cogo, cogere, coegi, coactus to force
constans, (gen.) constantis persistent, constant
contingo, contingere, contigi, contactus to pierce, corrupt, touch
contundo, contundere, contudi, contusus to crush, beat
converto, convertere, converti, conversus to turn upside down, change
cupido, cupidinis f. desire, longing
deduco, deducere, deduxi, deductus to draw down, pull
deficio, deficere, defeci, defectus to be away, fail, lack
deicio, deicere, dejeci, dejectus to dash down, force to fall
doceo, docere, docui, doctus to teach, show
dolor, doloris m. pain, sorrow
domo, domare, domui, domitus to tame, subdue
duco, ducere, duxi, ductus to govern, lead
durus, -a, -um hard, tough, unfeeling
facilis, facile easy, ready, agreeable
factum, facti, n. deed, act, (with bene) heroic act, good deed
fallacia, fallaciae f. trick, deceit
fastus, fastus, m. pride, arrogance
fera, ferae, f. wild animal, beast
ferrum, ferri n. sword, blade, iron
fero, ferre, tulī, lātum to carry, bear
focus, foci m. hearth, fireplace
fortiter, adv. bravely, strongly
hirsutus, -a, -um hairy, shaggy, rough
impono, imponere, imposui, impositus to put upon, place on
improbis, -a, -um ruthless, shameless, wicked
ingemisco, ingemiscere, ingemui, ingemitus to groan, cry with pain
iter, itineris n. journey, path
labor, labi, lapsus sum to slip, fall, perish
lumen, luminis n. eyes, light

luna, lunae f. moon
magicus, -a, -um magical
miser, -a, -um wretched, unfortunate, miserable
monitus, monitus m. warning, advise
moror, morari, moratus sum to occupy, delay, entertain
muto, mutare, mutavi, mutatus to change, move
nosco, noscere, novi, notus to get to know; learn
ocellus, ocelli m. eye
odi, odisse, osus to hate
os, oris n. face, mouth
palleo, pallere, pallui to grow pale
par, (gen.) paris equal, matched
patior, pati, passus sum to suffer, endure
pectus, pectoris n. heart, chest
percutio, percutere, percussi, percussus to beat, strike
pio, piare, piavi, piatus to appease, perform sacred rites
prex, precis f. prayer
quaero, quaerere, quaesivi, quaesitus to seek, look for
ramus, rami m. branch
refero, referre, rettuli, relatus to recall, bring back
remaneo, remanere, remansi, remansus to remain, stay
revoco, revocare, revocavi, revocatus to call back, recall
rupes, rupis f. rock, cliff
sacer, -a, -um sacred, holy
saevitia, saevitiae f. cruelty, ferocity
saevus, -a, -um fierce, cruel
sanus, -a, -um healthy, sane
saucius, -a, -um wounded, hurt
sero, adv. too late
sidus, sideris n. star
tardus, -a, -um slow, late
tutus, -a, -um safe, secure
tum, adv. then
vacuus, -a, -um empty, vain
valeo, valere, valui, valitus to be strong, count for, have influence
velox, (gen.) velocis swift, quick
vito, vitare, vitavi, vitatus to avoid, shun

Translation

Cynthia first bewitched wretched me with her eyes
 having been pierced by no desires before.
 then Amor dashed down my looks of persistent pride
 and [Amor] bowed my head with his feet having been placed upon it,
 until it pleased me to hate chaste girls 5
 the ruthless one, and to live by no plan.
 Oh! And now this passion does not cease for me for the entire year,
 when however I am forced to have the gods hostile,
 Milanion, by fleeing no tasks, O Tullius,
 crushed the cruelty of the hard daughter of Iasus. 10
 For now he was wandering, out of his mind among the hollows of Mount Parthenius,
 and now he was going often to face the hairy wild animals;
 even now that man having been struck with a wound from Hylaeus' branch,
 he cried out in pain on the rocks of Arcadia
 Then, he could tame the fast girl: 15
 such great prayers and heroic acts have influence in love.
 in my case slow Amor does not consider other skills,
 nor does he remember to take well known paths, as before.
 But you, for whom there is the trick of the moon, having been drawn down
 and the toil to perform sacred rites at magic altars, 20
 Come! Behold! Change the mind of my mistress,
 and cause that woman to pale more than my face:

then I would believe you to be able to govern both the starts and the rivers
with incantations of the woman of Cytae.

And you, who too late call back one who is falling, o friends, 25
seek help for an unhealthy heart.

Bravely I will endure both the cruel blade and flames,
if only there was the freedom to say the things which anger would prefer.

Carry me beyond the furthest lands and carry me beyond the waves
where no other woman would know my path. 30

You stay, to whose [prayer] the god approves with easy ear,
and you would always be well matched in safe love.

In my case our Venus oversees bitter nights
and empty Amor is exhausted at no time.

I warn you, avoid this evil; let each person's dear one entertain him, 35
and let him not change his place, once love has grown familiar.

But if anyone will have turned slow ears to warnings,
Oh! he will recall my words with such pain!

Introduction to Love Tablets

Love tablets could have one of two purposes: compelling someone to love the author
back, punishing the rival of the author, or a mixture of the two. Latin Love tablets mostly come

from Africa but have been found elsewhere such as Germany and Rome.¹⁴⁸ 8 percent of the known Latin tablets today are Love tablets.¹⁴⁹

Against Sextilius¹⁵⁰

This tablet was discovered in North Africa in a city called Hadrumentum (modern-day Sousse) in Tunisia. The text is in Latin but was originally composed with the Greek alphabet.¹⁵¹ In addition to being multilingual, the tablet shows a strong cross cultural influence, calling on Egyptian gods.

Adiuro ...per magnum deum et per Anterotas ... et per eum, qui habet accipitrem supra caput et per septem stellas, ut, ex qua hora hoc composuero, non dormiat Sextilios, Dionysiae filius, uratur furens, non dormiat neque sedeat neque loquatur, sed in mentem habeat me Septimam, Amoenae filiam; uratur furens amore et desiderio meo, anima et cor uratur Sextili, Dionysiae filii, amore et desiderio meo Septimes, Amoenae filiae. Tu autem Abar Barbarie Eloee Sabaoth Pachnouphy Pythipemi, fac Sextilium, Dionysiae filium, ne somnum contingat, sed amore et desiderio meo uratur, huius spiritus et cor comburatur, omnia membra totius corporis Sextili, Dionysiae filii. Si minus, descendo in adytus Osyris et dissolvam τὴν ταφὴν [tumulum] et mittam ut a flumine feratur; ego enim sum magnus decanus dei magni, dei AXRAMMACHALALA. E.

Notes

Adiuro ...per: The text is fragmentary here, but the syntax remains clear.

magnum deum: The great god referred to here is Osyris, an Egyptian god of death and resurrection.¹⁵² He is named in the penultimate sentence of the tablet.

Anterotas: A daemon, Anterotas gets revenge for people who have been abandoned or lied to by someone they love.¹⁵³

qui habet accipitrem supra caput: This refers to Horus, the Egyptian god of death.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁸ Daniela Urbanová, 2017, "Latin Curse Texts: Mediterranean Tradition and Local Diversity," *Akademiai Kiado*: 63.

¹⁴⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ EDCS-38700292

¹⁵¹ Urbanová, 63.

¹⁵² *OCD*, "Osiris."

¹⁵³ Urbanová, 63.

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.*

ut... non dormiat: The authors uses *ut... non*, rather than the more conventional *ne*. Urbanova has used this and other tablets to track shifts in grammatical rules across the Latin speaking world.¹⁵⁵ The verb *dormiat* begins a series of subjunctives in a purpose clause.

hoc composuero: Supply “into the grave.”

Sextilios, Dionysiae filius: The target of the curse, Sextilios is the object of Septimia’s affection, and she identifies both him and herself by their mother’s name. Gager has speculated on the origins of this practice.¹⁵⁶

Septimam, Amoenae filiam: The author of the curse, Septima is a rare example of a female author of a love spell. In fact, this is the only extant love spell in Latin from a woman.¹⁵⁷

meo: This is the ablative of *meus* but is better translated as “for me” rather than “my.”

anima et cor uratur: Septima here treats the compound subject *anima et cor* as a collective with a singular verb. This may either emphasize the symmetry with other phrases or simply be a grammatical error.

Septimes: This is the Greek genitive.

Abar Barbarie Eloee Sabaoth Pachnouphy Pythipemi: These names likely refer to daemons. North African curses are often influenced by Graeco-Egyptian magical practices, and these names may be an example of such influence.¹⁵⁸

fac... ne contingat, uratur, comburatur: The imperative *fac* from *facio* followed by *ne* and three subjunctive verbs forms a complex command.

Si minus: Translate as ‘if not.’

descendo: A gerund ablative of means.

et dissolvam... et mittam: The *et...et* connects the two future indicative verbs.

ut a flumine feratur: A purpose clause.

AXRAMMACHALALA. E.: An example of *voces magicae*, difficult to interpret, magical words, which have inherent power.

Vocabulary

accipiter, accipitris m. hawk

adiuro, adiurare, adiuravi, adiuratus to swear by, bind

adytus, adytus m. grave, tomb, shrine

combuero, comburere, combussi, combustus to consume with fire, burn to ash

compono, componere, composui, compositus to place

contingo, contingere, contigi, contactus to touch, reach

decanus, decani m. deacon, servant

descendo, descendere, descendi, descensus to descend, climb down

¹⁵⁵ *ibid.*, 64.

¹⁵⁶ John G. Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells From the Ancient World* (Oxford University Press, 1992), 14.

¹⁵⁷ Urbanová, 63.

¹⁵⁸ Celia Sánchez Natalías, *Sylloge of Defixiones from the Roman West : A Comprehensive Collection of Curse Tablets from the Fourth Century BCE to the Fifth Century CE* (BAR Publishing, 2022), 67.

dissolvo, dissolvere, dissolvi, dissolutus to loosen, open

fero, ferre, tuli, latus to bring, carry

flumen, fluminis n. river

furo, furere, furui to rage, be angry

loquor, loqui, locutus sum to speak

supra on top of

tumulus, tumuli m. tomb

uro, urere, ussi, ustus to burn

Translation

I swear... by the great god and by Anterotas and by him who has a hawk over his head and by the seven stars, so that from the hour which I have placed this curse, Sextilius, the son of Dionysia, not sleep, that he burn raging, and neither sleep nor sit nor speak, but hold me Septima, the daughter of Amoena, in his mind; let him burn raging with love and desire for me, let the spirit and heart of Sextilius burn, the son of Dionysia, with love and desire for me Septima, the daughter of Amoena. But you Abar Barbarie Eloë Sabaoth Pachnouphy Pythipemi, make Sextilius, the son of Dionysia, not touch sleep, but burn with love and desire for me, him whose spirit and heart are destroyed, every member of the whole body of Sextilis, the son of Dionysia. If not, by descending into the grave of Osyris I will both open the grave and send him, so that he is carried by the river; for I am the great servant of the god, the great god Achrammachalala - e

Against Aemilia¹⁵⁹

This tablet was discovered in Germany in Mogontiacum (modern-day Mainz). The author curses a woman who does not love them back. The text is written counterclockwise.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ EDCS-33900067

¹⁶⁰ Urbanová, 64.

Prima Aemilia Narcissi agat, quidquid conabitur, quidquid aget, omnia illi inversum sit, amentita surgat, amentita suas res agat. Quidquid surget, omnia interversum surgat. Prima Narcissi agat: como haec carta nuncquam florescet, sic illa nuncquam quicquam florescat.

Notes

Prima Aemilia: The target of curse, Prima Aemilia is the object of the unnamed author's affection and jealousy. *Prima Aemilia* is the subject of all but one of the verbs in the tablet.

Narcissi: Narcissus is Aemilia's lover, and the genitive conveys this.¹⁶¹

quidquid conabitur, quidquid aget: The author shifts from future verbs to subjunctive verbs, but both express the open conditions under which Aemilia should be punished.

sit: The first in a series of hortatory subjunctives.

como: An alternative, colloquial form of *quomodo*.¹⁶²

haec carta: Subject of *florescet*, refers to the tablet itself.

florescet: The tablet is compared to a flower, given that both are buried in the ground. Flower imagery is also common in love poetry. However, in this case, neither the lead tablet nor Aemilia will become a beautiful flower.

Vocabulary

ago, agere, egi, actus to do, drive

amens, (gen.) amentis out of one's mind, insane

carta, cartae f. tablet, writing

conor, conari, conatus sum to try, make an effort

floresco, florescere to thrive, blossom

inverto, invertere, inverti, inversus to turn upside down, alter

nuncquam, adv. never

quisquis, quidquid whatever

sic so, in this way

surgo, surgere, surrexi, surrectus to rise, pursue something, get out of bed

Translation

Whatever Aemilia Prima, the lover of Narcissus may do, whatever she will try, whatever she will do, may all of that woman's efforts be turned against her, may she get out of bed out of her mind, may she go about her day out of her mind. Whatever she will pursue, may she pursue everything

¹⁶¹ *ibid.*

¹⁶² Daniela Urbanová "Alcune particolarità della comparazione (*quomodo* – *sic*, *quemadmodum* – *sic*, *ita uti* – *sic*) in latino volgare, con particolare attenzione alle *defixiones*," *Graeco-Latina Brunensia* no. 2 (2016): 329–343.

backwards. May Prima, lover of Narcissus do this: so just as this tablet will never thrive, in this way never let that woman thrive at all.

CHAPTER 6

REVENGE MAGIC

Introduction to Vergil's *Aeneid*

Vergil was born in the village Andes in Cisalpine Gaul (modern-day Northern Italy) in 70 BCE.¹⁶³ The *Aeneid* is his most famous work. His other works are the *Eclogues* and the *Georgics*. The *Aeneid* follows the survivors of the Trojan War, led by Aeneas, as they journey to Italy. It is Rome's mythic origin story. In Book 4, Aeneas, who has been living in Carthage with Queen Dido, decides to leave her to pursue his destiny to found Rome. In the following passage, a heartbroken Dido performs a magical ritual to get revenge on Aeneas, before committing suicide.

Virgil's *Aeneid* 4. 474-521

ergo ubi concepit furias evicta dolore	
decrevitque mori, tempus secum ipsa modumque	475
exigit, et maestam dictis adgressa sororem	
consilium vultu tegit ac spem fronte serenat:	
'inveni, germana, viam (gratare sorori)	
quae mihi reddat eum vel eo me solvat amantem.	
Oceani finem iuxta solemque cadentem	480
ultimus Aethiopum locus est, ubi maximus Atlas	
axem umero torquet stellis ardentibus aptum:	
hinc mihi Massylae gentis monstrata sacerdos,	
Hesperidum templi custos, epulasque draconi	
quae dabat et sacros servabat in arbore ramos,	485
spargens umida mella soporiferumque papaver.	
haec se carminibus promittit solvere mentes	
quas velit, ast aliis duras immittere curas,	

¹⁶³ *Oxford Classical Dictionary* 4th ed., ed. Hornblower and Spawforth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), s.v., "Virgil."

sistere aquam fluviis et vertere sidera retro,
 nocturnosque movet Manis: mugire videbis 490
 sub pedibus terram et descendere montibus ornos.
 testor, cara, deos et te, germana, tuumque
 dulce caput, magicas invitam accingier artis.
 tu secreta pyram tecto interiore sub auras
 erige, et arma viri thalamo quae fixa reliquit 495
 impius exuviasque omnis lectumque iugalem,
 quo perii, super imponas: abolere nefandi
 cuncta viri monimenta iuvat monstratque sacerdos.'
 haec effata silet, pallor simul occupat ora.
 non tamen Anna novis praetexere funera sacris 500
 germanam credit, nec tantos mente furores
 concipit aut graviora timet quam morte Sychaei.
 ergo iussa parat.
 at regina, pyra penetrali in sede sub auras
 erecta ingenti taedis atque ilice secta, 505
 intenditque locum sertis et fronde coronat
 funerea; super exuvias ensemque relictum
 effigiemque toro locat haud ignara futuri.
 stant arae circum et crinis effusa sacerdos
 ter centum tonat ore deos, Erebumque Chaosque 510
 tergeminamque Hecaten, tria virginis ora Dianae.
 sparserat et latices simulatos fontis Averni,
 falcibus et messae ad lunam quaeruntur aenis
 pubentes herbae nigri cum lacte veneni;
 quaeritur et nascentis equi de fronte revulsus 515
 et matri praereptus amor.
 ipsa mola manibusque piis altaria iuxta
 unum exuta pedem vinclis, in veste recincta,
 testatur moritura deos et conscia fati
 sidera; tum, si quod non aequo foedere amantis 520
 curae numen habet iustumque memorque, precatur.

Notes

475 **secum**: "with herself," meaning she had an internal debate silently or speaking under her breath.

476 **sororem**: Refers to Anna, the sister of Dido.

477 **fronte**: The forehead often indicates emotions. Alternatively, *fronte* could represent her entire face.

479 **quae reddat... solvat**: A relative clause of characteristic, which takes a subjunctive verb.¹⁶⁴

eo: Ablative of separation with *solvat*, “release me from him.” Throughout the passage, Dido never refers to Aeneas, her ex-lover and the source of her grief, by name.¹⁶⁵

480 **Oceani**: A personified god, Oceanus is the river which encircles the world Oceanus. All other rivers were believed to originate from him in the west.¹⁶⁶

solemque cadentem: Refers to the direction in which the sun sets, i.e. West of Carthage, towards the Atlantic Ocean.

481 **Aethiopum**: A geographic region south of the Mediterranean Sea, Aethiopia was considered to be a distant, unfamiliar land.¹⁶⁷ Its precise location varies across authors, but Vergil places it near modern-day Morocco or Mali, near the Atlantic.

Atlas: A Titan, Atlas holds up the earth on his shoulders. He lives at the edge of the world, beside the Hesperides, mentioned below.¹⁶⁸

483 **hinc**: “from here,” Dido indicates that the priestess has traveled from the West.¹⁶⁹

Massylae: A city, Massilia was located in modern-day Marseille, on the southern coast of France. It was a trade partner of the Greeks and Romans.¹⁷⁰

monstrata (est): A feminine perfect passive verb, which, in addition to *effusa*, shows the gender of the *sacerdos*.

484 **Hesperidum**: A group of sisters, the Hesperides guard a tree of golden apples, located beyond the Atlas Mountains at the western coast of the Ocean.¹⁷¹

epulasque draconi quae dabat: Translate in the following order: *et quae epulas draconi dabat*. The relative clause has a second subordinate verb, *servabat*, which takes the object *sacros ramos*.

486 **soporiferum**: Pharr refers to this word as a “purely ornamental general epithet,” as it does not make sense for the priestess to intentionally put her guard-dragon to sleep.¹⁷² Alternately, Dido could be fabricating the story and becoming confused,¹⁷³ or the poppies could be an additional layer of protection for the tree but not among the dragon’s food.

489 **sistere... retro**: These are often listed as magical abilities; generally magic is known for reversing natural phenomena.¹⁷⁴

fluviis: A dative of reference, the waters belong to the river.¹⁷⁵

¹⁶⁴ Clyde Pharr, *Vergil's Aeneid Books I-VI* (D.C. Heath and Company, 1964), 231.

¹⁶⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ *OCD*, “Oceanus (mythological).”

¹⁶⁷ *OCD*, “Ethiopia.”

¹⁶⁸ *OCD*, “Atlas.”

¹⁶⁹ Randall Ganiban, *Vergil's Aeneid Books 1-6* (Hackett Publish Company, 2012), 354.

¹⁷⁰ *OCD*, “Massalia.”

¹⁷¹ *OCD*, “Hesperides.”

¹⁷² Pharr, 232.

¹⁷³ Ganiban, 354.

¹⁷⁴ *ibid.* Other examples include Ap. Rhod. *Arg.* 3.532-3, Tib. 1.2.43-4, and *Ecl.* 8.4.

¹⁷⁵ Pharr, 232.

490 **mugire... ornos**: A compound indirect statement with two accusative subjects and two infinitives.

492 **cara... germana**: Dido uses two vocatives, which emphasize her focus on her sister.

493 **caput**: Dido refers to Anna's head as a metonymy for her life. Metonymy uses a smaller aspect of a thing to refer to the entire thing.

invitam: Dido uses magic because she feels desperate. Pharr notes that the upper classes of Vergil's time thought of magic as "unsportsmanlike."¹⁷⁶

accingier: An archaic form of the infinitive, used as a middle voice, meaning "I arm myself."¹⁷⁷

artis: An accusative form, equivalent to *artes*, modified by *magicas*. Translate as "with the magical arts."¹⁷⁸

494 **sub auras**: A poetic plural. "Under the open air" refers to a courtyard or garden within the palace.¹⁷⁹

495 **erige**: Enjambed imperative, contrasted with the jussive subjunctive in line 497.

quae fixa reliquit: The phrase *fixa arma* suggests the odd image that the sword has punctured the bed or otherwise been permanently adhered to it. Dido was deeply connected to Aeneas and imagined their lives and belongings are being intertwined. On the other hand, the memory of his presence is hurtful, as if she had been stabbed in the heart.

496 **impius**: Again refusing to name Aeneas, Dido instead insults his most important quality, his piety.¹⁸⁰

exuvias: Refers to his clothing and spoils.¹⁸¹

497 **perii**: Dido may either be literal, referring to her approaching death, or be metaphorical, referring to her lovesickness.

imponas: A jussive subjunctive, which takes 3 objects: *arma*, *exuvias*, and *iugalem*.

nefandi cuncta viri monimenta: Synchysis or ABAB word order, *nefandi* modifies *viri* while *cuncta* modifies *monimenta*.

498 **iuvat**: An impersonal verb; supply the subject "it."

499 **pallor**: Her pale color is personified.

ora: A metonymy for her face.

500 **praetexere... germanam**: An indirect statement.

502 **morte Sychaei**: Dido's previous husband's name was Sychaeus. His tragic death prompted her to flee her homeland (modern-day Lebanon) and come to Carthage.¹⁸²

504 **pyra... erecta**: An ablative absolute.

506 **intenditque locum sertis**: Here *intendit* means "tend, cover, or decorate."¹⁸³

¹⁷⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ Ganiban, 354.

¹⁷⁸ *ibid.* Here the middle infinitive takes a retained accusative object.

¹⁷⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ *ibid.*, 355.

¹⁸¹ *ibid.* Vergil describes a similar magic ritual in *Ecl.* 8.91.

¹⁸² *ibid.*

¹⁸³ *ibid.*

508 **effigiem**: An image of Aeneas; magicians often created an image of their victim, which would transfer the effect onto them. Some curse tablets have been found with figurines or drawings representing their victims.¹⁸⁴

locat: Takes 3 objects: *exuvias*, *ensem relictum*, and *effigiem*.

haud ignara: Vergil emphasizes her knowledge by negating its opposite, a rhetorical device known as litotes.

509 **crinis**: A woman's hairstyle was a symbol of her civility. The only times a Roman woman could let her hair down were while she was mourning or during sex. Here Dido is grieving the loss of her lover. At the same time, non-Roman "uncultured" women had loose, chaotic hair. The priestess' hair designates her as a wild woman.

510 **ter centum... tergeminam... tria**: The number three often appears in magical rites.¹⁸⁵

tonat: Refers to the priestess' shouting, but typically refers to thunder; modified by the adverb *ter*.¹⁸⁶

Erebum: A Greek word meaning 'darkness,' Erebus is the personification of the dark.

Chaos: The first being, Chaos is a gaping void connected to the Underworld.¹⁸⁷

511 **tergeminam**: The triple goddess is Luna in heaven, Diana on earth, and Hecate in Hades. She was symbolized by a three-faced image set up at places where three roads met. Witches called on her both as Hecate and Luna.¹⁸⁸

Dianae: The goddess of the moon and hunting, Diana is the twin sister of Apollo and the aforementioned triple goddess.

512 **et**: The conjunction is delayed for the meter; take *sparserat* after *et*.

simulatos: The waters are not from Avernus in reality, but rather symbolically represent the power of the lake.¹⁸⁹

Averni: A lake made from a volcanic crater, Avernus was believed to be an entrance to the Underworld.¹⁹⁰ It is located near the city of Naples, Italy. Later in the *Aeneid*, it is where he begins his journey to the Underworld (6.118).

513 **quaeruntur**: Refers either to how the priestess acquired the herbs or to her bringing them out for the spell.¹⁹¹

aenis: Bronze was commonly used in rituals; its use predates that of iron, and it retained ceremonial significance after iron became more common for everyday uses.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁴ Pharr, 232. Ganiban compares this passage to *Ecl.* 8.75, 92 and Theocritus 2.53.

¹⁸⁵ Ganiban, 355.

¹⁸⁶ *ibid.*, 356.

¹⁸⁷ *OCD*, "Chaos."

¹⁸⁸ Ganiban, 356. *Aen.* 4.609 and *Ov. Fasti* 1.141 describe the triple crossroads.

¹⁸⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ *OCD*, "Avernus."

¹⁹¹ Ganiban, 356.

¹⁹² *ibid.*

514 **pubentes herbae**: The herbs are ripe, and full of a juice (*lac*), which is white but referred to as "black poison."¹⁹³

515 **nascentis... praereptus**: Greek and Roman magicians believed in the hippomanes (a Greek term derived from the words for "horse" and "insanity"), which was a piece of flesh supposedly found on the forehead of a newborn foal. Typically, the hippomanes was bitten off by the mother, but if it was removed first, it could be used as a love potion.¹⁹⁴

516 **matri**: A dative of disadvantage; the hippomanes is taken away from the mother.

amor: Refers to a love potion, rather than love itself.

517 **ipsa**: Refers to Dido, denoting a change in subject from the priestess.

mola manibusque piis: The adjective modifying both nouns;¹⁹⁵ here Dido is described as pious in the place of Aeneas.

518 **unum exuta pedem vinclis**: The participle is in the middle voice and *pedem* is an accusative of respect, however translate as, "with one foot unsandaled." Similar to the priestess' loose hair, Dido's bare foot symbolizes her move away from civilization and towards the wild realm of magic.¹⁹⁶

in veste recincta: She is still clothed, but disheveled.

520 **quod**: Following *si*, stands for *aliquod*.

521 **curae habet**: A dative of purpose; can be translated simply as "cares."

Vocab

aboleo, abolere, abolevi, abolitus to destroy

accingo, accingere, accinxi, accinctus to arm, equip

adgredior, adgredi, adgressus sum to approach

aenus, -a, -um bronze

aequus, -a, -um equal, fair

altar, altaris n. altar

aptus, -a, -um ornamented, joined

ara, arae f. altar

ast, conj. but

axis, axis m. the sky, heavens

cado, cadere, cecidi, casus to fall, set

carmen, carminis n. incantation, song

concipio, concipere, concepi, conceptus to take up, consider

conscius, -a, -um aware of, knowing

corono, coronare, coronavi, coronatus to crown, surround

¹⁹³ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ *ibid.* Literally, "she, having been undressed in respect to one foot from her sandal bands"

crinis, crinis m. hair
cunctus, -a, -um every, all
cura, curae f. care, concern
decerno, decernere, decrevi, decretus to decide
descendo, descendere, descendi, descensus to descend, come down
draco, draconis m. dragon
effigies, effigiei f. image, statue
effundo, effundere, effudi, effusus to let down, loosen
effor, effari, effatus sum to speak, say
ensis, ensis m. sword
epula, epulae f. food
ergo, conj. therefore
erigo, erigere, erexi, erectus to erect, build
evinco, evincere, evici, evictus to overcome, conquer
exigo, exigere, exegi, exactus to deliberate, weigh
exuo, exuere, exui, exutus to take off, undress
exuvia, exuviae f. memento, clothes, spoils
falx, falcis f. scythe, knife
figo, figere, fixi, fixus to fix, fasten
foedus, foederis n. agreement, pact
for, fari, fatus sum to speak, say
frons, frondis f. leaves, garland
frons, frontis f. or m. brow, face
funus, funeris n. death, funeral
furia, furiae f. anger, fury
germana, germanae, f. sister
grator, gratari, gratatus sum to congratulate, rejoice with
haud not at all, hardly
herba, herbae f. herb
ignarus, -a, -um ignorant, unaware
ilex, ilicis f. oak tree
immitto, immittere, immisi, immissus to throw, send against
impius, -a, -um wicked, impious
impono, imponere, imposui, impositus to place upon
ingens, (gen.) ingentis huge
intendo, intendere, intendi, intentus to tend, cover, decorate
interior, interius inner, interior
invenio, invenire, inveni, inventus to find, discover
invitus, -a, -um unwilling, reluctant
iubeo, iubere, iussi, iussus to order, command

iugalis, iugale marriage, yoked
iustus, -a, -um right, just, fair
iuvat (*impersonal*) it is pleasing
iuxta, adv. near
lacte, lactis n. milk, juice, sap
latex, laticis m. water
lectus, lecti, m. bed
maestus, -a, -um sad, mournful
magicus, -a, -um magic
manus, manus f. hand
mel, mellis n. honey
memor, (gen.) memoris remembering, mindful
meto, metere, messui, messus to cut, reap
mola, molae f. grain
morior, mori, mortuus sum to die
mors, mortis f. death
mugio, mugire, mugivi, mugitus to rumble, bellow
nascor, nasci, natus sum to be born
nefandus, -a, -um impious, wicked
niger, -a, -um black, dark
numen, numinis n. god, divine will
ornus, orni f. ash tree
papaver, papaveris n. poppy
penetralis, penetrare innermost
pereo, perire, perii, peritus to die, be destroyed
pius, -a, -um pious, sacred
praeripio, praeripere, praeripui, praereptus to snatch away
praetexo, praetexere, praetexui, praetextus to cover up, weave over
pubens, (gen.) pubentis ripe, full of sap
pyra, pyrae f. pyre
quaero, quaerere, quaesivi, quaesitus to seek, obtain
ramus, rami m. branch
recingo, recingere, -, recinctus to ungird, unfasten, undo
retro, adv. backwards
revello, revellere, revelli, revulsus to snatch away, remove
sacer, -a, -um sacred, holy
sacerdos, sacerdotis m. or f. priest, priestess
seco, secare, secui, sectus to cut, chop
secretus, -a, -um secret, private
sereno, serenare, serenavi, serenatus to show, shine

serta, sertae f. wreath, garland
sileo, silere, silui to be silent, not speak
simulo, simulare, simulavi, simulatus to imitate, pretend
sisto, sistere, stiti, status to make stand, stop
soporifer, -a, -um bringing sleep
soror, sororis f. sister
spargo, spargere, sparsi, sparsus to scatter, sprinkle
stella, stellae f. star
taeda, taedae f. pine wood
tego, tegere, texi, tectus to cover, hide
ter, adv. three times, thrice
tergeminus, -a, -um triple
testor, testari, testatus sum to call to witness, swear
thalamus, thalami m. bed
tono, tonare, tonui, tonitus to thunder, bellow
torqueo, torquere, torsi, tortus to turn, spin
torus, tori m. bed
ultimus, -a, -um furthest
umerus, umeri m. shoulder
umidus, -a, -um wet
venenum, veneni n. poison
vestis, vestis f. clothing, robe
vinclum, vincli n. strap, bond
vultus, vultus m. face, expression

Translation

Therefore when she, having been overcome with pain, took up her angers

and decided to die, she deliberated the time and manner with herself,

475

and having come to her sad sister with these words

she hides the plan with her expression and shows hope with her face:

“I discovered, sister, a way (congratulate your sister)

which would return him to me or would release me from loving him.

Near the end of the Ocean and the setting sun

480

there is the furthest part of Aethiopia, where the great Atlas

turns the sky ornamented with burning stars on his shoulder:

From here the priestess of the Massylan people was shown to me,
the guardian of the temples of the Hesperides, who gave food to a dragon
and protected the sacred branches on a tree,
sprinkling wet honey and sleep-bringing poppies.

485

This woman promises with her incantations to release the minds
which she wishes, but to throw hard cares on others,
to make the water of the rivers stand and to turn the stars back,
and to stir the spirits of the night: you will see that the earth rumbles
under your feet and that the ash trees come down from the mountains.

490

Dear sister, I call upon the gods and you and your
sweet head to witness that I unwillingly arm myself with the magic arts.

You, build a pyre in secret in the inner room under the open air,
and place upon it the man's weapons, which that impious one left lying on the bed
and all the clothes and the marriage bed,
by which I was ruined: it is pleasing to destroy
every memento of the wicked man and the priestess teaches this."

495

Having spoken these things she is silent, at the same time paleness invades her face.

But Anna does not believe that her sister covers up her death with unusual rites,
nor does she consider such madness in her mind
or fear something more serious than the death of Sychaeus.

500

Therefore she prepares the things which were ordered.

But the queen, with the pyre in the innermost seat under the open air

having been erected with a large pinewood and a cut oak, 505
 both tends to the area with wreathes and crowns it with the garland
 of a funeral; above she places the clothes and the abandoned sword
 and the statue on the bed, not ignorant of what was about to happen.
 The altars stand around and the priestess, having let down her hair,
 thrice thunders with her mouth a hundred gods, Erebus and Chaos and 510
 the triple Hecate, and the three faces of the maiden Diana.
 And she even sprinkled water pretended to be from the fountain of Avernus
 and herbs having been cut with bronze scythes under the moon are sought,
 herbs ripening with the milk of black poison;
 and the love charm plucked from the brow of a newborn horse is sought 515
 and snatched away from the mother.
 Dido herself with sacred grain and pious hands by the altars
 one foot loosened from the straps, ungirdled from her clothes,
 about to die and conscious of her fate, she calls as witnesses the gods and
 the stars; then, she prays to whatever god cares for those loving 520
 in an unequal agreement and remembers what is right.

Introduction to Revenge Tablets

Revenge tablets, also known as “prayers for justice,” ask a god or gods to punish
 someone who has harmed the author. The term was first introduced by Versnel.¹⁹⁷ The following
 tablets are all from the north Roman Empire; they date from the 1st to 4th centuries. Recently

¹⁹⁷ H. S. Versnel, “Beyond Cursing: The Appeal to Justice in Judicial Prayers,” in *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*, ed. Christopher A Faraone and Dirk Obbink (New York, 1991), 60-90.

over 100 revenge tablets were found in Britain.¹⁹⁸ Tablets from Britain often address local deities, in addition to Roman ones.

Against the Coin Thief¹⁹⁹

This tablet was discovered in Britain in a town called Aquae Sulis (modern-day Bath) in Southwest England. It was in a spring sacred to the goddess Sulis. It dates to the 3rd or 4th century CE, and it references Christianity. The author is looking for the person who stole money from his purse.

seu gentilis seu christianus, quicumque, utrum vir, utrum mulier, utrum puer, utrum puella, utrum servus, utrum liber, mihi, Anniano Matutenae, de bursa mea sex argenteos furaverit, tu, domina dea, ab ipso perexige eos. si mihi per fraudem aliquam inde praeustum dederit, nec sic ipsi dona, sed ut sanguinem suum epotes, qui mihi hoc inrogaverit.

Postumianus, Pisso, Locinna, Alauna, Materna, Gunsula, Candidina, Eutychius, Peregrinus, Latinus, Senicianus, Avitianus, Victor, Scotrus, Aessicunia, Paltucca, Calliopis, Celerianus

Notes

seu...seu: Meaning “whether... or;” this is an example of the common practice in curse tablets to allow for many possibilities for the identity of a target when they are otherwise unknown. This is known by scholars of curse tablets as the “catch them all formula.”²⁰⁰

christianus: This may be the first epigraphic evidence of the *christianus* in Britain, which suggests that Christianity was beginning to spread in the north at this time.²⁰¹

quicumque: A generalized reference to the thief and the subject of *furaverit*.

utrum...utrum: Similar to *seu...seu* above, this means “whether... or;” typically *utrum* is followed by *an*. The construction here, while less grammatical is more emphatic.

mihi: A dative of disadvantage; the coins were stolen from him.

Anniano Matutenae: The author of the tablet, Annianus identifies himself by his mother’s name, Matutina.²⁰²

¹⁹⁸ Daniela Urbanová, 2017, “Latin Curse Texts: Mediterranean Tradition and Local Diversity,” *Akademiai Kiado*: 78.

¹⁹⁹ EDCS-08600464

²⁰⁰ Urbanová, 65.

²⁰¹ Roger Tomlin, “The Curse Tablets,” in *The Temple of Sulis Minerva at Bath. Vol. 2: The Finds from the Sacred Spring*, ed. B. Cunliffe (Oxford University Committee for Archaeology, 1988), n. 98.

²⁰² Urbanová, 65.

argenteos: A substantive adjective, supply the word "coins."

furaverit: A perfect tense potential subjunctive in the relative clause. The verb is usually deponent (*furor*), but the author has created an active form.

domina dea: This goddess must be Sulis, a local deity, because was found in her sacred spring.²⁰³

ipso: Refers to the thief.

si... dederit, nec... dona: A mixed conditional; the protasis has a perfect tense subjunctive verb, but the apodosis does not use any subjunctive. Instead the author emphatically negates the imperative from *dono* with *nec*. Typically Latin expresses a negative command with *nolo* and the infinitive or *ne* and the subjunctive.

fraudem aliquam: *Aliquam* modifies *fraudem*, which are both feminine.

sic: An adverb, meaning "in this way."

ut sanguinem suum epotes: A hortatory subjunctive; *ut* is an unnecessary addition. The author's request that the goddess drink his enemy's blood is uncommon.²⁰⁴

mihi: A dative with a compound verb.

inrogaverit: A perfect tense subjunctive, here in a relative clause of characteristic. The subjunctive mood is common in curse tablets, stressing the unknown or hypothetical nature of the crimes and punishments.²⁰⁵

Postumianus... Celerianus: The tablet concludes with a list of suspects.

Vocabulary

argenteus, -a, -um silver

bursa, bursae f. purse

christianus, -a, -um Christian

dono, donare, donavi, donatus to give

epoto, epotare, epotavi, epotatum to drink up, drain

fraus, fraudis f. trick, fraud

furo, furare, furavi, furatum to steal, rob

gentilis, gentile pagan

inde, adv. then, from that time

inrogo, inrogare, inrogavi, inrogatus to inflict

perexigo, perexigere, perexegi, perexactum to take, demand, drive out

praeustus, -a, -um withered, burnt

quicumque, quaecumque, quodcumque whoever, whatever

sanguis, sanguinis m. blood

seu, conj. or

utrum, conj. whether

²⁰³ *ibid.*

²⁰⁴ *ibid.*

²⁰⁵ *ibid.*

Translation

Whether pagan or christian, whoever, whether man or woman, whether boy or girl, whether slave or free, whoever has stolen six silver coins from my purse from me, Annianus, son of Matutina, you, lady goddess, take them from him. If he should give me something withered through some trick then, don't give him anything, but drink up his blood, who inflicted this on me.

Postumianus, Pisso, Locinna, Alauna, Materna, Gunsula, Candidina, Eutychius, Peregrinus, Latinus, Senicianus, Avitianus, Victor, Scotrus, Aessicunia, Paltucca, Calliopsis, Celerianus

Against the Ring Thief²⁰⁶

This tablet was discovered in Britain in the town Aquae Sulis (modern-day Bath). It dates to the 3rd or 4th century CE. The author is looking for the person who stole her ring.

Basilis donat in templum Martis anellum argenteum. si servus, si liber, medius fuerit vel aliquid de hoc noverit, ut sanguine et luminibus et omnibus membris configatur vel etiam habeat intestina excomesa omnia is, qui anellum involavit vel qui medius fuerit.

Notes

Basilis: The author of the tablet, Basilis refers to herself in the third person.

donat... anellum argenteum: The author no longer has the ring, but rather symbolically offers it to Mars in exchange for his help.²⁰⁷

Martis: A god, Mars is the Roman counterpart to the Greek god "Ares." Both gods oversee war.²⁰⁸

si servus, si liber: Asyndeton, the emphatic omission of conjunctions.

fuerit... noverit: Perfect tense potential subjunctives.

ut... configatur... habeat: Hortatory subjunctives with an unnecessary *ut*, as seen in other tablets.

excomesa: A brutal punishment, similar to the one found in the cloak tablet below.

²⁰⁶ EDCS-08500431

²⁰⁷ Urbanová, 79.

²⁰⁸ *OCD*, "Mars."

is, qui... involavit vel qui... fuerit: *is* is the subject of hortatory subjunctives above but is delayed for dramatic effect. It is also the antecedent of both relative pronouns.

Vocabulary

anellus, anelli m. little ring

argenteus, -a, -um silver

configo, configere, confixi, confixus to fasten, pierce

dono, donare, donavi, donatus to give

excomesus, -a, -um eaten up, devoured

intestina, intestinorum n. pl. guts, intestines

involo, involare, involavi, involatus to take, seize, fly against

lumen, luminis n. eye, light

medius, -a, -um involved, in the middle

membrum, membri n. limb

sanguis, sanguinis m. blood

Translation

Basilis gives a little silver ring to Mars in the temple. If a slave or if a free man was involved or knew something about this, that let him be pierced in his blood and eyes and every limb or even have all his guts devoured, he who took my little ring or who was involved.

Against the Linen Thief²⁰⁹

This tablet was discovered in South West Britain in the village of Uley. It was located in the sacred precinct of Mercury. It dates between the 1st and 4th centuries CE. The author is looking for the person who stole her linen. The tablet is fragmentary.

Commonitionem deo Mercurio a Saturnina muliere de linteamine, quod amisit, ut ille, qui hoc circumvenit, non ante laxetur, nisi quando res supradictas ad fanum supradictum attulerit, si vir si mulier, si servus si liber. deo supradicto tertiam partem donat, ita ut exigat istas res, quae suprascriptae sunt ac a qua perdidit. deo Silvano tertia pars donatur, ita ut hoc exigat, si vir, si femina, si servus, si liber ...

²⁰⁹ EDCS-08901032

Notes

commonitionem: Either an accusative of exclamation, announcing this tablet or otherwise grammatically connected the missing segment of the tablet.

Mercurio: A god, Mercury is the Roman equivalent to Hermes. Both gods oversee circulation, including acting as a mediator between the living and the dead.²¹⁰ The name was written over another name, Mars Silvanus. However, the tablet ultimately was placed in Mercury's sacred precinct.²¹¹

Saturnina: The author of the tablet, Saturnina specifies that she is a woman.

quod amisit: A relative clause.

ut...laxetur: A purpose clause, explaining why Mercury has been reminded of this situation. *laxetur* is a present tense passive subjunctive.

qui hoc circumvenit: A relative clause.

non ante... nisi quando: Translate as "not until."

res supradictas: Refers to the linen, which is now plural.

ad fanum supradictum: Presumably refers to the temple of Mercury.

nisi... attulerit: A negative condition with a perfect tense subjunctive.

si vir si mulier, si servus si liber: Asyndeton, the emphatic omission of conjunctions. The same construction is repeated in the final line.

deo supradicto: Refers to Mercury.

tertiam partem donat: The author offers a finder's fee for the god.²¹²

ita: Adverb, not to be confused with a result clause.

ut exigit: A purpose clause, with a present tense subjunctive. The same construction is repeated.

quae suprascriptae sunt: A relative clause.

a qua perdidit: A relative clause, the relative pronoun is an ablative of separation.

Silvano: A Roman god of the countryside, Silvanus oversaw the forests and agriculture.²¹³

Vocabulary

circumvenio, circumvenire, circumveni, circumventus to take, trick, go around

commonitio, commonitionis, f. reminder

exigo, exigere, exegi, exactus to take, demand, drive out

fanum, fani n. temple, sanctuary

laxo, laxare, laxavi, laxatus to relax, rest

linteamen, linteaminis n. linen cloth

perdo, perdere, perdidit, perditus to lose, be deprived of

supradico, supradicere, supradixi, supradictus to say before or above

²¹⁰ *OCD*, "Mercurius."

²¹¹ Urbanová, 80.

²¹² Urbanová, 79.

²¹³ *OCD*, "Silvanus."

Translation

A reminder to the god Mercury, from the woman Saturnina about a linen, which she lost, that he, who took this thing, not be relaxed until he has brought the aforementioned things to the aforementioned temple, if a man or if a woman, if slave or if free. She gives a third part to the aforementioned god, so that he may take those things, which were written about above and which she lost. A third part is given to the god Silvanus, so that he may take this thing, if a man or if a woman, if slave or if free...

Against the Cloak Thief²¹⁴

This tablet was discovered in Germany in the town of Gross-Gerau near the Rhine River. It dates from the 1st to the 2nd century CE. The text was written right to left. The author details a punishment for the woman who stole his cloak.

Humanum quis sustulit Verionis palliolum sive res illius, qui illius minus fecit ut illius mentes memorias deiectas sive mulierem sive eam, quae Verionis res minus fecit ut illius manus caput pedes vermes cancer vermitudo interet membra medullas illius interet.

Notes

quis sustulit: A relative clause.

Verionis: The author of the tablet, Verio refers to himself in the third person.

qui illius minus fecit: A relative clause.²¹⁵ The same phrase is repeated.

mentes memorias: Asyndeton, the emphatic omission of conjunctions. The author uses asyndeton again with *manus, caput, pedes; vermes, cancer, vermitudo*; and *membra, medullas*

ut: Supply *fac*. Latin constructs an indirect command using *fac, ut*, and a present subjunctive. However this author uses the future indicative. Here, supply *habebit*.

illius: Modifies *mentes* and *memorias*, along with the adjective *deiectas*.

mulierem: The author differentiates between *mulier* and *ea*. *mulier* is a more specific term referring to a married woman.

²¹⁴ EDCS-46400786

²¹⁵ Literally, “who made his things less”

ut... interet: A singular verb takes a compound subject, treating them as a collective. Again supply *fac*; here the future indicative verb is expressed, rather than the subjunctive *interat*.
vermes: Similar to the ring tablet, this author wants the culprit to be devoured. Blasendorf believes that consumption by worms was one of the most gruesome deaths imagined in antiquity.²¹⁶

Vocabulary

cancer, cancri m. disease, crab
deiectus, -a, -um dismayed, thrown down
intero, interere, intrivi, intritum to break into, invade
manus, manus f. hand
medulla, medullae f. marrow
palliolum, pallioli n. little cloak
tollo, tollere, sustuli, sublatus to steal, take
vermis, vermis m. worm
vermitudo, vermitudinis, f. maggot

Translation

The person who stole Verio's cloak or his things, who robbed his things, make it that that she will lose her mind and her memories, whether she is a married woman or not, make it that worms, disease, and maggots will invade the hands, head, feet, of her who robbed Verio's things; they will invade her limbs, her marrow.

²¹⁶ Urbanová, 80, who cites Jürgen Blänsdorf, 'Würmer und Krebs sollen ihn befallen': Eine neue Fluchtafel aus Gross-Gerau," *Zeitschrift Für Papyrologie Und Epigraphik* 161 (2007): 61–65.

CHAPTER 7

PROFESSIONAL MAGICIANS

Introduction to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*

Ovid was born in the town of Sulmo in Southern Italy and lived from 43 BCE to 17 CE.²¹⁷ Ovid was a prolific poet; some of his works include *Amores*, *Heroides*, *Ars Amatoria*, and *Tristita*, all written in elegiac meter. He wrote his epic *Metamorphoses* in hexameter, the same meter as the *Aeneid*. The *Metamorphoses* is made of fifteen books, which tell a variety of mythological stories. The following passage comes from a section about the myth of Jason and Medea. After helping Jason to complete his heroic trials and fleeing with him to Greece, Medea prepares a magical ritual to make Jason's father young again.

***Metamorphoses* 7.179-219**

Tres aberant noctes, ut cornua tota coirent	
efficerentque orbem; postquam plenissima fulsit	180
ac solida terras spectavit imagine luna,	
egreditur tectis vestes induta recinctas,	
nuda pedem, nudos umeris infusa capillos,	
fertque vagos mediae per muta silentia noctis	
incomitata gradus: homines volucresque ferasque	185
solverat alta quies, nullo cum murmure saepes,	
inmotaeque silent frondes, silet umidus aer,	
sidera sola micant: ad quae sua bracchia tendens	
ter se convertit, ter sumptis flumine crinem	
inroravit aquis ternisque ululatibus ora	190
solvit et in dura submisso poplite terra	
'Nox' ait 'arcanis fidissima, quaeque diurnis	
aurea cum luna succeditis ignibus astra,	

²¹⁷ *Oxford Classical Dictionary* 4th ed., ed. Hornblower and Spawforth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), s.v., "Ovid."

tuque, triceps Hecate, quae coeptis conscia nostris
 adiutrixque venis cantusque artisque magorum, 195
 quaeque magos, Tellus, pollentibus instruis herbis,
 auraeque et venti montesque amnesque lacusque,
 dique omnes nemorum, dique omnes noctis adeste,
 quorum ope, cum volui, ripis mirantibus amnes
 in fontes rediere suos, concussaue sisto, 200
 stantia concutio cantu freta, nubila pello
 nubilaque induco, ventos abigoque vocoque,
 vipereas rumpo verbis et carmine fauces,
 vivaque saxa sua convulsaue robora terra
 et silvas moveo iubeoque tremescere montis 205
 et mugire solum manesque exire sepulcris!
 te quoque, Luna, traho, quamvis Temesaea labores
 aera tuos minuant; currus quoque carmine nostro
 pallet avi, pallet nostris Aurora venenis!
 vos mihi taurorum flammis hebetastis et unco 210
 inpatiens oneris collum pressistis aratro,
 vos serpentigenis in se fera bella dedistis
 custodemque rudem somni sopistis et aurum
 vindice decepto Graias misistis in urbes:
 nunc opus est sucis, per quos renovata senectus 215
 in florem redeat primosque recolligat annos,
 et dabit. neque enim micuerunt sidera frustra,
 nec frustra volucrum tractus cervice draconum
 currus adest.' aderat demissus ab aethere currus.

Notes

179 **tres... noctes**: The number three is common in magic rituals, as is the nighttime setting.²¹⁸

cornua tota: A crescent moon was thought to have two horns making up its edges and the horns would fill out into a circle to make the full moon.²¹⁹

179-180 **ut... coirent efficerentque**: Two imperfect subjunctives in a purpose clause; the passage of times leads to the arrival of the full moon, but the *ut* is best translated as 'before.'²²⁰

180 **plenissima**: A nominative superlative.

181 **solida imagine**: An ablative of description; due to the connection between magic and the moon, a full moon good was considered beneficial for magic rituals.²²¹

²¹⁸ William S. Anderson, *Ovid's Metamorphoses, Books 6-10* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1972), 264.

²¹⁹ *ibid.*

²²⁰ *ibid.*

²²¹ *ibid.*

182 **egreditur**: Ovid shifts into the present tense to make the description more vivid.²²²

tectis: A common poetic metonymy, a rhetorical device in which a part of something is used to refer to the whole concept.

182-183 **vestes induta recinctas nuda pedem**: The participle *induta*, describing Medea, takes accusatives of respect.²²³ This description recalls Dido in the passage from the Aeneid (*Aen.* 4.518).

183 **nudos umeris infusa capillos**: Compare to the priestess in Aeneid (*Aen.* 509); both magic users have wild, unrestrained hair.

184-185 **fert... gradus**: A highly stylistic description of walking, *fert* can be translated as “take” rather than “bring.” It is followed by a triple chiasmic structure, ABCCBA word order; translate in the following order: *gradus vagos per silentia muta mediae noctis*.²²⁴

185 **homines volucresque ferasque**: The first of many examples of polysyndeton, emphatic repetition of conjunctions. Later in the passage Ovid describes *cantusque artisque* (195) and *auraeque et venti montesque amnesque lacusque* (197). Anderson notes that the repetition of *que* is both epic tradition and helpful for following dactylic hexameter.²²⁵

186 **nullo cum murmure**: Meaning no woodland animals are moving the leaves and creating noise; hedges and leaves do not typically whisper.

188 **sidera sola micant ad quae**: *sidera* is the antecedent of the relative pronoun. Here Ovid transitions from describing the setting to Medea’s action.²²⁶

bracchia tendens: This is a common gesture of prayer.²²⁷

189-190 **ter... ter... ternis ululatibus**: Anaphora, the repetition of a word at the beginning of a clause; Medea shrieks three times to get the gods’ attention.²²⁸ Once again, three is a common magical number.

189 **se**: The direct object of *convertit*.

flumine: An ablative of source; in order to complete a ritual, one needed to be purified with water.²²⁹

189-190 **sumptis aquis**: An ablative absolute.

190 **ora**: An ablative of separation.

191 **submisso poplite**: An ablative absolute.

192 **Nox**: The personification of Night, Nox is described as a faithful secret keeper.²³⁰

arcanis: An ablative of specification.

192-193 **quae... astra**: Both *quae* and *aurea* modify *astra*.

²²² *ibid.*

²²³ *ibid.*; literally, “dressed in respect to her loosened clothes, bare foot.”

²²⁴ *ibid.*, 265.

²²⁵ *ibid.*

²²⁶ *ibid.*

²²⁷ *ibid.*, 266.

²²⁸ *ibid.*

²²⁹ *ibid.*

²³⁰ *OCD*, “Nyx.”

diurnis... ignibus: Referring to the sun;²³¹ the dative object of *succedo*.

193 **cum luna:** An ablative of accompaniment.

194 **triceps Hecate:** The goddess of crossroads and magic, Hecate had three forms or faces: Luna, Diana, and Hecate. She has influence in the Underworld and assist magicians.²³² The priestess also invoked *tergmina* Hecate (*Aen.* 511).

coeptis conscia nostris: Here *conscia* takes a dative object;²³³ Medea uses the first person plural when referring to herself.

195 **adiutrix:** An appositive to Hecate.

cantusque artisque: Objective genitives, since Hecate is described using the noun “helper” rather than using verb “to help,” the recipients of her help (the songs and tricks) are in the genitive.²³⁴

magorum: A *magus* is a magical person; the word originally referred to Iranian priests. Greek and Roman *magi* were under the protection of Hecate.²³⁵

196 **Tellus:** The Roman goddess of the Earth, Tellus oversees plant growth, including magical herbs.²³⁶

197 **auraeque... lacusque:** Medea acknowledges the power of the local landscape and asks for its help.²³⁷

198 **dique... noctis:** Finally, Medea invokes the nearby gods;²³⁸ *di* is nominative plural of *deus*.

199 **quorum ope:** It is customary in prayer for the suppliant to describe how the deities have helped them.²³⁹

ripis mirantibus: An ablative absolute; Medea personifies the riverbanks.²⁴⁰

199-206 **amnes... sepulcris:** A typical list of magical abilities, which focuses on reversing natural phenomena.

200-201 **concussa... stantia... freta:** A hyperbaton, separation of adjectives from the noun they modify, which creates a word image, stirring up the order of the phrase, just as Medea stirs up the sea.

201 **cantu:** An ablative of means.

204 **vivaque saxa:** Refers to an undisturbed rock, which appears to be growing out of the earth.²⁴¹

²³¹ Anderson, 266.

²³² *OCD*, “Hecate.”

²³³ Anderson, 266.

²³⁴ *ibid.*

²³⁵ *ibid.*

²³⁶ *OCD*, “Tellus.”

²³⁷ Anderson, 266.

²³⁸ *ibid.*

²³⁹ *ibid.*

²⁴⁰ *ibid.*

²⁴¹ *ibid.*, 266-267.

sua convulsaque robora terra: A similar word picture to lines 200-201, the trees have been uprooted in an earthquake;²⁴² *sua terra* is an ablative of means.²⁴³

205-206 **iubeo... exire:** A series of three indirect statements detailing the commands; *montis* is accusative plural. Another reference to earthquakes,²⁴⁴ *mugire* also appears in Dido's speech (*Aen.* 490).

207 **Luna:** The Roman goddess of the Moon, Luna is connected to magic.²⁴⁵ Magic users had the power to draw down (*traho*) the moon for assistance.²⁴⁶

Temesaea: A colony in Greece, Temesa was a source of copper and bronze, referred to in the Odyssey but no longer known in Ovid's time. The reference here is to bronze cymbals used ritually during an eclipse to counteract the mysterious force attempting to take away the moon.²⁴⁷

207-208 **quamvis... minuant:** A present subjunctive in a concessive clause, expressing that the bronze cymbals cannot prevent Medea's magic.

208-209 **carmine nostro... nostris... veneis:** Ablatives of cause, best translated "at." Medea again uses the first person plural when referring to herself.

209 **avi:** Medea's grandfather, Helios controls the sun with his chariot.²⁴⁸

Aurora: The Roman goddess of dawn, Aurora is associated with the aforementioned god of the sun.²⁴⁹

210-214 **vos mihi... in urbes:** Medea recounts the hero Jason's trials at Colchis, which he needed to complete on his quest for a magical Golden Fleece.²⁵⁰ His trials were to plow a field with fire-breathing bulls, plant dragon's teeth, which would become men, and finally to get past the dragon guarding the fleece. Medea provided him with everything he needed to complete the tasks: protection from the flames, a distraction for the dragon-born men, and a sleep potion for the guard.

210 **vos:** Anaphora, the repetition of a word at the beginning of a clause (212).

hebetastis: Syncopated for *habetavistis*.²⁵¹

210-211 **unco inpatiens... collum... aratro:** Chiastic word order ABBA: *aratro unco collum inpatiens*.

211 **oneris:** *inpatiens* takes a genitive object for the thing which is avoided or not endured.

pressistis aratro: The bulls are not attached to the plow directly, but rather the yoke.²⁵²

²⁴² *ibid.*, 267.

²⁴³ *ibid.*

²⁴⁴ *ibid.*

²⁴⁵ *OCD*, "Luna."

²⁴⁶ Anderson, 267.

²⁴⁷ *ibid.*

²⁴⁸ *OCD*, "Helios."

²⁴⁹ *OCD*, "Eos."

²⁵⁰ Anderson, 267.

²⁵¹ *ibid.*

²⁵² *ibid.*

212 **serpentigenis**: A *hapax legomenon*, a word which only appears in a language once. Ovid seems to have invented this poetic compound for the passage.²⁵³

213 **rudem somni**: *rudem* with the genitive means unaccustomed to; this can be translated as “sleepless.” Either the dragon magically does not need sleep or simply is usually awake.

sopistis: Syncopated *sopivistis*; alliteration with *somni*, which evokes both hushing the dragon to sleep and the hissing of a serpent.²⁵⁴

aurum: Refers to the fleece Jason was retrieving.

214 **vindice decepto**: An ablative absolute; refers to the guardian dragon.

Graias... urbes: At the conclusion of Jason’s quest, he returns to the city of Iolcus in Greece.

215 **opus est sucis**: An impersonal verb which takes the dative, translated literally as, “There is a need for potions.”

215-216 **per quos... redeat... recolligat**: Subjunctives in a relative purpose clause; Ovid emphatically repeats the prefix *re* as in the verbs and *renovata*.²⁵⁵

216 **in florem**: Refers to flowers which bloom again in winter.²⁵⁶ Youth is frequently referred to as a flower.

217 **dabit**: The future indicative verb indicates Medea’s certainty that the gods will help her, due to her own immense power.²⁵⁷

micuerunt sidera: Recalls the stars at the beginning of the passage (188).

218-219 **volucrum tractus cervice draconum currus**: Synchysis, ABAB word order: *currus tractus cervice draconum volucrum*. Medea owns a dragon-drawn chariot, which she now summons.

Vocabulary

abigo, abigere, abegi, abactus to remove, send away

absum, abesse, afui, afuturus to be away from, be before

adiutrix, adiutricis f. helper, assistant

aer, aeris m. air

aes, aeris, n. bronze, bronze cymbal

aether, aetheris m. sky, heaven

altus, -a, -um deep, high

amnis, amnis m. river, stream

aratrum, aratri n. plow

arcanus, -a, -um secret, hidden

aureus, -a, -um golden

avus, avi, m. grandfather

²⁵³ *ibid.*; literally, “You gave the snake-born men fierce wars against themselves”

²⁵⁴ *ibid.*, 268.

²⁵⁵ *ibid.*

²⁵⁶ *ibid.*

²⁵⁷ *ibid.*

bracchium, brachii, n. arm
cantus, cantus m. song, chant
capillus, capilli m. hair
coeo, coire, coivi, coitus to meet, come together
coepi, coepisse, coeptus (*no present tense*) to begin, undertake
concutio, concutere, concussi, concussus to shake, stir up
conscius, -a, -um knowing, aware
convello, convellere, convelli, convulsus to overturn, shake
convertio, convertere, converti, conversus to turn
cornu, cornus n. horn, edge of the moon
crinis, crinis m. hair
currus, currus m. chariot
deus, dei, m. god
diurnus, -a, -um of the day
draco, draconis m. dragon
efficio, efficere, effeci, effectus to make
egredior, egredi, egressus sum to go out
faux, faucis f. jaw, throat
ferus, -a, -um fierce, wild
fera, ferae, f. wild animal, creature
fidus, -a, -um loyal, trustworthy, safe
flumen, fluminis n. river
fons, fontis m. spring, source
fretum, freti, n. sea, straight
frons, frondis f. leaf, leafy branch
frustra, adv. in vain, for nothing
fulgeo, fulgere, fulsi to shine, glow, flash
gradus, gradus m. step
hebetio, hebetare, hebetavi, hebetatus to weaken, blunt
herba, herbae f. herb
impatiens, (gen.) impatientis avoiding, intolerant
incomitatus, -a, -um alone, unaccompanied
induco, inducere, induxi, inductus to lead in
induo, induere, indui, indutus to dress in, clothe
infundo, infundere, infudi, infusus to pour out, flow
inmotus, -a, -um unmoving, still
inroro, inrorare, inroravi, inroratus to wet, sprinkle
instruo, instruere, instruxi, instructus to teach, prepare
lacus, lacus m. lake
luna, lunae f. moon

magus, magi, m. magician
manes, manium, m. pl. ghosts, spirits
mico, micare, micavi to shine, twinkle
minuo, minuire, minui, minutus to lessen, weaken
miro, mirare, miravi, miratus to be amazed, marvel
mugio, mugire, mugivi, mugitus to rumble, bellow
murmur, murmuris, n. murmur, whisper
mutus, -a, -um silent, mute
nemus, nemoris n. grove, forest
nox, noctis f. night
nubilum, nubili, n. cloud
onus, oneris n. burden, cargo
ops, opis f. help, power
palleo, pallere, pallui to become pale
pello, pellere, pepuli, pulsus to push, drive away
plenus, -a, -um full
polleo, pollereto to be strong, have power
poples, poplitis m. knee
premo, premere, pressi, pressus to press
quies, quietis f. quiet, sleep
recingo, recingere, -, recinctus to loosen, undo
recolligo, recolligere, recollegi, recollectus to recover, take again
redeo, redire, redivi, reditus to return, go back
renovo, renovare, renovavi, renovatus to renew, restore
ripa, ripae f. riverbank
robur, roboris n. oak tree
rudis, rude unaccustomed to, rough, wild
rumpo, rumpere, rupi, ruptus to break
saeps, saepis f. hedge
saxum, saxi n. rock, stone
sepulcrum, sepulcri n. grave
serpentigena, serpentigenae m. snake-born
sidus, sideris n. star
silentium, silentii n. silence
sisto, sistere, stiti, status to stop, cause to stand
solum, soli, n. ground, earth
solvo, solvere, solvi, solutus to loosen, relax, let out
sopio, sopire, sopivi, sopitus to put to sleep
sto, stare, steti, status to stand, be still
succedo, succedere, successi, successus to follow

sucus, suci m. potion, juice
sumo, sumere, sumpsi, sumptus to take up, obtain
taurus, tauri m. bull
tectum, tecti, n. house, roof
tendo, tendere, tetendi, tensus to stretch
ternus, -a, -um three times
tremesco, tremescere to shake, tremble
triceps, tricipitis three-headed
ululatus, ululatus m. shrieking, howling
umerus, umeri m. shoulder
umidus, -a, -um humid, wet
uncus, -a, -um curved
vagus, -a, -um wandering
venenum, veneni n. poison, drug
vestis, vestis f. clothes, robe
vindex, vindicis m. defender, protector
vipereus, -a, -um of snakes
vivus, -a, -um living
volucer, -is, -e flying, winged

Translation

There were three nights before each edge of the moon would meet

and make an orb; after the full moon glowed, 180

and it looked on the lands with its complete shape,

she leaves the house dressed in loose clothes,

barefoot, loose hair flowing onto her shoulders,

and she takes wandering steps alone through the silent stillness

of the middle of the night: a deep rest had relaxed 185

men, and birds, and beasts, with no murmur the hedges

and the unmoving leaves are silent, the humid air is silent,

only the stars shine, to which she stretched her arms

and turned around three times, three times she wet her hair

with the water taken up from the river, and she let out three shrieks from her mouth, 190
 and when she lowered her knee to the hard earth,
 she said, "Night, most loyal secret keeper, and the
 golden stars which along with the moon follow the fires of the day,
 and you, triple Hecate, who knows the things I have begun
 and comes to help with both the songs and tricks of magicians, 195
 and Earth, who instructs the magicians with powerful herbs,
 and the breezes and winds and mountains and rivers and lakes,
 and all the gods of the groves, and all the gods of the night, come here,
 with whose help, when I wished, the rivers returned to their sources
 while their banks marveled, and I calm the seas having been stirred up, 200
 I stir them up when they are standing by the power of my song, I push the clouds
 and I led the clouds in, I both remove and summon the winds,
 I break snakes' throats with my words and song,
 and I move living rocks and oak trees having been thrown over by your earth
 and the woods, and I order the mountains to shake 205
 and the earth to rumble and the spirits to leave their graves!
 And you, Moon, I drag down, however the Temesean
 bronze cymbals may lessen your problems; even my grandfather's chariot
 grows pale at my song, and Aurora pales at my poisons!
 You weakened the bulls' flames for me and 210
 you pressed the neck, which avoided burdens, with the curved plow,
 and you put the snake-born men in a fierce war against themselves,

and you lulled the restless guard to sleep and when the defender
 was deceived, you sent the golden fleece into the Greek cities:
 now I need potions, through which old age having been restored 215
 may return as a flower and may recover his younger years,
 and you will give them. For the stars do not shine in vain,
 nor is the chariot dragged by the neck of the flying dragons
 here in vain.” The chariot came having been send down from the air.

Introduction to Professional Tablets

Some curse tablets were mass manufactured by professional magicians. These professionals assisted in rituals, like the priestess Dido calls in the *Aeneid*. They also created spell books, such as the Greek Magical Papyri, a collection of spells and rituals found in Egypt.

Against Plotius²⁵⁸

This tablet was discovered in Rome near Porta Salaria in Italy. It dates to the early 1st century BCE. It is one of an identical set of 5 tablets, all written by the same hand, probably a professional magician. Each tablet had a space left for the victim’s name, which could be filled out by the customer; this particular tablet is against Plotius. The tablet has two sides, each containing a curse, but Side A is significantly longer than Side B.

A: bona pulchra Proserpina, Plutonis uxor,
 sive me Salviam dicere oportet,
 eripias salutem, corpus, colorem, vires, virtutes
 Ploti. tradas Plutoni, viro tuo ne possit cogitationibus
 suis hoc vitare. tradas illunc

5

²⁵⁸ EDCS-38600018

febris quartanae, tertianae, cottidianae,
 quae cum illo luctent, deluctent; illunc
 evincant, vincant, usque dum animam
 eius eripiant. quare hanc victimam
 tibi trado, Proserpina, sive me 10
 Proserpina, sive me Acheruosiam dicere
 oportet. me mittas arcessitum canem
 tricipitem, qui Ploti cor eripiat. pollicearis
 illi te daturam tres victimas:
 palmas, caricas, porcum nigrum, 15
 hoc si perfecerit ante mensem
 Martium. haec, Proserpina Salvia tibi dabo,
 cum compotem feceris. do tibi caput
 Ploti Avoniae. Proserpina Salvia,
 do tibi frontem Ploti. Proserpina Salvia, 20
 do tibi supercilia Ploti. Proserpina
 Salvia, do tibi palpebras Ploti.
 Proserpina Salvia, do tibi pupillas
 Ploti. Proserpina Salvia, do tibi nares,
 labra, auriculas, nasum, linguam, 25
 dentes Ploti, ne dicere possit
 Plotius, quid sibi doleat: collum, umeros,
 brachia, digitos, ne possit aliquid
 se adiutare: pectus, iecinora, cor,
 pulmones, ne possit sentire, quid 30
 sibi doleat: intestina, ventrem, umbilicum,
 latera, ne possit dormire: scapulas,
 ne possit sanus dormire: viscus
 sacrum, ne possit urinam facere:
 natis, anum, femina, genua, 35
 crura, tibias, pedes, talos, plantas,
 digitos, unguis, ne possit stare sua
 virtute. sive plus, sive parvum
 scriptum erit, quomodo quicquid
 legitime scripsit, mandavit, sic 40
 ego Ploti tibi trado, mando
 ut tradas, mandes mense Februario
 ecillunc.

B: male perdat, male exeat,

male disperdat. mandes, tradas, ne possit
amplius ullum mensem aspicere,
videre, contemplare.

Notes

A1 Proserpina: The queen of the underworld, Proserpina looks over the dead with her husband, Pluto. In Greek mythology, she is known as Persephone.²⁵⁹

Plutonis: The king of the underworld, Pluto rules over the dead. In Greek mythology, he is known as Hades.²⁶⁰

2 me...oportet: An impersonal verb, followed by indirect statement;²⁶¹ the construction is repeated in line 12.

Salviam: This is the only instance of this epithet for Proserpina; Salvia may be a Latin equivalent to the Greek Σώτεια, meaning savior.²⁶²

3 eripias: A second person hortatory subjunctive, along with *tradas*.

salutem, corpus, colorem, vires, virtutes: Asyndeton, emphatic omission of conjunction, used repeatedly in the tablet: *quartanae, tertianae, cottidianae* (6), *luctent, deluctent* (7), *evincant, vincant* (8), and *palmas, caricas, porcum nigrum* (15).

corpus, colorem, vires, virtutes: Two alliterative pairs; this type of word play is common in tablets, where specific words are given literal power.

4 Ploti: The target of the tablet, Plotius.

ne possit: A present subjunctive in a negative purpose clause.

4-5 cogitationibus suis: An ablative of means.

5 hoc: Refers to the punishment and the curse.

illunc: The letter *c* at the end of the demonstrative pronoun is a deictic particle, meaning one that points to something. You may translate *illunc* as “this man here!”²⁶³

6 febri: A singular in the place of a plural; may refer to the symptoms of malaria.²⁶⁴

7 luctent: A present subjunctive in a relative clause of characteristic; a manufactured active form of the deponent verb.²⁶⁵

8-9 dum... eripiant: A present subjunctive in a temporal clause.

10-11 sive... sive: Meaning “whether... or;” the author of the tablet does not want to offend the goddess by addressing her by the wrong name.

²⁵⁹ OCD, “Persephone/Kore.”

²⁶⁰ OCD, “Hades.”

²⁶¹ Literally, “It is necessary that I say”

²⁶² E.H. Warmington, *Remains of Old Latin, Archaic Inscriptions* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1940), 281.

²⁶³ J. N. Adams, “One of the Johns Hopkins Defixiones (‘Plotius’), of Republican Date (c. 100 BC?),” in *An Anthology of Informal Latin, 200 BC–AD 900* (Cambridge University Press, 2016), 112.

²⁶⁴ Daniela Urbanová, 2017, “Latin Curse Texts: Mediterranean Tradition and Local Diversity,” *Akademiai Kiado*: 71.

²⁶⁵ Adams, 114.

11 **me... dicere**: An indirect statement, as in line 2.

Acheruosiam: An epithet of Proserpina,²⁶⁶ the name Acherusia refers to the river Acheron, which flows through both the mortal world and the Underworld.²⁶⁷

12 **me**: Here the first person does not refer to the author of the tablet, but rather the tablet itself, which having been deposited in a grave will now journey to the Underworld.²⁶⁸

mittas... arcessitum: A present hortatory subjunctive, followed by a supine of purpose, which requires a verb of motion like *mitto*.²⁶⁹

12-13 **canem tricipitem**: A three-headed dog, Cerberus guards the underworld.²⁷⁰ There are seven curse tablets from Italy which are addressed to Cerberus, Pluto, and Proserpina.²⁷¹

13 **qui... eripiat**: A present subjunctive in a relative clause of characteristic.

pollicearis: A second person present hortatory subjunctive.

16 **si perfecerit**: A mixed conditional, future perfect in the protasis, present subjunctive in the apodosis.

16-17 **ensem Martium**: The month March was named for Mars, the god of war.²⁷²

18 **cum... feceris**: A future perfect in a temporal clause.

compotem: Referring to Proserpina.

19 **Avoniae**: Plotinus' mother, Avonia is named in the genitive.²⁷³

20-37 **frontem... unguis**: The author details an extensive list of body parts which they will curse.

27 **sibi doleat**: A present subjunctive in an indirect question; *doleo* takes a dative object.

29 **iecinora**: The word is plural but refers to the singular liver.

33 **sanus**: Modifying Plotius; however, it is best translated as an adverb in English.

33-34 **viscus sacrum**: Refers to an organ in the urinary system, likely the penis.

34 **urinam facere**: This is a euphemistic reference to urination.

35 **anum**: The term *anus* does is rare in curse tablets, only appearing again in a tablet from Bregenz, Austria.²⁷⁴

38 **plus... parvum**: Adjectives modifying *scriptum*.

39 **scriptum erit**: A future perfect verb.

²⁶⁶ Urbanová, 71.

²⁶⁷ *OCD*, "Acheron."

²⁶⁸ Adams, 115-116.

²⁶⁹ *ibid.*, 114.

²⁷⁰ *OCD*, "Cerberus."

²⁷¹ Urbanová, 71.

²⁷² *OCD*, "Mars."

²⁷³ Some scholars have translated this genitive as "Plotius, slave of Avonia." However, matronymics are common identifiers in curse tablets.

²⁷⁴ Urbanová, 71.

40 **legitime scripsit, mandavit**: Here *mandavit*, paired with *scripsit*, means "entrust to writing;"²⁷⁵ it is translated "to hand over" elsewhere in the text. *mando* and *legitime* are legal terms, which give the tablet authority and emphasize that it must be obeyed.

42 **mense Februario**: The month February was named for the purification ritual held in the middle of the month, the *Februa*.

43 **ecillunc**: In addition to the emphatic *c* from line 5 (*illunc*), *ecce* further singles out the demonstrative pronoun. The words elide to create *ecillunc*.²⁷⁶

B1 **perdat... disperdat**: Hortatory subjunctives; supply *se* as object of each verb. The word *exeat* can refer both to leaving literally and to dying.

2 **mandes, tradas**: Hortatory subjunctives.

4 **contemplare**: A constructed active form of a deponent verb.

Vocabulary

adiuto, adiutare, adiutavi, adiutatus to help

amplius, adv. more, longer

anus, ani, m. anus

arcesso, arcessere, arcessivi, arcessitus to summon

aspicio, aspicere, aspexi, aspectus to see

auricula, auriculae f. ear

bracchium, bracchii, n. arm

canis, canis, m. dog

carica, caricae f. fig

cogitatio, cogitationis f. thought, reasoning

collum, colli n. neck

compos, (gen.) compotis able, powerful

contemplor, contemplari, contemplatus sum to consider, observe

cor, cordis n. heart

cottidianus, -a, -um daily

crus, cruris n. leg

deluctor, deluctari, deluctatus sum to struggle, wrestle with

dens, dentis m. tooth

digitus, digiti m. finger

disperdo, disperdere, disperdidi, disperditus to ruin, destroy

eripio, eripere, eripui, ereptus to take, snatch

evinco, evincere, evici, evictus to overwhelm, conquer

exeo, exire, exivi, exitus to leave, die

febris, febris f. fever

²⁷⁵ Adams, 120.

²⁷⁶ *ibid.*, 121.

femur, feminis, n. thigh
genu, genus n. knee
iecur, iecinoris, n. liver
intestina, intestinorum n. pl. guts, entrails
labrum, labri n. lip
latus, lateris n. side
legitime, adv. legitimately, by law
lingua, linguae f. tongue
luctor, luctari, luctatus sum to struggle, wrestle with
naris, naris, f. nostril
nasus, nasi m. nose
natis, natis, f. butt
niger, -a, -um black, dark
oportet (impersonal) it is necessary, required
palma, palmae f. palm of the hand
palpebra, palpebrae f. eyelid
pectus, pectoris n. chest
perdo, perdere, perdidi, perditus to ruin, destroy
pes, pedis m. foot
planta, plantae f. sole of the foot
polliceor, polliceri, pollicitus sum to promise, offer
porcus, porci m. pig
pulcher, -a, -um beautiful
pulmo, pulmonis m. lung
pupilla, pupillae f. pupil
quare, adv. therefore, for this reason
quartanus, -a, -um every fourth day
quisquis, quicquid whoever, whatever
quomodo, adv. just as
sacer, -a, -um sacred, holy
salus, salutis f. health
scapula, scapulae f. shoulder blades
scribo, scribere, scripsi, scriptus to write
sive, conj. or
supercilium, supercilii n. eyebrow
talus, tali m. ankle
tertianus, -a, -um every third day
tibia, tibiae f. shin
trado, tradere, tradidi, traditus to hand over, surrender
triceps, tricipitis three headed

umbilicus, umbilici m. navel
umerus, umeri m. shoulder
unguis, unguis m. nail
urina, urinae f. urine
usque, adv. constantly, continuously
uxor, uxoris f. wife
venter, ventris m. belly
victima, victimae f. sacrificial victim
virtus, virtutis f. courage, strength
vis, viris f. strength, power
viscus, visceris n. organ
vito, vitare, vitavi, vitatus to escape, avoid

Translation

Good, beautiful Proserpina, wife of Pluto,

or if I should say Salvia

take the health, body, complexion, strength, courage

of Plotius. Hand him over to Pluto, your husband, so that he is not able

to escape this with his mind. Hand that man over

5

to fevers on every fourth day, every third day, every day,

which would struggle, wrestle with him,

let them defeat him, let them conquer, constantly while they take his soul.

Therefore, I hand over this victim

to you, Proserpina, whether I should

10

say Proserpina or Acherusia.

Send me to summon the three headed dog,

who would rip out Plotius' heart. Promise

him that you will give three sacrificial victims:

dates, figs, a black pig,

15

if he will have done this before the month
 of March. I will give these things to you, Prosperina Salvia,
 when you will have done this powerful thing. I give you the head
 of Plotius, son of Avonia, Prosperina Salvia,
 I give you the forehead of Plotius. Prosperina Salvia, 20
 I give you the eyebrows of Plotius. Prosperina
 Salvia, I give you the eyelids of Plotius.
 Prosperina Salvia, I give you the pupils
 of Plotius. Prosperina Salvia, I give you the nostrils,
 lips, ears, nose, tongue, 25
 teeth of Plotius, so that Plotius is not able to say
 what hurts him: the neck, shoulders,
 arms, fingers, so that he is not able
 to help himself at all: the chest, livers, heart,
 lungs, so that he is not able to know what 30
 hurts him: the guts, belly, navel,
 sides, so that he is not able to sleep: the shoulder blades,
 so that he is not able to sleep well: his sacred organ,
 so that he is not able to urinate:
 the butt, anus, thighs, knees, 35
 legs, shins, feet, ankles, soles,
 fingers, nails, so that he is not able to stand
 by his own strength. Whether more or less

will have been written, just as someone
wrote this curse as magical law demands, entrusted it to writing, in the same way 40
I hand Plotius over to you, I order
that you hand him over, that you order
this man in the month of February.

B: Let him suffer terribly, let him depart miserably,
let him ruin himself horribly. Order him, hand him over, so that he is not able
to see another month more,
nor look at it, nor think about it.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

It is my hope that texts included in this reader allow students to gain a greater understanding of the complexities of Roman life and belief systems. A favorite way to engage students in the idea of Roman magic outside of textual analysis is by constructing their own curse tablets. One can easily construct a faux curse tablet by folding sheets of aluminum foil to the point that they are pliable but firm enough to be engraved on with a pen. The pen will be used as a stylus and the ink may not stick to the foil. Encourage students to write their messages in code, backwards, or, as a composition exercise, in Latin. Students may either keep their tablets or bury in an appropriate location.

This reader provides a variety of perspectives on magic, differing in genre, place and time of origin, and context. There are many ancient texts concerning magic not addressed in this reader, including thousands of surviving curse tablets. I would like to provide some suggested additional reading. An iconic Ancient Greek source on witches, which I highly recommend to any interested students, is Euripides' *Medea*. For more ancient evidence of magic use, I recommend Hans Dieter Betz's translation of *The Greek Magical Papyri*. For a scholarly analysis of Greco-Roman magic, I recommend "Drawing Down the Moon: Magic in the Ancient Greco-Roman World" by Radcliffe Edmonds.

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