

There is no doubt the *Iliad* draws upon some story or stories about Protesilaos. His famous leap from his ship, making him the first of the Achaeans to land and die, is mentioned in 2.702, played upon in *Iliad* 15-16, and alluded to in his name. Whether other stories about him predate the *Iliad* is an open question. In the Catalogue of Ships (2.700ff.), there is the bare remark that Protesilaos in dying left a wife in their pathetic half-built house. Were other stories about the couple in existence at the time of our *Iliad*? Grossardt, *Erzählung von Meleagros* 2001:48 suggests not: rather, the bare vignette in the Catalogue inspires a story which slowly amasses more detail. Yet the evidence is far from conclusive. In this paper I shall map out possible pre-Iliadic scenarios for the couple and their implications.

First, the surviving stories center on the couple's passionate devotion: e.g., their bargaining with Hades for a moment together after his death, her suicide to join him in Hades. If any of these predate the *Iliad*, what depth of field might they have provided for the action of the poem? By situating the action around Protesilaos' ship in Books 15-16, the poet makes use of the story of his leap and death: the action has now returned to the site at which the war began, lending some sense of repetition or fatedness. And this in itself is enough to justify the choice of Protesilaos' ship. Yet if *some* story of the death-defying devotion of Protesilaos and his wife were also within the audience's ken, a more particular shadow hangs over the scene. The action at the ship frames the urgent conversation between Patroklos and Achilles which ends in sending Patroklos out. So this conversation would be framed by a scene which conjures up erotic devotion and, perhaps, suicide for a beloved. I shall explore the poetic resonances involved in such framing and ask whether these resonances in fact make plausible the preexistence of some tradition.

Second, the identity of the wife. Almost all sources call her Laodameia, daughter of Akastos. But according to Paus. 4.2.7 the *Cypria* identified her as Polydora, daughter of Meleager and Kleopatra. If this Polydora reflects a pre-Iliadic story, that too carries implications for how we experience the plot of the *Iliad*. The discussion between Patroklos and Achilles, framed by Protesilaos' ship, is obviously adumbrated in the intimate scene between Meleager and Kleopatra in *Iliad* 9. If the audience has access to the connection between Protesilaos' wife and Kleopatra, the parallel between Kleopatra and Meleager's conversation in 9 and Patroklos and Achilles' conversation in 16 takes on added weight and pointedness. The mother, Kleopatra, prefigures Patroklos' plea, while the daughter figures in the story which frames it.

I shall also consider the alternative chronology. That is, given that the *Cypria* makes the wife of Protesilaos a daughter of Kleopatra, is this plausibly a quasi-midrashic story *inspired by* the interconnections of Books 9 and 16 of the *Iliad* rather than already *entwined in* the poem? From where we are looking, Pausanias seems to have been the first to notice that grandmother Marpessa, mother Kleopatra, and daughter Polydora each commits suicide upon her husband's death. This could be because these suicide stories are all post-Homeric. Yet is it possible that some kind of connection among the three women already plays a role in the plotting of the *Iliad*?