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NOTES ON PROPERTIUS BOOK II

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2, 1, 3-6: *Non haec Calliope, non haec mihi cantat Apollo.  
ingenium nobis ipsa puella facit.  
Sive illam Cois fulgentem incedere cogis,  
hoc totum e Coa veste volumen erit.*  
line 5 cogis: vidi *v.l.*

Propertius states that Cynthia inspires his poetry. I would like to suggest that we should translate as follows: “If you force her to triumph (incedere<sup>1</sup>) resplendent over the Coans, of Coan dress all my book will be”.

The poet is alluding to the fact that Maecenas wants him to write poetry about warfare. However, Propertius prefers to write about love, and to describe Cynthia as dressed in diaphanous clothes<sup>2</sup>.

2, 1, 35-38 *Te mea Musa illis semper contexeret armis,  
et sumpta et posita pace fidele caput:  
Theseus infernis, superis testatur Achilles,  
hic Ixioniden, ille Menoetiaden.*

Propertius refers here to the friendship between Augustus and Maecenas. I would like to suggest that we should place a full stop after *pace*, in line 36, and translate as follows: “My Muse would always weave you into those famous battles, in peace or war. Theseus invokes a faithful person (*fidele caput*) amongst the shades,

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Lewis-Short, s.v. *incedo* II, B, 1: “To triumph over, exult over; with dat”.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Horace, *Sat.* I, 2, 101-2 *Cois tibi paene videre est / ut nudam*. The variant *vidi*, accepted by Viarre, is not necessary: we are dealing with *Personenwechsel*. The poet addresses his readers (*quaeritis*, line 1) and then addresses, with *cogis*, Maecenas, as becomes clear from line 17. I assume that the reader has consulted Prof. P. Fedeli’s commentary: *Properzio Elegie Libro II*, Cambridge 2005.

Achilles amongst the gods above, the one Ixion's child (i.e. *Pirithous*<sup>3</sup>), the other the son of Menoetius (i.e. *Patroclus*)”.

Maecenas was a faithful friend of Augustus, and is thus compared to Pirithous and Patroclus.

2, 1, 57-58: *Omnes humanos sanat medicina dolores:  
solus amor morbi non amat artificem.*

The critics have been puzzled by the meaning of line 58. Textual alteration is, however, not necessary. We should translate as follows: “Medicine cures all human suffering; only Love (*Amor*<sup>4</sup>) does not love a man who is skilled in disease (*morbi ...artificem*<sup>5</sup>)”.

The poet is alluding to the fact that love is an incurable disease. Cf. Propertius 1, 2, 8: *nudus Amor formae non amat artificem*. “Naked Love does not love a man who is skilled in beauty (*formae...artificem* ).”

2, 8, 11-15: *Munera quanta dedi vel qualia carmina feci.  
illa tamen numquam ferrea dixit “Amo”.  
Ergo iam multos nimium temerarius annos,  
Improba, qui tulerim teque tuamque domum,  
Ecquandone tibi liber sum visus?*

The critics have been puzzled by the meaning of this passage. Perfect sense can, however, be restored to the transmitted text if we place a full stop after *dixit*, in line 12, and translate as follows: “What gifts I gave her, what songs I made for her. She, however, never said firm things (*ferrea dixit*<sup>6</sup>). Therefore I have loved (*amo*)<sup>7</sup> her now too rashly for many years. Impudent girl, have I who endured you and your family ever seemed free to you?”

<sup>3</sup> Pirithous descended to the infernal regions together with Theseus.

<sup>4</sup> Note that *Amor* is personified.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Lewis-Short, s.v. *artifex* II, A: “Act., skilled in a thing”. Cf. also Suet. *Tit.* 7: *tam artifices saltationis*.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Lewis-Short, s.v. *ferreus* II, B: “... firm, fixed.”

<sup>7</sup> Note the use of the historical present. In other words, Cynthia never firmly declared her love: cf. Virgil, *Georg.* 2, 501 *ferrea iura*. For the oath of love having to be strong cf. *Minerva* 19, 2006, page 193.

2, 8, 39-40: *Inferior multo cum sim vel matre vel armis,  
mirum si de me iure triumphat Amor?*  
line 39 matre: marte *v. l.*

The poet states that Love triumphs over him. It should be noted that the variant reading *martē* makes perfect sense. Propertius is alluding to the literary topos according to which love is warfare. He distinguishes between skill in fighting and armour. We should translate as follows: "Since I am very inferior in warfare (*martē*) and in armour (*armis*), what wonder is it if Love rightfully triumphs over me?"

In other words, Propertius cannot equal Love in skill in fighting or in arms.<sup>8</sup>

2, 9, 1-2: *Iste quod est, ego saepe fui: sed fors et in hora  
Hoc ipso eiecto carior alter erit.*  
line 2 eiecto: electo *v. l.*

Propertius refers here to a rival<sup>9</sup> lover. It should be noted that the mss reading *electo* makes perfect sense. We should translate as follows: "What he is now, I often was. But one day perhaps another will be dearer than this chosen man (*electo*) himself."<sup>10</sup>

2, 9, 38-39: *tela, precor, pueri, promite acuta magis,  
figite certantes atque hanc mihi solvite vitam.*

The poet addresses the loves and tells them to bring arrows, due to magicians (*magis*<sup>11</sup>), and to pierce his heart. At lines 47-48 Propertius prays that his rival will become a stone due to the power of magic:

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<sup>8</sup> The variants *matre* and *arte* (cf. Hanslik's apparatus) arose because scribes did not understand that *martē* means here "love as warfare" (*-militat omnis amans*): *matre* = *Thetis* is unjustified, because a hero's mother has nothing to do with his valour, and *arte* is an invented alternative to the attested *martē*.

<sup>9</sup> For the literary topos of the rival cf. G. Giangrande, *Mus. Phil. Lond.*, X, 1996, page 14.

<sup>10</sup> *Eiecto*, preferred by Butler-Barber (ad. loc.) and Viarre, is a trivialization, invented by someone who did not understand the pointed meaning of *electo*.

<sup>11</sup> For the power of magic cf. my *Studies*, page 142.

*atque utinam, si forte pios eduximus annos,  
ille vir in medio fiat amore lapis.*

Propertius then states in lines 49-50 that the Theban chieftains did not fall in deadly combat over a kingdom due to magicians (*magis*):

*non ob regna magis diris cecidere sub armis  
Thebani media non sine matre duces.*

There is no need for us to imagine that some lines have been lost after line 48<sup>12</sup>. The transmitted text makes perfect sense if we understand that the poet refers at lines 38 and 49 to the power of magic in love affairs.

2, 13, 15-18: *quae si forte bonas ad pacem verterit aures,  
possum inimicitias tunc ego ferre Iovis.  
Quandocumque igitur nostros mors claudet ocellos  
accipe quae serves funeris acta mei.*

Propertius refers in this passage to his own death. I would like to suggest that Iovis<sup>13</sup>, in line 16, means Augustus. The poet states that if Cynthia listens to him, he will be able to bear the hostility of Augustus, who wants him to write epic poetry.

2, 13 A, 53-56: *testis, qui niveum quondam percussit Adonem  
venantem Idalio vertice durus aper;  
illis formosus iacuisse paludibus, illuc  
diceris effusa tu, Venus, isse coma.*  
line 55 *formosus Postgate*: *formosum mss iacuisse*: *lavisse v. l.*

Propertius refers here to the death of Adonis. I would like to point out that the correct reading in line 55 is *lavisse*. The poet is alluding to the fact that the anemone sprang up from the blood of Adonis. Venus is said to have moistened (*lavisse*) the handsome man (*formosum*) by that famous marsh (*illis...paludibus*).

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. H.E. Butler, *Propertius*, Loeb edition, London 1967, reprint, note *ad loc.* The difficulty seen by the critics is due to the fact that they mistook *magis* to mean “more”.

<sup>13</sup> Apollo told Propertius to write love poetry: cf. my *Studies in Text of Propertius*, page 86. For Augustus = Zeus (Juppiter) cf. my *Studies in Late Greek Epic Poetry* (Amsterdam 1987), page 20.

Similarly Ovid states that Venus sprinkled the blood of Adonis with nectar: cf. *Met.* 10, 731 *sic fata cruorem/ nectare odorato sparsit*. We may therefore translate as follows: “By that famous marsh you are said, Venus, to have moistened the handsome man, thither to have gone with hair unbound”.

2, 16, 29-30: *Aspice quid donis Eriphyla invenit amaris,  
arserit et quantis nupta Creusa malis.*

The critics have been puzzled by the meaning of these lines. Textual alteration is, however, not warranted. We should place a comma after *invenit*, in line 29, and translate as follows: “See what Eriphyla earned due to gifts, and due to how many bitter misfortunes (*amaris ... malis*) the bride Creusa burned”.<sup>14</sup>

2, 17, 17-19: *quod quamvis ita sit, dominam mutare cavebo:  
tum flebit, cum in me senserit esse fidem.  
Assiduae multis odium peperere querelae.*

Propertius states that he does not wish to change his mistress. I would like to suggest that we should place a full stop after *assiduae*, in line 19, and translate as follows: “Then will she weep, when she feels that there is in me the faithfulness (*fidem*) of a constant woman (*assiduae*<sup>15</sup>). Complaints have caused hatred in many”.

2, 18, 21-24: *Quin ego deminuo curam, quod saepe Cupido  
huic malus esse solet, cui bonus ante fuit.  
Nunc etiam infectos demens imitare Britannos,  
ludis et externo tincta nitore caput?*

The poet refers to rouge and foreign dyes. I would like to suggest that we should place a full stop after *ante*, in line 22, and translate as follows: “Still my care grows less when I remember that Cupid often is unkind to him to whom he formerly (*was*<sup>16</sup>) kind. Was it possible (*fuit*<sup>17</sup>), mad girl, to imitate (*imitare*<sup>18</sup>) even now the painted Britons, and do you wanton with foreign dyes on your head?”

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<sup>14</sup> Note the *enjambement*, and *et* placed in the third place ( cf. *OLD.*, s.v. *et*: “even fourth place”).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Propertius 2, 33, 44 *assiduos...viros*.

<sup>16</sup> Note the ellipse of the *verbum substantivum*.

2, 21, 11-12: *Colchida sic hospes quondam decepit Iason:  
eiecta est tenuit namque Creusa domo.  
line 12 tenuit: tenuis v.l.*

Propertius states that Jason deceived Medea. I would like to point out that the mss. reading *tenuis* makes perfect sense. We should translate as follows: “So of old the stranger Jason deceived the maid of Colchis. The insignificant woman (*tenuis*<sup>19</sup>) was cast out, for Creusa was in her home”.<sup>20</sup>

Jason deserted Medea, and married Creusa, the daughter of Creon, the King of Corinth.

2, 22, 9-10: *siue vagi crines puris in frontibus errant,  
Indica quos medio vertice gemma tenet.*

The poet refers here to Indian gems. I would like to suggest that we should translate as follows: “or if wandering hair, which an Indian gem from inside a whirlpool (*vertice*)<sup>21</sup> holds, strays over her clear brow”.

2, 22, 47-48: *Quanta illum toto versant suspiria lecto,  
cum recipi, quem non noverit ille, putat.  
line 48 putat: vetat v.l.*

The critics have been puzzled by the meaning of these lines. I would like to suggest that we should print the variant reading *putat*, and translate as follows:

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. Lewis-Short, s.v. *sum* I, B, 5, b: “*Est, sit, etc.*, with infin. In Gr. Constr., it is possible”.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Lewis-Short, s.v. *imitor* (a): “Act. form *imito, are*”.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Lewis-Short, s.v. *tenuis* II, B, 2: “Esp., of rank, standing, etc., low, inferior, common”.

<sup>20</sup> For *domo* = “at home” cf. Lewis-Short, s.v. *domus*.

<sup>21</sup> Jewels and pearls were thought to have been cast up by the sea: cf. my *Studies in the Text of Propertius*, page 11. Cf. also Horace, *Odes* 2, 9, 22 *minores...vertices* (“smaller eddies”). The critics have taken *medio vertice* to mean “au sommet de sa tête”, but if the *gemma* retains the hair (*tenet*), the hair cannot fall down (*vagi crines ...errant*: cf. 2, 1, 7). Therefore I would like to suggest that *medio vertice* = “from inside a whirlpool”. For the ablative of origin cf. Forbiger, *Index Gramm. et Criticus* III, in his edition of Virgil, vol. 3, page 762: “*ablativus ...originem indicat omisso participio*”.

“How many sighs (*suspiria*<sup>22</sup>) torment (*versant*<sup>23</sup>) him on the whole bed, when he thinks (*putat*) that a man unknown to him is admitted”.

2, 23, 1-2:        *Cui fuit indocti fugienda et semita vulgi,*  
                          *ipsa petita lacu nunc mihi dulcis aqua est.*  
                          line 1 haec: et *v.l.*

The critics have been puzzled by the meaning of these lines. Textual alteration is, however, not necessary. We should print the reading *et*, in line 1, and place a comma after *semita*. Translate as follows: “I who once shunned even the path (*et semita*) of an ignorant man (*indocti*), now find that water sought from the tank of the common people (*vulgi* / ...*lacu*<sup>24</sup>) is sweet”.

2, 23, 21-24:    *et quas Euphrates et quas mihi misit Orontes,*  
                          *me iuverint: nolim furta pudica tori;*  
                          *libertas quoniam nulli iam restat amanti,*  
                          *nullus liber erit, si quis amare volet.*

Scholars have been puzzled by the meaning of lines 23-24. Textual alteration is, however, not necessary. We should place a full stop after *pudica*, in line 22, and translate as follows: “Since now freedom of love (*tori* / *libertas*)<sup>25</sup> remains for no lover, nobody will be free if anybody wishes to love”.

2, 24, 1-2:        *Tu loqueris, cum sit iam noto fabula libro*  
                          *et tua sit toto Cynthia lecta foro?*  
                          line 1 sit: sis *v.l.*, sic *v.l.* (cf. Hanslik’s apparatus)

I would like to point out that the variant reading *sit* in line 1 makes good sense. We should translate as follows: “Do you speak, when there is already

<sup>22</sup> The woman is imagined to sigh when she thinks of her lover.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Lewis-Short, s.v. *verso* B, 2, (a):” ... to discompose, disturb, vex”. Heinsius (cf. Butler’s Loeb edition) conjectured *necat*. *Toto* is here “distinguished from a part” (*OLD.*, s.v.), i.e. it means that the man does not share the bed with the lady he loves. Cf. *toto foro* 2, 24 A, 2.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Lewis-Short, s.v. *lacus* III. The common people went to get water from public tanks: cf. Horace, *Sat.* I, 4, 37.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Lewis-Short, s.v. *libertas*: “With gen.”, and *OLD.* s.v. *libertas*, 5. Note the elegant enjambement *tori* / *libertas*. Cf. Viarre, note 311 of her excellent edition.

common talk (*fabula*) due to your notorious book (*noto...libro*), and your Cynthia is picked out in the whole forum?”

In other words, Cynthia is singled out as Propertius' mistress by the people in the forum: cf. *O.L.D.*, s.v. *lego*, 5. Viarre takes *sit lecta* in the sense “tout le forum a lu ta ‘Cynthia’”.

2, 24, 9-11: *quare ne tibi sit mirum me quaerere viles:  
parcius infamant: num tibi causa levis?  
et modo pavonis caudae flabella superbae.*

Scholars have been puzzled by the meaning of these lines. They have therefore suggested that there is a lacuna in the text after line 10. It is, however, possible to restore sense to this passage if we place a full stop after *causa*, in line 10, and translate as follows: “Therefore do not wonder that I seek common women; they are more sparing in slander. Is that an excuse (*causa*) in your eyes? And recently there was the trifling (*levis*) story (*fabella*)<sup>26</sup> of the peacock's proud tail”.

2, 24, 15-17: *a peream, si me ista movent dispendia, sed me  
fallaci dominae iam pudet esse iocum.  
Hoc erat in primis quod me gaudere iubebas?*

Cynthia asks Propertius to buy her presents. I would like to suggest that we should place a full stop after *hoc*, in line 17, and translate as follows: “But I am now ashamed to be this (*hoc*) laughing-stock (*iocum*) for my faithless mistress. Was it possible (*erat*) to rejoice (*gaudere*<sup>27</sup>) that (*quod*) you ordered me at the beginning?”.

<sup>26</sup> For the reading *fabella* cf. G. Giangrande, *Orpheus* 25, 2004, page 3 f.

<sup>27</sup> For *gaudeo quod* cf. Lewis-Short, s.v. *gaudeo* (1). Cf. also Horace, *Epist.* I, 6, 19 *gaude, quod spectant oculi te mille loquentem*. For *est* = it is possible cf. Lewis-Short, s.v. *sum* B, 5, b. Note the enjambement *iocum / hoc*.