

Broken Distichs: Propertius' Internal Epitaphs and Inscriptions

A. 2.13.25-6; 31-6<sup>1</sup>

sat mea sat magna est si tres sint pompa libelli  
quos ego Persephona maxima dona feram.  
[...]  
deinde, ubi suppositus cinerem me fecerit ardor,  
accipiat manes parvula testa meos,  
et sit in exiguo laurus superaddita busto,  
quae tegat exincti funeris umbra locum,  
et duo sint versus: QUI NUNC IACET HORRIDA PULVIS. 35  
UNIUS HIC QUONDAM SERVUS AMORIS ERAT.

Enough, large enough is my procession, if it were  
to be three little books which I shall bring to  
Persephone as the greatest of gifts.  
[...]  
Then, when the heat placed below has turned me  
to ash, let a tiny urn receive my soul, and add too a  
laurel over my minute tomb, a shade to cover the  
site of the burnt-out pyre, and let there be two  
verses: WHO NOW LIES HERE AS FOUL DUST,  
WAS ONCE THE SLAVE TO A SINGLE LOVE.

B. 4.2.55-64

sed facias, divum sator, ut Romana per aevum  
transeat ante meos turba togata pedes.  
sex superant<sup>2</sup> versus; te qui ad vadimonia curris  
non moror: haec spatiis ultima creta meis.  
STIPES ACERNUS ERAM, PROPERANTI FALCE DOLATUS  
ANTE NUMAM PAUPER PAUPERE IN URBE DEUS. 60  
AT TIBI, MAMURRI, FORMAE CAELATOR AENAE,  
TELLUS ARTIFICES NE TERAT OSCA MANUS,  
QUI ME TOT DOCILEM POTUISTI FUNDERE IN USUS.  
UNUM OPUS EST, OPERI NON DATUR UNUS HONOS.

But, father of the gods, may you ensure that the  
togate Roman throng passes before my feet for all  
time. Six lines remain: I do not delay you who  
hurry to answer bail: this is the finishing line of  
my circuits.  
I WAS A MAPLE STUMP, FASHIONED BY A  
HASTENING SICKLE, A POOR GOD IN A POOR CITY  
BEFORE THE DAYS OF NUMA. BUT, MAMURRUS,  
DIVINE SCULPTOR OF MY BRONZE FORM, MAY THE  
OSCAN EARTH NOT WEAR AWAY YOUR ARTIST'S  
HAND, YOU WHO HAD THE ABILITY TO CAST ME TO  
BE TAUGHT SO MANY ROLES. IT WAS A SINGLE  
WORK; NOT SINGLE IS THE HONOR GIVEN TO IT.

C. 2.14.23-8

haec mihi devictis potior victoria Parthis,  
haec spolia, haec reges, haec mihi currus erunt.  
magna ego dona tua figam, Cytherea, columna  
taleque sub nostro munere carmen erit:  
HAS PONO ANTE TUAM TIBI, DIVA, PROPERTIUS AEDEM,  
EXUVIAS, TOTA NOCTE RECEPTUS AMANS.

This victory is more important to me than the  
conquest of the Parthians; this will be my spoils,  
my kings, my triumphal chariot. I shall fix great  
offerings on your column, Venus, and there will be  
such a poem beneath our gift:  
THESE SPOILS I PLACE BEFORE YOUR TEMPLE,  
GODDESS, I, PROPERTIUS, THE LOVER WELCOMED  
FOR A WHOLE NIGHT.

<sup>1</sup> Latin text from Heyworth (2007) unless noted. Translations by Heyworth (2007) with slight alterations.

<sup>2</sup> Superant: Ω (Fedeli 2015); suberunt: Heyworth.

D. 4.7.83-6

hic carmen media dignum me scribe columna  
sed breve, quod currens vector ab urbe legat:  
HIC SITA TIBURNA IACET AUREA CYNTHIA TERRA:  
ACCESSIT RIPAE LAUS, ANIENE, TUAE.

Here on a public column inscribe a poem worthy  
of me, but a short one, such as a traveler hastening  
from the city may read:  
HERE IN THE EARTH OF TIBUR LAID THERE LIES  
CYNTHIA, GOLDEN:  
GLORY IS ADDED NOW, ANIO, TO YOUR BANK.

E. 4.3.67-72

sed, tua sic domitis Parthae telluris alumnis  
pura triumphantes hasta sequatur equos,  
in corrupta mei conserva foedera lecti:  
hac ego te sola lege redisse velim;  
armaque cum tuleri portae votiva Capenae,  
subscribam SALVO SALVA PUELLA VIRO.

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But, so may your spear untipped follow triumphal  
horses after the conquest of the sons of Parthia, as  
you keep unstained the pledges of my marriage  
bed: on this one condition I would wish for your  
return, and when I take your arms as a votive  
offering to the Capena gate, I shall write  
underneath: A GIRL; SAFE, FOR HER HUSBAND; SAFE.

F. 2.28.41-4

si non unius, quaeso, miserere duorum:  
vivam si vivet; si cadet illa, cadam.  
pro quibus optatis sacro me carmine damno:  
scribam ego PER MAGNUM EST SALVA PUELLA IOVEM.

If you do not pity one, pity two, I beg: I shall live  
if she will; if she falls, so shall I. In return for  
these prayers, I condemn myself to write a sacred  
song: I shall write: BY GREAT JUPITER A GIRL IS  
SAVED.

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