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Vincent Katz, Translator: The Complete Elegies of Sextus Propertius

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I.i

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
improbus, et nullo uiuere consilio.
et mihi iam toto furor hic non deficit anno,
cum tamen aduersos cogor habere deos.

Milanion nullos fugiendo, Tulle, labores
saeuitiam durae contudit Iasidos. 10
nam modo Partheniis amens errabat in antris,
ibat et hirsutas ille uidere feras;
ille etiam Hylaei percussus uulnere rami
saucius Arcadiis rupibus ingemuit.
ergo uelocem potuit domuisse puellam: 15
tantum in amore preces et bene facta ualent.

in me tardus Amor non ullas cogitat artis,
nec meminit notas, ut prius, ire uias.
at uos, deducatae quibus est fallacia lunae
et labor in magicis sacra piare focus, 20
en agedum dominae mentem conuertite nostrae,
et facite illa meo palleat ore magis!
tunc ego crediderim uobis et sidera et amnis
posse Cytinaeis ducere carminibus.

et uos, qui sero lapsum reuocatis, amici, 25
quaerite non sani pectoris auxilia.

1.1

Cynthia was the first. She caught me with her eyes, a fool
who had never before been touched by desires.
Love cast down my look of constant pride,
and he pressed on my head with his feet,
until he taught me to despise chaste girls,
perversely, and to live without plan.
Already, it's been a whole year that the frenzy hasn't stopped,
when, for all that, the gods are against me.

It wasn't by running away from difficulty, Tullus,
that Milanion crushed the hard Iasid's savagery.
He wandered mad in Parthenian caves,
face to face with hairy beasts.
One time, shocked by a wound from Hylaeus' stick,
he groaned in pain on the Arcadian cliffs.
That's how he was able to dominate that swift girl:
so much are prayers and exploits worth in love.

But in me Love is slow, does not stimulate any art,
and he forgets to go on ways he used to know.
You who do that trick with the moon,
who perform rites on magic altars,
change my mistress' mind,
make her face more pale than my own!
Then I'll believe in you, that you can lead stars
and streams from their paths with Cytinean songs.

But you, who call me too late as I slip away, friends,
get help for the insane.



fortiter et ferrum saeuos patiemur et ignis
sit modo libertas quae uelit ira loqui.
ferre per extremas gentis et ferre per undas,
qua non ulla meum femina norit iter. 30
uos remanete, quibus facili deus annuit aure,
sitis et in tuto semper amore pares.
in me nostra Venus noctes exercet amaras,
et nullo uacuis tempore defit Amor.

hoc, moneo, uitate malum: sua quemque moretur 35
cura, neque assueto mutet amore locum.
quod si quis monitis tardas aduerterit auris,
heu referet quanto uerba dolore mea!

Bravely will I endure knife and savage fires,
just let me say whatever I want in my rage.
Take me to exotic peoples, across the waves,
where no woman may know my path.
You stay, to whom the god has easily consented;
may you be equal always, in a safe love.
On me old Venus works bitter nights,
and Love is at no time absent.

Avoid this evil, I'm warning you. Let each one linger with his
sweetheart and not change place from an accustomed love.
Because if anyone should turn slow ears to these warnings,
he'll see how they'll come back to haunt him!



I.ii

Quid iuuat ornato procedere, uita, capillo
et tenuis Coa ueste mouere sinus,
aut quid Orontea crinis perfundere murra,
teque peregrinis uendere muneribus,
naturaeque decus mercato perdere cultu, 5
nec sinere in propriis membra nitere bonis.

crede mihi, non ulla tuae est medicina figurae:
nudus Amor formae non amat artificem.
aspice quos summittat humus formosa colores,
ut ueniant hederæ sponte sua melius, 10
surgat et in solis formosius arbutus antris,
et sciat indocilis currere lympha uias.
litora natiuis persuadent picta lapillis,
et uolucres nulla dulcius arte canunt.

non sic Leucippis succendit Castora Phoebe, 15
Pollucem cultu non Hilaira soror;
non, Idae et cupido quondam discordia Phoebo,
Eueni patriis filia litoribus;
nec Phrygium falso traxit candore maritum
auecta externis Hippodamia rotis: 20
sed facies aderat nullis obnoxia gemmis,
qualis Apelleis est color in tabulis.
non illis studium uulgo conquirere amantis:
illis ampla satis forma pudicitia.

non ego nunc uereor ne sim tibi uilior istis: 25
uni si qua placet, culta puella sat est;