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978-0-521-10653-5 - Propertius: A Hellenistic Poet on Love and Death

Theodore D. Papanghelis

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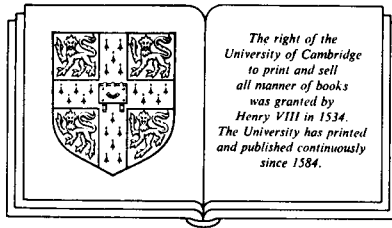
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Theodore D. Papanghelis

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For Demetrios and Theodora

nec umquam
esse satis potero, praestem licet omnia, gratus

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Ne méprisez la sensibilité de personne.
La sensibilité de chacun, c'est son génie.

Baudelaire, *Journaux intimes*

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PREFACE

Tristan rides the crest of an ecstatic and mystical passion, craving not so much Iseult as liberating Darkness and self-annihilation. Tristan and Iseult spurn the duality of physical love; the one-ness they seek can only be realised through and beyond death. It is this awesome, and distinctly European, secret of the medieval legend that unfolds over the three acts of Wagner's homonymous musical drama. Thus Denis de Rougemont in the celebrated and controversial *L'Amour et l'Occident*. He may be right or wrong, but there can be little doubt that what he deals with is – as the English rendering of the very beginning of J. Bedier's version of the legend would have it – 'a high tale of love and death'.

Before any reference can be safely made to the humble and scholarly tale of this book the pitch must be considerably lowered. Not because this tale is less distinctly European, nor yet because genuinely passionate and romantic love, as distinct from merry sensuality, was invented by the eleventh-century French Troubadours. When erudite men like C. S. Lewis in his *Allegory of love* and Denis de Rougemont in the above-mentioned work thus define the eras of European Love, they court disbelief – and on this point I firmly side with Niall Rudd (*Lines of enquiry*, ix). Why, having myself embarked upon the present study somewhat in the spirit of the Wagnerian *Liebestod* (I mean de Rougemont's interpretation of it, not the one that has Wagner glorifying sensual desire), I have then increasingly and for the most part felt the need to exorcise, or at least keep at bay, that spirit – this I trust the following pages to make clear.

I started thinking about Propertian love and death some six years ago, in Greece. Teachers and friends in the Classical Faculty of the University of Thessaloniki allowed me to try out some of my ideas on them. I thank them warmly. In 1981 the Greek State Scholarship Foundation wafted me to Cambridge where three years of unremitting largesse enabled me to enjoy a much-needed φιλόφρων ήσυχία and a highly congenial academic environment. Thus my college – 'The Evangelist St John my Patron was' – found its own generosity, in the form of a Benefactor's Studentship, anticipated, but it was not slow to help when other emolu-

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ments were petering out. To both these foundations I am deeply grateful for the support and the honour.

This book presents the revised and expanded version of my Cambridge Ph.D. thesis, which has also been adapted in order to accommodate my view of Propertius 4.7. The long section on the latter poem did not form part of the doctoral enterprise which Professor E. J. Kenney, while allowing me my head, supervised with exhilarating interest, intellectual stimulation and heartening humour. I am aware of being indebted to him for much that goes beyond my work, not least for his courteous hospitality. Miss M. Hubbard and Mr I. M. Le M. DuQuesnay, my Ph.D. examiners, had many useful and thought-provoking comments to offer, as did Dr R. O. A. M. Lyne, to whom I am very grateful not only for his stimulating criticism of the thesis material but also for his enthusiastic encouragement. L. P. Wilkinson *vidi tantum*. The distinguished scholar invited me to his rooms in King's College for an urbane discussion on 4.7, a draft of which he had previously read 'with great interest and generally with assent'; it was the warmest day I ever experienced in the British January. Guy Lee has read with sensitive vigilance through successive drafts of the whole work; my very special debt to him is for many a valuable point on both style and content – but, above all, for his invaluable friendship. I basked in it during the whole of my stay in Cambridge and, back at home, I am still its beneficiary. He has made the task of giving English translations for the Propertian passages immensely easier for his Greek friend by providing him with his own versions of all relevant elegies from Books 1 and 2, and also of 4.7. A non-native wielder of English cannot be too grateful for this, though in my case the requirements of the argument abetted by a native stubbornness dictated divergences at a few places, namely, 1.13.21–2, 1.13.26–9, 2.26b.58, 2.28.56, 4.7.11–12 and 4.7.79–80. More hazardously, I have given my own translations of all other Propertian passages, and indeed of all other literary quotations, whether modern or ancient, which appear in the book *except for* Lucretius and Theocritus' *Idylls*, for which I have used the translations of C. Bailey and A. S. F. Gow respectively, Virgil's *Eclogues* and Tibullus, where Guy Lee kindly allowed me to quote from his translations, as did Professor Constantine A. Trypanis for the passages quoted from Musaeus' *Hero and Leander* (with a very slight alteration at ll. 341–2). And the translated passages from Balzac's *Le Père Goriot* on p. 168 are those of M. A. Crawford, Harmondsworth 1951.

The occasional cackling of the gander, especially where Propertian translations are concerned, may thus disconcert even the charitable reader. But the current, and quite reasonable, practice calls for translation

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of Greek and Latin passages; it was put to me that translation is a good discipline for the author himself and makes him reveal his hand by declaring what he thinks a given passage means; and I was enamoured enough of the English language to take up, partly and in a small way, a metaphrastic challenge which nowhere involved my natural idiom. I found the effort, some Flaubertian agony over the *mot juste* notwithstanding, quite rewarding; where I have not succeeded in clearly revealing my hand through my version, I hope for indulgence.

I am conscious of having learned from more books and articles than could be referred to or listed here. I hope that the introduction as well as the individual footnotes allow my salient creditors to be clearly identified. For the rest, I allow myself to take a leaf out of Miss Hubbard's Propertius and thank all those who recognise here their property but fail to find sufficient or explicit acknowledgement in the pages that follow. The opinions and obsessions that will be found in them are entirely my own, and so are the errors and infelicities.

This book owes a great deal to the combined operation of Pauline Hire and Susan Moore, of Cambridge University Press. To the former I am especially indebted for encouragement and advice, and to the latter for her tactful subeditorial skill. In thanking them both I cannot but think of the expertise applied to the production of the book by other members of the staff of C.U.P.

Dr N. Follett has kindly permitted me to refer to material of which she holds the copyright. Miss Catherine Arambatzis typed first the thesis and then the book with skill and tact; had she not been there for these last two hectic years, I would still be fumbling and mumbling over the keyboard.

T. D. P.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Note. In abbreviating the names of ancient authors and the titles of their works I have generally followed the conventions of the *Oxford classical dictionary*; in abbreviating periodical titles those of *L'Année philologique*.

Gow	A. S. F. Gow, <i>Theocritus</i> . 2 vols. 2nd edn Cambridge 1952.
Gow–Page	A. S. F. Gow and D. L. Page, <i>The Greek Anthology: Hellenistic epigrams</i> . 2 vols. Cambridge 1965.
van Groningen	B. A. van Groningen, <i>Euphorion</i> . Amsterdam 1977.
Kl. Pauly	'Der Kleine Pauly' <i>Lexicon der Antike</i> . K. Ziegler and W. Sontheimer (eds.). 5 vols. Stuttgart 1964–75.
Nisbet–Hubbard	R. G. M. Nisbet and M. Hubbard, <i>A commentary on Horace: Odes Book I</i> . Oxford 1970.
OLD	<i>Oxford Latin dictionary</i> . P. G. W. Glare (ed.). Oxford 1982.
Pfeiffer	R. Pfeiffer, <i>Callimachus</i> . 2 vols. Oxford 1949–53.
Powell	J. U. Powell, <i>Collectanea Alexandrina</i> . Oxford 1925.
RE	<i>Real-Encyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> . A. Pauly, G. Wissowa and W. Kroll (eds.). Stuttgart 1893– .
TLL	<i>Thesaurus linguae Latinae</i> . Leipzig 1900–
West, IEG	M. L. West, <i>Iambi et elegi Graeci ante Alexandrum cantati</i> . 2 vols. Oxford 1971–2.