

*paraclausithyron* : (Gk.) "lament in front of the door"  
*exclusus amator* : (Lat.) "locked-out lover"

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Propertius 1.16 (ca. 25 BCE).

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*A house-door complains*

'Long ago I've stood wide open for great Triumphs,  
 A door famed for Tarpeian chastity,  
 Whose threshold, wet with prisoners' suppliant tears,  
 Gilded chariots celebrated.  
 Now I must often groan, disfigured by nocturnal 5  
 Drunken brawls and thumped by vulgar fists.  
 And all the time disgraceful garlands hang upon me,  
 And torches, exclusion's token, lie around.

I cannot guard my mistress from unsavoury nights,  
 My noble self being subject to graffiti. 10  
 Nor does she stop to think of reputation, living  
 More loosely than even our time's permissiveness.  
 What's more, I'm forced to weep and wail in sympathy  
 With a suppliant's long nights of watching.  
 He never gives my doorposts any peace, singing 15  
 Over and over this whining serenade:

"Door, crueller by far than even your mistress' self,  
 Why with hard panels closed to me and silent?  
 Why are you never unbarred to admit my love  
 Or moved to deliver clandestine pleas? 20  
 Will never an end be vouchsafed to my pain, and must  
 I sleep in disgrace on this lukewarm threshold?

Midnights and full moons and breezes that dawn frost chills  
 Feel sorry for me lying here.  
 You only, never pitying human pain, 25  
 Answer me back with silent hinges.

If only my feeble voice could enter through that crack  
 And find a way to strike my mistress' ear!  
 Be she more cusséd than Sicilian rock,  
 Harder be she than iron and steel, 30  
 Yet surely she could not remain dry-eyed  
 And would heave a sigh in reluctant tears.  
 But now she lies in the lucky arms of another man,  
 While I waste words on the midnight wind.

You, door, my only, you my greatest cause of pain, 35  
 Are never taken with my gifts.  
 My tongue has never shocked you with immodest words  
 Uttered when drunk in angry jest,  
 That you should let me whine on here until I'm hoarse,  
 Keeping tormented vigil in the street. 40  
 No, I have often spun you a song in modern verse  
 And, kneeling, pressed kisses on your steps.  
 You traitor, many a time I've turned in homage toward you  
 And secretly paid the vows I owed."

With this and much else typical of wretched lovers 45  
 He tries to drown the birds' dawn chorus.  
 So now, for a lady's faults and a lover's endless weeping,  
 I'm the lasting butt of malicious gossip.'

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*Propertius : The Poems. Translated with Notes by Guy Lee.*  
 Oxford University Press. 1996.