
These are prosperous times for Propertian studies. Paolo Fedeli’s long-awaited huge commentary on book 2 was published in 2005 (see my review in *Mnemosyne* 60 (2007), 317-20). Gregory Hutchinson now adds a detailed commentary on book 4. Scholars engaged in the study of Propertius or, for that matter, of Roman poetry in general are now able to consult full-scale and high-class notes on all the poems of the ‘Umbrian Callimachus’ (4.1.64): Fedeli’s commentaries on books 1 and 3 had appeared in 1980 and 1985 respectively.

Serious work on Propertius is impossible without these tools. To begin with, textual problems abound. When comparing Hutchinson’s text of book 4 with Fedeli’s Teubneriana of 1984, I counted more than 180 verses in which various differences can be witnessed, an average of one every five verses. On merely leafing through the pages, one difference immediately catches the eye: whereas Fedeli prints cruces in five verses, Hutchinson does so in more than thirty, with no less than eight cases in 4.11. Admittedly, there is no general consensus concerning Fedeli’s Teubner text, but it is notable that Simone Viarre’s recent Budé volume diverges from that edition in far less cases. Be this as it may, these purely arithmetic details are the outward sign of the difficulties which any student of Propertius has to cope with, or perhaps rather: should cope with, before escaping prematurely to the alluring paradise of ‘readings of Propertius’ or similar pastimes.

A few examples of Hutchinson’s textual decisions: in 1.19 Lachmann’s *annua at* is perhaps rightly preferred to MSS *annuaque*, because it “provides another rustic custom”; it will be regarded as painful in the town of Saint Francis that the distichon 1.125-6 is regarded as a spurious insertion prompted by “an evident patriotic motive”, but the Assisinites will find comfort in these reassuring words: “P. seems actually to have come from Assisi”; in 2.52 Morel’s *quōque* may well be better than MSS *atque* (before consonant); I am not convinced that in 3.37 my compatriot Broekhuyzen’s *conor* should replace MSS *cogor*, which is well explained by Camps; 4.55 is a rare case in which H. rejects Fedeli’s cruces: he merely substitutes MSS *sic* by *dic*, regarding *parianem* as “perhaps defensible”; in 5.61 Schippers’ *adoratum... Paestum* indeed provides a syntactically attractive direct object to *victura* (“might have surpassed”); the cruces in 6.36 *†lyrae†* seem inevitable because of *lyrae* in the same position in 6.32: moreover, H. dryly notes: “not yet invented, as 32 reminds us”, but his subsequent remarks *ad loc.* make one wonder why he does not print the “inviting deae”, which “would denote the Corycian Nymphs”; 7.1 *manes* illustrates H.’s general aversion to the use of capitals; in
7.64 he adheres to Housman’s *pectora sancta* as an apposition to Andromeda and Hypermestra; 7.85 †*sed tiburna iacet hic†* is a clear example of H.’s editorial principles: other editors usually print the distichon 7.85-6 in capitals, beginning with *HIC TIBURTINA IACET*, which looks sound enough. However, H. is no friend of such ‘epigraphic’ capitals and concerning the first part of v. 85 he coolly notes: “the exact form of words is unknown”. In fact, it is one of his guiding rules to print only what he regards as arguably plausible. For this reason I fail to understand his preference for the conjecture *palluĕrunt* for MSS *palluerantque* in 8.54: the pluperfect precedes *cecidere* in v. 53. Additionally one may ask how the emendation tallies with the note *ad* 8.82 *riserat*: “the pluperfect is often used instead of perf. (aorist) or impf.”, which in itself is not a particularly felicitous remark (cf. also the strange note *ad* 9.28: “*luceserat* is equivalent to *lucebat*”); the distichon 11.65-6 has been questioned by several scholars, because these verses “flagrantly interrupt the sequence” of the text. In accordance with the general rule set out on p. 23: “in book 4 transposition does not provide the best solution to any difficulty, and . . . some interpolation of lines has occurred”, H. does not follow any suggestion to transpose the distichon, but concludes that it is “a relatively early interpolation, filling in historical details”. In this case the textual decision has the quite serious implication that there is no reliable evidence on the date of Cornelia’s death.

Apart from the numerous cases in which textual problems play the principal part, H.’s commentary offers a wealth of information on everything the reader needs for getting some grip on Propertius’ intricate Latin and what he, probably or at least possibly, intends to express. Such information concerns details of topography, religious cults, epigraphy, the plastic arts, (military) history, mythology, and, above all, ancient poetry, specifically of Propertius’ contemporaries and of the Greek Hellenistic poets. Callimachus’ *Aitia* is regularly referred to. This material is made operational in H.’s explanations of the text. Some examples may illustrate this: in 1.18 *pendula turba* denotes “little objects representing people hung up from trees as part of rustic Italian *ludi*”; *ad* 1.95-6 H. persuasively notes: “Fighting in the camp to defend the eagle suggests a serious defeat”, perhaps the one suffered by Lollius at the hands of the Sugambri in 16 BC; 2.45-6 refer to flowers grown in gardens beneath glass and therefore offered to Vertumnus before they bloomed in the meadows; the note *ad* 4.2 on the Capitol is a fine specimen of precise topographical information; the bones in 5.64 may well be those of Acanthis, as H. suggests in contrast to other interpreters; the introduction to the sixth elegy (on Apollo of Actium, cf. v. 65 *Actius . . . Phoebus*) and the commentary on the first ten verses which concern Propertius’ poetical pedigree do justice to this complicated and puzzling poem and exceed all unsatisfactory exercises in which ‘irony’ functions as a simplifying interpretative master-key; the entire scene described in 10.5-22 is rightly considered to take place in front of Caenina’s *turres*; the complete absence of the poet-narrator in the final elegy, as in poems 2 and 3, is indeed