

ON THE TEXT OF PROPERTIUS

Abstract: Several passages of Propertius are explained.

Key-words: Propertius: textual criticism.

Resumen: Se explican diversos pasajes de Propertio.

Palabras-clave: Propertio: crítica textual.

I.

First of all, I deem it necessary to clear the ground regarding the quality of Propertius' text as transmitted to us. Butrica's paper in *Class. Quart.* 1997, page 176 ff. suffers from two fatal flaws, which render it worthless. First flaw: G. Giangrande, in his review of Fedeli's work (*Riv. Fil. Istr. Class.* 1986, page 212 ff.) demonstrated that Heyworth was utterly wrong in blaming Fedeli for not accepting the conjectures that Housman wanted to inflict on Propertius, because the text is perfectly sound and the conjectures in question are uncalled for. Butrica, not being able to refute Giangrande's specific arguments, resorts to evasion, i. e. to an unspecific proclamation, by asserting that the alleged archetype of all mss. of Propertius was «deeply corrupted» (*art. cit.*, page 179). This assertion is ungrounded: I have shown in my *Studies In The Text of Propertius* (Athens 2002), that the postulated archetype of Propertius' mss. was singularly correct, not «corrupted», because the passages which Housman and other critics wrongly considered to be in need of emendation and wanted to alter by unjustified conjectures are, as a rule, perfectly sound: an instructive selection of examples can be seen in Giangrande's review of my book, published in *Orpheus* 2003, page 354 ff.

Second flaw: Butrica's study of the *paradosis* is devoid of validity, because it remains within the Lachmannian limits. Butrica does not know that many manuscripts not included in Lachmann's *stemma codicum* and as such neglected by Lachmann's successors contain demonstrably genuine readings, as I have shown in my above quoted *Studies*: such readings evidently entered the *paradosis* through «trasmissione orizzontale», which is the normal process outlined by Pasquali: for an exactly parallel example concerning the text of Theophrastus cf. Giangrande in *Orpheus* 2003, page 93 ff. In view of this, we can conclude that an archetype of all the mss. of Propertius did not exist.

I hope I have clarified how matters stand as regards the text of Propertius: this clarification was needed because the «furori di tipo housmaniano» (so Fedeli, *apud* Butrica, *art. cit.*, page 179, note 17), now «sopiti», witness Viarre's edition, still infect Heyworth, Butrica and Giardina. Giardina, by failing to understand or even quote armfuls of genuine mss. readings and by altering, through incredibly violent conjectures, innumerable lines of Propertius, has produced an edition of Giardina's poetry, not of Propertius.

II.

3. 1. 9-14

*quo me Fama leuat terra sublimis, et a me
nata coronatis Musa triumphat equis,
et mecum in curru parui uectantur Amores,
scriptorumque meas turba secuta rotas.
quid frustra missis in me certatis habenis?
non datur ad Musas currere lata uia.*

line 13 *in me : mecum* P, Heinsius

Scholars¹ have been puzzled by the meaning of lines 13-14. I would like to suggest that the correct reading in line 13 has been preserved for us by Heinsius². We should translate as follows: «Why do you vie with me (*mecum*) in vain with loosened reins? According to the Muses (*ad Musas*³) it is not permitted (*non datur*) to hasten (*currere*) along a broad path».

A crowd of poets is said to follow the triumphal chariot of Propertius. However, Propertius points out that due to the Muses they are hastening along a narrow path. Since the path is narrow, there is no room for the other poets, who must therefore follow behind the chariot of Propertius.

3. 3. 1-14

*Visus eram molli recubans Heliconis in umbra,
Bellerophontei qua fluit umor equi,
reges, Alba, tuos et regum facta tuorum,
tantum operis, neruis hiscere posse meis;
paruaque iam magnis admoram fontibus ora
unde pater sitiens Ennius ante bibit,
et cecinit Curios fratres et Horatia pila,
regiaque Aemilia uecta tropaea rate,
uictricesque moras Fabii pugnamque sinistram
Cannensem et uersos ad pia uota deos,
Hannibalemque Lares Romana sede fugantis,
anseris et tutum uoce fuisse Iouem;
cum me Castalia speculans ex arbore Phoebus
sic ait aurata nixus ad antra lyra.*

line 7 *cecini : cecinit v. l. fratres: patres* v. 1.

Scholars⁴ have been puzzled by the fact that Propertius seems to confuse the *Curii* with the *Curiatii*. I would like to point out that the problem which was mentioned by Camps and Heyworth

¹ Cf. S. J. Heyworth, *Classical Quarterly* 36, 1986, page 199 f. I have used this article as the starting-point of my research.

² I have recently explained that Heinsius used manuscripts in order to correct the text of Propertius: cf. my *Studies*, page 166, note 1.

³ The words *ad Musas* are taken by the interpreters to mean «towards the Muses» (cf. e. g. Viarre, «vers les

Muses»), but poets do not run towards the Muses: rather, the Muses come to inspire poets, who produce poetry metaphorically envisaged, according to the well-known *topos*, as a race. Here, *Musas* means «poetry» and *ad Musas* means «according to the laws of poetry»: cf. *O. L. D.* s. v. *ad*, 34.

⁴ Cf. Heyworth, *op. cit.*, page 202 and Camps, *Propertius Elegies Book III*, page 64.

disappears if we accept the variant reading *patres*⁵. Propertius refers in line 7 to the ancient *Curii*, who were the forefathers of the Romans.

It should, moreover, be noted that the correct reading in line 7 is *cecini*⁶. Ennius cannot be imagined to be the subject of line 7 ff. since he did not celebrate the victory of Aemilius Paullus, which is mentioned in line 8. Propertius states that he sang of the «Curian fathers and the Horatian javelins».

3. 3. 47-50

*quippe coronatos alienum ad limen amantis
nocturnaeque canes ebria signa fugae,
ut per te clausas sciat excantare puellas
qui uolet austeros arte ferire uiros.*

line 48 *nocturnasque ... faces* Markland

Heyworth⁷ was puzzled by the meaning of line 48 and suggested that we should print the alteration *morae* («lingering») instead of the mss. reading *fugae*. Textual alteration is, however, not necessary. Calliope says that Propertius will sing of the «drunken standards (*signa*)⁸ of nocturnal flight (*nocturnae... fugae*)». The lover is imagined to abandon his standards on the doorstep of the girl whom he loves. In other words, the poet is alluding to the fact that the lover was also a soldier⁹.

It should be noted that the reading provided by Markland mentions torches. The lover's torches (*faces*) are described as his «standards» (*signa*). I would like to suggest that the reading *nocturnasque... faces* is a trivialisation¹⁰, which was invented by somebody in order to explain that torches are the lover's standards, which he will leave on the doorstep of the house of his beloved.

3. 8. 11-18

*quae mulier rabida iactat conuicia lingua,
haec Veneris magnae uoluitur ante pedes;
custodum grege si circa se stipat euntem,
seu sequitur medias Maenas ut icta uias,

seu timidam crebro dementia somnia terrent,
seu miseram in tabula picta puella mouet,
his ego tormentis animi sum uerus haruspex;
has didici certo saepe in amore notas.*

Heyworth¹¹ notes that Margaret Hubbard was puzzled by line 13, which she argued «does not look in the least like a symptom of love». Textual alteration is, however, not necessary. Propertius is describing a woman who is jealous of other women, and who fears that she may be in danger of

⁵ For the variant reading *patres* cf. Burmannus *ad loc.*

⁶ Cf. my *Studies In The Text Of Propertius*, page 85.

⁷ *Op. cit.*, page 203.

⁸ Cf. my *Studies*, page 27.

⁹ Cf. my *Studies*, page 12.

¹⁰ I have recently pointed out that Markland used manuscripts in order to correct the text of Propertius: cf. my *Studies*, page 71, note 3. Note that *ebria* is used in *enallage*: the lover is, as is usual in such cases, drunk.

¹¹ *Op. cit.*, page 205.

losing her beloved. Thus she surrounds herself with a crowd of spies (*custodum*¹² *grege*) wherever she goes. She hopes that the spies will give her information about her rivals in love.

3. 13. 15-16

*felix Eois lex funeris una maritis
quos Aurora suis rubra colorat equis.*

line 16 *equis* : *aquis* v. l.

Heyworth¹³ was puzzled by the meaning of *una*, in line 15, and suggested that «Propertius wrote *illa*». Textual alteration is, however, not warranted. Propertius states that there is «a (*una*¹⁴) fortunate law of burial (*lex funeris*) for Eastern husbands». He is referring to the practice of suttee. Indian husbands are fortunate because their wives are willing to die with them.

Heyworth argues that we should print the reading *aquis* in line 16. I would like to point out, however, that the reading *equis* is supported by Propertius 4. 3. 10:

*ustus et Eois decolor Indus equis*¹⁵

Propertius is alluding here to the chariot of the Sun.

3. 22. 11-14

*tuque tuo Colchum propellas remige Phasim,
Peliacaeque trabis totum iter ipse legas,
qua rudis Argoa natat inter saxa columba
in faciem prorae pinus adacta nouae.*

Heyworth¹⁶ was puzzled by the meaning of the phrase *Argoa columba* and suggested that the adjective *Argoa* is corrupt and should be altered. Textual alteration is, however, not warranted. We are faced here with an ablative of cause¹⁷. The ship which carried the Argo auts is said to have passed through the rocks «due to the dove from the Argo».

Heyworth was also puzzled by the meaning of the adjective *novae*. Textual alteration is again not warranted. We are faced here with an example of adjectival *enallage*¹⁸. The pine-tree is said to have been made into the shape of a strange ship. It was the form of the ship which was itself strange.

4. 1. 1-10

*Hoc quodcumque uides, hospes, qua maxima Roma est,
ante Phrygem Aenean collis et herba fuit:
atque ubi Nauali stant sacra Palatia Phoebo,*

¹² Cf. Lewis And Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, s. v. *custos* II, A: «In gen., a watch, spy».

¹³ *Op. cit.*, page 206.

¹⁴ Cf. Lewis And Short, *op. cit.*, s. v. *unus* II: «Transf., indef., a or an... *una mulier lepida* (Plaut. *Ps.* 4, 1, 38).» Cf. also *O. L. D.* s. v. *unus* 11, «a certain».

¹⁵ Cf. my *Studies*, page 135.

¹⁶ *Op. cit.*, page 207.

¹⁷ Cf. 4. 1. 8 where *nostris* means «due to our men».

¹⁸ For another case of adjectival *enallage* cf. my *Studies*, page 164.

*Euandri profugae concubuerunt boues.
 fictilibus creuere deis haec aurea templa,
 nec fuit opprobrio facta sine arte casa;
 Tarpeiusque pater nuda de rupe tonabat,
 et Tiberis nostris aduena bubus erat.
 qua gradibus domus ista Remi se sustulit, olim
 unus erat fratrum maxima regna focus.*

line 8 *bubus* : *tutus* v. l.

Heyworth¹⁹ noted that scholars have been puzzled by the meaning of line 8. I would like to point out that perfect sense can be restored to this passage if we print the reading *tutus*. Propertius states that in the past the Tiber was safe due to our men (*nostris*), i. e. due to the Romans.

4. 5. 57-58

*qui uersus, Coae dederit nec munera uestis,
 istius tibi sit surda sine arte lyra.*

Heyworth²⁰ explains that in this passage Acanthis talks of gain. I would like to point out that the reading *arte* makes perfect sense. Acanthis states that if a poet does not bring a girl fine garments as presents, then his artless lyre should be silent. She means that he cannot be a good poet because he does not earn any money from his poetry.

4. 9 11-14

*hic, ne certa forent manifestaue signa rapinae,
 auersos cauda traxit in antra boues,
 nec sine teste deo: furem sonuere iuuenci
 furis et implacidas diruit ira fores.*

This passage refers to Cacus. Heyworth²¹ notes that the critics have been puzzled by the meaning of line 13. Textual alteration is, however, not warranted. Propertius states that the young men (*iuuenci*²²) shouted thief (*furem sonuere*²³). He then adds that the anger of Hercules destroyed the gates of the thief. The reader will note that Propertius adopted an allusive narrative technique²⁴.

4. 10. 19

idem eques et frenis, idem fuit aptus aratris.

Heyworth²⁵ was puzzled by the meaning of this line. Textual alteration is, however, not necessary. Propertius is alluding to the fact that Romulus was a knight and governed Rome. Moreover,

¹⁹ *Op. cit.*, page 208.

²⁰ *Op. cit.*, page 209.

²¹ *Op. cit.*, page 210.

²² Similarly at Propertius 3. 22. 3 *iuuena* means «girl»: cf. my *Studies*, page 113.

²³ Cf. Ovid, *Met.* 15, 606 *tale sonat populus*.

²⁴ Cf. my *Studies*, page 91.

²⁵ *Op. cit.*, page 211.

Romulus²⁶ marked out the walls of Rome with a plough. Thus Propertius states that Romulus was suited to the reins of government (*frenis*²⁷) and to the plough (*aratri*).

Conclusion

None of the alterations which have been proposed by Heyworth for the text of Propertius is warranted.

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²⁶ Cf. my *Studies*, page 119. Cf. also Lewis And Short, *op. cit.*, s. v. *Equus* 2 B.

²⁷ Cf. Lewis And Short, *op. cit.*, s. v. *frenum* II. Cf. moreover Ovid, *Tr.* 2. 42 *imperii frena tenere sui*.