

PROPERZIO, *Elegie Libro IV*. Introduzione di Paolo Fedeli, commento di Paolo Fedeli, Rosalba Dimundo, Irma Ciccarelli, Nordhausen, Verlag T. Bautz GmbH, 2015 (*Studia Classica et Mediaevalia*, 7). 2 vols. 1529 pp. ISBN 978-3-88309-937-8

Propertius IV is one of the most fascinating and challenging books of the Augustan period. It inaugurated a new phase in the history of Latin elegy: poetry and city, as Fedeli clearly explains (pp. 78-79), grew together, putting Propertius as poet, refounder of elegy, on a par with Augustus, the refounder of Rome. An extensive commentary on this peculiar, polemic, and very difficult text was much called for – one that would, as this does, address the multiplicity of issues raised by Propertius: the evolution of elegy in the particular context of an Augustan, post-Virgilian Rome; Latin elegy's response to, and openness towards, other genres; its indisputable experimental nature; the refined architecture of the book, its complex characters and unexpected voices; its (re)staging of the dead Cynthia; matters of poetics, style, language.

Paolo Fedeli is the author of the edition of Propertius for Teubner (1984; *correctior* 1994) and of the reference commentaries on Propertius, including one on book IV which was published in Bari in 1965 (others: I, Firenze, 1980; II, Cambridge, 2005; III, Bari, 1985). Fifty years later, he shares the undertaking with two of the most qualified scholars for the task in hand, Rosalba Dimundo and Irma Ciccarelli (Fedeli reads elegies 1, 4, 6, 8, 9, 11; Dimundo discusses 3, 5, 7; Ciccarelli handles elegies 2 and 10). Thus is formed a team of commentators of the Università degli Studi di Bari 'Aldo Moro' whose studies over the last decades have focused mainly on Latin elegy.

The volume offers more than 1500 pages of the most accomplished philology. After an (expectedly) thorough bibliography (pp. 7-64), Paolo Fedeli signs a lengthy introduction ("In cerca di nuove vie per la poesia elegiaca", pp. 65-134) in which he identifies many of the questions that will find detailed treatment in the commentary. Therefore, it is worth recalling at least some of the points raised in the introduction. Fedeli addresses the challenges faced by Propertius in book IV, after Tibullus' and Virgil's death, after Horace's *Carmen Saeculare*: "La sfida di Properzio è stata quella di ridefinire la poesia elegiaca e di aprirle orizzonti nuovi, legandola al glorioso passato delle origini di Roma e celebrando l'elogio dell'attività di Augusto in campo militare e civile senza rinnegare il canto d'amore per Cinzia" (p. 68). The introduction evolves around the elucidation of the meaningful order of the *carmina* and entails an overview of the scholarship about this vexed issue. Fedeli distances himself from the common view that the first elegy should be divided into two poems, and explains at length why its bipartite form (p. 76) anticipates much of Propertius' project for book IV. This may also be said of the unconventional god Vertumnus in elegy 4.2: according to Fedeli, it symbolizes the possibilities of Propertius' poetry – changing contents and the very way of composing poetry – and "Properzio si è servito della sua voce per enunciare i principi di poetica che sovrintendono alla composizione del IV libro" (p. 84). As the author continues to clarify the significance of each composition in the structure of book IV, and how each poem adds to innovation and materializes the project advertised for the book, Fedeli explores the roles of Propertius' women and calls attention to the relevance of the plurality of voices now heard. Arethusa opens "la sfilata di personaggi femminili" (p. 87) in the third elegy, an "audace esperimento" (p. 100). She acts as *matrona* and lover (as Cynthia had done) while calling forth the theme of Augustus' expansionism. The following woman (elegy 4.4.) lives in Propertius a different version of her myth. The Latin elegist provides Tarpea with literary and political excuses for her treason: she is in love, and by her marriage she wishes to prevent a war. In elegy 5, the surprising appearance of a *lena* culminates in her appropriation of the poet's role of *praeceptor amoris* and in the transformation of those *praecepta*: "sembra quasi che, ora, il mondo dell'elegia si rifletta su uno specchio deformante" (p. 95). The author argues that book IV has two centres, a patriotic one in the Actium elegy (4.6) and an erotic-elegiac in

poem 4.7 (p. 101). The Actium poem intertwines motifs and techniques of alexandrinism with an historical event of paramount relevance, while Cynthia's first appearance in 4.7 as an *umbra* – her dying and coming back is a reminder that she is indeed a literary character (p. 106) – possesses a deep meaning regarding the evolution of Propertian poetry (pp. 104-105). Poem 4.8 is envisaged as a homage to the erotic poetry of books I-III as well as an exhibition of its potential for encompassing other genres (referring the reader in particular to epic poetry, pp. 105-106). In what concerns the ambiguous Hercules of elegy 4.9, Fedeli finds political reasons for his “duplice natura” (p. 111) of Virgilian champion and degraded hero. The tenth elegy is regarded as the only one really respecting the aetiological project announced by the poet at 4.1 (p. 112): the *aetion* of the temple of Jupiter Feretrius, in its alexandrian brevity, stands out for its bold experiments and innovations, even when confronted with other poems of book IV. Fedeli interprets the last elegy, that of Cornelia, as he takes position regarding the issue of Propertius' relationship with Augustan power. Fedeli refutes those who find in book IV an opposition to the Augustan regime, calls attention to the danger of anachronistic approaches to the work (pp. 118-124), and even suggests that the question of Propertius' adherence to or rejection of “Augustus” is perhaps misconceived (was there any need to advertise Augustus – in elegiac poetry – when book IV was composed?, and to what public?, p. 129). Cornelia's discourse emphasizes the continuity between her family's past and the (better) future for her *gens* at Rome (p. 118). From this point of view, it is in fact an adequate culmination for Propertius IV (and with a Virgilian touch, that of framing the second part of the book by two *umbræ*, Cynthia's and Cornelia's, pp. 115-116).

Each elegy is so thoroughly examined that the length of the commentary on individual poems might well justify the publication of individual monographs. The breadth of the work is thus very different from that of Gregory Hutchinson's for the Green and Yellow series (Cambridge, 2006), which is concise, in the spirit of the collection. Another noticeable difference is that the new commentary is not lemmatized: after offering an overall and introductory presentation of the poem (preceded by a list of bibliography), the authors proceed by verse or groups of verses. The result is that the commentary on each poem is a readable text, an exhaustive exposition and discussion of ideas (rejecting the model of listing *loci* or swiftly referring the reader to further bibliography).

The readership of this monumental work is not restricted to those interested in Propertius or in Latin Elegy; it is a convenient instrument for any student of ancient poetry at an advanced level. Its usefulness is enhanced by the several, and detailed, indexes that finish the volume (“1. Parole notevoli”, pp. 1413-1436; “2. Nomi e cose notevoli”, pp. 1437-1461; “3. Lingua, stile, poetica”, pp. 1462-1471; “4. Topoi”, pp. 1472-1473; “Passi citati”, pp. 1474-1527). The utility of some indexes extrapolates that of helping the reader find information in the lengthy volume. For example, the index of *topoi* might be used as a reading guide for approaching the elegiac code; the list of topics concerning poetics offers a convenient starting point for an informed and systematic study of that subject, as does the exhaustive array of topics concerning important names, such as Augustus' (points range from his adoption of Capricorn as zodiac sign to his pose as “principe di pace” or his administration of justice).

An abridged version of this commentary, aimed at a less informed public, might be a worthy endeavor for the Barese team. This would make the rich and impressive scholarship on which the commentary rests accessible to a wider audience, thus expanding the volume's readership and impact.

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