

The first aim of this paper is to situate Stephen Heyworth's 2007 OCT edition of Propertius within the recent history of scholarship on the text. Specific points of reference include the other two complete critical editions that have appeared within the past five years, by Simone Vietri (Budé 2004) and Gian Carlo Giardina (Edizioni dell'Ateneo 2004). The evidence of a sample poem, 2.1, will illustrate the wide differences of approach taken by the three editors; those differences, besides showing the extent to which the text of Propertius remains unsettled, also reflect a larger absence of consensus in classical editing at the moment, and a widening gap in editorial practice between conservative and skeptical critics.

My second aim is to test the assumption that underlies many of Heyworth's editorial choices, namely, that difficult or obscure expressions in the transmitted text are the result of an unusually corrupt manuscript tradition rather than evidence of the poet's idiosyncratic style. In that connection I will examine a number of passages in which the transmitted text presents challenges to interpretation but where no emendation has been proposed or where Heyworth himself has chosen not to emend.

In a final section I will examine the concept of progress in textual scholarship and in the study of Propertius in particular; for example, in what sense can an edition be said to supersede a predecessor? The focus here is not on the reporting of manuscript evidence—an area in which Heyworth has indeed advanced beyond previous editors—but rather on the constitution of the text, where the editor's judgment is ultimately the decisive factor. My conclusion is that, while Heyworth's edition is an indispensable tool in the ongoing discussion of Propertius' text, other constructions of that text continue to be useful and in some respects more persuasive.