

MISZELLEN

A TEXTUAL NOTE ON PROP. 2.32.25:
AGAINST EMENDING TO *CEDERE**

Keywords: Propertius, textual criticism, *fabula*, *credere*

*nuper enim de te nostra me laedit ad aures
rumor et in tota non bonus urbe fuit.
sed tu non debes inimicae credere linguae: 25
semper formosis fabula poena fuit.
non tua deprenso damnata est fama veneno;
testis eris puras, Phoebe, videre manus.*

Prop. 2.32.23–28¹

Problems of interpretation in these lines have drawn scholarly attention and emendation, chiefly Wakker's conjecture in 25 of *cedere* for *credere*. While our principal manuscripts agree unanimously on *credere*, there is no consensus: emendation to *cedere* has garnered support from influential editors (Camps, Goold, Fedeli, and Viarre),² but the paradoxis enjoys the majority of printings (Barber, Enk, Flach, Giardina, Günther, Hanslik, Luck, Moya and Ruiz de Elvira, Richardson, and Shackleton Bailey).³ Stephen Heyworth condemns both and prints his own *atten-*

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1) The text is that of S. J. Heyworth, *Cynthia: A Companion to the Text of Propertius*, Oxford 2007, 250. For the text of book 2 elsewhere I have used P. Fedeli, *Properzio: Elegie Libro II*, Cambridge 2005 and, for the remaining books, S. J. Heyworth, *Sexti Properti Elegi*, Oxford 2007.

2) W. A. Camps, *Propertius: Elegies Book II*, Cambridge 1967; G. P. Goold, *Propertius: Elegies*, Cambridge 1990; Fedeli (n. 1 above); S. Viarre, *Properce: Élégies*, Paris 2005.

3) E. A. Barber, *Properti Carmina*, Oxford ²1960; P. J. Enk, *Propertii Elegiarum Liber Secundus*, Leyden 1962; D. Flach, *Sextus Propertius: Elegien*, Darmstadt 2011; G. Giardina, *Properzio: Elegie*, Rome 2005; H. Günther, *Quaestiones Propertianae*, Leiden 1997, 29; R. Hanslik, *Sex. Propertii Elegiarum Libri IV*, Leipzig 1979; G. Luck, *Properz und Tibull: Liebeselegien*, Zurich 1964; F. Moya / A. Ruiz de Elvira, *Propercio: Elegías*, Madrid 2011; L. Richardson, *Propertius: Elegies I–IV*, Norman 1976; D. R. Shackleton Bailey, *Propertiana*, Cambridge 1956, 127.

dere. I here lay out the traditional arguments for and against the *paradosis* and build on Heyworth's argument against emending to *cedere*; the conjecture introduces as many problems as it aims to solve, for it ignores the implications of *fabula* in line 26 and disrupts the logical progression of the distich.

Rejection of the *paradosis* in favor of *cedere*, led recently by Paolo Fedeli, has rested on the logical difficulty introduced to line 25 if *tu* refers to Cynthia and not the narrator. The pronoun must point to Cynthia since the *te* of 23 and *tua*⁴ of 27 also look to her and since a threefold shift in pronoun-referent over so many couplets is unattested.⁵ If the *tu* of 25 is Cynthia, however, *credere* seems to produce a logical anomaly: her belief in the things said about her is inconsequential and illogical since she already knows whether or not the charges against her are true. The "semplique correzione"⁶ to *cedere* solves this problem and renders the line, "heed the complaints of unfriendly critics,"⁷ or, "surrender to an unfriendly tongue."⁸ Defenses of *credere* vary; some attempt to give the infinitive a sense it cannot have in "take seriously."⁹ Shackleton Bailey (followed by Enk) suggests that we acquiesce to the "logical anomaly," especially since it is paralleled in a joke made by Augustus recorded in Macrobius.¹⁰ Still others attempt to smooth over the logical difficulties and explain *credere* on its own terms, either as an ironic statement or one which does not necessarily imply belief in the charges.¹¹

In this atmosphere, Heyworth has suggested jettisoning not just *credere* but also *cedere* since it does not meet the "necessary meaning."¹² This argument is unexplained but on further examination almost certainly correct, at least in the unsuitability of *cedere*. As Camps observes, *cedere* demands that "the misdemeanors against Cynthia are not being denied or disbelieved as untrue but ac-

4) Some instead accept Weidgen's emendation of *mea* for *tua* in line 27 and/or assign 25 and a number of the following lines to Cynthia; see J. P. Postgate, *Sexti Properti Carmina*, London 1894; Luck (n. 3 above); and E. K. H. Wistrand, *Miscellanea Propertiana*, Göteborg 1977, 59–60. This is an attractive hypothesis but seems to invite further and extensive emendation; see the cogent analysis of Günther (n. 3 above) 29–30.

5) Heyworth, Cynthia (n. 1 above) 251, although cf. Wistrand (n. 4 above) 60 n. 1 and M. Dominicy, *Propertius* 4.5.19–21, *RhM* 153, 2010, 177 with n. 103.

6) Fedeli (n. 1 above) 903.

7) Camps (n. 2 above) 212.

8) Goold (n. 2 above) 201.

9) So H. E. Butler / E. A. Barber, *The Elegies of Propertius*, Oxford 1933, 251; cf. Moya / Ruiz de Elvira (n. 3 above) 374 n. 740 and 375.

10) Shackleton Bailey (n. 3 above) 127 citing Sat. 2.4.4: *idem cum ab eo Pacuvius Taurus congiarium peteret diceretque iam hoc homines vulgo loqui, non parvam sibi ab illo pecuniam datam: "sed tu," inquit, "noli credere"*. Cf. Enk (n. 3 above) 411.

11) Richardson (n. 3 above) 306 and Flach (n. 3 above) 102.

12) Heyworth, Cynthia (n. 1 above) 250–51; Heyworth's sense of what the couplet must mean is: "But you ought not to worry: such stories are always a problem for beautiful women."

cepted and dismissed as venial.”¹³ This reasoning, however, cannot stand in light of the strong logical connection between the lines of the distich – all editors print a colon between them – for not just 25, but also 26, appeals to the unbelievability of the charges against Cynthia. If, in other words, 26 suggests the charges against Cynthia are not to be believed, it is unacceptable to condemn *credere* for doing the same thing.

26 claims that the rumors about Cynthia have a negative truth value, for the speaker observes that pretty people always attract *fabulae*, a word which implies incredibility not just in Roman elegy but also more broadly in Latin literature. On the one hand, as Fedeli notes, *fabula* regularly has a “connotazione negativa” associated with the *rumores vulgi* (TLL s. v. 25.49–51) in Roman elegy.¹⁴ In the Propertian corpus speakers always imply that such *fabulae* / *rumores* are false (Prop. 3.15.45–46: *fabula nulla tuas de nobis concitet aures; / te solam et lignis funeris ustus amem*)¹⁵ or label them as such (Prop. 2.13.13–14: *populi confusa vaeto / fabula*). If the *fabulae* in 26 denote the *rumores vulgi*, then the speaker is pointing to the negative truth value of the stories going around about Cynthia: they are fabrications.

Beyond Roman elegy, as well, *fabula*'s primary sense of “narration” strongly implies the untrustworthiness of utterances.¹⁶ Occurring as it does in a poem which cites the tales of legendary adulteresses (Helen, 31–32; Venus, 33–40;¹⁷ Pasiphae, 57–58; Danae, 59–60), *fabula* almost certainly carries with it here this more general sense, as Hubbard argues;¹⁸ indeed Housman noted the same valence of the word and proposed (probably wrongly) to transpose 25–26 after 30 where the myths are cited.¹⁹ On these grounds, as well, *fabula* implies factual inaccuracy. According to the rhetorical handbooks *fabulae* are narrations which tell untrue stories: *fabula est quae neque veras neque veri similes continet res* (Rhet. Her. 1.13); *fabula est, in qua nec verae nec veri similes res continentur* (Cic. Inv. 1.27).²⁰ Propertius, as well, shows awareness of this sense of the word at 3.5.45 (*an ficta in miseris*

13) Camps (n. 2 above) 212, emphasis added.

14) Fedeli (n. 1 above) 375.

15) Cf. S. J. Heyworth / H. W. Morwood, A Commentary on Propertius Book 3, Oxford 2011 ad loc.: “P. repeatedly questions or affirms the credibility and power of rumour.”

16) See Fedeli (n. 1 above) 375.

17) On the textual issue here, see Fedeli (n. 1 above) 907–8.

18) See T. K. Hubbard, Art and Vision in Propertius 2.31/32, TAPhA 130, 1984, 281–97, especially 293 with the observation that “*fabula* [is] pure fiction of a highly prejudicial nature”.

19) J. Diggle / F. R. D. Goodyear (eds), The Classical Papers of A. E. Housman, Cambridge 1972, 34.

20) See especially T. Reinhardt / M. Winterbottom, Quintilian: Institutio Oratoria Book 2, Oxford 2006, ad Inst. 2.4.2 (*fabulam, quae versatur in tragoediis atque carminibus non a veritate modo sed etiam a forma veritatis remota*). Cf. also the fragment of Asclepiades of Myrleia preserved by Sextus Empiricus at Contra Gramm. 263–64.

descendit fabula gentes).²¹ In 2.32, then, *fabula* can hardly fail to imply the speaker's disbelief in the charges being leveled against Cynthia, whether we understand the word in its more general sense of "narration" or as the *rumores vulgi* typical in Roman elegy.

Far from solving the logical difficulty of the believability of the charges in line 25, emendation to *cedere* only moves the issue to line 26 where the stories told about Cynthia are also called untrustworthy. The infinitive of 25 should anticipate this negation by encouraging the addressee to disregard the trustworthiness of the *inimica lingua*, but *cedere*, in the sense demanded here of "non resistere, non observari" (see TLL s. v. 727.82–728.39; cf. OLD s. v. 10d), never calls into question the veracity of its objects. Heyworth's rejection of *cedere* on the grounds of its "necessary sense" therefore seems justified; his suspicion of *credere*, however, is problematic for the same reasons I am suggesting in this note. Indeed, it is difficult to defend Heyworth's conjecture of *attendere* over *credere* if the initial argument for suspecting the vulgate is disregarded. Linguistic comparanda yield no preference, as there are no other attestations in the Latin canon of *credere / attendere linguae*. Heyworth defends *attendere* by comparing near synonyms of the phrase (e. g. Plin. Ep. 7.26.2: *ne sermonibus quidem malignis . . . attendit*),²² but the plausibility of *attendere* does not disprove *credere*, which in any case is well attested in similar circumstances (e. g. Cic. Fam. 3.10.10: *sed ne summorum quidem hominum malevolis de me sermonibus crederet*). Furthermore, *attendere* demands a metrical phenomenon rare in the Propertian corpus: out of 25 elided syllables in the middle of the fourth foot in Propertius' hexameters, only two (8%) are long (2.22.49: *et rursus puerum quaerendo audita fatigat*; 3.8.7: *tu minitare oculos subiecta exurere flamma*), as Heyworth's *attendere* demands.²³ Emendation, then, creates as many issues as it intends to solve in this distich; the paradosis at line 25 should be maintained.

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21) Cf. Heyworth / Morwood (n. 15 above) 143–44. Only once in the Propertian corpus, at 2.24.1 (*cum sis iam noto fabula libro*), does *fabula* not imply negative truth value.

22) Heyworth, Cynthia (n. 1 above) 251.

23) Note also Propertius' avoidance of elided diphthongs; see M. Platnauer, *Latin Elegiac Verse: A Study in the Metrical Usages of Tibullus, Propertius, and Ovid*, Cambridge 1951, 72, although cf. 77.