Francis CAIRNS Propertius 3.16

I offer as a case study exemplifying my approaches to the text and interpretation of Propertius a paper on Propertius 3.16 scheduled for publication in *Hermes* in the course of 2010. Although first drafted and largely developed before the appearance of the most recent OCT, it rejects explicitly or implicitly certain readings which were subsequently printed by the OCT editor, and it seeks to understand 3.16 without the transpositions printed by that editor.

The principles underlying my paper are these: the text of Propertius offered by the archetype (of which N is the best representative) can be corrected without controversy when the corrections are trivial and/or orthographic. But when it comes to emendations and transpositions, greater caution must be observed than many Propertian scholars, past and present, have thought necessary. In particular textual critics should avoid the traps of pedantry, prosaicism and linguistic naivety when dealing with a poet as innovative in every dimension and as intellectually coruscating as Propertius. Moreover, textual critics should be very sure before they propose emendations and transpositions that the have made every effort to understand the text presented by N in all its linguistic (including etymological) dimensions, its generic implications, and its intertextuality.

In my paper I examine (directly or indirectly) the following textual problems:

1) The two transmitted versions of the text of 3.16.13-14:
quisquis amator erit Scythicis licet ambulat oris,
nemo deo ut noceat barbarus esse volet. (N)

quisquis amator erit Scythiae licet ambulet oris,
nemo adeo ut feriat barbarus esse volet. (*CIL* IV.1950)

2) *exclusis* in 3.16.20:
sanguine tam parvo quis enim spargatur amantis
improbus? exclusis fit comes ipsa Venus.

3) Are transpositions necessary to establish a logical sequence of thought within 3.16?

Re 1: I argue, on the basis of ancient etymologies hitherto undetected in 3.16, that N's text (with corrections of *ambulat* and *deo*) can stand; *feriat*, printed in the most recent OCT, is therefore otiose.

Re 2: I contend that, because 3.16 is a *komos* (a generic identification which had not been proposed before), *exclusis* is correct; hence the most recent OCT's *ecce suis* is wrong.

Re 3: On the basis of thematic analysis and of Gallan influence which has not in the past been taken into consideration, I interpret as consistent and meaningful the sequential logic of the elegy, including its final portion; as a result I regard all editorial transpositions (including those of the most recent OCT) as unnecessary.