

BOOK REVIEW

Tibullus: Elegies. Translated by A. M. JUSTER. With an Introduction and Notes by ROBERT MALTBY. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. Reprinted with corrections, 2013. Pp. xxxiv + 142. Paperback, £9.99/\$14.95. ISBN 978-0-19-960331-2.

This welcome edition of Tibullus's elegies contains a 20-page introduction, an *en face* bilingual text and translation of the elegies of Tibullus (Books 1 and 2 of the *Corpus Tibullianum*), a 33-page section of explanatory notes for his sixteen elegies, a 6-page section of textual notes listing readings used in this edition, and a 3-page select bibliography.

Maltby's introduction examines (1) Tibullus's life and work, based on the *testimonia*; (2) his place in the history of Latin elegiac poetry; (3) his addressees, with emphasis on Delia, Nemesis, and Marathus; (4) his books as poetic units, with reference to structure, character, and theme; and (5) his influence on later poets, from classical times through the nineteenth century. Maltby regards Tibullus's elegies, appropriately so, "as a mixture of fact and fiction" (vii), consistent with a genre "which combines real life with literary convention" (xvi–xvii)—where (I would add) Tibullus may touch on the contemporary world and refer as well to real individuals outside the poem's web of self-reference, such as the historical figures Messalla and Messalinus. As Maltby shows, some characters may be real or imaginary: 1.4.73 Titius = the consul Marcus Titius or a fictitious 'John Doe' (98); 2.2.9 Cornutus = the *quindecimvir* M. Caecilius Cornutus (115) or (I would add) Sulpicia's Cerinthus, the traditional choice of many classical scholars;¹ 2.6.1 Macer = Aemilius Macer or Pompeius Macer or a pseudonym for a 'thin' lover (123).

The text used is based on a new investigation of the manuscripts, especially the Ambrosian (= A), for which Maltby substitutes later readings to correct obvious errors in it (see xxvii for a note on the text used and 124–29 for a list of the departures from A)—in which regard one misses a reference to the value of the

¹ See R. J. Ball, *Tibullus the Elegist: A Critical Survey* (Göttingen: Hypomnemata 77, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983) 166–67.

standard Teubner text edited by Georg Luck. Verse form presents a serious challenge for anyone attempting to translate classical poetry into English, inasmuch as classical meters are quantitative whereas English verse is accentual; although translations of classical verses into the original meters may well result in a metrical *tour de force*, they tend to have a jingly sound, which can obscure and overshadow the poet's artistry. Philip Dunlop translated some of Tibullus's elegies into free verse and others into heroic couplets—an approach conflicting with the poet's use of a single verse form, i.e. the elegiac couplet. Guy Lee translated all Tibullus's elegies into free verse, with units resembling elegiac couplets, although the rhythms seem inconsistent and the short lines often too short and lacking in content. Michael Putnam recently revised/published (posthumously) librarian Rodney Dennis's translation, conveying excellently the sense of the couplet through accentual six-beat and five-beat lines. A. M. Juster (= pseudonym of lawyer Michael Astrue) has now produced a translation conveying extremely well the sense of the couplet through alternating iambic hexameters and pentameters.

Tib. 2.1.1–10, the opening verses of the elegy about the Ambarvalia, the country festival celebrating the lustration of the fields, exemplify how faithfully and gracefully Juster has rendered Tibullus's couplets in English:

*Quisquis adest, faueas: fruges lustramus et agros,
 ritus ut a prisco traditus extat auo.
 Bacche, veni dulcisque tuis e cornibus uua
 pendeat, et spicis tempora cinge, Ceres.
 luce sacra requiescat humus, requiescat arator,
 et grave suspenso uomere cesset opus.
 solvite uincla iugis: nunc ad praesepia debent
 plena coronato stare boues capite.
 omnia sint operata deo: non audeat ulla
 lanificam pensis imposuisse manum.*

Be quiet, everyone! We're cleansing crops and fields,
 a rite still done as forebears passed it on.
 Come, Bacchus, and from your horns let sweet grapes hang
 and, Ceres, wreath your brow with stalks of corn.
 Let farmland rest in sacred light; let farmhands rest.
 Hang up the plough and stop the heavy work.
 Take straps from yokes; the oxen in full mangers ought

to stand now and their heads be crowned with garlands.
 Let everything be for the gods; let no one dare
 suggest a spinner touch her piles of wool.

In general, Juster's translation reproduces Tibullus's verses in simple yet polished language, and it contains many creative and appealing turns of phrase, of which the following include only a selection: 1.2.3 *percussum tempora Baccho* ("my brow is Bacchus-bludgeoned"); 1.3.38 *effusum uentis prae bueratque sinum* ("or give the wind their puffed-out chests of sails"); 1.8.11 *quid fuco splendente genas ornare* ("What do you get from dolling up with gleaming blush?"); 1.10.2 *quam ferus et uere ferreus ille fuit!* ("How ired and truly iron that man was!"); 2.3.57 *ut mea luxuria Nemesis fluat* ("so that my Nemesis may drip with luxury"); 2.6.11 *magna loquor, sed magnifice mihi magna locuto* ("I brag, but when I've bragged with braggadocio"). Juster translates Tibullus's phrase *uota cadunt* (2.2.17) as "prayers tumble out"—a translation Maltby justifies with the note "i.e. from Cornutus' lips. He finally makes his prayers" (115)—although, in keeping with the context of 2.2.17–18 (where 17 should read *uiden ut*, not *utinam*), Tibullus very likely means "your prayers come to pass" or "your prayers are answered" (see *OLD*, #17). The translations of the noun *caelum* as "heaven" rather than "sky" seem somewhat out of place in two locations (2.5.44 and 2.5.58), inasmuch as one normally thinks of heaven as a Christian concept—not the realm to which Aeneas will ascend as Indiges during his apotheosis (2.5.44) or from which Ceres will view the fields of future Rome, destined to rule the world (2.5.58).

The explanatory notes provide a useful commentary on the elegies, where, in a balanced and incisive manner, Maltby uses material from or expands on material in his earlier edition of Tibullus, without emphasizing (as he had in that edition) scholarship that mistakenly sees the poet's corpus as one in which "Hellenistic Greek themes and echoes permeate every elegy."² In his notes on Tib. 1.7, Maltby resurrects and reinforces an interpretation I proposed and published in more than one venue—that Tibullus abandons Augustan propaganda by presenting the peaceful side of Messalla's career and a positive picture of Egypt's religion, in a way that may argue for Egypt's peaceful reintegration into the Roman world (104 [also x–xi and xxi]). In his notes on Tib. 2.5 (in accordance with what full-length studies

² See R. Maltby, *Tibullus: Elegies. Text, Introduction and Commentary* (Cambridge [England]: Arca 41, Francis Cairns, 2002) 66 and *passim*.

have thoroughly demonstrated), Maltby appears to refine a view he expressed in his earlier edition, this time giving more credence, quite appropriately, to the belief that the poet may have adapted parts of Vergil's *Aeneid* for this elegy and heard those parts at prepublication recitations (120–22 [also xv]).

Like the Dennis/Putnam edition, the Juster/Maltby edition provides the modern reader with an attractive translation of Tibullus's elegies, written in a meter that preserves the poet's elegant language, unpretentious tone, and deceptively simple style, and accompanied by introductory/explanatory information that should enable his admirers to appreciate him all the more.

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