

## BOOK REVIEW

*A Literary Commentary on the Elegies of the Appendix Tibulliana.* By LAUREL FULKERSON. New York, NY.: Oxford University Press, 2017. Pp. 384. Hardback, \$115.00. ISBN: 978-0-19-875936-2.

The Students of the so-called *Appendix Tibulliana* have not been particularly well served by commentaries. In English, the slim, old volumes of Postgate (1903) and Smith (1913) and the recent, richly detailed commentary of Navarro Antolín (1996) cover only some of the poems in the corpus. Tränkle (1990) addresses all the poems in German, but is selective in his approach and strongly philological in his focus. Fulkerson's commentary will immediately be attractive for treating the entire [Tib.] 3 (excluding 3.7, the *Panegyricus Messallae*) in impressive detail, given the relatively low page count (384). The literary focus of the commentary is also welcome, and quite successfully executed. It arises from, and amply demonstrates the truth of, Fulkerson's personal judgment on the poems and their authors: "the more time I spend with this poetry, the better I like it; much of what at first looked to me—and is often considered by others—amateurish and awkward eventually has resolved itself into witty, pointed, and above all, sophisticated poetry written by authors who knew just what they were up to" (viii).

I begin with the volume's many strengths. The substantial introduction (59 pages) is excellent, and will be of value both to experienced scholars of elegy and to relative novices. The first three sections in particular (1-25) could serve as an introduction to the study of Latin elegy: they cover literary, cultural and theoretical issues for elegy as a whole and the unique features of the *Appendix Tibulliana* relative to that whole. Sections IV-VII (25-58) delve into more contested questions about [Tib.] 3, including authorship, dating, the division of the corpus into cycles, stylistic features (and any light they might shed on the foregoing questions) and the perennial debate about the identity of Sulpicia. Throughout, Fulkerson is sensible in her treatment of the many controversies and uncertainties surrounding this corpus, most often concluding, rightly, that no definitive answer can be reached on a given topic. Her surveys of the various possibilities are

almost always lucid. The bibliography she offers is impressive, here and throughout the notes; it is worth consulting the volume for this alone. Her pronouncements are authoritative (I particularly liked: “Elegiac love is unhappy, unequal, doomed: hours of despair outweigh moments of joy ...” [4] and the way that she raises and dismisses the tricky question of “ladies’ Latin” [48]).

The commentary itself (including introductions for each poem) is comprehensive in several senses: every couplet is afforded a substantial note, often with observations on every word; ancient parallels are listed assiduously and copiously; reference to modern scholarship is frequent and wide-ranging. The notes cover issues of text, meaning, *realia*, style and literary interpretation, often suggesting several possibilities without being unnecessarily prescriptive (the notes on 3.1.1 and 22 *donare* are good early examples). Different readers will value different things in a commentary; I myself enjoyed the frequent focus on poetic register, leitmotifs, metapoetic vocabulary and etymological play. Fulkerson offers many gems: a nice discussion of old age in elegy at 3.7-8, a succinct explanation of the relationship between Jupiter and the Fates in ancient literature at 3.4.47-8 and an off-hand comment about the “fungibility of elegiac women” at 3.19.3-4. Mistakes, excluding a few typos in Latin passages, are rare (I will note only the difficult 3.18.1-2, where *ne ... sim* is surely an optative subjunctive and not a purpose clause).

The bibliography, as mentioned, is very full, as are the *index locorum* (listing every instance where a passage is cited, even if it is not quoted) and general index. Fulkerson’s practice of printing each couplet before the relevant notes is convenient for the reader.

My reservations about the volume arise from disappointment that Fulkerson was not even more generous in offering her insights. She reprints the text of Lenz/Galinsky 1971 (7 differences listed on page 59) with no translation or *apparatus criticus*. The former absence is not necessarily a problem except for those, like the present reviewer, who find the meaning of the poems in [Tib.] 3 to be obscure rather often, and the help that Fulkerson’s notes offer on this front to be not quite frequent enough. The lack of an *apparatus* is more unusual in an OUP commentary, even one explicitly labelled as “literary.” Indeed, Fulkerson wades into textual issues regularly in her notes, but sometimes in an unfocussed manner and more than once not making fully clear the provenance of the alternatives discussed. Thus, for example, at 3.1.8 on page 81 she discusses the conjectures *novis* and *tuis*, accepting the latter, but we must wait until page 83 to discover that the reading of the manuscripts is *meis*. At 3.3.22, I had to resort to Navarro Antolín to

confirm that *gerit* is a manuscript reading and not a conjecture, as Fulkerson's prose could imply. The most frustrating example is the long discussion of the very difficult 3.13.1-2 (*Tandem uenit amor, qualem texisse pudori / quam nudasse alicui sit mihi fama magis*), which proceeds for 2½ pages before revealing that *pudore* exists as a textual variant for *pudori*, and "is probably to be preferred." If so, Fulkerson might have printed the variant, or at least discussed it earlier.

But these concerns in the end will perhaps not bother many readers. Overall, Fulkerson's volume represents an important step forward in the study of a very interesting corpus that well deserves the increased scholarly attention it has enjoyed in recent years.

KYLE GERVAIS

*The University of Western Ontario, kgervai2@uwo.ca*