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978-0-521-10318-3 - Powerplay in Tibullus: Reading Elegies Book One

Parshia Lee-Stecum

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This study explores the subtle, many-faceted interplay of power in Tibullus' first book of elegies. A series of power relationships are created by the text (lover and beloveds, poet and patron), and the processes through which power of various sorts can be exercised are brought to the foreground. Such powerplay within the text of Tibullus 1 has ramifications well beyond the erotic sphere. Gender categories, rural life, religion, *militia*, patronage are among the areas subsumed within and determined by the operation of power dynamics in this consistently underrated Augustan text. As secure meaning becomes elusive, the reader also is drawn into this nexus of powerplay. Taking a linear reading of Book One as its basis, this study uncovers the shifting, unstable ground of Tibullan elegy. The result is a picture of the poet and text of Book One far removed from the bland, safe and urbane 'Tibullus' of previous criticism.

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Who but a weakling would analyse power?

Allen Wheelis, *The Path Not Taken*

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PREFACE

This book is a substantial revision and expansion of a 1995 Cambridge doctoral thesis. In my time at Cambridge I received particular direction and inspiration from Michael Reeve and John Henderson (my own personal Scylla and Charybdis). The insights which they tried to foster and the methodological rigour which they encouraged are, I hope, still visible in the best parts of the present work. I am also grateful to Maria Wyke, Peter Davis and Pat Easterling for reading and commenting upon drafts at different stages, and especially to Kathleen Coleman whose valiant efforts, against strong resistance, to channel my unintelligible gibbering into eloquent prose have, I fear, not entirely succeeded. Thanks also to Pauline Hire, Muriel Hall and other members of Cambridge University Press for the work they have put into turning my manuscript into the artefact you now see before you. Suffice it to say, any problems which remain are entirely due to my own obtuse and stubborn nature.

During my time in Dublin while preparing this text for publication I was warmed and welcomed by my colleagues in the School of Classics, Trinity College. My gratitude to them for providing a stimulating working environment is considerable: a finer, kinder bunch of people were never assembled within the same academic department. Thanks, as well, to my students, for keeping me interested and on my toes: a valuable gift and one I am very much aware of even if it doesn't always seem that way.

Finally, for her care and support (and for convincing me *not* to start this book with a quotation from Barthes' *Lover's Discourse*), my thanks and love to Siân, whom all this has been done to impress. I don't know, I guess it's just a power thing ...

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ABBREVIATIONS

OLD *Oxford Latin Dictionary*. Oxford, 1968–82.

RE *Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*.
Stuttgart, 1893–1980

TLL *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*. Leipzig, 1900–

Abbreviations of journal titles correspond to those used in
L'Année Philologique.