

her beauty with traditional acts of mourning. Note the artful construction of the couplet with the parallel endings, *Parce solutis* and *parce genis*.

69-70. The whole elaborate death fantasy is now revealed as a play introducing the traditional *carpe diem* motif. *Caput* = a Greek accusative of respect. The image of Death's head veiled in shadows is striking.

71-72. This is the third appearance of *iners*. In line 3 it contrasts the peaceful and contented life of the poor farmer with the labor of the wealthy soldier. In line 58 it contrasts the life of the powerless lover with the glorious Messalla, and here it contrasts present vigor with the creeping impotence of old age. Tibullus uses this repetition of key terms to achieve compositional unity in a text that weaves together a variety of different themes. Deceit looks back to deceit in line 53 and points to the contrast between the unconventional elegiac lover and the respectable Messalla.

Note how the previous couplet's head of death, shrouded in darkness, here becomes the white head of old age.

73-78. The major themes of the poem are recalled in these last three couplets as the poem is brought to a close.

73-74. *Nunc leuis est tractanda uenus*: this not only states that love is appropriate to youth, but also announces Book 1's poetic program. *leuis* is the opposite of the traditional Roman virtue of *grauitas*, "seriousness," see Caecilius 72.6.

Frangere postes: the violent image prepares for the next couplet's explicit invocation of the *militia amoris* motif [27, 54-55].

Non pudet: the use of the indicative contrasts with line 29's *ne . . . pudet*. There the potential subjunctive speaks of how it *would* not shame the equestrian to Tibullus to pick up the hoe in his own hands. Here the indicative states that it *does* not shame him to break down the door of his beloved. The pastoral dream is revealed as the cover for an altogether more sordid, and more comical, urban reality.

75-76. Like Messalla, Tibullus too is a *dux* and a *miles*, but of a very different sort. He is a soldier of love. *Signa ruba*equae recalls line 4's *classica pulsa*.

77-78. Despite his earlier protestations of poverty, Tibullus already has his own "pile" (*aceruo composito*, compare line 10). *Dites* recalls line 1's *dinutias*.

The poem ends with a perfectly balanced pentameter that calls for a mean between poverty and wealth. Its note of resolution is deceptive, however. Can the conflicting positions of the lover and the soldier, the farmer and the

merchant, the poet and Messalla, Tibullus and Delia really be so easily resolved? The constantly shifting setting of this poem would suggest not.

TIB

1.2

Labin Elovic elegy, ed P. Allen
Miller 2002

Poem 1.2's urban setting picks up where 1.1 left off. The image of the poet breaking down his beloved's door in the previous poem's antepenultimate couplet directly prepares us for the present elegy's use of the *paraclausithyron*. The poet has not simply written poems that express the feelings of the moment, but he has carefully constructed a book.

Tibullus's poetry nowhere earns its reputation of being dreamlike so much as in 1.2 [41]. Even the setting is contradictory. When the poem opens, the poet is calling for more wine to induce sleep and seems to be in a private or symptic setting. Later in the same poem, he is portrayed as the *excelsus amator* standing before his beloved's door where she is kept under strict guard [10]. From a logical point of view, both cannot be true. He must be either in the bar or at the door. This confusion has given rise to much debate.

The partisans of each view line up the reasons why their opponents' reading could not be true and why the imagery either of the symposium or the *paraclausithyron* must be an illusion. Yet, the question is not which context is correct, but what does it mean to create poetry capable of being read in such contradictory ways? Why does Tibullus go to such lengths to subvert his own dreams?

This is not the sole example of such self-subverting contradictions within the poem. In lines 41-64, the poet urges Delia to let him in because he has obtained magical powers from a witch that will make him invisible to her *coniunx* ("husband" or "regular lover"). The barthos of the play is clear on its own terms, but the poet then proceeds to tell how the same witch's spell had failed to free him from the love of Delia - ostensibly because he secretly wished not for separation but for their love to be mutual. The spell, however, as the poem makes clear, was a failure on both counts. The absurdity of pretending that this kind of argument will persuade Delia only undercuts the speaker's credibility. In cases such as this, to insist on univocal meaning is to apply a standard alien to Tibullus's text and its time. The contradictions are not flaws in the poem's structure, but its subject matter in the deepest sense.

1-2. The poet calls for unmixed wine (*merum*) so that he might fall into a drunken stupor and escape his pain. The Romans normally drank their wine mixed with water.

Fessi is ambiguous. Does he seek the sleep of the exhausted man through strong drink (*fessi sopor*), or does that drink provide sleep to one who is exhausted but sleepless from love (*fessi lumnina*)? Both readings are possible.

3-4. Percussum . . . baccho is a memorable metaphor for the effects of wine. Its violence contrasts with the peacefulness of the slumber that results from it. Tempora = Greek accusative of respect.

The delayed appearance of amor is effective. Only now are we sure this is a poem about love.

5-6. The cause of the poet's dolor is made clear. Delia is under guard and held behind a locked door. Sera = the bar with which the door is shut. The dura . . . sera contrasts with the implied *mollitia* of the poet [7, 9]. Note the couplet's repeated as and ae diphthongs.

7-8. Let the door be exposed to the elements and the anger of Jupiter! Ianua is vocative. I have changed the punctuation of the OCT by adding a comma after domini at the caesura.

The placement of *difficilis* is happy. Morphologically it can be either vocative or genitive. We thus naturally take it with ianua before realizing it goes with domini. Effectively it modifies both.

Domini is the first indication we have that Delia may already have a lover. He is the master of the *domus*. The parallel with domina points up the disparity between the real power of the man to control the house and its slaves and the imagined power of the mistress over her *servus amoviti* [7, 8].

9-10. Note the anaphoric repetition of ianua linking this with the previous couplet, and ultimately looking back to line 6 [43].

Uni mihi: the poet fears he has other rivals as well.

Victoria recalls *victa lumina* in line 2. Note the subtle use of military metaphors throughout.

Furtim implies stealth, but also the poet's status as a thief. He would steal the love of *dominus* [10-12]. Therefore, the door must be bid to open without a sound.

11-12. If in my madness I have cursed you, may those curses fall upon my head! The poet's tone has changed from threats (lines 7-8), to hopeful prayer (lines 9-10), to abject wheedling.

Dicere mala = both to speak ill of and to curse.

Dementia is the madness of both love and drink. Its personification distances the poet, thereby diminishing his responsibility.

13-14. The poet prays to the door as one would to a deity. The basic prayer formula of Roman religion was *do ut des*. The relation to the gods was conceived in terms of contractual exchange relations. I give you x so that you may give me y. The poet here beseeches the door not to think of his recent impiety but to recall (te meminisse deceo) the garlands (*Florida serata*) he has left on it as a suppliant. Leaving garlands on the door of the beloved is a

commonplace in Alexandrian and Latin erotic poetry. This closes the address to the door.

15-16. Venus helps those who help themselves! The poet addresses Delia directly. The anaphora of te and tu eases the transition and creates the appearance of unity. This next section, lines 15-40, focuses on Venus's aid to Tibullus and Delia in their efforts to deceive her coniunx (41).

17-22. Note the anaphoric repetition of illa as the poet presents his catechism of Venus. Venus is the patron saint of illegitimate love. She teaches how to open closed doors and how to creep from bed on silent feet.

21-22. Docet governs conferre and abdere. The husband or *dominus* (viro) is not only to be fooled, but right before his very eyes (coram). Nurus . . . loquaces = "nods that speak what mouths cannot" (Purman 1973: 64).

Compositis . . . notis = an agreed-upon code. Ovid will take this conceit of the lover's secret signs and turn it into an entire poem in *Amores* 1.4.

23-24. Inertia here becomes the enemy of Venus, where in 1.1.5 and 1.1.58 it was her ally. It should be remembered, however, that one possible meaning of *iners* is "impotent." Love is by nature *mollis*, but only to a certain point. Judging where that point was part of what made Roman masculinity a perilous venture. The heterosexual Don Juan could be considered *mollis* in Roman terms as well as the passive homosexual (*cinaedus*). Neither exemplified the *graviditas* and self-control expected of the aristocratic male. At the same time, terms like *mollis* and *durus* take their meaning from a context that privileges masculine potency. The dangers of *mollitia*, then, loom on all sides. In elegy, Roman masculinity is in a perpetual state of crisis.

The repetition of docet from line 19 continues the anaphoric pattern. Timor is banished. The lover like the soldier must lead the *vita activa*.

25. Behold, I am one of Venus's protected few! The missing pentameter says words to the effect that, though the poet wanders (tagor) throughout the city (tota urbe) at night (cum tenebris), "he nonetheless remains safe."

25a-26. After dark, brigands roamed freely in Rome where there was no official police force.

Occurrat = final subjunctive without ut, a poetic construction.

27-28. The lover enjoys divine protection. Horace treats the same commonplace with equal humor in *Odes* 1.22, "*Integer vitae* . . ."

29-30. This divine protection extends even to the very elements (imber)

whose punishing blows he earlier wished upon the recalcitrant door and would normally affect the *exclusus amator* who stands outside it. See line 7. *Pigra* = "numbing."

Note the anaphoric repetition of *non*.

31-32. The lover suffers the hardships of labor just like the soldier in 1.1.3. Note the shift from the confident indicative of *non laedit* to the operative subjunctive of *reseret* and *uocet*.

The object of the preposition *ad* is the delayed *sonum*. The emphasis therefore falls on *digiti*: "at the sound of her finger." The hyperbaton, or disruption of normal word order, allows for the juxtaposition of *tacturuna* with *sonum*. On the lovers' agreed-upon signs, see lines 21-22.

33-36. *Parcite luminibus* could be addressed to the slaves who are carrying torches and accompanying the lover on his late-night rendezvous. "Whether a man or a woman should be met on the road, spare the lights." The gnomic quality of the statement could also make it a general statement of amorous wisdom addressed by the *praceptor amoris* to his pupils. As noted above, this poem has no one setting nor a single addressee. The more common reading translates *parcite luminibus* as "avert your eyes," citing *parce oculis* in Propertius 4.9.53. The addressee then becomes a generic "you." *Lamina*, while it refers to "eyes" in line 2, clearly means "torches" in 36, just two lines later. A shift in meanings from one couplet to the next would be harsh, but the repetition of the same meaning without alteration would be otiose. Either alternative is problematic. The ambiguity, however, is purposeful. Love's thievish prospers in the dark, and we should avert our eyes since lovers are protected by Venus.

Furta picks up on *furtim* in lines 10 and 19.

37-38. *Ocular*: operative subjunctive, with *id* understood.

39-40. The threat here is castration. Venus traditionally arose from the foam and blood of Uranus's testicles when they were cut off and tossed into the sea by Saturn. Love was born from an act of unmanning and whoever gossips about the poet and his trysts will discover this truth. The paradox of love as both *durus* and *mollis*, masculine and effeminizing, continues. *Rapido* . . . *mari* recalls *Carullus* 70.4's *rapida* . . . *aqua*.

41-42. This couplet opens the third section of the poem on the *saga* or "witch," which stretches to line 64. The witch is a stock figure in elegy; see 1.5.59 and Propertius 1.1.19-24. See also the introduction to the notes on this poem.

Huius refers back to *quicumque loquax* in line 39 and eases the transition from one section to the next.

Coniunx most often means spouse but can refer to anyone with whom a woman has a long term and exclusive relationship.

Verax suggests that such promises would not normally be trusted.

43-44. In light of the poet's later equivocation as to the witch's power, his claims to having been an eyewitness to her powers lose credibility. Leading the stars from the sky and making rivers reverse course are standard wonders attributed to witches in poetry. See Propertius 1.1.23-24.

Carmen originally referred to ritual chanting and hence spells. It later became a generic word for song. Tibullus and other Augustan poets play on both meanings. Note the use of anaphora in lines 43-56 to give the sense of a heightened ritual language.

45-46. The list of wonders continues. *Finditque solum manesque sepulcris* | *elicit* = "both cleaves the soil and conjures the spirits of the dead from their graves." *Manes* can mean either ghosts or corpses, though the former is more common.

47-48. The witch is comically pictured as commanding an army of zombies with her shrill magic cry (*stridore*). Milk is a frequent part of rituals involving the dead; see the note on *Carullus* 101.1-2.

49-50. Even the natural world is at her disposal. *Aestiuo* . . . *orbe* = summer sky.

51-52. *Dicitur*: we have now left the realm of "eyewitness" reporting and are dealing with hearsay. The poet's claims to credibility are progressively weakened.

Malas Medaeae . . . *herbas*: these are not good omens given the results of Jason's love for Medea: the murder of her father, brother, and of her and Jason's children.

Hecate: a goddess of the underworld. She is an aspect of Diana in Roman religion. Her cult featured dog sacrifice and her apparitions were often accompanied by packs of dogs.

53-54. The number three is common in magic. *Hecate* was also known as the triform goddess. *Quis* = archaic *quibus*.

55-56. Seeing is not believing for the *coniunx*! *Sibi* is pleonastic, and *uiderit* assumes *non*. The ironic contrast with Tibullus's claim to authenticate the witch's miraculous powers through eyewitness testimony in line 43 is to be savored.

57-58. The poet catches himself up short. If *Delia's coniunx* cannot see Tibullus when he lies in the former's bed with his beloved, then presumably he

cannot see Delia with others as well. He issues a rapid correction that undercuts his already thin credibility.

The enjambment of *omnia* and the splitting of the last clause by the caesura in the pentameter gives the couplet a jerky rhythm reminiscent of hasty improvisation.

59-60. The poet anticipates Delia and the reader's obvious question: *quid credam?* The response is comically ridiculous: because the witch said she could make Tibullus fall out of love. Yet, he is still in love. The poet, however, has laid his rhetorical trap with all due skill. Readers are lulled into a false sense of security through the postponement of *solvuere* until after the caesura in the pentameter. We are led to believe that this will be another tale of the power of the witch to produce *amor*, not destroy it.

61-62. The poet without skipping a beat describes the ceremony. First he is purified with the sulfur from torches, and then a dark victim (*hostia pulla*) is offered to the gods of the underworld who were appealed to in magic (*magicos . . . deos*).

63-64. Now comes the poet's explanation for why the spell did not work: it was his fault not the witch's. He prayed for mutual love not separation. But this is rhetorical sleight-of-hand. What the poet offers as proof of the witch's power already presumes that Delia has consented to join in the effort to deceive the *coninx*, which would mean that she had been persuaded by his argument. If not, their love is not mutual and the spell failed.

65-74. The theme of separation alluded to in the previous couplet (*abesset*) prepares for the next section of the poem, which inveighs against military adventurism in favor of a life of agrarian simplicity like that envisioned in 1.1.

65-66. *Ille* is generally assumed to be the *coninx* but could well be Tibullus himself. Poem 1.3 shows him after he has fallen ill on the island of Corcyra while accompanying Messalla on just the kind of expedition he here condemns.

Ferreus is a pun. War is characteristic of the Iron Age whereas agrarian repose is a traditional mark of the Golden Age. See 2.3.35. Thus, the soldier is not only hard-hearted he is also symptomatic of the fallen age in which the poet lived. Note that *praedas* are the natural corollary of *arma*. The soldier and the merchant are both men of the Iron Age who travel in search of wealth on the *viae Messalla* builds. These are the "iron" or *duriss* men of traditional *virtus*.

67-68. *Cilicum* = genitive plural. The Cilicians were noted pirates whom

Pompey had defeated in 66 BCE. They also figured in Messalla's eastern campaign. *Ante* = adverb.

69-70. The *ferreus* hero, now woven out of silver and gold, sits upon his horse.

71-72. The idyll of rural poverty makes its return, but the poet says he *would* be able (possim) to adopt this lifestyle, not that he actively seeks it. His real interest, as before, is Delia, and there is no sign that she shares his pastoral reveries.

Bovae . . . iungere = to hitch oxen to the plough.

73-74. The tentative *licet* is to be contrasted with the soldier's more assured *licet* in line 67.

The interweaving of *mollis . . . somnus* and *incolta . . . humo* (uncultivated and hence hard earth) nicely captures the pastoral paradox. It is only those who are *culti* (cultivated in the sense of cultured) who imagine the shepherd's sleep to be soft. *Cultus* and *mollis* are practically synonymous for cultural refinement.

75-86. This section continues the theme of sleep but now focuses on the sleepless nights the poet spends because of the tortures of Venus. It is one of the most artfully constructed passages in Tibullus [43].

75-76. Tyrian purple was an expensive dye, synonymous with luxury.

77-78. *Plumae* = feather pillows. *Stragula* = coverlets. *Sonitus placidae . . . aquae* = a fountain in a wealthy house.

79-80. Are my sleepless nights the result of a rash or slanderous word against Venus? *Numina* = poetic plural.

81-82. Or perhaps I am said (feror) to have committed sacrilege? *Incestus* = the negative of *carrus*. *Serta*: see line 14. Are these the same garlands the poet has left on Delia's door?

83-84. The poet's self-flagellation reaches a fevered pitch. The combination of self-abasement with eroticism implicit in the pose of the *servus amoris* here becomes explicit in the image of the poet on his hands and knees kissing the threshold to the temple of Venus. This of course is exactly the position of the *exclusus amator*. The poet returns to the themes that opened the poem.

85-86. The image is one of comic masochism even as it recalls 1.1.73-74's *frangere postes | non pudet*.

87-98. The final section returns to the poem's second theme, the powers of Venus.

87-88. Cauero = future imperative, "beware!" Tu is either one of the poet's drinking companions or the reader. Usque = "forever."

89-90. The aging lover is a standard figure of ridicule. See 1.1.72.

91-92. The pathos of tremula . . . uoce adds to the comic effect. We should probably assume *tremulis* with *manibus* as well.

93-94. The figure of the *exclusus amator* returns. Nec . . . puduit recalls 1.1.29 and 1.1.74. The ancilla is detained while doing errands in the forum (*medio . . . foro*) in order to carry a message from the aged lover to his *domina*.

95-96. Circumterro = a Tibullan coinage, to rub around. The crowd of boys and youths jostles around the old man as they mock him and spit. Desput = apotropaic magic to ward off such a fate. See lines 53-54.

Molles: primarily because of their youth, but also because they are the right age for elegy, the *mollis* genre. See 1.1.71-74.

97-98. The prayer that Venus spare him is too late. He is her slave (*seruit*), and she should not burn her own harvest. The shift to the agricultural metaphor recalls 1.1.

1.4

Priapus introduces the figure of the *praecipitor amoris* in a poem that looks back to the pederastic content of Hellenistic elegy. This poem has been neglected in previous textbooks. It is not hard to understand why. It features a speaker who is iconographically represented as either having or being a giant penis giving advice on how to pick up young boys. Yet, to ignore this poem is to ignore much of the fundamental background that separates the world of the elegists from our own.

Roman society, while possessed of a strict sexual code in terms of what acts were allowed and with whom, was also frankly erotic. Roman sexuality was understood almost exclusively in phallic terms, that is to say in terms of the symbolic representation of the male genitals. Phalloi hung from small children's necks as amulets to guard them from harm. Winged phaloi decorated oil lamps that hung over dining tables and sexual scenes not infrequently decorated the walls of the homes of the wealthy. The moral code that regulated this culture of sexual display was one that privileged masculine penetration and that stigmatized as *mollis* [9], and hence

effeminate, whoever was penetrated. Penetration equaled power and dominance.

Homosexuality *per se*, then, was not stigmatized nor considered mutually exclusive from heterosexuality, as demonstrated by Catullus's Lesbia and Juvenius poems. Indeed, these terms are themselves misleading since they imply a stable sexual identity based on the gender of one's beloved. This was not the case in the Greco-Roman world. What was stigmatized, however, was a man allowing himself to be penetrated by another man. Pederasty was not effeminate since the older male partner was always imagined as the active penetrating party. In this light, the truly subversive nature of the elegists' self-depiction as *mollis* becomes clear. Although on one level they remain active penetrating males, their submission to their mistresses (*dominae*) casts them in the role of the passive. In this context, Priapus's role as *praecipitor amoris* [7] seems obvious.

Poem 1.4 is important for two other reasons. First, it demonstrates Roman erotic elegy's roots in Alexandrian poetry, which was predominantly pederastic [5, 25, 44]. Indeed, almost every theme in this poem can be directly paralleled somewhere in the corpus of Hellenistic poetry. Second, it introduces the theme of *munera*, gifts. Boys only yield to the *divus amator*. The same thing is true of Delia and Nemesis, confirming the analogy between the feminine and the effeminate positions in Roman thought.

Indeed, the interesting question is not "why is there pederastic poetry in elegy?" but, given its ideological and Hellenistic background, "why is heterosexual love so dominant?" The answer may well have to do with the unstable power relations that characterized Rome during this time of civil upheaval at the beginning of principate. The *servus amoris/domina* relationship represented an inversion of normal relations that were deeply embedded in Roman society. Marriage, family, and the inheritances dependent on them were all parts of the ideological matrix from which elegy's peculiar understanding of love sprang. Elegiac love embodied a felt instability in power relations that could at any moment be reversed, an instability that Augustus attempted to address through his moral reform program [22-23]. The pederastic relationship was more rule-bound and by definition more temporary. The elder lover might claim to be the young boy's slave, but he could never slip into the passive role. The much-maligned figure of the adult passive, the *cinadus*, was always pictured as an adult man who was penetrated by other adult men. Within the sexual terminology of the day, a man who liked to be penetrated by boys simply did not exist. In the ancient world, the pederast was less subversive than the elegist.

1-6. The poet prays to Priapus to teach him how to attract boys.

1-2. The poet following the standard formula of Roman prayer, *do ut des*, prays that the statue of Priapus be protected from the elements so that it might