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POWERPLAY IN TIBULLUS

POEM TWO

Setting the scene

Critical approaches to the second elegy have been dominated by two interrelated concerns. The function of the paraclausithyron form in the poem has been examined in detail, in particular by Copley¹ and Vretska,² neither of whom were able to draw firm conclusions about the meaning of the text from appeal to that genre. For Copley 'the incident is a literary formality, a convenient frame on which to hang a poem',³ while Vretska points to the more general difficulty of establishing the context of the poem with any certainty: 'Gewiß, Tibull zeichnet die realen Situationen nirgends klar und genau aus, sondern begnügt sich oft mit wenigen Andeutungen.'⁴ Vretska's comments lead into the second, more general concern: the nature of the poem's 'dramatic setting'. Copley, for example, sees the dramatic setting as certain and fixed: 'a dramatic scene that seems to transport the reader to the doorway and place him at the side of the *exclusus*'.⁵ But the poem resists such attempts to pin it down conclusively, as Vretska and Bright⁶ have pointed out. Kennedy, who cites the comments of Lee⁷ (who in turn is influenced by Vretska), sees 'the subject-matter and rapid changes of scene ... [as] remi-

niscient of mime',⁸ but suggests of the possibilities of 'performance' (a 'notion ... [which is] entailed by and encoded in a phrase like "dramatic setting"')⁹ that 'neither its establishment nor its refutation would "fix" or guarantee the meaning of the text'.¹⁰ The attempts of critics to 'fix' the meaning of the poem by establishing a certain dramatic setting for it are destabilised by the variety of possibilities which the text raises. As Kennedy puts it: '1.2 has placed considerable difficulties in the path of ... [such an] analysis'.¹¹

The paraclausithyron 'frame' and the uncertain or shifting nature of the setting both suggest the power-struggles at work in the text. The basis of the paraclausithyron form is the initial powerlessness of the poet/lover,¹² locked outside the beloved's door, and his attempts to gain his desires (access to the beloved) through the power of his words. Thus, both an initial position in a power structure, and the enactment of power struggle, are inherent in the paraclausithyron. Similarly, the text's suggestion of dramatic setting only to create uncertainty as to its exact nature involves the reader, as it has the critics who have approached the poem, in a struggle to fix meaning. The uncertainty of the setting of the poem could, thus, be seen to indicate the reader's place in a power dynamic with the text, a struggle for meaning where the reader's position is destabilised and remains insecure. In this way, the central concerns or problems which critics of the poem have isolated foreground the power relationships set up by the text, relationships which involve both poet/lover and reader.

Knocking on the door

Adde merum innoque nouos compese dolores,
occupet ut fessi lumina uicta sopor;

¹ Copley (1956) 91-107.
² Vretska (1955) 20-46, who also has a good summary of the views of earlier critics on the second elegy as a paraclausithyron and, more generally, on the dramatic setting of the poem; see also Yardley (1978) 19-34.
³ Copley (1956) 91; see, however, Wimmel (1983), who believes that the paraclausithyron form is determined by the appearance of the *conuinx* and is a demonstration of the poet/lover's reaction to his consequent powerlessness, 107.
⁴ Vretska (1955) 23.
⁵ Copley (1956) 92.
⁶ Bright (1978) 134.
⁷ Lee (1990) 116.

⁸ Kennedy (1993) 21.
⁹ Kennedy (1993) 21.
¹⁰ Kennedy (1993) 21.
¹¹ Kennedy (1993) 18.
¹² See Wimmel, who stresses this aspect of the paraclausithyron form in the second elegy (Wimmel (1983) 107).

neu quisquam multo percussum tempora Baccho
 excitet, infelix dum requiescit amor:
 nam posita est nostrae custodia saeua puellae,
 clauditur et dura ianua firma sera.
 te Iouis imperio fulmina missa petant,
 ianua, iam pateas uni mihi, uicta querelis,
 neu furtim uerso cardine aperta sones,
 et mala siqua tibi dixit dementia nostra,
 ignoscas: capiti sint precor illa meo.
 te meminisse decet quae plurima uoce peregre
 supplice, cum positi Florida serta darem. (1-14)

The first word of the second elegy is a command (*adde*). The initial command might suggest that the poet, in contrast to the first elegy, is taking a dominant position from the start. As Bright has pointed out, the language of lines 1-6 is vigorous, exploiting military vocabulary (*compesce; occupet; percussum; uicta*).¹³ Again the separation of *militia* and *amor* is elided by a shared vocabulary.¹⁴ But while Bright sees such expressions as likening the poet's vigil outside Delia's door to a siege laid upon a city, the military language is in fact directed against the poet's own state:

uinoque nouos compesce dolores,
 occupet ut fessi Iumina uicta sopor (1-2).

The poet is attempting to use the power of wine to restrain (*compesce*) his grief, enabling sleep (*sopor*) to take control (*ut occupet*) of his eyes, conquered and enslaved by exhaustion (*fessi uicta*). He wishes to be controlled by these relatively beneficial forces rather than by *dolor*, which he wants to suppress. This maintains the impression given by the first elegy of the poet as passive, needing the power of other forces, in this

¹³ Bright (1978) 135-6.

¹⁴ The surprise so often expressed that love should be described in terms also used for war, a surprise that manifests itself by calling that use metaphorical, is indicative of a definition of love which wishes to exclude or disown notions of violence, aggression, the desire to impose domination, or to have domination imposed.... Kennedy (1993) 55.

case wine and sleep, to achieve his desires, in this case to create some comfort by suppressing his grief. It is ironic, then, that he begins with an order, effectively commanding that he be controlled. In his description of this desired state he sees himself as acted upon violently by the power of wine (summed up by the metonymic name of the god Bacchus, a figure of power): *multo percussum tempora Baccho* (3). Again, rest is a desired state (*neu quisquam*)¹⁵... [*me*] *excitet*, and, as at 1.1.43, *requiescit*), although the poet has become so dominated by his love that he actually speaks of his own rest, his own *sopor*, as the rest of *infelix amor: infelix dum requiescit amor* (1.2.4). It is the effect that his sleep will have on *amor* which determines the poet's desire for *sopor*. *Amor* seems to have become so entirely a part of him that his rest is *amor's* rest.

Lines 5-6 give the reason for the poet's *dolor: nam*... The expression *nouus dolores* might have led the reader to expect something other than the simple restraint before the mistress; door of poem one, and in a sense the situation¹⁶ is different¹⁷ - and worse. Not only is he excluded from entry, but there is another force ranged against him: *custodia saeua*. Unlike the situation in poem one, where the terms *custodes* and *custos* referred to the gods of the estate (the Lares), who, the poet at least hoped, would act on his behalf, the *custodia* of poem two is a power operating against the poet. It is not a potential or doubtful force, like the powers which the poet desires to come to his aid in the opening elegy, but real and harsh (*saeua*, just as the door again is *dura*). The door is strong and impervious to the poet: *clauditur et dura ianua firma sera* (6). The poet is powerless to overcome it, hence his *dolores*, and hence his need for the power of wine to suppress his grief and bring rest and comfort. It is clear that the sentinel has been deliberately placed (*posita est*) and the door closed. This picture of the

¹⁵ This perhaps suggests there is a threat that such rest might be disturbed.

¹⁶ At least the situation as it is now revealed: since it is possible that these elements, although not revealed by the poet in the first elegy, were present earlier.

¹⁷ For a different view, see Henderson (1987) 21, who argues that the suggestion of 'newness' here is problematic and proposes the emendation *nouo* qualifying *uinoque*.

physical manoeuvres of love (like the more than physical enslavement of the poet by his love explicated in poem one) describes a struggle. Someone is acting against the poet and, at the moment at least, seems in control. The question which most immediately faces the reader is: who is this 'someone'? In poem one the poet was chained *outside* the door and the implication of his appeal to Delia to comply with his wishes (*iungamus amores*) was that it was *she* who was opposed to him in this. But the exact situation remained relatively ambiguous (not necessarily precluding Delia's willingness) and open to different readings. Similarly, the description of the sentinel as *nostra puella* could conceivably mean that he was placed either by her, or by another for her 'protection'. This is suggested by *domini*,¹⁸ which denotes the possessor of the *iamna* and refers to some powerful male figure (at this stage possibly anything from a father to a husband or lover) who locks her in. This provides a contrastingly powerful male to the poet's passive one, and, by suggesting that it is this *dominus* who is responsible for the guard, it leaves open the possibility that Delia is willing. *Difficilis* suggests the power struggle between the poet/lover and the stronger forces of the door and its *dominus*.

The poet now changes addressee, blaming the door itself for his lock-out, still seeming hesitant to specify the human source of his suffering. First he curses. He wishes upon the door hardship, just as its being locked has caused him hardship (7-8). Once more, as in the first poem, the poet must rely upon the power of a third party, in this case the ultimate power of Jupiter: *Iouis imperio*. The violence of his wishes – whipping (*uerberet*) by rain and attack by lightning (*fulmina petant*) – demonstrates the fierce, warlike nature of the *amor*-struggle in these elegies (recalling the destruction of the door at 1.1.73). The poet/lover attempts to take on the power latent in the curse by voicing it. But, of course, the verbs are in the subjunctive and the reader may doubt the likelihood that Jove will enforce the poet's words, especially given the lines which

follow. The poet appeals directly to the door: *iamna iamnataas*, with the words *uni mihi* suggesting the threat of rivals. This opens new possibilities for reading the poem to this point. Is it a rival who caused the poet's exclusion? The implication that the door itself has the power to grant the poet's wish is artificial, since the poem makes it clear there is human agency behind his exclusion. Still, the idea that the poet is at the mercy of an inanimate object emphasises his powerlessness.¹⁹ The hope that the door be *uicta querelis* demonstrates that the complaints of the poet, his threats (curses) and appeals, are themselves an attempt to gain power over the door (*uicta iamna*) by coercion and persuasion. The poem itself is part of the power struggle. Victory in this particular skirmish, the tipping of the power balance in favour of the poet, would result in the opening of the door (*aperita*). But line 10 introduces another element, the necessity for secrecy: *neu furtim . . . sones*. This suggests that even such a victory leaves the victor vulnerable. The knowledge of it must be concealed since, it is implied, that knowledge would enable those with the power to do so to act against him. This might suggest to the reader that knowledge is itself power of a sort, and correspondingly so is the ability to deceive. To gain such power (of self-protection) the poet must appeal to an inanimate object (10): a door. His position may not look strong,²⁰ especially since he has just cursed the same inanimate object he is depending upon, a fact he draws attention to in the next couplet (11-12). He seems ignorant himself of his curses, unsure whether he pronounced them or not: *mala signa . . . dixit*. It is *dementia nostra*, not the poet, that is the subject of *dixit*.²¹ He describes himself as mentally, and therefore verbally, out of his own control.²² He can now only appeal to the door to forgive him for having cursed it: *ignoscas*.²³ It could be seen as a mark of the general

¹⁹ For a similar effect of the lover's address to the door in another Roman para-clausithyron see Propertius 1.16.17ff.

²⁰ Not to mention how comic it might appear.

²¹ He has not been the subject of any finite verb in the poem so far.

²² *Dementia* recalls the controlling power of *amor* over the lovers at *Ecllogue* 2.69 and

6.47.

²³ The joke is, of course, that doors are not sentient in the first place.

¹⁸ Which I take with *difficilis*, as Lee (1990) 116.

weakness of his argument and in particular the weakness of his confidence in his own power to carry the curses through and gain access without the goodwill of other powers (i.e. the door itself) that the poet takes back his curses, after the space of only three or four lines, in an extremely self-abasing, apologetic way: *capiti sint precor illa meo* (12).

While the poet, in writing the elegy, takes on (or at least tries to take on) the controlling role, shaping the course of the verse, at the same time the text suggests that the poet/lover is powerless to control the course of the poem. Instead its course seems determined by the possible reactions of a door: caustic when the poet thinks it is adverse to him, grovelling when he thinks these curses may anger the door into excluding him in the future. Even when he is apparently aggressive (as with his initial curses against the door) the poet soon returns to passivity, potentially suffering from his own wishes.²⁴ The powerlessness of the poet is extended even to his ability to control the final target of his words. This suggests further complications to the power structures in which the poet and reader are involved. While the poet/lover is presented as powerless, as an object of humour for the reader, at the same time the poet (the author) is in control of this presentation. The reader is thus at once in a superior position in relation to the powerless poet/lover and is *being placed* in that position (and thus to some extent manipulated) by the poet/author.²⁵

The recantation of the poet/lover's curses also suggests that the poem could be read as an argument in which the poet uses various techniques (such as cursing or appeal) to get his way. As one technique seems unsuccessful or likely to create more difficulties for him (by his supposedly offending the door, for example), it is rejected and disavowed in favour of another. The possibility of such a (perhaps) more guarded reading is certainly open. So too it is possible to understand this im-

²⁴ In fact, if he remains outside Delia's door (and as yet there is no sign of his being admitted or going away) he has as much chance of being beaten by rain or even possibly hit by lightning as the door.

²⁵ For further discussion of these issues see my reading of poem five below, esp. 156-8, 164-5, 168-9, and 178-9.

sioned address to an inanimate object as comic.²⁶ The humour may be deliberate on the poet/lover's part, in which case he might seem less serious in his grief, or it may be unintentional, in which case the poet/lover's position seems all the more ridiculous and pathetic in its powerlessness.

Te meminisse decet suggests that the ability to determine what is remembered, what is known, is connected directly to the ability to control eventual action. The word *decet* (re-calling 1.1.53 and 71) again brings before the reader the poet's definition of morality (what is 'right') in terms of his desire for Delia. The reason, the reader may think, that it is right for the door to remember one thing and not the other is simply that the one may lead to the poet's admittance (and supposedly his possession of Delia) while the other will not. The emphasis is again on the poet's resort to appeals to the power of others (even objects, as in this case) in order to achieve what he desires: *quae plurima uoce peregi | supplice*. The picture of him as a suppliant, worshipping before Delia's door, is underlined by reference to the floral garlands he has given, which recall the garlands he dedicated before the door of Ceres in poem one (1.1.15-16). This similarity suggests the goddess-like power which Delia has over the poet's life, and points to the shared process which underlies this similarity between the religious procedure (prayer/supplication) and operations within the sphere of *amor*: the attempt to secure power.

Setting out the rules

Tu quoque, ne timide custodes, Delia, falle;
 audendum est: fortes adiunat ipsa Venus
 illa fauet seu quis iuuenis noua limina temptat
 seu reserat fixo dente puella fores.
 illa docet furtim molli decedere lecto,
 illa pedem nullo ponere posse sono,
 illa uiro coram nutus conferre loquaces
 blandaque compositis abdere uerba notis;

²⁶ Or as a set piece of the *exclusus amator*: an immediately recognisable representation of the situation (and grief) of the unrequited lover.

nec docet hoc omnes sed quos nec inertia tardat
nec uetat obscura surgere nocte timor.
en ego cum tenebris tota uagor anxius urbe

nec sinit occurrat quisquam qui corpora ferro
uulneret aut rapta praemia ueste petat.
quisquis amore tenetur eat tutusque sacerque
qualibet; insidias non timuisse decet.
non mihi pigra nocent hibernae frigora noctis,
non mihi cum multa decidit imber aqua;
non labor hic laedit, reseret modo Delia postes
et uocet ad digitum me taciturna sonum. (15-34)

The addressee changes once more, with the words *tu quogue*, as if the direct approach to Delia is a second thought,²⁷ as if perhaps the poet is reluctant to speak to her, or, having failed in his approach to the door, he must now try another approach. He appeals to another power to admit him: to Delia herself. Such an address, with its advice to the furtive lover, seems to imply that Delia is receptive to the poet's desires. *Ne timide custodes*, Delia implies that the poet believes she *does* at present fear them, that she does not wish them to be there. The poet thus expects Delia to achieve his desires for him: *custodes*, Delia, *falle*. *Audentum est* raises a question: why, then, has the poet not dared, but must rely upon Delia? Or has he dared and failed? As usual, the poet seems powerless, useless. He must rely on Delia's initiative and power, and assures Delia that, should she attempt this, she in turn will be supported by the power of a third party, the goddess Venus: *fortes adiunat ipsa Venus* (16). But the examples of the goddess' favour (*illa fauet*) which the poet proceeds to give question this. The young man *quis*... *noua limina temptat* is in a similar position to the poet,²⁸ yet the poet has been, so far, unsuccessful. Is it, perhaps, that he is not *fortis*; is the goddess?

²⁷ It may, perhaps, also mirror the wandering mind of someone who is drunk (1-6), but this is not clear.

²⁸ *Noua* recalls *nouos* of the first line, suggesting that the poet too has not been by the door long.

power insufficient, or is perhaps the statement (line 16) invalid? Whatever the case, as a result of such doubt the second example of Venus' favour, which corresponds to what the poet hopes will be Delia's position (line 18), seems far less certain or straightforward than the poet suggests.²⁹ The repeated *illa*... *illa*... *illa* (17, 19, 20, 21) suggests that Venus is in control, determining the rules of the game. It certainly appears that, in the poet's mind, his love (the power of Venus) is the central controlling force.

The poet (maintaining the relation of knowledge to power) goes on to suggest that part of Venus' power is bestowed upon mortals through teaching (*illa docet*). Secrecy is foremost: *furtim molli decedere lecto*... *pedem nullo ponere posse sono* (19-20, recalling line 10).³⁰ This suggests that the ability to conceal information is a positive power (in the amatory context at least), enabling lovers to achieve their desires without the threat of possibly stronger forces intervening. Lines 21-2 emphasise the importance of knowledge in this regard: knowledge shared by the lovers (*mutus conferre loquaces*... *compositis uerba notis*) but not by such threatening figures as the *puella's uir*³¹ (*uero coram*... *abdere*). This is an ideal of lovers, not involved in a power struggle between themselves, but united and empowered by the knowledge which they control, the knowledge granted by Venus. The next couplet, however (even more than the detached, lecture-like tone of these lines),³² brings into doubt the relevance of this ideal to the poet's own immediate situation. Venus does not empower everybody (*nec docet hoc omnes*), and those she does are defined by what they don't do:

quos nec inertia tardat
nec uetat obscura surgere nocte timor. (23-4)

²⁹ As Bright (1978) 139-40 suggests, the whole passage seems detached from the reality of the situation.

³⁰ *Ponere posse* instead of simply *ponere* emphasises that Venus invests others with power through the knowledge she bestows rather than simply exercising power directly herself.

³¹ This does not necessarily suggest as yet that Delia herself is in the power of such a *uir*, but such a suggestion could be read here.

³² On which see Bright (1978) 139.

This seems to be an encouragement to Delia *not* to do these things (to be *fortis*) and assumes that she wants the power which Venus would bestow, that she wants to comply with the poet's desires. But the word *inertia* recalls the poet's professed desire to be *iners*, and his actual position 'chained' motionless outside Delia's door in poem one. By the first test of 'don'ts' the poet himself fails. Again there is a process, a trade: the absence of *inertia* and fear (*timor*) gains the favour and teachings of Venus (i.e. the power which the poet desires). The poet, however, simply fails to deliver the goods. Conclusion: by the first of his own criteria, he will not receive the knowledge to enable him to carry on an affair in secrecy. In this respect too he is powerless.

Given that he fails the first criterion, it is perhaps not surprising that he concentrates on the second: *nec obscura ... nocte timor*. Based upon this (absence of fear about getting about at night), he claims his own share of the power (the invulnerability) of lovers: *En ego cum tenebris...* The example of 'protected' lovers comes from his own life (*en ego*) rather than, as might have occurred, myth. The power of his passion is immediate to him, he is exclusively concerned with its effects on him. *Vagor anxius* shows that he is not in full physical or mental control over himself. His love is the reason he submits to dangers (*tenebris*) in a threatening, entirely urban environment (*tota urbe*). But again there is a trade-off: in return for love's control of him, it also protects him³³ even from the threat of physical danger (*nec sinit occurrat...*). He meets no one who would offer a direct violent physical threat to his body or possessions:

qui corpora ferro
vulneret aut raptā praemia veste petat. (27-8)

The trade-off is set out fully in the next line. Whoever is passively under the control of love is safe and sacred and may go where they like: *quisquis amore tenetur eat tutusque sacer-que | qualibet*. Since they are, however, controlled by *Amor*,

³³ Presumably the lost line stated something of this sort. I am assuming here, based on the close connection of sense from lines 25 to 27, that there is only one lost line.

eat qualibet might seem equivalent to 'wherever *Amor* makes them go'. *Sacer* (rather an extension of the sense of the immediately preceding lines) suggests *Amor* as a god and, more particularly, that its power is godlike and *all* those controlled by that power are favoured by the god. The morality – the code of feeling, of response, and of behaviour – which is determined by love is described again in line 30, and again the word *deceit* is used:³⁴ *insidias non timuisse deceit*.³⁵ The poet has claimed invulnerability from direct violent physical attack, deceitful attack and, in the next couplet (made insistent by the repetition of *non mihi* at the beginning of each line), any natural discomfort or danger which the night (*hibernae noctis*) might bring.³⁶ Apparently, then, he has no reason whatsoever to fear the night (as line 24). There is, it seems, some power attached to the poet's state. The reader may, by this point, wonder why, then, *he* doesn't brave the guard, if that is the only obstacle to his love. Is it only because of his powerless *inertia*?

The apparently simple trade-off of no night-terrors or discomfort in return for being controlled by love does in fact have another, overriding condition which is now revealed.

non labor hic laedit, reseret modo Delia postes
et uocet ad digitū me taciturna sonum. (33-4)

The poet will not suffer from such hardships *only (modo)* if Delia complies, if *she* is the active party and enables him to enter the house. It is entirely reliant upon her. Effectively, it is not the power of the god which bestows this, perhaps purely psychological, invulnerability to such hardships, but the power of Delia; and her compliance is not certain (again the verb is in the subjunctive). Similarly, on another level, it could be argued that the poet makes this statement to encourage Delia to take pity on him and save him from such hardship by complying, in which case the entire conceit of the love-possessed being

³⁴ For the moral connotations of *deceit* see *TLL* V.131.42ff.

³⁵ It is ironic that it was the lover at lines 19-22 who was employing *insidiae* of his/her own.

³⁶ This recalls the *rain (imber)* he wishes upon the door and then upon himself.

invulnerable has been related for her benefit. In such a reading, the course of the poem, indeed the whole reason the poet is writing, is determined by Delia. The power to control the poet and also the power of silence and secrecy³⁷ are in her fingers: *uocet ad digiti me taciturna somnum* (34). The text, however, has already suggested several strategies (and several objects of address: the door, Jupiter etc.) by which the poet/lover might attempt to gain some control in the power struggle which *amor* represents, and, rather than collapsing them into a single master-strategy, the appeal to Delia simply presents one possibility for the poet in that struggle.

Parcite lumnibus, seu uir seu femina fiat
 obuia; celari uult sua furta Venus.
 ne strepitu terrete pedum neu quaerite nomen
 neu prope fulgenti lumina ferre face.
 siquis et imprudens aspexerit, occulat ille
 perque deos omnes se memnisse neget;
 nam fuerit quicumque loquax, is sanguine natam,
 is Venerem e rabido sentiet esse mari. (35-42)

It is the need for secrecy (rather than his dependence upon Delia)³⁸ which the poet now expands upon. Again he must appeal to others³⁹ for this: *parcite lumnibus, seu uir seu femina fiat | obuia* (35-6). As before in such appeals, *parcite* is used. In one sense those addressed are being asked to spare the poet, by maintaining secrecy, while in another more literal sense they would be sparing *themselves*, their own eyes (*lumnibus*). The reference to Venus' desire for secrecy suggests the mythologically renowned anger of a goddess when mortals see (or know) what they should not.⁴⁰ The poet is thus claiming the power of Venus (the threat of it) to support his appeal for secrecy. *Ne strepitu terrete pedum* suggests that, while (at least

if Delia complies) the poet has no fear of physical attack, he can be terrified by the sound of a foot. He seems a vulnerable, perhaps even somewhat pathetic, figure. Again knowledge (the sight of the poet, and especially the poet's name) gives power: the power to reveal the poet's presence to the man who has 'control' over Delia (whether father, husband, or dominant lover). This would effectively end the poet's access to her. The poet is the prey of chance, of anyone who might happen to see or find out (*siquis et imprudens aspexerit*). Apparently, and perhaps surprisingly,⁴¹ he is powerless to prevent such 'accidents', and again must appeal to those who would have that knowledge and thus be in a superior position: *occulat ille | perque deos omnes se memnisse neget* (39-40). This recalls line 13 and the importance of what is known (and thus remembered) as a source of power and/or a threat throughout the poem. The poet's willingness to accept falsehood if it suits his purposes is another example of the morality determined by the poet's 'love'. This might alert the reader to the possibility that the poet's words should not always be taken at face value. He again backs up his appeals with the threat of Venus' power. He claims that the 'knowledge' such a *loquax* will gain (*sentiet*) will, ironically, be to his own loss:

is sanguine natam,
 is Venerem e rabido sentiet esse mari. (41-2)

Venus is as violent and deadly as war, just as in the first poem, despite the poet's claims that the two are different, the processes by which war and love operate were seen to have more similarities than simply vocabulary and imagery (including real sentries, violence, captives and suffering). This description of Venus (central power figure/goddess of love) has implications for the poet/lover himself who has suffered and is suffering⁴² from his love.

Indeed, the poet/lover could himself be called *loquax*, since his desire for secrecy is made a nonsense of by the published

³⁷ If, as the action suggests, the sound of fingers is meant to summon the poet without alerting the *custodix*, on this point see Murgatroyd (1980) 82.

³⁸ This might suggest he does not want too much attention drawn to this dependence.

³⁹ Here the poet changes addressee once more.

⁴⁰ Most notably Diana's towards Actaeon or Juno's toward Tiresias.

⁴¹ It is surprising because the reader might expect them to meet in more private places.

⁴² As *dolores* in the very first line of this poem suggests.

poem itself.⁴³ This may suggest that the poet is unable to control his own tongue, yet another manifestation of general powerlessness. On another level, of course, the revelatory nature of the poem may be accepted by the reader as simply part of the elegiac 'game'.

Magic and the powerful woman

Nec tamen huic credet coniunx tuus, ut mihi uerax
 pollicita est magico saga ministerio.
 hanc ego de caelo ducentem sidera uidi;
 fluminis haec rapidi carmine uertit iter;
 haec cantu finditque solum manesque sepulcris
 elicit et tepido deuocat ossa rogo.
 iam tenet infernas magico stridore catenas;
 iam iubet aspersas lacte referre pedem.
 cum libet, haec tristi depellit nubila caelo;
 cum libet, aestiuo conuocat orbe niues.
 sola tenere malas Medae dicitur herbas,
 sola feros Hecatae perdomuisse canes.
 (43-54)

Nec tamen huic credet coniunx tuus: finally the poet states directly something which has been suggested and implied ambiguously throughout the poem so far. Another male figure (probably husband or established lover)⁴⁴ holds the dominant position in Delia's life, controlling her movements, or at least is powerful enough to be a threat to any affair between Delia and the poet.⁴⁵ The question of belief is also raised more directly by this statement. The potential power of any information is dependent on belief, and what is believed may be unreliable. This is seen on several levels. The poet believes the *coniunx* will *not* believe the truth, because the poet trusts a *saga* whom he believes to be *uerax*: *ut . . . pollicita est*. If the beliefs of the *coniunx* are unreliable, why not the poet's? This undercuts the poet's claims, or at least encourages doubt on

⁴³ The use of pseudonyms, however (if Delia is a pseudonym), may lessen this.

⁴⁴ See Murgatroyd (1980) 7-8 on the ambiguity here.

⁴⁵ Hence the emphatic desire for secrecy.

the part of the reader, who may think *uerax saga* is a contradiction in terms.⁴⁶ The reader is thus him/herself involved in the belief process.⁴⁷

The description of the 'powers' of the witch (45-54) continues the concern both with power and with the basis for knowledge/belief. The witch has power over stars: *de caelo*⁴⁸ *ducentem sidera* (45). The poet's belief in this power is apparently based on direct sensory perception: *hanc ego . . . uidi*. It is, however, only the power to lead down stars which the poet claims to have seen at first hand. He does not state how he 'knows' of the powers named in 46-52. The witch is said to have power over natural forces: her power is physical (*fluminis haec rapidi carmine uertit iter*) and violent (*haec cantu finditque solum*). *Carmine* and *cantu* indicate that it is through song (incantation) that this power is exercised. This stands in contrast to the poet's songs, which, at least as yet, have had no power to bring Delia to him. Yet the only persons the witch has power over are dead: *manesque sepulcris | elicit et tepido deuocat*⁴⁹ *ossa rogo* (47-8). The words *tepido ossa rogo* emphasise the lifelessness. But what is the exact relation between the sphere of *amor* and such unnatural powers over the realm of death? Either there is no relation and again the poet appears unlikely to gain any power by this route, or, if a witch skilled in the area of death⁵⁰ is suitable for amatory matters, this may suggest love and death are similar in nature.⁵¹ This would be another area where separateness is elided by the similar workings of power in each context. The witch's power is emphasised by the initial position in succeeding lines of *iam*

⁴⁶ Compare the deceitful nature of the more high-profile witches of myth, Medea and Circe.

⁴⁷ The reader might also doubt whether the poet himself really does believe what he claims to. He may, for instance, simply be falling back on another argument (*tamen . . .*) in case the talk of possible discovery put Delia off.

⁴⁸ This might suggest power even over the gods.

⁴⁹ *Uocare* and its compounds as indicators of the subject's power recur (34, 48, 52).

⁵⁰ In Roman terms this might well include every witch, the whole notion of witchcraft being surrounded by connotations of death, corpses and the macabre; see, for example, Horace *Epode* 5.

⁵¹ For example, the *manes'* slavery to the *saga* (*deuocat*) is like the poet's slavery to Delia (*uocet*).

teneat . . . *iam libet*. Again her power is over the dead (*infernias catenas*). Through the instrument of her sound/song (*magico stridore*) she makes them come and go (*referre pedem*) at will.⁵² The four lines concerning her power over the dead are framed by couplets relating her power over natural elements or forces (lines 45–6 and 51–2). At lines 51–2 again her power is emphasised by repetition of the first words of the lines, *cum libet* . . . *cum libet*, highlighting her power to achieve her will. As with the description of her manipulation of the dead, her power is both to disperse (*depellit*)⁵³ and summon (*convocat*). The repetition *sola* . . . *sola* (53–4) shows that she has sole, absolute power in these areas. Again, the verb illustrating her power is *teneat*, and *perdomuisse* denotes control, literal mastery over wild forces (*feros canes*). But here the poet is no longer claiming first-hand experience of her power, or even leaving the question of how he ‘knows’ these things open. Instead he states *dicitur*. The fact that he says this may indicate his own doubt. The basis of belief, which is necessary if knowledge is to be possessed, is seen to be on a less stable foundation than at line 45. It may also hint that the powers of lines 46–52 were also heard of at second hand by the poet.

The *malae herbae* of Medea and the *feri canes* of Hecate are also rather ill-omened presages of the witch’s skills as far as love is concerned. This is especially true of the herbs of Medea, the archetypal combination of love and power, with wild destruction the result. This is suggestive both of love’s destructive force and its operation as a power struggle. It is also significant that almost all the power figures in the poem, with the exception of the *custodia*⁵⁴ and Jove’s brief appearance (line 8), have been female: Delia, Venus, *saga*, *Medea*, *Hecate*.⁵⁵ This might suggest that the poet, so dominated himself by a woman and his feelings towards her, can con-

⁵² The ceremony of the dead *asperas lacre* recalls the poet’s ritual *spargere lacre* *Palem* at I.I.36. Here, too, it is to gain power (implying that this is one central function of ritual), although in poem one it was the power of peace (*placidam Palem*) and, supposedly, prosperity.

⁵³ Again *caelo*; cf. n.48.

⁵⁴ The *coninx*, as presented by the poet at any rate, is not entirely in control (43).
⁵⁵ This is true in the opening poem as well: Ceres, Pales, Delia.

ceive of power, in relation to *amor* at any rate, virtually only in female terms.

Studies of the female in elegy, especially where they look specifically at Tibullan elegy, tend to concentrate on the mistress, often with the goal of ‘identifying’ the social class which the mistress is supposed to occupy or her relation, more generally, to ‘real’ women in contemporary Roman society.⁵⁶ From a different perspective, however, Judith Hallett has observed the ‘inversion’ of the conventional power relations between genders in the depiction of the relationship between poet/lover and mistress by Tibullus and Propertius: ‘by having women control them, they are sharply reversing social reality’.⁵⁷ She suggests that the elegists are making a social statement, projecting a ‘counter-culture’, by ‘both their non-compliance with widely-accepted behavioral norms and their bent towards social innovation by consciously and deliberately (if sometimes ironically) inverting conventional sex roles in their poetry’.⁵⁸ Maria Wyke, however, has more recently argued that the depiction of the female in elegy is a function of the power structures being presented by the text: ‘it is not the concern of elegiac poetry to upgrade the political position of women, only to portray the male narrator as alienated from positions of power and to differentiate him from other, socially responsible male types’.⁵⁹ While this view puts the emphasis on the powerlessness of the male, rather than on female power,⁶⁰ the network of female power figures which can be seen in the Tibullan text work not only to place the poet/lover on the periphery of society and power through his domination by and association with the peripheral figure of the powerful mistress, *lena* or *saga*, but by linking these peripheral figures (who disrupt and invert the social norms) with more central, conventional figures of female power, such

⁵⁶ See, for example, Lilia (1965), esp. 37–41.

⁵⁷ Hallett (1973) 113.

⁵⁸ Hallett (1973) 109.

⁵⁹ Wyke (1989b) 42.

⁶⁰ ‘[T]he elegiac texts take little interest in elaborating their metaphors in terms of female power, but explore, rather, the concept of male dependency’ Wyke (1989b) 42.

as the goddess Venus, similarities between these anomalous power structures and those of conventional society are drawn which complicate the simple inversion of gender relations. The powerful female figures, and the poet/lover's adoption of the passive, powerless role normally associated with the female in Roman sexual discourses,⁶¹ are both anomalous to the power structures supported by traditional Roman society and understandable (and described) in terms of those same structures. In this way, the depiction of power structures in the elegies, despite the apparently peripheral role of *amor* and the power-relations it creates, relates itself directly to the operation of power more generally in Roman culture.

Haec mihi composuit cantus quis fallere posses;
 ter cane, ter dictis despuce carminibus:
 ille nihil poterit de nobis credere cuiquam,
 non sibi, si in molli uiderit ipse toro.
 tu tamen abstineas aliis, nam cetera cernet
 omnia, de me uno sentiet ille nihil.
 quid credam? nempè haec eadem se dixit amores
 cantibus aut herbis soluere posse meos,
 et me Iustravit taedis, et nocte serena
 concidit ad magicos hostia pulla deos.
 non ego totus abesset amor sed mutuus esset
 orabam, nec te posse carere uelim. (55-66)

The poet claims that the power of the witch *has* been given to him (*mihi*). That power consists of the manipulation of belief and thus the manipulation of the actions of other figures (i.e. the *coninx*), and again the channel for that power is song (*composuit cantus*... *carminibus*). But it is *not* actually power for *him*, rather it is in Delia's hands. He can only give her instructions (knowledge: see line 19) involving a somewhat ridiculous combination of singing and spitting (*ter cane, ter*... *despuce*) which the reader might well expect Delia to laugh at rather than comply with.⁶² The object of the poet is to

remove from the *coninx* (the *ille* of line 57) the power to believe⁶³ reports from others about any affair between Delia and the poet: *ille nihil poterit de nobis credere cuiquam*. But then the poet claims the *coninx* will not even have the power to believe his own direct perception: *non sibi, si in molli uiderit ipse toro*. The verbal parallel between *uiderit ipse* and *ego*... *uidi* (45) raises a question: if the *coninx*' interpretation of visual perception may not be correct (for one reason or another), then why should the poet's be trusted?⁶⁴ Furthermore, lines 59-60 could be read as the poet's attempt to fill up any possible loopholes in his argument (*tamen*...) and (slyly?)⁶⁵ to use the threat of the *coninx*'s power⁶⁶ to protect his own interests. This opens the possibility that the whole tale of the witch has been made up by the poet as part of his argument to convince Delia not to fear the power of the *coninx*. Contrary to the poet's implication throughout that Delia would come to him if it wasn't for the guard, these lines also suggest that she might wish to go to others rather than to the poet.⁶⁷ Has the poet been deluding himself, the reader, or both?

Quid credam? might well sum up the situation at this point for the poet and the reader.⁶⁸ Belief, by its nature, is not necessarily infallible and can be manipulated by other forces. Knowledge, and thus a solid base from which to act, is not easy to possess. The poet is somewhat dubious about the witch's claim that she has the power (through her instruments *cantibus aut herbis*) to dissolve his passion altogether.⁶⁹ His

⁶³ This would in turn prevent his exercise of other powers (e.g. the power to somehow separate Delia and the poet, or worse).

⁶⁴ Could he too have selective/distorted perception, perhaps due to the force of his passion, which controls every other element of his operation, emotional, mental, physical, moral?

⁶⁵ It might also be thought that the poet here is blundering. Suddenly realising that Delia might take notice of his encouragement for the sake of some other rival, the poet tries here to patch up his mistake. This reading might make the poet appear, as he often does, rather pathetic.

⁶⁶ Knowledge would empower the *coninx* to act (*cernet*... *de me uno sentiet ille nihil*) to prevent the success of the poet's rivals.

⁶⁷ For this idea see Bright (1978) 142-3.

⁶⁸ And, of course, for the *coninx*.

⁶⁹ *Amores*... *soluere*... *meos*: the idea that his love must be loosed from him implies that at the moment he is bound by it and not free.

⁶¹ Wyke (1989b) 36.

⁶² Petronius, for example, uses 'magic' spitting for comic effect at *Sat.* 131.

doubt⁷⁰ that a fight between the witch and his love would come out in the witch's favour may be based on his experience of the invulnerable power of *amor*; or, on another level, it may be part of the argument to impress Delia with the implied strength of his passion for her.

At any rate, the poet has, it seems, gone through with the ceremony (lines 63-4). Again ritual is used as a means of gaining power. The process – purification and sacrifice (*lustravit... concidit... hostia*) – is the same as the poet's ceremony to gain the power of the Lares at 1.1.21-2, only here the source of the power is different: the gods the ritual is aimed at are *magici* and the ritual itself takes place at night (*nocte serena*). Even the power of the witch, it seems, comes from a third party.

As if realising he has undercut his suggestion that his love is unflinching by admitting he has undergone a rite to release him from that love, the poet qualifies his words:

non ego totus abesset amor sed mutuus esset
orabam.

(65-6)

The poet, these lines suggest, is so controlled by *amor* he cannot even wish his love to be gone (unlike Propertius 1.1.26ff.), but at the most he desires a balance of power, a balance of love (*mutuus*). He does not even *want* (*nec... uelim*) to have the power (*posse*) to go without her (*carere*, something the poem suggests he may be forced to do), so controlled is he mentally and emotionally by his love. His wish that love be made mutual between them immediately reveals that, at present, it is not mutual, that Delia does not love him in return. The suggestions that only the guards and *coniunx* stand in the way are entirely undercut. The appeals to Delia to take the active part, trick the guard and let the poet in are shown to be fairly hopeless. Whatever the reason for such suggestions in the first place (possibly the poet's self-delusion),⁷¹ this destabilises the reader's certainty in any 'meaning' he/she might gain from the poet's words.

⁷⁰ On which see Putnam (1973) 69.

⁷¹ It may be another case of wishful thinking. His belief too, it seems, is not on a solid foundation.

Ferrens ille

Ferrens ille fuit qui, te cum posset habere,
maluerit praedas stultus et arma sequi.
ille licet Cilicum uictas agat ante catervas,
ponat et in capto Matria castra solo,
totus et argento contactus, totus et auro,
insideat celeri conspiciendus equo:
ipse boues – mea si tecum modo Delia – possim
iungere et in solito pascere monte pecus;
et te dum liceat teneris retinere lacertis,
mollis et inculta sit mihi somnus humo.
quid Tyrio recubere toro sine amore secundo
prodest, cum fletu nox uigilanda uenit?
nam neque tunc pluma nec stragula picta soporem
nec sonitus placidae ducere possit aquae. (67-80)

By contrast, the poet (67ff.) describes a man who was in a position of power over Delia (*te cum posset habere*) and, furthermore, *did* have the ability to go without her. He is described as *ferrens*. This may mean that he was unfeeling to leave Delia (a meaning which the poet himself, calling the man *stultus*, probably intends), but it may also mean that the man has enough strength (like iron) to resist being controlled by love. The poet here, as in the first poem, is not entirely rejecting warfare or military service. The rejection of *militia* is only relative to love, where a direct choice is made between them (*maluerit*). *Ille licet...* suggests that the rewards of *militia* are the man's right.⁷² It is only the *choice* which prompts the poet, from a love-determined moral perspective, to brand the man *ferrens* and *stultus*. Like the process of 1.1.1-6, *militia* brings power. This power is first described in terms of war and then, as in poem one, wealth. Unlike the poet who is himself (see 1.1.55), or wishes to be (see 1.2.2), *uictus*, the *ferrens* drives hordes of captives before him. *He* is in complete control: *Cilicum uictas agat ante catervas. Ponat*

⁷² This recalls the position of Messalla at 1.1.53-4.

castra also points to this command and control, and the fact that his camp is *in capto solo* underlines it. The poet emphasises (even exaggerates) the wealth (*praedas*) gained:⁷³ *totus et argento contectus, totus et auro*. The man is *conspiciendus*. No secrecy exists here. Knowledge seems uncomplicated. Everything seems right up front.

There is, however, uncertainty as to the exact identity of the *ferreus*. *Ille* is not necessarily, or even probably, the *coniux*, but may be another lover (or simply a beloved of Delia, as Delia is of the poet). The uncertainty involved in the identification of this figure, which has been highlighted by critics such as Zelzer and Brouwers,⁷⁴ echoes the uncertainty of the poem's dramatic setting, and like it leaves that identification left open by the text will always render such assumptions finally unstable.

The word *ipse* at the beginning of line 73 underlines the contrast between the *ferreus* and the poet. The description of rural life continues the recollection of the opening poem, but here the determination and domination of such a lifestyle by Delia is declared from the very start (*mea si tecum modo Delia*) and is more intense. The poet's preference for the rural life here depends entirely on Delia. The *incolta humus* (78) suggests that it is something to be *suffered* in return for Delia.⁷⁵ The sole criterion for such a life is a degree of control over Delia: *et te dum liceat teneris retinere lacertis*.⁷⁶ Comfort for

⁷³ Perhaps there is a suggestion here that the poet himself might have pursued such a lifestyle and consequently accumulated such wealth had he not surrendered these great career prospects in order to devote himself to Delia. Again such devotion might form part of an argument encouraging her to return to him.

⁷⁴ Zelzer (1988); and Brouwers (1978), who provides a good discussion of the variety of critical views on this point, 398–400; see also Bright (1978), 144.

⁷⁵ It might, thus, be an attempt by the poet to win the mistress over by impressing her with the amount of suffering he is willing to endure for her love. To a certain extent Roman elegy in general could be read this way, and has been (see Stroth (1971)).

⁷⁶ Control of the oxen (*boves iungere*) may reflect the power the poet would have in controlling Delia. Thus he grows in control generally. On the other hand, it may simply contrast the more elaborate power of *ferreus ille*. The accustomed hill (*in solio monte*) also implies stability and certainty.

the poet lies entirely in this (note the adjective *tener*, as in the first poem, and *mollis somnus*, recalling the comfort of sleep at 1.2.2 and 1.1.48). All this is, of course, a wish: *possim*. He does not have the power to achieve it.

Quid Tyrio recubare toro sine amore secundo | prodest? (77) may be suggestive of the *ferreus* who has gone without love and might be able to afford Tyrian dye. It may also simply suggest that luxury without happy love is, in the poet's eyes, far worse than physical hardship *with* love. But it is also clearly indicative of the poet's immediate position *sine amore secundo*. This is supported by the picture of the lover *cum fletu nox uigilanda uenit* (78). This hypothetical lover suffers and is deprived of sleep just as the poet, suffering (*dolores*) and desiring the *sopor* of wine (at line 2), seems to be. The similarity suggests that this is the reality of the poet's own position, in contrast to the wish he has no power to realise (73–6). The poet's passive situation achieves nothing and leaves him powerless (*quid prodest?*). In a world determined by love and oriented towards the object of that love, elements normally gentle to the senses (*plumae; stragula picta; sonius placidae aquae*), lose their power to bring comfort and relief, qualities which are here again embodied by sleep: *soporem | nec ... ducere possit*.

Looking for excuses

Num Venetis magnae uiolau numina uerbo
 et mea nunc poenas impia lingua luit?
 num feror incestus sedes adisse deorum
 sartaque de sanctis deripuisse focus?
 non ego, si merui, dubitem procumbere templis
 et dare sacratis oscula liminibus;
 non ego tellurem genibus perrepere supplex
 et miserum sancto tundere poste caput. (81–8)

The lines which follow perhaps suggest that the poet is himself aware that this is the reality of his own position. For now the poet searches for a reason for his suffering: since, as

the reader now knows (or at least believes), Delia is non-compliant. The poet wonders if he has offended Venus and she is exacting punishment:

Num Veneris magnae violauit numina uerbo
et mea nunc poenas impia lingua luit?

(81-2)

Here is another process, like many others which have been seen in this and the first elegy. But in this case, instead of service/reward, it is transgression/punishment. Unable to achieve the first, the poet embraces the transgression/punishment process, freely offering to pay penance in the hope of improving his (powerless) situation. The simple fact that the poet believes this is possible, and sees Venus as a hostile power, undercuts his invocation of Venus' power on his behalf earlier in the poem. In fact, instead of Venus punishing those who reveal his affairs (41-2), he sees *himself* as being possibly punished by her (*poenas luit*). Indeed, the possibility is raised that those earlier words about Venus (16ff. and 35ff.) were themselves the *uerba* (81) which infringed her authority. Or, the poet thinks, he may have been reported as having acted against her temple, either by entering it *incestus*, or by stealing its garments. At the same time as it emphasises the unreliability of belief and report, this may remind the reader that the poet himself cannot always be taken at face value. (The more sceptical reader, at the mention of *serta*, might recall those at line 14 hung by the poet on Delia's door, and start to get suspicious.) Unable to resist the power of *amor*/Venus, the poet declares that if he had done these things (*si merui*) he would gladly abase himself and demonstrate physically his total subservience to Venus' power (85-8). The description of himself as *supplex* and the emphasis on the doorway (*liminibus . . . poste*) recalls Delia's door and the poet's attitude before it (a suppliant, treating it as a shrine: lines 13-14). In a way, then, according to his own terminology the poet is already prostrate and subservient before the door of a temple. He suffers there (perhaps through his own fault) just as he would suffer in his submission to Venus' power: *et*

miserrum sancto tundere poste caput. In one respect his suffering before Delia's door is submission to Venus' power: the power of *amor*.

At tu qui lentus rides mala nostra caueto.

Mox tibi, non uni saeuiet usque deus.

uidi ego qui iuuenum miseros lusisset amores

post Veneris uinclis subdere colla senem,

et sibi blanditias tremula componere uoce,

et manibus canas fingere uelle comas;

stare nec ante fores puduit caraene puellae

ancillam medio detinuisse foro.

hunc puer, hunc iuuenis turba circumterit arta,

despuit in molles et sibi quisque sinus. (89-98)

But now the poet once more changes addressee (*At tu*, 89), and speaks to those who might mock him. He uses the legalistic imperative *caueto*, as if he is in a position of power. He suggests that he is under the malevolent attack (*saeuiet*) of the god (*deus*), presumably *Amor*, and states without qualification that the mocker will suffer the same (*mox tibi*). How does he know this? *Vidi ego*: from direct perception, which, it has already been suggested, is unreliable. This might immediately encourage the reader to be wary of the poet's claims. The picture of the mocker and his fate at lines 91-2 parallels that which the poet imagined for himself at lines 81-8. The infringement of Love's authority (*miseros lusisset amores*) leads to total submission to the power of Venus (*post Veneris uinclis subdere colla*). The physical weakness of old age accentuates the loss of power. *Blanditias tremula componere uoce*, | *et manibus canas fingere uelle comas*, implies that while the old man may want to act in this particular way, it may be as far beyond his physical power to do so as it is beyond what is deemed appropriate for the elderly. The mocker's behaviour will be determined entirely by love, regardless of how pathetic or ridiculous this behaviour may be (as in lines 93-4). The same will be true of his personal morality: *stare nec ante fores*

puclit (95).⁷⁷ The elements of public debasement (as in line 96: *medio foro*) and inappropriateness are emphasised as a crowd of youths gathers close around (lines 97–8). Similarities can be drawn here with the poet/lover's present condition. Yet, in the case of the mocker, it is a clear, logical (and, in divine moral terms, fair) process of punishment for an offence against *amor*. The poet, however, has supposedly committed no such offence; his puzzled questions at 81–4 and *si merui* (85) imply as much. Indeed, if the poet has seen the fate of such mockers himself (91), presumably he joined the band of youths who turn to superstition (recalling the magic at 56) to prevent such a future for themselves: *despuit in molles et sibi quisque sinus* (98). From the evidence of these poems, no such apotropaic power was forthcoming, for the poet at least. If all does him no good, he is still enslaved by love. Is Venus illogical in her exertion of power, enslaving those innocent as well as guilty in her eyes? Was the poet himself a mocker earlier in his life?⁷⁸ Or is his statement of Venus' power here (used to threaten those who would mock him, and thus to prevent them from mocking) just as untrustworthy as those earlier, undercut by the revelation of Venus' (unexplained) enmity towards him?

At mihi parce, Venus. semper tibi dedita seruit
mens mea. quid messes uris acerba tuas? (99–100)

These questions are left open, but the final couplet emphasises once more (in the first and only direct address to Venus) that the poet is at the goddess' mercy. He is mentally enslaved to her⁷⁹ (*semper tibi dedita seruit | mens mea*), and can only appeal to her to operate her power the way he desires: *At mihi parce, Venus* (99). While the central relationships involving

⁷⁷ *Ancillam detinuisse* may hint, in physical terms, at the power-struggle of *amor* (as well as the secrecy). It might also suggest that the man is socially debased by love, being forced to deal with slaves.

⁷⁸ This raises the question of how old the poet is supposed to be.

⁷⁹ The poet is enslaved to Venus by being enslaved to Delia through the agency of *amor*. This opens the possibility of identification of the two central power figures in the poet's cosmos: Delia and Venus. Is an address by the poet to Venus equivalent to an address to Delia and vice versa?

amor are power-relations, the normal operation of the normal processes by which power in other spheres is gained (the trade-offs) seems to have broken down, or perhaps simply cannot exist in the sphere of *amor*. In return for 'loyal' service the poet receives hostility and bitterness (*acerba*). The illogical, self-destructive nature of *amor*, as the poet knows it, is demonstrated in the final words of the poem: *quid messes uris acerba tuas?* (100). The force which creates these desires, and this enslavement of the poet, itself brings them to nothing. The result is suffering which, at the beginning of the poem, the poet wished to suppress by wine. As yet he has been powerless to do so. Here in the final line that suffering is still present, captured in the image of burning.

Conclusion

The examination of power through the second elegy develops into wider areas and opens wider questions. The separation of various fields in the first elegy (*militia*, rural life, *amor*) was (as with magic and *amor* in the second elegy) elided by the common operation of power relationships and the existence in all these fields, or at least the assumption of the existence, of the processes by which power is gained, exerted and maintained. But in the second elegy those processes of exchange seem to fail actually to secure power in the field of *amor*, in the poet's case at least.⁸⁰ This could be read as re-asserting the difference (the anomalous and unconventional nature of *amor*) and undercutting the commonality. But the continued depiction of *amor* as power struggle might suggest another reading. Could the illogical, absolute and arbitrary nature of *amor*'s power suggest something more general about the nature of power when it tends to such extremes?⁸¹ Any understanding of *amor* and the operations of power in the second elegy must in-

⁸⁰ Their failure was suggested in the first poem, but in the second this failure is brought out into the open.

⁸¹ This reading might be particularly forceful if, as was tentatively suggested in my reading of poem one (see above 66), *amor* is seen as actually paradigmatic of power-struggle.

corporate the similarity as well as the difference between *amor* and these other fields.

Questions of knowledge and belief and their relation to power (as vital instruments to strengthen, weaken, or make possible the exertion of power) also become immediate to the reader in the course of the second poem. Previous interpretations of the text are questioned, revised or overhauled, as they were in the first elegy. In the process of reading, control over meaning remains precarious. This is emphasised in poem two by uncertainty over the dramatic setting and the identification of *ferreus ille* at line 67, which uncertainty destabilises any reading through the variety of possibilities which the text leaves open. Reading always involves gaps and blind-spots, but in the second elegy the uncertainties are central to the reader's negotiation of the text. The dynamic of the poem grows out of and draws attention to such uncertainties. The poet himself is uncertain (see lines 61, 81ff., 99-100). In fact, the reader's lack of complete control over the meaning of the text mirrors the powerlessness of the poet in general as Delia's true attitude to him undercuts his suggestions earlier in the poem and prevents him from achieving his desires. The resonances which the text creates, both within the poem itself and between it and poem one, multiply the shifting set of possible meanings. This is evident in the last line, which explicitly uses harvest (*messes*) as a metaphor for love. It might suggest an entirely new metaphorical reading of the rural motif in poem one, at the last moment destabilising the reader's previous assumptions and beliefs.

POEM THREE

The problem of unity

As Campbell observed over twenty years ago,¹ critics of the third elegy of Tibullus' first book have always tended to focus on one central problem, the 'episodic character' of the poem. This episodic nature has been seen as a problem because the relationships between the various episodes often appear tenuous. One thought can move abruptly to another. Connections can seem obscure, and development of thought hard to follow or non-existent. This threatens the elegy's unity, fragmenting the poem. To counter this, various critical strategies have been employed to suggest unity: Eisenberger's construction of the poet/lover's 'Gefühlsgründe';² 'der Gesamtaufbau der Elegie' suggested by Hanslik,³ or Campbell's own assertion of the 'inner coherence'⁴ of the poem in both its linear progression and its structural 'schematization' of present, past and future.⁵ These concerns illustrate both the desire to construct and the difficulty of constructing a single, complete meaning for the elegy.

But discontinuity within the poem also parallels a larger problem. The poet/lover's departure on *militia* and the power structure of the *amor*-relationship which he presents in elegy three appear inconsistent with the situation and positions suggested in the earlier poems. This is immediately disruptive to a linear reading of the collection. The expectations which have been established through a reading of the first two elegies are undercut and the viability of a coherent reading of the collection is brought into question. At the same time, however, the alternative strategy of resisting such a reading, of isolating

¹ Campbell (1973) 147-9.

² Eisenberger (1960) 197.

³ Hanslik (1970) 145.

⁴ Campbell (1973) 149.

⁵ *Ibid.* 156.