TIBULLUS AND EGYPT: A POSTCOLONIAL READING OF ELEGY 1.7

P. LOWELL BOWDITCH

The pageantry of Roman military power became increasingly common in the early years of the Augustan principate.[1] The Roman military triumph, with its floats displaying captives in chains, booty, and graphic representations of conquered territories, provided a persuasive ritual discourse for a population weakened and scarred from the trauma of a century of civil war. Here citizens could witness the visual evidence of Roman hegemony in the Mediterranean;[2] here the distinction between Rome and the enemy, self and other, colonizer and colonized, was easily drawn. As an ideological vehicle, the triumph effectively communicated to all social strata, elite and otherwise. Those citizens who observed the elaborate and decadent pomp signifying Rome's victories had their own imperial identities reinforced. But as a discursive ritual, the military triumph formed only one of many signifying systems—literary, plastic, numismatic, and urban environmental—that served to construct and reinforce the "imperial subject" that evolved as the Roman republic transformed into an unrivalled Mediterranean empire. These discursive systems often overlapped in Augustan Rome, as coins would feature commemorative buildings, triumphal iconography would adorn temples, and literature would include descriptions

1 Pais 1920.305–25. Crook 1996.91 notes that subsequently, as proconsular commands declined and the triumph competed with the emperor's own image making, the ritual became rare. On the origins, history, and components of the military triumph, see Versnel 1970, Beard 2007.

2 On the propaganda effect of triumphs at this time, see Konstan 1978.176, Beard 2007.295–96.

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of triumphs, significant urban structures, and ideological catchphrases that also appeared on money.[3]

Tibullus 1.7, a poem whose opening includes a quintessential image of a Roman triumph, exhibits such discursive complexity. Prominently intertwining several sub-genres and topoi within the greater context of a book of love elegies, the poem allusively highlights the most significant and politically charged relationship of the early principate: Rome's acquisition of Egypt as a province. Written to celebrate the birthday of Tibullus's patron Messalla Corvinus and his recent defeat of the Aquitanians in 27 B.C.E., the poem develops from a cameo description of his ritual triumph into a panoramic sweep of Rome's imperial reach that concludes with a hymn-like digression on the Nile and Osiris. Although the poem makes no direct reference to Octavian's own celebration of 29 B.C.E., which honored the victory at Actium along with conquests in Illyria and Egypt, the description of Messalla's triumph certainly alludes to it and serves, in part, as a metonymic evocation of the princeps's earlier ritual ceremony.

The foregrounding of such triumphal imagery underscores the poem's rhetoric of conquest, a discourse of power that serves to fashion its elite audience into imperial subjects. Drawing on the work of Edward Said and recent applications of postcolonial theory to Greco-Roman literature, this essay analyzes the distinctive features of the colonialist representation of Rome's relation to Egypt in Tibullus 1.7. That Tibullus presents here a particular vision of Roman imperial power is certainly self-evident, and the poem has attracted a range of critical responses focusing primarily on the Osiris section.[4]

However, the poem merits further discussion as a literary text that depends on a greater context of generic conventions for its orientalizing

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3 On the visual arts and the urban environment in Augustan Rome, see Zanker 1988, especially 101–66. On Augustus's use of coinage to advertise his military exploits through depictions of buildings, see Favro 2005.237–38; on coins celebrating the conquest of Egypt, see Versluys 2002.6 n. 9 for the relevant bibliography; on coinage and imperial policy more generally, see Sutherland 1951. See Oliensis 1998.189 on coinage reflected in Horace's *Epistles*. On literary depictions of buildings and Roman topography, see Jaeger 1997 on Livy and Welch 2005 on Propertius; on Augustan poets and the visual arts of the city, see Barchiesi 2005.281–305; on the triumph in elegy, see Galinsky 1969.75–107.

4 Gaisser 1971 connects the Osiris section to Messalla as both military general and literary patron receiving a birthday poem; Konstan 1978 examines the depiction of Egypt and Osiris in relation to the Roman triumph; Johnson 1990 explores Messalla as a figure of empire; Lee-Stecum 1998.205–26, 299–303 explores the power relations between patron and poet in the context of the changes in Roman social and political institutions during the principate.

alignment of elegiac gender difference with an East/West opposition. Several relationships of power overlap in the poem and rhetorically explore and, ultimately, legitimize Rome's authority over her new province, notwithstanding the respect shown for Egypt's cultural antiquity.[5] The discursive relationship between Rome and Egypt—in orientalist terms, the West's political and representational control of the East—intersects with the elegiac relations between patron and lover-poet and, implicitly, lover and beloved, in Tibullus 1.7. These relations also intersect with the ritual discourse of the military triumph. This essay places a fundamental ambivalence in Tibullus's orientalizing representation of Egypt in the context of the competing and, at times, overlapping discourses of triumphal ritual and Tibullan love elegy. As I argue in the conclusion, Tibullus 1.7 embraces a complex audience: as a text that engages Rome's colonial relationship with Egypt at a critical moment, the elegy speaks not only to Roman colonizers but also to a colonized provincial elite, exercising a form of cultural imperialism over a rhetorically constructed Egyptian "Other."[6]

Before turning to a close analysis of the poem itself, a brief discussion of terminology is in order. Said's influential *Orientalism* identified Greco-Roman texts as seminal in the development of "orientalist discourse," the representational matrix by which western texts conceptualized Asia, and the East more generally, with the negative, "weaker" term in a series of binary oppositions.[7] Said's *Culture and Imperialism* then examined how such discourses implicate literature in "the formation of imperial attitudes, references, and experiences" (1993.xii), helping to sustain the great European colonial empires of the nineteenth century (Goff 2005.3). Despite charges of anachronism, postcolonial analyses in the vein of Said's work have been fruitfully applied to Roman imperial texts and the colonial discourses they engage.[8] "Colonial discourse" here describes the rhetorical

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5 Lee-Stecum 1998.205–26 discusses the power relations in 1.7 in the context of other poems in Tibullus's collection, but not from the perspective of an orientalizing discourse.

6 Johnson 1990.105 refers to Messalla as a "cultural imperialist." Ball 1975.737 refers to Messalla as "a sort of diplomat exploring foreign countries and observing different peoples, not as a fierce commander, crushing rebellious tribes and plundering defeated cities." Neither critic examines the poem itself as a form of cultural persuasion speaking to different audiences.

7 Said 1978.56–57. In *Inventing the Barbarian* (1989.2), Edith Hall similarly analyzes Greek tragedy for its development of a "'discourse of barbarism,' the system of signifiers denoting the ethnically, psychologically, and politically 'other.'"

8 For responses to the charge of anachronism concerning postcolonial analyses of the classical world, see Shumate 2006.11–17 (which focuses on whether the Roman empire can

systems that reflect, fashion, and instill the attitudes and self-perceptions of the Roman metropolitan elite—those who regarded themselves at the center of the empire (even if geographically displaced to administer the provinces), and who depended for their sense of identity and colonial purpose[9] on simultaneously recognizing themselves in, and distinguishing themselves from, an Other over whom Rome held sway.[10]

Many postcolonial readings of Latin texts have focused on one side of this equation—namely on how such an Other is constructed as markedly different, as monstrous and barbarous, thus accentuating Roman civilization as the norm and justifying Rome's hierarchical relationship to the provinces that comprised her empire. Roman texts about Egypt exhibit these strategies and, it is argued, provide the cultural persuasion so central to affirming imperial identity and encouraging the expansion and maintenance of the empire's borders.[11] Juvenal's *Satire XV* on cannibalism in Egypt, for example, has elicited such "colonial discourse analysis," the term for criticism that interrogates the "imperialism of representation" itself (Webster 1996.7). Thus Nancy Shumate argues that the ethnographic discourses about Egypt—one of antiquity's Orients—and other provincial regions not only served Roman hegemonic interests but also created a rhetorical template for imperialistic and colonizing representations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (2006.7).[12]

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be considered with theoretical paradigms developed in response to modern imperialism). Shumate invokes Webster 1996.8–9, who argues that it is not a comparison of "'colonialisms'" but rather the "*discourses* which enable colonialism" (9). See Goff 2005 on postcolonial approaches to the classical tradition.

9 The Marxist critic Peter Hulme defines colonial discourse as "an ensemble of linguistically-based practices unified by their common deployment in the management of colonial relationships, an ensemble that could combine the most . . . bureaucratic of official documents . . . with the most non-functional and unprepossessing of romantic novels" (1992.2).

10 See Habinek 1998.151–69 and 2002.59–60 on Ovid's exile poetry, both the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*, as contributing to "the work of empire," by providing literature that allows elite Romans, the "colonizing agents," to internalize the imperial project and thereby develop an "appropriately colonialist subjectivity" (59) with regard to the colonized regions—in this case, the lands of Pontus.

11 See Said 1993.109 on culture as a "persuasive means" of sustaining an ideological vision.

12 Although focusing more on the classical rhetorical template of particular authors than on the discipline of classics itself, the work of Shumate goes some distance in addressing the problem identified by Vasunia 2003 as the "collusion between Classics and empire" and "the intersection of the discipline with European colonialism and imperialism from the 1700s to the 1900s" (91).

In constructing foreign cultures as barbarous, however, ancient texts can, ironically, project their own cultural coordinates, mapping what is markedly Other onto what is familiar. That is, such texts represent what is culturally different through a rhetorical prism that reflects the author's own culture. As M. J. Versluys remarks, when imagining the Other, "The unknown is in fact often brought into one's own perception, defined within one's own terms, in order to be understandable" (2002.391). Thus in the *Mirror of Herodotos*, François Hartog analyzes a "rhetoric of otherness" that depends on the figures of comparison and analogy to bring what is foreign into the field of knowledge shared by narrator and addressee (1988.225–30). Such mirroring of the Other in terms of the author's own culture has, in the Roman imperial context, a culturally assimilationist function as well. Not only does the rhetoric of comparison locate the Other for, and distinguish it from, a Roman audience, but it may also encourage the intellectual integration of that foreign culture's provincial elite into Roman imperial culture. So, for example, in an essay comparing Juvenal's orientalizing vision of Egypt and Plutarch's *de Iside et Osiride*, Richard Alston initially identifies the oppositions of civilized Romans versus primitive, animal-worshipping Egyptians that structure these texts and justify Roman imperial control. But he also observes that Plutarch subordinates the myth of Isis and Osiris to the *interpretatio Graeca* by viewing the Egyptian gods through a Platonic and Pythagorean lens. Juvenal, in turn, consistently embeds Greco-Roman mythological references in his tale of Egyptian cannibalism. As a result, these works effect an integrationist model of the Roman empire, one distinct from modern imperialist discourses that ultimately shore up the lines drawn between European and barbarian (Alston 1996.105). By allowing identification with the dominant culture's attitudes, this Greco-Roman self-referencing in both Juvenal's and Plutarch's texts serves to assimilate the local Egyptian elite into the wider Hellenic culture of Rome's Mediterranean empire.[13]

Although this integrationist aspect is historically specific to the context of Roman imperialism and does not characterize modern colonial discourses, such assimilation of the Other in Roman imperial texts reflects,

13 Alston 1996.106: "These attitudes . . . were both bound up with the imperial experience, and aided imperial rule. They offered intellectual avenues of integration for the Egyptian elite by which the elite could identify with the dominant Mediterranean culture. They also attest to an attitude on the part of the Roman elite which would allow integration." In contrast to Alston, Shumate 2006.14–15 argues that the more recent work on Romanization, which emphasizes consensual participation on the part of the provinces, lets Rome "off the hook" (14) politically. On this consensual model, see also Ando 2000.

I believe, a fundamental ambivalence that Said notes is a general feature of Orientalist representations. Said identifies this ambivalence as a "vacillation" of attitude between viewing phenomena as familiar and fearing their difference as a threat:

> Something patently foreign and distant acquires, for one reason or another, a status more rather than less familiar. One tends to stop judging things either as completely novel or as completely well known; a new median category emerges, a category that allows one to see new things, things seen for the first time, as versions of a previously known thing. In essence such a category is not so much a way of receiving new information as it is a method of controlling what seems to be a threat to some established view of things . . . The threat is muted, familiar values impose themselves, and in the end the mind reduces the pressure upon it by accommodating things to itself as either "original" or "repetitious."[14]

Said ascribes this "category" that "allows one to see new things . . . as versions of a previously known thing" to the way cultures process, domesticate, and stage the exotic for their own consumption. Thus in the Middle Ages, the European intellectual treatment of Islam as a "misguided version of Christianity" was an example of Europe's tendency to "*stage* the Orient" for western apprehension (Said 1978.61; emphasis in original). As Alston's work shows, such cultural self-projection—representing foreign cultures as distorted versions of one's own—appears as well in the discur-

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14 Said 1978.58–59. This passage continues: "The Orient at large, therefore, vacillates between the West's contempt for what is familiar and its shivers of delight in—or fear of—novelty" (59). Said initially refers this vacillation to the tendency of western cultural thought to interpret "new" forms of the Orient through the lens of "old," and thus familiar, stereotypes. This is what he refers to with the phrase "contempt for what is familiar." More precisely, this passage in *Orientalism* follows analysis of Aeschylus's *Persians* and Euripides' *Bacchae* as early examples of Europe's conceptual opposition between the East and the West. As non-Greek and, particularly, eastern cultures were explored by Herodotus and others, further sub-categories of the Orient emerged so that what was new would be seen in terms of "familiar" versions of the Orient. Said's later discussion of the Christianization of Islam, however, suggests a slightly different vacillation between a foreign culture or religion viewed as "novel" and strange, on the one hand, and as a distorted but "familiar" version of one's own, on the other.

sive tendency of ancient Roman texts to represent what is other within the recognizable matrix of Greco-Roman culture. Indeed, the Roman imperial texts regarding Egypt may be said to display greater or lesser degrees of ambivalence and vacillation between the familiar and the novel, both within individual works themselves and within the body of literature taken as a whole. Just as Plutarch and Juvenal display an assimilating tendency that contrasts with the description of some aspects of Egyptian culture as barbaric and other, so it is possible to observe such ambivalence in individual texts of the Augustan poets as well as in the overall character of the literature of the principate.[15]

In contrast to the treatment of Egypt by his contemporaries Propertius, Vergil, and Horace, the orientalizing rhetoric in Tibullus's seventh elegy is subtle. The poem celebrates Roman imperial power, but it also dignifies Egyptian religion and culture as parallel to the achievements of Rome as conqueror. The depiction of Egypt as primitive, barbaric, or strange is encoded in a few lines, but the poem tends rather to honor her religion and civilization. Nonetheless, on a basic structural level, the poem moves from the ideology and images of Roman conquest to a recognition of Egyptian identity, and, finally, to an assimilation of that identity into a Greco-Roman vision. Thus despite the tribute paid to Egypt's culture, the elegy's overall structure subordinates the positive images of that ancient civilization to an overarching Roman imperial theme that dominates both at the beginning and at the poem's conclusion. Moreover, as we shall see, the images of Egypt—and specifically of Osiris—tend themselves to fluctuate not only in the degree to which they become assimilated into recognizable Greco-Roman terms, but also across the spectrum of gender identification. Assimilation becomes more problematic as the trope of the "feminized East" appears, evoking as it does elegiac conventions, and the Roman West asserts anew its masculine identity as the dominant civilization.

The following discussion explores this ambivalent treatment of Egypt in the broader context of Tibullan elegy: we shall focus first on the Romanizing depiction of Osiris as the inventor of agriculture, then on the implications of his feminized, ritual self, and, finally, on the competing

15 See Wyke 1992 on orientalizing depictions of Egypt in Vergil, Propertius, and Horace. The so-called "Cleopatra Ode," Hor. *Od*. 1.37, orientalizes Cleopatra by presenting her as a *fatale monstrum* given to drink and lechery, but it also famously ennobles her, presenting her suicide in terms of Roman Stoicism. Here, too, we see an Augustan poet assimilating the Egyptian Other into his own Roman culture.

discourses of the elegiac genre and the military triumph as interpretative frameworks for the Egyptian god and the poem as a whole. In the conclusion, I shall speculate on the poem's potential audiences.

Let us first review the development of the poem. The opening image of the Fates anticipating Messalla's military victory over the Aquitanians, later celebrated in ritual triumph, sets the tone of empire's inevitability (1–8). The reference to Messalla's celebration as *novos* ("fresh," "further," *OLD* s.v. 5) points up the frequency of the ritual during this period: the *Fasti Triumphales* record no fewer than seven such events between 29 and 26 B.C.E., the most spectacular being Octavian's unprecedented triple triumph in 29 B.C.E. Messalla's is yet one more, an allusive compliment to the Augustan regime (Murgatroyd 1980.214, Maltby 2002.284). After evoking Transalpine Gaul through the personified images of its rivers and other geographical features, thus suggesting the iconography of an actual triumph (9–12), the poem turns to Messalla's expedition to the East, comprising Cilicia, Syria, Phoenicia, and Egypt (13–22). A long section that identifies Egypt first with the Nile (23–26) and then with Osiris, praises the god for inventing agriculture and introducing civilization in the form of wine (27–48), metonymically represented by the Roman Bacchus. The speaker then proffers an invitation to the Egyptian god, dressed in the ritual attire of, and syncretically fused with, Bacchus-Dionysus, to join Messalla's Genius in the birthday festivities (49–56). The penultimate image before the final blessing of Messalla's birthday spirit praises the statesman and general for his repairs to the Via Latina, leading from the great urban center of Rome back into the countryside (57–64).

As this brief synopsis demonstrates, not only does Osiris appear in positive terms in his "local" or "national" association with Egypt as a divine culture hero who discovers agriculture, he also provides a counterpart to Messalla, himself a purveyor of Roman civilization.[16] Scholars have been quick to point out the similar phrases used to describe each: the Roman populace witnesses Messalla's triumph ("novos pubes Romana triumphos / vidit," 5–6) just as the foreign, "barbarous," populace of Egypt celebrates and marvels at Osiris, divine manifestation of the mysterious power of the Nile ("te canit atque suum pubes miratur Osirim / barbara," 27–28).[17] The poem's closing image of the farmer, leaving the great city

16 Levy 1929.111; Gaisser 1971.227–28; Putnam 1973.118–19; Ball 1975.737–38, 1983.115–16; Bright 1975.36–37; Konstan 1978.181; Johnson 1990.105; Lee-Stecum 1998.219, 223. Mutschler 1985.111–12, 117–18 casts doubt on the equation of Messalla and Osiris.

17 All citations of Tibullus are from Maltby 2002. All translations are my own.

and enjoined to sing Messalla's praises ("te canat agricola, a magna cum venerit urbe," 61), echoes the Egyptian populace's hymning of their god and reinforces Messalla's semi-divine status as Jupiter in his triumph. This equivalence between Osiris and Messalla even extends to the suggestion of the Egyptian god, as a figure conflated with Bacchus-Dionysus, implicitly enjoying his own triumphal *pompa* that is parallel to Messalla's celebration (Konstan 1978.181). That the ritual of the military triumph is said to have evolved out of Dionysiac festivity (Beard 2007.315–18) only reinforces the parallel. And yet, as we shall see, Osiris' ambiguous gender complicates the equation. For Osiris' gender vacillates between identification with a masculine principle (and thus with the triumphal and conquering Messalla), and assimilation to a feminine persona that evokes both the feminized elegiac lover and his mistress.

Let us first consider the masculine Osiris and how such a depiction incorporates the god into a Roman framework. It is as the *protos heuretes* ("first inventor") of agriculture that Osiris appears explicitly in aggressively sexual and masculine terms. Feminine nature yielding to masculine, civilizing force structures the rhetorical imagery of lines 29–36. The suggestive opposition of "tender/hard" in line 30—"He disturbed the tender soil with his iron plough" ("et teneram ferro sollicitavit humum")—becomes literal in the sexual act of the god Osiris who initiates the "virgin land" into agriculture and "entrusts his seed" to the earth ("primus inexpertae commisit semina terrae," 31). That the name "Isis" meant "land" in ancient Egyptian strengthens this sexual and marital symbolism of the earth receiving her husband, Osiris.[18] The gathering of fruit (32), too, has long-standing erotic connotations in the Greco-Roman literary tradition, as Sappho's epithalamia attest, and the "marriage of the tender vine to its support" ("teneram palis adiungere vitem," 33) appears frequently as a metaphor in Latin authors.[19] The repetition of the adjective *teneram* (30, 33) reinforces this feminine characterization of the land and nature.

However, although some critics have focused on Osiris' peaceful nature, the rhetoric describing the actions and teachings of the Egyptian god has violent connotations.[20] His "disturbance" of the earth with the plough evolves into metaphoric warfare when the pruning of foliage with

18 Serv. *ad Aen*. 8.696; Cairns 1996.22, Maltby 2002.291.

19 Sappho LP 105a. On "marriage" metaphors in agricultural texts, see Maltby 2002.291.

20 On peaceful Osiris, Klingner 1951.128–29, Ball 1975.737–38. By contrast, Putnam 1973.123, Moore 1989.427, and Maltby 2002.291–92 acknowledge the violence of the diction here.

a "hard sickle" connotes a form of "slaughter" to the vine ("hic [docuit] viridem dura caedere falce comam," 34): *comam*, a word often applied to hair, personifies the vine and intensifies the suggestion of martial violence in the verb *caedere*. The agricultural word for "prop," *palum* (33), contributes to this violent subtext, for it can also refer to the stake to which condemned prisoners would be bound for execution (Cic. *in Verr.* 2.5.11, Liv. 8.7.19). Even the pressing of ripe grapes (*uva matura,* 36) by crude feet (*incultis . . . pedibus*, 36*)* evokes a brute masculine force overcoming feminine nature when she has come to sexual maturity. In general, such metaphors go back to literature of the archaic age, which often presents agriculture as sexual violence perpetrated on the land.[21] The specific orientalizing discourses of the sexually aggressive Egyptian male and Egypt as a "locus of male fertility" may also be at play here.[22]

In the particular context of Tibullan elegy, however, the description of Osiris' activities assimilates the god to a Roman vision of the countryside. As commentaries note, the agricultural motif here—but not the subtle violence of its rhetoric—resembles the vision of Pax in the tenth elegy (45–49) and the gods of the countryside (*ruris . . . deos*) in 2.1.37–50 inventing the arts of cultivation. In 1.10, it is Pax who initiates ploughing and teaches about viniculture, but without the sense of an assault on the land. Indeed, the idyllic aspects of the farmer's life appear frequently in Tibullus as a kind of escapist dream that also encodes the conservative social values often referred to as one facet of Augustan ideology. The very first elegy displays the speaker desiring this life, in language that partly echoes Osiris' actions (cf. *manu sollerti*, 1.7.29, and *teneram vitem*, 1.7.33): "When the time is ripe, I myself, a countryman, with deft hand (*facili . . . manu*) would sow the tender vines (*teneras . . . vites*) and great fruit trees" (1.1.7–8). At one level, as David Konstan argues, in 1.7 Tibullus has attached his conventional picture of Roman rural pursuits, with all the rugged virtues of the *mos maiorum*, to the Egyptian god Osiris. As a result, the usual opposition between the soldier and the farmer—identified in Tibullus with the patron versus the poet-lover—takes on a geographical cast in 1.7, as the sphere of activities associated with each of these fig-

21 On the ancient metaphor of woman's body as field and furrow in the Greek literary tradition, see duBois 1988.39–85. See, too, the chapter, "Grounding Representation," in Keith 2000.36–64.

22 I borrow the phrase "locus of male fertility" from Vasunia 2001.43. See, too, Zeitlin 1996.123–71 on this trope.

ures becomes aligned with the Roman West (Messalla) and the Egyptian East (Osiris) respectively (Konstan 1978.182). Ironically, it is Egypt that represents a quintessentially Tibullan—and "Roman"—rural vision in contrast to Messalla's military sphere.

And yet, such an opposition is problematic, as the differences between Osiris and Pax as first inventors suggest: the Romanizing vision of Osiris does not *only* consist of this transference of the rustic motifs of the Tibullan countryside, for it also, as we have seen, includes and appropriates a military and aggressive rhetoric within a picture of rural pursuits. Again, the greater context of the Tibullan corpus reinforces these connotations. *Ferrum*, the word for an "iron" plough, appears as "weapon" in Tibullus 1.2.27 and 1.9.21. The verb *caedo*, although not uncommon in agricultural writing, resonates with connotations of violent warfare in the context of Tibullus's poems, recalling its association with Bellona, goddess of war, in the previous elegy. There, although the speaker as *miles amoris* consults Bellona in an erotic situation, the frenzy of her priestess is no less gruesome for that: "She violently hacks at her own arms with a two-headed axe" ("ipsa bipenne suos caedit violenta lacertos," 47).[23] Moreover, the cognate noun *caedes* appears exclusively in violent contexts in Tibullus's poems. In 1.3, for example, where the poet remains behind as Messalla continues his military expedition to the East, the speaker decries the "constant slaughter and wounds under Jupiter's rule" ("nunc Iove sub domino caedes et vulnera semper," 1.3.49). In 1.10.1–4, it is the first inventor of the sword whom the speaker predictably holds accountable for the slaughter and battles of the human race: "Quis fuit, horrendos primus qui protulit enses? / . . . tunc caedes hominum generi, tunc proelia nata."

Thus the lexical variations of *caedere* appear generally in Tibullus in a violent or military setting, the setting associated with Messalla, the patron, and adamantly rejected by the speaker as elegiac lover-poet and rural enthusiast.[24] But rather than maintain a separation of these two spheres in the depiction of Osiris, Elegy 1.7 displays a subtle conflation in which metaphors of warfare associated with Messalla as general and patron inhabit, even contaminate, the agricultural vision often fantasized by the lover-poet. As a result, in his activities as both "farmer" and—connota-

23 In 1.1.21, *caesa* refers to the slaughtering of a calf—an agricultural but still bloody act.

24 Tib. 1.1 presents this opposition most clearly, as does 1.10, although it does not mention Messalla specifically. In 1.5, the speaker's dream of a simple rustic existence includes Messalla, despite his association with public militarism in other poems.

tively—"warrior," Osiris displays characteristics that recall the original Roman concept of the farmer-citizen-soldier, a hybrid national identity that Messalla only partly evokes as triumphing general and Roman imperialist.

The sexual rhetoric of the passage only reinforces this martial—and Roman—undertone of Osiris' labors as inventor. As the triumphal iconography of Rome variously suggests, military victory was seen as masculine dominance over a feminized victim.[25] Tellingly, in our passage, it is the line preceding his agricultural innovations—and "conquest of the land"—that first suggests Osiris' triumph: the Egyptian populace celebrating Osiris and his achievements echoes the Roman populace at Messalla's triumph and sets up the parallel between the two. But the text goes beyond presenting Osiris as a complementary figure to Messalla. For in Tibullus's deployment of the *heuretes* ("discoverer") of agriculture topos, the Egyptian god in fact becomes identified with this Roman general and his military conquest of territory:[26] the Romanizing of Osiris—through the Tibullan cultivation topos and its undercurrent of martial violence suggesting Messalla as conqueror—draws the god's agricultural "conquest" of the land (Egypt and, figuratively, Isis) rhetorically close to Messalla's and therefore, metonymically, to Rome's victory over her provinces. Indeed, the rhetorical victimization of the subtly personified Egyptian land at the hands of Osiris looks back to the personification of the river Atax defeated and trembling on the day that brought Roman victory ("quem tremeret forti milite victus Atax," 4). In this sense, Osiris' masculine violence ironically serves as a trope for Rome's own conquest of Egypt.[27] By presenting Osiris in such terms, the poem displays how Rome appropriates Egypt through an assimilation of her gods to a Roman paradigm of martial virility.

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25 Kellum 1997.167 discusses the Forum of Augustus (dedicated in 2 B.C.E.) as a "performance" space for the triumph. In this space, caryatids—marble statues of clothed women—served as a gendered reminder of the fate of captured cities. In addition, although the phallus that dangled from the triumphant general's chariot was primarily apotropaic, it also suggested the virility of martial conquest: Kellum 1997.171–73. "There was still . . . a presenting and a receiving role, and it was the aggressor who attempted to wield the phallus" (173). Beard 2007.83–84 cautions that Pliny *Nat*. 28, 39 is our only evidence for the triumphal phallus. See, too, Ramsby and Severy-Hoven 2007.43–71 on the representation of dominated peoples as female in Roman art of the Augustan age.

26 For Osiris as inventor of agriculture and, more broadly, civilization in the Egyptian tradition, cf. Diod. Sic. 1.14.1, 1.17.1–4, 1.20.3.

27 Note that the adjective *teneram* describing the land is repeated in Osiris' *teneros pedes*, suggesting that the "feminized" vision of Osiris becomes identified with the land itself, whose conquered status is implied in the discourse of triumphal ritual.

Conquest, then, resides also at the level of rhetoric: that is, from the perspective of the "imperialism of representation" (Webster 1996.7) wherein the conqueror speaks for the conquered, the Romanizing vision of Osiris is as much a form of "imperialism" as imagery that accentuated Egypt as a country of strange customs and oriental mystique. Both ways of conceiving and representing Egypt are present in the poem to different degrees, and they tend to vacillate and even commingle at times in single images. Here, in lines 29–36, the assimilating form of imperialist representation explicitly aligns Osiris with an aggressively masculine principle and thus aligns the "fertile Egyptian male" with a conception of Roman identity that emphasizes active sexuality, virility, and military domination, in addition to agricultural pursuits.[28] However, the god gradually evolves into a figure who embodies Egypt as a feminized Other—the orientalizing trope that accentuates difference.

Let us now consider how the lines that introduce Osiris prepare for that subsequent evolution from a masculine, Roman figure to his feminine ritual self. For the assimilation of Osiris into a Roman vision of the countryside follows directly on the few lines that do refer to unique rituals and distinctive geographic features of Egypt—lines that arguably exhibit an orientalizing (if not yet overtly feminizing) depiction of Egypt that contributes to a Roman self-conception through differentiation from an Other. The list of foreign and exotic names of rivers, mountains, and the peoples associated with these topographical features (9–16) creates an aura of mysterious difference and local identity that leads into and prepares for the ultimate symbol of geographic mystique—the hidden source and enigmatic flooding of the Nile (21–28):

> qualis et, arentes cum findit Sirius agros,
> fertilis aestiva Nilus abundet aqua?
> Nile pater, quanam possim te dicere causa
> aut quibus in terris occuluisse caput?
> te propter nullos tellus tua postulat imbres,
> arida nec pluvio supplicat herba Iovi.

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28 See n. 25 above. On Roman manhood as defined in terms of an active/passive polarity, with "the small class of *viri*, true men, adult Roman citizens in good standing [as] the impenetrable penetrators" at the top of a "social pyramid," see Walters 1997.41. Admittedly, the Roman soldier with his wounds was a modified exception, but here penetration of the body was honorable only if resulting from weapons in warfare.

> te canit atque suum pubes miratur Osirim
> barbara, Memphitem plangere docta bovem.
>
> Should I relate how the fertile Nile, when Sirius splits the parched fields, floods with summer water? Father Nile, for what reason or in what lands could I say that you hide your head? It is because of you that your land demands no showers, nor does the dry grass supplicate Jove of the rains. The primitive populace, having learned to mourn the bull of Memphis, celebrates and wonders at you as their own Osiris.

The focus on distinctive features of the Nile and the religious customs of those inhabiting the region displays an orientalizing emphasis on alterity. For all that the hymnic language here elevates the Nile when identified with Osiris (Klingner 1951.124–29, Gaisser 1971.225), the last line pointedly accentuates the otherness of the worshipping Egyptian populace with the enjambment of *barbara,* the ultimate descriptor of Greco-Roman difference.[29] The word's enjambed position serves to underscore as foreign, and implicitly strange and primitive, not only the populace but also the religious custom to which the line next refers—the Egyptian practice of animal worship. Despite the positive valence of *docta* ("knowing," "taught," "learned"), the reference to the ritual mourning at Memphis for the sacred bull Apis, avatar of Osiris, invokes the practice most regarded as strange and uncivilized by the Romans.[30] Indeed, the fundamental ambivalence that characterizes much Greco-Roman writing about Egypt—respect for the antiquity of its culture combined with a paradoxical sense of its religion and customs as different and primitive—appears in the tension of these

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29 The adjective *barbarus*—either "foreign," meaning neither Greek nor Roman, or "barbarian" as in "uncivilized"—translates exactly the Greek *barbaros*, which simply meant "non-Greek" and originally referred to the "babble" of a non-Greek speaker. See Hall 1989.4.

30 On Roman attitudes to Egyptian animal worship, see Cic. *de Rep.* 3.9.14 and the discussion in Smelik and Hemelrijk 1984.1955–59, where the Tibullan line is read as expressing "wonder" at the exotic practice. According to Dio Cass. 51.16.5, when Octavian visited Egypt in 30 B.C.E., he refused to acknowledge Apis, declaring that he worshipped gods not cattle. On Apis as the incarnation of Osiris, see Diod. Sic. 1.85.4 and Plut. *Mor.* 359B. Koenen 1976.141 argues that by identifying Osiris and Apis, Tibullus points to "Sarapis as to the god of mysteries" but that he avoids the name Sarapis for political reasons and to retain the greater exoticism of the name Osiris.

two adjectives describing the foreign, and implicitly primitive, as against the learned or civilized populace.[31]

Moreover, the poem's emphasis on Egypt's barbarous or primitive inhabitants in the context of celebratory wonder at the Nile's flooding corresponds with a particular feature of Nilotic scenes (paintings and mosaics of the flooded river) that date to this period: it is only after approximately 30 B.C.E. that the figures of dwarves and pygmies, often engaged in merrymaking or "sexual excess" in relation to Roman ideal norms, begin to populate these Nilotic landscapes. M. J. Versluys suggests that, in contrast to the Hellenized elites who also figure in these works, this depiction of the indigenous Egyptians as pygmies only appears after the annexation of Egypt as a province because it serves to justify the Roman colonial presence (2002.437).[32]

Tibullus's poem similarly emphasizes primitive Egypt, but it negotiates and tames that cultural difference through the familiarity of the stereotype[33]—the mystery of the Nile's source—and through clear allusions to the learned (*docta*) Alexandrian and more broadly Hellenic literary tradition. For three of these lines ("fertilis aestiva Nilus abundet aqua," "aut quibus in terris occuluisse caput," "Memphitem plangere docta bovem") directly echo Callimachus's epinician poetry celebrating the athletic victories of Sosibius, the minister of Ptolemy IV (Gaisser 1971.225–26, Murgatroyd 1980.210–12, 221). Such associations with and questions about the Nile and Egypt extend back through the writings of Lucretius, Callimachus, Aristotle, Euripides, Herodotus, and Aeschylus, among others.[34] On a stylistic level, then, even when emphasizing the mystery and strangeness of Egypt, the gesture to Callimachus, Alexandrianism, and the Greco-Roman literary tradition has a certain assimilating function that anticipates the Romanizing vision of Osiris, first as the inventor of agriculture and then as Bacchus-Dionysus. Moreover, the allusion to Hellenistic literature in

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31 On this ambivalence and complexity in Greek literature regarding Egypt, see Vasunia 2001.

32 On dwarfs in Nilotic scenes, see, too, Meyboom and Versluys 2007, esp. 208.

33 The postcolonialist theorist Homi Bhabha develops Said's ideas in an essay on the stereotype in colonial discourse (1994.94–120). Bhabha suggests that the cultural stereotype resembles the Freudian concept of fetishism, in that in the alternation between recognition of cultural difference and its disavowal, something familiar—i.e., the stereotype—is affixed to the unknown.

34 Aesch. *Pers*. 33, *Supp*. 497–98; Arist. frags. 283–85 (Rose), *Hist. An*. 562b, 584b, 606a, *Gen. An*. 770a35; Eur. *Hel*. 1–3; Herod. 2.19, 2.32; Lucr. 6.712–37; Diod. Sic. 1.37. On Hellenizing representations of Egypt, see Vasunia 2001, and 275–82 on the Nile in particular.

particular corresponds to the presence of the Hellenized upper classes in the Nilotic scenes, the "learned" (*docta*) segment of the population that contrasts with the "primitive" (*barbara*) native Egyptians.

Let us now turn to the lines that depict Osiris as a feminized figure in ritual attire. Again, a certain ambivalence governs the trajectory of Osiris' manifestations as he becomes associated with the Roman Bacchus, metonymically representing wine (Putnam 1973.123), and then reverts back to his Egyptian self, distinguished by his Egyptian name but ambiguously appareled in Bacchic-Dionysiac-Osirian dress. In part, such ambiguity reflects the cultural syncretism that identified these gods from an early date, as Herodotus (2.42, 2.144) and others attest.[35] Here in Tibullus's poem, the garb and accoutrements of the god invoke the familiarity of the Greco-Roman tradition even as they serve to accentuate Osiris, and by metonymy Egypt, as a feminized figure (43–48):

> non tibi sunt tristes curae nec luctus, Osiri,
> sed chorus et cantus et levis aptus amor,
> sed varii flores et frons redimita corymbis,
> fusa sed ad teneros lutea palla pedes
> et Tyriae vestes et dulcis tibia cantu
> et levis occultis conscia cista sacris.
>
> Neither sad cares nor sorrows concern you, Osiris, but dance and song and light love, and many-colored flowers and your brow bound with a garland of ivy-berries, and a saffron robe reaching to your tender feet and Tyrian dress and a flute sweet with song and the light woven basket complicit in your secret rites.

Although commentaries remark that these lines provide the only overt reference to love in the entire poem, the depiction of Osiris in his ritual attire as a feminized lover is crucial to understanding how this elegiac poem intersects with an orientalizing and thus colonial discourse.

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35 See, too, Diod. Sic. 1.13.5 and 1.15.6, Plut. *de Is. et Os*. 35, Serv. *ad Aen*. 11.278. On syncretism here, see Levy 1929.109 and Klingner 1951.126. Ball 1975.735 writes: "Familiar with the Greco-Roman rustic gods but somewhat unfamiliar with the cult of Osiris in its true Egyptian form, the poet converts Osiris into a typical Greek culture-divinity (29–38), and employing the couplets about wine, he subtly slips into identifying Osiris with Bacchus (39–42) . . ."

But just how distinctively foreign is the feminine Osiris with his *teneros pedes* and his Tyrian clothing? The long-standing syncretism that associated Bacchus-Dionysus with Osiris as inventors of viniculture applied as well to the effeminate or bisexual quality of each god and the ritual dress associated with them at Greco-Roman and Egyptian festivals (Maltby 2002.294–95). Thus the *lutea palla* or long saffron-colored robe was typically worn by women celebrants of Dionysus as well as by initiates in the cult of Osiris. Plutarch (*de Is. et Os*. 51) claims that statues of the Egyptian god would be draped in such a "fire-colored robe." Roman women wore the *palla*, and a bride's veil would typically be saffron colored, yellow being a feminine color according to Pliny (*Hist. Nat.* 21.46). In turn, *Tyriae vestes* refers to clothing dyed purple, for which Tyre was famous, a color signifying luxury and, in the elegiac world, feminine decadence.[36] Thus Osiris' status as foreign Other aligns with and becomes accentuated by markers of femininity within the paradoxically familiar framework of Greco-Roman gender.

All the same, it is significant that the poem shifts back to the name of Osiris rather than Bacchus here, at the very moment that the god definitively transforms from his metonymic incarnation as wine into his effeminate persona in ritual celebration. As a result, the final line of this passage—referring to a basket used in the mysteries of both Dionysus and Osiris[37]—tends to associate the mysterious and exotic nature of such rites—*occultis . . . sacris*—with the feminine Othering of the Egyptian god. Any such associations with Dionysus strengthen that effect of alterity, for they invoke the orientalizing discourse of Hellenic literature, where the god of wine becomes—in certain manifestations—an effeminate Asiatic Other in relation to the Athenian norm.[38] As Shumate (2006.20) observes, "The rhetorical interchangeability of the figures opposing and

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36 See Tib. 2.3.58 and Propertius 2.16.18 for gifts from Tyre. However, purple in general was a sign of luxury and status, worn by both men and women, and by the *triumphator* in particular.

37 For ancient evidence on the *cista*, see Cat. 64.259 and Apul. *Met.* 11.11.3; Maltby 2002.295 and Koenen 1976.152 n. 102.

38 Said 1978.56 on the *Bacchae*; cf. Hall 1989.152–53: "By presenting the cult of Dionysus as a barbarian import the poets thus found mythical expression for his role as the god of epiphany, and revealed his promise of liberation from the norms of Hellenic *sophrosune*, his responsiveness to primeval instinct, and his danger." On Dionysus's greater identification with the "feminine" in the Greek theater and reinforcement of Athenian patriarchal norms through "playing the other," see Zeitlin 1996.341–74.

thus defining community identities and cultural ideals was established and ubiquitous in classical antiquity, going back to the binarism of woman/barbarian/slave/*cinaedus* . . . versus free male citizen that structured so much of Athenian thinking."

But beyond such cultural binarisms, this passage emphasizing Osiris' femininity resonates specifically within the greater context of Tibullan elegy and elegiac conventions of gender. We shall consider Osiris in relation first to the lover-poet and then to the elegiac mistress. Indeed, several elements in the depiction of the god recall the self-characterizations of the lover-poet elsewhere in Tibullus. In the first elegy, the speaker pursues *levis . . . Venus* (1.1.73), "carefree passion," a phrase resembling the *levis . . . amor* that befits Osiris. More broadly, as commentaries note, the *chorus, cantus, levis . . . amor,* and *varii flores* (44–45), which comprise ritually festive Osiris' sphere in 1.7, echo the vision of the Elysian Fields to which the speaker imagines himself being led by Venus in 1.3.59–62:

> hic choreae cantusque vigent, passsimque vagantes
> dulce sonant tenui gutture carmen aves,
> fert casiam non culta seges totosque per agros
> floret odoratis terra benigna rosis.
>
> Here dance and song flourish, and birds flying about trill sweet song from their slender throat, the untilled field bears cassia, and throughout all the land, the kindly earth blooms with sweet-smelling roses.

Moreover, the speaker envisions his entry to this seductive afterlife to be on account of "his inclination to tender Love" ("quod facilis tenero sum semper Amori," 57). Such compliance with love parallels how "carefree love" suits Osiris: *aptus* and *facilis* are near synonyms. The speaker's temperament gains access to a realm in 1.3 that corresponds with the ritual identity and sphere of Osiris as depicted in 1.7.

The very fact that the lover-poet envisions an afterlife for himself in 1.3 also draws him into identification with Osiris as a god who, having died and come back to life, was associated with eternity (Koenen 1976.135). Elegy 1.3 displays the speaker as ill and languishing on the island of "Phaeacia," or Corcyra, where he must stay while Messalla departs to continue on his campaign. Although the dramatic scene assumes that the lover-poet had initially agreed to accompany the expedition, in his now sickened

state, he invokes the aid of Isis, his mistress's goddess, then entertains a picture of the Elysian fields and Tartarus, and finally imagines himself returned to health while Delia runs to meet him on naked foot. Conceiving his homecoming to Delia as "sent down from the sky" ("sed videar caelo missus adesse tibi," 90), the speaker presents his return to both health and Delia as the epiphany of a god, hinting at the resurrection of Osiris and his reunion with Isis in the Egyptian myth.[39] Thus despite the speaker's nostalgic preference for his ancestral Penates and Lares (33–34), his own Italian household gods, the poem structurally and thematically identifies him with Osiris and his mistress with Isis (Lee-Stecum 1998.110, Murgatroyd 1980.108).[40]

The speaker's initial enfeebled condition and his submission to the power of Delia-Isis reflect the typical status of the elegiac lover as lower than that of his mistress and, within the elegiac convention of gender inversion, as feminized. As a feminized Osiris-lover figure, then, the elegiac speaker in 1.3 anticipates the feminized depiction of the Egyptian god in 1.7, but with a crucial difference: the Osiris of 1.7 is, as Lee-Stecum (1998.218) points out, a powerful figure and—implicitly—a successful lover. Worrisome care and grief ("tristes curae nec luctus") do not accompany him, but rather, as we have mentioned, "song and dance and carefree love" are his companions.

For all his feminized status in this vision, Osiris does not share the typical elegiac lover's all-consuming passion and the pain that goes with it. The Tibullan speaker of 1.1 may declare his desire for "light passion" (*levis Venus*) as noted above, but the subsequent poems to Delia manifest the lover-poet's more conventional elegiac suffering. In 1.2.1–4, a form of *paraklausithyron*, he asks for more wine to relieve his "fresh sorrows" (*novos . . . dolores)* from his "unhappy love" (*infelix amor)*; both the fifth and the sixth elegies show him displaced by rival lovers. Indeed, the elegiac woman notoriously withholds her favors, granting them on some occasions but not on others—and not exclusively—to the lover-poet. The speaker describes this unpredictability of his erotic fortune when he warns Delia's

39 Another parallel for the poem is Penelope and Odysseus.

40 As Koenen 1976.130 notes, we see the latter identification in Delia's name, derived from Delos, a major site of Isis worship in addition to its association with Apollo. In the poem itself, the near conflation of mistress and goddess appears in the abrupt shift in addressee from line 26, where the speaker addresses Delia as a devotee of Isis, to line 27, where Isis as goddess is invoked.

current paramour that "fickle Chance turns on a swift wheel" ("versatur celeri Fors levis orbe rotae," 1.5.70). In the ninth elegy, addressed to the boy Marathus, we find the lover-poet wishing that the female mistress of this new male love object be as "fickle" (*levis*) to him as he has been to the speaker: "sit precor, exemplo sit levis illa tuo" (1.9.40). Such usage reveals that Osiris' *levis amor* in 1.7 has connotations beyond a "light" love free of anxiety (in contrast with *tristes curae*), for it also suggests the "fickle" and "uncommitted" passion of the elegiac *domina*.

As Maria Wyke summarizes the essentialist rhetoric describing the elegiac mistress, "She is *levis*: unstable, fickle, faithless, dangerously passionate and deceptive, in need of supervision and control. She is vilified for the mutability her poet declares is characteristic of all women."[41] In the underlying resonance of the adjective *levis*, then, the orientalizing characterization of Osiris overlaps as much with the cheating, fickle mistress as with the feminized lover himself. Indeed, the two other pastimes suited to Osiris—song and dance—also suggest the elegiac *puella*, modeled as she is on the Greek courtesan and her accomplishments.[42] Moreover, in keeping with her capacity to charm through poetic song and rhythm, the *puella* often becomes identified with the elegiac genre itself. Here, then, Osiris' *teneros pedes* ("soft, tender feet") metonymically evoke both mistress and meter. Indeed, not only does the adjective *tener* suggest elegiac style and Callimachean *leptotes* (Keith 2008.183 n. 35), but Propertius, too, employs the phrase *pedibus . . . teneris* when imagining Cynthia crossing frozen terrain with a rival lover in Illyria (1.8.7–8).

Osiris' attire also suggests the elegiac mistress: clothing of expensive Tyrian dyes connotes the decadent world of elegiac *otium*, but it specifically represents the ostentation and greed of the mistress in other Tibullan elegies. Thus in 1.9, the speaker mockingly asks a cuckolded husband whether it's for him that his wife "goes out arrayed in Tyrian cloth" ("Tyrio prodeat apta sinu," 70); and in 2.4, the speaker decries the rapacious mistress and wishes death on the merchant "who gathers green emeralds and dyes snowy fleece with Tyrian purple"—imperial commodities that give rise to erotic corruption ("o pereat quicumque

41 Wyke 2002.173, with further references to McCoskey 1999 and others. Note the degree to which this characterization of the elegiac *puella* resembles orientalizing depictions of Asia as full of mystery, irrationality, and dangerous excess.

42 On the accomplishments of poetry, song, and dance as the conventional skills of a courtesan, see Hemelrijk 1999.82–83, Wyke 2002.171.

legit viridesque smaragdos / et niveam Tyrio murice tingit ovem . . . haec fecere malas," 27–31). Elsewhere in 1.7 itself, the speaker evinces respect for Phoenician Tyre as "cultivated" or "skilled," since it was "the first to engage in seafaring" ("prima ratem ventis credere docta Tyros," 20). Such maritime commerce, however, inevitably leads to the luxury goods favored by the mistress. The personification of *Tyros* as *docta* in this maritime context, coupled with Osiris dressed in *Tyriae vestes*, further identifies Osiris with the elegiac mistress—a *docta puella*—through a metonymic "clothes make the (wo-)man" association. Finally, for all that Osiris' actual gendered status as an effeminate male correlates with the elegiac lover, the very potency of the feminized god corresponds more with elegy's construction of the powerful, dominant mistress than with her submissive paramour.

Other conventions of elegy are also relevant to the depiction and interpretation of Osiris as manifesting an ambivalent orientalizing discourse in 1.7. In the inverted hierarchy of elegiac gender, the female power exercised over the poet-lover not only feminizes but also likens him to a slave, a captive status visible in Tibullus's first elegy where the elegiac speaker laments his metaphorical condition: "The chains of a beautiful girl hold me fast" ("me retinent vinctum formosae vincla puellae," 1.1.55).[43] This elegiac convention also informs the characterization of Osiris, for in the god's capacity as Bacchus—i.e., wine—he "brings respite to aggrieved mortals, though their legs rattle in hard shackles" ("Bacchus et afflictis requiem mortalibus affert, / crura licet dura compede pulsa sonent," 41–42). Not only does this recall the speaker's request for more wine to relieve his *novos . . . dolores* ("fresh sorrows") in 1.2.1–4, but the image of slavery—of shackled legs—also looks back to those "enslaved leaders, their arms bound" ("evinctos bracchia capta duces," 1.7.6) on display for the Roman populace in Messalla's *novos . . . triumphos* at the poem's opening.

Neither of the instances of slavery in 1.7 acts as an overt metaphor for elegiac love, for the poem does not address that condition. However, each image of subjugation displays the rhetoric that elsewhere makes up the metaphorical "vehicle" for the elegiac lover's dominated and suffering state—the "tenor" or referent that that vehicle expresses (cf. 1.1.55,

43 Murgatroyd 1980.64 notes that this is the first extant example of the trope in Roman love elegy. All the same, its frequency over the course of Tibullus's work and in Propertius, whose *Monobiblos* is published around the same time as Tibullus I, demonstrates that it quickly became a convention. Moreover, Gallus may well have introduced the trope.

1.2.92, 1.6.38, 1.9.21–22, 79, 2.3.80, 2.4.1–5).[44] Given the conventions of love elegy—where the military world so often provides the rhetoric to express the erotic sphere—a reader inevitably carries the associations of that metaphorically militarized erotic context back into a poem that seems directly to address the political and military sphere. As a result, the elegiac convention of *servitium amoris*—the lover-in-chains as a metaphorical slave or the military booty of his mistress—necessarily presents itself as part of the greater context of Tibullan elegy, the backdrop against which the feminine and effeminate Osiris must be interpreted. In an elegiac poem featuring triumphal discourse and celebrating Roman conquest, how does one interpret a feminized divine figure embodying a recent territorial acquisition? How does one interpret such an image when it also invokes elegiac conventions—namely, a discourse where the figurative use of military rhetoric typically inverts the power relations of ancient gender roles so that a masculine mistress dominates an effeminate male?[45] That is, in addition to the tribute paid to the power of Osiris as a local Egyptian god—the denotative meaning of the passage—there are at least three further competing and intersecting discourses that complicate the picture: the Roman triumph, with its emphasis on the correlation between masculinity and military dominance over an implicitly feminized victim;[46] the elegiac discourse of gender inversion where the feminized male lover is the slave and even the booty of his "masculine" *domina* or mistress; and, finally, a literary tradition of orientalism that runs deeper than such elegiac conventions, authorial style, or the requests and considerations of patronage.[47]

In this elegiac poem and the greater context of elegiac conventions, the feminizing and orientalizing attributes of Osiris simultaneously reinforce his status as foreign Other *and* inscribe him in a familiar generic paradigm. The feminized Osiris as an embodiment of Egypt functions both in the ritual discourse of triumphal conquest and in the elegiac discourse of gender relations. Initially, these different discourses would seem to have

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44 Lee-Stecum 1998.207 comments on the similarities between the captive leaders in 1.7 and the enchained poet in 1.1.55–56.

45 As Galinsky 1969.77–80 notes, Tibullus never uses the actual triumphal ritual as an overt metaphor for erotic domination in the way that Ovid and Propertius do. Nonetheless, Tibullus *does* refer to the lover in chains, and thus implicitly as Delia's metaphorical "spoil," in contrast to Messalla's literal booty in 1.1.53–56.

46 See notes 25 and 28 above.

47 On orientalism as a narrative tradition that transcends these more historically specific and generically contingent pressures, see Wyke 1992.106.

divergent implications for how we interpret the Egyptian god. On the one hand, when we consider Osiris, i.e., Egypt, within the "discursive system of elegiac love" and its "inversion of the submission/dominance paradigm for sexual relations" (Wyke 2002.172), his attributes—luxurious Tyrian clothes, "tender feet," fickleness, and passion for song and dance—align the powerful god primarily with the dominant mistress of love elegy. The dominance of the mistress, a *docta puella* in the elegiac system, corresponds to the vision of Egyptian power and cultural authority in the poem. In this system, if the "Tyrian purple" suggests Osiris' own "triumph,"[48] it is the rhetorical triumph of the elegiac mistress. On the other hand, Osiris as the metonymic incarnation of Egypt, a recent conquest and new territorial possession to be administered and controlled by Rome, *should* in the discourse of military power and the triumph constitute a figure of imperial booty and enslaved status.[49] Like the Atax that trembles in defeat (*tremeret . . . victus Atax*, 4), Osiris—identified with the Nile—*should* act like a suppliant.[50] Nonetheless, the seeming conflict between these two discursive systems in the poem tends to dissolve when we consider the artifice of the elegiac world: just as elegy's system of inverted gender relations, where the *domina* holds sway over her captive lover, constitutes a topsy-turvy social fiction, so, too, does the elevation of Egypt as equal to her actual conqueror, Rome, strike a fanciful, imaginary note: in the real world of political and imperial status, Rome's conquest of Egypt corresponds to a sex-gender system of male dominance and feminized submission.

On this level, then, the orientalizing emphasis on Osiris's femininity aligns him with the conquered—submissive—status of the feminized victim in a triumphalist discourse of masculine dominance. This appears clearly in verbal echoes that implicitly correlate active and passive grammatical voice with masculine and feminine gender: the past participle *fusa* describing Osiris' "saffron robe reaching to his tender feet" ("fusa sed ad teneros lutea palla pedes," 46) recalls the active infinitive *fundere* in line 3, referring to the day "that would *defeat* the Aquitanian races" ("Aquitanas posset qui fundere gentes"). The passive form of *fusa*, paired with

48 Cf. Konstan 1978.181: "Osiris shares the purple (*Tyriae vestae*) with the Roman *triumphator*."

49 Konstan 1978.179 suggests that in Messalla's actual triumph of 27 B.C.E., there may well have been carried an image of the Nile, recalling Octavian's triple triumph of 29 B.C.E.

50 Konstan 1978.180 considers the implications of lines 25–26: because of the Nile, the Egyptian land does not have to supplicate rainy Jupiter—a symbol of the triumphant Roman general.

the feminine *lutea palla*, connotes Osiris' submission to Roman masculine power within the military context evoked by the active *fundere* at the poem's outset.[51]

Even the power dynamic of elegiac gender relations, when examined more closely in relation to 1.7, align with Rome's power to control Egypt—here on the discursive level of representation. As we have seen, the characteristics of the elegiac lover are not initially displayed by Rome, as represented by Messalla and his triumph, but rather by the Egyptian Osiris as a feminized figure. However, Osiris' stronger identification with the elegiac mistress causes the elegiac relation of *domina*/lover-poet to overlap with an East/West binary relationship and, at the level of structure, aligns Rome with the lover. As critics point out, in the conventions of elegy, the elegiac lover's submissive position is a voluntary one. The lover-poet controls, imagines, and manufactures the inverted power relations in which his mistress holds sway over him. Thus despite his "enslaved status," the lover-poet exercises complete discursive mastery over his mistress, projecting onto her his own fantasies of her as a *dura puella* or "cruel girl." This is a persuasive strategy, according to Duncan Kennedy (1993.74), that causes the mistress to capitulate in order to reject this image.[52] Within the context of Tibullus 1.7, Osiris is, of course, not *dura,* nor is Rome enslaved, but the elegiac poetics of the lover-poet's fashioning of his mistress as a projection of his own fantasies, to serve his own needs, perfectly aligns with the discursive practices of Roman cultural imperialism in which Rome and her poets construct Egypt—antiquity's Orient—in a self-serving strategy. Indeed, the "search for a topic" in lines 13–22 draws attention to the poet's power to choose the details of his construction and poetic shaping of the East: *quid referam* ("What shall I relate?"), the speaker asks as he begins his selective presentation (Lee-Stecum 1998.213).[53]

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51 The third instance of the verb *fundere* in the poem occurs four lines after *fusa,* in the couplet inviting Osiris to celebrate with Messalla's Genius and to "drench [pour] his temples with much wine" ("concelebra et multo tempora funde mero," 50). This active imperative form of the verb does not detract from the implications of the other two instances of *fundere*. Rather, even in this more gender-neutral context, the imperative *funde* should be understood as the Roman speaker's command to—and thus control of—Osiris, temporarily empowering him in an elegiac birthday setting that nonetheless looks back to the hard-power militarism of Roman triumphal dominance.

52 See James 2003 on elegy as a thoroughly hortatory genre.

53 Although Rome's poets participate in such orientalizing constructions, orientalism as a literary tradition has a long pedigree in Greco-Roman literature; see notes 14, 15, and 47 above.

Thus just as the male lover-poet in fact possesses socio-political power in the world of political realities external to the text, so after the battle of Actium, Rome exercised sovereignty over Egypt in a relationship of administrative control and economic exploitation. It is this world of socio-political realities—where Rome controls Egypt—that the ritual discourse of the military triumph affirms. The elegiac construction of Osiris (and Egypt) as a powerful mistress ultimately yields—as a feminized, orientalized Other—to the socio-political hierarchy of Roman triumphal dominance. The rhetoric of such dominance appears overtly at the poem's beginning where the cameo description of Messalla's celebration leads into a list of regions, characterized mostly by rivers, but also mountains and cities, that have witnessed the general's conquering presence (9–22) and the poet's participation (9–12). The reference to the dove, sacred to the Syrians (*sancta columba Syro*, 18), points up the "bird's-eye view" of this landscape, a common device in triumphalist geographical passages in Roman imperial literature that "allows the reader's eye to sweep over the *orbis terrarum* as a thing to be possessed."[54]

Moreover, Tibullus's geographic list evokes the actual iconography of ritual practice in which the triumphal procession includes pictures or effigies of personified rivers and mountains as representations of conquered territories.[55] The evocation of this practice in Tibullus 1.7 reminds the reader that Octavian's own triple triumph of 29 B.C.E., alluded to by the phrase *novos triumphos* (5), featured an effigy of the Nile, a personification that may well have suggested Osiris. Indeed, Propertius refers to both "Egypt and the weakened Nile, with his seven captive streams, dragged into the city" at the event ("Aegyptum et Nilum, cum attractus in urbem / septem captivis debilis ibat aquis," 2.1.31–32). In Tibullus's poem, the figure of Osiris projects an image of divine power, but once understood within the context of elegiac gender roles and the genre's paradigm of "contrary-to-fact" female dominance, his feminine attributes take on a different meaning in the socio-political world: they serve to orientalize him and,

54 Schrijvers 2007.231 here cites Murphy 2004 on triumphalist passages in Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*. Holliday 1997.130–47 connects the bird's-eye view of the Nile mosaic at Praeneste to Roman triumphal painting and the iconography of an actual triumph. Schrijvers 2007.236–39 compares features of the mosaic at Praeneste to Tibullus 1.7 and proposes that Messalla commissioned the mosaic as a political-triumphalistic representation that diplomatically avoids the imperial space of Rome as reserved for Augustus.

55 On such iconography in the triumph, see Beard 2007.109–10, 178–80; see Bright 1975.37 n. 16 on the possibility that Tibullus here refers to this practice.

ironically, to demote the Nile to its rightful status as one of many captive rivers signifying conquered territory in the ritual discourse of the triumph.

In addition, although the speaker invites Osiris as a seeming equal to Messalla's birthday party, the description of the anticipated event includes several echoes of the opening triumph scene: "at te victrices lauros, Messalla, gerentem / portabat nitidis currus eburnus equis" ("Drawn by shining [white] horses, the ivory chariot carried you, Messalla, bearing the conqueror's laurel," 7–8). The hair of Messalla's Genius, shining with unguents ("nitido stillent unguenta capillo," 51), recalls the shining horses (*nitidis . . . equis*) of his triumphal chariot; the soft garlands (*mollia serta,* 52) on the Genius's head and neck look back to Messalla's triumphal crown of laurel (*victrices lauros*).[56] Here at the birthday party, the *mollia serta* even hint that Messalla, as the incarnation of the Roman West, temporarily identifies with the elegiac lover and his seeming surrender of control: the statue of his Genius wears the emblematic garland described here as *mollis*, "soft," "effeminate," etc., the adjective most associated with the elegiac genre.[57] The *mollia serta* serve here to "elegiacize" Messalla—or his Genius—suggesting the way the elegy itself acts as a "soft-power" resource of cultural imperialism.[58]

But the echoes of Messalla's triumph as—literally—the "underlying" discourse of hard power assert the naked socio-political fact of Roman sovereignty beneath the elegiac role-playing. Indeed, the very last line of the poem addresses Messalla's Natalis, his birthday-spirit Genius,

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56 Several critics have noted these echoes (e.g., Gaisser 1971.227, Konstan 1978.183–84, Maltby 2002.296), but do not interpret them as the hard power of militarism lurking beneath the soft (*mollis*) elegiac setting of Messalla's birthday celebration.

57 Although Tibullus does not use *mollis* specifically to describe his verse in the way that Propertius does in 1.7.19 (*mollem . . . versum*) and 2.1.2 (*mollis . . . liber*), the conjunction of the word with *serta* surely suggests elegiac practice. In a gesture of generic identification, the Propertian speaker of 3.1.19–20 requests the Muses to grant him the "soft garlands" of Callimachus rather than the "hard crown" of the *triumphator*: "mollia, Pegasides, date vestro serta poetae: / non faciet capiti dura corona meo."

58 As defined by Joseph Nye (2004.6), "soft power" refers to "the ability to attract," and "soft-power resources are the assets that produce such attraction." Such assets include "culture [and] political values and institutions." Although Nye coined the term in reference to the United States and contemporary foreign policy alternatives, it has a certain relevance, *mutatis mutandis*, to Roman hegemonic power in relation to her provinces: the diffusion of Roman culture constituted one means by which Rome attracted provincial subjects to the "idea of empire," in Said's phrase (1993.11), and encouraged—resistance notwithstanding—their "native collaboration" and "accommodation with the dominant partner" (Mattingly 1997.10).

and wishes him "many happy returns" by asking that he "always come brighter and brighter" ("at tu, Natalis multos celebrande per annos, / candidior semper candidiorque veni," 63–64). This line also looks back to the poem's opening and the Fates' prediction of *hunc diem* ("this day"): Messalla's birthday, the defeat of the Aquitanians, and his subsequent triumphal procession. Traditionally, four white horses drew the *triumphator*'s chariot, a detail evoked directly by *nitidis . . . equis* and subtextually by *candidior semper candidior*.[59] Thus the desire for ever more brilliant and joyous birthdays for Messalla, recalling the poem's opening conflation of birthday, day of conquest, and day of triumph, rhetorically figures the wish for ever expanding Roman imperial dominance.[60]

There remains, finally, to discuss the image of the road leading from Rome to the country as an equivocal symbol of the poem's cultural imperialism (57–60):

> nec taceat monumenta viae, quem Tuscula tellus
> candidaque antiquo detinet Alba lare.
> namque opibus congesta tuis hic glarea dura
> sternitur, hic apta iungitur arte silex
>
> And let him not remain silent about the road, testament of your public work, one whom Tusculum and shining white Alba detain at his ancestral hearth. Indeed, here piled up from your resources, the hard gravel is strewn, here the flint is joined together with fitting art.

Denotatively these lines refer to the Via Latina, a portion of which was assigned to Messalla to repair with the wealth from his military campaigns. The initial phrase "nec taceat monumenta viae," however, self-reflexively suggests the speaker as advertising Messalla's benefactions, *candida . . . Alba* has been read as an allusion to the "pure style" of Albius Tibullus (Maltby 2002.298), and the poet-lover's references in other poems to his *antiquo . . . lare* (cf. 1.3.34, 2.1.60) point to him as the anonymous *quem* detained at his hearth. Moreover, the road as a *monumenta* of skillfully fitted flint-stones also evokes the poem itself, an unusual elegy of

59 See Beard 2007.234–36 on white horses drawing the chariot of the *triumphator*.

60 For the conflation of birthday and day of conquest, see Maltby 2002.283; for the association of birthday and triumph, see Ball 1983.108.

artfully joined genres and sub-genres: birthday poem (*genethliakon*), victory poem (*epinikion*), and kletic hymn seamlessly arranged into an elegiac poem in a book of Roman erotic elegies.[61] And although the road constitutes a symbol of civilization par excellence, the description here divides the making of that road into two processes that connotatively juxtapose the hard-power militarism of Messalla, the patron, with the soft-power imperialism of the poet and his craft. The verb *sternitur* ("is strewn") commonly describes the slain on a battlefield. It is the poet's craft that takes the hard socio-political realities—the "hard gravel" (*glarea dura*) piled up from Messalla's conquests—and transforms them by fitting them into an elegiac poem. That poem, like a road, begins with the triumphal march at Rome and then extends out from the center along the peripheral borders of the Mediterranean empire only to return to the great city at the conclusion.[62]

A symbol of the poem's ambivalence, then, the road highlights how Tibullus's elegy fashions its audience into subjects of the new and evolving Augustan regime, at once reinforcing Roman imperial dominance *and* serving to incorporate into the *imperium Romanum* those who identified with Egyptian culture and religion. Like the elegiac poem and its soft cultural imperialism, the road symbolizes connectivity, linking those at the periphery with the center of Rome. Within and through that center, however, the road constitutes a performance space for the military triumph, the theater in which Rome would stage the ritual displays of her power or "hard imperialism."

In contrast to those witnessing the actual triumph, Tibullus's poem would have enjoyed a more elite, if geographically dispersed, audience. Beyond Messalla, the particular addressee, the wider audience may have ranged from the literate at Rome who had sympathized with Octavian or Antony during the civil wars, to far-flung Romans of the diaspora with

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61 Of course, the movement of the poem also resembles a river. Cf. Bright 1975.33: "The most frequent single motif in the poem is that of flowing," and Klingner's description of Tibullus's fluid style as "die Gedanken wandeln sich ständig im Vollzug" (1951.131). On the blend of genres, see Luck 1969.86, Bright 1975.39–45, Cairns 1979.171–72, Murgatroyd 1980.209–10.

62 There may also be a kind of pun in the image of the farmer departing from Rome along this road, with his *inoffensum . . . pedem*, "the foot that does not stumble," suggesting the elegiac poem/meter that gives no offense. This would be Tibullus's way of acknowledging that to some Roman readers, his poem might appear offensive in its honoring of Egyptian religion. See, for example, Della Corte 1966.333, who considers the poem hostile to Augustus.

varying degrees of interest in Egypt,[63] to the Hellenized Egyptian elite with whom provincial Roman administrators must have collaborated.[64] Although much of the inscriptional evidence indicates that the language of the "old Greek-style administration" (Adams 2003.598) in Egypt continued to be Greek at the lower levels, Latin was used as an assertion of Roman imperial power and increasingly became part of what it meant to be Roman (Adams 2003.546–55, 597–98). Since Latin love elegy would have been recited or performed in public as well as read in private, a mixed audience of Roman officials and Egyptian elite at a semi-public *recitatio* is not hard to imagine—particularly given the background of Cornelius Gallus.

The first poet to write Roman love elegy, Cornelius Gallus was also the *praefectus* to whom Augustus entrusted Egypt as a province soon after the victory at Actium. As the breadbasket for the empire and a potential source of political unrest, Egypt had to be handled with care.[65] In contrast to other provinces, senators were not allowed to travel to Egypt without permission, and the equestrian *praefectus* answered directly to the princeps (Bowman 1996.679). However, Gallus exceeded his post, pushing southward with his legions and commemorating his exploits in public inscriptions. The subsequent condemning of Gallus for treason—resulting in his suicide in 27–26 B.C.E.—indicates how wary Augustus continued to be of political threats from the East (Gruen 1996.148). As a side effect, Gallus's demise may well have reinforced any interest that the Roman and Egyptian provincial elite took in love elegy. Indeed, critics have speculated that the papyrus fragment of Gallus's own poetry discovered in Qasr Ibrîm, south of the area of Roman control, "arrived there in the baggage of a Roman officer" when the next prefect, P. Petronius, established a short-lived Roman garrison from 25/24–22 B.C.E. (Anderson, Parsons, and Nisbet 1979.127).

Whether published before Gallus's death or not, Tibullus's elegy would have served Augustus's interest in maintaining political stability

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63 On the people who made up the Roman diaspora and "formed the Roman core of provinces and who bound client-kingdoms into the fabric of the *imperium*" (85), see Purcell 2005.85–105.

64 See Smelik and Hemelrijk 1984.1923–25: Although Augustus did not allow Egyptians to serve in the army, nor could citizens of Alexandria form a council, he nonetheless "preserved the existing internal organization of Egypt as far as possible" (1925). See Bowman 1996.679–93, 702 for the view that such continuity has been overstated.

65 See Suet. *Iul.* 35.1 on Julius Caesar having avoided the annexation of Egypt as a province for fear of its rebellion under a Roman governor. See Smelik and Hemelrijk 1984.1922–25, Bowman 1996.680–81, 699 on Roman anxiety over Egypt as an economic resource.

in Egypt. As Richard Alston remarks, "The adoption of imperial culture, either in Greek or Roman form, became an indicator of political reliability . . . and the active or passive encouragement of Roman officials motivated provincial elites to become culturally Roman" (1997.86). For the Hellenized Egyptian elite, then, Tibullus's poem and its construction of Osiris within the framework of Roman erotic elegy may have performed an assimilationist function. In particular, the masculine vision of Osiris as a potent Messalla-like figure in an elegiac Tibullan countryside allows an Egyptian audience to identify their own god in a Romanized context.[66] Egyptian civilization, as represented by Osiris as potent first inventor or *protos heuretes*, has a place in the Roman West. Similarly, for those Romans who had sympathized with or actively supported Antony—possibly in excess of three hundred senators departed Rome to follow him in 32 B.C.E. (Syme 1960.278)—the poem's "invitation" to Osiris to attend Messalla's party may well have signified a healing gesture.[67] And yet, for those Romans who had sided with Octavian-Augustus or those who acted as colonizing agents—administrators or officials in charge of the province after Actium, in addition to literate members of the Roman army—the poem performs differently, engaging a colonial discourse that justifies Roman dominance. For the elegiac representation of the festive Osiris underscores his identity as an orientalized Other who logically yields to a masculine victor in the discursive practice of triumphal ritual: here, a feminine Osiris meant a feminized conquest. Indeed, the evolution in Osiris' gender identity speaks to different audiences and, as we have argued, derives from at least three different sources: from the tradition of the god's sexual ambiguity, from the alignment of that ambiguity with the gender inversion of elegy, and finally, I believe, from an orientalizing discourse that expresses Rome's ambivalent relationship with Egypt as a potential threat, cultural competitor, and indispensable economic resource. Ultimately, the alternation in Osiris' identity demonstrates the ambiva-

66 With regard to a Hellenized Egyptian elite, see Smelik and Hemelrijk 1984.1926 and Bowman 1996.696 for the juridical distinction between Greek and native-born Egyptians. See, too, Alston 1997. One might also consider the depiction of two different populations in the Nilotic scenes after 30 B.C.E.—the stereotype of indigenous Egyptians as "dwarves and pygmies," in contrast to the Hellenized upper classes walking fashionably by villas (Versluys 2002.437).

67 After all, in the Ptolemaic discourse of divine kingship, Cleopatra was identified with Isis, making her consort, Antony, an Osiris figure (Syme 1960.274). On this poem as sending a message about the need for cultural tolerance from Rome, see Konstan 1978.182, 185.

lence of the text—reflecting Rome's simultaneous will to integrate and to dominate her new province, Egypt.[68]

University of Oregon

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