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# The Tibullan Dream Text*

Paul Allen Miller
*University of South Carolina*

> Das ländliche Existenz ist bisher nur ein Teil seines Daseins, sie stellt das Element einer Spaltung dar. Sie ist nicht in seinen vollen Lebenskreis ‚integriert'.... (Wimmel 33)
>
> Il motivo principale del canto si annunzia da principio in una forma generale, che è come il preludio della sinfonia; poi si perde nell'ondeggiare dei pensieri e dei sentimenti, delle immagini e delle visioni nuove.... (Riposati 169)

This paper argues that Tibullus' poems are best read as complex, multi-voiced dream texts that construct a world at once idyllic and nightmarish. It is a world that modulates, at times almost imperceptibly, between images of the poet-subject as now humble farmer, now urbane poet, now *exclusus amator*, now fever-wracked soldier, now loyal *cliens*, now moralizing social critic, now *praeceptor amoris*, now pederast spurned (Fineberg 24). Nor is this polyphonic quality of Tibullan verse simply a function of the variety of poems found in the corpus, for even within a single poem the poet often seems not a unified subject but rather, in W. R. Johnson's words, "a sheer discontinuum, fragmentations of self and work and love, (a series of) multiple and mutually exacerbating conflicts" (108). This inconstant quality of Tibullan verse and the Tibullan subject has presented many problems for the poet's modern readers, and can be seen as one factor in his relatively low standing vis-à-vis his better loved peers, Ovid and Propertius (Fineberg 156). As we shall see, however, from the perspective of the dream text—as defined by Freud and Lacan—the conflicts that arise among such competing voices are to be treated neither as problems to be solved, by sublimating them to a higher level of hermeneutic abstraction on which their

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seeming oppositions can be conjured away,[1] nor as mere aesthetic blemishes (Cairns 1–5) to be castigated or removed by the blunt instrument of textual criticism.[2] Rather, these moments of contradiction in the text of Tibullus are best treated as symptoms that point to the traumatic eruption of what Lacan labels the "Real" and Jameson calls "History" into the ordered realm of language and the Symbolic (Jameson 1981; Miller 1995).

Such contradictions reveal the limits of a given ideological or signifying structure and thus point to a realm beyond the narratives that individuals or cultures use to explain the world. Yet, inasmuch as this moment beyond narrative, ideology, and signification can only be expressed through those same means, the Real will always only manifest itself as a disturbance or aporia in the structure of the Symbolic. History, then, is precisely that which histories strive, and ultimately fail, to render intelligible. The Real is that which always eludes any given construction of reality. In Micaela Janan's terms, "Traumas are of the Real: they give rise to significations in symptoms, dreams, parapraxes, and so on, but are not themselves signifiable" (Janan 17, as well as 44; and Žižek 1991: 30, 36, 104–5). From such a perspective, I will argue that interpretive dilemmas on the level of the text, when there is no evidence of manuscript corruption—e.g., metrical irregularities, contradictory readings among otherwise reliable texts, or linguistic impossibilities—are most productively read as indices of conflict in the mute world beyond its borders. Thus, by examining Tibullus' texts from the combined perspectives of their complex interplay of conflicting poetic voices, the Freudian interpretation of dreams, Lacan's concepts of the Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real, and the context of the unsettled world of the early principate, we shall see how the poet creates a multileveled text that defies linear interpretation even as it manifests what Jameson would term the Augustan "political unconscious."

I will begin by examining the ways in which the Tibullan theme of wealth is overdetermined by both its poetic context and Roman ideology. I will then contend that a Lacanian and Jamesonian reading of Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* offers a formal model for dealing with such complex signifying structures. This section is followed by a close reading, based on this model, of the

[1]As when Veyne declares elegy a semiotic game that has "no other referent than itself" (Veyne 11–12, 30, 112; Kennedy 95–96, 99).

[2]See for example Murgatroyd's (1991) and Postgate's (1915) acceptances of Richter's proposal to move lines 25–32 of poem 1 immediately after lines 1–6 to remedy what they see as a contradiction between the opening lines' *vita iners* and the emphasis on manual labor that comes afterward. Lee (1982), Smith and Putnam (1973) reject this suggestion. The *locus classicus* for the twentieth century's negative view of Tibullus is Jacoby (1909 and 1910).

conflict between *rura* and *militia* as presented in the opening lines of 1.1. In turn, the elaboration of this initial opposition leads to a closer examination of the ways in which Tibullus' agrarian ideal is split between the Lacanian categories of the Imaginary and the Symbolic. This doubleness, I argue, is manifest even on the level of diction and is best understood in terms of Freud's concepts of condensation and displacement. Having established the plurivocal quality of Tibullus' poetry with regard to the basic opposition between *rura* and *militia* and contextualized that opposition in terms of the Tibullan corpus, Roman ideology, and the structure of the dream text, I am then ready to explore the ways in which *amor* and the figure of Messalla relate to this initial binary opposition and its multiple layers of signification. The next and penultimate section of the paper examines the conflicts between Tibullus' praise of Messalla and his exaltation of the Golden Age and condemnation of the contemporary ideology of accumulation and exchange. I conclude by contending that the irreducible contradictions and complicity between *rura* and *militia*, Imaginary and Symbolic, individual and collective, and poet and patron that are explored in the body of this paper point to a realm that both lies beyond these binary oppositions and makes them possible. That, I argue, is the realm that Jameson calls History and Lacan the Real, the a-rational kernel that lies at the heart of the dream.

**I. Interpreting the Dream Text: The Meaning of Wealth**

The fundamental conflict between an unfulfilled desire for cultural, personal, and/or amorous plenitude and the realm of limit and necessity is a constitutive principle in Tibullus' poetry. The result is a schizophrenic text in which the poetic subject is haunted by a plurality of voices. I contend it is the intersection among these various, incompatible voices that constitutes the space of Tibullan consciousness and, ultimately, points to that necessary realm of the Real, which is by nature beyond all signifying processes and so can only be indicated by a breakdown in signification. The difficulty in determining the relations between these voices in any single poem by Tibullus is great. That difficulty is compounded when the reader moves to the collection as a whole. Questions of order and unity then loom larger. Should each poem's series of associations be interpreted as a unified whole that only relates to other poems in the collection as one totality to another, or can groups of images or verbal themes (e.g., the Golden Age, Messalla, the journey, farming, the lover at the door) be detached from their immediate contexts and directly compared to one another? This is not a simple question.

Take the example of wealth, one of the more prominent motifs in the collection. *Divitiae* is the first word of the first poem and thus, following ancient practice, could have served as the book's title. As a theme in poem 1.1, it is systematically contrasted with an agricultural poverty (*paupertas*, 1.1.5) that recalls the traditional values of the Roman farmer and is replete with references to the homely rituals of the countryside (Bright 9). Wealth is also identified with the notion of martial conquest and the terrors of war (1.1.3–4). Thus in 1.1, *divitiae*, on a first reading, seems to function more as a moral than a pragmatic value. The issue is what wealth means, given its association with violence and conquest, *militia* (the source of most of the great fortunes of the first and second centuries B.C.E.), rather than what wealth can do (Gaisser 66–67).

At first 1.1's concern with the topic of wealth seems an isolated instance in the corpus. The terms *divitiae*, *dives*, or *munus* do not occur in poems 1.2 and 1.3, which do, however, continue the first poem's examination of the relationship between love and soldiery. Yet the topic of wealth does recur. In poem 1.4, the ability of *divitiae* to buy love through the offering of presents is a central concern.[3] Priapus, the poem's main speaker, says that wealth gives the *dives amator*, "wealthy lover," an unfair advantage over the poor poet:

> heu male nunc artes miseras haec saecula tractant:
> iam tener adsueuit munera velle puer.
> at tua, qui venerem docuisti vendere primus,
> quisquis es, infelix urgeat ossa lapis.
>
> Oh now these times vilely traffic in wretched arts:
> now the tender boy is accustomed to want gifts.
> But you who first taught them to sell love, whoever you are,
> may an unlucky gravestone lie heavy on your bones. (1.4.57–60)

In this poem, although the curse lends the passage a moralizing tone, the real issue is practical: rich guys get all the boys. Thus 1.4's treatment of wealth seems at odds with 1.1's and could lead the reader to suspect another, more mercenary, agenda beneath the first poem's moralizing posture. But there are difficulties with such a neat reversal. A simple inversion takes into account neither the structural integrity of poem 1 and the complex set of relations in which wealth finds itself embedded in that text, nor the nature of 1.4. Rather, it reads thematically across

[3]On 1.4 as the first poem in the collection to link wealth with *munera*, see Wimmel (4) and Leach (1978: 89).

the corpus without regard to the specific contexts of these themes' enunciations and the dialogic relations that ensue.

Poem 1.4 is in many ways atypical of the Tibullan collection up to this point. First, the speaker is not Tibullus himself but Priapus. Second, Tibullus' love object has hitherto been Delia, but in 1.4 his desire has shifted into a pederastic mode, and he is "tortured" by his love for Marathus (1.4.81). The unique status of the poem is widely granted: in studies of the arrangement of Book 1, poem 1.4 is generally identified as one of two "genre" poems (the other being 1.7) that serve to mark the major divisions in the two series of love poems, those devoted to Delia—1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.5, and 1.6—and those to Marathus, 1.8 and 1.9 (Littlewood 1970: 661–69; Leach 1980a: 81; Dettmer 1980: 70–71, 1983: 1964; Ball 1979: 6).[4] Hence, by virtue of its very eccentricity, 1.4 does not directly call into question the authenticity of 1.1's opposition to wealth on moral grounds. The two poems' structures are so heterogeneous that neither one by itself is capable of fully undercutting the other. But, insofar as we accept the fact that 1.4 plays a key role in dividing the major sequences of the first book into smaller, more coherent units, then the poem's status as a mediating link between 1.3 and 1.5 becomes all the more important (Leach 1978: 83).[5] Consequently, it cannot be insignificant that, although wealth is not discussed in poems 1.2 and 1.3, in 1.5, immediately after Priapus has introduced the theme of gifts, Tibullus is unable to gain access to his beloved because she is locked inside her house with her *dives amator* (1.5.47). Her door, he confesses, is to be struck only by one whose hand is full of money (1.5.68).

In 1.5, as in 1.4, money is necessary if love is to be found. One may hate money in 1.4 and 1.5, but the reasons are a good deal less high-minded than those in 1.1. Poem 1.5, as a Delia poem, moreover, is less eccentric to the concerns of 1.1 than 1.4 on Priapus and Marathus, and so 1.5 has greater power to subvert 1.1's ethical valorization of poverty. The question is complicated further when this same link between money and access to love is taken up in 1.9, but now the moral objection is married to the practical, so that the poet declares, this time in relation to Marathus, *divitiis captus si quis violavit amorem*, "anyone captured by riches has trampled on love," 1.9.19 (Wimmel 3). The line can be read two ways, either as a cynical manipulation of the moral topos for the purpose of trying to persuade Marathus that he should leave his own *dives*

[4]Marathus is, of course, mentioned in 1.4, but only at the end. The poem as a whole is not dedicated to him per se, but see Powell (107–12).

[5]Elder (91) sees 1.4 as "a reflective pause between 1.3 and 1.5."

*amator*, or as a genuine expression of the desire for an emotional, or at least erotic, relationship that transcends the demands of mere exchange. Finally, the return to the moral realm in which wealth is condemned because of its relation to violence, to *militia*, is completed in 1.10.29, *alius sit fortis in armis*, "let *another* be brave in arms," which, as Wimmel sees, is an analogue to 1.1.1's *divitias alius fulvo sibi congerat auro*, "let *another* pile up riches in tawny gold" (3).

How, then, are we to interpret the intersection of the different voices in Tibullus' poems? And, more specifically, how does the treatment of wealth in the later poems of Book 1 affect our understanding of it in 1.1? I suggest a middle course. Recurrent images, when they appear in a collection, can be related to one another and seen as arising from a single (un)consciousness. Their specific meanings, however, are ascertainable only with reference to the actual contexts in which each of them appears. The hermeneutic relationship between individual examples of recurring thematic elements such as wealth is thus overdetermined by the material context of those elements' poetic form, that is, their appearance in a planned collection (Bakhtin 92). The Tibullan collection thus engenders a dialectic between the particular and the general that creates ever more complex sets of relations both within and between individual poems, interweaving the political, the personal, the ideological, and the poetic into a dream text in which the irrational whole is always more than the sum of its sensible parts. The concept of the dream, as we shall see later, is particularly important here, since, as Freud explains, dreams constitute fantasy wish-fulfillments in which personal and political contradictions are temporarily overcome, or at least elided.

On a more concrete level, this means that the moral objection to wealth voiced in 1.1, even after the reader has seen 1.4, 1.5, and 1.9, cannot be read as a mere rationalization, a projection of the poet's erotic *ressentiment* onto the realm of the ethical (Jameson 1981: 200–205). Rather what we must elucidate is the intersection of the cynical reduction of the moral to the material with the continuing existence of the moral even so. The moral problematization of wealth simply refuses to go away. For, in addition to the structural integrity of 1.1 itself—and the consequent way in which wealth and other terms are woven into its specific structures of signification and thereby acquire contextually bound connotations that subsequent poems cannot eliminate—the objections to wealth in 1.1 and the poem's espousal of the traditions of the countryside are firmly rooted in the Roman ideology of the period. It is impossible to read this opening poem and not be reminded of both the traditional mythology of Rome—the city of small farmers whose greatness was bound to their simple piety (Cairns 13–14; Edwards

1993: 149)—and of Augustus' attempt to appropriate this imagery for his own project of religious and ideological reconstruction (Edwards 1996: 49–50), an undertaking whose reflection and impetus can be seen in Vergil and Horace (Lee 1974: 101; Murgatroyd 1991: 49–50; Boyd 274). As Lyne notes, Tibullus is in fact "re-deploying against the Roman establishment's thinking" its "own moral mythology" (155). Thus, although on one level Tibullus will tell us in 1.4, 1.5, and 1.9 that contempt for money and desire for the return of the old ways represent merely the *ressentiment* of those who wish to occupy the position of the wealthy—and, within the world of elegy, therefore to possess the boy or girl of their dreams—on another, he is articulating a genuine desire for a world before exchange, a dream of the time before *ressentiment*, the Golden Age. The cynical reading is fostered by a narrative strategy that develops and complicates various themes as the collection progresses, while constantly referring back to previous, more naive enunciations of them.[6] The reader is thus encouraged to practice a form of backward scanning even as she moves forward: from the perspective of poems 1.4, 1.5, and 1.9, 1.1's protestations smell of bad faith. However, within 1.1 itself this is not the case, and one reading does not preclude the other. Indeed, one of the characteristics of Tibullus' poetry is the way the individual, idyllic passage transcends its ironic frame. Thus 1.5's dream of Delia as the mistress on Tibullus' farm serving Messalla the finest fruits of their labor is admitted to be a fantasy, and yet it is one of the most powerful and lasting images of the poem.

Tibullus therefore forces us to deal with the individual passage both on its own terms and in its relation to the often-dissident passages surrounding it. His is a poetry of aporia and contradiction in which logical and communal norms—what Lacan terms the Symbolic—are often at odds with his Imaginary self-conceptions, i.e., the way the poet envisions himself (Kennedy 20; Bright 140–41). In some poems, such as 1.2, even the setting is self-contradictory, the position of the speaking subject impossible to determine. When the poem opens, the poet is calling for more wine and seems to be in a private or sympotic setting (Lyne 180; Bright 137; Ponchont 15). Later in the same poem, he appears to be portrayed as the *exclusus amator* standing before his lover's door (Murgatroyd 1991: 71; Leach 1980a: 87; Cairns 166–67; Putnam 1973: 10; André 21; Smith 208; Copley 107). From a logical point of view, both cannot obtain. He must be either in the bar or at the door. Consequently, the partisans of each view line up the reasons why their opponents' reading could not be true and why the imagery

[6]On this recursive pattern of reading as the hallmark of the lyric collection, see Miller (1994: 1–8, 52–77).

either of the symposium or the paraclausithyron must be an illusion. Yet clearly the question is not "which context is correct," but "what does it mean for Tibullus to create poetry consistently capable of being read in such contradictory ways" (Kennedy 18; Konstan 179). Why does he go to such lengths to subvert his own dreams, producing self-canceling images of a desire whose consummation can never be realized? Elder sums up the significance of this pattern of self-subversion nicely when he writes:

> The instinct to "undercut" his idyll must originate in large part from life at Rome as he found it. That life drove him to his dreams, and that same life made him masochistically snap the dream-thread. Both instincts reflect the urge he must have felt somehow to try to come to a conscious definition of what he was and should be in his actual circumstances, that is, these instincts are intimately connected with the necessity he felt for making judgements upon himself in terms of the reality of life in Rome. To say that he did not succeed is virtually to say that we have his poems about his unresolved problem. (Elder 84–85)

In cases such as this, to insist on univocal meaning is to apply a standard of rationality alien to Tibullus' text and its time.

## II. The Dream Text as a Formal Concept

With these observations in mind, I would argue that Tibullus' poems are best examined in the terms Freud proposes for the interpretation of dreams, rather than as dramatic narratives or the recountings of actual events (Lyne 178–79; Cairns 24). Indeed, one of the commonplaces of Tibullan criticism is the dreamlike quality of his text, a view that normally goes hand-in-hand with the devaluation of his poetry as overly smooth or soft, and lacking the formal integrity, imaginative leaps, and sharp juxtapositions that characterize Propertius (Fineberg 59, 155–56; Veyne 36; Lyne 178; Dunlop 44–49). One commentator, as Bright notes, has gone so far as to attribute Tibullus' style to a brain abnormality (9–10, citing J. van Wageningen, "Tibulls sogennante Träumereien," *NJA* [1913]: 350–55). Even the poet's supporters often damn him with faint praise. Thus Smith writes, "He is not a man of brilliant passages" (68), while Putnam and Lyne characterize his poetry as "smooth" and "drifting" (Putnam 1973: 6–7, 11–12; Lyne 181–83).

The fact is that all, whether friend or foe, agree that Tibullus' poetry is highly internalized, nonlinear,[7] and often seems to move from one topic to the

[7]Bright does claim that Tibullus is a linear poet, but he means by this not that the poet follows a logical point-by-point progression, but rather that he proceeds in a metonymic or

next "through the mere associations of ideas and words" (Veyne 36). Thus Johnson speaks of the corpus as "a fever's dream," an "achronological, spiritual, autobiographical collection" (102–3), while Veyne writes that "Tibullus' transitions, unpredictable by nature of their intended banality and, sometimes, incongruity, prohibit the reader from assuming that the poem has a subject...this theater is a dream theater" (41–43). Likewise, Kennedy observes that in Tibullus fantasy not only cannot be separated from reality, but also actively constitutes it. He continues, "These poems have often been dismissed as disorganized concatenations of motifs, and, although this is a view which has become increasingly difficult to defend, they are tantalizingly elusive" (13–17). Bright argues, "The distinction between past, present and future, as between reality and fantasy, is never clear in Tibullus" (59; cf. Riposati 93–94).

Indeed, one finds in Tibullus' poems no *terra firma*, no Archimedean point from which to distinguish subject from object, reality from whim, or margin from center. Leach notes that Tibullus' "lack of a single emotional obsession for a common theme has convinced readers" that the collection is "no more than a random grouping of the poet's favorite pieces" without any overarching unity (1980a: 80). Likewise, Van Nortwick sees this same indefiniteness of theme as evidence of Tibullus' awareness "of the fragility of his dream, and of the paradoxes that lay at the center of that dream" (122–23). This last observation is acute. It implies that the traditional image of Tibullus the dreamy dilettante may be made to yield a more fertile hermeneutic model if the insight on which it is based—the oneiric quality of Tibullan verse—can be purged of its ideological and historical limitations. The model of the dream, rather than signifying merely the lack of a clear outline, or a lazy drifting from topic to topic, may instead be read as a measure of the profound emotional complexity of these poems, the subtle and multiple levels of determination that shape their content, and their continuing engagement with the contradictory, the marginal, and the nonlinear. These texts are indeed wish-fulfillments, containing multiple and mutually exclusive determinants, such as poem 1.1's unprecedented—and logically impossible—combination of the rural idyll with the urban paraclausithyron (Van Nortwick 121; Gaisser 72; Leach 1980a: 86; Cairns 23). In these poems, each contradictory motif undercuts the other's claim to an authentic existence outside the dream world while reinforcing its status as the object of an impossible desire. These

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associative style, as opposed to the circular style of ring-composition (Bright 261–62). Cairns, in contrast, sees ring-composition as typical of Tibullus, but, as he and Dettmer concede, the poems are susceptible to more than one kind of analysis (Cairns 208–9; Dettmer 1983: 1963).

texts are less a series of coherent rhetorical arguments in the manner of Ovid (Luck 1962: 74; Riposati 168)[8] than complex tissues of related, interwoven, and sometimes contradictory themes.

The Freudian model of interpretation is appropriate in part because it begins by allowing us to see condensation and displacement, or metaphor and metonymy in Lacan's linguistic reading of Freud (Janan 43; Fineberg 14–15, 118–19, 158; Barthes 88), as the fundamental axes along which texts are constituted. By refusing what Kennedy has labeled the "rhetoric of realism," the Freudian model can approach these artifacts on their own terms, as structures of signification rather than as documents whose meanings must conform to an ideology of univocal reference and "human" experience (at least so long as the latter is regarded as a self-evident and unproblematic term). From the perspective of the interpretation of dreams, recurring analogous images and terms are progressively regrouped into ever-larger paradigms of substitution (i.e., metaphor), where lion stands for Achilles or cigar for phallus. One signifier can be substituted for another, and hence in Freud's terms an operation of condensation has taken place, as one signifier now stands for two. Naturally this operation can be, and is, extended to encompass more than two terms at a time. Given the right context, its scope is theoretically infinite.

At the same time, these signifiers are also made to add ever new levels of individual signification as they are scattered across the discursive field delimited by the corpus (i.e., metonymy). They are thus moved from their "original" contexts to new positions in the text through repetitions, hyperbata, transfer of epithets, and other forms of catachresis. In each new position, they acquire new connotations even as they bring with them the marks of their previous contexts. They are then, in Freud's terms, displaced (Miller 1995: 228). The work of interpretation itself consists in discovering the mediating links (both metaphoric and metonymic) that allow often disparate, latent thoughts to be associated with a single set of manifest materials: contradictions from this perspective are not to be resolved, but exfoliated (Freud 1952: 27–38). As we shall see in the case of Tibullus, images such as the city, the countryside, and military life, and words such as *iners* and *decus* are susceptible to multiple, often contradictory interpretations that defy any univocal resolution by traditional philological means. The matrix out of which these conflicts arise can be provisionally sketched by examining the intersection of the following recurring motifs, with special

[8]Ovid, however, often undercuts the value of his logic at the poems' end. See Parker.

reference to their occurrence in 1.1: *amor*, *militia*, *rura*, Messalla, the Golden Age as an evocation of the Lacanian Imaginary, the world of property and exchange as an evocation of the Symbolic, and the castration of Uranus as the mythic point in time that marks the birth of Venus, and hence of the subject of desire. Such an investigation, however, must ultimately lead beyond 1.1 to both Book 1 and the Tibullan corpus as a whole.

### III. *Militia* and *rura*: When Opposites Attract

Julia Haig Gaisser has shown that poem 1.1 consists of two separate sections. The first half of the poem is devoted to the contrast between *militia* and *rura* and the second to that between *militia* and *amor* (59). Similar analyses by Leach (1980a) and Boyd have noted how this basic set of contrasts structures the collection as a whole. No consensus exists, however, as to when and if these oppositions are resolved. Where Leach and Boyd argue for their eventual resolution in 1.10, Gaisser rejects this thesis (70–72). We shall return to the analysis of 1.10 at the end of this essay. The problem, however, is in some ways a false one, because a close examination of the sections in which these terms are first introduced shows that the oppositions are in large part self-undermining, and the relations maintained between them are highly unstable. Consequently, the relationship of their individual elements to one another (*militia* versus *rura* and *militia* versus *amor*) can be clarified only by references to terms outside their initial binary oppositions.

To understand how this works in the case of *rura* and *militia*, we can begin by reading closely 1.1.1–6:

> *Divitias* alius *fulvo* sibi congerat *auro*
> et teneat culti iugera multa soli,
> quem labor *adsiduus* vicino terreat hoste,
> Martia cui somnos classica pulsa fugent:
> me mea *paupertas* vita traducat inerti,
> dum meus *adsiduo luceat igne* focus.
>
> Let another pile up *riches* in *tawny gold*
> and let another possess many acres of tilled soil
> whom *constant* struggle terrifies with the enemy nearby,
> whose sleep Mars's trumpet blasts sets to flight:
> let my *modest means* lead me over to a life of inactivity,
> while my hearth *shines with a constant fire*. (1.1.1–6)

The first thing to be noted about this passage is that the opposition between *divitiae* and *paupertas*, which is initially set up on the logical or rhetorical level,

is undermined on that of image and diction. As Putnam notes, *divitiae* is itself cognate with the Greek *dios* and so anticipates *fulvus* and *aurum* later in the line (1973: 50). The luster of riches and gold is on one level, then, contrasted with the poet's avowed modesty of means in line 5, but at the same time made to reflect the gleaming (*luceat*) fire of line 6. This same combination of contrast and reflection can, in turn, be seen in the poet's use of the word *adsiduus*. In line 4, it modifies *labor* and is therefore part of the soldier's world of *militia*; but in line 6 it modifies *ignis*, and so is part of the poet's world of ideal agricultural poverty. Moreover, as Cairns notes, *adsiduus* "was often etymologized so as to mean 'rich,'" thus associating it directly with line 1's *divitiae*, in the case of both the farmer and the soldier (16–17).

In addition, *labor* itself is ambiguous. Within the world of Hellenistic poetics it generally referred to the polished quality of a work that required much toil. As Cairns notes:

> Tibullus doubtless subscribed to this notion, but he goes out of his way to declare his life *iners* in 1.1.5. This self-description is related to his erotic persona, and specifically it reinforces the paradoxical conjunction he makes in 1.1 of his twin roles of lover and farmer....The farmer was traditionally hardworking. Tibullus in 1.1 quite deliberately attributes *labor adsiduus* not to himself but to his antithesis, the soldier (3).

Through his repetition of the adjective *adsiduus*, Tibullus marks his conscious recognition that *labor* has been transferred from the farmer to the soldier to create his pastoral ideal. At the same time, his refusal of the attribute of being *laboriosus* (cf. Catul. 1) within the context of his own Hellenistic poetics can only be read as ironic, and hence as a qualified acceptance of the term as the necessary ground on which his pastoral fantasy of the rejection of *labor* can be erected. Thus the opposition between farmers and soldiers in terms of *labor* is dependent on a pre-existing poetic *labor* that creates the dream world in which this initial thematic antithesis can take place. That poetic *labor*, in turn, must be attributed to the poet whose persona is assuming the role of the *otiosus* farmer.

One might choose to argue that the verbal identity created between the contrasting formulations of the greedy soldier and the contented farmer through the repetition of *adsiduus* serves merely as a rhetorical means to emphasize their substantive differences (Murgatroyd 1991: 52), or, following Postgate, as a measure of the poverty of Tibullan language (Postgate 1910: xxviii, 67), rather

than as a means of denoting some more substantial identity.[9] But there are important reasons to reject such readings, for the contrast between the life of the soldier and that of the farmer is not as clear as it might seem. Tibullus is setting up the contrast and then subtly undermining it (Wimmel 8). Indeed, the opening couplet applies much better to the situation of a landed squire than to that of the average soldier. It is the picture of a well-off equestrian farmer, like Tibullus, who possesses *multa iugera*. If we slow down the reading process in the manner of Stanley Fish's examination of Milton's "When I consider how my light is spent" (164–84), then *quem labor adsiduus* is most naturally taken as referring to the labor of farming, a confusion that is not obviated until we reach the word *terreat* in the second hemistich. And while Tibullus downplays the amount of actual manual labor he would have to perform as a farmer, he still imagines himself (*ipse*) planting vines (7), wielding a hoe (29), driving cattle (30), and carrying lost lambs back to their mothers (31–32), menial tasks that his use of the verb *pudet* (29) acknowledges to be unfit for a man of his social status (Lyne 157). Indeed, as Wimmel notes (28), twice within the poem's opening panel juxtaposing *rura* and *militia* the poet paints a picture of ideal pastoral inertia in one couplet and then proceeds to undermine it in the next. Thus in lines 5–6 he wishes for a life of inactivity before an unfailing fire, only to picture himself in the next couplet tending his own vines, while in lines 27–28 the poet avoids the heat of the summer sun, lying in the shade on the banks of a murmuring stream, but in the very next couplet pictures himself hoeing his fields and herding cattle (29–30).

In this light, whose life, the farmer's or the soldier's, is more correctly characterized as one of *adsiduus labor* is open to question—though from a coldly realistic perspective, in the context of the lives of the equestrian and senatorial landed gentry to which Tibullus and all the other major poets of the first century belonged, the point is moot (Ste. Croix 41–42; Miller 1994: 125–26; Taylor 1925: 161–70, 1968: 469–86; Nicolet 441–56). When Cicero in the *de Officiis* (1.151) recommends farming as an appropriate career for the *vir bonus*, "he means running one or preferably more large farms, managing an estate on which the work would be done by tenant farmers or hired labourers or slaves" (Lee 1974: 100). Tibullus, the poet, does not intend to pick up the hoe himself. That would be shameful, *pudeat*, 1.1.29 (Veyne 103). Such labor is characteristic of slaves, not of freemen and certainly not of equestrians, those with the time and

[9]*Adsiduus* in l. 6 is emended to *exiguus* by Heyne without comment in his 1817 edition in order to avoid the repetition.

leisure to pursue such *artes liberales* as reading or writing poetry (Parkhurst 47; Ste. Croix 198–201; Syme 176). As Littlewood sums up, "The Augustan elegists were sophisticated *literati* who belonged to a still prosperous middle-class which enjoyed both the freedom to remain aloof from governmental and military responsibility and the stimulation of mutual intellectual intercourse" (1983: 2134). They were not manual laborers.

Tibullus in his guise as a farmer portrays himself, not as one who pursues a life appropriate to his actual station (*non pudet*, 1.1.74), but as a *servus* or little better. This is a complex move. First, in so doing he anticipates his own later self-portrayal as *servus amoris*, "slave of love" (1.1.55–58), thereby establishing a continuity of lowness or humiliation between the amorous and georgic portions of the poem. Perception of an ongoing connection between the scenes in which Tibullus pictures himself performing manual labor and the later scenes of amorous servitude is confirmed by certain stylistic observations made by Wimmel (40). In discussing lines 29-30, *nec tamen interdum pudeat tenuisse bidentem / aut stimulo tardos increpuisse boves*, "even so may it not shame me in the meantime *to have held* a hoe or *to have chided* slow cattle with the goad," he notes that the use of the perfect active infinitive in place of the present was characteristic of love elegy's diction (cf. Smith 190–91). Thus we would expect this passage to have an amorous cast, given its use of one of the genre's signature features. It does not, but lines 45–46, the next example of this trope, do: *quam iuvat immites ventos audire cubantem / et dominam tenero continuisse sinu*, "how happy it makes me lying in my bed to hear the pitiless winds and *to have held* my mistress to my tender breast." Wimmel argues that these parallel grammatical features indicate a continuity of content between the two passages not otherwise immediately apparent. His case is strengthened by the citation of a similar set of passages from 1.4. There, in lines 47–48, perfect active infinitives are used to describe the kind of servile labors the lover should not be ashamed to undertake if he is to win the favors of his beloved. The description of those labors, however, contains nothing erotic per se. Then, in 1.4.56, the next occurrence of the perfect active infinitive, we see the fulfillment of the desires of the *servus amoris*, repeating the pattern found in 1.1. Wimmel concludes from this parallel that the labors undertaken by the poet in 1.1 are love-offerings made to the beloved on the analogy of those in 1.4. I am unwilling to go that far, since no mention is made of Delia in the first half of 1.1, while 1.4 is erotically motivated from the beginning. Moreover, there is every indication that Delia is a thoroughly urban character who does not share Tibullus' agrarian dreams. Consequently an offering of hard manual labor on the farm would not impress

her. Wimmel, however, is correct to see that in both 1.1 and 1.4 Tibullus uses a grammatical form, whose preciosity had become associated with love elegy, to underline the continuity between forms of labor conventionally considered servile and *servitium amoris*.

A second layer of complexity can be seen in the sheer paradox of Tibullus' portraying himself as a farmer whose actions are not characterized by *adsiduus labor*, but who nonetheless performs manual toil unthinkable for one of his station. At the same time, as we shall see, he is also described in the poem as someone who opposes war and wealth yet somehow accepts them as traditional Roman values. This self-portrait creates a subject position that has no analogue within the available terms of Roman ideology. The Tibullan speaker is neither farmer nor soldier, free man nor slave, merchant nor leisured man of *otium*. He is an anomaly that exists only in poetry, which, in fact, is how Veyne characterized the elegiac lover in general (101). Yet where Veyne sees the creation of such an aporetical and oxymoronic figure as signifying that elegy is merely a semiotic game (30), I want to ask: why this game now? What does the existence of this game at this particular point in time, the beginning of the principate, the only time when elegiac discourse as an important literary genre is possible in Rome, signify? Is not the very incoherence of this subject position symptomatic of a crisis in Roman ideology, a crisis that we call the collapse of the republic and the birth of the empire, and whose clearest, least mystified witness is the rewriting of what it means to be a free Roman citizen (Fisher 1950–51)? The anomaly of the Tibullan persona can be read as figuring the gap between the Imaginary and the Symbolic through which History, in the form of the unsignifiable Real, emerges into the text.

By determining what made this subject position possible at a given moment in Roman history, one can begin to elucidate the history of elegy and its multiform relations both to other cultural forms and to the profound transformations of the Roman Real that are taking place at this time (Cohen 213, 216). Those changes themselves are signaled by the progressive collapse of Roman republican ideology and the vast network of formal and informal institutions set up to maintain and be maintained by it, as well as through the subsequent rise and consolidation of the imperial state with its ideological state apparatuses. Neither of these ideological formations, the republican or the imperial, nor their various and often antagonistic subformations, is capable of fully representing these changes. They can only produce narratives that respond to these shifts through the deployment of strategies of appropriation and

containment (Jameson 1981: 52–53). Such responses are always necessarily more concerned with power and positioning than with pure re-presentation. They are ideological and situated.

This is certainly the case with the period that concerns us. The Augustan program of moral revival and religious reconstruction was consistently presented in terms of a return to the virtues of the past, the *mos maiorum*, and the restoration of the republic (Yavetz 14–15), even as it laid the ideological groundwork for consolidating what was to be the most sweeping transformation of the Roman state since the expulsion of the Etruscan kings (Syme 313–18; Scullard 219–20; Littlewood 2138; Edwards 1996: 49–50, 57). At the same time, in spite of its self-proclaimed reactionary nature, the regime did not scruple to appropriate Egyptian concepts of sacred kingship and other ideas foreign to traditional republican political thought, where it deemed them useful (Koenen 128). Augustan imperial ideology was less a coherent, theoretical edifice than an *ad hoc* construction designed to meet specific needs (Koenen 132; Kennedy 36–37). It was more concerned with power and stability than with ideological purity (Ste. Croix 360).

The republican counterprogram, to the extent that such a thing existed, offered nothing but the myth of a return to the Golden Age of Senatorial rule, itself based on an oligarchical system that had ceased to be functional since the time of the Gracchi (Syme 514–15; Brunt 1971a: 74–111; Ste. Croix 359–60; Nippel 33–34). By the middle of the first century B.C.E., the existing constitutional settlement had deteriorated to the point where civil war was a constant threat, elections were cancelled in the face of riots, and the legions were used against the populace to quash uprisings for debt relief (Brunt 1971a: 127–32; Ste. Croix 354; Nippel 77–84).[10] The professionalization of the army, which had begun with Marius, eroded the traditional ideology that bound the soldiery to a republic in which they as landholders had a definite stake. Instead, they increasingly professed loyalty to individual commanders, the sole authorities who had an interest in insuring that the soldiers received their just rewards, generally an allotment of land supplied by despoiling their political enemies (Syme 441–42; Scullard 23; Brunt 1971a: 11–15, 19; Ste. Croix 358; Miller 1989: 63–64; Nippel 30–31).

[10]See Nippel (90–91) on the changes in the powers of the magistrates that had already occurred well before the principate. The Roman constitution was in a state of flux that made any sort of return to a pure republican *libertas* more an exercise in wish-fulfillment than in *Realpolitik*.

The leadership of the senatorial oligarchy thus became beholden to the generals—Sulla, Marius, Pompey, Caesar, and eventually Octavian and Antony—to crush both their rivals, and, if need be, popular resistance (Nippel 66–67, 83–84). The soldiers' alienation from the traditional instances of state power was in turn augmented by the practice among some of the senatorial elite of driving the families of these soldiers off their lands while they were away on campaign (Sal. *Jug.* 41.8; Brunt 1971b: 551–57; Ste. Croix 357). The ruling class thus became increasingly fragmented as they were forced to line up behind various warlords and the factions they represented. At the same time, those members of the elite who claimed to represent the interests of the *plebs*, the so-called *populares*, were engaging in new forms of political organizing that sought to create alternative organs of power through the mobilization of *collegia*, or guilds of tradesmen, *vici*, or neighborhood councils, and the worshippers of nontraditional cults such as those of Isis and Bacchus (Ste. Croix 352–53; Nippel 72; Brunt 1971a: 127–28). Thus, at this period in Roman history, power itself simultaneously became more diffuse, as it broke away from its traditional institutional basis, even as it also became more concentrated in the hands of the generals whose troops emerged as the final arbiters of Roman political conflict. In this context, it is no wonder that the traditional narratives that legitimated that power had become increasingly suspect.

The republican constitution in effect no longer existed. Return to it was a dead letter. The fact was that no ideological alternative as yet existed. This was the breach into which the Augustan settlement would step (Yavetz 17). But where Augustus' program camouflaged the nature of its intervention in the Real—i.e., the reorganization of the state's political and cultural apparatuses and the centralization of the powers of military command—beneath the mask of a fictional, although not necessarily insincere, return to the *status quo ante* (Ste. Croix 391–92), the republican opposition had no solutions to propose at all (Galinsky 8). It offered only nostalgia.

Neither narrative option (the republican or the Augustan), then, can be said to provide an accurate reflection of the transformations occurring in the Roman Real, nor was this even their purpose, assuming that such a thing were possible. Indeed, the picture that we have just pieced together is a synthetic product, drawn forth by a variety of scholars from a disparate array of materials, historical, literary, epigraphical and archeological, no one of which is to be taken at face value. Indeed, our mosaic does not offer a coherent narrative of meaningful events so much as point to a series of crises in meaning whose discursive

functions were symptomatic rather than expository. What does it mean to be an equestrian, a farmer, a soldier—at the limit, a subject in Rome? Each of these questions points to a crisis that produced conflicting ideological valuations and even violence. These crises in turn are registered as moments of trauma and undecidability in the cultural productions of the period.

For the literary historian, it is not a question of taking sides or determining which valuations to believe and which to condemn, but rather of studying the conflicts themselves: when they arise; when they disappear; how they are linked to other moments of conflict and stabilization; and what is the logic of their transformation. Thus, what is of utmost importance is not the content per se of the narratives produced by those who participated in these events, but the moments of ideological contradiction and aporia found therein. These are the truest barometers of the architectonic shifts occurring in the Real, that is, the profound historical movements reshaping the world beyond the immediate consciousness and control of its actors and participants, as well as the cultural revolution accompanying them (Jameson 1981: 82–83, 96). These are the moments that reveal the limits of ideology and mark those junctures where we must look for the emergence of the Real.

**IV. Imaginary, Symbolic, and the Agrarian Ideal**

Tibullan poetic consciousness, I am arguing then, is openly split in its relations to Lacan's two major psychic registers. What this means can be clarified by examining a passage in Žižek where the difference between the Imaginary and the Symbolic has been neatly summarized:

> [T]o put it simply, Imaginary identification is identification with the image in which we appear likable to ourselves, with the image representing 'what we would like to be', and Symbolic identification, identification with the very place *from where* we are being observed, *from where* we look at ourselves so that we appear to ourselves likable, worthy of love (Žižek 1989: 105, emphasis his).

The poet's Imaginary identification with the farmer or the lover is consistently at odds with his Symbolic identification as an equestrian subject in the Roman social order. Tibullus creates strong Imaginary identifications with a world of ideal amatory and/or agricultural pleasance throughout his poetry, only to undercut them—as noted by Elder above—when they come into contact with the values and identifications out of which the Symbolic constitutes our various

realities.[11] This same split between Imaginary and Symbolic, this same emergence of the Real, can be seen in the earlier example of the theme of wealth. From the perspective of the poet's Imaginary identifications, the world of exchange, which necessarily brings with it the realms of politics and *militia* as the concomitants of Roman social order, can only be antithetical to his utopian yearnings. *Divitiae* must, therefore, be morally condemned in an effort to achieve Imaginary purity. But that condemnation, as the rest of the collection realizes, can take place only from within the Symbolic and its rule-based codes. Consequently, the moral revulsion against wealth, when translated into the exchange values of the Symbolic—as figured from the poet's own equestrian position—becomes the *ressentiment* of those who do not have wealth towards those who do. The two evaluations do not cancel each other out because they address different registers of existence from different positions. Rather, they establish oppositions whose logical categories are consistently undermined. In the resulting moment of undecidability, we encounter the Real in all its unassimilability to the world of sense. Indeed, it is precisely in the fact that the old paradigms are no longer able to make sense out of the raw data from which we construct our Imaginary identifications that the clearest record of an historical shift can be found.[12] The former cohesion, or at least semblance of cohesion, between circumstances, self, and sense has been lost.

The conflict between the Imaginary agrarian ideal and Symbolic "reality" manifests itself on many levels in the poetry of Tibullus. Certainly, the harshness of agricultural labor is made clear in 2.3.9–10, where the poet pictures himself laboring in the fields with sunburnt limbs and ruptured blisters on his hands.[13] Moreover, poem 1.9, in a passage that has caused much critical debate and to which we shall return, includes the farmer among those motivated by greed. On that score, the farmer, then, is indistinguishable from the soldier described in the opening couplet, who would pile up tawny gold and hold vast acreages. The opposition between them would seem at least momentarily to have been elided. Indeed, Kennedy suggests that the narrator of 1.1 is best understood *to be* a

[11]"C'è in Tibullo un antitesi fra la realtà e il sogno; di qui le note discordanti del contrasto, della nostalgia e del rimpianto, di quei subitanei turbamenti dell'animo, e di quel perenne oscillar di fanciullo fra opposti sentimenti" (Riposati 93–94).

[12]This can be compared to Kuhn's notion of the increase in anomalies as indicating an impending paradigm shift in "normal science" (43–76 and *passim*).

[13]Indeed, the prospect of labor is less idealized in Book 2 (Lyne 165; Bright 192, 194). *Labor* is also frequently used in military contexts. For a good bibliography, see Boyd (273–74 n. 2).

soldier, thus explaining the frequent use of the optative subjunctive[14] in regard to the activities he proposes to undertake on his ideal agrarian estate (14–15). Such a reading also would make better sense of 1.1's relation to 1.3—which opens with Tibullus left behind on Corcyra after falling ill on a military mission with Messalla—and to 1.2 and its curse against anyone who would leave Delia to go on such a mission (1.1.65–66; Kennedy 20), a statement generally read as either an ironic anticipation or recollection of the journey undertaken in 1.3.

In addition, the heaps of fruit and the vats filled with new wine that Tibullus imagines on his farm in lines 9–10 recall that very desire for accumulation that he had ostensibly repudiated. Indeed, as Putnam points out, poem 1.1 has a circular structure, beginning with *divitiae* and ending with *dites* (1973: 50; Ponchont 8). Of course, the final line of the poem reads *dites despiciam despiciamque famem*, "I shall despise wealth and I shall despise hunger." But the mirror structure of this pentameter, which reflects an equivalence of opposites, is predicated on the hexameter's evocation of *ego composito securus acervo*, "I without a worry, since my own *pile* has been amassed," a phrase that both reflects the desire for accumulation stigmatized in the opening couplet and employs the same noun, *acervus*, used to designate the heaps of fruit mentioned in lines 9–10. The opposition of *militia* and *rura* that structures the poem's opening panel is, therefore, self-deconstructing, since each term is equally characterized by labor and accumulation: *militia* and *rura* are both opposites and mutually implicated. Consequently, when Lyne writes of poem 1, "Here Tibullus *can* be detected yearning for a primal and idealized (but presumably not totally fictitious) rural simplicity" (153, emphasis his), there is a certain truth to the statement, but it is hardly the whole of the matter. Riposati is closer to the mark when he sees 1.1's and 1.10's evocation of rural simplicity as an attempt by the poet to recapture a dreamed-of childhood innocence, before both love and war (16), before the world of exchange and accumulation. Yet even this is an oversimplification that fails to do justice to the intricacies of Tibullus' craft.

Indeed, this text manifests a complexity of reference and poetic intention in even the minutest details of its diction. In line 11, after the initial series of optative subjunctives, the poet tells us, in the first use of the indicative in the poem, that he is a man of old-fashioned and simple piety who reveres the gods in

[14]On the use of the subjunctive throughout 1.1, see Riposati (99), Wimmel (17, 21–22, 28 n. 55), and Bright (130).

the traditional rural manner—a statement difficult to square with Kennedy's identification of the speaking subject with the figure of the freebooting soldier:

> nam veneror, seu stipes habet desertus in agris
> seu vetus in trivio florida serta lapis:
> et quodcumque mihi pomum novus educat annus,
> libatum agricolae ponitur ante deo.
>
> For I pay homage, whether a deserted post in the fields
> or an old stone at a crossroads, it has flowery wreaths:
> and whatever fruit the new year brings to me,
> is placed as an offering before the god of the farmer. (1.1.11–14)

This evocation of primal rural simplicity, though, is hardly univocal. Indeed, we have to ask: simple compared to what; in what sense is it primal? The sudden use of the indicative is deceptive. We see the speaker in the fields and before his simple altar. But who is he? Just a few lines before when he spoke of his activities as a *rusticus* planting vines with his own hand (1.1.7–10), the use of the optative subjunctive *seram* connoted not an actual state of affairs, but a wished-for situation (Kennedy 13–14). Our poet is presumably therefore only a would-be *rusticus*.[15] This is hardly an original pose. As Peter Green notes, pastoral poetry from Theocritus to Vergil, Tibullus, and beyond "is set in the countryside, its ideals are rural and bucolic, it glorifies summer ripeness—and it is invariably produced by urban intellectuals who have never themselves handled a spade, much less herded sheep, goats, or cattle, in their lives" (233).[16] Thus the simplicity of which Lyne and others speak is in fact not simple at all. It is a dream of simplicity that can only bespeak a sophistication and nostalgia that is everywhere in this poetry revealed and denied.

How, then, can the simple farmer be contrasted with the greedy, acquisitive soldier if the life of rural piety, on which the contrast is predicated, is itself internally divided? Moreover, the next use of the indicative, in lines 19–22, reveals the poet not to be one who shuns the false morality and acquisitiveness of the present in favor of the simple verities of the past. Instead, he is a member of that vast displaced rural aristocracy whose fortunes were reduced by the civil

[15]Wimmel terms the use of the indicative in an analogous passage, 1.35–36, an "Art Überkonjunktive" or "a kind of hypersubjective," since it imagines the realization of the desired state.

[16]On the relation between elegy and pastoral, see Veyne (101).

war (Murgatroyd 1991: 7; Putnam 1973: 3; Littlewood 1983: 2146),[17] but hardly eliminated:[18]

> vos quoque, felicis quondam, nunc pauperis agri
> custodes, fertis munera vestra, Lares.
> tunc vitula innumeros lustrabat caesa iuvencos:
> nunc agna exigui est hostia parva soli.
>
> You, the Lares, guardians of a now poor estate
> that once was wealthy, you bring your gifts.
> Then a slaughtered calf cleansed countless bullocks,
> now a lamb is the small sacrifice of my narrow holding. (1.1.19–22)

Tibullus' nostalgia is in part forced upon him. The simplicity of which he speaks refers not so much to a primitive time before the fall, or at least not only to that, but also to the anxieties of the present.[19] Through its very doubleness, this presumed simplicity stands as a symptom of the traumatic eruption of the senseless world of the Real into the realm of the Symbolic. It does not offer a reasoned reflection on the social conflicts that led to the rise of the Augustan regime, nor produce a teleological narrative that would aim at containing (though never reflecting) the Real within the ideological structures of the Symbolic. Instead, the answer of the Real is seen precisely in the generation of an aporetical text in which the nostalgia for a world of ideal agricultural poverty reflects both an inaccessible utopian dream and the actually existing circumstances of a fallen present that the dream ostensibly opposes.

Such contradictions in regard to the speaker's circumstances, in turn, recall the earlier paradox of the simultaneous identity and contrast between rural *paupertas* and martial *divitiae* with which we began. Indeed, the assertion of unity and difference is a pattern throughout the poem. The more closely the diction of the poem is inspected, the more overdetermined the relation between its manifest content and its latent multiplicity of meanings is revealed to be. In lines 7–8, the hand that plants the vines and the fruit is called *facilis*. This is a puzzling adjective to characterize the kind of manual labor generally considered beneath the dignity of a man in Tibullus' position (Smith 187) and has occasioned no

[17]Riposati does note that land distributions were made in 41 B.C.E. to the veterans of Philippi in the region of Pedum, thought to be Tibullus' native land (16–17).

[18]On the pose of *paupertas* and external evidence for Tibullus' *divitiae*, see Putnam (1973: 3–4) and Riposati (18).

[19]As Lee notes, the proposition that one should live content with little as a way of avoiding anxiety was a philosophical truism of the time (1974: 99).

small amount of critical discussion.[20] The apparent simplicity of the phrase is belied by the struggle of the critics to explain it. As Putnam notes, "*facilis* is ordinarily a passive adjective, 'without effort,' a suitable detail in this easy *vita iners*, but perhaps strange for a *rusticus*." He is not the only commentator to note its strangeness. Smith seeks to domesticate this rogue adjective by arguing that *facilis* should be translated as "ready," "skillful," noting that "the shift of adjectives from a usual active to an unusual passive or vice versa is a frequent and characteristic device in poetry" (187). Yet Smith, by observing that the passive is usual, in effect concedes that if a Roman reader were to arrive unassisted at the active reading he prefers, it would not be the first interpretation that leapt to his or her mind. The *OLD* agrees. While it registers the active meaning of the word, citing this very line, it is the last of eleven possible definitions.[21] Murgatroyd in his commentary goes even further than Smith, arguing that "such changes in adjectives from passive to active and vice versa are quite common." Perhaps, but that is not the case for this word in Tibullus. In the four other uses of the adjective in the corpus,[22] the active meaning does not appear once. In addition, the principal passage Murgatroyd cites to bolster his argument, Propertius 2.1.9, is not apposite, since the *faciles manus* with which Cynthia plays the lyre refer to a case in which the root's primary meaning of "easiness" or "doability," whether passive or active, is not contradicted by the nature of the activity in question. Playing the lyre, while perhaps not a simple thing to do, is not something that the Romans would normally qualify as *labor*. The planting of vines and of fruit trees is. Cynthia's hand is far more easily pictured as *facilis* than the Tibullan farmer's.[23]

[20]A novel suggestion offered by one of the anonymous readers contends that *facilis* is a transferred epithet from *poma* and refers to the ease with which the ripe fruit is plucked from the tree. This is certainly one possible level of meaning, but it addresses neither the significance of the transfer itself, what Freud would label a displacement (see section V), nor how the sense of *facilis* addresses the planting of the fruit tree as opposed to merely its harvesting. To recognize this trope as a transfer of epithet is not to interpret it but to establish the general rhetorical framework (i.e., catachresis) within which the labor of interpretation must begin.

[21]Even then the *OLD* lists the passage in question under a subheading of *facilis*' active definition different from that Smith prefers. It cites the line in question, not under, "deft, quick, skilful," which is subheading *b*, but under *c*, "acting without restraint, free, liberal."

[22]As presented in Postgate's *OCT* (1915) and Luck's Teubner (1988).

[23]All parallel passages listed in the *TLL* date from a period after Tibullus and are liable to the same sort of objections. None refers to a labor in any way comparable to the farmer's: Ov. *Ars* 1.160, smoothing a pillow; *Fast.* 3.536, keeping time to music; [Sen.] *Oct.* 483, Fortune's ease in handing the reins of government to Nero; Sen. *Ep.* 121.5, the art of painting. Only Apul.

This and similar attempts to reduce the strangeness of this use of *facilis* are doomed to failure. Not only is the passive meaning usual, as conceded by Smith and the *OLD*, but the context that would allow the active meaning to be used without strain is not immediately available. This is not to say that such a meaning would be impossible, but that it would only be accessible after a certain hermeneutic delay. It is an interpretation arrived at in an attempt to neutralize the strangeness of the more normal sense of *facilis* as "without effort." Accordingly, the secondary meaning, "deft, quick, skillful," is only visible as a palimpsest overwriting a primary meaning, now held "under erasure."

Doubleness, however, is the order of the day. This puzzlement on the level of diction is reproduced on that of the passage as a whole, since many critics have felt that the list of manual labors catalogued in lines 7–10 is so out of place in relation to the poet's stated desire for a *vita iners*, "life of inactivity," that they have resorted to emending the text, although there is no evidence of corruption.[24] Thus Murgatroyd, who favors the active meaning of *facilis*, also accepts Richter's proposal to move lines 25–32 of poem 1 immediately after lines 1–6 in order to resolve this seeming contradiction. Yet there is no conflict between the longed-for *vita iners* and the planting of vines or the harvesting of fruit, as Putnam correctly perceives, if the labor in question is viewed as easy. Indeed, it could be argued that the active reading of *facilis* all but requires the emendation, since such an interpretation does not view the labor as "easy" but the hand as "skillful." The opposition between the *vita iners* and manual labor is structurally homologous to that between the passive meaning of *facilis* ("easy") and the vigorous activities of planting and pruning described in lines 7–8, and ultimately to that between the *paupertas* of the farmer and the *divitiae* of the soldier. The *vita iners* is opposed to the planting of vines only so long as the labor itself is strenuous; the addition of *facilis* undermines the opposition even as the controversy over its interpretation—based on the fact that the actions themselves are *not* easy—reinstates it. This simultaneous combination of opposition and concord in turn reminds us of that seen at the beginning of the poem between the *adsiduus labor* of the soldier and the *adsiduus ignis* of the contented farmer's hearth. The result is a complex whole whose multiple layers of meaning vastly outweigh the sum of its parts, while at the same time remaining structurally anchored to the particularities of history understood in their deepest sense. Indeed

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*Met.* 8.5 comes close when referring to the act of stabbing a boar, though even this passage is not listed as parallel by the *OLD* and is much later.

[24]For a complete discussion of the controversies surrounding this passage, see Ball (1983: 23).

not the least irony of this passage is that the man who is *dives*, and would in fact do the least *labor*, is opposed to the one who is *pauper*, and would in reality do the most *labor*, on the clearly fictional basis that the rich man's life is more laborious and that therefore poverty is preferable to wealth.

## V. Condensation and Displacement, or Doubleness and the Dreamwork

This series of passages, lines 1–10, can be seen as an example of what Freud in *On Dreams* labels "condensation," the production of multiple layers of signification by a single set of terms. Indeed, the very kind of doubleness and ambiguity that we have observed on the level of diction, in words like *facilis* and *adsiduus*, is what Freud describes as the effect of condensation in the dreamwork:

> If in any particular instance we compare the number of ideational elements or the space taken up in writing them down in the case of the dream and of the dream thoughts to which the analysis leads us and of which traces are to be found in the dream itself, we shall be left in no doubt that the dream work has carried out a work of compression or *condensation* on a large scale....From every element in a dream's content associative threads branch out in two or more directions....The dream work is particularly fond of representing two *contrary* ideas by the same composite structure (Freud 1952: 26–31, emphasis his).

Condensation in Tibullus, moreover, is all but invariably generated through the mechanism of displacement, thereby reproducing the two basic tropes Freud used to characterize the dreamwork.[25] In each of the examples we have examined, the fertile contradictions in Tibullus that give rise to this effervescence of meaning are generated by the slippage of an initial term from its primary or initial location in the signifying chain to a secondary or eccentric position. Hence the luster of the first line's riches is transferred to the sixth line's hearth, the constancy of the soldier's labor to the fire that warms the ideal farmer's leisure, the ease of the work of sowing and reaping to the hand that performs the task. In each case, the moment of fully present, unambiguous meaning is deferred, displaced onto

[25]"I cannot leave the subject of dream displacement without drawing attention to a remarkable process which occurs in the formation of dreams and in which condensation and displacement *combine* to produce the result. In considering condensation we have already seen the way in which two ideas in the dream thoughts which have something in common, some point of contact, are replaced in the dream content by a composite idea, in which a relatively distinct nucleus represents what they have in common....If displacement takes place in addition to condensation, what is constructed is not a composite idea but an 'intermediate common entity,' which stands in a relation to the two different elements similar to that in which the resultant in a parallelogram of forces stands to its components" (Freud 1952: 37, emphasis his).

another set of terms, so that, instead of a longed-for unity, the reader experiences more multiplicity, more division, and more desire. As Fineberg sums up, displacement, or what Lacan labels metonymy, "is about desire because it points to a fragment, a remnant or displaced part of a disjoined referent or lost whole; it is the figure that is defined by fragmentation, separation, loss" (118–19), but it is also the figure that continually leads us forward to the production of more meaning, more levels of metaphoric complexity, and hence more condensation (Janan 43).

Thus in lines 7–8, there is in fact a double displacement, a catachresis raised to the second power, when, in addition to the problem of the *facilis manus*, the action of planting is described as occurring *maturo tempore*, a phrase that more logically governs the act of harvesting:

> ipse seram teneras *maturo tempore* vites
> rusticus et facili grandia poma manu.
>
> I myself will plant the tender vines at the ripe time,
> as a peasant, and the full grown fruits with ease of hand. (1.1.7–8)

One might try to solve the problem by translating *poma* as fruit trees, but the adjective *grandia*, then, makes little sense, since trees are normally planted when small, not large. Hence one would assume that the reference is to the fruit itself, which would make better sense of *poma*'s neuter gender, inasmuch as trees are normally feminine and Tibullus uses the neuter to mean fruit in line 13 of this very poem (Postgate 1910: 108; Putnam 1973: 51). The natural assumption, therefore, would be that *maturum tempus* goes with the fruit, since the first definition of *maturus* in the *OLD* is "ripe." But why would ripe fruits be planted? Putnam is on the right track when he says that *grandia* "anticipates the productivity of [Tibullus'] seedlings" (1973: 51). In short, the displacement of *maturum tempus* in conjunction with the anticipatory adjective *grandis* creates a series of contradictions on the logical level, but not on the level of the poetic dream text, for, through the mechanism of condensation, it allows the presentation of the entire agricultural cycle from planting to the harvest of fruit in a single couplet. Displacement thus produces condensation and the meaning of the text is enriched even as the implicit structure of the whole scene as a form of wish-fulfillment—since it is based on the anticipation of desired results—is made clear. The notion of the full rural cycle is, in turn, able to be joined directly to the normally opposed concept of the *vita iners* through the displacement of *facilis* from the activity per

se to the metonymic hand, allowing the life of leisure and that of rural labor momentarily to seem one.[26]

Even this reading, however, does not exhaust the potential of these lines. As one of the anonymous referees has pointed out, Vergil and Columella note that vines can be planted in autumn as well as spring (*G.* 2.315–22; Col. *RR* 3.14.1). This would on one level resolve the seeming contradiction by allowing planting and harvesting to take place simultaneously, while still maintaining the basic thrust of our reading that the couplet points to the entire agricultural cycle. Yet the unity achieved by this *coincidentia oppositorum* is only provisional at best, since the ripeness implied by the adjective *maturus* is still logically opposed to the act of planting with which it is juxtaposed. At the same time, it is far from certain that the poet necessarily alludes to the prospect of reaping and sowing in the same season. Vergil merely notes that the planting of vines in autumn is one option, while Columella strictly distinguishes those situations in which spring planting is to be preferred to fall, and then later does the same with fruit trees as well (*Arb.* 20.3). In the end, the couplet's extreme compression and elegant composition make either interpretation (spring planting and fall harvest or fall planting and fall harvest) possible and neither necessary. Both must be retained. Indeed, no element of this poem's exquisitely chosen diction reveals the simultaneous collapsing of contradictory significations through condensation and the reassertion of difference through metonymic juxtaposition more elegantly than the collocation of *tener* and *maturus* in line 7 of the couplet.[27] Here, the proximity of the words' placement and the opposition of their meaning reveal the doubleness inherent both in this passage and in the Tibullan dreamwork as a whole.

## VI. What's *Amor* Got to Do with It: Messalla and the Symbolic

In all the cases examined thus far, we are dealing with the paradoxical assertion of contrasts presented in terms of identity. As such, all these oppositions are structurally homologous with the relation that obtains between *militia* and *rura* presented in the first six lines. As we have seen, the problem of determining precisely the nature of the relationship between *militia* and *rura*, as well as that between their homologues, would appear to be insoluble in its own terms, since each member of these oppositions constantly proclaims both its identity with and

[26]Wimmel is surely right when he refers to the "exquisite arrangement" of 1.1.8 and indeed one could say this of the whole couplet (10).

[27]I owe this observation to Marilyn Skinner.

its difference from the other. A third term will have to be introduced if so complex an equation is to be solved, or at least more fully factored. One good candidate is *amor*, whose contrast with *militia* occupies the second half of poem 1. This strategy presents one important complicating element, however. The section that introduces *amor* also begins with Messalla, whose presence necessarily alters the light in which *militia* is to be viewed.

If we examine lines 53–58, the section that, as Gaisser (59–60) points out, introduces the last half of the poem and is organized on the same formal pattern as lines 1–6, we find the soldier's life portrayed in a substantially different way than it was at the beginning of the poem:

> te bellare decet terra, Messalla, marique,
> ut domus hostiles praeferat exuvias:
> me retinent vinctum formosae vincla puellae,
> et sedeo duras ianitor ante fores.
> non ego laudari curo, mea Delia: tecum
> dum modo sim, quaeso segnis inersque vocer.
>
> It is fitting that you wage war, Messalla, on the sea,
> so that your house might display enemy spoils:
> the chains of a beautiful girl hold me bound,
> and I sit as her doorman before her hard threshold.
> I do not care to be praised, my Delia: so long as I
> might be with you, I seek to be called lazy and inactive. (1.1.53–58)

Here, the soldier's life is no longer primarily defined by its participation in the ideology of accumulation, but is now portrayed as *decus* and the object of *laus* (Murgatroyd 1991: 64). The description of Messalla seems to reverse the earlier condemnation of the soldier's life, but occurs without explanation. Consequently, the association of military adventure with greed is never retracted, while on the level of diction, though not of theme, it is reasserted: the use of *exuvias* to end line 54 not only refers to the acquisition of spoils that would be displayed in the *vestibulum* of the house to signal Messalla's achievement and his right to *laus*, but also rhymes with *pluvias* and *vias*, which end lines 50 and 52 respectively, thereby creating a highly unusual series of three rhyming couplets (Murgatroyd 1991: 64; Lee 1974: 105). In this fashion, Messalla's achievement, which seems to be given the poet's stamp of moral approval through his use of the verb *decet*, is inextricably linked both with the *dives* in line 50—able, Tibullus says, to bear storms, *pluvias*, at sea in his pursuit of gain—and with the piles of gold and emeralds that he contends would better perish than for one girl to cry over his own mercantile or mercenary adventures, *vias* (Fineberg 135–36).

In 1.3, moreover, *viae* are clearly associated with both the poet's accompanying of Messalla on a military expedition (l. 14),[28] and with the end of the Golden Age (lines 35–44), which also marks the beginning of organized agriculture.

quam bene Saturno vivebant rege, priusquam
  tellus in longas est patefacta *vias*!
nondum caeruleas pinus contempserat undas,
  effusum ventis praebueratque sinum,
nec vagus ignotis repetens compendia terris
  presserat externa navita merce ratem
illo non validus subiit iuga tempore taurus,
  non domito frenos ore momordit equus,
non domus ulla fores habuit, non fixus in agris
  qui regeret certis finibus arva, lapis.

How well they lived when Saturn was king, before
  the earth was laid open to long roads!
Not yet had the pine held the azure waves in contempt
  and offered the billowing sail to the winds,
nor had the wandering sailor seeking profits in unknown lands
  weighted down his raft with foreign wares.
At that time the strong bull did not yet submit to the yoke,
  the horse did not take the bit with a tamed mouth,
no house had doors, no stone was set in the fields
  that might mark the plowlands with certain bounds. (1.3.35–44)

As we learn from poem 1.7, Messalla is indissolubly linked with the world of *viae*: roads, marches, ways of access to far-away places, and hence the possibility of separation, boundaries and their necessary crossing (Fineberg 153).[29] He is also the fly in the ointment with regard to Tibullus' dream of Arcadia, for it is in order to accompany Messalla on campaign that the poet leaves Delia in the first place (Johnson 103). In the same poem, moreover, Tibullus rejects what is *decus* for Messalla in 1.1, the conquest of military glory, in favor of love. Yet that rejection does not in itself redeem the dream of the pastoral paradise. Just because *rura* and *amor* are both opposed to *viae* does not mean they coincide with each other. Delia is not a creature of the country. The poet only fantasizes

[28]*Cuncta dabant reditus: tamen est deterrita numquam / quin fleret nostras respiceretque vias*, "all things foretold return: but she is never deterred / from weeping or viewing our departure with alarm."

[29]See Ball on the tension between Messalla and Tibullus at the beginning of the collection. For 1.7 as a poem in which the complementary but opposed worlds of Tibullus and Messalla find a momentary balance, see Moore (423–30).

her presence there in 1.5, when he imagines her playing hostess to Messalla. She lives in the city, an urban sophisticate whose life represents the opposite of Tibullus' pastoral imaginings and whose existence is joined to the country only by the roads that Messalla builds, the very presence of which marks the limits of the Tibullan agrarian utopia. Messalla, the city, and Delia, then, all stand in the same essential relation to the Tibullan dream text. They supply the necessary conditions for the dream's content and forms, as well as the leisure and sophistication necessary to create it—yet ultimately prevent its realization (Lyne 154). They are, then, profoundly related figures.

To begin to explain this conjunction of seemingly different images and characters, we shall have to return to the passage from poem 1 in which we found the poet's initial portrait of Messalla. The paradoxes inherent in his depiction of his powerful patron, and the latter's relation to both Delia (or *amor*) and the city, are given further elaboration when we turn to the way Tibullus portrays himself in these same lines. First, the *rura* that he imagined as his own in the first half of the poem have now vanished and will not reappear for the remainder of 1.1. Second, the poet is now pictured not only before his mistress' door, but also in the adopted posture of a slave in chains. This of course evokes the standard elegiac trope of *servitium amoris*, but also puts the greatest possible distance between the *vestibulum* of Messalla's aristocratic abode in which the emblems of his triumph are displayed—thereby validating his claims to the highest ethical and social status accorded by traditional Roman values—and Delia's front door, where Tibullus adopts the position of the lowest of the low, a *ianitor* bound to the house of another and a man subjected to the whims of a woman. This servile posture is standard procedure for Tibullus. In 1.5.61–66 he portrays himself as Delia's slave, moving crowds out of the way so she may pass and arranging assignations for her with other lovers. As we have seen, the homology between servile labor and *servitium amoris* was established in the agricultural portion of 1.1 and repeated in 1.4.

This semiotics of self-abasement reaches its apogee in 2.3 when Tibullus proposes to become a field slave at a neighboring estate so he can catch a glimpse of Nemesis at her *dives amator*'s villa (Cairns 154–55).[30] The hard labor of the countryside and the servile qualities of the lover have now shed their romantic sheen (Bright 193–94). In poem 2.3, *rura* are part of the Iron Age, not the Age of Gold (Fineberg 146, 148 n. 64). This in turn clarifies why the Golden Age is

[30]Nemesis, as Bright remarks, is the negative side of Delia (186).

described as a time before agriculture in 1.3 (Whitaker 84). Agriculture means labor, and the man who must labor, in ancient terms, is no longer truly free. He is subject to external necessity, just as the *servus amoris* portrays himself as subject to the whims of his *domina* (Grimal 110, 142).[31] Hence Tibullus' self-portrait as a field slave in 2.3 is in fact the logical development of his earlier juxtaposition of the farmer and the lover in 1.1. There is, then, no real paradox in the transformation of the *rusticus* into the *ianitor* in 1.1; rather, from a class perspective it is a natural progression. Even so, our sense of the necessity governing this sequence is blunted by Tibullus' consistent attempt to portray the impossible subject position of both the farmer whose labors are *facilis* and the *ianitor* whose life is love. This is a romanticization of *amor* and *labor* that Book 2 will find increasingly difficult to sustain, since as every Roman of Tibullus' station knew, love and labor were both forms of servitude. Indeed, this poetic portrayal of the assumption of servitude by members of the elite, as Veyne points out, constituted much of elegy's humor for its Roman audience (102–06, 115; Fitzgerald: 9).

Tibullus' assumption of the position of *ianitor* represents the poetic renunciation of his own inherited social and sexual prerogatives,[32] the very things Messalla positively embodies. This rejection of traditional ideology through self-abasement—however comic its intention or effect—is spelled out in lines 57–58, where the poet not only repudiates the desire for praise, but actively signals his desire to be called *segnis inersque*, two terms of opprobrium (Lee 1982: 109; Murgatroyd 1991: 65). As Leach notes, the term *iners* "is anathema to the political man but scarcely more appropriate to the Roman farmer or the Augustan poet" (1980b: 60–61). In fact, one of its meanings is "impotent"—hence its use in Catullus 67.26, *iners sterili semine natus erat*, "the son was impotent with sterile seed," an unhappy description for either a lover or a farmer.[33]

These terms are hardly chosen at random. *Iners* appears in line 5 of the first passage we examined, referring there to the quiet existence the poet proposes to lead in opposition to the restless life of accumulation led by the soldier. In the

[31]Wimmel notes that by introducing the word *domina* in 1.1.46, at the end of the agricultural section of poem 1, he is returning the word to its "altrömischer" significance as the mistress of a rural household who would supervise the work of the house slaves (39). See also Grimal (160–61).

[32]See more explicitly 2.4, where Tibullus proposes to sell his ancestral lands in order to be able to buy trinkets for Nemesis. This would be the ultimate rejection of his own position as an equestrian within the Roman symbolic (Bright 214).

[33]See also Lyne (155) and Boyd (277).

first passage, it seems to imply merely a life of leisure or inactivity, although the verb *traduco* is susceptible of another interpretation than just "to lead": it can also mean "to betray or traduce" (Putnam 1973: 51).[34] Hence, one possible reading would be that Tibullus' rejection of the life of a mercenary is, in fact, a betrayal of his better self, a willful impotence, a form of post-Oedipal castration in which the masculine subject assumes a feminine position outside the phallic order of the Symbolic.[35] Castration is a fate that Priapus wishes on the poet's greedy enemies in 1.4 when he declares:

> at qui non audit Musas, qui vendit amorem,
> Idaeae currus ille sequatur Opis,
> et tercentenas erroribus expleat urbes
> et secet ad Phrygios vilia membra modos.
>
> But he who does not listen to the Muses, who sells love,
> may that one run after the chariots of Idan Ops,
> and fill three hundred cities with his wanderings
> and slice off his useless appendages to Phrygian rhythms. (1.4.67–70)

The punishment is appropriate because it is precisely these sellers of love (and those who pay them), with their total absorption in the realm of phallic accumulation and exchange, that have left the poet impotent in his amorous pursuits. The poet, therefore, wishes them to become castrated followers of Cybele (Idan Ops) so that he might be empowered. He is looking at trading places, for the poet through his own desired *inertia*, his rejection of the life of *divitiae* and *militia*, has been severed from phallic power. As Callimachus says in *Iambus* 3—a possible model for both this poem and Catullus 63—in the present world, where money is honored more than virtue, it would be better to be a eunuch devotee of Cybele than a poet (fr. 193 and *Diegesis*; Trypanis; Murgatroyd 1991: 131; André 53; Luck 1962: 89–90).

The irony of Priapus himself uttering threats of castration in Tibullus 1.4 would have been lost on no one. Tibullus invokes the personification of the phallic to voice a sentiment that aims at depriving those who currently wield

[34]The passage calls attention to itself through its unusual syntax. One expects *vitam* to be the accusative object of the verb; instead, by putting *vita* in the ablative, the poet in effect treats his inactive life as the medium through which *paupertas* leads or betrays (*traducat*) him (Wimmel 7).

[35]On men being able to assume the feminine position in discourse and women being able to assume the phallic position, see Weed (81, 89); Janan (30); Moi (136–37); Kristeva (1983: 223–47); Irigaray (1977b: 183; 1977c: 189; 1974: 165); Lacan (1975: 34, 39, 67–75).

phallic power of their attachment to it and transplanting that power to poets like him. This gesture of appropriation is itself, of course, an implicitly phallic one that presumes the poet already to be participating in the realm of Symbolic exchange, personified at its best by Messalla. Nonetheless, the poet defines the life he chooses to lead in opposition to that of his honored patron. His life is to be without glory, a life actively disparaged by traditional Roman values. As noted above, the term he uses for this life in the second passage, *iners*, is the same as that which he employed earlier in what had initially seemed a laudatory contrast between the calm life of the farmer and the hectic existence of the acquisitive soldier. To see more precisely how both of these things can be true at once will require that we now examine Tibullus' depiction of Messalla's relation to the Golden Age.

**VII. Before the Father and Before Love**

W. R. Johnson has shrewdly noted that Messalla in Tibullus' poetry plays the role of a father figure, with all the ambivalent feelings that that persona implies (96–97). And while Johnson goes out of his way to avoid invoking a crude psychoanalytic reading of this point, in fact, his *praeteritio* serves only to bring this facet of his interpretation into sharper focus: "I refrain of course from calling him a superego or something of the sort" (104). Johnson lays the groundwork for a Lacanian interpretation not only of Messalla but also of the tropes of the Golden and Iron Ages when he observes, "Adults live in the age of iron; the age of gold is the time when children wander freely in the pleasance, which, for them, is at once ideal and real" (Johnson 102). The father in Lacanian psychoanalysis is the figure who, in the *post facto* narrative of the subject's "creation," signifies the intrusion of the realm of the Symbolic into the child's world of the Imaginary through the threat of castration. The Symbolic, as noted above, is the world of language and of norms (and hence a more complex entity than the classical notion of the superego, which Johnson rightly avoids). It is the social world that exists between subjects and thus makes subjectivity possible. In the realm of the Imaginary there are no subjects because there is no Other,[36] only doubles of the same (Julien 75). The world, as concretized by the mother and her body, exists only for the infant. It is an extension of the self and reflects the image of the

[36]See Lacan (1975: 71): "Comme ça se produit grâce à l'être de la signifiance, et que cet être n'a d'autre lieu que le lieu de l'Autre que je désigne du grand A, on voit la biglerie de ce qui se passe. Et comme c'est là aussi que s'inscrit la fonction du père en tant que c'est à elle que se rapporte la castration, on voit que ça ne fait pas deux Dieu, mais que ça n'en fait pas non plus un seul."

infant to itself in the fullest possible plenitude, hence this moment's name in Lacan's early formulation,[37] "the mirror stage." The child is the mother's exclusive possessor. This is similar to the way Tibullus portrays the Golden Age in poems such as 1.3.[38] Here the world exists only to offer its plenty to its ideal inhabitant. It is a world without war, without labor, without possessions, without otherness or alienation, indeed without doors. The Golden Age, then, is an evocation of the realm of the Imaginary.[39]

It is the father who, in the subject's retrospective reconstruction of his/her own creation,[40] puts an end to this idyll of infancy by asserting his own claim to the mother and instituting the classic Oedipal conflict that lies at the heart of all psychoanalytic thought. This conflict is resolved through the threat of castration, which hardly need be interpreted in the literal sense (Žižek 1991: 165), but merely implies the paternal function's capacity to remove the source of pleasure and plenitude. In fact, Lacan argues that what is really at stake in castration is the child's entrance *as a speaking subject* into language or the Symbolic—the infant has in reality bathed passively in the Symbolic's norms and expectations since conception. Castration names that primal wound whereby we are separated from ourselves so as to enter language as subjects (Julien 190, 231; Eagleton 168; Kristeva 1979: 11). "The speaking subject that says 'I am' is in fact saying 'I am he (she) who has lost something'—and the loss suffered is the loss of the Imaginary identity with the mother and with the world" (Moi 99). When our Imaginary self-identification most seems to coincide with our subject position in the Symbolic, then the suture that closes this wound is all but invisible. But in times when the Symbolic is in crisis, when it is clearly no longer adequate to the relations our Imaginary selves maintain with the Real, then the wound becomes visible, and the split it marks at the subject's heart is foregrounded (Schneiderman 113). The concept of castration figures a limit to desire and the necessity of recognizing the existence of others and thus also of the self.

[37]The succession of "periods" in which these events are staged, as Lacan makes clear subsequently, is logical rather than strictly temporal. See Janan (20) and Lacan (1975: 53).

[38]In Ov. *Fast.* 1.193–94, however, the rule of Saturn is already characterized as a time of greed (Edwards 1996: 58). On there being two different Golden Age traditions in the ancient world, one similar to the ideal described by Tibullus and Vergil and another characterized by hard work and greed, see Fitzgerald (275 n.15). Vergil's vision in *Ecl.* 4 is perhaps the most idealized and untroubled of the lot (Boyd: 275).

[39]"Que l'imaginaire se supporte du reflet du semblable au semblable, c'est ce qui est certain" (Lacan 1975: 77).

[40]In point of fact, as Julien makes clear (67), both the Imaginary and the Symbolic are assumed to be present from the beginning in Lacan's teaching after 1953.

Castration, then, represents the birth of society and of the subject. Lacan punningly labels this resolution of the primal Oedipal conflict as the introduction of the *nom du père*, which in spoken French sounds like either the *name* or the *no* of the father. For with the father's no—with the institution of the world of the Symbolic—the realm of regulated social exchange, whether in the form of language, money, property, or systems of kinship, is instituted (Lacan 1973: 169; Kristeva 1982: 61; Goux 17, 20–21, 24, 49, 52–53, 55–56; Parkhurst 51).

This is Messalla's world: the world of politics and military accomplishment, the world that recognizes the value of the enemy spoils he displays in his vestibule amidst the death masks of his glorious ancestors. Indeed, in 1.7 Messalla is assimilated to the figure of Osiris, the culture hero who makes civilization possible. In the same poem, Messalla is also portrayed as the patron of farmers in his role as highway repairman. Yet, this is a paradox. As many critics have noted, the world of the farmer in Tibullus is also associated with the Golden Age, a mythical, carefree world before cities that comes to an end with the overthrow of Saturn by Jupiter, itself a repetition of the initial killing of the divine father, the castration of Uranus by Saturn or Kronos (Kristeva 1982: 61).[41] The present, then, as Tibullus' mythological paradigm defines it, is the product of intracommunal, in fact intrafamilial, violence. This is a theme that would have had a strong resonance for Tibullus' Roman audience. Indeed, the whole series of divine deaths can be read as an allegory of the civil wars through which Rome had just lived (Bright 74–75; Putnam 1973: 183; Smith 447; Postgate 1910: 125).[42] And it is from the castration of Uranus, which starts the intergenerational strife that leads to the destruction of the Golden Age, that Venus (as Tibullus acknowledges in 1.2) is born. Here in that part of the poem that most clearly recalls the classic paraclausithyron, the poet declares that if anyone should see his and Delia's trysts and gossip about them, *is sanguine natam, / is Venerem e rapido sentiet esse mari*, "he will know that Venus was born from blood; he will know her born from the foam of the sea" (1.2.39–40), invoking a punishment that equates speech and the gaze with the rebirth of Venus. In a paradoxical sense, the entry of illicit love into the realm of discourse, the intersubjective world of the Symbolic, will be punished by the rebirth of *amor* and its goddess. Love is a symptom of the fallen Age of Iron. It is the scar of castration, the visible sign of

[41]On Jupiter's overthrow of Saturn as a form of castration, see Lacan (1975: 276).

[42]Cairns (82–83) points out that 2.5, where Apollo is pictured as singing Jupiter's victory ode after Saturn's defeat (9–10), also recalls the *prodigia* seen after the death of Julius Caesar (67–82). For a contrary view, see Murgatroyd (1994: 174).

our desire for a "lost" plenitude, a loss that the entrance into the Symbolic both institutes and seeks to cover over (Lacan 1975: 65, 74–79). In the Golden Age, under the rule of Saturn, however, there are no love affairs (and how could there be, since there are no subjects and no possessions?), and hence no *amor* exists that can be contrasted with *militia* or associated with *rura*. Tibullus' poetry must assume that the Golden Age has passed, and with it his pastoral ideal, *haec mihi fingebam*. In this light, the inclusion of the farmer at the beginning of poem 1.9's list of those motivated by greed makes better sense. It is not a case of the poet using a "topos without assimilating it," as Bright claims (251), or a clever means of highlighting the unusual extent of Marathus' greed, as Fineberg argues (84–87). Rather, it is of a piece with the poet's statement in 1.3 that agriculture is a product of the end of the Golden Age, every bit as much as commerce and trade. The farmer and the soldier are both symptoms of the same pathological state.

Indeed, love as it is represented in elegy depends on property, not just in the sense that one must have money in order to attract the beloved—itself a sign of the fallen nature of the age—but also in the deeper sense of the ability to possess. Delia can only be Tibullus' in a world that recognizes boundaries, that has doors (and hence paraclausithyra). Yet this segmentation of the world into discrete, bounded entities or places is the very negation of the Golden Age (Fineberg 136–37). The Golden Age has no love. By the same token, it has no agriculture, because agriculture too needs boundaries, as primitive Roman religion recognized in its worship of the *termini* or boundary markers between fields, portrayed by Tibullus at 1.1.11–12 (Murgatroyd 1991: 56; Putnam 1973: 52; André 13; cf. 1.3.42–44). To the extent that passion existed in the Golden Age, it was exercised freely and in the open, a practice Tibullus explicitly associates with the mythic period when men fed on acorns and lived on the earth's spontaneous, if unrefined, bounty (Whitaker 84; Bright 204). In 2.3, when he ostensibly despairs over Nemesis' having gone to the country villa of his wealthy rival, the speaker cries, in yet another moment of amorous *ressentiment*, that, if he may not enjoy the fruits of the present, then let us return to a time before the pleasures of domesticated crops and possessive love, before doors that could be closed:

> o valeant fruges, ne sint modo rure puellae:
> glans alat et prisco more bibantur aquae.
> glans aluit veteres, et passim semper amarunt:
> quid nocuit sulcos non habuisse satos?
> tunc, quibus aspirabat Amor, praebebat aperte
> mitis in umbrosa gaudia valle Venus.
> nullus erat custos, nulla exclusura dolentes

ianua: si fas est, mos precor ille redi.
.....
horrida villosa corpora veste tegant.
nunc si clausa mea est, si copia rara videndi,
heu miserum, laxam quid iuvat esse togam?

Farewell to crops, provided only that no girls be in the country:
the acorn will nourish us and water be drunk as when time began.
The acorn nourished the men of old and they made love anytime, anywhere:
what did it hurt them not to have sown fields?
Then, to those whom Love inspired, ripe Venus
openly offered her joys in a shady glen.
There was no guardian, no door to lock out those in pain:
if it is proper, I pray, may that way of life come back.
.....
may they cover their shivering bodies with shaggy garments.
Now if my girl is locked away, if my chances of seeing her are rare,
wretched me, what good is my loose fitting toga now? (2.3.67–78)

Thus there is a homology, a structural echo, between agriculture and the practice of possessive love, a fact further reflected in the tension between Tibullus' use of the possessive adjective *meus* in the passage's final couplet and his desire to return to a time before possession of any kind. But this wish is an expression of bad faith on the part of the poet's persona.[43] He does not wish to renounce his possession of Nemesis, to share her openly; rather, he desires that she be possessed by no one but him. He is not so much against doors per se as against those that close on him (Whitaker 85–86; Copley 73).

We have already seen this homology between agriculture and modern love reflected in the parallel thematics of the servile labors of the farmer and the lover, all of which helps to account for the unusual pairing of these motifs in 1.1. Of course, with boundaries and the determination of "yours" versus "mine," exchange becomes both possible and necessary (Ragland-Sullivan 42). We enter the realm of the Symbolic: of money and of roads linking places to one another (Fineberg 1991: 137–38), now that places (i.e., others' places) as opposed to simply place (i.e., my place) exist. This is the realm of Messalla, the realm of the father. This is the realm that Tibullus both needs and tries to escape and the reason why Messalla occupies the mythic place he does in the Tibullan corpus, being both the incarnation of traditional Roman values and in 1.7 associated with Osiris and Bacchus, the founders of agriculture (Johnson 105;

[43]See Bright (194), "the premises of 2.3 are sheer pretense," and Cairns (154–55).

Moore 424, 428; Bright 53–54). Messalla figures both the basis of Tibullus' agrarian dream and the mark of the fall from the Golden Age (Van Nortwick 118; Moore 427, 429; Bright 59). As a figure of mythic proportions, Messalla both provides the space Tibullus needs and stands above that space (Bright 64–65; Koenen 157–58). He functions as the unbounded boundary and hence is out of play. He makes possible the dream of the contradictory existence for which Tibullus longs: to experience the boundlessness of the Imaginary dyad, the fantasized fusion with the other, within the bounded space of the possession of his love, his property, his farm, and his gods.[44] Possession and place then become the two key elements of the Symbolic necessary for the dream to exist, but they also represent that which undermines it, because with them comes exchange, travel, and military service. The quasi-deification of Messalla is an attempt to forestall the violent resolution of this conflict, to move the point of contradiction outside the field of ideological and semiotic play.

This recognition in turn explains why, in 1.5, Tibullus cannot be present in his dream of Messalla's coming to the country, for if Messalla is on the farm then he is no longer above the conflicts that structure the Tibullan dream text. In this scene, Tibullus imagines Delia not merely on the farm but actually running it while serving Messalla the fruits of the harvest (Bright 46–47). Here the most disparate elements of his imaginings come together: Delia, the country, and the figure who incarnates the opposition to both *amor* and *rura*, Messalla.

> consuescet numerare pecus; consuescet amantis
> garrulus in dominae ludere verna sinu.
> illa deo sciet agricolae pro vitibus uvam,
> pro segete spicas, pro grege ferre dapem.
> illa regat cunctos, illi sint omnia curae:
> at iuvet in tota me nihil esse domo.
> huc veniet Messalla meus, cui dulcia poma
> Delia selectis detrahat arboribus:
> et, tantum venerata virum, hunc sedula curet,
> huic paret atque epulas ipsa ministra gerat. (1.5.25–34)
>
> She will be accustomed to counting the cattle; and the chatty home-born
> slave to playing in the lap of his loving mistress.

[44]See Žižek (1991: 167), "the respective domains of fantasy and symbolic law are radically incommensurable. That is to say, it is in the very nature of fantasy to resist universalization: fantasy is the absolutely particular way every one of us structures his/her 'impossible' relation to the traumatic Thing. It is the way every one of us, by means of an imaginary scenario, dissolves and/or conceals the fundamental impasse of the inconsistent big Other, the symbolic order."

she will know how to offer to the farmer's god grapes for the vines,
ears of grain for the crops, a banquet for the herd.
Let her reign over everyone, may she be in charge of everything:
but let it be a joy to me to be nothing[45] in the entire household.
My Messalla will come here, to whom Delia will bring
sweet fruits from the best trees:
and, having worshipped so great a man, diligently she will serve him,
and, as his attendant, she will herself prepare and bring him feasts.

In this scene, rather than the father figure that sunders the Imaginary dyad—since Tibullus has already vanished—Messalla represents the poet's ideal mirror image. He occupies the position Tibullus longs for but of which he cannot truly even dream. Here, Messalla and Delia reflect each other in a kind of brief Symbolic apotheosis of the Imaginary dyad. Each of them is momentarily deified as they enter Tibullus' dream world (Van Nortwick 116–17; Bright 47–48), but this can happen only when that world has itself been raised to such a level that the poet can no longer imagine his own presence in it. Tibullus presents this dream in the form of a mirroring relationship, an impossible unity of the Imaginary and the Symbolic that is explicitly recognized as an unrealizable fantasy: *haec mihi fingebam, quae nunc Eurusque Notusque / iactat odoratos vota per Armenios*, "these things I imagined for myself, prayers that now the East and South winds toss about among the perfumed Armenians" (1.5.35–36). It is a primal scene, much like that Freud outlines as lying behind the Wolf-Man's dream, in which the desire both to possess the mother and be possessed by the father, to be the subject of power and be subjected, are conflated. The poet, like the child, is reduced to the passive observer who must simultaneously fear and long for the castration that would both split apart the impossible unity he desires while rendering the articulation, and hence provisional satisfaction, of his desire possible.[46]

In truth, the only way Tibullus can be present, can even imagine being present, in this unity of the Imaginary and the Symbolic, of the Golden Age and the institution of those boundaries that would allow him exclusive possession of Delia, is through death (Bright: 28–29). This point is made clear in poem 1.3. At its beginning, Tibullus, after having reluctantly agreed to accompany Messalla on

[45]I have chosen to translate *nihil* literally as "nothing," even though it is somewhat awkward in English. The Latin contains within it not only the more obvious sense of "without significance, unimportant" but also suggests complete nonexistence.

[46]I owe this last observation to David Oberhelman. See Freud's analysis of the Wolf-Man's dream (1955: 29–47).

a military mission to the east, falls ill and is left behind on the island of Phaeacia, generally identified with Corcyra in ancient geography (Murgatroyd 1991: 102; Putnam 1973: 74). The Odyssean allusion is one of many in the poem (Kennedy 49; Bright 33–36), but it is especially significant in regard to the Golden Age and its relation to death. Phaeacia was generally located in mythological geography near Elysium (Cairns 45, citing the scholia to the *Odyssey* and the *Hippolytus*; Bright 23). Tibullus' road has led to a land near death, and in his fevered state he imagines being led the one short step to Elysium. This, however, is not the afterlife of heroes found in epic but one for the followers of Venus (1.3.57–66). Here the fields yield fruits and fragrant flowers without cultivation (Whitaker 72). This is a Golden Age for lovers, unlike that described a few lines above (35–48).[47] In that brief description love was nowhere mentioned. This, however, is an alternative Golden Age that exists after death (Cairns 47). The original Golden Age was a realm without roads, without boundaries, without possession, and indeed there is no road, *via*, by which Tibullus and Delia may reach this new place except through death.[48]

At this point the conflict between the two parts of poem 1 becomes clearer. The farmer's quiet retreat cannot be rigorously distinguished from the freebooting soldier's ideology of accumulation because each depends upon the other. The farmer's retreat is always imagined in terms that include love. Yet love implies subjects and the birth of Venus, which means castration and the end of the Golden Age, and the birth of the world of money, commerce, and exchange. Hence the second half of poem 1, the part that concerns love, is introduced by the figure of Messalla, the name of the father who makes both love and the farmer's property and prosperity possible, as symbolized in his later portrayal both as Osiris, avatar of the fertility of the Nile, and as the builder of roads and consequent object of Italian rustics' praise. The rural retreat, which is ultimately admitted to be only fantasy in 1.5, therefore depends on the name of the father and love. Love, however, as the last half of poem 1 indicates, takes place in the city, the negation of the country and the center of culture and wealth, the regulated realm of rule and exchange.

[47]Obviously, I do not completely accept Cairns' position (54) that the description of the Golden Age (lines 35–48) and that of Elysium are to be equated, though clearly they are very similar. There are two key differences: in the Golden Age, love is not mentioned; in Elysium, everyone is dead. My argument rests on the contention that such differences between love and death are not insignificant.

[48]On the Golden Age as the negation of Tibullus' situation as described at the poem's beginning, see Whitaker (67–68).

## VIII. Beyond Reflection: The Dream, History, and the Real

In the end, we see that Tibullus must live a life split between the Imaginary Arcadia of his pastoral dream and the social Symbolic, for neither term can ever fully comprehend the other. Consequently his paradoxical portrait of the relation between *amor*, *rura*, and *militia*, as mediated by the figure of Messalla, must point to a *tertium quid* that constitutes the ground on which this conflict between the Imaginary and the Symbolic takes place: the world of inarticulate struggle, of life, death, and the material forces beyond our wills; the same world we try to manage and understand through the Symbolic, even as we seek to maintain and assert our Imaginary identities within its bounds. Lacan labeled this realm the *Real*. And it is in Tibullus' mute gesture to this *beyond of signification*, to what Foucault labels the stutter of language, that his elegies discover their profundity. The image with which they leave us is of a dreamlike plurality of voices in which the Law, in the form of Messalla, the Symbolic, and the name of the father, is ever present as both that which makes desire possible and keeps it ever unfulfilled. The end result is not a balance between extremes, but a tense unease embodied in the opposition between the collection's final prayer for peace (1.10.66–67) and the farmer's drunken erotic violence that immediately precedes it (1.10.51–60). *Amor* and *rura* do not replace *militia* but threaten to become it (Gaisser 71). Peace and harmony are not established in the final movement of the book but are valiantly wished for in a series of optative subjunctives that parallel those found in 1.1. The dream remains the moment when the contradictory nature of our desires is represented but not transcended.

Tibullus' poetry, thus, in its very plurivocal quality, in its insistent, repetitive articulation of a desire for the conjunction of the Imaginary and Symbolic registers of existence, stands as eloquent testimony to the early principate's status as a moment of ideological crisis. These texts' very incoherence, their split quality, is symptomatic of the changing realm of the Real in post-civil-war Rome. These changes, while not reducible to the poems' thematic content, are nonetheless most eloquently expressed in the inability to find Symbolic categories adequate to the imagining of personal identity. The Symbolic is no longer able to process the experiential traumas that the world of History and the Real has inflicted upon the subject. The dream, therefore, through its ability to maintain contradictory relations, becomes the sole medium able to achieve a momentary and longed-for coherence, even as its status as wish-fulfillment insures that in reality it can only be the most insubstantial, utopian articulation of the desire to escape History's nightmare.

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