

THE ORDERING OF TIBULLUS BOOK 1

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THERE is a consensus among scholars that Book 1 of Tibullus was published during his lifetime and, therefore, probably under his supervision. We infer this from two sources. The first is a reference in Book 2 of Ovid's *Tristia*, published in A.D. 9, where the poet in exile attempts to placate Augustus. Ovid mentions a number of erotic compositions by authors who are no longer living. In lines 447–62 he refers in particular to Tibullus Book 1: Do not the lies which Tibullus' mistress tells to her husband prove that a woman is not to be trusted? Did he not teach his mistress how to deceive those set to watch over her, and then was he not himself deceived by the self-same tricks? Did he not teach her how to remove telltale bruises, "impresso fieri qui solet ore" (456)? Was it not Tibullus stalking past when the dog barked? Was it not his cough outside the closed doors? And did he not pronounce many other precepts by which husbands might be cuckolded? But, says Ovid (463–64): "non fuit hoc illi fraudi, legiturque Tibullus / et placet, et iam te principe notus erat." Augustus became *princeps senatus* in 28 B.C. and Ovid's verse suggests that Tibullus' book was published soon after this date—*iam te principe*¹—when Augustus was in a position to take action against the poet if he so chose. The date of publication, therefore, may well have been 25 or 26 B.C.²

The second source, which fixes the date of Tibullus' death and must be used in conjunction with the passage in Ovid, is an epigram, appended to the manuscripts, written by a contemporary poet, Domitius Marsus:

Te quoque Vergilio comitem non aequa, Tibulle,
Mors iuuenem campos misit ad Elysios,
ne foret aut elegis molles qui fleret amores
aut caneret forti regia bella pede.

Vergil died on September 21, 19 B.C. The suggestion of the epigram is that Tibullus died close to that date. The evidence is by no means conclusive, but, on the basis of what little we have, it is probable that Tibullus did live to see the publication of Book 1.³ This question follows: according to what principle did Tibullus order the ten poems?

Now a very great deal has been written about the poems' chronology. Remarkable ingenuity and fatuity have gone into supporting this or that order of composition, and almost every imaginable order has been suggested at one time or another.⁴ Questions which, it was hoped, might shed some light on the chronology problem have been tediously examined. Did Delia marry in the course of Tibullus' love affair with her? Or was she already married when it began and did she subsequently obtain a divorce? Or was she married the whole time? Or was she never married? When did Messalla's two expeditions take place and

1. *Iam* must go with *te principe*, not *notus*, and it therefore indicates the beginning of Augustus' reign. See A. Cartault, *À propos du Corpus Tibullianum* (Paris, 1906), p. 63; and W. Port, "Die Anordnung in Gedichtbüchern Augusteischer Zeit," *Philologus*, XXXV (1926), 467.

2. Cartault (n. 1), p. 63. There are in fact textual indications also pointing to this date or thereabouts (Port [n. 1], p. 466,

gives 25 or 24 B.C.). But the matter is complicated and moot at best. See Port (n. 1), pp. 464–68, for a discussion.

3. Cartault (n. 1), p. 64; Port (n. 1), p. 436. And cf. D. N. Levin, "The Alleged Date of Tibullus' Death," *CJ*, LXII (1967), 311–14, which refers also to a number of other articles.

4. See Cartault (n. 1), pp. 14–24, for a review of the various suggestions. Also Port (n. 1), pp. 439–40.

in what order—the one to Gaul and the one to Asia—and did Tibullus accompany him on both, or only one, and, if only one, which one? Was Tibullus really in Corcyra, and, if so, when was he there? And why? Did the love affair with Marathus described in poems 4, 8, and 9 ever take place in fact, or is Tibullus merely drawing his *Μοῦσα παιδική* from Alexandrian models? If it did take place, does it represent a passionate aberration of his youth, before Tibullus was exposed to the nobler, more rewarding, more proper pleasures of his heterosexual liaison with the beautiful Delia, so that poems 4, 8, and 9 were therefore written prior to 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6, the Elegies dedicated to Delia? Or did the Marathus affair occur after the *discidium* between Tibullus and Delia? Or were they even concurrent? If the affair with Marathus did not take place, and the poet is only echoing the Alexandrians, and if his dependence on Greek models wanes in the Delian poems—but then it is difficult to say if it *does* wane—does this mean that the Marathus poems represent an earlier stage in the development of the poet's art, or were they in fact not written by Tibullus at all but by an imposter and a pervert determined to sully the great bard's name? And so forth. Few of these questions have been decided to the satisfaction of all or even most.

More in desperation than in certitude scholars have come to support the position that the poems were written in the same order that we have them with two exceptions: 10 and 1. *Elegy* 10, by comparatively general agreement, is considered to be the earliest. First, it contains no references whatever to Delia. Second, it is clear from

the text that Tibullus, about to depart on a campaign, is yet unexperienced in war, whereas in other poems he refers to the expeditions with which he is associated. *Elegy* 1, because it refers to both the expeditions of Messalla—"semper longae deditus esse viae" (1. 26); *terra marique* (1. 53)—is usually placed after 2⁵ or after 3,⁶ depending on whether one places the Asian campaign before the Aquitanian⁷ or the Aquitanian before the Asian.

Aside from poems 10 and 1, however—and even here much uncertainty remains—all the elaborate investigations into the chronology of Book 1, the work of German scholars for the most part, have yielded nothing convincing. This is not surprising. From a literary standpoint chronology is a false issue. Reconstruction of the real events which underlie a poetic composition can be, at very best, exceedingly tenuous. A. Cartault, although he views the problem with circumspection, still endorses the view that the order of the poems in the manuscripts must reflect the order of composition except where this is manifestly not the case, as in 10 and 1.⁸ But this is not a legitimate assumption. Their arrangement could be random. It might parallel by theme some lost Greek or Latin model. These are equally valid suppositions where evidence is so clearly lacking. The questions to which we must address ourselves are these: Is there a discernible *literary* principle behind the ordering of the poems? Does the book reveal a structure *qua* book? Or does it merely consist of separate poems grouped together by no principle, or by a principle that is unknowable, whether it be chronological or otherwise?

Let us first consider the introductory and

5. See W. Y. Sellar, *The Roman Poets of the Augustan Age* (Oxford, 1892), pp. 223 ff.

6. See A. Cartault, *RPh*, XXIX (1905), 296–305.

7. But some question the text of 1. 7. 9, on which the belief

in Tibullus' participation in the Aquitanian expedition is based (the *Vita* is late and, anyway, derives its material from the poems). Cf. critical note in the OCT.

8. Cartault (n. 1), p. 540.

concluding poems, for there are striking resemblances between them.⁹ As is appropriate to an introductory poem, *Elegy* 1 contains all the important themes that the book will later develop: contempt for wealth, preference for the simple delights of country living, fear of debilitating old age, hostility to the soldier's life and martial pursuits in general, respect for the *mores antiqui*, strong inclination to indulge the senses and engage in amorous undertakings. *Elegy* 10 echoes the same concerns, sometimes in language very similar to that of *Elegy* 1. The *dites despiciam* of 1. 78, for example, finds its counterpart in "diuitis hoc uitium est auri" of 10. 7; both phrases occur in antimilitary contexts which find the causes of war in the pursuit after wealth. The conceit of the strife of love contrasted with strife in arms is also common to both poems,¹⁰ as are many details of country life.¹¹ And Tibullus celebrates the *antiqui* in each, referring to their crude utensils,¹² their rustic deities,¹³ and the ancient Lares.¹⁴ Finally, growing old is a concern common to both poems. Tibullus writes in 1. 71–72: "iam subrepet iners aetas, nec amare decebit, / dicere nec cano blanditias capite"; and in 10. 43–44: "sic ego sim, liceatque caput candescere canis / temporis et prisca facta referre senem." In the former instance, however, old age is a curse putting an end to the delights of love and poetry (a fact which spurs him on to greater indulgence of the present [69–70]: "interea, dum fata sinunt, iungamus amores: / iam veniet tenebris Mors adoperta caput"); in the latter he looks to the brighter side of

old age, to its peacefulness and to the solace which remembrance of the past can bring.

It is of course only appropriate that the first and last poems of a collection show some thematic similarity, for by this similarity they frame that which lies between. One might object that passages equally reminiscent of *Elegy* 1, or more so, occur in poems other than 10 and that the similarity between the two *Elegies* is for that reason not significant. However, my assumption here is that the ten poems of Book 1 were written independently and that it was only later, before publication, that Tibullus attempted to arrange them in some conscious order,¹⁵ possibly making minor alterations to facilitate this ordering. Recurrent themes, generally speaking, represent persistent concerns of the poet, and they may therefore be significant in his later ordering of the book or they may not. There are too many echoes of *Elegy* 1 in *Elegy* 10, however, for these to be without importance. Tibullus acknowledged the close similarity of the two poems and utilized this similarity to unify the whole book.

But what other evidence is there of a purposive ordering? Let us examine the subject matter of the poems, for it is here, I think, that we will find a definite and meaningful progression.

The first three poems are concerned with Delia. In the first she is introduced, receiving only twenty-five lines. Here the poet is a slave to love; but his love is reciprocated—there is no *silex* in her *cor tenerum* (64) and she will weep at his death.

9. The relation of 1 and 10 as program poems is agreed upon by most. Cf. Port (n. 1), p. 441.

10. 1. 53–57, 73–75 with 10. 53–56, 65–66.

11. Cf. for example his references to the labor of oxen (1. 30, 10. 45–46), the nurture of vines (1. 7, 10. 47), the storing of the wine (1. 10, 10. 48–49), and the use of the hoe (1. 29, 10. 49).

12. Cf. 1. 39–40 with 10. 8.

13. Cf. 1. 13–14 with 10. 21–22.

14. Cf. 1. 19–21 with 10. 25–26.

15. Cf. Port (n. 1), p. 436: "Wir haben es mit einer Vereinigung vorhandener Gedichte (allerdings in der bestimmten Zehnzahl) zu tun, bei deren Dichtung der Buchgedanke noch nicht vorschwebte." And p. 440: "Keinen Liebesroman haben wir vor uns, sondern einzelne Gedichte, die aus verschiedenen Stimmungen heraus entstanden sind."

The second, in general form a παρακλυσίθυρον, is entirely occupied with Delia and develops the poet's position of l. 56, "et sedeo duras ianitor ante fores." Tibullus does not explicitly question her love here. Possibly we are to infer a covert suspicion from his appeal to the *saga verax*; her spell will be effective for him alone (2. 57–58): "tu tamen abstineas aliis: nam cetera cernet / omnia: de me uno sentiet ille nihil." In the third poem, Tibullus finds himself in the very situation he had cursed in 1 and 2: he has set off to war. But illness has halted his journey in Corcyra. He thinks of death and prays that Delia remain chaste.

The first three poems present, therefore, a development in the poet's love affair with someone named Delia: first their union and then a separation due to an unmanageable contingency. (The biographical question of whether or not this development reflects what actually occurred between Tibullus and whoever Delia was, even if it could be determined, cannot be relevant here and is a false issue.¹⁶) What then is the point of *Elegy* 4 coming next, a homosexual poem obliquely addressed to the *puer delicatus* Marathus? Does the poet, at the height of an affair with a woman of Delia's charms, suddenly turn aside and fall under the sway of this Μοῦσα παιδική? It seems strange until the reader comes to *Elegy* 5, where we are told in the first verses of a *discidium* that has occurred between Tibullus and Delia. Delia has had another lover, a *dives amator*. The poet has tried to forget his sorrow through drink ("saepe ego temptavi curas depellere vino," 5. 37, which picks up the opening lines of *Elegy* 2, where he attempts to drown his anguish in wine) and through other love affairs (*saepe aliam tenui*, 5. 39). To be sure,

he writes *aliam*, not *alium*. Yet the point is the same: during the *discidium* he has had other involvements. *Elegy* 4 represents this period. It interrupts the series of poems about Delia, just as an interruption has occurred in the poet's relation with her.

The *discidium* of 5 is a foretaste of what is to come in the next poem, *Elegy* 6. Here there is more talk of infidelity and vague threatenings. And that is the last we hear of Delia. The half-humorous, half-embittered tone of 6 is appropriate to the concluding poem of the series. Its loose-knit, almost haphazard, structure, consisting of a series of motifs developing one out of another, recalls the similar structure of the first of the Delia poems, *Elegy* 1. Whereas 1, however, is made up of variations on a theme of well-being, 6 consists of variations on a theme of discontent. The similarity in structure between 1 and 6, together with their opposition in theme and tone, produces a certain framing effect for the entire Delia episode.¹⁷

But by what rationale does 7, dedicated to Messalla on his birthday, come next in order? This poem, the least amatory of all ten, forms an interlude between the close of the Delia poems and the resumption of those addressed to Marathus. It thus represents a "breather" of sorts. Its hymn to Osiris and emphasis on generation and birth—growth of the vine, the invocations to *Natalis*, the wish that children might come to Messalla—and its light, optimistic stance suit it to follow 6, which gloomily relates the collapse of the poet's affair with Delia. This is the last of the four poems in which Messalla is invoked—the others being 1 (53), 3 (1 and 56), 5 (31)—and is also the one wherein Messalla receives by far the fullest treatment. Messalla's presence as Tibullus' patron has been subtly

16. See n. 15.

17. Cf. Port (n. 1), p. 443.

felt in the preceding portion of the book, and it seems fitting that he be the subject of this interlude.

In *Elegy* 8, the second poem dedicated to Marathus, the poet uses a technique similar to the one he used in 4, the first Marathus poem.¹⁸ In 4 Tibullus pretends that the information sought from Priapus is intended for a certain Titius. We learn at the end that it is in fact Tibullus who stands in need of coaching. In 8 the poet takes up, with seeming disinterest, the cause of Marathus in his suit for Pholoe. At the end his disinterest dissolves into a too apparent satisfaction that Marathus now suffers what he had once imposed on others. Both poems, then, disguise until the last verses the true preoccupation of the poet. Further, of all the poems in Book 1 which are principally amatory in content, these two are by far the least personal. Both are primarily taken up with the giving of advice and the promulgation of rules in the game of love. In neither does Tibullus plead obviously and earnestly in his own behalf. In this way as well the two poems echo one another. *Elegy* 8, therefore, after an interval of three poems, thematically reiterates *Elegy* 4. It does so by way of its homosexual theme (explicit in 4, implicit in 8), by the poet's stance of disinterested intercessor, which breaks down in the last verses, and by its didactic and homiletic character.

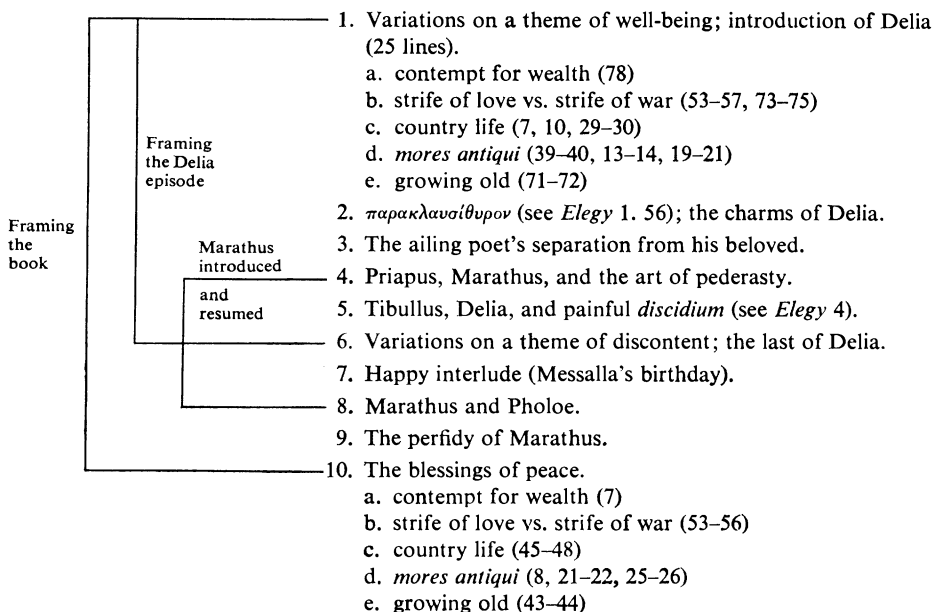
In 9, the last homosexual poem, Tibullus is embittered against Marathus for the same reasons he was embittered against Delia in *Elegy* 5: Marathus too has succumbed to the lure of riches and the *amatores* who possess them. It is reasonable that 9 follow 8. First, in 9 there is mention of a *puella* (39) and of Tibullus' assistance in her relationship with Marathus (41–44). There is also mention of

verses that Tibullus had composed in Marathus' honor (47). Whether or not the *puella* of 9 is the Pholoe of 8 is unimportant; one might argue that she is not since in 9 the poet says, "sit precor exemplo sit leuis illa tuo" (40) when in 8 this was the very complaint lodged against her. It is also unimportant whether or not the *laudes* (9. 47) that Tibullus sang for Marathus are meant to refer to poems 4 and 8—although, again, it appears unlikely, since 4 and 8 are not particularly laudatory. What does matter, with regard to the ordering of the poems, is that 9, containing these two details, fits in better when it follows poems that have referred to Marathus and to Marathus' association with a *puella*. Second, since this is the last we are to hear of any specific beloved in Book 1—the amatory element in 10 is highly generalized—the last two lines of 9 suit the poem well for this position, for they are a valediction of sorts. "hanc [sc. palmam] tibi fallaci resolutus amore Tibullus / dedicat et grata sis, dea, mente rogat." The *saga verax* of *Elegy* 2 was capable of losing Tibullus from his love, but at that time this was not his wish (2. 64): "nec te posse carere uelim." Now he does want it. Having passed through his trying entanglements with Delia and Marathus, the poet here comes out, *resolutus*, at the other side.

The main principles, therefore, by which Tibullus ordered Book 1 are these: framing by the first and last poems, and an attempt to convey the notion of development, almost of story, in the area of the principal themes. Diagrammatically our argument will look as shown on page 112.

This scheme is preferable to Port's, who is compelled to force his material somewhat to make it fit. He agrees that 1 and 10 are program poems, but believes that 2–9 fall

18. *Ibid.*



into two symmetrical groups held together by common motifs:¹⁹

1	program poem	
2	Delia in possession of a <i>vir</i>	6
3	to Messalla	7
4	Marathus	8
5	the wealthy rival	9
10	Program poem	

parable treatments of Messalla, and, anyway, Messalla is mentioned in 5. 31 too (not to mention 1. 53). Furthermore, Port's scheme breaks up the two Marathus poems, 8 and 9,²⁰ poems that are too closely related to submit to this sort of schematization.²¹

This is artificial. 3 and 7 are hardly com-

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19. *Ibid.*

20. Cf. J. Martin's note on Port's article in *Würzburger hrbücher für die Altertumswissenschaft*, III (1948), 196.

21. For two other proposed diagrams, both unsatisfactory, see Martin (n. 20), p. 196; and Port (n. 1), p. 441, who reproduces K. P. Schulze's.