

THE UNITY OF TIBULLUS 2.3 *

It is a view commonly held by Tibullus' commentators and critics that the poet's art consists essentially in the more or less skilful weaving together of disparate themes into a single elegy. Leo, for example, talks of Tibullus' imagination which 'ihn selbst und somit den Hörer gleichsam unwillkürlich von Bild zu Bilde reisst';¹ Jacoby asserts that Propertius and Ovid composed in a similar fashion 'während Tibull eine eigene Art der Komposition gebildet hat, die wesentlich in der Aneinanderreihung von Motiven besteht';² Schuster says that the poet 'von Gegenstand zu Gegenstand, von Bild zu Bild führt, wie diese in seiner Seele auftauchen';³ and recently Williams writes of the poet's 'combination into a single poetic composition of a large number of traditional themes'.⁴ On this view a main theme and development of thought in a Tibullan elegy should not be looked for—there is no main theme, only a number of themes all of equal status, no development, only the adding of 'Bild zu Bild' or motive to motive. It is precisely in the handling of a *diversity* of themes that the chief principle of the poet's art is thought to reside.

However, the obvious question arises, where that unity essential to any work of art is to be discovered in a poet in whom diversity is his chief strength. On the view I have represented above unity is most often found to consist in some very general formal principle underlying the elegies. (Some hostile critics of course, Jacoby⁵ for example, have denied unity of any sort to Tibullus because of the heterogeneousness of his themes.) Thus Leo says 'eine Art von Symmetrie der Bilder und Motive . . . wirkt fast durchweg stützend und zusammenschliessend mit zur Einheit der Form',⁶ Schuster finds the unity of the poems to reside in a quasi-musical pattern of themes and variations,⁷ while for Williams what lends unity to the Tibullan elegy is its autobiographical form—the various themes of a particular poem hang together because they are all thoughts passing through this one poet's mind.⁸ Unity in Tibullus' poetry is thus considered to be not of theme or content but of form (whether symmetrical, quasi-musical, or autobiographical).

Let it be said at the outset that I agree in large part with 'the common view' concerning the nature of Tibullus' art and the type of unity to be looked for in his poems, outlined above: as a general statement about most of Tibullus' elegies it is accurate enough. The poem, however, I propose to analyse in this

* This article develops a part of my thesis 'Myth and Personal Experience in Roman Love Elegy' (still in the process of being written) for a Ph.D. from the University of St. Andrews.

¹ F. Leo, *Philologische Untersuchungen* 2 (1881), 24.

² F. Jacoby, 'Zur Entstehung der Römischen Elegie', *Rh.M.* 60 (1905), 38–105, on p.100.

³ M. Schuster, *Tibull-Studien* (reprint, 1968), p.16.

⁴ G. Williams, *Tradition and Originality*

in *Roman Poetry*, p.498.

⁵ art. cit. 92.

⁶ op. cit., p.46.

⁷ See especially op. cit., pp.57–61.

⁸ Cf. op. cit., p.500: 'Tibullus . . . invented for himself a perfect form of composition in which a severely limited range of themes . . . can create variety by various forms of combination and can find unity in an adaptation of the autobiographical approach whereby the poet composed in the form of an extended mental reflection.'

paper seems to me to possess a unity of thought over and above any mere formal unity. In 2.3,¹ as I shall endeavour to show, all themes are not of equal status, motive is not simply added to motive: here there is development of thought, and one main theme to which the other themes of the poem are subordinated runs right through the elegy.² This main theme is concerned with the problem of how the poet's mistress is to be approached. In what follows the elegy will be treated in three parts, comprising 1–32, 33–60, and 61–80,³ in each of which this question is handled by the poet in a new way.

PART I: LOVE IN THE COUNTRY (1–32)⁴

Before looking at the opening ten lines of the poem I should like to examine the extended mythological *exemplum* dealing with Apollo's service of Admetus, which occupies 11–28. The suddenness with which the mythic section is introduced and the lack of explicit connection between it and the preceding part of the elegy, might seem to justify the observations of the critics quoted above concerning Tibullus' manner of ranging essentially unconnected themes alongside one another. Detailed examination of the *exemplum*, however, reveals close links between the circumstances of Apollo portrayed therein and the poet's situation as outlined in the first ten lines of 2.3; it will be seen, accordingly, that the myth cannot be considered simply on its own, in isolation from these lines.

The myth of Apollo and Admetus seems to me to be organized by the poet into five sections. First, the opening hexameter (11) gives us the whole situation dealt with by the *exemplum* in a nutshell: the handsome Apollo pastured the bulls of Admetus. Second, 12–14 explain *why* he had to do this. He was in love,⁵ and all his most famous divine attributes—his lyre-playing, his renowned untrimmed locks, and particularly his art of healing (the physician could not heal himself)—were useless either to win his beloved or to rid himself of his passion. Accordingly, the third section (14a–16) outlines what the god did do (since all his normal attributes and activities were useless): he drove cows to pasture, he wove baskets, he made cheese.⁶ These lines may appear to constitute

¹ I follow the text (except where otherwise stated) and line numeration of Postgate's O.C.T.

² Another Tibullan poem in which recent critics have discovered a more than formal coherence is 1.3. R. Hanslik (in *Forschungen zur römischen Literatur*, ed. Wimmel (Wiesbaden, 1970), pp.138–45) developing the ideas of H. Eisenberger ('Der Innere Zusammenhang Der Motive in Tibulls Gedicht I, 3', *H. 88* (1960), 188–97) finds in 1.3 two dominant themes, of service to Amor and service to Messalla, the former theme eventually predominating over the latter.

³ These divisions should not be regarded as hard and fast. Owing to the skill with which Tibullus prepares his transitions from one theme to another, it is difficult to divide his poems into sections with any exactitude. Cf. Schuster's strictures on

attempts to find arithmetic correspondences in 1.3 (op. cit., pp.9–11).

⁴ I had already written this article when I read F. O. Copley, 'Servitium Amoris in the Roman elegists', *TAPA* 78 (1947), 285–300. I am glad to see that my conclusions concerning the myth of Apollo and Admetus agree very closely with his.

⁵ This reason for Apollo's service of Admetus first occurs, so far as we know, in Callimachus, *H.* 2.49 ff. It occurred also in Rhianus (see Copley, art. cit. 286). In earlier accounts of the myth Apollo's service was a punishment for his killing of the Cyclopes (or their sons). See W. H. Roscher, *Lexikon der Griechischen und Römischen Mythologie*, s.v. 'Admetus'.

⁶ Further rustic occupations of the god may have been detailed in the lacuna after 14a.

little more than a discursive development of the theme of Apollo's sojourn in the country, but in fact they serve to emphasize the menial level to which the god (note *ipse deus solitus*, 14a) was prepared to sink—for love.¹ The fourth and longest section (17–26), portrays with gentle yet effective humour the effects of Apollo's rustic toil. His sister was ashamed, the god's *docta carmina* were interrupted by the cattle's lowing, petitioners at his oracles went away disappointed (no answer was forthcoming since the god was absent), Latona grieved to see her son's dishevelled hair, as did all who saw the god. (We should note the way in which the effects of Apollo's service are portrayed in terms of his best-known activities and attributes, namely his pastoral, musical, and oracular functions, and his famous hair.) The fifth and final section of the *exemplum* consists of a brief summing up, in a single couplet, of what has gone before:

Delos ubi nunc, Phoebe, tua est, ubi Delphica Pytho?
nempe Amor in parva te iubet esse casa. (27 f.)

The chief point of the myth then, as it is presented by Tibullus, is that Apollo undertook rustic labour for love of Admetus since only rustic labour was of any use in his case. This point is given prominence by the contrast, repeatedly underlined in various ways by 11–28, between the god's famous divine attributes—his beautiful untrimmed hair (12; 23–5), his musical accomplishments (12; 19 f.), his art of healing (13 f.), his oracles (21 f.), his splendid shrines at Delos and Delphi (27)—and his present straitened circumstances brought about by love. In the face of love all these attributes meant nothing; in order to win his beloved the god had to undertake rustic labour like the most menial of mortals and live in a humble cottage—that was the only way.

The two important ways in which Tibullus diverges from his Callimachean original in presenting this version of the myth should be noted, since it is precisely in these divergences that the significance of the *exemplum* resides. First, whereas Callimachus merely states that Apollo served as Admetus' herdsman out of love for him (*ἡιδέου ὑπ' ἔρωτι κεκαυμένος Ἀδμήτοιο*, *H.* 2.49) Tibullus indicates that the god's love *compelled* him to serve the king, since all other expedients had failed (11–14). Second, in Callimachus the story of Apollo's service, occurring as it does in a hymnic context, is used to glorify the god, to show his divine power as *Nóμος*;² in Tibullus, by contrast, Apollo's service is represented, not as glorious, but as something servile and shameful (cf. *ipse deus solitus*, 14a, and the god's mother's and sister's embarrassed and sorrowful reactions to his herding in 17 f. and 23 ff.). By diverging in these ways from Callimachus, the poet succeeds in giving to his version of the myth a new, specifically Roman elegiac, meaning. What he does is to subsume Apollo's amorous activity under the familiar elegiac concept of *servitium amoris*. Apollo is represented as one whose chief value is love: his rustic labour thus becomes something he, like the elegiac lover at Rome, is forced to undertake when all other approaches to the beloved and attempts to rid himself of his love have failed.³ And this *servitium amoris*, although freely undertaken, is represented by the poet to be as shameful for the god as it would be for the freeborn elegiac lover.⁴

¹ Cf. Copley, art. cit. 292.

² Cf. Copley, art. cit. 287.

³ For the necessity of *servitium*, after

other expedients have failed, see Tib.

2.4.1–20 and Prop. 1.5.

⁴ For the shamefulness of *servitium*,

If we now turn back to examine the poet's outline of his circumstances in 1–10, the relevance of the myth to this opening section of the elegy will become plain. Lines 1–2 sketch the situation out of which the poem develops and to which, as we shall see, the poet returns in Part III:

Rura meam, Cornute, tenent villaeque puellam:
ferreus est, heu heu, quisquis in urbe manet.

Tibullus here establishes a contrast between countryside and city; he would have it that, because his girl is in the country, the city-dweller is *ferreus*, insensitive in matters of love.¹ The thought of these two lines is carried a stage further by the couplet that follows, in which the spheres of love and of the countryside are brought into still closer conjunction:

ipsa Venus latos iam nunc migravit in agros,
verbaque aratoris rustica discit Amor. (3–4)

Venus and Amor, it would appear, have abandoned the city in order to become rustics;² the country is now become the only possible setting for love. Accordingly, in 5–10, Tibullus transports himself (in imagination) from city to country and adopts the lot of a rustic labourer:

o ego, cum aspicerem dominam, quam fortiter illic
versarem valido pingue bidente solum
agricolaeque modo curvum sectarer aratrum,
dum subigunt steriles arva serenda boves!
nec quereretur quod sol graciles exureret artus,
laederet et teneras pussula rupta manus.

What he envisages for himself is *servitium amoris*³ in a rustic context, and that means tilling the soil and following the plough. It is important to note that the life of the country is by no means idealized in these lines; the characteristic attributes of the elegiac lover suffer under the unaccustomed hardships to which they are exposed (9 f.).⁴ And it is precisely because the agricultural life is as hard as he represents it to be, that the poet makes his adoption of such a life conditional: rustic *servitium* is to be undertaken, not for its own sake, but in order that he might be admitted to his mistress's presence (*cum aspicerem dominam*, 5).

The connection between Tibullus' version of the myth of Apollo and Admetus

see Prop. 1.5.26; 2.20.19–22; 2.24a.5–8; Ov. Am. 2.17.1–4; 3.11.1–4.

¹ *ferreus* quite often bears this specific meaning in the elegiac poets. See Tib. 1.2.65; Prop. 2.8.12; Ov. Her. 1.58; Am. 2.19.4.

² In line 4 the poet skilfully adapts the Hellenistic motive of Amor as ploughman (cp. GP, Moschus I) to suit the present situation.

³ *dominam* in line 5 clearly indicates that the poet views his relationship to his girl as that of a slave to his mistress.

⁴ K. Smith's comment on these lines

(*The Elegies of Albius Tibullus* (reprint 1971), ad loc.), shows that they emphasize too the baseness of the toil, the *servitium*, chosen for himself by the poet: 'The ideal lover of the elegy is not endowed with an especially strong physique, partly, no doubt, because great bodily strength or rude health is suggestive of those who have to work for a living and are therefore no better than slaves, cp. Ovid, *Trist.* 1.5.72, 'invalidae vires, ingenuaeque mihi'; Martial, 3.46.6, 'invalidum est vobis, ingenuumque latius'.'

and this situation of the poet should by now be clear. The god, like the poet, freely undergoes *servitium amoris*, also in a rural setting, doing menial work he would never undertake for its own sake, for the sake of a beloved. Further, in the case of Apollo, those attributes which distinguish him as a god and not a mortal, are nullified by his rustic labour, just as, in the poet's case, those very things (*graciles artus, teneras manus*, 9 f.) which argue him to be an elegiac lover and not a slave, are the most affected by his *servitium*. The *exemplum* thus turns out to be one of a kind often found in ancient poetry, by means of which men justify their conduct by reference to the conduct of the gods.¹ In the present instance, the fact that one of the greatest of the gods could undergo *servitium amoris* of exactly the same kind as Tibullus envisages for himself, and with similar results, is a powerful justification of the poet's proposed course of action.

The four lines following the myth provide, in my opinion, strong support for the interpretation I have placed upon the *exemplum* and its relationship to the poet's experience. Lines 29 f. make explicit that was only implied by Tibullus in the myth, that Apollo's service of Admetus was shameful but that it was freely undergone as *servitium amoris*. *Veneri servire* here confirms that *servitium amoris* was indeed what Apollo underwent, while *puduisse* shows that *servitium* of this sort was generally held to be shameful (even though the god did not think it so). The next two lines, 31 f., are closely connected with the immediately preceding couplet and cannot be interpreted apart from it. I take the meaning, which is highly compressed by the poet, of the four lines together to be as follows:² 'Men were happy once when they had before them the example of gods who loved openly, without shame. Nowadays a god of that sort is no longer believed in;³ but he who loves his girl prefers that the god should not be believed in (sc. by others—the lover himself believes in the god) rather than that the god should be thought not to be amorous (sc. and be generally believed in).' Tibullus is here protesting against the rationalism of the present day, which will not give credence to the sort of story he has just related involving a god who loved. The poet, however, clearly regards himself as one *cui sua cura puella est*; against the tendency of the present day he and other true lovers, like the *felices* of old, *do* believe in a god who undertook *servitium amoris* and, like the *felices*, still take such a god for their model. Thus the justification of the poet's proposed method of approach to his mistress implied by the myth of Apollo's rustic *servitium amoris*, although qualified by modern disbelief, is nevertheless vindicated by reference to the belief of true lovers.

PART II: LOVE IN THE IRON AGE (33–60)

At the end of the preceding section the poet indicated that in the Golden Age⁴

¹ For just a few examples see Ter. *Eun.* 584–91; Cat. 68.138–40; Prop. 2.30B.31 f.; A.P. 5.100.

² As regards 31 f. in particular, I concur in the interpretation of W. Kraus, 'Der Gott der Liebenden', *WS* 79 (1966), 399–405. A number of the points made by Kraus are anticipated in the brief articles by W. S. Maguiness (*CQ* 38 (1944), 31–2) and H. J. Rose (*CQ* 38 (1944), 78), which are

not mentioned by Kraus.

³ *fabula* here is taken to bear the meaning 'an idle tale', 'something no longer believed in' (as in Hor. *Od.* 1.4.16; Prop. 3.5.45) rather than 'byword', 'laughing-stock' (as in Tib. 1.4.83; Ov. *Am.* 3.1.21).

⁴ That a Golden Age is referred to in *felices olim* etc. emerges from 35, where contrasting *ferrea saecula* are introduced.

men considered love one of their chief values, but that nowadays this was no longer the case; what he did not do was to offer any explanation for men's different set of values in the present. In the central section of the poem, now to be examined, Tibullus does precisely that, by revealing what has displaced love to become the preoccupation of men in the present day. And this revelation forces upon him a new view of how his mistress is to be approached, altogether different from the one he adopted earlier.

In 33 f. the poet breaks off quite abruptly from his preceding train of thought to address an unnamed person:¹

at tu, quisquis is es, cui tristi fronte Cupido
imperat ut nostra sint tua castra domo . . .

This address is followed by a lacuna² in the text, after which we find the poet declaring:

ferrea non Venerem sed praedam saecula laudant.³

From this line we learn why men no longer hold love in high esteem, as they did in the Golden Age. The reason is that wealth is now the chief value—in the present Iron Age profit is rated higher than Venus.

In the 13 lines that follow (36–48) Tibullus makes it quite plain what he thinks of his modern scale of values. He inveighs against the evils caused by profit and against the profiteer's extravagance, and then in a concluding couplet (47 f.) shows his own contrasting preference for a simple way of life:

at mihi laeta trahant Samiae convivia testae
fictaque Cumana lubrica terra rota.

The poet here attempts to dissociate himself (as in 31 f.) from the tendency of the present; he is, however, soon to realize that the modern tendencies he has just condemned have to be faced—if his mistress is to be wooed and won.

Realization dawns in the next line (49) where the poet reluctantly admits that, despite his personal taste for simplicity, girls nowadays rejoice in wealth:

heu heu divitibus video gaudere puellas.

And this admission, conflicting as it does with all he has hitherto indicated of his beliefs, brings about, of necessity, a complete reversal of the poet's earlier opinions and attitudes. Venus is now no longer thought of as a victim of modern materialism (cf. 35)—she is one of its proponents (50). The countryside is no longer a suitable place for the poet's girl (cf. 1–4)—she must parade

¹ I take this person in 33 to be a rival, a *dives amator*, with whom the poet's girl has gone off into the country (thus Postgate (*JPh* 26 (1899), 182–96) and R. Bürger, in *Charites, Festschrift Leo* (1911), p.383). I prefer this interpretation to the alternative one according to which a fellow-lover and *socius malorum* is here addressed (thus Dissen comm. ad. loc.; H. Karsten (*Mn.* 16 (1888), 47); Lenz, apparatus criticus) simply for reasons of economy. A rival is definitely mentioned

elsewhere in the poem, at 59 f., but a fellow-lover is not (unless, with Karsten and Lenz, we see a reference to him in 47, where *tibi* must then be read).

² I agree with the majority of editors that we must mark a lacuna after 34. If we do not, the transition from *at tu* in 33 to the statement of 35—although not grammatically impossible—is simply too harsh for the invariably smooth Tibullus.

³ I here capitalize *Venerem*, as against Postgate's *venerem*.

resplendent through the city (51 f.). The poet is no longer content with simplicity (cf. 47 f.)—he must have extravagant wealth (50). But most important of all, Tibullus does not now believe that he can gain access to his girl, Nemesis,¹ through rustic *servitium amoris*—only luxurious gifts will win her (51 ff.). Such are the realities of love—with which the poet must come to terms if he is to win his mistress—in the present, grasping, Iron Age. His demand for wealth and his granting of luxury upon luxury to Nemesis which follow (53–8), when only a few lines before he was denouncing the evils of *praeda*, serve to emphasize the extent of his devotion to his mistress. Against his own inclination he is prepared to submit to the spirit of the times, if that is the only way his mistress is to be won.

Finally, a brief contemptuous reference (59 f.) to the *dives amator* who has usurped Tibullus' place in Nemesis' affections, rounds off this section.

Before analysing the third section of the elegy, I should like to summarize briefly the movement of the poem so far, in order that the continuity of theme in the final section may be appreciated. At the start of the poem Tibullus closely associates love with the countryside, whither his girl has gone from the city, and assumes rustic *servitium amoris* to be the appropriate way of wooing her in her present rural surroundings (1–10). Next, the *exemplum* of Apollo's country labouring for love of Admetus is introduced, implicitly to justify the poet's proposed *servitium* (11–28). We then learn that the sort of story just recounted as *exemplum* is nowadays no longer believed in. But the poet's taking Apollo's rustic *servitium* as an example to be followed is nevertheless justified by reference to the belief of true lovers (29–32). The reason for men's general disbelief in a god who loves now becomes clear, as the predilection of the present Iron Age for money rather than love is denounced (33–48). The poet is, however, forced to acknowledge that girls nowadays, his girl no less than others, desire wealth; and this leads him to revise completely his earlier idea of winning his mistress by agricultural toil. Nemesis, he now realizes, must have the luxuries of the city, she can be won only by costly gifts of exotic silks and slaves (49–60).

PART III: LOVE IN THE COUNTRY RECONSIDERED (61–80)

We saw earlier that, at the start of the elegy, Tibullus by no means idealized the life of the countryside (5–10); he knew he would be burned and blistered in his agricultural labours. The countryside was therefore to be tolerated only upon a condition: that he might be admitted to his mistress's presence. But lines 49–58 have shown that this condition could never have been fulfilled: the proper setting for his Nemesis is seen to be the city, and admittance to her, the poet now realizes, is won not by rustic *servitium amoris* but by expensive gifts. Accordingly, the thought of 61–7 follows on with perfect consistency. Tibullus here rounds upon the countryside—now intolerable for the reasons just outlined—and curses it, praying that nothing may grow from the cornfield and that Bacchus may desert the vintage. The relationship of country to city established in the opening couplet of the poem:

¹ She is named for the first time, most effectively, in 51.

Rura meam, Cornute, tenent villaeque puellam:
ferreus est, heu heu, quisquis in urbe manet,

is now inverted by the words '*dura seges*, *Nemesim quae abducis ab urbe*' (61). In the two couplets that follow Tibullus widens the arc of his fire to take in the produce not only of the tilth but also of Bacchus:

et tu, Bacche tener, iucundae consitor uvae,
tu quoque devotos, Bacche, relinque lacus.
haud impune licet formosas tristibus agris
abdere: non tanti sunt tua musta, pater. (63–6)

The derogatory tone of *dura seges* is continued by *devotos lacus* and *tristibus agris*. And again a contrast suggests itself between the poet's present sentiments and those he expressed at the start of the poem. The mood of:

haud impune licet formosas tristibus agris
abdere (65 f.),

is very far from that of:

ipsa Venus latos iam nunc migravit in agros. (3)

Finally, line 67:

o valeant fruges, ne sint modo rure puellae,

sums up the poet's new hostile attitude to the land, expressed in the preceding lines. He concludes here that the produce of the soil is somehow *responsible* for girls' going into the country—and accordingly rejects it.¹

In the lines that follow Tibullus takes us back once more to the realm of myth, to that Golden Age of Love which was earlier viewed chiefly in terms of Apollo's service of Admetus. (The presence of mortals was only indirectly touched on by *felices* in 29.) Now the mythic past is viewed from the standpoint of the men, the *felices* (the *veteres* of line 69) of that time. What Tibullus does here is to offer, in terms of the myth in 69 ff., a reason for those men's happiness in rustic love. And this reason is, at the same time, an explanation of the divorce between love and the countryside in the present Iron Age.

In the couplet 67 f.:

o valeant fruges ne sint modo rure puellae:
glans alat et prisco more bibantur aquae,

the pentameter, picking up the idea suggested by *fruges* in the hexameter, advocates a return to those times when there was no produce, when men were nourished by acorns and water, rather than by the grape and grain (cf. 61 f. and 63–6) of the present day. This couplet is followed by another of central importance to this mythic section of the poem:

¹ The thought of 67 (as of 29–32) is highly compressed. The poet would seem to be reasoning along the following lines: the country is farmed for produce—rich

men own farms—girls go off there with them—*ergo* if there were no produce girls would not go into the country.

glans aluit veteres, et passim semper amarunt:
quid nocuit sulcos non habuisse satos? (69 f.)

The hexameter, by creating a quasi-causal link between the fact that Golden Age men ate acorns (i.e. they did not till the soil for food) and the fact that they loved at large, provides a reason, albeit a somewhat bizarre one, for their success in love. At the same time this line picks up and develops the thought of 61–7. There the poet established a close connection between the idea that the countryside was cultivated for produce and the idea that it was an unsuitable place for beautiful girls. Now he indicates that the men of former times did not cultivate the soil for produce—and they loved indiscriminately. The implication, clearly, is that it is *the practice of agriculture*, unknown in the Golden Age, that has ruined the countryside as a setting for love in the present day and made it an unsuitable place for girls to be. This implication is strengthened by the pentameter, 70:

quid nocuit sulcos non habuisse satos?

where *sulcos satos* confirms that it is specifically the practice of agriculture that Tibullus has in mind. The answer to the question posed by this line is that it harmed Golden Age men not at all—they loved where they would—it is rather we in the Iron Age that suffer for ploughing the fields.¹

Lines 71 f. then enlarge on the thought of *passim semper amarunt*: in a countryside not yet ravaged by agriculture:

. . . quibus aspirabat Amor, praebebat aperte
mitis in umbrosa gaudia valle Venus.

aperte here at the end of 71 echoes *aperte* at the end of 29; the fact that love was then a free open activity is made a distinguishing feature of the Golden Age in both places.

After line 72 Tibullus continues to develop his highly individual version of the Golden Age myth. But he now leaves behind the theme of Love and the Countryside to take up topics more closely connected, as we shall shortly see, with his main theme, how his mistress is to be approached. In 73 ff. he interprets the fact that Venus and Amor formerly operated openly, at large, in a new sense; they could work openly, he says, because there were no barriers between lover and beloved:

nullus erat custos, nulla exclusura dolentes
ianua.

Here, as elsewhere in his descriptions of a mythic past,² Tibullus projects back into that past present-day evils which affect him, simply by attaching a negative to them.³ The contrast thus afforded with his personal experience is brought

¹ In retrospect we can see an important difference between the poet's and Apollo's rustic *servitium amoris* as represented in Part I. The poet's *servitium*, we now realize, was self-defeating; the activities he envisaged for himself were all connected with the cultivation of the soil—but it was precisely this practice that made the

country an unsuitable place for love. Apollo's *servitium* was (we presume) successful, since the tasks he undertook were exclusively pastoral and therefore appropriate in a non-agricultural Golden Age of Love.

² See 1.3.35–48 and 1.10.7–12.

³ Note *nullus*, *nulla*, in 73.

out by 77 f., where the poet returns from the Golden Age to his present situation. He now deplores positively those details he had presented in negative form within the myth, complaining that every approach to his mistress is barred. Myth and personal experience are here reciprocally adapted so as to set each other off exactly; *clausa mea est* contrasts with *nulla exclusura dolentes ianua*; *copia rara videndi* with *nullus erat custos*; and *laxam togam* with the thought (whatever its precise formulation may have been) expressed by *villosa veste*. In the Golden Age one's beloved could be approached with perfect freedom; in the present the poet can by no means gain access to his mistress since she is under lock and key. Tibullus seems now finally to have despaired of both methods of approach to Nemesis mooted in the poem, namely rustic *servitium amoris* and the granting of costly luxuries.

In the concluding couplet of the elegy the poet returns to the idea of rustic *servitium* first introduced in 5–10. By this stage, however, the optimism of

o ego, cum aspicerem dominam, quam fortiter illic
versarem valido pingue bidente solum, (5 f.)

has given way to the despairing submissiveness of:

ducite: ad imperium dominae sulcabimus agros:
non ego me vinclis verberibusque nego. (79 f.)

Lines 61–70 have, in the interval between these two passages, demonstrated conclusively to the poet that he has no chance of winning his mistress through agricultural toil. The final two lines therefore display no sign of hope: they serve rather to emphasize the strength of Tibullus' attachment to his Nemesis. Although he now knows that country labour will never win his mistress, he is nevertheless prepared to undertake rustic *servitium*¹ under the cruellest conditions, with no hope of *amor*—simply at her command.

In addition to the themes already discussed there are also two minor motives which, recurring as they do at each successive stage of the poem's development, succeed in strengthening the unity of thought of the elegy. The first is the opposition between country and city as the appropriate setting for Nemesis. In the opening couplet the *rura* have the upper hand, the city is a place only for the insensible. But in 51 the city is in the ascendant, it is there Nemesis must parade in her finery. And in 61 ff. the city finally triumphs, as the countryside is cursed for drawing Nemesis away from the city. The second motive is the association of Venus (often accompanied by Amor) with each change of direction in the poem. In Part I we find her linked with the countryside (3) and *servitium* (29). In Part II she is seen first as the victim of the Iron Age's acquisitiveness (35), but then as one of its proponents. Finally, in Part III Venus is found presiding over the pleasures of the men of the Golden Age (72). These recurrent motives serve as good indices of the poem's development: to understand why they appear in the particular form they do, in each successive stage of the elegy, is to apprehend the interconnection of thought, and thus the unity, of the whole.

¹ The idea of *servitium* is here more strongly marked than in 5–10. Besides the phrase *ad imperium dominae* (79) there is also mention of chains (cp. '*servitium sed*

triste datur teneorque catenis' in line 3 of the immediately following elegy, 2.4) and lashes in line 80.

CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

What the above analysis of 2.3 has (I hope) made clear, is that this poem is more than a collection of themes, all of equal status, loosely unified by some sort of formal device. It has been shown that a main theme—how the poet's mistress is to be approached—to which other secondary themes are subordinated, runs right through the elegy lending it a unity of thought. In Part I the main theme is handled in 1–10, where Tibullus supposes rustic *servitium amoris* to be the appropriate way of ingratiating himself with his mistress. The theme of Apollo's service of Admetus (11–28) arises directly out of this handling of the main theme and is subordinate to it. The purpose of the myth is to justify the poet's proposed course of action. In the four lines following the myth (29–32) the poet again touches, indirectly, on the central thought of the poem. He affirms his belief in *servitium* as a value, despite the disbelief of the present day. Part II opens with the attack on wealth, but this is a minor motif introduced, not for its own sake, but to prepare the way for a return to the main theme in 49 ff. There the poet decides that Nemesis is to be approached only with luxurious gifts. In Part III Tibullus deals with his main theme for the most part in a negative way. He shows why his thoughts of approaching his mistress in the countryside through rustic *servitium* (in Part I) were misconceived. He then indicates that there is no way in which Nemesis can be approached and the poem ends on a note of submissive resignation.

Tibullus' handling of these themes is admittedly discursive in some places and highly allusive in others. (It is this discursiveness and allusiveness that make him, in my opinion, one of the most elusive of the Augustan poets.) But the main theme, which controls the introduction and development of the various subsidiary topics of 2.3, lends the whole a more than merely formal unity.

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