

### Tibullus, Ennius, and the Blue Loire

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- Hunc cecinere diem Parcae fatalia nentes  
 stamina, non ulli dissoluenda deo;  
 hunc fore, Aquitanas posset qui fundere gentes,  
 quem tremeret forti milite victus Atax.  
 5 Evenere: novos pubes Romana triumphos  
 vidit et evinctos bracchia capta duces;  
 at te victrices lauros, Messalla, gerentem  
 portabat nitidis currus eburnus equis.  
 Non sine me est tibi partus honos: Tarbella Pyrene  
 10 testis et Oceani litora Santonici,  
 testis Arar Rhodanusque celer magnusque Garunna,  
 Carnutis et flavi caerula lympha Liger.  
 (Tib. 1.7.1-12)

Although my present interest is chiefly confined to the epithets in line 12 as reflections of Tibullus' poetic taste, a brief comment at the outset on the general historical background behind this passage may not be amiss, since all of the epithets applied here to the rivers bear upon the question whether the poet had actually accompanied Messalla into Gaul and, if so and if the rivers are some sort of markers of Messalla's travels, whether then the poet had himself seen these rivers. If we think that the answer to both questions is "yes," the passage becomes our only first-hand account, poetically vague though it may be, of Octavian's activities in *Gallia comata* in this period.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The few and meagre sources of information about Messalla's campaign against the Aquitani are listed and discussed by J. Hammer, *Prolegomena to an Edition of the Panegyricus Messalae* (Albany 1925, diss. Columbia) 62-64. The only information which we have about Messalla's operations in Gaul outside of Aquitania comes from this passage of Tibullus (see O. Hirschfeld, "Aquitani in der Römerzeit," *Sitz. Berlin* 1 [1896] 429-56, republ. *Kl. Schr.* [Berlin 1913] 209-38, and Hammer, p. 63). Hammer proposes this chronology for Messalla's career in 31-27 B.C.: 31-30 Orient, 28-27 Aquitania and north, 27 (fall) triumph. Although J. P. Postgate, "Messalla in Aquitania," *CR* 17 (1903) 112-17, had argued that Augustus while in Gaul in the summer of 27 B.C. (Livy, *Per.* 134; Dio Cassius 53.22.5) enlarged Aquitania (Strabo

Apparently the Aquitani, perhaps in 28 B.C.,<sup>2</sup> had broken out of "Julius Caesar's Aquitania" (bounded by the Garonne, the Pyrenees, and the Atlantic Ocean) and had burst into the Province as far at least as the Aude (Atax) and presumably were then threatening Narbo itself. Octavian dispatched Messalla against them.<sup>3</sup> On the Aude the Aquitani were routed (*forti milite victus*, 4), but Messalla, to press home the victory, marched on to the southwestern part of "old Aquitania" (*Tarbella Pyrene*, 9): Basque country. That done, his immediate task was accomplished.

But Octavian, it would seem, had also directed Messalla to advance north along the coast and then considerably to the east, to judge from Tibullus' witnesses of Messalla's exploits:<sup>4</sup> up the Atlantic seaboard (*Oceani litora Santonici*, 10) to the Loire and even north of it (*Carnutis*, 12), and finally eastward to the Saône (Arar) and the Rhône (Rhodanus). A large part of Gaul, larger even than what was to become "administrative Aquitania." Properly, therefore, when Messalla celebrated his triumph on 25 September 27 B.C., he celebrated it *ex Gallia*.<sup>5</sup>

4.1.1) and divided *Gallia comata* into its three sections (the "new Aquitania," *Gallia Lugdunensis*, and *Gallia Belgica*), Hammer (p. 64) follows Mommsen (*Hermes* 15 [1880] 111–12) in dating this reorganization as during 16–13 B.C. But if, as Hammer himself proposes (p. 64), Messalla's duties outside of Aquitania were only administrative (dubious: it is unlikely that any governor of Gaul at this period could separate administration from occasional pacification), then surely Messalla must already have made a deal of headway in setting up the machinery of government, a task which could hardly have been difficult or complicated. Much here depends upon the interpretation of Dio Cassius 53.22.5 (that Augustus in 27 B.C. "took a census of the inhabitants and regulated their life and government").

<sup>2</sup> This date is conjectural; cf. Hammer (above, note 1) 55, note 289. Some argue that Messalla went from Actium to Aquitania and that therefore Tibullus depicts Messalla's achievements chronologically. But against this it might be argued *inter alia* that the poet is not so much concerned with historical sequence as with moving from the occasion which gained Messalla his triumph to Messalla's other activities, and perhaps also from his warlike accomplishments to his peaceful ones (cf. Hor. *Epist.* 1.20.23 "me primis urbis belli placuisse domique").

<sup>3</sup> Gaul, like Spain, must have been neglected during the Second Triumvirate; see Louis Harmand, *L'Occident Romain* (Paris 1960) 116–17.

<sup>4</sup> Appian 4.38 says that Octavian sent Messalla as a general "against the revolted Celts." Hammer (above, note 1) 62, note 307, says that Appian "must have had the Aquitani in mind;" I should sooner suppose that Appian meant the Gauls northward (cf. Caes. *BG* 1.1.1 "tertiam qui ipsorum lingua Celtae, nostra Galli appellantur").

<sup>5</sup> "M. Valerius M. f. M. n. Messalla a. DCCXXVI / Coruinus pro co(n)s(ule) ex Gallia VII k. Oct.": *CIL* 1.1<sup>2</sup>, p. 50 s. a. 727 (=Degrassi, *Ins. It.* 13.1, p. 87 s. a. 27); Appian 4.38.

Most of this reconstruction is based on the rivers named by Tibullus. We now ask what in fact they may tell us.

The Aude, entirely within the "old Province" and indeed its main stream, had belonged to the Romans for almost a century now. The Garonne (Garunna) had been known for some time as one of the boundaries of "Julius Caesar's Aquitania" (*BG* 1.1.7); its estuary, farther up north, was doubtless familiar to ship-masters and merchants. The Rhône, dominating the annexed area between the Cévennes (Cevenna) and the Alps, must equally have presented nothing new or strange to Roman readers.

The Loire (Liger) we note was actually a bit north of the northern border of "new Aquitania," if that means much or anything. The eastern border of "new Aquitania" fell between the Allier (Elaver), a tributary of the Upper Loire where it swings south, and the Loire itself, along the upper (southern) watershed between them, until the border crossed the Allier near its mouth to run parallel and south of the Loire (when that river swings west). As for the Saône, it like the Rhône lay too far east even to touch at any point the lines of "new Aquitania." But most of the Rhône and a good part of the Saône flowed through Gaulish land, i.e. through what presumably was Messalla's command.

What to make of these observations, as regards Tibullus and Messalla?

If the location of the Saône and the Rhône seems inharmonious with the notion of only an "Aquitanian victory and nothing else," we might follow a passing thought of Scaliger, emend *Arar Rhodanusque* to *Atur Duranusque* (line 11; the Adour and the Dordogne are both in southern Aquitaine), and thus considerably reduce the extent of Messalla's labors—and glories.<sup>6</sup>

Or we may conclude with Postgate that the "common property" of the four rivers (Saône, Rhône, Loire, and Garonne) "is that they form with the ocean what we may call the water-boundaries of the territory which . . . Augustus added to Aquitania."<sup>7</sup> But in fact they do not, nor do we know when Augustus carved out the "new Aquitania" (see note 1).

<sup>6</sup> For the history of Scaliger's "passing thought," see O. Hirschfeld, *Sitz. Berlin* 1 (1896) 715–16, who here took back the support he had previously given it (above, note 1) 215. In his texts of 1577, 1582, and 1600 (Catullus, Tibullus, and Propertius) Scaliger himself printed *Arar Rhodanusque*, without any queries in his *Castigationes*.

<sup>7</sup> Postgate (above, note 1) 114.

Or we may jejunely say that the rivers are brought in because rivers are of importance to present or future merchants or of interest to students of geography or, to be a bit less drab, because their mention here permits the poet to "work up" to his great passage on the Nile.<sup>8</sup> None of these reasons seems in itself worthy.

Or we may assume, as was suggested above, that Messalla had been told to start to set up the administration of as much of his territory as seemed useful and feasible, pacifying here and there where necessary. Accordingly, he moved out beyond the lines which were to become the boundaries of "expanded Aquitania"—indeed he would probably have been as ignorant of them at this time as Octavian himself doubtless was—and halted his thrusts at the militarily suitable points of the Loire and the Saône.

Or, finally, we may add to this last assumption the proposal that Tibullus brings in all four great rivers to serve as poetic witnesses, as fertile symbols,<sup>9</sup> of the range of Messalla's command, which thus included *Gallia Narbonensis*. This inclusion seems likely.

Now, to look at the epithets applied to the rivers, I myself see nothing "ridiculous" in *celer* and *magnus* (line 11).<sup>10</sup> The Rhône is swift; the Garonne has a huge estuary. True, these basic facts could have been heard or read. But the epithets are no better and no worse than *frigidus* applied to the Taurus (line 16) or *fertilis* to the Nile (line 22), and in themselves do not furnish an argument against Tibullus' having been with Messalla. After all, it is not easy in one adjective to "pin down" a long river.

The stumbling block has been the "blue Loire."

Scaliger's comment on *caerula* (line 12) is the earnest attempt of a scholar: "Caeruleum vocat, hoc est aequoreum, quia Oceanum intrat per se, et aestuaria efficit. Nam caeruleus est aequoreus."<sup>11</sup> Dissen, agreeing, adds: "Omnino quoniam saepe moneo non esse otiosa epitheta in his carminibus, perpetua epitheta in descriptione locorum non otiantur, sed vivas et distinctas reddunt rerum

<sup>8</sup> The liquid motive is a dominant one throughout the poem; cf. *fundere* 3, *fusa* 46, *funde* 50, the rivers themselves, *imbres* 25, *pluvio Iovi* 26, and Osiris-wine-Bacchus (on which see H. T. Rowell, *AJP* 63 [1942] 233-34).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *partus* 9 and *fertilis* 22.

<sup>10</sup> Hammer (above, note 1) 76, rightly criticized by F. Levy (later, F. Lenz) in his review of Hammer, *Gnomon* 3 (1927) 499 and in his "Der Geburtstag des Freundes: eine Studie zu Tibull I 7," *SIFC* 7 (1929) 106, note 1. Cf. Lucan 1.433-34: "qua Rhodanus raptum velocibus undis / in mare fert Ararim."

<sup>11</sup> *Castigationes* (Paris 1577) 129.

imagines.”<sup>12</sup> Klingner reveals his own penetrating taste: “*Carnutis et flavi caerulea lympa Liger* (12): das ist schon ein ganzes Bild, im vorigen durch Völkernamen, Flussnamen und charakterisierende Epitheta vorbereitet, beherrscht von einem Farbenakkord, Blond und Blau.”<sup>13</sup>

Others have not done so well. Ramsay suggested that *caerulea* may “be an unmeaning general epithet applicable to streams in general.”<sup>14</sup> Postgate was at least on the right track when he, like Klingner later, saw that aesthetically *flavi caerulea* was a unit; but then he declared of the phrase: “whatever we may think of its taste,” “the contrast of colours has become a mere trick of language;” he grumbled about “A yellow-haired Gaul by a blue-watered stream,” noted that he can find nothing to show that the waters of the Loire “are blue in any part of their course,” and concluded that Tibullus “had no more seen the Liger than he had seen the Cydnus.”<sup>15</sup> He therefore read with Baehrens: *non sine Marte ibi partus honos* (line 9),<sup>16</sup> and forthwith finished off the passage as a first-hand historical account and Tibullus as a member of Messalla’s staff.

When a poet of the late Republic or early Empire describes a striking feature of terrain, it is generally a mistake to ask: “How accurate is he?” The question should sooner be: “What earlier poets has he read?”

<sup>12</sup> L. Dissen, *Albii Tibulli Carmina* (Göttingen 1835) 151.

<sup>13</sup> F. Klingner, “Tibulls Geburtstagsgedicht an Messalla (I 7),” *Eranos* 49 (1951) 132.

<sup>14</sup> G. G. Ramsay, *Selections from Tibullus and Propertius* (3rd ed., Oxford 1917) 138, who comments: “As a rule, the Roman poets had a true eye for streams and rivers, and generally describe them by characteristic terms. Their descriptions of mountain or forest scenery, on the other hand, are in the last degree conventional and vague.” If this last opinion be true, it may be owing to the fact that neither scientific curiosity nor “romanticism” nor plain “sightseeing” seems often—there are exceptions like Aetna (Hadrian)—to have moved the Romans to scale mountains or push through impenetrable woodland; in fact, mountain-climbing as a diversion or sport—I except exceptional men like Petrarch—seems to have been a nineteenth-century British contribution.

<sup>15</sup> Postgate (above, note 1) 116, save that the second quotation comes from his *Selections from Tibullus* (2nd ed., London 1929) 92. O. T. Gruppe, *Die Römische Elegie* 2 (Leipzig 1838) 7, emended *caerulea* to *garrula*! Finally, someone was bound to bring in “the beautiful blue Danube;” it was K. F. Smith, *The Elegies of Albii Tibullus* (New York 1913) 326, and he was right in doing so: most rivers, given the proper season, sunlight, bed, and foliage, are to some degree “blue.”

<sup>16</sup> His *non sine Marte ibi* is otiose. If violence must be done (it need not be), then Housman’s *non sine re* is both elegant and palaeographically acceptable.

Tibullus' arresting collocation *flavi caerulea* was induced, I suggest, by memory of Ennius *Ann.* 384 (Vahlen):

Verrunt extemplo placide mare: marmore *flavo*  
*caeruleum* spumat sale conferta rate pulsum.<sup>17</sup>

Perhaps, too, the same Ennian lines with their powerful contrast in color were in Tibullus' mind when he wrote *flavis comis* in 1.5.44 and then two lines later *caerulea Thetis*.<sup>18</sup> At all events, we may guess that in the case of 1.7.12 it was the blondness of the folk of Chartres which in the first instance reminded Tibullus of the Ennian phrase.

The development of *caeruleus* / *caerulus* has been carefully traced, all the way from the first question to be raised: "Waren die Römer blaublind?"<sup>19</sup> Therefore it is enough to say that already in Ennius the word's usage is not narrow, and that subsequently it grows wider and is increasingly associated with water.<sup>20</sup> Tibullus, however, would seem, so far as we know, to have been the first to use it of a river, though Virgil was soon to do so.<sup>21</sup>

While those who have written on Ennius' *Fortleben* say nothing about any influence he might have had upon Tibullus,<sup>22</sup> it would not seem surprising that this Augustan should have recalled the early poet, and might even possibly have meant his recollection to

<sup>17</sup> Tibullus' collocation supports the punctuation (followed here) of the Ennian fragment as given by Ribbeck, *RhM* 10 (1856) 277; by Vahlen; and by J. Heurgon, *Ennius*, I: *Les Annales* (Paris 1960) 102, who adds, p. 103: "Les deux adjectifs de couleur *caeruleum* et *flavo*, sont intentionnellement en contact, l'un à la fin d'un vers, l'autre au début du vers suivant; la signification doit être précisée. Ce n'est pas facile." The Tibullan collocation argues against the punctuation (first line, comma after *flavo*) of Merula (1595, p. xxviii); Steuart (1925, p. 54); and Valmaggi (1956, p. 108). Also against that (first line, semicolon after *flavo*) of Warmington (1935, p. 138).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Hor. *Epod.* 13.16 (of Thetis): *mater caerulea*.

<sup>19</sup> K. E. Goetz, *Arch. latein. Lexikogr.* 14 (1906) 75–88, has traced the development of the word's applications (using the materials to be used in the *TLL* article).

<sup>20</sup> By my count *caeruleus* or *caerulus* is used by Ennius thrice of the heavens, twice of the ocean, and once each of a snake, a mantle, and a plain; by Lucretius four times of the heavens, thrice of the ocean, and once of an olive belt; by Catullus twice of the ocean; by Virgil nineteen times of water (ocean, river, rain, boat, marine divinities, etc.), twice of hair, and twice of a snake.

<sup>21</sup> Of the Tiber, *A.* 8.64; the Nile, *A.* 8.713; see *TLL s. v.* for later applications to rivers.

<sup>22</sup> See J. Vahlen, *Ennianae Poesis Reliquiae* (Amsterdam, reprint 1963) lix, and S. Mariotti, *Lezioni su Ennio* (Torino, reprint 1963) 39. I might add that I do not believe that Ausonius, *De Bissula* 328.10–11, "Germana maneret / ut facies, oculos *caerulea*, *flava* comas," reflects *Ann.* 384 (Vahlen, page cl, does not discuss the passage) but rather Hor. *Epod.* 16.7 and/or Tib. 1.5.44–46.

be obvious (though this point is of course unprovable and, in itself, not worth haggling over). The important fact is that the Augustans were reared on Ennius. Nor would the style of their immediate predecessors, the neoterics, whatever exactly those "new poets" may have thought of Ennius,<sup>23</sup> have proved satisfactory for the major Augustan poets or even for the Augustan love-elegists. As Solmsen observed, the Augustan elegists may have been the heirs of the neoterics to a degree in subject matter, but even the elegists knew, as the writers of didactic and historical epic poetry knew yet more surely, that what was wanted was a more dignified style.<sup>24</sup> This was not, in the elegists' case, to be the *genus grande* (though loftiness of spirit, or the desire for irony, may move Tibullus at times to use this style), but neither was it to be the *genus molle*. Ennius could help the Augustans in the formation of style, and theme. And so, whether or not Virgil's deep interest in Ennius was already widely known and emulated, it should not strike us as odd that at one point (3.3.7-12) Propertius chooses to review Ennius' themes in the *Annales* and that—but only in elegant pretense—he even contemplates treating them himself. Indeed, one of the "themes" may concern the battle of Myonnesus (*Aemilia rate*, 3.3.8);<sup>25</sup> if so, this comes from the same book of the *Annales*, the fourteenth, from which Tibullus was drawing in 1.7.12 and from which Virgil was soon to draw.<sup>26</sup> And as for Ovid, twice he quotes the same Ennian passage (*Ann.* 65 Vahlen, in *Met.* 14.814 and *Fast.* 2.487).

In fine, Propertius (4.1.61) and Ovid (*Am.* 1.15.19-20 and *Tr.* 2.423) may complain of Ennius' "rudeness of style," and Horace may object to the critical rating still given Ennius (*Epist.* 2.1.50-52)—indeed Horace may even overstate his case a bit by playing down the "moderns" now also read; but still, in one way or another, these three tell us how secure Ennius' position had remained and how intimately they (and presumably their contemporaries) knew him. That Tibullus does not mention

<sup>23</sup> See Mariotti (above, note 22) 37-38.

<sup>24</sup> F. Solmsen, "Tibullus as an Augustan Poet," *Hermes* 90 (1962) 313-14; Solmsen's observations here and elsewhere on style and content in Tibullus are unusually enlightening.

<sup>25</sup> L. Aemilius Regillus commanded the Roman fleet at the battle of Myonnesus (Livy 37.30). But Propertius may have had someone else in mind.

<sup>26</sup> A. 3.208; 4.583; 8.671-72. Was Book 14 of the *Annales* particularly emphasized in the schools?

Ennius need cause no wonder; Tibullus names no poets, dead or alive.<sup>27</sup>

To turn back now to the Tibullan passage (1.7.1–12), the poet's salute to Messalla begins on a solemn and even lofty tone, with grave echoes of Catullus' *Song of the Parcae* (Achilles)<sup>28</sup> and with effective anaphora (which in Tibullus is not mere rhetoric but indicative of deep feeling).<sup>29</sup> Then in line 12 comes the Ennian phrase. How had Ennius used it? In leading up to L. Aemilius' victory over Antiochus at Myonnesus (190 B.C.), which allowed the Scipios—one being none other than Hannibal's conqueror—to advance upon Asia Minor. Perhaps, then, a splendid and yet delicate tribute to Messalla Corvinus!

Finally, did Tibullus go along with Messalla into Gaul in 28–27 B.C.? No answer, I believe, can or was ever meant to be had from the epithets applied to the rivers. This much, though, may be said: the epithets are not silly; they are not incongruent; they are put down in a poet's way. *Celer* and *magnum* serve one poetic purpose; *caerulea* another. Each represents the "quick stroke," the "single impression." The rivers, as I see the matter, speak only for the extent of Messalla's territorial command.

No, the answer to the question must lie, if anywhere, in line 9. Here we should read *non sine me est tibi partus honos*, should remember that *at te* of line 7 balances *non sine me* of line 9 (as *te* and *me* balance each other in the artful shift in 1.1.53 and 55); therefore take *non sine me* literally, and consequently say "yes" to the query.<sup>30</sup> Howsoever that may be, this Tibullan passage is our best informant about Messalla's Gallic activities.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Unless Messalla (cf. *Catal.* 9.13–16) and the Macer of Tib. 2.6 qualify.

<sup>28</sup> Cat. 64.383 *cecinerunt . . . Parcae* and Tib. 1.7.1 *cecinerunt . . . Parcae*, Cat. 64.321 *fuderunt* and Tib. 1.7.3 *funderet*, Cat. 64.357 *testis erit . . . unda Scamandri* and Tib. 1.7.11 *testis Arar Rhodanusque celer magnusque Garunna* (on which Heyne-Wunderlich, 4th ed. 1817, *ad loc.*, remind us of Cic. *Leg. Man.* 30 "Testis est Italia . . . testis est Sicilia . . . testis est Africa . . . testis est Gallia . . . testis est Hispania . . . testis est iterum et saepius Italia . . . testes . . .").

<sup>29</sup> See the remarks of J. Waszink and F. Solmsen in a discussion led by P. Grimal, "Tibulle et Hésiode," *Entretiens Hardt* 7 (1962) 290–91.

<sup>30</sup> Which means that I accept neither the view of Postgate (above, note 1) that Tibullus (with the help of Baehrens' emendation) was never in Gaul, nor the same view of Hammer (above, note 1) 66–76 who, keeping the traditional text, interprets line 9 to mean that Tibullus, on orders or of his own accord, only aided Messalla's victory by writing about the general's exploits. Nor do I feel that a fair reading of the line makes Tibullus (Hammer [above, note 1] 70) commit an "indiscretion" by putting "himself in the foreground and Messalla in the background." "Not without



me" is hardly forward; it may indeed be intimate and personal. Nor could Messalla complain of lack of attention in the poem. I do not, therefore, consider the line as "lacking in taste." And since I am unwilling to condemn the *Vita* as a mere patchwork of items drawn from the elegies themselves, I assume that Tibullus was a member of Messalla's *cohors amicorum*. Whether he actually fought brings us back to the question which Rowell (above, note 8) 236 asked: "Were they (the *dona militaria*) bestowed on anyone who had not won them on the field of battle?"

<sup>31</sup> I wish here to thank my colleagues, Professors Wendell Clausen and Mason Hammond, for their helpful comments on this paper.