

PARVA SEGES SATIS EST: THE LANDSCAPE OF TIBULLAN ELEGY IN 1.1 AND 1.10

BARBARA WEIDEN BOYD

Bowdoin College

The minor role played by Delia in Tibullus 1.1 is in sharp contrast to the primary importance given to Propertius' Cynthia in the *Monobiblos*. Whereas Propertius' poetic program revolves around Cynthia, Tibullus looks instead to the rustic life to provide a fertile environment for his poetry: only after his rural landscape is complete will he turn his thoughts to a *domina* (1.1.46). In what follows, I shall examine the character of the rural landscape which Tibullus describes in 1.1, and shall suggest that it is through this landscape that Tibullus provides a poetic program for his first book of elegies. As we shall see, however, the security and permanence of the rustic life depicted in the first half of 1.1 are threatened in the second half of the poem, and the elegy comes to a close with tensions unreconciled; I shall finally suggest, therefore, that it is in 1.10 that Tibullus resolves the difficulties raised in the first poem.

1.1 can best be understood by considering its structure. There are two main sections: lines 1–42, followed by the transitional couplet 43–44, and 45–76, followed by a closing couplet which loosely unites the entire poem.¹ In 1–42, Tibullus describes the rural landscape in which he and his elegy are to reside. The *rura* and farm described here are realistic, insofar as this landscape contains neither the *arva beata* / . . . *divites et insulas* of Horace's sixteenth Epode (41–42) nor the *labor* . . . / *improbus et duris urgens in rebus egestas* of Virgil's first Georgic (145–46). In his opening lines (1–4), Tibullus equates *labor* with martial violence and the acquisition of wealth;² such *labor* has no place on Tibullus' modest

¹ My division of the poems is closest to that of E. W. Leach, "Poetics and Poetic Design in Tibullus' First Elegiac Book," *Arethusa* 13 (1980) 86. For another view of the structure of this elegy, see J. M. Fisher, "The Structure of Tibullus' First Elegy," *Latomus* 29 (1970) 765–73: Fisher believes that the first section extends through two-thirds of the poem, 1–52; cf. also K. F. Smith, *The Elegies of Albius Tibullus* (New York 1913; repr. 1979) 93, and G. Lee, "Otium cum indignitate: Tibullus 1.1," in *Quality and Pleasure in Latin Poetry*, edd. T. Woodman and D. West (Cambridge 1974) 103.

² On the military associations of *labor* in the *Georgics*, see H. Altevogt, *Labor Improbus: Eine Vergilstudie*, *Orbis Antiquus* 8 (Münster 1952) 27–30; cf. also 9–10: *labor* is

farm. Rather, apart from a few significant characteristics to which I shall return below, Tibullus' landscape is most reminiscent of the two exceptional rustic worlds described by Virgil elsewhere in the *Georgics*: that of the idealized farmers at *Geo.* 2.458–540 and that of the old man of Tarentum at *Geo.* 4.125–48.

Among the first details given by Virgil in his description of the Corycian at Tarentum is the fact that the old man's plot of land is small (*pauca relictis / iugera ruris*, 4.127–28). Virgil's idealized rustics are similarly modest in their pursuits: *exiguo . . . adsueta iuventus* (2.472). Both war (*procul discordibus armis*, 2.459) and luxury (2.461–66) are absent from their lives: they share instead in the bounty of *iustissima tellus* (2.460) and *secura quies* (2.467). Tibullus aspires to a similarly small plot of land: *alius . . . / teneat culti iugera multa soli* (1–2), and throughout the first half of the poem he re-emphasizes the modesty of this farm: *paupertas* (5), *pauper* (19, 37), *parvus* (22, 25), and *exiguus* (22, 33). Unremitting *labor* would have undesirable effects upon this landscape.

In other details as well Tibullus' landscape recalls the life of Virgil's *fortunati agricolae*. These rustics enjoy the natural pleasures of caves, fresh waters, cool valleys, and shade as they listen to their herds:

speluncae vivique lacus, at frigida tempe
mugitusque boum mollesque sub arbore somni
non absunt. . . . (2.469–71)

Tibullus' farm too is to be a place for resting in the shade, a rest to be disturbed only by his everyday concerns for his flocks:

sed Canis aestivos ortus vitare sub umbra
arboris ad rivos praetereuntis aquae.
nec tamen interdum pudeat tenuisse bidentem
aut stimulo tardos increpuisse boves;
non agnamve sinu pigeat fetumve capellae
desertum oblita matre referre domum. (1.1.27–32)

The security of both worlds is to be preserved by *pietas*: just as Virgil's rustics, the last mortals to be deserted by Iustitia, have put their faith in the *dei agrestes* (2.473–74, 493–94, 527–29), so does Tibullus suggest throughout the first half of 1.1 that his modest farm needs only the propitious care of the rural deities (9–24, 35–38).

"das Prinzip des Unfriedens und der Unmüsse." On the violence of *labor* and the connection between *labor* and *amor habendi*, see now R. F. Thomas, *Lands and Peoples in Roman Poetry: The Ethnographical Tradition*, Cambridge Philological Society Supp. 7 (Cambridge 1982) 51, 74–76.

Labor and *laborare* are used frequently in military contexts: see, e.g., Caes. BG 1.51.7, 7.67.4, 7.85.4; BC 2.41.1; Livy 5.10.9, 22.6.2, 26.13.9, 28.15.4, 34.38.6. Lee (above, note 1, 107–10) discusses several other instances of military language in Tibullus 1.1.

While it is clear that Tibullus' landscape precludes the fantastical Golden-Age luxury of *Epode* 16 and *Eclogue* 4, of greater subtlety are its differences from the worlds of Virgil's rustics and the Corycian. The Saturnian character³ of the former is seen in the fact that, although they must work the year through to benefit from nature's bounty (516–22), nature provides for them of her own accord: *facilem victum*, 2.460, and *quos rami fructus, quos ipsa volentia rura / sponte tulere sua, carpsit*, 2.500–501. As for the old man of Tarentum, Thomas has shown that to a great extent the Corycian's success is qualified by his cultivation of alternatives to the agricultural produce of the traditional Italian farm: *nec fertilis illa iuvenis / nec pecori opportuna seges nec commoda Baccho*, 4.128–29.⁴ Instead he raises vegetables, herbs, flowers, and fruit for his own enjoyment and personal consumption. Tibullus, however, though describing his longed-for rustic life as *vita iners* at the beginning of 1.1 (line 5), both anticipates the work involved in the upkeep and care of his farm (29–36) and includes in his landscape the produce typical in Italian agriculture: crops, trees and vines, and livestock (7–10; 13–24; 29–36).⁵ At least in the light of these differences, then, Tibullus' landscape can be seen as a realistic alternative to contemporary escapism.

In his recent book on Tibullus, Cairns sees in Tibullus' "rustic reverence" the poet's "yearning for a past age," an "idealised primitive Roman past."⁶ This interpretation, if not wholly misleading, at least needs modification: although much of Tibullus' rural landscape in 1.1 is described in terms that suggest a more prosperous past, Tibullus recognizes the anachronism of the Golden Age and clearly dismisses it as such by placing his farm firmly in the real world. In the closing lines of the second *Georgic*, Virgil characterizes the reign of Saturn as one in which humans refrained from animal slaughter: *ante / impia quam caesis gens est epulata iuvenis* (*Geo.* 2.536–37). With the epithet *impia* Virgil suggests that with the passage of Saturn, so has passed mortal *pietas*. For

³ See Thomas (above, note 2) 47, 79. Cf. also M. C. J. Putnam, *Virgil's Poem of the Earth: Studies in the Georgics* (Princeton 1979) 156, and G. B. Miles, *Virgil's Georgics: A New Interpretation* (Berkeley 1980) 160–65.

⁴ See Thomas (above, note 2) 55–60.

⁵ See Thomas (above, note 2) 3.

⁶ These phrases from F. Cairns, *Tibullus: A Hellenistic Poet at Rome* (Cambridge 1979) 14, are the latest in a long debate on the realism of Tibullan landscape. On the question of bucolic elements in Tibullus see J. P. Elder, "Tibullus: Tersus atque Elegans," in *Critical Essays on Roman Literature: Elegy and Lyric*, ed. J. P. Sullivan (London 1962) 80–85 (pro-bucolic) and F. Solmsen, "Tibullus as an Augustan Poet," *Hermes* 90 (1962) 303–4 (anti-bucolic); for a convenient summary of both see D. O. Ross, *Backgrounds to Augustan Poetry: Gallus, Elegy and Rome* (Cambridge 1975) 158–62. Cf. also A. W. Bulloch, "Tibullus and the Alexandrians," *PCPS* n.s. 19 (1973) 85–87; R. O. A. M. Lyne, *The Latin Love Poets* (Oxford 1980) 152; and G. Lee, *Tibullus: Elegies* (Liverpool 1982) 17–18.

Tibullus, however, animal sacrifice is an integral part of rustic life past and present: *tunc vitula innumeros lustrabat caesa iuvenco: / nunc agna exigui est hostia parva soli* (21–22).⁷ Indeed, such sacrifice even in Tibullus' limited circumstances serves only to affirm his *pietas*. His continued emphasis on the realistic nature of his farm proceeds in 37–42, where through the image of *pura fictilia* Tibullus momentarily evokes the good old days, only to undercut the image with his denial of any need for the prosperity of his ancestors:

non ego divitias patrum fructusque requiro,
quos tulit antiquo condita messis avo. (41–42)

Tibullus' realism culminates in 43, *parva seges satis est*: he recalls the description as begun in line 5 of the rural life which he wishes to lead, but clarifies his interpretation of *paupertas* by repeating the word *satis* here; while not a Tityrus, neither is he a Meliboeus.⁸ In the first half of 1.1, then, Tibullus indicates through his choice of landscape his concern for maintaining a poetic balance between optimism and realism.

Beginning at 45, Tibullus introduces a catalogue of some of the elegiac trifles with which elegies 1.2–1.9 will be concerned: 45–48 describe a secure life with his *domina*; in 49–54 Tibullus rejects war and wealth in favor of love; 55–56 contain the motifs of *servitium amoris* and the *exclusus amator*; in 57–68, Tibullus introduces Delia by name and implies an equation between love and death; in 69–72, youth is a requisite for love; and 73–76 contain the motif of *militia amoris*. Tibullus' transition, in 43–44, to these elegiac conventions is accomplished so smoothly that at first the incongruity of the second half of the poem with the first is not apparent. Certain details here in fact suggest continuity with the realistic tone of what has preceded: like the old man of Tarentum,⁹ Tibullus is to inhabit a landscape with a realistic, and sometimes harsh, climate:

quam iuvat immites ventos audire cubantem
et dominam tenero continuisse sinu
aut, gelidas hibernus aquas cum fuderit Auster,
securum somnos imbre iuvante sequi! (45–48)

However, the final couplet, in which Tibullus restates his allegiance to rustic *paupertas*, makes clear the tension in this poem: by recalling the

⁷ I wish to thank the anonymous referee of *TAPA* for pointing out the importance of *vitula caesa* here.

⁸ Cf. Sen. *Ep.* 87.40–41. M. C. J. Putnam, *Tibullus: A Commentary* (Norman, Okla. 1973) comments on line 43: "Direct repetition, anastrophe and partial chiasmus at the caesura underline once more the litany of reconciliation with, or even desire for, *parva seges*." Cf. also Cairns (above, note 6) 20–21.

⁹ See *Geo.* 4.134–43; cf. also *Geo.* 2.516–22, and the discussion of climate in both passages by Thomas (above, note 2).

realism and moderate optimism of the first section, the last couplet makes the elegiac fantasies and extremes of the second section seem all the more out of place. Whereas in 5–18, 27–28, and 35–36 Tibullus had expressed a desire to participate in the harmony of natural events, in 45–48 he emphasizes the harshness of nature in contrast to the security to be found in a life with his *domina*. Again, the equation of the acquisition of wealth with war, used in the opening lines of the poem to establish Tibullus' sense of moderation, is in 49–54 seen rather to emphasize the exclusive concern of the elegiac lover, his *puella*; here, love and love only matters (55–58). Particularly telling is his use of the word *iners* in line 58: whereas after its earlier occurrence in this elegy (line 5) it was itself undercut by Tibullus' list of his every-day concerns with farming, it now appears in the culmination of his proclamation of love for Delia. The life he will lead with her is antithetical to that of the moderately successful rustic. Also of central interest is the role played by Delia herself in this section. As Guy Lee has noticed, "women of Delia's kind, women like Gallus' Lycoris and Propertius' Cynthia, do not live buried lives in country towns or country houses."¹⁰ Thus, in poetic terms, when Tibullus shifts his attention to Delia he implicitly abandons his farm.

Futhermore, as we saw above, in the first half of the poem Tibullus had specifically rejected fantasies of an anachronistic nature; he had expressed as well an awareness of and a sense of harmony with the passage of time (see, e.g., expressions such as *maturo tempore*, 7; *novus annus*, 13; and *quot annis*, 35). In the second section of 1.1, however, Tibullus sees in the passage of time only a threat to his love (*suprema hora*, 59; *dum fata sinunt*, 69; and *iam veniet Mors*, 70).¹¹ In fact, in this poem at least, talk of love is tantamount to talk of death; as soon as Tibullus mentions Delia, his thoughts turn to the subject of his own mortality.¹² The fantasy scene in which Tibullus imagines his own death and Delia's mourning, 57–68, is the central and most elaborate scene in this half of the poem. Thus, although 1.1 closes on a note of optimism, several troubling inconsistencies in the poem have been left unresolved. The equation of love with death suggests that the security of Tibullus' landscape is ephemeral at best; elegiac conventions threaten this elegiac landscape.

¹⁰ Lee (above, note 1) 103–6. See also Lyne (above, note 6) 158–63, and Leach (above, note 1) 87: "Delia herself is the practical flaw in the program." Cf. F. Cairns, "Horace, *Epode* 2, Tibullus I, 1 and Rhetorical Praise of the Countryside," *MusPhilLond* 1 (1975) 89–91: Cairns notes that in his description of his amatory interests, Tibullus differs from traditional rhetorical descriptions of the pleasures of farming and country life.

¹¹ Noteworthy also is the third occurrence of *iners* in this poem, at line 71: *iam subrepet iners aetas*. The epithet is here unambiguously negative, describing as it does the onset of loveless old age.

¹² Cf. also Ross (above, note 6) 112, note 1.

A resolution for this paradox is to be found in the book's closing elegy, 1.10. That 1.1 and 1.10 are related in some way is a premise basic to much recent work on Tibullus; the focus on rural landscape in both poems is usually interpreted as providing a framework for the book as a whole.¹³ In what follows I shall suggest that 1.10, while closely linked to 1.1, is in fact far more than a simple recollection of the scenery of the first elegy. Rather, 1.10 can be seen as a response to 1.1, a realistic revision of a threatened landscape.

Like 1.1, 1.10 may also be divided into two main sections: lines 1–38, in which the subject of war dominates; and 39–68, in which peace takes hold. Tibullus begins by lamenting the close of the Saturnian age, and thereby acknowledges the present reality of war (1–14). No longer, however, does Tibullus easily dismiss anachronistic fantasies: the series *tunc–nunc–tunc* in 11–19 indicates his ambivalence about the present state of affairs. In fact, even Tibullus himself is not exempt from involvement in war—*nunc ad bella trahor*, 13. Fittingly, he prays to the Lares (named in 15 and 25) for salvation and the cessation of war, and his prayer to the Lares is accompanied by both the sacrifice of a pig from his farm (26) and his own ritual purity and consecration to them in this rustic setting (27–28). Nonetheless, Tibullus' resort to his rustic landscape does not, as it stands, provide a wholly satisfactory solution: death threatens his elegiac landscape from without, in the shape of war, just as it did from within in 1.1, in the figure of Delia. The world of *parva seges satis est* is constantly in danger: tellingly, in his description of the landscape of death, Tibullus begins with *non seges est infra*, 35. Without some revision of reality, Tibullus' rural landscape remains vulnerable.

In the second half of 1.10, Tibullus effects this revision. He once again describes country life, in even more vivid—and more realistic—terms than he had used in 1.1. In the phrases *prole parata, in parva pigra senecta casa, filius, uxor, liceatque caput candescere canis / temporis et prisca facta referre senem* (39–44), every unpretentious detail of the rustic life is catalogued: wife and children, old age, humble surroundings, and hard work. The elegiac *domina* is replaced by a family; and the *topos* of youth as a requisite for love (cf. 1.1.69–72) gives way to an acceptance of the passage of time and the coming of old age.

¹³ Work on "symmetry and sense" in Tibullus' elegies has provided the focus for renewed interest in Tibullan elegy; in the light of Skutsch's discovery of the architecture of the Propertian *Monobiblos* ("The Structure of the Propertian Monobiblos," *CP* 58 [1963] 238–39), Tibullus' first book in particular has undergone similar analysis. See: R. J. Littlewood, "The Symbolic Structure of Tibullus Book I," *Latomus* 29 (1970) 661–69; B. Powell, "The Ordering of Tibullus Book I," *CP* 69 (1974) 107–12; D. F. Bright, *Haec mihi fingebam: Tibullus in His World* (Leiden 1978) 260–68; H. Dettmer, "The Arrangement of Tibullus Books 1 and 2," *Philologus* 124 (1980) 68–82; Leach (above, note 1) 79–96; and Lee (above, note 6) 13 and, in particular, 22, note 4.

Indeed, old age appears not just acceptable here, but is a reward for the simple life, lived well. The marks of old age are now an integral part of Tibullus' rustic landscape.

Into this scene Tibullus introduces peace, a peace which guarantees that Tibullus' rural landscape will thrive: *interea pax arva colat* (45). Peace makes the farmer's tools gleam with the polish of hard work and constant use, while neglect takes hold of the soldier's weapons (49–50). It is only *after* 45–50, in which peace secures permanence for the poet's rural scene, that the elegiac conventions of 1.1 find their place on Tibullus' farm. After reemphasizing the realistic character of this farm with the words *rusticus*, *uxor*, and *progenies* in 51–52, Tibullus brings onto the scene the elegiac *topos* with which he had concluded a catalogue of such themes in 1.1, *militia amoris* (53–66). All the clichés inherent in this convention are present: *scissos capillos*, *perfractas fores*, *lascivus Amor*, *rixa*, *lacrimas*, and so forth. Now, however, moderation dominates even this martial scene: excess violence belongs on the battlefield, far from Venus (65–66).¹⁴ Significantly, the word *satis* is reiterated three times in 61–63; in this way Tibullus recalls the phrase *parva seges satis est*, and the ideal of moderation which dominates his farm.

In the last couplet, Tibullus returns to the most important element in his literary landscape, *pax*.¹⁵ By closing with a final mention of peace, Tibullus literally frames the elegiac conventions of 51–66 with an ode to *pax*:

interea pax arva colat. pax candida primum
 duxit araturos sub iuga curva boves:
 pax aluit vites et sucos condidit uvae,
 funderet ut nato testa paterna merum:
 pace bidens vomerque nitent, at tristia duri
 militis in tenebris occupat arma situs.

 at nobis, Pax alma, veni spicamque teneto,
 profluat et pomis candidus ante sinus. (45–50, 67–68)

It is only within this framework that the poet's farm, and his elegy, can flourish. To signify just how crucial *pax* is to his elegy, Tibullus personifies her as *Pax alma*, and endows her with the attributes of the rural deities invoked in 1.1: she holds the *spica* and bestows the plenty of nature. Furthermore, by returning to a theme which had controlled the

¹⁴ Cf. F. Solmsen (above, note 6) 307–8, and "Propertius in his Literary Relations with Tibullus and Vergil," *Philologus* 105 (1961) 273–77.

¹⁵ The importance of *pax* in the second half of 1.10 recalls Virgil's fuller treatment of a landscape untouched by violence at the end of the second Georgic: see in particular *Geo.* 2.495–98 and 523–30. Whereas in Virgil, however, peace is an outgrowth of Saturnian order, for Tibullus *pax* itself controls and imposes order upon the landscape. On the novel role of *pax* in Tibullan elegy, see also Solmsen (above, note 6) 298.

first section of 1.1, the presence and care of the rural divinities, Tibullus achieves both unity for his book and a resolution of the dilemma of 1.1. In modifying the realism of his rural landscape through the presence of *Pax*, Tibullus also reconciles elegiac conventions to his poetry by moderating their unrealistic extremes. *Pax* alone can secure for Tibullus a life compatible with his poetic landscape; she brings a blessed fertility and security to his farm and a new figure of inspiration to Augustan poetry.¹⁶

¹⁶ An earlier version of this paper was presented on April 2, 1982, at the annual meeting of the Classical Association of New England in Boston. I wish to acknowledge the assistance of the Faculty Research Fund at Bowdoin College for enabling me to pursue work on this paper.