

Haec Nobis Fingebamus: Tibullus, Ovid, and the Power of Imagination

1. Tibullus 1.5.19-20¹

At mihi **felicem uitam**, si salua fuisses,
fingebam demens, sed renuente deo.

Yet I, out of my mind, **was imagining** a
happy life for myself, if you were safe,
although the god was denying it.²

2. Tibullus 1.5.1

Asper eram et bene **discidium** me ferre loquebar;

I was tough, and I kept saying I bore the
breakup well;

3. Tibullus 1.5.21

Rura colam, **frugumque** aderit mea Delia **custos**

I will till the fields, and my Delia will be
present as a **guard of the fruits**

4. Tibullus 1.5.29-30

Illa **regat** cunctos, illi sint omnia curae:
at **iuuet** in tota **me nihil esse** domo.

Let her rule all, let all things be under her
care, but **let it be pleasing for me to be**
nothing in the whole house.

5. Ovid *Tristia* 4.2.57-64

Haec ego summotus qua possum **mente videbo**:
erepti nobis ius habet illa loci:
illa per immensas spatatur libera terras,
in caelum celeri pervenit illa fuga;
illa meos oculos mediam deducit in urbem,
inmunes tanti nec sinit esse boni;
invenietque animus, qua currus spectet eburnos;
sic **certe in patria per breve tempus ero**.

I, banished, will see these things the way I
can, **with my mind: my mind has a right to**
the place that's taken away from me; it
goes freely through vast lands, it reaches into
the sky with swift flight; **it leads my eyes**
into the middle of the city, and doesn't allow
them to be deprived of such great good; my
mind will find a place where it will watch the
ivory chariot; thus **for a short time I will**
truly be in my country.

6. Ovid *Tristia* 4.2.19

Ergo **omnis populus** poterit spectare triumphos

Therefore, **the whole populace** will be able to
watch the triumph

¹ All Latin text taken from the OCT editions.

² All translations are my own.

7. Ovid *Tristia* 4.2.65-71

Vera tamen capiet populus spectacula felix,
laetaque erit praesens cum duce turba suo.
At mihi fingendo tantum longeque remotis
auribus hic fructus percipiendus erit,
atque **procul Latio** diversum **missus** in orbem
qui narret cupido, vix erit, ista mihi.
is quoque **iam serum** referet **veteremque** triumphum:

Nevertheless, **the fortunate populace will comprehend the true spectacles** and the crowd will happily be present with its leader. **But for me** this boon must only be grasped **by imagining** and by my ears far removed, and there will scarcely be anyone who, **sent far from Latium** into this remote world, would tell me those things that I desire. He too will report a triumph **old and already too late**;

8. Tibullus 1.5.35-36

Haec mihi fingebam, quae nunc Eurusque Notusque
iactat odoratos uota per Armenios.

I was imagining these things for myself, prayers which now the southeast and south winds cast throughout fragrant Armenia.

9. Tibullus 1.5.67-68

Heu canimus frustra **nec uerbis uicta patescit**
ianua sed plena est percutienda manu.

Alas, I sing in vain, **nor does the door open conquered by my words**, but I have to knock with a hand full of gifts.

10. Ovid *Tristia* 4.2.17-18

Nos procul expulsos communia gaudia **fallunt,**
famaque tam longe non nisi parva venit.

The shared joys deceive me, banished far away, and only a small rumor comes from so far away.

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