

Ignotis...Terris: Center and Periphery in Tibullus 1.3

This paper considers how Tibullus represents the center and the periphery of his poetic world in poem 1.3. In 1.3 Tibullus' poetic 'ego', having left Italy in the company of Messalla, has fallen ill on the island of 'Phaeacia'. Separated from both Delia and his ideal elegiac-pastoral landscape, Tibullus describes 'Phaeacia', the Ages of Man, and the underworld in order to explore the center of his poetic world from a vantage point at its edge.

I demonstrate in this paper that each of the landscapes and time periods the poem describes is replete with literary, geographical, and generic resonances that illustrate Tibullus' alienation from his elegiac-pastoral ideal. My analysis considers first how Tibullus makes use of the toponym 'Phaeacia' to connect his location to the epic geographies of Homer and Apollonius Rhodius, a move which shapes his own elegiac geopoetics. Second, I look at Tibullus' description of the Ages of Man, Elysium, and Tartarus. Contrary to previous scholarship, which has emphasized parallels between Tibullus' Golden Age, his Elysium, and his elegiac-pastoral ideal, I contend that in this section of the poem Tibullus continues to subtly depict his alienation from the center of his elegiac world through these temporally and spatially peripheral examples.

In the conclusion of the paper, I situate 1.3 within the larger context of Tibullus' poetic project of redefining Roman pastoral myth, and in relation to contemporary discourses about genre, travel, and empire.

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