

## Time and Place in Tibullus 1.10

Tibullus' first book of elegies is famous for the rustic reveries of its poetic speaker. The speaker's evocation of idyllic moments in the country, particularly in poems 1.1, 1.5, and 1.10, charm and disarm the reader; then, just as the reader has been lulled, the reverie is broken as the speaker comes sharply back to reality. The manner in which Tibullus shifts between real and unreal has led many scholars to identify a dreamlike quality in his elegies, and to analyze the poems themselves like dreams (e.g. Miller 1999). In this talk, I seek to make sense of setting in Tibullus, focusing on poem 1.10 and the role of time and place in the speaker's dreamlike movements from the battlefield to the farm, and from childhood to old age.

Tibullus experiments with time and place throughout his two books, but the experimentation in poem 1.10 is perhaps the most baffling. The difficulty pervades the poem, but is encapsulated in a vignette that closes the elegy (51-68). Here a country bumpkin (*rusticus*, 51) drives his wife and children home from a sacred grove (51-52). In the next couplets, an elegiac woman (*femina*, 54) appears, along with an amator who has torn her hair and broken her doors (*scissosque capillos...perfractas conqueriturque fores*, 53-54). The sudden shift is difficult to understand, causing some readers to suspect a lacuna or other mischief in the manuscript tradition. I will argue that the text is sound, and that the shift in setting is highly characteristic of Tibullan elegy.

I analyze the poem into three overlapping parts, in each part highlighting themes related to time and place. In the first part (1-28), I focus on the speaker's tendency to define his traumas by reference to critical moments in the distant past; in the second part, I turn to the speaker's preoccupation with death, old age, and parenthood, concentrated in lines 23-52; and in the final

part, I explore the idiosyncratic quality of local and temporal instability that lines 45-68 share with many of the most memorable passages in Tibullus. Here the audience finds the speaker in his starkest realism and his most captivating fantasy. The relationship between the two has never been very well understood; it is this I hope to elucidate in my talk by re-focusing attention on the poet's manipulation of time and space.

#### Bibliography

Miller, P.A. 1999. "The Tibullan Dream Text." *TAPA* 129: 181-224.