

## Setting the Stage for Retribution: Tibullus 2.1 as a Programmatic Poem

Tibullus 2.1 at first appears to be merely a nostalgic, albeit tightly structured, description of single rustic religious festival (Musurillo 1975). Tzounakas has identified the poetic metadiscourse in the poem as a programmatic feature (Tzounakas 2013); I propose to identify another fundamental theme of the collection for which 2.1 prepares the reader. The tripartite structure is readily indicated by the invocation that each contains, first of rustic gods (2.1.1-36), then of Messalla (2.1.37-80), and finally of the god Amor (2.1.81-90). The narrator shows himself to be familiar with and a proponent of Roman religion and military, but wary of the god *Amor*, thus presenting himself as an adherent of traditional Roman values. By distinction, therefore, the poem prepares the background against which the reader will be able to appreciate the subversive nature of the poet's tumultuous and tortuous love affair with Nemesis (described in 2.3, 2.4, and 2.6). But though Tibullus devotes this poem primarily to establishing these values, in it he also subtly suggests that he will turn to erotic themes and even alludes to the name of his mistress (Nemesis). Thus, this poem is programmatic for Tibullus' second book of elegies.

### Bibliography

- Musurillo, H. 1975. "A Festival on Messalla's Estate: Tibullus II. 1 Reconsidered." In *Classica et Iberica: A Festschrift in Honor of the Reverent Joseph M.-F. Marique*, 107–17. Worcester, MA.
- Tzounakas, Spyridon. 2013. "Horace and the Poetology of Tibullus' Elegy 2.1." *Museum Helveticum* 70 (1): 16–32.