

Propertius and Ovid have been the prime beneficiaries of almost fifty years of sustained critical attention to Roman erotic elegy, far outstripping Tibullus as the focus of scholarly articles and monographs though the latter is now very well equipped with commentaries (Smith, André, Lenz rev. Galinsky, Putnam, Della Corte, Lee³ rev. Maltby, Murgatroyd 1980 and 1994, Maltby 2002). The commentators' important work, however, has seemingly not spurred the critical investigation of, e.g., rhetorical conventions, literary allusions, thematic motifs, and political commitments in the Tibullan corpus that they invite. This paper exploits the valuable findings of the commentators on Tibullus but draws its broader analytic from the political turn in contemporary Latin literary studies (Barchiesi, Connors, Habinek, Hinds, Kennedy; cf. Bing and Kuttner) to explore the extent and significance of 'imperial geographies' in Tibullan elegy.

Maltby (1999) has shown that Tibullus exploits non-Latin vocabulary (primarily Greek loanwords), not uniformly but rather for specific effect 'in poems where Hellenistic influence is particularly noticeable' (381). Thus Hellenistic sources have been proposed to explain Tibullus' rehearsal of Greek geographies and literary themes in 1.3 (e.g., Cairns, Maltby 2002 *ad loc.*). Similarly, scholars have analyzed 1.7's syncretistic play on Greco-Egyptian religious themes in the Gallic and Egyptian geographies of a birthday poem celebrating Messala's triumph over the Aquitani as an example of Tibullus' sophisticated adaptation of Alexandrian sources (e.g., Cairns, Maltby 2002 *ad loc.*, and Hunter). I argue here, however, that we should also treat Tibullus' deployment of non-Latin diction in Greek literary geographies as both expressing and enacting contemporary Latin literary and Roman imperial expansion and consolidation in the Mediterranean. In this connection, I also examine Tibullus' appropriation of foreign loanwords from the near east (appropriated into Latin through Greek though not necessarily Greek in origin) in 2.2 and 2.3, where Hellenistic literary influence has not (yet) been identified as prominent (though it reinforces my argument if it should be). These two poems locate addressee and poet in the Italian center of Roman power, and illustrate the flow of luxury products into Rome from the eastern periphery of empire, in a move that both reverses and complements the imperial geographies explored in 1.3 and 1.7. I conclude that Tibullus' poetry thus participates *in its very linguistic texture* in the larger Roman imperial projects that it occludes in an ostensibly un- or anti-political presentation of elegiac themes (*contra* Sullivan).

Imperial Geographies in Tibullan Elegy

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