

## WHAT'S IN A NAME? DELIA IN TIBULLUS 1.1

Delia, the name given to Tibullus' mistress in five of the poems in the first book of his elegies (1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.5, 1.6), has long inspired curiosity. Two approaches have dominated discussion.<sup>1</sup> The biographical approach takes its cue from the *Apology* of Apuleius (10), which regards Delia as a pseudonym:

eadem igitur opera accusant C. Catullum, quod Lesbiam pro Clodia nominarit, et Tigidam similiter, quod quae Metella erat Perillam scripserit, et Propertium, qui Cynthiam dicat, Hostiam dissimulet, et Tibullum, quod ei sit Plania in animo, Delia in uersu.

The identification of Delia with Plania is assumed to rest upon the association of Delia with the Greek adjective δῆλος, one Latin equivalent of which would be *planus*. The second approach associates her name with the island of Delos, the birthplace of the god of poetry, Apollo, and so evokes poetic inspiration; the names of Gallus' Lycoris and Propertius' Cynthia similarly evoke geographical features associated with cult names connected with Apollo.<sup>2</sup> Delos was also the birthplace of Apollo's sister Diana, goddess of the countryside, which the Tibullan lover wishfully imagines as the location of his idealized affair.<sup>3</sup> It is not the purpose of this brief article to reopen or review these discussions, rather to add a third approach that seems hitherto to have escaped attention, and is based upon Delia's introduction in the opening poem of the collection.

Delia is not named in Tibullus 1.1 until line 57, though she is then apostrophized again in lines 61 and 68. The poem's speaker contrasts military life in pursuit of wealth with the idealized bliss of the life of the humble *rusticus* he dreams of being. It seems he now even regrets having joined a campaign himself in search of riches (*iam modo, iam possim contentus uiuere paruo | nec semper longae deditus esse uiae*, 1.25–6; cf. *diuitias alius fuluo sibi congerat auro*, 1.1), a pursuit he is prepared to leave to those prepared to brave the hardships involved (*sit diues iure furorem | qui maris et tristes*

<sup>1</sup> The evidence is conveniently assembled and discussed in R. Maltby, *Tibullus: Elegies. Text, Introduction and Commentary* (Cambridge, 2002), 42–5. The text of Tibullus is cited from this edition.

<sup>2</sup> See D.F. Kennedy, *The Arts of Love: Five Studies in the Discourse of Roman Love Elegy* (Cambridge, 1993), 88.

<sup>3</sup> *Delia* is first attested in Latin in Verg. *Ecl.* 3.67, apparently as the name of the mistress of Menalcas (though this has been disputed since antiquity; see the note of W.V. Clausen, *Virgil Eclogues* [Oxford, 1995], ad loc.), and as a cult-title of Diana at *Ecl.* 7.29. On the latter passage, Clausen notes that, although Δῆλιος was an established cult-title of Apollo, Δηλία was not usually so used of Diana, and suspects that this is Virgil's innovation. Comedy frequently attests to the use of island names as a way to refer to a *hetaera*-figure ('the girl from ...', e.g. Chrysis in Menander's *Samia* and in Terence's *Andria*), and this is carried on in Catullus' *Lesbia*. *Delia* is the title of comedies attributed to Aristophanes and to Sophilus, as *CQ*'s anonymous referee points out.

*ferre potest pluuias*, 1.49-50). He does not reveal any erotic preoccupations until 1.45-6, when he fantasizes about lying in bed listening to the winds outside while holding a mistress, not named, in a tender embrace: *quam iuuat immites uentos audire cubantem | et dominam tenero continuisse sinu!* As Guy Lee has noted,<sup>4</sup> *continuisse* is a technical military term for hemming in the enemy, and is part of a complex series of plays on military terminology that runs throughout the poem, and eventually grows to contrast the life of the impoverished lover and that of the potentially wealthy soldier, the familiar theme of *militia amoris*, in 1.73-8:

nunc leuis est tractanda Venus, dum frangere postes  
 non pudet et rixas inseruisse iuuat.  
 hic ego dux milesque bonus. uos, signa tubaeque,  
 ite procul; cupidis uulnera ferte uiris,  
 ferte et opes: ego composito securus aceruo  
 dites despiciam despiciamque famem.

The consequences for his reputation have been willingly embraced as early as line 5, which Lee renders ‘let my general poverty transfer me to inaction’ (reading *me mea paupertas uitae traducat inert*).<sup>5</sup> Lee sees in *traducere* a military term of transferring a soldier from one company to another. Maltby (ad loc.) objects that ‘the normal construction in such contexts is with *ad* or *in* with the accusative rather than the dative’, and against the main manuscript tradition reads the ablative *uita ... inert* with *traducere* in ‘its more literal sense of “lead through”, perhaps with the suggestion of being paraded in a procession or exposed to disgrace’. For present purposes, the exact reading and the precise interpretation of *traducere* we may leave to one side. The adjective *iners* that the speaker uses here to characterize his preferred lifestyle is one with strong connotations of cowardice in the face of the enemy, which are explicitly called to mind in the previous couplet describing the hardships facing one who would go to war in pursuit of wealth: *quem labor adsiduus uicino terreat hoste | Martia cui somnos classica pulsa fugent* (1.3-4). A few examples will suffice to indicate the stark contrast with the courage expected of a soldier.<sup>6</sup> Cicero contrasts the followers of Catiline with the Roman citizens they would plot against (*Cat.* 2.10): *hoc uero quis ferre possit, inertes homines fortissimis uiris insidiari, stultissimos prudentissimis, ebriosos sobriis, dormientes uigilantibus?* When Turnus attacks the Trojans, his companions *Teucrum mirantur inertia corda, | non aequo dare se campo, non obuia ferre arma uiros, sed castra fouere* (Verg. *Aen.* 9.55-7). Horace asks *quid non ebrietas dissignat? operta recludit, | spes iubet esse ratas, ad proelia trudit inertem* (*Epist.* 1.5.16-17). Caesar berates his troops for their lack of spirit: *tremuit saeua sub uoce minantis | uolgus iners* (Luc. *B.C.* 5.364-5). In Tibullus, the behaviour of Messalla, together with the material rewards and renown that accompany it, is set up as an exemplar of all the speaker’s lifestyle is not (1.1.53-4): *te bellare decet terra, Messalla, marique | ut domus hostiles praeferat exuuias*. In contrast, the speaker, in the guise of the locked-out lover (*exclusus amator*) characteristic of love elegy, is portrayed as a slave (*me retinent uinctum formosae uincla*

<sup>4</sup> A.G. Lee, ‘*Otium cum indignitate*: Tibullus 1.1’, in T. Woodman and D. West (edd.), *Quality and Pleasure in Latin Poetry* (Cambridge, 1974), 94–114, at 107–8.

<sup>5</sup> A.G. Lee, *Tibullus, Elegies: Introduction, Text, Translation and Notes* (Leeds, 1990<sup>3</sup>), 3; for a defence of this reading, cf. id. (n. 4), 107.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *OLD* s.v. *iners* 3.

*puellae*, | *et sedeo duras ianitor ante fores*, 1.1.55-6), a trophy set at the door of his *puella*, just as the spoils of the enemy adorn the door of Messalla.

It is only at this point that the elusive *puella* is named, and the phraseology of the couplet repays close attention (1.1.57-8):

non ego laudari curo, mea Delia; tecum  
dum modo sim, quaeso segnis inersque uocer.

The speaker rejects the fame and reputation (cf. *laudari*) he has associated with the soldiering of Messalla, gladly preferring, so long as he can be with 'my' Delia, to be called *segnis inersque*.<sup>7</sup> *segnis*, like *iners*, is a word that connotes an absence of military spirit; Maltby ([n. 1], ad loc.) cites Livy 29.1.6, *segnes atque inutiles milites*. *Dēlia* may well evoke δῆλος or Δῆλος and their various associations, but consider also that in her name can be heard the Greek word for 'cowardice', δειλία, of which it is a transliteration. The soldier's life, which he would wish to reject, he has associated with terror in the face of the enemy (*quem labor assiduus uicino terreat hoste*, 1.1.3). It is only in the context of the *militia amoris*, breaking down doors and brawling, that he can imagine himself a 'good soldier' (*hic ego dux milesque bonus*, 1.1.75), though the distinctly craven behaviour he displays as a lover in the following poem serves to suggest retrospectively that this is yet more of the wishful thinking that characterizes the speaker.<sup>8</sup> The name of his *puella* sounds like an ironic reflection of his dealings with the world, whether as soldier or as lover.

The phraseology of *quaeso ... uocer* (58) is also worthy of note. Guy Lee aptly translates 'they can call me slack and ineffective, if only I'm with you'.<sup>9</sup> The names of poet-lovers and their beloveds are frequently associated when they are referred to in erotic literature. In successive couplets in Propertius 2.34, as the poet seeks to construct a tradition to which his work can be added, Varro's name is juxtaposed with that of Leucadia (*Varro Leucadiae maxima flamma suae*, 2.34.86), Catullus' with Lesbia (*haec quoque lasciuu cantarunt scripta Catulli*, | *Lesbia quis ipsa notior Helena*, 2.34.87-8), Calvus' is associated with Quintilia (*haec etiam docti confessa est pagina Calui*, | *cum caneret*

<sup>7</sup> *iners* recurs in 1.1.71, *iam subrepet iners aetas, neque amare decebit*, which further extends the interaction of military and erotic associations of the adjective developed in the poem; cf. P. Lee-Stecum, *Powerplay in Tibullus: Reading Elegies Book One* (Cambridge, 1998), 62.

<sup>8</sup> Briefly: rather than break down the door of the obdurate master of the house (presumably the *coniunx* of Delia, cf. 1.2.43), he wishes for the rain and thunderbolts of Jupiter to strike it (*ianua difficilis domini, te uerberet imber*, | *te Iouis imperio fulmina missa petant*, 1.2.7-8), and then prays that the door, overcome not by his shoulder or fists but by his complaints, open without a sound (*ianua, iam pateas uni mihi, uicta querellis*, | *neu furtim uerso cardine aperta sones*, 1.2.9-10). A brawl once inside looks to be the last thing on his mind. Compare also the references to cowardice and fear in relation to the night-time activities of the lover in 1.2.23-4 (*nec docet [sc. Venus] hoc omnes sed quos nec inertia tardat* | *nec uetat obscura surgere nocte timor*) and, as he commits himself to the protection of Venus, to the dangers he imagines himself facing in his nocturnal wanderings in 1.2.25-30 (*en ego cum tenebris tota uagor anxius urbe* | ... | *nec sinit occurrat quisquam qui corpora ferro* | *uulnera aut rapta praemia ueste petat*. | *quisquis amore tenetur eat tutusque sacerque* | *qualibet; insidias non timuisse decet*). In the dark, even the sound of footsteps and the prospect of recognition by those he meets fill him with fear in 1.2.35-8 (*parcite luminibus, seu uir seu femina fiat* | *obuia; celari uult sua furta Venus*. | *ne strepitu terrete pedum neu quaerite nomen* | *neu prope fulgenti lumina ferte face*). Delia remains an unseen presence in this poem, mediated (as in 1.1) only by the lover's words. Note also the language of overcoming fear he juxtaposes with her name when he apostrophizes her and encourages her to give her guards the slip in 1.2.15-16: *tu quoque, ne timide, Delia, falle*; | *audendum est: fortes adiuuat ipsa Venus*.

<sup>9</sup> Lee (n. 5), 5.

*miseræ funera Quintiliae*, 2.34.89-90) and Gallus' is set alongside Lycoris (*et modo formosa quam multa Lycoride Gallus | mortuus inferna uulnera lauit aqua*, 2.34.91-2). In succession to these pairings, Propertius hopes that his name and that of Cynthia will live on (*Cynthia quin uiuet uersu laudata Properti, | hos inter si me ponere Fama uolet*, 2.34.93-4). As *laudata* and *Fama* in this final couplet suggest (and cf. too *notior* used of Lesbia in 2.34.88), the issue of fame and reputation is central to the association of names. The topos may go back to Gallus. In *Am.* 1.15, like Propertius 2.34 the concluding poem of an elegiac book in which poetic reputation is the point at issue, Ovid remarks (29-30):

Gallus et Hesperii et Gallus **notus** Eois,  
et sua cum Gallo **nota** Lycoris erit.

The similarity of this couplet to *Ars am.* 3.537 (*Vesper et Eoae nouere Lycorida terrae*) makes direct allusion to something Gallus himself wrote about the worldwide fame their linked names would enjoy very likely. The topos of names joined in fame through their love is familiar enough that Ovid can make it the source of humour in *Am.* 1.3, where it is used in the final couplet as the climax to a series of ploys of seduction, the phraseology perhaps a nod to Gallus (25-6):

nos quoque per totum pariter cantabimur orbem  
iunctaque semper erunt nomina nostra tuis.

The joke is that no named beloved has appeared yet in the collection (*Am.* 1.3 refers only to *quae me nuper praedata puella est*, 1). Is Tibullus 1.1.57-8 another humorous debunking of the elegiac theme of *iuncta nomina*? The phrasing of the couplet emphatically juxtaposes 'I' and 'you': *non ego laudari curo, mea Delia; tecum | dum modo sim, quaeso segnīs inersque uocer*. His close association with *mea Delia*, 'my' Δειλία,<sup>10</sup> is the source of his (lack of) reputation, and runs as far as even the willing suppression of his own name.<sup>11</sup> Or, perhaps, the oblique suggestion of it?<sup>12</sup> Hor. *Epist.* 1.4 is addressed to an Albius, who since antiquity has been regularly identified with the poet Tibullus. Horace seemingly puns on his name when he addresses him as *Albi*, *nostrorum sermonum candidē iudex* (1.4.1). *candidus* is usually a term of approbation, *albus* not always so. In general, paleness is the colour appropriate to a lover (cf. Ov. *Ars am.* 1.729, *palleat omnis amans: hic est color aptus amanti*), in contrast with a sailor, farmer or athlete (cf. Ov. *Ars am.* 1.723-8), who would be subject to prolonged periods in direct sunlight,—or a soldier, as Tib. 1.1.25-8 implies: *iam modo, iam possim contentus uiuere paruo | nec semper longae deditus esse uiae, | sed Canis aestiuos ortus uitare sub umbra | arboris ad riuos praetereuntis aquae*. In particular, *albus* is used of the paleness caused by blood draining from the skin—the complexion

<sup>10</sup> The use of the possessive pronoun with the beloved's name is a characteristic of love elegy in general (cf. Ov. *Am.* 1.15.30 *sua cum Gallo nota Lycoris erit*, with McKeown's note ad loc.), but seems peculiarly appropriate to the topos of *iuncta nomina*: cf. Prop. 2.34.86, *Varro Leucadiae maxima flamma suae*; Ov. *Tr.* 2.427-8, *sic sua lasciuo cantata est saepe Catullo | femina, cui falsum Lesbia nomen erat*.

<sup>11</sup> Looking back to the first appearance of the name Delia in Verg. *Ecl.* 3.67, might one perhaps see a humorous contrast there between Δειλία and the associations of the name of Menalcas with μένος, 'might' or 'force', or μένω, 'stand fast', and ἄλκη, 'strength'?

<sup>12</sup> I am grateful to *CQ*'s anonymous referee for the suggestion to develop this point.

associated with overpowering emotional responses, whether of guilt (cf. Hor. *Epod.* 7.15, *tacent et albus ora pallor inficit*)<sup>13</sup> or of fear (cf. Pers. 3.115, *alges, cum excussit membris timor albus aristas*).

One further consideration. Tibullus' predilection for etymological wordplay has been the focus of intensive scholarly study for a generation now.<sup>14</sup> Thus in Tib. 2.3.3-4, *seruitium sed triste datur, teneorque catenis, | et numquam misero uincla remittit Amor*, Francis Cairns has suggested an etymological play on *catenae* and *teneo*, citing Isid. *Etym.* 5.27.9, *catenae ... quod capiendo contineant*. Also, in that *Amor* suggests *Venus*, he detects an etymological connection between *Venus* and *vincire*, citing Varro, *Ling.* 5.61-2, *... et horum uinctionis uis Venus. hinc comicus: 'huic uictrix Venus, uidesne haec?' non quia uincere uelit Venus, sed uincire ...*<sup>15</sup> Many ancient etymologies sound eccentric to the modern philologist's ear, but often have a rationale in their particular contexts. Indeed, David Sedley has written of the remarkable catalogue of etymological analyses in Plato's *Cratylus* that 'considerations of philosophical profundity and complexity are assumed to outweigh those of philological obviousness', and '[etymology] can ... offer us a whole range of decodings which any Platonically attuned reader will recognize as philosophically correct'.<sup>16</sup> And it is to the *Cratylus* that we can look for an etymology that, *mutatis mutandis*, any attuned reader of Tibullus will see as psychologically correct and thoroughly in harmony with what we have just seen of his practice. Among the terms for virtues and vices that Socrates analyses is *δελία*, which he explains as 'the violent tying down of the soul': ἡ δελία τῆς ψυχῆς σημαίνει δεσμὸν ἰσχυρόν (415c). Socrates sees the word as a combination of the verb 'to bind' (*δεῖν*) and the adverb 'excessively' (*λίαν*) in the explanation he goes on to give: δεσμὸς οὖν ὁ λίαν καὶ ὁ μέγιστος τῆς ψυχῆς ἡ δελία ἄν εἴη.<sup>17</sup> Look now once more at the couplet that immediately precedes the one in which the name of Delia is first introduced (Tib. 1.1.55-6):

me retinent uinctum formosae uincla puellae,  
et sedeo duras ianitor ante fores

In addition to the verbal plays on restraint, binding and chains in line 55, a doorkeeper (*ianitor*, 56) was the most menial of slaves and often depicted as chained to his post.<sup>18</sup> The notion that, as in line 46 (*dominam tenero continuisse sinu*), the lover might be the one who would be doing the restraining seems increasingly in retrospect yet more

<sup>13</sup> See L.C. Watson, *A Commentary on Horace's Epodes* (Oxford, 2003), ad loc.

<sup>14</sup> See especially F. Cairns, *Tibullus: A Hellenistic Poet at Rome* (Cambridge, 1979), 87–110; id., 'Ancient "etymology" and Tibullus: on the classification of "etymologies" and on "etymological markers"', *PCPhS* 42 (1996), 24–59; R. Maltby, *A Lexicon of Ancient Latin Etymologies* (Leeds, 1991). Maltby's commentary on Tibullus (n. 1) draws attention to possible etymologies as they occur in the text. The bibliography is now extensive, but in this context cf. especially S. Hinds, 'Venus, Varro and the *vates*: towards the limits of etymologizing interpretation', *Dictynna* 3 (2006), online at <http://dictynna.revues.org/206> (accessed 28 May 2015). Hinds explores in detail the ancient etymologies for the name Venus discussed below with important general comments on Latin poetic etymologizing.

<sup>15</sup> Cairns (n. 14 [1979]), 94–5.

<sup>16</sup> D. Sedley, *Plato's Cratylus* (Cambridge, 2003), 97 and 98.

<sup>17</sup> The imagery of the δεσμοί of love is found in Meleager, *Anth. Pal.* 12.132.3–4, τί μάτην ἐνὶ δεσμοῖς | σπαίρεις; αὐτὸς Ἔρωσ τὰ περὰ σοι δέδεκεν, in an epigram addressed to his soul (cf. 1, οὐ σοι ταῦτ' ἐβόων, ψυχῆ).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Ov. *Am.* 1.6.1, *ianitor (indignum) dura religate catena* with McKeown's note ad loc.

wishful thinking on his part.<sup>19</sup> Delia is named at last in 1.1.57, and her name linked to that of the lover. What's in a name, then? As Plato's *Cratylus* reminds us, the function of etymology can be to help us assess the 'correctness' of names—and to decode the significance that may be locked up within them.

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<sup>19</sup> Cairns (n. 14 [1979]), 96 suggests a possible etymological play on *tenero* and *continuisse* in 1.1.46.