

### Corcyra, Cassiope, and Phaeacia: Propertius 1.17 and Tibullus 1.3

Tibullus and Propertius typically represent their poetic ‘egos’ avoiding travel in favor of pursuing the life of the elegiac *amator* at Rome or in the Italian countryside (Prop. 1.6, Tib. 1.1). Moreover, they discourage their beloveds from attempting journeys, expressing concern on the occasions when they do travel (Prop. 1.8, 1.11, 1.12, 2.19, 2.32, Tib. 1.9). Yet alongside their anti-travel rhetoric Tibullus and Propertius both produce elegies that present them journeying to or towards the Ionian island of Corcyra: Prop. 1.17 and Tib. 1.3. Although the connection between these two poems is well known, the shared references to Corcyra in the third line of each elegy have not been significantly investigated. This paper argues that the common destination in these two poems illuminates important aspects of the discourses surrounding travel in Roman love elegy, a genre that begins with the traveling love poet-imperial agent Cornelius Gallus and concludes with the exile of its final practitioner, Ovid.

In 1.3 Tibullus, having fallen ill while accompanying Messalla to the east, finds himself on Corcyra, which he calls by the Homeric toponym, Phaeacia. Propertius 1.17 may also refer to Corcyra. The interpretation of Propertius’ reference to Cassiope at the opening of 1.17, his sea storm elegy, has long divided scholars. 1.17.3, a textually difficult verse, which Fedeli prints as *nec mihi Cassiope solito visura carinam*, has been interpreted as either a reference to the constellation or to the port on Corcyra. This paper makes two related assertions: (1) that Propertius’ mention of Cassiope should be interpreted as a reference to Corcyra; and (2) that Prop. 1.17 and Tib. 1.3 engage with each other through their shared destination. For my purposes, arguments about the priority of the *Monobiblos* or the first book of Tibullus are beside the point (e.g., Lyne [1998], Knox [2005]). Whatever the precise chronology of publication, the two texts were in dialogue through recitations and pre-publication circulation.

The first section of the paper offers a novel rationale for concluding that Propertius refers to the port Cassiope through a comparison with other travel narratives that mention the town. Heyworth (2007a) argues against the interpretation of Cassiope in 1.17 as the port, contending that it is an obscure town. Heyworth, who believes that the line must refer to the constellation, emends the verse in his recent *OCT* to *nec mihi Cassiope solvit conversa carinam*. Yet, as this paper demonstrates, a common theme in descriptions of stops at Corcyra, and in particular at Cassiope, is stormy weather, which fits the context of the tempest in Prop. 1.17 (cf. *Od.* 5.291-443, *Cic. ad Fam.* 16.9.1, *Gel.* 19.1). Indeed, Tibullus' stay at Corcyra due to illness in 1.3 provides a similar example of the island functioning as a stop when problems arise. Suetonius' description of Cassiope as the first port for ships crossing from Brundisium also supports the notion that it could function as an emergency stop (*Ner.* 22.3; on Corcyra as the first port of call cf. *Caes. Civ.* 3.100, *Liv.* 44.1.3, 45.41.3, *Luc.* 2.623, *Tac. Ann.* 3.1).

The second part of the paper explores the implications of the shared destination of Tib. 1.3 and Prop. 1.17. The paper demonstrates that the mythological resonances of Propertius' toponym Cassiope, echoed in the reference to the Nereids at 1.17.25, are in dialogue with the Homeric valence of Tibullus' 'Phaeacia'. I also argue that the shared destination for the poets' ill-fated journeys sets the two poems in competition with one another: each poet implies that he is less fit for travel than the other. The assertion of being a poor traveler not only coheres with the anti-travel themes of elegy, but also functions as a claim to elegiac glory by emphasizing the *puella* as the inescapable 'geographic' center of each poet's first book. The paper concludes by suggesting that the parallel journeys in Tib. 1.3 and Prop. 1.17 demonstrate one facet of how both poets reject the traditional role of Roman elites as provincial imperial agents, while embracing the Augustan emphasis on the centrality of Rome and Italy.

### Selected Bibliography

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