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ARTICLE

Hell is other poets: Tibullus, Ovid and Statius in queer Elysium*

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Abstract

The Underworld is a 'shared space' for poets and their poems, but one that exists on different timelines to Upperworld spaces, such that it is built on cyclicality rather than linearity. In this article, I explore the cycles within and between the homoerotic Underworld poetry of Tibullus, Domitius Marsus, Ovid and Statius. Using a combination of traditional philology and queer temporal approaches, I show how characters 'recycle' through these texts, so that Tibullus' Marathus cycles into Statius' Philetus through metapoetic metempsychosis. I begin with the role of the Underworld in Latin poetry, before turning to Tibullus' death, as commemorated by Ovid and Marsus. Next, I explore how Tibullus 'kills' Marathus, so that Ovid can hint at his being in the Underworld. Finally, I turn to Statius' poem on Philetus to show how it continues the cycles of earlier poetry, before concluding with a discussion of the consequences of Elysium's queerness.

Keywords: Ovid; Tibullus; Statius; Domitius Marsus; Underworld; queer theory; cyclicality; temporality

at sacri vates et divum cura vocamur;
    sunt etiam qui nos numen habere putent.
scilicet omne sacrum Mors importuna profanat,
    omnibus obscuras inicit illa manus.[1]

Yet, we poets are called 'sacred' and 'beloved of the gods'
    and some even think that we possess divinity.
Undoubtedly, cruel Death defiles every sacred thing,
    and lays her shadowy hands over everything.

Ov., *Am.* 3.9.17–20

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[1] My text for Ovid is Kenney 1995; for Tibullus, Postgate 1924; for Statius, my text is largely taken from Newlands 2011a, with some (acknowledged) deviations. All translations are my own.

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Death is a rapacious force that pulls everything it touches — including love poets — into its all-consuming void. The post-death space of the Underworld, then, must be bursting at the seams with residents and their memories.

In describing death's tendency to absorb poets into it, Ovid cannot help absorbing the language of another poet — *Amores* 3.9's dedicatee, Tibullus.[2] Where are people like Ovid and Tibullus called *sacri vates* ('sacred poets')? The first extant reference is Tib. 2.5.114: *vati parce, puella, sacro* ('spare the sacred poet, girl').[3] In the previous line of Tibullus' poem, we find *divum … tutela* ('charge of the gods'), which is reconfigured in Ovid's *divum cura* ('beloved of the gods'). The final two lines quoted above clearly absorb, then correct,[4] the beginning of Tibullus' own Underworld poem, Tib. 1.3.4–5 (*abstineas avidas Mors modo nigra manus./abstineas, Mors atra, precor*, 'black Death, hold back your greedy hands now. Hold them back, dark Death, I pray'). Both death and Ovid, then, are hungry for Tibullus.

In this article, I explore the Underworld as a queer 'shared space' in the homoerotic poetry of four Latin authors: Tibullus, Domitius Marsus, Ovid and Statius. I argue that these poets build, in overlapping ways, on one another's presentation of the Underworld, such that their poems function as separate 'entrances' to the same Underworld space. Within this Underworld, later poets may encounter earlier poets (and, perhaps, *vice versa*), as well as the characters from their poems; this results in a 'recycling' of personalities over time, so that Ovid recreates Tibullus' beloved, Marathus, within the dead soul of the poet Cornelius Gallus, who is then revived and killed anew under Statius' pen, now using the name Philetus. These multiple stages of interconnection create a corpus of poetry from the early years of Augustus' reign to the later years of the Flavian dynasty that interweave death, commemorative poetry and homoerotic love.

I begin, in Section I, with an overview of the poetic ends to which the Underworld is put in Latin poetry — particularly epic poetry — and the scholarship on it. I suggest that the Roman literary imagination associates the Underworld with cyclicality and iterability, which I connect to queer theoretical ideas about temporality. In Section II, I discuss Tibullus' death as a literary trope in Ovid, *Amores* 3.9 and Domitius Marsus, fr. 180 (Hollis) to show how it is associated with homoerotic companionship and cyclical presence in Elysium. Next, in Section III, I turn to the death of Tibullus' male beloved, Marathus, which is figured (if not stated outright) in Tib. 1.9. The effect of this is twofold: (1) Tibullus connects his own death, and the destruction of his poetry, with the loss of Marathus; and (2) Tibullus establishes what might be thought of as endings (e.g. death or the final line of a poem) as inflection points, not conclusions. Both features lay the ground for my discussion, in Section IV, of how, in *Silvae* 2.6, Statius recycles both Tibullus' poems about Marathus (including his death) and Ovid's poem about Tibullus' own death. I show, by drawing on notions of poetic metempsychosis and cyclicality, how Statius' play on anonymity and comparativity ultimately encourages a reading of *Silvae* 2.6 in which the deceased Philetus becomes a second Marathus. Finally, in Section V, I consider the implications of Elysium's queerness for Roman poetic eternality and for classicists' understandings of intertextuality.

Throughout, I set historical time (in which Tibullus precedes Ovid, who precedes Statius) against literary time which is queerer and less linear. Therefore, I read poets and poems against one another, in broadly chronological, but not always consistently linear, ways; the approach is intertextual, but in a manner that pushes beyond philologically charting allusions to previous texts, and into a queerer and more Kristevan sense of intertextuality

[2] Something he does throughout *Am.* 3.9; see n. 51. See also Williams 2003 on non-Tibullan allusions.
[3] See also Hor., *Carm.* 4.9.20; Ov., *Ars am.* 3.539; Calp., *Ecl.* 4.65; Valerius Flaccus, *Argonautica* 6.114.
[4] See Reed 1997: 262.

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which encourages textual filiations forwards, backwards and obliquely.[5] For queer intertextuality is not purely bidirectional: it is not just that Statius may act on Ovid as readily as Ovid may act on Statius (see V). Nor is it purely cyclical (although cycles are important), such that homoerotic poetry Oedipally returns to the same points on a ring, like the regulatory cycling of the seasons, and that the straight line of historical time bends into a slightly less straight, but nonetheless unidirectional, circle. Rather, it is attuned to strange or unpredictable entanglements and 'loopy' modes of reading that cycles may incur.[6] It is not cyclical in the sense 'helical', progressively winding around itself in a regimented fashion (the helix is, after all, the shape of that agent of procreation, DNA); instead, it is cyclical like the tornado, where repeated turning entangles objects in chaotic fashion and drives them towards metamorphosis, perhaps even destruction.[7] Not all cycles are queer but some cyclicality enacts and produces queer entanglement.

I Plutonian poetics

The Underworld is a well-mapped place in Latin poetry.[8] From Lucretius[9] to Virgil (twice),[10] to Ovid (thrice),[11] to Lucan,[12] to Silius Italicus,[13] to Statius, in the *Thebaid*,[14] there is a well-established tradition of the locales and geographies of Underworld spaces encountered by those who venture down on catabases,[15] especially in epic poetry.[16] Similarly well established are the poetological ends to which these spaces are put in Latin verse. The Underworld becomes at once a way to reflect on the plots and narratives of the poem at hand and a space which connects poems to the worlds of past and, I suggest, future, poetry; as Hardie has observed, 'the traveler to Death's kingdom has instantaneous access to a kind of worldwide web of the past'.[17]

The Underworld is a shared space, and, as we shall see, a queer one, removed from the limitations of (straight)forward-moving chronologies as much as it is from the constraints

[5] Kristeva, coiner of the term *intertextualité* as a multidirectional process (1969: 113), would be surprised by how linear some contemporary intertextual readings are; for recent critiques of overly linear intertextual practice in classics, see Rimell 2019: esp. 458; Giusti 2023.

[6] For queer 'loopiness' — both psychiatric and cyclical — see Halberstam 2011: 53–86.

[7] See Kosofsky Sedgwick 1996: 279–80; Neyra 2020 (especially 132–7) on queer intertextuality's propensity towards odd juxtapositions. For queer (self-)destruction, see Edelman 2004.

[8] Although questions of topography are notoriously complex; see Feldherr 1999; Clark 2001; Gee 2017. See Brodd 2022 for the dreamlike (and thus topographically polysemous) quality of the Virgilian Underworld; M. Y. Myers (2019: 2) says that the Virgilian Underworld 'resists being mappable'.

[9] Lucr. 3.912–1075, following Reinhardt 2004; Buglass 2019.

[10] Verg., *G.* 4.467–93; *Aen.* 6.264–899.

[11] Ov., *Met.* 4.432–46, 10.11–77, 11.61–66. Not counting Ovid's non-epic non-catabatic Underworlds in *Amores* 2.6 and 3.9 (see below).

[12] Luc., 6.413–830.

[13] Sil., *Pun.* 13.381–895, with Reitz 1982; Billerbeck 1983; Klaassen 2010: esp. 113–26; the relative chronologies of *Punica* 13 and *Silvae* 2 are not entirely clear, but see van der Keur 2024: 2–7 for a detailed recent discussion.

[14] Stat., *Theb.* 7.794–8.126, with Bennardo 2018. See also the *necyia* at 4.406–645.

[15] Catabases are closely related to *necyiae*; the former is a physical journey to the Underworld, whereas the latter invoke the Underworld to the Upperworld by ritual means. There has been an effort recently to consider these two literary tropes together (Baertschi 2013; Reitz 2019). See Herrero de Jáuregui 2020 on the physicality of catabatic journeys.

[16] Stemming, in Greco-Roman literature, from Odysseus' *necyia* in *Odyssey* 11, which inaugurates both the tradition and its potential for poetological implications; see Most 1992; Gazis 2018. For the Underworld as an epic space, see Most 1992; Hardie 2004; Reitz 2019. See also para-epic texts like the *Culex*, with Marinčič 1998; Seelentag 2012: 22–9; Kearey 2018; Hömke 2020; K. S. Myers 2020.

[17] Hardie 2004: 143 See also Laterza 2021 on the temporal dimensions of *Aeneid* 6's Underworld.

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of Upperworld events. It may be accessed from various places,[18] and at various moments in historical time, but, narratively, exists in perpetual cyclicality.[19] Thus, it is the space *par excellence* in which stories can be not only told, but retold.[20] As Aeneas descends into *Aeneid* 6's Underworld, he meets Palinurus, a recycled Elpenor from the *Odyssey*; as he looks at the crowd of tragic women encircling Dido (Phaedra, Procris, Eriphyle, Evadne, Pasiphaë, Laodamia and Caeneus), we are induced to restage half a dozen Attic tragedies; as he speaks with Deiphobus, the reader's mind circles back to the conversation between Hercules and Meleager in Bacchylides' fifth *Ode*, which itself echoes with the memory of Odysseus' conversations with Achilles and Agamemnon in *Odyssey* 11. The same cast of characters — albeit sometimes under different names — parades before any visitor to the Underworld and, as Reitz has it, looking at Latin literary Underworlds produces 'a kaleidoscopic view nurtured by the many texts that have provided audiences with a 'map' of the abodes of the dead'.[21]

The Underworld's cyclicality was well known in the ancient world. Often attributed to the mythical Orpheus,[22] the notion that souls were engaged in a cyclical process of reincarnation is first expressed by Empedocles (*Catharmoi* fr. 108 Wright):

> ἤδη γάρ ποτ' ἐγὼ γενόμην κοῦρός τε κόρη τε,
> θάμνος τ' οἰωνός τε καὶ ἔξαλος ἔλλοπος ἰχθύς.
>
> For I have already previously been both a boy and a girl,
> a shrub and a bird and a mute fish in the sea.

Already, in Empedocles' multi-gender (and multi-species) past lives, we may sense a queer potential in this process.[23] The Empedoclean soul's cyclicality would be developed in subtly different ways across several Platonic texts (i.e. the *Gorgias, Phaedo, Phaedrus, Republic* and *Timaeus*) such that, by the advent of Latin literature, the Underworld was already cyclical, rather than static.[24] This cyclical Underworld is haunted by a particular group in Tartarus: the so-called 'great damned' — perpetually punished sinners whose torments enact the cyclicality of their setting.[25] In particular, the image of Ixion on his wheel is emblematic. For Ovid, 'Ixion turns, and both follows and flees himself' (*Met.* 4.461, *volvitur Ixion et se sequiturque fugitque*) — the cyclicality enacted by verb-heavy phrasing — while Virgil's two mentions of Ixion (*Aen.* 6.616–17, *radiisque rotarum/districti pendent*, 'some people hang,

[18] See Barrière 2016.

[19] See Laterza 2024 on *Aeneid* 6's heterotopic qualities.

[20] See van der Keur 2024: 12 for an analysis of the recycling between Hom., *Od.* 11, Verg., *Aen.* 6 and Sil., *Pun.* 13.

[21] Reitz 2019: 464.

[22] See Edmonds 2021: esp. 125–7.

[23] Cf. Saetta Cottone 2023 on Empedoclean resonances in the rather queer myth of Aristophanes at Pl., *Symp.* 189e–93d.

[24] For the epistemic journey from Empedocles to Plato, see Edmonds 2014; Saetta Cottone 2023. For Platonic conceptions, see the overview and bibliography in Long 2021.

[25] See Della Corte 1982; Martorana 2022: 271–2 (with bibliography). Roman conceptions of the Underworld were not cartographically precise (see n. 8), but Tartarus — home of the 'great damned' and synecdochically called Acheron after its river (Verg., *Aen.* 6.297) — and Elysium are clearly separate places. The Sibyl places them as opposite destinations of a forking road: *dextera .../hac iter Elysium nobis; at laeva malorum/exercet poenas et ad impia Tartara mittit* (6.541–43, 'to the right is our path to Elysium; but the leftward way oversees punishments and goes to wicked Tartarus'). I principally discuss Elysium in this article as it is explicitly the setting for the poems on which I focus (Marsus, fr. 180.2 Hollis; Ov., *Am.* 3.9.60; Stat., *Silv.* 2.6.109); however, the whole Underworld cycles queerly and these introductory comments reflect that.

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stretched out from the spokes of wheels';[26] *G.* 4.484, *Ixionii vento rota constitit orbis*, 'the turning of Ixion's wheel stopped') centre the wheel (*rota*) on which he eternally turns (or, in the *Georgics*' case, stops turning).[27]

The Ixionic wheel returns,[28] crucially, later on in Virgil's description of the metempsychosis of the souls waiting by the river Lethe 'where they turned the wheel for a thousand years' (*Aen.* 6.748, *ubi mille rotam volvere per annos*), a phrase recycled from Ennius' own lines on metempsychosis (= fr. 9 Manuwald).[29] I will cycle back to Virgil, metempsychosis and Ennius at this article's end.

The Underworld's cyclicality renders it a queer space, *vis-à-vis* the Upperworld, where, on a human scale, life moves from A to B (or from B to D — Birth to Death) in a linear fashion.[30] Upperworld time follows a unidirectional arrow — an arrow that represents, after Halberstam, 'straight time'.[31] The queer Underworld becomes a place where different people, plucked from different moments in 'straight time', may come together in 'strange encounters', to use Ahmed's phrase;[32] where, in the *Punica*, Scipio Africanus, who lived in the third to second centuries B.C.E., may encounter Homer (13.778–97) and the great heroes of Greek myth (13.798–805) alongside late republican figures like Pompey and Julius Caesar who postdate him (13.861–64). Indeed, as we shall see, the topic of the Underworld threatens the dissolution of some aspects of identity as it moves through historical time.[33] Metempsychosis and the river Lethe make the Underworld a space in which some souls begin the process of reincarnation, losing their memories, but maintaining traces of their former selves. This queer place does not tend to reproduce the chronologies of the Upperworld. Here, death is not simply the end of life; instead, the Underworld allows (and even encourages) 'encounter, fantasy, and imagination' within and for its 'devious landscapes of desire'.[34]

The Underworld comprises 'landscapes of desire', precisely because it lies beyond the experiential and, for the living, can only be fantasised from the vantage of lack.[35] It is a utopian space of which the writer cannot (at the time of writing) have personal experience and to which they may never go (depending on one's own beliefs).[36] In Lucretian language (3.627–30):

[26] Horsfall (2013a: 427) explains the anonymous plural subjects: 'on one (or more) wheels, Ixion (and, if you will, the likes of Ixion)'.

[27] Later recycled at *Aetna* 83: *idemque rotant Ixionis orbem* ('the same poets set Ixion's wheel turning').

[28] Horsfall (2013a: 506–7) rightly points out that *Aen.* 6.748's wheel is not, *stricto sensu*, Ixion's but picks up Orphic and Pythagorean images of the wheels of transmigration. There is no reason (following Clark 1975: esp. 130–1; Bernabé 2005: 58) to ignore the resonances of Ixion's wheel of torture here.

[29] Serv., *ad Aen.* 6.748: 'it is, however, a phrase of Ennius", (*est autem sermo Ennii*).

[30] Upperworld-time in the *longue durée* does involve cyclicality, especially in Stoic conceptions of the *ekpyrosis* ('conflagration') and *palingenesis* ('recreation') that 'recycles' the world; see Long 2006: 256–82. See Giusti 2021; Krasne 2022; Schiesaro 2022 on these forces in literature.

[31] Halberstam (2005) never uses the phrase 'straight time', although he does talk of 'reproductive time', 'repro-time' and 'family time' to mean the same thing (p. 5).

[32] The phrase is taken from the title of Ahmed 2000; however, she does not connect encounters to queerness in that work. For this, see Ahmed 2006: 109–56. See also Pope 2023: 83–119 on the erotics of death's capaciousness.

[33] Cf. Sappho, fr. 55's (Voigt) queer Underworld with Watson forthcoming.

[34] Both quotations from Halberstam 2020: 46; see Halberstam 2020: 3–50 on queer wildness generally.

[35] Cf. Halberstam's (2011: 89) summary of Muñoz' (1999) view of sex as 'a desiring and melancholic relation between the living and the dead'.

[36] Cf. *Aetna* 76–84 on the Underworld as an inherently poetic space.

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nec ratione alia nosmet proponere nobis
possumus infernas animas Acherunte vagare.
pictores itaque et scriptorum saecla priora
sic animas intro duxerunt sensibus auctas.

We cannot picture the Underworld souls wandering in
Acheron by any other logic of ours [sc. than the five senses].
That is why painters and previous generations of writers
have represented spirits like this, endowed with senses.

This Epicurean does not think he will see the Underworld, yet he projects it as a recurrent space in his *De rerum natura* — one which the fearful student conjures repeatedly (e.g. 3.27, 3.86, 5.996), but which even our poet-sage must confront. The Underworld is a true utopia, 'that thing that lets us feel that this world is not enough, that indeed something is missing', as Muñoz has it.[37] This lack, naturally, lends the Underworld to being understood as a primarily literary and intertextual phenomenon: Lucretius' own parade of Underworld-but-Upperworld horrors (3.980–1023) is haunted by the epic and tragic spectres from which it is composed.[38] In the spirit of Barthes' *Fragments d'un discours amoureux* (1977), any given literary Underworld is recursively recreated from the desire for fragments of other literary Underworlds. The Underworld, writ large, is 'shared' because many pens have gone into writing it.

Spatial and temporal queerness need not centre homosexuality or homoerotics, but it is no accident that this article's Underworld figures — especially Tibullus, Marathus and Philetus — find themselves there in a way that is connected to their non-normative desires for other men. Unlike Aeneas' search for the emblem of familial (straight) futurity in *Aeneid* 6, these poets seek queer community.[39] Repeatedly, I return to the image of an all-male, all-homoerotic coterie of poets and their muses who cycle around in the Elysian fields and who, occasionally, transform into one another in queer ways.

II Tibullan textual tombs

All ancient Romans are dead, but Tibullus is especially so — at least, poetically. He died in late 19 or 18 B.C.E.,[40] an event that is commemorated by at least two contemporary poems — one by Domitius Marsus[41] and one by Ovid — but which is also, proleptically, figured in his own poetry at 1.3.55–80.[42] Marsus' sweet quatrain on Tibullus goes as follows (fr. 180 Hollis):[43]

te quoque Vergilio comitem non aequa, Tibulle,
mors iuvenem campos misit ad Elysios,

[37] Both quotations from Muñoz 2019: 1; his italics.

[38] See Buglass 2019; for Lucretius and tragedy, see Cowan 2013. Cf. Muñoz' (2019: 1) 'ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future'.

[39] See Section V for *Aeneid* 6's queerness. See especially Muñoz 2019: 133–5 on the 'Great Refusal' of Underworld figures like Orpheus and Narcissus in Marcuse 1955.

[40] For the date, see McGann 1970.

[41] The ascription of Domitius Marsus' authorship to fr. 180 (Hollis) is not certain (see Maltby 2021: 556–8 for a recent summary).

[42] The chronological relationship between Tibullus' Underworld and Virgil's in *Aeneid* 6 is hard to pin down (see M. Y. Myers 2020: 111, 129 n. 2), although there is clear dialogue; Tibullus draws on Lucretius' Underworld (Henderson 1969).

[43] I consider these four lines a complete poem and not a fragment (see Hollis 2007: 311). While I use Hollis' text, I correct his error *Tibullo* in the first line.

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ne foret aut elegis molles qui fleret amores
aut caneret forti regia bella pede.

Unfair death also sent you to the Elysian Fields,
Tibullus, you young companion to Virgil,
lest there be anyone to cry for soft loves in elegiacs
or to sing of royal wars in heroic metre.

These four lines abound with allusions to both Tibullus' and Virgil's poetry in a way which, as Myers has recently shown, associates those poets especially with their writings on the Underworld, so that Tibullus and Virgil become entombed by the walls of their own poetry.[44]

Tibullan death, especially, is homoerotically marked. We feel it in Marsus' use of *comes* ('companion') to describe the relationship between Tibullus and Virgil in the Underworld,[45] which engages *comes*' homoerotically charged usages in Tibullus and Virgil's earlier poetry. In poem 1.4, Priapus teaches Tibullus how to seduce his male beloved, Marathus, advising 'do not refuse to go with him as a companion, however long the road' (1.4.41, *neu comes ire neges, quamvis via longa paretur*), while in poem 1.9, Tibullus describes 'how often I carried many torches for you at night as your companion' (1.9.41–42, *quotiens .../ipse comes multa lumina nocte tuli*) in erotic servitude to the same boy.[46]

When it comes to Virgil, the (homo)erotic force of *comes* is even clearer, as it evokes the opening of his Nisus and Euryalus episode in *Aeneid* 9, where the latter is introduced with *et iuxta comes Euryalus* (9.179, 'and next to him, his companion Euryalus'), while the former is also characterised as a *comes*, although to Aeneas, not Euryalus (9.177).[47] This episode is laced with Underworld imagery in a way that figures Nisus and Euryalus as two *comites*, trapped in an Underworld they cannot escape, in direct contrast with Aeneas' earlier catabasis in Book 6, which had ended with a successful return trip: the couple's journey begins with 'having left, they crossed the ditches and, through the shadow of night ...' (9.314, *egressi superant fossas noctisque per umbram*) in a way that evokes Aeneas' road 'beneath the night and through the shadow' (6.268, *sub nocte per umbram*); later, Nisus declares to his *comes* 'this is our path' (9.321, *hac iter est*) in memory of the Sibyl's words to Aeneas, *hac iter Elysium nobis* (6.542, 'this is our path to Elysium'); finally, Nisus and Euryalus pass into an Acherontic forest at *Aen.* 9.381–83,[48] where 'an occasional path was glinting along hidden tracks' (9.383, *rara per occultos lucebat semita callis*) which retreads Aeneas' catabatic

[44] See M. Y. Myers 2020: 112–13. See, particularly, Tib. 1.3.57–66 and Verg., *Aen.* 6 (especially 440–76, the *lugentes campi* or 'Fields of Mourning'); see M. Y. Myers 2020. See also the relationship between Marsus, fr. 180.4's *caneret forti regia bella pede* ('to sing of royal wars in heroic metre') and Verg., *Ecl.* 6.3's *cum canerem reges et proelia* ('when I was singing of kings and wars'); see further Morgan 2010: 367–8.

[45] Ingleheart (2021: 201 n. 55) connects this to the association between Virgil and homosexuality in the ancient biographical tradition (e.g. Donat., *Vit. Verg.* 9; Apul., *Apol.* 10); on this association, see Kearey 2023: 189–91.

[46] Homoerotic contexts account for half of *comes*' usages in Tibullus Book 1; of the other two usages, one is distinctly unerotic (Tib. 1.10.4) and the other is in the context of a heterosexual couple (Tib. 1.5.63). In Book 2, Tib. 2.6.2 is plausibly homoerotic, as it stages the relationship between Cupid and a lover (see Ingleheart 2021: 188–99 for this phenomenon in Ovid); Tib. 2.3.62 is unerotic. See Lindheim 2023 for queer readings of these last two poems; for other queer readings of Tibullus, see Nikoloutsos 2011a; 2011b.

[47] Euryalus is also Nisus' *comes* at Verg., *Aen.* 9.223; cf. *Aen.* 9.277, where *comes* perhaps hints at an eroticism between Euryalus and Iulus. The nature of Nisus and Euryalus' relationship has been debated extensively — see e.g. Colmant 1951; Makowski 1989; Hardie 1994: 31–4; Williams 1995: 534; Lloyd 1999; Meban 2009; Fratantuono 2010 — but even by Ovid's day, they were accepted into a homoerotic canon (*Tr.* 1.5.19–24; 1.8.27–34); see also Cannizzaro 2023: 174–5 on Ov., *Met.* 5.47–73.

[48] Cf. Verg., *Aen.* 6.131, 136–39, 270–71 (with Hardie 1994: 141).

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road at 6.270–71 (*quale per incertam lunam sub luce maligna/est iter in silvis*, 'like a path in a forest, beneath the faint light of an unclear moon').[49] This netherworldly homoerotic companionship lurks behind Marsus' presentation of Tibullus and Virgil as *comites* who accompany one another through the Underworld.

Marsus offers another netherworldly intertextual chain that pushes us forward to Ovid. Line 2 tells us that 'death sent the young man to the Elysian fields' (*mors iuvenem campos misit ad Elysios*), which clearly harks back to Tibullus' own imagined journeys in the underworld: *ipsa Venus campos ducet in Elysios* (Tib. 1.3.58, 'Venus herself will lead me into the Elysian fields').[50]

In a characteristic twist, Ovid's own poem on Tibullus' death, *Amores* 3.9,[51] reimagines Venus' role: no longer Tibullus' guide in the Underworld, she is now his grieving lover (like Delia and Nemesis some lines later). Her pain at her poet's demise is like losing her lover Adonis (3.9.15–16), but is also figured as maternal, through her son Cupid's, sense that Tibullus is his brother (3.9.9–14).[52] Here, Ovid develops Tib. 1.3.5–10, where Tibullus claims that neither his mother nor his lover are presently at hand, should he die.[53] Ovid combines these identities in Venus (and, at 3.9.1–3, in Elegia herself), transmuting biography into poetics. He also adapts Tibullus' line from 1.3 about journeying to the Elysian Fields (*Am.* 3.9.59–60):

> si tamen e nobis aliquid nisi nomen et umbra
> restat, in Elysia valle Tibullus erit.
>
> Yet, if anything remains of us but a name and a shadow,
> Tibullus will be in the valley of Elysium.

The tenses are telling: Tibullus' future (*ducet*) is situationally logical, as the diegetic Tibullan speaker is not actually deceased in 1.3's timeline (nor is the extradiegetic Tibullus), while Marsus' perfect tense (*misit*) gives death an epitaphic finality — Tibullus has descended to Elysium, and that is the end of it. Ovid, however, invites us to think not of death's finality, but of the eternality of the Elysian afterlife, repurposing Tibullus' *ducet* into his own future tense verb, *erit*. This third image of Tibullus in the Underworld might begin to solidify some things for us. Tibullus has not just died — Tibullus will always be dead. He is now, perhaps (see Section V), established as a character who can be encountered in the poetic Underworld for all time (*Am.* 3.9.66: *auxisti numeros, culte Tibulle, pios*, 'you have increased their dutiful ranks, elegant Tibullus'), just like the 'great damned', whom he had imagined meeting at Tib. 1.3.73–80, albeit now in heroic Elysium, not dark Tartarus.

The first 58 lines of Ovid's poem address the effects of Tibullus' death on those left behind (Elegia, Venus, Delia and Nemesis), but the final ten turn to those he will encounter

[49] Hardie 1994: 27. See also Hardie 1994: 142 on the Underworld evocations of *Aen.* 9.386's description of Nisus as *imprudens* ('unaware').

[50] See Hollis 2007; Maltby 2021: 558 for Marsus' reuse of Tibullan metrical structures here. Ross (1975: 159–61) detects, in Tib. 1.3's Underworld, an allusion to Virgil's presentation of Gallus in *Eclogue* 10; if we agree, it is canny of Ovid to have Tibullus meet Gallus in that same Underworld at *Am.* 3.9.63–64 (see below).

[51] Ov., *Am.* 3.9 is a patchwork of Tibullan intertexts; see Taylor 1970; Perkins 1993; Bretzigheimer 2001: 180–2; Huskey 2005; Oliensis 2019a: 90–2; Davis 2024: 251–70. Naturally, it weaves in other references: Hellenistic laments (see Reed 1997; Davis 2024: 249–50) and Ovid's own *Am.* 2.6, the elegy on Corinna's dead parrot (see Thomas 1965; Cahoon 1984). Some see this patchwork as a parody or critique of Tibullan style (e.g. Perkins 1993; Hallett 2023), but I follow Taylor (1970) in disagreeing.

[52] On these familial ties, see Hallett 2023: 198–200.

[53] Cf. Ov., *Am.* 3.9.49–52 which parallel closely Tib. 1.3.5–10.

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now that he has died. In place of a line-up of heroes or sinners, Tibullus meets a pack of poets, to whom Ovid tells us he is (and will always be) a *comes*, in resonance with Marsus' identification of Tibullus as the eternal Underworld *comes* to Virgil (*Am.* 3.9.61–66):

> obvius huic venias hedera iuvenalia cinctus
> tempora cum Calvo, docte Catulle, tuo;
> tu quoque, si falsum est temerati crimen amici,
> sanguinis atque animae prodige Galle tuae.
> his comes umbra tua est; siqua est modo corporis umbra,
> auxisti numeros, culte Tibulle, pios.
>
> Learned Catullus, you will come to meet him, your youthful
> brows bound with ivy, accompanied by your Calvus;
> you too, who wasted your blood and life,
> if your dishonoured friend's accusation was, Gallus, truly hollow.
> Your shade is a companion to them; if there is any shade of the body,
> you have increased their dutiful ranks, elegant Tibullus.

Ingleheart demonstrates that Ovid's choice of poets here is not serendipitous and, in fact, figures the Underworld as a homoerotic space.[54] Although such catalogues of poets are common in elegy (Prop. 2.34.85–94; Ov., *Am.* 1.15.9–30, *Ars am.* 3.329–38, *Rem. am.* 757–66, *Tr.* 2.361–70, 4.10.43–54),[55] Ovid almost uniquely here omits reference to their female beloveds,[56] distinguishing this coterie as particularly homosocial.[57] Indeed, Ovid's omission is tendentious if we believe (and I do) that this trope of listing poets (often love poets) draws on a lost passage of Gallus in which he boasted that his poetry had brought Lycoris renown.[58] The *puellae* were the original point of such catalogues, but not in this queer twist on the form.

The first two mentioned — Catullus and Calvus — come as a ready-made couple from their erotic appearances in the Catullan corpus (also, presumably, in the now-fragmentary Calvan corpus);[59] Ovid invokes this by transferring Catull. 53.3's *meus Calvos* ('my Calvus') into *Calvo … tuo* ('your Calvus'), but also by continuing the funerary narrative of Catull. 96.[60]

In 96, Catullus shares a eulogy with Calvus for the latter's lover, Quintilia, that is coloured by a profound homosociality (e.g. Catull. 96.3–4, *[dolore] quo desiderio veteres renovamus amores/atque olim missas flemus amicitias*, '[grief] in which we renew our old loves with our longing and weep for the bonds that were once abandoned'). Quintilia's death alienates her from Calvus — she does not await him in the Underworld; rather, she is locked away

[54] Ingleheart 2021: 200–2.

[55] See McKeown 1989: 394–5 for catalogues of poets, Ovidian and non-Ovidian.

[56] The beloveds receive their own catalogue at Ov., *Ars am.* 3.535–38.

[57] No beloveds are included at *Tr.* 4.10.43–54. Tibullus and Propertius' *puellae* are not included at *Tr.* 2.447–66, but Gallus' Lycoris appears at 2.445–46, and Catullus, as proto-elegist, is listed alongside Lesbia at 2.427–30. Neither *Tristia* passage is, however, specifically a catalogue of love poets. I omit *Pont.* 4.16.5–46, as that catalogue is different in content, if similar in purpose.

[58] See McKeown 1989: 412 on Prop. 2.3.43–44, Ov., *Am.* 1.15.29–30 and *Ars am.* 3.537.

[59] Calvus appears at Catull. 14, 50, 53, 96, each of which alludes to his intimacy with Catullus (e.g. 14.1–2, *ni te plus oculis meis amarem,/iucundissime Calve*, 'if I were not more in love with you than with my own eyes, sweetest Calvus'). For the (homo)eroticisation of this relationship, see Finamore 1984; Oliensis 1998: 159, 162–3. Cf. Prop. 2.25.4.

[60] Catull. 96 is generally understood as celebrating a heteroerotic couple (e.g. Fraenkel 1956; Alfonsi 1971; Delz 1977). True enough, but I suggest that the first four lines are homoerotic regardless of a woman's presence in the last two.

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in 'unspeaking tombs' (96.1, *mutis sepulcris*), leaving him alone in the Upperworld with Catullus.

Ovid completes Catullus' homoerotic eulogy, but also engages Calvus' (presumably heteroerotic) funerary elegy on Quintilia, through negation.[61] Calvus imagines himself 'when I will already have become dark ash' (fr. 27 Hollis, *cum iam fulva cinis fuero*) which, we may infer, leads thematically into our second fragment, *forsitan hoc etiam gaudeat ipsa cinis* (fr. 28 Hollis, 'perhaps even your ash itself delights at this'), implying a continued post-cremation affection between Calvus and Quintilia. Ovid refutes this, in line with Catullus' homoerotic poem (96), so that Quintilia is ignored, remaining unresponsive (and unmentioned) ash in an Upperworld tomb, while Calvus — imagined as corporeal, with ivy-wreathed brows, not as 'dark ash' — accompanies his male lover, Catullus.

Gallus too is present in *Amores* 3.9 because of his associations with death and homoerotic elegy.[62] For Ingleheart, the deceased Tibullus is 'reunited with the company that he may have been happiest in all along: that of his fellow, homoerotically inclined male poets. It is they, not Delia and Nemesis, who provide the conclusion to Ovid's portrait of Tibullus'.[63] I would go further and, in the spirit of the Underworld's cyclicality, suggest that the transformation of Ovid's future tenses (*erit* at 3.9.60 and *venias* at 3.9.61) into the eternal present of *est … est* (3.9.65) reveals that Tibullus has not only joined his homoerotic coterie of *comites*, but will be with them always, in a space from which female lovers (Lesbia, Quintilia, Lycoris, Delia, Nemesis and, in the future, Corinna) are omitted. That omission is especially palpable given the contrast drawn between the Upperworld bickering of Delia and Nemesis immediately before this passage (3.9.55–58) and the strong catabatic turn initiated by line 59's *tamen* ('however').

We see, then, that Tibullus, in the years after his death, became quickly associated with two interlocking motifs: postmortem existence in the Underworld and homoerotic companionship. These, as we shall see, are brought together tendentiously by Statius in *Silvae* 2.6.

III Entombing Marathus

The obvious rejoinder to Ingleheart's suggestion that this coterie picks up on Tibullus' association with homoerotic verse is that Tibullus' male lover, Marathus, goes unnamed in the Ovidian Underworld; if the point is to stress homoerotics, why not include Marathus?[64] For Ingleheart, the answer lies in Ovid's introduction of Cupid as a *puer* ('boy') in line 7, which, she argues, engages Marathus' introduction into Tibullan poetry at Tib. 1.4.83 (*parce, puer, quaeso*, 'spare me, boy, I plead') and Ovid's own flirtation with loving a *puer* at *Am.* 1.1.20.[65] I am not convinced that *Am.* 3.9.7 is Marathus' hiding place, but I do believe that Tibullus' male lover weighs on this eulogy.

[61] Perhaps Calvus, frs. 27–28 Hollis (see Hollis 2007: 68–70); see Fraenkel 1956 on Catullus' reworking of this elegy. It matters little here whether Quintilia was Calvus' wife or his mistress; see Hollis 2007: 69–70 for an overview of the debate. See also Hogenmüller 2017 for further intertextual resonances.

[62] For the Underworld Gallus, see Prop. 2.34.91–92 (*et modo formosa quam multa Lycoride Gallus/mortuus inferna vulnera lavit aqua* ('and now, how many wounds does Gallus, who died for beautiful Lycoris, wash with the waters of the Underworld'), with Heyworth 2007: 279–80 (for the compressed sense) and Fideli 2005: 1004–8. In Verg., *Ecl.* 10, Gallus is on the verge of death (especially 10.11) and himself imagines it at 10.33–34; see Perkell 1996. For the homoerotic Gallus, see Ingleheart 2015a; 2021: 201–2.

[63] Ingleheart 2021: 202.

[64] Ingleheart (2021: 200–1) does anticipate these criticisms. Others have taken Marathus' absence as evidence for Ovid's distaste for homoerotics (e.g. Maltby 2002: 41), which seems indefensible given Ovid's fascination with sexuality in all its manifestations, even if the *Amores* is a heteroerotically biased collection.

[65] Ingleheart 2021: 200.

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What precisely does Ovid mean when he says to Tibullus' ghost, at *Am.* 3.9.66, *auxisti numeros … pios*? What is the force of *auxisti*? Does it mean 'you have increased their dutiful ranks [by joining them yourself]' (which may seem, *prima facie*, the most obvious interpretation)[66] or 'you have increased their dutiful ranks [by adding a person other than yourself]'? Both senses of *augere numeros* are evidenced in pre-Ovidian Latin,[67] and I suggest that both are at play here: Tibullus swells the crowd of homoerotic *comites* with his own presence, and with the presence of Marathus.[68] Indeed, we may detect that something odd is happening in Ovid's change of tense from present (*est* in the previous line) to perfect (*auxisti*): Tibullus has increased the hordes of the dead not only by dying, but also by means of something that he had already done before dying — something we may find by turning to his poem 1.9.

1.9 is the conclusion to Tibullus' Marathus Cycle, three poems which chart the poet-lover's complex relationship with a young boy:[69] in 1.4, Tibullus struggles to woo Marathus, seeking erotodidactic advice from Priapus; by 1.8, Marathus has left Tibullus for a girl named Pholoë; in 1.9, Marathus has abandoned both Tibullus and Pholoë for an unnamed older man, and Tibullus takes his temper out on all three other parties (Marathus, Pholoë and the old man).

In his anger at Marathus, Tibullus brings to bear several motifs in this final poem that worm their way into *Amores* 3.9. Tib. 1.9 opens with a rebuke directed at Marathus' inconstancy (1.9.1–6):

quid mihi, si fueras miseros laesurus amores,
foedera per divos, clam violanda, dabas?
a miser, et si quis primo periuria celat,
sera tamen tacitis Poena venit pedibus.
parcite, caelestes: aequum est impune licere
numina formosis laedere vestra semel.

If you were going to harm my wretched love, why make vows
in the gods' names, only to violate them in private?
Ah poor boy, even if someone at first hides their perjuries,
eventually, Punishment still comes on silent feet.
Show pity, gods: it is justly allowed for beautiful people
to harm your divinity without punishment — once.

For Nikoloutsos, this litany of legalistic and diplomatic language conveys the impression of a marital agreement between Tibullus and Marathus which, in turn, underscores the severity of Marathus' breach of his commitments.[70] Building on Nikoloutsos' argument, I

[66] Clearly the interpretation of Williams 2003: 228.

[67] For *augere numeros* meaning 'to increase by adding oneself', see Plaut., *Amph.* 307, *Mostell.* 19; Enn., *Andromache* fr. 102 (perhaps); Caes., *BGall.* 7.48; Lucr. 1.436; *Ciris* 201 (the *Ciris* predates Ovid; see Kayachev 2020: 5–20); Manilius, *Astronomica* 3.431–32. For the sense 'to increase by adding a third party', see (*inter alia*) Cic., *Phil.* 14.11; Livy 2.34.6, 4.43.5, 29.34.4, 32.26.6.

[68] Although only poets are named at *Am.* 3.9.61–66, Ovid invokes beloveds as well as their poets with his question, at 3.9.59–60, about the postmortem continuation of *nomina* ('names'), as at *Am.* 3.9.31: *sic Nemesis longum, sic Delia nomen habebunt* ('so, both Nemesis and Delia will have a long-lasting name'). Cf. *Ars am.* 3.536: *nomen habet Nemesis, Cynthia nomen habet* ('Nemesis has a name, as does Cynthia').

[69] Tib. 1.9's characters are all unnamed, but the poem clearly continues 1.8's story; see Cairns 1979: 151–3; Murgatroyd 1980: 257–8; McGann 1983; Booth 1996. Scholars often study the cycle for its pertinence to the conventions of elegy (Drinkwater 2012) or wider homoerotic verse (Verstraete 2005).

[70] Nikoloutsos 2011a: 32.

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suggest that Tibullus' focus on this semantic field opens Marathus up to Ovid's recycling of him into Gallus.[71]

As he introduces his coterie of *comites* in *Amores* 3.9, Ovid presents the first two — Catullus and Calvus — as a pair; the reader thus expects to encounter a second pair, but the whole couplet 3.9.63–64 is devoted to a single figure:[72]

tu quoque, si falsum est temerati crimen amici,
sanguinis atque animae prodige Galle tuae

You too, who wasted your blood and life,
if your dishonoured friend's accusation was, Gallus, truly hollow.

Gallus is without his Lycoris, who is frequently paired with him in such catalogues and who inspired this take on catalogics.[73] Further, his name is delayed until almost the end of the pentameter, driving a reader to absorb his whole description — as an accused traitor in homosociality who has died — before deciphering these words' referent. Indeed, this description is particularly elusive: it takes no small level of interpretation to identify the *temeratus amicus* ('dishonoured friend') as Augustus (presumably in reference to the breakdown of Gallus and Augustus' relationship in the mid-20s B.C.E.),[74] or to unpick that Gallus' presence in Elysium is contingent on Augustus' accusation against him being *falsum*.[75] The reference to Gallus' suicide is unusually explicit, with its deliberate (*prodige*) loss of blood (*sanguis*) and lifeforce (*anima*), given that other poets who mention his death present him as having died vaguely 'for love'.[76]

We may more readily imagine an intimate of Tibullus' who dishonoured his friend (*temeratus*) and whom Tibullus might hope to be wrong in accusing (*falsum crimen*). I suggest, therefore, that Ovid cruelly teases the character of Tibullus in *Amores* 3.9, by dangling the possibility that Marathus waits for him in the crowd of Underworld homoerotic lovers, through a subtle reference to Tibullus' rebuke of Marathus at 1.9.1–6 and a return to its theme and vocabulary of crime and punishment.[77] Ovid then reveals that it is in fact 'only' Gallus, the inventor of their shared genre of elegy who was, himself, closely associated with homoerotics.[78] There is a blurring, then, between the figures of Marathus and Gallus that anticipates the metempsychotic strategies I develop below.

[71] Perhaps Tibullus invokes Gallus here, especially at 1.9.5–6 and in the phrase *miseri amores* (1.9.1), that could evoke the title of Gallus' elegies, the *Amores* (see Nikoloutsos 2011a: 36 who makes this connection, but without following through), thus capitalising on the anonymity of his addressee, so that it can plausibly be (at this juncture) either Marathus or Gallus in a way that Ovid is able to repurpose at *Am.* 3.9.63–64. For Tibullus' use of Gallus, see Ross 1975: 153–62 and O'Hara 2005 (especially the instructive bibliography at p. 319 n. 9).

[72] Davis (2024: 268–9) attributes this to Gallus' singular importance to Ovid.

[73] Ov., *Am.* 1.15.29–30, *Tr.* 2.445–46; Prop. 2.34.91–92.

[74] See Cass. Dio, 53.23; Suet., *Aug.* 66.2 (Suetonius spotlights Augustus and Gallus' friendship). See Rogers 1959: especially 229; Wardle 2014: 247 on the *renuntiato amicitiae* ('renunciation of friendship') that Augustus issued against Gallus. For the best overview of Gallus' life, see Manzoni 1995: 3–53; see also Raymond 2013.

[75] Cf. Ingleheart 2010: 347–50 on Ovid's deployment elsewhere (*Tr.* 2.445–46) of vague comments about Gallus to authorise his readers to seek out hidden meanings.

[76] Prop. 2.34.91–92; Verg., *Ecl.* 10.10; cf. the association between Gallus' *A/amores* and (his) death at *Ecl.*10.33–34.

[77] On the queerness of flashing, non-linear memory; Halberstam 2011: 54.

[78] I advance tentatively that Gallus was associated with a homoerotic relationship with Augustus, suggested by the strange reference to Augustus at *Am.* 3.9.64 (which parallels Lycoris' erotically lethal role at Prop. 2.34.91–92 and Verg., *Ecl.* 10.10), Augustus' reluctance to make friends other than Gallus (Suet., *Aug.* 66.1) and his uncharacteristic grief upon condemning Gallus (see Wardle 2014: 429 *ad* Suet., *Aug.* 66.2, *sed Gallo quoque … ad necem conpulso … ceterum et inlacrimavit et vicem suam conquestus est, quod sibi soli non liceret amicis, quatenus vellet, irasci*, 'but when Gallus had been compelled to die, Augustus still cried and bewailed his lot, because he alone was not allowed to be angry with his friends to the degree he would like'; cf. Wardle 2014: 395 *ad* Suet., *Aug.* 58.2). Jennifer Ingleheart reminds me of *conqueri*'s ('to bewail') elegiac-erotic connotations and suggests a parallel between Gallus

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And yet, for this to work, Marathus must already be dead — especially since, in *Amores* 3.9, both Nemesis and Delia have outlived Tibullus. Tibullus' poetry does not explicitly detail Marathus' death; it does, however, imagine his violent demise. In his anger at Marathus' infidelity, Tibullus cries (1.9.11–16):[79]

muneribus meus est captus puer. at deus illa
in cinerem et liquidas munera vertat aquas.
iam mihi persolvet poenas, pulvisque decorum
detrahet et ventis horrida facta coma;
uretur facies, urentur sole capilli,
deteret invalidos et via longa pedes.

My boy is taken by gifts. But may a god turn
those gifts into ash and flowing water.
Soon, he will pay me back: dust will drag down his
beauty, as will his hair, made foul by the winds;
His face will be burned, his tresses will be burned by the sun,
a long journey will wear down his weakened feet.

The language is destructive. The literal referent of lines 13–16 is a lengthy walk under the hot sun that will distort Marathus' appearance with sunburn. However, we cannot ignore the apocalyptic force of line 12's transformation of the gifts that have corrupted Marathus 'into ash and flowing water' (*in cinerem et liquidas ... aquas*), especially given ash's strong connection with death in Latin poetry,[80] as well as the double use of *urere* ('to burn') in line 15. Metaphorically, Tibullus desires the destruction of Marathus' body, particularly through the elemental forces of fire and water — extinction in conflagration and inundation.[81] Perhaps Tibullus here brings to a head the etymological pun he has been making with Marathus' name throughout the cycle: 'Marathus' may be associated with μαραίνω's sense 'to smoulder slowly'.[82] Thus, in imagining Marathus' final moments, Tibullus brings the slow burn of Marathus' love (Tib. 1.4.81, *quam Marathus lento me torquet amore*, 'how Marathus tortures me with his slow love') to an incendiary fever pitch. Furthermore, if we harken to the prefixes with which Tibullus begins lines 14 and 16 (*detrahet* and *deteret*), we feel a downward pull in this destruction that carries Marathus' scorched body down to the Underworld.

As others recognise,[83] this scorched body (particularly its *invalidi pedes*, 'weakened feet'), is a metapoetic one, especially when read against the more obviously metapoetic description of Marathus' body at 1.8.9–14,[84] which also ends with a reference to Marathus' wounded (read: elegiac) feet (1.8.14: *compressos ... pedes*, 'restricted feet'). Thus, when Tibullus, at 1.9.49–50, plans to destroy his poetry about Marathus, we may recognise it as a reflection of 1.9.11–16:

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and Hephaestion and their respective relationships with Augustus and Alexander, citing Gallus' self-destructive drunkenness at Ov., *Tr.* 2.445–46.

[79] See Maltby 2002: 326–7 for the forcefulness and violence of these lines.

[80] *OLD* 316 s.v. 'cinis' 4.

[81] For conflagration, inundation and cyclicality, see n. 30.

[82] See Gauly 1995: especially 101–5. For other attempts to explain the onomastic pun with μαραίνω (and μαραίνομαι, 'to dwindle'), see Wilhelm 1896: 56. For the association between Marathus' name and μάραθον ('fennel'), an etymology that may also point to fiery play (see Murgatroyd 1980: 9; Gauly 1995: 104–5) while underscoring phallicism, see Boucher 1976: 510–11; Bréguet 1980: 70.

[83] Nikoloutsos 2011a: 35–36; see more broadly Henkel 2014.

[84] See Damer 2014: especially 495–505 for the queer textual gendering of Marathus' body here.

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illa velim rapida Vulcanus carmina flamma
torreat et liquida deleat amnis aqua.

I wish Vulcan would burn those poems with devouring
flame and the river would obliterate them with its flowing water.

There are verbal repetitions (*illa; liquida[s] aqua[s]*) and clear parallels in situation (conflagration; inundation; the presence of a male god), which lead us to associate the destruction of poetry about Marathus with the destruction of Marathus himself — after all, what existence can Marathus have beyond poetry about him?[85] Indeed, for any reader who interprets Tib. 1.9.11–16 only in literal terms (as representing a walk on a hot day), Tib. 1.9.49–50 serves as an encouragement to revisit the earlier section and reconsider their interpretation.

Let us not ignore Tibullus' own death in attending to Ovid's grave-robbing from Tib. 1.9. Tibullus, the character, does not die in poem 1.9, of course; he survives throughout the entirety of Book 2. However, Tibullus prefers death by torture to seeing Marathus give into an old man's munificence (1.9.21–22):

ure meum potius flamma caput et pete ferro
corpus et intorto verbere terga seca.

Rather, burn my head and come at my body
with a knife, and split my back with a twisted whip.

Tibullus is addressing Marathus, and the careful reader will notice that Tibullus begs his lover to burn him with precisely the same verb (*urere*) that he had earlier used twice, just six lines earlier (1.9.15), to illustrate Marathus' own destruction.[86] Again, Tibullus draws on Marathus' onomastic propensity towards matters fiery (μαραίνω) to figure the fatal flame that is love for the boy.

Tibullus' scorching demise, prefigured at Tib. 1.9.21–22, is semi-realised in Ovid's *epicedion*. Ovid gives no cause of death; he does, however, portray the fiery destruction of Tibullus' body (*Am.* 3.9.41–44):

tene, sacer vates, flammae rapuere rogales,
pectoribus pasci nec timuere tuis?
aurea sanctorum potuissent templa deorum
urere, quae tantum sustinuisse nefas.

Holy poet, did the funereal flames snatch you away,
and were they unafraid to feast on your heart?
Flames that could have supported such unspeakable criminality
could burn the golden temples of the sacred gods.

We see again the verb *urere* (3.9.44), once more the first word in its line (as at Tib. 1.9.15 and 1.9.21), underscoring how the destruction of Tibullus' body in flames is as sacrilegious (*nefas*) as the destruction of the gods' temples. And yet, this image of the Tibullan body ablaze derives from Tibullus' own poetry. The close reader of Ovid's poem — and this dense

[85] Nikoloutsos 2011a: 39–40. For the long-standing recognition that literary constructedness characterises elegy's beloveds, see Wyke 1987; Greene 1998; Wyke 2002: 115–54; James 2003. Recently, 'written' identity has been attributed to elegy's men: Nikoloutsos 2011a (on Tib. 1.9); Damer 2019: 148–51; Fredericksen 2022 (on Propertius' self-presentation).

[86] Damer (2019: 78) rightly connects these lines to Tib. 1.4.81. Cf. also Tib. 1.5.5.

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eulogy demands close reading — is haunted by Marathus' ghost, who still burns Tibullus, both onomastically and with the fires from the scorching punishment with which he is threatened at Tib. 1.9.11–16.

Ovid, then, has ample material on which to draw if he wants to inscribe Marathus (and, indeed, Tibullus) into *Amores* 3.9's Elysian scene. Tibullus has laid the groundwork for him, poetically killing his darling, such that he has 'increased the dutiful ranks' (*Am.* 3.9.66, *auxisti numeros … pios*) of the dead by sending Marathus to join them.[87] Of Tibullus' three beloveds, only Marathus receives any sort of death within the narrative arc of Tibullan elegiacs: the Delia Cycle ends with a hope for long-enduring affection (1.6.65–86, *nos, Delia, amoris/exemplum cana simus uterque coma*, 'Delia, let us be the model of love, both of us with our white hair'). Book 2's Nemesis Cycle ends more pessimistically and is haunted by death — the poet's own (2.6.19–20, 2.6.51–52) and the premature passing of Nemesis' sister, which occupies the centre of the poem (2.6.29–40) — but ends by emphasising the possibility of Nemesis' continued existence (2.6.53, *vivas*, 'you may live on'). Thus, for Ovid, only Marathus can be waiting for Tibullus when he reaches Elysium.

These images of destruction that figure Marathus' death without actually killing him result in a (failed) attempt to bring closure to the cycle — and what is queerer than the iterative failure to close a loop?[88] The word 'cycles' has long been used to denote subgroups of poems by the same poet on a similar theme or character; it is particularly apposite for Tibullus' three poems on Marathus, which consist of and construct multiple interlocking and cyclical rings. Fineberg shows how poem 1.4 stages the tension between time's inexorable progression in one direction and repetitive loops that iterate the same images and behaviours.[89] She concludes by demonstrating that 1.4 ends with a beginning, suggesting that the final four lines (1.4.81–84) 'would surely work as well at the opening of the poem as they do at the close'.[90] I suggest that we extend Fineberg's arguments to apply to the entire trilogy, which is now revealed to be made up of repetition — one need only look to how poem 1.8 ends with the phrase *quam cupies votis hunc revocare diem!* (1.8.78, 'how you will want to recall this day with your prayers').

Tibullus ends the cycle, in 1.9, with the threat that it is about to start all over again, as he hurls at Marathus 'then will you cry, when another boy has shackled me, and proudly holds dominion over your domain' (1.9.79–80, *tunc flebis cum me vinctum puer alter habebit/et geret in regno regna superba tuo*), which rather neuters the poem's actual final statement, a prayer to Venus in which Tibullus thanks her that he is now 'freed from deceptive love' (1.9.83, *fallaci resolutus amore*).[91] How *resolutus* ('freed') is a man who, by his own admission, will soon be *vinctum* ('shackled')? How *resolutus amore* is any lover who, seconds ago, was mid-tirade at an ex? These cycles remind me again of the image of Ixion, spinning forever on his Underworld wheel; how different is it to be trapped in a cycle of unrequited love

[87] Tibullus never calls Marathus *pius* — the cycle's narrative precludes it. *Pius* is common of the dead (*OLD* 1384 s.v. 'pius' 1b) and is associated with poets and their poetry (e.g. Catull. 16.5, *castum esse decet pium poetam*, 'a *pius* poet should be chaste'), which suits these *numeri pii*, who are both poets and characters in others' poetries. I detect etymological play between *pius/pietas* and the *Pierides* ('Muses'), who protect poets, in return for their *pietas* (Tib. 2.5.113–14; Ps.–Tib. 3.4.43–44; Ov., *Am.* 3.9.17–18, *Ars am.* 3.405, 3.548); cf. Fulkerson 2017: 156 on the similar pun in *castus* ('chaste'; cf. Catull. 16.5) and the Muses' home, Castalia (if so, cf. Ps.-Tib. 3.1.16). This pun is teased with the imbrication of *pietas* and *Musa* at Hor., *Carm.* 1.17.13–14: *di me tuentur, dis pietas mea/et Musa cordi est* ('the gods watch over me, my *pietas* and my Muse are dear to the gods'). Whilst *Pierides* is rare in elegy, it is distinctly Tibullan (Gibson 2003: 314–15); Tibullus uses *Pierides* only in the Marathus cycle and only within contexts where *(im)pietas* is an (unspoken) theme (1.4.61, 1.4.62, 1.9.48). See Lieberg 1980.

[88] See Halberstam 2011: 87–121.

[89] Fineberg 1999. See also Gardner 2013: 186–92 on Tib. 1.4 and 1.8.

[90] Fineberg 1999: 428.

[91] I take *fallaci* ('deceptive') with *amore* ('love') here for ease but believe (with Maltby 2002: 339) that *fallaci* goes as well with *tibi* ('to you', i.e. Venus) as it does with *amore*.

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than to be trapped on a wheel in Tartarus? As Tibullus' (self-)torture turns into death at *Am.* 3.9.63–64, Ovid rubs salt in the wound by teasing out 1.9's conclusory contradictions. Tibullus feigned to want a 'another boy', yet it is precisely Marathus, the same boy, who is absent from Tibullus' Elysium. Perhaps Ovid's cruellest and queerest joke is refusing to complete the cycle: conjuring the spirit of Marathus before Tibullus' eyes (and the readers'), before jerking him away.

IV Statius and the circle of life (and death)

For the wheel's final twist, I turn to Statius' *Silvae* 2.6 — a poem with an odd history in scholarship, positioned at the margins of the various groups into which scholars might slot it.[92] It is a 'standard text' on the reading lists of classicists interested in literary depictions of homosexuality,[93] but its purpose there is often to be an odd bedfellow to the simpler dynamics of earlier homoerotic verse.[94] As one of the *Silvae*, it is seldom given detailed attention, compared to supposedly more productive poems.[95] Our poem is even overlooked relative to the other three *Silvae* commemorating the death of younger partners in homoerotic pairings (2.1, 3.4 and 5.5),[96] especially 2.1, which covers similar ground.[97]

Scholars repeatedly query how *Silvae* 2.6 should be understood in its context — how to reconcile the fact that it immediately follows 2.4 and 2.5, poems which, in turn, eulogise a dead bird and a dead lion.[98] Does Statius, with King Lear, suggest that man's (or, at least, Philetus') life's cheap as beast's? I will not wade into these debates. This article is not a command to wall off the intertextual parameters of *Silvae* 2.6 such that it can only allude to Tibullus and Ovid's queer Underworld poetry; rather, it is an appeal to begin extending 2.6's limits beyond well-known Statian intratextuality, starting from an established *locus* of poetic play (Tibullus' death).[99] My interpretation of *Silvae* 2.6 is uncompromisingly metapoetic; the poem has a context — as all *Silvae*, it was written for a specific occasion (Philetus' death) and for a specific patron (Flavius Ursus), who was emotionally invested in that occasion — but here, I attend to what Statius' poetry is doing in terms of its poetics.

I begin with a shorter discussion of a poetics of anonymity in *Silvae* 2.6, before turning to the end of the poem to show how Statius knits together his consolatory purpose (2.6 is called a *consolatio* at 2.*praef.*) and his learned intertextuality so as to recycle Augustan depictions of the queer Underworld.[100] In short, Statius casts Philetus as an *alter Marathus* — the ultimate

[92] *Silvae* 2.6 is discussed in detail at Hardie 1983: 103–10; Markus 2004: 127–30; Rühl 2006: 181–95; Laes 2010: 254–8; Gunderson 2021: 301–13.

[93] A surprising role when even recent Statian scholars are reluctant to call *Silvae* 2.6 unambiguously homoerotic (e.g. Newlands 2011a: especially 202). *Contra* Newlands, see La Penna 1996; Gunderson 2021: 305 n. 255.

[94] E.g. Butrica 2005: 231–6. See its inclusion in sourcebooks: Hubbard 2003: 427–8; Larson 2012: 129.

[95] For instance, *Silvae* 2.4, which has been discussed extensively (e.g. Colton 1969; Cawsey 1983; Dietrich 2002; Myers 2002; Krasser 2002; Kronenberg 2017; Gunderson 2021: 271–7; Putnam 2023: 156–82), as has 2.7 (e.g. Malamud 1995; Newlands 2006; 2011b; Tzounakas 2017; Andrisani 2020; Gowers 2021).

[96] For an overview that takes the four together, see Laes 2010.

[97] See Dietrich 2002: 96–7; Bernstein 2005; Zeiner 2005: 170–1; Rühl 2006: 181–95; Asso 2010; Busch 2013; Newby 2014; Kronenberg 2017: 559 n. 4; Janan 2020; Gunderson 2021: 313–14. Hardie (1983: 67) calls 2.6 'a clear twin for 2,1'. See Newlands 2006 on the relationship between *Silvae* 2.1 and 2.7.

[98] See, recently, Bernstein 2019: 69–70, 76; Gunderson 2021: 302–12. See also Van Dam 1984: 3–4; Laes 2003: 316–17; Newlands 2011a: 9–11. On these poems generally, see Newlands 2005.

[99] I do not discuss *Silvae* 5.5 in detail, where there is a subtler version of the relationship discussed here. See especially *Silv*. 5.5.53–56 (on Orpheus and Linus), which evokes Ov., *Am.* 3.9.21–24's invocation of the same mourning poets in another homoerotic *epicedion*; Gibson *ad loc.* (2006: 417–19) correctly detects a Statian allusion to Verg., *Ecl.* 6.55–57 but misses the more situationally apposite *Amores* intertext. See Asso 2010: 678–9; Gunderson 2021: 251 n. 170 on taking 5.5 with 2.1.

[100] See Hardie 1983: 103–5 for *Silvae* 2.6's position in funerary and consolatory poetic traditions.

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male beloved of Latin elegiacs — who, fittingly, dwells among the Underworld's homoerotic coteries alongside Tibullus, Calvus, Catullus, Gallus and, now in the Flavian age, Ovid.

Let us start at the beginning (*Silv.* 2.6.1–6):

> saeve nimis, lacrimis quisquis discrimina ponis
> lugendi modos. miserum est primaeva parenti
> pignera surgentesque (nefas!) accendere natos;
> durum et deserti praerepta coniuge partem
> conclamare tori, maesta et lamenta sororum
> et fratrum gemitus:
>
> Whoever you are who places limits on tears or boundaries
> on mourning, you are too cruel. It is awful for a parent to cremate
> their young children and (for shame!) their adolescent sons;
> it is also harsh to bewail the abandoned side of the bed, from which
> a wife has been snatched, and sisters' sad laments
> or brothers' groans.

This opening invokes many instantiations of the poetic Underworld; indeed, we may wonder if, in alluding so boundlessly here, Statius' reference to the 'limits on tears' (*lacrimis discrimina*) and 'boundaries on mourning' (*lugendi modi*) is as tongue-in-cheek as it is metapoetic. In Statius' catalogue of family members who participate in matters funereal (*parens*, 'parent'; *primaeva pignora*, 'young children'; *surgentes nati*, 'adolescents'; *coniunx*, 'wife'; *sorores*, 'sisters'; *fratres*, 'brothers'), we may recognise the spectre of the similar, densely-packed catalogue that Orpheus encounters during his catabasis in *Georgics* 4 (4.475–77):[101]

> matres atque viri defunctaque corpora vita
> magnanimum heroum, pueri innuptaeque puellae,
> impositique rogis iuvenes ante ora parentum
>
> Mothers and husbands, and the bodies of great-hearted
> heroes, emptied of life, boys and unwed girls,
> and young men, set on pyres before their parents' eyes

These lines are, themselves, composed of epic intertexts, and Virgil repeats them verbatim as Aeneas descends to this same Underworld at *Aeneid* 6.306–8.[102] Thus, from the beginning of *Silvae* 2.6, which must unfurl at an Upperworld funeral, we are alert not just to the haunting presence of the Underworld that will take centre stage over the course of the poem, but also to the fact that this Statian Underworld, when we reach it, will be the self-same Underworld that has been visited so many times in poetry.

Statius' parenthetical *nefas!* ('for shame!') in line 3 stands out. Commentators point to a similarly funereal moment in the *Thebaid* (1.2.83–84: *cui vita (nefas!) et sanguine nati/partus honos*, 'whose life (for shame!) and honour have been born from his son's blood'), and I am

[101] For *primaevi pignora*, cf. also Catull. 64.401's *primaevi funera nati* ('funeral of a young child').

[102] See also Verg., *Aen.* 5.553, where *ante ora parentum* invokes death (see Fratantuono and Alden Smith 2015: 541). The image ultimately derives from Hom., *Od.* 11.38–41, layered onto *Il.* 6.146–49's cyclical leaves; see Thomas 1988: 228; Wills 1996: 281–2; Horsfall 2013a: 259–60.

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happy to accept this intra-Statian allusion.[103] However, does the specific context of cremation push attentive readers towards *Amores* 3.9.44 (translated above),[104] where *nefas* is used in close connection with the burning of Tibullus' body?[105]

While we are in the world of *Amores* 3.9, I briefly consider anonymity. I have already discussed how a deceased figure's anonymity can permit learned readers — and *Silvae* 2.6's first reader, Ursus, is explicitly *doctissimus* (Stat. *Silv.* 2.*praef*., 'extremely learned') — to detect multiple intertextual presences in a poem. Statius' opening lines (above) keep matters similarly innominate: *Silvae* 2.6's direct addressee, Ursus, does not appear until line 10, and his beloved's name (Philetus) is suppressed until 81.[106] For the first nine lines, then, the reader is engaged in a guessing game as to who has died (not least because, in reading Book 2 sequentially, they have encountered three previous *epicedia*, and are now accustomed to the form): is this a second poem on the death of Glaucias (2.1), or Melior's parrot (2.4) or 2.5's tamed lion?

Anonymity is 'surprising' in the light of epitaphic poems like Bion's *Lament for Adonis* and Pseudo-Moschus' *Epitaph for Bion*, which name their deceased in lines 1 and 2 respectively.[107] Even Statius' earlier *epicedia* had been clearer: 2.1 gives its addressee's name (Melior) in the first line (although Glaucias is unnamed until line 229), and *psittace* ('parrot') is the first word of *Silvae* 2.4.[108] This anonymity has been seen to contribute to 2.6's 'bloodlessness'; placed next to the far longer 2.1, 2.6 has seemed less personal to certain readers, a feature which is typically explained by Statius' closer relationship with Melior than with Ursus.[109] However, there is purpose in this poetics of namelessness. Into the gulf left by the anonymity of 2.6's subjects, the reader's mind may extend to supply any name they wish or expect to see there — any deceased whom they may expect Statius to commemorate. Why would they not, shortly after two densely Ovidian poems (i.e. *Silvae* 2.3, which adapts scenes from the *Fasti* and *Metamorphoses*,[110] and *Silvae* 2.4, which reworks *Amores* 2.6, another *epicedion*),[111] expect a reworking of Ovid's other eulogy (*Amores* 3.9)?[112] That reader may well remember that Ovid's poem on Tibullus similarly opened with a game of name-guessing interwoven with familial mourning (3.9.1–6):

Memnona si mater, mater ploravit Achillem,
et tangunt magnas tristia fata deas,
flebilis indignos, Elegia, solve capillos!
a, nimis ex vero nunc tibi nomen erit!

[103] Newlands 2011a: 203.

[104] For Ov., *Am.* 3.9's influence on Statius elsewhere, see Pollmann 2004: 177; Moss 2020: 284–5, both *ad* Stat. *Theb.* 12.382–85. For Statius' Ovidianism more broadly, see Dewar 2002: 398–406; Rosati 2014: 62–7; Rosati 2023 on the *Silvae* and Spinelli 2024 on the *Thebaid*.

[105] For the description of the funeral in *epicedia*, see Hardie 1983: 105 n. 21.

[106] For readers who have read *Silvae* 2's preface, Ursus' identity will be known; however, the preface only describes Philetus as an *amissus puer* (Stat., *Silv.* 2.*praef*., 'lost boy'). The title that 2.6 is given in MS M (*consolatio ad Flavium Ursum de amissione pueri delicati*, 'consolation to Flavius Ursus on the loss of his *puer delicatus*'), is almost definitely non-Statian (see Van Dam 1984: 69–72; Coleman 1988: xxviii–xxxii; Newlands 2011a: 7), but, regardless, preserves Philetus' anonymity.

[107] See Davis 2024: 251–3, quotation p. 251; Davis is discussing Ov., *Am.* 3.9, not Stat., *Silv.* 2.6.

[108] *Silv*. 2.5 plays a similar game of anonymity, delaying the identity of the deceased — *leo* ('lion') — so that it is the poem's last word at 2.5.30, 'though it is, of course, clear what the subject of the poem is within a few lines' (Van Dam 1984: 372).

[109] See e.g. Van Dam 1984: 390–1; Newlands 2011a: 202.

[110] See Dewar 2002: 398–403; Morzadec 2003; Hardie 2006; Newlands 2011a: 157–8; Putnam 2023: 46–50 for *Silvae* 2.3's Ovidianism.

[111] See n. 95.

[112] See Asso 2010 for Statius' reworking of Ovidian erotic poems in homoerotic consolatory poems.

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ille tui vates operis, tua fama, Tibullus
ardet in exstructo corpus inane rogo.

If a mother grieved for Memnon, or for Achilles,
and so sad fates touch even the great goddesses,
mournful Elegia, set free your hair which does not deserve this!
Ah, now your name will be all too true!
That bard of your genre, your own glory, Tibullus,
burns on a pyre built for him — an empty body.

Ovid's requiem gives us three personal names (Memnon, Achilles and Elegia), two implied names (Aurora and Thetis) contained within their titles (*mater, mater*), and one onomastic riddle that explains the eulogistic etymology of Elegia's name (*Am.* 3.9.4, *a, nimis ex vero nunc tibi nomen erit!*, 'ah, now your name will be all too true') before it reveals the identity of the deceased in line 5. Indeed, names remain tied to (im)mortality throughout the poem: at 3.9.31, Ovid tells us that Nemesis and Delia *longum nomen habebunt* ('will have a long-lasting name') because of Tibullus' poetry about them, and, at 3.9.59–60, Ovid gives us:

si tamen e nobis aliquid nisi nomen et umbra
restat, in Elysia valle Tibullus erit.

Yet, if anything remains of us but a name and a shadow,
Tibullus will be in the valley of Elysium.

There is little direct verbal intertextuality between the opening of *Amores* 3.9 and *Silvae* 2.6 and, on the face of it, little reason to propose a connection between Statius and Ovid's poem beyond the obvious situational parallel. However, I argue, Statius capitalises on Ovid's focus on names with his own plays of anonymity, metonymy and pseudonymity; thus, just as we cannot tell whether 2.6 will revisit 2.1, 2.4 or 2.5, we also begin to wonder whether it could retread Ovid's *epicedion* for Tibullus.

On their mission to identify 2.6's nameless subjects, Statius' reader is quickly confronted with the language of comparativity, through which Philetus (still unnamed) is juxtaposed against other losses that Ursus might have suffered (2.6.6–8):

alte tamen aut procul intrat
altius in sensus, maioraque vulnera vincit
plaga minor.

Yet a lesser blow still comes
deeply (far more deeply) into one's feelings
and conquers greater wounds.

Losing Philetus is a 'lesser blow' (*plaga minor*) compared to the 'greater wounds' (*maiora vulnera*) caused by the deaths of more important people in Ursus' life. The comparatives (*minor, maiora, altius*) encourage readers to play a game of hierarchy,[113] balancing Philetus' death against other deaths and, we may extend, Philetus himself against other dedicatees of commemorative poetry.[114] The given reason for Philetus' 'lesser' position is his social status: he is a *famulus* ('household slave').

[113] Philetus is also comparatively *minor* at *Silv.* 2.6.35 and 2.6.26 and *maior* at 2.6.11, 2.6.22.

[114] See also the generic play which sees Philetus, suited to light, occasional (*minor*) verse become the object of a hexameter (*maior*) poem with epicising moments; for the epicising force of *Silvae* 2.6 (especially 2.6.38–45), see Newlands 2011a: 202.

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Yet, Statius suggests, enslavement and all the hierarchical 'lesserness' it would imply, do not fit well for Philetus (2.6.8–12):

> famulum (quia rerum nomina caeca
> sic miscet Fortuna manu nec pectora novit),
> sed famulum gemis, Urse, pium, sed amore fideque
> has meritum lacrimas, cui maior stemmate cuncto
> libertas ex mente fuit.
>
> You grieve for a household slave (since Fortune blends together
> the names for things like this with her blind hands, and does not know the heart),
> but a dutiful household slave, Ursus, and one deserving of these tears
> through his love and loyalty, whose freedom was in the mind — greater than
> your whole family tree.

The label *famulus* is misplaced, and Philetus really ought to be known by another *nomen* (his actual *nomen* remains undisclosed).[115] Statius pushes further at his games of anonymity and comparativity, begging the reader to bring some fixity to boy's unstable identity, perhaps by drawing on an identity with which they are already intertextually familiar. Fortune's power to blend and elide identities is particularly notable given, as we shall see, the polysemous way in which Statius characterises Philetus at the poem's end.

Later, Statius further underscores the disconnect between Philetus' enslavement and his *libertas* ('freedom') of spirit (2.6.21–25):[116]

> quid si nec famulus? vidi ipse habitusque notavi
> te tantum cupientis erum; sed maior in ore
> spiritus et tenero manifesti in sanguine mores.
> optarent multum Graiae cuperentque Latinae
> sic peperisse nurus.
>
> What if he were not a household slave? I myself saw and noted the demeanour
> of this boy that desired you alone as his master; but there was a greater spirit in
> his face and the character in his tender blood was evident.
> Greek and Latin girls alike would have wished and desired
> to have borne a child like him.

This is autoptic evidence that Philetus does not fit the label *famulus*; line 22, in particular, implies that his servitude to Ursus was born out of personal desire (*te tantum*, 'you alone') rather than forced enslavement. Earlier, Philetus had been equated with a 'lesser blow' (2.6.8, *plaga minor*) but he is now possessed of 'greater spirit' (*maior spiritus*), in a move that directly contrasts Philetus' innate and imposed qualities — *libertas* and enslavement. Moreover, the boy's 'character' (*mores*) is 'evident' (*manifesti*) — Statius capitalises on the metapoetic force of *manifestus* to encourage readers to unpack this 'evidence', located in Philetus' *tener sanguis* ('tender blood'). This strange phrase (a unique collocation in extant Latin) has not been satisfactorily explained by commentators:[117] Van Dam suggests that the ultimate signification is 'youth', via *sanguis*' meaning of 'descent', correctly pointing out

[115] See Geue forthcoming on the poetics of enslavement in *Silv.* 5.5.

[116] See Hardie 1983: 106.

[117] The closest parallel is *sanguinea teneritudo* ('bloody tenderness') at Zeno of Verona, *Tractatus* 1.62.4.

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that *sanguis* itself cannot refer to age.[118] Yet, it does not follow that 'descent' should mean 'youth' either. Although I disagree with Van Dam's conclusions, 'descent' does seem right to me, but I recalibrate to something queerer than biology can provide: 'kinship'. Statius is, I suggest, invoking Tibullus' repeated characterisation, in his homoerotic elegies, of *pueri delicati* ('charming boys') — and especially Marathus — as *teneri* ('tender').[119] 'Tender kinship' meaning 'Tibullan kinship', therefore, would provide a clearer and queerer identity for Philetus in these lines.[120]

Furthermore, line 24's potential subjunctives (*optarent* and *cuperent*) drive readers to imagine the young Philetus being the offspring of mothers other than his own, dislocating him from the constraints of biography and reinserting him into the fictive space of the Greco-Roman literary tradition.[121] Once we envisage Philetus as an enslaved boy whom the desiring homoerotic mind wishes to imagine as free, it is not hard to crawl further down the bough of his queer family tree to find other such youths in, for instance, the *tenerae puerorum turbae* (Tib. 1.4.9, 'tender crowds of boys') of Tibullan poetry (1.4.11–14):

> hic placet, angustis quod equum compescit habenis;
> hic placidam niveo pectore pellit aquam.
> hic, quia fortis adest audacia, cepit: at illi
> virgineus teneras stat pudor ante genas.
>
> This boy delights because he controls his horse with tight reins;
> this boy strikes the still water with his snow-white chest.
> This boy takes your fancy because he has a brave confidence: but
> virginal shame stands guard on that one's tender cheeks.

Tibullus constructs a fantasy here, in which the *pueri delicati*, who, as far as they can be said to be 'real', were 'really' enslaved, and could not participate in activities like horse-riding, swimming (in the Tiber) or military service;[122] Statius does likewise by imagining Philetus as having a mother from the heart of the Roman world (*Graiae aut Latinae nurus*, 'Greek or Latin girls') and eliding reference to his 'real' origin which, if *Silv.* 5.5 is anything to go by, could have been an Egyptian slave market (5.5.66–69). Philetus does not belong to a family tree constructed by the temporal and reproductive logics of heterosexuality; rather, he participates in a queerer insistence upon familial ties that refute such logics.[123]

[118] Van Dam 1984: 406, drawing on *OLD* 1689 s.v. 'sanguis' 8, 10.

[119] Tib. 1.4.9, 1.4.14, 1.4.58, 1.8.51, 1.9.30. See Nikoloutsos 2007: especially 67 on Tib. 1.4's use of *tener* to translate Greek terms of homoeroticism like ἁπαλός ('pliable') and τρυφερός ('tender'). Tibullus' use of *tener* in 1.1 and 1.4 is well treated by Nikoloutsos, but it also appears in the often overlooked poem of Tibullan homoerotics, 2.3 (lines 10 and 63). Henkel (2014: 456 n. 19) notes that Tibullus uses *tener* more than any other Augustan elegist and M. Y. Myers (2020: 121–6) discusses *tener* as an archetypally Tibullan adjective. If we follow Ingleheart's (2021: 201–2) connection between Tibullus, Ovid, homoerotics, Gallus and Orpheus, then Ovid's use of the same adjective to describe Orpheus' homoerotic affections for *teneri mares* ('tender men') at *Met.* 10.84 may have a Tibullan flavour. See Bonar 2023: 65–66 for Orpheus' attraction to *teneri mares*.

[120] Scholarship generally ignores Statius' reception of Tibullus (in contrast to his Ovidianism; see n. 104). Fulkerson (2017: 44) and Fisher (1983: 1951–3) evince that, although considered the finest of the elegists (Vell. Pat. 2.36.6; Quint., *Inst.* 10.1.93), Tibullus' poetry saw little sustained engagement after Ovid. However, see, recently, Putnam 2023: 64–6 on Statius.

[121] On fictivity, death and biography, see Goldschmidt 2019: especially 3–10.

[122] E.g. Nikoloutsos 2007: 66–7; Williams 2010: 207–8. See generally Fitzgerald 2000: 51–68; Verstraete 2012. For a recent reappraisal of *servitium amoris* dynamics which accounts for their hierarchical paradoxes, see Racette-Campbell 2023: 174–6; see also James 2005: 284–99.

[123] See Halberstam 2011: 106–21 for queer theory's capacity to balance between (hetero) linear narratives in talking about descent, and the anti-social, anti-family theorisation of Edelman 2004; see also D'Angelo 2023.

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This kinship with softness (*tener*) is also generic.[124] Philetus is compared to, then distinguished from heroes like Theseus (2.6.25–26), Paris (2.6.27–29), Achilles (2.6.30–31) or Troilus (2.6.32–33), each of whom is here associated with both beauty and epic poetry. Instead, he is connected to homoerotic characters like Parthenopaeus (2.6.42–45) and a Spartan youth (2.6.45–47; perhaps Hyacinthus?), who is also defined in terms of *tener* (2.6.46, *teneri sic integer aevi*, 'unimpaired in his tender age');[125] Philetus even surpasses, in his devotion to Ursus, a *ménage à six* of famous homoerotic lovers from myth (2.6.54–55): Orestes and Pylades, Achilles and Patroclus, and Theseus and Pirithoüs.[126] Although this list shares some names with the epic catalogue above, it is here defined in terms of homosocial interpersonal relationships based on *fides* ('trust'), rather than generic epicness.[127] The poem's final comparative couple — Eumaeus and Odysseus (2.6.56–57) — are undeniably epic in origin, but here underscore the homosociality (if not the homoeroticism) of the *fides* that bonds Philetus to Ursus, whilst teasing again that Philetus' ancestry may be greater than Ursus knows, given that Eumaeus was a slave who had been born a prince (*Od.* 15.403–92). Furthermore, the image of Eumaeus waiting for Odysseus prefigures Philetus in the Underworld, waiting for his beloved master.

Let us return to the spectre of Tibullus' poetic death in *Silvae* 2.6, which emerges clearly as Statius consoles Ursus that the deceased Philetus is now safe in the Underworld (2.6.98–100):[128]

> subit ille pios carpitque quietem
> Elysiam clarosque illic fortasse parentes
> invenit,
>
> He is descending to the dutiful dead and enjoying the
> peace of Elysium and, perhaps, he even finds illustrious ancestors
> down there.

The surface-level sense is clearly that Philetus, once in the Underworld, may discover that, despite his enslaved status, he really did have well-born biological ancestors. However, the *pii* ('dutiful') dead whom Philetus encounters remind us of Tibullus' augmentation of the *numeri pii* ('dutiful ranks') at *Amores* 3.9.66, and we may even hear an aural echo between the metrically equivalent phrases *ille pios* (*Silv.* 2.6.98) and *Tibulle pios* (*Am.* 3.9.66).[129] Philetus had already been called *pius* at 2.6.10 (printed above), which anticipates his union with the queer kin group of *pii* here. Furthermore, in picking up his earlier musing on Philetus' parentage (2.6.8–12, 2.6.21–25) precisely when he most opens his poem up to allusions to Tibullus' death, Statius asks an audience to decode the identity of the 'illustrious ancestors'

[124] For the beautiful appearance of Flavian *pueri delicati*, see Pollini 2003.

[125] For the effeminate imputation of a reference to Parthenopaeus, see La Penna 1996: 162–5; Seo 2013: 122–45. *Contra* Newlands 2011a: 202: 'the poem emphasises Philetos' manliness; he is presented as an epic hero, a Roman Parthenopaeus, not an effeminate youth'.

[126] See Van Dam 1984: 424 for Statius' allusive inclusion of all three couples here.

[127] For *fides* as a levelling force between socially unequal Statian lovers, see Bernstein 2019: especially 69–70. Cf. Eumaeus' *fides* at Ov., *Her.* 1.104.

[128] Newlands (2011a: 222) permits the presence here of 'the elegiac model of the lovers' paradise (e.g. Tib. 1.3.57–66)' but does not expand further.

[129] Statius' *ille* is emphatically repeated here from 2.6.97 and is not needed for sense (Van Dam 1984: 446; Newlands 2011a: 223) which further permits poetic play on the word; Newlands (2011a: 223) appears to imply an aural similarity between *ille* and *Elysium*. I tentatively note that Statius' *subit ille* is almost a perfect anagram of Ovid's *Tibulle* and that both lines start with morphologically identical verbs (*auxisti* at *Am.* 3.9.66 and *solvisti* at *Silv.* 2.6.98). Ov., *Am.* 3.6.67 capitalises on polyptotic references to peace (*requiescite* and *quieta*) that may be picked up in Statius' *quietem/Elysiam* (*Silv.* 2.6.98–99).

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(*clari parentes*) who await Philetus, not least through his provocative *fortasse* ('perhaps').[130] *Fortasse* encourages meditation on these ancestors' existence, as does the metapoetic *claros* ('illustrious'), which implies that an audience will recognise who is being discussed.[131] Philetus, I suggest, meets, as his homoerotic forebears, at least Tibullus, but also the whole queer coterie of Calvus, Catullus, Gallus and Virgil whom earlier poets had gathered in a homoerotic post-mortem grouping.[132]

Finally, let us turn to the conclusion to Statius' poem — a conclusion which has been seen to be so odd that editors have over-emended the text (2.6.103–5):[133]

> pone, precor, questus; alium tibi Fata Phileton,
> forsan et ipse dabit, moresque habitusque decoros
> monstrabit gaudens similemque docebit amari.
>
> Lay aside, I pray, your wailings; perhaps the Fates will give another Philetus
> to you, or perhaps he will himself, and he will gladly teach him proper
> character and demeanour and will teach someone similar to himself to be loved.

The scenario is bizarre: Philetus, once dead, will provide his own replacement as Ursus' lover (presumably from among the Underworld souls?) and will teach this new boy how to behave and be loved as Philetus had. It is understandable that some have sought to edit the poem here to make it more palatable (as outlined at my n. 133); however, the text printed above, which is relatively close to the *paradosis*, makes good sense when considered in the light of the intertextual games we have seen Statius play.

Let us unpack the identity of *alius Philetos* ('another Philetus'). The most prosaic interpretation is that this will be some new lover, perhaps purchased from Egypt (cf. *Silv.* 5.5.66–69); however, how would Philetus instruct a living boy from beyond the grave?[134] Gibson rightly invokes the end of Virgil's second *Eclogue* — *invenies alium ... Alexin* (*Ecl.* 2.73, 'you will find another Alexis')[135] — securing *Silvae* 2.6's lovers to another homoerotic pair in *Eclogue* 2's Corydon and Alexis,[136] while also inscribing this Flavian *epicedion* into the tradition whence springs Virgil's Hellenistic source.[137]

This *alius Philetos* echoes, then, with memories of other homoerotic lovers; while we are listening to these echoes, I suggest we also hear Tibullus' self-defeating proclamation from

[130] Van Dam (1984: 446) takes *fortasse* with *claros* (i.e. 'maybe illustrious') but, if anything, word order suggests it should go with *parentes* (i.e. 'maybe [some] ancestors').

[131] See Heslin 2011: 68–9 on Prop., 4.10.47 (*Ponticus heroo, Bassus quoque clarus iambis*, 'Ponticus, famous for epics, Bassus, also famous for iambics'). I wonder if *claros* ('famous') here invokes Verg., *Aen.* 6.478's reference to the *bello clari* ('those famous for war'), which prominently include Parthenopaeus (6.480).

[132] See Halberstam 2011: 70–4 on the queer temporalities of non-biocentric kinship structures.

[133] I print *amari* at 2.6.105, which is the reading of Q and is preserved by some editors (e.g. Phillimore 1917; Marastoni 1970; Courtney 1990). Newlands (2011a), Shackleton Bailey (2003) and Van Dam (1984) print *amorem*, making the sense 'you will teach a love similar to the one you had for Philetus to the new boy'. See Van Dam 1984: 449 for a full survey of the textual possibilities here. I also print third-person forms (*dabit, monstrabit, docebit*), with Phillimore 1917; Van Dam 1984; Courtney 1990 and the MS tradition, *contra*, more recently, a preference for the second person (Shackleton Bailey 1987: 276; 2003; Newlands 2011a).

[134] Asso (2010: 692) ascribes this to 'supernatural postmortem powers'.

[135] Gibson 2006: xl; Newlands 2011a: 224.

[136] Cf. the post-mortem association between Virgil and homoerotics (n. 45) and the suggestion that Virgil's Corydon and Alexis are pretexts for his own relationship with a youth called Alexander (Apul., *Apol.* 10; Donat., *Vit. Verg.* 28–31). See also Mart. 6.68, 8.55 for ancient recognition of *Ecl.* 2's homoeroticism. See Fredericksen 2015: 422–8; Oliensis 2019b: 425–31.

[137] Theoc., *Id.* 11.76: εὑρησεῖς Γαλάτειαν ἴσως καὶ καλλίον' ἄλλαν ('you will, perhaps, find another, more beautiful Galatea'). See Clausen 1994: 85.

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the end of poem 1.9 that 'another boy' (1.9.79, *puer alter*; full lines printed above) will fall in love with him after Marathus' treachery. Indeed, the Tibullan echoes are all the louder if we have been attuned to Statius' repeated allusions to *Amores* 3.9, the poem on Tibullus' death. Statius capitalises on Marathus' figurative death in Tib. 1.9, interweaving Ovid's description of Tibullus' own death in *Am.* 3.9, so that the deceased Philetus has ready access to a Rolodex of homoerotic Latin literary loves. Perhaps in the spirit of the cyclical turning of Ixion's wheel, the *alius Philetos/Phileto similis* ('another Philetus, one similar to Philetus') could be one of these characters from previous erotic poetry — a suggestion reinforced by the pun in Philetus' name. He is φιλητός, 'worthy of love' or, perhaps even, 'worthy of love poetry'. Whichever word is printed as the final one of the poem (*amorem, amari, amori* or *amare*),[138] Statius plays on Philetus' name's onomastic origin by restating the centrality of love in this poem commemorating 'Loverboy'.

Statius, then, suggests that the *alius Philetos* could be a character from our queer coterie; however, the issue that the dead Philetus is being asked to teach a living boy remains unsolved. I suggest that Statius invokes metempsychosis,[139] as introduced at the end of *Aeneid* 6's Underworld scenes (6.703–51). Virgil's Elysian souls prepare to re-enter the Upperworld as 'other' versions of themselves; as Anchises has it, there are 'souls to whom fate owes other bodies' (*Aen.* 6.713–14, *animae, quibus altera fato/corpora debentur*).[140] Philetus' location in the Underworld, next to the shores of the Lethe (*Silv.* 2.6.100), in the so-called *nitentes campi* ('gleaming fields'), places him in that part of the Underworld where souls wait before undergoing metempsychosis.[141] In short, he is ready to provide his own replacement through reincarnation.

And yet, this seems to be about more than just reincarnation; Statius is remembering the longstanding tradition of metapoetic metempsychosis.[142] From Latin literature's earliest moments, the Pythagorean transmigration of the soul had been associated with metapoetic self-awareness, ever since Ennius declared himself *alter Homerus* ('another Homer') when the Greek epicist came to him in a dream and explained the philosophy of metempsychosis (Enn., *Ann.* frs. 2–9 Manuwald).[143] As Hardie has shown, this tradition travels through almost all Latin hexameter poetry: Lucretius identifies as an *alter Empedocles* and *alter Epicurus* in the same breath (a position complicated by Epicureanism's non-belief in the soul's immortality); Virgil's Anchises in *Aeneid* 6 is an *alter Ennius* (himself an *alter Homerus*); Ovid's Pythagoras in *Metamorphoses* 15 is made up of the reincarnated souls of all the above (an anachronistic joke, given that Pythagoras chronologically precedes all of them except Homer), in a move which prompts the reader to see Ovid himself as an *alter Pythagoras, alter Ennius, alter Homerus* (etc.),[144] with, as one would expect, some *alter*ations.[145] The process of metempsychosis, then, moves forward through historical time in one sense, while in another, it instantiates a constant recycling.[146] Philetus performs a pedagogical task which echoes Homer's at the beginning of the *Annales*, teaching his replacement (who is also his reincarnation) how to continue his legacy.

[138] For the first three, see Van Dam 1984: 449; *amare* is floated, then rejected, by Shackleton Bailey (2003: 377).

[139] Van Dam (1984: 449) invokes Virgilian metempsychosis but does not elaborate.

[140] See Harrison 1978.

[141] Described at Verg., *Aen.* 6.677–85; see Molyviati-Toptsis 1994.

[142] For an overview, see Gillespie 2010.

[143] See Skutsch 1968: 7–9; Goldschmidt 2019: 11–13. No text survives in which Ennius called himself *alter Homerus*, but the title became associated with him (Lucil., fr. 1189 Marx; Hor., *Ep.* 2.1.50) and is in line with the extant fragments.

[144] See Hardie 1995: especially 209–14; 2024: 252–54. See also Hardie 1986: 76–83; Aicher 1989; Barchiesi 1995; Segal 2001.

[145] Miller 1994; Van Schoor 2011.

[146] See Krasne 2022.

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If Philetus is preparing *alius Philetos* ('another Philetus') for metempsychotic reincarnation, he is engaged in turning the cycle of love (onomastically speaking). If the *alius Philetus* is set to return to the Upperworld, we begin to wonder who Philetus was before he was Philetus, or where the turning wheel last stopped. Was he Marathus? Or Tibullus? From the Underworld, Philetus will teach 'character and demeanour' (*mores habitusque*) to the new boy — attributes that were linked to his *tener sanguis* ('tender blood'; 2.6.23 and 2.6.21, respectively), and in which, therefore, we feel the presence of Tibullus, Marathus and other Underworld figures.[147] Thus, as Statius' poem draws to a close, we turn back to motifs from its beginning and, in his recycling of the language of *mores* and *habitus*, we feel an allusion to the recycling of the soul.

This 'teaching moment' between Philetus and the *alius Philetos* is, itself, coloured by the homoerotic. How could Philetus teach his new self the art of love but through practical example? The participle *gaudens* ('rejoicing') that is ascribed to Philetus in the poem's last line hints at an eroticism between him and his *alius*-self, that itself recycles the queer encounter between Homer and Ennius, where the latter says of the former, 'I see you in dreams, and ever I embrace and kiss you' (Enn., *Ann.* fr. 2 Manuwald, *video in somnis, numquam est quin amplectar et exosculer*).[148] Notably, Ennius does not 'inherit' from Homer as his father-figure, reinforcing patrilineal procreativity;[149] rather they merge in transhistorical queer desire. The moment in which the baton changes hands in metempsychosis may be a tender and erotic one.[150]

Into this cyclicality, Statius introduces phrases that recycle not his own words, but Tibullus' pleas in the Marathus Cycle, wheeling us back from the end of one Flavian poem to the beginning of an Augustan poetry cycle. Statius' final appeal to Ursus, which immediately precedes the reference to Philetus' metempsychosis, is *pone, precor, questus* (2.6.103, 'lay aside, I pray, your wailings'). In these wailings, we hear the echoes of Tibullus' cry to Marathus, *parce, puer, quaeso* (Tib. 1.4.83, 'spare me, boy, I plead'), preserved in the lachrymose alliteration of 'p', 'c' and 'r' sounds, the direct parallelism of 'p', 'p', 'q' initial lettering, and the exact metrical equivalence of the two phrases.[151] Indeed, the iterative potential of this phrase had already been exploited by Tibullus, who reuses it in his rebuke at Pholoë, after her theft of Marathus from him: *parce precor tenero* (Tib. 1.8.51, 'spare, I pray, the tender boy').[152] As Statius recycles Marathus, he also recycles generic identity: with his instruction 'to lay aside wailings' (*ponere questus*), he instructs Ursus, on the generic level, to do away with elegiac poetry, which is strongly associated with *questus* and its cognates in ancient literary criticism — a fitting instruction given that *Silvae* 2.6 is in hexameters, rather than

[147] Rimell (2024: 375) calls *tener* 'a buzzword of Roman erotic elegy' and stresses its flexibility, attributable equally to poets, their beloveds and the poems themselves; see also Pichon 1902: 277–78.

[148] This encounter produces, in the waking Ennius, the conflicted emotions of love: *aut fleo ubertim aut exulto laetitia aliqua et voluptate* (Enn., *Ann.* fr. 2 Manuwald, 'I either weep abundantly or rejoice out of some delight or pleasure').

[149] Cf. D'Angelo 2023 on Hippocratic patrilineality.

[150] Cf. (albeit in a different philosophical system) Pope's (2023) argument that Lucretian atomic theory results in the infinite penetrability of humankind, despite men's claim to be impenetrable.

[151] Both Newlands (2011a: 223) and Van Dam (1984: 448) adduce parallels in Stat., *Silv.* 2.1.183 (*pone metus letique minas desiste vereri*, 'lay aside fear and stop fearing the threats of death') and Sil., *Pun.* 9.350 (*pone, precor, lacrimas*, 'lay aside, I pray, your tears'), although neither seems as close to me as Tib. 1.4.83. See also Ov., *Met.* 14.762 (*pone, precor, fastus*, 'lay aside, I pray, your pride') and *Fast.* 1.480 (*siste, precor, lacrimas*, 'stop, I pray, your tears'), both of which Bernstein (2022: 196) sees behind *Pun.* 9.350, similarly ignoring Tibullus.

[152] Maltby (2002: 315) outlines that *parce, precor* ('spare, I pray') is a commonplace opening for Latin hexameters (with many examples) but does not connect it back to Tib. 1.4.83's *parce, puer*.

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elegiac distichs.[153] If Philetus is an *alter Marathus*, then poetry about Philetus is also a transmigration of poetry about Marathus across metres and genres. Statius becomes a second Tibullus, at least in these poetic moments.

V Queer Elysium

Let us cycle back to queer theory. Through the pens of Marsus, Tibullus, Ovid and Statius, we have traversed four different Underworlds, which are, of course, all the same Underworld. We have met an imbricating series of homoerotic lovers, poets and poems, which cycle between one another: Marsus' Tibullus walks ever more as Virgil's *comes*; Ovid's Tibullus, however, joins a coterie of lovers, from which Virgil is absent, but in which we may detect the half-hidden shade of Tibullus' lover, Marathus; Statius' commemoration of Philetus has him ready to provide his own replacement as Ursus' lover in a way that prompts us to wonder both who Philetus was before (Marathus?) and who he will be in the future.

These interweaving rings of poetry cast the Underworld as a place that is separate from the chronologies of the Upperworld's historical time; for all that the philologist may want to read forward-moving, backward-looking linearity here (Tibullus leading to Ovid, leading to Statius), we know that, in Elysium, we can touch the future as much as the past. When Statius responds to the dead Tibullus and Ovid, those Augustan poets are not the past and passive victims of his will to rework. They have already projected an agency into Elysium by walking there poetically. Rather than thinking of Statius as 'mastering' his predecessors (in macrocosm of Ursus' mastery over Philetus), perhaps we should attend to the erotic intermingling of Homer and Ennius at Latin literature's birth — a very queer parentage for this literary tradition. Ennius neither controls nor dominates Homer — they commingle by means of two deponent verbs that enact the neither-active-nor-passive act of tender and eternal love (Enn., *Ann.* fr. 2 Manuwald, 'ever I embrace and kiss you', *numquam est quin amplectar et exosculer*). Love — distinctly, homoerotic love — is precisely the vehicle and the metaphor here; this is not a love of alterity (etymologically at the core of heteroerotics), but of the homoerotic pull towards sameness.

Ennius and Homer's mingling moment should be instructive for our journeys in intertextuality.[154] If we uncritically declare that, in writing, Statius acts on Ovid or Tibullus, figured as the sexually and literarily passive partners in this encounter, we reproduce a heterosexualist mode of (male) dominance over the other. In the context of classical reception studies, Butler rebukes the historicising premise that 'the past cannot, in fact, love you back', which, he argues, produces the almost homophobic edict that 'if we want finally to get the past off our backs, we must never be seen, in our relationship to the past, to be on our backs'.[155] And Statius is, to some degree, on his back for Philetus; this *puer delicatus* is a little buffer than his previous incarnations (2.6.40–44):

> torva atque virilis
> gratia nec petulans acies blandique severo
> igne oculi, qualis bellus iam casside visu
> Parthenopaeus erat, simplexque horrore decoro
> crinis

[153] Hor., *Ars P.* 75. See also Ov., *Am.* 1.1.21, *Her.* 1.8; Verg., *Ecl.* 8.19 (with Cucchiarelli 2023: 396). See Pichon 1902: 248 for its use within elegy. See also Hinds 1987: 103–7.

[154] 'Embrace' and related concepts are part of Rimell's new vocabulary of the intertextual (2019: 458).

[155] Butler 2019: 403.

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> you were masculine, with stern
> good looks, your gaze was not wanton, and your eyes were
> sweet with a serious gleam, as Parthenopaeus was to look at,
> now beautiful in his helmet; your hair was unadorned and its
> roughness was beautiful

Philetus' looks abound with oxymorons: beautiful (*pulchrior*) yet manly (*virilis*); flirtatious (*petulans, blandique .../oculi*) but stern (*torva .../gratia, severo/igne*); epically warlike, but like pre-masculine Parthenopaeus, in whose epithet *bellus* ('beautiful') we hear the paradoxical echo of *bellum* ('war').[156] He is not figured as the unambiguously passive recipient of a (Statian/Ursan) penetrating love but as a versatile youth who straddles the dichotomy of active and passive. Versatility makes him the perfect lover for queer, commingling intertextuality: a Statian 'reception' of Ovidian and Tibullan homoerotics, who puts Statius on his back for these older poets; yet simultaneously a Statian thrust backwards that drives Ovid and Tibullus to their knees.

Philetus, in his glorious versatility, belongs in the queer Underworld — this space that privileges cyclical queer time over straight time's linearity, where identity is not fixed by the constraints of chronology and corporeality, but may dissolve and fracture, at once pushing into and taking on impressions from past lives (and past poems).[157] Thus, queer Elysium demands to be interpreted through interlocking intertextualities, but never to be concluded. Statius' cannot be the last word — he is simply the last (Roman) speaker in this article.

Ultimately, in contemplating Elysium's queerness, we are left with a notion both disconcerting and hopeful.[158] If Marathus is both Gallus and Philetus, at different moments on metempsychosis' wheel, we must confront the fact that Ovid's coterie of homoerotic lovers in *Amores* 3.9 is an inflection point, not a conclusion. His hopeful future tense — *in Elysia valle Tibullus erit* (3.9.60, 'Tibullus will be in the valley of Elysium') — represents a snapshot, not a final resting place: after a brief stint in Elysium, Tibullus will cycle into some other mode of poetic existence (into Statius?). Elysium is queer precisely because it is not the *straight*forward end of life — the tip of time's arrow. It is a place that cannot be occupied, but poetry may, temporarily, offer us glimpses of it.

Elysium figures Muñoz' notion of queer utopia as a horizonal space and time that lies just beyond the experiential; as he memorably puts it, 'we may never touch queerness, but we can feel it as the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality. We have never been queer, yet queerness exists for us as an ideality'.[159] Rather than the image of poetic eternality with which Roman poetry (especially Ovid) so often acquaints us, queer Elysium provokes us to consider the unfixity and malleability of poetic afterlives.[160]

How, then, can we read those literary Underworlds where authors seek, momentarily, to straighten out Elysium's queerness? In particular, *Aeneid* 6's catabasis stands on a knife's edge. Virgil wants this catabasis to bear upon linear genealogies: the father, Anchises, tells the son, Aeneas, about their future descendants, biological and political, arrayed in linear chronology (6.752–885).[161] In short, this Underworld seems the ultimate servant of Halberstamian 'straight time'; where is the queerness here?

[156] A recognised play: Ov., *Am.* 1.9.6, with McKeown 1987: 53–4; 1989: 263.

[157] See, with similar conclusions, but absent the queer theoretical force, Gee 2017.

[158] In these comments, I keep in mind the conclusions to Lindheim 2023.

[159] Muñoz 2019: 1.

[160] E.g. Ov., *Am.* 1.15, *Met.* 15.871–79, *Tr.* 3.3; Hor., *Carm.* 3.30. All with Ingleheart 2015b; Xinyue 2022: esp. 152–4; Hardie 2023; La Bua 2023.

[161] E.g. Horsfall 2013b; 2014a; 2015.

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It lies in the threat of cyclicality haunting Aeneas' catabasis. Anchises the patriarch, we have seen, is both an *alter Ennius* and an *alter Homerus*, the result of and participant in queer intermingling that bridges historical time — an inflection point, not a conclusion.[162] He offers Aeneas not fixed futures, but spokes on a wheel (*Aen.* 6.792–94):[163]

> Augustus Caesar, divi genus, aurea condet
> saecula qui rursus Latio regnata per arva
> Saturno quondam
>
> Augustus Caesar, progeny of the deified, who will
> establish a Golden Age again throughout the fields where
> once Latin Saturn ruled.

Famous lines, and cyclical ones. Anchises does not present eternal *imperium sine fine* (1.279; cf. 9.446–49), but the temporary recycling of a past Golden Age; the promise of his future-tense *condet* ('will establish') — which both looks forward to the *Aeneid*'s closural, ambiguously ctistic use of *condere* at 12.950 and looks backward to Lucretius' use of *condere saeclum* to denote death (3.1090)[164] — is problematised by *rursus* ('again') and fully confounded by the perfect *regnata* ('ruled').[165] Queerness inhabits the interstitials between *condet* and *regnata* — if Saturn's kingdom can come again for Augustus, so too must the periods where no *imperium* exists at all. This *imperium* has not one, but multiple *fines*; its cyclical multiplicity can only be expressed from the vantage of the Underworld.

While I have focused on journeys to Elysium that are, because of their homoerotic content, more obviously queer, we should, after *Aeneid* 6, recognise that Elysium is queer by its very nature. Even the most progressional, procreational, 'hetero' instantiation of the Underworld comprises the same cyclicality and mingling identity that we saw in *Silvae* 2.6. This Underworld poetics prompts us to remember, as we theorise the connections between ancient texts, that poets need not (only) follow or surpass one another along the straight line of historical time's arrow; they can also walk shoulder to shoulder, especially in the Underworld, where queer wheels keep on turning.[166]

Virgil, Tibullus, Marsus, Ovid and Statius are all dead. They are all remembered, sometimes by one another, in ways that allow parts of their selves to 'live on', but that also push them over into a 'horizon imbued with potentiality'. Rather than entering a (stable) state of immortality, they turn the wheel. In her 1991 novel *Le vieil homme et les loups* ('The Old Man and the Wolves'), Julia Kristeva, mother of the theory of intertextuality, has her character Septicius Clarus (reincarnated after a real second-century C.E. Roman), ask 'mais où sont passés Ovide, Tibulle[?]' ('but where have Tibullus and Ovid gone?').[167] He answers himself (1991: 64–5):

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[162] Cf. Anchises: *quisque suos patimur manis. exinde per amplum/mittimur Elysium et pauci laeta arva tenemus,/donec longa dies perfecto temporis orbe/concretam exemit labem* (Verg., *Aen.* 6.743–46, 'we each suffer our own spirits. Then, we are sent through spacious Elysium and a few of us inhabit the happy fields until time's passage has rid us of our accreted defects with the completed rotation of time's wheel'). Cf. Horsfall's (2014a) suggestion that Virgil's Underworld threatens the poet's own death and joining the dead poets therein.

[163] See Heyworth 2015: 245–8 for the irrationality of *Aeneid* 6's future imaginings.

[164] See Kenney 2014: 228–9.

[165] See, on this cyclicality (recycled from *Ecl.* 4) and its dependence on Jewish thought, Horsfall 2013b: 540–41; 2014b.

[166] Cf. Ov., *Met.* 11.61–66 of Orpheus and Eurydice, especially 64–65: *hic modo coniunctis spatiantur passibus ambo,/nunc praecedentem sequitur, nunc praevius anteit* ('here, they both now wander, side by side, now he follows the leader, now he takes the lead').

[167] Kristeva 1991: 64.

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> Je pense, quant à moi, qu'ils se sont métamorphosés. En quoi? En nous. En vous. Dans les disques du barman. En Santa Barbara elle-même, pourquoi pas? Par conséquent, on peut les retrouver, si l'on cherche bien. Dans les texts, évidemment, sous les ruines des vieux palais et des églises, et même dans les pensées des gens qui changent de visage. … chez vous, il reste des traces.
>
> For myself, I think that they have metamorphosed. Into what? Into us. Into you. Into the bartender's records. Into Santa Barbara itself, why not? Thus, we can find them, if we search well. In texts (obviously), under the ruins of ancient palaces and churches, and even in the thoughts of people who change their faces. … there remain traces [of them] in you.

En nous? *En vous*? The queer metempsychosis continues. Where next?

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