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TIBULLUS 1. 7: A TRIBUTE TO MESSALLA

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THE central problem in the interpretation of Tibullus 1. 7 is to determine the meaning of the hymn to Osiris and its relation to the rest of the poem.[1] A secondary problem is to account for the exceptionally large number of literary allusions and echoes from other poets.[2]

The solution that I should like to propose is that both the hymn and the literary echoes are used as tributes to Messalla. Tibullus has artfully complimented his patron by equating him with the god Osiris.[3] He has included the literary allusions as a tribute to Messalla's interest in poetry. The poem as a whole thus is not only an acknowledgment of Messalla's achievements as a general and an administrator, but also a compliment to his intellectual interests and his connoisseur's knowledge of Roman and Alexandrian poetry. In order to show that this is the case, I shall discuss first Messalla himself and then the poem in which Tibullus praises him.

The outlines of Messalla's public career are well known, although many of the details are obscure.[4] In the confusion between the death of Julius Caesar and the Battle of Actium, Messalla changed sides several times—honorably it seems, but also advantageously. The date at which he joined Octavian has not been definitely established, but in 32 B.C. he was consul-designate for the following year, and in 31 he fought as consul on Octavian's side at Actium. Between 31 and 27, Messalla undertook two important missions for Octavian: one to Aquitania to quell disturbances among the Gauls, and the other to the east. The relative chronology of these expeditions is controversial but need not concern us here.[5] What is important is that Messalla was awarded a triumph for his victories in Aquitania and celebrated it in 27 B.C.

Messalla, however, was not only a distinguished general, but also a man of cultural and literary interests. As a young

1. Among the important studies concerned with this point are: M. Schuster, *Tibull-Studien* (Vienna, 1930), pp. 17–25; F. Levy, "Der Geburtstag des Freundes, eine Studie zu Tibull 1.7," *SIFC*, VII (1929), 101–11; F. Klingner, "Tibulls Geburtstagsgedicht an Messalla (1. 7)," *Eranos*, XLIX (1955), 117–36.

2. G. Luck, *The Latin Love Elegy*[2] (London, 1969), pp. 83–92; J. P. Elder, "Tibullus, Ennius, and the Blue Loire," *TAPA*, XCVI (1965), 97–105.

3. In its original form this suggestion was presented as a paper in a seminar under J. P. Elder at Harvard University in 1964. I have since met several people to whom the idea has occurred independently. In particular I have profited from discussions of the point with K. Olstein of Columbia University and J. Gilmartin of Cambridge University. A tantalizing allusion to the idea is made by M. Putnam in a forthcoming essay on Tibullus in the *Yale French Studies*.

4. J. Hammer, *Prolegomena to an Edition of the Panegyricus Messallae* (Albany, 1925); J. Carcopino, "Notes biographiques sur M. Valerius Messala Corvinus," *RPh*, XX (1946), 96–117; R. Hanslik, *s.v. Valerius*, *RE*, 2e R., XV (1955), 131–57. In general the following summary of Messalla's career is based on Hanslik.

5. It seems best to put the expedition to Aquitania first, with Hanslik (n. 4). Hammer (n. 4) and Carcopino (n. 4) take the opposite view.

man he studied in Athens.[6] Upon his return to Rome he began to make a reputation as an orator; we know the names of some of his speeches.[7] Quintilian tells us that he disciplined himself by translating Greek speeches into Latin.[8] Messalla gained enough distinction as an orator to be praised by Cicero himself and later to be compared with Cicero by Tacitus.[9] It was he who made the speech proposing that Augustus be called *Pater Patriae*.[10] Messalla wrote his memoirs, and these were probably consulted by various ancient historians.[11] He also took an interest in the niceties of language and is known to have written grammatical treatises of a specialized nature.[12]

The best evidence for Messalla's interest in poetry is his patronage of the literary circle that included Tibullus, Lygdamus, Sulpicia, Ovid, and the author of the *Panegyricus Messallae*.[13] The members of this circle were interested in the same type of poetry; for the most part, their poems deal with erotic themes and are handled in the neoteric manner.[14] This no doubt suited Messalla's own poetic preferences and seems to have been the same sort of poetry he wrote himself. On this point, however, our evidence is scanty and disputed. According to the ninth *Catalepton*, he wrote bucolic poetry in Greek:[15] "pauca tua in nostras venerunt carmina chartas, / carmina cum lingua, tum sale Cecropio, / carmina quae Phrygium, saeclis accepta futuris, / carmina quae Pylium vincere digna senem" (*Cat.* 9. 13–16). Apparently he wrote poetry in Latin as well, for Pliny includes him in a list of Latin erotic poets.[16]

From these scraps of information a picture begins to emerge. Messalla's considerable reputation rested on the accomplishments of his public career, but at the same time he maintained an informed interest in language and poetry. His own literary productions seem to have been somewhat affected and over-refined in style. This at least is the inference that Hanslik has made about his speeches,[17] and we may perhaps extend it to his other works as well. His use of language was careful, if not precious, to judge from his interest in small points of grammar and his preference for rare or erudite words.[18] Our information about Messalla's poetry is too meager and disputed to allow us to say much about its character, but we may suppose that it was as learned and refined as his prose.

It is possible—although this is speculative—that he was vainer of his literary than of his military reputation. It is certain, however, that the composers of both the *Panegyricus Messallae* and the ninth *Catalepton* took care to include tributes to his literary accomplishments with praise of his military exploits.[19]

6. Cic. *Att.* 12. 32. 2 and 15. 17. 2.

7. *In Aufidiam* and *Pro Liburna*. See H. Malcovati, *ORF* (Turin, 1930), 3. 188–95.

8. Quint. 10. 5. 2.

9. Cic. *Ad Brut.* 1. 15. 1; Tac. *Dial.* 18: "Cicerone mitior Corvinus et dulcior et in verbis magis elaboratus."

10. Suet. *Aug.* 58. 2.

11. H. Bardon, *La littérature latine inconnue* (Paris, 1952), II, 101. In particular, Bardon suggests that Suetonius quoted Messalla's memoirs for his speech proposing the title *Pater Patriae*.

12. For example, his treatise on the letter *s*. See Quint. 1. 7. 23 and 35, 10. 4. 38; and fragments in H. Funaioli, *GRF* (Leipzig, 1907), pp. 505–6. On his use of language in general: "fuit autem Messalla exactissimi ingenii quidem in omni studiorum parte, sed Latini utique sermonis observator diligentissimus" (Sen. *Controv.* 2. 4. 8).

13. R. Hanslik, "Der Dichterkreis des Messalla," *AAWW*, LXXXIX (1952), 22–38.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

15. R. E. H. Westendorp Boerma, *P. Vergili Maronis Catalepton*, II (Assen, 1963), 14–16. According to Boerma (p. 7), the majority of modern critics believe that the *Catalepton* refers to our Messalla. Important exceptions are Bardon (n. 11), p. 23 and Hanslik (n. 13), pp. 31–32. (This represents a change of opinion on Hanslik's part, for earlier [(n. 4), p. 156] he had assumed that the poem referred to Messalla.)

16. Plin. *Epist.* 5. 3. 5. But Bardon (n. 11), p. 23, believes that Pliny has misunderstood the reference to Messalla's poetry in *Cat.* 9.

17. Hanslik (n. 4), p. 155. Hanslik bases this opinion on Tacitus' remarks about Messalla (n. 9), which he says imply affectation of style. He also refers to Suet. *Tib.* 70. 1, where it is said that Messalla was the teacher of Tiberius, whose speeches were notoriously affected.

18. Examples in Funaioli (n. 12), p. 505.

19. *Paneg.* 5–6; *Cat.* 9. 13–16.

Tibullus, too, wrote a poem for Messalla. Like the authors of the *Panegyricus Messallae* and the *Catalepton*, he wanted to please his patron; unlike them, he knew and preserved the distinction between compliment and flattery. We may expect his tribute to be subtle, witty, and artfully calculated to appeal to Messalla's intellect as well as to his vanity.

Tibullus has cast his praise of Messalla in the form of a birthday poem. He opens on a lofty note: "hunc cecinere diem Parcae fatalia nentes / stamina, non ulli dissoluenda deo" (1–2).[20] On the day of Messalla's birth the fates foretold his triumph. With this beginning Tibullus gives a special significance to the man and to the occasion. It is a well-known fact that Tibullus, unlike the other elegists, avoids both the use of myth and any mention of other poets. In these lines, however, he has made oblique reference to both.

The idea of the spinning Fates is an ancient folk-tale motif,[21] but it seems to have been Catullus who first connected the Fates with prophetic song about tne birth of a hero.[22] This is in Catullus 64, where the Fates sing of Achilles and his exploits at the wedding of Peleus and Thetis. Tibullus echoes a line from this passage.[23] Catullus 64. 383: "carmina divino *cecinerunt* pectore *Parcae*"; Tibullus 1. 7. 1: "hunc *cecinere* diem *Parcae* fatalia nentes." This echo is striking enough, especially as it is conspicuously placed at the beginning of the poem, to be a definite (if allusive) reference to Catullus 64. Moreover, the general situation, the Fates singing of the hero's destiny while they spin, recalls the scene in Catullus.

The initial compliment to Messalla follows from this echo of Catullus; for if Messalla grasped the reference, he could not fail to smile at the implied comparison of himself with Achilles. Characteristically Tibullus does not labor the point, although he hints at it again in line 11: "testis Arar Rhodanusque celer magnusque Garunna." The rivers of Gaul witnessed Messalla's victories; the Scamander will witness those of Achilles:[24] "testis erit magnis virtutibus unda Scamandri" (Cat. 64. 357).

In line 5, Tibullus passes from the prophecy to its fulfillment in the triumph of Messalla. In only four lines he sketches the essential points of the scene: the captives, the spectators, and Messalla the *triumphator*, crowned with laurel and riding in his chariot. This is Messalla's greatest moment; for a Roman general in the hour of his triumph not only enjoyed the applause of his fellow citizens, but also approached very near to divinity itself.[25] Altheim gives us a good account of the religious significance of the ceremony:[26]

> There can be no possible doubt that he [the *triumphator*] was not merely *Iovis Optimi Maximi ornatu decoratus* (Livy 10. 7. 10) but that he was also the

20. The quotations in this discussion have been taken from the edition of F. W. Lenz, *Albii Tibulli aliorumque carminum libri tres* (Leyden, 1964).

21. E.g., Hom. *Od.* 7. 196–98; *Il.* 20. 127–28.

22. In earlier versions of the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, a wedding song is performed by Apollo (Aesch. Frag. 350 Nauck²), by Apollo and the Muses (Pind. *Nem.* 5. 19–37), or by the Muses (Eur. *Iph. in Aul.* 1040–49). In Pindar, the song is not prophetic; in Aeschylus and Euripides, the birth but not the fate of Achilles is foretold. The Fates sing at the marriage of Zeus and Hera (Aristoph. *Av.* 1731), but their song is not prophetic. The conjunction of the Fates, prophecy, and the birth of a hero occurs in the Meleager legend (Apoll. 1. 8. 2 and Diod. Sic. 4. 34), but the prophecy is spoken rather than chanted or sung as in Catullus 64.

23. Elder (n. 2), p. 104, pointed out this and other echoes of Cat. 64 in the poem. The others are Tib. 1. 7. 3 with Cat. 64. 321 and Tib. 1. 7. 11 with Cat. 64. 357. I agree with the latter of these (see below) but am dubious about the former, in which the echo depends on the occurrence of a single common word in dissimilar contexts (Cat. *fuderunt*; Tib. *fundere*).

24. The device of citing natural landmarks as witnesses of great deeds is, however, not uncommon (e.g., Cic. *Leg. Man.* 30). The anaphora of *testis* also occurs in the *Panegyricus Messallae* (". . . testis mihi victae / fortis Iapydiae miles, testis quoque fallax / Pannonius, gelidas passim disiectus in Alpes / testis Arupinis et pauper natus in arvis," 107–110).

25. K. F. Smith, *The Elegies of Albius Tibullus* (New York, 1913), p. 325; F. Altheim, *A History of Roman Religion* (tr. H. Mattingly, London, 1938), pp. 236–37; K. Galinsky, "The Triumph Theme in the Augustan Elegy," *WS*, LXXXII (1969), 75–79.

26. Altheim (n. 25), pp. 236–37.

bearer and possessor of the divine power. That is why the triumpher was bound to paint his hands and face with vermilion, like the earthenware statue of Jupiter in the Capitoline temple; it was only thus that the identity could be fully expressed.

In the first eight lines, then, Tibullus has set out two themes that will be developed and intertwined in the course of the poem: the birthday and the triumph. The triumph theme is serious; it is associated with an important complex of religious and patriotic ideas.[27] The birthday motif is not burdened with such dignified associations; accordingly, Tibullus handles it with a lighter touch. The lofty introduction, the reminiscence of Catullus, the allusion to Achilles—these are details that would appeal to the literary rather than to the military Messalla.

In verses 9–22, Tibullus touches upon the scenes of Messalla's activities, from Gaul (9–12) to Cilicia (13–16), Syria (17–20), and finally Egypt (21–22). Each place is evoked by the mention of an important landmark associated with it, often a river. Scholars have devoted a great deal of attention to this passage; from the studies of Schuster and Klingner, a kind of consensus (and an accurate one, I believe) has emerged about its meaning in the poem.[28] The following paragraph is a summary of Klingner's interpretation.

The passage begins with the places in Gaul that witnessed Messalla's victories. The tone is dignified and somewhat impersonal. But the geographical shift in the next lines from west to east is also a shift in mood from the objective to the lyric, from war to peace, from the real to the marvelous.[29] The goal of this movement is Egypt and the Nile. All of the rivers mentioned before are only a prelude to the Nile, the river *par excellence*; all the nations are only a prelude to Egypt, the ultimate land of religion and mystery. We are now prepared for the great Osiris hymn that follows.

Tibullus has been working on two levels in this passage. Messalla's victories were real, and the poet dutifully lists the places where they were won. But at the same time we are being taken over a metaphorical landscape, where the reality of the place names is less important than the mood they evoke.

The passage also contains, according to Elder,[30] an echo of an earlier poet. The line in question is, "Carnutis et flavi caerula lympha Liger" (12). Elder believes that this is a reminiscence of the Ennian collocation *flavo / caeruleum* in the *Annales*: "verrunt extemplo placide mare: marmore flavo / caeruleum spumat sale conferta rate pulsum" (384 V²). Was the echo meant to be obvious? As Elder says, it is impossible to prove the point.[31] But, given an audience sufficiently steeped in poetical tradition (as Messalla seems to have been), it is probable that the borrowing would have been recognized,[32] especially since the poem, as we have seen, contains other, more easily identifiable echoes of earlier poets.

The hymn to Osiris is particularly rich in such allusions. One critic, in fact, has gone so far as to say that this part of the poem is "given over to Tibullus' private

27. After Tibullus, the theme loses some of its serious quality. Both Propertius and Ovid use the triumph as a metaphor for victories in love. See Galinsky (n. 25), pp. 80–106.

28. Schuster (n. 1), p. 18; Klingner (n. 1), pp. 130–33.

29. Schuster (n. 1), pp. 18–22, has shown particularly well how these changes in mood and subject are achieved by means of gradual and subtle transitions.

30. Elder (n. 2), p. 102. On the vexed question of the "blueness" of the Loire he correctly observes (p. 101), "When a poet of the late Republic or early Empire describes a striking feature of terrain, it is generally a mistake to ask: 'How accurate is he?' The question should sooner be: 'What earlier poets has he read?'"

31. Elder (n. 2) p. 103.

32. Elder (n. 2), p. 104, goes farther, and suggests that perhaps a compliment to Messalla is implied. "How had Ennius used it? In leading up to L. Aemilius' victory over Antiochus at Myonnesus (190 B.C.), which allowed the Scipios—one being none other than Hannibal's conquerer—to advance upon Asia Minor. Perhaps, then, a splendid and yet delicate tribute to Messalla Corvinus!"

Callimachean avocation."[33] The echoes of Callimachus are there; they are consciously and conspicuously employed, not to illustrate any irresistible fascination on Tibullus' part with Callimachus, but to be identified and savored by the reader and especially by Messalla himself.

The geographical passage closes with a reminiscence of Callimachus. Tibullus 1. 7. 22: "fertilis aestiva Nilus abundet aqua"; Callimachus Frag. 384, 27 Pf.: *θηλύτατον καὶ Νεῖλος ἄγων ἐνιαύσιον ὕδωρ*. The hymn begins with another. Tibullus 1. 7. 24: "aut quibus in terris occuluisse caput"; Callimachus Frag. 384, 31–32 Pf.: *ὃν οὐδ' ὅθεν οἶδεν ὁδεύω / θνητὸς ἀνήρ*. Both of these echoes are taken from Callimachus' poem celebrating the athletic victories of Sosibius, the minister of Ptolemy IV.

A few lines later Tibullus includes yet another Callimachean reference. Tibullus 1. 7. 28: "Memphiten plangere docta bovem"; Callimachus Frag. 383, 16 Pf.: *εἰδυῖαι φαλιὸν ταῦρον ἰηλεμίσαι*. Less is known about the poem in which this fragment occurs, but it apparently also commemorates an athletic victory.[34]

Tibullus then is echoing lines from Callimachus' epinician poetry in his own work commemorating the military victories of Messalla. The references are a bow to Callimachus, but (and this is more important) they also evoke memories of Sosibius and the whole tradition of hero-athletes commemorated in epinician poetry.

The first part of the hymn (23–48) mentions in turn the Nile, Osiris, wine, Bacchus, and Osiris again. The passage, however, is not merely a hodge-podge of Egyptian phenomena. The unifying element is that in the Egyptian religion each of these figures is a manifestation or aspect of the god Osiris.[35] This is the basic fact that Tibullus presents in poetic terms in the hymn.

The poet describes each of the god's manifestations as making a unique contribution to mankind; the contributions of all are absorbed and surpassed by Osiris himself. This whole section of the hymn is a series of gradually ascending climaxes, in which Tibullus reveals that Osiris embodies the qualities of each of his avatars and at the same time surpasses their achievement.

The Nile itself is a high point, the culmination of the whole preceding geographical section, as we have seen. It is celebrated for the moisture, and hence the fertility, it brings to the fields in its annual flood. But even the Nile is only an aspect of something greater. The description of the Nile builds to a peak in the identification of the river with Osiris: "te canit atque suum pubes miratur Osirim / barbara, Memphiten plangere docta bovem" (27–28).[36] The Nile is a fertilizing force, but it is Osiris who invented agriculture itself. His inventions are listed; the crowning achievement is the cultivation of the vine (33–36). Now, by a masterful and subtle transition,[37] the poet makes wine the subject of his praise. Wine teaches the joyful arts of song and dance; Bacchus, the god of wine, brings comfort and rest to weary mankind.

But wine and Bacchus, like the Nile, are only manifestations of Osiris himself, as we see in the final and climactic section (45–48). In the preceding passage wine was the teacher of song and dance; Bacchus brought rest from suffering. Now we find

33. Galinsky (n. 25), p. 78.

34. C. A. Trypanis, *Callimachus* (London, 1958), pp. 230–31.

35. The argument and references are to be found in Klingner (n. 1), pp. 125–29.

36. Luck (n. 2), p. 89, translates: "The foreign crowd that has been brought up to lament the bull of Memphis sings of you and worships you as its Osiris." This interpretation was proposed by Klingner (n. 1), pp. 123–25.

37. The hymn as a whole is characterized by use of anaphora: *te, te*; *primus, primus*; *hic, hic*; *illi, ille*; *Bacchus, Bacchus*; *sed, sed*; *et, et*. *Primus* (29, 31), *hic* (33, 34), and *illi* (35) all refer to Osiris; the change occurs in 37 with *ille* referring not to Osiris but to wine (*ille liquor*). The pattern made by the anaphora is not disturbed by the change of subject.

Osiris associated (in reverse order) with these ideas: "non tibi sunt tristes curae nec luctus, Osiri, / sed chorus et cantus et levis aptus amor" (43–44). The high point in the identification is reached in the final description of Osiris in the garb of Bacchus, crowned with ivy and wearing the saffron robe of the god.[38]

The identification of Osiris with Bacchus, then, is the goal and climax of the first part of the hymn. Osiris is dressed as Bacchus and so becomes the embodiment of wine and festivity. Now we have to see what Tibullus will do with him. In the next section of the hymn (49–54), the answer is apparent: Osiris is to be invited to Messalla's birthday party (*huc ades*, 49). The anticlimax is deliberate, and swiftly brings about the transition from Egypt back to Rome, from the world of fantasy back to that of reality.

Yet fancy is not altogether abandoned. For now Tibullus introduces the Genius of Messalla, who also is to be dressed for a revel: "illius et nitido stillent unguenta capillo, / et capite et collo mollia serta gerat" (51–52). The Genius is a specifically Roman figure, and one especially to be invoked on birthdays,[39] so that mention of him immediately confirms the return to Rome and the occasion of Messalla's birthday—the starting points of the poem.

Yet all is not so artless as it appears. In the first part of the hymn Tibullus showed the god Osiris assimilating and absorbing the qualities of other divinities. Now he suggests an extension of this idea to the Genius and specifically to the Genius of Messalla. The Genius is to be honored by Osiris with his special gifts of wine and dancing (49–50). Like Osiris, he wears festal garlands (52); like Osiris, he is invited to the feast (*sic venias*, 53). Much of the effect is achieved by the juxtaposition of the pictures of the two gods; the picture of the Genius in festal attire (49–54) complements the more detailed description of Osiris as Bacchus in the lines above (43–48).

Another indication of the special quality of Messalla's Genius is given by the presence of echoes from Callimachus in this passage. The first instance is line 51. Tibullus: "illius et nitido stillent unguenta capillo"; Callimachus Frag. 7, 12 Pf.: ἀπ' ὀστλίγγων δ' αἰὲν ἄλειφα ῥέει. The second is the word *Mopsopio* in line 54: "liba et Mopsopio dulcia melle feram." The word is Callimachean,[40] and it is probable that this is its first occurrence in Latin.[41]

These two allusions to Callimachus are apparently used as a compliment to Messalla and his poetic aspirations. The line that Tibullus echoes in verse 51 is from the description of the Graces in the *Aitia*. In the same passage Callimachus goes on to ask the aid of the Graces in securing immortality for his verses: ἔλλατε νῦν, ἐλέγοισι δ' ἐνιψήσασθε λιπώσας / χεῖρας ἐμοῖς, ἵνα μοι πουλὺ μένωσιν ἔτος (Frag. 7, 13–14 Pf.). The beginning of the *Aitia*, containing as it did Callimachus' theory of poetry, was very famous in antiquity, and we can assume that both Tibullus and Messalla knew it well. Thus when Tibullus described the Genius of Messalla in the terms that Callimachus had employed for his Graces, he could suppose that the line and its context in Callimachus would be recognized. From this recognition would follow the associations between the Genius and the Graces and between the Genius and poetry, especially the poetry of Messalla himself. To stamp the passage as Callimachean, Tibullus included Callimachus' striking word *Mopsopio* in line 54.

38. J. André, *Tibulle: Elégies, livre premier* (Paris, 1965), p. 82, has collected the ancient evidence on this point.

39. W. F. Otto, *s.v. Genius*, *RE*, XIII (1910), 1155–70.

40. Frag. 709 Pf.: "Steph. Byz. v. *Μοψοπία. ἡ Ἀττική, ἀπὸ Μόψοπος. Καλλίμαχος. ἄρρητος ἡ Μόψῳ εὐθεῖα.*

41. Smith (n. 25), p. 339; R. Pfeiffer, *Callimachus* (Oxford, 1949), I, 457.

In the final section of the poem (55–64), Tibullus turns back at last to Messalla. The poem ends with a series of birthday wishes—for worthy children (55–56), fame (57–62), and "many happy returns of the day" (63–64). The first and last of these are somewhat conventional. They are briefly mentioned, and form a frame (*at tibi*, 55—*at tu*, 63) for the longer and more important passage dealing with Messalla's fame.

Messalla's fame is to be based on his repair of the Via Latina,[42] a work that is in essence peaceful and constructive, and hence, as Klingner pointed out,[43] in marked contrast with the military exploits that characterized the first part of the poem.

Moreover, this passage also provides some important indications of the identity of Messalla with Osiris. It gives an account of Messalla's beneficial and philanthropic activities parallel with the longer account of Osiris' benefactions above (27–36).[44] Both man and god have contributed positively to the progress of mankind—Osiris by inventing agriculture and the cultivation of the vine, and Messalla (to a lesser extent) by repairing the road.

Thus there is at least a general similarity between the two figures and their achievements in this passage, but specific points of resemblance scattered throughout the poem point more definitely to their identification.

In the first part of the poem Tibullus gives a brief description of Messalla's triumph: "evenere: novos pubes Romana triumphos / vidit et evinctos bracchia capta duces; / at te victrices lauros, Messalla, gerentem / portabat nitidis currus eburnus equis" (5–8).

Two details of the scene are important for our present discussion. First, Messalla the *triumphator* is wearing a crown of laurel (*victrices lauros*, 7). Crowns and garlands occur again in the descriptions of Osiris as Bacchus (*frons redimita corymbis*, 45) and the Genius of Messalla (*mollia serta*, 52). Messalla's wreath is part of the serious military pageantry connected with the triumph; the garlands of Osiris and the Genius are associated with festivity and revel. But the essential picture in each case is the same—a divine or quasi-divine figure (Messalla as *triumphator* partakes of divinity) wearing a crown of leaves or flowers.

As Messalla rides by in his chariot, his triumph is witnessed by the people of Rome. The collocation *pubes Romana* at line 5 is to be compared with the similar phrase *pubes . . . barbara* in 27–28: "te canit atque suum pubes miratur Osirim / barbara, Memphiten plangere docta bovem." Both Messalla and Osiris-Nile are the center of attention for their nation. Osiris, moreover, is the subject of song (*te canit*, 27), and is praised in the hymn that follows.

The phrase *te canit* occurs again in the poem, this time in connection with Messalla, who is to be praised for his road building (*te canit agricola*, 61).[45] The *agricola* also appears elsewhere in the poem, as the recipient of the gifts of Osiris-Bacchus: "Bacchus et agricolae magno confecta labore / pectora tristitiae dissoluenda dedit" (39–40).

Thus, by a pattern of references and cross references, Tibullus has suggested the identity of Messalla with the great god Osiris. We are prepared for this equation by Tibullus' presentation of Osiris in the poem. The hymn to Osiris, as we have seen, presents the syncretistic nature of Osiris in poetic terms. It moves from climax to climax, as each of the god's aspects is revealed.

42. Hanslik (n. 4), p. 151.

43. Klingner (n. 1), p. 135.

44. Levy (n. 1), p. 111: "... auf den Preis der ἀρεταί des Gottes folgt der der ἀρετή des Menschen ..."

45. There is a difficulty with the text, for the present indicative seems out of place here. Klingner (n. 1), pp. 135–36, suggests *canat*.

Osiris is established as the god who incorporates many natures; we are not surprised when Tibullus extends this idea first to the Genius and then to Messalla himself.

The problem now is to see precisely how this equation of Messalla with Osiris is justified in fact, as well as within the context of the poem. The likeness is not based on Messalla's military prowess, for Osiris is not a warlike god. But the triumph itself is useful, as it establishes Messalla as a semi-divine figure, who is at least worthy to be compared with the gods, if not on a par with them. Messalla's peaceful activities, as exemplified by the rebuilding of the Via Latina, do provide a parallel to the gifts of Osiris, but the greatest and most important point of comparison between the man and the god is not expressed in the poem. This is the fact that both Messalla and Osiris are closely associated with wine. Osiris' connection with wine provides the climax of the poem; Messalla's love of wine was a matter of common knowledge, as we see from the two ancient references to it.

Horace in *Odes* 3. 21 addresses a prayer to a wine jar to be present for the pleasure of Messalla, who is bound to appreciate it: "non ille, quamquam Socraticis madet / sermonibus, te negleget horridus" (9–10). Servius tells us that in the *Symposium* of Maecenas, Messalla was supposed to have delivered a speech on the good effects of wine: "hoc etiam Maecenas in symposio, ubi Vergilius et Horatius interfuerunt, cum ex persona Messalae de vi vini loqueretur, ita: ut idem umor ministrat faciles oculos, pulchriora reddit omnia et dulcis iuventae reducit bona" (Servius on *Aen.* 8. 310). Clearly, Messalla had the reputation of liking wine and festivity; it is on this part of his character that the association with Osiris is most securely based.[46]

The original and fundamental link, then, between Messalla and Osiris is admittedly a frivolous one, the taste for wine.[47] Yet the comparison has some validity on a serious level, too, as we have seen, and the poem is never allowed to decline into lampoon or even irony. The poem as a whole is in fact a curious blend of serious and light elements. Praise for Messalla's military victories is cast within the framework of the triumph, the focal point of Roman religious and patriotic feeling. Tibullus pays tribute to his patron's literary interests in a lighter vein, scattering echoes of other poets with a free hand throughout the poem. Each of these, when identified and associated with its context, implies a witty compliment to Messalla. He is an Achilles, a Regillus, a Sosibius, a Callimachus—each identification making only a fleeting impression and each subordinate to the great equation of Messalla with Osiris on which the poem is based.

This mixture of praise seriously and lightly intended has its parallel in the movement of tone and feeling within the poem. The poem moves from war to peace, and especially to the festive aspects of peace as exemplified by Osiris-Bacchus, the Genius, and the birthday party. It closes, however, not with festivity, but with a serious reference to Messalla's repairs of the Via Latina, a peacetime activity that balances the triumph at the beginning of the poem. And yet the road building itself, however emblematic of peace, cannot be completely dissociated from war, for it was paid for out of Messalla's booty (*opibus congesta suis*, 59).

46. An affinity between Osiris and Messalla based on wine was suggested by H. T. Rowell in a review of Schuster (n. 1) in *AJP*, LXIII (1942), 233–34.

47. The similarity between Osiris and Messalla would be still closer if one could rely upon the following statement by Raymond Postgate in the *Guardian* (May 22, 1969, p. 11): "So I chose wine from Aquitania where the vines were first planted by Messalla Corvinus about the time of Augustus." I am indebted to J. Gilmartin (n. 3) for this reference. Unfortunately neither of us has been able to verify Postgate's assertion.

The mixture of themes, the blend of serious and not so serious compliments to Messalla, and finally the frivolous basis of the important Messalla-Osiris identification, all have their explanation in the personal nature of the poem. The poem is an occasional one; the occasion is festive, and its central figure is Tibullus' friend. Tibullus is serious in his admiration of Messalla's public achievements, but as a friend he can take notice of his personal tastes and foibles as well.

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