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Title:	“Delineating and Blurring Urban Space and Urban Atmosphere in Roman Elegy: Tibullus´ Construction of Urbanity by Poetic and Religious Means“
Published in:	Religion in the Roman Empire Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck
Volume:	9 (3)
Year:	2023
Pages:	395 - 424
ISSN:	2199-4463

Persistent Identifier: https://doi.org/10.1628/rre-2023-0025

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Delineating and Blurring Urban Space and Urban Atmosphere in Roman Elegy

Tibullus' Construction of Urbanity by Poetic and Religious Means

Abstract

Urban space cannot be identified independently of the people that turned a settlement into a city by their practices and discourses. For the city of Rome and the massive expansion and change of its space in the Augustan period, the voices of contemporary poets are invaluable. How did their texts conceive of the 'city', how did their speakers and protagonists live the city, how did they distinguish between urban and non-urban spaces? And how did these texts use religion? Employing the concepts of 'urbanity' and 'regionalisations', this article analyses the second book of Albius Tibullus, a poet typically seen as invested in rural escapism. It is argued that the basic dichotomy of city and countryside is elaborated into a complex web of overlapping spaces. Religious rituals and divine figures are central for the construction and the blurring of the urban-rural divide.

Keywords: *urbanitas*, Regionalisation, Invention of rituals, Rome, Rural religion

Urban space and hence the object of an archaeology – or history of the urban in general and urban religion in particular – cannot be identified independently of the people that turn a built environment into a city by their practices and discourses. For the city of Rome and the massive expansion and change of its space in the Augustan period, the voices of poets – contemporary observers based in the city but originating from Italic towns – are very valuable.[1] How did their texts conceive of the 'city', how did their speakers and protagonists live the city, how did they distinguish between

1 See, e.g., Edwards 1996. I am grateful to the reviewers for valuable suggestions and stop-markers, to Elisabeth Begemann for her careful linguistic improvement of my text. Research on this article has been supported by the German Science Foundation (DFG) in the framework of the Kolleg-Forschungsgruppe 'Religion and Urbanity: Reciprocal Formations' at the Max Weber Centre of the University of Erfurt (FOR 2779, co-directed with Susanne Rau).

RRE 9 (2023), 395–424
ISSN 2199-4463
DOI 10.1628/rre-2023-0025

urban and non-urban spaces? Which experiences did they link to these spaces? And how did these *carmina* mobilise religion? As this article is interested in how such voices created urban space instead of asking about their comments on something treated as given – like 'Rome' in all its changes[2] –, it starts by developing an approach that relates emic terms like *urbanitas* and analytical concepts like 'city' and 'the urban'. Only on such a basis will a significant example from the range of the Augustan poetic production be analysed, the second book of a poet typically seen as a nostalgic dreamer escaping from the city to the countryside, Albius Tibullus, a book full of religious rituals and movements from the city to the countryside and back again.

1 *Urbanitas* and the city

How did people live the city? Which role did religion play in that endeavour? This combination of questions has proved useful in understanding the specifics of urbanisation and religious evolution on a larger scale as much as serving as a lens onto the atmospheres of specific dense and large settlements qualified as something different from other forms of settlements by concepts like 'town' or 'city'.[3] Creating differences within that basic difference is certainly a constitutive feature of doing and thinking one's city: this is a city and as a city different from any other city. Thus, rather than Romanness, Latinness, or the like, the (implicit) classificatory operation of comparing one's own place of residence with any other such place, other 'cities' – as smaller, better, or just different, albeit all of them 'urban' places – is even for Italy and Rome an important element of urbanity or of urbaneness. Throughout history, urbanisation developed in the form of urban networks, of groups and hierarchies of towns and cities, placing some at the top and others at the bottom of 'urbanity'.[4]

Employing the concept of urbanity presupposes a pregnant sense of the term. It is a way of life that is informed by ideas and that informs ideas and more complex imaginations and ideologies that define life in a specific form of settlement (typically one's own) as urban, as different from other ways of living and thinking. It is thus a spatial thinking, connecting actions, routines, and habits with a (typically) densely populated and larger

2 See Varzi 2019.
3 Atmospheres: Anderson 2009; urbanity and religion: Rau and Rüpke 2020; Rüpke 2020a.
4 Cf. Oberste 2012 for the concept of metropolity.

settlement, characterised by internal and external flows.[5] Practicing or elaborating on – in the form of acting, speaking, or self-stylising – such urbanity need not be restricted to the space of urban settlements, but it always refers to such places as constitutive for the urban character of such practices (or reflections). In other words, it is not just urban, but urbane.

Such an urban discourse, or discursive construction of life (and in particular one's own life) in that place as urban, is only occasionally explicit – not the smallest difficulty in a historical reconstruction – and thus able to confirm interpretations of constitutive everyday practices. Normative or descriptive guidebooks entertaining such qualifications are correspondingly rare and have taken very different generic forms.[6] Literary communication beyond administrative, juridic, economic or religious prescriptions and necessities is one field in which to search for them.

Might the emic concept of *urbanitas,* which stands at the beginning of the concept of 'urbanity' employed so far, serve as a sufficient indicator of the relevant utterances? The Latin term of *urbanitas* itself is far from straightforward. Latin *urbs* was a generic term, frequently denoting substantial towns or cities, in Latin comedies of the second century BCE. Plautus invents the word *urbicapus*, 'one who captures cities', as a praising address of a soldier.[7] The adjective *urbanus* builds on that, typically used in contrast with *rus* and *rusticus*. In the mid-second century, Cato the Elder uses (and seems to presuppose) the concept of the *villa urbana,* an accommodation built on the farm in the countryside, but according to urban standards of comfort. Only rich farmers are able to afford this kind of building, and Cato supposes these to live in the city. However, the urban luxury at the place of production will entice them to stay for longer periods, have direct supervision, and thus be even more successful.[8] The countryside, it is implied, has its own merits; not every urban figure has superiority over a countryman.[9]

Against this background, Cicero remodelled the term in numerous instances and for different audiences from pupils of rhetoric to juridical and political audiences and – most probably – invented the substantivated form *urbanitas* and the adverbial usage *urbane,* thereby striking a chord with

5 For these traits, Robinson, Scott and Taylor 2016, 5. Some of them go back to the city-definitions of Wirth 1938 (see also Wirth 1964 and Mumford 1961).

6 See Urciuoli 2021.

7 Plaut. *Mil.* 1055.

8 Cato *agr.* 4 (the following paragraph deals with the duties of the *vilicus*, the country-based administrator acting instead of the proprietor). Cf. Varro *rust.* 3.1.10, 3.2.10, and 1.16.3; briefly, De Martino 1985, 117.

9 See Plaut. *Mos.* 15.

many contemporaries who quickly followed his strategical usage. As Emma Dench has shown, the new usage combined two opposite semantic aspects. On the one hand, *urbs* qualifies the city of Rome only, the military, political, and cultural capital of Italy. On the other hand, the very qualities associated with *urbanus* and abstracted in the concept of *urbanitas* were qualities of people, regardless of their origins, and could be performed outside of Rome.[10] As a consequence, the term could be made into a claim of inclusion and high status despite extra-urban origins or space of action – or undercut by the same means. In the rapid, but partial and elite-centred unification of first century BCE Italy, the whole concept could also be questioned by the concept of true rustic simplicity as an alternative to urban depravity and luxury or by the pride of coming from, or living in, other (ancient) towns *(municipia)*.[11] The Roman-Italian case encourages us to analyse urbanity in an even wider framework.

The strategical use of the terms (and discourses relying on these terms but going far beyond them) invites an action-theoretical perspective. This change of perspective not only allows religion not to be viewed primarily from the perspective of stable systems of symbols and meanings, but instead to focus on lived religion and variance in the constant confrontation with practices of urbanity.[12] The gain is even greater for the spatial approach. Urbanisation as a long-term process as much as a short-term discursive strategy can thus be understood as the result of bundles of very different spatially constituting social practices.

Benno Werlen has proposed to differentiate space-related action into instrumentally rational, norm-oriented and meaning-oriented action, all of them consisting of aspects of the three ontologically very different physical, mental, and socio-cultural worlds.[13] These actions focus on calculation, prescription, and signification in their 'geography-making', giving progressively more importance to the relationship to one's own body. They are closely related to three forms of establishing relationships to the world, namely (a) productive-consumptive, (b) normative-political, and (c) significative-informative, thus producing geographies of production and consumption (a), of normative appropriation and political control (b), and geographies of information and symbolic appropriation (c).[14]

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10 Dench 2005, 114–115; for the contemporary Catullus 334–337.
11 See Dench 2005, 337–342.
12 Gasparini et al. 2020; Rüpke 2016.
13 Werlen 2017, 40, summarising earlier works, collected in Werlen 2010.
14 Werlen 2017, 45.

The analytical grid provided by distinguishing such 'regionalisations' is useful beyond the discipline of social or cultural geography and might be combined with the formal description of space as developed by Jacques Lévy and Michel Lussault for the purpose of analysing urbanisation.[15] If we interpret urbanisation as a form of structuring, and being structured by establishing, self–world relationships,[16] practices of urbanisation include very different types of agents and actions. They all aim at constituting 'cities' as a socio-spatial form. But they differ profoundly in their understanding of this form of regionalisation and their *modi operandi*, the 'sets of rules governing the ways in which the available means, tools, and media can (or cannot) be used by actors', rules which limit the spatial and temporal reach.[17] Such practices of urbanisation all constitute 'city' as a place (as opposed to other places who require explanation or a name), as a two-dimensional (occasionally three-dimensional) space of different metrics (depending on whether it is understood as something to be traversed, controlled or acted upon) or as a network (of like-minded people or professional colleagues). In doing so, they interact with spatially relevant actions that aim at other regionalisations, for example, at a continuum of production and consumption in an urbanised landscape or at political classifications aiming at an exclusive or inclusive society constituted not by space but by persons, at branding a particular atmosphere of specific capabilities and emotions, producing a complex co-spatiality[18] rather than just occasionally overlapping socially different appropriations of a given urban space.[19] Not only residents of the settlement or its immediate surroundings participate in such processes. From the outside, the same city can be seen as an ideal place (and possibly a destination of migration), as a specific member of a class of 'cities' or discrete point in a landscape in the far-reaching regionalisations of travellers, or as a symbol and instrument of imperial rule by a ruler.

These actors and actions all pursued – more or less reflexively (and accordingly more or less textually tangible) – very different urbanisation strategies and thus produced very different urbanities. These need to be looked at more closely, not least in terms of their interaction with religious action as they might be identified in the literary reflections of Roman authors as proposed here. Interpreting 'urbanity' as city-making within a broader

15 Lévy and Lussault 2013a, in particular Lévy 2013c; Lévy 2013d; Lévy and Lussault 2013b.
16 I combine Werlen's world-incorporation with Hartmut Rosa's concept of resonant self–world relations (Rosa 2019).
17 Werlen 2017, 50.
18 Lévy 2013b.
19 Cf. Löw 2016 for such a take.

spectre of 'regionalisation' invites to take a closer look not only at the different modes and the role of religious semantics within them as employed by the texts but also at the clearly delineating *and* blurring of any borderlines that articulate the urban and non-urban dichotomy.

Such 'literature' is firmly established in first-century BCE Rome, as a means of communication among a small, perhaps one-digit percentage, group performed during banquets of the nobility or lectures in the same social circles. It reached far larger audiences only in the form of dramatic performances in the theatres that were built in Rome in the same century and that were increasingly dominated by less discursive mimes and pantomimes in the centuries after (and throughout the Mediterranean).[20] Personal poetry and the genre of elegy certainly ranged at the top end of exclusivity or, *vice versa*, the bottom end of reach.[21] Without doubt, these texts, written in circles of noblemen close to the emperor Augustus, several of them even addressing the emperor directly, were occupied with the fate of Rome and her success as an imperial power, mixing praise and critique, extolling the 'eternal Rome' and commending the amenities of country life. Against this background, the question addressed in this contribution is: What is described or postulated as the *differentia specifica* of the urban? I will try to inquire into the short second book of the most successful[22] of this group of authors, Albius Tibullus (50s–c. 19/18 BCE).

2 Augustan elegy

The literature of the Augustan period has rarely been analysed as urban literature in the sense outlined above, that is, as a practice of complex, religious, affective, normative regionalisations. Three reasons might be given. First, many inquiries are informed by the long history, the post-ancient reception of, and ongoing fascination with, Rome. Within the limits of a Christian theology of history and history of interpretation of the biblical book of the Apocalypse of John, the identification of Rome with the last of four empires (according to the preceding book of Daniel's counting) has inspired subsequent imperial formations to frame themselves as successors to Rome, a second or third Rome. Classical Philology and Ancient History have already

20 See Beacham 1991; Manuwald 2011; Puk 2013; Sear 2006.
21 In general Bowie 1986; Conte 1994; for epic, Rüpke 2001a; Rüpke 2001b; Rüpke 2012b.
22 As judged by the ancient literary critic Quintilianus, cf. Quint. *inst.* 10.1.93.

been looking for the beginnings of that history in ancient texts.[23] Secondly, Greek political philosophy and thinking about *polis*, power, and the people, has also offered interpretations for the very different type of ancient Mediterranean 'city state' embodied by Rome – from antiquity onwards. The fact that Rome was the administrative centre of the Roman empire, a symbol for many[24] and the only place for political participation along the lines of ancient 'democracy', has led to analytical priority being given to the political and social body (the 'civic') supposedly constituting the city rather than to its topographical space and the practices performing this as an urban space ('political culture'),[25] to *polis* rather than *asteiotes*. Thus, it is easily forgotten that from early on, and on a large and unmistakable scale in the aftermath of the Social War (91–88 BCE), Roman citizenship *(civitas)* was granted to millions of people – firstly Italians – permanently living outside of Rome and its immediate vicinity.[26] Thirdly, a long tradition of political history has produced a preoccupation with Augustus in all kinds of historiography of the Augustan period. Here, Rome is read as a product of the agency of Augustus (or, at most, some of his dependents), basically from the death of Caesar (44 BCE) until the death of Augustus (14 CE).[27]

Against this background, I suggest to follow a different line and foreground the evident spatial interests of first century BCE Latin texts[28] within a specifically urbane framework, to focus on the different regionalisations that produced Rome as an *urbs* in these texts.[29] The historical context was a special on. 'The Rome of the first century BCE after the Social War must have been the largest construction site on earth of the period … Upgrading, replacing, building on marginal and peripheral sites must have been an impressive and oppressive reality in many parts of the city and its former boundaries … the chaotic city produced self-reflexive and ordering activities and institutions, calendar reform and temple restoration, legal codes and new offices.'[30] Religious practices, institutionalisations, and reflections were

23 E.g., Matthews 1986; Edwards 1996; Schmitzer 2016; Taylor, Rinne and Kostof 2016; Scheuermann 2019.

24 Not least in the figure of Thea Romê (Mellor 1975, 1981), before the latter was replaced by the god-like emperors themselves, the Sebastoi (Cancik and Hitzl 2003; Clauss 1999; Steuernagel 2010).

25 See Hölkeskamp 2010.

26 Ando 2016; Häussler 2013; Krauter 2004; Liverani 2013.

27 See Zanker 1987.

28 Beard, North and Price 1998; Edwards 1996, 168.

29 For such a history of urbanity, Russo 2016.

30 Rüpke 2020b, 292.

central to this, as I have pointed out before.[31] The particular co-spatiality of religious signs, enabling the construction of different, but co-extensive spaces, seems to have offered a favoured way to thematise medial, social, and spatial fluidity and complexity.[32] As I have shown for Propertius, whose fourth book (written c. 16 BCE) offers a continuous engagement with urban history and the contemporary urban fabric, the divine perspective and religious architecture as well as religious institutions allowed a temporal as well as spatial focalisation. Temporally, this allowed for diachronic comparison; spatially, the gods on high and the abodes of the dead introduce complexity without implying impartiality. Propertius' urbanity is about sudden and long-term change, situational and biographical instability – even if it is the opposite that speakers repeatedly long for. The city projected in these poems has boundaries, which are, however, constantly crossed and questioned. Roman-ness is an elusive perspective, a part of urbane-ness, but it does not define urbanity, the cultural construction of space as urban, in its entirety.[33]

The refined analytical grid developed above allows for a more detailed approach to a consciously composed book of poems likewise featuring a substantial number of lines describing religious practices in largely specified spatial contexts. Approach and text also allow a focus not only on the metrics and normative tagging of space but on the symbolic and emotional dimensions of city-making and its reflection and co-creation of the affective atmospheres of urban Rome.

3 Tibullus

Albius Tibullus was a contemporary of Propertius (likewise probably mid 50s–after 16 BCE), having circulated his first book slightly before[34] Propertius' first book, the *monobiblos* (c. 28 BCE), and publishing his second book of only six poems again slightly before Propertius' fourth book (c. 19 instead of c. 16 BCE for Propertius). Evidently, these authors were in dialogue, even if Tibullus' patron was Marcus Valerius Messalla Corvinus (64 BCE–13 CE, consul of 31 BCE, augur and Arval Brother)[35] rather than Augustus' close friend, Maecenas (c. 70–8 BCE), who acted as patron for poets like Horace and Vergil. It is generally assumed that Quintilian's judgment in his history

31 Rüpke 2020b and Rüpke 2012a; Rüpke 2017; Rüpke 2020a.
32 E. g., Schrader 2017, 268.
33 Rüpke 2020b.
34 Knox 2005 on Ov. *Trist*. 4.10.51–54, followed, e. g., by Gaisser 2012, 13.
35 See Rüpke and Glock 2008, *Fasti Sacerdotum* (*FS* in the following) 3414.

of Latin literature at the end of the first century CE reflects the widespread esteem in which these two poets were held when he characterises Tibullus and Propertius:[36] *Elegia quoque Graecos provocamus, cuius mihi tersus atque elegans maxime videtur auctor Tibullus. sunt qui Propertium malint* – 'With regard to the genre of elegy we (Romans) even challenge the Greeks. Of that genre to me by far the most polished and attractive author is Tibullus. Some rank Propertius higher.' Attractivity, as the two rhetorical qualifications of the verses make clear, was in the 'clear and correct' language (to nuance the Latin connotations of that elegancy), neither obscure nor obviously learned. It seems to have been a minority that preferred the opposite which was offered by Propertius.

Whatever is known about the life of Tibullus is based on the interpretation of his own texts and an identification with the Albius addressed by the slightly older Horace (63–8 BCE). The loss of the family's landed property in the civil war of 40 BCE,[37] paralleled by Vergil and Propertius, points likewise to an equestrian status of the family; at the end of his life he owned, and frequently used, a suburban villa in the Alban hills south of Rome, close to Pedum.[38] His equestrian status is explicitly confirmed by a short anonymous biography, which probably goes back to one composed by Suetonius at the beginning of the second century CE.[39] As a Roman knight, he performed military service under his later patron, attested by references in the first book of poems (1.3 and 7).

Without denying the possibility to detect many references to earlier or contemporary literature – above all Vergil[40] – and concealed learnedness,[41] Tibullus' language is straightforward and the ethos of the poems paradigmatically 'elegiac'. Preference is given to private concerns, love above all, rather than political and military endeavours.[42] The poems do not offer clearly defined set-pieces as Horace's contemporary 'satires' or songs did. Perspectives shift, implicit or explicit topographical and temporal settings are transformed into imagined spaces. Miller goes so far as to speak of a 'deceptive subtlety' that does 'not even paint a consistent scene', but a 'series of associations'.[43]

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36 In that sequence, Quint. *inst.* 10.1.93.
37 Tib. 1.1.41–42.
38 Hor. *epist.* 1.4.2 in 20 BCE.
39 Gaisser 2012, 2.
40 E. g., Solmsen 1962, 300; Ball 1975; Gaisser 1977.
41 E. g., Henkel 2014; Gaisser 2012, 19.
42 E. g., Gaisser 2012, 9.
43 Miller 2012; see already Solmsen 1962, 305 on 1.5.

Tibullus' praise of the 'countryside' *(rura)* has been repeatedly noticed. In 1962, Friedrich Solmsen had already contextualised this in a wider field of 'people sick and tired of … the restlessness inherent in metropolitan life' that already provoked parody in Horace's epodes in the 30s BCE.[44] He identified Tibullan specifics in his 'delight in rural plenty and simplicity', connected with hard work *(labor)* rather than idyllic consumption and contributing to the progress of 'civilization'.[45] Like love, it was framed in religious terms and images[46] and a new bond of eroticism and religion contrasted the Augustan connection of religion and the political.[47]

Eleanor Winsor Leach deepened such analyses in 1980 and contextualised the Tibullan 'philosophy of simplicity'[48] by references to sacral-idyllic landscape paintings and the fully developed so-called third (Pompeian) style surviving in Roman and Campanian houses. Even if this kind of nature reaches a higher degree of vividness and naturalness, she detects the escapist notion of the rural on the part of urbanites given a tone of seriousness and communality by setting a strong religious accent.[49]

Subsequent research has basically affirmed these poetic positions and also pointed out that they and their 'philosophy' and consumption need not imply an anti-Augustan stance. Its place in society is, however, seen differently. By helping in the Augustan project, is it implicitly mainstream to weave Roman history into the city in order to deal with the late republican Romans' 'lack of a sense of community'?[50] Is it a tolerated, subcultural vision represented by a Tibullus who remains 'in the fatal golden moment that pretends it need not fear the power of the metropolis'?[51] That uses the metropolis as a 'topographical backstage'?[52] Or is it an indication of a quickly differentiating society (and above all social elite) allowing for different types of social capital, also built on achievements called 'cultural', offering 'le projet alternatif d'une vie convenable' in a 'diversification des valeurs', as suggested by Tanja Itgenshorst?[53]

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44 Solmsen 1962, 299.
45 Solmsen 1962, 301–303; already Musurillo 1967, 264.
46 Solmsen 1962, 301.
47 Both associations judged as 'secondary' by Solmsen 1962, 320.
48 Leach 1980, 60, but cf. Putnam 1970, 32: deceptive.
49 See also Boyd 1984, 276, but see now for a much more detailed analysis Haug 2020b.
50 Rea 2007, 6.
51 Johnson 1990, 113.
52 Schmitzer 2016, 126.
53 Itgenshorst 2013, 393 and 396.

4 The second book of the elegies

Without denying the general point made by Itgenshorst, I will argue in the following for a different view. In the perspective of urbanities as city-making regionalisations as developed at the beginning, I will inquire into the specific contribution of Tibullus and his particular construction of the urban, his reflection on spaces as economic resources and affective atmospheres. The very operation of such urbanisations (if we drop the association of that term with the essentialisation of cities produced by the metric approach of administrative action) also implies the construction of a non-urban, something different from the urban, its opposite as much as its necessary pre-condition and horizon of extra-urban flows, of economic and political reach. The large presence of the 'rural' in the text under consideration suggests a highly reflected, critical position in such discourse, appreciated by a substantial number of recipients.

I claim that the whole second book is a spatially organised reflection on the conditions and problems of urban life, substantially couched in descriptions of religious practices. Spatially organised means that the narrator or rather speaker is deliberately moving the spatial position and likewise the object of his speaking between urban and non-urban space. Methodologically, I will thus try to identify the spatial position and the spatial object of the text in a continuous cursory reading of book 2.[54] At first glance, I will take words like *rure, rura, ager,* 'rural', as the principal but not only contrast to *urbs*, 'urban'. This approach presupposes the character of the text as a carefully composed overall structure. Admittedly, the 430 transmitted lines (and we cannot suppose substantial lacunae) make for a small but not impossibly small 'book', that is physically, a separate book role. There are, as stated before, no signs of substantial incompleteness and the arrangement of the individual poems in terms of topic and alternating length points to a well-arranged collection.[55] My aim is to reconstruct one of the many, yet a very successful, voice of the multiple urbanities articulated at Rome in the first century BCE, that is to say in one of the centres of the Mediterranean urbanisation wave of the Hellenistic and Roman period – a voice that was read far beyond Rome and hence might have been read as a reflection on urbanity beyond that exceptional city.

54 The text used is based on the edition of Maltby 2002 (and following his numbering of verses), but occasionally following decisions or readings by Lee 1982 and Murgatroyd 1994.

55 E. g., Maltby 2002, 52; Gaisser 2012, 15.

The first book, containing ten poems, basically announced similar concerns and positions as did the second a decade later. The framing poems 1.1 and 1.10 announced the topics of *pax*, 'peace', and erotic fighting as a *militia amoris* replacing traditional Roman warfare for its adherents. *Rura* were already developed as places of individual longing. My focus on the second book is not only a pragmatic decision for an article-length study, but also inspired by the close interaction of Tibullus and Propertius. I take the slightly later book of Propertius with all its focus on the urban conditions of life as summarised in the beginning of this paper as a reaction to and engagement with Tibullus' second book, that is, a contemporary reading focusing on the spatial and the urban.[56]

4.1 Grandfather's ritual (2.1)

The first poem starts with a ritual in the countryside and basically stays there. It is a fictitious ritual,[57] inspired by a few Roman festivals – or, as the speaker insists, by the tradition of an old-fashioned 'grandfather', a family ancestor in the singular and not the *maiores* of some collective. The *ritus ut a prisco traditus extat auo* (2.1.2) is not simply ongoing tradition.[58] *Extat* stresses survival against probabilities and the course of time. The rural setting, indicated in the first line by *agros*, 'fields', in the final position, is combined with a specific temporality – and agency. The speaker himself is acting in the role of a leader of the ceremony, a long prayer (3–24) is interrupted by a deictic description of the ritual procession preparing animal sacrifice (15/16). Yet before that, a spatial opposition is invoked, personalised, and deified (11–12): The invitation to all present *(adest)* to participate of the first verse is contrasted with an exclusion *(abesse … iubeo)* of those to whom Venus brought orgasms in the preceding night. The movement ordered *ab aris* (11) contrasts with the ritual movement *ad aras* (15). Implied, however, is a much more distant place of origins and destinations, the city and its inhabitants. This implicit understanding is made explicit in its negative form. The remaining participants are purified and engage in purification as *agrestes* (17). The difference is elaborated in a massive occurrence of terms of

56 For the religious-urban programmatic of Propertius' fourth book, Rüpke 2009.

57 For the discussion about identification with Feriae Sementivae or 'Ambarvalia' (a modern term) see Murgatroyd 1994, 17–19. Pascal 1988, 532, rightly points out that there is no reference to a recurrent ritual in the text.

58 For an entirely poetological reading of the poem Tzounakas 2013, but cf. the cautious position of Henkel 2014, 451 on the rather disguised poetological discourse in Tibullus.

purity (*casta, pura*, 13), and – probably for the first time in Latin[59] – Tibullus employs *purgare*, 'to clean', for a ritual rather than pragmatic procedure (*purgamus agros, purgamus agrestes*, 17). The house-bred children[60] of the slaves (*turbaque uernarum*, 23), playing in front of the fire built by the satisfied farmer, close the invocation as imagination of the future prayed for.[61]

Tibullus is again linguistically innovative in describing the technicalities of entrails inspections in the rural ritual, thus being able to immediately state the successful communication with the deities invoked, Bacchus, Ceres, and *di patrii* (17), further stressing the familial character of the ritual. And yet, the larger geography of the empire becomes present with references to Italian and Greek wine (27/28) and the triumph of his patron that was won over Aquitania (33) in the following section (27–36), re-dedicating the festive occasion to the celebration of the triumphator Messalla (see above),[62] who is invoked to join (*huc ades*, 35) and inspire (*adspira,* ibid.) while the speaker continues his thanksgiving to 'heavenly agriculturists' (*agricolis … caelitibus*, 36).

The following section now returns to the countryside and praise of country-life, formally reflecting on the speaker's poetic business: *rura cano rurisque deos* (37–66), time and again situating object as well as place of singing by anaphers of *rura/rure* or *agricola*. The passage ends with addressing also 'female labour' (61–66).

The rural setting and topics that have pushed aside the imperial achievements so quickly is kept in the final section but is made more complex (67–90). Now the male divinity of love, Cupido, is invoked to join. He is construed as an originally rural deity, who has shifted to and specialised in the erotic adventures, the miseries and bliss of lovers and love-making in the city (71–80). As in the shorter Venus passage before, the urban setting is not addressed as such, but clearly located by concepts of riches, thresholds and guardians, and dark streets. The god is now (81) invoked to revert, or better, convert *(ueni … sed pone …)*, to the countryside to care for (unspoken: match-making among) the animals and (spoken aside, *clam,* or even aloud, *palam,* in private by everybody) humans. Openly, the speaker exhorts every-

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59 Thus Murgatroyd 1994, 31. Cf. for a similar complex of ritual purity (related to the veneration of Isis) Tib. I.3.27–28.

60 The *vernae* might also be adult slaves building makeshift huts in a festival context (Murgatroyd 1994, 34), but the repetition of *turba … ludet/ludat* in the following poem (see below) suggests interpreting young offspring as sign of success in 2.1.

61 For the motif of the twig houses, see Pascal 1988, 534.

62 On the triumph and its anticipation in Tib. I.7 see Knox 2005, 207; cf. Cairns 1979, 131 for the direct literary allusions to that text.

body to 'play around' (*ludite,* 87), as night falls. The choice of words suggests an atmosphere of frivolity and drunkenness *(lasciuo, incerto pede)*, evidently transferring the erotic atmosphere naturally attached to the city into the rural scene of the ritual.

Centred around the individual farmer and his dependents, the rural *as rural* is construed as a space of productivity, measured not in spatial property but numbers of offspring and variety of agricultural primary and secondary (wine, textiles) products. Order is established by traditions, necessities of labour, and purity, consumption is local – the Falernian wine, produced in the border region between Latium and Campania, is definitively a domestic, a rustic product. Dancing, singing, drinking without distinctions of gender, perhaps even juridical status is the adequate form of celebration. And yet, the age of the wine is measured in urban eras, in 'ancient consuls', and the Falernian is to be accompanied by a jar of Chian wine (28). And full happiness includes the transferral of urban ways of sexual pleasure. Mercantile outreach (not least based on imperial, military achievements that seems to be glossed over so quickly) is as much part of the perfected rural world as urban eroticism. Performing religious communication brings in agents that are related, but conceptually not bound to specific places. To invite them to come, that is, to change place, is the essence of ritual. Their different temporalities allow the poet to add complexity to an action developing in the presence of narrated time, their own presence creates affective atmospheres, their past introduces processes and changes in production and social order. The entirely individual composition of the ritual[63] described in the Hellenistic mode of a choric hymn,[64] the demonstration of religious competence, adds a facet to the speaker's agency that is in full command of a rural landscape which is different but not isolated from the urban and imperial spaces.[65] This, at least, is the frame produced by the long opening poem. Against this background the following analyses will proceed in a more summary fashion.

4.2 An urban birthday ritual (2.2)

'Let's speak luck-bearing words; the god of Birth comes to the altars; / whoever is present, watch your tongue, man and woman!' (2.2.1–2). When at the end of the previous poem Night has harnessed the horses together and

63 Thus rightly Pascal 1988.

64 Cairns 1979, 128.

65 Against the text of 2.1, Johnson 1990, 113, is unfounded when he states that Tibullus remains 'in the fatal golden moment that pretends it need not fear the power of the metropolis.'

Sleep and Dreams have come (2.1.89–90), the subsequent poem witness a new movement, superficially in space – *ad aras* –, semantically also in time: a birth-day has come. The short poem (twenty-two lines in total) clearly recalls the previous ritual, in its form of a prayer at beginning and end, a ritual sequence that includes the confirmation of the successful conclusion of the ritual in the form of a bird appearing (l. 17–18). The grandfather who was a source of ritual inspiration in the beginning of poem 1 is replaced by grandfathers looking forward to the future offspring of the couple addressed at the end.[66] The final line, invoking a *turba novella* (22) neither refers, as is usual, to a troop of young animals nor to the unfree crowd in front of the farmer in poem 1, but to the children of this couple, a topic of birthday wishes, as we can see in 1.7.55–56.

The text lacks explicit indications of space. Without any further specification it is embedded only in the world at large, referred to by far-away destinations, or rather, places of origins of products consumed on the spot. The festive celebration demands incense 'sent' by a 'delicate' Arab (4). The suggestion for the ritual procedure includes costly spices *(nardo)*.[67] The luxury items suggest a situation in the city or even capital. Only late is the countryside (*arva*, 14) or even a distant wilderness (*Indias*, 15) as a place of investment and production invoked, but in a negative way: It is not a tempting exchange for marital fidelity (13–14). The whole poem is thus situated in the city *ex negativo*.

Amor's immediate arrival – flying on noisy wings (17–18) – is part of the positive outcome of the ritual. The central deity of the poem, however, is the *Natalis*, the Birthday Child himself. This thoroughly misunderstood figure[68] is neither an invisible god nor a statue, but the annually materialising agency semantically externalised, but ritually impersonated by the celebrated man (or woman). It is this dividualisation of the addressee in which the wording of Tibullus rejoices. This very concept renders Natalis a god that arrives but comes from nowhere, an arrival in time not in space, as stated at the beginning. Religious place-making hence creates a decontextualised space, yet a space imagined as urban and domestic: the celebrants meet in Cornutus' house.[69]

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66 I follow Murgatroyd 1994, 274 (critical appendix), in his interpretation of *avis* as dative plural of grandfather *(avus)* rather than as nominative of 'bird'.

67 For the Greek sound of the terms, Keith 2014, 489.

68 See, e.g., the recent commentaries of Lee 1982, 127–128; Murgatroyd 1994, 72–73 and the problems of translation based on a differentiation of several persons named Natalis, Hodiernus, Genius or Messalla respectively Cornutus.

69 For the latter Murgatroyd 1994, 69.

4.3 Preparing for departure from the city (2.3)

Rura, the countryside, is the first word of this lengthy poem which might have been longer than the eighty-four lines transmitted. But the first word is deceptive. The whole text, addressed to the same Cornutus as the previous poem, who might have been the colleague of Messalla in the priesthood of the Fratres Arvales in those years,[70] is by a speaker who has witnessed the removal of his girlfriend (later identified as Nemesis) to a *villa urbana* in the countryside: *tenent uillaeque puellam (1), ipsa Venus … migrauit in agros (3), uerba … rustica discit Amor (4).* These theistic metaphors set the tone for the whole poem, which is full of stories of humans and gods leaving (on a temporary basis) the city for the countryside.

Thus, movements are frequent and complex. The Iron Age (35) is an urban age. Riches are looked for, triggering war. Booty is invested in arable land but also in marble and columns in the city (43). Even girls are keen to display luxurious textiles – contrasted with the clay tableware of the modest. Despite the criticism implied, the male observer too expects girls to be in the city (61, 67): 'May the fruits of the land disappear, so that there are no girls in the countryside' (68). In the end, the consideration of urban and rural modes of existence leads the speaker to drop the proud wearing of the wide toga without his girl (and sex) for enslavement and hard labour in the countryside close to her. As Annette Haug has demonstrated in her study of urban decoration and communication in Pompeii as well as Rome, the association of sex and the city is a stable one across quarters and social classes.[71] This is confirmed in 2.3 despite all past – and hypothetically imaginable – movements of love gods even into the countryside, a place of toil rather than an idyllic landscape.[72]

4.4 Urban slavery (2.4)

In the consecutive reading of the book proposed here, it is the transmitted local adverb *hic,* 'here' rather than (likewise transmitted) modal *sic*, 'so then',[73] that makes sense as an opening of the book: The *persona* speaking

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70 The identification is only based on the identical cognomen and the prominence of the addressee of two poems second only to Messalla (Murgatroyd 1994, xvi–xvii); for membership among the Arvals, see Rüpke and Glock 2008, *FS* 971. He was about the same age as Tibullus.

71 Haug and Kreuz 2016; Haug 2020b, 2022.

72 Thus Damer 2014, 443.

73 Murgatroyd 1994, 277, now opts for the latter (likewise in his Latin text edition in Tibullus 2012).

is in the city,[74] slavery is here. Following up on the perspective from city to countryside, the urban erotic condition is now explored in the form of an autobiographic narrative from within. In terms of divine agents, Amor (4, 38, 52) and Venus (24) are harsh gods, causing erotic slavery, against whom neither of the poetic, elegies inspiring divinities, Apollo (13) and the Muses (15 and 20), are of any help. The spatial alternative to the speaker's misery is not the countryside, but the wilderness, frozen mountains and the turbulent sea (7–10), where he wishes to be in order to escape his situation.

It is not before line 22 that an urban location is positively confirmed by reference to closed doors and a plurality of temples (23) that might be robbed in sacrilege to produce the gifts demanded by the mistress. The luxury goods from all over the world, emeralds, purple, Coan textiles (that is, silk) and pearls (27–30) are associated with the mechanics of closed doors and human watchmen (31–32), easily corruptible, however, by money. Love is for sale (*pretio,* 39), but urban richness is also easy prey to conflagration (*incendia,* 41), reluctant firefighting and ends in funerary expenses that can no longer be met (44).

To exemplify the degree of addiction or dependency in the slave-like love relationship to a woman for sale, a prostitute (as all listeners to elegiac poetry were well aware despite the *Fiktionspakt* made with the author), the poem ends on the declaration of how far the speaker would go: Selling and leaving the ancestral home, or rather, in Tibullus' words, his household gods, the Lares (53–54), as well as drinking poison of all kinds and effects, brought into the city from the homelands of magic (55–60).

The erotic condition of life is, as the poem amply demonstrates, an urban one. It bears such strange fruit as crime, robbery, even sacrilege, that is, robbery of dedications to the gods, all to render one's mistress benign. It breeds the dealers in luxury, fans fires that threaten home and hearth, while homelessness and madness lie in the dregs.

4.5 Looking from upon the urban heights (2.5)

All modern commentaries know exactly where this piece – surely the longest (122 verses) and most complex poems of the second book[75] – is located: spoken at, and with reference to, the Palatine temple of Apollo, in the heart of Rome.[76] Yet, this conclusion is evident only for a contemporary reader if

74 Thus also Luck 1964 ad loc.
75 For a structural analysis, Méthy 2000, 70–71.
76 E. g., Murgatroyd 1994, 163.

he is already present in Rome. Certainly, Tibullus does not profile Phoebus Apollo as a rural god; he (and his readers) rather have fun in remembering the rare occasion of Apollo performing agricultural labour (2.3.11). Yet, a temple of Apollo could be anywhere – Tibullus inserts an indication of the urban location only four lines later, just as the identity of the 'new priest' *(nouus sacerdos)* is revealed six lines later.[77] Here, he refers to the services of the Sibylla and the Sibylline oracles for the Romans, texts collected on the order of Augustus and kept in the Palatine temple at Rome.

Yet again, the poem does not feature places but movements. First, movements constituting ritual space: The priest enters the premises. *Templum* is not *aedes*, the actual temple building; the 'poetic' plural accentuates the composite character of the ritual space. The god is exhorted to come *(veni)* while the ritual is still in its preparatory phase, people 'heaping' the altar (outside of any temple) with their gifts (6).[78] As has been shown above for the overlap of Birthday God and Birthday Child in 2.2, divine and religious agency[79] converge: The song attributes the power to Apollo to enable the poet's singing. The *pars epica* of the hymn praises Apollo (anaphoric *tu … tu … te …*, 11–18) by referring to priestly competences and the instrumental objects of this exchange (*augur, haruspex, Sibylla* [used by the *Quindecimviri*] and *avis, notis, pedibus* [i. e., hexameters] in final positions).[80]

This leads to movements in time, switching from the present to the past (19–70) and future (79–104) before returning to the present.[81] In the story of the Sibylla's prophecy given to Aeneas (told along Vergilian lines[82]) the speaker fully introduces the historically multi-layered city of Rome, contrasting the pre-urban past and the city's foundation, captured in the images of the *urbis/moenia* (23/24). The pre-urban fiction, worked out in considerable detail, remains embedded in a firmly urban setting. The name of the city (*Roma, tuum nomen*, 57) appears in the central section of a poem clearly engaging in the praise of Rome.[83]

The rural, then, is not place but time: after the conflagration of Troy *and* its gods (22) – only the household gods *(lares)* were carried along by

77 Thus pointed out by Murgatroyd 1994, 168. Bandiera 2006, 14–18, speaks of riddle and solution.

78 See Murgatroyd 1994, 172.

79 For the distinction, see Rüpke 2021.

80 The father of the person celebrated in the poem was M. Valerius Messalla Corvinus, Tibullus' patron and augur since 36 BCE (*FS* 3414); his uncle Potitus Valerius Messalla was *Quindecimvir* at the same time (*FS* 3412).

81 See Bandiera 2006, 30.

82 See Ball 1975.

83 Thus Ball 1975, 49.

Aeneas – and before Romulus' construction of the walls: now, an 'eternal Rome' (23–24).[84] Rural religion, too, is a religious era rather than a spatial phenomenon. Within a few verses, Tibullus sketches contemporary images of a religious past, painted along similar lines by Varro two decades before.[85] Pan is a shapeless shadow (27), Pales a raw tree stump (aniconic religion!, 28); architecturally elaborated sanctuaries did not exist, offerings were hung in trees (29). The god in the forest did not yet have a name (*silvestri … deo* is the *future* 'Silvanus', 30). Looking back from these verses, the preceding *herbosa Palatia* and *humiles in Iovis arce* (25–26) appear as oxymora that stress the temporality of the spatial order of 'eternal Rome'. Rome before Rome was countryside (*ruris,* 37).

The prophecy of the sibyl (39–64, resp. 66) adds a further spatiotemporal dimension. The city before Rome was Troy, slowly shifting to the site of (future) Rome via Laurentum, Lavinium, and Alba Longa (49–50). Yet even Rome is not a static end, but the cradle of imperial power spreading over the earth as can be seen when looking down upon it from much higher than the seven hills, namely from heaven (58). This is an expansion reflecting the long movement *(longa …. via,* 62) from Troy. However, it does not imply an unlimited future, there is no reason to indulge in thoughts of an 'eternal Rome'. A rather typical list of threatening prodigies from the recent past (67–78) threatens the community again – and induces the praying speaker to implore Apollo to drown such gloomy signs in the sea (80). Surely an awkward image, but by its awkwardness forcing the listener (or reader) to parallel the traditional drowning of monstrous signs (typically hermaphrodites[86]) with Cleopatra and her fleet, the latter of which has been 'drowned' by Augustus' fleet at Actium – the very occasion on which the temple central to this poem was vowed.[87]

The poem could have stopped here, were it not for Messalla – and the urban condition of life. Suddenly the scene switches to the countryside. The crackling laurel is a response to the prayer to Apollo and an indication of his benevolence (81–82). Yet the altar on which this laurel is offered is not the one of the Palatine Apollo. This is not clear from the subsequent first line, but evidence builds up quickly.[88] The good omens now reported refer to agricultural fertility and success (*felix et satur annus*, 82; *horrea plena,* 84),

84 For the resultant vagueness of the concept, Méthy 2000.

85 See Rüpke 2014. This character has escaped commentators hunting for 'realia'.

86 See Mowat 2021.

87 Here, Murgatroyd 1994, 218, is far too reluctant to embark on this line of interpretation ('may just possibly be a very oblique allusion').

88 The urban location is however assumed by Murgatroyd 1994, 216, and others.

coloni are to rejoice at hearing the sound (83). Participants lie in the grass (95) – rather than in urban manner at a table[89] – and enjoy the shadow of an *old* tree (96),[90] they build couches and tables of turf (100).[91] Looking back to the beginning of the poem, we realise that the speaker has never indicated his presence. He has asked Apollo to come to the new priest, not to himself, *huc*, not *hīc*. In clear difference to the earlier hymnodic poems in book 1 and 2, the participants in the ritual had not been addressed directly. It was Apollo who was called upon to sing the song composed by the poet, and Apollo who is present in the form of the poet's words only *(verba mea)*.[92] Yet, the speaker is not in the countryside either.[93] The vision of a good year and a good life is situated in the countryside, of people enjoying plenty,[94] of family, and the spring festival of the Palilia (81–104). The god for whom this festival is celebrated (*deo*, l. 95, again Tibullus suppresses the name) is the archetypical divinity mentioned in the vision of pre-urban Rome before.

Yet, where is the speaker? In his renewed address of Apollo (105–106) he surprises the recipient of his praises by admitting that he is ill at home, lying down (*iaceo*, 109–110), love-sick, singing only about his beloved Nemesis – and thus, of course, in the city. Apollo is implored to disarm Amor/Cupido. Implying the granting of the wish, the speaker turns to, nay, implores (*parce*, 114) his 'girl' to no longer torture him, thus freeing him to be able to celebrate his patron Messalla's son Messalinus, the 'new priest', that is, a *Quindecimvir sacris faciundis*,[95] leading a triumphal processions through the city and the urban crowd (*turba*, 119) and preceded by his father in the procession. 'Assent' *(adnue)* is the final plea in the last couplet, again directed at Apollo, to allow Tibullus and the father to witness that scene. It was never to happen.[96]

Deities in 2.5 can look down from a great height and can move instantaneously – not least impelled by *hymnoi kletikoi* like the present poem. They

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89 For the unique formulation of Tibullus, see Murgatroyd 1994, 224.

90 For the installation of (new) trees in urban sanctuaries, see Hallett 2020.

91 … *extruet alte* (99) parallels the heaping of the altars at the beginning, thus underlining the difference: here the ritual is focused on the fire.

92 2.5. For the discussion of the sentence (and widespread misunderstanding), Murgatroyd 1994, 170.

93 Heyworth 2018, 74. This is in difference to the continuity of scene and agents in Prop. 4.6.

94 Murgatroyd 1994, 219, points to Dio's report of a famine in 22 BCE (54.1) as a possible background for the atmosphere conveyed in the poem.

95 See *FS* 3415.

96 Tibullus must have died shortly after the publication of this book; Messalinus, possibly born 43 BCE (if he is to be identified with Lygdamus, on whom Heyworth 2018, 75–83), was a young *Quindecimvir*, but did not reach the consulate before 3 BCE, a time when triumphs were no longer celebrated by generals outside the imperial family.

allow the speaker to relate to different places without being present himself, in time and place. What is called a 'national poem' by some interpreters[97] is a complex interweaving of different temporalities and spatialities, of rural and urban in particular. The urban is the site of the prestigious and prominent places of the gods and crowd-drawing ceremonies that mark one's public life – and the site of sickening love and sex relationships beyond familial frameworks. The good life is in the countryside – but missed.

4.6 Futile hope of escape from the city (2.6)

This last poem starts with a movement, a departure to the military realm, to the camp (*castra,* the very first word) and from the beloved. Real military service might help to escape the metaphorical *militia amoris,* the programmatic metaphor of all elegy[98] – if only the speaker is really willing to take the 'long road' (3) and leave his *otium* (5). This braggadocio, this big-mouthedness, is reduced to nothing by a single sound, the slamming of a door (11–12). We are back to, respectively stuck in, the city.

The closed doors, the threshold of the girl, the going to-and-fro suggests urban architecture and settings (11–14). The basic psychological mechanism, futile hope, is ubiquitous, though. The speaker contrasts himself with a rustic figure, the farmer's proverbial wealth of next year (21). Yet hope fails in the face of the tenacity of Nemesis, *dura puella* (28).

In the face of that power, the character of the text shifts to a prayer, imploring (*parce*, 29) the beloved with reference ('by') to the bones of her early deceased sister. Against the background of Propertius (or rather: looking forward to Propertius' response to Tibullus' poems in book 4 of c. 16 BCE[99]), it is interesting to see the broad vision of tombs and funerary rituals as part of the scenery (29–38), evidently spatially connected to death by falling from a high window (39), again a suggestion of urban architecture. Here the poem ends by dwelling on the cruelty of the relationship between speaker, bawd, mistress and the competing lover and the solutions offered by urban technologies, writing, letters, and curses. Now, at the end of the book, the full social, spatial, and economic structure of the sex business exalted by longing, love, and reversed dependency, is spelt out. A book full of hymns and the literary performance of rituals ends on the minimal hope

97 E. g., Murgatroyd 1994, 166; similar Ball 1975.
98 See Miller 2012.
99 See Rüpke 2020b.

of successfully cursing the bawd and an at least minimal effect of his prayers on the 'gods' – the very last word of the book *(deos,* 54).

5 Conclusion

The poems of book 2 have a complex but well determined topography of the speaker's 'real' or imagined location or object. Religious language, the invocation of and dialogue with the gods, helps to accentuate movements and bridge spatial and temporal differences. The urban setting seems to offer the default situation. Placement outside of urban space is not rare, but always painstakingly indicated. This allows for a first conclusion. Tibullus is an urbanite speaking to urbanites. The spatial imagination is not a dual one of city and countryside or urban and non-urban. There is a wilderness out there that is punishment, not pleasure. The interspatiality of the city is not restricted to the interspatialities of the interface between urban and rural territory.[100] It is – much more than the countryside – a co-spatiality[101] at the node of two huge, military and economic, networks, the one associated with empire, the other with the world of production in its fullest extension.[102] It is part of the urbanity promulgated by Tibullus that the urbanite is in command of very different 'regionalisations' as spaces of experience, action and fruition – food from the rural hinterland, luxury items from afar, that is, cultivated *(tener Arabs)* as well as wild lands (mountains). They inform the speaker's behaviour, they are also hypothetically spaces of one's own action, whether in the shape of *castra, rura* or *villa*. All three are reflected in Tibullus's own biography as well as in his poems. However, they are spaces of very different modes of actions and very different emotional qualities. Regionalisation is a useful concept but needs flexible handling. Neither the three productive-consumptive, normative-political, and significative-informative modes nor the three resulting geographies offer adequate descriptions of the literary constructions of consumptive but not productive, affective, imperial, or spaces of display and competition. In addition, the concepts of inter- and co-spatialities help to capture and describe the relationships of different regionalisations. Thus, urbanity can be seen as one among several regionalisations of the same actor.

100 For the concept, Lévy 2013a.

101 Lévy 2013b.

102 On the importance of networks for urbanism, briefly Raja and Sindbæk 2020, 9. See the exemplary study for early urbanism by Wengrow 2010.

What is the profile of urbanity against that background? Urban practices[103] as described in Tibullus 2 are practices of display – parading one's riches, one's booty, one's offices and family – by male and female actors. These practices combine expressive behaviour with rational calculations of competition. Tibullus' book 2 repeatedly names objects but never architecture. Columns are carried through the streets, not static elements of buildings. Therefore, streets are prominent spaces. The most luxurious textile worn in any of the texts is patterned so as to 'show streets', *disposuitque vias* (2.3.60). To translate this by 'stripes' misses the point. What the poet seems to aim at goes beyond the ephemerality of practices. It is not about affordances of streets or objects but about 'affective atmospheres'. To re-specify Ben Anderson's concept,[104] the urban space is imbued with ongoing practices as much as with memories and meanings attributed to the physical environment in earlier practices. Thus, such space elicits emotional responses as much as it conveys vague qualities, luxury and victory above all in the text analysed here. Rome is not some city but an imperial capital.[105]

This is one important facet of the urban atmosphere. The erotic atmosphere is not unrelated in view of the actors and economic mechanisms, but less visible (if not rendered visible, as often is the case, by graffiti[106]). The city of the Augustan period is a place triggering, and filled by, practices of prostitution – on a scale that allowed the whole genre of elegy to flourish. Both atmospheres are not spatially separated and interact in the practices of parading one's achievements.

The countryside is (as has been affirmed in earlier research) a realm of peace and productivity, of leisure spent in piety and of hard work. In a way, rural life is the good life. Yet crop failure lurks always just around the corner. Likewise, this countryside is just a hinterland to the city, people go back and forth and can play around with the idea, the advantages and costs of such movement. In the end, the rural is a temporary and above all an imaginary escape. In the end, for the urbanite neither rural slavery nor the hardships of real military service offer more than an imagined contrast to life seen as ideal.

The second book paints an ambivalent and complex image of urban as well as rural life. In the elegiac perspective, urban life has a strong gendered element. It is a glorious place for public men. However, even in a close social

103 See Haug 2020a for the concept.

104 Anderson 2009, 79–80.

105 For the specific urbanistic conditions of ancient capitals Gutiérrez, Terrenato and Otto 2015; for Rome, Terrenato 2015.

106 See Haug 2022.

environment, female enjoyment of it clashes with male damnation. Death is the end, and death is also urban (as is post-mortal commemoration). From the point of view of urbanity discourses, Tibullus proposes norms and values that in his literary cosmos are contrafactual with regard to living in the city and much easier to plausibilise in a rural setting. Yet, he permanently undercuts the realism of that rurality and affirms the urban existence of the speaker. Given the economic means of the creator of this urban character, the historical person Tibullus had the possibilities and knew how to combine the rural and the urban, the suburban villa and the urban thrill, and audience, and support, and resources, and eroticism. His literary persona needs to dream himself away. The suburban rural – as I like to call this affective regionalisation – is dependent on, and, as a place of temporary living as well as a literary figure of thought (or a domestic decoration), part of, urbanity. The urban is the default, it is naturalised, presupposed, emotionally and bodily conceived. It needs no specific explication. Tibullus never spells out the urban location. Indicating the locality is necessary only if you leave the urban space, leave home.

Tibullus' poetic collection is hardly a survival handbook for the urban jungle. Yet, the complexity of the positions developed is a product of urban growth and social differentiation in the first century BCE. If resilience is increased by diversity,[107] such production in the immediate aftermath of a civil war might be taken as an indicator as much as an instrument for the increase of urban resilience in early imperial Rome. It must have been appealing to other urban centres, too, if we transfer the well-attested dissemination of contemporary domestic décor to the dissemination of manuscripts that we can only imagine with regard to this specific text – at least for those who shared the social imaginary of this *eques,* whatever their actual legal and economic status was: with or without Italian origins, military service performed, a suburban villa owned, female prostitutes enjoyed and bawds cursed. The urban atmosphere described by Tibullus and the urbanity thus created and decorated with rural simplicity probably had some appeal beyond his social class, beyond equestrians.

So probably did his religious imagination. The gods of Tibullus 2 cannot be classified as urban and non-urban. There is an anonymous *deus* in the countryside (5.95), there are gods *of* the countryside (*rurisque deos*, 1.37), but they turn out to be Bacchus, Lares, Minerva, and Cupido. There is no dichotomy of rural and urban gods. Instead, gods are used to historicise this very distinction and fuse it; switches from towns into countryside and

107 Thus, for rural areas, Quaranta and Salvia 2014.

back are part of mythological narratives (3.11–38). Urban and rural ritual blended. Tibullus gave urban practices a rural atmosphere, fused Palatine with agrarian ritual. The archetypically rural festival of the Palilia of the last poem were actually celebrated as Parilia in his days, a Birth ritual *(parere)* on the birthday of the *urbs Roma*.

The gods of the second book are highly mobile. In that, they are like the human protagonists. This is reflected in their agency and 'ontology', in human and divine actors blended, Natalis and Birth child, Apollo and poet. These gods are not fixed to houses or temples; even Apollo, as I have argued, is not fixed to his (newly) famous urban temple. They are not delineating but blurring boundaries, not least by adding a deep chronology to the rise of the urban. Urbanity is relying on, and questioned by, religious means.

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