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ALBIUS TIBULLUS and others, *Carmina (Elegies)*

In Latin, illuminated manuscript on parchment

Italy, Padua, c. 1470-1490

i (modern paper, added) + 61 + *i* (modern paper, added) on parchment, very thin, incorrect early modern foliation in large Arabic numerals copied in ink in the upper margin, mostly erased, but f. 39, numbered, 33, and ff. 44-58, 43-53, modern foliation in pencil, top outer corner recto, collation, missing one folio at the beginning (*i*¹⁰ [-1, with loss of text] *ii-vi*¹⁰ *vii*²), horizontal catchwords, middle, lower margin, except quire two, inside, lower margin, flourished in quire three, lacking in quire six, no signatures, horizontal rules in ink, double vertical bounding lines almost undetectable, ruled in blind, prickings top and bottom margins, and a single pricking, far outside margin, above the top horizontal rule (justification, 92-90 x 65-53 mm.), written below the top line in an elegant cursive humanistic script in eighteen long lines, most rubrics in alternate lines of red and blue square capitals, occasionally with two lines of red alternating with two lines of blue), a few rubrics in red or blue humanistic minuscule script, thirty-five two-line gold initials, infilled with dark red or blue with decorative white highlights, some forming flowers, on square parted grounds of blue and green, blue, red and green, or red and green, with decorative white dots and highlights, all elegies begin with painted initials except II.4 and III.4 which begin with two-line red initials, in good condition, with some cockling and damage from water or damp, mostly in the outer margins, ff. 10-11, top outer corner repaired with modern parchment, f. 13v, some damage from damp, with blue ink offset on f. 14, water stain, f. 24, with slight damage to the text, small dark stain within the text on ff. 27-31, also faintly visible on ff. 25-26, stain top margin, f. 35v. Bound in its original North Italian binding of blind-stamped brown goatskin over wooden boards with three sets of triple fillets forming an outer border of rope interlace and a narrow rectangular center panel of closely interwoven rope interlace, interspersed with small round stamps, possibly once gilt (traces remain), smooth rounded spine rebacked in mottled leather, cover damaged in the corners revealing the boards, both covers are worn, back cover with small holes in the leather, outer corner of the lower board is also damaged with wood loss, but overall in sound condition. Dimensions 148 x 87 mm.

This elegant copy of Tibullus's *Elegies*, or love poems, in its original humanist binding is noteworthy for its beautiful humanistic cursive script and graceful square capitals. Perhaps copied by Antonio da Salla, it belongs to the same tradition as the manuscripts by the famous Paduan scribe, Bartholomeo Sanvito. The copy also includes a unique survival of poems by a female author from ancient Rome. Although Tibullus's poems survive in over 100 copies, they rarely appear for sale. The Schoenberg Database records the most recent sale in 1979; four copies are listed in De Ricci's *Census* and the *Supplement* by Bond and Faye.

PROVENANCE

1. Written in Italy, probably in Padua, near the end of the fifteenth century as indicated by the script; the careful, elegant cursive humanistic script (also known as italic script by some scholars) is similar to the script of Antonio da Salla (d. 1505). Antonio was a priest who held the benefice of the Church of San Stefano di Carpanedo near Padua from 1462-1505, and a contemporary of Bartolomeo Sanvito (1435-1511). A recent study by Laura Nuvoloni identifies eleven manuscripts copied by him and lists six additional manuscripts that he may have copied; she did not know of this manuscript (listed in Nuvoloni 2008, pp. 33-34; his work is discussed pp. 21-31; he is briefly mentioned in de la Mare, 2009, pp. 59, 149, 307, 376). He copied three manuscripts in

a cursive humanistic script very similar to that used in this manuscript; many of his manuscripts were copied in a distinctive humanistic minuscule. London, British Library, Arundel MS 212, should also be mentioned; it was copied in Padua in the last quarter of the fifteenth century (after 1468) and was probably not copied by Antonio da Salla. Nonetheless it presents interesting similarities with our manuscript, especially in the use of distinctive ligatures (see British Library Digital Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts, below, Online Resources). Further study would be needed to determine whether the manuscript described here was copied by Antonio da Salla or by another scribe in his circle.

2. Front flyleaf, f. i, white and gold paper label with "L<?>" in ink.
3. Private Collection.

TEXT

ff. 1-61, incipit, "/Custodes fertis munera uestra lares/ Tunc vitula innumeros lustrabit cesa inuencos/ ... Dites despiciam despicanque famem"; [f. 2v, Elegia 2] *Conqueritur de ianua quod sit clausa et ad eam et ad deliam multis vtitur blanditiis*, incipit, "Adde meum uinoque nouos compesce dolores/ ..."; [f. 59v, Carmen IV.14 (III.20)] *Tetrasticon de infamia sue amatae polle* [sic], Rvmor ait nostrum peccare puellam/ ... Quid miserum torques rumor acerbe tace"; [f. 60, Domitus Marsus, Epigram], incipit, "Te quoque uirgilio comitem non equa puella [sic]/ .. Aut caneret forti regia bella pede"; [f. 60v, Vita tibulli], incipit, "Albius Tibullus eques romanus ... obiit adulescens ut ex eius epitaphio accepimus"; [f. 61, Domitus Marsus, Epigram], incipit, "Te quoque uirgilio comitem non equa puella [sic]/ .. Aut caneret forti regia bella pede" [f. 61v, blank];

Albius Tibullus, and others, *Carmina*, or *Elegies*, edited numerous times; editions listed in Maltby 2002, pp. 23-26; here divided into three books, beginning on ff. 25v and 38v, agreeing with the older witnesses, although many fifteenth-century manuscripts divide the text into four books. Elegy II.5 is divided into two poems, with the second beginning at line 39 on f. 34. Elegy III.6 is similarly divided, with a new poem beginning on f. 46v, with line 33; blank line on f. 43v where III.4, line 65 is omitted. All these textual characteristics appear in the oldest manuscripts. The text here is accompanied by introductory arguments, usually copied in square capitals (blank lines left for the argument before I.4 on f. 8v, and I.8 on f. 18v; on f. 46v, argument for III.6 was erased, although one line remains on f. 47).

This manuscript includes the entire corpus of poetry that circulated as the work of the Roman author, Albius Tibullus (c. 54 BC-19-18 BC) in the fifteenth century. Books One and Two (here on ff. 1-38v), are by Tibullus. Book One was written by Tibullus between 30 and 27-26 BC, and centers on poems for his first love, here addressed by the pseudonym, "Delia." The second book centers on poems for another love, known as "Nemesi." It is quite short, including only six poems, and was probably incomplete at the time of his death. The remaining poems, here presented as a third book, although in many fifteenth-century manuscripts they are divided into books three and four, are probably not authentic, but are rather elegies composed by various authors in the circle of Tibullus's patron, the soldier, statesman and orator, Marcus Valerius Mesalla Corvinus (64 BC- AD 8), which circulated with Tibullus's genuine works

throughout the Middle Ages. Among these poems are a group of short compositions by Sulpicia, which are unique survivals of poems by a female author from ancient Rome.

We know little more about the life of Tibullus other than that he was a Roman knight, who owned a small estate. He lived during a turbulent time in Rome's history, growing up in the midst of the Civil Wars that ended with the abolishment of the Roman Republic and the establishment of the Principate of Augustus in 27 BC. This collection of elegies (verse written in elegiac couplets, a form used by the Roman authors Catullus, Propertius, and Ovid, as well as Tibullus), are for the most part love poems, treasured for their great beauty and elegance of language. They express a yearning for a simple, peaceful country life far from the strife of his era. One modern commentator comparing Tibullus with his younger contemporary Ovid, summarizes, "He expresses, I believe, a wider range of feeling: humour and high spirits on occasion, . . . , but nostalgia and melancholy, tenderness (his favourite adjective is *tener*) and compassion, fear, hatred, admiration, reverence – the list is incomplete; enough to say that if Propertius is the poet of passion and Ovid of wit, Tibullus is the poet of feeling" (Lee 1982, p. 10).

The manuscript transmission of Tibullus is a romantic one. It is a preeminent example of a classical text which was nearly lost to the modern world. We know that there was a copy at Charlemagne's Court, since it is included in a booklist dating c. 790 now in Berlin (Diez B.66). This manuscript, or a copy of it, was probably later at Fleury, where it was known to Theodulf (d. 821), and then at Orleans, where it was used by the compilers of the *Florilegium gallicum* in the middle of the twelfth century. Richard de Fournival, Chancellor of the Cathedral of Amiens (1240-60) owned a copy of Tibullus (probably a copy of the Orleans codex), which was part of his bequest to the Sorbonne. This manuscript, like the copy at Monte Cassino, and indeed all the early copies, is not known to have survived. Extracts included in the *Florilegium gallicum*, and other medieval florilegia, are the only early witnesses to the text of Tibullus.

The oldest surviving manuscript of the complete text of the poems, Milan, Ambrosiana R. 26 sup., was copied around 1374 for Coluccio Salutati (1331-1406), the Italian humanist scholar and Chancellor of Florence, who was an avid book collector and lover of the classics. Some scholars have argued that this manuscript was a copy of a manuscript brought to Italy by Petrarch (1304-1374) from France. Five additional copies were made in Italy in the 1420s (one of which survives now in a seventeenth-century copy). By the middle of the fifteenth century, the text was well established, and there are well over one hundred manuscripts dating from the middle of the fifteenth century and later (Luck 1989, pp. xxvii-xxxv, lists 137 total manuscripts, not including this one). There has been no modern study of the text of Tibullus as it is preserved in this large group of later manuscripts, which Tibullus's editors have assumed are derived from Ambrosiana R 26 sup. A complete census and study of the text of these manuscripts could add much to our knowledge of the reception and textual transmission of the text.

Although these poems survive in over 100 copies (mostly from after the mid-fourteenth century), they rarely appear for sale. The Schoenberg Database records the most recent sale in 1979; four copies are listed in the United States in De Ricci's *Census* and the *Supplement* by Bond and Faye (at Harvard University, Yale University, Princeton University, and the Folger Shakespeare Library).

LITERATURE

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Wardrop, James. *The Script of Humanism; Some Aspects of Humanistic script, 1460-1560*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1963.

ONLINE RESOURCES

The Latin Library (Text in Latin):

<http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/tib.html>

Perseus Digital Library (Text in Latin):

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/searchresults?q=tibullus>

Selections in English translation

<https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/Tibullus.php>

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