

Punning between anatomical and metrical feet is well known in Latin literature (e.g. Hinds 1987, 16–18) and has been noted in elegy as part of a metaphorical strategy identifying elegiac poetry with the elegiac love object (e.g. Wyke 1989). Keith 1999 (following Fineberg 1993) has shown that Tibullus employs this “anatomical metaphor” when he characterizes women’s gaits as either elegant or halting, since these descriptions also characterize his poetry and its meter, respectively. This paper will argue (1) that Tibullus uses metapoetic foot puns in many more instances than have been recognized (perhaps as many as 56) and develops the metaphor with connected images such as limping, chains, and binding; and (2) that these puns correspond to similar metapoetic puns in the other Augustan poets and constitute intergeneric dialogue about the elegiac meter.

Although metapoetic play with the word “foot” is best known from Ovid (e.g. *Am.* 3.1.7–10; cf. Wyke 1989), Barchiesi 1994 has catalogued examples as early as Pindar in Greek and Catullus in Latin. Tibullus mentions the word “foot” 23 times in his two books, and many of these can be connected to meter and the rhetoric of genre. In some cases the feet are explicitly metrical (*abdita quae senis fata canit pedibus*, 2.5.16; *Nemesim, sine qua versus mihi nullus | verba potest iustos aut reperire pedes*, 2.5.111–12). Elsewhere feet are associated with the undertaking or not (*recusatio*) of various military campaigns, one of which has been independently supposed to represent epic (*o quotiens ingressus iter mihi tristia dixi | offensum in porta signa dedisse pedes!*, 1.3.19–20; *cum bene iuravi, pes tamen ipse redit*, 2.6.14; O’Neil 1967 on epic in 2.6). In other cases the foot or its gait is characterized by an adjective that Propertius or Ovid uses explicitly to characterize their elegiac verse (*ad teneros. . . pedes*, 1.7.46, 1.9.30; cf. *teneris. . . modis*, *Ov. Am.* 2.1.4). Often, though, Tibullus elaborates the metaphor with images of binding and chains, humorously playing on the halting rhythm of the pentameter. Catullus and Callimachus also played on the metrical defects of their meter by using exhaustion (*Cat.* 31) and gout (δεσμός *Call. Ia.* fr. 191.41) to represent the limp of the choliambic meter (see Morgan 1999), and Hinds 1985 has remarked on this *vitium pedis* motif in the *Tristia* (1.1.114, 3.1.11–12). Tibullus, in characteristically subtle manner, develops this self-reflexive—and humorously self-disparaging—metaphor using an erotic theme known already to Greek and Latin literature, *servitium amoris* (e.g. *at mihi servandum credas: non saeva recuso | verbera, detrecto non ego vincla pedum*, 1.6.37–8).

In developing the conceit that links metrical and anatomical feet, Tibullus is joining a conversation with other Augustan poets that centers around the relatively new genre of love elegy. Ovid and Propertius engage in such punning (*Ov. Am.* 3.1: Wyke 1989; *Prop.* 1.1.4: Commager 1974, 24; Ahl 1974, 83), but so does Horace in his “elegiambic” *Epod.* 11 (Barchiesi 1994), and so, I suggest, does Vergil in *Ecl.* 10 (e.g. Gallus to Lycoris: *a, tibi ne teneras glacies secet aspera plantas!*, 10.49), which declares Vergil’s admiration for Gallus (10.72–4). Moreover, a comment of Servius and similarities between *Ecl.* 10 and *Prop.* 1 make it plausible that Gallus engaged in self-reflexive metrical commentary in his elegiac *Amores* (Serv. on *Ecl.* 10.46 probably means 46–9 is a quotation of Gallus; cf. Clausen ad loc., and cf. *Prop.* 1.8.7–8). Tibullus’s development of this motif is especially prolific, and especially humorous, because he makes the *servitium amoris* motif do metapoetic duty as metrical comedy. He thus makes a virtue out of the elegiac *vitium pedis*.

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