

TIBULLUS (55/48-19 BCE), LATIN POET. From a family of equestrian rank, Tibullus spent some time in military service, but mostly lived a retired life on his estate near Rome, writing poetry. Of his three books of poetry (largely elegies), only the first two are actually his; they contain love poems addressed to several mistresses (including Delia), as well as patronage verse, elegies, and rural celebrations. Book 1 contains three poems for a beloved boy, Marathus (4, 8, and 9). Always paired with Catullus and Propertius in early modern Latin editions of his works, Tibullus was viewed as an irredeemably erotic, even wanton, poet.

JOHN DART (d. 1730), CHURCH OF ENGLAND CLERGYMAN AND ANTIQUARY. Dart published three works in addition to his translation of Tibullus: a poem on Westminster Abbey, and two studies of the history of St Peter's Church (Westminster) and Canterbury Cathedral, none of which were celebrated. According to the DNB, one contemporary called his antiquarian works "pompous" and "very inaccurate."

#### THE WORKS OF TIBULLUS, CONTAINING HIS LOVE ELEGIES (1720)

##### TO PRIAPUS: ELEGY 4

"So may the trees extend their spreading boughs,  
And guard thy head from heat and chilly snows,  
As you resolve me, for what arts acquired,  
Or for what beauteous features you're admired?  
Thy snarly locks are matted to thy head,  
And o'er thy face thy shaggy beard is spread.  
Naked, you stand the cold of wint'ry days,  
And naked, feel the dog-star's parching rays."<sup>1</sup>  
Thus I; and thus (to Bacchus near allied),<sup>2</sup>  
The god that holds the crooked scythe replied:<sup>3</sup>

"Far from the tender tribe of boys remove,  
For they've a thousand ways to kindle love.  
This pleases as he strides the managed horse,<sup>4</sup>  
And holds the tightened rein with early force;  
This, as he swims, delights thy fancy best,  
Raising the smiling wave with snowy breast;  
This with a comely look and manly airs,  
And that with virgin modesty ensnares.  
But if at first you find him not inclined  
To love, have patience: time will change his mind.  
'Twas time that first instructed man to tame  
The lion, and the savage race reclaim.

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<sup>1</sup> *dog-star* i.e., Sirius; it was believed to cause extreme heat and thus deleterious physical as well as mental effects.

<sup>2</sup> *Thus I* i.e., Thus I said.

<sup>3</sup> *the god* See 'Priapus,' Glossary (print anthology). *scythe* one of his symbols as patron of orchards and gardens.

<sup>4</sup> *this* i.e., this one [this boy].

Time eats the solid stone where rain distils,  
 And ripens clusters on the sunny hills.  
 The sun, as he approaches or declines,  
 Wheels round the year, and shifts the radiant signs.<sup>5</sup>  
 Nor fear to swear, for Venus perjuries  
 Throws in the wind, or scatters o'er the seas;  
 Great thanks to Jove, ev'n he the cheat allows,  
 Nor once insists on eager lovers' vows.<sup>6</sup>  
 Diana by her arrows lets us swear,  
 And Pallas by the glories of her hair.<sup>7</sup>

“But if you wave your hopes and use delays  
 You're wrong, for happy youth decays apace.  
 Alas, how swiftly flies away the light!  
 Nor slowly moves the day, nor wheels the night!  
 How quickly fades the earth as seasons slide!  
 Losing its flow'ry grace and purple pride!  
 How quickly does the tow'ring poplar shed  
 The leafy honours of its beauteous head!  
 Unnerv'd by age, how slothful lies the horse  
 Which flew when young in the Olympic course!  
 I've seen the old desire their youthful prime,  
 And wail their foolish hours and ill-spent time.  
 Ye cruel gods! the serpent can renew  
 His speckled lustre, and his shining hue;<sup>8</sup>  
 But beauty lost, our art and pow'r is vain  
 E'er to renew the precious prize again.  
 The only pow'rs whose youth can ne'er decay,  
 Are Bacchus and the god that rules the day;<sup>9</sup>  
 Their lasting beauties time can ne'er impair,  
 Nor strip the growing honours of their hair.

“And you, whate'er your fav'rite does, approve,  
 For condescension leads the way to love.<sup>10</sup>  
 Go with him where he goes, though long the way,  
 And the fierce dog-star fires the sultry day;  
 Or the gay rainbow girds the bluish sky,  
 And threatens rattling show'rs of rain are nigh.  
 If sailing on the water be his will,  
 Then steer the wherry with a dex'trous skill;<sup>11</sup>  
 Nor think it hard fatigues and pains to bear,  
 But still be ready with a willing cheer.

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<sup>5</sup> *radiant signs* zodiac.

<sup>6</sup> *Nor ... vows* Proverbial. “Lovers' vows are not to be trusted” (Tilley L570) and “Jove laughs at lovers' perjuries” (J82).

<sup>7</sup> *Pallas* See ‘Athena,’ Glossary (print anthology).

<sup>8</sup> *The . . . hue* by shedding its skin.

<sup>9</sup> *The ... day* See ‘Apollo,’ Glossary (print anthology).

<sup>10</sup> *condescension* submissive deference.

<sup>11</sup> *wherry* light, small boat.

If he'll enclose the vales for savage spoils,  
 Then on thy shoulders bear the notts and toils;<sup>12</sup>  
 If fencing be the fav'rite sport he'll use,  
 Take up the files, and artlessly oppose;<sup>13</sup>  
 Seem as intent, yet oft expose your breast,  
 Neglect your guard, and let him get the best;  
 Then he'll be mild, then you a kiss may seize,  
 He'll struggle, but at length comply with ease;  
 Reluctant though at first, you'll find him grow  
 Ev'n fond, when around your neck his arms he'll throw.

“But ah, these times pernicious customs use!  
 And without gifts they'll ev'ry one refuse.  
 Whoe'er at first on presents fixed his eye  
 Upon his grave may weighty ruins lie!  
 Let Learning and the Muse's fav'rite care,  
 Who wealth despise, thy fondest kindness share;  
 In verse the purple lock of Nisus shines,<sup>14</sup>  
 And Pelops' iv'ry shoulder lives in lines:<sup>15</sup>  
 Whate'er the Muse recites, while oaks shall grow  
 Will last, or stars shall shine, or rivers flow.  
 But who neglects the Muse and prizes gain?  
 May he unite himself to Cybel's train;  
 And through three hundred scattered cities stray,  
 Emasculated in the Phrygian way.<sup>16</sup>  
 But Venus' self will guard the lover's cares,  
 And favour soft complaints and melting tears.”

These things Priapus said, which I again  
 To Titius sung, but sung them all in vain;<sup>17</sup>  
 His wife forbids to learn such rules as these,  
 Let him be governed by her if he please.

Me honour as your master who employ  
 Your arts to gain some lovely blooming boy.  
 Each man his praise, let lovers when despis'd,  
 Repair to me where they may be advis'd.  
 The time shall be when I shall teach the young,  
 Myself grown old, and all the list'ning throng,  
 Shall gather Venus' precepts from my tongue.

Alas, how Marathus a thousand ways<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *notts* pruned tree limbs; perhaps employed in conjunction with the *toils* or nets that helped enclose a space into which game would be driven for slaughter.

<sup>13</sup> *files* foils: light swords used in fencing. *artlessly* without skill (here, a pretence).

<sup>14</sup> *Nisus* king of Megara; guaranteed long life and prosperity, as long his special lock of red hair remained uncut. His daughter Scylla cut it off to win the love of the besieger of her father's city, Minos of Crete.

<sup>15</sup> *iv'ry* i.e., ivory.

<sup>16</sup> *May . . . way* See 'Cybele,' Glossary (print anthology).

<sup>17</sup> *Titius* Tibullus' friend.

<sup>18</sup> *Marathus* Tibullus' beloved boy.

Distracts my soul and kills me with delays;  
No rules or precepts serve to gain his love,  
Nor arts avail, nor any means can move.  
Indulge my love, lest I in time shall grow  
A common town-talk and a pointed show;  
Scorned and derided by the youthful train,  
For teaching rules myself must own are vain.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> *vain* useless.