A PROPOS OF THE NEW GALLUS FRAGMENT

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The subject of this article, Gaius Cornelius Gallus, is well known to the literary history of Rome as the first of the Latin love-elegists. Gallus was famous in antiquity for his love of the actress Cytheris (whom he called Lycoris), and for the four books of elegiac Amores she inspired. Yet despite his importance Gallus has always remained something of an enigma. The reason for this is that, until just over a year ago, only one single line of his poetry was known.

But this situation has now been dramatically altered by the publication, by Anderson, Parsons and Nisbet, of a papyrus fragment unearthed in Upper Egypt containing elegiacs by Gallus. The fragment, discovered in 1978, consists of the remains of two columns of a papyrus roll. The first column comprises parts of three separate elegiac poems, or sections of a poem, and traces of a fourth, while in the second column the beginning of a hexameter, opening another poem or section, is legible. What justifies us in talking about ‘separate poems’ or ‘sections of a poem’ are spaces appearing at regular intervals in the text, and pairs of peculiar H-shaped marks which occur in them. (I shall discuss later what I believe to be the significance of these spaces and marks.)

On literary-historical and archaeological grounds Parsons dates the actual time of writing of the papyrus to between 50 and 20 BC, not excluding the slight possibility that it may be as late as AD 25. This dating means that—apart from the intrinsic interest of its contents—the papyrus is tremendously important for the history of texts. It is, with one possible exception, by far the oldest manuscript of Latin poetry that has been discovered, and the only manuscript of a classical poet we have which in all probability dates from the lifetime of that poet himself.

The first editors of the Gallus fragment have discussed with exemplary thoroughness the many different questions prompted by its form and content. In the present article, therefore, I shall try to avoid, so far as possible, simply repeating their conclusions. Instead, I shall deal with various points on which I disagree with the first editors, or where I believe their arguments may be supplemented by fresh ones. In what follows I shall (1) examine some details of the interpretation of the text; (2) offer a further argument in support of the date Nisbet gives for the composition of the poem(s); (3) discuss the literary-historical significance of the elegiacs; (4) put forward certain suggestions concerning the form of the fragment.

The text of the Gallus fragment and translation:

tristia nequit[ia . . . ]4 Lycori tua.
2 Fata mihi, Caesar, tum erunt mea dulcia quom tu
3 maxima Romanae pars eri historiae
4 postque tuum reditum multorum templar deorum
5 fixa legam spoliei deivitora tueis.
6 . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
7 qvae possem domina deicere digna mea.
8 . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
9 . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

(a) ' . . bitter (sad), Lycoris, by your misbehaviour (wantonness/profligacy')
(b) 'My fate will be sweet to me then, Caesar, when you become the most important part of Roman history and when, after your return, I read/survey the temples of many gods hung with your spoils and made richer by them.'
(c) 'At last the . . . Muses have made poems that I could call worthy (OR utter as worthy) of my mistress . . . the same to you, I do not Viscus, I do not, Cato, fear . . . even if you are the judge.'

Commentary:
Line 1: Most significant here is the occurrence of the name 'Lycoris'. This proves conclusively that the elegiacs are by Gallus. Lycoris was the woman to whom his elegies were addressed as we know from Virgil, Servius, and the other elegists. It is of course remotely possible that some poet other than Gallus is apostrophizing Lycoris here, but I can find no example of such an apostrophe to another man's mistress in extant elegy.
Line 2: We should note the connection between the beginning of this piece and the end of the preceding one. It is apparent in the contrast between, on the one hand, 'tristia' (1) which can mean both 'sad' and 'bitter' and, on the other hand, 'dulcia' (2) which can mean both 'pleasant'/agreeable' and 'sweet'. Gallus, then, is contrasting the present misery of his lot, brought about by his beloved's misbehaviour (a common elegiac theme), with his future happiness at Caesar's triumph.
Lines 2-4: A point about these lines which Nisbet and Parsons do not comment on but which deserves mention, is their sound. We should note particularly the sonorous vowel sounds of 'fata', 'Caesar', 'maxima', 'Romanae', 'historiae' and 'multorum deorum'; and also the insistent assonance of 'u' and 'm' in 'tuum', 'erunt', 'dulcia', 'quom tu' and especially in 'tuum reditum multorum templar deorum'. The effect of all this is to lend a solemn, dignified tone to the verses, appropriate to Caesar, their august addressee.
Lines 4-5: So far my remarks have followed pretty closely the commentary of
Nisbet and Parsons. But my understanding of lines 4 and 5 is very different from theirs. To begin with, let us examine their interpretation of the verb ‘legam’. Nisbet and Parsons take ‘legam’ to mean, not ‘read’ at first hand, but ‘read of’ at second hand. They translate: ‘when I read of many gods’ temples . . . etc.’. But then, on the basis of this interpretation of the verb they must needs construct a rather elaborate and, in my view, flimsy biographical hypothesis. They are forced to argue that if Gallus is only to read of Caesar’s victory, this must mean that he cannot have participated in it, and that he will be absent from Rome during the triumphal celebrations. ‘. . . Gallus, in his disappointment at being left behind, is emphasizing his isolation from Caesar’s victories: he will not even be present at the triumph, but will read about it afterwards in the history-books.’

The verb ‘legam’, however, can be understood in a different way which renders this biographical speculation unnecessary. I would take ‘legam’ here to mean something between ‘read’ and ‘survey’. ‘Read’ is of course one of the commonest meanings of the verb ‘legere’. But it is also found, though much more rarely, in the sense ‘survey’ (as when Virgil in Aen. 6,755 writes of Anchises taking a stand ‘unde omnes longe ordine posset adversos legere et venientum discere voltus’). The compound ‘perlegere’ quite commonly has this sense of ‘survey’ in poetry. I would then take ‘templa’ as the direct object after ‘legam’ and translate ‘I shall read/survey the temples . . . etc.’ Now it might be objected that, whereas it is fair enough to talk of ‘surveying’ a temple, it is rather odd to talk of ‘reading’ one. There is, however, an exact parallel to this usage in Cicero, De Senectute 21, where the author uses the phrase ‘sepulchra legens’, ‘reading tombs’—by which he means of course ‘reading the inscriptions on tombs’. Since Roman temples normally had inscriptions in a prominent position on the architrave, Gallus could with equal propriety refer to ‘reading temples’ meaning, just like Cicero, ‘reading the inscriptions on them’. As Gallus then goes on to talk of the dedication of victory spoils in the temple, he is perhaps thinking of inscriptions referring to this fact.

Still in lines 4 and 5, I disagree again with the order in which Nisbet and Parsons take the words of this couplet. They argue for the word-order ‘legam templa multorum deorum deivitiora post tuum reditum fixa spolieis tueis’ translating ‘(when) I read of many gods’ temples the richer after your return for being hung with your trophies’. Nisbet and Parsons themselves say of this word-order: ‘(ii) is admittedly very artificial’ and ‘contorted to the point of obscurity’. But they try to justify it by saying that ‘the neoteric Gallus may have experimented with arrangements that his successors declined to follow’ and that the involuted word-order may help to explain why Quintilian characterised Gallus’ verse as ‘durior’. But this special pleading becomes unnecessary if we order the words of lines 4 and 5 in a way that seems to me just as effective and is certainly more natural. I would take these words in the order: ‘(quom)-que, post tuum reditum, legam templa multorum deorum fixa spolieis tueis deivitiora (spolieis tueis)’ and translate accordingly.
It is clear that there is some kind of contrast drawn between Gallus and Caesar in lines 3–5. Nisbet's and Parsons' main reason for understanding 'legam' as they do, and for producing the word-order which Nisbet calls 'contorted', is that they want the contrast to be one between Caesar's being written of in the history books, and Gallus' merely reading those books. On my understanding of 'legam' and my word-order there is still a contrast, only now it is one between Caesar's making history by his exploits, and Gallus' surveying the results, i.e. the temples hung with spoils and inscribed with honorific inscriptions. The phrase 'post tuum reditum', which Nisbet and Parsons take with 'deivitiora' alone, would come at the beginning of its clause and govern the whole of it—the dedication of the spoils and Gallus' viewing them would necessarily follow Caesar's return.

Finally in this section, line 5. My translation will have made it clear that I take the phrase 'spolieis tueis' ἀπὸ κονυθ with both 'fixa' and 'deivitiora'. The line thus means 'hung with your spoils and made richer by your spoils'. All Nisbet and Parsons can find to say against such an arrangement is that it is 'an unusual situation', but it seems to me less unusual than their own radical reordering of the words in this and the preceding line.

Line 7: Nisbet and Parsons say that 'deicere digna' cannot here mean 'call worthy' since this would limit the poet's role too much (the Muses actually making the poems (6) and the poet simply calling them 'worthy'). But I cannot agree that the poet's role would be so narrowly limited by this interpretation. Gallus does not intend so sharp a distinction between the Muses' activity and his own—'fecerunt carmina Musae' is another way of saying 'ipse feci ingenio meo'.

As regards the term 'digna', Nisbet and Parsons see in this only a general expression by Gallus of pride in his poetic achievement. I believe that 'digna' has a more specific reference, that Gallus is alluding here to his celebration of Caesar in 2 ff. What he is saying is that only now, having glorified Caesar in his poetry, has he composed verse that is truly worthy of his mistress.

II

We have not yet considered the question who the 'Caesar' of line 2 is, and what bearing this has on the date of composition of the fragment. I do not want to say very much about this question—important though it is—since it is discussed at length and in detail by Nisbet, with results that seem to me convincing. To summarise then: Nisbet considers the possibility that the Caesar is Octavian, and that the victory referred to in lines 2 ff. alludes to the Illyrian Wars of 35–3 or Actium in 31. But for various reasons Nisbet rejects these possibilities. He argues instead that the Caesar is Julius, and that the campaign referred to is a grandiose Eastern expedition for which Caesar had already made considerable preparations before he was assassinated in 44. This would give a date of composition for the fragment of 45 or early 44.
One good argument against a later date which would support Nisbet's case but which he does not mention, has to do with Gallus' mistress, Cytheris/Lycoris, and the nature of the poet's relationship with her. It is certain from Virgil's *Eclogues* 10, which must have been published around 39, that Lycoris had already been Gallus' mistress for at least one or two years prior to that time. So if we date the Gallus fragment to 31/30, the period of Actium, this would mean that the affair must still have been going strong a *minimum* of 10 years later. (We cannot argue that Gallus was writing about a relationship which was already dead—lines 1 f. and 7 clearly rule out such an interpretation.) But everything we know about Lycoris—not to mention the mistresses of the other Roman love-poets—makes the assumption of so long an affair extremely improbable. Lycoris seems originally to have been the mistress of Volumnius Eutrapelus, who later freed her. She was then Antony's mistress for 3 or 4 years, from about 49 or 50 to 46. In 46 she was back with Volumnius. At some time she also had an affair with Marcus Brutus. If then, as seems probable, her liaison with Gallus began in about 46 or 45 after her break with Antony, it seems very unlikely indeed that it should still have been alive fifteen years later in 31/30. And the same consideration would weigh against putting the poem as late even as 35-3, the date of the Illyrian Wars.

III

If we accept a date of composition for the Gallus fragment of about 45 or 44, certain very interesting and—from a literary-historical point of view—extremely important conclusions follow. To show just how significant these conclusions are, a little scene-setting will be necessary. In matters of politics the poets of the neoteric circle, mainly sons of local aristocracy, retained the old Republican spirit of fierce independence. In their poetry they tended to regard politicians either as not worth bothering about or else as the subject for invective. The classic expression of the former attitude, indifference, is to be found in Catullus' epigram 93 addressed to Caesar:

Nil nimium studeo Caesar tibi velle placere,
nec scire utrum sis albus an ater homo.

Elsewhere, Caesar, together with his lieutenants, is rather more roughly handled in fierce invectives. And it was not only Catullus among the neoteries who adopted this attitude to politicians. Despite the almost total loss of the poetry of the other neoteries, we know that Bibaculus attacked Caesar, as did Calvus who also wrote a derisive epigram about Pompey.

In the time of the neoteric movement, then, poetry was anything but *engagé*. Yet only a couple of decades later, in the poets of the Augustan period, we find an enormous change. There are now strong ties between influential political figures such as Maecenas and Messalla and poets like Virgil, Horace, Tibullus and Propertius. (And in the case of Maecenas at least, behind the patron looms the still more powerful figure of the *princeps.*) The poets now not only address
such persons with respect, but they regard public men and their achievements as legitimate subjects for poetry. Clearly, then, as Gordon Williams has noted, we have here a 'gap between the political commitment of Augustan poets and the political nihilism of Catullus' (and, we may add, of the other neoterics). Due to the almost total disappearance of late Republican poetry it has proved impossible to trace the transitional stages by which this gap was filled in. Williams, however, suggested that it was Julius Caesar who first began to realise the value of literary men as political propagandists, and to organise them in his service. So it would be in the lost writings of the poets of the 40's BC that we should expect to find some foreshadowing of the attitudes of Augustan poets to public and political figures.

If the new Gallus fragment is correctly dated to 45 or 44, then this hypothesis of Williams' is spectacularly confirmed. The addressee of the central section of the fragment is precisely the man whom Williams took to be the key figure—Julius Caesar. And he is addressed, not abusively in Catullan and neoteric style, but in terms of great respect: Gallus anticipates that Caesar will find a place in the annals of Rome, he foresees the triumphal ceremonies, he suggests that only now that he has celebrated Caesar, has he composed verse truly worthy of his mistress. Gallus here uses exactly the tones that the Augustan poets were to use in addressing their powerful friends and patrons.

But this is not the only way in which Gallus anticipates the poets of the next generation. The Augustans, although they found themselves under pressure to write on public and patriotic themes and although they appreciated the obligations of patronage, nevertheless strove to retain their independence and integrity as poets. Hence they developed certain techniques, certain methods whereby they could touch on themes of political and national significance without violating the requirements of their chosen genre or indeed of their own taste. For example, they evolved the 'recusatio' in which the poet declines to write about the exploits of some public figure, but nevertheless succeeds in giving those exploits prominence by the rhetorical device of 'praeteritio'. Then again, and more important for the point I wish to make, there is the technique whereby the Augustan poet links the glorious public career of some statesman to his own humble private experience. Virgil, for example, at the end of the Georgics, writes of Caesar's thundering by the Euphrates while he (the poet) 'flourished in the pursuits of ignoble leisure'. Horace in Odes 3,14 skilfully shows how the public rejoicing at Augustus' return from Spain will find its echo in his own private celebration. Propertius in Elegies 3,4 says he will look on and applaud the Parthian triumph of the divine Augustus—from his mistress' lap.

Examples of this linking of public and private themes by the Augustan poets could be multiplied, but those given will suffice. Once again it should be clear from the new fragment that Gallus was a pathfinder for the poets of the following generation. Just as the Augustans would do in their poetry, so Gallus interweaves themes from his own private and personal experience with themes drawn from the public life of Caesar. Let us look a little more closely at how this
is done. To begin with, whatever may have preceded the first line of the fragment, it is clear that in line 1 Gallus is saying he has been made miserable by Lycoris' misbehaviour. This assertion prepares the way for the references to Caesar that follow. Gallus now declares (line 2), by way of contrast, that his private life will be happy only when Caesar achieves public success, the contrast being strengthened by the opposition of 'tristia' to 'dulcia'. A further, subsidiary contrast is created in the lines that follow. Gallus says that Caesar's role will be to perform historic deeds, his own merely to gaze at the results. And the contrast here is emphasized by an antithesis of first and second person running through lines 1-4. We find 'mihi', 'mea', 'tu', 'eris', 'tuum', 'legam', 'tueis'—poet and statesman are repeatedly juxtaposed.

On the evidence of the fragment, then, Gallus emerges as a most important transitional figure between the political insouciance of the neoterics, to whom he was nevertheless very close, and the political committedness of the Augustans. In addition, it would seem that Gallus had already faced and solved the same problem that would confront the Augustans, the problem of how to integrate historical and political material into genres which were not specifically designed for it.

IV

To conclude this article I would like to offer some speculations arising from the form of the Gallus fragment. As has already been noted, the main part of the fragment falls into three separate sections of poetry, line 1, then 2-5, then 6-9. These sections are separated by spacing in the text, and by pairs of peculiar H-shaped marks. So the question arises: what precisely is it that is being separated here? Is the division one between separate poems or separate sections of a single poem?

In considering this question Parsons begins with a discussion of the spacing. He notes the various ways in which major divisions of sense are marked in early papyri and manuscripts, and finds that where paragraphs are indicated in a text by some form of punctuation no extra space is left between the last line of the old paragraph and the first line of the new one. As for the H-shaped punctuation marks in the Gallus fragment, Parsons argues that due to the lack of material for comparison, their precise function and significance must remain obscure. He concludes, however, that 'the very wide spacing in P Qasr Ibrim [the Gallus fragment] indicates a major division: that is, between poems'.

Now this conclusion seems to me rather more definite than the evidence cited by Parsons would warrant. Parsons bases his argument chiefly on what he regards as the wide spaces between lines 1 and 2, 5 and 6, 9 and 10. But if we consider these spaces in relation to the wide margin left by the scribe at the top of the papyrus and the wide spacing of the individual lines of text, then the gaps between the sections of poetry do not seem particularly large. The book from which this fragment came was evidently a good edition in which space was not an
important consideration; the scribe did not feel obliged to fit as much text as possible onto the papyrus. In view of this, and of the fact that the function of the H-shaped marks is obscure, Parsons' conclusion that we have here separate poems must be subject to doubt. This is not to say his conclusion is wrong; but, given the paucity of comparative material, I think we must at least leave open the possibility that the spaces and H-shaped signs mark off, not separate poems, but separate paragraphs of a single poem.

There are other considerations of a purely literary nature which strengthen this possibility. Parsons himself allows that the separate pieces of poetry might seem 'less jejune in context than in isolation'. And as we have already seen, there are certainly links between the contents of the various sections. There is the contrasting link between 'tristia' (1) and 'dulcia' (2). There is the possibility that 'carmina digna domina mea' in lines 6 and 7 may allude to the celebration of Caesar in 2 ff. Furthermore, the contrast the poet draws between himself and his addressee, which we noted in lines 2–5, is in fact to be found in the other sections of the fragment—note 'tua' (1), 'possem', 'mea' (7), 'tibi', 'ego' (8), 'te' (9). Gallus creates a whole web of balances and contrasts between himself and Lycoris, himself and Caesar, himself and the critics, which it is difficult not to view as forming a unity. So, even if these pieces of verse were intended as separate poems, they were meant to be read, not each in isolation, but as complementary to one another. In my view the connections between them would most naturally imply that they were paragraphs of a single poem.

Presumably this whole question would resolve itself if we had more of the papyrus. Then, perhaps, we would be able to see clearly the difference between the division of paragraphs on the one hand, and poems on the other. However, it may just be that no very clear textual distinction was made between poems and paragraphs, and that the various pieces formed a kind of loose cycle, like the elegies in the collection of Theognidea.

Finally, a piece of pure speculation. It is fascinating that the problem which has immediately arisen with the Gallus fragment—one poem or more than one?—is precisely the same as has plagued editors of Propertius for centuries. Propertius' manuscripts are notoriously capricious in their treatment of poem divisions. What one branch of the manuscript tradition presents as a single elegy, another will divide into two or three poems, and vice versa. No two modern editors ever agree exactly on where poem divisions should be made—as we may easily see from the treatment of Book II in a pair of recent editions of the Elegies. Richardson argues for 34 elegies in this book, while Hanslik in his 1979 Teubner edition prints 43.

It is possible that the new Gallus fragment throws some light on this problem. Here we have a manuscript of elegy which was, almost certainly, written in Propertius' own lifetime. So the fragment must give us at least some idea of what the first manuscripts of Propertius looked like. If in those manuscripts there was no very clear distinction between poem divisions and paragraph divisions—as I have conjectured for the roll which contained the Gallus fragment—then it is
quite understandable that difficulties should have arisen as to where one elegy ended and the next began. Unlike authors such as Terence, Horace and Virgil, Propertius was not studied in the schools of antiquity—indeed he hardly seems to have been read at all after the 5th century AD. So no tradition of scholarly annotation of his poems arose to safeguard his text. I would guess that at some early date an unscholarly scribe confounded the distinction, which may in any case have been unclear, between paragraphs and poems, and that from that time onwards the dictum ‘quot editores, tot Propertii’ began to hold good. The scribes who came after had simply to use their native intelligence, or succumb to their lack of it, in dividing one elegy from another.

NOTES

1. This article is adapted from a paper delivered at the Conference of the Classical Association of South Africa in Durban in January 1981.


3. EGQI, 127 f.

4. I present here only lines 1-9 of col. i, since I am concerned only with this part of the text. I have taken the liberty of transferring the H-shaped marks, which appear in Parsons’ transcript, to his and Nisbet’s text.

5. For a different reconstruction of lines 8-9, entailing the translation ‘... with you, Viscus, as judge I do not fear the double penalty which Cato recommends’, see A.S. Hollis, CQ 30 (1980) 541-2.

6. Virgil, Ecl. 10,1 f. and Servius ad loc.; Propertius 2,34,91; Ovid, Am. 1,15,29 f.; Tr. 2,445.

7. EGQI, 140 and 142.

8. Ibid., 142.


10. Nisbet and Parsons, EGQI, 142, cite this parallel only to dismiss it: ‘there is no analogy since reading tombstones is a more regular activity than reading temples.’ But the word ‘sepalchrum’ means ‘tomb’ not ‘tombstone’—for which the regular Latin word is ‘lapis’ (in Prop. 3,1,37, ‘ne mea contempto lapis indicet ossa sepulchro’, the two terms ‘lapis’ and ‘sepulchrum’ are clearly distinct). The analogy of Cic. Sex. 31 is thus much closer than Nisbet’s and Parsons’ translation would suggest.

11. For the custom of placing honorific inscriptions on the architraves of temples—a Hellenistic Greek, and Roman, rather than classical Greek, practice—see Daremberg and Saglio, vol. III, 1, pp. 539 f.

12. EGQI, 140 and 143.

13. Nisbet and Parsons, ibid., 143.

14. Nisbet, ibid., 149.

15. Nisbet and Parsons, ibid., 143.

16. Nisbet, ibid., 149.

17. I agree with Putnam (art. cit., n. 2) 51 f. and 55 that ‘historiae’ (3) cannot be narrowly confined to the sense of ‘historiography’, as Nisbet and Parsons (141) would have it, but means rather the great deeds themselves enacted by Caesar.

18. Not with ‘fixa’ as asserted by Putnam, ibid., 51 (see EGQI, 143).

19. EGQI, 143.

20. Ibid., 144.

21. Ibid., 151-5.

22. Cic. Fam. 9,26,2; Art. 10,10,5 and 16,5. (See also RE, s.v. ‘Kytheris’.)

23. Auct. Vit. Ill. 82,2. Nisbet (EGQI, 153, n. 145) suggests this may be a confusion with Decimus Brutus.
25. E.g. Cat. 29 and 57.
29. Gallus was almost certainly one of the 'cantores Euphorionis' to whom Cicero refers (*Tusc.*, 3.45). Line 9 of the new fragment seems to provide evidence of a connection with Valerius Cato, an important figure for the neoterics (see Nisbet and Parsons, *EGQ*, 146 ff.).
30. For these marks, approximately reproduced in my text at p. 88 above, see *EGQ*, plates 4 and 5, and the 'Transcript', p. 138.
31. *EGQ*, 129.
32. *ibid.*, 129.
33. On this see Nisbet, *ibid.*, 149.
34. This is Nisbet's view. He takes it that the fragment consists of a series of epigrams '... composed as a sequence dealing in turn with the ruling passions and dominating personalities of the poet's life' (*EGQ*, 149). But he seems to wish the 'epigrams' could be taken as parts of a single poem: 'The fragments would seem more effective if they could be regarded as sections of one complex poem (the connections in elegy are often loose, and Propertius sometimes divides into quatrains), but the layout of the book tells against such a hypothesis ...' (*ibid.*, n. 122).
35. For a succinct account of these problems see M. Hubbard, *Propertius*, London 1974, 44 ff.
38. The following articles came to my notice when this paper was already in proof:
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