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GALLUS — SOLDIER OR SHEPHERD?

Toivo Viljamaa

Verg. ecl. 10,44—49 is one of the numerous passages in Latin poetry which have not yet got a commonly accepted interpretation. The text, which is part of the poet Gallus' monologue in the eclogue, runs as follows:

*Nunc insanus Amor duri me Martis in armis
tela inter media atque adversos detinet hostis.
tu procul a patria — nec sit mihi credere tantum —
Alpinas, a, dura nives et frigora Rheni
me sine sola vides. a, te ne frigora laedant!
a, tibi ne teneras glacies secet aspera plantas!*

The main problem is contained by the lines 44—45: is Gallus on military service and accordingly madly enthusiastic for campaigning (*insanus Amor Martis me detinet*) or is the reason of his madness the love for Lycoris which keeps him in the milieu of military affairs (*insanus Amor me Martis in armis detinet*)? Which *Amor* is meant by Vergil? If the *Amor Martis* is meant, how is it possible that Gallus is represented in the poem as being at one and the same time a soldier and a shepherd, serving in the camp in Italy (cf. E. de Saint-Denis, Virgile, Les Bucoliques, Paris 1970¹⁰, 138) or with Antony in the East (cf. R. Coleman, Vergil, Eclogues, Cambridge 1977, 286) and also lying under a rock in Arcady (v. 14 *illum etiam sola sub rupe iacentem*)? If, on the other hand, Gallus' love for Lycoris is meant, how to explain his words "the insane Love detains me in Mars' camp", despite of the fact that Lycoris has followed some officer to the military camp on the northern frontier (vv. 22—23 *tua cura Lycoris perque nives alium perque horrida castra secuta est*)? In other words, in the phrase *insanus Amor me ... detinet*, who other would be referred to by the word *me* than Gallus himself? It follows then that in a way or another Gallus is in Mars' camp.

In the case of a love-poet like Gallus the latter interpretation sounds most natural. Pain and madness caused by Love are constant themes in elegists, and also in this eclogue the relentless power of Love is emphasized (cf. v. 10 *indigno cum Gallus amore peribat*; vv. 21—22 *under amor iste ... tibi? ... Galle, quid insanis?*). In the first place, Gallus is described as being in the lover's condition. Nevertheless, the former explanation (*Amor Martis*) has found more support among scholars (e.g. Forbiger, Conington-Nettleship, Williams, Klingner; cf. E. de Saint-Denis, who translates: "Au lieu qu'un amour insensé me retient sous les armes de l'impitoyable Mars au milieu des projectiles et face à l'ennemi"). Especially E. Coleiro, *An Introduction to Vergil's Bucolics*, Amsterdam 1979, 269—278, is anxious for championing this opinion. Though Coleiro speaks of "psychological drama" which Vergil constructs, he at the same time tries to find too much in the poem treating it as a document of historical events. To speculate about Gallus' possible military service, whether he was with Antony or with somebody other, is to underestimate the value of poetical imagination. Gallus is represented as being in Arcady like a shepherd, and this fact must be, of course, in keeping with his words in 44—49, but the agreement can be found better in imagination than in reality.

In my opinion, therefore, the best interpretation is given by the ancient commentator Servius: *ex affectu amantis ibi se esse putat ubi amica est, ut 'me' sit 'meum animum'* (cf. J. Perret, *Virgile, Les bucoliques*, Paris 1970, 111, who correctly explains: "l'amour insensé que je te porte me retient en pensée au milieu des armes de Mars"). Coleman (p. 287) gives the preference to this interpretation, though with hesitation. He finds a little strange that an officer's mistress is described as being *Martis in armis* and *tela inter media*. But, I think, he takes the words too literally, and on the other hand, his objection implies the opinion that Gallus must somehow be identified with Lycoris, who has run away with an officer. In my mind, Servius' comment is not referring to a possible *alter idem* of Gallus in the sense of *animae dimidium meae* of Hor. *carm.* 1,3,8, but its meaning must be that Gallus thinks himself to be in the company of Lycoris (*ibi se esse putat ubi amica est*). Gallus' mind is with the woman whom he loves. Now there is nothing strange in *Martis in armis* and *tela inter media* because they are things experienced by a man, by Gallus in his imagination. Although Gallus wants to free himself from the power of Love, he cannot

help that his thoughts follow Lycoris. And because Lycoris has left him to run away with a soldier, those affectionate thoughts recall also the military life, i.e. Lycoris' present whereabouts. In this sense Gallus is in the camp; he feels himself (his thoughts) to be tightly in the horrid milieu of war. The following lines 46—49 then describe Gallus as imagining himself in Lycoris' company: *nec sit mihi credere tantum* "o that it were not for me to think so much". The emphatic use of pronouns and exclamations also add to the impression of sympathy.

To answer the question posed in the title: Gallus is neither a soldier nor a shepherd, but he is a poet, in the first place. As a poet he uses his imagination and calls on his readers to do the same. And as a Hellenistic poet he uses mannered language with the interplay of grammatical and thematic structure.¹ Thus in the line 44 the grammatical structure cannot solve the meaning of *Amor* (Is *Martis* the genitive attribute of *Amor* or *armis*?); the solution must be based on the thematic structure of the whole poem. For mannered word order compare also the thematic position of *dura* in the phrase *Alpinas, a, dura nives* and of *sola* in *me sine sola vides*. Mannered word order seems to be typical of Gallus' poetry, as far as one can conclude from the scanty material survived to us.² In addition, the following elements in our passage are in accordance with Gallus' style (cf. Van Sickle, op.cit.): antithetical settings, personal tone reinforced by the use of personal pronouns, and the themes of Love, War, and Poetry. Here we must, of course, remember that we are in fact dealing with Vergil's poem in which Gallus is only represented as having his love song. But on the other hand, as noted already by Servius, Vergil apparently has transformed Gallus' elegiacs into his bucolic verses.

For the love-poet Gallus the *horrida castra* (v. 23) has many meanings: (1) the camp is rugged in itself, (2) an elegist preferring pastoral leisure abhors war, (3) the camp is terrible because it has taken away the woman whom Gallus loves, (4) it is horrid because Gallus wishes Lycoris to abhor it, and (5) it is horrid because Gallus feels sympathy for Lycoris. In the same way as Propertius, whom Cynthia has left (Prop. 8), Gallus

¹ See J. Van Sickle, *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica* 9 (1981) 115—123.

² For the new Gallus fragment survived in a papyrus, R. D. Anderson, P. J. Parsons, R. G. M. Nisbet, *Journ.Rom.Stud.* 69 (1979) 125—155. Compare also Van Sickle, op.cit., and F. Graf, *Gymnasium* 89 (1982) 21—36.

is angry with Lycoris and accuses her of cruelty in deserting him (*tu ... Alpinas, a, dura nives et frigora Rheni me sine sola vides*), but at the same time he loves her, feels sympathy for her and is concerned about her welfare (*a, te ne frigora laedant! tibi ne teneras glacies secet asperas!*)