

DID GALLUS WRITE 'PASTORAL' ELEGIES?

It has long been noticed that Virgil's *Eclogue* 10, in which Gallus plays so prominent a rôle, contains a combination of pastoral and elegiac elements.¹ But this prompts the question: who was responsible for this combination? Was the fusion of pastoral and erotic-elegiac detail Virgil's own, or did Gallus himself write love-elegies with a strong pastoral colouring, a type of poetry which Virgil then echoed in *Eclogue* 10?

The latter view was powerfully argued by Franz Skutsch at the beginning of this century. In his influential book, *Aus Vergils Frühzeit*, Skutsch wrote apropos of the decision Gallus makes at *Ecl.* 10.50f. to modulate his Euphorionic poetry into pastoral: 'It is absolutely clear that Virgil could not have put such a resolve into [Gallus'] mouth unless the latter had already himself expressed it, or actually carried it out.'² The German scholar believed that Gallus *had* in fact already carried out such a resolve, and that 'Virgil's tenth Eclogue... clearly has as its aim to give an overview of the elegiac-bucolic poetry of his honoured friend, Gallus.'³

This theory of Skutsch's was immediately rebutted, in the following year, by F. Leo.⁴ In a fine analysis of *Eclogue* 10 Leo came to the conclusion that it was Virgil who put Gallus into a bucolic setting, and that the poetry of Gallus to which *Ecl.* 10 alluded 'was not bucolic but elegiac... otherwise Vergil's fiction would lose its meaning.'⁵

Many scholars have since accepted the cogency of Leo's arguments on this point. And yet one still finds, regularly repeated, the idea that, on the evidence of *Ecl.* 10, Gallus may be supposed to have written 'pastoral' elegies. David Ross, for example, takes this view.⁶ And recently Janet Fairweather has argued in this journal⁷ that the new 'Gallus fragment' formed part of a bucolic-elegiac poem, citing with approval⁸ Skutsch's opinion that *Ecl.* 10 provides evidence of Gallus' having written such poetry. Given, then, that this view continues to gain acceptance,⁹ it seems worthwhile to examine the question once more.

One point can be cleared up straight away. Both Skutsch and Ross assumed as axiomatic that Virgil could not have had Gallus express himself as he does at *Ecl.*

¹ By 'pastoral elements' I mean such things as the invocation of Sicilian Arethusa (1), the decor of goats (7, 30, 77), sheep (16, 18, 68), Pan (26), herdsmen (19, 36, 51); I do not mean merely rustic details such as the country setting or the theme of hunting (see below). Elegiac are themes such as the lover's death, the suffering caused to lovers by war, the mistress' following a rival, and the several abrupt shifts in mood in Gallus' speech (at lines 44, 50, 60); see F. Skutsch, *Aus Vergils Frühzeit* (Leipzig, 1901), ch. 1; E. Bréguet, *REL* 26 (1948), 207; R. Coleman, *AJP* 83 (1962), 62; F. Klingner, *Virgil* (Zürich, 1967), pp. 168 and 172.

² Skutsch, op. cit. p. 17.

³ *ibid.* p. 18.

⁴ 'Vergil und die Ciris', *Hermes* 37 (1902), 14–55 (= *Ausgewählte kleine Schriften* [Rome, 1980], pp. 29–70).

⁵ *ibid.* p. 19.

⁶ *Backgrounds to Augustan Poetry* (Cambridge, 1975), p. 82; pp. 85ff.; the strengths and weaknesses of Ross's arguments are excellently assessed by J. Zetzel, *CPh* 72 (1977), 249–60.

⁷ *CQ* 34 (1984), 167–74.

⁸ *ibid.* 171ff.

⁹ Besides the works of Ross and Fairweather cited above, see also Bréguet (art. cit. n. 1), 212; H. Bardon, *Latomus* 8 (1949), 225ff.; Coleman (art. cit. n. 1), 62: 'the use of pastoral settings for personal love elegy... may have begun with Gallus. The only pastorals he could write were pastoral love elegies' (in his commentary on *Ecl.* 10, however, Coleman expresses a different view); more cautiously, D. F. Kennedy, *CQ* 32 (1982), 374.

10.50f. ('I will go and play upon the Sicilian shepherd's pipe those songs I have composed in Chalcidian verse' – i.e. he will transpose his Euphorionic poetry into pastoral)¹⁰ unless Gallus had already written Theocritean-style verse.¹¹ But there is no need to assume this. One can just as well take *Ecl.* 10.50f., as a momentary expression of enthusiasm by Gallus for the pastoral rôle that Virgil has given him. The fact that Gallus immediately afterwards *rejects* the pastoral world and pastoral song (60ff.) would seem to confirm this interpretation.¹²

Since I have now anticipated my conclusions in this paper, I should state at the outset that in my view *Ecl.* 10 does not provide good evidence for Gallus' having written pastoral elegies – if by the latter we mean elegies in which he imagined himself as a shepherd amid the flocks or dealt extensively with the lives and loves of herdsmen. We must distinguish between 'pastoral' and 'rustic'. A comparison between certain lines in *Ecl.* 10 and certain passages of Propertius suggests that Gallus in his elegies may well have used rustic themes and settings; he may have represented himself as a hunter, or as a new Acontius, withdrawing to the country, telling his loves to the trees and carving his beloved's name on their bark.¹³ But themes of hunting and rural settings do not add up to pastoral.¹⁴ In what follows I shall argue that the poetic form of *Ecl.* 10 clearly indicates that it was not the elegist but Virgil himself who, for the purpose of his poem, blended elegiac and pastoral in creating his fiction of Gallus the lover-shepherd.

I have alluded to Virgil's purpose in writing *Eclogue* 10, but precisely what this purpose was is a much-debated question.¹⁵ Briefly, in my view what Virgil does in *Ecl.* 10 is to pay the elegist Gallus a gracious compliment by incorporating him for a spell into his (Virgil's) poetic world of pastoral – yet without thereby implying any negative reflection on elegy. The theme of passionate love, and the use (occasionally in elegy) of rustic settings, provided points at which pastoral and elegy overlapped; and the idea of the elegiac lover 'dying' of love for his mistress – a commonplace of later elegy – was no doubt already present in the *Amores* of Gallus. Virgil cleverly exploits these facts in order to cast Gallus in a bucolic rôle, as the hero Daphnis, dying of

¹⁰ *Chalcidico versu* here almost certainly refers to the poetry of Euphorion (see Coleman *ad loc.*), but whether to his hexameter poems or to elegies possibly written by him is a matter of considerable controversy; for detailed comment on 50f., citing much relevant literature, see Ross, *op. cit.* pp. 40ff.

¹¹ Skutsch, p. 17; Ross, p. 86; similarly Kennedy (*art. cit.* n. 9), 374.

¹² The comment of Zetzel (*art. cit.* n. 6), 258, seems to me exactly right: 'Given the context of these lines [*Ecl.* 10.50f.], it is nonsense to conclude that Gallus was concerned with pastoral ... Virgil's Gallus is here first acknowledging the supremacy of Virgilian pastoral, and later denying its relevance for himself.'

¹³ Hunter: *cp. Ecl.* 10.55–60 with Prop. 2.19.17–24; see G. B. Conte, in *Lecturae Vergilianae*, ed. M. Gigante (Naples, 1981), pp. 361–3; Acontius: *cp. Ecl.* 10.52–4 with Prop. 1.18, against the background of Callimachus, *Aetia*, fr. 67–75 Pf., esp. fr. 72 and 73 (*cp. Aristaenetus, Ep.* 1.10); see F. Cairns, *CR* 19 (1969), 131–4; R. Rosen and J. Farrell, *TAPhA* 116 (1986), 241–54. The theme of a love-lament in a rural setting appears in Hellenistic elegy also in Phanocles, fr. 1.3–4 (Powell), where it is said of Orpheus, *πολλάκι δὲ σκιεροῖσιν ἐν ἄλυσιν ἔζεν' αἰείδων | ὄν ποθόν* ...

¹⁴ Neither of the Propertian elegies, 1.18 and 2.19, used to reconstruct Gallan themes, could be described as pastoral; for the non-pastoral character of the theme of hunting, see Coleman on *Ecl.* 10.57.

¹⁵ The many different answers are conveniently reviewed by E. Coleiro, *An Introduction to Virgil's Bucolics* (Amsterdam, 1979), pp. 269ff. Add E. Pasoli, *RCCM* 19 (1977), 587: *Ecl.* 10 is a polemic against poetry, esp. love-elegy; G. d'Anna, *Athenaeum* 59 (1981), 298: the tenth eclogue is simply an expression of Virgil's affection for Gallus.

unrequited passion.¹⁶ Gallus sustains this rôle for a while (31–59) but in the end firmly rejects pastoral life and pastoral song as remedies for love (60–9). By allowing his Gallus-figure to do this and to conclude with the words ‘omnia vincit Amor: et nos cedamus Amori’ (69) Virgil makes a graceful bow in the direction of Gallus’ own chosen genre of poetry, namely love-elegy; he ultimately acknowledges the omnipotence of the elegist’s sovereign deity.

Assuming for argument’s sake that this interpretation of *Ecl.* 10 is correct, how can we, even so, be sure that the blending of elegiac and pastoral that we find here was due to Virgil and was not simply borrowed by him from Gallus’ elegies? One could say *a priori* that, on the former assumption, Virgil’s poem gains greatly in point and wit. But one need not rely only on *a priori* arguments. There are clear indications in the text of *Ecl.* 10 itself that this blending is new, not second-hand.

First, there is a formal consideration. In three out of his ten bucolic poems – in *Ecl.* 4, 6 and 10 – Virgil breaks the ‘pastoral illusion’ by coming forward at the start in his own person and offering some sort of explanation of what is to follow. And part of his reason for so doing, at least in the case of *Ecl.* 4 and 6, is the extreme novelty of these poems, both of which go well beyond the limits of ordinary pastoral. *Ecl.* 10 is, I believe, an analogous case. Certainly in the introductory section (1–8) of this poem Virgil seems to take great pains to prepare the reader for what is to follow, namely a blend of pastoral and elegy, as if it were something new. Thus in the opening lines Virgil writes of ‘songs’ for Gallus (2f.) – and we know these are to be pastoral because he invokes Sicilian Arethusa (1) – *but* songs with an elegiac colouring, ‘such as Lycoris might read’ (2), Lycoris being Gallus’ mistress and the addressee of his elegies. So too in 6f.: ‘We must sing of the troubled loves of Gallus’ (an elegiac theme) but this ‘while the snub-nosed she-goats crop the tender bushes’ (i.e. against a pastoral background). And yet again, in line 8, it is made clear that we shall hear an erotic-elegiac theme with pastoral resonance: ‘Our song does not fall on deaf ears, the woods will echo all (*sc.* that we sing).’ In this introductory section of *Ecl.* 10 Virgil emphasizes the nature of his composition with a consciousness of novelty that he would not, I believe, have felt, with an insistence that should not have been necessary, had the combining of elegiac and pastoral been already familiar from Gallus’ works.

So also in the section of the poem that follows, lines 9–30, in which Virgil tells how Gallus wasted away in Arcadia and was visited by various herdsmen and gods. Before we go into detail here, something must be said about the tone of *Ecl.* 10. Part of the reason why some critics go wrong in their interpretation of *Ecl.* 10 is that they mistakenly assume the mood of the poem to be one of unrelieved seriousness. Thus one scholar finds *Ecl.* 10 ‘gloomy’ and ‘painful’,¹⁷ while Coleman in his commentary writes of the ‘pessimistic tone of the Eclogue’ and detects in it a ‘despondent note’.¹⁸ Now I do not deny that there is seriousness in *Ecl.* 10 – one cannot, e.g., doubt the sincerity of Virgil’s expression of his love for Gallus in 72ff., nor could Virgil ever have been unmoved by the sort of suffering he describes in the poem. But in great writers seriousness and deep feeling need not be incompatible with wit and irony. To return to our theme: it has always seemed to me that, for all its serious aspects, *Ecl.* 10 is pervaded by an affectionate, gently ironic, humour; and that this humour reveals itself particularly in the lavishness with which Virgil applies his pastoral colours – as if he were trying to ensure that Gallus’ bucolic setting should be

¹⁶ See Klingner, *Virgil*, pp. 168f.

¹⁷ J. B. Solodow, *Latomus* 36 (1977), 767.

¹⁸ R. Coleman, *Vergil: Eclogues* (1977), pp. 294 and 297.

thoroughly and unmistakably bucolic. Nowhere is this more apparent than in lines 9–30.

As Gallus languishes even the laurels and even the tamarisks – those poetic and those simple pastoral trees¹⁹ – mourn for him, as do the Arcadian mountains; Gallus is placed by Virgil in Arcadia since that region seems to have come to represent for him the very essence of the pastoral world.²⁰ Then follow lines the tongue-in-cheek quality of which seems unmistakable:

stant et oves circum; nostri nec paenitet illas,
nec te paeniteat pecoris, divine poeta:
et formosus ovis ad flumina pavit Adonis. (16–18)

Virgil here sees fit to reassure Gallus that the pastoral setting in which he has placed him – and to which he now once more draws attention – is not beneath the dignity of Gallus the elegist. The humour of this passage then becomes almost broad as Virgil describes the first persons who visit the stricken Gallus (19–20): 'And the herdsman came, and the slow-moving swineherds came, and Menalcas came, dripping from the winter acorns.' Coleman detects 'grimness' here,²¹ but the tone is surely, rather, one of amused irony. The point is that these are distinctly *not* the sort of persons with whom the urbane Gallus would normally associate – even in Arcadia; indeed, the 'low' prosaic terms Virgil uses here, *upilio* for 'herdsman' and *subulci*, 'swineherds', selected for their incongruous effect,²² are unique to this passage in the *Eclogues*, as is the allusion to the steeping in water of the winter fodder. (There is also a nice piece of self-irony in the reference to a thoroughly countrified Menalcas, 20; the name had served as a mask for Virgil himself in *Ecl.* 5 and in *Ecl.* 9 and probably has the same function here.) Finally there is, too, something faintly comic about the very bucolic character Virgil lends to Gallus' divine visitants, Silvanus – 'Silvanus came, his head wreathed with the glory of the countryside, brandishing flowering fennelstalks and great lilies' (24f.) – and particularly Pan, whom Virgil describes in terms more appropriate to a rural statue of the god than to the god himself: 'Pan the god of Arcadia came – we saw him with our own eyes – reddened with vermilion and blood-red elderberries' (26f.).²³

Now, surely, if Gallus had already in his own love-elegies made extensive use of pastoral detail, or depicted himself amid the flocks, all Virgil's insistence here on pastoral *color* would be peculiarly frigid and flat. By contrast, this insistence gains enormously in wit and effectiveness if the shepherds' world is new to Gallus, and if the pastoral colours are Virgil's own. One cannot but agree, I believe, with the judgement of Leo, quoted earlier, that the poetry of Gallus to which *Ecl.* 10 alludes 'was not bucolic but elegiac... otherwise Virgil's fiction would lose its meaning'.

There is in fact a short passage we have already glanced at, early on in *Eclogue* 10, which seems to confirm this judgement conclusively. The significance of this passage

¹⁹ See Coleman on *Ecl.* 4.2; 8.13; 10.13–14.

²⁰ Thus Bruno Snell, 'Arcadia: the Discovery of a Spiritual Landscape', in *The Discovery of the Mind* (= *Die Entdeckung des Geistes*, Engl. transl., 1953), pp. 281–309; some reservations as to Snell's view are expressed by E. W. Leach, *JHI* 39 (1978), 539–60.

²¹ Coleman, p. 281: 'the description of Menalcas suggests an inclement season and so intensifies the grimness of the landscape details in 14–15'.

²² Klingner rightly comments: 'die Worte *upilio* und *subulcus* (19), offenbar unfein und "unpoetisch" und von leicht komischen Klang, sind im Scherz geflissentlich gewählt' (p. 167).

²³ D. A. Kidd, 'Imitation in the Tenth Eclogue', *BICS* 11 (1964), 54–64, assesses well the tone of these lines; he refers us to the light-hearted painting of Silenus' face with mulberries by the rustics in *Ecl.* 6.22 (p. 58).

and its bearing on the question of Gallus' poetry have indeed been noticed before,²⁴ but the recent proponents of (alleged) Gallan pastoral elegy leave it entirely out of account. I refer to lines 16–18, where Virgil, addressing Gallus, says: 'And the sheep stand round about; they aren't troubled by us, don't you be troubled by the flock, divine poet; even the beautiful Adonis pastured sheep by the river.' How could Virgil say this if Gallus had already appeared in a pastoral context in his own love-elegies or written at any length of sheep and shepherds – why should he in that case 'be troubled by the flock', and why should Virgil feel it necessary to encourage him by the example of a bucolic Adonis? The point here can only be that Gallus is not at home in the world of pastoral.

A closer reading, then, of *Eclogue* 10, with attention to the form and to the subtle, gently ironic, wit of the poem, forces one to the conclusion that its blending of elegiac and pastoral is due to Virgil rather than Gallus. *Ecl.* 10 makes most poetic sense on the assumption that the elegies of Gallus – although they may occasionally have employed rural settings, as indeed do the poems of all three Augustan elegists – were not pastoral in character. In short, the answer to the question posed by my title would be that Gallus did not write pastoral elegies.²⁵

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²⁴ See Leo (op. cit. n. 4), p. 30; G. Stégen, *Latomus* 12 (1953), 75 n. 3; C. Hardie, *PVS* 6 (1966–7), 9.

²⁵ A version of this paper was read to the biennial conference of the Classical Association of South Africa, held at Stellenbosch in January, 1987. I am most grateful to Mr Jasper Griffin and to the Editors of the *CQ* for helpful comments and criticism.