

the civil wars Gallus fought on the side of Octavian, from 43 B.C. until the battle at Actium in 31. His support of Octavian led to Gallus' appointment as prefect (*praefectus fabrum*), and he led the forces which formerly belonged to Antony against Egypt. He was particularly successful in the Egyptian campaigns, and showed himself a cunning and ambitious general. Augustus made Gallus the first prefect of Egypt, a significant position in a strategically and economically important new province. There Gallus quelled numerous local insurrections and strengthened Roman rule. In an apparant bid to increase his reputation, Gallus erected several statues of himself throughout Egypt, and more than one inscription survives which notes the personal military success of Gallus.

Gallus' career came to a swift end, however. For reasons now unknown, Augustus was forced to recall him from Egypt in 27/6 B.C., and Gallus committed suicide shortly thereafter. Some modern scholars guess that Gallus' ostentatious display of his military achievements in Egypt made him a threat to Augustus; other political *faux pas* have been suggested, too. And the ancient commentator on Vergil's 10th *Eclogue*, Servius, writes that Augustus suspected Gallus of being involved in a failed conspiracy against him, and had him killed. Whatever the true reason, it seems that Gallus' political star, which had climbed so high in such a short time, crashed to the earth in pieces.

Unfortunately little remains of Gallus' literary accomplishments. Indeed, only about dozen lines survive of the many poems which he is said to have penned. Yet he was regarded as a legend in his own time, and the poet Vergil compliments Gallus' poetic abilities on more than one occasion. Servius claims that one section of Vergil's *Georgics* contained the praises of Gallus but was expunged when Gallus fell into political disgrace. Vergil certainly does depict Gallus as a poet *par excellence* in *Eclogue* 6, and incorporates him into the pastoral world of *Eclogue* 10. It is safe to say that Gallus was regarded by the circle of avant-garde "neoteric" poets at Rome as first among equals.

Despite the little remaining evidence, we can say something about Gallus' poetry. He was one of the first writers of Latin love elegies, as Ovid and Quintilian attest. Gallus is reported to have published four books of *Amores*, love poems addressed to one "Lycoris". Lycoris was probably the pseudonym for the well-known actress Cytheris, who was once the mistress of Antony. Thus it may be that the subject matter for the *Amores* was drawn from real-life experiences (as one fragmented line suggests) as well as from mythical tales of love. Some critics think that Gallus' friend, the Greek poet Parthenius, provided Gallus with "raw material" in his *Erotica Pathemata*, 36 mythical love stories of Hellenistic origin.

Gallus: Roman Statesman and Poet

by R.A. Faber

Gaius Cornelius Gallus was one of the few people in the history of Rome who combined an active military career with the writing of poetry. Friend of Octavian (the later emperor Augustus) and the great poet Vergil, Gallus moved in the highest circles of Roman politics and literature. Though only a few details of Gallus' career are certain and only a dozen lines of his poetry survive, we do know that he was a successful general and considered the greatest poet of his time.

Gallus was born *circa* 69 B.C. at Forum Iulii (modern Fréjus) of Gallic parents. He was educated at Rome by the same teachers who trained Vergil, and it is plausible that Gallus gained Vergil as friend at that time. During

It seems likely that Gallus formed an important link between Hellenistic Greek poetry and the Latin Augustan poems. If the nature of Vergil's 6th *Eclogue*, which mentions Gallus in the context of a learned catalogue of nine mythical tales of love and metamorphosis, is any hint of the nature of Gallus' poetry, then we may be sure that the themes and style of poetry which were favoured by such Hellenistic poets as Callimachus and Euphorion appealed also to Gallus. They liked to write allusive poems about unrequited and unnatural love, about transformations and weird myths. Perhaps Gallus was the first of the "neoterics" to introduce such topics to Roman poetry. In Vergil's *Eclogue* Gallus is depicted as one initiated in the divinely inspired poetry of Hesiod, who was the model for Hellenistic poets.

Until 1979 only one line of Gallus' poetry survived. In that year fragments of about 10 more lines were discovered in Qasr Ibrim, in Nubia. The longest line is part of a panegyric to Caesar ("my fate will then be sweet to me, Caesar, when you are the most important part of Roman history"). The others are too broken to reconstruct with much confidence. Yet the manuscript is remarkable. Not only is it the oldest extant manuscript of Latin poetry, but the document is also one which tells us a little more of the nature of Gallus' poetry. It seems that Gallus composed love poems about the conflict between one's duty and one's personal happiness, and of the soldier's separation from his lover. In short, Gallus' elegies may have been based on the general's own experiences. The style of writing is one which the ancient literary critic Quintilian described as "more severe" than that of the other elegists Ovid and Tibullus. To use the words of the scholars who published the fragments, Gallus' vocabulary has "an impressive simplicity, suitable to a forthright man of action" (*Journal of Roman Studies* 49, 1979, 149). The army general may have composed his love songs in his army quarters far from Rome.

In conclusion, then, it may be said that Gallus possessed those qualities which only rarely occur in one person: ambitious action and emotional reflection in literature. It is truly unfortunate that we no longer possess the entire collection of a highly regarded poet and ambitious general of Augustus' time.