

Waiting for my Caesar to Come: Gallus in the Eighth Eclogue?

*tu mihi seu magni superas iam saxa Timavi
sive oram Illyrici legis aequoris,—en erit umquam
ille dies, mihi cum liceat tua dicere facta?
en erit ut liceat totum mihi ferre per orbem
sola Sophocleo tua carmina digna coturno?
a te principium, tibi desinam: accipe iussis
carmina coepta tuis, atque hanc sine tempora circum
inter victricis hederam tibi serpere laurus. (Ecl. 8.6-13)*

In his eighth *Eclogue* Vergil turns momentarily from his pastoral Muse to address an unnamed Roman triumphator. The anonymous nature of his addressee has caused confusion and generated speculation since the time of Servius. The stakes are high as there are dramatic consequences for Vergilian biography and for the interpretation of the *Eclogues* as a whole. For the most part scholarly consensus held that the reference was to C. Asinius Pollio, at least until 1971. In that year Bowersock reinvigorated the case for Octavian by expanding the timeframe for the composition of the *Eclogues* to include the triumvir's campaigns in Illyricum. Since that time there has been vigorous debate and much less consensus. While Clausen supported the identification of Octavian in his commentary (1994), Fowler's popular translation (1997) explicitly instructed the reader to understand the lines as a reference to Pollio. One piece of evidence that has not been a part of this speculation is the fragment of Gallus published by Anderson and Nisbet in 1979:

*Fata mihi, Caesar, tum erunt mea dulcia, quom tu
maxima Romane pars eri<s> historiae*

postque tuum reditum multorum templa deorum

fixa legam spolieis deivitiore tueis.

The Gallus fragment is a valuable comparandum to these lines of Vergil and one that argues for the identification of the triumphator as Octavian.

Similarly, while there has been a great deal of work on the Gallus fragment itself (e.g., Van Sickle 1981, Fairweather 1984, Noonan 1991) and comparisons with the works of authors such as Propertius (O'Hara 1989) and Tibullus (O'Hara 2005), Vergil's address to his unnamed triumphator in the eighth *Eclogue* has not played a part in those analyses. The similarities in language and structure are examined in this paper, but the primary point of comparison is the overall tone: the longing for the triumphant return of a Roman general.

Gallus explicitly names Caesar as his addressee. The primary points upon which the identification of Vergil's triumphator depend have been well delineated by the past forty years of scholarly debate:

(1) An Illyrican campaign and triumph; based on the geographic references *saxa*

Timavi, oram Illyrici aequoris, and the *victrices laurus*.

(2) An allusion to tragedy; based on *sola Sophocleo tua carmina digna coturno*.

(3) The formula *a te principium, tibi desinam*.

(4) The patronage, in one form or another, of the addressee; based on *accipe iussis*

carmina coepta tuis.

While this paper touches on all four points, the Gallus fragment pertains most strongly to the first. This is the point that is still most hotly contested. As evidenced by Philip Thibodeau's recent argument for Pollio (2006) the arguments have largely devolved to matters of history and

geography, forgetting what Van Sickle has stressed (1981b): that the literary evidence is as, if not more, important than the historical.

Gallus, of course, has both of these aspects. He is both a historical figure—a soldier, governor, supporter of Octavian, and friend of Vergil—and a literary character, one who will appear later in the *Eclogues*. Reading the eighth *Eclogue* with Gallus present, therefore, with an awareness of Gallus' influence, greatly enriches our understanding and confirms that, like Gallus, Vergil is addressing his poem to the conquering Caesar, Octavian.

Works Cited

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