

A Peaceful Theoxeny amidst Hannibal's Fury

1 Introduction

After the Roman defeats at Trebia and Lake Trasimene Hannibal demolishes the Italian countryside. Returning from Apulia, the Carthaginian general sets his mind on destroying the Campanian vineyards:

uertit iter Daunique retro tellure relictā
 Campanas remeat notus populator in oras.
 hic uero, intrauit postquam uberis arua Falerni
 (diues ea et numquam tellus mentita colono)
 addunt frugiferis inimica incendia ramis. (7.157–161)

He turns his course and leaving the land of Daunus he goes back to the Campanian coasts that already know this plunderer. But this time, after he entered the fields of fertile Falernus (this land is rich and has never betrayed its cultivator), his men set hostile fire to the fruit-bearing branches.

The fertility of the area is stressed (*uberis, diues, frugiferis*), which contrasts with Hannibal's plans to destroy the Falernian vines with 'hostile fire' (*inimica incendia*). At this point, the narrator interrupts his martial epic narrative to tell the story of Falernus, who is presented as eponym of the local wine. This old farmer received the god Bacchus in disguise in his humble abode. As reward for this hospitality the god gave him wine, so far unknown to him, and covered the surrounding mountain slopes with vines. This aetiological story (7.162–211) stands out from the surrounding narrative, as several scholars have noticed. The "lightness of tone"¹ contrasts with Hannibal's destruction of these god-given vineyards. When the narrator resumes the main narrative, the narratees are plunged right back into the darkness of the Punic Wars, as Hannibal is still continuing his devastation of the countryside: *haec tum uasta dabat terrisque infestus agebat | Hannibal* ('this was the land which

1 Hutchinson 1993: 201.

Hannibal then was destroying and treated violently', 7.212–213).² It is not surprising that scholars have discussed this contrast between the embedded narrative and the surrounding main narrative in black-and-white terms of good and evil.³ The story of Falernus is consequently read as a 'positive theoxeny':⁴ the god Bacchus bestows the blessings of Falernian wine on Falernus and all inhabitants of Italy after him. Although Bacchus can certainly be viewed as benefactor and Hannibal as violator of the *ager Falernus*, this opposition is potentially undermined by an earlier scene in the *Punica* (3.101–105). In these lines, the narratees have already learned what happened *after* Bacchus' visit to Italy: the god is portrayed as a violent conqueror, associated with fury and lust.⁵ This makes the exemplarity of Bacchus and of the Falernus episode as a whole more problematic than a reading at first glance would suggest.⁶

In order to explore the ambiguity of this narrative, I will first discuss its position in Book 7. Next, I have a closer look at the story itself, investigating the literary heritage of this otherwise unknown theoxeny. What can we learn from a comparison with similar stories from the Hellenistic age, Virgil, Ovid, and Lucan? After that, we examine the connections of this story to other parts of the *Punica*.

2 A New Beginning

The Falernus episode comes at a significant point in the *Punica*. Since Ennius' *Annales* and Virgil's *Aeneid*, readers of a Roman epic expect Book 7 to contain a new beginning.⁷ Book 7 is of course not the 'mathematical' middle of the seventeen-book *Punica*, but it does form one of the turning points in this "epic

2 This reopening of the main narrative strongly evokes the Virgilian story of Nisus and Euryalus, as Littlewood 2011: 108 points out. Line 7.212 echoes the words of Nisus: *haec ego uasta dabo* ('here I will deal destruction', Virg. *A.* 9.323). Their raid of the Rutilian camp would cost them their lives. Littlewood convincingly suggests that by this allusion the narrator implies that Hannibal "may live to regret his detour of destruction", because in the meantime Fabius was able to block his supply lines.

3 E.g. Littlewood 2013: 213 and McIntyre 2008: 192–193.

4 Littlewood 2013: 213.

5 See section 9 below.

6 The episode has received relatively little critical attention. The only studies that are solely focused on this narrative are Vessey 1973 and La Penna 1999. Von Albrecht 2011: 107–113 devotes a considerable part of his article to the Falernus episode.

7 McNelis 2007: 263 and 275–278, who discusses Statius' *Thebaid* 7 (beginning of the fighting at

of many middles”.⁸ Book 6 ended with Hannibal’s destruction of the temple at Liternum, an attempt to eradicate the memory of Rome’s victory in the First Punic War. The first line of the next book makes clear, however, that Rome cannot be blotted out and that Hannibal is confronted with a formidable opponent: Fabius. Silius presents him as Rome’s ‘sole hope’ (*spes unica*, 7.1) in these dark hours, and ascribes a supernatural mind and power to him (*mens humana maior*, 7.5; *sacra seni uis*, 7.9).⁹ Fabius all by himself embodies Rome’s entire military power:

tot milia contra
Poenorum inuictumque ducem, tot in agmina solus
ibat et in sese cuncta **arma uirosque** gerebat. (7.6–8)

Against so many thousands of Carthaginians and their invincible leader, against so many battle arrays he alone went forth and carried in himself all weapons and men.

This one general is defending Rome and what it stands for against all its Carthaginian foes.¹⁰ The phrase *arma uirosque* obviously echoes the opening words of the *Aeneid*, but also the proemium of the *Punica* itself:

ordior **arma**, quibus caelo se gloria tollit
Aeneadum patiturque ferox Oenotria iura
Carthago. da, Musa, decus memorare **laborum**
antiquae Hesperiae, quantosque ad bella crearit
et quot Roma **uiros** (1.1–5)

I begin the war, by which the fame of the Aeneadae was raised to heaven and fierce Carthage submitted to Oenotrian laws. Allow me, Muse, to recount the splendid toils of ancient Hesperia and how great and how many men Rome created fit for war.

Thebes). See also Smolenaars 1994: xxxvi on connections between *Aeneid* 7 and *Thebaid* 7. In Lucan there is another turning point in Book 7 (the Battle of Pharsalus).

8 Tipping 2004: 370, who discusses in this article Book 12 as one of those ‘middles’. For *Punica* 7 as a ‘middle’, see Tipping 2010: 105 with n.160 and Von Albrecht 2011: 102–104.

9 This recalls Regulus’ semi-divine portrayal in Book 6. See Chapter 2, section 3.1.

10 The notion of a single defender has epic roots, cf. Hector who ‘alone’ defends Troy (with De Jong 2012: 191–192).

Whereas this prooemium speaks of *multiple* Roman heroes (*Aeneadum, uiros*) who oppose the Carthaginians, in Book 7 Fabius is presented as the *only* person that embodies all Roman valour.¹¹ A few lines later the narrator apostrophizes Fabius as the saviour of Rome, who prevents a repetition of the sack of Troy:

summe ducum, qui regna iterum labentia Troiaie
 et fluxas Latii res maiorumque labores,
 qui Carmentis opes et regna Euandria seruas,
 surge, age et merito sacrum caput insere caelo. (7.16–19)

Highest of leaders, you who are saving the kingdom of Troy that is collapsing for a second time, the weak power of Latium, the efforts of our forebears, the power of Carmentis, and the kingdom of Euander: stand up and raise your sacred head up to heaven because you have earned it.

Again the narrator links Fabius to the prooemium of the epic. The efforts of Rome in the First Punic War (*maiorumque labores*) are threatened to come to naught, due to Hannibal's successes. Only Fabius' tactics of delaying can prevent that these had been in vain and assure that the Romans can actually receive the honour from the current war which was promised in the prooemium (*decus ... laborum*). Fabius is addressed as the most important Roman hero so far and is invited to claim the fame that in the first line of the epic was promised to all Romans.¹² By twice recalling the proem, the narrator signals that Book 7 is a 'new beginning'.

The successful delaying tactics of Fabius unnerve Hannibal so much that he is led to rashness, as becomes apparent from the following exhortation to his soldiers: *ite citi, ruite ad portas, propellite uallum | pectoribus* ('go quickly, rush to the gates, overthrow the wall with your chests', 7.101–102).¹³ He is, however, unable to unleash this rage, as Fabius keeps avoiding a confrontation. At that moment Hannibal directs his anger towards the Campanian landscape. The narrator pauses his narrative and starts to apostrophize the god Bacchus:

11 See Hardie 1993: 9–10 on the theme of 'the one and the many' in *Punica* 7. See also Chapter 2, section 8.

12 Littlewood 2011: 43 argues rightly that this apostrophe puts Fabius on a par not only with his divine ancestor Hercules, but also with Aeneas, Quirinus and Augustus. The phrase *sacrum caput* is also used by Lucan of Pompey (Luc. 8.677) and by Seneca of Cato (*Dial.* 2.2.3). After the Falernus episode, the narrator asks the Muse to 'give this man to fame' (*da famae, da, Musa, uirum*, 7.217). The phrase echoes the prooemium (1.3–5). Fabius is, again, presented as the only person that deserves fame, as the singular *uirum* underlines.

13 Stocks 2014: 122–123.

haud fas, Bacche, tuos tacitum tramittere honores,
 quamquam magna incepta uocent. memorabere, sacri
 largitor laticis, grauidae cui nectare uites
 nulli dant prelis nomen praeferre Falernis. (7.162–165)

It is not permitted, Bacchus, to pass over your honours in silence, although a great enterprise is calling upon me. You will be remembered, bestower of the divine liquid, in whose honour the vines, heavy with nectar, allow no other wine to have a name more renowned than the Falernian presses.

The narrator explicitly announces that he is putting his epic task (*magna incepta*) aside for the time being in order to praise Bacchus as the founding father of viniculture in this region. By stating that it is ‘not permitted’ (*haud fas*) to be silent on this topic, the narrator, once again, alludes to the prooemium. There, he claimed to have permission to disclose the war between Romans and Carthaginians: *mandata nepotibus arma | fas aperire mihi* (‘I am permitted to reveal the arms that are commissioned to descendants’, 1.18–19). Now that Hannibal is ravaging Italy, he interrupts his own epic enterprise for an aetiological digression, copying the delaying tactics of Fabius on a narrative level.¹⁴ That the primary narrator is emotionally involved can be deduced from the high frequency of apostrophes: four within the scope of fifty lines. Three times the narrator addresses Bacchus (7.163, 7.187, 7.205) and once Falernus (7.199).¹⁵

On an intertextual level, Silius’ interruption of his war narrative interacts with the *mora* of the Nemean episode in Statius’ *Thebaid*: when the Argive army has reached Nemea, the narrator apostrophizes Apollo and asks him to tell ‘whence came delay’ (*unde morae*, Stat. *Theb.* 4.650).¹⁶ Immediately hereafter, we learn that Bacchus is the reason for the drought that will delay the Argive army, which is heading for his native city of Thebes—it is only in Book 7

14 As the narrator had already done in Book 6 by inserting the extensive Regulus narrative on the First Punic War. See Chapter 2, section 7.1 and Stocks 2014: 122–123.

15 Apostrophe is quite uncommon in epic hospitality scenes, as Bettenworth 2004: 376 notes in her discussion on the apostrophe of Pacuvius’ son Perolla in 11.304–306; she has apparently overlooked the apostrophes in the Falernus episode: “in Gastmahlszenen ist dieses Element sonst nicht zu finden” (Bettenworth 2004: 376 n.378). For apostrophe, see also Chapter 2, section 3.1.

16 Bacchus himself is apostrophized in Stat. *Theb.* 5.712. The two apostrophes serve therefore also as a structural device, enclosing the narrative of the draught of Nemea, as Georgacopoulou 2005: 130–131 rightly argues.

that they will continue marching.¹⁷ McNelis suggests that the drought in Nemea can be read as a diversion from heroic epic narrative: "Given that the similes of a raging river and of the ship setting out from port symbolize the commencement of martial themes, the parching dryness here may be viewed metaphorically, as a counter to that poetic agenda."¹⁸ The Nemean episode symbolizes a poetic world that is rather 'Callimachean' than epic. In Silius, the pausing of the war narrative entails a generic change as well. In addition to the intertextual echoes of the Nemean episode in Statius, this is underscored by an allusion to the opening of Virgil's *Georgics* 2, which is dedicated to arboriculture. There the narrator, too, apostrophizes the god of wine: *nunc te, Bacche, canam* ('now I will sing of you, Bacchus', Virg. *G.* 2.2). The narratees of the *Punica* know now that they are leaving the heroic epic behind and enter a world that is both 'Callimachean' and georgic.¹⁹

3 A Georgic World

The Falernian narrative has a distinctively different atmosphere from the surrounding main narrative. We enter a world in which warfare and destruction have no place. Its aetiological nature is signalled by the word *nomen* (7.165): the episode will explain how Falernian wine got its name. The narratees learn the answer already in the next lines, in which Falernus is presented as an old farmer:

Massica sulcabat meliore Falernus in aeuo
ensibus ignotis senior iuga. pampinus umbras
nondum uuae uirides nudo texebat in aruo,
 pocula nec norant sucis mulcere Lyaei.
 fonte sitim et pura soliti defendere lymphā. (7.166–170)

17 For *mora* as one of the central themes of *Thebaid* 4, see Parkes 2012: xvii–xx. It is not improbable that the role of Bacchus in the Nemean episode is an invention of Statius, on which see Vessey 1970: 48–49 and Parkes 2012: 285. This would add another intertextual dimension, as Silius' Falernus episode is likewise an invented narrative about Bacchus and his power. For Bacchus' importance in the *Thebaid*, see also Legras 1905: 193–194 and Vessey 1970: 47.

18 McNelis 2007: 87. See also Parkes 2012: xxi–xxiii. A Callimachean model for the Nemea episode in the *Thebaid* is *Aetia* 3 on the Nemean games. On embedded narratives and *mora* in the *Punica*, see Introduction, section 3.

19 Von Albrecht 2011: 107–108. For the idea of (Roman) Callimacheanism, see e.g. Heerink 2015: 17–19 with further bibliography.

In a better age, when weapons were still unknown, the old man Falernus ploughed the meadows of Mount Massicus. Not yet were vine-leaves casting green shadows over bare fields, and people did not know how to soothe their cups with the liquid of Lyaeus, but were wont to quench their thirst with pure spring water.

The negations stress the blissful ignorance of this era: people did not now weapons (*ensibus ignotis*) and did not know wine (*nec norant*), but only drank water that nature provided.²⁰ That this latter situation is about to change by the god of wine is foreshadowed by *nondum* ('not yet'). But an important question is: does this change Falernus' world for the better? After all, this age is called 'better' *before* Bacchus' arrival.

The phrase *meliore in aeuo* is intriguing. The comparative points to the deterioration of life in Campania since the arrival of Bacchus, of which Hannibal's devastation will be the absolute climax. At the same time, it makes clear that Falernus lived in times close to, but not synchronous to, the Golden Age;²¹ Falernus and his fellow countrymen have to plough the fields for their sustenance, whereas in the Golden Age nature spontaneously provided men with food.²² Nevertheless, this agricultural society is set in a better time, which recalls Virgil's praise of country life (*G.* 2.513–531). Farmers do have to till the land, but reap the profits of their labour: the land is so fertile that the farmer can sometimes even enjoy some rest. This Virgilian country life is associated with the rule of Saturn in Italy: *aureus hanc uitam in terris Saturnus agebat* ('Golden Saturn lived such a life on earth', *G.* 2.538). Virgil does not make explicit whether humans of this era were involved in agriculture, but the god himself apparently was.²³ This idealized Saturnian age also did not know weapons yet:

20 This 'description by negation' is a common feature of ancient accounts of blissful life. Compare e.g. the descriptions of Alcinoüs' garden in Hom. *Od.* 7.114–116 and the Elysian Isles in Hor. *Epod.* 16.49–62. Davies 1987 gives an overview of this type of narration in Greek and Latin literature. Primitive men drinking spring water recalls Lucretius' account of pre-historic times: *at sedare sitim fluuuü fontesque uocabant* ('but to slake their thirst streams and springs summoned them', Lucr. 5.945).

21 The phrase *meliore ... in aeuo* recalls Horace's *Carmen Saeculare* in which Apollo 'is prolonging a continuously improving age' (*meliusque semper | prorogat aeuum*, Hor. *Saec.* 67–68). Augustus' reign is often associated with a new Golden Age (cf. e.g. Virg. *A.* 6.792–794). Spaltenstein 1986: 456 sees an association with the heroic age of Aeneas' Trojan ancestors 'who were born in better years' (*nati melioribus annis*, Virg. *A.* 6.649).

22 E.g. Hes. *Op.* 117–118, Ov. *Met.* 1.101–102, Virg. *G.* 1.125–128.

23 Aratus was probably the first poet to introduce the concept of agriculture in the Golden Age. In 112–113, the goddess Dike provided men with the ploughing-ox. See Kidd 1997: 112. But like Saturn in Virgil's *Georgics*, it is rather the goddess who does the actual farming,

necdum etiam audierant inflari classica, **necdum**
impositos duris crepitare incudibus **ensis**. (Virg. *G.* 2.539–540)

Not yet did they hear the blaring of trumpets, not yet the clattering of swords that were put on hard anvils.

The absence of weapons in Falernus' age and similar wording makes it clear that we are entering a world that has strong affinities with the Saturnian age of the *Georgics*.²⁴

Viticulture is an important subtheme of the second book of the *Georgics*, which has arboriculture as its main subject. The narrator praises many wines from other regions, but Campanian types take priority over these:

non eadem arboribus pendet uindemia nostris,
quam **Methymnaeo** carpit de palmite Lesbos.
(...)

quo te carmine dicam,
Rhaetica? nec cellis ideo contende **Falernis**.
sunt et Aminneae uites, firmissima uina,
Tmolius adsurgit quibus et rex ipse **Phanaeus**
(Virg. *G.* 2.90–91 and 95–98)

Not the same vintage hangs down from our trees as the one, which Lesbos gathers from Methymna's branches. (...) How am I to praise you in my song, Rhaetic? But even so, do not contend with Falernian cellars! There are also Aminnean vines, producing very strong wine, for which the Tmolian and the Phanaean, himself a king, rise in respect.

This type of praise is also found at the end of Silius' Falernus story. When Bacchus has covered the hillsides with vines, the Falernian wine is explicitly compared with three Greek wine regions that were also mentioned in the passage from the *Georgics* just quoted: Lydia, Chios, and Lesbos:

so that humans are still kept free from labour. See Johnston 1980: 28 and Smolenaars 1987: 395–396.

24 Compare also Euander's account of the Saturnian Age (Virg. *A.* 8.324–325) and Ov. *Met.* 1.98–99. In Lucretius' account of prehistoric times, people did kill each other in individual fights, but did not die in massive battles, as warfare was yet unknown (Lucr. 5.999–1000).

ex illo tempore diues
Tmolus et ambrosiis **Ariusia** pocula sucis
 ac **Methymna** ferox lacibus cessere **Falernis**. (7.209–211)

From that time onwards, the rich Tmolus, Ariusian cups filled with liquid ambrosia, and the fierce Methymna yield precedence to Falernian vats.

The wine from Chios is referred to with the learned toponym *Ariusia*, corresponding to the equally learned circumscription *rex ipse ... Phanaeus* in the *Georgics*.²⁵ Whereas that phrase marked the Chian wine as royal, Silius goes a step further: the wine even has divine qualities, as it is compared to ambrosia.²⁶ This of course also enhances the quality and fame of the Falernian wine, to which these other wines yield precedence. The focus on the Falernian wine is also emphasized by the absence of the Amminean, the only other Italian wine in the passage from the *Georgics*, and the order of the names: the Falernian wine is placed at the climactic end.²⁷

Silius' praise of Falernian wine also corresponds to a later passage in the *Laus Italiae*, in which the wine is presented as one of the blessings of the Italian country: *sed grauidae fruges et Bacchi Massicus umor | impleuere* ('but the land was filled with heavy branches and the Massic juice of Bacchus', *G.* 2.143–144). The Falernian vines that grow on Mount Massicus are symbols of Italy's fertility. Bacchus' role in viticulture is also addressed in a passage later in the same book:

hinc omnis largo pubescit uinea fetu,
 complentur uallesque cauae saltusque profundi
 et quocumque deus circum caput egit honestum.
 ergo rite **suum Baccho** dicemus **honorem**
 carminibus patriis ... (Virg. *G.* 2.390–394)

Hence every vineyard ripens with abundant produce; fullness comes to hollow valleys and deep glades, and every spot towards the god has turned

25 The Phanae is a mountain, Ariusia a wine region on Chios. Silius 'translates' the Virgilian hapax legomenon *Phanaeus* with another one: besides this text, *Ariusia* is only attested in Virg. *Ecl.* 5.71. There the Ariusian wine is called nectar, like Falernian in 7.166.

26 This might be an echo of the second Homeric hymn to Dionysus, where the scent of wine is compared to ambrosia: ἄρυστο δ' ὀδμή | ἀμβροστίη ('and there rose a smell ambrosial', *h.Hom.* 7.36–37).

27 Silius' metonym *lacibus ... Falernis* is a variation on Virgil's *cellis ... Falernis*.

his comely face. Duly, then, in our country's songs we will chant for Bacchus the honour he claims ...

In order to ensure the benevolence of Bacchus, the god has to be praised with songs (or poems). This literary aspect of worship also plays an important role in the Falernus narrative, as the narrator explicitly stops his epic story to honour Bacchus (*haud fas, Bacche, tuos tacitum transmittere honores*, 7.162). We can therefore see the Falernus episode as an example of a *carmen patrium* to sing praise of Bacchus.

In Silius, the *honores* refer not only to the honour brought to Bacchus by the narrator, but also to the honour that Bacchus bestowed on mankind—the reason for praising the god. Falernus is the first to receive these divine blessings, but in the final section of the episode the god makes wine available to the rest of Campania by covering the mountains with vineyards:

uuiferis late florebat Massicus aruis
miratus nemora et lucentes sole racemos.
it monti decus. (7.207–209)

The Massicus was widely overgrown with grape-bearing fields and the mountain looked in amazement at its forests and clusters that were shining in the sunlight. The splendour went up to the mountain.²⁸

This finale of the Falernus episode creates a ring composition with the beginning, where the narrator called Bacchus *sacri | largitor laticis* (7.163–164). Bacchus is presented here in his role of benefactor and civilizer, although we do not hear how Falernus' life changed after this metamorphosis of the Campanian countryside.

Silius' intertext, the *Georgics*, however, gives a more ambivalent message of viticulture. After the praise of Bacchus who bestows his blessings on the Italian countryside, Virgil emphasizes the ceaseless toils of the vinedresser (*G.* 2.397–419). The stress on *labor* in this passage of the *Georgics* contrasts with

28 The phrase *it monti decus* is ambiguous. Littlewood 2011: 107 translates: 'The reputation of the mountain spread'. Cf. Duff: 'The fame of the mountain grew.' Spaltenstein 1986: 460 suggests: 'la célébrité échet à cette montagne.' The Silian words, however, echo a similar Virgilian verse opening: *it clamor caelo* ('clamour went up to heaven', *Virg. A.* 5.451); cf. also *it caelo clamorque* (*A.* 11.192). Therefore, we should take the verb *eo* (*ire*) with dative as 'to go up to'. *Decus* is then not so much the 'reputation', but rather the 'splendour' or 'ornamentation' of the Falernian vines that grow all the way up the mountain.

the discussion of the olive and other trees that grow effortlessly, a feature of the Golden Age.²⁹ The labour that viniculture creates does not fit well with images of a Golden or Saturnian Age. Although men are able to cultivate the vine through *labor*, the Virgilian narrator questions the purpose of all this toil in comparison with other trees. He even ends his section on viniculture with an invective of Bacchus and wine:

quid memorandum aeque Baccheia dona tulerunt?
 Bacchus et ad culpam causas dedit; ille furentis
 Centauros leto domuit, Rhoecumque Pholumque
 et magno Hylaeum Lapithis cratere minantem.
 (Virg. *G.* 2.454–457)

What have the gifts of Bacchus brought that they should earn equal fame? Bacchus even provided grounds for blame. He overcame the raging Centaurs with death, Rhoecus, Pholus and Hylaeus, when he was threatening the Lapiths with a great mixing vessel.

Wine is presented here as the cause of the famous battle between the Centaurs and Lapiths at the wedding of Pirithous and Hippodamia. The message that Virgil gives is therefore ambiguous: Bacchus is praised, but his liquid can also cause lethal fights.³⁰

Silius, on the other hand, stresses the fame of Falernian wine and includes no references to *labor* at all, as the vines cover the hills spontaneously. Nevertheless, the narratees of the *Punica*, who are invited to read the narrative of Falernus with the *Georgics* in mind, might question this sheer positive representation of Bacchus' gift; the fact that Falernus has knowledge about wine indicates that we are already moving away from the 'better age' that Falernus is living in: from this moment onwards the people of Italy get acquainted with a product that stands for *luxuria*, which causes them to lose their previous innocence. In the *Georgics* only bulls still know this soberness:

atqui non **Massica** Bacchi
 munera, non illis epulae nocuere repostae:

29 Thomas 1988b: 237. *Labor* is almost the motto of the *Georgics*; cf. *labor omnia uicit* (*G.* 1.145).

30 Thomas 1988a: 242–243. Mynors 1990: 161 states that the adverbial *et* in the phrase *et ad culpam* suggests “that the vine works good as well as evil”. Erren 2003: 505 argues that we should not take this invective too seriously.

frondibus et uictu pascuntur simplicis herbae,
pocula sunt fontes liquidi atque exercita cursu
 flumina, nec somnos abrumpit cura salubris. (Virg. *G.* 3.526–530)

Yet no Massic gifts of Bacchus, no repeated feasts harm them. They feed themselves on leaves and simple grass, their cups are clear springs and rivers spurred on by their stream, and no care breaks their wholesome sleep.

The anaphoric negations underline that unlike bulls people *are* lethally harmed by luxury, of which the Falernian wine of Mount Massicus is mentioned as first example.³¹ Before the arrival of Bacchus, people in Italy were much like those bulls, in that they were used to drink water and knew of no wine (7.169–170). The Falernus episode marks this translation towards a life with more *luxuria* and further away from this 'better age'. As in the *Georgics*, the non-georgic world is never far away. Falernus did not know of any swords (*ignotibus ensibus*), but right after the Falernus episode, the narratees are transported back to epic reality. Hannibal cannot bear the postponement of fighting: *sicci stimulabant sanguinis enses* ('the fact that his swords were dry without any blood was vexing him', 7.213). Due to the delaying tactics of Fabius, but also due to the *mora* of the narrator, Hannibal is unable to release his bellicosity. Unable to meet the enemy in combat, the Carthaginian turns his rage on to the Italian landscape. So even though Hannibal cannot use his swords against the Romans, his fire destroys the idyllic and weapon-free world of Falernus.³²

4 The Story of Falernus as an Ideal Theoxeny

Let us now turn to the story itself, which is clearly modelled on the theme of 'the visit of a divine guest' or theoxeny. The reception of a god by Falernus can be read as another sign of a time closer to the Golden Age. Before our Iron Age at least, gods and heroes are said to have roamed the earth and frequented the houses of men.³³ This theme of theoxeny is as old as Homer, but became

31 Thomas 1988b: 140.

32 See Von Albrecht 1964: 155–157 for this parallel in specific and the contrast between the Falernus episode and the rest of the narrative in general.

33 Cf. the *δαίμονες* in Hes. *Op.* 122–123, Dike in Arat. 100–101, Cat. 64.384–386, and Virg. *Ecl.* 4.15–16. See Smolenaars 1987: 395.

especially popular from the Hellenistic Age onwards.³⁴ This theme is also frequently found in Latin literature, with Ovid's story of Philemon and Baucis in *Metamorphoses* 8 as the most famous example.³⁵ The story of Bacchus' visit to Falernus is not found in any other source and is generally taken to be Silius' own invention.³⁶ Nevertheless, it is clearly modelled on these earlier theoxenies. These stories typically follow the same pattern:³⁷

1. Gods (or heroes) roam the earth in disguise and are looking for shelter at the beginning of the evening.
2. The gods are on a mission or about to perform an important task.
3. The gods are received by humble (and often old) people.
4. The meal and other signs of hospitality are described.
5. A miracle takes place during the meal or shortly afterwards.
6. The gods reveal their true identity.
7. The gods bestow a reward for the hospitality they received.

Of course, not every theoxeny contains every single element, and sometimes the order is slightly changed.³⁸ The story of Falernus, however, closely sticks to this basic outline.

(1) Bacchus is seeking hospitality at the end of the day (*extremumque diem*, 7.172) and is not recognized by Falernus: *nec senserat hospes | aduenisse deum* ('the host did not notice that a god had arrived', 7.176–177). (2) What the god is doing on earth is not made explicit. The narrator says that he is on his way

34 For theoxeny in Homer, see Reece 1993: 47–57, with a list of examples. Famous Hellenistic theoxenies are Callimachus' story of Heracles' visit to Molorcus in *Aetia* 3 (Harder fr. 54b–i), Theseus' visit to Hecale (Hollis [1990] 2009²) and Eratosthenes' *Erigone* on Dionysus' visit to Icarus (Rosokoki 1995).

35 Ov. *Met.* 8.626–724. Some examples are Hercules' visit to Euander (Virg. *A.* 8.200–201), Ceres visiting Celeus (Ov. *Fast.* 4.507–560), and Ovid's 'own' visit to an anonymous farmer (*Fast.* 4.679–712). For theoxenical motifs in the Regulus episode, see Chapter 2, section 4.

36 This has been noticed by editors since Drakenborch. See e.g. Lemaire 1823: 421, Nicol 1936: 11–12, La Penna 1999: 177, and Muecke and Dunston 2011: 429.

37 The list is taken from Van den Broek 2019: 55–56 and is based on the motif-index of Thompson 1955–1958², especially Q1.1, Q42.3, and Q286.1, the basic outline of such divine visits according to Flückiger-Guggenheim 1984: 11–12, and the index on 'the hospitality theme' in Hollis [1990] 2009²: 341–354. Cf. also tale types ATU 750A, 750B and *750 in Uther 2004: 398–399 and Hansen 2002: 211–223.

38 Sometimes the miracle and the reward coincide or the gods reveals their identity at an earlier stage (e.g. in the story of Hyrieus in Ov. *Fast.* 5.495–544). Another variant is the 'negative theoxeny', in which the host violates the rules of hospitality. Instead of a reward, the host receives a punishment. Examples in Ovid are Lycaon (*Met.* 1.209–243) and the Lycian farmers (*Met.* 6.317–381). For the terms positive and negative theoxeny, see Loudon 2011: 32.

to the 'coasts of Calpe' (*pergentem ad litora Calpes* 7.171), the rock of Gibraltar.³⁹ An intratextual allusion to Book 3 makes clear that the god is about to conquer Spain.⁴⁰ (3) The god enters the humble cottage of Falernus, which is metonymically referred to as 'the small Lares' and 'a humble roof' (*paruosque Lares humilisque ... tecti* 7.173–174). The layout of the hut is simple, with the table standing before the hearth 'as was the custom in this poor age' (*ritu pauperis aevi*, 7.175). The narratees already know that Falernus is an older man (*senior*, 7.167), which is stressed again by *senectae* (7.178). (4) Falernus applies himself diligently to his task as host (7.177–185). He serves a purely vegetarian banquet (*opes festas*, 7.179) with fresh vegetables and fruit from his own garden. He ends his efforts by sacrificing a firstling to Vesta. (5) Bacchus is charmed by the industriousness of the old man (*sedulitate senili | captus*, 7.186–187) and causes the cups, milk pails, and mixing vessel to brim with wine (7.187–191). (6) The god then reveals his true identity: purple ivy-berries crown his head, long locks are flowing down from his shoulders, he holds a cup in his right hand and a thyrsus in the other (7.194–197). Together with the transformation of the god, the direct environment also undergoes a metamorphosis, with vines overgrowing the table of Falernus (7.198). The next morning all of Mount Massicus turns out to be overgrown with vines (7.205–208). (7) Falernus gets a double reward for his hospitality: Bacchus not only produces wine for instant consumption, but also promises the old man great fame as cultivator of the wine that is to be named after him: *uiticolae nomen peruulgatura Falerni | munera* ('gifts that will bring fame to Falernus' name as its cultivator', 7.193–194). Falernus immediately drinks the wine presented to him, which causes him to become drunk and fall asleep (7.199–205). The reward of fame also proves to be correct, as the narrator ends the narrative with the statement that since that day Falernian wine is to be preferred above Greek vintages (7.209–211).

In conclusion, the story of Falernus meets all elements of a typical theoxeny. Let us now turn to two important theoxenical models for the Falernus episode. It will turn out that Silius has changed important elements of these models in order to create his 'perfect' theoxeny.

4.1 *Model 1: Bacchus and Icarius*

An obvious model for the Falernus episode is the story of the Attic farmer Icarius, another host of Bacchus. This man, too, received wine as thanks for providing the god with food and shelter, and became in fact the first viticulturist of Greece. This theoxenical story was the theme of Eratosthenes' *Erigone*. It

39 The verb *pergo* is often used in military contexts in the sense 'to advance, to go against'. See *TLL* 10.1.1428.67–10.1.1430.10 s.v. for examples.

40 See section 9 below.

has been suggested that this work is an important model for Silius, although the few surviving fragments from this Hellenistic poem do not allow for a detailed intertextual comparison.⁴¹ This assumption is confirmed by Nonnus' adaptation of Eratosthenes' *Erigone* in Book 47 of his *Dionysiaca*. This work probably stems from the fifth century AD, but nonetheless it can shed some light on how Silius has reworked Eratosthenes' story of Icarus from the third century BC.⁴² Apart from general similarities there are some striking verbal correspondences between the *Dionysiaca* and the Falernus narrative.⁴³ The god is served goat milk (*γλάκος αἰγῶν*, Non. *D.* 47.40) just as Falernus puts milk on the table (*lacte* 7.181); in both cases the god stops the proceedings of his host before he produces wine (7.186–191 ~ *D.* 47.41–44); Dionysus is holding a drinking cup in his right hand before addressing his host: *δεξιτερῇ δ' εὐδομον ἔχων δέπας ἠδέος οἴνου* ('he is holding a fragrant cup of sweet wine in his right hand', *D.* 47.43). In Silius, too, the fragrance and sweetness of the wine is stressed right before Bacchus speaks to Falernus: *dulcis odoratis umor sudauit ab uuis* ('sweet liquid sweated from the fragrant grapes', 7.191).⁴⁴ After his speech, the god also holds a cup in his right hand: *dextraque pendit | cantharus* (7.196–197). The god's words to Icarus and Falernus also bear great similarity:

δέξο, γέρον, τόδε δῶρον, ὃ μὴ δεδάσιν Ἀθῆναι.
 ὦ γέρον, ὀλβίζω σε· σὲ γὰρ μέλψουσι πολῖται
 τοῖον ἔπος βοόωντες ὅτι κλέος εὖρεν ἐλέγξαι
 Ἰκάριος Κελεοῖο καὶ Ἥριγόνῃ Μετανείρης. (Non. *D.* 47.45–48)

Accept, old man, this gift, which Athens does not know yet. Old man, I give you a blessing. For the citizens will sing praise of you uttering the following word: 'Icarus has found fame that can rival with that of Celeus, and Erigone with that of Metaneira.'

41 See Rosokoki 1995: 102–105, who discusses possible parallels and gives a brief overview of the scholarly discussion. Littlewood 2011: 93 mentions the *Erigone* only in passing.

42 It cannot be excluded that Nonnus had read Silius, although scholars have not even raised this possibility. When this would be the case, the Icarus story in Nonnus is an example of window allusion: an adaptation of Eratosthenes *through* Silius' Falernus episode.

43 General similarities are e.g. the fact that both men are old farmers, entertain the god in a simple but cordial way, and are rewarded with wine. On the relation between the *Erigone* and the *Dionysiaca*, see Rosokoki 1995: 64–67 and Shorrock 2001: 100–101.

44 In Silius, the adjective *odoratus* has eastern connotations: it is used for describing the tombs of Egyptian kings (13.475) and the Indians (17.647), the latter also in a context of Bacchic conquest. For *odoratus* in connection to wine, see Ov. *Fast.* 3.301: *plenaque odorati ... pocula Bacchi* ('cups full of fragrant Bacchus').

In Silius, too, the god orders the old man to accept his gift, stressing his previous ignorance of wine, and promises great fame for Falernus in the future:⁴⁵

'en cape' Bacchus ait 'nondum tibi nota, sed olim
uiticolae nomen peruulgatura Falerni
munera.' (7.192–194)

'Come on', said Bacchus, 'take gifts that are yet unknown to you but that will once bring fame to Falernus' name as its cultivator.'

In Nonnus, Icarius is presented as first cultivator of wine and as such he will out-class Celeus' son Triptolemus, whom Demeter taught the art of agriculture. In turn, mankind learned from him to cultivate grain. Falernus cannot, of course, obtain the same status as inventor, because viniculture was already known in Greece. The god, however, promises him that his Falernian wine will surpass the fame of already existing Greek vintages (7.210–211).⁴⁶

Both Icarius and Falernus drink many goblets of wine (*D.* 47.58 ~ 7.200) and become drunk. When Icarius stands up to praise the god for his reward, he shows a wobbling gait:

δόχμιος ἀμφιέλικτος ἐρισφαλὲς ἴχνος ἐλίσσων
ποσσὶν ἀμοιβαίοισιν ἀνεσκίρτησεν ἄλωεύς (Non. *D.* 47.63–64)

Aslant and wavering he dragged along his tottering gait and hopped on his alternating feet.

Falernus, too, cannot walk properly anymore at the moment he wants to thank the god. The narrator signals the old man's instability while apostrophizing him: *pede risum* | ... *titubante moues* ('you raise a laugh with tottering feet', 7.200–201).

Because of these many similarities, the different ending of both stories is all the more striking. Icarius introduces the new drink to his neighbours, who also become drunk. When sober again they consider the unknown beverage

45 For correspondences between 7.192–194 and *Dion.* 47.45–48, see Rosokoki 1995: 103 and Fayant 2000: 135.

46 The explicit rivalry between Dionysus and Demeter in the story of Icarius is perhaps hinted at in Silius' description of grain produce as 'gifts of Ceres' (*Cerealia dona*, 7.183) and the offer that Falernus gives to this goddess. Falernus turns from a worshipper of Ceres into a follower of Bacchus.

a poison and decide to kill Icarus. His daughter Erigone subsequently commits suicide when she finds out about her father's fate.⁴⁷ Silius' story does not have such a negative ending: Falernus falls asleep, after which we hear that Mount Massicus is covered in vines. The Campanian farmer does not suffer any negative consequences from Bacchus' gift except for his drunkenness, which is described in a rather humorous way.⁴⁸

4.2 *Model 2: Philemon and Baucis*

An even closer model for the Falernus episode is the famous story of Philemon and Baucis.⁴⁹ As I have tried to show elsewhere, the narrator Lelex moulds his theoxeny to fit the purpose of his story: to prove that gods are almighty and that people will be rewarded for their piety or punished for their crimes.⁵⁰ The story as a whole and the happy ending in particular are too good to be true, especially when compared to other Ovidian theoxenies.⁵¹ Although Lelex's narratees are convinced, Ovid's primary narratees might question this interpretation of the story.

The narrator of the *Punica* closely follows his Ovidian predecessor, especially when narrating the god's entrance into the humble cottage and the hospitality scene itself.⁵² At the same time, the Silian narrator tries to surpass the idealism of the Philemon and Baucis story by omitting divine vengeance. Should the narratees of the *Punica* accept this positive message like Lelex's narratees in the *Metamorphoses* did? Even when we take into account that it is now the more authoritative primary narrator that tells the story instead of a secondary narrator, the sharp contrast between right and wrong seems all too neat, which should make the narratees suspicious.

47 According to Ovid, the god had raped Erigone by changing into a bunch of grapes, a version hinted at by Statius (*Theb.* 4.691), but otherwise unknown. See *Met.* 6.125 with Rosati, Tarrant, and Chiarini 2009: 267 and Borgeaud 2011: 168.

48 Littlewood 2011: 105. For the contrast between the endings of both stories, see Borgeaud 2011: 189.

49 Von Albrecht 1964: 156–157. Littlewood 2011 notices several parallels in the running commentary, but does not mention this famous story when discussing the theme of theoxeny (Littlewood 2011: xlvi–xlix and 92–93).

50 Van den Broek 2019: 57–60.

51 A good example is the visit of Jupiter, Neptune, and Mercury to Hyrieus in *Fast.* 5.495–544. Littlewood 2011: xlvi–xlix has pointed out the sharp contrast with the Falernus episode. For a comparison between the story of Hyrieus and that of Philemon and Baucis, see Van den Broek 2019: 65–67.

52 The lack of a female character is a marked difference: no daughter like Icarus' Erigone or wife like Philemon's Baucis is mentioned.

Let us take a closer look at the way the Silian narrator has incorporated the story of Philemon and Baucis into his own narrative. The entrance of Bacchus clearly mirrors that of the gods in Ovid's story:

nec pigitum **paruosque lares humilisque subire**
 limina **caelicolam** tecti. cepere uolentem
 fumosi **postes** (7.172–174)

It did not displease the heaven-dweller to enter the small household gods and threshold of his humble home. The smoky doorposts received the willing god.

In the *Metamorphoses*, too, Jupiter and Mercury have to stoop when they are entering the small cottage of Philemon and Baucis:

ergo ubi **caelicolae paruos tetigere Penates**
submissoque humiles intrarunt uertice **postes** ... (Ov. *Met.* 8.637–638)

So when the heaven-dwellers reached their small household gods and entered the humble doorposts while lowering their heads, ...

The contrast between the heavenly gods and the humble household gods also indicates a generic change in both epics: the gods, referred to with the grandiloquent Ennian compound *caelicola*, enter the non-epic, rustic world of a farmer.⁵³

The diligence of Falernus when serving the god (*hac sedulitate*, 7.187) mirrors that of Philemon and Baucis in Ovid (*Met.* 8.626–724).⁵⁴ The old couple entertains Jupiter and Mercury to the best of their abilities. The meal that Falernus serves also sounds familiar: like the Ovidian hosts, he serves apples in baskets, dairy, honey, and products from his well-watered garden.⁵⁵ Even their tableware is similar. Bacchus causes the beechen cups (*fagina* ... *pocula*, 7.188) and a hollow oaken mixing vessel (*quercu in cratera cauata*, 7.190) to brim with

53 Enn. *Ann. sed. inc.* 445 and *dub.* 6 (Skutch). See Hollis 1970: 115 and Littlewood 2011: 98–99. The latter signals an intertextual link with Euander's invitation to Aeneas to follow in the footsteps of Hercules by entering his cottage in *A.* 8.362–365. See also n.121 below.

54 Baucis shows the same quality (*sedula*, *Met.* 8.640). See Bruère 1958: 493.

55 The verbal parallels are: *puris* ... *poma canistris* (7.179) ~ *in patulis redolentia mala canistris* (*Met.* 8.675); *nunc irriguis citus extulit hortis* | *rorantes humore dapes* (7.180) ~ *quodque suus coniunx riguo collegerat horto* (*Met.* 8.646); *lacte fauisque* (7.181) ~ *lactis massa coacti* (*Met.* 8.666), and *in medio fauus est* (*Met.* 8.677). For these and other parallels with Ovid, see Wezel 1873: 87–88 and Bruère 1958: 493.

wine. This scene echoes the miracle in the Ovidian story, where the wine in the mixing vessel is replenished automatically (*Met.* 8.679–680). Earlier, the narrator had mentioned that Philemon and Baucis serve their drinks in hollow beechen cups, pouring wine from a mixing vessel:

post haec caelatus eodem
sistitur argento crater fabricataque fago
pocula, qua caua sunt, flauentibus inlita ceris. (*Ov. Met.* 8.668–669)

Next, they put down an engraved mixing vessel of the same silver and cups made of beech wood, coated where they are hollow with yellow wax.

The narrator stresses the simplicity of the mixing vessel: it is made out of the ‘same silver’ as the other tableware, so either terra cotta or wood. Silius glosses this ambiguity with the straightforward word *quercu*: the mixing-vessel is made of wood.⁵⁶

But when it comes to austerity, Falernus even outclasses the pious Philemon and Baucis. Whereas they serve a simple table wine (*Met.* 8.672) and pork (*Met.* 8.647–650), the Campanian farmer offers the god a purely vegetarian meal without any wine: *nulloque cruore | polluta castus mensa Cerealia dona | attulit* (‘and the chaste man brought the gifts of Ceres to the table not polluted by any blood’, 7.182–184). Vegetarianism is a sign of the Golden Age, as the echo of Pythagoras’ speech in the *Metamorphoses* makes clear: *nec polluit ora cruore* (‘[people in the Golden Age] did not pollute their mouths with blood’, *Met.* 15.98).⁵⁷ The implication is that Falernus is still closer in time to this paradisiacal era than Philemon and Baucis, who even intended to kill their sole goose.⁵⁸

In both stories the gods bestow multiple rewards on their hosts, which affect their environment and exceed their own lifetime. Philemon and Baucis are rescued from the flood that washes away their vicinity; their cottage—also

56 Like Silius, Hollis 1970: 121 and Kenney, Tarrant, and Chiarini 2011: 373 understand *eodem* together with the cups, so made of wood. Anderson 1972: 396 and Bömer 1977: 216 think that *eodem* refers back to the earthenware plates on which the food is served, mentioned in the same line (*fictilibus*, *Met.* 8.668). Hyrieus, too, has a terra cotta mixing vessel and beechen cups: *terra rubens crater, pocula fagus erant* (‘the bowl was red earthenware, the cups were beech’, *Fast.* 5.522).

57 Pythagoras repeats this precept in the final line of his speech: *ora cruore uacent* (‘let your mouths be void of blood’, *Met.* 15.478). For another example of the link between vegetarianism and the Golden Age, see Virg. *G.* 2.536–538. The eating of meat is introduced in the Age of Jupiter, see e.g. *G.* 1.139–140.

58 The gods prevent them from doing so (*Met.* 8.688). See Hollis 1970: 119–120.

saved from the deluge—turns into a temple, where the old couple may serve as priests; according to their wish, the one does not outlive the other, as they turn simultaneously into trees, and as such they are worshipped as gods by following generations. Falernus, in turn, enjoys the new wine in the presence of the god, the surrounding hills are covered with vineyards, and Bacchus promises that the new vine will bear his name and will become more famous than existing wines.⁵⁹

A marked difference with the Ovidian model is the lack of punishment. Jupiter and Mercury predict that they will take revenge on the impious neighbours of Philemon and Baucis for refusing hospitality to them: *meritasque luet uicinia poenas | impia* ('this impious neighbourhood will get its due', *Met.* 8.689–690). The ensuing deluge enhances the contrast between the pious couple and their impious neighbours.⁶⁰ In the story of Falernus, however, there is no divine punishment at all, precisely because there is no impiety in his world. That does not mean that destruction is far away, a message that is shimmering through in the description of the next morning:

hinc ubi primo
ungula dispersit rores Phaethontia Phoebo,
 uuiferis late florebat Massicus aruis
 miratus nemora et lucentes sole racemos. (7.205–208)

When the hoofs of Phaethon had dispersed dew with the first Phoebus, the Massicus was widely overgrown with grape-bearing fields and the mountain looked in amazement at its forests and clusters that were shining in the sunlight.

This is a positive ending to the Falernus episode: the whole region is beaming with fertility thanks to the benevolence of Bacchus. At the same time, however, this peaceful image foreshadows the future doom of the vines. Now the grapes are glittering in the sunlight, but the narratees will remember that the Carthaginians have set fire to these same vine-plants: *addunt frugiferis inimica incendia ramos* (7.161).⁶¹ The mention of Phaethon also adds to the ominousness of the scene: did this son of Sol not set the whole earth on fire, as

59 Vessey 1973: 245 argues that also the vision of the god is a reward in itself.

60 Baucis is called *piā* in the beginning of the story (*Met.* 8.631). Otis 1970: 201–203 and 414 points to the contrast between the piety of Philemon and Baucis and the impiety of Erysichthon in the next narrative.

61 Morzadec 2009: 156.

Ovid had famously and extensively told (*Met.* 1.153–332)? Hannibal had shortly before referred to that same story when calling the Po the ‘river of Phaethon’, using the same rare adjective in the same metrical position: *Phaethontius amnis* (7.149).⁶² In that context, Hannibal brought to his soldiers’ mind the image of the river turned red with the blood of the Romans. The image of Sol’s horses dispelling the morning dew also contains a gloomy reference to Turnus’ horses riding over the corpses of his enemies: *spargit rapida ungula rores | sanguineos* (‘the galloping hoofs were spattering the bloody dew around’, *Virg. A.* 12.339–340). Earlier in the *Punica*, Silius had used this same intertext to describe the Gallic cavalry riding over Roman corpses at the Battle of the Ticinus: *ungula pulsu | et circumuolitans taetros e sanguine rores | spargit humo* (‘the hoofs, as they ride round, scatter hideous dew of blood over the ground’, 4.164–166).⁶³ So, although Silius deviates from his theoxenical models in omitting divine punishment, the narrative foreshadows destruction in the main narrative.

5 Lucanian Echoes

The story of Falernus also echoes two hospitality scenes in Lucan’s *Bellum Civile*. In the first, Caesar visits the dwelling of the poor fisherman Amyclas, in the second he is entertained with excessive splendour by Cleopatra.⁶⁴ These intertexts can be interpreted as foil to the benevolence of Bacchus and the hospitality of Falernus. But when reading the Falernus episode against these two scenes, the narratees can also discern some disturbing resemblances between the *Bellum Civile* and the *Punica*.

In the first scene, Lucan playfully incorporates elements of the theoxeny theme into his story.⁶⁵ Caesar wants to cross the sea from Dyrrachium to Italy in

62 Littlewood 2011: 107 notes the similarity between the two passages, but denies any ominous associations in 7.206: “The peace of the Golden Age suffuses even this allusion to Phaëthon’s ride.” In 10.110 Phaethon and Phoebus are again mentioned as a pair; there Littlewood 2017: 81 does acknowledge the “ominous assonances” of the adjective *Phaethontius*. Compare also Marks 2006: 393–395.

63 Spaltenstein 1986: 278. Silius was fond of the image of blood as dew, as he uses it again in 14.486 and 15.363–364. Originally it was a Homeric phenomenon (*Il.* 11.53–54). See also Tarrant 2012: 174.

64 These two scenes resonate in Marus’ narrative, too. For echoes of Caesar’s visit to Amyclas, see Chapter 2, section 4.2; for echoes of his stay in Cleopatra’s palace, see Chapter 2, section 7.1.

65 In particular the visits of Aeneas to Euander in *Aeneid* 8 and the story of Philemon and Baucis. See Matthews 2008: 22–23.

order to summon the troops under the command of Antony to join him against Pompey. In the middle of the night, he leaves his camp without notifying anyone and comes to the house of the fisherman Amyclas—a variant of the usual farmer. Like a god in a theoxeny, Caesar is in disguise, for we are told that he is dressed as a humble man (*plebeio tectus amictu*, Luc. 5.538). Nevertheless, his manner of speaking betrays his true nature—mirroring more or less the usual epiphany. Caesar asks Amyclas for no hospitality, but a crossing to Italy for which the poor fisherman will be generously rewarded:

ne cessa praebere deo tua fata uolenti
angustos opibus subitis implere penates. (Luc. 5.536–537)

Do not delay to present your destiny to the god who wants to fill your humble home with sudden riches.

Caesar seems to suggest that he himself is that god. Although this promise of instant wealth does not seem to impress Amyclas that much, he does comply with Caesar's request (Luc. 5.557–558).

It may be clear that Amyclas echoes the humble host from other theoxenies. His poverty is stressed multiple times (e.g. *pauper Amyclas*, Luc. 5.539) and his home is even more simple than usual, lacking wooden beams for support and being partly covered by an upturned skiff (Luc. 5.516–518).⁶⁶ What connects Falernus with Amyclas more than with other hosts is the contrast between their peaceful life and the war in the surrounding main narrative. Despite the ominous knocking of Caesar upon his house, the fisherman feels no anxiety. This gives occasion for the narrator to praise a poor man's life and to blame people who do not appreciate such a simple lifestyle:

securus belli: praedam ciuilibus armis
scit non esse casas. o *uitae* tuta facultas
pauperis angustique lares! o munera nondum
intellecta deum! (Luc. 5.526–529)

He has no anxiety for war: well he knows that in civil warfare huts are not the loot. O safe the lot of a poor man's life and humble home! O gods' gifts not yet understood!

66 Another similarity is Amyclas' kindling of a smouldering fire (Luc. 5.524–525). His young age is a reversal of the usual seniority of the host. Another deviance is the lack of a meal, for which there is no time as Caesar urges him to board his vessel immediately.

The reference to Amyclas' simple existence rings through in the *Punica*, as Falernus' hut is described as *paruosque lares* (7.173) and his circumstances are called 'poor' twice (*pauperis aeuī*, 7.175 and *pauperis hospitii*, 7.189). According to the Lucanian narrator, people fail to see this carefree life as the real present of the gods; this is picked up by Bacchus' words to Falernus in the *Punica* when he calls the Falernian vine 'gifts still not known to you' (*nondum tibi nota (...)* *munera*, 7.192 and 194).

These intertextual echoes signal that Falernus' life is exactly the condition that Lucan was praising, but also that it is even better than that of Amyclas. The fisherman is, after all, aware of the civil war raging around him: he *knows* that he will not be a victim of it and this makes him carefree. The arrival of Caesar nevertheless causes him to play a part in the civil war, as he becomes Caesar's *ad hoc* helmsman.⁶⁷ Falernus, on the other hand, has no knowledge of warfare at all, as he is living in an age without weapons, let alone civil war: *meliore Falernus in aeuo | ensibus ignotis* (7.166–167).⁶⁸ His rustic life remains untouched by warfare or even any other forms of violence.

Falernus' honest and simple hospitality finds its counterpart in Cleopatra's extravagant reception of Caesar in *Bellum Civile* 10. Lucan makes it clear that Romans at that time were not acquainted with such Eastern luxury: *nondum translatos Romana in saecula luxus* ('[she displayed] luxury that was not yet transferred to the Roman race', Luc. 10.110). Her palace was entirely composed of precious materials (Luc. 10.111–126), and the meal she served up was excessive, consisting of every animal available in her kingdom (Luc. 10.155–159). Interestingly, the wine that is served is not Egyptian, but Italian: the precious cups are filled with Falernian—the only attestation of this wine in the entire *Bellum Civile*:

... gemmaeque capaces
 exceperere merum, sed non Mareotidos uuae,
 nobile sed paucis senium cui contulit annis
 indomitum Meroe cogens spumare Falernum. (Luc. 10.160–163)

... and huge jewelled cups received the wine, but not of Mareotic grape, but noble, fierce Falernian which Meroë had aged in not many years, compelling it to foam.

67 His meteorological knowledge recalls Palinurus in Virg. *A.* 5.13–25. See Matthews 2008: 23 and 142–144.

68 Dominik 2018: 286–288 shows that Silius often links the word *ensis* with civil discord, although he does not cite this passage.

The heat of Egypt is able to make Falernian wine age quickly, which normally requires a long fermentation process.⁶⁹ In the Falernus episode, too, the wine foams immediately, when due to Bacchus 'the beechen cups foamed with the juice of the vine' (*fagina pampineo spumarunt pocula suco*, 7.188). But in this case, the miracle of the god was a 'reward for poor hospitality' (*pauperis hospitii pretium*, 7.189). The effect of this intertextuality with Lucan is therefore one of contrast: Cleopatra uses the Falernian wine, poured in precious cups, to tempt her guest into dealing with her brother. In fact, the unnatural aging of the Italian wine mirrors the corruption of Caesar by the Egyptian luxury surrounding him. Lucan claims that even great and sober Romans from the old days (*nomina pauperis aeui*, Luc. 10.151) would not have been unmoved by such wealth, let alone a general who was waging war against fellow citizens. The exact same verse ending is found in the Falernus episode, where it is stated that the farmer's hospitality was 'in accordance with the rites of a poor age' (*ritu pauperis aeui*, 7.175). This allusion demonstrates that Falernus is one of those poor people of old, still untouched by decadence.

But the allusions to the *Bellum Civile* also lead to a more paradoxical reading of Bacchus' gift to Falernus. Just as Caesar tempts Amyclas with promises of wealth and Cleopatra seduces Caesar with unrestrained luxury, the god of wine rewards the Campanian farmer with a drink he does not strictly need—as he was used to drinking spring water. After having received this gift, Falernus is not able to restrain himself and drinks several cups of the divine liquid, which causes him to become drunk. This inebriety can be seen as a departure from the sober lifestyle he had adhered to so far. Bettenworth observes that excessive drinking is exceptional in epic hospitality scenes. She underestimates, to my opinion, the possible negative undertone of Falernus' inebriety. It is of course much more innocent than the reckless ambition of Caesar or the excessive luxury at Cleopatra's palace, but it does signify a lack of restraint that Falernus had not known before: this is a victory of the eastern, decadent Bacchus over the farmer's former Italic sobriety.⁷⁰

69 E.g. Plin. *Nat.* 23.34, Athen. 26c, Var. *R.* 1.65. See M.G. Schmidt 1986: 244 and Holmes 1990: 111.

70 Bettenworth 2004: 359–360 cites as example the drunkenness of the Cyclops in Hom. *Od.* 9.371–374. In the *Punica*, the banquet in Capua serves as a negative example. She repeatedly states that the inebriety of Falernus is different and should not be viewed negatively, but does not provide an argumentation for the difference (Bettenworth 2004: 359, 374–375, 377). For a negative appraisal of inebriety in general, see e.g. Seneca *Ep.* 83.25.

6 Falernus Overcome by Bacchus

Falernus' transition from drinking water to drinking wine also ties in with meta-poetical connotations of 'water-drinkers' and 'wine-drinkers'. Since Hesiod, drinking spring water is a metaphor for poetic inspiration in general, but from the Hellenistic age onwards, it became associated with Callimachean poetry in particular. This can be traced back to Callimachus' *Hymn to Apollo*, in which he suggests a similarity between creating refined poems and gathering small amounts of pure water from a sacred spring:⁷¹

Δηοὶ δ' οὐκ ἀπὸ παντὸς ὕδωρ φορέουσι μέλισσαι,
ἀλλ' ἤτις καθαρή τε καὶ ἀχράαντος ἀνέρπει
πίδακος ἐξ ἱερῆς ὀλίγη λιβάς ἄκρον ἄωτον. (Call. *Ap.* 110–112)

Not from any source do bees carry water to Demeter, but what creeps up, pure and unpolluted, from a holy spring, a tiny drop, the choicest of waters.

After Callimachus, poets have associated Callimachean poetry with drinking water, whereas the opposite, especially the 'masculine' poetry of Homer or Archilochus, became associated with drinking wine; a famous example is a poem of Antipater of Thessalonica.⁷² Although the exact categories of water-drinkers and wine-drinkers vary, Roman poets use these same metaphors for discerning different poetic styles.⁷³ Horace, after having criticized the water-drinking poets, ranges epic poets with wine-drinkers:

laudibus arguitur uini uinosus Homerus;
Ennius ipse pater numquam nisi potus ad arma
prosiluit dicenda. (Hor. *Ep.* 1.19.6–8)

Homer, by his praises of wine, is convicted as a winebibber. Even Father Ennius never sprang forth to tell of arms save after much drinking.

71 For a discussion of the metapoetics of the Callimachean passage, see F. Williams 1978: 93–97, Heerink 2015: 12–13, and Stephens 2015: 73, 98–99. For the relevance of the *Hymn to Apollo* for another passage in the *Punica*, see Chapter 2, section 7.1.

72 Antipater of Thessalonica *GP* 20 (= *Ant. Pal.* 11.20) with De Jonge (forthcoming). See also Kambylis 1965: 118–122, and Fantuzzi and Hunter 2004: 446–449.

73 Crowther 1979 nuances the sharp distinctions that have been made between the two types. See also De Jonge (forthcoming).

Propertius claims that he is the first to follow the footsteps of Callimachus and Philitas and calls himself 'priest from a pure spring' (*puro de fonte sacerdos*, Prop. 3.1.3), clearly evoking the spring in the *Hymn to Apollo*.⁷⁴ Before Bacchus' arrival, Falernus and his fellow Campanians were used to drink water: *fonte sitim et pura soliti defendere lymphā* ('they were wont to quench their thirst with pure spring water', 7.170). When we read this as an allusion to both Callimachus and Propertius, we can understand it as yet another indication that we are entering a narrative with Callimachean overtones.

The arrival of Bacchus and the discovery of wine change Falernus from a water-drinker into a wine-drinker. At first glance, this change does not indicate a transition to the martial world of epic. On the contrary, the narrator describes the farmer's first drunkenness with some humour, as the tottering old man can barely pronounce his words when he wants to thank the god:

nec facilis laeto certasse, Falerne, saporī,
 postquam iterata tibi sunt pocula, iam pede risum,
 iam lingua titubante moues patrique *Lyaeo*
tempora quassatus grates et praemia digna
 uix intellectis conaris reddere uerbis,
 donec composuit luctantia **lumina Somnus**,
 Somnus, **Bacche**, tibi comes additus. (7.199–205)

It is not easy for you, Falernus, to contend with the joyful juice, and after you had a second cup, you raise a laugh, now with tottering feet, now with tottering tongue. With pounding temples you try to render father Lyaeus the thanks that he deserves with words hardly understandable, until Sleep closed your struggling eyes—Sleep that is joined to you, Bacchus, as your companion.

Commentators have called Silius' description of Falernus 'comical', noting a change in style compared to the epiphany of Bacchus in the previous lines.⁷⁵ Besides comedy, these lines also conjure up the atmosphere of Roman love elegy, in which drunkenness is often a cure for the pangs of love.⁷⁶ In the perception of Roman poets, elegy is Callimachean poetry *par excellence*, and is the genre that is most strongly felt as the opposite of (martial) epic: it revolves

74 Camps 1966: 53. Cf. Prop. 4.6.1–7, where water also has poetical dimensions.

75 Spaltenstein 1986: 459 and Littlewood 2011: 105.

76 Since Antipater of Sidon (*Ant. Pal.* 9.323.5), being 'wine-stricken' (*οἶνονπλήξ*) is a topos in love elegy. Cf. Henderson 1979: 60.

around *otium* and *amor* instead of epic *negotium* and *arma*.⁷⁷ Although Falernus is obviously no elegiac *amator*, his throbbing temples recall those of the desperate lover in the opening lines of Tibullus' second elegy.⁷⁸ The lover, who is not let in by his mistress, wants to drown his suffering in drinking and sleep:

adde merum uinoque nouos compesce dolores,
 occupet ut fessi **lumina** uicta **sopor**;
 neu quisquam multo **percussum tempora** **Baccho**
 excitet, infelix dum requiescit amor. (Tib. 1.2.1–4)

Pour it neat, boy. Discipline fresh misery with drink, letting sleep invade these tired defeated eyes, and when Bacchus in his strength has hit me on the temples see that no one wakes me while unhappy love is at rest.

Silius carefully follows the language of Tibullus: the accusative of respect (*tempora*) with the participle 'hit' (*percussum* ~ *quassatus*) and the metonymy of the god's name for the wine itself (*Baccho* ~ *Lyaeo*) are retained from the model. But whereas Tibullus' lover wants to drink away his sorrows purposefully, the wine strikes Falernus unexpectedly. That Falernus' temples are shaken by wine is also reminiscent of Ovid's *Remedia Amoris*, in which the poet advises to abandon leisure (*otia*);⁷⁹ sleep and wine are, after all, a breeding ground for love and result in mental weakness:

Languor, et inmodici sub nullo uindice **somni**,
 aleaque, et multo **tempora quassa mero**
 eripiunt omnes animo sine uulnere neruos:
 adfluit incautis insidiosus Amor. (Ov. *Rem.* 145–148)

Laziness, and immoderate sleep with no one to check you, and dicing, and temples shaken by much wine rob all people of their mental strength without a wound: insidious Love glides into those who are off guard.

In order to free themselves from the consequences of love, men should instead occupy themselves with warfare, business in the forum or agriculture (*Rem.* 151–224). The Ovidian text also alludes to Tibullus 1.2 (*multo percussum tempora Baccho* ~ *multo tempora quassa mero*), resulting in a window allusion.

77 See Heerink 2015: 17–19 on Roman Callimacheanism.

78 Spaltenstein 1986: 460.

79 Bruère 1958: 495.

That Silius alludes to Tibullus through the Ovidian intertext is flagged by the change of Tibullus' *percussum* into *quassatus*. This indicates that the drunkenness of Falernus is an effect of this harmful *otium* that has replaced his former *negotium* as a farmer. Although the *otium* can be viewed positively as a relief from his heavy labour as a farmer, it can also be read in metapoetical terms and indicate a departure from a simple world towards (elegiac) *luxuria*.

The world of epic seems to be far away. The wine stands for *otium* and *luxuria* as we know it from elegy, so it seems. But there are signs that the wine actually does indicate a change towards the martiality of epic. Let us first have another look at Falernus and the elegiac lover in Tibullus. The latter wishes to be overcome by sleep and wine, using military metaphors: sleep will 'occupy' (*occupet*) his eyes so that they are 'conquered' (*uicta*)—he wants to numb his agony. Silius' text contains similar military imaginary, but there is also an important difference: Falernus fights against the consequences of *luxuria*: the farmer is 'contending' (*certasse*) with the wine and his eyes are 'struggling' (*luctantia*) against Sleep, who is called the 'comrade in arms' (*comes*) of Bacchus.⁸⁰ Finally, however, Falernus has to give in. This is therefore not the carefree sleep that the Tibullan lover longs for, but rather one that forebodes danger.⁸¹ A parallel is the restless sleep of Thebans shortly after the arrival the army of the Seven in Statius' *Thebaid*: *si tenuis demisit lumina somnus | bella gerunt* ('if light sleep cast down their eyes, they were waging wars', *Theb.* 7.463–464). The Thebans are already fighting future battles in their dreams.

Two scenes in the *Punica* of soldiers dying on the battlefield confirm the ominous connotation of Sleep mastering Falernus. The first is the Carthaginian Sychaeus, who was killed by consul Flaminius: *longo componit lumina somno* ('he closes his eyes in a long sleep', 5.529). The second example is the death of a Roman soldier, in a later passage in Book 7: *erratque niger per lumina Somnus* ('black Sleep wanders over his eyes', 7.633). Like in the case of Falernus, Sleep

80 The juxtaposition *comes additus* also has a strong military flavour; it occurs in Virg. *A.* 6.528, referring to Odysseus as member of the death squad entering the room of Deiphobus, and in Stat. *Theb.* 8.184, referring to Amphiaras as a part of the doomed Argive army. In Book 13, the Sibyl points out the 'great cohort' (*quanta cohors*, 13.579) that is menacing the shades in the underworld. One of them is Leanness (*Macies*), who is 'added as a companion to terrible diseases' (*malis comes addita morbis*, 13.581). See Van der Keur 2015: 315 for these and other references.

81 Littlewood 2011: 106 notes that in love elegy wine-induced sleep poses a danger to girls and their protectors. Falernus is neither a *puella* nor a *custos*, but the allusion to this topos adds to the feeling that something is amiss. For the consequences of *luxuria* on Hannibal, see section 8 below.

is here personified.⁸² The deaths of Eurydice in Virgil's *Georgic* and Palinurus in the *Aeneid* are two other scenes that ring through. When Eurydice recedes into the underworld, she shouts to Orpheus: *fata uocant, conditque natantia lumina somnus* ('fate calls me back, and sleep closes my swimming eyes', *G.* 4.496). In the account of Palinurus' death, the god Somnus plays an active role in the drowning of the helmsman:

ecce deus ramum Lethaeo rore madentem
uique *soporatum* Stygia super utraque quassat
tempora, *cunctantique natantia lumina soluit.* (Virg. *A.* 5.854–856)

Look, the god [i.e. Somnus] shakes a bough, dripping with Lethe's dew and soporific by Stygian power, over his temples and frees his swimming eyes despite his efforts.

The sleeping Palinurus falls into the sea, while his sleeping comrades do not hear his calls for help: *socios nequiquam saepe uocantem* ('he often called his comrades in vain', *A.* 5.860). Falernus' struggling eyes in Silius (*luctantia lumina*, 7.204) recall in sound and meaning both Palinurus' 'swimming eyes' (*natantia lumina*) and his resistance against Sleep (*cunctanti*). Falernus, too, was not able to use his voice effectively anymore: *grates et praemia digna | uix intellectis conaris reddere uerbis* ('you try to render [Bacchus] the thanks that he deserves with words hardly understandable', 7.202–203).⁸³ Hardie observes on the Virgilian passage: "We have here a self-contained little episode, an encounter between a mortal and a god which is decisively concluded first by loss of consciousness, and then, as it appears, death by drowning."⁸⁴ The same can be said of Falernus, only that he drowned in wine.

These intra- and intertextual parallels bring to the surface an association between Sleep and Death, which of course has a long literary and iconograph-

82 Delz does not print a capital in 7.633, but the verb *errat* shows that Somnus is here personified, too. An identical verse ending reappears once more in Book 13, when Pomponia is visited by Jupiter, whom she recognized in spite of her sleepy eyes: *implebat quamquam languentia lumina Somnus, | uidi, crede, Iouem* ('although Sleep filled my weary eyes, believe me, I have seen Jupiter', 13.641). Contrastively, this encounter would result not in death, but in the birth of Scipio. See Van der Keur 2015: 345–346.

83 The apostrophe of Falernus echoes that of Palinurus in Virgil (*te ... tibi*, Virg. *A.* 5.840); *uix*, too, is an intertextual allusion, as the word occurs twice in the Palinurus episode (*A.* 5.847 and 5.857).

84 Hardie 1998: 108.

ical pedigree.⁸⁵ This makes the sleep of Falernus, the 'comrade in arms' of Bacchus, less peaceful and elegiac than a superficial reading might suggest. His excessive drinking therefore not only evokes the world of elegy, it also foreshadows the change from his 'Callimachean' world into the world of martial epic.⁸⁶

7 Foaming Cups: Intra- and Intertextual Ramifications

Whereas it is not made explicit that Sleep and wine kill Falernus, the narrative in Book 7 can be seen as a prefiguration of a morbid scene in Book 13: the collective suicide of the Capuan traitors during a dinner. This event takes place when the Romans are laying siege to Capua for having collaborated with Hannibal. Virrius, the leader of Capuans who decided to betray Rome, invites his supporters to his house. Drinking wine will make it easier for them to commit suicide, he claims:

dum copia noctis,
cui cordi **comes** aeterna est Acherontis ad undam
libertas, petat ille meas **mensasque dapesque**
et uictus mentem fuso per membra **Lyaeo**
sopitoque necis morsu medicamina cladis
hauriat ac placidis exarmet fata uenenis. (13.270–275)

As long as there is plenty of night, let him, who wants to have liberty as eternal companion at the water of the Acheron, come to my table and meal. And let him, whose mind Lyaeus has conquered by spreading through the limbs, thus having soothed the sting of death, take the medicine of defeat and disarm fate with peaceful venom.

The language of this banquet recalls the meal at Falernus' hut, but now Bacchus has become an assistant in committing suicide.⁸⁷ In the final part of this

85 One can think of Sarpedon, whose body is removed from the battlefield by the twins Hypnos and Thanatos in *Il.* 16.671–683. Hardie 1998: 109 gives some other Homeric examples. In Virgil, Sleep is called 'of the same blood as Death' (*consanguineus Leti Sopor*, *A.* 6.278).

86 In *Aetia* fr. 178.11–12 (Harder), Callimachus poses himself as a moderate drinker, like Icus he is sitting next to. This guest is the narrator of the next *aition* and therefore wine-drinking seems to have an underlying metapoetical significance; see Scodel 1980: 39–40 and Harder 2012: 972.

87 E.g.: *mensasque dapesque ~ mensae*, 7.176 and *dapes*, 7.181; *Lyaeo ~ Lyaeo*, 7.201.

sinister feast, cups foaming with venom replace the wine. The goddess Fides transforms into a Fury and serves these poisonous drinks in person:⁸⁸

**ipsa etiam Stygio spumantia pocula tabo
porrigit et large poenas letumque ministrat.** (13.294–295)

She herself hands them the cups foaming with Stygian poison and serves punishment and death in abundance.

These lines are a clear echo of the wine wonder in the Falernus episode: *subito, mirabile dictu, | fagina pampineo spumarunt pocula suco* ('suddenly, wondrous to tell, the beechen cups foamed with the juice of the vine', 7.187–188). The context of foaming cups in Falernus' cottage has been changed drastically: from a cheerful epiphany in Book 7 to a collective suicide in Book 13, where the boundaries between Heaven and Hell have become blurred.⁸⁹

This intratextual echo also has an intertextual dimension: in the first book of Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* we find a very similar reversal. There, too, foaming cups of wine are foreshadowing a suicidal scene later in the same book. The first passage comes from the festivities of the Argonauts before their departure to Colchis. Achilles was sitting on the lap of his father Peleus, one of the crewmembers. The little child was not impressed by the cups of wine: *illum nec ualido spumantia pocula Baccho | sollicitant* ('the cups foaming with strong Bacchus do not attract his attention', V. Fl. 1.260–261). These Valerian lines are echoed in the wine cups of 7.188, not only on a verbal level, but also in word order and sound: *fagina pampineo spumarunt pocula suco*. The foaming cups of venom in *Punica* 13, in turn, are reminiscent of a scene at the end of *Argonautica* 1, where Jason's father Aeson together with his mother commits suicide, aided by one of the Furies:

**adstitit et nigro spumantia pocula tabo
contigit ipsa graui Furiarum maxima dextra;
illi auide exceptum pateris hausere cruorem.** (V. Fl. 1.815–817)

88 Van der Keur 2015: 165 rightly argues that Fides becomes a Fury. Especially convincing for this interpretation is his argument that Fides is already acting as a Fury in an earlier stage (*furiare*, 13.279). He also compares the furibund Venus in the Lemnos episode in V. Fl. 2.101–106. Others, like Spaltenstein 1990: 226, understand a Fury, not to be identified with Fides, to have appeared suddenly.

89 For this phenomenon in Flavian epic, see Hardie 1993: 76–87.

The eldest of the Furies stands nearby and touches with her heavy hand the cups that are foaming with black venom. Eagerly they drank the blood taken from the bowls.

In this case, the cups are foaming with venomous bull's blood.⁹⁰ However, the suicide, the role of the Fury, and other verbal and sound repetitions confirm that *Punica* 13 is a reworking of this scene.⁹¹

Silius repeats the order of the two Valerian scenes when referring to foaming cups: first in a positive, then in a negative context.⁹² In the case of Falernus, the foaming cups of wine are a divine miracle, but they return as a means of the Fury to bring about the suicide of the Capuan senators in Book 13. Likewise, the cups of wine were used in a happier context of feasting in the beginning of Book 1 of the *Argonautica* and in a much gloomier situation at the end of it, when Jason's parents commit suicide at the instigation of the Furies. This second, negative use of the cups in retrospect also casts a shadow over its earlier use. The departure of his son on a heroic quest has at least contributed to Aeson's decision to end his life: the threat of his brother Pelias urges him to meet the heroic standards of his son (mentioned first!), ancestors, and his own heroism in earlier wars:

magnos obitus *natumque* domumque
et genus Aeolium pugnataque poscere bella. (V. Fl. 1.769–770)

His son, his house, his Aeolian race and previous wars all demanded a glorious death.

Likewise, the foaming cups in Falernus' cottage are foreshadowing the suicide of the Capuans in Book 13. The inhabitants of this city serve as a foil to Falernus, as they are living more or less in the same area, close to the *ager Falernus*, but

90 Taking these intratextual and intertextual parallels into account, I follow Heinsius' reading of *spumantia* instead of *fumantia*, which was also in the *Codex Coki* according to Burmannus 1724: 255. For these and other arguments in favour of the reading *spumantia*, see Heerink and Van den Broek: 2022. For a defence of *fumantia*, see Kleywegt 2005: 471–472. Zissos 2008, although maintaining *fumantia*, translates 'foaming'.

91 The intertext between *Punica* 13.294–295 and the *Argonautica* has been acknowledged since Ripoll 1999: 513–514. See also Zissos 2008: 409 and Van der Keur 2015: 166. The intertextual play between V. Fl. 1.260–261 and the foaming cups in the Falernus episode has not been noticed.

92 So, the intratextuality between the two passages in Silius is in fact intertextual, because it is based upon the intratextuality in Valerius Flaccus.

are leading a life of unbridled *luxuria*. The wine of Bacchus has corrupted them in such a way that they changed it into a means of killing themselves.

8 The Falernus Episode and Hannibal's Downfall

Capua is an important turning point in the epic. Its collaboration with Hannibal first seems to help the Carthaginians in weakening Rome even more after the destructive Battle of Cannae, but after their hibernation in Capua (Book 11), Hannibal's soldiers and the general himself are enfeebled by the luxury of their hosts. The former vigour has disappeared and from this moment onwards the Romans will increase their military successes, which culminate in the Battle of Zama at the end of the *Punica*. So, paradoxically, the moral decay of Capua helps the Romans to overcome their archenemy. Hospitality in general and wine in particular play an important role in the weakening of the Carthaginians. In this light, the Falernus episode can be read as a foreshadowing of the defeat of the Carthaginian army, as I will argue in this section.⁹³

The desertion of Rome's former ally is salient, because one of Aeneas' companions, Capys, was its founder. Silius stresses this common Trojan origin of the two cities at the beginning of Book 11: *Dardana ab ortu | moenia barbarico Nomadum sociata tyranno* ('[who could believe] that a city of Trojan origin would become an ally of a barbarian tyrant of Nomads?', 11.30–31). The narrator's explanation for the betrayal is the excessive luxury and wealth of the Capuans, which caused them to become morally depraved (11.32–43). An example is their ancient habit of gladiatorial fights during meals, which often resulted in a bloody spectacle: *saepe et super ipsa cadentum | pocula respersis non parco sanguine mensis* ('often the combatants even fell on top of the cups and the tables were splattered by no small amounts of their blood', 11.53–54). This is a first indication that we should view the Capuans as the opposite of Falernus. While their tables are covered in blood, Falernus' table has not even been polluted by animal blood (*nulloque cruore | polluta ... mensa*, 7.182–183). The moral depravity of the Capuans is in strong contrast with Falernus' frugal dinner habits.

When Hannibal and his men are invited to enter the city, they are regaled with an excessive dinner party. This luxurious hospitality is again the opposite

93 See also Morzadec 2009: 157–158. On the role of Capua in the *Punica*, see Pyy and Van der Keur 2019.

of the simple country dishes that Falernus serves 'according to the habit of his ancestors' (*de more parentum*, 7.177). The Capuans have diametrically opposed habits:

instituunt **de more** epulas festamque per urbem
 regifice exstructis celebrant conuiuia mensis.
 ipse deum cultu et sacro dignatus honore (11.270–272)

According to their habits they prepare meals and give banquets throughout the festive city with tables piled up in a regal manner. He [i.e. Hannibal] himself is deemed worthy the worship of gods and sacred honour.

The theoxenical character of the Falernus episode also rings through, as Hannibal is honoured as a god.⁹⁴ But instead of one sedulous old man, throngs of servants are serving the Carthaginian guests (11.274–276). The tough soldiers are looking at this splendour in amazement, unused to such refinement and wealth.⁹⁵ First, Hannibal frowns upon this display of luxury in his honour: *tantos damnat honores* ('he condemns honour of such measure', 11.283). But finally, he, too, gives in to the abundance of food and wine: *pulsa fames et Bacchi munera duram | laxarunt mentem* ('the expulsion of his hunger and the gifts of Bacchus made his mind relax', 11.285–286). The phrase 'gifts of Bacchus' recalls the reward of the god in Book 7, where the god himself speaks about wine as his *munera* (7.194). These echoes of the theoxeny in Book 7 invite a comparison between the characters of the two episodes. The Carthaginian general is indulging in the hospitality of the Capuans, just as Bacchus enjoyed the hospitality of Falernus. On the other hand, Hannibal mirrors Falernus, who was overcome by the gift of Bacchus; now the god of wine holds the Carthaginians firmly in his grasp.

The dinner at Capua almost becomes fatal for Hannibal, as the Capuan Perolla planned an assault on the general. The narrator apostrophizes this young man, stating that he cannot pass over his plan in silence.⁹⁶

94 See Bettenworth 2004: 381.

95 Cf. Caesar and his Romans banqueting at Cleopatra's palace in *Bellum Civile* 10. See section 5 above.

96 Silius nowhere mentions his name, but the story of Perolla is told at length by Livy (23.8–9). On this episode in the *Punica*, see Bernstein 2008: 145–150 and Stocks 2014: 143–146.

neque enim, iuuenis non digne sileri,
 tramittam tua coepta libens famamque negabo
 quamquam imperfectis, magnae tamen indolis, ausis (11.304–306)

For I would not want, young man worthy to be mentioned, pass over your deeds in silence and I will not deny fame to the endeavours of great ingenuity, though they were unsuccessful.

This introduction is reminiscent of the opening lines of the Falernus episode, where the narrator apostrophizes Bacchus in a similar way:⁹⁷

haud fas, Bacche, tuos tacitum transmittere honores,
 quamquam magna incepta uocent. (7.162–163)

It is not permitted, Bacchus, to pass over your honours in silence, although a great enterprise is calling upon me.

Perolla is in a way put on a par with Bacchus in Book 7, in that his story deserves to be told by the primary narrator. In this sense, it is surprising that the young man is the only person in Capua who has remained sober, as the narrator explicitly states:

mens una, inuiolata mero nullisque uenenis
 potando exarmata decus (11.307–308)

He was the only one whose mind was untouched by wine and whose honour was not disarmed by drinking any of this poison.

Perolla is therefore the only person in Capua not under Bacchus' spell. The narrator presents the 'gift of Bacchus' in a very negative way, calling it 'poison' that has the power to rob a person of his honour. The fact that Perolla was not intoxicated made it possible for him to plan the assassination of Hannibal. Finally, he did not manage to carry out his plan, as the narrator had already anticipated by the phrase *quamquam imperfectis*. His father Pacuvius, the leader of Capua, prevents Perolla from attacking Hannibal by imploring his son not to violate the rules of hospitality and not to cause a massacre:

97 The narrator has prepared for this intratextual allusion by naming the god twice in the preceding sentence: the soldiers follow Hannibal in pouring wine (*Bacchique ... liquorem*, 11.301) in libation and grow heated by drinking (*ardescitque Lyaeo*, 11.302).

absiste inceptis, oro, ne **sanguine** cernam
polluta hospitia ac **tabo** repleta **cruento**
pocula et euersas pugnae certamine **mensas**. (11.334–336)

Abandon your undertaking, I beg you, lest I see hospitality polluted by blood, cups filled with bloody gore and tables overturned by strife.

Pacuvius' words sound as if they were those of Falernus, who truly had 'a table not polluted by any blood' (*nulloque cruore* | *polluta ... mensa*, 7.182–183). The words of this father are, however, rather hypocritical when we take into account how bloody Capuan dinners often get: *saepe et super ipsa cadentum* | *pocula respersis non parco sanguine mensis* ('often the combatants even fell on top of the cups and the tables were splattered by no small amounts of their blood', 11.53–54).⁹⁸ Pacuvius convinces his son to abandon his plot against Hannibal.

When revealing his plans, Perolla had called them 'greater undertakings' (*inceptis ... maioribus*, 11.323). This recalls the narrator's reference to his own epic undertaking at the start of the Falernus episode: *magna incepta* (7.163).⁹⁹ The primary narrator continues his epic narrative after the 'Callimachean' Falernus episode. Perolla's potential epic glory, however, yields to wine and sleep. Returning with his father to the dinner party, he drowns his sorrow in feasting until he is overcome by sleep (11.361–368). So, in Book 11 Hannibal is victim of Bacchus, but paradoxically his life is saved under the influence of the same god: Perolla, the one Capuan that up to now was unaffected by wine, falls victim to excessive drinking.¹⁰⁰

After this failed assassination plan, the deterioration of Carthaginian valour continues. This time the moving force is Venus, who plans to destroy the Carthaginians by luxury. The goddess is about to launch a new assault:

nec Venerem interea fugit exoptabile tempus
 Poenorum mentes caeco per laeta premendi
 exitio et luxu corda importuna domandi. (11.385–387)

98 At the same time, the words of Pacuvius are ironical, as they foreshadow his own death. The Capuan traitors commit suicide by drinking poison during a dinner: *Stygio spumantia pocula tabo* ('cups foaming with Stygian venom', 13.294).

99 For the epic connotations of *magnus*, cf. Virgil's proem to the second half of the *Aeneid*: *maior rerum mihi nascitur ordo*, | *maius opus moueo* ('a greater sequence of deeds is produced by me, a greater work I set in motion', *A.* 7.44–45).

100 For the idea of Hannibal as a victim of Bacchus, see Tipping 2010: 76–77 and Vessey 1973: 245–246.

Meanwhile Venus, too, did not miss out this welcome opportunity to oppress the minds of the Carthaginians with invisible destruction disguised as joy and to tame their savage hearts with luxury.

The goddess instructs her Cupids to break the fierceness of the Carthaginians, for which wine is an important weapon. After the enemy has been overcome by wine, other forms of indulgence will follow:

... discatque Lyaeo
 imbellem donare diem. tum deinde madenti
 post epulas sit grata chelys, segnisque soporas
 aut nostro uigiles ducat sub numine noctes. (11.406–409)

... and let [Hannibal] learn to offer a warless day to Lyaeus. Then, let him enjoy the lyre when he is soaking drunk after meals and spend the night in lazy sleep or stay awake under my power.

After this exhortation the Cupids get to work. The Carthaginians embrace the luxury that is brought to them: *Bacchi dona uolunt epulasque et carmina rursus | Pieria liquefacta lyra* ('again, they want the gifts of Bacchus and meals and songs that are made sweet by a Pierian lyre', 11.414–415). This is an echo of the earlier drinking scene of the Carthaginians, when they indulged in 'the gifts of Bacchus' (*Bacchi munera*, 11.285). Due to Venus' workings, the Carthaginians immerse themselves in luxury and wine again (*rursus*).

The word *rursus* is also an intratextual signpost to the Falernus episode: once more, Bacchus' gifts have a destructive force. Therefore, the repetition of the names Bacchus and Lyaeus in Book 11 is not just a conventional metonymy for wine, but stresses the involvement of the god in the weakening of the Carthaginians. Hannibal is completely defeated by luxury: the narrator states that Capuan vices had a harmful effect on his character in contrast to his previous successes on the battlefield: *intactumque secundae | fortunae ingenium uitia allicientia quassant* ('enticing vices shook his character that had remained untouched by his success', 11.425–426).

From this moment onwards, the force of the Carthaginians is broken and they will achieve no major victories anymore. This becomes clear when the war narrative continues in Book 12:

sed non ille uigor, qui ruptis Alpibus arma
 intulerat dederatque uias Trebiaque potitus
 Maeonios Italo scelerauit sanguine fluctus,

tunc inerat. molli luxu *madefacta meroque*,
illecebris somni torpentia membra fluebant. (12.15–19)¹⁰¹

They did no longer have the vigour, which had broken the Alps and made way for armed combat, which had conquered Trebia, which had polluted the Maeonian streams with Italian blood. Their limbs were lax, drenched in soft luxury and wine, inactive by seductive sleep.

Wine and sleep have overcome the Carthaginians. They have become similar to the Capuans who invited them into their city and who had already been corrupted by luxury (11.32–54).¹⁰² The stay in Capua has turned out to be a crucial turning point in the war. It is as if Bacchus repays Hannibal for having destroyed the Falernian vineyards in Book 7, by subduing his army with wine.¹⁰³

9 Bacchus as an Unstable Exemplar in the *Punica*

Bacchus is often used for legitimizing divine rule and conquest. This paradigm has a long pedigree, going back to the time of Alexander the Great and frequently found in Augustan literature.¹⁰⁴ Like Hercules, with whom Bacchus is often paired, the god is no straightforward example of benevolence, but rather a two-faced divinity: on the one hand he is a cultivator, bringing viniculture to other parts of the world, on the other he stands for violent and suppressive autocracy.¹⁰⁵ In the *Punica*, too, we see reflections of this ambiguity. In this section I will explore this double image of Bacchus in the *Punica* in order to get a clearer view on his role in the Falernus episode.

From Book 1 onwards, we find references to Bacchus as a god of fertility. Spain is called 'not inhospitable to Bacchus' (*nec inhospita Baccho*, 1.237) and the mountains around Sorrentum are 'fertile due to Bacchus' (*felicia Bac-*

101 Together with Duff, I do not print a comma after *somni* (12.19).

102 The connection is enforced by the repetitions of *luxus* (11.32 ~ 12.18) and *madefacta* (11.40 ~ 12.18).

103 Capua is also a turning point in the Punic War in Livy (23.18.10–16). For more references, see Matier 1980: 391.

104 See Austin 1977: 246–247 for some examples. Mark Antony associated himself with Dionysus in order to legitimize his authority in both the East and the West. The god's associations with luxury and Otherness made this image problematic, as Zanker 1987: 65–73 shows.

105 Tipping has argued that the exemplary role of Bacchus is similar to that of Hercules: "both are unstable exemplars" (2010: 80).

cho, 5.465). In these cases, Bacchus stands for the viniculture of the areas mentioned.¹⁰⁶ In Book 7 Bacchus is presented as bestower of blessings (*largitor*, 7.164), contrasting with Hannibal who takes on the role of the aggressive violator of the Italian landscape. Bacchic fertility as opposed to Carthaginian destruction returns briefly after the Battle of Cannae. From the battlefield the enemy marches straight to Rome, laying waste to the Campanian countryside once again: *hinc Allifanus Iaccho | haud inamatus ager nymphisque habitata Casini | rura euastantur* ('next they destroyed the farmland of Allifae, loved by Iacchus, and the countryside of Casinum, inhabited by nymphs', 12.526–528). The use of Bacchus' cult name Iacchus invites the narratees to connect this passage with the earlier Falernus episode, which contains the only other attestation of this name in the *Punica* (7.187).¹⁰⁷ Once more Hannibal's troops are destroying an idyllic landscape that was dear to the god of wine—a rehearsal of the Carthaginian destructiveness in the same region in Book 7.¹⁰⁸ Once again, a Bacchic landscape falls victim to the aggression of Hannibal.

In other places in the *Punica*, Bacchus figures rather as a god of conquest. This is especially apparent from a short episode in Book 3, where the narrator tells about the god's subjection of Spain:¹⁰⁹

tempore quo Bacchus populos domitabat Hiberos
 concutiens **thyrs**o atque armata Maenade **Calpen**
 lasciuo genitus Satyro nymphaque Myrice
 Milichus indigenis late regnarat in oris
 cornigeram attollens genitoris imagine frontem. (3.101–105)

Since the time when Bacchus subdued the peoples of Spain, shaking Calpe to its foundation with his thyrsus and his armed troupe of Maenads, Milichus, born from a lustful Satyr and the nymph Myrice, held sway far and wide over his indigenous coasts, bearing horns on his forehead, like those of his father.

106 Other examples are 14.24 and 15.177 on viniculture in Sicily and Tarraco in Spain respectively.

107 See Telg genannt Kortmann 2018: 127 n.44, who suspects an intratextual reminiscence, but does not explain how we have to understand it.

108 Compare 12.526–528 with the resumption of the main narrative after the Falernus episode: *haec tum uasta dabat terrisque infestus agebat | Hannibal* ('this was the land which Hannibal then was destroying and treated violently', 7.212–213).

109 Bacchus' conquest of Spain is also told by Varro according to Pliny the Elder (*Nat.* 3.8).

That Bacchus and his companions were aggressive invaders is apparent from words like *domitabat*, *concutiens*, and *armata*. The local nymph Myrice is victim of sexual aggression by one of Bacchus' satyrs, as his epithet *lasciuus* seems to imply.¹¹⁰ The topography is relevant here, for Calpe is the place where Bacchus is heading in the Falernus episode: *attulit hospitio pergentem ad litora Calpes | extremumque diem pes dexter et hora Lyaeum* ('a lucky step and hour brought Lyaeus at the end of the day to this hospitable home, while he was travelling to the coast of Calpe', 7.171–172).¹¹¹ The repetition of this toponym makes clear that the story of Falernus has to be read as the prequel to Bacchus' western campaign.¹¹² Vessey states: "His beneficent and creative activity in Campania is set in symbolic antithesis to the destruction and havoc caused by Hannibal, who had come from victory in Spain to further triumphs in Italy."¹¹³ However, the beneficial role of Bacchus in Book 7 can be questioned, since the narratees have already learned about his violent conquest of Spain that follows after his departure from Italy.

The Falernus episode contains yet another allusion to the Spanish campaign of Bacchus. The thyrsus, the weapon of the Menaeds in 3.102, is echoed in the epiphany of Bacchus in Book 7:¹¹⁴

inde nitentem
lumine **purpureo frontem** **cinxere corymbi**,
et fusae per colla comae, dextraque **pendit**
cantharus, ac **uitis thyrso** delapsa **uirenti**
festas Nysaeo redimiuit **palmite** mensas. (7.194–198)

Next, his head, shining with a purple light, was wreathed with ivy-berries, his locks flowed over his neck, from his right hand a drinking cup hang

110 See Tipping 2010: 80. Hannibal's wife Imilce is a descendant of this Milichus. Sexual aggression returns in a more explicit scene later in Book 3, when Hercules is told to have raped the girl Pyrene (3.415–441). Strikingly, Bacchus again plays a role here, as Hercules comes to his deed due to inebriation: the hero is 'possessed by Bacchus' (*possessus Baccho*, 3.423).

111 Spaltenstein 1986: 190 and 457 observes this parallel.

112 Bacchus' conquest of the East is much more famous, e.g. A.R. 2.905–910, *Ov. Met.* 4.20–21, *Virg. A.* 6.804–805, and *Sen. Oed.* 113–116. In Euripides' *Bacchae*, however, the god is travelling from East to West (*Ba.* 13–16). See Töchterle 1994: 222.

113 Vessey 1973: 241.

114 The thyrsus is a common attribute of Bacchus and his followers, but is mentioned only three times in the *Punica*. The other attestation of this word is 3.393.

down, and the vine descending from his green thyrsus wrapped the festive tables with branches from Nysa.

Bacchus 'conquers' Campania by introducing the vine from his native mountain Nysa in the East (*Nysaeo ... palmite*), which takes over Falernus' hut and later the whole countryside.¹¹⁵ This is much less aggressive than his conquest of Spain, where Calpe is shaking in terror due to Bacchus' thyrsus and his Maenads.

But even this rather peaceful conquest of Campania in Book 7 is not unproblematic. The epiphany of the god alludes to two scenes from the *Metamorphoses* where the god shows his vengeful side. In *Metamorphoses* 3, the ship of the Tyrrhenian sailors was covered by the same ivy-berries (*corymbi*) before the crew was transformed into dolphins.¹¹⁶ Right after this Bacchic hijacking of the ship, the god transforms into his divine self, shaking a spear, while his forehead was wreathed with grapes:¹¹⁷

impediunt hederæ remos nexuque recuruo
serpunt et grauidis distinguunt uela **corymbis**.
ipse racemiferis **frontem circumdatus** uuis
pampineis agitat uelatam frondibus hastam. (Ov. *Met.* 3.664–667)

Ivy hinders the oars, snaking up with winding bindings and decks the sails with heavy ivy-berries. The god himself, with his forehead garlanded with clusters of grapes, shakes a spear covered with vine-leaves.

An even clearer example is the punishment of the daughters of Minyas.¹¹⁸ Before they are transformed into bats, their loom is overtaken by Bacchic vegetation, even producing a purple glow:

resque fide maior, coepere **uirescere** telae
inque hederæ faciem **pendens** frondescere uestis;
pars abit in **uities** et, quae modo fila fuerunt,

115 For Nysa as the birth place of Bacchus, see *h.Hom.* 1.8–10 with Allen, Halliday, and Sikes 1936: 103–104.

116 These are the only attestations of this word in both the *Metamorphoses* and the *Punica*.

117 For the parallel, see also Bruère 1958: 494, Von Albrecht 2011: 110, and Littlewood 2011: 104–105.

118 Only Spaltenstein 1986: 459 briefly mentions this parallel.

palmite mutantur; de stamine pampinus exit;
purpura fulgorem pictis accommodat uuis. (Ov. *Met.* 4.394–398)

Something beyond belief, their looms turned green and the hanging cloth was overgrown with ivy-leaves. A part became vine and what were just now threads changed into vine-branches. From the warp vine-leaves came down. The purple tapestry matches its brightness to the variegated grapes.¹¹⁹

These intratextual and intertextual allusions problematize a sheer positive appraisal of Bacchus' arrival and epiphany in Book 7: he is not merely a benefactor, but can also be a violent and overpowering god, as Euripides had already made amply clear in his *Bacchae*.¹²⁰ The contrast between Bacchus and the Carthaginian general therefore also becomes less stark. They are both conquerors, the one heading *to* Spain, the other departing *from* there.

Bacchus' destination of his western campaign is highly symbolic. Calpe is not only a metonym for the most western extremity of the world, but also the location where Hercules—on his way to the monster Geryon in Gades—is thought to have erected the pillars that were named after him. That Bacchus is following the footsteps of Hercules is made clear at the beginning of the Falernus episode. The initial word of 7.171 (*attulit*) is one of the allusions to Hercules' arrival at Euander's dwelling, as the king tells his guest Aeneas: *attulit et nobis aliquando optantibus aetas | auxilium aduentumque dei* ('time once brought to us the help and arrival of a god, when we were wishing for it', Virg. *A.* 8.200–201).¹²¹ Hercules came to Pallanteum when he was driving Geryon's

119 Commentators usually understand *purpura* as referring to the tapestry and *pictis ... uuis* to the real grapes, see e.g. Barchiesi et al. 2007: 294. The language is, however, ambiguous as the sentence can also be understood the other way around: 'the purple colour (of the real grapes) matches its brightness to the painted grapes (on the tapestry)'. This is exactly the point: nature and art become indistinguishable.

120 In Statius' *Thebaid*, too, the god is portrayed as a conqueror, with in his train personifications of Ira, Furor, Metus, Virtus, and Ardor (*Theb.* 4.652–663, with Parkes 2012: 286). Another text that rings through is the 'Bacchic ode' in Seneca's *Oedipus*. The Theban chorus evokes the god thus: *effusam redimite comam nutante corymbo, | mollia Nysaeis armatus brachia thyrsis, | lucidum caeli decus, huc ades* ('bright glory of heaven, garland your flowing hair with nodding ivy-berries, you whose hands are armed with the thyrsus from Nysa, please come here', Sen. *Oed.* 403–405). *Armata Maenade* in 3.102 might be an echo of this same Senecan passage, also because we have to suppose those Maenads to be armed with thyrsi. For the idea, see already Euripides (*Θύρσοις ... ὠπλισμέναι*, *Ba.* 773).

121 See Littlewood 2011: 98–99, who also compares 7.173–174 with Virg. *A.* 8.362–365. See also n.53 above.

cattle back from Spain, while Bacchus is still heading for Spain. Hannibal also portrays himself as a successor to Hercules in travelling this route.¹²² This is for example apparent in the speech to his men just before the Battle of Cannae: *Herculeis iter a metis ad Iapygis agros | uincendo emensi* ('you have traversed victoriously from the Pillars of Hercules to the Iapygian fields', 9.185–186). Hannibal portrays himself as a powerful conqueror, like Hercules and Bacchus before him.

In the second part of the *Punica*, after the Battle of Cannae, Scipio rather than Hannibal is the character most readily associated with Bacchus and Hercules.¹²³ Two passages in particular bring this to the fore. The first is Virtus' speech in Book 15, when the goddess promises the Roman general eternal glory:

at quis aetherii seruatur seminis ortus,
caeli porta patet. referam quid cuncta domantem
Amphitryoniadem? quid, cui, post Seras et **Indos**
captiuo **Liber** cum signa referret ab Euro,
Caucaseae **currum duxere per oppida tigres?** (15.77–81)

For those in whom the issue of heavenly seed is preserved, the gate of heaven stands open. Why should I mention the son of Amphitryon, who tamed everything? Why should I mention Liber, who, after subduing the Chinese and Indians, brought back military standards from the conquered East, whose chariot was brought through cities by Caucasian tigers?

According to Virtus, Scipio is the rightful successor to Bacchus and Hercules. This is affirmed by the primary narrator at the end of the entire epic. In the triumphal procession, images of the conquered areas are shown, among them Calpe: *laudibus olim | terminus Herculeis Calpe* ('Calpe, once the limit of Hercules' honour', 17.637–638). Scipio is therefore following in the footsteps of Hercules, assuming the honour that once belonged to the Greek hero. After the Roman citizens have looked in amazement at a picture of Hannibal fleeing from the battlefield, the focus turns to Scipio. His appearance in the triumphal procession is explicitly compared to that of Bacchus and Hercules:

122 For Hercules as exemplar of Hannibal, see e.g. Stocks 2014: 218–221.

123 Marks 2005: 222–227 and Tipping 2010: 16 and 46.

qualis odoratis **descendens Liber** ab Indis
egit pampineos frenata **tigride currus**,
 aut cum Phlegraeis confecta mole Gigantum
 incessit campis tangens Tiryntius astra. (17.647–650)

So looked Liber, when he came down from the fragrant Indians, driving his chariot, that was wreathed in vine-leaves and drawn by tigers, and so looked the Tiryntian when he drove over the fields of Phlegra after having killed the huge Giants, reaching with his head the stars.

These lines are the realization of Virtus' prophecy: Scipio has become as triumphant as Bacchus and Hercules once were. The image of Bacchus riding on a chariot drawn by tigers is exactly as Virtus had pictured the triumph of the wine god in Book 15. But we should also recall Anchises' prophecy in *Aeneid* 6. There, Aeneas is told that Augustus will surpass the conquests of Hercules and Bacchus:

nec qui **pampineis** uictor iuga flectit habenis
Liber, agens celso Nysae **de** uertice **tigris**. (Virg. *A.* 6.804–805)

Not [did] Liber [cover so much of the earth], who steered his chariot with reins of vine-branches, driving his tigers from the lofty peak of Nysa.

Apart from the similar imagery of a chariot drawn by tigers, there are two more resemblances. The first are the vine-leaves on the chariot, as the repetition of the rare adjective *pampineus* in the same metrical *sedes* underlines.¹²⁴ This detail of Scipio's chariot was also subtly foreshadowed in the Falernus episode.¹²⁵ The second similarity is Bacchus' route: in the *Aeneid* he descends from Mount Nysa in India, where he was born, in the *Punica* he descends 'from the fragrant Indians' (*odoratis ... ab Indis*). This phrase suggests that Bacchus introduced viniculture to the Indians, too. Again, we can see a subtle reference to the Falernus episode, where we read about the miraculous wine that comes from 'fragrant grapes' (*odoratis ... ab uuis*, 7.191). The fact that both Roman

124 Albeit in a different function: in Silius the vines seem to be decorative, in Virgil they are used as reins. The adjective *pampineus* is probably a Virgilian coinage (Horsfall 2013 vol. 2: 549).

125 In the *Punica*, the only other attestation of this adjective comes from the Falernus episode, where wine is called *pampineo ... suco* (7.188).

leaders are compared to Bacchus in a very similar way makes it plausible to see Scipio as a prefiguration of Augustus.¹²⁶

The other Roman that is compared to Bacchus in the *Punica* (and is actually said to surpass him) is Domitian.¹²⁷ Jupiter prophesied that the emperor's conquests in the East will outdo those of Bacchus:

hic et ab Arctoo **currus aget** axe **per urbem**,
 ducet et Eoos **Baccho** cedente triumphos. (3.614–615)

From the North Pole he [i.e. Domitian] will drive his chariot through the city and he will lead triumphal processions for victories in the East, to which Bacchus yields.

Again, we see a leader driving a chariot, although the tigers are absent.¹²⁸ Another difference is that Domitian will celebrate his triumphal processions in the only *urbs* that really matters: Rome; Bacchus did so through anonymous *oppida* (15.81). Just like Augustus in the prophecy of Anchises, Domitian will surpass the conquests of his divine counterpart.¹²⁹

The Falernus episode might also implicitly refer to another association between Domitian and Bacchus. Around AD 91, Domitian issued the so-called vine edict. Suetonius (*Dom.* 7.2) informs us that the emperor ordered that no more vines were to be planted in Italy and that the existing vineyards were to be cut down by half.¹³⁰ This measure was taken because of a shortage of corn, according to Suetonius, but Statius frames it as a moral, rather than an economic decision in his *Silvae*:

qui **castae Cereri** diu **negata**
 reddit iugera **sobriasque terras** (Stat. *Silv.* 4.3.11–12)

126 Tipping 2010: 187–188.

127 For Hercules and Bacchus as models for Domitian, see Marks 2005: 222–227.

128 Driving a chariot is a well-known metaphor for leading a state, see e.g. Virg. *G.* 1.512–514 with Balot 1998: 92. For the topos in Statius, see Rebggiani 2013 and 2018: 101–110.

129 The narrator probably implies that the Flavian emperor will even outdo Augustus. See Tipping 2010: 188. Another example of Domitian surpassing Bacchus is found in Mart. 8.26. Martial describes the triumphal arch that commemorated Domitian's northern campaign against the Sarmatians (*Arctoi ... belli*, Mart. 8.65.3). On top of the arch stood a golden statue of Domitian steering two chariots (*currus*, Mart. 8.65.9), each drawn by two elephants.

130 See Coleman 1988: 107 and Jones 1992: 77–78.

[Domitian] who [as censor] restores to chaste Ceres acres long denied to her, sober fields.

It seems as if Silius is commenting on this Statian text when he says that a 'chaste' Falernus 'brought gifts of Ceres' to his table (*castus ... Cerealia dona | attulit*, 7.183–184); Domitian is bringing the landscape of Italy back to the time before Bacchus' arrival in the region, returning almost to a Golden Age.

If we only read the Falernus episode, Bacchus would be considered a potent but innocent divinity, bestowing his vines on Italy. As such he is the antithesis of Hannibal the destroyer. Narratees who remember the god's violent invasion of Spain can question this black-and-white interpretation: Bacchus and Hannibal, both conquerors of Spain, have perhaps more in common than the text in Book 7 at first glance suggests. In the second half of the epic, after Cannae, it is Scipio who assumes the role of Bacchus and Hercules, with the final triumphal procession as the climax.

10 Conclusion

The Falernus episode stands out in an epic that deals with the greatest defeats of Roman history. Silius creates for a moment a world in which people were simple farmers and where a god acts as a cultivator, instead of a destructive force. The story serves as a georgic antithesis to the destruction of the Campanian countryside by Hannibal. The epic narrative and thus Hannibal's destruction is paused. This narrative pause is mimicking the confrontation-avoiding tactics of Fabius in the main narrative. This *mora* can only be temporarily: after the theoxeny, Hannibal continues his devastation of the Italian land.

Nevertheless, the Falernus episode will appear to be an overture for themes that are elaborated in the ensuing books of the epic. The gift of wine that Falernus receives is ambiguous. It means a removal from the 'better age' of Falernus towards excessive luxury in later times. Capua, not far from the *ager Falernus* is an example of the harmful effects of *luxuria*, of which wine is an important element. Paradoxically, the vices of the Capuans will save Rome, as their sumptuous lifestyle infects Hannibal and his soldiers during their stay in Capua. In this respect, the Falernus episode foreshadows the weakening of Hannibal by Venus and Bacchus in Book 11.

The contrast between Bacchus and Hannibal is, however, less great than the Falernus episode at first glance suggests. In other parts of the epic, the god is a symbol of conquest. The Falernus episode is the prequel to Bacchus' western campaign, in which he conquers Spain, as was told in Book 3. The god also

subdues Falernus by making him drunk and changing his life drastically; the military metaphors employed in the episode also point in that direction. Hannibal is of course also a conqueror: having subdued Spain, he sets out for an eastward campaign, which will lead him to Campania.

In the later books of the *Punica*, Scipio takes over this role of a new Bacchus, following in the footsteps of Aeneas. Scipio is here portrayed as the predecessor of Domitian: the emperor is the only other Roman in the epic that is equalled to Bacchus. Jupiter even prophesies that the emperor will surpass the god's conquests in the East. The mirroring between Bacchus and these Roman leaders seems to confirm the antithesis between Bacchus and Hannibal in Book 7. But Bacchus, as we have seen, is an unstable model. Are Scipio and Domitian to be seen as cultivating forces, bringing back Rome to something that resembles a Golden Age? Or do they rather stand for conquest and autocratic rule? The Falernus episode contributes to the ambiguity of Bacchus and the gift of wine, without providing definite answers.