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Foaming Cups

A Textual Note on Valerius Flaccus Argonautica 1.815

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atque farinas, the scribe's eye may have jumped back to 39 *transfert inde manu fusas in cribra farinas*, which he would then start copying once more (*transfert*, corrected to *et uersat*, could easily lead to *transuersat* in a subsequent copy).

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FOAMING CUPS: A TEXTUAL NOTE ON VALERIUS FLACCUS
ARGONAUTICA 1.815

Immediately after Aeson's final speech in Book 1 of Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*, he and his wife Alcimede commit suicide by drinking the blood of a slaughtered bull (*Arg.* 1.815–17):¹

adstitit et nigro fumantia pocula tabo
 contigit ipsa gravi Furiarum maxima dextra;
 illi avide exceptum pateris hausere cruorem.

815 fumantia γ: spumantia *Co Heinsius*
 816 contigit γ: porrigit *Caussin* [see n. 16 below]

The eldest of the Furies stood nearby, and with her terrible hand she touched the cups that **steamed** with the dark blood; eagerly they drank the blood drawn from the bowls.²

1. Cf. Zissos 2008, 409: “*Nigro* . . . *tabo* is the bull's blood—the account of its slaying has been omitted—which has been collected in goblets for consumption.”

2. Translations of Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* and Silius Italicus' *Punica* are based on Mozley 1934 and Duff 1934, respectively. Other translations are our own unless indicated otherwise.

In line 815, *fumantia* (“steaming”) is printed by all editors.³ We would like to argue, however, that *spumantia* (“foaming”) should be read here instead, the reading of the Codex Coki, which was also independently conjectured by Nicolaas Heinsius, as Pieter Burman tells us.⁴ We will try to build a cumulative case for this reading by presenting three arguments of increasing importance.

1. THE SACRIFICIAL CONTEXT

First of all, we think that parallels for the sacrificial context of Valerius’ passage favor the reading *spumantia*. A. J. Kleywegt and Andrew Zissos adduce parallels for *fumantia pocula* in their commentaries, but these are not very close, whereas the reading *spumantia pocula* would even produce intertextual contact.

Kleywegt notes, for example, that Valerius’ *fumantia* is “probably taken from V. A. 8.106,” which is part of a passage that describes Evander sacrificing to Hercules just before the Trojans arrive (*Aen.* 8.102–6):⁵

Forte die sollemnem illo rex Arcas honorem
Amphitryoniadae magno divisque ferebat
ante urbem in luco. Pallas huic filius una,
una omnes iuvenum primi pauperque senatus
tura dabant, tepidusque cruor **fumabat** ad aras.

It so happened that on that day the Arcadian king Evander was performing yearly rites in honour of the mighty Hercules, son of Amphitryon, and was sacrificing to the gods in a grove outside the city. His son Pallas was with him, and with him also were all the leading warriors and the senators, poor men as they were. They were offering incense and warm blood **was smoking** on the altars. (Trans. West)

The sacrificial context of this Virgilian passage, however, is quite different from the situation in *Argonautica* 1.815, and what is described here may in fact not be the “steaming” of blood (*OLD* 2, “of liquids or moist substances”), as in Valerius’ passage, but rather the sacrificial meat that is “smoking” (*OLD* 1) on the altars.⁶

In his commentary on the Valerian passage, Zissos remarks that “VF has *fumare* (‘steam’: *OLD* s.v. 2) of the emission of a bloody vapour again at 2.233–34 (with Poortvliet) and 7.644–45 (with Stadler).”⁷ The two supposed parallels, however, describe different situations. Lines 2.233–34, which are part of the description of the massacre of the Lemnian women killing their husbands, describe blood which is still warm as the victims are just killed: *it* [*Sabellius*: his γ] *cruor in thalamis et anhelat in pectore fumant / vulnera* (“Blood flows in the chambers, while gasping wounds steam in every breast”). The passage could, however, be a parallel for the steaming of blood if the manuscript reading is retained (as Edward Courtney and Widu-Wolfgang Ehlers do),

3. Zissos 2008, although maintaining *fumantia*, translates “foaming.”

4. Burman 1724, 137: “conjecerat et Heinsius, *spumantia*, ut Virg. III. Aeneid. 66 *spumantia cymbia lacte et ita desertum est in codice Cokiano*.” The Codex Coki was deemed lost but Michael Reeve identified it as MS Holkham 326 (see Ehlers 1976, 257; 1980, xi).

5. Kleywegt 2005, 471.

6. Pace *OLD*, s.v. 2, which does include *Aen.* 8.106.

7. Zissos 2008, 409. Cf. Spaltenstein 2002, 296: “*Fumantia* renvoie au sang, qui ‘fume’ (vers 2.233*).”

or if the conjecture *hic* of the editio princeps (*B-1474*) is read (as Gauthier Liberman does); *cruor* would then be one of the two subjects of *fumant*. This is very problematic, however, and the conjecture *it* by Sabellicus is much more likely, as Harm Poortvliet and Alison Harper Smith show in their respective commentaries.⁸

On the other hand, in the other parallel adduced by Zissos, 7.644–46, Jason is described as leaving the battlefield and running to his fellow Argonauts at the river after the Earth-born Men have killed themselves: *protinus in fluvium fumantibus evolat armis / Aesonides, qualis Getico de pulvere Mavors / intrat equis uritque gravem sudoribus Hebrum* (“Immediately, the son of Aeson hurries toward the river in his steaming armor, just like Mars, when leaving the Getic dust of the battlefield, enters Hebrus with his horses and brands it deep with his sweat”). As the simile seems to make clear, *fumantibus* here refers to the sweat on either Jason’s shoulders (*armi*) or armor (*arma*),⁹ but the word has nothing to do with blood here.

So these two parallels are also quite different from the situation described in *Argonautica* 1.815. Admittedly, Valerius’ cups could still be said to “steam,” because the blood that the cups contain is from a bull that has just been slaughtered. The reading *spumantia*, however, would not produce just parallels but a closely related intertextual nexus, which make this reading more convincing than *fumantia* in our view.

First of all, there is the parallel already adduced by Burman.¹⁰ In *Aeneid* 3, the Trojans give Polydorus a proper burial (*Aen.* 3.67–69):

inferimus tepido **spumantia** cymbia lacte
sanguinis et sacri **pateras**, animamque sepulcro
condimus et magna supremum voce ciemus.

With offerings of **foaming cups** of warm *milk* and **bowls** of sacrificial *blood* we committed his soul to the grave and lifted our voices to call his name for the last time. (Trans. West)

This passage seems to have been inspired by an earlier Virgilian one, in which Menalcas promises to sacrifice annually to Daphnis and Apollo (*Ecl.* 5.65–71):

en quattuor aras:
ecce duas tibi, Daphni, duas altaria Phoebo.
pocula bina novo **spumantia** lacte quotannis
craterasque duo statuam tibi pinguis olivi,

8. See Harper Smith 1987, 111–12: “it is natural to take *his* with *thalamis*, but the introduction of ‘these bedchambers’ is abrupt, and the position of *his* at the beginning of a line looks like a reference back to *quos*. ‘Their blood (flowed) in the rooms’. However, the phrase is difficult without a verb, and Sabellicus’ *it cruor* is a convincing conjecture, being a Virgilian phrase *Aen.* 9.433f. *pulchros . . . per artus it cruor*, used by Valerius at 6.723f. *largusque cadentum it cruor* (it *B-1474*: et ω). The asyndeton is effective, and the impersonal tone continued in the following phrase *anhela . . . vulnera*, with the singular *pectore*.” Cf. Poortvliet 1991, 144: “Unlike most of their predecessors, Courtney and Ehlers keep the reading of the mss., but I do not see how this can possibly be correct: *his* cannot be a dative, for even if *his cruor* (sc. *est*) in *thalamis* is Latin for ‘their blood is in the chambers’ (which I doubt), the emphasis on ‘their’ would be preposterous (who else’s blood could it be?); nor can it be an ablative, again because of the emphasis (Valerius does not mention the presence of other things in the other *thalami*). *his* must have arisen from a misunderstanding of the run of lines 230ff.: someone took *immanes* in 231 to start a new sentence, could not, as a result, make anything of *it*, and therefore changed it to *his*.” Another argument for reading *it* is a parallel from Sil. *Pun.* 4.204–5, on the death of a Gallic warrior: *per candida membra / it fumans cruor* (“steaming blood runs over his white limbs”).

9. See Spaltenstein 2005, 382 for a discussion of the alternatives. Cf. *OLD*, s.v. *fumo* 2c: “(of animals) to steam (with the sweat of exertion).”

10. See n. 4 above.

et multo in primis hilarans convivium Baccho
 (ante focum, si frigus erit; si messis, in umbra)
 vina novum fundam calathis Ariusia nectar.

Here are four altars: look, Daphnis, two for you and two altars for Phoebus. Every year I will set up a pair of cups **foaming** with fresh *milk* and two bowls of rich olive oil for you, and, most importantly, I will enliven the feast with much wine (before the hearth in winter, in the shade at harvest time), pouring Ariusian wine, fresh nectar, from goblets.

In another related passage, from Statius' *Thebaid*, the burning pyre of Opheltes is described (*Theb.* 6.209–12):

nec non Assyriis pinguescunt robora sucis,
 pallentique croco strident ardentia mella,
spumantesque mero paterae verguntur et atri
sanguinis et raptio gratissima *cymbia lactis*.

Logs fatten with Assyrian juices, burning honey hisses with pale saffron, **foaming bowls** of wine are tipped and cups of black blood and *cups of milk*—most grateful to the lost one. (Trans. D. R. Shackleton Bailey)

In all three interconnected passages there is mention of liquids (wine, blood, and milk) in a sacrificial context, and the cups containing the liquid are “foaming,” not “steaming.” As the words in bold and italics make clear, the *Thebaid* passage is clearly inspired by the one from *Aeneid* 3, but the mention of “black blood” (*atri / sanguinis*) also evokes the Valerian passage under discussion (*nigro . . . tabo*, 1.815; compare the underlinings), which was also inspired by *Aeneid* 3 (cf. *Aen.* 3.68: *sanguinis*). We can thus speak of a window allusion (Statius alluding to Virgil through Valerius), which would reinforce the reading *spumantia* in *Arg.* 1.815, as all three texts involved in this intertextual nexus would then feature a plural form of the participle *spumans*.

2. THE INTRATEXTUAL CONTEXT

A more important argument in favor of the reading *spumantia* in 1.815 is intratextual. On the eve of their departure, the Argonauts are preparing a farewell party, when Chiron comes running down the mountain with the baby Achilles, who already foreshadows his later, Homeric self (*Arg.* 1.260–63):¹¹

illum nec valido **spumantia pocula** Baccho
 sollicitant veteri nec conspicienda metallo
 signa tenent: stupet in ducibus magnumque sonantes
 haurit et Herculeo fert comminus ora leoni.

The **cups foaming** with strong wine do not attract him [*Achilles*], the striking figures engraved in the ancient metal do not hold his attention: he marvels at the leaders, drinking in their loud words, and brings his face close to the lion-skin of Hercules.

These lines are clearly modeled on the passage from *Eclogue* 5 quoted above. The foaming cups of milk (*pocula . . . spumantia*, *Ecl.* 5.67) are here changed into cups of wine

11. See Zissos 2002, 81.

(*valido . . . Baccho, Arg. 1.260; cf. multo . . . Baccho, Ecl. 5.69*). Even more striking are the structural parallels between *Argonautica* 1.260 and 1.815:

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| illum <u>nec</u> <i>valido</i> spumantia pocula <i>Baccho</i> | 1.260 |
| adstitit <u>et</u> <i>nigro</i> fumantia pocula <i>tabo</i> | 1.815 |

The reading *spumantia* in 1.815 would strengthen the intratextual contact between the two lines and passages and thus the suggestive contrast between them: whereas the cups in 1.260 are part of the optimistic party at the eve of the Argonauts' departure, the cups in 1.815 are part of the rather grim suicide scene of Jason's parents, Aeson and Alcimedede, which ends Book 1 and of which the optimistic Jason is blissfully unaware. But maybe more interesting effects can be discerned once this intratextual contact is established. The joyful mood of the Argonauts during the farewell party is in large part due to the second, optimistic prophecy of Idmon (1.228–39) and the immediately ensuing speech of Jason, which ends with the invitation to start the party (1.240–51). More pessimistic elements are present in the background, however, as the narrator adds afterward that Idmon delivered his prophecy with tears in his eyes, because he knows he will not return home (*lacrimae cecidere canenti, / quod sibi iam clausos invenit in ignibus Argos*, “The tears fell as he spoke, for in the flames he discovered that for him Argos was now closed,” 1.238–39), something which Jason readily glosses over by immediately beginning his optimistic speech (*vix ea fatus erat, iungit cum talia ductor / Aesonius . . .*, “Scarcely had he spoken these words, when the Aesonian leader added the following . . .,” 1.240–41). Furthermore, the first, pessimistic prophecy by Mopsus had terrified the Argonauts (*iamdudum <hac> Minyas <vates> ambage ducemque / terrificat*, “long enough now has the seer [Mopsus] terrified the Minyae and their leader with this obscure utterance,” 1.227). The pessimistic atmosphere continues after Orpheus has ended the party by singing the Argonauts to sleep (1.277–95). Jason stays awake and comforts his crying parents (*hunc gravis Aeson / et pariter vigil Alcimedede spectantque tenentque / pleni oculos*, “The aged Aeson and Alcimedede, sleepless too, gaze at and embrace him with brimming eyes,” 1.296–97), after which the Argo, “or rather its tutelary deity,”¹² appears to Jason in his sleep and reassures him (1.302–7). When we arrive at the end of Book 1 and the suicide of Aeson and Alcimedede, however, we realize that Jason's parents had every right to be worried.

So the mood before, during, and after the party on the eve of the Argo's departure is not as joyful and optimistic as Jason, Idmon, and the Argo pretend it to be. This is retrospectively emphasized by the intratextual allusion of the deadly cups foaming with dark blood in line 1.815, back to the cups foaming with strong wine during the party in line 1.260, and this contrastive and suggestive allusion would in our opinion be stronger and more effective if *spumantia* would be read in both instances.

3. THE INTERTEXTUAL CONTEXT

Our most compelling argument for reading *spumantia*, however, is an intertextual one. We think the intratextual contact between 1.260 and 1.815 outlined above is emphasized

12. Zissos 2008, 223.

by a reworking of both Valerian passages in Silius Italicus' *Punica*.¹³ In Book 13, the Capuans who collaborated with Hannibal have a private meeting as the Romans, their former allies, threaten to take the city. After dinner they decide to opt for a collective suicide now that the tide has turned. Cups foaming with venom replace the wine, and the goddess Fides, transformed into a Fury, serves the poisonous drinks in person (*Pun.* 13.294–95).¹⁴

ipsa etiam Stygio **spumantia pocula tabo**
porrigit et large poenas letumque ministrat.

She hands them the **foaming cups** of Stygian **blood in person** and abundantly serves them the punishment of death.

These foaming cups, used to commit suicide in *Punica* 13, clearly evoke the suicide at the end of *Argonautica* 1, as has been widely acknowledged.¹⁵ In both cases a Fury provides (*contigit ~ porrigit*) the deadly venom (*nigro tabo ~ Stygio tabo*) in person (*ipsa ~ ipsa*).¹⁶ The fact that Silius speaks of “foaming” cups is another argument for reading *spumantia* in Valerius' model text.

At the same time Silius' lines contain an intratextual echo. In an aetiological tale on the origin of Falernian wine, Bacchus (in disguise) pays a visit to the old farmer Falernus. During dinner, the god reveals his true identity by turning water into wine: *subito, mirabile dictu, / fagina pampineo spumarunt pocula suco* (“Suddenly, wondrous to tell, the beechen **cups foamed** with the juice of the vine,” *Pun.* 7.187–88). At the same time, this wonder recalls the wine that filled the cups at the farewell party in *Argonautica* 1, and Silius closely follows the Valerian intertext, not only on a verbal level, but also in word order and sound: *valido spumantia pocula Baccho* (*Arg.* 1.260).

The intratextual play in the *Punica* therefore has an intertextual dimension, which is in fact even more intricate, as the two Valerian scenes are in the same order: first in a merrier and then in a grim context. In the case of Falernus, the foaming cups are a divine miracle, but they return as lethal instruments of the Fury Fides in aiding the Capuan senators to commit suicide. Silius thus not only alludes to both individual scenes with foaming cups in the *Argonautica*; the retrospective intratextual effect is recreated as well: the same words have a totally different meaning in the respective passages. The inhabitants of Capua serve as a foil to Falernus, as they are living more or less in the same area, close to the *ager Falernus*, but contrary to Falernus they are leading a life of unrestrained *luxuria*. The wine has corrupted them in such a way that they changed it into a means of killing themselves. Thus the foaming cups of the Capuans retrospectively cast a grim shadow over the first appearance of the cups in what initially seemed to be a cheerful drinking scene: Bacchus' gift of Falernian wine is not as innocent as it seemed in Book 7.

13. Although the relative dating of the Flavian epics remains a vexed problem, we assume that the *Argonautica* antedates the *Punica*, following Stover (2012, 7–26), who argues that Valerius' epic was created between 70 and 79 CE, and Augoustakis (2010, 7), who assumes that Silius started working on his poem around 81 CE.

14. For this interpretation of Fides as Fury, see van der Keur 2015, 165. Particularly convincing 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 Val. Fl. *Arg.* 2.101–6. Others understand a suddenly appearing Fury that is not to be identified with Fides (e.g., Spaltenstein 1990, 226).

15. Ripoll 1999, 513–14; Spaltenstein 1990, 227; Zissos 2008, 409; van der Keur 2015, 166.

16. The intertextual contact would be even stronger if Caussin's conjecture *porrigit* is read in *Arg.* 1.816 instead of *corrigit*, as Liberman does, on the basis of the Silian parallel (2002, 450: “Silius 13,295 confirme *porrigit*.”).

4. CONCLUSION

The phrase *fumantia pocula* is found nowhere else in Latin literature. *Spumantia pocula*, on the other hand, has a clear Virgilian origin (*pocula . . . spumantia*, *Ecl.* 5.67) and found its way into Flavian epic.¹⁷ The sacrificial context, the intratextuality in *Argonautica* 1, and the parallel in Silius' *Punica* make the reading of *spumantia* in *Argonautica* 1.815 in our opinion far more attractive than its alternative *fumantia* despite the latter's stronger manuscript support. We therefore assume that *fumantia* is a scribal error. Apart from the palaeographical similarities between an s and f,¹⁸ the mistake may have been triggered by the similarity with the initial syllable of *Furiarum* in the next line (1.816).

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17. Another attestation of foaming cups of wine in Latin literature is found in an epigram in the *Anthologia Latina* attributed to Pliny the Younger (*Anth. Lat.* 710 Riese = Pliny frag. 3 Courtney [1993, 369–70]). In the first line, the narrator calls upon “foaming cups of copious wine” (*largo spumantia pocula vino*) to accompany him during a night of lovemaking. The phrase clearly echoes *Arg.* 1.260 and/or *Pun.* 7.188.

18. Cf. Verg. *Georg.* 2.542, where the correct reading *fumantia* is transmitted by “all our authorities (including a quotation in Quint. 3.6.45), except the Palatinus and Romanus (with a little ninth-century support) which read *spumantia*” (Mynors 1990, 177).

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