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The Poet in an Artificial Landscape: Ovid at *Falerii*

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Abstract

For Ovid, erotic elegy is a quintessentially urban genre. In the *Amores*, excursions outside the city are infrequent. Distance from the city generally equals distance from the beloved, and so from the life of the lover. This is peculiarly true of *Amores*, 3.13, a poem that seems to signal the end of Ovid's career as a literary lover and to predict his future as a poet of rituals and antiquities. For a student of poetry, it is tempting to read the landscape of such a poem as purely symbolic; and I will begin by sketching such a reading. But, as we will see, testing this reading against what can be known about the actual landscape in which the poem is set forces a revision of the results. And this revision is twofold. In the first instance, taking into account certain specific features of the landscape makes possible the correction of the particular, somewhat limited interpretive hypothesis that a purely literary reading would most probably recommend, and this is valuable in itself. But paying more general attention to what can be known about this landscape over its long history raises some larger questions, most of which could hardly arise from a conventional literary reading. Nor, I should add, are such questions likely to arise from a consideration of landscape alone: it is the way in which literary and landscape studies seem to contradict one another, both superficially and on a deeper level, that makes this poem so fascinating. These contradictions cannot, in my view, be entirely resolved; and for this reason they give us an opportunity to reflect on certain theoretical issues that I will raise here only briefly, reserving them for fuller exploration elsewhere.

Disciplines

Arts and Humanities | Classics

The Poet in an Artificial Landscape: Ovid at *Falerii* (*Amores*, 3.13)¹

Joseph Farrell

For Ovid, erotic elegy is a quintessentially urban genre². In the *Amores*, excursions outside the city are infrequent³. Distance from the city generally equals distance from the beloved, and so from the life of the lover⁴. This is peculiarly true of *Amores*, 3.13, a poem that seems to signal the end of Ovid's career as a literary lover and to predict his future as a poet of rituals and antiquities⁵. For a student of poetry, it is tempting to read the landscape of such a poem as purely symbolic; and I will begin by sketching such a reading. But, as we will see, testing this reading against what can be known about the actual landscape in which the poem is set forces a revision of the results. And this revision is twofold. In the first instance, taking into account certain specific features of the landscape makes possible the correction of the particular, somewhat limited interpretive hypothesis that a purely literary reading would most probably recommend, and this is valuable in itself. But paying more general attention to what can be known about this landscape over its long history raises some larger questions, most of which could hardly arise from a conventional literary reading. Nor, I should add, are such questions likely to arise from a consideration of landscape alone: it is the way in which literary and landscape studies seem to contradict one another, both superficially and on a deeper level, that makes this poem so fascinating. These contradictions cannot, in my view, be entirely resolved; and for this reason they give us an opportunity to reflect on certain theoretical issues that I will raise here only briefly, reserving them for fuller exploration elsewhere⁶.

- 1 Versions of this paper have been presented to audiences at the University of Pennsylvania and at Fordham University as well as at the Geneva colloquium. James McKeown, Carole Newlands, and Ellen Oliensis all kindly read an earlier draft, and I am grateful to them for their comments and encouragement. Elizabeth Fentress and Kimberly Bowes have been very generous in sharing their knowledge of the archaeology of South Etruria and the considerable bibliography pertaining to it. My own investigations of the region would have been impossible without the help of Ann de Forest, who also improved this paper by testing and discussing its thesis at every stage. Naturally none of these benefactors is responsible for any flaws that remain in a paper that they all did much to improve.
- 2 This attitude is most clearly expressed in the opening lines of the *Ars amatoria*, where Ovid says *Siquis in hoc artem populo non novit amandi, / hoc legat et lecto carmine doctus amet* (1.1-2). The *populus* whom Ovid addresses is the *populus Romanus* and, specifically, the inhabitants of the city itself, as is made clear shortly thereafter when he invokes the *urbis/orbis* motif to make the point that *tot tibi tamque dabit formosas Roma puellas* (55), expanding the conceit even to cosmic proportions when he says *quot caelum stellas, tot habet tua Roma puellas: / mater in Aeneae constitit urbe sui* (59-60). Then his advice on where to look for girls focuses exclusively on the monuments of the city (67-90).
- 3 *Am.*, 2.16 finds Ovid in Sulmo, his birthplace (cf. 3.15.8, *Tr.*, 4.10.3); see Boyd 1997, 54-66. In poem 2.11 Cynthia is traveling, and Ovid is distraught. In these as in other respects Ovid follows Propertius more closely than Tibullus.
- 4 Thus in 2.16 Ovid laments *at meus ignis abest. - verbo peccavimus uno! / quae movet ardores est procul; ardor adest* (11-12).
- 5 See the excellent analysis by John F. Miller, *Ovid's Elegiac Festivals*, *Studien zur klassischen Philologie* 55, (Frankfurt 1991, 50-57).
- 6 See Farrell (forthcoming).

OVERVIEW OF THE POEM

The poem itself is brief, so that it will be possible, and useful, to begin by summarizing it in its entirety⁷. Ovid announces it as the account of a visit he made to the town of *Falerii* for the purpose of witnessing a festival of Juno, which he says made a difficult journey well worth the effort (1-6). He then briefly and evocatively establishes the *mise en scène*: an old grove that is not only shady but numinous and that contains an ancient altar (7-10)⁸.

The procession to this grove is next introduced (11-12) and then fully described in three sections (13-30). The first of these mentions the sacrificial animals – native, snow-white heifers along with calves, a pig, and a billy goat (13-17). Section 2 is a brief digression about a ritual hunt: a she-goat evidently plays the literal role of scapegoat because of some antagonism with Juno. Ovid explains this antagonism with reference to a story that we do not know from other sources: apparently Juno was planning some sort of escape but was betrayed by the she-goat's whinnying; and for this, as part of the festival, boys shoot some sort of missiles at a she-goat, the one who hits her winning her as a prize (18-22). The third section takes us back to the procession, which includes boys and girls in ceremonial dress, the girls carrying some sacred implements atop their heads, and mentions ritual silence on everyone's part as priestesses conduct the image of the goddess to the grove (23-30).

After describing the procession, Ovid tells about the origin of the cult: *Halaesus*, a hero of the Trojan War, brought it with him when he founded *Falerii* after fleeing to Italy from Argos in reaction to the murder of his king, Agamemnon (31-34)⁹. In the last couplet, the poet prays that these rites might always be propitious both for himself and for the people of *Falerii* (35-36).

DEPARTURES FROM AND MODIFICATIONS OF ELEGIAC CONVENTION

Quite unusually for Ovid, this is a poem that seems almost to have been designed to fill the modern reader with nostalgia for the sedate and, today, relatively obscure place where it is set¹⁰. It celebrates a simple, traditional, bucolic piety that is removed from the bustle of the metropolis. It presents scenes that are picturesque and sentimental, and in that sense it anticipates, and so perhaps even helps to determine, the modern tourist's experience of the place. As I have noted, nostalgia and bucolic piety are not qualities that one usually associates with Ovid, especially in his erotic verse. But we are dealing here with a poem that introduces into the *Amores* a number of generic sophistications.

We notice these sophistications first as intrusions that take place in the opening lines of the poem. The first of these is the word *coniunx* (1), which occurs in earlier elegiac poetry, but never, as here, in a matter-of-fact reference to the elegist's own wife. Elegiac poets are not supposed to have wives, and Ovid's first readers would surely have been surprised by the appearance of

7 I give the Latin text and a selective critical apparatus in an appendix.

8 The unusual atmosphere of the grove is suggested by the adjective *praenubilis*, which Ovid perhaps invents here (it is the only occurrence cited by *TLL s.v.*).

9 On *Halaesus* see Horsfall 2000, 473-474 ad 723-732; cf. Ov., *Fast.*, 4.73-74 with Fantham 1998, 105 ad loc.

10 In antiquity this area was reckoned part of Etruria and, as we will see, archaeologists consider it as part of South Etruria. But cut in modern Italian political geography, it is part of the Viterbo province of the state of Lazio.

one here¹¹. Of course, later readers might have reacted differently. If we look back over Ovid's entire career, we can see this passage as an anticipation of the exile poetry, in which his wife is a major heroine¹². But we also learn from the exile poetry that this wife had two predecessors. We hear first about a starter marriage when Ovid was quite young, and then about a second that did not last long either, before the one that endured into and despite Ovid's relegation to *Tomis* (*Tr.*, 4.10.69-74)¹³. So there is a sense in which the appearance of one of these wives at the end of the *Amores* anticipates the role that Ovid's wife plays in his later elegiac poetry¹⁴. But introduction of the elegiac poet's wife into the *Amores* has to be considered a major disruption of elegiac decorum.

In line 3 a similar intrusion occurs. Unlike the poet's wife, chastity is a concept that had been invoked previously in elegy, but apotropaically, as it is by Propertius in a programmatic passage near the beginning of his very first poem, where he tells us how Amor has taught him to hate *castas puellas* (1.1.5). So the celebration of *castas festas* in our poem has to be considered another elegiac heresy.

Subsequently we encounter motifs that seem more at home in elegy. For instance, just half-way into the poem we meet the very elegiac word *domina* (18). Soon thereafter, we finally meet some *puellae* (23). And in the following couplet we learn that these *puellae* have their hair adorned with gold and jewelry and that they wear expensive shoes (25-26). Finally, the poem closes with a wish that includes the word *amica* (36). But of course we realize that the *domina* in question is a goddess – literally, and not metaphorically, as elsewhere in elegy¹⁵ – that these *puellae* are shy (*timidae* 23), and that their hair – which anyway is called by the more dignified word *crines* (25) instead of the properly elegiac *capilli*¹⁶ – is virginal hair (*virginei* 25), which makes them even less elegiac than they already were. And *amica* – not a feminine singular, but a neuter plural form – refers to Ovid's hope for friendly relations not with any woman, but with the *Iunonia sacra* about which he has just told us. So these apparently familiar elegiac elements undergo a permutation that symbolizes the same transformation that Ovid's poetry is experiencing, as well.

RELIGIOUS ELEMENTS

Ovid's repurposing of such elegiac motifs is of course closely related to the theme of religion, and religious words and images appear all throughout the poem. In fact, at the very beginning we encounter the personage behind these motifs in the form of the goddess Juno (3). Like

11 Thus Green 1982, 334 notes that the poem “breaks one cardinal rule of Roman erotic elegy by mentioning the poet's wife”; cf. Miller 1991, 51.

12 The exilic Ovid explicitly encourages the reader to imagine his wife as one of the *Heroides* at *Tr.*, 1.6.22: see Hinds 1999, 123-141.

13 The poem suggests that Ovid's marriage followed the period when he was writing the *Amores* (*Tr.*, 4.10.57-68), which he characterizes as a period of socially active bachelorhood. For a plausible, but largely unprovable chronology of Ovid's married life see Green 1982, 21-25, 30-32, 40-44.

14 It is, of course, entertaining to speculate as to which wife is involved in *Amores*, 3.13. Does the sequence “*Amores*, then marriage” discussed in the previous note imply that Ovid, in the context of praising his current wife, wished to gloss over a poem in which he mentioned one of his previous ones? Green 1982, 334 argues that the wife of *Am.*, 3.13, who is said to be Faliscan (1), cannot be Ovid's third wife because she was “Roman-born”, though there is no actual evidence to that effect; more on this point below.

15 In general see Lieberg 1962.

16 Axelson 1945, 51.

Ovid's wife, Juno is not an elegiac character and represents the anti-elegiac theme of marriage. It is true that Roman poetry often makes us think of Juno as the goddess of *perverse* marriage, like the pseudo-marriage of Dido and Aeneas or indeed Juno's own marriage to her philandering brother; but those associations seem out of place here. The Juno of this poem appears to be not the weird, meddling, and ultimately self-defeating Juno of literature so much as the Juno worshipped at a specific cult site, a goddess who stands very much at the center of Roman as well as Faliscan marriage ideals. We can gain some sense of what these were from a passage of Plutarch's *Roman Questions* that explains the Roman custom of parting a bride's hair with the point of a spear by referring to the cult of Juno *Curitis*, noting that *curis* is an old word (some say a Sabine word) for spear – information that is supported by a number of other sources¹⁷. And Tertullian connects the worship of Juno *Curitis* with the Faliscans in particular¹⁸. Further witnesses inform us that *Falerii* at some point became a colony and received the title of *colonia Iunonia Faliscorum*¹⁹. And Ovid himself in the *Fasti* refers to the people of *Falerii* as *Iunonicolas Faliscos* (6.49). Finally, we know that the cult of Juno *Curitis* was established at Rome²⁰. So, all of these factors make the poet's participation in a festival of Juno *Curitis* as the husband of a Faliscan woman impressively emblematic of Roman marriage ideals.

CALLIMACHUS' *AETIA* AND OVID'S ELEGIAC PROGRAM

All of this information brings to mind another generic sophistication in the poem, which is the wealth of aetiological detail that it contains. Ovid's description and explanation of the specific observances involved in the ceremony, and especially the foundation myth with which he concludes, clearly anticipate the major themes of the *Fasti*, as others have noted²¹. But in these same opening lines Ovid introduces a couple of other, not specifically elegiac motifs that also deserve our attention.

The first of these is the very common image of the road, something a poet can hardly ever mention without licensing the reader to look for some self-reflexive import. But in this poem the image is more than usually multivalent²². At the simplest level, of course, a road often stands for the poem at hand, the one that we are actually reading. And that certainly makes sense here, since this poem is actually about going on a journey. By extension, the image pertains to larger literary contexts, such as the collection to which this poem belongs and the rest of the author's works, which altogether add up to a career – a word that, literally, means “journey”²³.

17 *Quaest. Rom.*, 87, *Ov., Fast.*, 2.475-80, 557-60, *Fest.*, *De sign. verb.*, 43.1-6, 55.3-8, and *Paul., epit.*, 56.21-22 L.

18 *Faliscorum in honorem patris Curis et accepit cognomen Iuno*, *Tert., Apol.*, 24.8

19 *colonia quae appellatur Iunonia Faliscos* (*Liber coloniarum* 217 L).

20 Pliny, in a list of South Etrurian *coloniae* (*Nat.*, 3.51) begins with *Falisca, Argis orta, ut auctor est Cato*.

21 Miller 1991 opened many doors to new research in this vein. Among the most recent contributors I can mention Wahlberg 2008.

22 In fact, the image of the difficult road in *Am.*, 3.13 could be considered a very specific revision of the erotic *Autobahn* that one could trace through Propertius' complaint about Cynthia's suburban excursions (2.32.3-6) back to Cicero's snide theatrical rebuke of Clodia Metelli in *pro Caelio* (34), where he impersonates Clodia's ancestor, Appius Claudius Caecus Censorinus, making him regret that he ever built the *Via Appia* if Clodia was to use it as a quick route to *Baiae*.

23 According to the *OED* entry *s.v.* “career” means “a. The ground on which a race is run, a racecourse; (also) the space within the barrier at a tournament” and “b. *transf.* The course over which any person or thing passes; road, path way. *Obs.*”.

Roads involve departures, as well, and I have already mentioned some of these in the form of the various elegiac permutations and non-elegiac intrusions that define this poem. These can easily be seen as departures, especially in the sense that the experiences they describe take the poet and the reader out of the city, the characteristic and defining *mise en scene* of the *Amores*. The same can be said for erotic elegy as whole, so that the image of the road signals Ovid's departure from each of these familiar points of reference. And as well as departure, roads take us to destinations; therefore in poetry they can signal closure, or the lack of it. Ovid's last book of *Amores* is full of closural signals, almost from the beginning of the book, and such signals naturally intensify as we approach the end²⁴. So in fact, by the time we reach poem 13 we have been prepared for the end of erotic elegy that finally comes in the opening lines of the book's final poem (*Quaere novum vatem, tenerorum mater Amorum! / raditur hic elegis ultima meta meis*, 3.15.1), and prepared as well for Ovid to settle down, get married, and move on in new poetic directions.

The road is also a common symbol of poetry not just in the sense of a particular work or body of work, but in terms of style. Callimachus is the most famous exponent of this motif, having declared his preference for poetry that measures its excellence not in length but in refinement, and who expressed disdain for the well-travelled, easy road in comparison to the narrow, difficult path²⁵. Callimachean references, especially of a stylistic nature, are very frequent in Ovid's work²⁶. It certainly makes sense to see one here. But in addition to the tenets of Callimachus' stylistic manifesto, Ovid may also have in mind a more specific sort of Callimachean reference.

By this I mean the idea, which we find in Callimachus, of literary genres standing in a hierarchical relationship to one another. These relationships are often figured spatially, with different genres imagined as occupying higher or lower ground. The most important such passage in Callimachus occurs in the *Aetia*, the poem that the poet himself placed first when he arranged his own collected works. At the end of the *Aetia* Callimachus says that, having finished that relatively grand work, he will descend from the heights of Mt. Helicon, where Pegasus left his hoof print, to the walkable pastures of the Muses (fr. 112 Harder); and the work that follows is his (notionally, at least) humbler *Iambi*²⁷.

- 24 In poem 1, Ovid considers whether his true calling is tragedy or elegy and decides on the latter, but only for the time being (69-70). In poem 3, he is exasperated by his *puella* and her continuing infidelity. In poem 6, he is unable to cross a river in spate (a symbol of epic poetry?) and so reach his beloved. In poem 7 he is impotent, in poem 8 he complains of his inability to compete with wealthy rivals, and in poem 9 he laments the actual death of an elegiac poet (Tibullus). In poem 10 the *Cerealia* has brought with it enforced sexual abstinence. In poem 11 (or 11 a and b) he debates whether to remain a lover, and in poem 12 he complains that his poetry has promoted his girl's faithlessness by trumpeting her beauty before his rivals.
- 25 Call., *Aet.*, fr. 1.25-28 Harder. Knox 1999, 275-287 argues in connection with Lucretius that not all difficult paths are necessarily Callimachean; but I suspect that he would see Callimachus as standing with both feet on almost any Ovidian path, and I would do so as well.
- 26 McKeown 1987, 32-62; Boyd 1997, index *s.v.* *Callimachus*.
- 27 For a review of theories regarding the specific import of the fragment, see Harder 2012, 2.855-70. Harder herself favors the view that Callimachus' reference to walkable pastures refers specifically to the poet's arrangement of his collected works, and not to literary programmatic. But it would of course have been open to readers, including poets writing with reference to this passage, to interpret it in programmatic terms.

In Roman poetry, a journey of this sort is more often figured as moving in the opposite direction, from humbler genres and lower ground to the heights of more sublime genres. Vergil's careful shaping of his own career was influential here. When we read the end of the *Eclogues*, we may not be able to say with certainty exactly what Vergil had in mind when he wrote those lines, but once he had gone on to write the *Georgics* and then the *Aeneid*, it became almost impossible to not to read the hortatory subjunctive *surgamus* at *Ecl.*, 10.75, prepared for and supported by images of rampant growth in the preceding lines (*crescit* 73, *se subicit* 74), as anything other than a statement of future plans to “rise” by stages to the very summit of the generic hierarchy. So Ovid as well, when he mentions the slopes that make a journey to *Falerii* difficult (*difficilis clivis huc via praebet iter* 6), seems to signal a move into “higher ground” as defined by a different kind of elegy with a different subject; and he maintains this line in the *Fasti*, for which *Amores*, 3.13 seems – at least, once again, in retrospect – like a trial run²⁸. And since *Falerii* is frequently described as a hill town, one almost irresistibly infers that Ovid has found metaliterary symbolism in the actual landscape where this aetiological elegy is set.

Before leaving the image of the road, I want to mention briefly one additional motif to which I will return at the end of the paper. Alongside all of the self-referential posturing that one might find within Ovid's metapoetic journey, there may be a message of encouragement for the reader as well. Ovid has already sent at least one such message in the *Amores*: in fact, at the very beginning of the collection, in the opening epigram that precedes book 1, he informs the reader that the three poetry books of lying before him or her have been reduced from an original five; and, he says, although there may be no joy in reading them, at least there will be that much less pain²⁹! This joke at the beginning of the collection could be balanced by a more serious bit of encouragement to persevere as one approaches the end of the collection only to find that the path has become steeper and the going more difficult – because, as Ovid tells us, this new and more demanding form of elegy will be well worth the effort.

FALISCAN SETTING

But where exactly does this road take us? The text is, at least apparently, definite and emphatic about this: *Falerii* is named our destination at three strategic points in the poem, at the beginning, near the middle, and at the end (*Faliscis*, 1, *Falisca*, 14, *Faliscos*, 35)³⁰. The modern name of ancient *Falerii* is Civit  Castellana, which is located about sixty-five kilometers north of Rome in some very rugged country indeed. The basic character of this land was determined by a number of primeval volcanos, now dormant, whose craters have become the enormous Lago di Bracciano and Lago di Bolsena, along with a few smaller lakes. The thick layer of tufa deposited by these volcanoes was then cut by rivers and streams, flowing mainly from southwest to northeast, into a network of ravines that are in some places as deep as 75 meters. The challenge of crossing not just one but many of these gorges made it difficult for the original settlers to build roads that ran due north and south, so that early Etruscan and Faliscan roads

28 The *Fasti* of course thematizes its own generic ambitions in terms of elevation (1.295-310, 5.11), weight (1.5, 2.25-26, 4.55-56 with Hinds 1987, 11), scale (2.3-4, 3.273-74, 4.3, 9-10, 6.21-22, 535-40), scope (3.723-26), and so on.

29 *Qui modo Nasonis fueramus quinque libelli, / tres sumus; hoc illi praetulit auctor opus. / ut iam nulla tibi nos sit legisse voluptas, / at levior demptis poena duobus erit.*

30 *Faliscis* in line 1 refers to the town itself (*OLD* s.v. *Faliscus* 1b), not to the inhabitants (1a).

tend to follow the path of the rivers and streams. In this and other ways, the geomorphology of the *ager Faliscus* a big influence on how this landscape developed over time, economically, culturally, and politically.

But traveling from the metropolis to this provincial town is probably not what Ovid has in mind when he speaks of a “difficult journey”. That is because, with the advent of Roman engineering, north-south transit through this rugged landscape became a simple matter (fig. 1). In Ovid’s day one could travel by excellent roads that offered several places to stop for refreshment (fig. 2). If there were no need to hurry, the distance between Rome and *Falerii* could be easily covered in two leisurely days, time that an equestrian gentleman like Ovid would have spent reading or in some other diversion³¹.

Therefore, even though there are a few significant slopes on the road into and through the *ager Faliscus*, they would have caused Ovid himself no trouble. The difficult slopes of which he writes probably presented themselves at the end of the journey, at *Falerii* itself, when he took part in the procession on foot. But here we have to conjure with the fact that there were in antiquity two places called *Falerii* – the original one at Civit  Castellana, which came to be called *Falerii Veteres*, and another one called *Falerii Novi*, which was near today’s Fabrica di Roma. The two towns were not far apart, but they were very different.

In the vicinity of *Falerii Veteres*, the modern Civit  Castellana, “ground level” is the aforementioned volcanic plain, which is roughly 150 meters above sea level; and this plain, again as I mentioned before, is deeply cut by ravines and gorges that plunge 75 meters or more into the soft tufa. The city itself, which was the chief city of the *ager Faliscus* and the original center of Faliscan culture, occupies an area of about 1,000 x 400 meters situated at the confluence of the River Treja, which flanks the town on the south east, and the Rio del Purgatorio and its tributary the Rio Maggiore to the north, so that it is surrounded by deep gorges on all sides except on the west. For modern tourists, the forbidding gorges themselves have always been one of the town’s chief attractions; and artists have long celebrated them, as well, together with the Ponte Clementino, an impressive engineering feat of the eighteenth century that spans the Rio del Purgatorio. But in antiquity this position was more than merely picturesque. As Martin Frederiksen and J. B. Ward Perkins explain,

Falerii Veteres, like its medieval and modern successor [*i.e.* Civit  Castellana], stands at the centre of a radiating series of deep vertical gullies and elevated tufa promontories. The site is marked out as a natural centre of communications. Except in the lower reaches of the Treia where there are extensive deposits of gravel exposed, roads normally, even today, avoid the valley-bottoms, where flooding, heavy vegetation, and the likelihood of rock-falls are recurrent hazards; the ridges, not the streams, form the lines of communication. Civita Castellana thus dominates the natural egress of those inhabiting a considerable area to the south and west into the more spacious highways of the Tiber Valley, and to the hostile marauder who followed up the Treia it was an impassable obstacle³².

31 Augusta-Boularot 1988, 49-50 estimates 60 km as the distance that could be covered on horseback in a single day, and this is about the distance from the *pons Milvius*, near Ovid’s suburban villa (*Pont.*, 1.8.43-44), to *Falerii*. But conditions existed that would make for a less strenuous trip. There was a *mansio* on the shore of Lake Baccano (which was drained in the nineteenth century) near the junction of the *via Cassia* and the beginning of the *via Amerina* at about 32 km on the *via Cassia* (in the vicinity of modern Campagnano di Roma), and the town of *Nepete* (modern Nepi) was (and is) about 10 km further north on the *via Amerina*. Either would have been suitable places to break up the trip.

32 Frederiksen & Ward Perkins 1957, 129.

Falerii Novi, though it is barely five km to the west of the older city, is a very different place. It lies on a plain that is quite level on the western, northern, and eastern sides of the town, the only significant variation in the terrain being a gully created by the Rio del Purgatorio, which flows a few hundred meters to the south. Unlike *Falerii Veteres*, which lies beneath Cività Castellana, *Falerii Novi* has long been uninhabited, so one can see clearly the outlines of a well laid-out, regular Roman town with its outer walls and four main gates, one in each of the cardinal directions, serving the two ends of both the *cardo* and the *decumanus*³³. The circuit wall is certainly well built and is quite impressive in many ways; but it is the only real protection from attack that the town had, because *Falerii Novi* lies in a place with virtually no natural defenses.

So the topography of these two cities is very different. The older city lay well defended in very rugged country, while the new one was practically defenseless in, essentially, an open plain. But it is the well-defended old city that was taken in battle, and this event led directly to the founding of the poorly defended new settlement. It is most interesting that Ovid carefully avoids mentioning this paradoxical development by focusing instead on the earlier “capture” of the older town by the legendary Roman military hero, M. Furius Camillus.

CAMILLUS AT *FALERII*

Ovid mentions Camillus prominently in line 2 as the general responsible for capturing the walls of *Falerii*. This is the only mention of military history in the poem, and it is so fleeting as to seem quite incidental, even if Ovid expected the event to which he alludes to be familiar to all his readers. It is easy to believe that it would have been, since Camillus is quite a celebrated figure during the entire Augustan period, and he is arguably Ovid’s own favorite hero from the early days of the Roman Republic³⁴. If so, it is suitably ironic that he may not have really existed. Camillus was credited with an impossibly distinguished career, which supposedly started at the very top of the *cursus honorum* with a term as Censor in 403 before he had held any other office with *imperium*³⁵. Camillus was also an exemplary exile, a fact may have appealed to Ovid at the time when he was writing the *Fasti* and so help to explain his prominence in that poem³⁶. But most important for the question of his historicity is the fact that his career spans (and is very much wrapped up in) the Gallic invasion of 391-390, when Rome was sacked and virtually all records then in existence were destroyed, making the event a watershed between the legendary and the somewhat more historical epochs in Roman history.

Camillus’ “conquest” of *Falerii* lies just on the far side of the Gallic invasion, in 395 BC, and as such is an event that belongs almost entirely to legend. The story is very well attested, but it is surely a fiction³⁷. Camillus, ordered to invest a city that was so well defended by its natural position, began to prepare for a long siege. But while doing so, he was approached by a treacherous Greek schoolmaster whose pupils were all the sons of the leading men in town.

33 The town was virtually abandoned by the mid-seventh century. Shortly after 1140 a group of Cistercians from the Savoy came and founded the abbey of Santa Maria in Falleri: see del Lungo & Fumagalli 2007.

34 On this topic see Gaertner 2008, 27-52.

35 Broughton 1951, 1.82.

36 See Farrell 2013, 59 and 70.

37 Our main sources are Liv. 5.26-27 and Plut., *Cam.*, 9-11; see also Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.*, 13.1-2, Val. Max. 6.5.1, Frontin., *Strat.*, 4.4.1, Polyae., *Strat.*, 8.1.7, Florus, *Epit.*, 1.6/12.5-6, Avitus, fr. 2 *apud* Prisc. CGL 2.427.1-6, Eutrop. 1.20, Jer., *Ep.*, 57.3, Oros. 3.3.4, Zon. 7.22 (from Cassius Dio).

For a consideration, he offered to deliver them into Camillus' hands as hostages, thus effectively delivering him the city as well. The honorable Camillus, of course, was having none of that. Indignant, he had the wicked schoolmaster stripped naked, beaten, and sent hustling back to the city, where he received no very warm welcome. The Faliscans were impressed by Camillus' sense of fair play – so much so that they surrendered. According to Livy, a Faliscan delegation appeared before the Roman senate to inform them that they believed they would “live better under your rule than under our laws³⁸”. Thus tradition records Camillus' conquest as a bloodless victory that could be better characterized as a voluntary capitulation on the part of the besieged city when faced with a living exemplar of Roman Republican virtue.

Historians generally imagine that whatever may have happened between the Romans and the Faliscans on this occasion, it probably did not end with a decisive Roman victory, and certainly not with “conquered walls”. If anything, there was probably some sort of negotiated settlement behind this edifying and self-congratulatory tale. But if we look at the subsequent history of Roman-Faliscan relations, we find nothing to support in detail and still less in spirit the eirenic moral of the story – which is the only story we have that names Camillus as the “conqueror” of *Falerii*. Instead, what we find is a hundred-and-fifty-year record of off-and-on conflict, broken treaties, redundant truces, garrisons, and other signs of bad faith³⁹. Then, finally in 241, two Roman consuls led an army out to invest the city, forcing its capitulation within six days, during which time (we are told that) fifteen thousand Faliscans were killed⁴⁰. This is the sort of occasion that a phrase like “conquered walls” would more properly describe. The terms that the Romans imposed on the vanquished were exceptionally harsh: half of the *ager Faliscus* was confiscated; the city itself, including its defensive walls, was destroyed. The surviving Faliscan population was relocated to a new location – the site of *Falerii Novi* – in an undefended area where they would be capable of causing no further trouble.

It is an open question what trouble the Faliscans caused on this occasion. There seem to be two possibilities. One is that they themselves – who, as the record shows, had always been a feisty people – cut, after watching the Romans demonstrate their ability to wage war with the Carthaginians for more than two decades, decided that the end of that conflict would be the perfect time to attack the Romans themselves. Not very many believe that this is how it happened; the Faliscans were feisty, but not stupid. The other theory is that the Faliscans caused some sort of trouble during the first Punic war, or that they were not as helpful as they might have been, but that at any rate the Romans were sick of them; and that the only thing preventing the Romans from dealing sooner with their troublesome neighbors was that they had struck a hundred-year *foedus* in 342⁴¹. Wishing not to incur the wrath of the gods, or just

38 *rati... melius nos sub imperio uestro quam legibus nostris uicturos* (Liv. 5.27.12).

39 392, Romans sack *Falerii* (Diod. Sic. 14.96.5); 391, peace treaty (Diod. Sic. 14.98.5); 388, citizenship grants to “faithful” Faliscans (Liv. 6.4.4); 358-352, *Tarquinius* and *Falerii* overrun southern Etruria (Liv. 7.12-17, Diod. Sic. 16.31-36, Fron., *Strat.*, 2.4.18; dates vary); 351, forty-year *indutiae* (Liv. 7.22.5-6); 342, hundred-year *foedus* (Liv. 7.38.1); 298 and 295, Roman garrisons at *Falerii* (Liv. 10.12.7, 10.26.15); 293, Faliscan participation in siege of *Sutrium* (Liv. 10.45-46), imposition of *indutiae annuae* (Liv. 10.26.15).

40 241 BC, destruction of *Falerii Veteres* (Polybius 1.65.2, Liv., *Per.*, 20, Val. Max. 6.5.1, Eutrop. 2.28, Zon. 8.18.1; *Fast. Triumph.* a.u.c. DXII).

41 See Loreto 1989, 720-27, Di Stefano Manzella 1990, 342. Against this view, McCall 2007 argues that the foundation of *Falerii Novi* was a cooperative venture between the Faliscans and the Romans, but this involves (among other problems) a virtually complete dismissal of the quite explicit literary evidence.

because they were otherwise occupied, the Romans honored the *foedus* until it ended in 242; and the next year they destroyed the chief city of their former ally and arranged things so that the Faliscans could present no possible trouble in the future. As indeed they did not.

So, in addition to reminding readers of a famous and edifying story from the legendary past, Ovid's reference to the walls of *Falerii* conquered by Camillus glosses over a lot of somewhat less edifying history that he must have expected quite a few of those same readers to know⁴².

ROMAN INTERVENTION IN THE *AGER FALISCUS*

To get some further sense of what people might have been likely to know, and still more of what else Ovid might have experienced on his journey to *Falerii*, I want to consider next what landscape archaeology has to tell us about the *ager Faliscus*, about who lived there, and about how well these realities square with Ovid's poem and with the ways in which we react to it. The information that I will be presenting here is not without controversies of its own, but I think it encourages us to make a few solid inferences about the main influences on human life in this area and about the unusual character of its occupation during the Roman period. And I believe that these inferences have something to tell us about Ovid's poem.

In his study of *The Landscape of South Etruria*, Timothy Potter characterizes the entire Roman period, from about 400 BC to about 500 AD, as a "major hiatus in the history of the region"⁴³. The Roman intervention began at about the time when Camillus is supposed to have taken the walls of *Falerii* without a fight and then steadily increased in its intensity until the end of the Republic, by which time a new and more artificial set of conditions had been imposed on the territory, conditions unlike anything that had existed before; what these were, I will explain below. The new situation then prevailed into the early Middle Ages, at which time conditions reverted to something like what they had been before the Roman intervention. Potter's study is now over thirty years old and is based on work conducted even earlier under the auspices of the British School at Rome by its director at that time, John Ward Perkins⁴⁴. But it remains the best and the most complete synthetic study available, and while more recent research suggests that it will require significant modification in some respects, the broad outline of the picture that it presents is still valid⁴⁵. How, then, does Potter characterize the Roman intervention in South Etruria?

I mentioned previously that the *ager Faliscus* in particular is divided on a southwest to northeast axis by a network of ravines cut by rivers and streams that flow down from the mountains to the west and into the Tiber in the east (fig. 1). As one would expect, this very pronounced and distinctive geomorphology had a decisive impact on settlement patterns. During the bronze and iron age, settlements in south Etruria tend to cluster along the banks of the rivers. By the archaic period, this pattern cut intensified, resulting in more and a few larger

42 It is of course true that to speak of captured walls is conventional in the language of military *elogia*, as Michel Tarpin reminds me. In this context, perhaps the convention would serve to underline the irony of Ovid's expression.

43 Potter 1979, 93.

44 Potter 1979, xiii-xiv, 1-29; for an updated perspective see Patterson & Millett 1998, 1-20; Potter & Stoddart 2001, 3-34.

45 Some idea of the ways in which Potter's conclusions will need to be modified can be found in Patterson *et al.* 2004a, 2004b, 2004c and Harrison 2004.

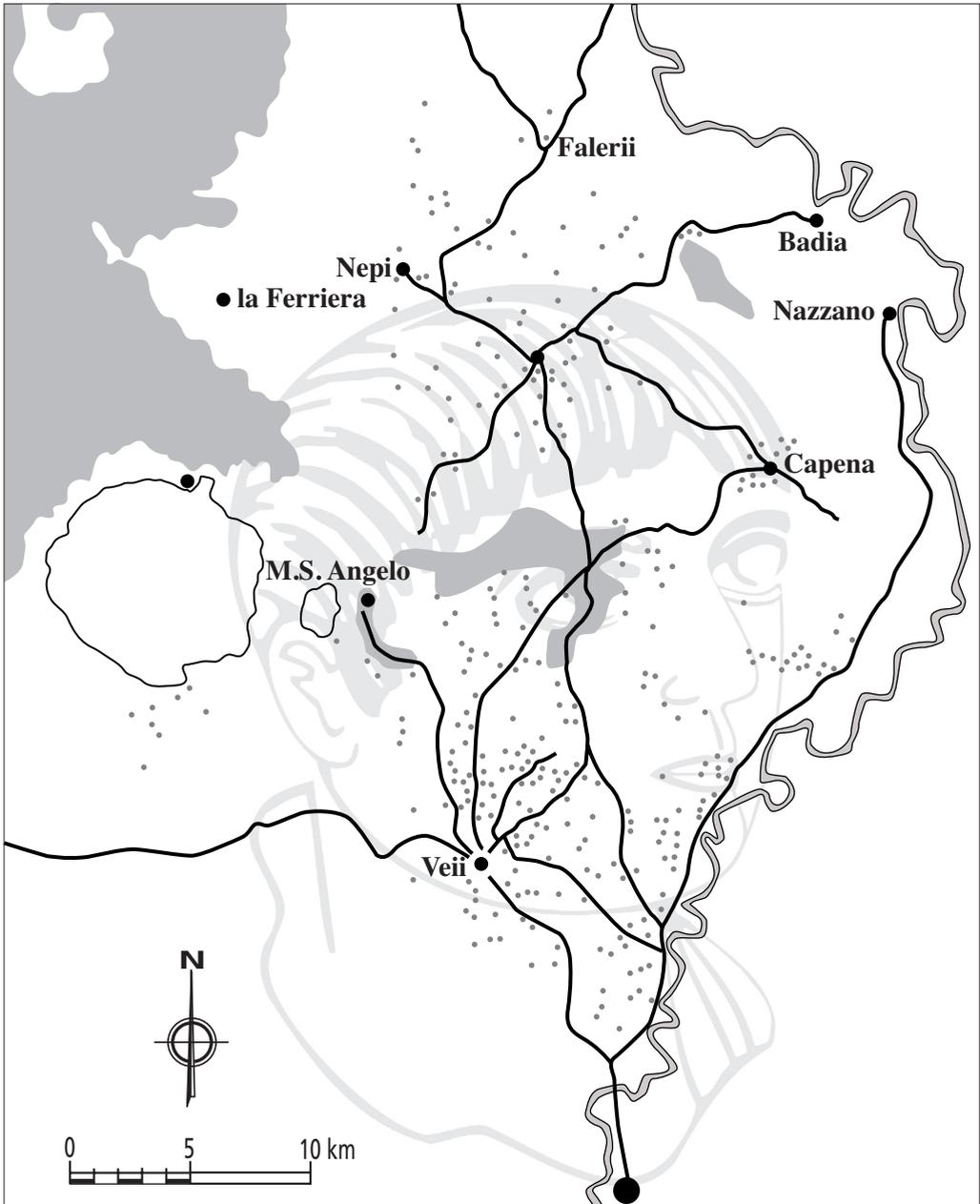


Fig. 1. Settlement and transportation patterns in South Etruria, 7th-6th c. BC (source: Potter 1979, 73).

settlements. In addition, the inhabitants have begun building roads, mainly in or along the ravines that now form the primary communications and transportation network in the region. This is only to be expected: although the area can in general be characterized as (originally) a fairly level plain that would present few obstacles, travel across the ravines is quite difficult. But there is no indication that this topography was in fact or was felt to be a major barrier to development. All of the rivers and stream that run through the area drain into the Tiber, and roads following these rivers and streams led similarly to roads that followed the course of the Tiber into the interior of Italy. These conditions did not prevent the growth of several impressive cities, including *Veii* and *Capena* to the south of the *ager Faliscus*, and quite a few smaller but flourishing settlements, as well.

By the classical period, however, when the inhabitants of this region come into more and more frequent contact and conflict with Rome, a new pattern begins to emerge. The southernmost cities – those closest to Rome – come to be seen by the Romans as competitors for hegemony in the region and even as a threat to Rome's well-being. These peoples are eventually defeated by the Romans on the battlefield and their urban centers are evacuated and destroyed. Some of the population move into the nearby countryside while others migrate to more distant urban centers. This process can be seen in the *ager Veientanus* in particular.

So, the Roman intervention begins with a redistribution and a general reduction of the population in South Etruria as several urban centers disappear (fig. 2) and their inhabitants disperse. The record indicates that only some of these inhabitants move to the nearby countryside, while many others apparently abandon the region.

A second, complementary aspect of the Roman intervention concerns transportation. Formerly, as I have noted, the rivers and ravines that run through the area dictated the general orientation of the transportation network (fig. 1). But Romans gradually introduced a more complex system⁴⁶ (fig. 2). In cases where the point was to link existing settlements, they frequently took advantage of existing roads, sometimes investing significantly in upgrading them. In cases where the point was rather to facilitate long-distance travel through the area to more distant destinations, there were not always earlier existing roads to rely on, so that they had to lay out and build new ones from scratch. In both cases, however, there is a notable selectivity and a strategic plan in view. The Roman road system served fewer population centers than did the native system, focusing on those towns that were firmly under Roman control and avoiding altogether any potential trouble spots, including even those that had undergone forcible evacuation and had remained essentially unpopulated for years. Thus for instance the *Via Clodia* bypasses the former site of *Veii* and takes no account of earlier roads or existing settlements until after passing Lago di Bracciano, whereupon it starts to follow the old Etruscan road network that connected the smaller towns of *Blera*, *Orciae* (Norchia), *Tuscania*, and *Saturnia*, none of which is known ever to have opposed Rome militarily. The *Via Cassia*, which shares the same route as the *Clodia* from the *pons Milvius* to La Storta, about nine miles north of the city center, similarly avoids *Veii* as well as more distant settlements at modern Cesano, Formello, and Campagnano, and does not actually arrive at an inhabited town until *Sutrium* (Sutri), well to the north of Lago di Bracciano. The arrangement makes sense, because the indigenous settlement pattern in the region close to Rome was disrupted, and the number of both towns and total inhabitants was greatly reduced, in the early classical period. The road system reflects the new dispensation by

46 The following account is based on that of Ward Perkins 1957, 139-143.

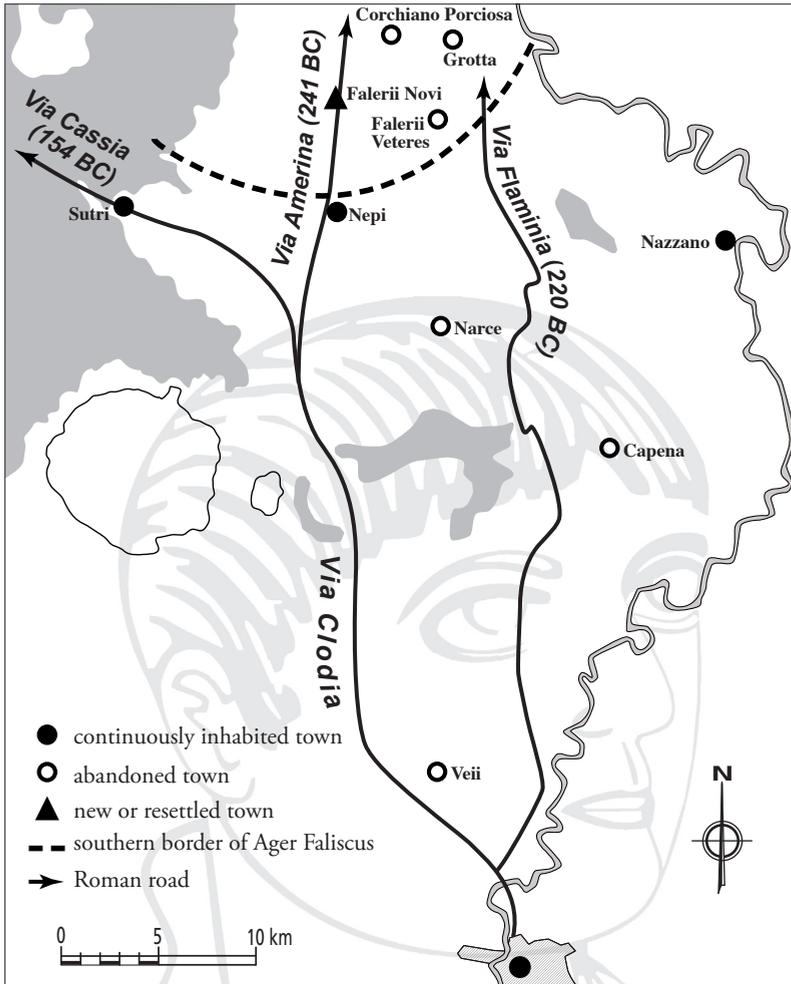


Fig. 2. Settlement and transportation patterns in South Etruria, 2nd c. BC (after Potter 1979, 121).

providing rapid transportation – for armies, perhaps principally, as well as for civilian purposes – through the area to more distant towns.

A similar pattern of development is clearly visible along the *Via Amerina*, which is the only major Roman road that passes directly through the *ager Faliscus*. It seems to have been built in two distinct phases. The road begins by branching off from the *Via Cassia* at *Baccanae* (Baccano) from which it takes a quite direct route to the Etruscan town of *Nepete* (Nepi). Livy describes *Nepete* along with *Sutrium* as “the gates of Etruria” (5.8.5); and after the fall of *Veii*, the Romans soon gained control of both and established them as colonies in 383⁴⁷. It seems reasonable

47 See Liv. 6.21.4 and Vell. Pat. 1.14 with Harris 1971, 43-44.

to interpret the *Cassia* and this southern portion of the *Amerina* (which will probably have been known at this time as the *Via Nepesina*) as closely related and built for essentially the same purpose: both of them seem to have been designed to facilitate rapid movement through the area from Rome to *Sutrium* and *Nepete*, which from the early fourth century onwards were no longer independent entities so much as local centers of Roman control over the area. Beyond *Sutrium*, as we have seen, the *Via Cassia* served to connect several Etruscan towns that lay to the north and west of the *ager Faliscus*; beyond *Nepete*, it appears that the Romans left administration of the *ager Faliscus* to the Faliscans themselves – at least until 241, when they intervened in decisive fashion.

It must have been at this time, immediately following the destruction of *Falerii Veteres*, that *Falerii Novi* was built, on an undefended site where there had previously been no settlement of any size. It appears that the *Via Amerina* was extended at the same time from *Nepete* through *Falerii Novi* and beyond to the Umbrian town of *Ameria* from which it takes its name. The course that it followed is generally quite different from that of any previous or indeed subsequent road through the *ager Faliscus*⁴⁸. As it left *Nepete*, it headed north-northeast for about 2.5 km, crossing the Rio Vicano in the process, until it reached a second stream, the Fossitello, where it turned sharply to follow the ravine, which cuts across the terrain from east to west. After an additional km or so, it crossed the Fossitello near a place later called Torre dell' Isola, where the ruins of what must have been a very impressive bridge can still be made out. Thereafter, the *Via Amerina* ran almost due north, being carried across several more ravines by a series of bridges, most of them also now in ruins; but one, at Fosso Tre Ponti, is in a state of almost perfect preservation and, in fact, is still used by local traffic. It is about 50 meters long and rises more than ten meters above the stream that flows beneath it⁴⁹ (fig. 3). This is a good example of the topographical features that had made north-south travel difficult in this part of south Etruria. But by the middle of the third century BC, such features presented no problem to Roman engineers. Other bridges along this route were comparable in size to the one at Fosso Tre Ponti, and the arrangement at Torre dell' Isola must have been even more elaborate⁵⁰. Together with the road itself, they create a transportation system that conspicuously ignored the contours of the region as well as any indigenous roadways.

Just 2 km north of the bridge at Fosso Tre Ponti lay *Falerii Novi*. The *Via Amerina* runs straight through the town, becoming in fact the *cardo maximus* within its walls. Thus it is very

48 Frederiksen & Ward Perkins 1957, 90: "From Nepi to *Falerii Novi* the road markedly changes character. Up to this point it is very largely a contour-road, conforming closely to the lie of the country; the fact that it is able to follow so direct a line is due to skilful siting rather than to any major feats of engineering. There are some rock-cuttings ... but these are modest in scale and, like the road itself, they follow the run of the country. From Nepi onwards the road is almost mathematically direct. The Fosso dell' Isola was a major obstacle, which had to be circumvented by traditional methods. But elsewhere the line runs straight across country, cutting through minor obstacles, and crossing the by no means inconsiderable valleys to the north and south of the Fosso dell' Isola by the simple expedient of trenching straight down through either cliff and bridging the central span. The cuttings are far wider than the actual road (up to 12 m. wide in places), and the engineers have gone to considerable (at times, indeed, rather exaggerated) lengths to eliminate awkward gradients. Instead of conforming to the landscape, the road is imposed upon it".

49 Frederiksen & Ward Perkins 1957, 97-100.

50 Frederiksen & Ward Perkins 1957, 90-91 (on the crossing of the Fossitello), 92-94 (of the crossing at Torre dell' Isola), and 99 (of the remains of three other bridges between Torre dell' Isola and *Falerii Novi*).

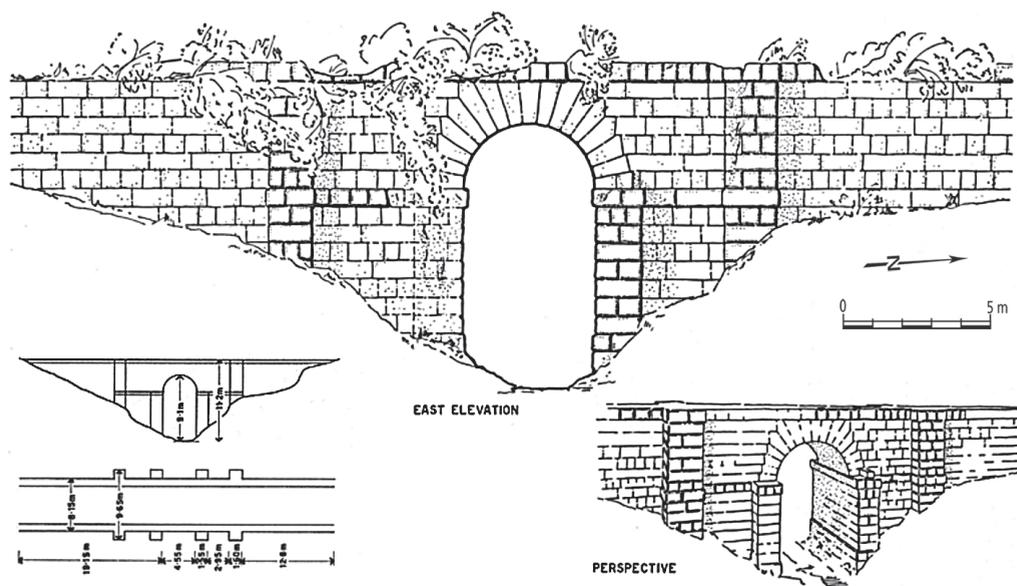


Fig. 3. The bridge at Fosso Tre Ponte on the Via Amerina (source: Fredericksen & Ward Perkins 1957, 100).

clear that the the road and the town were closely connected, and there is every indication that they were planned and built at the same time as coordinated elements of regional redefinition soon after the destruction of *Falerii Veteres*, which lay about 5 km to the east. Thus the *Via Amerina* steered well clear of that site, and also avoided several towns to the north of *Falerii Novi*, such as Gallese (the ancient *Aequum Faliscum*), Vignanello, and Orte (*Horta*), including the sites of some, like Corchiano (whose ancient name is unknown) that were probably destroyed at the same time as the old Faliscan capital or else went into decline after that event.

We can see, then, two distinct phases in this phase of the Roman intervention in south Etruria. In the first phase, which lasted from about 400 to about 250 BC, the area closest to Rome, particularly the *ager Veientanus*, was decisively altered, as urban areas were evacuated and the transportation system reorganized, according to the engineering capacities of that time, so as to discourage the resettlement of the evacuated sites. The main effects of this reorganization seem to extend only to the southern border of Faliscan territory. But in the mid-third century, with a more fully developed capacity to alter the landscape, the Romans suddenly introduced sweeping changes that completely replaced the old settlement pattern of the *ager Faliscus* with one that was entirely new and quite at odds with the geomorphology of the area. The destruction of *Falerii Veteres* and several smaller towns, the establishment of *Falerii Novi*, and the construction of the *Via Amerina* were the key elements of this re-engineering of the Faliscan landscape. J. B. Ward-Perkins distinguishes between the earlier and later phases of this process in describing the section of the *Via Amerina* north of *Nepete*:

it is noteworthy that this stretch is quite different from anything that had hitherto been seen in Etruria – Roman road-construction as we meet it later in many parts of the Roman world, surveyed across country on a mathematically straight line, regardless of obstacles, and pushing its way across the intervening gorges

by the simple expedient of trenching down through the cliffs on either side and throwing a span across the valley bottom. By contrast, it is the older style of road that we see to the south of Nepi, winding its way across country and deliberately avoiding obstacles that would have involved any substantial engineering effort⁵¹.

Thus Roman policy in south Etruria, first in the nearby *ager Veientanus*, and subsequently in the slightly more distant *ager Faliscus*, seems to have remained consistent throughout the early and middle Republican period. But as the Romans' engineering ability (and, no doubt, wealth) increased, their capacity for dramatic intervention grew as well; and we can see the evidence cut in the alteration of the Faliscan landscape.

The next step in this re-engineering program was taken twenty years later with the building of the *Via Flaminia*. This road drives through south Etruria on its way to *Umbria*, staying well clear of any urban centers, even abandoned ones, including *Falerii Veteres*. It is clearly meant for taking traffic through – or, one might even say, over – south Etruria to more distant places. It was certainly not meant to facilitate movement within the region or to serve a large local population – which at this point, with very few urban centers in the area, did not really exist.

The final intervention came in the form of an extension of the *Via Cassia* through *Sutrium* to points beyond. From our immediate perspective, this road took traffic entirely away from the *ager Faliscus*, and in this way can only have had a depressing effect on the local population and economy apart from that of the Roman colony at *Sutrium*.

With the Republican period, then, the major communications and transportation network runs mainly from north to south, ignoring the terrain and bypassing most urban centers, including some of the deserted ones that had been resettled on a small scale. The countryside begins to show some signs of heavier settlement, although this is one of the areas in which the evidence of the south Etruria survey is equivocal. Or rather, at the time it was conducted, it was not equivocal: it tended to show a drastic depopulation of the entire region throughout this period. It was rather the interpretation of this evidence that was equivocal, since few could believe that the region had suffered such enormous population loss during these centuries⁵². This is precisely the question that new ceramic dating criteria are supposed to address. But if we can draw preliminary conclusions from results that have appeared so far, such as Helga Di Giuseppe's comparative study between evidence from Volterra in the north and the *ager Veientanus* in the south, the southern part of Etruria does seem to have experienced a long period of underpopulation in comparison with the north throughout the late Republican period⁵³.

By 100 AD we see evidence of an increase in the rural, apparently under the influence imperial policies aimed at this very goal⁵⁴. And this is the result of the four-century-long intervention of which Timothy Potter wrote: a long-term re-engineering of the landscape that the Romans found when they first became involved in south Etruria, a landscape that itself evolved over several centuries of interaction between the Etruscan settlers and the geomorphology of the region. Instead of the Etruscan landscape that consisted of several significant urban nuclei in communication with one another by means of the rivers and valleys that define the region's topography, the Roman one is largely devoid of urban centers and is instead devoted to a

51 Ward Perkins 1957, 142.

52 Potter 1979, 95-96.

53 Di Giuseppe *et al.* 2004, 1-36; cf. Patterson *et al.* 2004b, 11-28.

54 Potter 1979, 133-137.

fairly sedate farm economy and a few small settlements that are largely bypassed by the major thoroughfares.

The reason why Potter can legitimately characterize the Roman system as a “hiatus” is that, eventually, elements of the system that artificially sustain it break down. The major roads remain in use for a long time, some of them in effect even today, so to this extent the Roman intervention has been permanent. But with the eventual erosion of central authority, an ill-defended site like *Falerii Novi* came to have little appeal. Eventually it was abandoned in favor of the old city, with its excellent natural defenses, which was re-occupied as the medieval *Cività Castellana*, the name by which it is known today. But from its destruction in 241 BC until sometime before 994 AD when we first encounter the new name, the site was literally unoccupied: no evidence has been found that anyone lived there or that anything went on there, except in one specific area.

The exception is a sacred precinct that is found in the ravine that guards the north flank of the city and the entrance to a place today called *Celle* – perhaps in honor of the three-chambered temple that was found there at the end of the nineteenth century. This is the first such temple ever found, as it happens. It has been dated to the fifth century BC, so it is indeed old. But its remains, which are housed today in the Museo della Villa Giulia, hardly suggest the sort of primitive antiquity that Ovid celebrates in the form of the ancient altar fashioned without art. Archaeologists consider this temple to be the destination of the procession that Ovid celebrates in *Amores*, 3.13. The procession, then, would probably have begun in *Falerii Novi* and covered the 5 km of level terrain that separated the new city from the old. But to reach the temple, the participants would have had to make their way down from the plateau into the ravine some hundred or so meters below. So when Ovid tells us that the road was difficult because of the slopes, that is presumably what he means.

With that, we can begin to draw some conclusions and pose some new questions.

The first conclusion I would like to draw has to do with Ovid’s Callimachean road. I began by noting what seemed to be a parallel between the literal difficulty of Ovid’s road to the festival and the metaphorical difficulty of his embarking on a new kind of elegy. This interpretation hinged on the word *clivus*, which means “slope” and refers in the first instance to the route of the procession to the cult site. Virtually all notices mention that *Falerii* is a “hill town”, and this would seem to suggest that the procession involved climbing from lower to higher ground. On this basis, I inferred that the literal route of the procession symbolizes Ovid’s attempt to “rise” metaphorically from frivolous erotic elegy to more serious and therefore “elevated” religious and aetiological themes. By the normal standards of inference in the criticism of Roman poetry, one would be almost required to make this connection. But after tracing the route of the procession, we may feel that we have been misled, because the road to the festival that Ovid actually walked from *Falerii Novi* to *Falerii Veteres* was flat most of the way, but ended with a significant downhill slope, not an uphill one⁵⁵. And it seems very likely that Ovid was being playfully misleading. He does stress, though, that the site is worth seeing; and if one does visit the place, the nature of the downward road that Ovid traveled becomes quite clear. But what of his ascent from a lower to a higher form of elegy? Here we should remember that Callimachus used and perhaps invented the motif of the path as a poetic journey first, at the beginning of the *Aetia*, to describe a way that is difficult and seldom taken, but that does not explicitly lead up or down, and then

55 The road used by the procession is investigated by Fredericksen & Ward Perkins 1957, 143-146.

at the end of the same poem to describe his symbolic *descent* from the mountains to the plains when he moved from the *Aetia* to the *Iambi*⁵⁶. It was Callimachus' Roman followers, like Vergil, who inverted Callimachus' image in the process of adopting it, making it a standard emblem of generic ascent instead of descent. It would be equally characteristic of Ovid to revise the motif, effectively taking advantage of the new spin that his immediate predecessors had placed on it even as he simultaneously brought it closer to the Callimachean original – quite possibly in the spirit of being more Callimachean than thou. In this regard, it is important to note that even if a slope must always go both up and down, Latin does not lack the resources to make a distinction⁵⁷. By using the ambiguous word *clivus*, Ovid manages to say two contradictory things at once.

My next point is more of a question than a conclusion. Where was Ovid's wife actually born? No one who has commented on this seems to have any doubt: she was born at *Falerii*. As evidence they cite the first line of the poem⁵⁸. But that is not quite what I think Ovid says, for two reasons. The first has to do with the verb that he uses, *orior*. This is of course used as a highfalutin synonym of *nascor*, and it could be that Ovid so uses it here. But it is also very commonly used in phrases that refer not to the immediate circumstances of a person's birth, but to their more distant ancestry⁵⁹. So Ovid could also be saying, "since my wife's *ancestors* were from *Falerii*". Why do I think this is important? For the simple reason that everything else at the beginning of this poem gives us reason to be suspicious of easy assumptions. Ovid allows us to think that he is taking his elegiac project in a new direction by ascending a difficult path, when in fact his poem is about descending a difficult path that takes him to a novel theme. He allows us to think of Camillus as the hero who overcame the walls of *Falerii*, eliding both the nature of Camillus' "conquest" and also the long and, eventually, tragic history of troubled relations between that city and Rome. The verb *orior* is similarly ambiguous. So I think it is worth asking: was Ovid's wife born there, or not?

As my previous points show, the answer could depend on what you mean by "there". It is unlikely that the future wife of an equestrian gentleman would have been raised exclusively in the country⁶⁰. She might have been born at *Falerii Novi*, which was at this time an inhabited city and perhaps already a Roman colony, but even that seems a remarkably provincial background. At any rate, she almost certainly was not born at *Falerii Veteres*, as Ovid implies, because the town itself was an uninhabited ruin, even if its sanctuaries remained. The fact is, if we ask where Ovid most probably met his future wife, how can we doubt that this would have happened anywhere other than Rome? She may have been born and spent part of her childhood somewhere in the *ager Faliscus* and then moved to Rome at some point or other. But it seems to me at least as likely that she lived in Rome most and perhaps all of her life, and that only her ancestors were actually born in the *ager Faliscus*, not she herself.

56 Call., *Aet.*, fr. 112 Harder.

57 *acclivis* (or *-us*) means, unambiguously, sloping uphill, *declivis* (or *-us*) the opposite: see *OLD s.vv.*

58 See, e.g. Frederiksen & Ward Perkins 1957, 146; Potter 1979, 100.

59 *TLL s.v. orior* II.c. *ex patria vel gentibus patriis*.

60 The rural population of the *ager Faliscus* rose throughout the late Republican period and eventually reached its high point in about AD 100, by which date, according to Potter 1979, 123, about 22% of the sites surveyed fall into the category of "high-ranking villas", *i.e.* places that presumably would have been owned and inhabited by members of Ovid's social class. This percentage remains lower than those Potter cites for other parts of South Etruria, however, suggesting that the *ager Faliscus* developed later and remained less fashionable than other areas.

In a way it is more important to ask this question than to answer it, just so that we will think about the situation not only as Ovid portrays it, but as it was and as it is likely to have been. The *Falerii* that he visited was a ruin in which the only real activity was at the cult sites. The larger landscape in which this ruin found itself had been converted by years of Roman policy from a place with several important urban centers and a complex relationship between city and hinterland, into a depopulated agrarian zone and that preserved a few religious cult sites⁶¹. There is reason to think that Caesarian and Augustan policy was to support the region by the establishment or re-establishment of colonies, and Imperial policy seems to have taken very seriously the need to re-populate the entire region and to enhance its economic position⁶². So this is not a simple case of whether Ovid is supporting or poking holes in some policy of Augustus. He could be doing either, but to look at the poem in that way impoverishes it. I am suggesting that an enriched reading takes account of the realities that we have been exploring and on that basis asks why Ovid responds as he does, and why we similarly respond to the rather misleading and idealized picture that he shows us.

I suspect on the basis of the misleading gestures with which this poem opens, gestures that he seems to want at least some readers to see through and enjoy, that Ovid wishes to provoke some such complex response; and to support this view I draw my last conclusion. It concerns, once again, the theme of instructions to the reader. As we have seen, Ovid tells us in line five of the poem that it is “well worth the trouble” to get to know these rites, and I have suggested several ways in which this line may signify. In conclusion I would like to suggest one other; for I believe Ovid is telling us that it simply will not be sufficient just to read this poem and draw our conclusions: we need to make the trip for ourselves. In that way, I believe – by experiencing the landscape, traveling first to *Falerii Novi*, with its reminders of when Roman military power decisively altered the Faliscan landscape for centuries, and then by accompanying the procession back to the old city, seeing its ruined walls, hearing again (no doubt) the story of Camillus’ conquest, and learning (no doubt) more of the region’s history along the way; then making the climb down into the ravine: doing all of these things will change our reading of the poem, whether by confirming our initial impressions or, as I think is more likely, enriching and complicating them, causing us to correct them in some instances and deepening them in others.

This way of reading is always available to us, and it is recommended by the founding principles of our discipline; but I know of few ancient poems that actually embrace and recommend this approach. We are not time travelers, so we cannot actually live the experience that Ovid recommends to us. But a comprehensive approach that pays equal attention to the very different methods that one must use to interpret literature and landscape can take us closer than anything else.

61 In this respect, the epithet *pomiferis* in line 1 of the poem is of some interest, even more because of the ms variant *piniferis*: the choice between these alternatives involves imagining the *ager Faliscus* as a fertile and productive or else as a barren and deserted place. The former seems more in keeping with the general tone of the poem; Ovid also uses it to describe the fields around Tibur at *Am.*, 3.6.46, but uses the latter to describe the setting of his suburban villa at *Pont.*, 1.8.43. Since *pomifer* is sometimes associated with autumn (e.g. Hor., *Carm.*, 3.22.8, 4.7.11; Gratt., *Cyn.*, 148; *Laus Pisonis*, 151) Ovid may be hinting that his visit to *Falerii* took place in that season; and here it may be significant that the shrine of Juno *Curitis* in the *Campus Martius* was dedicated on October 7 (Richardson 1992, 214, with further references).

62 See note 59 with Potter 1979, 111, 113, 124.

Appendix: *Amores* 3.13

Cum mihi pomiferis coniunx foret orta Faliscis,
 moenia contigimus uicta, Camille, tibi.
 casta sacerdotes Iunoni festa parabant
 et celebres ludos indigenamque bouem;
 grande morae pretium ritus cognoscere, quamuis 5
 difficilis cliuis huc uia praebet iter.

stat uetus et densa praenubilus arbore lucus;
 adspice – concedas numen inesse loco.
 accipit ara preces uotiuaque tura piorum –
 ara per antiquas facta sine arte manus. 10

huc, ubi praesonuit sollemni tibia cantu,
 it per uelatas annua pompa uias;
 ducuntur niueae populo plaudente iuuencae,
 quas aluit campis herba Falisca suis,
 et uituli nondum metuenda fronte minaces, 15
 et minor ex humili uictima porcus hara,
 duxque gregis cornu per tempora dura recuruo.

inuisa est dominae sola capella deae;
 illius indicio siluis inuenta sub altis
 dicitur inceptam destituisse fugam. 20
 nunc quoque per pueros iaculis incessitur index
 et pretium auctori uulneris ipsa datur.

qua ventura dea est, iuuenes timidaeque puellae
 praeuerrunt latas ueste iacente uias.
 uirginei crines auro gemmaque premuntur, 25
 et tegit auratos palla superba pedes;
 more patrum Graio uelatae uestibus albis
 tradita supposito uertice sacra ferunt.
 ora fauent populi tum cum uenit aurea pompa,
 ipsa sacerdotes subsequiturque suas. 30

Argiua est pompae facies; Agamemnone caeso
 et scelus et patrias fugit Halaesus opes
 iamque pererratis profugus terraque fretoque
 moenia felici condidit alta manu.
 ille suos docuit Iunonia sacra Faliscos. 35
 sint mihi, sint populo semper amica suo!

Since my wife is from Falerii, rich in orchards, we traveled to those walls that you conquered, Camillus. The priestesses were readying the chaste festivals for Juno, both the well-attended games and the sacrificial ox that is bred there. Witnessing these rites is well worth the time, however difficult the steep road makes the journey.

There stands a grove that is old and dark with many a tree: look at it and you would admit that there is divinity in the place. An altar receives prayers and offerings of incense from the devout – an altar artlessly made by ancient hands.

To this place, when the pipe has played a prelude in the prescribed tune, the procession goes each year along shaded ways; while the people applaud, snowy heifers that Faliscan grass has nourished in their native fields are brought along, and calves threatening with brow not yet fearsome, and a lesser offering, a pig from its humble pen, and the flock's leader with horn curved back over rugged head.

Only the she-goat displeases her mistress, the goddess; it's said that she, the goddess, revealed under deep foliage by that animal's evidence, abandoned the escape that she'd attempted. Now too the informer is assailed by boys with javelins and is herself given as a prize to the one who wounds her.

Boys and shy girls go before and with trailing garment sweep the wide paths where the goddess is to arrive. Maidenly tresses lie beneath gold and jewel, and a proud cloak covers gilded feet; girls veiled by white dresses in the ancestral Greek way carry atop their heads traditional sacraments. The people keep silent when the golden procession arrives, and Juno herself follows her priestesses.

The look of the procession is Argive. When Agamemnon was murdered, Halaesus fled both the crime and his ancestral possessions and, after wandering land and sea as a refugee, founded these high walls with a propitious hand. He taught these rites to his Faliscans. May they always be favorable to me and to their people!

sigla: Kenney, OCT **1** pomiferis: piniferis v **2** uicta: uincta v iuncta w culta w **11** huc *Heinsius*, *A_b²Z*: hic v hinc w hac *F¹* ac *P_c¹* **24** praeuerrunt *exc. Put. Et Scal., Arondeliani m teste Heinsio*: praeuertunt *DE_a* (*ut uid.*): praeberunt v: strauerunt *V_b*: uelant *P¹*: praetexunt *Frankius*: praesternunt *Heinsius 27* Gaio *Heinsius ex Arondeliano, Pc (v.l.) V_a²X* grato *D*: graium *H*: sacro *Q*: sanctae v **30** suas w: suos w **34** alta w: apta v: illa *X*

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