

VISIONS OF GRANDEUR: HANNIBAL'S GAZE AND EKPHRASIS IN THE *PUNICA* OF
SILIUS ITALICUS

by

SEAN MATHIS

(Under the Direction of Mario Erasmo)

ABSTRACT

This is a thesis about Silius Italicus, a Latin poet, who wrote his epic poem, the *Punica*, during the reign of the emperor Domitian. Silius wrote his epic poem in the period after Vergil's *Aeneid*, and, like his literary contemporaries, was forced to contend with his poetic forebears in order to insert his own poem into the Latin epic tradition. Thus, the poet looks back to Vergil, his principal poetic predecessor, through his use of allusion, metaphor, and other poetic imagery. The poem is also historical in nature, covering the period leading up to the Second Punic War, and Silius necessarily looks back to his historical predecessors, notably the Latin historian Livy. Silius creates, within the *Punica*, an interesting allusive technique that allows for a literary dialogue between the historical and epic genres, thus guaranteeing his position as a successor to both Vergil and Livy.

INDEX WORDS: Silius Italicus, *Punica*, Second Punic War, Ekphrasis, Silver Age Latin, Silver Epic, Imperial Epic, Hannibal, Saguntum, Allusion, Successors of Vergil

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DEDICATION

This being my first publication to have the honor of being bound in a hard cover, I dedicate it to you, my loving wife, Amanda.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
INTRODUCTION: THE PRE-SILIAN EPIC AND HISTORICAL TRADITIONS.....	1
CHAPTER	
1 SILIUS' LITTLE <i>ILIAD</i> AND HANNIBAL'S SHIELD.....	8
Saguntum: Vergil and Livy at War.....	9
Hannibal's Shield.....	19
2 HANNIBAL AD PORTAS: THE DOORS OF THE TEMPLE OF HERCULES AND THE CROSSING OF THE ALPS.....	36
The Temple of Hercules.....	36
Visions of Hercules.....	45
Hannibal's Dream.....	57
Mountains, Poets and the Anxiety of Influence.....	62
3 EKPHRASIS, MONUMENT, AND MEMORY.....	72
Regulus, the Serpent, and Crucifixion: A Look at the Past.....	74
The Temple Walls: Hannibal the Art Critic.....	85
CONCLUSION.....	97
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	102

INTRODUCTION: THE PRE-SILIAN EPIC AND HISTORICAL TRADITIONS

Livius Andronicus' *Odyssia* emerged in the late third century BCE as the first work of the Latin epic tradition, and Livius himself is commonly accepted as the founder of Latin literature.¹ A Greek playwright and *grammaticus* living in Rome, he translated Homer's *Odyssey* into poetically innovative Latin Saturnians. As a *grammaticus*, however, Livius formulated his work as a didactic tool and a bridge to Homeric Greek rather than an autonomous piece of Latin literature. Shortly after 218 BCE Naevius used the Saturnian verse form to write his *Bellum Punicum*, an historical epic on the First Punic War (264-241 BCE) that represented a remarkable step towards the development of Latin literature, by blending contemporary events into the epic genre. It was Ennius, however, who continued the story of Homer's epics through the Roman point of view with his own Latin epic, the *Annales* (before 169 BCE), in hexameters rather than Saturnians. Ennius saw his work as the successor of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* both through the survival of the Trojan Aeneas, who is mentioned in the *Iliad*, and through his choice of verse form. Indeed, Ennius was so influenced by the notion that his epic challenged and perhaps even surpassed Homer's that he included within the *Annales* a scene of Pythagorean reincarnation in which he himself effectively became Homer.²

Not every example of continuity and successorship is as marked as Ennius' reincarnation, but this bold assertion of the transformation of, elaboration on, and reliance upon Homeric epic poetry at the beginning of the Latin hexameter tradition became paradigmatic for later Latin authors. Ennius' *Annales* was the classic Roman epic for over a century before it was supplanted

¹ Gian Biagio Conte, *Latin Literature: A History* (Baltimore, 1994), 39.

² *Memini me fieri pavom* ("I remember that I became a peacock") fragment ix. Skutsch, *The Annals of Quintus Ennius* (Oxford, 1995). The peacock is a traditional symbol of Pythagorean reincarnation. See Mario Erasmo, "Birds of a Feather? Ennius and Horace *Odes* 2.20," *Latomus* 64 (2005): Forthcoming.

by Vergil's *Aeneid*, a work that rapidly gained popularity and was hailed as the new Roman epic by the time of Augustus' death in 14 CE.³ The challenge of confronting or surpassing this canonical text became so difficult, in fact, that only Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (unfinished at the time of his exile in 8 CE) made any literary claim to equal Vergil's epic by appropriating and inserting a mini-*Aeneid* into his larger epic.

Later, in the tumultuous, yet highly literary, court of Nero, Lucan wrote his *Pharsalia* as a kind of anti-*Aeneid*, which, through the very act of opposing the *Aeneid*, took Vergil's epic as its model.⁴ The later Domitianic author Statius (c.40 – 96 CE),⁵ however, dropped all pretense of rivaling the *Aeneid* and ended his *Thebaid* with a parting address to his own epic that shows the most overt of the Vergilizing tendencies of the Imperial authors:

vive, precor; nec tu divinam Aeneida tempta,
sed longe sequere et vestigia semper adora.

Live, I pray; do not try to rival the divine *Aeneid*,
but follow from a distance and always adore its footsteps. (*Thebaid* 12.816-17)

Statius, far from attempting to supplant Vergil, asks that his poem follow the *Aeneid*, effectively linking his own poem with the Latin epic cycle, with Vergil's text as a rock to which his epic can cling.⁶ Both Lucan and Statius, through their imitation of Vergil's *Aeneid*, establish his work as the bedrock of the Latin epic tradition.⁷

³ Conte (1994), 284-85.

⁴ Conte, *Latin Literature*, 440-52.

⁵ See R.B. Steele, "Interrelation of the Latin Poets under Domitian," *CPh* 25 (1930): 328-42.

⁶ Philip Hardie, *The Epic Successors of Vergil: a Study of the Dynamics of a Tradition* (Cambridge, 1993). Stephen Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext*, 91-92, claims: "Perhaps no verses have done more to keep all post-Augustan epic out of the modern academic canon than these."

⁷ See R. Häussler, *Das historische Epos von Lucan bis Silius und seine Theorie* (Heidelberg, 1978), and P. Hardie, "Flavian Epicists on Vergil's Epic," *Ramus* 18; 3-20.

It is into this tradition of Vergilizing epic, ranging from outright opposition to utter servility to the *Aeneid*, that Silius Italicus inserts his *Punica*, an epic in hexameter verse covering the period of the Second Punic War (218-202 BCE), which had become, for many Romans, an emblem of *virtus*. The war's most dramatic moment, the Roman military disaster at Cannae, had become prominent in Roman social memory,⁸ and it had also produced two individuals, Hannibal and Scipio Africanus, who were imbued with, respectively, villainous and heroic characters by the historical and popular traditions, in addition to numerous poems.⁹ It is this war that Silius adapts to hexameter verse, effectively rewriting the Second Punic War into the epic tradition.¹⁰

Unlike Naevius and Ennius, Silius is not writing contemporary events into his epic poem, but an event that occurred nearly three hundred years before his time. Silius depends on the historical tradition for material.¹¹ Historical prose accounts of the Second Punic War had, of course, existed prior to Silius' composition, and he relies on these sources for his *Punica*. The earliest of these sources are annalistic works that are no longer extant, and exist only as brief references in the histories of later authors. The most prominent examples of these lost chronicles include those of Valerius Antias, Silenus, Claudius Quadrigarius, Fabius Pictor, and the monographer Coelius Antipater. Our most complete Latin source on the Second Punic War, however, is Livy's third decade (Books 21-30), which was informed by all these earlier

⁸ As late as the fourth century CE, Ammianus Marcellinus (31.13.19) compares the Roman defeat at Adrianople (378 CE) to the defeat at Cannae.

⁹ Extant fragments from Cato's *Origines* depict parts of the Second Punic War, usually avoiding proper names but often including epithets such as *Dictator Carthageniensium* for Hannibal. See Conte (1994).

¹⁰ See A.J. Boyle (ed.), *The Imperial Muse: Ramus Essays on Roman Literature of the Empire. Flavian Epicists to Claudian* (Bendigo, 1990), and E. Burck, *Historische und epische Tradition bei Silius Italicus, Zetemata 90* (Munich, 1984).

¹¹ See C. Santini, *Silius Italicus and his View of the Past* (Amsterdam, 1991).

historians.¹² The earliest extant Greek prose text of the Second Punic War is Polybius' *Histories*, written in the period after the Third Punic War (168-164 BCE), with which Livy was familiar.¹³ Appian wrote his *Roman History* after Silius' *Punica* (early second century CE), but his work reflects earlier historical accounts that are no longer extant, and is useful in determining Silius' use of other annalistic sources.¹⁴

History and historiography, however, form a different tradition than epic. Where an epic has *successors*, history has *continuations*; where epic supplants, history critiques. Historians, and specifically annalists, express continuity by picking up at the end of the chronology of a prior work,¹⁵ and subsuming shorter works or monographs into their own larger scope.¹⁶

It was Aristotle who first pointed to the difference between history and poetry:

ἡ μὲν γὰρ ποίησις μᾶλλον τὰ καθόλου, ἡ δ' ἱστορία τὰ καθ' ἕκαστον λέγει.

Poetry expresses universals, whereas history expresses particulars. (*Poetics* 1451b6-7)¹⁷

¹² See, e.g., Conte (1994), 367-76; and R.B. Steele, "The Historical Attitude of Livy," *AJP* 25 (1904), 15-34.

¹³ See Livy 30.45.

¹⁴ John Nicole, *The Historical and Geographical Sources used by Silius Italicus* (Oxford, 1936), tends to emphasize the non-Livian sections of Silius' narrative, which are predominantly in the second half of the *Punica*. Other scholars have seen more Silian dependence upon Livy's narrative than Nicole. See Conte, *Latin Literature*, 492-93; and R.B. Steele, "The Method of Silius Italicus," *CPh* 17 (1922): 319-33.

¹⁵ Herodotus was continued by Thucydides, and in turn by Xenophon. In the Latin tradition we see that Sallust's *Histories* picks up where Sisenna's *History of the Social War* left off. Tacitus continued Livy, and Ammianus Marcellinus, writing in the fourth century CE, likely intended to continue Tacitus' work, although the absence of the first several books of his work makes this difficult to say with certainty.

¹⁶ Livy's third decade clearly shows that he was familiar with and often coopted the stories of earlier historians on the Second Punic War, citing Coelius Antipater most frequently (see p.3 above). See also S.J. Northwood, "Livy and the Early Annalists," *Studies in Latin Literature* 10 (2000): 45-55.

¹⁷ Bibliography on the connection between history and tragedy is extensive: see, e.g., B.L. Ullman, "History and Tragedy," *TAPA* 73 (1942) 25-53; F.W. Walbank, "History and Tragedy," *Historia* 9 (1960); C.S. Kraus and A.J. Woodman, *Latin Historians* (Oxford, 1997); and Christina S. Kraus, *The Limits of Historiography: Genre and Narrative in Ancient Historical Texts* (Leiden, 1999). See also A.J. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography* (London, 1988), 180 ff. on the ancient view of the inter-connectedness of poetry, oratory, and historiography.

Yet Aristotle based his division between genres primarily upon content. He saw the information presented as more important than compositional stylistics:

ὁ γὰρ ἱστορικὸς καὶ ὁ ποιητὴς οὐ τῶ ἢ τὸ ἔμμετρα λέγειν ἢ ἄμετρα διαφέρουσιν (εἴη γὰρ ἂν τὰ Ἡροδότου εἰς μέτρα τεθῆναι καὶ οὐδεν ἦττον ἂν εἴη ἱστορία τις μετὰ μέτρου ἢ ἄνευ μέτρων)· ἀλλὰ τούτῳ διαφέρει, τῶ τὸν μὲντὰ γενόμενα λέγειν, τὸν δὲ οἷα ἂν γένοιτο.

The historian and the poet do not differ in their metrical rather than non-metrical composition (for it would be possible to put the works of Herodotus into meter and they would be no less historical with meter than without it); but it differs in this, that the one (history) speaks about what actually happens, and the other (poetry) about what *might* happen. (*Poetics* 1451b1-5)

Clearly, as early as Aristotle, poetry and history were considered to exist in different literary divisions—what we now identify as *genres*—but later authors saw certain kinds of material as suited to particular compositional forms (i.e. historical prose or verse poetry).¹⁸ For example, Livy, in his preface, notes:

quae ante conditam condendamve urbem poeticis magis decora fabulis quam incorruptis rerum gestarum monumentis traduntur, ea nec adfirmare nec refellere in animo est.

The things which were handed down before the city was built or about to be built are more suited to poetic stories than to the pristine monuments of things done, but it is my intention neither to confirm nor deny these things. (*Praef.* 6)

For Livy, poetic stories (*poeticis. . . fabulis*) are the appropriate genre for the early mythic traditions about Rome, while his own annals are more fit for the “monuments of things done.” It is an interesting programmatic statement that effectively separates the two genres into their respective literary spheres. Livy toys with the mixture of genre at the end of his preface by making an invocation to the Muses, although he admits that this is an aspect of poetic verse rather than history:

¹⁸ The definition of history changed after Aristotle, who may not have even considered Thucydides to be a part of that genre. See G.E.M. de Ste. Croix, “Aristotle on History and Poetry (*Poetics*, 9, 1451a36-b11),” in *Essays on Aristotle’s Poetics*, ed. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (Princeton, 1992), 23-32.

cum bonis potius ominibus votisque et precationibus deorum dearumque, si, ut poetis, nobis quoque mos esset, libentius inciperemus, ut orsis tantum operis successus prosperos darent.

If it were customary for us (historians), as is the case with poets, I would begin gladly with good omens and vows and prayers of the gods and goddesses that they might give prosperous success to my work begun just now. (*Praef.* 13)

Although Livy refrains from making an actual invocation to the Muses, he touches lightly upon poetry, while still maintaining his identity as an historian. Livy begins his historical account with the story of Aeneas' voyage from Troy, a myth of the very kind identified as suited to poetic stories in his preface. Thus Livy shows a certain degree of fluidity in his definition of the epic and historical genres, and, while Aristotle may have been correct that Herodotus' work would still be history if it were written in verse, the opposite may also be true, that Livy's narrative is an epic in prose form.¹⁹

When Silius takes up the task of monumentalizing the Second Punic War in epic verse, he is necessarily caught between two distinct, yet not mutually exclusive, traditions. Silius does not simply Vergilize an historical event; rather he uses a sophisticated allusive technique that looks to both traditions, and allows his narrative to engage in a literary dialogue across genres. We find, for example, that Silius draws digressionary material and other small passages from Livy and expands their significance to fit an epic context. In addition, he also cites mythological and poetic causes for the war, using Dido's curse from the *Aeneid* to add an epic pathos to these historical events.

Chapter 1 will explore Silius' allusive technique within the first and second books of the *Punica* in the context of the Siege of Saguntum and the ekphrasis of Hannibal's shield. Chapter

¹⁹ John Moles ("Livy's Preface," *PCPhS* n.s. 39 (1993): 141-68) suggests that the first line of Livy's preface was composed in dactylic rhythm, but was subsequently changed in later manuscripts. Only Quintilian preserves the line in its original form (9.4.74). This idea has been discussed in Livian scholarship for some time prior to Moles as well.

2 will continue this examination of Book 3 of the *Punica*, looking particularly at the ekphrasis of the Temple of Hercules and Hannibal's crossing of the Alps. Chapter 3 will finish the examination of Silius' poetic technique in the context of the ekphrasis of the wall paintings on the Italic temple at Liternum. I will close with some final comments on Silius' narrative, the character of Hannibal as both an historical and literary character, and Silius' constant anxiety about his own poetic successorship.

CHAPTER 1: SILIUS' LITTLE *ILIAD* AND HANNIBAL'S SHIELD

Silius Italicus combines both the epic and historical traditions in his *Punica*, a hexameter work on the Second Punic War, and arranges the material to create a dialogical relationship in which the works of both Vergil and Livy are present, blending with as well as informing one another. Ultimately, Silius' verse follows the historical Livian account, but evokes aspects of Vergil's epic poetry through epic features such as ekphrasis and the epic simile. Conte provides a useful way of examining this kind of allusive artistry in Latin poetry:

In both allusion and the trope, the poetic dimension is created by the simultaneous presence of two different realities whose competition with one another produces a single more complex reality. Such literary allusion produces the simultaneous coexistence of both a denotative and a connotative semiotic.²⁰

Scenes in Silius' poetry often denote or describe events as they occurred in the historical tradition, but, through simultaneous poetic intertext, elevate the events into the loftier realm of epic verse. This chapter will examine the allusive techniques that Silius employs to evoke both the epic and historiographic genres through his use of ekphrasis, poetic imagery, and battle narrative in the siege of Saguntum (Books 1-2). The first area of analysis will be the siege of Saguntum and Hannibal's Shield in Books 1 and 2 of the *Punica*, using the siege and shield as models for articulating Silius' blend of the historical prose and epic verse genres. The siege of

²⁰ Gian Biagio Conte, *The Rhetoric of Imitation: Genre and Poetic Memory in Virgil and other Latin Poets*, translated from the Italian, ed. Charles Segal (Ithaca, NY, 1986), 24. Conte's comment was intended for a specifically poetic context, but his observation is particularly useful for a discussion of cross-genre intertextuality. My discussion of poetic continuity will also be informed by Stephen Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext: Dynamics of Appropriation in Roman Poetry* (Cambridge, 1998). Hinds, despite some very insightful comments on the revitalization of Silver Epic, and particularly the poetry of Lucan and Statius, mentions Silius Italicus only once in a list of other authors within a footnote; his work, however, is readily applicable to Silius' *Punica*. See also Lowell Edmunds, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Roman Poetry* (Baltimore, 2001), 148-50.

Saguntum emerges as an event of both historical and cosmic significance.²¹ Its sack recalls the sack of Troy and places the *Punica* within the epic tradition of Homer, Ennius, and Vergil, and Books 1 and 2 effectively become the story of the Trojan War in miniature, a kind of *Little Iliad* on their own.

Saguntum: Vergil and Livy at War.

In 241 BCE the First Punic War ended in a humiliating defeat for Carthage, which, in addition to paying a huge indemnity, surrendered Sicily, Corsica, and later Sardinia, to Rome.²² Due to these losses, as well as the mercenary revolts brought on by lack of money, Carthage was in a dire situation and in danger of losing her remaining holdings. Enticed by the prospect of gaining new territory, Hamilcar Barca, the Punic general defeated in the First Punic War and Hannibal's father, decided to establish a new headquarters at Nova Carthago in southern Spain, giving Carthage an effective military base in continental Europe, from which Hannibal would later launch his trans-Alpine campaign.²³

There is a strong historiographic tradition that, on the eve of Hamilcar's departure, Hannibal took an oath of eternal hostility against the Roman people. Livy's account of the oath (21.1.4-5), the best example in extant Latin prose, is related in an indirect way through his use of *fama est*, perhaps indicating that Livy is reticent to insert it into the narrative proper, but feels comfortable with its presence in a digression.²⁴

²¹ David Vessey, "Silius Italicus on the Fall of Saguntum," *Classical Philology* 69 (1974), 28-36 informs much of my discussion of Books 1 and 2 of the *Punica*.

²² M. Cary and H.H. Scullard, *A History of Rome* 3rd ed. (London, 1975).

²³ *Ibid.*, 125.

²⁴ The insertion of *fama est* at the beginning of the digression marks it as a scholarly digression, which demands that the reader understand its allusive significance as a piece that is already a part of the tradition in which the author is

Fama est etiam Hannibalem annorum ferme novem pueriliter blanditientem patri Hamilcari ut duceretur in Hispaniam, cum perfecto Africo bello exercitum eo traiecturus sacrificaret, altaribus admotum tactis sacris iure iurando adactum se cum primum posset hostem fore populo Romano.

There is a story that Hannibal, at nearly nine years of age, as children will, was begging his father to be brought along with him to Spain, when Hasdrubal, with the African War brought to an end, was making his sacrifices in preparation for crossing his army into Spain. Hannibal was compelled, with the sacrificial victims taken up in his hands, to swear that he would be an enemy to the Roman people as soon as he might be able. (Livy 21.4.4)

Livy does not specify to which divinity these sacrifices are being made, nor does Appian (7.1.3), but Polybius (3.11.5-9) asserts that Hannibal swore his oath at an altar of Zeus, the equivalent of Baal Hammon, the primary masculine deity of Carthage.²⁵ Silius changes the tradition altogether and depicts the scene as an oath to Dido, who has attained divinization among the Carthaginians and has a temple at Carthage. After a lengthy description of the temple itself, Silius' Hannibal swears his oath:

“Romanos terra atque undis, ubi competet aetas,
ferro ignique sequar Rhoeteaque fata revolvam.
non superi mihi, non Martem cohibentia pacta,
non celsae obstiterint Alpes Tarpeiaque saxa.
hanc mentem iuro nostri per numina Martis,
per manes, regina, tuos.”

“When my age is adequate, I will pursue the Romans on land and sea, with sword and with fire, and I will bring back the fates of Troy. Neither the gods, nor the treaties that prevent war, nor the stars nor the Alps nor the Tarpeian rock will stand in my way. I swear to this intention by the divinity of our Mars, and by your shades, my queen.” (*Pun.* 1.114-19)

writing. Appian (7.1.3) begins the digression with λεγόμενος, the Greek equivalent of *fama est* in this context. Polybius (3.11.5) sets the scene by having Hannibal describe his own oath to King Antiochus, after his exile from Carthage, and Cornelius Nepos (*Hannibal* 1-2) does likewise. See Hinds (1998, 1-2) for more on *fama est* as an indicator of an “Alexandrian footnote.”

²⁵ Baal Hammon is alternately associated with Zeus/Jupiter, Ouranos/Uranus, and Chronos/Saturnus. Polybius (7.9.2-3) records that Hannibal took another oath, many years later, to King Philip V of Macedon, which called three triads of gods to witness the oath: Zeus, Hera, and Apollo; the daimon of the Carthaginians, Herakles, and Iolaus; and Ares, Triton, and Poseidon were all included. See Serge Lancel, *Carthage: A History* (Oxford, 1992) 208-9 for a fuller discussion of this oath and its placement within the archaeological record.

Unlike Livy's portrayal, which he related in indirect speech, Silius records the oath as a direct quotation from Hannibal as his version is not a digression. Though Silius' scene generally follows the historical accounts, the changes are notable and its connection with Vergil's *Aeneid* unmistakable. Unlike Livy, who does not specify the deity invoked, Silius identifies the temple as Dido's in an obvious poetic insertion that allows Hannibal to speak directly to the spirit of Aeneas' one-time lover,²⁶ who cursed the hapless Trojan and all future Romans in Book 4 of the *Aeneid*:

“tum vos, o Tyrii, stirpem et genus omne futurum
exercete odiis, cinerique haec mittite nostro
munera. nullus amor populis nec foedera sunt.
exoriare aliquis nostris ex ossibus ultor
qui face Dardanio ferroque sequare colonos,
nunc, olim, quocumque dabunt se tempore vires.
litora litoribus contraria, fluctibus undas
imprecor, arma armis: pugnent ipsique nepotesque.”

“Then pursue, O Tyrians, his offspring and all his descendants with your hatreds, and grant these gifts to my ashes. Let there be neither love nor any treaties between our peoples. Rise up, some avenger from by bones who will follow the Dardanian colonists with torch and sword, now, someday, whenever strength will offer itself. I pray for shores against shores, waves against waves, and arms against arms: let their children and our descendants fight it out.” (*Aen.* 4.622-29)

Hannibal now takes up the torch and the sword in accordance with the curse of Vergil's Dido. Silius, therefore, rewrites Livy's scene, yet does not miss the opportunity to identify Hannibal's historical oath as the actualization of Dido's poetic curse. Inevitably, however, Hannibal is doomed to failure in trying to conquer Rome, as any reader of history knows. Dido's curse is unfulfilled in the sense of total revenge,²⁷ although it must be noted that the curse, while total domination of the Romans is certainly implied, mentions only strife and warfare. Dido gets

²⁶ Silius gives the names of both Dido in the nominative and Elissa when the oblique case is used, thus avoiding forms such as *Didonis*, etc., just as Vergil did. See William C. McDermott, “Elissa,” *TAPA* 74 (1943): 205-14.

²⁷ Ralph Hexter, “Sidonian Dido,” in *Innovations of Antiquity*, ed. Ralph Hexter and Daniel Selden (New York, 1992) 344.

exactly what she asks for, and no more. This misinterpretation of prophecy and disappointment of Carthaginian expectation become important for Hannibal in Chapter 2.

Silius' use of a temple of a *goddess* (Dido) rather than the temple of "our Mars," who might be interpreted as the Punic Baal Hammon, may also have been influenced by Vergil's emphasis on Juno as the primary deity at Carthage (*Aen.* 1.12-22).²⁸ Ralph Hexter points out the possibilities of Dido's name and particularly the implications of her epithet *Sidonian*: "The epithet Sidonian makes it particularly appropriate to think of Astarte, whom the Hebrew Bible knows as the goddess of the Sidonians (1 Kg. 11.5, 33; 2 Kg. 23.13); moreover, the 'queen of Sidon' was always a priestess of Astarte."²⁹ The intimations of Dido's divinity are already within Vergil's *Aeneid* and Silius simply manifests them in his epic. Yet why was Juno's fury not mentioned? Certainly Juno's name would have been more appropriate in an historical context as the Roman equivalent of the Carthaginian goddess rather than that of a divinized mortal.

The problem of using Juno's wrath for the *Punica* lies in the epic, not historical, tradition. The problem that Silius must overcome is the fact that Juno and Jupiter were reconciled to one another at the end of Vergil's *Aeneid* as they were in Ennius' *Annales*.³⁰ Certainly Silius must have considered this aspect of the tradition when he used Dido's wrath as a substitution for Juno's. Though Juno sides with Hannibal throughout the epic and is responsible for his final

²⁸ Baal Hammon was paired with Tanit, who was his consort. The names Tanit, Astarte, and Juno Caelestis were virtually interchangeable due to years of syncretism between the Syro-Phoenician, Egyptian, native Berber, and later Greek and Roman interpretations of the goddess. The Vergilian tradition maintains that Dido established the cult of Juno Caelestis (*Aen.* 1.446-49) on the Byrsa hill in Carthage, adding yet another level of assimilation to this mysterious goddess.

²⁹ Hexter (1992), 348.

³⁰ D.C. Feeney, "The Reconciliations of Juno," *CQ* 34 (1984), 179-94, explores the aspects of this reconciliation in detail. Servius relates on *Aen.* 1.281: "*consilia in melius referet*": "*quia bello Punico secundo, ut ait Ennius, placata Iuno coepit favere Romanis*". *Annales* 291, Vahlen's edition.

escape from the Battle of Zama in Book 17, she reins him in when he tries to destroy the city of Rome itself (see *Pun.* 12.668-730). Silius' Juno keeps her Vergilian oath in this cosmic portrayal of the Second Punic War. Silius' changes to the tradition are subtle, leaving the historical framework of the scene as it appears in prose accounts, yet also rooting it firmly within the epic tradition. Silius treads the space between historical adherence and poetic fancy, creating a complex allusion to both genres simultaneously.

As the *Punica* continues, Silius follows Hannibal's historical path to war, as it is generally described in Livy, Polybius, and Appian. The colonization of Nova Carthago goes as planned and Hamilcar sets out to subjugate the local Spanish population for tribute, and also to provide himself with an effective power base in order to strengthen his forces. Hamilcar, however, is not fated to lead the campaign against Rome that he had envisioned, and upon his death, with Hannibal still too young to take command, his son-in-law, Hasdrubal, takes charge of the armies in Spain. Ancient historical accounts agree that it is under Hasdrubal's command that the Ebro River Treaty was signed with Rome in 226 BCE, an agreement that divided Spain into Carthaginian and Roman spheres of influence at the Ebro River, which ran east-west and opened out into the Mediterranean. The treaty further stipulated that both sides would refrain from attacking one another's allies.³¹

When Hannibal gains control of the army, he immediately begins to foment war with Rome, and attacks Saguntum, one of Rome's allied cities. Historical traditions vary on whether Saguntum was located to the north or south of the Ebro River: Livy indicates that it was to the south of the river (21.7.2), while Polybius (3.14.6-7) and Appian (6.2.7) place it to the north, indicating that the Carthaginians broke both aspects of the treaty by crossing the river and

³¹ Livy 21.2.7.

attacking Rome's allies.³² Livy, though he correctly places Saguntum to the south of the Ebro river, tries to dodge the issue by emphasizing the second part of the treaty and presenting the Roman senate's diplomacy in the best possible light, furthering the notion that Hannibal was entirely at fault for the outbreak of the war. Yet it is reasonable to see why Silius, who prized events that would add to the drama and pathos of his narrative more than geographical accuracy or political intrigue, selected the tradition that idealized the Romans' innocence in the outbreak of the war and placed Saguntum to the north of the Ebro.

Silius does not evaluate the various political causes for the war, but rather constructs his narrative on the basis that Hannibal is the uncontested aggressor.³³ To Silius, Hannibal is not the "cause" of the war, but rather the inevitability of a greater movement that began centuries before in Carthage's mythic past: Dido's curse.³⁴ This war, like its Trojan precursor, is waged on account of a woman, now a goddess. Silius' Hannibalic war is both historical and mythic, and his battle narrative of the siege of Saguntum shows the same dialogical relationship as the oath of Hannibal in its description. Silius follows the historical account, but inserts epic language into the narrative and uses Saguntum as a metaphor for Troy, encapsulating the earlier epic tradition in its sack, as we will see. After Silius' brief description and history of the city (1.271-95)—founded by Hercules as a memorial for his friend Zacynthus,³⁵ killed by a snake on the site of the future city—Hannibal resolves for the last time to take the city and strike the first blow against Rome. The Saguntines, however, are no easy foe, and Silius records that they fight back with

³² Serge Lancel, *Hannibal*, trans. Antonia Nevill (Malden, MA, 1999), 46-47.

³³ Historians were very interested in the political causes of the war. See A.E. Astin, "Saguntum and the Origins of the Second Punic War," *Latomus* 26 (1967): 577-96.

³⁴ J. Küppers, *Tantarum causas irarum: Untersuchungen zur einleitenden Bücherdyade der "Punica" des Silius Italicus* (New York, 1986).

³⁵ From which "Saguntum" draws its name. That Hannibal sacks a city founded by Hercules becomes a problem when he vainly tries to attain Hercules' powers, as will be discussed in Chapter 2.

ferocity: *certamine tanto/ conseruere acies, veluti circumdata vallo/ Roma foret* (“they joined battle in as great a struggle as if Rome were surrounded by a siege wall,” 1.338-40).

Livy’s account of the initial stages of the siege (21.7-9) describes two battles that are separated by several days.³⁶ His account of the first battle includes descriptions of the initial siege works, which fail to undermine the Saguntine wall, as well as a skirmish in which Hannibal approaches too close to the wall and is himself wounded (21.7.5-10). The narrative of the second battle describes the breaching of Saguntum’s walls and subsequent influx of the Carthaginians, who are held back and eventually routed by the stiff resistance of the Saguntine defenders (21.8.1-9.2).

Silius, however, unites Livy’s two combats into one continuous battle narrative, in which the Carthaginians breach the wall and engage the Saguntines in hand-to-hand combat, and Hannibal is wounded (1.296-534). The concision of Silius’ reworking of the scene is not itself as remarkable as the fundamental change in tone that his narrative undergoes when the Carthaginians breach the wall. Silius compares the crumbling wall to an avalanche in the Alps:

Alpibus altis
aeriae rupes, scopulorum mole revulsa,
haud aliter scindunt resonanti fragmine montem.

Not unlike when
the high peaks of the Alps, when a mass of rocks is torn away,
slide down the mountain with a great crash. (*Pun.* 1.370-72)

The siege, which has progressed in an historical fashion up to this point, is interrupted by the insertion of this epic simile, which is not only historically proleptic (for Hannibal’s later Alpine crossing), but also foregrounds the epic tone of the combat that follows. As the Carthaginians scramble over the rubble to get into the city, the Saguntine defender Murrus leaps forth to do

³⁶ See P.G. Walsh, *Livy: His Historical Aims and Methods* (Cambridge, 1961), 196, for a fuller analysis of Livy’s artistic division of the scenes in reference to other sections of his narrative.

battle with them (1.376-79). Silius' inclusion of Murrus' lineage calls attention to the relationship of the Saguntine people with Rome, as he is born of a Rutulian father and a Saguntine mother. The reference to Murrus' Rutulian father (*Rutulo de sanguine*, 377) constitutes the first occurrence of the adjective *Rutulus* in Silius' narrative, and conjures up the image of a Saguntine Turnus, the famous Rutulian defender in Virgil's *Aeneid*. The combination of the epic simile of the Alpine avalanche and the reference to Murrus' Rutulian blood recalls a notable Vergilian simile regarding Turnus in Book 12 of the *Aeneid* and further solidifies

Murrus' identification with Turnus:

ac veluti montis saxum de vertice praeceps
 cum ruit avulsum vento, seu turbidus imber
 proluit aut annis soluit sublapsa vetustas;
 fertur in abruptum magno mons improbus actu
 exsultatque solo, silvas armenta virosque
 involvens secum: disiecta per agmina Turnus
 sic urbis ruit ad muros.

Just as when a rock, torn off by the wind, tumbles headlong from the peak of a mountain, or when a turbid rain loosens it, or slipping old age weakens it over many years; the cruel mountain is born into the break in a great rush and leaps across the earth, dragging trees, flocks, and men along with it: so Turnus rushed to the walls of the city through the scattered lines. (*Aen.* 12.684-90)

The juxtaposition of the avalanche simile, the allusion to Rutulian Turnus, and the prominence of walls (*ad muros*) in both Silius' and Vergil's similes foreground the Vergilian landscape; and the historical narrative appropriately shifts to the heroic combats of individual heroes rather than the movements of troop formations, as is typical in historical writing.³⁷ In this context, Murrus stands synecdochically for the city itself; the fate of Murrus is the fate of Saguntum.³⁸ This

³⁷ History is not without examples of individual combats, such as Torquatus and the Gauls (See Livy 7.9.8-10 and Claudius Quadrigarius, Frag. 10b, in H. Peter, *Historicum Reliquiae* [Leipzig, 1914]), but the tradition surrounding the Hannibalic War lacks the individual combats between Hannibal and enemy commanders, as is portrayed here.

³⁸ See Philip Hardie, *The Epic Successors of Virgil: a study in the dynamics of a tradition* (Cambridge, 1993), 3-10 for a fuller discussion of the synecdochic hero in post Vergilian Latin epic.

reading is encouraged by the pun that Silius makes on the words Murrus and *murus*, the Latin word for “wall.”

Although Murrus appears in all his epic glory and begins to kill Carthaginian invaders in a lengthy catalogue of proper names—a *topos*³⁹ that is well established for epic combats—Hannibal also emerges from the background of the narrative in a manner befitting an epic hero. He races across the field to accept Murrus’ challenge to single combat, and kills just as many Saguntines as Murrus has Carthaginians along the way. Silius compares Hannibal’s approach to the streaking of a comet (*Pun.* 1.460-67), and the Saguntines cower before him, except for Murrus, who decides to stand and face Hannibal’s charge. The two catch sight of one another in the midst of the wall’s breach and engage in heroic taunts (*Pun.* 1.478-87), and Hannibal hurls a section of the wall at Murrus (*Pun.* 1.488-91), wounding him in a dramatic reversal of the Turnus-Aeneas combat in *Aeneid* 12. Murrus, however, recovers, and both warriors issue final threats against one another before Hannibal kills Murrus, running him through with his blade. Despite Murrus’ death, the siege is far from over, and the other Saguntines rush to drive Hannibal back from the breach with a barrage of stones, javelins, and arrows. Human weapons, however, are not sufficient for the task, and it requires a dart hurled by Jupiter’s hand—which can slip through Hannibal’s defenses and injure the god-like Carthaginian commander (*Pun.* 1.535-40)⁴⁰—to drive Hannibal back from the walls.

Hannibal, like Murrus, stands synecdochically for his people as a whole, a reading that is confirmed by what Murrus sees as he looks upon Hannibal for the last time:

³⁹ I take my definition from Hinds (1998) 34, “As normally defined, the *topos* is an intertextual gesture which, unlike the accidental confluence, is mobilized by the poet in full self-awareness. However, rather than demanding interpretation in relation to a specific model or models, like the allusion, the *topos* invokes its intertextual tradition as a collectivity, to which the individual contexts and connotations of prior instances are firmly subordinate.”

⁴⁰ A blow that parallels the later lightning blast with which Jupiter strikes Hannibal when he approaches the city of Rome (*Pun.* 12.619-26). The similarities with Juturna’s spear, thrown at Aeneas in Book 12, are also striking.

sed postquam propior vicino lumine fulsit
et tota se mole tulit, velut incita clausum
agmina Poenorum cingant et cuncta paventem
castra premant, lato Murrus caligat in hoste.
mille simul dextrae densusque micare videtur
ensis, et innumerae nutare in casside cristae.

But after Hannibal, coming closer, gleamed with nearer light and bore himself with his whole bulk, it seemed as if the entire Carthaginian army surrounded and pressed him as he lay there in fear, then Murrus' visage grew dark as his enemy advanced. It seemed that a thousand hands and dense blades shone, and innumerable plumes nodded on his helmet. (*Pun.* 1.496-501)

Silius need not describe the thousands of Carthaginians, but rather assigns their numbers to Hannibal's lone figure. Later, when the Saguntines drive Hannibal from the wall, Silius mentions that:

decisae vertice cristae
direptumque decus nutantum in caede iubarum.

The plumes were shorn from his head, as was the glory of the plumes that nodded over the corpse. (*Pun.* 1.524-25)⁴¹

Thus the epic retells the historical episode with the two heroes standing synecdochically as one for the many.

Yet the combat of the two heroes retells not only the historical scene, but also encapsulates the combats from the epic tradition. Through their combat, Murrus comes to stand for Turnus—whom Vergil modeled primarily on Homer's Hektor—and Hannibal comes to represent a “Carthaginian Aeneas,” whom Vergil similarly modeled on Homer's Achilles.⁴² Though the events of the Murrus-Hannibal battle do not occur in precisely the same way as those in the Turnus-Aeneas combat, it becomes apparent through Silius'

⁴¹ This description is certainly inspired from *Aen.* 9.808-18.

⁴² Vessey (1974) 28. This, naturally, problematizes Hannibal's epic persona, for he comes to embody the man upon whom Dido's curse has fallen, a mirror to his Roman epic counterpart. Hannibal's epic persona will later be further problematized by his acquisition of Herculean traits in order to perform his tasks, though his primary divine assistants are Juno, Dido, and the fury Tisiphone. Silius often uses such ironies in crafting Hannibal's epic identity, as we shall see in Chapter 2.

narrative that epic, like history, is doomed to repeat itself in what can be correctly interpreted as a cyclical event with endless repetitions. Silius, in effect, reworks the Livian account of Saguntum to reenact the sack of Troy in Vergilian terms, thus encapsulating both earlier epics through the metaphorical representation of Saguntum as, alternatively, Troy (1.115) or Rome (1.338-40). At the same time, Silius establishes his *Punica* as the third epic in a successive line beginning with Homer and continuing through Vergil.⁴³ That Book 1 of the *Punica* ends with the flight of the Saguntine ambassadors to Rome to beseech their allies for help only strengthens the metaphorical relationship of Saguntum to Troy and Rome, and the flight can be understood as a reenactment of the Trojan flight from the burning city of Troy to found the city of Rome.

Hannibal initially takes the role of an Achilles or, as suggested above, a Carthaginian Aeneas, who seeks to destroy Rome and undo the Roman Aeneas' foundation. Hannibal's heroic aspects in Silius' battle narrative are sufficient to show his role as the Carthaginian hero, but he initially lacks one critical aspect of the epic-heroic persona: heroic equipment, which is furnished to him by the Oceani in the form of a shield.

Hannibal's Shield.

Silius introduces an historical interlude when Hannibal briefly abandons his siege of Saguntum to quell a Spanish rebellion, and then returns to the beleaguered city (2.391-94). As he marches back to the city, we find that the Oceani,⁴⁴ the inhabitants of the western coast of

⁴³ These two are Silius' primary *predecessors*, although the tradition extends also to Naevius, Ennius, Lucretius, Ovid, and Lucan all of whose works help to shape Silius' *Punica*.

⁴⁴ The reference to the Oceani is an important allusion to the shield of Hercules, which I will discuss below.

Spain, have brought gifts for him, most notably a shield.⁴⁵ The need of an elaborately crafted and carefully described shield for an epic's heroic character, of course, has its origins in the shield of Achilles (*Iliad* 18.478-607), and later in the shield of Aeneas (*Aen.* 8.625-731). The two earlier shields, as well as Silius' refashioning of them, are important for any study of epic ekphrasis.⁴⁶

An ekphrasis, as its etymological roots suggests (ἐκ φράζω, "to show forth"), is quite simply a "description."⁴⁷ My ekphrastic study, however, will take a more specific approach to ekphrasis as it is applied to a work of art. Ekphrases, when applied to art, consist of two distinct parts: the first, external ekphrasis, involves a physical description of the object and the material used in its fashioning; the second, internal ekphrasis, reaches into the surface of the object and attempts to recreate a miniature narrative through the portrayal of its images. This miniature ekphrastic narrative evoked by the piece of art necessarily comments on, alludes to, and stands metaphorically for the larger epic narrative into which it is placed.⁴⁸ The reader, therefore, "reads" the scenes depicted upon the artwork and, through the reading process, comes to realize that the object contains a miniature narrative unto itself, what scholars have come to call a *mise*

⁴⁵ I am particularly indebted to David Vessey's "Silius Italicus: the Shield of Hannibal," *AJP* 96 (1975), 391-405, which introduced me to ekphrasis in Silius Italicus.

⁴⁶ M.C.J. Putnam, *Virgil's Epic Designs: Ekphrasis in the Aeneid* (New Haven, 1998) is critical to any study of ekphrasis in Latin epic, and can be taken as a model through which to view the Vergilizing ekphrases of Silius Italicus.

⁴⁷ D.P. Fowler, "Narrate and Describe: The Problem of Ekphrasis," *JRS* 81 (1991): 25-35, discusses the limiting view of ekphrasis as mere description, and prefers to explore ways in which the narrative and description interact with one another at an interpretive level. See also J. Hollander, "The Poetics of Ekphrasis," *Word and Image* 4 (1988): 209-18, and M. Krieger, *Ekphrasis* (Baltimore, 1922).

⁴⁸ Putnam, *Virgil's Epic Designs*, 3.

en abîme, “a miniature replica of a text embedded within that text; a textual part reduplicating, reflecting, or mirroring (one or more than one aspect of) the textual whole.”⁴⁹

Andrew Becker explains the duality of ekphrasis, what I have referred to as internal and external ekphrasis, in terms of Achilles’ shield as Homer describes it. For Becker, ekphrasis functions, on the one hand, as a verbal replacement for the act of viewing produced by *saphêneia* (clarity) and *enargeia* (vividness).⁵⁰ On the other hand, an ekphrasis goes beyond description, for it is necessarily charged with the emotional response of the author to the work:

Any description is necessarily an interpretation; a describer selects and organizes an infinite variety of aspects of phenomena. But some texts downplay the mediating presence of the describer and the language of description, some call our attention to it, some do both. Ekphrasis . . . is not to describe just the visible appearance of the work and the world it represents, but to include the judgments and emotions of the describer.⁵¹

As mentioned above, through internal and external ekphrasis, I have divided the material aspects of a description, which are used for virtually any object within a text, from its narrative/emotive aspects to highlight the literary devices that are implicit in Hannibal’s shield.⁵²

When an ekphrasis contains both external and internal aspects, an elaborate system of signification and subsequent allusion is produced. In the case of Hannibal’s shield, the metallic shield itself (external ekphrasis) is not sufficient to evoke a specifically epic context. Rather, the allusive nature of the shield is dependent upon what is depicted upon its surface (internal ekphrasis), which alludes to both the epic and historical traditions simultaneously, reflecting the dialogical struggle that is present in Silius’ larger epic narrative.

⁴⁹ Andrew Becker, *The Shield of Achilles and the Poetics of Ekphrasis* (London, 1995), 4. Becker draws his definition from G. Graff, *A Dictionary of Narratology* (London, 1987).

⁵⁰ Becker (1995), 25.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁵² Becker’s four levels of ekphrasis: *res ipsae*, *opus ipsum*, *artifex* and *ars*, and *animadvertor* are also useful in this discussion. *Ibid.*, 42.

Silius initially describes the material aspects of the equipment, emphasizing its metallic content and costliness:

Ecce autem clipeum saevo fulgore micantem
Oceani gentes ductori dona ferebant,
Callaicae telluris opus, galeamque coruscis
subnexam cristis, vibrant cui vertice coni
albetis niveae tremulo nutamine pennae;
ensem, unam ac multis fatalem milibus hastam;
praeterea textam nodis auroque trilicem
loricam, nulli tegimen penetrabile telo.
haec, aere et duri chalybis perfecta metallo
atque opibus perfusa Tagi, per singula laetis
lustrat ovans oculis et gaudet origine regni.

Behold, the inhabitants of the shores of the western sea brought gifts—a shield glinting with a savage gleam, the work of the land of Gaul, and a helmet fastened with a flashing plume, on the crest of whose white apex snowy feathers shook with a trembling nod; a sword and a spear that alone would bring death to many thousands; and mail covered moreover with bonds and triple-stranded gold inlay, a covering that could be pierced by no weapon. [Hannibal] scanned these—wrought with bronze, hard steel, and inlaid with the wealth of the Tagus River—and, rejoicing with his eyes, he took joy in the origins of the kingdom. (*Pun.* 2.395-405)

The initial description of Hannibal's weaponry is just that, a description, emphasizing the material worth and strength of the arms in the external portion of the ekphrasis. It is centered on the function of the object. Vergil begins the ekphrasis of Aeneas' shield in much the same way:

ille deae donis et tanto laetus honore
expleri nequit atque oculos per singula voluit,
miraturque interque manus et bracchia versat
terribilem cristis galeam flammisque vomentem,
fatiferumque ensem, loricam ex aere rigentem,
sanguineam, ingentem, qualis cum caerulea nubes
solis inardescit radiis longeque refulget;
tum levis ocreas electro auroque recocto,
hastamque et clipei non enarrabile textum.

Aeneas is unable to sate his eyes, so pleased is he at the gifts of the goddess and at such an honor, and he moves his eyes over each part, he marvels and grasps with his hands and arms the helmet with its terrible crest and belching flames, and the death-dealing blade, and mail of hardened bronze, bloody and giant as when

heavenly cloud glints with the rays of the sun and glows from afar; then the light greaves of electrum and worked gold, and the spear and the surface of the shield, unnarratable. (*Aen.* 8.617-25)

Vergil, of course, does not actually mean *enarrabile*, for he spends the next hundred lines doing just that, describing the narrative of the shield through the narrative of his poem, and thereby transforming the object from mere armament (external ekphrasis) into a narrative unto itself (internal ekphrasis) or *mise en abîme*. This kind of ekphrasis creates a temporal pause, in which the main narrative fades into the background as both character and reader attempt to interpret the poet's description.

Much modern critical reading of ekphrasis in classical literature takes the form of an attempt to show that what earlier critics had seen as "merely" decorative description can in fact be integrated with the narrative, indeed demands to be so integrated. Precisely because ekphrasis represents a pause at the level of narration and cannot be read functionally, the reader is possessed by a strong need to interpret.⁵³

The poet introduces such an ekphrasis as an interpretational challenge to the reader, yet the poet, by describing the object also sides with the audience, and sets a paradigm for how the reader should respond to the ekphrasis by explaining how he himself is "reading" the artwork. Through internal ekphrasis the poet becomes both craftsman and art critic, writing his narrative and simultaneously reacting to it.

1. *Right Side: Epic*

Silius' Hannibal turns his attention away from the material that makes up the shield to the images on the shield itself and sees the origins of Carthage depicted upon it, the internal aspect

⁵³ Fowler (1991), 27. See also R.F. Thomas, "Vergil's Ecphrastic Centerpieces," *HSCP* 87 (1983): 175-84.

of the ekphrasis. First, Hannibal looks to the right side of the shield and sees the poetic cause of his struggle, Dido's curse:⁵⁴

Condebat primae Dido Carthaginis arces,
instabatque operi subducta classe iuventus.
molibus hi claudent portus, his tecta domosque
partiris, iustae Bitia venerande senectae.
ostendant caput effossa tellure repertum
bellatoris equi atque omen clamore salutant.

Dido built the fortresses of first Carthage; the youths went to their work with the fleet drawn up on the beaches. Some enclose the ports with jetties, and to others you apportion houses and homes, O Bitias, venerable in your just old age. They pointed to the head of a warhorse found in the earthen ditch and they took joy in the omen with a shout.

The presence of Vergilian allusion is extensive:⁵⁵ the depictions of Carthaginians working hard at building their city and the discovery of the warhorse's head point towards *Aeneid* in a general way.

Lucus in urbe fuit media, laetissimus umbrae,
quo primum iactati undis et turbine Poeni
effodere loco signum, quod regia Iuno
monstrarat, caput acris equi; sic nam fore bello
egregiam et facilem victu per saecula gentem.

At the center of the city stood a wood, very pleasant with shade, where the Punics, tossed by sea and storm, first unearthed the sign, which queen Juno had shown to them, the head of a fierce horse; for thus their race would be famed for war and would come by tremendous wealth. (*Aen.* 1.441-45)

The allusion is strengthened all the more by Silius' subsequent description of the arrival of Aeneas and his affair with Dido, essentially summarizing Books 1 and 4 of the *Aeneid*:⁵⁶

has inter species orbatum classe suisque
Aenean pulsum pelago dextraque precantem

⁵⁴ There are various ways of dividing the shield into panels. For this study, as the second half of the ekphrasis specifies the "left" side, it is convenient to think of the first half as the right.

⁵⁵ Vessey, "Silius Italicus: The Shield of Hannibal," 394.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 395.

cernere erat. fronte hunc avide regina serena
 infelix ac iam vultu spectabat amico.
 hinc et speluncam furtivaque foedera amantum
 Callaicae fecere manu; it clamor ad auras
 latratusque canum, subitoque exterrita nimbo
 occultant alae venantum corpora silvis.
 nec procul Aeneadum vacuo iam litore classis
 aequora nequicquam revocante petebat Elissa.
 ipsa, pyram super ingentem stans, saucia Dido
 mandabat Tyriis ultricia bella futuris;
 ardentemque rogum media spectabat ab unda
 Dardanus et magnis pandebat carbasa fatis.
 parte alia⁵⁷ supplex infernis Hannibal aris
 arcanum Stygia libat cum vate cruorem
 et primo bella Aeneadum iurabat ab aevo.
 at senior Siculis exultat Hamilcar in arvis—
 spirantem credas certamina anhela movere,
 ardor inest oculis, torvumque minatur imago.

Among these scenes it was possible to see Aeneas, deprived of fleet and men, battered by the sea, supplicating with his right hand. The unfortunate queen looked upon him with calm brow and with a face already friendly. Here the Gauls, with their skill, had wrought the cave and the secret pacts of the lovers; the barking and baying of dogs goes through the air, and the troop of hunters, disturbed by the sudden rainfall, take shelter under the trees. Not far off, the fleet of Aeneas' men was seeking the sea from the empty shore, while Elissa called them back in vain. Wounded Dido herself, standing over the great pyre, was ordering avenging wars for future Tyrians; Dardanian (Aeneas) was watching the pyre from the midst of the sea and was spreading his sails for his great destiny. On another part of the shield Hannibal, as a suppliant, pours secret gore as a libation on the infernal altars with the Stygian priestess, and he swore wars against the sons of Aeneas from his first youth. And the older Hamilcar was riding proudly in the Sicilian fields—you might even believe that he was actually breathing and accomplishing breathless struggles. There is a gleam in his eyes, his face threatens grimly. (*Pun.* 2.395-431)

The details of the love tryst between Aeneas and Dido are specifically Vergilian, a love affair often cited as the primary change that Vergil made to the Ennian tradition, which had portrayed Dido as a faithful widow and paragon of chastity.⁵⁸ The juxtaposition of Dido's curse and

⁵⁷ I take this to mean another part of the right side, although it could also be viewed as a transitional panel at the top or bottom of the shield.

⁵⁸ Hexter (1992), 338-40.

Hannibal's oath calls attention to the epic causes of the war, mirroring the earlier passage of Hannibal's oath in Book 1. Silius thus uses Hannibal's shield as an allusive device to recall the Carthage of Vergil's *Aeneid* as well as an intratextual device to recall passages within Silius' own narrative. The allusions in the right half of the shield are primarily epic, though Silius' description of the right side ends with a very lifelike portrayal of Hamilcar, Hannibal's father, a figure made famous in historical prose. Between the shield's summary of the *Aeneid* (*Pun.* 2.395-425) and the figure of Hasdrubal is Hannibal's oath, an oath that becomes a point of intersection between the epic and historical traditions in both the epic and the ekphrasis. Within the right half of the shield we see the dialogue between the epic and historical genres played out in the plastic arts.

2. *Left Side: History*

This epic side of the shield (the right side), however, must coexist with its historical left half. That Silius ends his description of the right half of the shield with the figure of Hamilcar, provides a link to the historical realm portrayed upon the left:

Necnon et laevum clipei latus aspera signis
implebat Spartana cohors; hanc ducit ovantem
Ledaeis veniens victor Xanthippus Amyclis.
iuxta triste decus pendet sub imagine poenae
Regulus et fidei dat magna exempla Sagunto.
laetior at circa facies, agitata ferarum
agmina venatu et caelata mapalia fulgent.
nec procul usta cutem nigri soror horrida Marui
assuetas mulcet patrio sermone leaeneas.
it liber campi pastor, cui fine sine ullo
invetium saltus penetrat pecus; omnia Poenum
armenti vigilem patrio de more secuntur;
gaesaque latratorque Cydon tectumque focique
in silicis venis et fistula nota iuvenis.
eminet excelso consurgens colle Saguntos,
quam circa immensi populi condensaque cingunt

agmina certantum pulsantque trementibus hastis.
extrema clipei stagnabat Hiberus in ora,
curvatis claudens ingentem flexibus orbem.
Hannibal, abrupto transgressus foedere ripas,
Poenorum populos Romana in bella vocabat.

And yet a harsh Spartan army filled the left side of the shield with their standards; victorious Xanthippus from Amyclae, the city of Leda, leads them in celebration. Nearby, glorious Regulus hangs under the sad image of his penalty and he provides Saguntum with a great example of loyalty. But nearby is a happier scene: herds of beasts are pursued by hunters and engraved huts gleam. Not far off, the sunburnt sister of a black Moor soothes the lionesses trained by her native tongue. The herdsman goes free upon the field, where the flock unforbidden grazes in a pasture without limit; the shepherd takes all of his possessions with him in the nomadic custom: his spears, his Cretan dog, his shelter and hearth in the stone channels, and the reed pipes known to his flocks. Saguntum was preeminent rising on a lofty hill, which hordes of men and crowded formations of fighters surrounded and struck with their bristling spears. On the outmost lip of the shield flowed the Ebro, enclosing the great circle with its giant folds. Hannibal, after crossing the banks and breaking the treaty, summoned the Punic people to war against Rome. (*Pun.* 2.432-52)

The story on the left half is starkly historical in nature, making the transition from the mythical side to the major generals from the First Punic War: Xanthippus and Regulus in addition to Hamilcar. A specifically Livian allusion is impossible to determine as Livy's second decade, which included the First Punic War, is no longer extant, but we do have other sources, which describe the cruel fate that Regulus suffered by remaining faithful to his oath and returning to Carthage after being captured and sent to Rome to seek terms for Rome's surrender.

The description moves to a miniature ethnography concerning the nomadic habits of the North Africans, and ends with the siege of Saguntum, a story that is simultaneously drawn from historical writing,⁵⁹ a study of the past, but is also occurring at the present time, a temporal problem that will be discussed below. The historical half, like its epic opposite, functions allusively, recalling the historical tradition surrounding the First Punic War, as well as

⁵⁹ The specific sources for this ethnography are uncertain, though it certainly shares elements with Sallust's descriptions of northern Africa.

intratextually, reminding the reader of Saguntum's significance within Silius' narrative.⁶⁰ The outer rim, like the rest of the shield, serves as an historical as well as an epic reminder.

Beginning with Achilles' shield, epic shields are rimmed with a body of water.⁶¹ Silius names the river as the Ebro River, fully contextualizing the ekphrasis in its historical setting even as he alludes to the prior epic tradition.

3. Returning from Ekphrasis to Epic: Crafting a Reader's Response

We, as readers of this ekphrasis, step into the mind of the viewer, Hannibal in this case, and learn his responses to the work of art. In the narrative, just after the ekphrasis, Hannibal reacts with the anti-Roman sentiment that we expect:

tali sublimis dono, nova tegmina latis
aptat concutiens humeris celsusque profatur:
"heu quantum Ausonio sudabitis, arma, cruore!
quas, belli iudex, poenas mihi, Curia, pendes!"

Exalted by such a gift, brandishing the new armaments, he fitted them to his broad shoulders and proudly said: "How soaked you will be by Ausonian blood, my weapons! Such penalties shall you pay, Senate, the appointer of war!" (*Pun.* 2.453-56)

Although Hannibal verbally reacts in this way to the ekphrasis, Becker is useful in determining the general's unspoken response as a viewer of the ekphrasis: "ekphrasis focuses attention not only on the subject matter of a work, but also on the ways in which a work does what it does to its audience. In an ekphrasis, the response of a *describer*⁶² to a work of visual art can thus

⁶⁰ Vessey (1974), 28, comments that "Saguntum becomes a symbol of sublime, tranquil virtue, standing above and apart from the turbulent mass of mankind, just as the Stoic sage, passionless and unchanging is exalted above unredeemed humanity." Vessey's further observation that Silius' narrative can be read as a Stoic allegory is also interesting.

⁶¹ Homer specifies the water as "the River Ocean," as does the author of the "Shield of Hercules," once thought to be Hesiod. Vergil indicates that Aeneas' shield is simply rimmed by "the sea."

⁶² My emphasis, not Becker's.

become a metaphor for the response of an audience to the description itself, and to other texts as well.”⁶³ Adjectives and other descriptive words found within the ekphrasis itself, then, are every bit as important in determining a viewer’s response as the way in which the character directly responds within the narrative. We find, within this ekphrasis, descriptions of a “harsh Spartan army” (Carthage’s ally in the First Punic War), “glorious Regulus,” and “the sad image of his penalty,” which “provides Saguntum with a great example of loyalty.” These are reactions from a distinctly Roman, and certainly not a Carthaginian perspective. The ekphrasis does, as Becker points out, create a model for the reader’s response to the epic, but it also problematizes Hannibal’s persona as a viewer of the ekphrasis.⁶⁴ Why would Hannibal see Regulus as glorious? The Carthaginian’s unspoken response is distinctly Roman, and he seems to slip into the reaction of Silius’ authorial persona. The two personae become conflated in their reactions to the ekphrasis, and Hannibal can be read as a metaphor for Silius’ authorial persona, which becomes important in reading his later crossing of the Alps (see Chapter 2).

This conflation of personae, then, gives the reader a model by which to examine one or more aspects of the rest of the epic, and the Vergilian allusions that surface in the ekphrasis become more important for interpreting the poem as a whole. When comparing Hannibal’s shield with that of Aeneas, it is notable that Silius describes events that occurred in the past, in both the Vergilian right half and the historical left half. The sack of Saguntum, on the other hand, is occurring in the present, but a Roman reader would link the telling of this story with historical prose,⁶⁵ a genre that is specifically a study of the past. Contrarily, Aeneas’ shield, as

⁶³ Becker (1995), 38.

⁶⁴ See M. Jaeger, *Livy’s Written Rome* (Ann Arbor, 1997), and Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (trans. J.E. Lewin) (Ithaca, 1980).

⁶⁵ We have no extant poetic accounts of this siege other than brief statements that reference its occurrence. The extended description of the siege is distinctly historical.

Vergil describes it, contains images that look forward to future events, from the origins of Rome through its Regal period and up to Augustus' triple triumph in 27 BCE.⁶⁶ Although both Silius and Vergil describe the heroic shields in chronological order, with a strong strain of historical elements, Hannibal is primarily looking to his past in order to determine his future. Aeneas is looking only into the future all the way to Vergil's own day. Vessey correctly notes: "When Aeneas received his shield from his mother he accepted the burden of the future (*Aen.* 8,729-31), the weight of an empire that his descendants were to possess. Hannibal assumes the burden of history, the duty of revenge."⁶⁷ Vessey further utilizes this distinction of future and past to describe Hannibal's inability to know the future, due to the deceptive quality of the shield, noting "the world into which Hannibal is passing in despite of treaty obligations is in reality a narrow one: his mission is enmeshed inextricably with the past; it has no true future."⁶⁸ While I agree with Vessey's interpretation of the event as one possible reading of the way in which the images on the shield relate to Hannibal's fate, I wish to propose a slightly altered reading that comments on the literary dialogue present within Silius' narrative. I take Vessey's claim that "it has no true future," to mean "success" for Carthage rather than "future" in its temporal aspect. The shield does portray, in veiled terms, a very real future for Carthage, but one of failure and eventual destruction.⁶⁹

Silius begins his internal ekphrasis with the origins of Carthage, and gives them a distinctly Vergilian perspective, particularly through the entrance of Aeneas and subsequent

⁶⁶ Putnam, *Virgil's Epic Designs*, 119-88.

⁶⁷ Vessey, "Silius Italicus: The Shield of Hannibal," 399.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 404.

⁶⁹ Hannibal fails to interpret the shield, in much the same way as he fails to interpret other signs of future events, such as the oracle of Hammon (i.e. Baal Hammon) in Book 3 as well as his dream of Mercury, both of which will be discussed in Chapter 2.

summary of *Aeneid* 1 and 4. The right half concludes with Hannibal taking his oath at the temple of Dido, effectively citing Dido's Vergilian curse as the cause for the Second Punic War. The left side, by comparison, is drawn primarily from historical prose, depicting the First Punic War up to Hannibal's crossing of the Ebro and the sack of Saguntum. The backward-looking aspect of the shield is, indeed, as Vessey has described it, but Saguntum's metaphorical identification with both Troy and Rome, as noted above, extends also to Carthage, whose future is directly affected by the actions on the shield.

When the Roman ambassadors arrive in Carthage, they enter the Carthaginian senate, and Hanno, an old enemy of the Barcid family, rises to speak (2.270-326). Angry at Hannibal's recklessness and fearful of future Roman retaliation, he rails against the young Hannibal for breaking the Ebro River treaty with an interesting rhetorical strategy: "*haud Tirynthia tecta . . . nunc hoc, hoc inquam, tempore muros oppugnat, Carthago, tuos teque obsidet armis*" ("it is not Saguntum that he attacks . . . now at this moment (at this very moment I say!) he attacks your walls, Carthage, and he besieges you with arms" (2.300-03). The rhetorical device is drawn directly from Hanno's famous speech as it is recounted in Livy's narrative:

"Carthagini nunc Hannibal vineas turesque admovet: Carthaginis moenia quatit ariete. Sagunti ruinae—falsus utinam vates sim—nostris capitibus incident, susceptumque cum Saguntinis bellum habendum cum Romanis est."

"Hannibal is now moving siege sheds and siege towers against *Carthage*: he shakes the walls of *Carthage* with a battering ram. The ruins of Saguntum—would to god that I were a false prophet—will fall on our heads, and the war undertaken with the Saguntines must also be waged with the Romans." (Livy 21.10.10)

If we apply this rhetorical device to Silius' ekphrasis, the range of events from Carthage's Tyrian origins to the sack of Saguntum is far more totalizing and temporally progressive than Vessey

suggests. It encompasses Carthage's Tyrian origins, Hannibal's present siege, and the future fall of the Carthaginian Empire.

Furthermore, Silius imbeds the origins of Carthage in a Vergilian allusion, but its eventual fall in a Livian allusion. Both sides of the shield, the epic right and the historical left, terminate in the deeds of Hannibal recorded in the *Punica*. The right ends with Hannibal's oath to Dido and a description of his father, Hamilcar, both of whom Hannibal seeks to avenge, and the left half ends with Hannibal marching on Saguntum as commander. The ekphrasis, therefore, is inextricably tied to the dialogue between the epic and historic genres within Silius' larger narrative. Hannibal becomes both Dido's Vergilian avenger and Livy's cunning general.

The shield, then, has acquired the epic characteristics necessary for such an item, yet the truth that is revealed upon its surface is lost on Hannibal:

tali sublimis dono, nova tegmina latis
aptat concutiens humeris celsusque profatur:
"heu quantum Ausonio sudabitur, arma, cruore!
quas, belli iudex, poenas mihi, Curia, pendes!"

Exalted by such a gift, brandishing the new armaments, he fitted them to his broad shoulders and proudly said: "How soaked you will be by Ausonian blood, my weapons! Such penalties shall you pay, Senate, the appointer of war!" (*Pun.* 2.453-56)

Hannibal does not understand that he is the aggressor, viewing only the justifications for his actions, and he maintains that the Roman Senate is to blame. His prediction about his shield is fulfilled, yet, like Dido's curse, it fails to reach the success that is implied by his statement. The irony that Hannibal does not appear to know his history would not be lost on a Roman reader. Hannibal's reaction to the images on his shield is much the same as Aeneas', who did not understand the future as it was revealed upon his own shield:

talia per clipeum Volcani, dona parentis,
miratur rerumque ignarus imagine gaudet,

attollens umero famamque et fata nepotum.

Aeneas marveled at such things upon the shield of Vulcan, the gifts of his mother, and he delighted in the image, though ignorant of these things, lifting the fame and fates of his descendants onto his shoulder. (*Aen.* 8.729-31)

The fact that Aeneas is *ignarus rerum* could readily be applied to Hannibal through Silius' allusion. Both heroes, after viewing their shields, simply sling them upon their shoulders and continue with their tasks. For both heroes the future is still hidden.

Notable also is the placement of the Ebro River along the outer rim of Hannibal's shield, in the same way that Achilles' shield is rimmed by the River Ocean in *Iliad* 18. Like Ocean, the Ebro is a boundary, occupying a liminal position in two important ways: first, it is the established border between the territories of Carthage and Rome; second, it marks the division between the ekphrasis of Hannibal's shield and Silius' narrative. The narrative Hannibal, at the very end of the ekphrasis, sees the ekphrastic Hannibal (both avenger and general) cross over the river and summon the Carthaginians to war (*Hannibal, abrupto transgressus foedere ripas, Poenorum populos Romana in bella vocabat*, 2.451-52). Hannibal, who now occupies a position both in Silius' narrative and in the ekphrasis of the shield, has indeed crossed over the river, the boundary from one narrative into the next, from epic into ekphrasis.

Silius' description of Hannibal's shield thus adds another layer to the viewer's range of interpretation. The reader reads Silius' poetic creation, the *Punica*, and watches as Silius' Hannibal, who is desperately trying to rewrite history, steps into the ekphrasis. We are invited, then, as readers, to view Hannibal's shield as a metaphor for the *Punica*, and Hannibal as a metaphor for Silius himself. With the prior epic tradition now fully encapsulated within the narrative of the sack of Saguntum, and Hannibal acting as a metaphor for Silius' authorial

persona, the story can now progress, treading the fine line between the epic and historical traditions.

Chapter 2 will continue my examination of Hannibal's identity as well as the dialogical relationship between the epic and historic genres, using the ekphrasis of the temple of Hercules at Gades as another interpretive device for the narrative. This ekphrasis will inform my analysis of Hannibal's dream sent by Mercury, a scene that is depicted by Livy Book 21, but which also parallels Mercury's message to Aeneas prompting his departure from Carthage in *Aeneid* 4. Building upon the observation that Hannibal's epic persona can be seen metaphorically as Silius' authorial persona, I will examine some of Hannibal's actions and direct speeches as markers for Silius' narrative voice, particularly when crossing the Alps. Hannibal's identity is further problematized not only as he becomes the historical general and a "Carthaginian Aeneas" as we saw in chapter 1, but also as he attempts to embody Hercules in order to overthrow the Romans, a truly Herculean labor.

This poetic technique of changing Hannibal's identity from general, to hero, to demi-god is balanced by a firm grasp of the historical setting for Hannibal's trans-Alpine invasion. Despite his apparent depth of understanding when viewing ekphrases, Hannibal is woefully inept at interpreting anything but the immediate future. His future unfolds in exactly the way he envisions, just as Dido's curse is fulfilled in exactly the way that she invokes it. Juno assists in this revenge, despite her reconciliation with Jupiter at the end of the *Aeneid*. She will not, however, bring total destruction to Rome, and remains true to her oath by allowing Hannibal only to bring destruction to Rome's armies and allied cities. Neither the divinized Dido nor the Herculean Hannibal are able to break from the path of history in order to bring the total destruction upon Rome that they envision. Both are unable to see that their actions are

repetitions of prior events, though they attempt, again and again, to rewrite history and have their revenge.

CHAPTER 2: HANNIBAL AD PORTAS: THE DOORS OF THE TEMPLE OF HERCULES AND THE CROSSING OF THE ALPS

In my previous chapter, I established the intertextuality of both the historical and epic narrative of the work. Silius' account of the Hannibalic war against Rome, in particular the sack of Saguntum, generally follows Livy's account, yet expands certain aspects of the historical narrative, coloring them with a distinctively epic tone. By examining his method of composition, we can see that Silius also organizes his epic on a Vergilian model, with the sack of Saguntum dominating Book 2, just as Vergil placed the sack of Troy in Book 2 of his *Aeneid*. *Punica* 3 now marks Hannibal's journey towards Rome across the frozen expanse of the Alps, reflecting both the historical Hannibal's trans-Alpine route, as well as the wanderings of Aeneas across the Mediterranean in Book 3 of the *Aeneid*.⁷⁰ Hannibal sets out to uproot Rome while Aeneas had set out to found it.

The Temple of Hercules

War with Rome is inevitable now that Hannibal has sacked Saguntum. Yet the Carthaginian general/hero cannot depart for Rome at once; he must first gather his forces and prepare for his journey across the Alps. Livy reminds us that winter intervened and that Hannibal allowed his troops to have one last visit with their families before marching for Italy in the spring, as it would be many years before they could return.⁷¹ Silius does not mention the

⁷⁰ Malcolm Wallace, "The Architecture of the *Punica*: a Hypothesis," *CPh* 53.2 (1958): 99-103, makes a compelling argument that the *Punica* was intended to reach 18 books rather than the extant 17, due to a large lacuna in the text as well as irregularity in the organization of the last two books. Such a division would fit better into modern scholars' ideas about Vergilian and post-Vergilian division of works into hexads or triads. F. Delarue, "Sur l'architecture des *Punica* de Silius Italicus," *REL* 70 (1992): 149-65.

⁷¹ Livy 21.21.5-8.

vela dare et rerum praenoscere fata iubetur.
 prisca fides adytis longo servatur ab aevo,
 qua sublime sedens, Cirrhaeis aemulus antris,
 inter anhelantes Garamantas corniger Hammon 10
 fatidico pandit venientia saecula luco.
 hinc omen coeptis et casus scire futuros
 ante diem bellique vices novisse petebat.

After the pact had been broken by the Tyrians and the walls of chaste Saguntum had been overturned—a deed considered unjust by the father of the gods—the victor immediately approached the peoples dwelling at the end of the world and the familiar thresholds of Gades. Nor was it overlooked to rouse the minds of the priests and their prophetic souls concerning Hannibal’s struggle for power. Quickly Bostar was ordered to sail by sea and to discover the outcome of these events. An ancient faith was preserved in these sanctuaries from long ago, where, sitting on high, a rival to the Delphic caves, horn-bearing Hammon among the panting Garamantes reveals the coming ages from his prophetic grove. From here Hannibal was seeking an omen for his undertakings and to know future events before their day and to know the fortunes of war. (*Pun.* 3.1-13)

Clearly, Silius models his account on Livy’s, but augments it with an added detail: Bostar’s consultation of the oracle of Baal Hammon. This addition initially reminds the reader of Vergil’s aetiology of the cult of Hammon/Jupiter, which comes just before the Numidian King Iarbas’ prayer to the divinity at *Aen.* 4.198-202:

Hic Hammone satus rapta Garamantide nympha
 templa Iovi centum latis immania regnis,
 centum aras posuit vigilemque sacraverat ignem,
 excubias divum aeternas, pecudumque cruore
 pingue solum et variis florentia limina sertis.

Here the son of the nymph Garamantis, who had been raped by Hammon, had built magnificent temples to Jove in his broad kingdom, he had set up a hundred altars and had dedicated a vigilant flame at each, the eternal guardians of the gods, and the soil was rich with the blood of flocks and the thresholds were blossoming with many-colored garlands.

Silius looks back to Vergil through the lens of Lucan, as the Neronian poet described this same temple, which Cato visits during his famous desert-crossing into Egypt.⁷⁵

ventum erat ad templum Libycis quod gentibus unum

⁷⁵ See D. Feeney, *Gods in Epic*, (New York, 1991): 290.

inculti Garamantes habent: stat sortifer istic
 Iuppiter, ut memorant, sed non aut fulmina vibrans,
 aut similis nostro, sed tortis cornibus Hammon.
 non illic Libycae posuerunt ditia gentes 515
 templa, nec Eois splendent donaria gemmis:
 quamuis Aethiopum populis Arabumque beatis
 gentibus atque Indis unus sit Iuppiter Hammon,
 pauper adhuc deus est nullis violata per aevom
 divitiis delubra tenens: morumque priorum 520
 numen Romano templum defendit ab auro.
 esse locis superos testatur silva per omnem
 sola virens Libyen. nam quidquid pulvere sicco
 separat ardentem tepida Berenicida Lepti
 ignorat frondes: solus nemus extulit Hammon. 525
 silvarum fons causa loco, qui putria terrae
 adligat et domitas unda conectit harenas.

They came to the temple, which alone among the Libyan tribes the uncivilized Garamantes have: there stands lot-bearing Jupiter, so they remember, but he neither holds lightning bolts, nor is he similar to ours, but he is Hammon with the curved horns. There the Libyan tribes have not established wealthy temples, nor do the treasuries gleam with eastern gems: although Jupiter Hammon is the only god for the peoples of the Ethiopians, and the blessed races of the Arabs, and for the inhabitants of the India, the god here is poor, defamed by no riches through the ages, holding his shrine: and he, a god of the ancient ways, defends his temple from Roman gold. That the gods are in the place is testified by the wood, which alone grows green in all of Libya. For the land, which resides beneath the dry dust and divides dry Berenice from Leptis knows nothing of trees: Hammon raises this grove alone. A fountain is the cause of the woods in the place, which unites the dust of the earth and binds the sands that are tamed by the water. (*Pharsalia* 9.511-27)

The reference to the Garamantes is the most obvious allusion to Lucan, who had expanded on Vergil's aetiology of the cult by including the rape of the nymph Garamantis and by using the patronymic *Garamantide*. Silius, by borrowing this term from Lucan, is asserting his own poetic successorship, perhaps in the same way that the Garamantes are the vatic successors of the prophetic nymph. The allusion to "horn-bearing" Hammon is specific to Lucan, who mentions the god's *cornua*. Yet Silius alludes not only to the epic genre with the presence of this temple;

its oracle is also documented historically, beginning with Herodotus in the fifth century BCE, who located it in Libya:⁷⁶

χρηστηρίων δὲ πέρι τοῦ τε ἐν Ἑλλησι καὶ τοῦ ἐν Λιβύῃ τόνδε Αἰγύπτιοι λόγον λέγουσι . . . δύο πελειάδας μελαίνας ἐκ Θηβέων τῶν Αἰγυπτίεων ἀναπταμένας τὴν μὲν αὐτέων ἐς Λιβύην, τὴν δὲ παρὰ σφέας ἀπικέσθαι . . . τὴν δὲ ἐς τοὺς Λίβυας οἰχομένην πελειάδα λέγουσι Ἄμμωνος χρηστήριον κελεῦσαι τοὺς Λίβυας ποιείειν· ἔστι δὲ καὶ τοῦτο Διός.

Concerning the Greek and Libyan oracles, the Egyptians tell the following tale . . . that two black doves from Egyptian Thebes flew away, one going to Libya, and the other arrived amongst the Greeks . . . They say that the dove that flew to Libya announced that they should make an oracle of Ammon; and this is also an oracle of Zeus. (Hdt. 2.54-55)

Lucan, although he delves into the identity of the god worshipped at the temple, passes over the tale of the two doves in silence. Silius, however, concentrates on the aetiology of the two doves, emphasizing its importance upon Bostar's return at the end of Book 3. When Bostar meets Hannibal on the Italian side of the Alps, having arrived ahead of him by ship, he recounts the visions he has seen and provides the oracle with a foundation drawn from Herodotus'

Histories:⁷⁷

‘nam cui dona Iovis non divulgata per orbem,
in gremio Thebes geminas sedisse columbas?
quarum, Chaonias pennis quae contigit oras,
implet fatidico Dodonida murmure quercum.
at quae, Carpathium super aequor vecta, per auras
in Libyen piceis tranavit concolor alis,
hanc sedem templo Cythereia condidit ales;’

‘For to whom are the gifts of Jove not known throughout the world, the twin birds that sat in the lap of Thebe? One of them touched the Chaonian shores with her wings and fills the Dodonian oak with a prophetic murmur. The other Cythereian bird of the same color, carried over the Carpathian waves, crossed through the

⁷⁶ Libya is a vague term in many ways. Lucan (9.411) uses “Libya” to refer to the entire continent, though Sallust (*Bellum Jugurthinum* 17.4) refers to the continent as “Africa.” As early as Herodotus, Libya was described as northwestern Africa, but its exact boundaries vary from author to author. In poetry “Libya” can refer to essentially any part of Africa.

⁷⁷ Cicero (*Div.* 1.3 and 1.95) pairs the oracles of Dodona in Greece and Hammon. Cicero provides no aetiology for the cult in these passages, however this pairing of their names implies a common origin.

breezes into Libya on variegated wings, and established this as the seat for the temple.’ (*Pun.* 3.677-83)

Clearly, the shrine has a long tradition surrounding it, although it is one not usually associated with Hannibal. What effect, then, does Silius’ insertion of this non-Livian element have? The intertext with Lucan gives the scene an epic tone, but Silius combines it with a non-epic, aetiological myth that harks back to Herodotus. The answer may not come from these two authors, but from the tradition surrounding Alexander the Great. In a notable passage, Arrian (*Anabasis* 3.3.1-2) tells us that Alexander himself set out on foot for this *same* shrine of Ammon, following the exact route that Hercules had walked.⁷⁸ The symbolic support from the oracle was crucial in winning over the Egyptian populace to Alexander’s rule, thus completing his conquest and asserting his rulership on a religious level.

The allusion is complex. Silius expands Livy’s narrative with the insertion of Bostar’s visit to the oracle of Ammon, an episode that recalls Vergil’s Iarbas, Lucan’s Cato, Herodotus’ Egyptian digression, and the visit of Alexander the Great. This veiled reference to Alexander the Great in the opening lines of Book 3 pairs nicely with Hannibal’s personal visit to the Temple of Hercules: Alexander the Great was one of the first Hercules imitators in the Hellenistic East, and Silius’ Hannibal (as we will see throughout Book 3) literally follows the path of the demigod. Just as the Oracle of Ammon contains allusions to Vergil and Lucan while also reminding the reader of the propaganda of Alexander the Great, the ekphrasis of the Temple of Hercules is also charged with this mixture of genres in constant dialogue with one another. We also see this dialogical relationship between epic and history through an examination of Hannibal’s character, which we will undertake before moving to the ekphrasis itself.

⁷⁸ Andrew Anderson, “Heraclēs and His Successors: A Study of a Heroic Ideal and the Recurrence of a Heroic Type,” *HSCP* 39 (1928): 7-58. See below, pages 15-16, for a critical study of this passage from Appian. See also L. Bassett, “Hercules and the Hero of the *Punica*,” in *The Classical Tradition: Studies in Honor of Harry Caplan* (Ithaca, 1966), 258-73.

That Hannibal would consult the gods and fulfill his oaths to a demigod (Hercules) contrasts sharply with the general portrayal of his character, best attested by Livy's description of Hannibal.⁷⁹ In addition to describing Hannibal's great *ingenium*, courage, martial prowess, resistance to extreme temperatures, and discipline, Livy also remarks that

Has tantas viri virtutes ingentia vitia aequabant: inhumana crudelitas perfidia plus quam Punica, nihil veri, nihil sancti, nullus deum metus, nullum ius iurandum, nulla religio.

Great vices equaled these great virtues of the man: inhuman cruelty, perfidy more than Punic, nothing of truth, nothing of holiness, no fear of the gods, no oaths, and no sense of piety. (Livy 21.4.9)

Clearly, Livy's remark emphasizes the dual nature of Hannibal's character. For Livy, Hannibal can entirely lack piety, yet also perform public vows to Hercules. It would seem, then, that Hannibal's piety is sporadic, motivated more by a craving for empire than by a true sense of duty.

Silius, reworking Livy's description, also depicts these two aspects of Hannibal, beginning with his vices:

Ingenio motus avidus fideique sinister
is fuit, exsuperans astu, sed devius aequi.
armato nullus divum pudor; improba virtus
et pacis despectus honos; penitusque medullis
sanguinis humani flagrat sitis.

When moved by his *ingenium* he was greedy and harmful to oaths, overcoming the city, but inconsistent in meeting out justice. While armed he had no reverence for the gods; he had a crooked character and honor that was contemptuous of peace; a thirst for blood burned deeply within his marrows. (*Pun.* 1.56-60)

⁷⁹ Livy's style is notable for its vivid portrayal of the Carthaginian general's personality and character traits in his work. By depicting character, he can typify one side of a conflict through a leader's relative possession or lack of *virtus* and other qualities. See P.G. Walsh, *Livy: His Historical Aims and Methods* (Cambridge, 1961), 82-109, for a general discussion of character types in Livy.

and later continuing to his “virtues”:⁸⁰

erepto trepidus ductore exercitus una
Hannibalem voce atque alacri certamine poscit.
hinc studia accendit patriae virtutis imago,
hinc fama in populos iurati didita belli,
hinc virides ausis anni fervorque decorus
atque armata dolis mens et vis insita fandi.

The army, fearful that their general (Hasdrubal) was gone, demanded Hannibal with one voice and with a swift vote. For one, the image of his father’s virtue kindled their zeal; secondly, the rumor of his sworn war had been circulated amongst the people; thirdly, his years were green with daring, and he had a glorious fervor for war and his mind was armed with trickery and his talent for speaking was inborn. (*Pun.* 1.183-88)

For both historian and poet, Hannibal’s lack of reverence and atheistic tendencies are enough to make him a villain and impious enemy of Rome.⁸¹ Silius’ description is obviously drawn from Livy’s, but the poet downplays Hannibal’s atheism, a difference that illustrates the authors’ divergence in literary aims. Silius’ Hannibal is not simply an impious man with a facade of public piety, as might be inferred from Livy’s portrayal; rather, he is a worshipper of foreign gods and goddesses, an ally of chthonic deities and Furies, a cohort of the underworld.⁸² As we have seen in other aspects of the poem, Silius borrows from Livy’s portrayal and expands brief statements from the historical narrative to emphasize their importance to his epic. Hannibal’s character is—as noted in the previous chapter—both that of a cunning historical general and that of an epic warrior. Silius’ Hannibal must have both epic and historiographic literary elements in

⁸⁰ Because of its separation of more than one hundred lines from Hannibal’s vices, the passage of his virtues tends to be overlooked. See, e.g., K.O. Matier, “Hannibal: the Real Hero of the *Punica*,” *AClass* (1989): 3-17, who not only overlooks Silius’ portrayal of Hannibal’s virtues, but also begins to draw conclusions based upon this omission. (See esp. Matier p.5)

⁸¹ See Walsh (1961), 102-05, for Livy’s portrayal of Hannibal in detail. See also J.-F. Thomas, “Le theme de la perfidie carthaginoise dans l’oeuvre de Silius Italicus,” *VL* 161 (2001): 2-14.

⁸² See Philip Hardie, *The Epic Successors of Vergil* (Cambridge, 1993), 57-87, who discusses the emergence of the epic conflict between Heaven and Hell. This image of Hannibal as a servant of the underworld is also made clearer in the passage on Hannibal’s vices, which includes the word *exsuperans*, a word often associated with burning, as well as the verb *flagrare* (“to burn”) within a few lines of one another.

order to be a suitable hero, or perhaps villain, for the epic: he must be cruel, impious, and sacrilegious, while simultaneously summoning divine assistance as he marches against Rome and the seat of the gods, the Capitoline Hill.⁸³ Hannibal's actions are dictated by the prior historical tradition, yet reworked to fit his new epic persona.

To understand Livy's Hannibal and Silius' Hannibal as identical is to misread the poem. Silius' Hannibal is following in the historical Hannibal's footsteps, crossing territory that has already been trodden, just as Silius metaphorically treads on the literary territory of Livy and his epic precursors. At no time does the reader forget that Rome will eventually gain victory.⁸⁴ That Silius suffers from an "anxiety of influence" is perhaps too obvious to mention, and has been demonstrated by numerous scholars,⁸⁵ but Hannibal, too, it seems, suffers from the anxiety of failure and of following too closely in the historical Hannibal's footsteps. Silius' Hannibal, although he sees signs of his future failure, attempts to break away from the fate to which his venture is doomed. Silius does not simply tell the tale of the Hannibalic War, for both Ennius and Livy have already told that story. For Silius, Hannibal is the victim of fate or, to borrow David Vessey's term, a *dupe of destiny*,⁸⁶ and the reader's knowledge of how the story will end strengthens the poem's overwhelming sense of fate. In his attempt to break from the narrative's future, which he only catches in glimpses, Hannibal requires the strength of Hercules, and proceeds to Gades not only to fulfill the vows mentioned by Livy, but also to acquire the traits

⁸³ Bostar's consultation of the oracle in Libya adds to this description through its intertext with Lucan's *Pharsalia*. Lucan's Cato asserts that consulting such shrines does not fit in with his own Stoic philosophy, and refuses to inquire into the future, despite Labienus' urging (*Pharsalia* 9.581-83). When Silius' Hannibal consults the same oracle, he effectively becomes an "anti-Cato," or, more simply, an "anti-Stoic," because he shows no hesitation in inquiring into the future.

⁸⁴ D. Vessey, "The Dupe of Destiny: Hannibal in Silius' *Punica* III," *CJ* 77 (1982): 320-25.

⁸⁵ Hardie (1992), 116-19 gives the best treatment of Bloom's application to the post-Vergilian epicists.

⁸⁶ See Vessey (1982), 320.

necessary to wage a successful war against Rome. Hannibal must first assimilate Hercules' divine persona before attaining an apotheosis for himself through his labors.⁸⁷

Visions of Hercules

While Livy's mention of Hannibal's visit to Gades is summary and lacks Hannibal's imitation of Alexander and Hercules, Silius expands the story to add an epic layer of motivation to Hannibal's character. As with the siege of Saguntum, Silius follows the historical framework, but now transforms it into one of mythic and epic significance. The clearest marker for the epic and mythic side of Hannibal's visit is the ekphrasis of the doors of the temple of Hercules. As with Hannibal's shield, Silius begins his ekphrasis by describing its external aspects before moving to the internal narrative depicted on its surface:

Exin clavigeri veneratus numinis aras captivis onerat donis, quae nuper ab arce victor fumantis rapuit semusta Sagunti. vulgatum, nec cassa fides, ab origine fani impositas durare trabes solasque per aevum condentum novisse manus. hinc credere gaudent consedisde deum seniumque repellere templis.	15 20
tum, quis fas et honos adyti penetralia nosse, femineos prohibent gressus ac limine curant saetigeros arcere sues; nec discolor ulli ante aras cultus; velantur corpora lino, et Pelusiaco praeifulget stamine vertex.	25
discinctis mos tura dare atque e lege parentum sacrificam lato vestem distinguere clavo. pes nudus tonsaeque comae castumque cubile; irrestincta focus servant altaria flammae. sed nulla effigies simulacrave nota deorum maiestate locum et sacro implevere timore.	30

Then, in an act of veneration, he loaded the altars of the club-bearing god with captured gifts, which the victor had recently taken from the torched stronghold of burning Saguntum. It is widely held, and it is no empty word, that the beams of

⁸⁷ The struggle between the characters in the poem over the successorship of Hercules is marked throughout the work, and it is notable that Scipio is compared to Hercules in the last few lines of the poem (*Pun.* 17.649-50).

the shrine that were placed there at its beginning were still firm and had known only the hands of its first builders through the ages. Because of this they delight in thinking that a god resides there and keeps old age from the temples. Then the priests, upon whom the honor of seeing the inner sanctum of the shrine had been bestowed, prohibited the passage of women and took care to keep bristly boars from the threshold; nor do the garments of any of the priests differ in color from one another; their bodies are veiled with linen, and their foreheads gleam with Pelusian headbands. It is their custom to sacrifice incense ungirt and from the law of their fathers to distinguish their sacrificial garment with a purple stripe. They keep their feet bare, their heads shaved, and their beds chaste; the fires in the hearth keep the altars unquenched. But no effigy or recognizable image of the gods fills the place with majesty and sacred fear. (*Pun.* 3.14-31)

Here the external portion of the ekphrasis serves not only to detail the marvelous quality of the wood, protected as it is by Carthaginian deities, but also to place the temple within its cultural context by depicting the holy rites associated with worship there.⁸⁸

The description of the rites associated with the temple reveals an anthropological side of the *Punica*, a brief digression into the ethnographical aspects of Punic/Phoenician religion. For a Roman audience, for whom Punic religion would have been made infamous by stories of infant sacrifice,⁸⁹ the digression served as a reminder of Carthage's Semitic origins, its "otherness."⁹⁰

Silius details the barring of women and of boars from the inner shrines of the temple, a practice linked to the cult of Hercules,⁹¹ as well as the Carthaginian aversion to swine. Silius' details are

⁸⁸ This ekphrastic preface is closely linked with Vergil's introduction to the temple at Cumae at *Aen.* 6.14-19, which establishes Daedalus as the builder before moving to the internal ekphrasis. See Matier (1989), 3-17.

⁸⁹ See Lancel (1992), 227-56, for the problem of child sacrifice at the Tophet of Carthage as well as which deity presided there (Tanit is most likely).

⁹⁰ The notion that Punic priests keep their heads shaved is important in the archaeology of Carthage, where a number of metallic objects have been found. Archaeologists have termed these objects, which resemble axe-blades with long handles, as "razors." Whether the notation in this line and the material object have any strict connection is, of course, debatable, but the literary evidence, coupled with the relative wealth of such finds, reveals some interesting details about the customs of Punic priests. See Lancel (1992), 106-07. Propertius 4.9 also provides details about the barring of women in connection with the Ara Maxima in Rome, indicating that this was an aspect of Hercules' cult regardless of location. It might also indicate the painstaking research that Silius put into his assertion.

⁹¹ See L.R. Farnell, *Greek Hero Cults and the Ideas of Immortality*, (Oxford, 1921), 162-63. See also C. Picard, "Un rituel archaïque du culte d'Herakles thasien trouvé à Thasos," *BCH* 47 (1923): 241-74. I draw both references from Nicole Loraux, "Herakles: the Super-male and the Feminine," trans. Robert Lamberton, in *Before Sexuality: the*

reminiscent of Herodotus' Egyptian digression (Book 2), which details many aspects of Semitic religious ceremony, most notably the Carthaginian distaste for pigs.⁹² The crucial difference between Roman and Punic religious sensibilities in this passage, however, is in the lack of statuary. For a Roman, as Silius argues, statues fill holy places "with sacred majesty and fear" (3.30-31), and their absence gives the temple a decidedly foreign atmosphere. A part of Silius' biography may shed further light upon his preference for statuary. Pliny (*Epistula* 3.7) recounts Silius' death, and informs his addressee that Silius was an avid antiquarian and art collector. For a man so intensely concerned with art, the lack of statuary is, indeed, a notable trait for a foreign temple.

Yet the temple does not entirely lack decoration, for its doors are painted⁹³ with scenes from the life of Hercules. It is uncertain whether these paintings are to be thought of as Punic additions or as a touch of Greco-Roman artistry; answering such a question would certainly establish who the "builders" (*condentes*, line 19) of the temple were. What is clear is that Hannibal pauses to examine these paintings, watching the stories unfold in the internal portion of the ekphrasis:

In foribus labor Alcidae: Lernaea recisis
 anguibus hydra iacet, nexuque elisa leonis
 ora Cleonaei patulo caelantur hiatu.
 at Stygius, saevis terrens latratibus umbras, 35
 ianitor, aeterno tum primum tractus ab antro,
 vincla indignatur, metuitque Megaera catenas.

Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World, ed. David M. Halperin, John J. Winkler, and Froma I. Zeitlin, (Princeton, 1990), 25, n. 18.

⁹² See Hdt. 2.47.

⁹³ I use "painted" since Silius emphasizes the wooden construction of the parts of the temple as well as its lack of statuary, which may imply the presence of only two-dimensional representations. We might, however, just as easily view these depictions as relief sculptures or even wood engravings. This same problem pervades scholarship on the Temple of Juno in *Aeneid* 1. See D. Clay, "The Archaeology of the Temple of Juno in Carthage," *CPh* 83 (1988): 195-205, and R.D. Williams, "The Pictures on Dido's Temple," *CQ* 10 (1960): 145-51. The bibliography on this ekphrasis is extensive.

iuxta Thraces equi pestisque Erymanthia et altos
aeripedis ramos superantia cornua cervi.
nec levior vinci Libycae telluris alumnus 40
matre super stratique genus deforme bimembres
Centauri frontemque minor nunc amnis Acarnan.
inter quae fulget sacratis ignibus Oete,
ingentemque animam rapiunt ad sidera flammae.

Upon the doors was the labor of Hercules: the Lernaean hydra lay with its snake-heads cut off, and the crushed head of the Nemean Lion was fashioned there with its gaping jaws. But the guard of the Styx, terrifying the shades with his savage barking, dragged from his eternal cave for the first time, raged at his bonds, and Megaera feared the chains as well. Nearby were the Thracian horses and the plague of Erymanthia, and the antlers of the bronze-footed stag overhanging the lofty branches. And the child of the Libyan land no easier to be conquered while upon his mother⁹⁴ and the deformed race of the slain centaurs, half man and half horse, and the forehead of the Acarnaeian river now lacking a horn. Amongst which things Mt. Oeta gleams with sacred fires, and the flames carry the great soul to the stars. (*Pun.* 3.32-44)

Clearly, Silius exercised a great deal of care in this ekphrasis, as he does with his others, and the reader (as well as critic) is invited to draw parallels between Hercules' labors and Hannibal's efforts. Identifying a link between a particular Herculean labor and one of Hannibal's deeds, however, proves to be difficult, as Hannibal's efforts do not correspond to those of Hercules.

Let us now turn to Silius' depiction of Hercules' labors, which is generally passed over without much comment.⁹⁵ First, we must note that there are not twelve labors depicted on Silius' temple doors, but rather ten *events*, only six of which are among the canonical twelve labors: the Lernaean Hydra, the Nemean Lion, Cerberus, the Horses of Diomedes, the Erymanthian Boar, and the Cerynaean Hind. Three of the four remaining events—the slaying of Antaeus, the battle with the Centaurs, the wrestling match with Acarnania (Achelous)—are not labors, but are rather

⁹⁴ This refers to Hercules' slaying of Antaeus, an autochthonous beast who could not be slain so long as he stood upon his "mother," the Libyan soil.

⁹⁵ Vessey (1982), 322-23; see also Bassett (1966), who, although insightful in his exploration of Hercules throughout the *Punica*, gives no detailed analysis of the ekphrasis.

considered *parerga*, or “side-labors,” by mythographers.⁹⁶ Entirely missing from the doors are the Augean stables, Stymphalian Birds, Cretan Bull, Girdle of Hippolyta, Cattle of Geryon, and Apples of the Hesperides. The last two absentees are especially notable in this context, as Spain figures prominently in both. We must remember, however, that the mythic tradition surrounding Hercules remained highly varied until the eventual canonization of the “Twelve Labors” by Diodorus (first century BCE).⁹⁷ Indeed, the tradition was so fragmented that Aristotle made disparaging remarks about poets who attempted to write a unified poem surrounding the life of Hercules.⁹⁸ Silius chooses to divide his ekphrasis into six *labores*, with three added *parerga*, and a fourth event, Hercules’ final apotheosis. The events do not occur in the text in chronological order, which suggests that Silius’ selection of tales stems from poetic choice rather than from his reliance on a particular Herculean tradition.

The problem for any poet of trying to unify a story around the life of Hercules is exacerbated in the *Punica* by the presence of yet another aspect of the Hercules tradition: the Carthaginian Hercules.⁹⁹ Also known as Melqart, the Carthaginian Hercules is thought to be a syncretic blend of an older African god and the Greek demigod, based on a passage from Herodotus’ *Histories*, which states that the “Egyptian Hercules” is not only more ancient than the Greek demigod but also the source for him. Herodotus’ writings, as well as recent archaeological excavations, have further linked the worship of Hercules/Melqart with a temple at

⁹⁶ See Timothy Gantz, *Early Greek Myth: a Guide to Literary and Artistic Sources* (Baltimore, 1993), 382.

⁹⁷ See Gantz (1993), 382-83, for Diodorus as well as the metopes on the Temple of Zeus at Olympia (5th century BCE), which identifies the canonical twelve in almost complete agreement with Diodorus’ account.

⁹⁸ Aristotle’s *Poetics* 1451a16-22.

⁹⁹ C.H. Moore, “Prophecy in Ancient Epic,” *HSCP* 32 (1921): 99-175 thinks little of Silius’ unity, although his critiques are generally based on the *Punica*’s lack of what he feels to be a sufficient climax. Moore levels this same criticism at the *Iliad*, however, and it makes one wonder just what qualifies as a “suitable climax” for this particular critic.

Phoenician Tyre, the mother city of Punic Carthage.¹⁰⁰ Yet even upon this point, the traditions surrounding Hercules are as divided as his myths, for Appian tells us, concerning the Temple in Spain:

τό τε τοῦ Ἡρακλέους ἱερόν τὸ ἐν στήλαις Φοίνικές μοι δοκοῦσιν
ιδρύσασθαι· καὶ θρησκεύεται νῦν ἔτι φοινικικῶς, ὅ τε θεὸς αὐτοῖς οὐχ
ὁ Θηβαῖός ἐστιν ἀλλ' ὁ Τυρίων. ταῦτα μὲν δὴ τοῖς παλαιολογοῦσι
μεθείσθω.

The Phoenicians seem to have built the temple of Herakles at the pillars of Herakles (i.e. the Straits of Gibraltar); and it is celebrated to this very day with Phoenician rites, and their God is not Theban but Tyrian. But let these things be left to palaeologists (antiquarians). (Appian 6.1.2)

The Romans had been aware of this plurality of Hercules' manifestations for some time. Cicero divides Hercules into six distinct identities:

“Quamquam quem potissimum Herculem colamus scire sane velim; pluris enim tradunt nobis ii qui interiores scrutantur et reconditas litteras, antiquissimum Iove natum sed item Iove antiquissimo—nam Ioves quoque pluris in priscis Graecorum litteris invenimus: ex eo igitur et Lysithoë est is Hercules quem concertavisse cum Apolline de tripode accepimus. Alter traditur Nilo natus Aegyptius, quem aiunt Phrygias litteras conscripsisse. Tertius est ex Idaeis Digitis, cui inferias adferunt. Quartus Iovis est et Asteriae Latonae sororis, qui Tyri maxime colitur, cuius Karthaginem filiam ferunt. Quintus in India qui Belus dicitur. Sextus hic ex Alcmena quem Iuppiter genuit.”

“Although I would wish especially to know just which Hercules we are worshiping; for those who examine esoteric and recondite literature have handed down many to us, the most ancient is the son of Jove but likewise from the most ancient Jove—for we also find many Joves in ancient Greek literature: from him therefore, and Lysithoë is the Hercules whom we understand to have struggled with Apollo over his tripod. Another is Egyptian and is said to have sprung from the Nile, whom they say composed Phrygian literature. The third is from the Digi of Mount Ida, to whom they offer sacrifices to the dead. Fourth is the son of Jove and Asteria, the sister of Latona, who is worshiped especially at Tyre, whose daughter they say was the nymph Carthago. There is a fifth in India who is called Belus. And the sixth is the one whom Jupiter bore through Alcmena.” (*De Natura Deorum* 3.16.42)

¹⁰⁰ Hdt. 2.42-45. See also Lancel, *Carthage*.

Silius' Hercules shows characteristics of Hercules one, two, four, and six in various parts of the ekphrasis, and we are left puzzling over which Hercules we are discussing.¹⁰¹ Silius' temple doors clearly depict the labors of the Greek Hercules, but the surrounding cultural signs seem to indicate an Egyptian/African temple that is tied to the Phoenician East (i.e. Melqart), despite Appian's later protest that there was a distinction between those two divinities. To which Hercules, then, is Silius' temple dedicated? To "the full-knowing reader,"¹⁰² all the aspects of Hercules are present in the temple, reflecting not only syncretism with Melqart, but also a mythical and religious dialogue, which enables a reader to find the aspects of Hercules with which he or she is most familiar.

Clearly, Silius borrows from Livy's account of Hannibal's vows to Hercules and expands it to encompass every aspect of the elusive demigod. He attracts the reader's anthropological interest in the Phoenicians through the description of the rites in the external portion of the ekphrasis, but the historical aspect is in constant dialogue with the mythological depictions on the temple doors in the internal portion of the ekphrasis. Just as the internal and external ekphrases are in dialogue with one another, so too are Hannibal's historical and epic sides. Hannibal examines the door with the expectation of becoming another Hercules and performing similar *labores* of his own, as we will see. It becomes quite clear that Hannibal sees, not Hercules, but *himself* in the ekphrasis, just as he saw himself in the ekphrasis of the shield.

Hannibal is not the first epic hero to think of himself as another Hercules; Aeneas does the same in Vergil's *Aeneid*. References to Aeneas' identification with the demigod are scattered

¹⁰¹ I am indebted to Bassett (1966), 266, for the use of Cicero's *De Natura Deorum*. Bassett sees parallels to Hercules four and six of Cicero's description; the addition of one and two are my own, based on further observation of the ekphrasis and the temple. Silius was certainly familiar with the works of Cicero and even restored some of his old villas (Pliny 3.7) during his retirement. See Francis Ripoll, "Silius Italicus et Cicero," *LEC* 68.2/3 (2000): 147-73.

¹⁰² I take this term from Joseph Pucci, *The Full-Knowing Reader: Allusion and the Power of the Reader in the Western Literary Tradition* (New Haven, 1998).

Not far off the Herculean walls lift themselves from the shore, on a gently rising hill, to which Zacynthus, the founder of the lofty city, had given his name. Here the companion of Hercules was returning to Thebes in procession after the death of Geryon and was recounting the deeds to the sky. For the monster had three lives, his body was armed with three right hands and he had a head on each neck, three in a row. Nor did the land ever see another upon whom a single death was not able to place an end, and for whom the harsh sisters twisted a third thread when it had already been broken twice. Here the rejoicing victor displayed the spoils and was calling the flocks to the springs at mid-day, when a serpent, as it was trodden upon, broke open his jaws—swelling with poison and kindled by the sun—and dealt a lethal wound, and laid low the Inachian man on Iberian soil. (*Pun.* 1.273-87)

Later in Book 2, when the demigod sees the Saguntines' plight, he mourns their suffering:

Desuper haec caelo spectans Tirynthius alto
illacrimat fractae nequicquam casibus urbis.

Tirynthian Hercules, watching these things from overhead in the lofty heavens, wept in vain at the fall of the broken city. (*Pun.* 2.475-76)

Hercules' tearful reaction in the *Punica* reminds the reader of his reaction to the death of Pallas in the *Aeneid*:

audiit Alcides iuvenem magnumque sub imo
corde premit gemitum lacrimasque effundit inanis:

Hercules heard the youth and let out a groan from the depths of his heart and poured out tears in vain. (*Aen.* 10.464-65)

We have already noted that Hannibal initially appears to be a Carthaginian Aeneas, and now, by extension, a Carthaginian Hercules. His self-identification with the demigod, however, is destined to be short-lived and Silius places Hannibal's oath to Hercules at the beginning of Book 3 in ironic juxtaposition to Saguntum's sack at the end of Book 2. Despite his vows to Hercules and other methods of self-fashioning, Hannibal is the victim of fortune and cannot maintain the Herculean traits to which he aspires for the entirety of his task. Through the allusion to the

weeping Hercules of *Aeneid* 10 (see above), Hannibal's sack of Saguntum begins to resemble Turnus' slaying of Pallas, an act that dooms Turnus to death at Aeneas' hands.¹⁰⁷

Just as he is not the first *epic* hero to model himself on Hercules, Hannibal is also not the first *historical* figure to do so. Indeed, the trope of becoming another Hercules is not just bound to an epic context; the adoption of the Herculean persona is also a mode of political propaganda that originated with Alexander the Great. Carthage shows many similarities to the kingdoms of the Hellenistic East,¹⁰⁸ and there can be little doubt that Hannibal, like most other educated inhabitants of the Mediterranean, was familiar with Alexander's life as well as military prowess. It is interesting to note that Alexander also visited a temple of Hercules at Troy, presumably on the same visit as the story of his famous visit to Achilles' tomb.¹⁰⁹

Silius' Hannibal's hope to become the next Hercules and Alexander the Great places him next to other great Hercules/Alexander imitators, such as Scipio Africanus (who actually ends up attaining the Herculean role sought by Hannibal), Pompey, Caesar, Antony, Augustus, and later Roman emperors.¹¹⁰ Of these Hercules imitators, Caesar proves most interesting upon examination, as he is both an historical reality for the Roman reader and a literary figure from the most recent epic to be produced prior to Silius' *Punica*, Lucan's *Pharsalia*. Scholars have noted that Silius' Hannibal shows remarkable similarities to Lucan's Caesar;¹¹¹ however, the

¹⁰⁷ Feeney, *The Gods in Epic*, 155-58.

¹⁰⁸ Susan Raven, *Rome in Africa*, 3rd ed. (New York, 1993), 29-31 and 37-38. The similarities are especially evident in army organization as well as artistic innovations. Additionally, numismatic evidence points to a special reverence for Melqart by the Barcid family. The name Hamilcar means "gift of Melqart." See Vessey (1982), 322, n. 16.

¹⁰⁹ Anderson (1928), 14.

¹¹⁰ Subsequent Roman emperors, such as Domitian, who ruled in Silius' own day, attempted to use Herculean iconography to cement their own claims both to earthly power and to divinization by the senate after their deaths.

¹¹¹ See G.B. Conte, *Latin Literature: A History*, trans. Joseph B. Solodow (Baltimore, 1994), 494; and Richard T. Bruere, "Silius Italicus *Punica*," *CPh* 47 (1952), 219-27. See also J.H. Brouwers, "Zur Lucan-Imitation bei Silius

Carthaginian general/leader also shows parallels with the historical/biographical Caesar of Suetonius' *Life*:¹¹²

Quaestori ulterior Hispania obvenit; ubi cum mandatu praetoris iure dicundo conventus circumiret Gadisque venisset, animadversa apud Herculis templum Magni Alexandri imagine ingemuit et quasi pertaesus ignaviam suam, quod nihil dum a se memorabile actum esset in aetate, qua iam Alexander orbem terrarum subegisset, missionem continuo efflagitavit ad captandas quam primum maiorum rerum occasiones in urbe.

Further Spain came under his command as quaestor. When he was going about with the command of the praetor to convene a court of law and he had come to Gades, and he noticed an image of Alexander the Great at the temple of Hercules, he groaned and as if suffering from his own mediocrity, because while nothing memorable had been done up to that point in his life, by then Alexander had subjugated the whole world. At once he demanded a discharge in order to seize the opportunities of his ancestors in the city (of Rome) as soon as possible. (Suetonius, *Divus Julius* 7.1)

Clearly, the Temple of Hercules at Gades had seen spectacular men. Indeed, one can see that the Silian Hannibal's quest after Herculean immortality was not such a distant thought as it may be to a modern reader. Julius Caesar, after all, became a god, and his careful propaganda campaign to model himself on Alexander the Great played no small part in his divinization.¹¹³

Regardless of the alternate portrayals of Caesar as either good or evil, his role as a pawn of fate is unmistakable throughout the work of Lucan as well as of Suetonius. His fate and his destiny were divine in origin, although it is up to the poet or the biographer to determine his relative good or evil qualities with the benefit of hindsight. Silius' Hannibal is no less a pawn of the gods than was Caesar, both in the poetic and later biographical traditions. Hannibal, however, is not destined to gain the victory that Caesar won, and conquer Italy. Silius must

Italicus," in *Actus: Studies in Honour of H.L.W. Nelson*, Ed. J. den Boeft and A.H.M. Kessels (Utrecht, 1982), 73-87. See also Hardie, *The Epic Successors of Vergil*, 64 and 80.

¹¹² Suetonius wrote after Silius, but, like Appian, his work was carefully researched, and this side-note is obviously the product of a prior tradition concerning Caesar.

¹¹³ Anderson (1928), 39-42.

doom his hero to the historical fate that has been laid out before him, and leave room for Lucan's Caesar, who comes next chronologically, to wage his civil rather than foreign war. Thus Silius fills the temporal gap between Vergil's *Aeneid* and Lucan's *Pharsalia*, securing his own work within the Latin epic cycle.

Historically and poetically, Hannibal is doomed to failure against Rome. Silius' general is not yet aware that his war has already been literarily carried out, that fate has already run its course in the writings of Livy. Hannibal, like Aeneas—who fails to understand the images on his shield (*Aen.* 8.729-31) even after he has seen the future of Rome in his descent to the underworld (*Aen.* 6.756-853)—is going to meet his destiny with the full expectation of success. But just as the reader of the *Aeneid* knows that Aeneas will be successful in his endeavor, the reader of the *Punica* knows that Hannibal will not. Both heroes, if the term can be applied to Hannibal, are the pawns of the fates, the one successful and the other not.

Hannibal, despite his apparent bravado, is constantly seeking the future, unsure of his actions, haunted by a justified sense of foreboding:

Postquam oculos varia implevit virtutis imago, mira dehinc cernit: surgentis mole profundi iniectum terris subitum mare nullaue circa litora et infuso stagnantes aequore campos. nam qua caeruleis Nereus evolvitur antris atque imo freta contorquet Neptunia fundo, proruptum exundat pelagus, caecosque relaxans Oceanus fontes torrentibus ingruit undis. tum vada, ceu saevo penitus permota tridenti, luctantur terris tumefactum imponere pontum. mox reheat gurges tractoque relabitur aestu, ac ratis erepto campis deserta profundo, et fusi transtris expectant aequora nautae. Cymothoës ea regna vagae pelagique labores Luna movet, Luna, immissis per caerula bigis, fertque refertque fretum, sequiturque reciproca Tethys.	45 50 55 60
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After varied images of *virtus* had filled his eyes, then he saw marvelous things: the sea beneath is thrown upon the earth with the mass of the surging depth and no shores surround it and the fields are as pools once the water has come in. For where Nereus rolls out from his sea-blue caverns and whips up the Neptunian waters from the lowest depth, the sea rushes out in waves, and Ocean, loosing his hidden springs, groans with the torrential waters. Then, as if moved by a savage trident from the depths, the waters struggle to place the swollen sea upon the earth. Soon the flow returns and slips back with the tide dragging it away, but a ship is deserted upon the fields after the depth had snatched it there, and the sailors, spread out on their rowing benches, await the sea. The moon moves the kingdoms of wandering Cymothoë and the labors of the sea, the Moon, with her chariots sent through the waves, bears the sea in and out, and Tethys follows in turn. (*Pun.* 3.45-60)

Nereus, who had calmed the seas for Hercules' crossing to Spain to slay Geryon,¹¹⁴ now whips up the sea, surely an ill portent for Hannibal's first steps as a new Hercules. On the one hand, we may view Hannibal as an Aeolus, stirring the seas against the Romans, yet the effect of the storm is to beach a Carthaginian ship. For Hannibal, there will be no Neptune to calm the waves as an orator does a crowd (*Aen.* 1.148-50); rather there is only the historical assurance of his inevitable failure. It is notable that the moon moves the *labores* of the sea, a distinctly Herculean word within a few lines of the ekphrasis. Hannibal will ride the wave of fortune towards his destiny, but will find himself stranded in a foreign land the way that the ship is stranded upon the dry earth in Hannibal's vision.

Hannibal's Dream

Silius also emphasizes the inevitability of Hannibal's failure through his description of Hannibal's dream from Mercury. Livy had provided a memorable account of the scene:

Ab Gadibus Carthaginem ad hiberna exercitus redit; atque inde profectus praeter Onusam urbem ad Hiberum per maritimam oram ducit. Ibi fama est in quiete visum ab eo iuvenem divina specie, qui se ab Iove diceret ducem in Italiam Hannibali missum: proinde sequeretur neque usquam a se deflecteret oculos. Pavidum primo nusquam circumpicientem aut respicientem secutum; deinde cura

¹¹⁴ Gantz (1993), 405. Panyasis provides a link between these figures (preserved in Athenaios), see fr. 9 *PEG*.

ingenii humani, cum quidnam id esset quod respicere vetitus esset agitare animo, temperare oculis nequivisse; tum vidisse post sese serpentem mira magnitudine cum ingenti arborum ac virgultorum strage ferri ac post insequi cum fragore caeli nimbum. Tum quae moles ea quidve prodigii esset quaerentem audisse vastitatem Italiae esse: pergeret porro ire nec ultra inquireret sineretque fata in occulto esse.

From Gades the army returned to winter quarters at New Carthage, and from there he led them, departing beyond the city of Onusa, to the Ebro River along the coast. There is a tale that in his sleep, he saw a youth of divine countenance, who said that he had been sent by Jove as Hannibal's guide into Italy: thence he should follow him and never turn his eyes behind him. At first Hannibal followed, never looking behind nor to his sides despite his fear; then, by that curiosity inborn to man, since it came into his mind to see what it was that he had been forbidden to look upon, he was unable to control his eyes; then he saw behind him a serpent of great size followed with a great destruction of trees and shrubs, and a cloud followed after with a crash of the heavens. Then he asked what kind of destruction or portent this was and heard that it was the destruction of Italy. He went on, did not inquire further, and allowed the fates to be cloaked in darkness. (Livy 21.22.5-9)

In Chapter 1, we have already discussed the significance of “fama est” as a distancing technique in an historical narrative, or, as Hinds has termed it, an “Alexandrian footnote.”¹¹⁵ Here, Livy utilizes the divine message and prophetic dream to portray Hannibal's character, but his use of “fama est” also reveals the existence of a tradition, suggesting that the tale (*fama*) had existed before Livy.¹¹⁶ While neither Polybius nor Appian mention such an event, Cicero relates that Silenus, and then Coelius Antipater, describe a very similar scene, likely the source of Livy's *fama* (*Div.* 1.49).¹¹⁷ While such a mythologizing *fama* requires distance from Livy's historical narrative, Silius imports the tale into his poem, endowing it with epic significance:

Tum pater omnipotens, gentem exercere periclis
Dardanium et fama saevorum tollere ad astra
bellorum meditans priscosque referre labores, 165

¹¹⁵ Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext*, 1-2.

¹¹⁶ See Chapter 1.

¹¹⁷ Feeney, *The Gods in Epic*, 305, argues that Coelius would have been available to Silius, indicating that Silius recasts the scene from several different sources, although this is difficult to prove as the texts of neither Silenus nor Coelius survive intact for our examination. For more on Livy's use of Coelius and other historians see P.G. Walsh, *Livy: His Historical Aims and Methods* (Cambridge, 1961), 124-37.

praecipitat consulta viri segnemque quietem
 terret et immissa rumpit formidine somnos.
 iamque per humentem noctis Cyllenius umbram
 aligero lapsu portabat iussa parentis.
 nec mora: mulcentem securo membra sopore 170
 aggreditur iuvenem ac monitis incessit amaris:
 “turpe duci totam somno consumere noctem,
 o rector Libyae: vigili stant bella magistro.
 iam maria effusas cernes turbare carinas
 et Latiam toto pubem volitare profundo, 175
 dum lentus coepti terra cunctaris Hibera.
 scilicet, id satis est decoris memorandaque virtus,
 quod tanto cecidit molimine Graia Saguntos?
 en age, si quid inest animo par fortibus ausis,
 fer gressus agiles mecum et comitare vocantem; 180
 respexisse veto (monet hoc pater ille deorum)
 victorem ante altae statuam te moenia Romae.”

Then the all-powerful father, thinking to test the Dardanian race with dangers and to lift the tales of savage men to the stars and to bring back their ancient hardship, hastened the man’s plans and terrified his sluggish inactivity and disturbed his rest, placing fear upon him. And now the god of Cyllene (Mercury), through the darkening shadow, carried the orders of his father with a wing-borne flight. Nor was there delay: he approached the youth soothing his limbs in secure sleep and advanced with bitter warnings: “To take up the whole night in sleep is to be led shamefully, o ruler of Libya. Wars are present for the vigilant commander. Now may you see how hundreds of keels disturb the seas and how Latian youth bustle about on the whole depth, while you are waiting lazily to set out from Spain. Obviously, if there is glory enough and if *virtus* must be recalled, was it such a triumph that fate yielded up Saguntum? Therefore come now, if there is anything in your mind equal to such strong darings. Bear your quick feet with me and accompany me as I call out; I forbid that you look back (the father of the gods warns this) before I bring you victorious to the walls of high Rome. (*Pun.* 3.163-82)

Silius changes the god from Livy’s more generic “youth of divine countenance” to “the god of Cyllene,” Mercury, who acts as Jupiter’s messenger.¹¹⁸ Mercury, as the crosser of boundaries, is expected to deliver such a message, although the scene also alludes to Mercury’s message from Jupiter to Aeneas in *Aeneid* 4.219-37, urging his immediate departure from Carthage to Italy.

¹¹⁸ This is the Roman Jupiter as opposed to the syncretic blend with Baal Hammon. The Roman Jupiter allows all of this to happen as a test for the Romans. Interestingly, the Carthaginian Jupiter is never personified in the way that the Roman deities are in Silius’ narrative.

Here, Mercury delivers Jupiter's message that Hannibal should depart from *New Carthage* to Rome, in order to reverse Aeneas' foundation.

Jupiter's rationale in urging such a war is to test the Roman people and make their fame (*fama*) rise to the heavens by repeating their ancient hardship (*labores*). Yet the appearance of Mercury to Hannibal is also a test for the Carthaginian; it is a test of Hannibal's obedience to Jupiter's divine will. All that Hannibal has to do is follow the god without looking back, but Hannibal forgets the divine command:

Iamque videbatur dextram iniectare graduque
laetantem trahere in Saturnia regna citato,
cum subitus circa fragor et vibrata per auras 185
exterrent saevis a tergo sibila linguis;
ingentique metu divum praecepta paventi
effluxere viro, et turbatus lumina flectit.
ecce iugis rapiens silvas ac robora vasto
contorta amplexu tractasque per invia rupes, 190
ater letifero stridebat turbine serpens.
quantus non aequas perlustrat flexibus Arctos,
et geminum lapsu sidus circumligat Anguis,
immani tantus fauces diducit hiatu
attollensque caput nimborum montibus aequat. 195
congeminat sonitus rupti violentia caeli
imbriferamque hiemem permixta grandine torquet.

And now it seemed that Mercury laid his right hand upon him and with a swift pace, dragged him, delighting, into the Saturnian kingdoms, when suddenly a great clamor broke out all around him and vibrating hisses from savage tongues disturbed the breezes; and because of his great fear, the precepts of the gods eluded the fearful man, and, disturbed, he turned his eyes back. Behold, a great black serpent, snatching the woody hills and trees twisted in destruction with its coils and rocks dragged through the pathless ways, hissing with a destructive blast. As big as that snake which traverses the unequal north stars with its coils, and the snake that binds each star in its path, so much did it stretch its jaws with a giant maw, and lifting its head it equaled the cloudy mountains. The violent sound of the broken sky groaned and it brought down the rain-bearing winter with hail mixed in. (*Pun.* 3.183-97)

Silius' passage follows Livy's in its scope, but makes a crucial change: Livy's Hannibal is *unable* to restrain his eyes (*temperare oculis nequivisse*), while Silius' Hannibal *forgets*

(*effluxere*) to restrain his eyes. Silius' Hannibal thus shows similarities to Vergil's Orpheus (*Georgics* 4.485-92), who also forgets the divine command not to look back.¹¹⁹ Because of his forgetfulness, he loses his lover, Eurydice;¹²⁰ Hannibal, on the other hand, will lose Italy, and his inevitable failure becomes ever clearer to the reader in this scene.

Silius further expands Livy's *fama* by transforming the historian's indirect statement into a direct question from Hannibal to Mercury, as well as the god's reply:

hoc trepidus monstro (neque enim sopor ille nec altae
 vis aderat noctis, virgaque fugante tenebras
 miscuerat lucem somno deus) ardua quae sit,
 scitatur pestis terrasque urgentia membra
 quo ferat et quosnam populos deposcat hiatu.
 cui gelidis almae Cyllenes aditus antris:
 “bella vides optata tibi. te maxima bella,
 te strages nemorum, te moto turbida caelo
 tempestas caedesque virum magnaеque ruinae
 Idaeі generis lacrimosaque fata secuntur.
 quantus per campos populatis montibus actas
 contorquet silvas squalenti tergore serpens
 et late humectat terras spumante veneno,
 tantus, perdomitis decurrens Alpibus, atro
 involves bello Italiam tantoque fragore
 cruta convulsis prosternes oppida muris.”

Terrified by this vision, which was terrible, (for that sleep was not actual sleep, and the force of night had waned, and with the wand that puts shadow to flight the god had mixed light with sleep). Hannibal inquired what this pestilence was and where it bore its ground-pressing coils and what peoples it sought after with its maw. To which Mercury, born in the frigid cave of child-rearing Cyllene, said: “You see the wars wished by you. The greatest wars, the destruction of groves, a turbid storm in the moved sky, the deaths of men, the great ruins of the race of Ida and the fearful fates follow you. Just as the serpent, with the mountains having been destroyed, twists through the fields and woods, which are driven by its scaled back, and broadly levels the lands with fuming poison, so too, rushing down from the thoroughly tamed Alps, will you throw Italy into black war. With a great crash, you will scatter the uprooted fortresses with their walls shaken to pieces.” (*Pun.* 3.197-213)

¹¹⁹ Note also the similarities of words in identical metrical positions, each three lines from one another: *fragor* (*Georgics* 4.493 and *Pun.* 3.185) and *lumina* (*Georgics* 4.496 and *Pun.* 3.188).

¹²⁰ Later, Hannibal is charmed by a bard, who recounts the tale of Orpheus (11.440-82).

The image that is implicit in Livy (21.22.9) is made explicit by Silius: Hannibal *is* the serpent. His marching army will slither through the high Alps and down into the valleys of Italy, destroying the cities in its path. As in Livy, the dream does not tell of ultimate victory, only the destruction of Italy. Silius takes Livy's Hannibalic dream and makes it as murky as Dido's curse; the portents hint at victory, but tell only of destruction. Despite the vagueness of the omen, Hannibal is overjoyed at the vision and prepares his army for the march toward Rome (3.214-221).

Later in Book 3, Hannibal crosses the Pyrenees Mountains, whose origins Silius describes with a peculiar aetiological story. On his way to slay Geryon, Silius says, Hercules became drunk with wine and raped Pyrene, who gave birth to a snake and ran away into the mountains that now bear her name (3.420-41). The mention of Geryon is notable, as it is missing from the ekphrasis of the temple of Hercules, but the birth of the snake is even more important for the symbolism surrounding Hannibal's self-fashioning. Thus far we have seen Hannibal as both a successor of Hercules—through the ekphrasis at Gades—as well as a snake—through the dream of Mercury. Here we find that the images of both demigod and serpent are possible for Hannibal. The metamorphosis of Hannibal into a great serpent, which follows Hercules' footsteps, is now complete. The suffering that the serpent causes for both its mother, Pyrene, and father, Hercules, looks back to the sack of Saguntum, and also anticipates the upcoming suffering of the Romans in Italy.

Mountains, Poets, and the Anxiety of Influence

At the end of chapter 1, we discussed how Hannibal's character and Silius' authorial persona became conflated in a curious overlap of reactions to the ekphrasis of Hannibal's shield.

What is implied in Hannibal's reaction to the ekphrasis becomes clearer as Hannibal approaches the Alps: Hannibal is a metaphor for Silius' authorial persona, and the Alps a metaphor for his task. The parallels between hero and author are not new to studies of Roman epic,¹²¹ but the poetic persona that Silius adopts is somewhat unique, in that it anticipates his own poetic failure. If one reads Hannibal's actions as metaphors for Silius' poetic endeavor—as we are encouraged to do—the crossing of the Alps is transformed into an act of poetic initiation, wherein Silius asserts his work into the epic tradition by surmounting the obstacle of his predecessors' work. The hero-poet's crossing of the Alps parades Silius' poetic *agon*, demonstrating how he inserts his originality into the tradition.

Hannibal wakes from his dream and prepares his camp for the march on Italy and his divine task just as Silius sets out on his own poetic task: “*Prodite, Calliope, fama*” (3.222). This is the first mention of a specifically epic Muse, although he summons a general *musa* at *Punica* 1.3. The invocation of Calliope by name summons an epic context to mind, breaking from the historical *fama* of Hannibal's dream taken from Livy's histories. The invocation can be translated as either “hand down to fame,” or perhaps even “endow this story,” if we take *fama* in both senses of the word.¹²² After the summons, Silius launches into an epic catalogue of Hannibal's armies,¹²³ thus completing the shift from history to epic, a technique utilized throughout the poem. Yet the summons of Calliope by name also inserts Silius' authorial voice

¹²¹ Hardie, 88-119.

¹²² *Fama* can mean either “rumor” or “report,” which, in its written form, would be a “tale” or “poem.” If the latter translation is preferred, we might read *fama* alternatively as the story of Hannibal's dream or the *Punica* as a whole.

¹²³ D. Auverlot, “Le catalogue des armées alliées de Carthage dans les *Punica* de Silius Italicus: construction et fonction (Livre III, vers 222 à 414),” *IL* 44.1 (1992): 3-11.

into the narrative, reminding the reader of the presence of the author.¹²⁴ As Hannibal sets out for his Herculean task against Rome, Silius also sets out to write an epic that will rival his principal predecessor, Vergil.

After gathering his forces and crossing the Pyrenees, Hannibal comes at last to the Alps, which fill his men with terror. The initial metaphor used to describe the mountains' heights makes the Alps into more than a geographical boundary:

quantum Tartareus regni pallentis hiatus
ad manes imos atque atrae stagna paludis
a supera tellure patet, tam longa per auras
erigitur tellus et caelum intercipit umbra.

· · · · ·
mixtus Athos Tauro Rhodopeque adiuncta Mimanti
Ossaque cum Pelio cumque Haemo cesserit Othrys.
primus inexpertas adiit Tirynthius arces.

By as much as the Tartarean chasm of the pale kingdom opens to the lowest shades and pools of black swamp from the upper world, by so much does the land rise up to the breezes and break the sky with shadow . . . Mt. Athos mixed with Mt. Taurus, Mt Rhodope with Mt. Mimas, Mt. Ossa with Mt. Pelion, and Mt. Othrys with Mt. Haemus yielded (before the Alps). Tirynthian Hercules first approached the untried fortresses. (*Pun.* 3.483-86; 494-96)

These lines not only denote the height of the Alps, which Hercules first crossed, but also contain a metaphor that suggests a boundary between the human world and the divine. By crossing the mountains, Hannibal seeks to attain Hercules' immortality, surpassing the demigod's labors with his own and literally entering into a place as lofty as Olympus. The imagery of piling mountains one on top of another is a cunning rhetorical hyperbole, but it also recalls the myth of Otus and Ephialtes, the Giant sons of Aloeus, who piled up Mt. Ossa and Mt. Pelion in order to reach the

¹²⁴ Vergil does not mention Calliope by name until *Aen.* 9.525, well into the "Iliadic" half of the poem, cf. Conte, *Latin Literature*, 277. Elsewhere Vergil invokes a general *musa*, as well as Erato. The identity of the muse invoked foregrounds a specific backdrop in any genre.

gods, just as Hannibal is doing now.¹²⁵ Hannibal's war thus becomes a sort of Gigantomachy, wherein the Carthaginian general, fooled by visions of his own immortality, challenges the gods. Heedless of his hubris, Hannibal marches on.¹²⁶ His soldiers, however, are not so certain of their present actions:

At miles dubio tardat vestigia gressu,
impia ceu sacros in fines arma per orbem,
natura prohibente, ferant divisque repugnant.

But the soldiery slowed their steps with a doubtful pace, for they thought that they were carrying impious arms through the world across sacred boundaries, with nature prohibiting, and that they were struggling with the gods themselves. (*Pun.* 3.500-02)

Yet Hannibal is adamant and urges his men on with a curious enjoiner:

“nunc, o nunc, socii, dominantis moenia Romae
credite vos summumque Iovis conscendere culmen.”

“Now, o now, allies, believe that you are climbing the walls of Rome and the highest hill of Jove himself.” (*Pun.* 3.509-10)

Again, the denotation of the scene is merely that of a general urging on his troops, arguing that the Alps will be the worst obstacle, and, once they are crossed, the army will cut into Italy's soft interior. Yet the connotations of Hannibal waging war against the hill of Jupiter color the simple speech with mythic significance. Hannibal is willing to challenge not only Rome, but also Jupiter himself. The Capitoline hill, despite its lower altitude, thus becomes a Roman Olympus, and Hannibal's march against it will be as vain as Otus' and Ephialtes' attack on heaven.

Hannibal's Alpine crossing also functions metaphorically, as mentioned above, for Silius' own poetic task. Like Otus and Ephialtes, Silius is constructing a mountain that will enable him

¹²⁵ For the tale of Otus and Ephialtes, see *Odyssey* 11.305-11, *Iliad* 5.385-91, Apollodorus 1.7.4, and Hesiod *Catalogus mulierum* fr. 21; Seneca, *Thyestes* 804-12, and Vergil, *Culex* 234 (*Appendix Vergiliana*), mention Otos and Ephialtes by name; other Latin poets allude to the tale in various contexts.

¹²⁶ See *Iliad* 5.403-04 for the gods' reaction to Hercules' attack on the immortals.

to reach the heights of Olympus and the poetic heights of Vergil. Silius' position as a post-Vergilian epicist gives him an extraordinary burden in composing his own poem, the burden of tradition and the "anxiety of influence."¹²⁷ Where tradition can bring power to the later poet, it can also bring about an eclipse of his work, and the successor-poet must undergo a terrible *agon* with his precursor in order to guarantee himself a place in the poetic tradition. The mortal successor must prove himself to his immortal forbears. It is perhaps ironic that the Giants' attack on Olympus, Hannibal's epic endeavor to defeat Rome, and Silius' attempt to rival Vergil, are all tasks that cannot succeed. Silius' inability to rival the Vergilian hexameter, coupled with Pliny's criticism (3.7), has earned the *Punica* a less than desirable reputation.¹²⁸ C.H. Moore, one of Silius' more acerbic critics, dismisses the *Punica* as a product of an age that "labored in different degrees under the triple burden of self-consciousness, learning, and empty rhetoric." His criticism is based, in part, on the fact that none of the Silver Age poets could ever win out against Vergil. "Their task was the more difficult because Homer and Vergil had preceded them, so that whether they chose an historical or mythological theme, they were timorously conscious that they were doomed to second place."¹²⁹ Yet, we must also recall that Martial calls Silius the next Vergil,¹³⁰ and both he and Pliny remind us that Silius revered Vergil's tomb like a temple. What is "their task," as Moore puts it? Why must we assume that Silius' "task" was to supplant

¹²⁷ Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: a Theory of Poetry*, 2nd ed., (New York, 1997).

¹²⁸ See K.O. Matier, "Prejudice and the *Punica*: Silius Italicus. A Reassessment," *AClass* 24 (1981): 145-51. Matier gives several very compelling arguments against Silius' harsher critics.

¹²⁹ C.H. Moore, "Prophecy in the Ancient Epic," *HSCP* 32 (1921): 99-195.

¹³⁰ 7.63 and 11.50(49): *Iam prope desertos cineres et sancta Maronis / nomina qui coleret pauper et unus erat; / Silius optatae succurrere censuit umbrae, / Silius et vatem, non minor ipse, colit.* "Now he who had tended the nearly deserted ashes and holy names of Vergil even though he was poor and alone; Silius thought it good to pay proper homage to the hoped-for shade, and Silius also tended the poet, no lesser a poet himself."

Vergil? We need only remember the last words of Statius' *Thebaid*¹³¹ to see the extent of the Silver Age poets' reverence for Vergil's *Aeneid*. Is it not equally possible that Silius and perhaps the other imperial epicists were each vying to win the silver rather than lose to Vergil for the gold?

In answering this question, we must remember that Silius' initial hero, Hannibal, guaranteed his own immortality in the historical, and now poetic, realm only through his monumental *failure* against Rome. Hannibal's immortality was attained by his perceived threat to Rome; paradoxically, he provided Rome with a greater sense of glory through his defeat. Hannibal's war gave rise to Scipio's victory, and Scipio's immortalization as Rome's greatest general is entirely dependent on Hannibal's identity as Rome's greatest threat. Silius must struggle against Vergil, however vainly, in order to achieve any measure of poetic immortality. What hero is more appropriate than Hannibal for such a poem? Silius will gain nothing by simply following the path that has been laid out before him. His poetry is not anti-Vergilian, as Lucan's *Pharsalia* has been characterized;¹³² the *Punica* breaks away from its models, both epic and historical, to establish its place in Latin poetry.

In order to do this, Silius' poem veers from its historical path and undergoes what Harold Bloom calls a *clinamen* ("swerve"), a term borrowed from Lucretius that is critical for creation. Lucretius uses the terms *clinamen*, *clinatio*, and *declinare* to describe this swerve, which acts upon atoms as they stream through the void, causing them to collide with one another at indeterminate times. Without this swerve there could be no collision, and subsequently no

¹³¹ *Thebaid* 816-17: *vive, precor; nec tu divinam Aeneida tempta, / sed longe sequere et vestigia semper adora.* "Live, I pray; do not try to rival the divine *Aeneid*, but follow from a distance and always adore its footsteps."

¹³² Conte, *Latin Literature*, 443-48.

creation (*De Rerum Natura* 2.216-93). Bloom uses the term to describe an act of poetic independence, whereby the successor can absorb his predecessor's poetic vision into his own:

The *clinamen* or swerve . . . is necessarily the central working concept of the theory of Poetic Influence, for what divides each poet from his Poetic Father (and so saves, by division) is an instance of creative revisionism . . . The poet so stations his precursor, so swerves his context, that the visionary objects, with their higher intensity, fade into the continuum.¹³³

Just as Silius' poem follows the *Aeneid*, and then establishes its own identity, Silius' Hannibal follows Hercules' path across the Alps to a point, but then breaks away:

nec mora, commotum promissis ditibus agmen
erigit in collem et vestigia linquere nota
Herculis edicit magni crudisque locorum
ferre pedem ac proprio turmas evadere calle.
rumpit inaccessos aditus atque ardua primus
exsuperat summaque vocat de rupe cohortes.

There was no delay, he ordered the army up the hill, with the promise of wealth, and he ordered the squadrons to leave behind the known footsteps of the great Hercules, to bear their feet into new places, and to climb by way of an individual path. He broke through the inaccessible approaches and he first overcame the slopes and he called his cohorts from the highest rock. (*Pun.* 3.512-17)

Although Hercules was the first (*primus*, 496) to cross the Alps, Hannibal was the first (*primus*, 516) to take this particular path over the Alps.¹³⁴ Hannibal's *clinamen* from Hercules' path indeed reflects Silius' own poetic *clinamen* from Vergil and the prior epic tradition.¹³⁵ That Hannibal is the first (*primus*) to take this path through the Alps mirrors the "primus ego" motif of Hellenistic poetry, wherein poets proclaimed the originality of their works.¹³⁶ Silius asserts the

¹³³ Bloom, *Anxiety of Influence*, 42.

¹³⁴ It is significant that *primus* is in the initial position in the line when referring to Hercules, and in the final position in the line when referring to Hannibal.

¹³⁵ Silius' affinities with Lucretius are numerous, the most obvious being "*Aeneadum*" as the first word of the second line of the poem, patterned on Lucretius' *Aeneadum genetrix*, just as Silius' first line *Ordior arma* is patterned on Vergil's *Arma virumque*.

¹³⁶ See Callimachus, *Aetia* 1, Fragment 1. See also Lucretius 4.1-9.

“primus ego” motif through the metaphorical use of Hannibal for his authorial persona, thereby refraining from inserting his own authorial voice into the poem, yet asserting originality and poetic autonomy from his literary sources.¹³⁷ As with Statius and Valerius Flaccus, rough contemporaries of Silius, the poet uses the *Aeneid* as a foundation, but then breaks away to establish his own poem as traditional, yet also unique. Though final victory over his predecessors is denied Silius, the *Punica*’s place in the epic tradition is assured and the poem, though failing in its apparent task to supercede Vergil, will live on as Hannibal himself lives on at the end of the poem.

Hannibal’s path will take him to immortality; so also will Silius’. He climbs the Alps that are higher than all other mountains and traverses them by new paths, proceeding through what is initially a heavenly locale. Yet, as Hannibal progresses, the Alps undergo a stunning transformation. The Alpine inhabitants attack Hannibal’s column:

mutatur iam forma locis: hic sanguine multo
 infectae rubuere nives, hic, nescia vinci,
 paulatim glacies cedit tepefacta cruore;
 dumque premit sonipes duro vestigia cornu,
 ungula perfossis haesit compressa pruinis.

Now the form of the place was changed: here the snow grew red, tinged with much blood; here, not knowing how to be conquered, little by little the ice receded, warmed by the blood; and while the steeds pressed their footsteps on with hard horn, the pressed hoof clings to the frost as it digs through. (*Pun.* 3.547-51)

The Alps change from a place of lofty sublimity—as suggested in Silius’ metaphor placing it in the heavens—to an image of the underworld, where hot blood melts through the ice. Notably, Hannibal and his army undergo the torments of the Alps for twelve days, perhaps reflecting Hercules’ twelve labors, and doubling the six labors depicted on the temple doors.

¹³⁷ Polybius decries some versions of the crossing in which a hero appears and leads Hannibal across the Alps (3.48.8-9), saying that it is a *deus ex machina*. Silius transforms Hannibal into the hero described by Polybius, a suitable change for this epic version of history. See Feeney, *Gods in Epic*, 261.

Despite resistance, Hannibal moves on into Italy. His efforts are so enormous, in fact, that they prompt Venus to weep to Jupiter, asking if Rome is doomed (3.557-69). In answer, Jupiter reminds her (as well as the reader) that Hannibal's war is merely a test for Rome (3.569-629), and goes on to recount the city's deeds.¹³⁸ Jupiter's catalogue begins with the Second Punic War, and then jumps quickly into the post-Augustan era, continuing Vergil's march of history in *Aeneid* 6. Silius includes Paulus, Fabius, Marcellus, and Scipio, before skipping ahead to the Flavians—Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian—who will glorify the Julio-Claudians.¹³⁹ Thus Hannibal's passage through the Alps does not simply swerve away from the epic tradition, but it is also an expansion of Vergil by recognition and then continuation. Through his recognition of Vergil's influence and prior catalogue, Silius can place his poem as a continuation of the *Aeneid*, and add his own, more "complete" view of history to his predecessor's list.¹⁴⁰ Through this device, the *Punica* rises to meet the *Aeneid*'s challenge, but it is positioned in a reverential rather than antagonistic way. At no time does the poem diverge too far from Vergilian poetics, but rather continues them through *aemulatio*.¹⁴¹ The *Punica* becomes a part of the Latin epic cycle that continues the story that Vergil began, finding its place in the period between the *Aeneid* and Lucan's *Pharsalia*.

¹³⁸ The background of the council of the gods in *Aeneid* 10 is certainly present in this scene, as is Venus' plea to Jupiter in *Aeneid* 1.

¹³⁹ Silius only mentions the Julii in passing, spending nearly thirty lines on the Flavians, and Domitian (the present emperor) in particular.

¹⁴⁰ Bloom, 14. Bloom borrows the term *tessera* not from mosaic-making but from mystery cults in which *tesserae* (potsherds, for example) were used as tokens of recognition. Many of Silius' allusions, and perhaps even the entire poem, can be read as a *tessera* or token of recognition to Vergil. This scene, however, is particularly marked by the authorial persona's close link with Hannibal, and calls the reader's attention to the scene much more dramatically than is found elsewhere.

¹⁴¹ See G. Williams, *Tradition and Originality in Roman Poetry* (Oxford, 1968). His exploration of translation and *aemulatio* (251-67) is particularly useful to any study of allusion within tradition.

As Hannibal descends from the heights and from his illusions of immortality, so also does the poem return to the vague visions that Bostar sought at the beginning of Book 3. Bostar, who has traveled around the Alps by boat, informs Hannibal of the oracle of Hammon's response to his undertaking: that Hannibal will glorify his Phoenician ancestors, that no other man will drive deeper into the vitals of Rome, and that Rome will never be free from fear as long as Hannibal draws breath in the upper world (3.700-12). Book 3 ends in a ring composition that emphasizes Hannibal's murky future as he prepares for his campaign. It is a fate to which he has remained blind, and it will not become clear until Hannibal sees it through the only sign to which he gives credence, an ekphrasis.

Books 4 and 5 describe Hannibal's march into Italy and subsequent victory over the Romans at the battles of the Ticinus River, the Trebia, and Lake Trasimene. The heroic combats that ensue are Vergilian and even Homeric at times, seemingly overtaking the historical aspects of the events. Yet, in Book 6, in the aftermath of the Battle of Lake Trasimene, two passages stop the fast pace of the narrative and peek into the Roman side of the conflict. The first is the story of Regulus' son, Serranus, who survives the battle and is nursed back to health by Marus, an old man who served with Regulus in the First Punic War and tells Serranus stories about his father. The second is Hannibal's visit to a temple in the Italian countryside, which has numerous scenes of the First Punic War depicted upon it. Both episodes bring the battle narrative to a halt, and the poem conjures up memories of Rome's valiant past. The respective Roman and Carthaginian reactions to ekphrasis and the past remain important in interpreting the future for each side in the conflict.

CHAPTER 3: EKPHRASIS, MONUMENT, AND MEMORY

The *Punica* continues the dialogue between the epic and historiographic genres as Hannibal sets out through Italy, ravaging the countryside and soundly defeating any Roman army that intercepts him. Details of all the battles Hannibal fights are drawn from historical accounts,¹⁴² but Silius transforms them into epic combats, as we saw in the Siege of Saguntum. Silius appropriates Livy's story and moulds it to the Vergilian hexameter. The poem is elevated to one of cosmic significance that expresses universal concepts rather than the particulars of history,¹⁴³ yet it is also eternally bound to its historical background. The path of the poem is predetermined, and even Hannibal, the strongest epic hero in the poem thus far and standing metaphorically for Silius' authorial persona, is powerless to change its course. Silius, despite his *clinamen* from both history and epic, now walks the path between the two genres, continuing the dialogue between them. The outcome of the action is known, but the way that it will arrive at its endpoint is dramatically changed from its historical predecessors.

As the narrative progresses, Silius makes ever-bolder transformations from history to epic, foregrounding the Vergilian, Lucanian, and Homeric intertexts. During the Battle of the Trebia, for example, Silius goes so far as to say that this war surpasses the Trojan War of Homer's *Iliad*:

Non, mihi Maeoniae redeat si gloria linguae,
centenasque pater det Phoebus fundere voces,
tot caedes proferre queam, quot dextera magni
consulis, aut contra Tyriae furor edidit irae.

Not even if the glory of the Maeonian (Homeric) tongue might return to me, and father Apollo grant it to pour out a hundred voices, would I be able to express so

¹⁴² Usually Livy, but Polybius and Appian also provide some of Silius' source material.

¹⁴³ See Aristotle's *Poetics* (1451b.1-7), discussed in the introduction (p.4-5). See also Feeney, *Gods in Epic*, 185.

many deaths, either those slain at the hand of the great consul, or by the opposing fury of Tyrian wrath. (*Pun.* 4.525-28)

By alluding to the *Iliad*, Silius invites comparison between his work and Homer's epic, but he also indicates that the telling of this war is beyond even Homer's ability. As Books 4 and 5 progress, Silius' battles become so fraught with epic material that the epic tone begins to overshadow the *Punica*'s historicity. As Hannibal pushes the Romans back to the Trebia River,¹⁴⁴ the river comes to life in a distinctly Homeric fashion:

Tum Trebia infausto nova proelia gurgite fessis
inchoat ac precibus Iunonis suscitatur undas.
haurit subsidens fugientum corpora tellus
infiduaque soli frustrata voragine sorbet.

Then the Trebia River began new battles against the tired Romans with its luckless surge, and because of Juno's prayers it roused its waves. The sinking earth trapped the bodies of the fleeing men and it absorbed their bodies hindered by the treacherous quagmire of the soil. (*Pun.* 4.573-76)

The personification of rivers is primarily a Homeric conceit that adds epic color to the historical battle,¹⁴⁵ and Silius increasingly privileges the epic background as his poem progresses. Scipio goes so far as to rebuke the river (4.638-48) and the Trebia even responds to his taunts (4.660-66).¹⁴⁶ The elevation of the tale from history to epic is crucial to Silius' emphasis on Hannibal as a victim of fate, a dupe of destiny,¹⁴⁷ and on the Romans as the destined victors. Later in Book 4, Juno disguises herself as the personification of Lake Trasimene and reminds the unfortunate Carthaginian of his fate:

¹⁴⁴ See Livy 21.56. Though the events parallel one another, Silius' language is not Livian.

¹⁴⁵ Achilles against the Xanthus and Skamander Rivers is the *locus classicus* for this trope (*Iliad* 21.211-382).

¹⁴⁶ A reader may be invited to draw comparisons between this crossing and Xerxes' bridging of the Hellespont, although the parallels between them are distant at best. Even Livy's description of Romans and Carthaginians fording rivers is linked only tenuously (e.g. the crossing of the Rhone, 21.26-30). Epic, and specifically Homeric, language pervades these scenes.

¹⁴⁷ Vessey, 1982.

“o felix famae et Latio lacrimabile nomen
Hannibal, Ausoniae si te Fortuna creasset,
ad magnos venture deos! cur fata tenemus?
pelle moras: brevis est magni Fortuna favoris.”

“O Hannibal, lucky from fame and a name woeful to Latium, if Fortune had created you of the Ausonian race, you would go to the great gods! Why do we hold the fates back? Enough of this delay: the fortune of great favor is brief.”
(*Pun.* 4.729-32)

Hannibal, however, still obstinately refuses to see its double-sidedness (*Pun.* 4.739-40). To the heroic general, a water god such as Lake Trasimene does not have the power to divert his course. Hannibal refuses to listen, although the advice comes from Juno, a goddess closely allied to him and to Carthage.¹⁴⁸

Regulus, the Serpent, and Crucifixion: A Look at the Past

It is not until Book 6 of the *Punica* that Silius brings the Roman perspective of the war before the reader’s eyes. To this point, Hannibal has dominated the epic, and continues to do so for Books 7-12. Book 6, however, turns away from the advancing Carthaginian army and follows instead the story of one particular fugitive, Serranus, the son of that Regulus who had become a heroic martyr during the First Punic War.¹⁴⁹ Fleeing from the massacre at Trasimene, Serranus finds himself in the home of an old man, Marus, who treats his wounds (*Pun.* 6.62-100) and recalls his own experience against Carthage, fighting under Regulus’ command in Africa.

To comfort the wounded young man, Marus tells him of his father’s courage, beginning with the tale of Regulus’ fight with a gigantic serpent on the banks of the Bagradas River. Marus sets the scene of his narration with a description of the river:

“Turbidus arentes lento pede sulcat harenas
Bagrada, non ullo Libycis in finibus amne

¹⁴⁸ We may view this passage as Juno’s test of Hannibal, the way that Mercury’s message was a test from Jupiter.

¹⁴⁹ E. Bassett, “Silius *Punica* 6.1-53,” *CPh* 54 (1959): 10-34.

victus limosas extendere latius undas
et stagnante vado patulos involvere campos.
hic studio laticum, quorum est haud prodiga tellus,
per ripas laeti saevis consedimus arvis.”

“The turbid Bagradas furrows the burning sands with its slow pace, unconquered by any river in the Libyan lands in extending its muddy waters more broadly and covering the open fields with standing water. Here, happy because of our eagerness for water, which the land does not produce in abundance, we made our camp in the savage fields beside its banks.” (*Pun.* 6.140-45)

The initial lines of this embedded tale look back to Lucan’s *Pharsalia*, which describes the same river, although in a different context:

primaque castra locat cano procul aequare qua se
Bagrada lentus agit siccae sulcator harenae.
inde petit tumulos exesasque undique rupes,
Antaei quae regna vocat non vana vetustas.

(Curio) set his first camp far from the white sea where the slow Bagradas draws itself along, the furrower of the dry sand. From there he sought hills and rocks hollowed out on all sides, which antiquity called the kingdom of Antaeus, not in vain. (*Pharsalia* 4.587-90)

Silius, true to his technique of cloaking allusions, borrows Lucan’s river, changing some words, but often using other derivatives from the same root (*sulcat* from *sulcator*) and the same words in different cases (*lento*, *lentus*; *harenas*, *harenae*); word position is also important for determining the depth of allusion (compare *Pun.* 6.140 and *Phar.* 4.588).¹⁵⁰ The allusion to Lucan’s passage recalls Antaeus, an autochthonous monster that Hercules slew while traveling in North Africa. Antaeus provides an interesting comparison with Silius’ snake, which is also an autochthonous creature (*Pun.* 6.254). Clearly, Silius is again working the Hercules theme into his historical characters’ actions, this time on the Roman side, and through the character of Marus.

¹⁵⁰ E. Bassett, “Regulus and the Serpent in the *Punica*,” *CPh* 50 (1955): 1-20, as well as M. Martin “Le monstre de Bagrada: Silius Italicus *Punica* 6.146-296,” *Eidolon* 7 (1979): 20-42. See also Francis Ripoll, “L’image de l’Afrique chez Lucain et Silius Italicus,” *VL* 159 (2000): 2-17.

According to Marus' tale, he and a companion first discovered the serpent along the banks of the Bagradas; Marus luckily escaped the oncoming monster, but his friend did not (6.151-203). As Marus fled, the serpent followed and fell upon the rest of the column as they formed ranks behind their commander, Regulus. The serpent is of no common size, and Silius emphasizes its length with an epic metaphor:

quantis armati caelum petiere Gigantes
anguibus, aut quantus Lerna lassavit in undis
Amphitryoniaden serpens, qualisque comantes
auro servavit ramos Iunonius anguis:
tantus disiecta tellure sub astra coruscum
extulit assurgens, caput atque in nubila primam
dispersit saniem et caelum foedavit hiatu.

Like the snakes with which the Giants were armed as they sought heaven, or like the snake that attacked the son of Amphitryon in the waters of Lerna, and the snake of Juno that protected the tree limbs shaggy with gold: just so, rising from the broken earth it bore its crest under the stars, it struck its head and first venom into the clouds and befouled heaven with its maw. (*Pun.* 6.181-87)

The immediate effect of the metaphor is to capture the serpent's immense size, a detail that had become common in the Roman literary tradition by Silius' day. In Livy's lost Book 18, he described Regulus' battle with a one-hundred-twenty-foot-long serpent, which the Roman general killed with catapults and siege weapons, albeit with much loss of life.¹⁵¹ The tale is also preserved in Pliny *Natural History* 8.14, Florus 1.18.20, and Aulus Gellius 6.3. Pliny and Aulus Gellius agree on the length of the serpent and its death from siege weapons, while Florus summarizes the event in a single sentence and does not provide any such detail. Aulus Gellius cites the source of his information as the first century BCE historian Q. Aelius Tubero, indicating

¹⁵¹ Livy's tale is related to us in two major fragments. The first is from Priscian (*inst. gramm.* 14.38), who gives a one-sentence summary of the story. See fragment 7 in von Weissenborn, *Berbeitet* and H.J. Müller, *Titi Livi Ab Urbe Condita Libri: Zehnter Band Buch XLV und Fragmente Dritte Auflage* (Berlin, 1962). The second is from Valerius Maximus 1.8.ext.19 (von Weissenborn, fragment 9), which is a lengthier passage and specifies the length of the snake at one-hundred-twenty feet as well as the use of catapults and *ballistae* against it.

that the story was widespread throughout the Roman historical tradition.¹⁵² One unique aspect of Silius' recasting of the scene is the passage's lengthiness (the longest prose account is Valerius Maximus' at 14 lines; Silius' version is 154 lines of verse). This technique of expanding a small historical detail into a lengthier epic tale is consistent with other parts of Silius' narrative. Silius specifies the serpent's length at one hundred ells (375 feet), clearly allowing the storyteller, Marus, to take poetic license with the conventional measurement, trying as he is to stretch his tale to epic proportions.

The epic metaphor does not simply denote the serpent's length, however. As with so many of Silius' metaphors, it begins by describing something present in the narrative, in this case the snake, but it also conjures up visions of a gigantomachy, the Lernaean hydra, and Juno's serpent. All three images evoke associations within the *Punica* that Silius has been constructing throughout the poem: Hannibal's war against the gods, Hannibal's identification with Hercules, and Hannibal as a snake as well as Juno's pawn. Hannibal's Mercury-sent dream of becoming a great serpent is brought into full view, and his serpentine assault on Rome is merely a repetition of the fight with Regulus.

The image of the snake also looks outside the *Punica* and summons other epic snakes to mind, most notably the two serpents that devour Laocoön and his sons in *Aeneid* 2, the sea of snakes that attacks Cato's column as he crosses the Libyan desert in *Pharsalia* 9,¹⁵³ and the serpent that Cadmus kills in *Metamorphoses* 3.26-113.¹⁵⁴ Vergil and Lucan's snakes are

¹⁵² Tubero wrote in the annalistic tradition, though Aulus Gellius calls his work *Historiae* rather than *Annales*, the title that Badian suggests. See E. Badian, "Aelius Tubero, Quintus," in *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd ed. Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth (Oxford, 1999), 19.

¹⁵³ There are other images of serpents in Statius' *Thebaid* and Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*, but their date relative to the *Punica* is uncertain, and we cannot be sure whether their descriptions were composed before or after Silius'.

¹⁵⁴ Cadmus strikes the serpent a blow with a rock and a javelin. Ovid notes: *illius impulsu cum turribus ardua celsis / moenia mota forent* (From such a blow, high walls with lofty towers would have fallen.), and Silius undoubtedly

inimical to Rome, and Lucan's snakes in particular can be seen as representation of hardships of life according to Stoic philosophy:¹⁵⁵ just as Cato, the Stoic *par excellence*, marched through the hardships of the Libyan Desert in the *Pharsalia* (9.619-949), so too must Silius' Romans cling to their virtue in the face of Hannibal's invasion. The benefit in boldly facing the snake, regardless of what it represents, becomes apparent in Marus' tale when he describes how Regulus first struck the serpent, which inspired Marus to a daring act of heroism. He tells Serranus, speaking in the third person:

“At non spectator Marus inter talia segni
torpebat dextra. mea tanto in corpore monstri
hasta secunda fuit. iam iamque extrema trisulca
lambebat lingua fessi certamine terga
quadrupedis; torsi telum atque urgentia velox
in memet saevi serpentis proelia verto.
hinc imitata cohors certatim spicula dextris
congerit alternasque ferum diducit in iras,
donec murali ballista coercuit ictu.”

“But Marus did not sit idly and watch with a lazy hand in the midst of such things. My spear was second in the massive body of the monster. And even now the forked tongue was licking the utmost back of the horse, tired from the struggle; I let lose my spear and quickly turned the pressing battle lines of the savage serpent against myself. At this point the rest of the cohort, imitating me in rivalry, showered their darts and led the best around in anger first at one then at another, until a ballista struck it with a wall-shattering blow.” (*Pun.* 6.261-69)

Marus follows Regulus' example and strikes the second blow, inciting his countrymen to action.

By facing their opponent head-on, the Romans are able to overcome the beast. Regulus' trials

had this passage in mind when he later described the blow from a *ballista*, which was *murali* (wall-leveling). We might also recall the story of Apollo and the Python (*Met.* 1.416-51), although the linguistic similarities are less striking.

¹⁵⁵ Not all snakes are enemies in epic: Aeneas sees a snake at Anchises' burial mound in *Aeneid* 5, which can be read as the spirit of Anchises himself. In the *Punica*, during the sack of Saguntum, a snake, perhaps the guardian of the city, slithers up from a mound in the city and out into the sea. Outside of epic, Herodotus records the Athenian's offerings of honeycakes to a serpent on the Akropolis in Book 8, and snakes were often depicted on the Lararia of Roman households, as finds in Pompeii (e.g. House of the Vettii) have demonstrated. A serpent does not necessarily represent hardship or hatred in all contexts, but it is clear that Silius' serpent does so. See Irad Malkin, "Snakes" in *OCD* 3rd ed., 1417-18 and D. Orr, "Roman Domestic Religion: The Archaeology of Roman Popular Art," in *5,000 Years of Popular Culture*, 156-72 (see esp. 161-63).

are not limited to a fight with a serpent, however, and Marus goes on to describe his capture by the Spartan general Xanthippus as well as his later return to Rome. In accordance with the tradition surrounding Regulus that the Carthaginians made him swear an oath to return to Carthage after presenting terms to the Roman senate, Silius describes Regulus' arrival at Rome. Instead of urging peace, however, he urges the senate to continue the war and dutifully returns to Carthage where he is tortured and crucified. The story of Regulus' faithfulness to Rome and subsequent torture and death upon his return to Carthage is among the most famous in Roman literature.¹⁵⁶ He dies a paragon of *virtus* and *fides*, both crucial criteria for evaluating character in Silius' narrative.¹⁵⁷

Silius adds another layer to the tale of Regulus, however, for as the veteran Marus describes Regulus' return to Rome, he remembers that Serranus, who was then just a small child, was present: ("*Agnoscisne diem? an teneris non haesit in annis?*" "Do you remember the day? Or did it not stick in your childish memory?") *Pun.* 6.406). The old soldier, then, weaves his tale in a metapoetic way, inserting both himself and the wounded man before him into the story, endowing it with a pathos that would be absent from a tale that involved only unconnected characters. The background for this kind of storytelling is an epic trope. Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as well as Vergil's *Aeneid* are filled with instances of heroes telling of their family's (or their own) exploits in digressive tales.¹⁵⁸ Here, Silius has Marus tell a story that is recorded

¹⁵⁶ See E.R. Mix, *Marcus Atilius Regulus: Exemplum Historicum* (Paris, 1970). Polybius 1.13-15 suggests that Regulus was immortalized in both verse and prose writing in his own day. Horace's *Ode* 3.5 (the Regulus Ode) brought the tradition into Augustan poetry by comparing Regulus' defeat with that of Crassus.

¹⁵⁷ K.O. Matier, "Stoic Philosophy in Silius Italicus," *Akroterion* 36 (1990): 68-72.

¹⁵⁸ Examples abound in the *Iliad*, where heroes even pause in mid-combat to trade armor and renew an old guest-friendship (see the Diomedes-Glaukon episode at *Il.* 6.119-236). In the *Odyssey*, Odysseus' tale about his own wanderings, which takes up the majority of Books 9-12, is the best example of this type of digressive story. Vergil's Aeneas does much the same in narrating the sack of Troy and his own wanderings (*Aen.* 2 and 3).

primarily in the historiographic tradition, giving it an epic tone by the way in which it is presented.

Marus and Serranus are all but unknown in prior works on the Second Punic War—except Serranus, who appears in other works in name alone—and they do not play any significant role later in the poem. They perform no great deeds in the Hannibalic War and they gain no heroic status; rather, they are simple soldiers who spin stories about the heroic past, Marus' generation, and the First Punic War. Through Marus' tale, Silius' narrative captures the origins of an oral tradition surrounding Regulus. Silius effectively reaches back to the dawn of Latin literature at the end of the 3rd century BCE, and describes the mythologizing of this event that would later be recorded by historians and poets alike. Although Silius does not refer to any written form of this tale within his narrative, Regulus appears later in the ekphrasis of the Italic temple (6.653-716); clearly, it is a tale worthy of artistic and poetic representation beyond the oral tradition preserved by Marus.

Thus, Silius purports to reach back to the first example of the oral account of Regulus' capture. It is the first time that Regulus' death is used as an *exemplum* of Rome's glorious past, a monument to Rome's steadfastness that can be used to give courage to later Romans. It is made all the more poignant when the story of the father is related to the son, Serranus. Interestingly, Marus, the storyteller, delivers the tale in Latin hexameters, a verse form that had not yet been adapted to Roman poetry; Ennius, credited with the achievement, composed his *Annales* only *after* the Second Punic War had ended. Silius later emphasizes this pre-literary environment in his description of the capture of Sardinia in *Punica* 12, wherein Ennius, not yet a poet, fights the Carthaginians as a character in the *Punica* and is defended by Apollo when an errant spear flies too close to him (12.387-419).

Although the tale of Regulus is primarily historical in its prior literary record and Marus, who is an eyewitness to the events, and therefore the most qualified to tell the tale as it happened, he uses poetic hyperbole and epic tropes, as though anticipating the later poetry of Ennius, Vergil, and Lucan. During Marus' retelling, Silius appears to be the historian rather than a poet, dutifully recording the actions as they took place, and keeping his own voice out of the narrative. He allows Marus to tell the tale in hexameters, the meter to which the old veteran evidently deems the tale most suited. Yet even as Marus speaks, the reader can see Silius parading his poetic ability, as he now adopts the old veteran as a vehicle for his poetic voice. Silius' poetry now imbeds itself into early Roman literary history, preceding Lucan, Vergil, and even Ennius as Marus speaks in the voice of the Imperial author.

Marus becomes a poet-soldier in the telling, in much the same way that Silius will later describe Ennius. We will recall that it was Marus who struck the second blow against the serpent along the Bagradas, and was subsequently rewarded for his act with Regulus' own spear:

“haec tunc hasta decus nobis pretiumque secundi
vulneris a vestro, Serrane, tributa parente,
princeps quae sacro bibit e serpente curorem.”

“This spear was given to me by your father, Serranus, as a trophy and a prize for inflicting the second wound; this spear was the first which drank the blood from the sacred serpent.” (*Pun.* 6.291-93)

The weapon is obviously a source of pride for the veteran and serves as a visual reminder of the story's authenticity as well as his own heroic achievement. Yet the passing of the spear from one hero to another also has poetic significance for Silius as an author. We have already seen, in Chapter 2, that Silius used Hannibal as a metaphor for his authorial persona. Here we find a Roman performing much the same function. Marus, the soldier-poet, gives Regulus credit for the first blow against the serpent, but credits himself with the second, and for his actions he gains

Regulus' own spear, the weapon which struck the first blow. Just as Marus strikes the second blow, but is rewarded with the spear that struck the first, so also does Silius insert his own poetry into the epic tradition. Although secondary, Silius hopes to inherit the poetic success of his forebears and be rewarded for his actions.

We have already noted that the narrative shifts to the Roman point of view for this digression, and here we find the first hint of future glory that is not ephemeral and doomed to failure. Elsewhere, Hannibal makes great strides toward victory, but his gains are always curtailed by fate. Here, at last, Silius sides with the Romans and finds within them Regulus' *virtus* and *fides*. The entire digression foreshadows the Romans' eventual victory as long as they, like their shining example, Regulus, choose *virtus* over *voluptas* and *fides* over *perfidia*.¹⁵⁹

“longo revirescet in aevo
gloria, dum caeli sedem terrasque tenebit
casta Fides; dum virtutis venerabile nomen,
vivet;”

“His glory will grow green in the long age while chaste
Faithfulness will hold the throne of heaven and the lands; while the name of virtue
is praised, it will live.” (*Pun.* 6.546-49)

Less than one hundred lines later we also find that the successorship of Hercules, which Hannibal sought after so intensely in Book 3, belongs to Fabius:

stirpe genus clarum caeloque affinis origo.
nam remeans longis olim Tirynthius oris
et triplicis monstri famam et spectacula captas
mira boves hac, qua fulgent nunc moenia Romae, 630
egit ovans. tunc Arcadius, sic fama, locabat
inter desertos fundata Palatia dumos
paupere sub populo ductor; cum regia virgo,
hospite victa sacro, Fabium de crimine laeto
procreat et magni commiscet seminis ortus 635
Arcas in Herculeos mater ventura nepotes.
ter centum domus haec Fabios armavit in hostem,

¹⁵⁹ As Scipio, the great Roman hero, later does (*Punica* 15.18-128).

limine progressos uno; pulcherrima quorum
cunctando Fabius superavit facta ducemque
Hannibalem aequando. tantus tunc, Poene, fuisti!¹⁶⁰ 640

He was born of a famous family and related to heaven in his origins. For once the Tiryinthian, returning from far off shores and rejoicing in the fame of the three-bodied monster and the marvelous spectacles, drove the taken cattle to this place, where the walls of Rome now shine. Then Arcadius, so the story goes, was establishing the Palatine amongst the deserted brambles as the leader of a poor people; when the queenly virgin, smitten with desire for the sacred guest, gave birth to Fabius from the crime that bore no ill and the Arcadian woman mingled the seeds of two great houses as she was about to become the mother of Hercules' descendants. This house once armed three hundred Fabii against the enemy, advancing from a single threshold; whose very beautiful deeds Fabius surpassed by delaying and by equaling the general Hannibal. So great were you then, o Punic! (*Pun.* 6.627-40)

This version of the tale does not agree with Vergil's, who describes Hercules battling Cacus at the site of future Rome when returning from Spain with the cattle of Geryon. Silius is well aware of the variance, however, as *sic fama* (631) reminds us. Silius uses a mythological aetiology to explain Fabius' proud heritage, but also alludes to the historical tale of the three hundred Fabii, preserved in Livy Book 2.¹⁶¹ The passage also recalls Livy's famous epitaph for Fabius Maximus, which in turn alludes to Ennius' reference to Fabius *Cunctator*, as Livy records in Book 30:

Eodem anno Q. Fabius Maximus moritur, exactae aetatis, si quidem verum est augurem duos et sexaginta annos fuisse, quod quidam auctores sunt. Vir certe fuit dignus tanto cognomine, vel si novum ab eo inciperet. Superavit paternos honores, avitos aequavit. Pluribus victoriis et maioribus proeliis avus insignis Rullus; sed omnia aequare unus hostis Hannibal potest. Cautior tamen quam promptior hic habitus; et sicut dubites utrum ingenio cunctator fuerit an quia ita bello proprie quod tum gerebatur aptum erat, sic nihil certius quam unum hominem nobis cunctando rem restituisse, sicut Ennius ait.

¹⁶⁰ The use of the vocative for Hannibal emphasizes the shift in viewpoint from a Carthaginian to a Roman one, as mentioned above.

¹⁶¹ See Livy 2.48-51. Livy says 306 men, while Silius rounds the figure to 300. See also *Punica* 7.39 ff.

In that same year, Quintus Fabius Maximus died, at an old age, if indeed it is true that he was an augur for sixty-two years, which some authors claim. Certainly he was a man worthy of such a cognomen, even if it had begun new from him. He surpassed his father's honors, and equaled those of his grandfather. Rullus, his grandfather, was distinguished with more victories and greater battles, but only one enemy, Hannibal, was able to be his equal in all things. Nevertheless, he was considered more cautious than hasty; and so you would doubt whether he had been a delayer by nature or whether such a thing was fitting for the present war which was then being waged, certainly nothing is more certain than that one man maintained the republic for us by delaying, as Ennius said. (Livy 30.26.7-9)

Livy's emphasis on *cunctando* is notable, a word that recalls the tradition surrounding Fabius and his nickname of *Cunctator*.¹⁶² The passage encourages the reader to recall Livy's epitaph as well as the Ennian tradition, upon which Livy depends and to which he directly refers. The result is a complex allusion to myth, history, and poetry through history, all relying on the tradition surrounding Fabius.¹⁶³

The reader now sees that Rome (and by extension, Silius) is equal to the task at hand. The Fabian *gens* is of Hercules' lineage, and Fabius will be the greatest of the line, as his other name, *Maximus*, implies. While Hannibal's claim to Herculean successorship is tenuous at best, Fabius' is very real. While Livy, whose annalistic writings are told primarily from a Roman perspective, says that Hannibal equaled Fabius, Silius reverses the formula saying that Fabius was equal to Hannibal, the hero of the poem thus far. The sentiment of Fabius equaling Hannibal also marks a turning point for Rome, and, so long as Rome heeds Fabius' strategy, it will eventually win. Perhaps, we might surmise, if the consul Varro had only heeded Fabius' advice, the disaster of Cannae might have been averted. Rome is prepared to undergo trials worthy of a Stoic, but the stage is set for her eventual victory in spite of the upcoming debacle in

¹⁶² See *Pun.* 7.10, which also references the literary tradition surrounding Fabius.

¹⁶³ G.R. Stanton, "Cunctando restituit rem: the Tradition about Fabius," *Antichthon* (1971): 49-56. For more of Livy's use of Ennius see R.A. Birch, "Livy 22.50 and the Quotation of Ennius," *Latomus* 39 (1980): 88-94; for further reading on Silius' reliance on Ennius, see K.O. Matier, "The Influence of Ennius on Silius Italicus," *Akroterion* 36 (1991): 153-58, and L.B. Woodruff, *Reminiscences of Ennius in Silius Italicus* (London, 1910).

Books 9 and 10 (Cannae). Hannibal, however, is unaware of his fate. His march against Rome, the Capitoline Hill, and the gods has been warned against by Juno (*Pun.* 4.729-32) as well as Jupiter himself (6.600-18), yet it is not until he reaches a temple in Campania that he begins to understand his destiny:

The Temple Walls: Hannibal the Art Critic

Disturbed by Jupiter's warning against his attack on Rome, Hannibal marches through Campania to the town of Liternum on the coast. There he finds a temple painted with murals depicting scenes of the First Punic War, which he proceeds to examine:

Hic dum stagnosi spectat templumque domosque
Literni ductor, varia splendentia cernit
pictura belli patribus monumenta prioris
exhausti—nam porticibus signata manebant—
quis inerat longus rerum et spectabilis ordo.

Here, while the leader examined the temple and houses at swampy Liternum, he noticed the various painted monuments of the prior war, brought to an end by their fathers—for the witnesses were remaining on the doorways—upon which was a long and spectacular procession of events. (*Pun.* 6.653-57)

Silius' introduction to the ekphrasis' external aspects is notable in several ways. Initially, the reader is undoubtedly reminded of Aeneas' visual survey of the Temple of Juno at Carthage in *Aeneid* 1, here reversed with the Carthaginian viewing an Italic temple. In Vergil's poem, Aeneas looks upon images of the defeat of Troy, a primarily poetic tale,¹⁶⁴ here Hannibal looks upon images of the defeat of Carthage in the First Punic War, an historical event. Silius bridges the gap between poetic ekphrasis and historical material by describing the paintings as *monumenta* (6.655 and 716), a word that I will discuss in greater detail below. First, however, I

¹⁶⁴ The aftermath of the Trojan War does appear in Livy 1, as well as in Herodotus, Thucydides, and other historians' works, but any such mention recalls Homer's epics as well as the rest of the epic cycle.

will examine the entire ekphrasis, as well as Hannibal's reaction to it, before moving to a thematic discussion of the depicted images and allusions to both the historical and epic traditions.

The ekphrasis effectively summarizes the major events of the First Punic War, beginning with Regulus' campaign in North Africa:

primus¹⁶⁵ bella truci suadebat Regulus ore,
 bella neganda, viro si noscere fata daretur.
 at princeps Poenis indicta more parentum 660
 Appius astabat pugna lauroque revinctus
 iustum Sarrana ducebat caede triumphum.
 aequoreum iuxta decus et navale tropaeum,
 rostra gerens nivea surgebat mole columna;
 exuvias Marti donumque Duilius, alto 665
 ante omnes mersa Poenorum classe, dicabat.
 cui, nocturnus honos, funalia clara sacerque
 post epulas tibicen adest; castosque penates
 insignis laeti repetebat murmure cantus.
 cernit et extremos defuncti civis honores: 670
 Scipio ductoris celebrabat funera Poeni,
 Sardoia victor terra. videt inde ruentem
 litoribus Libycis dispersa per agmina pubem;¹⁶⁶
 instabat crista fulgens et terga premebat
 Regulus; Autololes Nomadesque et Maurus et Hammon 675
 et Garamas positus dedebant oppida telis.
 lentus harenoso spumabat Bagrada campo
 viperea sanie, turmisque minantibus ultro
 pugnabat serpens et cum duce bella gerebat.
 necnon proiectum puppi frustra que vocantem 680
 numina Amyclaeum mergebat perfida ponto
 rectorem manus, et seras tibi, Regule, poenas
 Xanthippus digni pendebat in aequore leti.

Regulus first urged wars with his vicious mouth, wars that should have been denied, if it had been granted to the man to know his fate. But Appius the princeps was assisting with a battle indicated against the Punic in the custom of his forefathers and crowned with a laurel was leading a triumph, justly earned by

¹⁶⁵ The placement of *primus* in line 658 agrees with Regulus, but is juxtaposed with *bella*, a wordplay that alludes to the subject of the ekphrasis. Notice also the placement of *bella* beneath *primus* at the beginning of line 659. This kind of acrostic juxtaposition was common in Alexandrian poetry as well as later Latin poetry. See Smith (1997).

¹⁶⁶ The Carthaginian viewpoint is now emphasized again, shifting briefly away from the Roman perspective.

Punic slaughter. Nearby was a maritime prize and naval trophy, the rostra carrying white columns was surging from the structure; Duilius was dedicating the spoils to Mars and a gift, with the fleet of Punics sunk in the deep before all. To whom, a nightly honor, bright lanterns and the sacred flute player were present after the feasts; and he sought out his chaste gods to the tune of an unknown happy song. He saw the last honors given to a dead citizen: Scipio, the victor of Sardinian land, was celebrating the funeral rites of the Punic leader. From there he saw the youth rushing from Libyan shores through scattered battle lines; Regulus was present with his gleaming crest and was pressing in from the rear; the Autolians, Nomads, Maurus, Hammon, and Garamas were surrendering their strongholds with weapons thrown aside. The slow Bagraidas was foaming with snake venom on the reedy plain, and beyond it the serpent did battle with the threatening battalions and was waging war with the leader. And a treacherous hand drowned the Spartan general in the sea as he was thrown from his ship and called for the gods in vain, and so Xanthippus paid the penalties long overdue to you, o Regulus, with a just death at sea. (*Pun.* 6.658-83)

Regulus' inability to know his fate and the irony of his seeking a war that will bring about his doom remind us of Hannibal's present circumstances. The words used to describe the victories, such as *decus* and *iustum*, show that Silius is definitely inserting his own, Roman, opinion into how the reader ought to interpret the ekphrasis. Silius writes from Hannibal's perspective initially, but then slips into his authorial persona in describing the ekphrasis itself. The painters of the temple were evidently careful not to depict Regulus' actual punishment, although it is alluded to in the description of Xanthippus' death, as a just recompense for the capture of Regulus. Silius does not need to digress too far into the details of Regulus' death as he has already done so in Marus' tale to Serranus earlier in Book 6. In effect, the entire digression at the beginning of the book helps describe the internal ekphrasis of the temple when Hannibal views it. Marus' tale becomes a part of the ekphrasis, and a key for understanding the artistic description.

Yet the differences between the spoken tale and the visual ekphrasis are notable, and the variance between what Serranus hears from Marus and what Hannibal sees on the temple walls adds another layer of interpretation to the ekphrasis, and to the entire poem. The Romans clearly

exiguus domitas capiet locus; ardua celsis
 persultet iuga victor equis Garamasque Nomasque. 705
 addes Ticini spumantes sanguine ripas
 et nostrum Trebiam et Thrasymenni litora Tusci
 clausa cadaveribus. ruat ingens corpore et armis
 Flaminius; fugiat consul manante cruore
 Scipio et ad socios nati cervice vehatur. 710
 haec mitte in populos, et adhuc maiora dabuntur.
 flagrantem effinges facibus, Carthago, Libyssis
 Romam et deiectum Tarpeia rupe Tonantem.
 interea vos, ut dignum est, ista, ocius ite,
 o iuvenes, quorum dextris mihi tanta geruntur, 715
 in cineres monumenta date atque involvite flammis.”

After the laughing Punic beheld all of these things with his troubled face, he spoke from slow wrath: “You will grant it to inscribe the deeds of my hand no lighter than these, upon our halls: Carthage, grant it to see captured Saguntum, falling from sword as well as flame; let fathers stab the limbs of their children; nor will the sight of the conquered Alps take a small space; the victorious Garamantian and Nomad will prance about on the lofty hills on their lofty steeds. May you add the banks of the Ticinus foaming with blood and our Trebia and the shores of Tuscan Trasimene clogged with bodies. Let Flaminius the giant in body and arms fall in ruin; let the consul Scipio flee with blood dripping and may he be borne to his allies on the neck of his son. Send these things amongst the peoples and things greater still shall be given. Carthage, you will mould Rome burning with Libyan torches and the Thunderer hurled down from the Tarpeian rock. In the meantime go quickly as is worthy, o youths, by whose hands are my great deeds done, give these monuments into ashes and throw them into the flames.”
 (*Pun.* 6.698-716)

Hannibal will not suffer the images to remain, but rather “rewrites” the paintings before burning them, hoping to overcome the monument of failure. He becomes a poet himself for a moment—as we have seen in several prior examples—and his poetic language is made explicit with the invocation of *Carthago* as well as *da spectare*.¹⁷⁰ Hannibal’s actions had previously functioned metaphorically for Silius’ authorial persona, now Hannibal acquires his own persona and becomes his own poet.

¹⁷⁰ See Fowler, 73.

The invocation of Carthage in the vocative occurs elsewhere in the *Punica*;¹⁷¹ although Hannibal directly addresses it twice within this passage (701 and 712), calling particular attention to it. Silius' invocation of the muse in 1.3 also places special emphasis on *da*. Why does Hannibal now address Carthage with the imperative form of this verb? Where the invocation of the city may be used for emphatic or rhetorical purposes elsewhere, this invocation has a specifically poetic context due to the placement of the imperative *da*.¹⁷² Within the *Punica*, the uses of the imperative form of *dare* are found in four distinct contexts: 1) man to man when asking for a merciful death, 2) god to god in conversation, 3) man to god in formal prayer language, and 4) poet to muse. The third context in which this word is found (man praying to a god) is initially attractive, but there is little indication that either Hannibal and the Carthaginians or Silius and the Romans view the city as such. The divinization of the city may well be on Hannibal's mind, but this personification of Carthage to the rank of an addressee is a distinctly literary device. Furthermore, Hannibal is not praying to Carthage that Rome might fall, but rather that his victories will be immortalized in his hypothetical ekphrasis. For Hannibal the artist/poet, Carthage becomes a muse. Like Silius, who summoned a general muse at 1.3, Hannibal now summons his own muse to compose a painting that he captures in hexameters, and he will go on to inscribe his actions in the historical record, painting over the memory of Carthage's prior defeat. His spoken response is followed by the destruction of the temple, but what aspect of this temple requires such a fierce reaction? In answering this question, it is

¹⁷¹ Carthage is directly addressed eleven times by various speakers throughout the poem: Hanno addresses the city twice (2.303 and 2.326) in his speech against Hannibal's actions in Spain. Marus, while using the poetic language mentioned above addresses the city twice (6.344 and 6.410). Hannibal addresses the city as *parens* in 4.811, and uses a poetic invocation at 6.701 and 6.712; his final appeal is made toward the end of the poem (15.383). Silius himself addresses Carthage at 10.658, while lamenting the decline of Roman morals, and again at 11.531. Notably, Scipio is the last to address the city, eager to sack the home of his hated enemies (16.92).

¹⁷² *Da* is used in the singular imperative form 15 times in the *Punica*: 1.3; 2.492; 3.567; 6.702; 7.217 (bis); 9.149 (bis); 11.567; 12.643; 12.644; 13.465; 14.441; 15.161; 17.344.

necessary to explore the term that Silius uses to describe paintings on the temple, *monumenta*.¹⁷³

Silius emphasizes this word by having Hannibal repeat it in line 716. It is a term that has strong poetic and historical significance. Varro explains the origins of the word in his *De Lingua*

Latina:

Meminisse a memoria, quom in id quod remansit in mente rursus movetur... ab eodem Monere, quod is qui monet, proinde ac sit memoria; sic Monumenta quae in sepulcris, et ideo secundum viam, quo praetereuntis admoneant et se fuisse et illos esse mortalis. ab eo cetera quae scripta ac facta memoriae causa Monumenta dicta.

“To remember” comes from “memory,” since it is moved back into that which has remained in the mind . . . from that same root comes “to warn,” because that which warns, thenceforth is memory; thus monuments are things that are on sepulchres, and likewise are along roads, so as to admonish passers-by that they had existed and that those passers-by are mortal. Because of this, other things which are written and done for the sake of memory are called “monuments.” (6.49)

The word *Monumenta* appears in four distinct applications: As Varro suggests, *monumentum* has a funerary connection, but also the more standard meaning of “monument,” in the sense of public statuary, dedicatory inscriptions, and the like. We will also note two further applications: first, that *monumenta* can refer to an object within a poem (Vergil, for example, describes one of the most famous pieces of poetic artwork, Pallas’ swordbelt, with this term), and second, *monumenta* can often refer to a literary text itself. Livy, for example, calls his own history a *monumentum* (*Praef.* 10) and Horace (*Ode* 3.30.1) refers to his own collections of poems as a *monumentum*. Both of these examples fit well within Varro’s third general definition of *monumenta* as “anything written or done for the sake of memory.”

That Silius’ Italic temple might have a funerary context seems initially improbable, as Romans were very careful to separate the world of the living from the world of the dead. The

¹⁷³ The neuter plural form is often used to preserve meter, and refers to single unified pieces of art as well as more divided “panels.”

funerary context of this particular ekphrasis is made clear by the depiction of Scipio (Africanus' father) carrying out the last rites for a Carthaginian general in the First Punic War. We might interpret the entire ekphrasis as an epitaph for Carthage, a final word on Rome's deceased enemy, and it is ironic that Hannibal, in turn, burns the monument, giving the ekphrasis its last rites. It is also interesting to note that this city, Linternum, is the same city where Scipio Africanus would later die, after retiring from public life. The immolation of this temple may be a proleptic attack on the future burial site of his antagonist, but it may also be seen as clearing the way for a (presumably) much greater monument that will later be erected in memory of Hannibal's rival, Scipio.

In its second application, as mentioned above, *monumentum* can also denote a "monument" in the more familiar English sense, a commemoration made in the public sphere out of patriotism or piety, and this ekphrasis certainly conveys those emotions. Within the ekphrasis, in fact, we see one of the most famous of all Roman monuments, the rostra, where Cicero and other orators would later deliver their speeches, and upon which Cicero's head would eventually rest.¹⁷⁴ The emphasis on the rostra as a *tropaeum* in the ekphrasis provides an interesting layer to our interpretation, as it is a kind of monument within a monument. The paintings seem to be representing themselves before Hannibal's (and the reader's) eyes. Within the wall painting, the rostrum symbolizes victory over the Carthaginians, just as the ekphrasis as a whole delivers that same message to the viewer of the paintings.

In addition to physical monuments, a *monumentum* can also refer to less "monumental" poetic objects that acquire symbolic significance within a text. Memory, after all, can be called

¹⁷⁴ The rostra, we will recall, was a speaking platform upon which were placed the beaks of the Carthaginian fleet, defeated in the First Punic, on public display in the Forum Romanum. Augustus would later take this idea and decorate another monument with the beaks of Antony's fleet, defeated in the Battle of Actium.

to mind by any object, regardless of size, type, or even function. The belt of Pallas in the *Aeneid* is perhaps the most powerful example of such a *monumentum*:

ille, oculis postquam saevi monimenta¹⁷⁵ doloris
exuviasque hausit, furiis accensus et ira
terribilis

Aeneas, after he had drunk in with his eyes the monuments of savage sadness and the spoils of war, was incensed by furies and was terrible in his wrath. (*Aen.* 12.945-47)

Here the swordbelt conjures up memories of loss and pain for the hero. While the implications of this line are controversial, we can see that the reaction of Aeneas is charged with *furor* and *ira* as he goes on to sacrifice Turnus as a ritual victim.¹⁷⁶ Like Aeneas, Hannibal is roused to anger by the sight of the ekphrasis and reacts with the same destructive urge, torching the walls.

Clearly this poetic *monumentum* is just as real to the characters of the poem as a civic monument would be.

The fourth application for *monumenta* is most important for a poetic context, as a *monumentum* can refer to a literary text itself; Livy (*Praef.* 10) and Horace (*Ode* 3.30.1) refer to their works as such.¹⁷⁷ Clearly, the images on Silius' temple are historical in nature, referring as

¹⁷⁵ An example of the poetic plural of this word. Clearly, it is only one object (a sword belt), perhaps divided into panels. More likely, the plural is used for metrical purposes, as the singular form would force the last syllable of the word to be long by position.

¹⁷⁶ The controversy has divided scholars into two camps: the so-called "European" and "Harvard" schools. The European school takes the more traditional approach that Vergil felt that Aeneas was justified in his actions, while the Harvard school takes a darker view. Both groups view the character of Aeneas as symbolic of or allegorical for Augustus' regime. See G. Karl Galinsky, "The Anger of Aeneas," *AJP* 109 (1988): 321-48, and Hans-Peter Stahl, "Aeneas: An 'Unheroic' Hero?" *Arethusa* 14 (1981): 157-77. The "darker" view includes M.C.J. Putnam, *The Poetry of the Aeneid* (Cambridge, 1965) and W.R. Johnson, *Darkness Visible: A Study of Vergil's Aeneid* (Berkeley, 1976).

¹⁷⁷ Mary Jaeger, *Livy's Written Rome* (Ann Arbor, 1997), 23, argues that Livy does not state this explicitly, but *Praef.* 6 and 10 certainly seem to. In the *Punica*, Hannibal, as the viewer of the ekphrasis, differs little from the kind of reader and viewer of a *monumentum* that Livy supposes in his preface. Jaeger states: "Livy's hypothetical student of history aims at seeing, but at seeing as a metaphor for understanding. Studying history allows one to look on a *monumentum*, but a clear view is only part of this experience: the encounter with a *monumentum* that produces insight also entails the viewer's awareness of his or her own position in space (that of the *viator* on the road passing by). While the narrative maneuvers the reader into a position that allows him or her to receive an instructive vision,

they are to the First Punic War, and undoubtedly parts of Livy's lost second decade. As the paintings are captured in written form, we may view the ekphrasis as a kind of text, both historical and poetic, on the past war. Naevius' *Bellum Punicum*, for example, might provide some excellent *comparanda* with Silius' ekphrasis if it were not so fragmentary, as, undoubtedly, would parts of Ennius' *Annales*. The strongest poetic allusion, however, is to *Aeneid* 1, wherein Aeneas looks upon the sack of Troy depicted on the walls of Juno's Temple at Carthage,¹⁷⁸ a scene that has often been viewed as a metaphor for Vergil looking back on the Homeric poems and Greek epic poetry.¹⁷⁹ Hannibal's reaction to the ekphrasis on the Italic temple wall contrasts sharply with that of Aeneas in *Aeneid* 1. After viewing the images of Troy's defeat, Aeneas weeps and laments the fate of his city, yet makes no effort to destroy the images. Rather, Aeneas sees the ekphrasis of the temple at Carthage as a reminder of his past, one that he does not repress and even ventures to remember, recounting the sack of Troy to Dido in *Aeneid* 2. While Aeneas allows the memory (and monument) of the defeat of Troy to remain, he is able to overcome it later in the poem and establish his *gens* in Italy, which will go on to found Rome, a second Troy. Hannibal, on the other hand, cannot allow such a monument to remain; he destroys the image of his city's past defeat and is himself defeated at the end of the poem.

the ideal student reaches the ultimate goal of understanding the past, at times through vision, at times through determining his or her own position relative to events recorded on the textual "monument," and at times through perceiving the structure and movement of a particular episode."

¹⁷⁸ Vergil never expressly calls this a *monumentum*, but does emphasize the memories that it evokes through ekphrasis (1.453-58), and later, when Aeneas is asked to recount the sack of Troy, the subject of the ekphrasis, he notes: *quamquam animus meminisse horret luctuque refugit, /incipiam* "although the mind shrinks from remembering and it flees because of sadness, I will begin" (*Aen.* 2.12-13). Thus, though not expressly called such, the temple fulfills the function of a *monumentum*. There are some linguistic similarities (Aeneas sees the prior war *ex ordine* (*Aen.* 1.456) and Hannibal sees the prior war painted in a *longus rerum et spectabilis ordo*), but the most striking aspect is the contrast between the heroes' reactions to the depictions of their respective cities' failed pasts.

¹⁷⁹ R.A. Smith, *Poetic Allusion and Poetic Embrace in Ovid and Vergil* (Ann Arbor, 1997), 26-43, gives an excellent treatment of Aeneas as an intertextualized character within the poem, looking back to other poetry. See also Hardie, 88-119, on the self-referential quality of a hero as an aspect of the poetic persona.

Herein lies the crucial difference between the Romans and Carthaginians, monuments. Mary Jaeger reminds us that “*Monumenta* require both vision and memory,”¹⁸⁰ two elements that Hannibal now lacks by destroying this temple. Where Aeneas had a difficult past to overcome, he chose to embrace those memories and then later overcome them with the greatest monument of all, the beginnings of the future rise of Rome. Hannibal, on the other hand, will react to his own past, and that of his city, by creative erasure, blotting out memory, vision, and monument. However, as Don Fowler cunningly points out: “In the end, Hannibal will not find it so easy to destroy this picture of history; and he will conclude the *Punica* himself a picture, carried in Scipio’s triumph.”¹⁸¹ While the Carthaginians now lack any reminders of their past other than Hannibal’s vague vision of a future monument, the Romans have Marus’ reminder of Regulus as well as Serranus, the general’s son. Silius’ *Punica* also becomes a kind of monument, filling the space left in the wake of the destruction of the temple, his verses capturing the instant of the prior monument’s destruction, preserving it in spite of Hannibal’s wrath. The destruction of the temple, we will recall, does not erase the Romans’ memory of their glorious past, so long as heroic bards such as Marus (and Silius) continue to retell them. Livy’s story of the Second Punic War had already become a monument more lasting than bronze by Silius’ own day, a story of Rome’s virtue that will continue to live on long after other monuments have fallen and are forgotten; so also, Vergil’s *Aeneid* is the foundation upon which Silius constructs his *Punica* to guarantee himself a place within the Latin epic tradition.

¹⁸⁰ Jaeger (1997) 25.

¹⁸¹ Fowler, 73.

CONCLUSION

This thesis illuminates several aspects of Silius' compositional technique, specifically the poem's constant reliance on a dialogue between the historical genre (primarily Livy) and the epic genre, in which Vergil is preeminent. Silius creates a web of complex allusions, adapting epic language to fit an historical context at some times, and at others highlighting historical tales against an epic backdrop. Thus Silius composes a more complex reality for his poem that overlays both the historical and epic backgrounds through simultaneous allusion to both genres, privileging neither one. As a result, the poem is elevated to a tale of cosmic significance, while it is simultaneously grounded in its historical origins, for Silius uses language that denotes a particular idea, yet also connotes something entirely different.¹⁸²

The dialogical relationship between the epic and historical genres has been demonstrated in the context of the sack of Saguntum, the combat between Hannibal and Murrus, and Dido's curse, all of which allude to both historical and epic precursors. Silius' Hannibal becomes both the historical Hannibal as described by Livy as well as a Carthaginian Aeneas in *Punica* 1 and 2. The basis for this comparison between the Silian and Vergilian heroes is, of course, seen most clearly in the context of the ekphrasis of Hannibal's shield. Ekphrases such as this are crucial to an interpretation of any epic poem, and Hannibal's shield is signally important in foreshadowing the hero's future fate and his city's eventual doom. Yet the shield is also important in developing a reader's response to the poem, as both Hannibal and Silius respond to the piece of art. As we saw in Chapter 1, even as Hannibal regards the ekphrasis, we find the response of the Silian narrator imbedded within that of the Carthaginian general in a conflation of personae that

¹⁸² See Conte (1986), 24.

recurs throughout the poem. Silius embarks on his poetic endeavor to rival his literary predecessors as Hannibal sets out on his own, more hubristic, journey, to overthrow Rome.

Hannibal cannot be read as simply the historical general with a poetic veneer. Silius' Hannibal is a fully intertextualized epic hero who seems at least partially aware of his presence in a later literary work, although the future is still hidden to him. Like both his epic and historical precursors, Hannibal attempts to acquire Herculean traits to perform his task, by seeking guidance from and performing rites at two temples, both of which remind the reader of the demi-god Hercules and his later imitators, notably Alexander the Great. Hannibal's successorship to Hercules is doomed to failure, as the dream of Mercury informs the reader, yet poet and hero continue their march, crossing the Alps and even treading paths that have never before been trodden. Hannibal initially appears to be the ideal hero for Silius, continuously swerving away from his historically assured doom, just as Silius swerves away from his poetic and historical precursors. Yet, while the hero acts metaphorically for and even looks through the eyes of Silius' authorial persona at times, the goals of hero and author are fundamentally different. Hannibal seeks to destroy Rome, overturn the city, and attack the gods themselves; Silius' poetic task is neither to destroy nor erase the poetry of his predecessors, but rather to preserve their fame and join their ranks.

In a prominent metapoetic scene, we see this divergence of goals illustrated. At the temple of Litemum, Hannibal burns down a temple painted with depictions of the First Punic War, and replaces it with an imagined ekphrasis of his own. Yet it is Silius, not Hannibal, who fills the void, inserting Marus' tale of Regulus and the serpent into the Roman reader's memory. Where Hannibal destroys monuments or indeed any work of art that he sees, without truly understanding them, Silius composes lasting poetry and constructs monuments that will not be

felled at Hannibal's whim. It is at this point in Book 6 that we see the beginnings of the shift of hero, from the raging Carthaginian to a Roman, emphasized later by the rise of Scipio. Hannibal does live on at the end of the poem, preserved by Juno from death at Scipio's hands, but his power is broken and the danger that he poses to Rome has faded.

The dialogue between the historic and epic genres, however, by no means ceases after Book 6. In fact, it continues in such a similar fashion that the selections in this thesis may well provide a paradigm for examining later passages of the *Punica*. The crucial difference is primarily scope: whereas Books 1-9 cover less than two books of Livy's narrative, Books 10-17 cover eight, and the specific historical allusions to Livy's text that were scattered throughout the first part of the poem become lost as the narrative tends toward summary and away from vivid portrayal.¹⁸³ It is interesting to note that the departure of Hannibal from, and subsequent arrival of Scipio into, the narrative herald even more overt uses of epic tropes—such as Scipio's *nekuia* (*Pun.* 13.385-895) and the gods' increasing intervention in battles (*Pun.* 17.385-617)—perhaps indicating that the dialogue between genres becomes more weighted towards epic by the end of the poem. There is evidence to suggest, however, that the last books of the *Punica* were unfinished at the time of Silius' death, and lack the final polish from Silius' hand.¹⁸⁴

This final lack of polish, however, is hardly the attribute that has kept (and will continue to keep) the *Punica* out of the epic canon for so long. Unlike Lucan's *Pharsalia*, which is generally accepted as the work of a remarkable mind, despite its obviously fragmentary nature, Silius' *Punica* has been accorded no such accolades.¹⁸⁵ Indeed, the textual transmission of the

¹⁸³ There are exceptions, such as Hannibal's stay at Capua (*Pun.* 11.1-318).

¹⁸⁴ F. Delarue, "Sur l'architecture des *Punica* de Silius Italicus," *REL* 70 (1992): 149-55, and Malcolm Wallace, "The Architecture of the *Punica*: a Hypothesis," *CPh* 53.2 (1958): 99-103.

¹⁸⁵ See K.O. Matier, *Silius Italicus at Bay: Pliny, Prejudice, and the "Punica"* (Durban-Westville, 1989), and D. Vessey, "Pliny, Martial, and Silius Italicus," *Hermes* 102 (1974): 109-16.

Punica, which seems to have been concentrated in only one region of Germany, is sometimes considered a scribal accident.¹⁸⁶ Yet the lack of a strong textual tradition does not necessarily denote non-canonical status, as the student of the textual transmission of Catullus can attest.¹⁸⁷ What, then, is it about the *Punica* that has relegated it to the “unimportant” section of Latin poetry?

J.D. Duff, in the introduction to his Loeb translation, sets out several reasons for the failure of the *Punica*, chief of them being tautology.¹⁸⁸ While criticisms of the style of the poem are numerous (although the poem is not without its apologists), I would like to offer an observation that may shed light on its lack of acceptance. The poem’s greatest failing is precisely its attempt to achieve a dialogue between the epic and historic genres. The unfortunate result of this juxtaposition of historical and epic elements is that the poem becomes less of a poetic dialogue of genres and more of a parodic “carnival” of genres.¹⁸⁹ The reader of history looks at the poem and sees that it is not a critical evaluation of sources, that it is not “serious”: the historian looks for Saguntum and instead finds reminiscences of Troy; he looks for Hannibal and instead finds a shade of Achilles or Aeneas; he looks for accuracy and instead finds poetic fancy. On the other hand, the poet-critic views the poem and sees epic heroes drowned in historical detail; he finds Dido’s curse dragged out for seventeen books; rather than a story of a few weeks’ time, he finds a poem that could cover the entire siege of Troy twice over; he looks

¹⁸⁶ P. McGushin, *The Transmission of the “Punica” of Silius Italicus* (Amsterdam, 1985).

¹⁸⁷ The last remaining manuscript of Catullus’ *Carmina* was discovered in Verona in 1300 CE without which little of Catullus would have survived (see Conte, *Latin Literature*, 152). One can think of few poets who are as central to the modern classical canon as well as to Vergil and the elegists as Catullus.

¹⁸⁸ Silius Italicus, *Punica* (in 2 vols.), ed. and trans. J.D. Duff, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, 1934), xiii.

¹⁸⁹ C. Platter, *Aristophanes and the Carnival of Genres* (Baltimore, forthcoming). In his introduction, Platter details Bakhtin’s notion of “carnival culture” expressed in *Rabelais and His World* and *The Dialogical Imagination*. Cross-genre dialogue opens the poem to carnivalizing tendencies that “discredit what was previously elevated” (p.7).

for poetry and instead finds history. The reader of each genre sees within the poem a parody of their respective genres, and the poem is inevitably mocked by the historian and disdained by the poet-critic. Because of this carnivalizing of genres, the historian would rather read Livy and the poet-critic would rather read Vergil for the purer strain of each genre. It is precisely Silius' compositional technique that sets the *Punica* apart poetically and is most responsible for its exclusion from the canon.

That said, however, I remain in strong agreement with Duff's comments on the merit of the poem:

When defects are admitted and due qualifications made, the reader of the *Punica*, once he has surmounted the obstacles, will find much pleasant walking there . . . scholars would think better of the poem if they would condescend to read it.¹⁹⁰

Silius' *Punica* offers many insights into how the Romans saw themselves after the Second Punic War and how they viewed Hannibal, their great enemy. The poem also closely examines Vergilian poetics, bringing them into an entirely new context, and laying bare some of the symbolism and encoded language that we find throughout the *Aeneid*. The *Punica* deserves to be read, if for no other reason, because it reminds classicists that ancient poets were as eager to read Livy and Vergil as we are.

¹⁹⁰ See Duff, xiii-xiv.

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